



“ In terms of how it has developed our students I don't think that you could put a value on that, it is something that they will take with them in the future.”

Lydia Smyth, Head of Art -Thomas Knyvett

CASE STUDY

THOMAS KNYVETT COLLEGE
thomasknyvett.org

Thomas Knyvett College is a successful, over-subscribed school. We have made rapid and sustained progress over a number of years. However, we are not complacent and seek to ensure that we maintain our exceptional learning community. We see the College as the central resource for learning and support in the local community and continue to strive for excellence in all we do.

Whatever your present or future connection with the College may be, we want you to be part of our achievements, working together as part of the Thomas Knyvett community and sharing in our successes. If you are a student, please be assured that throughout your school career we will provide high levels of challenge and relevant support with a clear knowledge and understanding of your next steps. As a teacher we will support you to instil in the students a passion for your subject, deliver consistently good lessons and keep abreast of new techniques and research through the provision of high-quality CPD.

We have absolute belief in our young people and we experience on a day to day basis the fulfilment that working with young people can bring. By talking about the importance of values such as pride, respect, open mindedness, unity and determination, and through working together we can help our young people to 'bring out the best.'

Quote from: thomasknyvett.org

FEEDBACK FOLLOWING PILOT WORKSHOP

FROM: Katy Fitzpatrick - Assistant Headteacher, Thomas Knyvett College

Brief description of activities across the workshop:

Various activities to introduce the students to dance starting with whole group drama activities and then building into whole group basic choreography, before moving into small groups creating their own dance moves.

Length of contact time students experienced with dance practitioners:

3 hours

Number of students and year group of participating:

27 students from Year 9	13 disadvantaged students
17 girls, 10 boys	12 students with SEN

The pilot workshop went well because:

Communication beforehand was clear and thorough. We had a chance to talk through exactly how the workshop would look, how we could engage the type of students participating and what their prior experiences were.

The people organising the project passed this information onto those leading the workshop which ensured a smooth transition.

The people leading the workshop were excellent – they were patient with the students, they built up students' confidence gradually (not putting them on the spot), they used relatable activities drawing on drama techniques and they had good behaviour management.

The pilot workshop would have been even better if:

The workshop was excellent, no suggested changes.

Outcomes discussed at pre- programme meetings for your school:

Increased awareness of Dance in cultural and creative terms (rather than fitness terms). Increased uptake in Dance as an extra-curricular activity. Increased understanding of Dance as a creative activity by staff who deliver dance

Please detail any changes or developments to these outcomes arising as a result of the pilot workshop:

None – just a clearer understanding of how the project might take place

Please detail next steps agreed by school and dance provider:

PHASE ONE: End of June/July 2019: 2 x 1-day visits

3-hour workshops with current Year 9

Workshop 1 everyone from last time. Workshop 2 dance captains – students volunteer. Afternoon CPD with teachers who will work on this project

PHASE TWO: September-December 2019:

Term 1 whole of year 9 receive workshops – all classes receive 1-hour during Core PE Leading into a 6-8 week project for those who want to take part (these would be supported by year 10 dance captains from previous term). These sessions would be 3.15pm-5.15pm.

Possible performance in Xmas Show at end of project.

DANCE ARTIST FEEDBACK FOLLOWING PHASE TWO

CHLOE WILKINSON AND LUKE MURPHY

New Adventures Facilitator's

PROJECT ACTIVITY:

Chloe & Luke: Working with Thomas Knyvett to support the embedding of dance by offering CPD and shadowing to PE teachers and working with year 10's as dance captains across workshops for the whole of year 9, leading into a self-elected after school club over 2nd half of Autumn term, working toward a performance for the Christmas show.

Can you talk a little bit about how the communication with the school worked? If we did something in a similar setting again, what would help you in this area?

Chloe: Communication would tend to go through Alex (New Adventures) Sometimes we would talk to Lydia but I felt it was pretty difficult to obtain concrete times towards the end of the project when coming back in to rehearse. On the final day of rehearsal we were under the impression we were starting at a different time to the school therefore we had to be adaptable and rehearse in another space.... I think all dates and times could do with being set in place where possible before the project starts but I'm aware this was challenging to do.

Luke: I believe the school was going through its own issues at the time, the only contact I had personally was with Lydia, who was great, but other than that I think the teachers and the students weren't 100% sure what was happening. I don't know if this was intentional on the schools behalf (if we don't tell them what the end idea is, the students might get involved and be on board regardless) or if genuinely they didn't know, or even that some knew and didn't pass it on.

How did you find the space you were working in? Did you find the school welcoming and facilitating?

Chloe: The space it self was huge but all the chairs were left out leaving us with a small space for the amount of people. I felt the chairs could have been stacked away for us as what we had wasn't big enough.... The hall door wouldn't close properly so people could walk past and see in, which added another level of distraction for the participants.... In the end we decided to use the stage to rehearse as it was away from the door and acted as a form of containment although the floor was really dirty.

The school was generally welcoming but did just leave us to our own devices... we were never shown where water was to fill our bottles up or where the staff room was either so that would have been good to know.

Luke: We had a great space for the majority of the project, on the final day our space was double booked (which was only realised once we had already set up) we got shifted to the dinner hall, by the time it was clean enough we were moved back. Chloe and I had agreed with Lydia what the ongoing schedule was, I'm not sure how this happened.

Do you feel the participants had a background knowledge of New Adventures' work? Is there anything that could have been done prior to the project to aid the student's understanding?

Chloe: They did after Luke and I came in and did a presentation but before then very few did. I think going in and talking to the students and showing them some footage of the company really supported our work.

Can you talk about the engagement of the students, did they interact with you as dance artists and with the work & style of New Adventures?

Chloe: Initially over 40 people came to the first day but I felt many of them were coming to get out of lessons and when we mentioned they would have to stay after school many of them left. Ultimately we ended up with around 20..... the first day was challenging within the space but after we moved them to the stage with more containment they started to get onboard more with what we were offering.

By the end of the week the group had really meshed, and it was wonderful to see some of the more reserved students coming out of themselves and even starting to use their face. It was clear that they were growing in confidence and self-esteem. and I decided to start calling them a 'company' so that they felt a sense of unity. When we came back after the break, I was pleasantly surprised that they had kept to their word and practised it. For us this made light work for cleaning. Two students either couldn't make the showing or didn't want to so two girls had stepped in and already learnt much of the repertoire, so it was reasonably easy to slot them in. I really felt by the end that the company took responsibility for the piece which was really wonderful to witness.

Luke: The students were overall great. Like with any project of this nature, there were issues, but we ironed them out as we went along

What worked well with this group and what would you have found helpful, if taking on a similar project in the future?

Chloe: Games helped. They enjoyed learning the repertoire. For some the creative aspect was very challenging, in this case it was

helpful to work in either pairs or small groups but also getting each person to create their own move rather than letting the others do it for them in order to offer them empowerment and increase leadership skills.

At times it was challenging to keep them all focused. Games and tasks were needed and clear boundaries... leading artists had to be flexible as most days when we came to the schools it rarely started on time and/or people were missing or had to leave early even after stipulating they all had to be here for the whole time. I think it's really important on these more challenging projects that you're working with another leading artist that you have worked with previously so that you can feel as supported and comfortable as possible with adapting and problem solving on the spot.

Luke: Uniting the group by referring to them and us as a company, their entire mentality changed. The break between the creation and the performance didn't help much, but I'm sure there were plenty of reasons for that.

If you have any further comments or thoughts regarding this project, please do let us know!

Chloe: I felt the school was extremely inflexible with timings and moving things around to make things work.... I could understand during school hours with regards to the curriculum etc but in regard to placing our piece at the top of the performance I could not understand why that couldn't happen in order to to be more accommodating with regards to the circumstances.

TEACHER INTERVIEW- FOLLOWING PHASE TWO

Lydia Smyth - Head of Art

Had you heard of new adventures before this project?

No, New Adventures was something completely unfamiliar to me. I hadn't heard of Matthew Bourne. Because we don't do dance in our school we felt very inexperienced and weren't really too sure if this was something we should be involved in. New Adventures was definitely something that I think if we had a looked at a list of projects to be involved in, it wouldn't have been a first choice. We would have just felt that we didn't have the experience and we wouldn't have been confident with taking on dance or anything like that. So, this has really opened our eyes to what's possible. So, yeah, it's been really good, really good experience.

Did you have any reservations about having the company come into school?

I think because we had some experience in the year before with having our year 10's involved in workshops (with New Adventures), and we thought they'd be able to cope with it and that they'd enjoy it. However, seeing it as part of their wider Arts Award we didn't necessarily know if we would have the resources to be able to provide an Arts Award for them under the umbrella of dance. So that was our big reservation, the students have no end of enthusiasm for these things, but whether they'd be able to see it through and whether we were able to supervise it and lead it and support it within the school was always the challenge.

How did the students choose to get involved or was there a different mechanism for them to sign up for the project?

We had an assembly to give a little bit of an introduction to New Adventures, to the dancers and what is dance. The thing I found out about New Adventures is that it was very much rooted in theatre so the students

were able to connect that with their experience through drama, so they automatically started to see links. They didn't need to be involved in ballet or didn't have to be part of a dance class outside of school or anything like that. We had the initial introduction to what it would be about and then we had sign up sheets for those who wanted to take part. So, no pressure. They were left very much go away think about it. If it was something they wanted to be involved in or you want to find out more, then sign up, and they did.

Were you surprised by any of your students' engagement levels or behaviour during and or following the sessions?

Definitely, I think one of the students in particular has really developed, really changed as part of this programme. A girl who is as quiet as a little mouse. She would never raise her hand to be involved in anything and it's just so lovely to see her really put herself forward, to talk as confidently as she does now. Being able to use the language of dance really competently and enthusiastically. I thought behaviour would be a big issue with some students. Sometimes they suffer from a little bit of over exuberance. They have really been able to harness that though and focus it in a really positive way, so that has been absolutely wonderful for all of their teachers to see. We've been really impressed with them for that and their commitment, as well as turning up on time, turning up with the right equipment and being part of a team. They've had to continue this without having Chloe and Luke here on site. So they've been doing it during break times and lunch times and I see them when I'm on duty in the playground practising their steps and going through the routine together.

Has the relationship between the practitioners and the students changed over time, as the sessions progressed?

Around day three, instead of trying to corral everybody, to get them all together, all of a sudden they (Chloe & Luke) stopped calling them Year 9, which is how I would collectively group them, and instead said 'okay company'. The minute they would say that they would just stand to attention and all of a sudden they were a dance company and they were starting to look at themselves as being a company and ready to perform and taking it very seriously. Because you have professional dancers there they bring that discipline and they bring that sense of reality to it. That this is a job.

I don't think they had really considered it as part of their career development. I think, prior to this experience, when they had thought about performing they had singing and acting in their minds, but not dance. They hadn't really considered that before and also all the other areas that dancers go into, like choreography and going into schools to facilitate. Chloe and Luke explained that educating is a big part of New Adventures and that they are not just about just about performing. Chloe and Luke opened up conversations with the students where they could ask them questions about their career. They were really learning about the job in real terms and speaking to practitioners who are involved in the profession now.

Have there been any challenges relating to the project?

We originally had our year 10's involved in Phase Two as they had been the Year Nine group for Phase One. We wanted them to come on board again and take on a sort of mentorship role within the project with the current year 9's, having done the initial project last year. I thought that would have been much smoother. They were less keen to engage with the year 9s and I feel that was because they were almost too close in age and there are a lot of friendships

within those two year groups. I think they felt a little bit self-conscious and didn't want to go in as 'experts'. It didn't help that some of our year 9's have a lot more dance experience than the year 10's, so I think they felt out of their depth, just out of their comfort zone. I think if we were to do it again, we would definitely pair the year 10's with year 7's, where they could really nurture them, where they could really feel like their skills could be passed on.

If Culture Box Surrey were to secure funding to deliver another arts project what elements would you suggest were kept the same and what might you change?

We were quite lucky in that the workshops were delivered within a one-week intense course, so that worked quite well for our students and they were able to dedicate themselves completely for that week. It also really helped with timetabling, which is a big issue for us, and staffing. It was a nice, neat package that we could focus on before exams and really work it into our school calendar. Having the flexibility was fantastic and I think if we were doing it again we would definitely like to have something similar built into the programme.

Trying to have the same students available at the same time over a long stretch is much more challenging. I think for us the motivation was there in that one week, they were all definitely on board with it. They had no time for negative conversations with their peers who may not like or understand dance, so it was a very positive and intense time for them.



Engaging Lives Through Creativity and Culture

Culture Box Surrey is an independent partnership.

The current members of this group are:

John Stephens (Chair), Senior Manager, Surrey Arts - Surrey County Council (SCC)

Richard Beales, Strategic Manager, Artswork

Imogen Kinchen, Executive Director, New Adventures

Kathryn Mills, CEO, Delight

Marie Cahill, Headteacher, New Haw Community Primary School, Addlestone

Sarah Lewis, Headteacher, St Mary's C of E Primary School, Oxted

The management and facilitation of the Culture Box Surrey requires resources and this role is currently provided by SCC/ Surrey Arts

cultureboxsurrey.org.uk

