

‘Discovering the Arts Week’

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Background:

Kirkleatham Hall School is a special school for students aged 2-19 years with complex needs. At Kirkleatham Hall School, the ethos is that every person is important and has a part to play in making a special school. It is through that belief that we aim to promote equality of opportunity for pupils with a wide range of learning difficulties, including those with autistic spectrum disorder. Our pupils are aged from 2 -19 years and are placed within 4 discrete departments (Nursery/EYFS, Primary, Secondary and Further Education – FE).

I am the Primary Phase Leader with a keen interest in developing Arts participation at school. The Arts form fundamental aspects of our curriculum. After taking the Arts Award adviser training, and taking part in the Cultural Leadership programme, I felt inspired to implement and deliver Arts Award in school to ensure that the Arts are fully experienced and valued.

Arts Award allows young people to develop key skills, as stated upon the website:

‘Communication and People skills, Organisational Skills, Confidence and Leadership skills.’

That aligns with part of Kirkleatham Hall School’s mission statement, namely to:

Maximise potential through high expectations, within a diverse, inclusive curriculum (“Be Ready”).

Project Aims and Development

After completing my action plan and talking to my Head Teacher, and as part of a PD Day, I was given time to introduce and develop the Arts Week idea with staff.

A short film was shown, and packs detailing the Arts Award programme were presented. Staff enjoyed a lively session developing ideas for workshops and activities that could be included. It was a rewarding process, as staff were keen to be involved and to share their creative skills and passions.

Targets shared with staff:

- To provide a whole school Arts week in a structured and accessible way to ensure that the whole school community enjoy their involvement in the project.
- To work with a trusted local Artist, to deliver part of the project and to give students the opportunity to experience an outside agency/artist.
- Give school staff the opportunity to plan and deliver a range of workshops.
- Select one class in each Phase to complete the Discover Award.
- To explore delivering Arts Award each year and to start our journey towards achieving Artsmark.

Success Criteria Identified:

- 40 students to gain Discover Award.
- A celebration event displaying the students' journey and work.
- A positive and inclusive experience that enables personal progression for both staff and pupils.

Challenges:

THEN.....Just before the end of Spring term 2020, the UK government announced the unprecedented closure of schools from Monday 23rd March due to the Coronavirus pandemic. That closure sent us into “unchartered territory” for both families and school staff. Kirkleatham Hall School remained open for a small number of keyworker families but for the majority, learning took place in the safety of home. The Arts week was therefore postponed.

However, during the lockdown, fantastic projects were taking place in school with the keyworker children, but, equally, lovely things were taking place out of school. The photographs and videos that were shared on the home learning section of the school website were confirmation of that.

In order to display and celebrate the diverse projects and new skills both staff and students were acquiring, I decided to create a lockdown art exhibition along the main corridor in school. Families and staff were invited to send in photographs, pictures or videos of themselves doing something creative. That prompted an excellent community response, as I was inundated with contributions from nearly everyone in school.

It was a far from typical term, or how we expected our school year to end, but we have been on an extraordinary journey together and have learnt some new skills along the way.

All in This Together Display

