

Primary Arts Year 2 – Executive Summary

Programme overview

Primary Arts, designed and managed by A New Direction (AND), aims to increase access to high quality, inspiring arts, cultural and creative opportunities for children and staff in London's state mainstream primary schools and SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) settings. Following a successful pilot in 2023/24, the programme is supported by the City of London Corporation City Educational Trust Fund. Year 2 was delivered in 2025/26 in partnership with 27 cultural organisations through five strands: Go & See, In-Schools Touring, Masterclasses, Come & Try, and the Cultural Education Leadership Programme (CELP), including CELP Alumni.

The evaluation, based on survey data, interviews and observation, assessed the outcomes and processes of the programme, focussing on what worked well and what could be improved for Year 3.

Reach and engagement

Year 2 saw substantial growth on Year 1 across every headline measure:

- **273 schools** from 32 London boroughs participated, a 38% increase
- **16,837 pupils** directly participated, a 26% increase
- **1,816 school staff** took part in CPD, a 47% increase
- **1,087 school staff and family members** accompanied pupils to arts events
- **27 cultural partners** delivered the programme
- 124 of the 273 schools (**45%**) were engaging with Primary Arts for the first time
- 78 schools (**29%**) engaged with two or more strands, including one that engaged with all five.

This growth reflects a Year 1 recommendation to extend the programme's reach, and it is encouraging that nearly half of participating schools were new to Primary Arts. Approximately a third of registered schools have yet to participate, and targeting these schools alongside new applicants should remain a priority for Year 3.

Key findings - Go & See

Free tickets gave 4,730 pupils from 113 schools access to historic buildings, theatre, film and visual arts. All 66 respondents¹ to the post-visit survey agreed their pupils had enjoyed the experience and had fun, and over 80% agreed that outcomes for cultural capital, curiosity and personal and social development were also achieved, (in line with the pilot and Year 1). Journeying across London to venues was itself seen as valuable, building pupils' confidence and connection to the city. Fifteen SEND settings that responded to the survey reported strong benefits (such as turn-taking and managing unfamiliar places), and valued the availability of SEND-only sessions and the access budget, which helped overcome practical barriers such as transport and staffing. 98% of teachers felt more confidence to take pupils on cultural visits, signalling a positive legacy for schools.

¹ Survey response rate for Go & See: 79% (winter season) / 62% (summer season)

Recommendations include providing further guidance on how to maximise the use of the visit back in school, including curriculum links.

“This is the best trip we’ve ever had – it’s just re-sparked my love for history!” (SEND pupil visiting the Tower of London)

Key findings - In-Schools Touring

Delivered by 10 cultural organisations, offering a performance and workshop to a whole year group in a school, this strand remained oversubscribed (196 schools applied for 100 places) and reached 12,143 pupils and 1,552 staff across 79 mainstream schools and 21 SEND settings (three times the number of SEND settings supported in Year 1). Response rates to both the post-visit (92%) and six-week follow-up survey (61%) were high, strengthening confidence in the findings. At least 95% of respondents agreed that desired pupil outcomes had been achieved, with engagement, enjoyment, creativity and communication skills (responding to a new national focus on oracy), all prominent themes. Follow-up survey evidence indicated that the impact of visits is often sustained and can extend across the wider curriculum and school, supported by the accompanying CPD, resources, art materials and books. Teachers valued the CPD highly, particularly practical classroom strategies (cited by 80% of respondents) and growing confidence in creative pedagogy. There were also strong outcomes for the Delivery Organisations including increased confidence in working with SEND pupils and settings. Recommendations focus on ensuring class teachers are fully briefed ahead of visits, continuing dedicated support for SEND settings, and sharing best practice on gathering pupil feedback across Delivery Organisations.

‘It deepened my understanding of what schools need from visiting artists: not just entertainment, but work that teachers can hold on to after you’ve left.’ (Creative practitioner)

Key findings - Masterclasses and Come & Try

These strands offer CPD for school staff: six literacy-focused Masterclasses with the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE), and seven creative twilight sessions with the Crafts Council (6 sessions) and Into Film (1 session). Together they attracted 279 attendances, slightly below full capacity, reflecting the increasing difficulty schools report in releasing staff². Outcome ratings remained very high (typically above 4.5 out of 5) for both strands, with participants describing sessions as inspiring, engaging, creative, fun, practical and confidence-building. Masterclasses in particular reached significant numbers of teachers new to CLPE (65%) and AND (71%), and follow-up survey evidence confirmed sustained, whole-school impact on literacy practice, with 70% of respondents holding a relevant leadership role. Come & Try participants reported wellbeing outcomes alongside skill development, with most going on to use their new skills with pupils. A small number of Masterclass respondents, mainly from SEND and working in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), would welcome more content tailored to these contexts, and this is reflected in the recommendations, alongside the need to reach new audiences.

‘It reignited my passion to think outside of the box for developing creativity with children.’ (Masterclass participant)

² Survey response rate for Masterclasses: 100% and for Come & Try: 69%

Key findings - Cultural Education Leadership Programme (CELP) and CELP Alumni

Evidence demonstrates that CELP has a marked impact on participants' knowledge, confidence and identity as leaders of cultural education. All five intended outcomes showed a positive change of at least +1.0 on a five-point scale, with the largest gains in confidence to advocate for cultural education (+1.63) and how to access and use London's creative assets (+1.53). By the end of the programme, 100% of participants rated their leadership skills and confidence as high or very high, up from a baseline where the majority rated themselves as average or below. Follow-up survey evidence from pilot and Year 1 alumni confirmed that this impact endures well beyond the programme itself, with strong ratings for enhanced leadership skills, advocacy and school-level change, and several examples of participants securing more senior roles.

'I never thought of myself as being a leader... however this programme has really provided me with the tools, head space and opportunity to take on that role.' (CELP participant)

New in Year 2, the CELP Alumni programme responded directly to feedback about the value of ongoing peer networking. Nineteen of the 36 eligible alumni opted in, valuing the professional conversations, opportunities to visit other schools and continued support for their cultural education initiatives. Continuation of CELP Alumni is recommended.

Cross-cutting themes

Beyond the strand-level findings, four themes recur across the evaluation as a whole and are relevant to the programme's future direction.

- **Consistency and improvement.** Across the majority of measures, Year 2 ratings matched or exceeded those from Year 1 and the pilot, suggesting that learning from earlier years has been effectively embedded in delivery.
- **Access and inclusion.** Provision for SEND pupils and settings has expanded and there is strong evidence of significant outcomes for SEND and other disadvantaged pupils. CPD introduces teachers to inclusive practices such as sensory learning but feedback suggests this can be expanded further.
- **Sustained and cascading impact.** Follow-up survey evidence across strands (from In-Schools Touring whole-school initiatives on poetry, to CELP alumni curriculum reviews), confirms that benefits extend well beyond the initial delivery, often reaching the wider school community rather than being limited to direct participants. This evidence is encouraging but still emerging.
- **Capacity pressures.** Several strands noted growing difficulty for schools in releasing staff for CPD, reflected in lower bookings for Masterclasses and Come & Try and in access-budget usage for Go & See.

What is working well?

Several features of the programme appear to be particularly important to its success:

- **Quality:** schools value the opportunity to work with professional creative practitioners and reputable cultural organisations.
- **Free access:** the programme removes a significant financial barrier for schools and pupils.
- **Inclusion:** inclusive practice enables children who might otherwise be excluded from arts and cultural activity to participate.
- **Practicality:** teachers particularly value CPD that gives them approaches, resources and ideas they can use immediately.
- **Inspiration:** teachers report renewed enthusiasm and confidence to experiment with creative approaches.
- **Relationships:** opportunities to learn alongside peers and develop connections with cultural organisations are valued.
- **Leadership development:** CELP provides a route from individual professional development towards wider school-level change.

Key recommendations for Year 3

The evaluation does not suggest a need for fundamental change to Primary Arts. Rather, the priority should be to consolidate and extend what is working well.

- **Extend reach**, particularly among registered schools that have not yet participated.
- **Encourage schools to engage with more than one strand**, so that pupil experiences, CPD and leadership development can reinforce one another.
- **Further strengthen the link between cultural experiences and classroom practice**, for example, providing resources to help teachers maximise the learning potential of Go & See.
- **Continue to develop inclusive practice** in work with pupils and teachers. For example, share best practice on inclusive delivery and pupil feedback for In-Schools Touring.
- **Attract new audiences to Masterclasses and Come & Try**, while maintaining the value for repeat participants.
- **Continue CELP Alumni** and other opportunities for professional networking and peer learning.
- **Explore lasting impact further**, particularly whether changes in individual teachers' practice become embedded in whole-school approaches over time.

Overall conclusion

Year 2 provides further strong evidence that Primary Arts is achieving its intended outcomes. The programme is:

- giving children access to high quality arts and cultural experiences
- increasing pupils' engagement, enjoyment, curiosity and confidence
- developing teachers' confidence, practical skills and motivation to use creative approaches
- increasing teachers' knowledge of London's cultural assets
- supporting teachers to share and embed new approaches in their schools
- beginning to contribute to longer-term, school-level change, particularly through CELP.

The substantial increase in participation in Year 2 demonstrates that the programme is extending its reach, while the consistency of findings across the different strands continues to support the Theory of Change. As the programme enters its final year, the opportunity is to build on this strong foundation: reaching more schools, encouraging more connected engagement across the programme, strengthening the translation of cultural experiences into classroom practice, and consolidating the longer-term impact on teachers and schools.