

# OYAP Trust and Pitt Rivers *Kick Arts* with 6-month flexi school project



## The People

[Oxford Youth Arts Partnership \(OYAP Trust\)](#)

Oxford University Museums – [Pitt Rivers Museum](#)

[Charlie Henry \(artist\)](#)

[Lizzy McBain \(artist\)](#)

## The Project

OYAP Trust runs projects that invite young people across Oxfordshire to take part in irresistible arts activities. Each year, thousands of children and young people are inspired, learn new skills, meet new people and achieve success through creative projects. As well as running projects that are open to all young people, OYAP is passionate about providing specialised arts projects, designed to reach out to the county's most vulnerable young people – those at risk of isolation as a result of disadvantages such as poverty, special learning needs, school exclusion,

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mental health problems and family breakdown.

OYAP Trust's *Kick Arts* programme is a 6-month flexi-school project in which OYAP works with children who are at risk of falling out of mainstream education. Children who are school refusers, at risk of exclusion, persistent absentees or significantly under-achieving in school, are referred to the programme. They take



Image: OYAP Trust

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part in educational creative activities, to experience positive learning experiences in an individually tailored and highly supportive environment. The long-term goal is for participants to be able to return to full time education.

In 2015, the Pitt Rivers Museum hosted and collaborated with OYAP on the *Kick Arts* programme. The Pitt Rivers Museum is part of the Oxford University Museums Partnership and is host to one of the world's finest collections of anthropology and archaeology from around the world – an inspirational setting for young people on the project.

The *Kick Arts* programme began with an immersive two-day residency for young people. There was then a further ten contact days, along with additional one-to-one and small group sessions, to help the young people complete portfolios before moderation.

Students were given taster workshops in a wide range of art forms (including animation, filmmaking, music, textile arts, visual arts and photography). As their interests developed, they were enabled to work with specialist artists in their chosen field, and create their own project-based approach to developing knowledge, understanding and creative communication.

Visits to the museum and other nearby cultural organisations provided their audience and reviewing opportunities (in line with the Arts Award criteria). The young people chose their own arts inspirations and they were wide and varied. For the sharing skills section of Arts Award, they shared their skills with each other and with the young leader artist facilitators and museum staff. These sharings included badge making, sewing lessons, teaching each other animation techniques, demonstrating paint techniques and showing how to make origami sculptures.

*Kick Arts* culminated with an exhibition and celebration event hosted by the museum.

While the project took place in partnership with the Pitt Rivers Museum, visits were also arranged to Modern Art Oxford, The Story Museum and The Mill Arts Centre in Banbury hosted another cohort of young people. Visiting artists from a range of arts and cultural organisations helped the young people to find inspiration and brought new and interesting practices and materials into the *Kick Arts* space.



Image: OYAP Trust



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Schools purchased places for young people that they referred to this programme, primarily through Pupil Premium Funds. The programme was highly subsidised and supported by Artsworld, the South East Bridge organisation.

## **Successes**

*Kick Arts* allows for young people to achieve at a pace they feel comfortable with and learning is person specific – based on the young people's needs. Within the cohort working at the Pitt Rivers, two Silver Arts Awards were achieved, as well as four Bronze, and one Discover Arts Award.

*Kick Arts* aims to put the playfulness back into learning, using an enquiry-based approach. Creativity and the arts are key ways to engage young people in problem-solving and personal reflection. By working within a museum setting and using experienced artist educators, *Kick Arts* creates a safe space for enquiry and collaboration between young people and arts professionals. Young people create their own learning journey and really benefit from the opportunity to lead others. Arts Award provides an ideal structure for young people to work within and also allows for this kind of progression.

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Participants produced a huge range of artwork, and the moderation itself took place as part of the final exhibition, so films and animations were part of the moderation, as well as installations and hung images. Some of the young people chose to use the logbooks, turning them into unique works of art in their own right.

Young people gained valuable social skills, as well as emotional literacy skills, through being asked to reflect on what and how they were learning. One of the children has since joined another schools-based OYAP workshop series and is back in school again.

One young person who was not attending school at all has been able to return with a Silver Arts Award, and a sense of purpose in her learning. She is continuing to make amazing progress and is now attending ALL her lessons, even French and Spanish!

Another young man says he feels a lot less angry,

**I feel like I've become a better person. I am less angry about everything – I'm just seeing things in a better way than I did before. *Kick Arts* lets your imagination run wild and you kind of work the rest out for yourself.**



having found something he loves in filmmaking and photography. He is much more able to channel what he is feeling through creative channels. It was important for him to have a space away from school, to take stock of his relationship with learning and education. It gave him the opportunity to be creative, to explore himself, to not be put in a box, and to be free to be in charge of his own learning opportunities:

"I feel like I've become a better person. I am less angry about everything – I'm just seeing things in a better way than I did before. That's because of *Kick Arts*. It doesn't actually try to do anything, at least not overtly, it doesn't say to you 'OK, this is what to do next time you feel angry', it just lets your imagination run wild and you kind of work it out for yourself."

## Challenges

Working towards Silver Arts Award was more challenging within the timeframe, but young people with additional learning needs rose to the challenge. The advisers had to do a lot of scribing for the young people, and supported in the production of evidence.

For the leadership projects, one of the young people led a badge-making workshop at the final exhibition, and the other designed the poster and invitations for the exhibition. This kept the leadership elements within the parameters of the project, and made this possible without the overwhelming challenge of external conditions.

## Impact

*Kick Arts* has a huge impact on the young people involved in terms of raising their general wellbeing and levels of engagement and confidence. Young people are often seen to have improved attendance at school and reduced rates of exclusion following their involvement in this project. Young people all attain an Arts Award as a result of participating in *Kick Arts*, which is then a stepping stone to participating in further levels of Arts Award or other QCF qualifications. Young people are able to return to school with the

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motivation and inspiration to try and achieve more.

A number of the young people involved in this project came from a home-schooled background. We found the combination of working with these children (who can sometimes lack a familiarity with school social situations) and young people who are refusing school to be an interesting mix in terms of finding a mutually supportive learning environment that suited all needs.

## Feedback

“*Kick Arts* has been an experience of self-discovery.”



Image: OVAP Trust

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## Final Thoughts

It can be difficult to find the right balance between engaging young people who are very resistant to learning environments and pinning them down to build their portfolios. We had to do quite a bit of scribing and structuring the process to make it achievable. Some of us advisers preferred the structure of using the logbooks, whilst other lead advisers found this a little restrictive, so opted for a larger loose portfolio and exhibition of works.

The logbooks were great for less-experienced advisers and for young people who found the structure of a workbook to be helpful for them.

We encouraged the young people to be as irreverent and ‘disrespectful’ with their logbooks, and they ended up making them into works of art in their own right, with art and flaps and materials, sewing into and sticking material onto the pages. This became part of their ‘creative destruction’.

What also helped was that the supporting artists were Arts Award adviser-trained, as were the museum staff at the Pitt Rivers, so they were able to benefit from and understand the process of hosting these young learners.

## Supported with investment from:



## Project partners:



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## Credits

**Taken from: *Kick Arts* project 2015 evaluation by  
OYAP Trust (Helen Le Brocq and Miranda  
Millward)**

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