

## **Building capability in subject leadership with a focus on coaching, modelling and strategic planning to improve our cultural offer.**

**Hannah Fuller, Woodlawn School, Whitley Bay, August 2020**

### **Statement of focus**

Woodlawn School is a specialist setting in North Tyneside, catering for children from EYFS to post-16. Following a successful inspection in 2018, there was a desire to shift towards developing a broader and more enriching experience for the students, through extending the school's cultural capital and curriculum review. My own subject leadership was a focus for growth and formed the basis of this project. As subject lead for art, DT, performing arts and PSHE, and as a Thrive Practitioner, I wanted to develop a policy statement and overarching strategy that addressed the importance of cultural provision across all of these areas and the wider curriculum.

### **Development process**

Through the lens of disability, our students could be seen to be among those most disadvantaged in terms of access and inclusion. Therefore, our definition of cultural capital and our means of provision needed to be quite broad. The headteacher was keen to extend access to cultural capital at school through a combination of in-house coaching, modelling and CPD and also through developing links with external cultural partners.

Auditing skills and attitudes highlighted our existing strengths: an excellent offer through SMSC underpinned by a school vision based on the qualities of strength, teamwork, ambition and respect, and access to many inclusive sporting events. The obvious gaps were in our creative arts provision and in further embedding Thrive. Conversations with colleagues and governors indicated that there was low confidence in the teaching of the arts subjects. Equally, colleagues indicated a need for support in delivering Thrive activities.

This information allowed me to plan the next steps in my project:

- Delivering CPD for the whole school, highlighting the value of including creative arts experiences across the curriculum
- Working alongside my subject lead colleagues (Music, Thrive) to consider how to support colleagues through coaching, mentoring and modelling

An early CPD session, focussing on building cultural opportunities into all curriculum areas, yielded positive feedback. Colleagues could see that using the creative arts across subjects could offer positive and inclusive experiences; they were keen to be supported in developing their skills.

Building on this success, I met with the music subject lead to discuss how we could create an overarching vision for the creative arts. We agreed upon the following next steps, based on what we already knew about our subject areas:

- That one-off arts events would have little impact on teaching and learning
- That building and promoting cultural partnerships would have a strong impact on teaching and learning

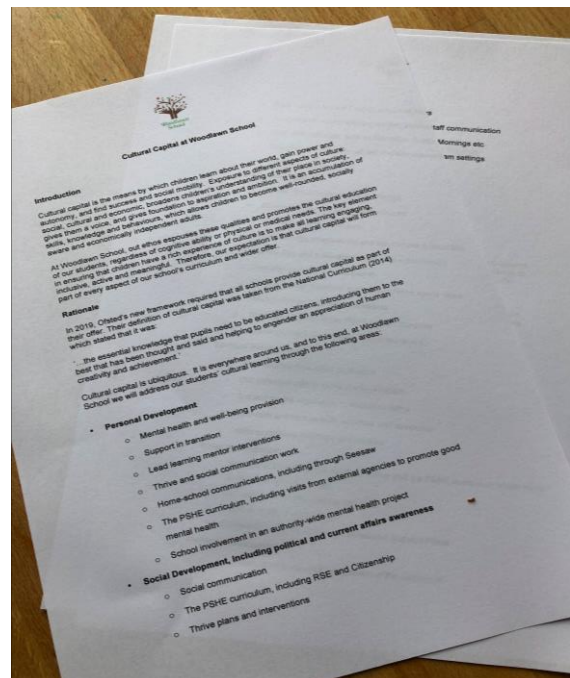
Action planning for our discrete subjects began to take shape and we agreed to develop an overarching creative arts policy and strategy in time. CBNE's own *'Quality Principles'* seemed a good place to start. We undertook informal coaching sessions in which we discussed what creative arts looked like across school, and what it could become. I supported in delivering regular whole department singing sessions in order to model teaching strategies and we looked closely at subject resourcing and curriculum development. We agreed that opening up the coaching model, peer observations and team teaching would offer a good way forward in the coming year.

From here, we began to take steps to develop creative partnerships. An application for funding from CBNE was unsuccessful, but a promising meeting with Jessie's Fund helped us shape planning for music. We developed a relationship with the local music service and began investigating the potential benefits of becoming Arts Award assessors. Working with the Lead Learning Mentor, we considered how we could use Thrive profiling to give us an evidence base which would feed into our curriculum planning, and immediately took this forward.

## Benefits and evidence of impact

The main benefit of the project has been that the subject leaders for the Creative Arts have a much deeper understanding of how to develop their own subjects. It has also led to a much greater overlap in our school's cultural offer as this work has fed into our curriculum review. Opportunities for cultural experiences are now signposted in planning and the profile of creative arts and Thrive has been raised. Conversations have taken place around how we can take the next step in developing our cultural capital and build partnerships to support this work.

In terms of supporting personal and social development in school, our Thrive practitioners have worked with staff to profile whole groups of children. This data will inform planning in arts subjects and social communication. We now also have a clear policy statement on what our cultural capital offer constitutes.



## Discussion of challenges, barriers and issues

A general lack of confidence to explore teaching and learning from a novel perspective meant that while there was an appreciation of the value of cultural capital, some aspects of what we could and should offer were missing from our curriculum and extra-curricular activities. Reflecting on Goleman's theory of leadership styles reassured me that adopting a *coaching* rather than a *commanding* approach and creating opportunities for CPD and feedback into our strategic planning would empower staff and promote cultural opportunities.

## The Six Leadership Styles (Goleman)

	<b>Commanding</b>	<b>Visionary</b>	<b>Affiliative</b>	<b>Democratic</b>	<b>Pacesetting</b>	<b>Coaching</b>
The leader's modus operandi	Demands immediate compliance	Mobilizes people toward a vision	Creates harmony and builds emotional bonds	Forges consensus through participation	Sets high standards for performance	Develops people for the future
The style in a phrase	"Do what I tell you."	"Come with me."	"People come first."	"What do you think?"	"Do as I do, now"	"Try this."
Underlying emotional intelligence competencies	Drive to achieve, initiative, self-control	Self-confidence, empathy, change catalyst	Empathy, building relationships, communication	Collaboration, team leadership, communication	Conscientiousness, drive to achieve, initiative	Developing others, empathy, self-awareness
When the style works best	In a crisis, to kick start a turnaround, or with problem employees	When changes require a new vision, or when a clear direction is needed	To heal rifts in a team or to motivate people during stressful circumstances	To build buy-in or consensus, or to get input from valuable employees	To get quick results from a highly motivated and competent team	To help an employee improve performance or develop long-term strengths
Overall impact on climate	Negative	Most strongly positive	Positive	Positive	Negative	Positive

Goleman, Daniel, "Leadership that Gets Results" [Harvard Business Review](#), March-April 2000 p. 82-83.

School closures in March meant that we found ourselves having to adapt to a new way of delivering curriculum content. Colleagues digitally signposted parents to cultural organisations; learning opportunities were culturally rooted; coaching took place through Zoom meetings. There were positive outcomes in an otherwise bleak and unprecedented situation.

## Reflections on what has been learned

We now have a really clear definition of what our cultural offer can be, which helps to shape our strategies going forward. I have been reminded that bringing about change can be a slow process. Quick wins are of the essence, providing a positive scaffold for further and more wide-reaching ambition. Equally, a growth mindset, clear vision and flexibility are essential in creating cultural opportunities. Lockdown has allowed us to develop theoretical plans, but not to put them into practice, and I look forward to seeing whether what seems right in principle translates successfully into real-world activities.