BIRMINGHAM CITY
University

BIRMINGHAM ARTS SCHOOL EVALUATION

Final Report **July 2024**

Birmingham City University
The Centre for the Study of Practice and Culture in Education

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Birmingham Arts School Evaluation

Birmingham Arts School (BAS) was funded in the first three years by Arts Connect and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. It aimed to enable access to the arts for all young people in Birmingham and to facilitate a joined-up cultural offer across the city.

Birmingham City University (BCU) was commissioned to provide timely, actionable data and intelligence to inform the impact, delivery, and sustainability of BAS. This report commences with a summary of BAS as originally conceived in its funding application, before delving into its impact on arts provision in the city. The data presented in this report primarily centre on the findings from year three, while also drawing upon evidence gathered in years one and two. This approach enables us to comprehensively analyse the growth and development of BAS over the three-year period.

Executive Summary

Developing an arts education strategy for Birmingham

This section is taken from the Esmée Fairburn Application and sets out the need for Birmingham Arts School (BAS) against the backdrop of political, social and economic challenges. This summary sets out BAS as originally conceived and is important for understanding the context of this report.

Arts Connect commissioned an independent research project, Young Cultural Journeys, that found if young people engage with arts by the age of seven, they are more likely to continue with these interests, and that there is another spike in interest at age 12-15 years. The need to engage young people with the arts at school remains critical for those without parental support, as 40% said that their school provided their first experience of the arts and their most memorable trip was to an arts or cultural venue.

Providing equality of access to the arts for young people in Birmingham is almost impossible if a school is not involved in accessing arts provision, as it is the one place where young people can have a structured and planned set of cultural experiences. The need for a cohesive cross-sector approach to supporting children, young people and their futures is vital. Excluding the independent sector, there are 301 primary schools and 81 secondary schools in Birmingham (including 27 special schools) serving around 200,000 children and young people. Compared to the national average, Birmingham has twice the number of young people with English as a second language and 40% more young people eligible for free school meals. Ofqual statistics reveal that nationally there has been a 25% drop in GCSE arts subject entrants, despite overall rises in GCSE entries of 3% over the same period since 2014.

Given the pressure on school budgets, it is therefore not surprising that a recent BBC survey found that 90% of secondary schools were cutting creative subjects. The West Midlands is particularly vulnerable, both socially and economically, to COVID-19, and Birmingham is proving to be one of the worst affected cities and is anticipated to recover more slowly. Many children are experiencing disruption to their education and there is a disparity in the impact on educational attainment across the city, with children from more disadvantaged backgrounds having fewer learning opportunities at home. A disparity in qualification and skill levels between residents in different communities and areas of the city already exists and the current crisis is exacerbating this.

ShapeArts Connect's Cultural Landscapes research from 2019 with the cultural sector shows that there is significant provision of cultural education in schools, but a combination of weak collective planning and disparities in demand result in some very proactive schools being 'super-served' whilst others have little or no engagement with the professional arts sector. Furthermore, this research suggests that some schools are working with up to nine different arts organisations, whilst a quarter of primary schools engage with none that are publicly funded. Schools that have no recorded activity tend to be in areas of deprivation (but by no means exclusively), are struggling with an adverse

Ofsted judgement, or have no recent history or practice to sustain links with the cultural sector. Consequently, their doors remain shut to meaningful cultural engagement.

The additional learning from the BAS prototyping project in 2019—which engaged five schools and five cultural organisations—bore this out. Cost was not the main barrier to engagement. Stronger factors were a lack of contact, experience and confidence in working with cultural organisations, and having the time and knowledge to know how to work strategically with them. The participating schools all indicated that they wanted to continue working with the organisations that they had met, and to further expand their connections and commit further funds to sustained partnerships.

The conclusions we draw from this evidence and our own lived experience is that too many schools do not have the specialists, relationships, knowledge or contacts to enable their pupils to engage with the special contribution that arts partners can bring to their cultural and educational development. We also conclude that the offer of many arts and cultural organisations is not connecting or resonating with those schools whose students may benefit most from a partnership. The problem is one of both demand and supply.

In light of this backdrop BAS self-describes as:

> *connecting schools and arts organisations (including music, dance, theatre and visual arts companies, venues and individual practitioners) across the city. BAS works strategically with teachers, headteachers, artist and arts organisations, to reduce inequalities for children and young people by engaging schools all over Birmingham with high quality arts opportunities. Through 'The Hub', a one-stop online portal, training opportunities for teachers and artists, and regular partnership events, BAS seeks to ensure that arts organisations continue to meet curriculum needs whilst encouraging schools to access the world class offer provided by the city's arts organisations.*

Much of this statement remains at the heart of BAS, including its focus on inequalities, the development of a one-stop portal and its signposting and provision of CPD events. However, further to this there has been significant developments, particularly in facilitating school and cultural organisation connectivity. This report will seek to capture some of the recent developments within BAS and suggest future possibilities for pass post the three-year funding period.

Reflecting on Year One and Two

Before reporting on the findings from year three, it is essential to reflect on the journey from Year One to Year Two and the significant developments that have shaped BAS's trajectory. Building upon the foundation of the previous two years, BAS has experienced considerable growth, driven by strategic initiatives and a commitment to developing its vision.

In Year One, the BCU research team embarked on activities aimed at formulating a Theory of Change (ToC) to guide the strategic direction of BAS. Utilising a qualitative methodology, the team conducted one-to-one interviews with key stakeholders, including cultural organisation leaders, head teachers, teachers, representatives from cultural organisations, and key personnel from BAS. This was complemented by a thorough document analysis of BAS's paperwork spanning from 2019 to June 2022. While devising a traditional ToC framework presented challenges due to the intricate nature of BAS's offerings, the year one report identified questions for further exploration, and managing expectations, providing BAS with questions for reflection.

Year Two marked a period of strategic planning and stakeholder consultations, aimed at solidifying BAS's long-term objectives. Through events, continued professional development, and outreach activities, BAS strengthened connections with stakeholders and fostered greater synergy between its aspirations and the broader cultural and school ecosystems. This period saw BAS establishing its identity, solidifying partnerships, and securing funding to support its work. The progress made in Year Two led to the identification of three key performance indicators for the final year:

Outcome 1: Arts and Cultural organisations are better at working with schools, using and embedding arts and cultural activities within and for school learning priorities. Arts and Cultural organisations grow their capacity to deliver high quality cultural learning provision with schools they have not previously engaged with.

Outcome 2: Secure funding for Phase 2 (2024-27) of Birmingham Arts School.

Outcome 3: Greater equity of provision and access to arts and cultural learning for children and young people across the city with demonstrable and meaningful impact on young people's social and economic development.

Methodology

The approach to this research evaluation has been predominantly qualitative in nature, to enable rich data to emerge, although some quantitative analysis is presented in the research findings of the cultural organisations and schools survey. Steering group meetings, focus group interviews, and semi-structured one-to-one interviews have been analysed using thematic coding processes (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to allow for themes to emerge until saturation is achieved. A six-stage process has been used for this analysis: data familiarisation, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. Emerging themes have then been collated, grouped, and presented in commentaries of the differing research sections contained in this report. At events where there has been a research presence, processes of naturalistic observation in a social setting have been used to facilitate emergent findings (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). In addition to gathering research data through fieldwork, there have been periodic liaison meetings with project leads. The research for year 2 of the BAS project built on lines of enquiry established through design of an initial theory of change developed by the research team during year 1 in the summer of 2022. Research methods for the theory of change included documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews with thematic analysis (Newby, 2010).

Full ethical approval was granted by Birmingham City University's Health, Education and Life Sciences Faculty Academic Ethics Committee prior to the commencement of this research evaluation.

The Report

The following section of this report discusses the findings derived from the evaluation. Structured under thematic headings, these findings provide an understanding of the role of BAS in shaping arts in schools, the impact of BAS arts partnerships and professional development, and will example some partnerships in action. By investigating each thematic domain, we aim to uncover insights that explore the efficacy and further role of BAS for enriching arts experiences of young people in Birmingham. The findings are structured under thematic headings:

• The Arts in Schools

• The Impact of Arts Partnership

• Professional Development

• Partnerships in Action

• Connecting communities (WebAPP and Travel)

• The Birmingham Arts School GCSE Offer

• Birmingham Arts School's Future

• The Birmingham Arts School Model
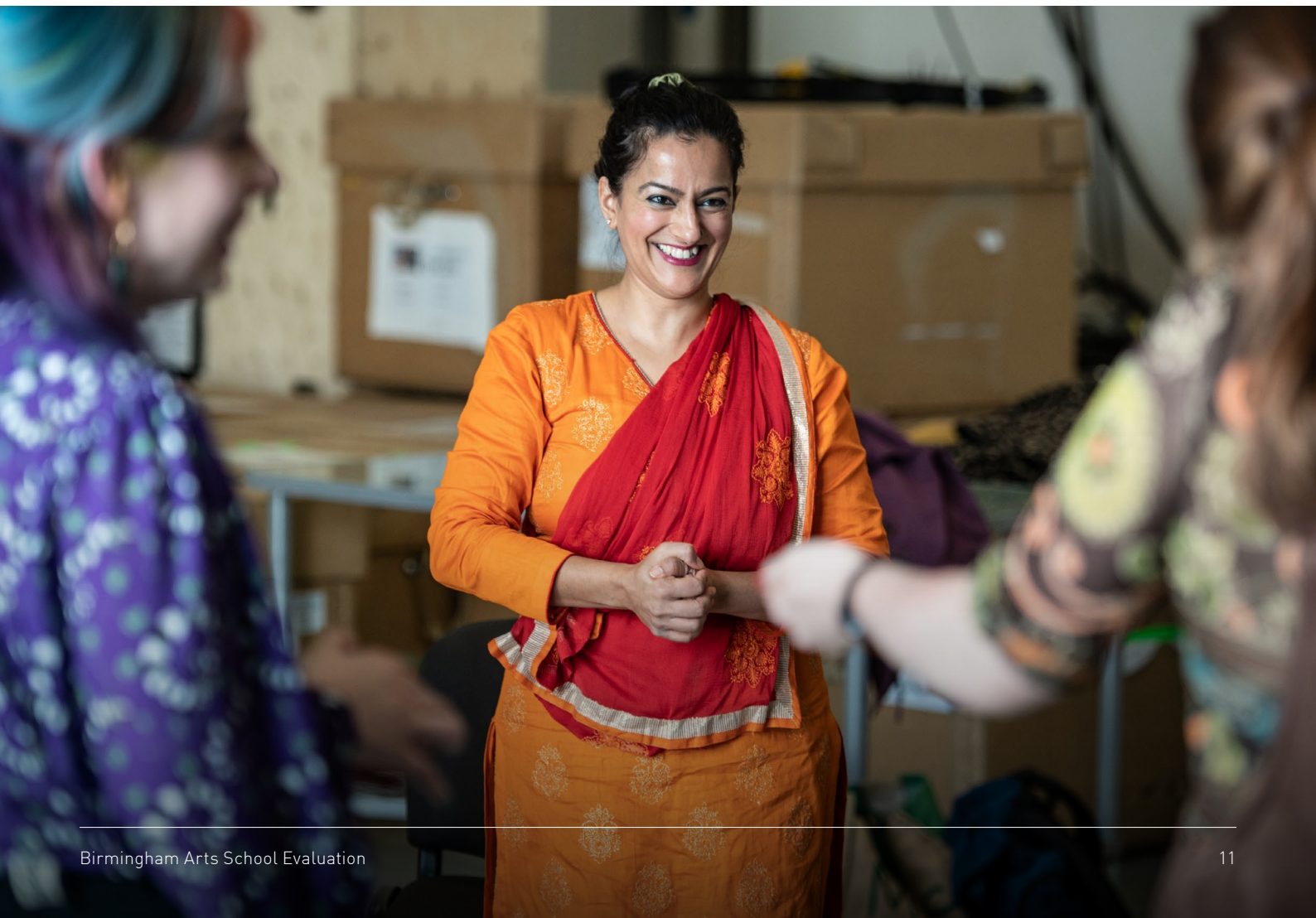
The Arts in Schools

Within the Year 2 evaluation (Anderson et al., 2023), we reported key findings from the Cultural Organisations online survey. Although a range of findings were identified there are some themes which remain consistent following analysis of the Year 3 schools survey data. These similarities include arts provision in 'cold spot' areas; priorities of schools and senior leadership teams, particularly with regards to curriculum; funding; communication; and the impact of BAS. While these are separate reports it is hoped that, when read in conjunction with one another, the qualitative experiences and viewpoints reported by respondents may be of use to BAS in developing its offer beyond Year 3.

Cultural Organisation Survey 2022-2023

From the period of November 2022 and February 2023 an online survey was distributed to cultural organisations. Responses were received from 16 cultural organisations, representing theatre, music, dance, and art (**Figure 1**).
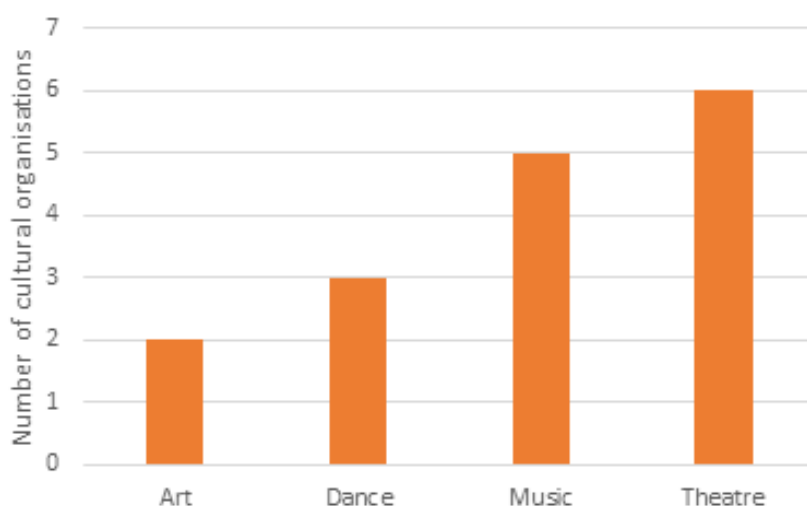
Figure 1 - Distribution of cultural organisation survey respondents.

The data form this survey is fully documented and discussed in the Year Two Interim Report. However, we felt it pertinent to underscore the key findings from the survey to establish correlations between the feedback provided by cultural organisations and, in parallel, that of the schools.

The observations made by cultural organisations regarding schools in different areas of Birmingham, categorised as either 'over-' or 'under-served' in arts provision, revealed a consensus that these disparities were primarily rooted in systemic issues such as support, funding, and organisation, rather than geographical location. Furthermore, according to cultural organisations, schools exhibited variations in both the allocation of curriculum time for the arts and their capacity to establish

and maintain relationships with cultural organisations. This diversity underscores the challenges faced by of cultural organisations in fostering successful collaborations.

A recurring theme highlighted by most organisations was the imperative of evaluating tangible outcomes. They emphasised that high-quality provision should employ imaginative and pupil-centred pedagogies that resonate with the specific needs of each school community. Time afforded to curriculum development was highlighted as a key need and cultural organisation saw that they played a role in this.

Despite the recognised benefits, funding emerged as the predominant challenge faced by cultural organisations in their endeavours to engage with schools. This financial constraint underscores the critical need for sustained investment in arts education initiatives. In addition to these points, cultural organisations expressed expectations of BAS, particularly focusing on fostering access and inclusion within the arts, facilitating enhanced communication and collaboration across various stakeholders, offering professional development opportunities, and advocating for the arts within educational contexts.

School Survey 2023 -2024

Introduction

To support the Year 3 evaluation of BAS an online survey was sent out to schools. Representatives from schools completed this survey during November and December 2023. Data from the survey allowed for both quantitative and qualitative responses and was, therefore, of mixed-methods design. In all, 49 participants responded to Part A of the survey (focusing on Cultural Education) with 31 (63%) continuing onto Part B (where supplementary questions were provided). The number of respondents who completed the Year 3 survey was significantly higher than the number of respondents who completed it in Year 2 (n=4). What should be considered when reading the data findings, however, is that since the school survey closed (December 2023) more engagement could have taken place. As such, findings from this survey may not necessarily reflect the current engagement schools have with cultural organisations.

In order for themes to be established from the Year 3 responses, data were analysed using Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Based on the data gathered, the following themes emerged: school demographics; established partnerships with arts and/or cultural organisations; BAS events; barriers in developing cultural partnerships; potential resolutions to addressing barriers in developing cultural partnerships; the value of cultural education; and developing BAS. Data for each theme will be presented in turn.

Part A: Cultural Education

School demographics
Types of schools included in the survey

Participants who responded to the survey came from a variety of school settings. These are shown in **Figure 2**. Of the 49 responses, nearly two-thirds of them (n=29, 59%) stated that they were based within the primary school setting. The 'other' category consisted of responses from a small number of respondents (n=6) who stated more generic school settings. These included 'MAT', 'Trust' 'Maintained', 'Academy', and 'E-act'.
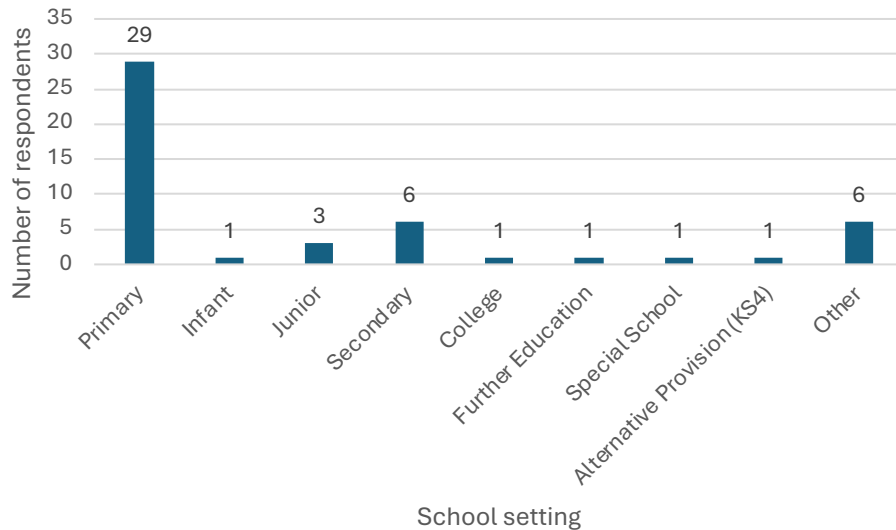
Figure 2 - Types of school settings stated by respondents.

Location of the school setting

Almost all respondents (n=48, 98%) provided a postcode to identify the district their school setting was located within the Birmingham area. For anonymity, so an individual school postcode could not be identified, only the first part of the postcode has been provided. These are listed in **Table 1** along with the approximate locations they cover. **Table 1** is also ranked where the highest number of respondents within a postcode district who completed the survey is at the top. Some postcodes are also colour coded. This represents further analysis undertaken using Cultural Landscapes map data to establish whether the school providing the information in response to the survey is located within one of Birmingham's top 20 most deprived areas, top 20 least engaged areas for arts provision, or both. A colour-coded key has been provided for clarification. As **Table 1** shows, some responses received were provided from schools located within these areas.

Within the top 20 most deprived postcode districts in Birmingham	Within the top 20 least engaged postcode districts in Birmingham	Both within the top 20 most deprived and least engaged postcode districts in Birmingham

Postcode	Code	Location[2]	Number of respondents
B7		Nechells, Vauxhall	4
B11	🟧	Sparkhill, Sparkbrook, Tyseley	4
B13		Moseley, Billesley	4
B32	🟨	Woodgate, Bartley Green, Quinton, California (part of)	4
B31		Northfield, Longbridge, West Heath	3
B36		Castle Bromwich, Smith's Wood, Bromford, Hodge Hill	3
B14		Kings Heath, Yardley Wood, Druids Heath, Higher's Heath, Warstock	2
B20	🟦	Handsworth Wood, Handsworth, Birchfield	2
B30		Bournville, Cotteridge, Stirchley, Kings Norton (North)	2
B34	🟦	Shard End, Buckland End	2
B44		Perry Barr, Kingstanding, Great Barr	2
B63		Halesowen (west and town centre), Hayley Green, Hasbury	2
B8	🟧	Washwood Heath, Ward End, Saltley, Alum Rock	1
B9	🟦	Bordesley Green, Bordesley	1
B10	🟦	Small Heath	1
B21		Handsworth	1
B24		Erdington, Wylde Green, Tyburn	1
B26		Sheldon, Yardley, Birmingham International Airport	1
B27		Acocks Green	1
B33		Kitts Green, Stechford	1
B35	🟧	Castle Vale	1
B38		Kings Norton (South)	1
B42		Perry Barr, Great Barr, Hamstead	1
B45	🟨	Rednal, New Frankley, Rubery, Cofton Hackett, Barnt Green, Lickey, Longbridge, Northfield (part)	1
B72		Sutton Coldfield town centre, Maney, Wylde Green	1
B74		Four Oaks, Little Aston, Streetly	1
			Total: 48 respondents

Table 1 - List of school postcode districts entered by survey respondents (ranked).

[2] *Approximate location of postcode districts. Taken from Wikipedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/B_postcode_area). [Last accessed 19 December 2023].*

Respondent job role

All survey respondents provided their current job role within their school setting. **Figure 3** shows that that over a third of respondents reported to be a Headteacher/ Principal (n=19, 39%). An additional third of respondents reported as being as a Teacher (n=16, 33%). The final 28% of respondents reported as other job roles including Head of Department (n=8), Assistant Headteacher/Principal (n=3), Lecturer (n=2), or Higher Level Teaching Assistant (n=1).
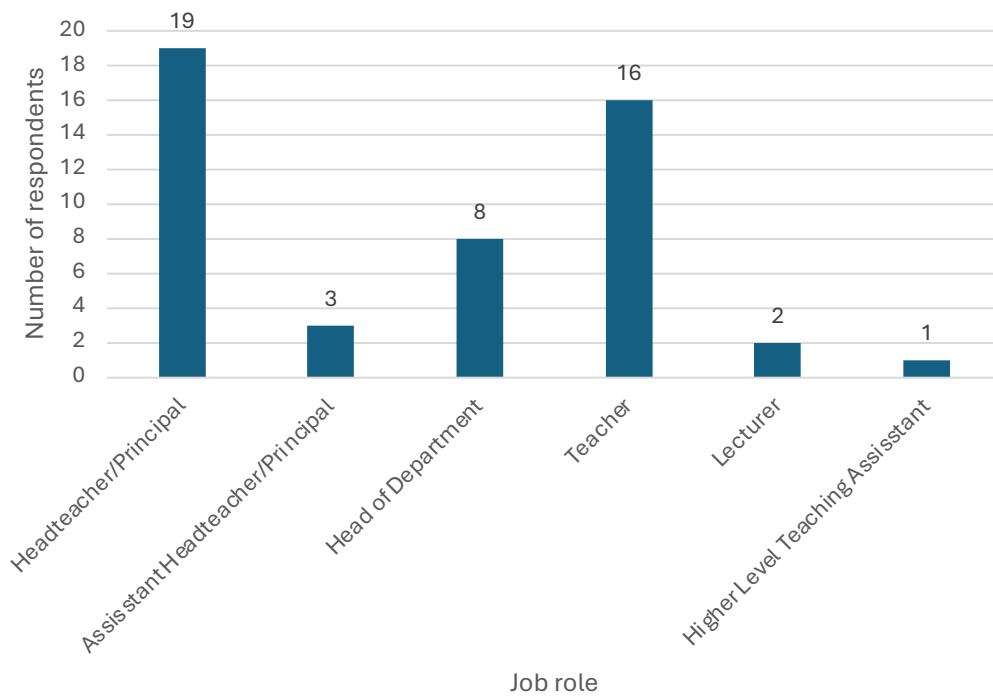
Figure 3 - Types of job roles stated by respondents.

Established partnerships with arts and/or cultural organisations

All respondents (n=49, 100%) stated whether they have established partnerships with an arts and/or cultural organisation. The results, shown in Figure 4, indicate that a slight majority of school settings (n=26, 53%) do not currently have any established partnerships with the remainder (n=23, 47%) stating that they do.(n=2), or Higher Level Teaching Assistant (n=1).
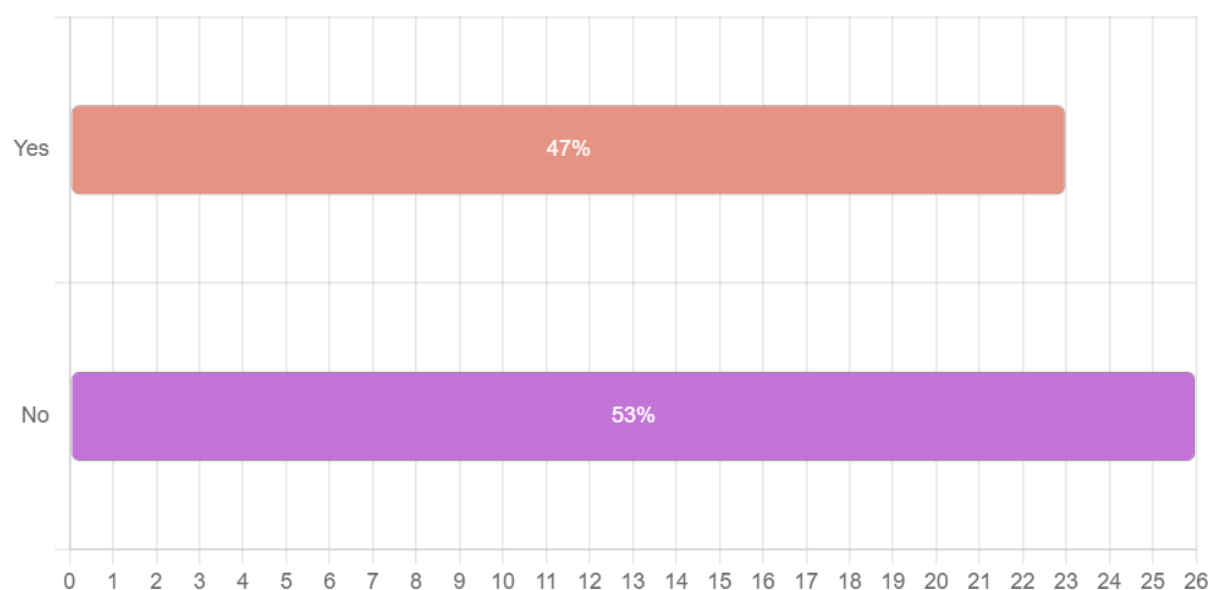
Figure 4 - Respondents stating whether their school setting has any currently established partnerships with an arts and/or cultural organisation.

Those who answered 'yes' were invited to state which organisations they currently held a partnership with. A wide variety of organisations were given and have been listed in **Table 2**. **Table 2** has also been ranked with the organisations with the most partnerships held, according to survey respondents, at the top.

Arts/Cultural Organisation	Number of times the organisation was stated by survey respondents
The Rep	6
Services For Education Music Service	6
Hippodrome Education Network	4
CBSO Endangered Species Instrumental Programme	4
Arts Mark	3
Open Theatre	2
Stans Café	2
Young Voices	2
Ikon Gallery	2
Royal Shakespeare Company Associate School Programme	2
Birmingham Royal Ballet	2
The Playhouse	2
Royal Birmingham Conservatoire	2
Create Connections	1
This Is Our Voice	1
Story Seekers	1
Slam Poetry	1
Edgbaston High School for Girls	1
Artist-in-Residence	1
Shakespeare Birthplace Trust	1
Ex Cathedra (Singing Playgrounds)	1
Royal Opera House	1
Walsall Art Gallery	1
Midlands Arts Centre (MAC)	1

Table 2 - List of arts and cultural organisation partnerships identified by survey respondents (ranked).

Although a wide range of organisations were stated, **Figure 5** shows that a large majority of respondents (n=16, 70%) said that these partnerships were not as a result of engaging with BAS with only approximately a third (n=7, 30%) saying that it was. It should be noted, however, that only 23 respondents (49%) responded to this question. Therefore, inferences made from the reported data should be done so with caution.
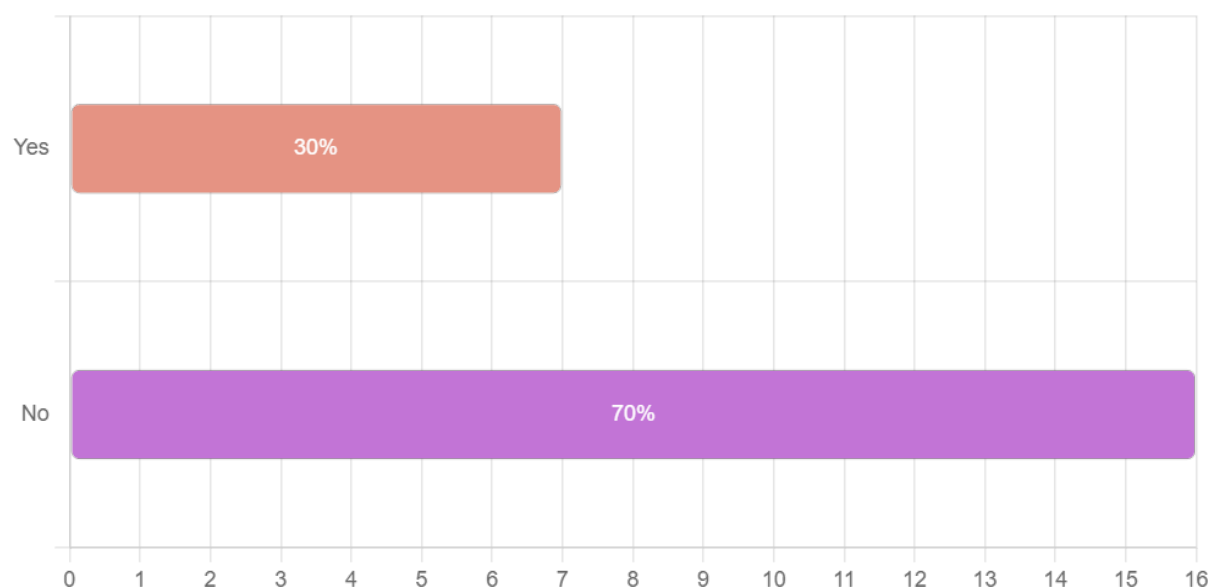
Figure 5 - Establishing whether arts and/or cultural organisation partnerships are a result of engaging with BAS.

Respondents who answered 'yes' were then invited to state how the partnership(s) with BAS came about. The responses are listed below. Most of the replies given indicate that partnerships with arts and/or cultural organisations were made through previous work with BAS, the projects and events it has offered, and the people associated with the organisation.

- As a result of the Arts Conference day.

- I became aware of the partnership following workshops/marketplace held by BAS [Birmingham Arts School].

- Previously worked with BAS [Birmingham Arts School] through the Commonwealth Connections programme.

- Through some of the adverts online. We have contacted some companies, or it gave us ideas of what we wanted to move forward with the types of experiences we are going to offer.

- Through 'Proud to be a Brummie' project

- Through the principal of BAS.

Birmingham Arts School Events

Attendance to Arts Partnership Showcases

All respondents stated whether they (or any members of their staff) had attended any arts partnership showcases that BAS had produced. **Figure 6** shows that a majority of respondents (n=32, 65%) stated that they, or another member of their team, had not attended a showcase.
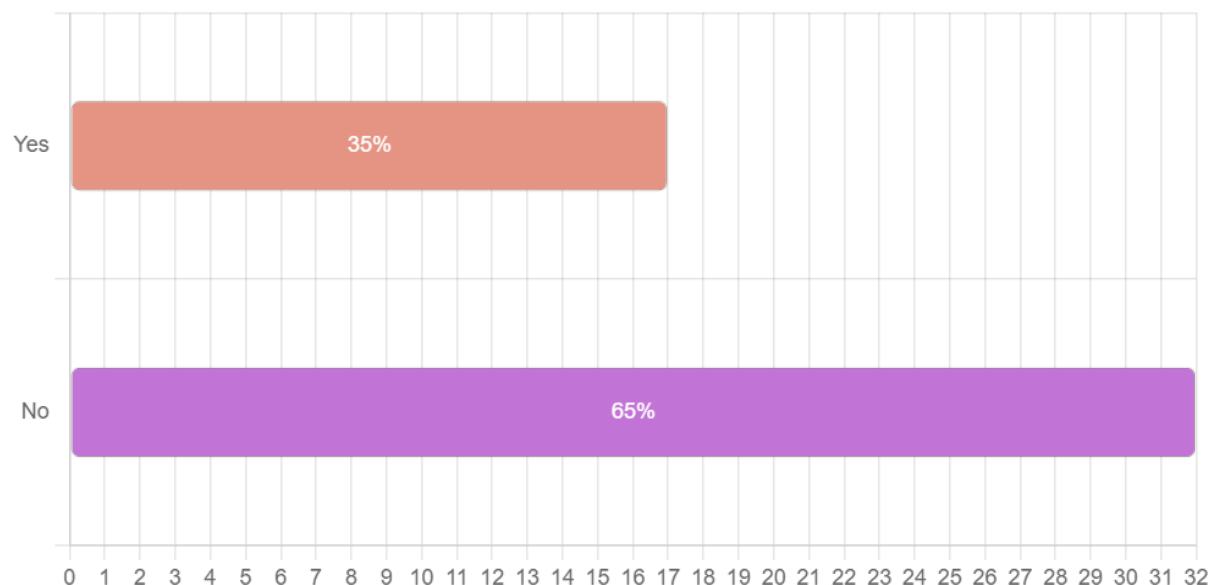
Figure 6 - Attendance to an Arts Partnership Showcase organised by BAS.

For those respondents (n=17, 35%) who said that they did attend, or had another member of their team attend, further analysis was undertaken using Cultural Landscapes map data to establish whether a showcase event was attended by someone whose school is located in one of Birmingham's top 20 most deprived areas, top 20 least engaged areas for arts provision, or both. For ease, the colour-coded key has been provided for clarification. As **Table 3** shows, some responses received were provided from schools located within these areas.

	Within the top 20 most deprived postcode districts in Birmingham	Within the top 20 least engaged postcode districts in Birmingham	Both within the top 20 most deprived and least engaged postcode districts in Birmingham

Postcode	Number of respondents
B32	3
B11	2
B34	2
B13	1
B14	1
B21	1
B24	1
B33	1
B36	1
B42	1
B45	1
B74	1
	Total: 16[3]

Table 3 - Postcodes of respondents who indicated attendance to an arts partnership showcase organised by BAS.

Respondents who stated that they, or someone else, had attended an arts partnership showcase were invited to state the impact it had. The most commonly stated response was establishing collaborations with cultural organisations with organisations such as Ikon Gallery and The Rep. Further comments for impact on schools included applying for grants; increasing the focus on enriching the curriculum offer; and enabling senior leaders to recognise how many arts opportunities are available for schools to access.

[3] *One respondent did not supply their school's postcode in the survey response.*

Attendance to Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

All respondents stated whether they (or any members of their staff) had attended any CPD sessions organised by BAS. **Figure 7** shows that a majority of respondents (n=32, 65%) stated that they, or another member of their team, had not attended a showcase.
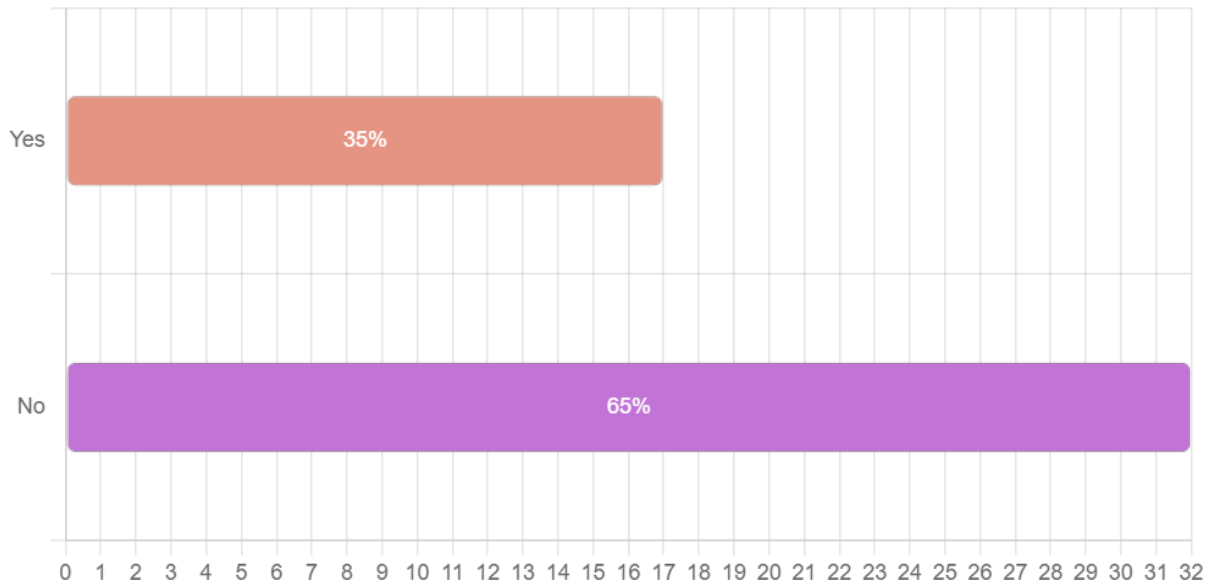
Figure 7 - Attendance to a CPD session organised by BAS.

For those respondents (n=17, 35%) who said that they did attend, or had another member of their team attend, further analysis was undertaken using Cultural Landscapes map data to establish whether a CPD event was attended by someone whose school is located in one of Birmingham's top 20 most deprived areas, top 20 least engaged areas for arts provision, or both. For ease, the colour-coded key has been provided for clarification. As **Table 4** shows, several responses received were provided from schools located within these areas.

Within the top 20 most deprived postcode districts in Birmingham	Within the top 20 least engaged postcode districts in Birmingham	Both within the top 20 most deprived and least engaged postcode districts in Birmingham

Postcode	Number of respondents
B31	2
B63	2
B7	1
B8	1
B10	1
B11	1
B13	1
B14	1
B26	1
B32	1
B34	1
B35	1
B44	1
B45	1
B74	1
	Total: 17

Table 4 - Postcodes of respondents who indicated attendance to a CPD session organised by BAS.

Respondents who stated that they, or someone else, had attended a CPD session were invited to state the impact it had. The most commonly stated responses were applying for grants and a valuable networking opportunity for future partnerships with organisations such as The Rep and Dance teacher networks. Further comments for impact on schools included supporting colleagues across school in developing their cultural provision; and sharing ideas with colleagues in other schools.

Attendance to teacher network meetings

All respondents stated whether they (or any members of their staff) had attended any teacher network meetings (for example, Primary Artslink, Secondary Drama, Secondary Dance, Secondary Art) organised by BAS. **Figure 8** shows that a large majority of respondents (n=40, 82%) stated that they, or another member of their team, had not attended an event.
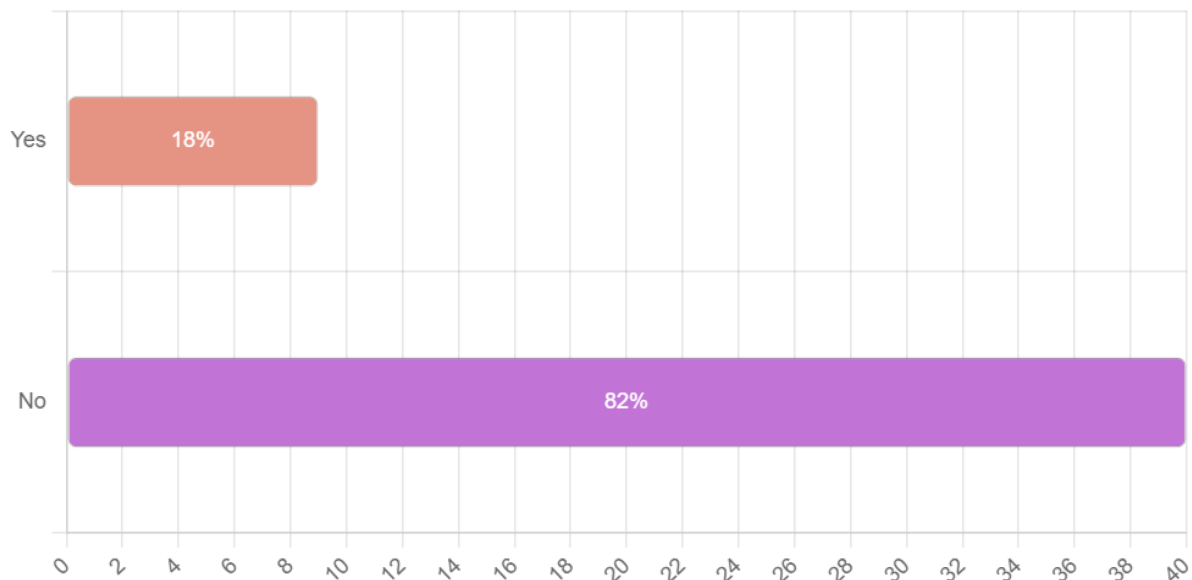
Figure 8 - Attendance to a teacher network meeting organised by BAS.

For those respondents (n=9, 18%) who said that they did attend, or had another member of their team attend, further analysis was undertaken using Cultural Landscapes map data to establish whether a teacher network event was attended by someone whose school is located in one of Birmingham's top 20 most deprived areas, top 20 least engaged areas for arts provision, or both. For ease, the colour-coded key has been provided for clarification. As **Table 5** shows, some responses received were provided from schools located within these areas.

Within the top 20 most deprived postcode districts in Birmingham	Within the top 20 least engaged postcode districts in Birmingham	Both within the top 20 most deprived and least engaged postcode districts in Birmingham

Postcode	Number of respondents
B14	2
B31	2
B8	1
B21	1
B32	1
B34	1
B44	1
	Total: 9

Table 5 - Postcodes of respondents who indicated attendance to a teacher network meeting organised by BAS.

Respondents who stated that they, or someone else, had attended a teacher network meeting were invited to state the impact it had. Although a small number of respondents (n=3) commented that, as yet there had been no impact following the meetings, others (n=6) voiced that the meetings were a valuable means of networking with other schools and subject leads to share ideas of cultural provision.

Accessing learning offers

All respondents stated whether they (or any members of their staff) had accessed any of the learning offers posted by Arts organisations on the Birmingham Education Hub. Figure 9 shows that a large majority of respondents (n=42, 86%) stated that they, or another member of their team, had not accessed any learning offers.
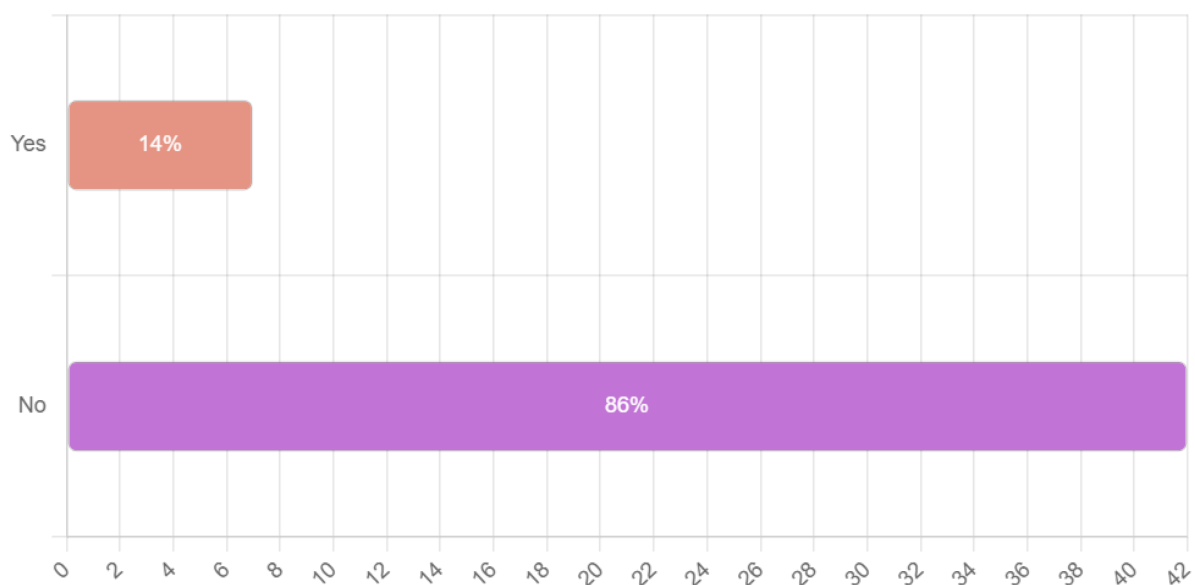

Figure 9 - Accessing any of the learning offers posted by Arts organisations on the Birmingham Education Hub.

For those respondents (n=7, 14%) who said that they have accessed, or that another member of their team has accessed, any of the learning offers posted by Arts organisations on the Birmingham Education Hub, further analysis was undertaken using Cultural Landscapes map data to establish whether learning offers were accessed by someone whose school is located in one of Birmingham's top 20 most deprived areas, top 20 least engaged areas for arts provision, or both. For ease, the colour-coded key has been provided for clarification. As **Table 6** shows, some responses received were provided from schools located within these areas.

Within the top 20 most deprived postcode districts in Birmingham	Within the top 20 least engaged postcode districts in Birmingham	Both within the top 20 most deprived and least engaged postcode districts in Birmingham

Postcode	Number of respondents
B10	1
B11	1
B31	1
B32	1
B42	1
B62	1
	Total: 6[4]

Table 6 - Postcodes of respondents who indicated access to any of the learning offers posted by Arts organisations on the Birmingham Education Hub.

Respondents who stated that they, or someone else, had access to any of the learning offers posted by Arts organisations on the Birmingham Education Hub, were invited to state the impact it had. Although some respondents commented that, as yet there had been no observable impact, two respondents voiced that the training had positively impacted on their Art, Craft and Design practice and it helped them to develop their curriculum and build staff knowledge.

[4] *One respondent did not supply their school's postcode in the survey response.*

Attendance to the 'Arts in Schools' Conference

All respondents stated whether they (or any members of their staff) attended the BAS 'Arts in Schools' Conference at The Rep on 4th October 2023. **Figure 10** shows that a large majority of respondents (n=37, 76%) stated that they, or another member of their team, had not attended the conference.
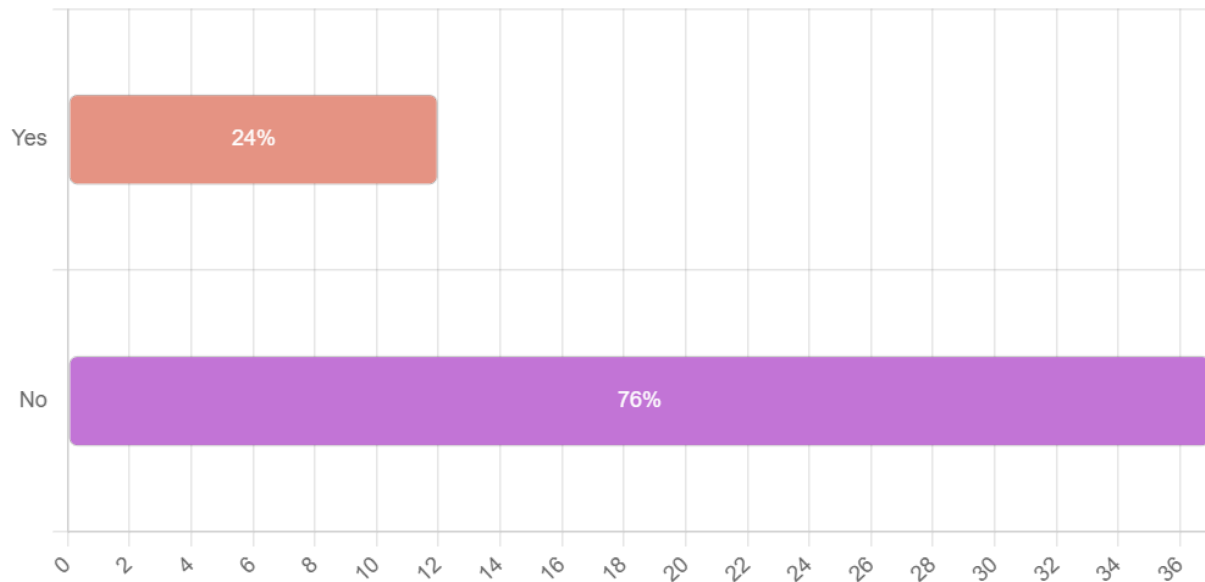

Figure 10 - Attendance to the 'Arts in Schools' conference organised by BAS.

For those respondents (n=12, 24%) who said that they attended, or had another member of their team attended, the 'Arts in Schools' Conference, further analysis was undertaken using Cultural Landscapes map data to establish whether the event was attended by someone whose school is located in one of Birmingham's top 20 most deprived areas, top 20 least engaged areas for arts provision, or both. For ease, the colour-coded key has been provided for clarification. As **Table 7** shows, some responses received were provided from schools located within these areas.

Within the top 20 most deprived postcode districts in Birmingham	Within the top 20 least engaged postcode districts in Birmingham	Both within the top 20 most deprived and least engaged postcode districts in Birmingham

Postcode	Number of respondents
B13	2
B10	1
B11	1
B14	1
B21	1
B26	1
B30	1
B32	1
B33	1
B45	1
	Total: 11[5]

Table 7 - Postcodes of respondents who indicated attendance to the 'Arts in Schools' Conference organised by BAS.

Respondents who stated that they, or someone else, had attended the conference were invited to state the impact it had. Although some respondents commented that, as yet there had been no observable impact, most respondents (n=5) voiced that the conference allowed them to establish new collaborations with one respondent going further to say that it allowed them to develop a greater awareness of the different opportunities available to schools to support their cultural offer.

Part B: Supplementary Questions

Having completed Part A, respondents were invited to opt into completing Part B. These supplementary questions sought to delve into more qualitative responses from participants into the impact of BAS. From the 49 that completed Part A, 31 of them (63%) continued to Part B.

Barriers in developing cultural partnerships

Three main barriers in developing cultural partnerships were identified: financial, curriculum, and outreach. These are listed in **Table 8** and have been arranged in order of frequency where the most commonly cited barrier is at the top of the table.

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[5] *One respondent did not supply their school's postcode in the survey response.*

Barrier Theme	Barrier Sub-theme	Additional notes from respondent comments
Financial	*Cost*	• Although 'cost' was the most frequently cited barrier, some respondents went on to say that cost of transport (for example, buses) was a significant issue. • Some respondents also commented on their school's need to raise standards in core subjects which impacts on funding for non-core subjects.
Curriculum	*Timetable time/priorities*	• Some respondents commented on their school's need to raise standards in core subjects which impacts on curriculum time for non-core subjects. • One respondent commented that, in their school, there was a lack of interest in arts subjects due to 'core subjects taking over the curriculum'.
Outreach	*Communication*	• A small number of respondents commented on their lack of awareness of partnerships in their area that they can build relationships with.

Table 8 - Respondents viewpoints on current barriers in developing cultural partnerships.

Potential resolutions to addressing barriers in developing cultural partnerships

Having commented on current barriers in developing cultural partnerships, respondents were then asked to share their views on what would help develop their cultural arts education offer further. Although a small variety of possible resolutions were stated (these are shown in **Table 9**), the most commonly reported resolution was support with the cost or transport to venues. For many respondents, this was important given the tightness of already stretched school budgets.

Barrier Theme	Barrier Sub-theme	Additional notes from respondent comments
Financial	*Cost*	• BAS to support with transport costs to venues. • Offer free/discounted taster workshops.
Curriculum	*Timetable time/priorities*	• Clusters of schools with similar provision getting together to network and share good practice.
Outreach	*Communication*	• Someone from outside school providing guidance and support on how we can achieve a better cultural education offer. • Email list of cultural organisations that can be filtered (for example, to tailor to a particular school setting).

Table 9 - Respondent viewpoints on potential resolutions to address current barriers in developing cultural partnerships.

The value of cultural education

Participants were asked to state, in a couple of sentences, how cultural education impacts attainment and personal development. To represent respondents' viewpoints word clouds were created and are shown in **Figure 11** (impact on attainment) and **Figure 12** (impact on personal development).

Figure 11 - A word cloud of respondents' viewpoint on how cultural education impacts attainment.

Figure 12 - A word cloud of respondents' viewpoint on how cultural education impacts personal development.

Figure 11 shows that the most reported viewpoints on how cultural education impacts attainment relate to developing young people's confidence in their abilities beyond academic subjects and offering them a variety of cultural experiences as part of the school's curriculum. Developing creative writing was also frequently reported by respondents. **Figure 12** shows that the most frequently cited viewpoint was developing learners' confidence. In addition, cultural education is also believed to develop an individual's well-being, their respect for other cultures, and self-esteem in sharing their own cultural background when this is different to others in the group.

Developing Birmingham Arts School

Respondents offered a range of viewpoints regarding how BAS might be developed further in the future. These are presented in **Table 10**. The most frequently cited viewpoint focused on whether a representative from the organisation could visit schools to speak to staff about what BAS is and what it can offer schools to support them in developing their cultural education for young people. This would also help with some of the communication/marketing viewpoints also expressed by some respondents. Comments relating to timing and location of BAS meetings are also important to consider; this may well affect whether a school is considered as 'engaging' or not by BAS.

Theme	Comments given by respondents
Visit from Birmingham Arts School	• Visit school to speak to staff and myself. I am not aware of what is on offer as much of it comes through email and I get millions of those a day. • Come into school and start the conversation. • A meeting or a phone call would be appreciated. Still not entirely sure what they [Birmingham Arts School] do. • Please come and visit us to tell us about what is on offer. • Consultation meetings with each school to see how they could broker organisations. • Maybe a visit from BAS [Birmingham Arts School] because the name has caused confusion as it is not a school. Not entirely sure how it works or who it is for?
Communication/ Marketing	• Make staff and schools aware of more arts events, opportunities etc. • E-mails of different events that are happening. • Provide a list of projects which can be signed up to, to reduce the time needed to find links independently. • Increase awareness of support that is available. • Provide a list of recommended associations for us to reach out to.
Timing and location of Birmingham Arts School meetings	• Staff development at a time that has no cover implications based at local venues, if possible. • The activities and conferences are not accessible to me as I don't have the time to attend when they are in the evening or even during school time. • Consider the timings for some events within the school day; it's not always viable/practical to attend on the evening after work. • Less things happening inside the city centre as we can't easily get/park there or get there on time after/during school.

Theme	Comments given by respondents
Funding	• Offer more funded or partially funded opportunities. • Bid writing training. List of organisations money can be sought from and maybe link these to the projects these would most succeed with. • Support with completing funding applications. • Organisation of funding pots that schools can apply to grants from. Support with writing fundraising bids.
Visit from Cultural Organisations	• Professionals that will visit schools and complete talks about their careers. • Visiting workshops are a winner.
Teacher professional development	• Helping to plan new topics and new ideas especially when working with SEND pupils.

Table 10 - Respondent viewpoints on how BAS might be developed further.

Concluding summary

The following points represent key highlights from the school survey. As stated at the beginning of this section, given the timing of when data collection for this survey took place (during November and December 2023), findings may not necessarily be an up-to-date reflection of current school engagement with cultural organisations. Furthermore, some of these conclusions may already have been actioned by BAS. Notwithstanding these caveats, the findings of the school survey show:

• Some respondents stated that they had developed their cultural provision because of working with BAS. These connections came about due to attending BAS events, previously working with BAS, and through working with the BAS team.

• Most respondents stated that neither they, nor a member of the team, attended the events put on by BAS (Arts Partnership Showcases, Continuing Professional Development sessions, Teacher Network Meetings, the 'Arts in School' Conference).

• Those respondents who stated that they, or another member of their team, did attend the events put on by BAS found them to be highly beneficial for building collaborations with cultural organisations, applying for grants, enriching the school's curriculum offer, networking, and developing a greater awareness of the variety of opportunities to support a school's cultural offer.

• Several barriers in developing cultural partnerships were identified. These included financial (especially with regards to transport costs), curriculum (were a

prioritisation of 'core subjects' occurs), and outreach (so that schools can become more aware of the cultural partnerships offered in their area). Barriers identified could be mitigated, according to respondents, by BAS offering support with transport and venue/workshop costs, bringing schools together to network and share good practice, and provide guidance and support, whether in-person or via email, on how a school's cultural provision can be developed.

- Respondents value the importance of cultural provision in learners' attainment and personal development. This is particularly important for developing young people's confidence, well-being, and curricular experiences.

- Numerous responses to the survey have come from respondents whose school is located in one of Birmingham's top 20 most deprived areas, top 20 least engaged areas for arts provision, or both. Moreover, respondents working within these schools also stated they have had attended an event organised by BAS. This suggests that BAS is reaching out into the these 'cold spot' areas.

Recommendations

- Most participants' responses (approximately two-thirds) came from the primary school setting. Therefore, explore the extent to which cultural provision is offered in a wider variety of educational settings.

- A large majority of respondents said that the cultural partnerships they have within school were not a result of engaging with BAS. Therefore, BAS could develop a broader understanding of how these non-BAS partnerships came about, the length of the partnership, and how it fits into curriculum provision.

- For BAS to monitor the engagement schools have with cultural organisations drawing on a representative pool of data ranging from small to larger arts-based organisations.

- To utilise already established and successful methods of communication (such as face-to-face visits and meetings, phone calls, and emails) to further enhance BAS's outreach to schools and initial, where needed, connections with cultural organisations.

The Impact of Arts Partnerships

Fostering meaningful and impactful partnerships between schools and arts organisations is a key performance indicator for BAS. To explore this, the research team conducted a series of focus group discussions with teachers and cultural organisations to investigate perceptions of effective arts partnerships.

Focus Groups

In October 2023, Focus Groups were convened, comprising a diverse mix of school representatives, including head teachers and teachers, as well as staff from cultural organisations.

The first focus group aimed to gather insights into preferences and perspectives regarding partnerships, utilising a sequencing exercise. The central question guiding this focus group was, 'What is most important when designing arts partnerships with schools?' To explore perceptions, participants were presented with a curated list of characteristics, each representing an aspect of arts partnerships. The selected characteristics for ranking included:

- cultural diversity,

- breadth of content,

- collaboration,

- interdisciplinary approaches,

- inclusion and

- transformative power.

These elements were chosen based on their perceived relevance and potential impact on the efficacy and success of arts partnerships within educational contexts, as highlighted in our year two interim report. The sequencing exercise was designed to encourage participants to critically evaluate and prioritise these characteristics according to their perceived importance. Furthermore, it aimed to explore the hierarchy of priorities and generate discussion.

The second focus group considered the question, 'What impact, if any, does arts partnership have on the school and wider community?' This question aimed to explore the broader implications of arts partnerships and their centrality to a school community.

To ensure a comprehensive analysis, both focus group data sets were examined using thematic analysis. This involved coding the data to identify recurring patterns and themes. The initial codes were then compared and refine the coding scheme. Through this rigorous process, a consensus was reached on the final set of themes, which are presented below. This methodological approach ensured that the analysis

was thorough, unbiased, and reflective of the diverse perspectives gathered from the participants.

Collaboration is central to curriculum development
A collaboration between an arts organisation and a school holds significant potential for shaping curriculum development. The centrality of curriculum development was highlighted in our year two report which stated:

> Attendees warned that individual school approaches to curriculum implementation have the potential to become formulaic and overly concerned with policy compliancy. (Stakeholder roundtable discussion)

To impact curriculum, a shared understanding and meaningful practices need to be developed, practices that go beyond the experiences of both partners. The quotes below illustrate how crucial aspects like inclusion, transformation, and diverse content rely on the depth of such partnerships. Additionally, the exploration of cultural diversity stands out as a priority for many schools.

> Unless the arts organisation and the school, work collaboratively, then none of the other things like inclusion, transformation, breath on content will happen. I want to develop our cultural diversity offer. I'm interested in getting organisations in school to help us develop so that we're moving beyond what we know.

> Partnership work must have transformative power, because if not who is it going to have value for? Inclusion is also a major factor, if I'm choosing an arts partnership or developing an arts partnership, it must be inclusive. It must also be a dialogue about this is what we have to offer (cultural organisation) and a menu of options and then it's about exploring what is going to fit with what our objectives are in school. Those three things rule every decision we make in terms of arts partners.

> The breadth of content is for the school to decide. That not for an arts organisation to make. This links back to the curriculum and knowing the school and the pupils and curriculum journey.

> You have to have a specific reason to be part of a project and think about how it builds on the learning. We've got a strategic view from reception all the way to year 6 and that learning journey is enhanced by projects. In our school we worked with the researchers and an organisation exploring composing and we've talked about how different things, different parts of what we've researched impacts and that fed into our curriculum.

Quality Assurance
Ensuring the quality of partnerships is a critical aspect of successful collaboration, and BAS can play a pivotal role in alleviating concerns related to quality assurance for schools. As expressed in the quotes, quality assurance involves more than just

evaluation—it's about providing advisory support and follow-up to guarantee that the partnership meets the desired standards. By offering expertise and support in evaluation, it becomes a valuable resource, allowing schools to focus on making informed decisions while ensuring the enduring quality of the partnership.

> It's about quality assurance. You know you can't go out to see the work that those people have done so it's like I seek the advisory and evaluation of previous projects.

> It's a service that's about quality assurance, but also following up about the partnerships and checking how it's going. I think BAS could help with that. If they could do evaluation and discussions, then you can spend the quality time to make sure you are making the right decisions. Someone helping with that would be useful.

> BAS is a connector, it's hard to find an arts organisation to work with especially if you have a specific thing you want to do and teacher just don't have time.

> It would be great to just have something online that I can go to that gives a real understanding of arts organisation do which would save time as all the information is there. That platform is important.

> If you see BAS are working with then that becomes a sort of kite mark or a recommendation to work with them. You can't just look on Google for these things as it's too much of a risk but that's where BAS can help giving that assurance.

> Because the bridges have ended it fills a gap, arts connect can't do that anymore, and it fills the space once occupied by the bridges, but it is more localised.

> BAS Covers the whole of Birmingham. That's a lot of teachers, that's bigger than a school network and a local network. This has the capacity to really create a network of teachers that can make transformative change at higher levels than just their classroom.

Further to this, one participant suggested BAS could provide funding reflection and planning meetings to support the development of impactful partnerships:

> ...supporting funding where joint planning can happen.

Constantly shifting timetables and space in the curriculum for the arts
Time afforded to arts subjects is in decline, as highlighted by research from the Cultural Learning Alliance. This reduction in time allocation significantly impacts the sustainability and integration of arts partnerships within the curriculum. During our focus groups, this issue was a recurrent theme, illustrating the challenges faced by educators and cultural organisations alike. One participant, shared their experience:

I'm a dance specialist. And through the years that I've been teaching dance at my school, dance has changed within the school. It's been there at Key Stage 3. It's not been there. It's been there for a term. It's been there for three terms. So, it's quite difficult sometimes to establish partnerships based on the climate and the context of what else is going on in school.

This quote underscores the instability of arts education within schools. The inconsistency in the presence of dance in the curriculum, fluctuating between being offered for different durations or not at all, creates significant barriers to forming and maintaining effective partnerships. The dynamic nature of arts provision means that establishing long-term, impactful relationships with external arts organisations becomes a challenging endeavour.

Another participant echoed these sentiments:

It's just a constantly shifting programme and timetable...SLT can be a barrier.

The reference to the "constantly shifting programme and timetable" highlights the broader issue of scheduling and structural changes within schools, which can hinder the integration of arts programmes. Moreover, the mention of Senior Leadership Teams (SLT) as potential barriers points to the administrative challenges and the need for supportive leadership to prioritise and stabilise arts education. Furthermore, the discussion pointed to the need for systemic change:

You could have a fabulous music department, but if your school doesn't actually give   it time then it's not embedded. It's only going to stay over there. It needs to come from the top. There needs to be a system shift and a philosophical shift from our government. That's the way I see it.

This statement emphasises the crucial role of institutional and governmental support in embedding arts education within the school system. Even with excellent departmental resources and initiatives, without adequate time allocation and a supportive framework from school leadership and policymakers, arts education remains peripheral. The call for a "system shift and a philosophical shift from our government" suggests that a more profound and foundational change is necessary to ensure that arts education is valued.

Shared dialogues that can impact curriculum development
Fostering shared dialogues between schools and arts organisations emerged as a key theme from the focus groups. Both cultural organisations and schools noted the profound implications that a shared dialogue could have for curriculum development. However, the challenge identified in the focus groups was understanding the distinct worlds that each institution inhabits—be it a school, museum, gallery, or performance space—each with its unique language and potential barriers. Bridging this gap requires a shift for both schools and organisations. While teachers navigate the National Curriculum (NC) and Ofsted requirements, arts organisations operate within different frameworks and constraints. One participant articulated this challenge well:

We need to understand each other's worlds. We all talk about cultural learning and programmes, but they look different in every school or museum, gallery, performance space. Each place has its own language, and the differences can be a barrier. If you talk to teachers, we will naturally talk about the NC, Ofsted, and all of those things; however, if you talk to museums, for example, they don't have those rigid boxes to fill. They are different worlds.

This quote highlights the necessity of mutual understanding and communication. The "different worlds" of schools and cultural organisations can lead to misunderstandings and missed opportunities for collaboration. Schools are often constrained by rigid frameworks such as the National Curriculum and Ofsted inspections, which shape their priorities and practices. In contrast, arts organisations may have more flexibility but also different goals and operational structures, which do not always align with the educational mandates faced by schools. The focus groups emphasised that creating a shared understanding is crucial for developing an arts-rich curriculum. This shared understanding would enable both schools and arts organisations to better align their efforts, making it possible to integrate arts more effectively into the educational experience. It requires an openness to learning about each other's constraints and possibilities, as well as a commitment to finding common ground.

The need for a shared dialogue also points to the importance of ongoing communication and relationship-building. Establishing regular channels for dialogue can help demystify each institution's processes and expectations, fostering a collaborative environment where arts partnerships can thrive. This, in turn, can lead to more sustainable and impactful arts education, benefiting students by providing a richer, more diverse learning experience.

Therefore, fostering shared dialogues and understanding between schools and arts organisations is not just beneficial but essential for creating an enriched curriculum that leverages the strengths of both educational and cultural institutions. The insights from our focus groups clearly indicate that overcoming the barriers between these "different worlds" is a vital step towards achieving this goal.

Wider school and community impact
Arts partnerships extend far beyond the classroom, fostering a wider impact within schools and communities alike. Through collaborative initiatives, these partnerships have the potential to enrich the overall school environment and significantly enhance learners' educational experiences. Furthermore, the effects extend into the community; creating connections and cultural engagement that transcend the educational setting, contributing to a more vibrant and interconnected community. Aspects such as parental engagement, co-creation, performances, trips and visits, as well as culturally relevant programmes, were all noted as having a significant impact on engagement and were seen to be crucial to successful partnership working. One participant highlighted the importance of community relationships:

We need a relationship with the community. So going in and talking to parents about the arts, creativity also doing that work with young people before they go

to things like shows. Sometimes things like Shakespeare can be intimidating and hard to understand, it could make you feel excluded so these sorts of engagement help.

This underscores the need for proactive engagement with both parents and learners to demystify and make arts more accessible. By preparing young people and involving parents, arts partnerships can help bridge the gap between cultural experiences and the community, making them more inclusive and less intimidating.

Another participant noted the necessity for arts organisations to adapt:

I think it's also about organisations changing their programming as well, because maybe you change the kind of theatre or the kind of things on offer so that you're going out into the community with something for them that's more relatable rather than expecting them to come to you.

This statement highlights the importance of arts organisations tailoring their offerings to meet the community's needs. By bringing relatable and relevant cultural experiences to the community, these organisations can foster deeper connections and engagement.

Additionally, the challenge of parental support for arts education was mentioned:

A lot of our families struggle with allowing their young people to pick arts subjects. Kids really have that passion, but sometimes their parents aren't necessarily on that same level.

This illustrates a common barrier where parental attitudes towards arts education can impact students' choices and engagement. Addressing this requires targeted efforts to educate and involve parents, helping them understand the value and benefits of arts education.

The concept of co-creation was also emphasised:

Co-creation is important for partnership; it has to work on both sides and not just something that's helicoptered into school.

Effective partnerships are built on mutual collaboration and shared goals. Co-creation ensures that arts initiatives are integrated into the school environment meaningfully, rather than being externally imposed without consideration of the school's context. Participants also noted the natural extension of arts experiences into the community:

The children will automatically take whatever that artistic experience out into the wider community. But it can be helped by sharing it, like a concert.

Public sharing of arts experiences, such as concerts, amplifies the impact of these initiatives, allowing the wider community to benefit and engage with the students' creative work.

Finally, the positive representation of students through community performances was highlighted:

> We always try to look at our position in the community and kind of representing our students in the best light. We've tried to put a kind of spotlight on the really positive elements. So, the fact that we were able to go out in the community and do performances within the community means we are able to shed a really positive light on the children at our school.

Engaging in community performances not only showcases students' talents but also enhances the school's reputation and strengthens community ties. By highlighting students' positive contributions, schools can foster a sense of pride and connection within the community. Arts partnerships have a profound impact that extends beyond the classroom. By fostering strong relationships with the community, adapting programmes to meet local needs, and engaging parents and students alike, these partnerships can create a more inclusive, vibrant, and interconnected educational community.

Long-term partnerships
The significance of long-term partnership working extends well beyond the immediate educational context, encompassing both the school environment and the broader community. For impactful and sustained collaboration, adequate support from both funding sources and partners is crucial. This support is essential to nurture relationships that not only enrich the curriculum but also foster enduring connections between staff and professionals. While the benefits of long-term partnerships are apparent in various artistic disciplines, there is a recognition that certain domains, such as art and design, face specific challenges in establishing and maintaining these extended collaborations.

One participant described the benefits of long-term projects:

> We have had a project that has been lasting for the school but lasted a long time and over many years. High-quality arts partnerships develop the staff, as well as model good work, good practice with staff. The hope is that you have staff that want to take that and have a go themselves.

This quote highlights the dual benefit of long-term partnerships: they not only enhance the student experience but also provide professional development opportunities for staff. By modelling good practices, these partnerships inspire teachers to integrate arts more effectively into their teaching.

Another participant shared their experience with a sustained partnership:

> We have had a partnership at my school with a dance company in Birmingham, which we've built up that partnership and that relationship for a number of years now. And we've worked with them over those years in many ways to enrich the students' lives, which has been lovely to see. We don't necessarily have the time for all the resources which they help with, as well as they

work with us academically to benefit the children, and help bring students to perform at Carnival. They have worked with us in lots of different ways because we've built up that relationship where they can help us to be rich.

This example illustrates how long-term partnerships can provide comprehensive support, from resources and academic collaboration to opportunities for student performances. The depth of the relationship allows for multifaceted engagement, enriching the students' educational experiences and the school's cultural offerings.

However, there are challenges in certain artistic disciplines, as noted by an art specialist:

> As a secondary art specialist, I hear a lot about long-term provision with arts partners in other areas. I feel for art there is less of that, and it's more a one-off occasion. I hear a lot about the benefits of a longer-term programme. I don't really have any point to make other than that it just feels a little bit separate for art as much less of this work happens.

This perspective underscores the disparity in long-term partnership opportunities across different arts disciplines. While some areas benefit from sustained collaborations, others, like art and design, often experience more sporadic engagement. This suggests a need for targeted efforts to develop long-term partnerships in these underrepresented areas, ensuring that all artistic disciplines receive equal support and opportunities for enrichment. Long-term partnerships are invaluable in creating enriched educational experiences and fostering strong connections between schools and arts organisations. However, achieving these sustained collaborations requires consistent support and a recognition of the unique challenges faced by different artistic disciplines. By addressing these disparities, we can ensure that all students benefit from the profound impact of long-term arts partnerships.

Concluding Summary

The focus group findings underscore the critical importance of fostering meaningful partnerships between schools and arts organisations for curriculum development, shared dialogues, and broader community impact. These partnerships are not only vital for enriching the educational experience but also for embedding cultural engagement within the school environment and beyond.

However, for these partnerships to be truly effective, they must be supported by quality assurance mechanisms and designed for long-term collaboration. Sustained partnerships have the potential to extend their impact beyond individual classrooms to the entire school community, thereby promoting a culture of continuous learning and artistic appreciation. Long-term relationships allow for deeper integration of arts into the curriculum, providing ongoing professional development for teachers and consistent, enriching experiences for students.

The findings also highlight the necessity of understanding and bridging the distinct

worlds that schools and arts organisations inhabit. Establishing a shared dialogue is crucial for aligning goals and creating cohesive programmes that are responsive to the needs of both educators and cultural practitioners. This mutual understanding facilitates the co-creation of arts initiatives that are meaningful, relevant, and sustainable. Additionally, the research reveals that the impact of arts partnerships extends far beyond the classroom, fostering wider community engagement. Through initiatives such as parental involvement, community performances, and culturally relevant programmes, these partnerships can build stronger connections between schools and their local communities, making the arts more accessible and relatable. The role of BAS is important; by acting as brokers for collaboration and engagement BAS facilitates the creation and nurturing of these partnerships. BAS helps ensure that the arts remain an integral part of the educational experience, providing the necessary support and resources to sustain long-term collaborations.

In conclusion, the focus group findings clearly demonstrate that well-supported, long-term arts partnerships are essential for creating a rich, dynamic educational environment. These partnerships enhance the curriculum, foster shared understanding, and have a lasting impact on both the school and the wider community. The ongoing work of organisations like BAS is crucial in realising the full potential of these partnerships, ensuring that arts education continues to thrive and evolve. Eight key themes emerged summarise below:

1. **Partnership Characteristics:** The first focus group identified key characteristics of effective arts partnerships, including cultural diversity, breadth of content, collaboration, interdisciplinary approaches, inclusion, and transformative power. Participants critically evaluated and prioritised these characteristics, highlighting the importance of collaboration for curriculum development and the necessity of inclusion and transformative potential in arts partnerships.

2. **Impact on Curriculum Development**: Collaboration between arts organisations and schools is essential for meaningful curriculum development. The focus groups emphasised that such partnerships must go beyond compliance with policy and foster inclusion, transformation, and diverse content to be effective.

3. **Quality Assurance:** Ensuring the quality of partnerships is crucial. BAS can play a pivotal role in quality assurance by providing advisory support, evaluation, and follow-up. This helps schools make informed decisions and maintain high standards in their arts partnerships.

4. **Challenges of Time Allocation for Arts:** The declining time allocated to arts subjects in schools poses a significant challenge to sustaining arts partnerships. Inconsistent scheduling and administrative barriers hinder the integration of arts programmes within the curriculum.

5. **Need for Shared Dialogues:** Effective arts partnerships require a shared dialogue between schools and arts organisations. Understanding the distinct operational frameworks and constraints of each institution is essential for successful collaboration. Regular communication can bridge these gaps, fostering a collaborative environment for arts integration.

6. **Wider School and Community Impact:** Arts partnerships extend beyond

the classroom, enriching the school environment and fostering community engagement. Parental involvement, culturally relevant programmes, and community performances are critical components of successful partnerships, enhancing the overall impact on both students and the community.

7. **Benefits of Long-Term Partnerships:** Long-term partnerships provide significant benefits, including professional development for staff and enriched student experiences. Sustained collaborations allow for comprehensive support, from resources and academic cooperation to student performance opportunities. However, certain disciplines, like art and design, face challenges in establishing long-term partnerships.

8. **Systemic Support and Change:** Institutional and governmental support is vital for embedding arts education within the school system. A systemic shift and philosophical change from government and school leadership are necessary to prioritise and stabilise arts education, ensuring its integration into the curriculum and broader educational experience.

Interviews

Between March 2024 and June 2024, the research team conducted a series of interviews with 15 stakeholders from schools and cultural organisations. The primary objective of these interviews was to explore perceptions of the impact of BAS. Through these interviews, we aimed to not only understand and gain knowledge of impacts on schools and the broader community but also to discern the nuanced ways in which arts partnerships are perceived, experienced, and valued by those involved in their execution and collaboration. These interviews not only shed light on the current arts education landscape but also offer insight into perceptions of potential avenues for future development and growth of BAS.

The interviews have been thematised and are presented below.

Increasing knowledge and visibility of cultural organisation offers to schools

The interim evaluation report (Kinsella et al, 2023) has been instrumental in shedding light on the critical need for increased visibility and connectivity between cultural organisations and schools. According to the report, cultural organisations have expressed a pressing need for heightened awareness among schools regarding their offerings, emphasising the need for BAS to facilitate this awareness and highlight their high-quality work and suitability. In response to this need, BAS has significantly extended its efforts in the third year to enhance the publicity surrounding cultural organisations' offerings. Through initiatives such as the BAS website, expanded social media presence, targeted communication directly to schools, and arts showcases, BAS has actively nurtured vital connections between cultural organisations and schools. The impacts of these initiatives are evidenced through these quotes from cultural organisations:

> We don't work so much in secondary schools because it's easier to get into primary schools and there's fewer barriers, to be honest. The work in the secondary school [via arts showcase] is making our work more visible for the upper year groups.

> I guess having a central organisation with a platform, opportunity space, you know, we just wouldn't have had the opportunity to provide that ourselves.... it's just great to be given access to those platforms in the arts and education sector and schools.

> I think we've been able to really push our offer and really share what we're doing and the pathways for doing that. BAS were clear and easy, and you know which is not the case with other, you know, cultural education partnerships that we've worked with.

> It's sometimes hard to access teachers, so what's happening with BAS being able to fund these places, you know providing us with a small budget to put

those events on. It kind of really elevates what we're able to do.

We're working with a number of schools that we've not contacted before, so instantly we are in touch with whole load of different schools, and you know there is this tricky thing. And I noticed from the education world, it's really hard, that unless you know somebody in a place, it can be really difficult. I've really struggled as their schools in the area that I'm trying to get in touch with and you try and go through reception. You know you try and go through the office, try and go through the head. It's just it's really difficult to breakthrough sometimes.

Just having access to that additional wider network is really important.

It's giving us a chance to really show off what we do here.

While BAS has successfully facilitated cultural organisations in expanding their outreach to new schools, the conversion of these engagements into paid, long-term partnerships remains a challenge. This aspect highlights the need for strategic focus and concerted efforts to optimise outcomes. To address this challenge, BAS could play a crucial role in identifying funding opportunities to sustain these partnerships. Additionally, by acting as a liaison between schools and organisations, BAS could explore diverse funding avenues, fostering mutual financial support and sustainability.

Further quotes from cultural organisations shed light on both their proactive approach and the challenges they face in sustaining their work and converting inquiries into concrete engagements:

We've booked about 20 workshops. But those were all ones that we had had funded ourselves.

Moreover, while organisations successfully secured workshops, they expressed a desire for more sustained engagement with schools. These quotes highlight further challenges:

A lot of the bookings that have come from Birmingham Art School have been   short one-off sessions, more like introductory sessions. Longer-term interventions in schools would be really nice as this would sustain our work.

I've had a few inquiries through that people saying they've seen us advertised on there [website]. But, none of it's actually come to anything. There's been a few emails and then it's all gone quiet. But I guess at some point they might get back when they've made a decision on what it is they need and what they're going to do.

...in terms of actual bookings, yes, but in terms of actual income generation, we haven't had any.

The prevalence of short, one-off sessions indicates that they are often introductory in nature, serving as initial touchpoints rather than long-term interventions. This suggests a gap between their current engagements and their aspirations for deeper, more impactful involvement within schools. The challenges in converting inquiries into bookings and revenue further underscore the complexities of engaging with schools and the broader education sector. Despite receiving inquiries, the organisation struggles to translate interest into tangible outcomes, reflecting a common hurdle faced by cultural organisations. This emphasises the importance of refining communication strategies and follow-up processes to capitalise on opportunities effectively.

In navigating these challenges, the role of BAS networks emerges as crucial.

> Time to network is really important and can also provide a different space to share and explore mutual challenges that could be explored through a partnership project.

> We have access to networks... it's really easy to post opportunities and invitations to the head teachers and the teachers within that network. So, anyone who's signed up gets our notifications.

These quotes highlight the value of networking in amplifying visibility, fostering collaboration, and addressing common challenges within the cultural education ecosystem. BAS provides a platform for organisations to connect with relevant stakeholders, share experiences, and disseminate information, ultimately enhancing engagement and collaboration within the community.

Overall, while the cultural organisations demonstrate initiative and engagement in their interactions with schools, there is a clear need for strategic focus on sustainability, deeper engagement, and optimising conversion rates for inquiries. Leveraging BAS networks can play a pivotal role in addressing these challenges, amplifying visibility, and fostering collaboration within the cultural education sector.

The Cultural Map

The Cultural Landscapes Map serves as a tool in fostering collaboration between cultural organisations and schools in Birmingham. This interactive platform offers a holistic view of the schools engaged with various cultural activities, empowering organisations with valuable insights for strategic decision-making and outreach efforts. Organisations can leverage this map to identify potential collaboration opportunities, particularly targeting schools they have not previously engaged with or those situated in areas with limited access to cultural activities or facing socioeconomic challenges.

For instance, organisations have used the map to target schools with limited prior involvement in arts and cultural activities, effectively addressing gaps in participation and expanding their outreach to underserved communities. This strategic approach not only enhances the reach and impact of cultural initiatives but also contributes to

addressing disparities in access to cultural education. These cultural organisations stated:

> I've used that in terms of the work I do, to really to help pinpoint the schools considered as a part of our outreach.

> there's a certain amount of data available about like, you know, the various demographics of the Birmingham wards and stuff. But obviously it's hard to see individual schools, the schools that we've shortlisted and that we've pitched to specifically for this project were all at the bottom of the list of having had very little to no involvement, at least not regular involvement with arts and organisations.

> It's really helped us with our mapping of our day-to-day activity within the city and where   the cold spots were. So, when you're talking to [funder], you can evidence the cold spots.

> I have looked at the cultural landscapes map and identified a potential area that we could consider working in for our next funded project. I contacted BAS who was able to make the connection between us and the consortium of schools in that area. I then attended a meeting to talk about the project. There is real potential for us to work with them.

> some of the schools we're working in are in quite particularly deprived areas as outlined in the map.

Overall, the Cultural Landscapes Map emerges as a valuable tool in enhancing collaboration, promoting inclusivity, and driving positive change in Birmingham. Its role in guiding strategic decision-making, facilitating targeted outreach, and fostering partnerships underscores its significance as a catalyst for promoting equitable access to cultural opportunities for all learners.

The need for arts partnerships and associated funding

In the interviews, a resounding need for arts partnerships emerged as a crucial component of enriching young people's educational experiences. Teachers emphasised the value of collaborations with organisations, particularly when it comes to professional development and innovative content delivery methods.

> We really value partnership with organisations, especially when it offers us continued professional development or helps us to think about new ways of delivering content.

Furthermore, there was a recognition of the deficit in visual arts education within schools. Some educators highlighted the challenges they face due to limited training and expertise in this field.

I think from what I know of schools, they're really keen to get more visual arts help, shall we say they have a lot of teachers who have no background, no training. I mean some of them, they've done very few hours in their teacher training, and they're expected to deliver it and quite a few of them are desperate for help with visual arts, I would say.

Moreover, interviewees underscored the transformative potential of collaboration between cultural organisations and schools. Rather than a unilateral approach, there was a consensus on the necessity of mutual engagement and co-creation:

...a way to bridge or bring the cultural organisations and schools together, rather than one doing to the other.

However, despite the evident benefits of arts partnerships, funding remains a persistent challenge. Stakeholders discussed the financial constraints hindering the realisation of collaborative initiatives. Addressing this issue requires strategic intervention and innovative solutions to secure sustainable funding streams and support mechanisms. Thus, while the demand for arts partnerships is clear and compelling, unlocking their full potential hinges upon overcoming financial barriers and facilitating meaningful collaboration.

I think it's where they have a large number of pupil premium. They can probably afford it and see it as a worthwhile way spending some of that money.

...there's money that schools can apply for that arts organisations can't apply for.

And I guess, yeah, I guess continued CPD training for, you know, head teachers to be able to apply for funding to sort of unlock these pots of money. Yeah, I think that's that's kind of what's missing really. You know, if you can't afford it in your budget, how else could you make it happen in your in your school?

The centrality of BAS's future post funding

As BAS approaches a key point with funding coming to a close in July 2024, stakeholders expressed diverse perspectives and aspirations regarding its future role and impact. Many of the stakeholders noted BAS's increased engagement in this final year and the need for this to continue and grow. Further to this, they emphasised the significance of BAS's virtual model and place, not as a school, but serving schools and cultural organisations.

I feel like the most interaction with BAS has happened over the last year. And I think it [the cultural organisation programme offer] is picking up so that it would be a great shame to for that not to continue.

So, this idea of BAS being a virtual school that really chimes with our vision. The idea of education not stopping at school age, education being, you know, really central to what we do for all of our visitors, for all of our, you know, for

the adults who work here, for all of our partners.

However, although there is recognition of BAS's accomplishments as noted earlier in this section, there remain further considerations regarding its scope and inclusivity. Observations regarding bias towards certain art forms and larger organisations underscore the need for equitable opportunities and broader representation within BAS's framework. Stakeholders discussed and hoped BAS will advocate for more diverse partnerships, embracing emerging talents, and respond dynamically to the evolving needs of Birmingham's cultural ecosystem:

> I do the get the impression that they're more sort of drama and performing arts biased. So, I don't know. My impression is that they prefer to work with larger organisations. But that might just be my perception. There is scope to do more work with smaller organisations and artists.

> Birmingham Art School has, you know, will do or has the opportunity to…to create more of those opportunities where they can pay the artist to deliver stuff in schools for free or subsidise.

According to interviewees, central to BAS's future success is its ability to continue to foster networks and streamline communication channels. Stakeholders emphasised the importance of cohesive collaboration, efficient dissemination of opportunities, and amplification of BAS's overarching message. Furthermore, there is a collective call for BAS to assume a prominent advocacy role, championing the arts amidst challenging times and fostering an interconnected creative community:

> The role they can kind of play in Birmingham is crucial, as a city they really are championing the arts and showing that we desperately need it. You know we're in a bit of a tricky time in the city and need more funding

> … things are happening, but they're not joined up

> To carry on networking with those kind of people and seeing what other arts organisations are doing outside our bubble.

> Getting the message out about what Birmingham Art School stands for. About bringing people together, about training and developments and creating a real buzz about the about the creative arts industry.

The imperative for BAS to diversify its offerings and partnerships was expressed by a range of stakeholders. Many noted the need to broaden BAS's scope to encompass smaller organisations and embrace the experiences they bring to the table. Furthermore, in acknowledging Birmingham's status as a diverse city with a wide range of offers, BAS is poised to catalyse inclusive growth by nurturing partnerships with a wider array of stakeholders. As one stakeholder advocates:

> We need to diversify our work and diversify our partnership more because there are organisations doing similar work in the city and we know

Birmingham is a very diverse cultural area. I think that's probably where Birmingham Art School can also develop.

Moreover, the call for diversification extends beyond mere representation; it encompasses a commitment to staying informed of evolving needs and trends within the community. Therefore, BAS needs to remain agile and proactive, continually seeking out emerging talents, change-makers, and voices that reflect Birmingham's cultural offer. This should be a strategic imperative for BAS's continued relevance and impact. By championing diversity in its partnerships and programming, BAS can foster a more inclusive and representative cultural ecosystem, ensuring that its offerings resonate deeply with the diverse education and cultural communities it serves. These perspectives are highlighted in the quote below:

> We shouldn't still be offering the same things in schools. We should be trying to keep ahead of the game. Who are the freelance people who are the change makers? Who are the young people with young voice? That can say this is what our area of Birmingham needs.

Furthermore, it underscores the necessity for BAS to continuously innovate and adapt its offerings to stay relevant. Identifying and collaborating with freelancers and young change-makers can inject fresh ideas and perspectives into the cultural and educational landscape of Birmingham. In addition to this, the next comments highlight a crucial gap that BAS needs to address: moving beyond mere activity to substantive advancements in creative and pedagogical practices. BAS must focus on not just increasing its presence but also enhancing the quality and impact of its programmes:

> What I don't feel is that we are moving creative and pedagogical practice on, and I think I would like to see Birmingham Art School doing that. It's not good enough just to have more stuff happening and more stuff happening in places it hasn't happened before.

> ...there are years' worth of good practice in the city and some absolutely excellent providers who have influence nationally and they're not necessarily the big organisations either.

These insights emphasise the value of recognising and collaborating with smaller, yet highly influential, local organisations. To do this, one interviewee explored the potential of rather than creating entirely new frameworks, BAS should focus on revitalising existing structures. This approach can facilitate more efficient and effective partnership working, ensuring that established networks and practices are utilised to their fullest potential:

> We needed to reinvigorate the structures or rethink the structures that we already have, not invent a new one.

> There are a lot of the same people around the tables.

To foster genuine inclusivity and innovation, BAS must strive to include new and diverse voices in its decision-making processes. Expanding the range of participants can lead to richer discussions and more comprehensive solutions. Effective partnerships are not just about collaboration but also about amplifying the message and impact. BAS should prioritise communication strategies that highlight the successes and opportunities within its network, making sure that both parents and the public are aware of the valuable work being done.

> True partnership working is getting the messaging out there and true effective impact is about partnerships.
>
> There is great stuff happening all over Birmingham in schools, but you know parents might not know about it nor the public...we really need to make space in the city where that stuff like this is put on a public sphere.

Engaging parents as key stakeholders can serve as a gateway for broader community involvement and partnership working. Creating public platforms to showcase these initiatives can increase visibility and support for BAS's programmes, fostering a more connected and informed community.

In conclusion, BAS must not only diversify its partnerships but also actively seek out and integrate a wide array of voices and practices. By doing so, it can maintain its relevance and effectiveness, ensuring its cultural and educational offerings resonate deeply within Birmingham's diverse communities.

The need to support small organisations and professionals newly starting out

Additionally, BAS could play a role in supporting and nurturing new and early-career artists, as well as professionals within the cultural sector, by providing mentorship, training, and networking opportunities tailored to their needs:

> I'm fairly confident about what I'm doing now, but when I was starting out, I think a lot of networking and working with other artists would have helped. I don't know if they could do some sort of, you know, for people who are just starting out, working in schools and things...like shadow, or something like that. I think would have been really useful at the beginning. I mean, I don't really feel like I need it now, but if that would have been a possibility just to, you know, shadow or help someone out who was going into schools and see how they do it and just that would have been useful I think.
>
> ...networking events and things generally they tend to be when I'm working... they can also often be at a cost that freelancers can't afford.
>
> I have brought some early career colleagues to some events, and they get a lot out of them. There could be more to support their progression.

Curriculum development and change

The impact of arts education outreach initiatives lies not only in the delivery of curriculum but also in the capacity to challenge and innovate within educational frameworks. As stakeholders emphasise, there exists a delicate balance between working within the curriculum's constraints and pushing its boundaries. Arts organisations are uniquely positioned to challenge pedagogy, fostering imaginative approaches to curriculum delivery and encouraging learning both in and through the arts. However, this endeavour must be tempered by a pragmatic understanding of the classroom realities and the imperative to align with curriculum objectives to effect meaningful change.

Amidst funding constraints and short-term pressures, the arts education sector grapples with the need for sustained innovation and the tension between meeting funding criteria and addressing genuine educational needs. Moreover, there is a recognition that schools seek more than just supplementary activities; they value initiatives that offer unique value propositions beyond what teachers can deliver independently. Ultimately, the efficacy of arts education outreach efforts hinges on their ability to transcend the confines of what one interviewee called "artsy farty" realm and deliver tangible, impactful outcomes that resonate with the educational community. In response to these challenges and opportunities, interviewees provide valuable insights. One interviewee noted:

> There has to be some kind of balance between working with the curriculum and challenging the curriculum. I think arts organisations should be able to challenge curriculum, challenge pedagogy and find really imaginative ways of teaching the curriculum. Whether it's learning in the arts or learning through the arts. We have hugely creative people to bring to the table to have conversations, but we have to be mindful of the realities of the classroom and we have to work within the curriculum if we're going to have any impact.

Another interviewee highlighted the prevalent issue of short-termism driven by funding limitations, stating:

> There's a lot of short-termism. These are problems for the wider arts education outreach sector where funding is limited. There can be a pressure to build projects to fit the funding criteria rather than what is really needed. Sometimes you can feel that funders want to see the next big thing not just keep funding things that work well and need sustaining. Innovation comes from developing and evaluating ideas/projects over time, not from constantly trying new things or always trying to reach new people.

It was also emphasised that schools seek initiatives that offer unique value propositions beyond activities teachers can deliver themselves:

> They [schools] don't want things that teachers can deliver themselves.

Finally, one interviewee cautioned against adopting a narrow focus on participation and artistic output without considering the tangible educational outcomes desired by schools. They expressed:

> I think we [arts organisations] can just go terribly inwards into thinking participating is wonderful and as long as we make something at the end of the day, we've all done good. And that's not good enough for schools.

These insights collectively illuminate the challenges and opportunities present in curriculum development underscoring the importance of striking a balance between creativity and practicality.

BAS Funding for events and projects

Participants discussed the importance of BAS funding in overcoming barriers and elevating their capacity to engage with schools. One noted:

> It's sometimes hard to access teachers, but with BAS providing us with a small budget to put on events, it really elevates what we're able to do.

This sentiment highlights how financial support enables cultural organisations to reach teachers and students more effectively, thereby enhancing the visibility and impact of their work. Moreover, BAS funding facilitates collaborations with artists and supports professional development initiatives. Participants highlighted how this financial backing enables them to approach artists with concrete project proposals, fostering meaningful partnerships and assisting artists in developing their practice. As one interviewee remarked:

> It's allowed me to approach artists and say, you know, we have this bit of funding. Here's the vision for what we'd like to do because actually we're offering them a body of work.

This demonstrates how BAS funding serves as a catalyst for creative collaborations and skill development within sector. However, despite the benefits of BAS funding, some interviewees expressed concerns about the limited uptake of certain events, particularly showcases designed to provide schools with brief insights into organisational work. They voiced concerns regarding the effectiveness of showcases organised with BAS support, noting poor attendance and limited impact. One participant expressed dissatisfaction, stating:

> I feel like the showcases, I feel like they've had minimal effect... the attendance, the ones that I've been involved with, has been quite poor. I don't know what, what were they trying to do exactly?

This highlights the importance of critically evaluating the design and objectives of events to ensure they align with the needs and preferences of schools. Additionally, interviewees suggested that BAS should adopt a more inclusive approach when organising showcases, catering to a diverse range of art forms and preferences. As

one participant pointed out:

> I feel like the showcases suit certain art forms and not others, so I think they [BAS] need to think more inclusively about what's suited for all art forms.

This feedback underscores the importance of considering the diverse interests and preferences of schools when planning events, thereby maximising engagement and impact. In summary, while BAS funding plays a vital role in supporting cultural organisations and fostering collaborations, there is a need for ongoing evaluation and refinement of event strategies to ensure they effectively meet the needs of schools, cultural organisations and optimise engagement opportunities within the arts education sector.

Birmingham Arts School's Future

Reflections on the future of BAS initiatives reveal a consensus among interviewees on key areas of focus, including collaboration, professional development, and strategic planning. Interviewees advocate for increased awareness of alternative business models and working methodologies, highlighting the need for quality professional development opportunities for educators. Interviewees underscored a desire for greater exposure to diverse business models and innovative approaches within the arts education sector. As one participant noted:

> There isn't enough awareness of the other kinds of business models or ways of working that might be out there.

This reflects a recognition of the importance of exploring new paradigms to address emerging challenges and opportunities in arts education. Moreover, interviewees state the critical role of quality professional development in supporting educators at both primary and secondary levels. By providing opportunities for teachers to enhance their skills and knowledge, BAS initiatives can contribute to the overall improvement of arts education in Birmingham. As expressed by one participant:

> Quality professional development for classroom teachers at primary and secondary is needed and helping get people to come along to those kinds of events.

In addition to professional development, interviewees advocate for initiatives that foster collaboration and dialogue around pedagogy and creative practice. By bringing together diverse stakeholders to discuss common challenges and explore innovative solutions, BAS can facilitate the sharing of expertise and best practices across domains. As one participant articulated: "...having conversations about pedagogy and creative practice".

While some express perceptions regarding the tangible impact of BAS initiatives thus far, there is a consensus on the necessity of big-picture strategic thinking and sustained efforts to transform pedagogy, curriculum, and practice within the city. Interviewees stated the need for strategic planning and collaboration among

senior education leaders, artists, educators, and managers to address systemic challenges and drive long-term change. As one participant suggested: "There needs to be big picture strategic thinking." This underscores the importance of adopting a holistic approach to arts education that considers the needs and perspectives of all involved in the education of young people. As BAS moves forward, the challenge lies in harnessing the collective wisdom and expertise of key stakeholders to drive meaningful change and innovation. This requires a strategic approach to matchmaking and collaboration, as well as ongoing efforts to promote dialogue and knowledge sharing within the arts education community. Ultimately, the success of BAS initiatives will depend on their ability to impact pedagogy, curriculum, and practice in the city, driving positive outcomes for educators, learners, and cultural organisations alike.

Concluding summary

In the interviews, several themes emerged, shedding light on current experiences of arts and culture in the city, the role and impact of BAS as well as the future potential of BAS partnership. Eight key points include:

1. **Increased Visibility and Connectivity:** BAS initiatives have significantly enhanced the visibility of cultural organisations to schools through platforms like the BAS website, expanded social media presence, targeted communications, and arts showcases. These efforts have facilitated connections and opened doors to new opportunities.

2. **Challenges in Conversion to Long-Term Partnerships:** While BAS has successfully facilitated initial engagements, converting these into sustained, paid partnerships remains a challenge. Strategic focus on identifying funding opportunities and acting as a liaison between schools and organisations is crucial for long-term sustainability.

3. **Networking and Collaboration:** BAS's role in fostering networks and collaborations emerged as a main impact of BAS. Furthermore, efficient dissemination of opportunities and advocating for the arts were highlighted as essential functions for BAS.

4. **Cultural Landscapes Map:** The Cultural Landscapes map has proven instrumental in identifying schools for potential collaboration, particularly in underserved communities. It has enabled organisations to target areas with low engagement in cultural activities, promoting equity and access.

5. **Need for Arts Partnerships and Funding:** Stakeholders emphasised the value of arts partnerships in enriching educational experiences and addressing challenges in arts education. However, persistent funding challenges hinder the realisation of collaborative initiatives.

6. **Future of BAS Post-Funding:** As BAS approaches the end of its funding, stakeholders express varied perspectives on its future role and impact. There is a consensus on the need for BAS to continue and grow its engagement, while also

advocating for equitable opportunities and broader representation within the arts community. Seeking funding, supporting funded partnerships or development of bids, development of early career professional, and further networking opportunities were all highlighted as key priorities.

7. **Curriculum Development and Change:** Arts organisations have the potential to challenge and innovate within educational frameworks, but there is a delicate balance between meeting curriculum objectives and pushing boundaries. Stakeholders emphasise the importance of meaningful outcomes and sustained innovation in arts education. A part of this is collaboration between schools and organisations, where true partnerships, ones of shared dialogues and understandings, lead to curriculum development.

8. **Professional Development and Collaboration:** Quality professional development opportunities for educators and initiatives fostering collaboration and dialogue around pedagogy and creative practice are crucial for driving meaningful change and innovation within the arts education sector. BAS have begun to develop good programmes of work that need to be sustained and developed further.

Continued Professional Development

Research indicates that impactful continued professional development (CPD) significantly influences the enhancement of classroom practice, ultimately leading to improved pupil outcomes. Nevertheless, numerous obstacles impede teachers from actively participating in CPD activities. These barriers include financial constraints, school release, the challenge of juggling multiple commitments, time constraints, examination demands, and a scarcity of subject-specific, well-designed CPD programmes that provide a tangible return on investment.

Historically, teacher CPD has been characterised by narrow objectives, often disconnected from teachers' actual needs (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Instead, it frequently aligns with top-down demands dictated by school hierarchical structures and mandates (Apple, 2009). Further challenges such as limited space, time, and resources, coupled with a shortage of professional development opportunities, as well as an overemphasis on standardised tests, pose significant obstacles to effective arts (Hourigan, 2011). Moreover, the term "professional development" itself implies a perception of teachers as "deficient and in need of developing and directing" (Webster-Wright, 2009, p.712).

Despite Henley's (2012) review of Cultural Education in England advocating for a 'Broad Cultural Education for all Children' and the 2019 Ofsted inspection framework underscoring the importance of a 'broad and balanced curriculum', challenges persist in schools recognising the value of cultural learning and the arts. Coupled with this is the lack of time given to arts subjects in teacher and education training. For example, the primary post graduate certificate of education (PGCE) often gives limited time to foundation subjects such as art and design, design and technology, music and dance. This scarcity of arts training can significantly impact teacher confidence. Self-confidence is a major factor in arts provision. Oreck's (2004) research highlights artistic attitudes and self-confidence, rather than arts-rich backgrounds or previously acquired skill sets, are crucial elements for integrating arts into teaching. He contends that professional development can play a significant role in promoting arts-inclusive pedagogy. Furthermore, Ofsted (2012, p.33) states 'there has been a near-absence of any appropriate subject training for subject leaders in primary schools'. In 2023, Ofsted still recognise the need to support teachers with CPD that is appropriately attuned to the curriculum.

In our year two interim report cultural organisations, teachers and stakeholders noted the importance of CPD. We noted:

> Cultural organisations also suggested there was some role for BAS in offering professional development to teachers and cultural practitioners (n=3) and in arts advocacy (n=1). The ability to centralise provision of cultural opportunities was identified as the distinguishing feature between BAS and cultural organisations themselves (n=9). It was hoped that BAS would be able to map existing arts provision, support schools' needs, identify strategic opportunities, and create a centralised content hub. In doing so it would be well-placed to

broker partnerships at a city-wide *level (n=4) and support development (n=4) through large-scale, multi-organisation initiatives and funding bids. (2023, p.33)*

Cultural organisations considered the potential for BAS to provide regular meetings for multi-organisation networking, to run professional development programmes to meet common needs, to encourage skill-sharing between cultural practitioners, and to build impactful, multi-organisation funding bids. (2023, p.34)

In year three, BAS identified a critical need for CPD in the arts to enhance support for its educational provision in schools. BAS's approach to this requirement includes a diverse range of opportunities, incorporating teacher networks and CPD initiatives developed collaboratively with partners from schools and cultural organisations. Through this comprehensive strategy, BAS directly addresses the concerns of both educational institutions and cultural organisations, adopting a more meaningful and impactful approach. Alongside the PD provision, the teacher and arts-link networks provide another space for teachers to share best practice and collectively address challenges. Throughout the academic year 2023 – 2024, BAS significantly expanded its professional development programme, strategically addressing areas of professional need identified by both schools and cultural organisations. In year three **132** schools engaged in a CPD opportunity. The range of opportunities are outlined in **Table 11** below.

CPD Offer	Frequency and Dates
Conference	• Arts in Schools Conference 4th October 2024
Teacher Networks	• Secondary Drama: 6 meetings throughout 23/24 • Secondary Dance: 6 meetings throughout 23/24 • Secondary Visual Art: 5 meetings throughout 23/24 • Arts link primary: 3 meetings throughout 23/24
CPD courses delivered by Cultural Organisations for Schools	• 23rd January – Ex Cathedra for Primary Schools • 14th March – Ikon Gallery CPD for Secondary Schools • 18th March – One Dance UK CPD for Primary Schools • 12th June – Ace Dance and Music CPD • 13th June – BAS Led CPD for Teachers and Cultural leads in producing festivals • 1st July – Stan's Café CPD
CPD for cultural organisations	• 23rd February - Rethinking the cultural learning curriculum though collaboration with artists, teachers, and academic researchers

CPD Offer	Frequency and Dates
Arts Partnership Showcases	• 6th February 2024 – Percy Shurmer Academy with Stan's Café and The Play House • 1st March 2024 – Birmingham Royal Ballet and Fabric • 14th March – Birmingham Open Media

Table 11 - PD opportunities offered by BAS.

To investigate the influence of CPD and teacher networks, the researchers adopted a triangulated data collection strategy, encompassing observations and interviews with key stakeholders and recipients of the professional development opportunities. The analysis of these data sets is organised and presented below through thematic headings.

Teacher Networks

Teacher networks have played a vital role in the professional development and support offer by BAS. These networks have been led and planned by key stakeholders, ranging from arts organisations to senior leaders in schools. Each network received a small grant from BAS to support provision and develop a distinct programme, addressing key challenges, motivations, and areas deemed most significant for subject specialisms. The networks have provided a platform for teachers to connect, collaborate, and share best practices, resources, and experiences. By engaging with peers in similar roles, the teachers have gained access to a diverse range of perspectives and expertise, which can help them refine their teaching strategies and address challenges more effectively. Additionally, the teacher networks have offered opportunities for ongoing learning, mentorship, and the exchange of innovative ideas, ultimately contributing to continuous improvement in teaching quality. Furthermore, these networks foster a sense of belonging and camaraderie among the teachers, promoting a supportive and collaborative culture. Overall, the teacher networks have served as an important resource for professional growth, empowerment, and community-building.

During interviews with network leads, attendees at network meetings and observations, significant themes surfaced regarding their impact, these are presented under thematic headings.

Connection and community building

The networks serve as knowledge exchange spaces for building and nurturing connections between teachers across a range of phases and differing contexts. One key aspect of the networks is that they have provided teachers the opportunity to come together, share experiences, and forge relations. Through collaborative discussions and shared learning experiences, the teachers have not only developed professionally but also cultivated a sense of support. Within the networks, teachers

have explored common challenges, exchanged innovative ideas, and explored pedagogic practices:

> The group discuss other networks they are involved in such as teacher networks and other networks led by organisations such as the NSEAD. The question therefore surrounding the unique offer of this secondary network: fundings, partnership working, local observations and sharing activities, local knowledge, job sharing to opportunities to have a local community of arts teachers. (Researcher Notes Secondary Art Network Meeting).

> Sharing insights that teachers have, is in itself one of the successes of these kind of teaching networks (Network lead).

Bid Writing and Seeking Funding

Many teachers who attended networks expressed a desire to explore funding opportunities and partnerships, recognising the potential for meaningful impact. However, bid development was an unfamiliar terrain that they recognised needs support. This was supported in some of the network meetings through presentations by funders. Furthermore, in meetings teachers often discussed budget constraints that impact partnership work but highlighted the value of initiatives such as gallery workshops and knowledge sharing among schools and cultural organisations:

> The teachers are wanting to explore the opportunities for funding and how they can create partnerships with a wide range of partners, including thinking about how the work has impact and how such data can be collected. However, many teachers seem lost at the prospect of developing a bid and one teacher states that 'this is just not something we have done before but we know it can have real benefit' (Researcher Fieldnotes).

> There is potential for BAS to offer support when writing bids and make connections to various partners for the work to be undertook (Researcher Fieldnotes).
> There are lots of questions and discussions explored who writes the bid in the first place, the organisation who then goes to a school or a school who then seeks an organisation and then what funding opportunities are open for both of those avenues (Researcher Fieldnotes).

> A teacher asks about funding 'how can we get funding to work with organisations? Does BAS give funding? Are you a funder? The teachers are keen to understand more of BAS remit and what their role is (Researcher Fieldnotes).

> The cost of artists in schools is massive and we just don't have the budget for it. But I have been learning a bit more through coming to the network meetings about things we could tap into, like gallery workshops and even just ways of sharing with other schools and teachers (Teacher).

A prominent theme arose as teachers expressed a keen interest in establishing partnerships with a wide range of collaborators. Within the quotes provided, teachers acknowledge the potential advantages of collaboration, yet they also are uncertain about the logistical aspects of launching such initiatives:

> There are some really good opportunities on offer, but I just don't even know where to begin with bid writing and making an application (Teacher).

> The presentations tonight have been really insightful, but I just don't think I know what to do and who i could work with or what they want to see in a funding application (Teacher).

The discussions regarding funding mechanisms and BAS's role highlights the eagerness of teachers to better understand the funding system and ways that they can find financial support for long term partnerships:

> There is lots of conversation about the potential for BAS to offer support when writing bids and make connections to various partners for the work to be undertook (Researcher Fieldnotes).

Sharing Expertise

The opportunity to explore different teaching methodologies, discuss exam specifications, and observe pupils' work firsthand in some of the networks was a main feature for many teachers attending the meetings. The teachers felt that this fostered a culture of continuous learning, knowledge exchanged and impacts that could directly be brought back into the classroom, enriching teaching approaches and benefiting students' learning experiences:

> The ideas we have explored today [teacher network] I am going to use with my classes (Teacher).

> It's just so nice to be able to come and see another department, look at their pupils' work, talk about exam specifications and actually do some practical work (Teacher attending network meeting).

Quality Improvement

In discussions regarding funding bids and partnership work some of attendees and interviewees discussed the necessity to better understand the importance of research evaluation as a key part of the work they do with cultural organisations. While teachers possess deep insights into their learners and school contexts, they may lack the necessary expertise to articulate the criteria for impactful projects and evaluate their outcomes effectively. Consequently, there is a recognised need for capacity building in evaluation techniques and project assessment:

> Do the teachers need to understand about evaluation? How to assess the benefits? How to evidence the benefits? This seems quite an essential point which might make funding applications more successful. It's really clear the teachers know their learners and the school contexts, but they are less able

to articulate what an impactful project should or could look like – they are less able to explain how they will evaluate the impact. There is work to be done here that could impact partnership work. Do the schools need a writing retreat to help them develop a funding bid or plan? (Researcher Fieldnotes)

Emerging impact of senior leadership team (SLT) understanding of the value of the arts

An important part of BAS's three-year programme was developing and advocating for the arts in schools. Teachers noted SLT buy in for attendance at events, highlighting their growing understanding of the value of the arts:

> It's my head teacher who encouraged me to come along to the network and released me early from school to come along. I think they [head teacher] understands the value of me coming along to these things to make connections and build networks.

Further to this, SLT passing on network meeting times and for some, allowing them to leave school early to attend meetings across the city:

> When asked about how they heard about the arts network all the teachers attending stated their head teacher sent them on the information. This shows the impact of SLT on teacher engagement in such networks. A couple of the teachers stated that they school ensured cover of their last lessons of the day to ensure they could attend. This shows buy in by SLT (Researcher Notes).

This, however, was not the norm and something that network leads felt needed careful consideration with the potential of some sort of financial support:

> As a teacher in education, recognising the demands and the pressures on teachers, and that they are actually giving up more additional time outside of school.

> It's actually a huge commitment, particularly when outside teaching hours which now go way beyond a three o'clock expectation than what it used to. Most teachers are now, you know, as a norm are teaching most evenings, you know with interventions and clubs. Particularly from a performing arts point of view is then all the extracurricular, the enrichment and everything else.

Planning to meet the needs of the network

Discussions surrounding the planning of activities for teacher networks reveal a strategic and intentional approach driven by a commitment to addressing the specific needs of educators within the network. Network leads emphasise the importance of moving beyond mere discussion to tangible progress and development, recognising the shortcomings of previous networks that failed to deliver meaningful outcomes.

The quotes highlight a common frustration among educators with previous networking experiences, which often involved discussions without resulting in

concrete actions or improvements. As one network lead observed: "Previous networks have always been very short lived". This sentiment underscores the need for a shift towards more impactful and sustainable networking initiatives that can effectively address the challenges faced by teachers.

In response to these challenges, network leads have adopted a proactive approach to planning activities, with a focus on targeted interventions designed to meet the specific needs of teachers. Rather than simply facilitating discussions, the emphasis is on implementing activities that foster progress, development, and the sharing of best practices. This proactive approach reflects a commitment to maximising the value and impact of the networking experience for educators.

Moreover, there is a clear recognition of the importance of collaboration and knowledge sharing within the network. Educators express a desire to actively participate and contribute to the network, highlighting the need for opportunities to share good practices and learn from one another. This emphasis on collaboration underscores the value of creating a supportive and collaborative environment where educators can collectively address challenges and drive positive change in their practice as noted by this teacher:

> I come to the network to meet others, share ideas and gather information and practical activities that might help me back in the classroom.

Cross-education phase networks

Some of the networks have facilitated some cross-education phase interactions. The integration of educators from different educational stages within these network meetings has facilitated rich connections and discussions, offering teachers the opportunity to collaborate and explore strategies. This inclusivity is particularly significant given the recent changes in the educational landscape, such as the removal of HE courses across the West Midlands, which directly impacts Birmingham. As one participant noted:

> There is a real demand about how we bring together secondary teachers, FE teachers, and HE teachers because there is a clear relationship that needs to be formed.

This recognition of the interconnectedness between educational stages underscores the importance of fostering collaboration and alignment across different sectors to support learners' progression through the education system.

Furthermore, the inclusion of teachers from primary and secondary education is seen as essential in addressing challenges such as the removal of art form courses in secondary education. By bringing together educators from different stages, some network events have begun to break down silos and promote a more integrated approach to arts education. As one participant stated:

> We shouldn't be working isolated. Change start from the outset of learning.

Moreover, the networks provide a platform for addressing broader issues impacting arts education, such as the reduction in student numbers and concerns about the quality of students entering, HE courses. By starting conversations from lower levels of schooling and considering the progression pathway, the networks could promote a more holistic and comprehensive approach to arts education. As one participant reflected:

> That we move away from a linear conversation, but we can start to do this in the networks. By integrating phases, we can think about long term impact.

Sharing of knowledge not selling of services

Despite the valuable opportunities provided by network meetings, there has been a concerning trend where these gatherings often transform into platforms for organisations to promote their education services. However, the quotes highlight a shift towards genuine collaboration between arts organisations and educational institutions, emphasising the importance of meaningful dialogue and activities that mutually benefit both parties. Participants have noted a growing tendency for network meetings to become sales pitches, with organisations pushing their products or offers onto educators. This approach can be counterproductive, as it overlooks the need for collaborative efforts between arts organisations and education to effectively address the challenges facing the sector. As one participant pointed out:

> These huge projects that have been sold to solve a lot of education problems can't work without collaboration.

The key, as highlighted by another participant, lies in empowering teachers and cultural organisations to work together more effectively. Rather than being passive recipients of solutions, educators should be active participants in the dialogue, contributing their insights and expertise to collaborative efforts. This approach fosters a more inclusive and equitable partnership, where both parties can learn from each other and work towards common goals. As highlighted in these quotes:

> It's given us as much of an insight for us to talk to teachers. We have got a lot from them too.

> Time to network is really important and you know everybody sits on their own at all tables. I think the last time I went to an event, it was very much sort of the arts organisations are over here and the teachers will sit over here and yeah, so little things to mix things up is always good.

Furthermore, there is a recognition of the importance of bridging the gap between education and cultural organisations. Participants highlighted the role of intermediaries who can speak the language of both sectors, facilitating communication and collaboration. This role is crucial in ensuring that educators feel empowered to engage with cultural organisations on their own terms, rather than being overshadowed by sales pitches. It is important therefore to have network leads who come from both a teaching and organisational background or a collaboration of

the two as highlighted by this interviewee:

> I come from both a teaching and organisational background and so I try to ensure that identify the needs and wants of both parties.

Despite these challenges, there is optimism about the potential for meaningful collaboration between educators and cultural organisations. Participants acknowledged the value of networking events in providing insights and opportunities for dialogue. By breaking down barriers and encouraging interaction between different stakeholders, these events create a conducive environment for sharing knowledge and fostering genuine partnerships.

Finance and location of Networks

The financial support for these networks is limited. The challenges of continuous outreach, recruitment, and communication with teachers highlight that to make them impactful requires network leads to take on a lot of roles to ensure their co-ordination, planning and organisation:

> The finance for the networks are not great as the named person kind of overseeing this has been, this has been tough in the fact that I don't think the financial contribution recognises actually it is tough to run a network: continuous outreach, recruitment, communication with teachers to make it purposeful.

Moreover, hosting meetings in central locations, while convenient for some, presents barriers for others, especially teachers who may face logistical challenges in attending. To address these issues, alternative approaches, such as satellite networks or flexible scheduling outside of school hours, may better accommodate teachers' diverse needs and facilitate greater participation and engagement in network activities:

> Hosting meetings in the centre of Birmingham that has ended up being and that has been a barrier for teachers. A more effective way for the teachers would be maybe kind of almost satelliting the network.

> The time of sessions after school has caused problems for many. Ultimately it would be good to offer funding to release teachers to attend.

Consideration of financial support, location and timing of meeting will be crucial for their sustainability.

Conclusion

Teacher networks have emerged as an area that supports professional development. Led by key stakeholders from arts organisations to school leaders, these networks received BAS grants to tailor programmes addressing critical challenges and priorities within subject specialisms. By providing platforms for collaboration,

knowledge sharing, and resource exchange, the networks fostered a sense of community.

Despite financial constraints and logistical challenges, the networks navigated these obstacles to offer valuable learning opportunities and empower teachers to engage in bid writing, seek funding, and enhance teaching practices. Through cross-phase collaboration and a focus on sharing expertise rather than selling services, the networks facilitated meaningful dialogue and collaboration between educational institutions and cultural organisations. Moving forward, addressing funding limitations and exploring alternative meeting formats will be essential for sustaining the impact and accessibility of these networks in supporting teachers' professional growth and collaboration efforts.

CPD Sessions and Showcases

BAS offered a diverse range of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities tailored to both cultural organisations and schools, reflecting a commitment to fostering collaboration and innovation across various arts subjects. These CPD sessions played a crucial role in enhancing teacher development and empowering educators to deliver high-quality arts education experiences. For cultural organisations a CPD session exploring collaborative projects between schools, cultural organisations and academics was held. This CPD opened up dialogue about collaborative projects among artists, teachers, and academic researchers and gave insights into effective collaboration strategies as well as addressed common barriers faced by cultural organisations. The attendees gained valuable knowledge and insight into the working of a collaborative project, project objectives and outcome of all involved and exploration of impacts.

Furthermore, BAS's CPD offerings for teachers catered to a broad spectrum of arts subjects, ensuring inclusivity and relevance across different educational contexts. For instance, ACE Dance and Music CPD for non-dance specialists in Primary and Secondary Schools equipped teachers with the skills and confidence to lead student-led learning in dance. Their session explored autonomy and creativity. Similarly, Ikon Gallery's CPD session introduces teachers to printmaking techniques, providing opportunities for skill development and contextual understanding. The event at Ikon engaged teachers in practical activities and explored the historical and cultural significance of printmaking allowing teachers to gain valuable insights and experiences that could be brought back into the classroom.

In addition, Ex Cathedra's Singing Schools CPD for Primary School teachers focused on teaching new songs and singing games to support teaching and learning, classroom community, teamwork, vocal skills, and musicianship. This session not only enhanced teachers' musical skills but also promoted collaboration and creativity in the classroom, fostering a positive and inclusive learning environment. The modelling in the session provided insight into techniques directly applicable in the classroom. One Dance UK's CPD offered an introduction to primary dance, providing teachers with tools to plan and deliver dance lessons, build subject knowledge, and foster creativity.

Teachers at the events offered insights into their motivations for coming to the CPD and the impacts it had:

> I didn't realise that the [cultural organisation] offered all these opportunities for schools, I will be in contact with them about getting some of my pupils and A-level students involved.

> I had no idea that we could think about something that was bespoke. It is always a real issue when looking for artists to come into school to get something that actually fits the curriculum or the exam spec. But from what [arts organisation lead] is saying we can have those discussions to find out ways of working together that fits our needs. This is what we need.

> My head teacher encouraged me to come along, they are supportive of me coming to things like this and to find out other ways we can work with organisations and schools.

> I don't get the opportunity to come along to CPD that is [art form] focused. So, this was a good opportunity.

> I have got some practical activities to take back to the classroom as well as make some new connections with the [arts organisation] should I want to do more work with them.

The CPD sessions had key impacts, including promoting collaboration between artists, teachers, and cultural organisations, increasing knowledge and skills in delivering arts education, fostering creativity, critical thinking, and cultural engagement in the classroom, developing confidence and autonomy, enriching teaching practice through practical activities and theoretical underpinnings, and promoting inclusivity and diversity in arts education.

Much like the teachers, attendees at the event for the cultural organisation CPD commented on the importance of events like this to deepen understandings of funded partnership work and their impacts. Although this CPD was focused on cultural organisations, teachers also attended. This signifies that the CPD focus appealed to more than cultural organisations. Attendees stated:

> I think we need to know more about how we can work in partnership with schools and what funders we can apply to to do this. This session has helped as its given me some insight to that (Cultural Organisation Attendee).

> I thought I would come along and meet new people and learn more about what a collaborative project looks like. I am new into my post at [cultural organisation] and so they have supported me to come along this afternoon to make connections and learn about collaborate projects. This is in the remit of my new role' (Cultural Organisation Attendee).

I actually work at a school, and they've supported me to come along to find out about collaborative projects maybe in the hope that we will work collaboratively on one in the future (Teacher).

The event really helped highlight that it's greater than the sum of our part. Like the project worked with an organisation, schools, and academics and what they can bring. You know, when we put everyone together. That's really affirming (Cultural Organisation Attendee).

...they brought a range of really interesting speakers whose work I wasn't aware of before. Not in my own discipline, but gave me, you know, just was really helpful to me just thinking outside of the box. So, I found I found it really helpful (Cultural Organisation Attendee).

... getting cultural organisations together to begin to work strategically at the CPD we [had]... so that they can actually not just think about what their organisation is doing in the schools where they're working, but to think collectively about how best to improve equity of provision across the city (Cultural Organisation Attendee).

Arts in Schools Conference

The Arts in Schools Conference, held at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, offered a comprehensive programme aimed at enhancing arts education in primary, secondary, and special schools. The event began with keynote presentations by Shazia Mirza, a Birmingham-born comedian, and Sally Bacon OBE, who presented findings from the Arts in Schools Report 2023. These keynotes set the tone for the day, emphasising the importance of arts education and providing a backdrop for the discussions and activities that followed.

Throughout the day, attendees participated in a wide array of workshops and seminars covering topics such as non-verbal physical theatre techniques, DJing, storytelling through dance, and integrating drama across the curriculum. These sessions provided practical, hands-on experiences, equipping teachers with new techniques and ideas to bring back to their classrooms. A notable feature was a panel discussion chaired by the Director of BAS, which explored the impact of arts partnerships on schools. The conference concluded with additional workshops, including an introduction to dance in primary schools, transformative movement in secondary schools, and the development of a creative curriculum. The diverse range of topics ensured that there was something of value for every attendee, regardless of their specific focus within arts education. The conference drew a diverse group of participants, including 45 artists and 75 teachers. The evaluation of the event highlighted several key successes, particularly the practical applicability of the workshops. Teachers appreciated the sessions that offered transferable activities and ideas for classroom use:

I found that the techniques shared were things that could be used and adapted very easily in a whole class setting.

Engaging and some brilliant techniques on connecting with the children.

Interesting and fun; some easily transferable ideas.

Enjoyable and engaging... relevant for my setting and gave me lots of ideas.

Great techniques using sketchbooks and a variety of different resources.

Interactive, lively, great ideas, work pack of ideas provided that we can use in school.

Some useful ideas to take back to the classroom.

I thoroughly enjoyed this workshop. [Session leader] really showed us how to bring stories to life. [Session leader] had very simple props which would be easy for us to replicate. [Session leader] showed us ways of involving every child in storytelling, no matter what their ability or maturity level. They used the example of Jack and the Beanstalk but it was easy to see how this approach could be used with other stories. [Session leader] was able to address the needs of everyone at the workshop, despite the fact that they represented the whole spectrum of age groups.

This workshop was incredible! I didn't want it to end. I left feeling so inspired and with a bank of practical teaching resources and activities that I could share with staff back at school and implement straight away with a good level of confidence and knowledge.

These reflections underscore the conference's success in providing practical, immediately applicable tools and techniques. Teachers left the event not only inspired but also equipped with concrete resources to enhance their teaching practices. In addition to offering practical tools for classroom use, the conference facilitated valuable opportunities for participants to engage in dialogue, debate, and the sharing of experiences. These interactions fostered a sense of community and reinforced a shared purpose among attendees:

Great to get together with other schools and talk about a subject we are all passionate about.

A good opportunity to discuss impact and improvement ideas.

I enjoyed the discussions that it threw up and the examples raised by participants.

The sense of community and collaboration cultivated during the conference emphasised the importance of partnerships and a shared purpose in promoting

arts education. Participants recognised the value of these interactions in fostering a supportive network of like-minded professionals committed to enhancing arts education. Looking ahead, future conferences could further build on this collaborative spirit by allowing teachers to present and share ideas. This approach would help foster transdisciplinary learning and provide valuable insights for cultural organisations.

Concluding summary

The array of CPD opportunities offered through BAS examples the recognition of the collective need for continuous learning, extending beyond schools to include cultural organisations. As demonstrated in the literature, there is often an assumption that teachers and schools are deficient. However, for partnerships to thrive, there must also be recognition of the development needs within cultural organisations to ensure the sharing of knowledge and expertise. This highlights BAS's understanding and acknowledgment that ongoing learning is essential, not only for educators but also for those within the cultural sector. Such an inclusive approach enriches collaboration, fosters shared knowledge, and contributes to the overall advancement of both the educational and cultural spheres. This is crucial for the success, ethics, and learner-focused nature of partnerships (Kinsella et al., 2019).

 Furthermore, the opportunity to connect with peers through the teacher networks offers the opportunity to draw from a range of expertise and pedagogies. Additionally, providing a supportive community that encourages continuous learning and development. Eight areas of impact have been identified:

1. **Connection and Community Building:** Teacher networks have been effective in creating knowledge exchange spaces that foster connections among teachers across various phases and contexts. These networks have allowed teachers to share experiences, ideas, and best practices, enhancing professional development and cultivating a supportive community.

2. **Bid Writing and Seeking Funding:** Teachers expressed a strong interest in exploring funding opportunities and establishing partnerships, yet many found bid writing and funding application processes unfamiliar and challenging. There is potential for BAS to provide support in this area, aiding teachers in navigating the complexities of securing financial support for arts initiatives.

3. **Sharing Expertise:** The networks have facilitated the exchange of teaching methodologies, exam specifications, and firsthand observations of students' work. This continuous learning and knowledge exchange have enriched teaching approaches, directly benefiting classroom practices and student learning experiences.

4. **Quality Improvement:** Teachers identified the need for better understanding and capacity building in evaluation techniques and project assessment. Improving teachers' ability to articulate the criteria for impactful projects and evaluate outcomes can enhance the effectiveness and success of funding applications and partnership initiatives.

5. **Senior Leadership Team (SLT) Engagement:** The involvement of senior leaders in schools has been crucial. SLT members have shown growing support for arts education by encouraging teacher participation in networks, recognising the value of professional development opportunities, and facilitating attendance at events, thereby enhancing engagement and impact.

6. **Strategic Planning for Network Activities:** Network leads have adopted a proactive approach to planning activities, focusing on targeted interventions and practical outcomes rather than mere discussions. This intentional planning aims to address specific needs of teachers, fostering progress and development within the network.

7. **Cross-Phase Collaboration:** The integration of educators from different educational stages (primary, secondary, FE, and HE) within network meetings has facilitated rich connections and collaborative strategies. This inclusivity addresses broader challenges in arts education, promoting a more integrated and holistic approach to student progression and curriculum development.

8. **Overcoming Logistical and Financial Barriers:** Financial constraints and logistical challenges, such as central meeting locations and timing, have presented barriers to participation. Exploring alternative approaches, such as satellite networks and flexible scheduling, alongside considering financial support, will be crucial for sustaining the impact and accessibility of these networks.

These findings highlight the significant role of teacher networks in professional development, the importance of strategic support for funding and evaluation, and the value of cross-phase collaboration in enhancing arts education.

Partnerships in Action: 'Proud to be a Brummie'

The 'Proud to be a Brummie Festival was held at Symphony Hall in Birmingham on 8 July 2024. It sought to develop new cultural learning partnerships between schools and arts organisations on the broad theme 'Proud to be a Brummie' and built on the civic pride which the 2022 Commonwealth Games brought to the city. Over 800 pupils from schools across Birmingham worked with 7 arts organisations throughout the Summer term 2024 to create performances and exhibitions for the festival.

The outline for the project is summarised below, taken from the funding application:

The festival will bring people together through engagement with the Arts. Birmingham enjoys a wide range of cultural provision from individual artists working in schools to world leading arts organisations such as the CBSO and Birmingham Royal Ballet. But access to these experiences is not universal with children and young people in poorer wards in the city less likely and able to access the City's cultural offer.

The Covid pandemic revealed the extent to which access to Arts opportunities and participation in the Arts can dramatically improve health outcomes and well-being, counter inequalities and increase social engagement. Evidence suggests that engagement with the Arts can improve physical and mental well-being providing opportunities for people to engage with each other and their own creativity, directly improving their sense of well-being. The Arts can reduce stress and increase social engagement as well as providing opportunities for self-expression. The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Well-being published a report in 2017 'Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Well-being' which stated that 79% of people in deprived areas live more healthily after engaging with the arts, 77% engage in more physical activity, and 82% enjoy greater well-being.

The festival will focus upon children and young people from schools that do not have established partnerships with arts organisations and have not previously engaged with and benefited from the City's rich cultural offer. They will be more creative, their academic performance will benefit and they will learn about and appreciate their cultural heritage engage in activities that support their mental wellbeing gain in confidence and self-esteem increase their understanding of issues and ideas which are important to them have a greater understanding of cultural difference develop a sense of civic pride in their neighbourhood and City building on the success of Birmingham 2022 TEACHERS will develop a range of arts education skills and knowledge have improved access to the city's rich cultural offer form new sustainable partnerships with cultural organisations have opportunities to share and celebrate their work with other schools and stakeholders. Artists and Arts Organisations will develop new skills in working with children and young people in schools, form new partnerships with schools profiling their arts education work with a wider audience.

The project partnerships, and outline for workshops are outlined in **Table 12** below:

Organisation	Project outline	Schools
The Play House	In this project, children took on the roles of writers, directors, and actors, shaping their own theatrical production. The storyline revolved around a new folk-lore tale that celebrated diversity, inclusion, and the rich history of Birmingham's cultural heritage.	Greet Primary School Brookfields Primary School Conway Primary School
Barber Institute	In this project, pupil's explored portraiture. They began with a visit to the Barber Institute, where they explored historical portraiture through a themed gallery tour and collaborative sketching session. Following their gallery visit, the students engaged in outreach session back at Paget Primary School, led by local artists. Focusing on collage-making, students learnt to collect, cut, and stick found images to create their own collage portraits.	Paget Primary School
B:Music Ltd	The project aimed to engage school pupils and musicians in creating a musical response to the theme. Utilising music tech equipment donated by Native Instruments through B:Music, the project provided an opportunity for young people to explore music production, which may be limited in school settings. Importantly, the project was designed to be inclusive, welcoming participants regardless of previous music experience.	Wheelers Lane Technology College Lea Forest Academy

Organisation	Project outline	Schools
Friction Arts	Building on Friction Arts' Home and Back Home projects, which involved an augmented reality (AR) and photography collaboration with photographer Vanley Burke, the project aimed to document stories of young people in partnership with People's Heritage Co-op. Young people were trained to interview each other and local champions, exploring the theme of "Back Home" and capturing diverse perspectives on identity and community. The project aimed to explore identity, promote community, and develop interviewing and reflective skills among participants.	Woodcock Hill Primary School
Ikon Gallery	The three primary schools engaged in workshops at IKON. Following this, two artists visited the schools to coordinate their dates with the teachers, while confirmation was awaited from a third. Exciting themes were explored around the Birmingham Coat of Arms and its "Forward" motto during the creative workshops, which included both in-school sessions and visits to the IKON gallery. The students' initial visit to IKON focused on printmaking and poster design, resulting in an engaging and creative learning experience.	Chivenor Primary School Wheelers Lane Primary School Kitwell School

Organisation	Project outline	Schools
Ex Cathedra	The Singing Playgrounds activities saw children bringing their own child-led singing play into the concert hall, celebrating their voices and playground communities. The in-school singing activities and performance presentations aimed to bring joy, improved wellbeing, and inspire unity and pride in being part of Birmingham's vibrant community.	Woodgate Primary School Paganel Primary School
Birmingham Music Service	The project aimed to transform lyrics inspired by "Proud to be a Brummie" into a song. Composer Sarah Baker led sessions, exploring lyrics and composing. An audio recording was created for the school. The song was performed in the Jenny Blackwell space and Symphony Hall.	Yardley Wood Community School

Table 12 - Project partnership workshops.

Observation Samples

As part of the research evaluation of BAS, researchers visited two sessions of the 'Proud to be a Brummie' project which provided differing perspectives of the interpretation and enaction of this theme by different arts organisations. At both sessions it was clear that the notion of identity and locality were strong motivators that brought expansive and expressive responses from the children involved. The leaders of each strand prioritised contextualising the session activities within Birmingham settings at the beginning of each session, before using this as a springboard towards artistic responses. Without the work of BAS, such imaginative opportunities both in and outside of school would not have been possible, and this demonstrates the depth and immediacy which locally-based arts co-ordination has the potential to provide to Birmingham children. As well as reflecting on researcher visits, this section of the report also draws on comments participants made during research interviews which undergird the vision for an indigenous project such

as 'Proud to be a Brummie' and these are therefore also threaded through the discussion.

Evaluation sample 1: Ikon Gallery

The 'Proud to be a Brummie' interpretation available at this centre consisted of three primary schools who visited the Ikon gallery for workshops with two artists, who later visited the children's own schools on two occasions. The art work produced was then displayed on buildings in the city on York Road, consolidating the local connection. The themes explored were based on the City's coat of arms and "forward" motto and the children explored screen printing of two differing kinds. During the researcher visit, 30 Year 5 pupils were visiting Ikon, along with two classroom teachers for a session lasting an hour and a half. The children were introduced to historical printing machines and printed artwork form artists such as David Hockney, before engaging in mono-printing and screen-printing activities.

It was clear during the visit that the children developed through the contextual environment, with its emphasis on artist spaces for creating and responding. This was evident in the children's responses and enthusiasm, and particularly at moments when they were asked questions by the workshop leaders, they were keen to contribute thoughts and ideas, and frequently all raised their hands demonstrating their enthusiasm to contribute. During the printing activities there was a similar level of enthusiasm, as the children chattered excitedly whilst they explored and experimented. There was much laughter, sharing and excitement as the pupils interacted with the workshop leaders (asking them questions and sharing their work) and the teachers were also very responsive in this atmosphere, sitting alongside the children and working with them. The teacher engagement in this way was also noted in the research interviews which were carried out with stakeholders:

> We want the teachers to engage in that time with the artist as well. So, the teachers getting something out of it.

After the mono-printing was developed into an extension activity by the workshop leader (during which the pupils created collages from their screen-printing work), the children were even more enthusiastic; and could not wait to recommence on this next phase, as they completed their printing and used up excess ink.

The atmosphere of the session, where children were encouraged to participate engendered an inclusive environment where all contributions were welcomed. As the workshop leader states at one point:

> Coming from a teaching background, I'm always thinking, did I need a learning objective? Then I remember I don't have to do that! If I can see they are enjoying it, I think – let them play a little longer! (Workshop Leader)

This was further evident during research interviews, where the emphasis on inclusive involvement was often emphasised by participants:

> We want to show that any kind of person can be an artist, and that being an artist means lots of different things.

It was this atmosphere of play, which was evident throughout the session, where all children were given agency and permitted to share their voice. The idea of voice was also evident in some of the comments participants made in research interviews:

> We want the children to understand that when you're making artwork that every single contribution has value and gives them a voice.

BAS therefore enabled access to a different learning environment for artistic development, which the visiting artists were able to continue when in their follow-up workshops in the primary schools concerned.

Evaluation sample 2: Primary School song project

The primary school song project consisted of a composer-in-residence, with Services For Education Music Service, making five school visits to each school. During this time the composer explored lyrics and song composing. This was then followed by four sessions the following term to rehearse the performance of the songs which emerged from the children's work, alongside making recordings, music scores and backing tracks which were retained by the schools as project legacy. The final version of the songs will also be performed by the children in Symphony Hall as part of the Services For Education Music Service festival at the end of the 2024 summer term. The emphasis on creating Birmingham inspired lyrics to reflect the children's identity in, and to, the city, was the central strand of this iteration of the 'Proud to be a Brummie' project.
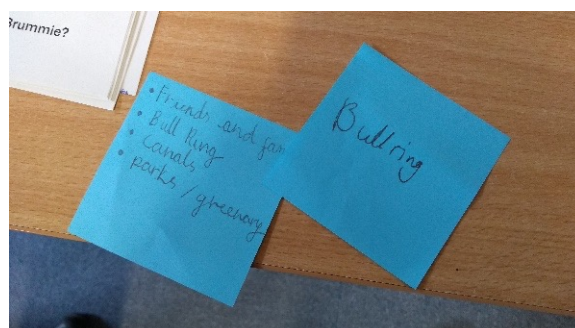
During the researcher visit, two Year 5 classes were observed, each of 26 pupils. The classes were arranged as for the pupils' other curriculum sessions, either in rows or table groupings, and the visiting composer worked with the children and their teachers in this format. Each session began with vocal warm-ups, and rhythmic patterns to create a soundscape imitating a machine, using the phrase "Proud to be Brummie". The session then moved to contextual information about Birmingham and its history as the "workshop of the world" (Composer in Residence). The main activity was lyric-writing at this stage of the project, which the children were later to use to create musical motifs and melody-lines for their songs. Research interviews demonstrated how important Birmingham was as an inspiration for these sessions:
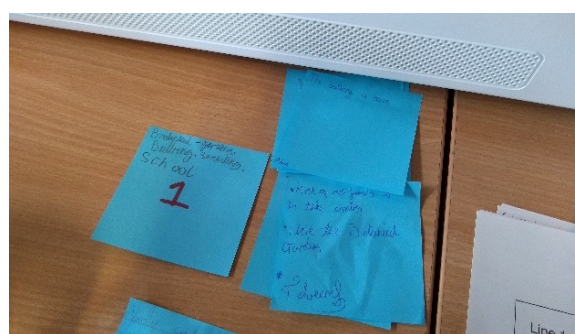
> It's about getting the students to really respond to being a Brummie and bringing their own ideas into it.

The link to the city was no less important for the children as they developed their composing work. The following examples demonstrate the Birmingham context in the children's work, something which this project as facilitated through BAS had enabled through its local commissioning. The composer used these lyrics to create chants and song structures. These are shown in **Figure 13**.
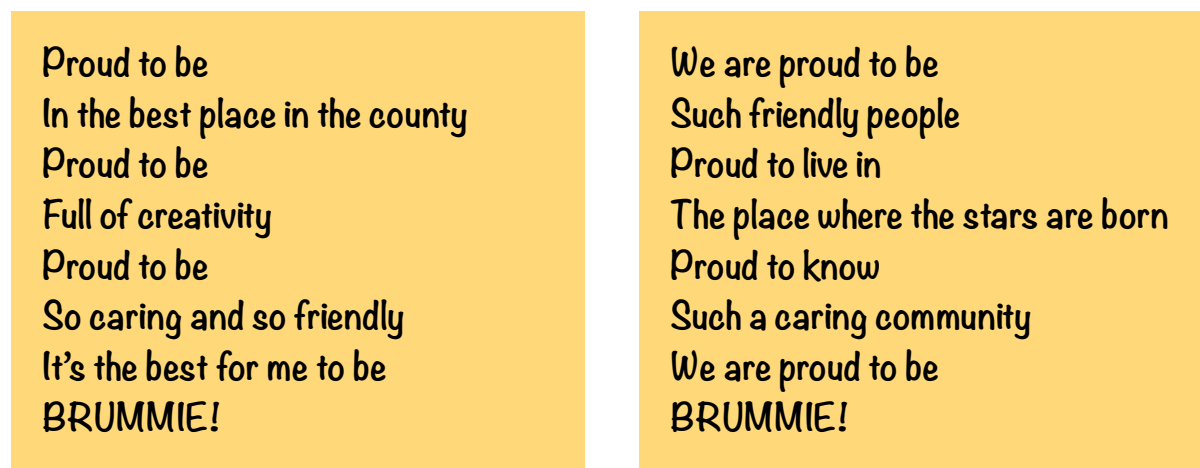
Proud to be
In the best place in the county
Proud to be
Full of creativity
Proud to be
So caring and so friendly
It's the best for me to be
BRUMMIE!

We are proud to be
Such friendly people
Proud to live in
The place where the stars are born
Proud to know
Such a caring community
We are proud to be
BRUMMIE!

Figure 13 - Examples of children's lyric-writing from Proud to be a Brummie songwriting.

'Proud to be a Brummie' was conceived as a means of promoting the arts in schools and this was expressed by participants in research interviews:

It is in our mission to promote the arts and projects like this help us to do that.

The participatory nature of the activity arising from such a mission was very much in evidence during the song composing sessions. The children displayed constant enthusiasm and participated with energy. When the composer recorded and played the results back to the class, the children were smiling, nodding and moving to the music. The agentic dimension was also in evidence in this iteration of 'Proud to be a Brummie' just as in the Ikon Gallery. All the lyrics came from the ideas the children had created as writing stems, which the composer-in-residence used in unabridged form in the song-writing activities. The approach involved collating and shaping, rather than re-phrasing, allowing the voice of the children to continue to be paramount and at the centre of the experience for these pupils. Children could be seen to be moving during the sessions, even though the researcher visited at the end of the week, when energy levels were more likely to be low.

Concluding summary

In these two iterations of 'Proud to be a Brummie' the local, contextual value of the artistic creativity and expression which children were able to include were critical to how they were perceived by the teachers, visiting artists and children stakeholders. BAS provided the structural framework for this to occur and the context to give such activity wider meaning. Both artists working in different art forms referred to "650 other children across the city" engaging in the same activities and this macro

perspective was embedded in the micro activity taking place in the room at the time, widening children's horizons, whilst anchored to their own lived experiences of Birmingham. This conceptualising of arts activity allowed children to experience fresh approaches beyond their existing field of experience. As one participant in research interviews put it:

> Projects like this really give kids the opportunity to experience something they might not have before, you know, we don't want just to want it to be another school day.

The place of 'Proud to be a Brummie' within BAS was viewed as highly significant by participants in research interviews:

> There is an element of a call to action in this work, encouraging young people to become change-makers and to think of the role of arts - that it has that power.

The manner in which children enthusiastically participated in the arts activities presented to them in widely differing modalities goes some way to enable the realisation of this ambitious aspiration.

Four areas of impact have been identified:

1. **Children are pro-active in arts development when learning in arts spaces:** It was evident from observations at the Ikon gallery that children were excited, enthusiastic and pro-active participators in the arts activities presented to them. This appeared to build from the springboard of inspiration from the artistic work and the printing presses which surrounded them.

2. **Arts settings allow children to share their voice:** The inclusive construction of arts activities allowed children to openly share their creative work and ideas without fear of failure. This facilitated their agency as co-creators of artistic expressions.

3. **Birmingham-centric stimuli enable children to respond more intuitively to arts opportunities:** The use of song-writing which drew on children's perceptions of their identity as citizens of Birmingham, facilitated their creative response and resulted in more immediate and dynamic outputs.

4. **The participatory nature of arts experiences is fundamental to their design:** Arts activities, as shaped in the 'Proud to be a Brummie' project, connected children's active participation with arts stimuli as a central feature, rather than as a passive transfer of information. Children's engagement was in the arts, rather than solely about the arts.

Connecting Communities

In addition to the wide range of activities associated with BAS detailed within this report, additional concepts are also worthy of mention. These help position BAS as an organisation which helps provide important access points for schools to engage in and with cultural organisations. Specifically, these are the STAGE Web APP, travel tickets, the Birmingham Arts School Celebration Event, and a GCSE course offer. Each one is briefly described below.

STAGE Web APP

Created by InEdTech and BAS, the S.T.A.G.E. (Surplus Tickets Are Great Experiences) Web App aims to provide opportunities for young people to experience high-quality performances across Birmingham. Through the app, schools can access free tickets for shows and events where there is capacity to do so. This is an important notion which recognises the pressures of fundings both schools and families are facing. Organisations what are part of the scheme are B:Music, The Alexandra, Birmingham Royal Ballet, Birmingham Hippodrome, Birmingham Rep Theatre and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. At present, BAS prioritises schools that are located in deprived areas or least engaged, although the list of eligible schools will increase in the near future. To allow fairness across school settings, each school will be able to claim one set of surplus tickets every six months.

Travel

BAS recognises that schools often find it difficult to organise transport, particularly coaches, to travel to and from cultural events. To support schools, they have provided information about two types of 'ClassPass'. The first is a 'Network Class Pass' which provides travel on West Midlands Trains, buses or trams (public transport), after 9am. The second is a 'National Express Classpass' (bus only) which is delivered under the NX Education scheme.

BAS Celebration Event

On 27th June 2024, BAS hosted a celebration event. The aim of the celebration evening was to highlight the engagement between schools and cultural organisations. The celebration acknowledged outstanding contributions across ten categories: The New Partnerships Award; The Music Award; The Drama and Theatre Award; The Dance Award; The Art and Design Award; The Early Years Arts Award; The Young Achiever Award; Changemaker award; Pioneering Practitioners Award (divided into two sub-categories: Fearless Freelancer Award and Small but Mighty). The winners were:

1. **Music Award:** Sampad South Asian Arts and Heritage and Nishkam High School

2. **Drama and theatre Award:** Stan's Café and Raddlebarn Primary School

3. **Art and Design Award:** Our Scene and Wheeler's Lane Technology College

4. **New Partnerships Award:** Birmingham Repertory Theatre and Woodgate Primary School

5. **Dance Award:** Autin Dance Theatre and Longwill School

6. **Young Arts Achiever Award:** Lee Martin-Evans

7. **Fearless Freelancer Award:** Ashley Tolley

8. **Small but mighty Award:** Loudeemy Productions

9. **Early Years Arts Award:** Ex Cathedra and Birmingham Children's Hospital

10. **Changemaker Award:** Keith Farr

The Birmingham Arts School GCSE offer

The decline in entries to arts subjects over the past ten years in English schools is well documented in the literature. For instance, according to statistical analyses of qualification entries data carried out by Education Datalab (Beynon and Thomson, 2024) the overall 'percentage of pupils doing any qualification in art and design fell from 31% in 2015 to 27% in 2023, in music from 9% to 7%, and in performing arts [including of dance and drama] from 20% to 12%.' In 2023, the percentage of pupils entered for a GCSE qualification in art and design was 26%, in music 4%, and in performing arts 8%. As such, although a GCSE has consistently been the dominant qualification for art and design subjects, other qualifications, such as vocational equivalents, appear to have become increasingly popular for music and performing arts subjects.

At regional-level, entry rates for performing arts subjects in the West Midlands for 2023 (11%) were the second lowest, being around four percentage points higher than the North East region (7%). Additionally, while most regions showed fewer than 10% of schools had no pupils entered for a performing arts qualification, the West Midlands had 15%. This figure was higher for music where the West Midlands was the second highest region to have no pupils entered for a qualification (17%) with the highest, the North East, being the highest (19%).

Overall, the analyses show that, between 2015 and 2023, there has been a decrease in the percentage of pupils being entered for an art, music and/or performing arts qualifications by schools. Moreover, the research shows that 'schools with the most disadvantaged populations were least likely to take music or performing arts (and where they did, they were least likely to be taking GCSEs in these subjects). And they were also most likely to be in a school where these qualifications weren't available to them.'

Notwithstanding the challenges outlined above at both national and regional level,

BAS has for the past year been working on a GCSE drama and GCSE dance pilot in collaboration with the Birmingham Rep Theatre and Birmingham Royal Ballet. It is hoped that young people will be recruited for September 2025. This initiative provides a valuable opportunity for schools that are not able to offer GCSE Dance and GCSE Drama as well as offering young people exciting opportunities that may differ from those in a traditional school environment.

Concluding summary

In summary, these concepts, in addition to the other important work BAS is engaged with, provide valuable means for schools to engage in and with cultural organisations. Specifically, they provide schools with opportunities to enable:

1. **Access to High-Quality Performances:** The S.T.A.G.E. Web App, created by BAS, provides schools with free tickets to performances and events across Birmingham, enhancing students' access to cultural experiences. This initiative helps mitigate funding pressures faced by both schools and families. It also prioritises schools located in deprived areas or those least engaged with cultural events widening and levelling participation.

2. **Transport Solutions for Schools:** Recognising the challenges schools face in organising transport to cultural events, BAS collaborates with schools to identify and provide effective travel solutions.

3. **New GCSE Offer:** The new GCSE programme aims to provide valuable opportunities for students from schools that currently cannot offer these qualifications. This initiative is focused on levelling the playing field and ensuring equal access to these subjects for young people across the city.

Birmingham Arts School's Future

To gain deeper insights into the strategic direction, impact, and future potential of BAS, we conducted interviews with the Director and Deputy Director. Their insights shed light on BAS's role in the city for the advocacy of arts education and its commitment to fostering inclusive and impactful partnerships between schools, artists, and arts organisations.

Connector Between Cultural Organisations and Schools
The Director and Deputy Director both see BAS as playing a crucial role as a connector between Birmingham's diverse cultural organisations, individual artists, and schools. After three years of development and moving into phase 2 post-funding period, BAS is positioned to play a leadership role in arts education nationally. The Director notes:

> Birmingham Art School can play a leadership role in terms of the national landscape.

This quote underscores the ambition of BAS to extend its influence beyond the local community, positioning itself as a model for arts education on a national level. One of the significant impacts of BAS has been its ability to facilitate effective collaborations between schools and arts organisations. The Deputy Director explains:

> Through brokering meetings with head teachers, we've introduced those schools to our arts partner organisations. So, there's been new opportunities.

This brokerage has not only provided new opportunities but has also encouraged schools to engage with Birmingham's broader cultural offer, targeting less engaged schools and fostering a more inclusive approach. This initiative highlights BAS's role in ensuring that all schools, regardless of their previous level of engagement, have access to the arts.

Enhanced Engagement and Partnerships
The enhancement of engagements has stemmed from a range of opportunities and offers provided by BAS. For example, CPD programmes have equipped teachers with the skills and resources necessary to integrate arts into their curricula effectively. The Deputy Director highlights:

> It's created a collective voice for working with schools so that organisations feel less as if they're working in isolation but as part of a joined-up strategic approach to improving access and opportunity for children and young people and teachers across the city.

This collective voice has enabled a more unified approach to arts education, where schools and cultural organisations work together towards common goals.

Moving Forward: Diversified Funding Streams and Advocacy

Moving into phase 2, the funding strategy for BAS is also evolving to ensure sustainability. The Deputy Director states:

> We will involve much greater diversity of funding than the current business model.

This shift towards a diversified funding approach, including earned income from CPD sessions, conference fees, and membership subscriptions from cultural organisations, aims to secure the financial future of BAS while continuing to expand its impact. The approach also includes seeking funds from charities and philanthropic endeavours to sustain and broaden BAS's offerings.

Advocacy for the Arts

BAS's role extends to advocating for the arts and acting as the main point of contact between schools and arts organisations. The Deputy Director explains:

> Making sure more young people have access to the arts and through our CPD programme, we equipped teachers with the skills and resources to carry that out in their own school.

This advocacy is crucial in a diverse city like Birmingham, where there is a pressing need to engage young people from various backgrounds in the arts. The Deputy Director in the quotation above notes the importance of equipping teachers to bring arts education into their classrooms, thereby broadening the reach and impact of BAS.

Addressing Diversity and Equity

BAS acknowledges and addresses the lack of diversity in the arts sector, striving to provide opportunities for young people from all backgrounds. The Deputy Director notes:

> Birmingham is an incredibly diverse city. Yet when you look at the arts scene, first of all, there's not that many young people from black and ethnic minority backgrounds taking up careers in the arts.

This quote highlights the ongoing challenge of diversity within the arts sector. BAS's efforts to address this include the use of a cultural landscape map to identify and target schools and wards within Birmingham that have been least engaged in arts partnerships. This proactive approach aims to level the playing field and ensure equitable access to arts education.

Quality Cultural Learning Provision and Brokerage

BAS has focused much of their efforts over the past two years on delivering high-quality cultural learning experiences. The Director notes:

> Deliver high quality cultural learning provision that makes sure that curriculum needs and the aims and the hopes of schools are being achieved.

In the future, BAS aims to continue serving as the main point of contact between schools and arts organisations to facilitate access to cultural opportunities. This role is vital in developing a relevant curriculum that impacts the next generation of creatives. Reflecting on the broader impact, the Deputy Director remarks:

> You're not only creating the next generation of potential young people with creative careers, but also supporting the next generation of young people who are compassionate about the world around them.

Despite the successes, there are challenges to address. The Deputy Director notes:

> Only a small population of schools are getting this provision in terms of arts access and arts partnerships... we need to continue with more extensive outreach to ensure that all young people in the city can benefit from arts education.

This statement underscores the need for ongoing efforts to expand BAS's reach and impact, ensuring that all young people in Birmingham have access to high-quality arts education.

Concluding summary

BAS has made significant strides over the past three years, establishing itself as a crucial connector between cultural organisations, individual artists, and schools in Birmingham. Through strategic partnerships, effective collaborations, and continuous professional development (CPD) programmes, BAS has enhanced arts education and engagement across the city. The insights shared by the Director and Deputy Director underscore the school's commitment to fostering inclusive and impactful arts education. The School's leadership sees BAS playing a pivotal role not only locally but also on a national scale, advocating for the arts and striving to address diversity and equity within the sector. The development of a diversified funding strategy and the proactive use of a cultural landscape map demonstrate BAS's dedication to ensuring sustainability and broadening access to arts education for all young people in Birmingham. However, the work of BAS is far from complete. The challenges of reaching all schools and providing equitable access to arts partnerships remain. The Director and Deputy Director acknowledge the need for more extensive outreach and continued support to expand BAS's impact.

As BAS moves into its next phase, the potential for even greater influence and effectiveness is clear. With further time, resources, and funding, BAS can continue

to strengthen its role as a leader in arts education, creating more opportunities for young people and fostering a culturally aware and creatively confident youth prepared to tackle the dynamic challenges of the future. The continued support and expansion of BAS's initiatives promise an even more vibrant and impactful future for arts education in Birmingham. Five key areas from the interviews with the Director and Deputy Director have been identified:

1. **Connector Role:** BAS is seen as a crucial connector between Birmingham's cultural organisations, individual artists, and schools, facilitating effective collaborations and new opportunities for engagement.

2. **Enhanced Engagement:** Through professional development programmes (CPD), BAS has equipped teachers with skills and resources, fostering a unified and strategic approach to arts education that benefits children, young people, and teachers across the city.

3. **Diversified Funding Strategy:** Moving into phase 2, BAS aims to secure its financial future by diversifying funding streams, including earned income from CPD sessions, conference fees, and membership subscriptions, along with seeking funds from charities and philanthropic endeavours.

4. **Advocacy for the Arts:** BAS acts as the main point of contact between schools and arts organisations, advocating for increased access to the arts and equipping teachers to integrate arts education into their curricula effectively.

5. **Addressing Diversity and Equity:** BAS is committed to addressing the lack of diversity in the arts sector by providing opportunities for young people from all backgrounds and targeting less engaged schools and wards to ensure equitable access to arts education.

Report conclusion

Over the past three years, BAS has played a key role in enhancing arts education and fostering cultural partnerships across the city of Birmingham. By connecting schools with a diverse array of cultural organisations and artists, BAS has had impact on enriching arts education as well as promoting inclusive access. Through a mixed methods approach to data collection the research team were able to highlight the multifaceted contributions of BAS.

Schools reported an enhanced cultural provision directly linked to their engagement with BAS, with many attributing new opportunities and collaborations to BAS's initiatives. However, the journey has not been without obstacles. Financial constraints, curriculum prioritisation of core subjects, and outreach challenges have posed barriers. Despite these challenges, BAS made commendable strides in reaching underserved and less engaged areas of Birmingham and providing opportunities for young people from all backgrounds. The Cultural Landscapes map, for instance, has been instrumental in identifying and targeting schools in 'cold spot' areas, ensuring a more equitable distribution of cultural opportunities. The cultural map alongside other communication and CPD opportunities have begun to engage schools in cultural offers across the city. Arts partnerships facilitated by BAS such as 'Proud to be a Brummie' have fostered community engagement and promoted a collaborative spirit among educators and cultural practitioners. Furthermore, BAS has significantly influenced cultural organisation practice by increasing their involvement with schools and opening discussions regarding curriculum development.

However, as BAS looks to the future, further time, resources, and funding are essential to sustain and expand its impact. Moving into Phase 2, BAS should focus efforts to secure its financial future through a diversified funding strategy, which includes earned income from CPD sessions, conference fees, and membership subscriptions, alongside seeking support from charities and philanthropic endeavours. This approach will be crucial in ensuring that BAS can continue to serve as a vital connector and advocate for arts education in Birmingham. The key findings are summarised below:

Recommendations

To ensure the sustained growth and impact of BAS, it is essential to address the challenges identified and build on the successes achieved thus far. The following recommendations aim to guide future actions and strategies for BAS:

Recommendation 1: Expand Cultural Provision
The findings indicate that most BAS engagement occurs within primary schools. To broaden the impact, BAS should investigate and support cultural provision in early years settings, secondary schools, further education (FE) colleges, special schools and higher education (HE) institutions. Expanding into these areas will ensure

that more children and young people benefit from wider provision. Alongside this, generating cross-phase discussions between these different phases of education is crucial for transitional knowledge development and future career pathways. These should be enabled through networks and CPD offers.

Recommendation 2: Mitigate Participation Barriers and Enhance Professional Development

Financial constraints, particularly related to transport and venue costs, have been identified as significant barriers to cultural engagement. BAS should continue to support schools in identifying routes to overcome these challenges and provide financial support for these expenses to increase accessibility. BAS should continue to lobby for further funding across the city for school travel. Additionally, the expansion of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes is crucial. By equipping teachers with necessary skills and resources, BAS can foster a unified approach to arts education across the city. More CPD and network opportunities were highlighted as a significant need.

Recommendation 3: Increase Access and Equity in Arts Education

To ensure equitable access to arts education, BAS should continue to target less engaged schools and wards. The Cultural Landscapes map should be regularly updated to remain relevant and useful in identifying schools for potential collaboration, especially in underserved communities. This targeted approach will help bridge gaps and promote inclusivity in arts education.

Recommendation 4: Foster Shared Dialogues and Effective Collaboration

Effective arts partnerships require regular communication between schools and arts organisations. BAS should promote shared dialogues to understand each other's operational frameworks and constraints. Encouraging collaborative curriculum development through these dialogues will ensure that partnerships are inclusive, transformative, and aligned with educational goals.

Recommendation 5: Enhance Community and Parental Engagement

Community and parental engagement are critical for a wider understanding of the arts. BAS should develop programmes that involve parents and the community, ensuring broader support and involvement.

## Recommendation 6: Improve Visibility, Networking, and Connectivity

BAS has enhanced the visibility of some cultural organisations to schools through its platforms. To further improve, BAS should strengthen teacher networks, creating spaces for knowledge exchange and allowing teachers to share experiences, ideas, and best practices.

Recommendation 7: Support Funding, Bid Writing, and Overcome Logistical Challenges

Many schools and cultural organisations face challenges in securing financial support for arts initiatives. BAS should assist with bid writing and funding applications to help navigate these processes.

Recommendation 8: Facilitate Joint Planning Between Schools and Cultural Organisations

Planning for participation and planning for learning need to be considered when developing partnership projects. BAS could further support these collaborative efforts through targeted support. This includes structured planning sessions to align goals, strategies, and outcomes between schools and cultural organisations.
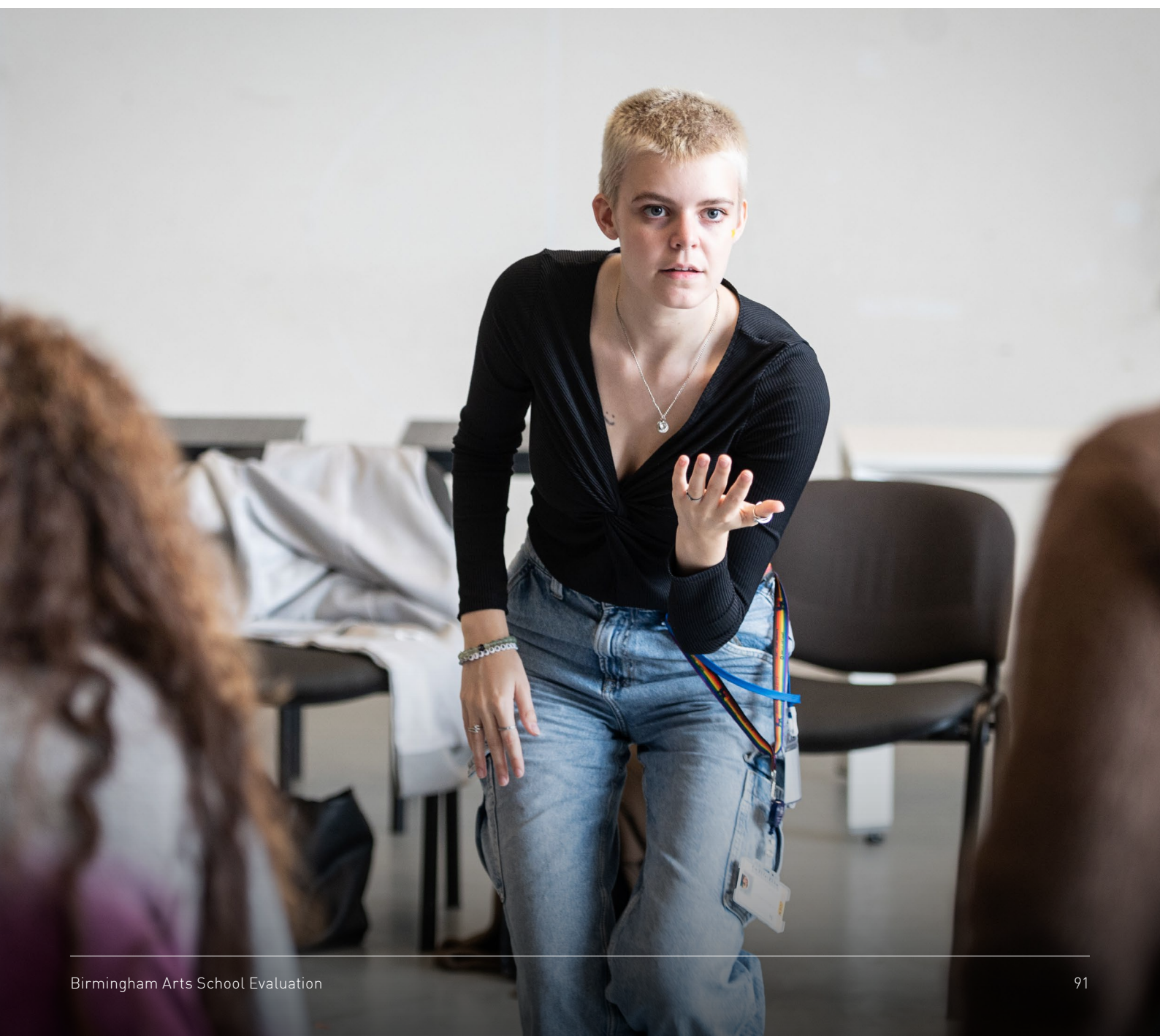
The Birmingham Arts School Model

The BAS model provides an illustration of the vision, challenges addressed, and impact of BAS over the past three years. This is shown in **Figure 14.** Central to this model are the six identified areas of challenge to arts and cultural engagement, known as the 6 Cs: cost, coaches, curriculum, capacity, communication, and careers. These challenges represent the primary barriers that schools and cultural organisations face in fostering effective arts education and partnerships. The model also demonstrates the extensive efforts made by BAS to address these challenges through nine key areas of impact; professional development, networks, a new GCSE offer, partnership projects, advocacy, bespoke support, WebAPP, online directory and communications.

"Birmingham Arts School is all about connecting arts organisations and artists to schools in the city. It's about enabling children and young people to engage with the arts." Deputy Director Birmingham Arts School.

Identified Areas of Challenge:
1. Cost,
2. Coaches,
3. Curriculum,
4. Capacity,
5. Communication,
6. Careers.

BAS Impact Model:
1. Professional Development,
2. Networks,
3. New GCSE offer,
4. Partnership Projects,
5. Advocacy,
6. Bespoke Support
7. WebAPP,
8. Online directory,
9. Communication

Figure 14- The BAS model.

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BIRMINGHAM ARTS SCHOOL EVALUATION

Birmingham City University
The Centre for the Study of Practice
and Culture in Education