Hastings and Rother Arts Education Network

Health and Wellbeing Report

Supported with investment from Artswork, the South East Bridge

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Contents

Introduction

The key stakeholders in the consultation are Hastings and Rother Arts and Education Network (HRAEN) and Culture East Sussex.

HRAEN focuses on using local resources for local schools, creating sustainable projects that embed culture into the everyday lives of young people. HRAEN provides regular networking meetings for teachers and practitioners, information exchange including newsletters, opportunities for cultural engagement and bespoke cultural projects, supporting teachers in the classroom, artists working in schools and organisations offering cultural outreach.

The Cultural Education Challenge is Arts Council England's strategic ambition to see the arts, cultural and education sectors working together to provide more and better opportunities for children and young people to engage creatively. To better enable this to happen they are developing a network of Cultural Education Partnerships (CEP) across the country, bringing cultural organisations, educational institutions and local authorities together to grow the offer. Hastings and Rother has been designated a CEP area with the CEP function sitting with Culture East Sussex. With this structure in place two areas of development have been agreed with HRAEN leading the Health and Wellbeing strand and Skills East Sussex leading the learning and skills element.

This consultation was tasked to enable HRAEN, in the context of CEP strategic developments to formulate a strategy, to support improved mental health and wellbeing for children and young people by ensuring that schools are more supported in promoting health, wellbeing and emotional development outcomes through arts and cultural projects, thereby positioning the arts and culture as a core component of health and wellbeing improvements.

The consultation listened to senior arts and pastoral leaders in education, as well as parents and young people. It encompassed six schools, broadly representative of the area, ranging from an Ofsted grading of "requires improvement" to that of "outstanding", and representing over two thousand students.

The consultation concluded that there are consistent themes across the area with regard to the specific aspects of wellbeing that it would be most beneficial for HRAEN to support, and distinct strategies that providers should employ in order to most effectively develop an on-going relationship with schools.

It is recommended that the HRAEN strategic plan include:

- Arts and cultural activities that bring multiple benefits in order to counter financial restrictions.
- Professional development for teachers and school leaders that employs peer learning.
- A concentration on emotional wellbeing, balanced and healthy relationships and confident self-expression from young people through the arts.
- Support that aims to maximise the impact of external provider collaboration.

Being Rural artist in residence at Salehurst Primary School (2015)

Methodology

The consultation was comprised of a triangulated approach to developing understanding. The triangulation points were: interview responses, survey responses and contextual data. The information gathered at each of the triangulation points was cross-referenced to establish the accuracy and utility of the data in reference to the development of the recommendations for a strategic plan. All data gathered is anonymous in the published report.

The main data gathering exercises were conducted in schools intended to represent the range of experiences in the Hastings and Rother context. There were six case study schools, each representing one feature: Primary school (rural), primary school (area of socio-economic deprivation), primary school (urban), secondary school (urban) and secondary school (area of socio-economic deprivation). Two categories of school, secondary rural and special provision, did not respond to requests to participate.

The chief interview subjects were:

- The headteacher or designated senior leader of the case study schools. The interview is intended to achieve a strategic oversight of the issues relating to the school.

- The pastoral leader (this may be the headteacher or designated senior leader in the case of smaller schools). The interview is intended to understand the perception of the issues surrounding health and wellbeing.

- The arts leader. The primary purpose of the interview is to describe the profile of art and culture in the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. The secondary purpose is to understand the links made between the arts and wellbeing.

- Representatives of the student body. These interviews are intended to draw out the health and wellbeing issues experienced by students and the strategies relating to arts and culture that they employ in addressing those issues.

- Parent[1] representatives. These interviews are aimed at describing the parents' perspective of health and wellbeing issues experienced by young people and the extent to which the arts and cultural provision of the school and local community supports resilience.

Survey responses

Online surveys were used to support and extend the information derived from the interviews. The surveys helped to cross-reference the issues, employing near identical questions for primary and secondary settings. Online surveys present the opportunity to reach more deeply into the population of the case study schools and to extend more widely across non-case study schools. The response rate was low, less than 5% of the total potential school population but above the market research standard of 0.5%.

Contextual data

The contextual data consists of information gathered through public agencies, such as central and local government. The intention is to use the contextual data to provide a better informed understanding of the case study schools and the learning gathered from interviews and surveys.

References derived from contextual data always state the agency and the age of the data provided.

Key Stages

Key Stage 1	Ages 5-7	Years 1 and 2
Key Stage 2	Ages 7-11	Years 3, 4, 5, and 6
Key Stage 3	Ages 11-14	Years 7, 8, and 9
Key Stage 4	Ages 14-16	Years 10 and 11

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[1] The term parent has been used throughout to denote all forms of primary carer.

Findings

Descriptions of context.

There are clear challenges in East Sussex in general and in the area covered by HRAEN in particular. Whereas East Sussex was (2015) in the second percentile in the deprivation score, Hastings sits in the third percentile at 33.1. Directly related to this is data indicating that 28.7% children in Hastings and 19.2% children in Rother grow up in low income families, compared to the East Sussex average of 18.6%, slightly above the national average. The theme of financial deprivation, low aspirations and an adverse impact on wellbeing is consistent across the consultation. The impact of such deprivation can be seen in higher than average incidents of risky behaviour by young people, lower levels of life satisfaction and reports of bullying that exceed the national average.

The headteacher of the urban primary school described the context of the school population as having a large percentage of pupils coming from families that can be characterised as 'just about managing'. This was defined as one or both parents being in work but in low paid, low skilled employment. As a result, the school has a cohort of pupils who are just outside the pupil premium threshold, where there are multiple needs but no additional funding to support them. These issues were exacerbated in the primary school situated in an area of social and economic deprivation where the families that constitute the majority of the school population experience high levels of unemployment. As a consequence, one third of the pupils are entitled to Free School Meals (FSM).

These responses were mirrored in the rural primary school where the headteacher noted that staff had an increasing awareness that pupils and parents from 'ticking over' families were struggling financially, and that this was reflected in multiple challenges for which the school received little or no additional funding.

The headteacher of the secondary school described the context of the school as diverse but mostly from lower socio-economic levels and that there are low levels of social mobility in the area. This was reflected in comments by other senior leaders and headteachers.

Parental engagement.

All of the schools reported good levels of parental engagement for formal occasions such as consultation evenings. One of the urban primary schools noted that those families at the bottom end of the socio-economic spectrum tend to be the most hard to reach. This was echoed by other headteachers who observed that many parents from hard to reach families are reluctant to engage with the school, especially in regard to academic issues. The hard to reach families' chief concerns are that their children are happy in school, that they behave and that relationships are good, and less significance is given to academic progress. Where numbers of that category of family are significant in the school the headteacher commented that homework is not widely completed and many children are not supported in their reading at home. As a consequence, the longer holidays have a detrimental impact on pupil progress. This was echoed by a secondary school senior leader who commented that the long summer break is particularly challenging. It undermines efforts to sustain engagement from students and parents, and leads to old behaviour patterns reasserting themselves.

Feedback from Key Stage 2 pupil surveys shows a pattern of low engagement with cultural opportunities outside of school.
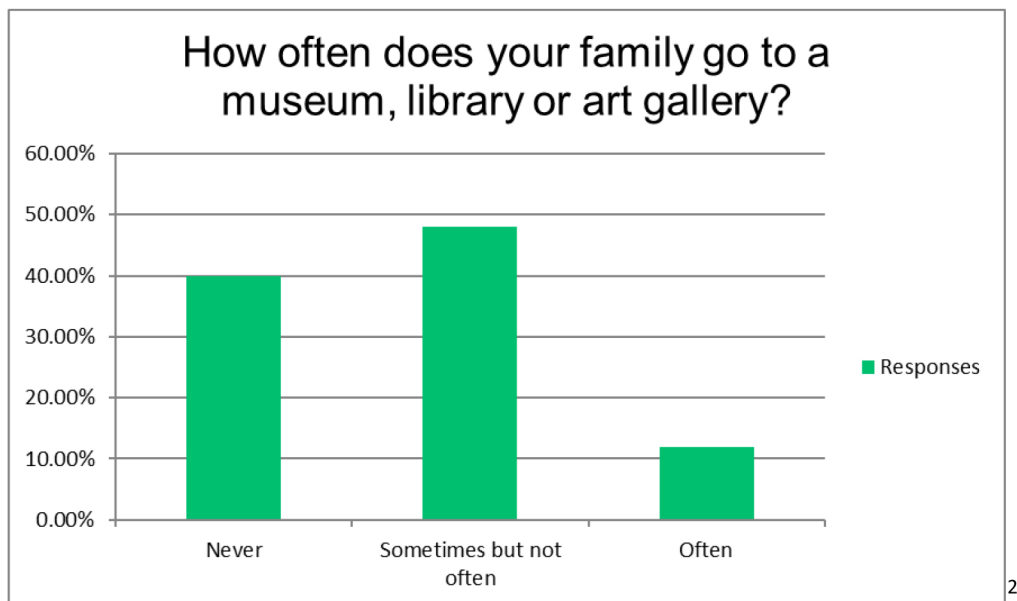
However, the parents of primary school-aged children indicated a different pattern.

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[2] Key Stage 2 Pupil survey

[3] Parental survey (primary schools)

While the pupil survey results were more similar in nature to those of parents with secondary school children.

How motivated is your family to go to an arts/cultural event or location (such as museum, library or art gallery)?

The senior leader of one of the secondary schools commented that student aspiration is a key feature of the school. He felt that this is embodied by the actions of staff and a growing percentage of the students but that the expectations of the school are not always supported by parents, especially those who are hard to reach and do not actively engage. He felt that the level of aspiration observed in the students can exceed that of the home: that is, the students' sense of aspiration is being capped by lower expectations from home than those being promoted by the school.

Unsurprisingly, the headteachers were all aware that the level of aspiration and expectation mirrors the socio-economic make-up of the parents. The headteacher of an urban primary school noted that where there is evidence of low aspiration and expectation from home which has an impact on the pupils, many of the children want to leave education before university and to get some form of employment, thereby replicating their parents' circumstances.

The arts leader of a secondary school commented that there is a core group of parents (estimated at 20% of the total parent population) that has multiple needs and poor parenting

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[4] Key Stage 3 and 4 pupil survey.

skills. The benefits of regular engagement with education, and the arts in particular, is not appreciated or advocated at home.
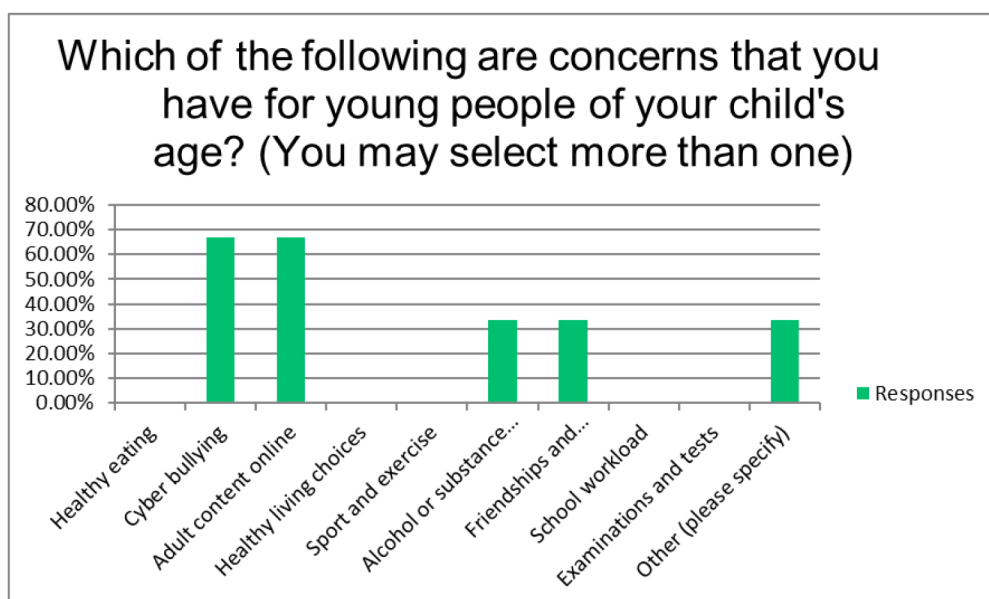
An issue raised by several of the headteachers was the lack of willingness to contribute to extra-curricular activities and school trips by families that are just above the threshold for pupil premium funding. This places strain on the capacity of the school to enrich the curriculum and reduces the number of cultural experiences that the pupils are offered. This was also reflected in interview responses from parents with primary school-aged children who believed that school organised trips were valued and seen as fun by the children. Parents who were not well off but received no support found funding trips very difficult and resented those who didn't pay.

Health and wellbeing.

The most commonly reported health and wellbeing issues were centred on emotional and psychological wellbeing. The headteacher of an urban primary school indicated that this can be difficult to understand and deal with appropriately, especially if there is limited capacity at home. This was echoed by all of the headteachers, who often stressed that the impact was significant on the emotional wellbeing and resilience of the children. In this respect, the distinction between cause and consequence was blurred but the common features seemed to be persistent poor attendance, a lack of resilience in the pupils when faced with challenge, low self-esteem and a tendency to be passive in class. Less frequently reported health and wellbeing issues included bereavement and a lack of ability to engage with peers. Only one of the primary headteachers reported issues around weight, diet and physical activity but, where these were present, the consequences were significant.

Parental interview responses regarding wellbeing issues linked them to friendships and the point at which the child gets a mobile phone. The parents felt that the stress that was specifically school related came from testing and measuring or the transition to secondary school. Sport and meditation, more than arts-based activities, were seen by parents as important in promoting wellbeing. Drama was regarded as improving confidence and dance as improving physical abilities.
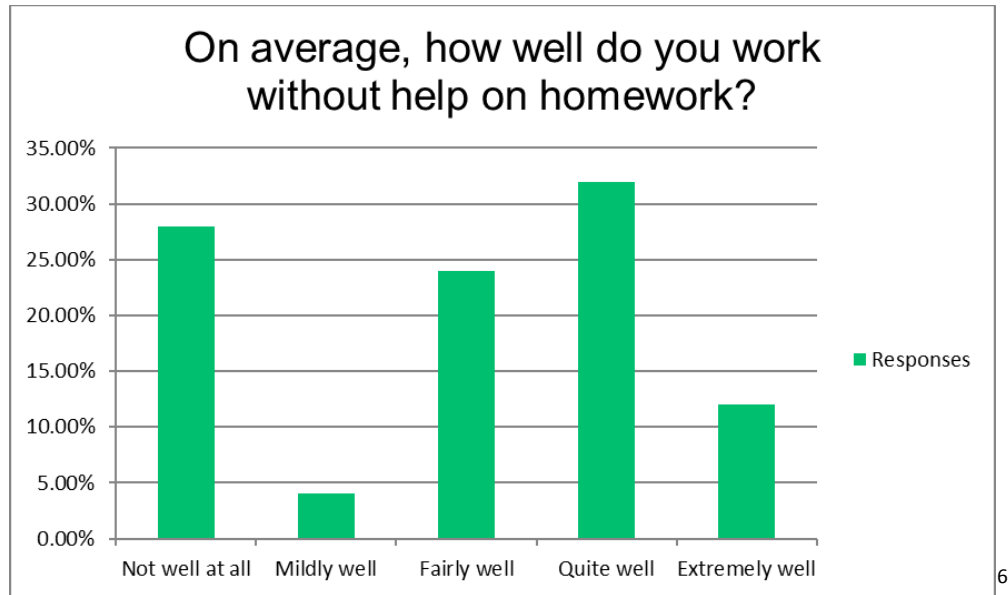
The secondary schools also had a focus on students with mental health issues. But as the young people become more autonomous the schools felt that it was important to support healthy lifestyle choices. The secondary schools placed a much higher emphasis on the problems arising from stress and anxiety in young people. This was matched by responses from parents with secondary school-aged children.

Which of the following are concerns that you have for young people of your child's age? (You may select more than one)

The students from one of the secondary schools identified two main causes of poor wellbeing: friendships and school work. The students believed that the demands placed on them were much greater than those of even two years ago. They referred to the volume of homework and the expectations of teachers. They referenced their own school and those of friends.

Online responses from primary pupils similarly identified academic issues that require support from home as a concern.


On average, how well do you work without help on homework?

Chart showing responses:
- Not well at all: ~28%
- Mildly well: ~4%
- Fairly well: ~24%
- Quite well: ~32%
- Extremely well: ~12%

Legend: ■ Responses

In the case of friendships, most secondary students cited social media as the key cause of stress. They all seemed to have an active online presence, mostly revolving around apps such as Snapchat and WhatsApp. The main difficulties came from generalised comments and an expectation that they be involved in dealing with the situations of one another. They believed that it was difficult to interpret comments posted on line and that this often caused frustration and anxiety.

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[6] Key Stage 2 pupil survey.

Key Stage 2 pupils identified a range of concerns in their online responses ('Other' included fear of parent dying, accidents, injuries and being sent to prison)
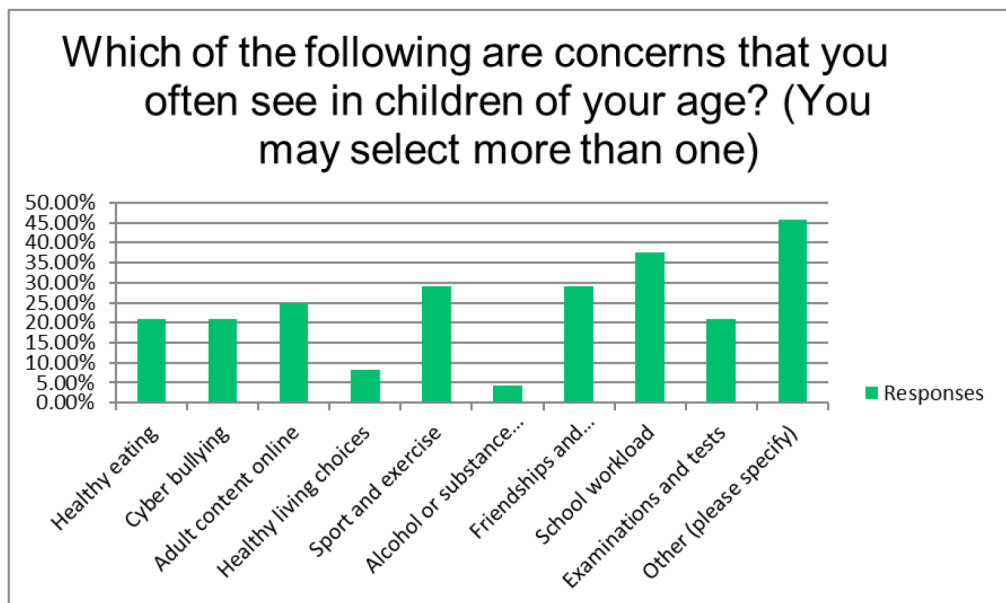
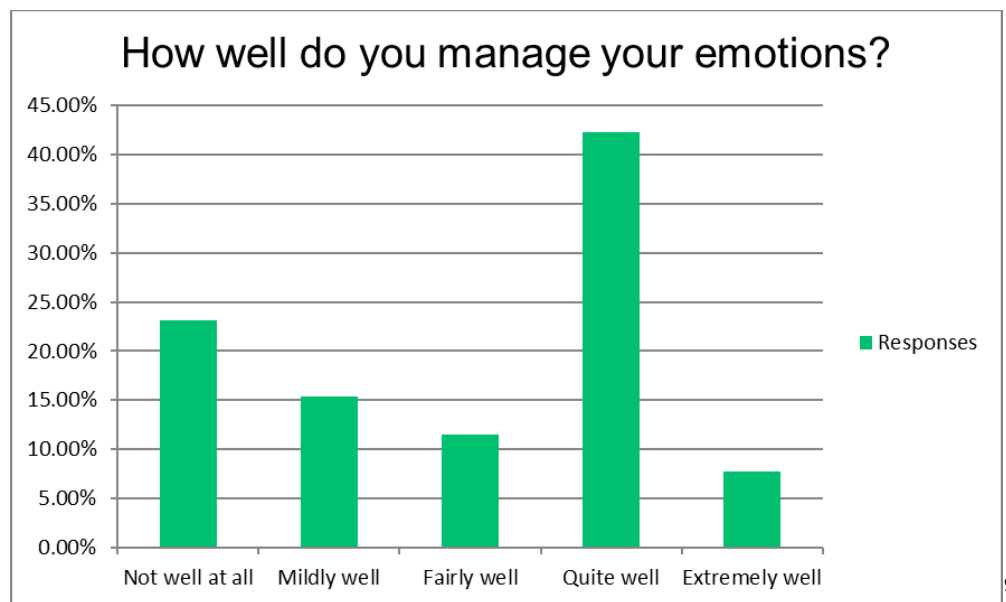The parents of primary school-aged children identified the following pattern of concern.

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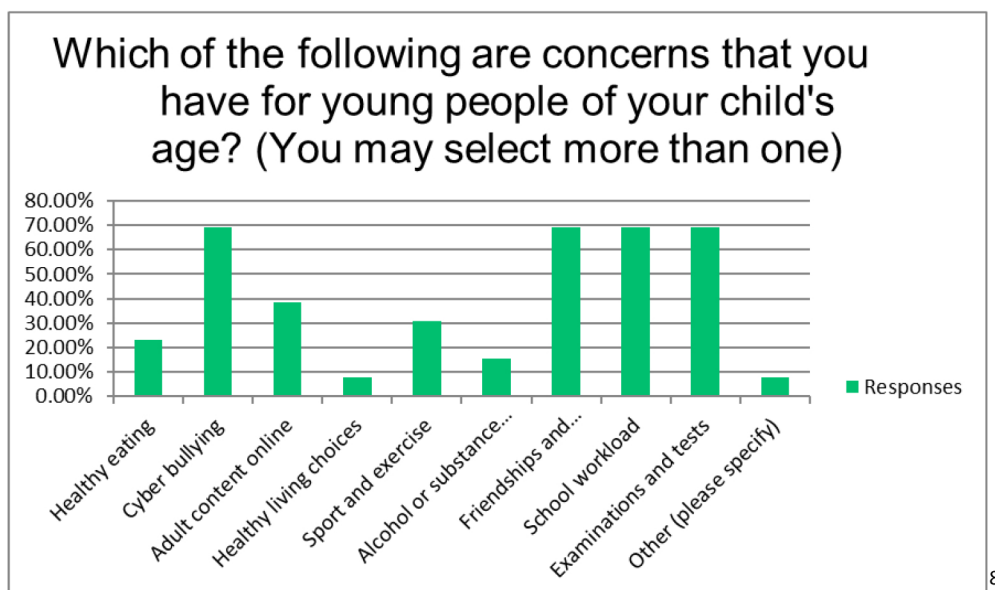
[7] Key Stage 2 pupil survey

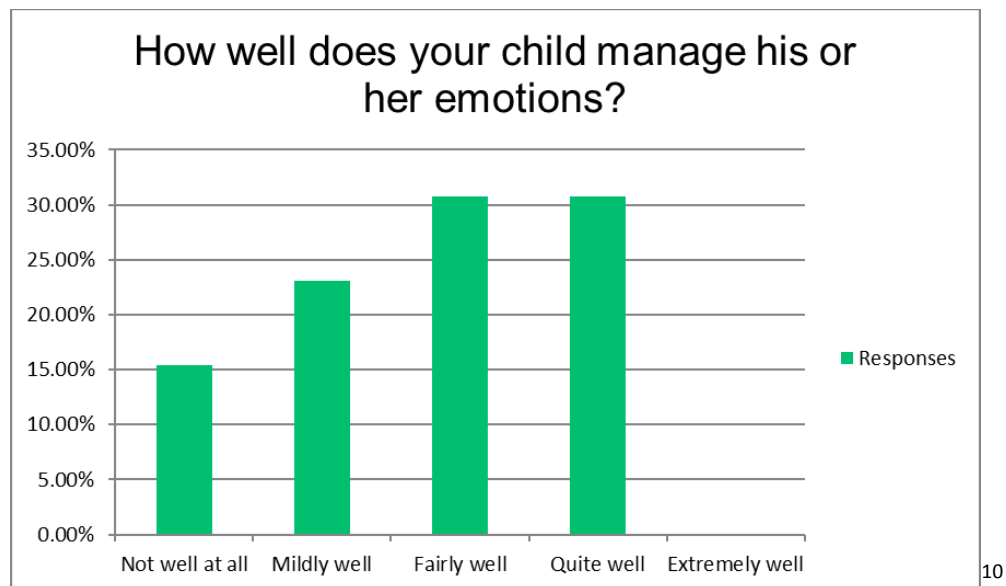[8] Parental survey (primary schools)

The secondary school students universally described their life experience as stressful. They identified the following consequences of that stress: anger, depression, 'shutting down', feeling sad and 'not doing anything'. Several of the students commented that there was not a prevailing situation and that, even in the case of individuals, experiences and behaviours could swing rapidly. None of the students referred to physical health issues.

Likewise, primary school pupils also focussed on emotional wellbeing to a greater extent than physical health.

How well do you manage your emotions?

A bar chart titled "How well do you manage your emotions?" showing the following approximate response percentages:
- Not well at all: ~23%
- Mildly well: ~15%
- Fairly well: ~11.5%
- Quite well: ~42%
- Extremely well: ~7.5%

Legend: Responses

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9 Key Stage 2 pupil surveys

This was not quite the impression given by the parents of children in the same age range.

How well does your child manage his or her emotions?

A bar chart showing responses as percentages:
- Not well at all: ~15.5%
- Mildly well: ~23%
- Fairly well: ~30.5%
- Quite well: ~30.5%
- Extremely well: 0%

Legend: ■ Responses

[10]

In dealing with these issues the schools returned to the theme of families and problems just outside of the threshold for additional funding. The headteacher of an urban primary school gave the example of a pupil with multiple issues that all fall under thresholds for external support. For example, when a child has Special Educational Needs (SEN) that do not justify an Education Health Care Plan and subsequent additional funding, and yet members of that child's family have mental health problems, there is limited support provided for that child and a lack of capacity to support any intervention at school. This was reinforced by a comment from the headteacher of a school in deprived socio-economic circumstances that the most challenging problems for the school related to issues around mental wellbeing as these can be reinforced by the problems of parents at home.

This was strongly echoed in the secondary school situated in an area with high socio-economic deprivation. The pastoral leader stated that the most challenging aspects for the school are students whose issues are just beneath threshold for agencies such as CAMHS. Mental health issues are exhibited by students but also the school has a concern with regard to parents'

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[10] Parental survey (primary schools)

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mental health and ability to support their child. This lessens the effectiveness of interventions and support because families lack the resources to support their child effectively.

The wellbeing crisis-points in a young person's experience of education most commonly cited were those of transition: from early years settings to primary school, from primary school to secondary and then the two year GCSE phase.
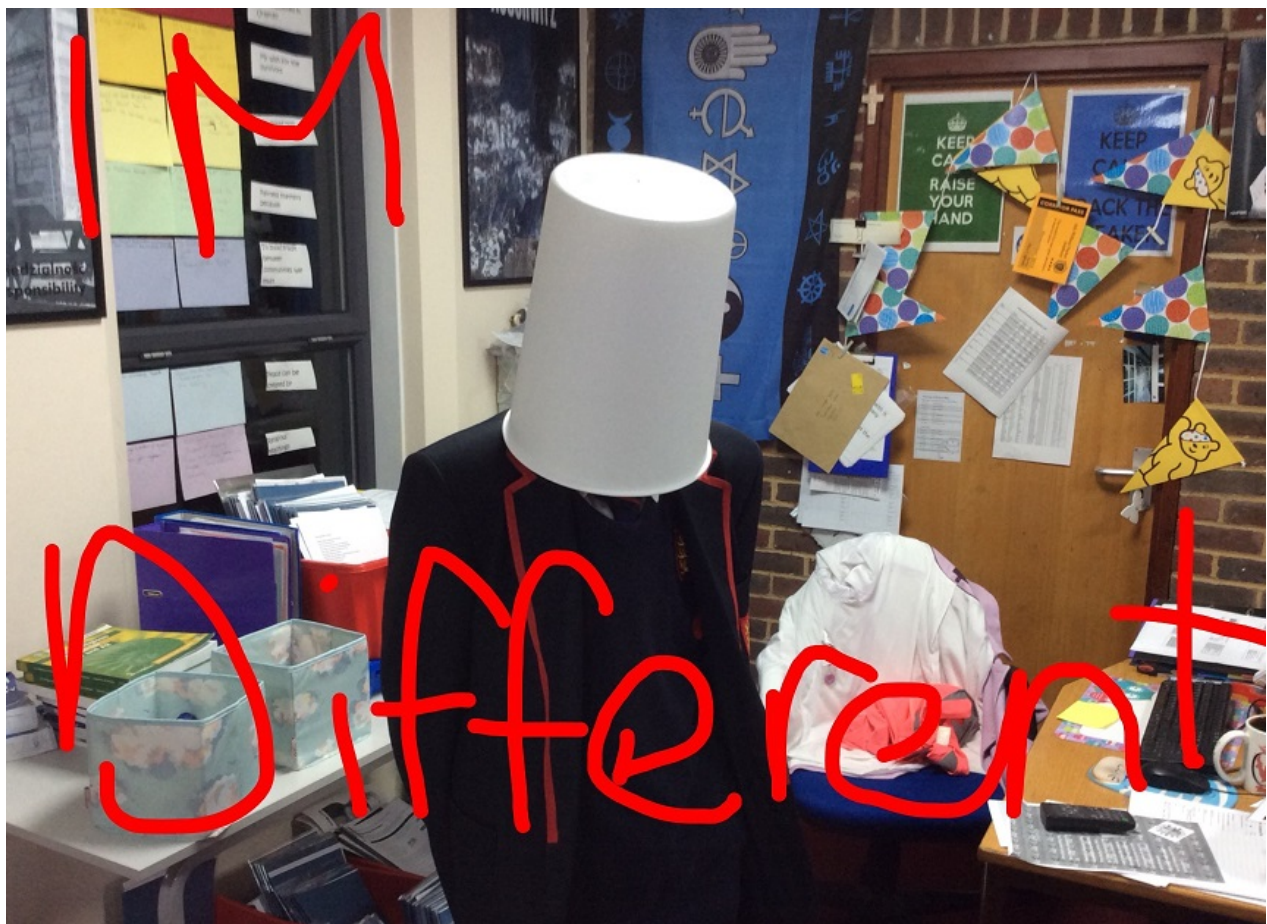
Telling Your Story at Ark William Parker Academy 2016 (Culture Shift)

Responding to wellbeing and health challenges.

All of the schools in the consultation are committed to using any approach that supports children, including the arts. The needs of the child are central to their consideration and actions.

The students of both secondary schools acknowledged that their school made efforts to help them be more resilient. They referred to the school counsellor, the support of teachers and the topics of assemblies. One student felt that the advice offered was generic and 'clichéd' and another believed that students were supported in terms of what to do, not how to do it. All of the students felt able to speak out about their feelings. The students from one of the secondary schools felt that the arts, especially drama and dance, enabled them to release stress and be more open about their emotions. They felt that the arts gave them confidence inside and outside school. It helped them to channel their emotions. They said that their main health concern was stress and they described the responses to stress as being a negative attitude to school, friendship difficulties, mood swings and finding it hard to cope with examinations and tests.

The students often engaged in arts clubs in school but only one did so out of school (dance). They enjoyed performances, exhibitions and shows. The students wanted more opportunities for those that are struggling in school to have access to the arts as a sort of therapy, akin to counselling or mentoring.
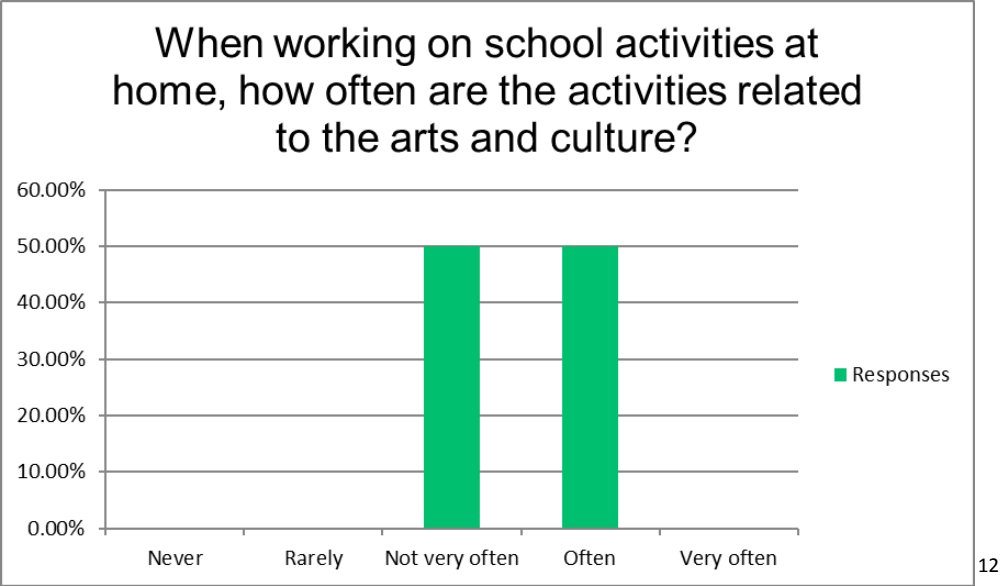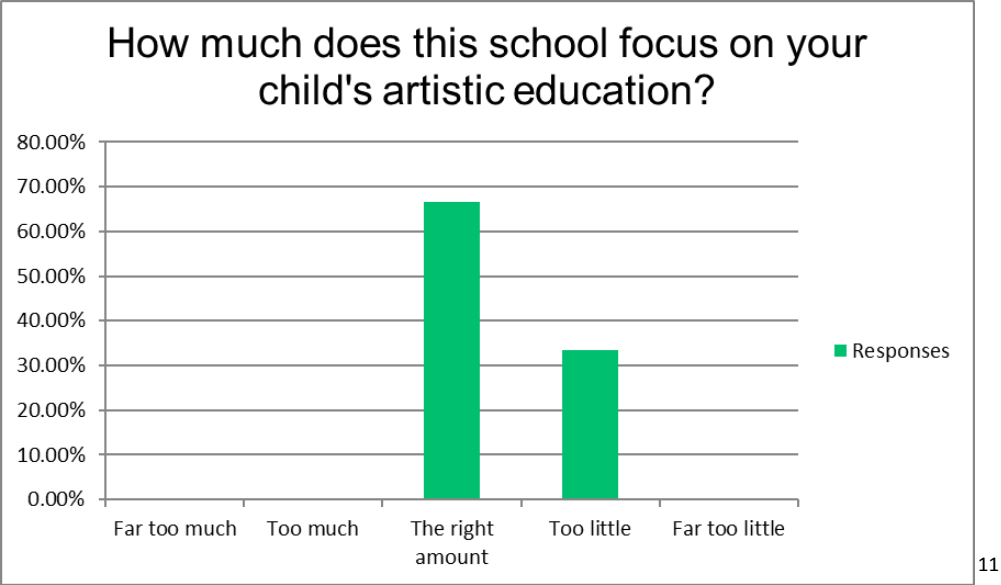
One of the secondary headteachers expressed a strong belief that cultural experience and engagement in the arts opens the students' eyes to new possibilities and experiences, raises expectations, supports diversity and increases self-esteem. All of these qualities were reflected in the most resilient and engaged students, but lacking in those with wellbeing and health challenges. This belief was reflected in a secondary school arts leader's view that the most challenging situations for the school to deal with were students with multiple needs from families with limited parental engagement, which was reflected in self-esteem and personal confidence issues.

In addressing these issues, the schools use the capacity of a similar range of services: CAMHS, school nursing service, specialist units, counsellor, the school nursing team, play therapists, the police service and ESBAS (East Sussex Behaviour and Attendance Service).

One headteacher stated that the school has Artsmark and tries to be creative in integrating the arts with core subject delivery as part of an enrichment that benefits the wellbeing of the pupils. Most of the headteachers felt that there is a place for the arts in all aspects of curriculum design and that formal expressions of this include visits, drama workshops and access to artefacts. This is intended to provide interventions for specific pupils around communication, self-awareness and self-expression.

Interview responses from the parents of primary school-aged children showed that the arts are considered as part of a basket of enriching activities, typically alongside sports. These activities were seen as improving behaviour (boys), focusing attention and linking with school learning. School based activities that parents reported children talking enthusiastically about included dance, drama and drumming. These linked with out of school activities such as ballet and gymnastics.
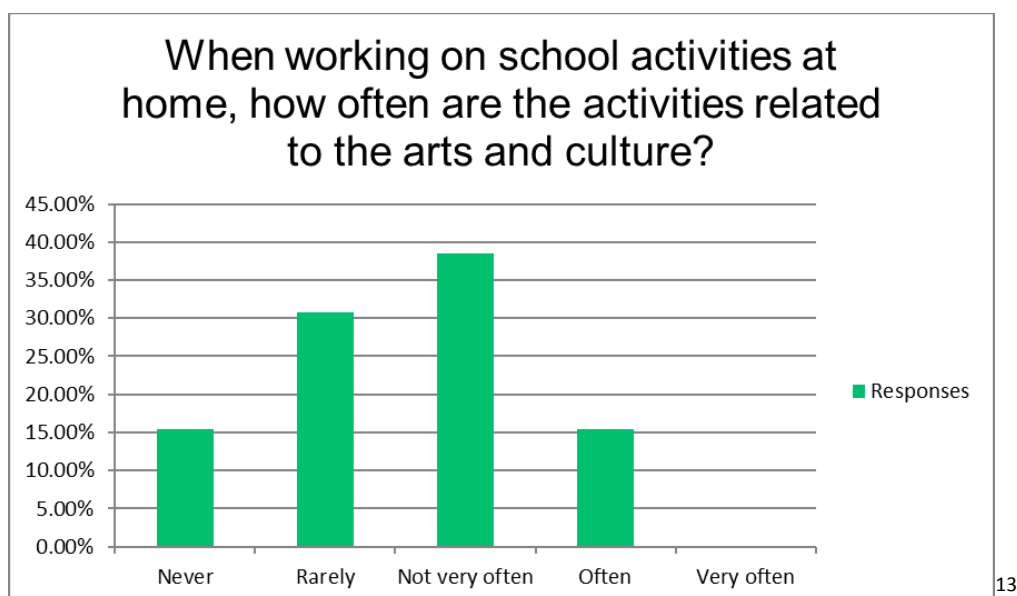
At secondary school level the expressive subjects available include drama, music, art and performing arts. One of the secondary schools reported a reduction in the number of students opting to take the arts on offer because the school has broadened its curriculum at Key Stage 4. This has created more choice, with the unintended consequence that the school has seen a drop in the numbers of students choosing arts subjects at GCSE. The other secondary school also recorded a decline in the number of students opting for creative subjects at GCSE, with no music course currently in operation due to very low numbers of interested students. On the whole, the parents that responded to the secondary school online survey appeared reasonably happy with the volume of creative arts in the curriculum.

How much does this school focus on your child's artistic education?

When working on school activities at home, how often are the activities related to the arts and culture?

The balance of primary school arts-related activities undertaken at home as a result of school work appears to be different, based on the responses from parents.

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[11] Parental survey (secondary schools)

[12] Parental survey (secondary schools)

When working on school activities at home, how often are the activities related to the arts and culture?


[13]

One of the secondary schools felt that there is a limited range of extra-curricular activities related to the arts. These, such as art club and music club, are usually attended by students with a pre-existing interest, and numbers are small in comparison with the student population as a whole. They are not targeted towards hard to reach students. The arts leader of another secondary school stated that expressive arts clubs offered structured and unstructured activities. The arts leaders in both of the secondary schools shared a belief that the creative arts offered a safe space for the students to access opportunities during and after the school day. All of the arts leaders commented on the value of festivals and competitions.

All of the primary headteachers observed that the drive to focus the curriculum around reading, writing and mathematics had an adverse impact on the school's ability to respond to wellbeing and health challenges through an enriched curriculum. However, there was a strong determination not to allow the emphasis on published results to detract from providing their pupils with an education journey that incorporates the arts in a cross-curricular capacity. More than the focus on core subject results it was felt that financial constraints have had an impact on staffing levels and this, combined with curriculum changes, means that the arts can be the 'first to go' when cuts need to be made. In tight financial circumstances parents are unwilling to

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[13] Parental survey (primary schools)

make a financial contribution which further pressures the role of the arts in the curriculum and its capacity to support pupils with wellbeing and health challenges.

This interpretation was matched by primary arts leaders who commonly believed that the arts are present but not enough. Most believed that the practicalities of provision and its cross-curricular approach make it easy to be squeezed out. They universally pointed out that some staff are very confident in the arts and there is very good practice. Where staff are less sure they tend to follow a safe route or minimise the arts in their teaching. This means that the experience of the pupils and the ability of the arts to enrich wellbeing are patchy. This was also reflected in feedback from primary school pupils.

[14]

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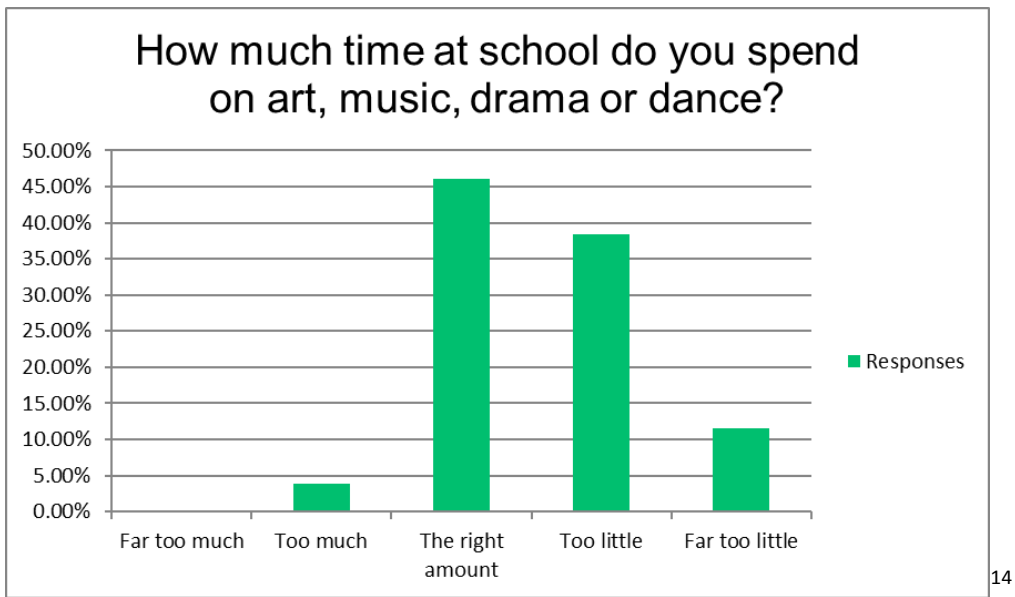
[14] Key Stage 2 pupil survey

The parents of primary school aged children held a very similar perspective.

How much does this school focus on your child's artistic education?
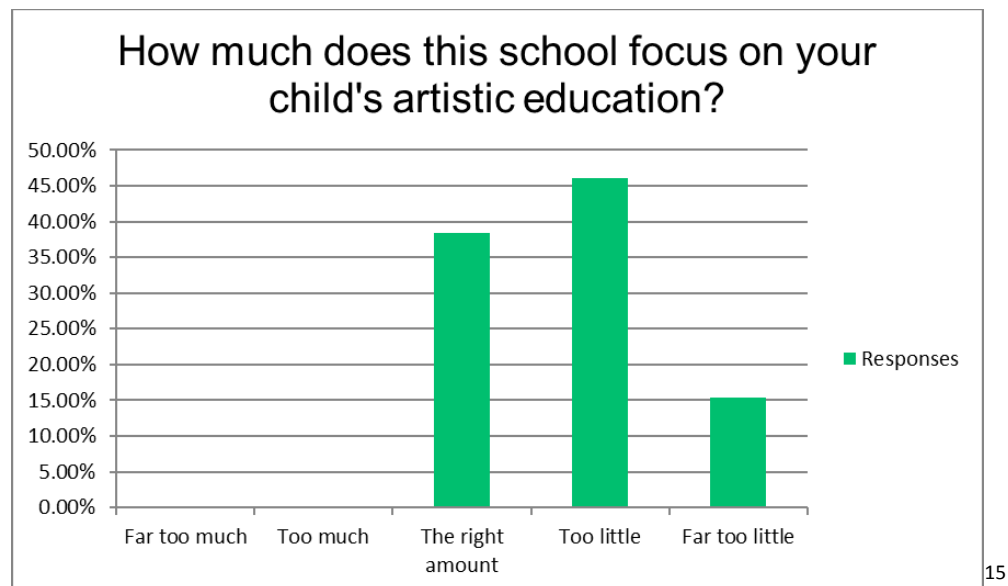
One of the secondary school pastoral leaders stated that the school had no formal role for the arts in addressing wellbeing and health issues, unlike sport in the school. A pastoral leader from the other secondary school felt that the arts should have a bigger role because they encourage experimentation, an ability to learn from disappointments and the benefits of working together. This was an approach matched by the philosophy of the primary school leaders.

In meeting wellbeing and health issues the primary arts leaders saw an important role for the arts in providing a space for self-expression. Pupils have the opportunity to learn to express themselves without checking in to be told if something is 'right' or 'wrong'. As a result, one of the urban primary schools uses the arts in its nurture, "Thrive"[16] and therapeutic work. This was echoed by the arts leader of another urban primary school who stated that the arts link the child to a wider context and form a cohesive sense of the school experience. The arts leader of one of the secondary schools argued that the expressive arts provide the students with a better ability to control emotional states, to offer mutual support and to acquire personal self-control.

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[15] Parental survey (primary schools)

[16] The Thrive Approach is a distinct, whole school strategy based on cognitive development.

Engaging with external provision.

In engaging with creative arts providers the primary and secondary schools expressed similar requirements and similar frustrations.

All of the arts and pastoral leaders preferred provision that was based in school, rather than being external to it. The arts leaders of an urban primary school stated that going out of school is difficult because of the costs and administration. The arts leader of a secondary school argued that there were two main determining factors: (a) the students gained different experiences that are not offered in school and (b) the arts teachers had opportunity to work with really good practitioners. It was noted that one-off events are seen as risky: if they are excellent but not followed up they can be counterproductive, and if they are poor quality the damage can be hard to heal. The pastoral leader of a secondary school also felt that engagement with external provision in the arts was best when it: worked towards a distinct goal, involved the community from which the students are drawn, served to open students' eyes to a wider world and focussed on building positive relationships rather than attempting to be therapeutic in a more specific sense.

As one might expect, the perspective of headteachers was more global. One secondary headteacher stated that an attractive offer of engagement in arts provision should ideally have proven impact and build interaction with the community but not remove students from the class room. The need for proven impact was emphasised by a secondary senior leader who specified three criteria for engagement: recommendation from other schools as this provides a reassurance that the quality of the offer is strong and sustainable, evidence of impact as there must be evidence that the offer will have a positive impact on the students otherwise it is not core business for the school, and finally likelihood of low risk in that the offer has been considered and developed to fit the structures and expectations of the school.

For senior leaders and headteachers the provision was most attractive when there were other benefits, such as the enrichment of core subject provision or professional development opportunities for staff. For secondary school senior leaders the most attractive arts-based provisions are forms of art therapy that support those students working with the counsellor or those that are near that level of need, and afterschool or holiday activities that use the school facilities and link with local features such as art shows.

In order to be attractive, external arts-based provision needs to consider the timing and nature of the offer.

The primary school senior and arts leaders had specific times of the school year when an offer was potentially more attractive. This is indicated by the following comments:

'As early in the planning cycle as possible.'

'Aim the offer at KS1 or early KS2. Year 6 aren't available until after the SATS.'

'Groups seriously under estimate the impact of SATS as a time of year when the school is not interested in an offer.'

'It needs to fit with the school calendar which is compiled in the Summer. Activities promoted after that time have a lower likelihood of being adopted.'

'Summer is best for planning provision.'

This was mirrored by the feedback from secondary school senior and pastoral leaders. They emphasised that the planning for a new academic year commenced around April and that the school diary and timetable for the new year was largely determined by late June. Any offers made outside the April to June window operate at a significant disadvantage.

Recommendations.

The place of the arts and culture in schools.

All stakeholders acknowledge the pressures on the arts in a tightly focussed, assessment driven context. However, there is evidence of a strong commitment to creativity in the curriculum. The twin pressures of finance and core subject emphasis mean that any HRAEN strategy must bring multiple benefits for example supporting wellbeing and enhancing professional development, or engaging parents and encouraging creative self-expression in young people.

Both primary and secondary school arts and pastoral leaders referred to arts and cultural activities as providing a safe space for young people, enabling them to find the freedom to experiment and be expressive. Activities that explicitly promote those benefits may have a greater likelihood of being adopted and sustained.

Financial restrictions were referred to by primary and secondary education leaders, as well as being a contentious topic in parental interviews. With this in mind, low or no cost offers seem to have an in-built advantage but not a decisive one. Senior leaders are particularly mindful of the desirability of additional benefits from activities. Most frequently cited are those linking with professional development, those having an impact beyond the event or cohort focus thus bringing benefits to more year groups or across several issues, and those activities that improve the extra-curricular mix available to young people while engaging parents.

Practitioner learning is a current feature in two-thirds of the surveyed schools and an aspect for development in the remainder. There are different forms of practitioner learning, such as lesson study and action learning groups. In every case the emphasis is on teachers learning from each other and developing new practice on the basis of that learning. HRAEN's increasing role as a source of professional development offers an opportunity to develop a better understanding of the impact of the arts in education, while also benefitting young people and teachers.

Wellbeing and health.

The blanket terms, wellbeing and health, cover a multitude of issues. With limited provision and tight finances it seems appropriate to focus on a distinct range of aspects in order to bring the maximum perceived benefits. Responses from young people, education leaders and parents indicate that emotional wellbeing, balanced and healthy relationships and confident self-expression would be suitable areas to focus on in a strategic plan for the coming years.

Pressure points in the educational lives of young people.

The responses from young people and education leaders indicates that, rather than considering the entirety of the long journey from early years to the end of GCSEs, maximum benefit from the arts can be achieved by a strategic plan that focuses on the three key transition points of starting primary school, starting secondary school and starting GCSEs. These points appear to be the key stress points for young people while offering the maximum potential to achieve engagement by hard to reach families in the education of their children.

Maximising the impact of external provider collaboration.

External arts provision would appear to be lacking awareness of the issues around the timing and promotion of offers. In the HRAEN strategic plan these should be actively delivered to arts providers in order to improve the sustained take up of any offer.

Fulcrum Learning (UK) Ltd.

Fulcrum Learning is a Bexhill-based education enterprise that supports school and college improvement through coaching, professional development and consultancy. Its two executive directors are Stephen and Joanne Calladine-Evans.

We work with over forty schools and colleges, as well as three universities, including the Institute of Education (UCL) which is ranked as number one in the world. Our work with the IoE is currently establishing the content for national middle and senior leadership qualifications. We also currently support two multi-academy trusts and work across several teaching school alliances.

To find out how we can support you in education go to www.fulcrumlearning.co.uk