

VAN Briefing

The voice of the Voluntary Arts

Taking the voluntary arts into education

Having the opportunity to be taught by and experience the work of an artist in school can be a highly valuable and memorable time for children, one they may not have the opportunity of experiencing otherwise.

Not only does the pupil gain contact with adults skilled in a different discipline, but participating in the arts helps children develop creativity, imagination and the ability to visualise, essential tools for solving problems and dealing with life's ever changing situations. It also enhances language development and encourages the acquisition of new technical and social skills in non-threatening and fun ways. This in turn builds self esteem and confidence.

The artist can benefit from using their discipline in a new way and from working with a new audience, while the school gains new activities and a fresh outlook. When all parties (pupils, artist, school) are given equal consideration, this can be a highly successful partnership, one that can greatly impact on everyone's lives.

Whether you're an artist or an arts group considering working in schools, about to start or already have some experience in the field, there are many things to consider. This briefing outlines the main issues surrounding the artist/school partnership and will help guide you through the process.

A. Types of work in schools

The type of work done by artists in a school depends on the school's needs, the artist's particular work itself, and the partnership that they form together. Thus, there are a variety of ways in which you could choose to work, all depending on how long your programme is and how it interacts with the pupils. Some artists choose to work closely to the core curriculum, whereas others provide a programme not linked to the curriculum at all.

- **Residency** – An artist-in-resident programme is hosted by a school for a specified period of time (usually 1 year, 1 term, or 1 semester) where the artist is paid or given accommodation to teach a class and to present their own work.
- **Placement** – can be short-term or long-term arrangements with schools where an individual

artist is invited into the school to run workshops as well as create their own work.

- **Taster courses** – short courses usually given over 1 to 5 days as an introduction to the topic.
- **Workshops** – a 'hands on' class given either over a short or long period of time. Workshops tend to work best with smaller numbers.
- **One off performance** – artist(s) invited into a school to give a single performance.
- **A performance out of school** – when a group of pupils leave school grounds to see a performance.

B. Getting Started

Do your research

Teachers and schools receive a good deal of requests from artists soliciting work. It can be difficult for them to choose from the range of opportunities presented to them and as a result they are most likely to choose artists who fit into their budget and the curriculum.

- Find out and then focus on the skills they are looking for.
- Look at the whole curriculum. It may be that your work fits an unexpected category (e.g. science, maths, etc.).
- How will your work benefit the school more widely and in the longer term (i.e. by providing material for assemblies or for the end of term performance). Think laterally!
- Schools might not know what kind of art programme they want or need and they might need some help finding out. Have plenty of suggestions ready to offer.
- If possible find out what their budget is. You don't want to over prepare or ask a fee that they can't cover. What facilities and materials are already available (i.e. kilns, darkrooms, stage, musical instruments, etc). Is there a budget for new materials?
- There are training courses available to artists on working in schools, as well as opportunities for shadowing artists already working there.

Contact your Local Education Authority to find out if either of these options are available in your area.



What sort of work will you do?

When considering the type of programme you might undertake at the school, also consider the following issues:

- Do you want to, or does the school want you to, work with different groups? Or the same group over a period of time?
- Is it a cross curricular project? What types of artforms does it encompass?
- Is it a programme that allows/requires you to create your own work?

Marketing, PR

Good publicity and marketing is vital, whether you have yet to work in a school or you've worked in twenty.

- Having a portfolio of examples of work done in previous schools, with references and quotes from satisfied teachers and pupils, is some of the best publicity you can get. Be sure to collect samples for your records.
- If you have yet to work in a school, collect examples of work you have done with children and/or other workshops you have run. If you have no teaching experience it might be a good idea to volunteer at a school or educational centre to gain a little experience first.
- Consider promoting yourself through exhibitions or displays at local community venues. This can be a great opportunity to get yourself seen and to network.
- A mailing about you, your work and potential projects for schools is a great way to introduce yourself to a school. But be careful. Mailings should be carefully targeted and always followed up with a phone call.
- A personal website can be a very successful marketing tool. It gives a broader idea of yourself and your work.
- Try getting to know people in the local media. These contacts could prove to be fruitful when you have an upcoming event at a school you'd like to promote. Local media are always keen for stories involving children and learning.
- Write yourself good press releases and send them to the local press. See VAN Briefing 77: 'How to Write a Press Release' for a helpful guide.
- Learn from others. Take a look at how other artists are marketing themselves, either on the web or through leaflets. This will help you get an idea for what type of publicity and marketing you may want to consider.

Contacting the School

Your first contact with a school is vital.

- Be sure to send targeted information to schools where possible, focusing on the skills they are looking for. (you will already know this from your research!)

- Evidence of your work in previous schools could assist in the school's decision of whether or not to hire you.
- Submit a clear and considered proposal outlining your ideas and aims of the art programme(s) you are offering. Make sure you show how what you are offering might meet the schools needs.
- The evidence and proposal are not only good publicity. They are also good planning tools. Schools will have more confidence in you if you can show you are organised and have a professional, efficient and knowledgeable approach.

C. Funding your work

Artists working in schools can be funded through three primary sources: the school, the Local Authority, or an outside funding body.

The School

- Some artists rely on the fees that they receive from schools.
- Many schools have to fundraise in order to benefit from having an artist in their school.
- Some schools are unable to issue cheques, so be sure to clarify the method and date of payment well in advance.

The Local Authority

- Some projects are directly funded by LEAs. Check with the Local Authority for any funding they may have available.

Funding Bodies

- Artists working in schools can access alternative methods of funding, applied for by either the school or the artist. Investigate grants and Arts Council funding available.

Bear in mind that if you manage to obtain funding yourself, you will be able to offer lower prices to schools than other artists.

D. Designing the project

Planning

Once the school has accepted you, you will need to firm up the project.

- When planning make sure that you are as flexible and as adaptable as possible to the needs of the school.
- Make sure you understand the teachers/schools aims and objectives and that you can work towards helping to achieve them.
- Be clear too about your aims and objectives. Whilst you want to meet these as far as possible, be careful not to impose them rigidly on the school or you might lose the job.
- Make a checklist of questions to ask and take them with you to your planning meeting.
- All projects take more time than you expect for planning with the teacher/school. Allocate yourself



enough time – and then some more – for both the planning process and the project itself.

- Good communication is the key to a successful project. All parties should be informed of all stages of the project. Be prepared to compromise and negotiate. This way, the purpose and scope will be clear.
- In some cases, a teacher should be identified to co-ordinate with the artist and interpret the school's information for the artist. Some issues to discuss with the school and/or co-coordinating teacher might be –
 - What is the school's schedule? Discuss how you can organise your programme around this, so as not to disrupt the school day, if possible.
 - Do any of the children you will be working with have any special needs or considerations to be accommodated?
 - What resources are available to you? (e.g. instruments, kilns, darkrooms, rooms, teachers, etc).

Preparation

Develop a basic template for the project, taking into consideration the following points, many of which you should already have identified in the planning stage –

- What is the project/programme?
- What age group, size is it appropriate for?
- What are your aims and objectives? The schools?
- How will the project achieve these?
- What is the length of the programme?
- The costs? the fees?
- What kind of final assessment will be undertaken?

Whenever possible, do a training session with the co-ordinating teacher before the work with the pupils begins. This will help open communication and ensure that everyone's aims are met. You may also find it helpful to create special teacher packs designed for your programme. These will assist in the partnership and increase participation in your programme.

Visiting the school

Preparatory visits to the school help you become familiar with the layout and type of facilities available to you. You will then become clearer as to what you will need to supply yourself.

When planning your preparatory visits, also consider including time for the following –

- Plans, sketches and notes.
- Discussions about resources with the school.
- Working out a schedule that includes:
 - groups to be involved;
 - numbers of pupils, teachers and artists;
 - amount of time to be given to each group;
 - where you will work;
 - storage facilities; and
 - display space.
- Opportunities for outside involvement (i.e. parents, public, etc.).

- Checking that the working space has all the necessities (e.g. electricity, water, stage, changing area, plugs).
- Making a risk assessment on the space and any health and safety aspects considered (e.g. source of fresh air, enough space, etc...).

E. Legal Issues

Contracts

Whenever you are working with a school you should have a formal contract – even if you've worked with them before. The contract will lay out all specifics of the programme in writing and will protect both the artist and the school in case of any unforeseen complications. Look at sample contracts from other artists, agencies and LEA's to get an idea of what you will need included. Contracts will need to be tailored to fit your programme's needs, but a basic contract should include the following:

- A cancellation clause, giving a notice period and arrangements, in case of any cancellations by the school or artist.
- Any specific information or arrangements required (i.e. parking, equipment, audience age or size, staffing).
- Date and length of programme.
- Fee agreed.
- Contact name, telephone number, email address, fax number and address of contact at the school.

Contracts should be short and simple. Try to avoid any legal or artistic jargon and keep it to one page of A4.

Always make sure the contract is signed by you **and** a representative of the school and that you each have a copy.

Employed or self employed

As an artist, you will be working as either –

- Employed –
 - with tax and NIC deducted under PAYE, or
- Self employed –
 - paying your own tax and insurances.

If you will be working as self-employed and have not already declared self-employed status, it may be best to take some advice from other artists, schools or LEA arts officers.

Insurance

Insurance is a very complicated subject. Some schools' insurance will cover artists coming in, while others will require artists to take out their own. If you are taking out your own insurance policy – take advice. Talk to the school, other artists and arts councils about what kind of policy you will need. For a good guide to insurance, see an (Artists Information Company) www.a-n.co.uk.

Official disclosure

Before working in a school environment, all artists will need to have an official CRB disclosure (see VAN Briefing 82: 'Child Protection Part 1').

F. In the school – good practice

- Once you enter school grounds, it is important that you maintain professional behaviour, making sure that your language, conduct and conversation is appropriate at all times (not just in the classroom or during your workshops).
- Get a plan of the school and don't wander into other areas without prior consent.
- Find out what the school's policies are before your project begins (e.g. fire practices, personnel within the school, first aid, discipline policies, child protection policy) and take the time to talk to the teacher/school if you have any queries regarding these policies.
- Remember that you are in the school as an artist (be it in a workshop situation, assisting pupils with their work, or doing a performance) and you are not there as a teacher or teacher substitute. Be clear in your own mind and with the school about your personal and professional boundaries.
- With this in mind, make sure that you are never left unsupervised with pupils or get pulled into roles that are not your responsibility or remit. Arrange with the co-ordinating teacher ahead of time the staffing requirements during your project or programme.

More good practice guidelines...

- Only use staff toilets in the school. Find out where the staff toilets are on arrival.
- Whenever possible, find out and follow school procedures (e.g. signing in).
- Treat all children with respect and listen to them carefully.
- Read VAN Briefings 82 & 83 on Child Protection, for a good practice guide.

G. Follow-up and evaluation work

- Try to keep in touch with the school after you have finished working with them. Good communication is crucial and may help you secure future work.
- Evaluation sheets are a great way to monitor

- your work. Be sure to supply different evaluation sheets for teachers and pupils.
- Discuss with the teacher any arrangements you'd like to make for follow-up work after your departure. This will help ensure that your work is continued and built upon.
 - Remember that follow-up work might not always be appropriate, and it is always the teacher's decision if it is undertaken.
 - For a good guide to Monitoring and Evaluation see Voluntary Arts Wales' **'Why Bother, Monitoring and evaluating your arts event... A book of ideas and encouragement'** (recently endorsed and adopted by the Arts Council of Wales as their guide to M&E for community and voluntary arts projects).

Further information & resources

Further reading

- **'Artists in Schools'** by Eurfron Parry (Bristol Arts and Music Service)
- **'Working in schools: a practical guide to the partnership'** by Charlotte Jones. (ITC, Independent Theatre Council) www.itc-arts.org
- **VAN Briefings 82 & 83: 'Child Protection Parts I & II'**

Useful websites & contacts

- Soundsense www.soundsense.org
- DAISI www.daisi.org.uk
- Wise Moves www.artistsineducation.co.uk
- Environmental Trainers Network www.btcv.org/etn/
- Creative Youth Partnerships – CYP is a 3-year scheme that will create, develop and sustain arts programmes, activities and initiatives for children and young people aged 3-25 years throughout Northern Ireland. www.cypni.org
- The Arts Council/An Comhairle Ealaíon (RoI) are working in partnership with the Department of Education and Science to produce guidelines on artists working effectively with schools. www.artscouncil.ie

Disclaimer: We have taken reasonable precautions to ensure that the information contained in this Briefing is accurate. However, the document is not intended to be legally comprehensive. We recommend you take legal advice before taking action on any of the matters covered herein.

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