



An Evaluation of the Impact of the NW Museum Hub's
Primary Consultant (Museums and Galleries) with
Manchester Education Partnership

Summary of Final Report

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The report reviews the progress and educational outcomes arising from a partnership between the NW Museums Hub and Manchester Education Partnership (MEP) from January 2005 to July 2006. The partnership led to the appointment of a Primary Consultant, employed by the MEP but funded by the Hub. Her main role has been to develop and operate a programme of collaborative projects between 5 Hub and First Partner museums and over 40 schools. This programme is known as the Manchester Museums and Galleries Pilot (Magpie). In addition, the Primary Consultant has performed the broader role of consultant, communicator, advocate and mediator between the education and museum sectors.

The partnership arose from a convergence of objectives between museum and education sectors. Magpie fitted with the mission set out for primary schools in *Excellence and Enjoyment* (DfES, 2003) and with the objectives of the NW Hub Education Programme Delivery Plan.

The first phase of Magpie ran from January 2005 through to December 2005 and involved teachers and pupils from 12 schools. The second phase ran from September 2005 to July 2006 and consisted of a further 29 schools. In both phases, teachers were asked to plan and deliver extended schemes of work, lasting half a term or longer, which a) incorporated one or more museum-based education sessions and b) incorporated teaching and learning activities which relate to museum education practice. The particular curriculum focus was writing, though teachers included other curriculum objectives as well. Teachers were supported by experienced teachers known as lead practitioners, by museum educators, by professional development supplied by St Martin's College and by one another through network meetings.

Impact

Teachers

The evaluation documents a considerable impact upon teacher practice, confidence and satisfaction in the teaching of writing. Planning documents, interviews, feedback and discussions reveal that teachers developed a more cross-curricular approach to the teaching of writing. They used museum sessions and innovations in their teaching to deliver sequences of learning activities where writing had a purpose and a context and was alternated with a range of other learning experiences. These included a greater use of visual images, speaking and listening, performance and kinaesthetic activities. In general, teachers were extremely positive about the way they had been able to develop their own practice and about the benefits of these innovations for pupils. Significantly some of these teachers regarded these changes as a transformation, though for others Magpie confirmed their existing approach.

Pupils

Teachers reported qualitative improvements in many aspects of writing, though the impact on grammar and punctuation appears to have been less

marked. In addition, pupils wrote at greater length and with greater enjoyment. Progress in writing was measured by longitudinal teacher assessment for 201 pupils at baseline, mid- and end-point and for 176 pupils through voluntary SATs. This showed a mean progress of 1.73 points (about a National Curriculum sub-level and a half) over the first term, 1.04 points over the second term, 2.72 points over two terms and 3.4 points over two terms if measured using the SATs. Mean progress of 3.4 points over two terms is significantly beyond local and national targets (equivalent to 1 point per term that is 6 points or 3 sub-levels over two years) and provides clear evidence of value added for the Magpie programme.

The analysis also suggests that, in general, boys and younger pupils benefited from the scheme slightly more than others.

Schools

There is considerable evidence that Magpie had some impact upon other teachers in participating schools largely through the work of Magpie teachers disseminating their experience. In a minority of Magpie schools there are definite plans to involve other classes in Magpie type teaching and learning next year. In a number of schools there is evidence that good practice has already been transferred, as teachers have adopted Magpie planning or teaching approaches or booked in for particular museum education sessions. Dissemination within a school was usually stronger under the following conditions: where more than one teacher participated in Magpie, teachers participated in Magpie for longer, head teachers viewed Magpie as a pilot for curriculum change or participating teachers had a wide cross-school role.

Museums

Magpie increased the volume of visits (579 additional sessions involving 16,933 pupils of which 13,440 were new to the host museum) and helped to popularise particular sessions. 41 schools were involved. 73 of the 124 school visits were from schools that had not used the museum in the previous two years. Museum educators benefited from attending network sessions, particularly from the training sessions run by St Martin's College. Some museums were encouraged to make formal or informal modifications to sessions which benefited from some of the techniques and ideas central to Magpie. Interaction with teachers and the network helped museum educators to understand how sessions might form part of an extended scheme of work and so meet the curriculum needs of schools.

Close work with teachers, but particularly with the Primary Consultant, provided feedback to museums about the quality and use of their sessions and this has impacted on development.

The Primary Consultant

Building on her leadership of Magpie, the Primary Consultant has fulfilled a wider role – mediating, brokering and communicating between the museum

and the education sectors. This activity has been documented by the Primary Consultant and consists of a diverse range of conversations, meetings, presentations, contributions to specific projects, exchanges of advice and guidance, making connections, raising awareness and spreading of good experiences. Such activity is very difficult to evaluate since the impact is likely to be dispersed and is medium to long term. However, there is evidence that the Primary Consultant has contributed to the development and improvement of museum based sessions and to the development and delivery of related projects such as My Manchester and the Peterloo Project. Beyond this, the Primary Consultant has built links with a range of related agencies and networks in Manchester – through which she has been able to spread awareness of the museum offer in general and of particular opportunities connected to Magpie or to other museum activities.

Partnership

At a structural level the partnership has developed a steering group and a management post, recently extended for two years. On the ground, it has developed a network of experienced and expert teacher practitioners and museum/gallery educators, additional curriculum and planning resources and raised understanding of and expectations from partnership work.

These achievements help to make clear what the benefits of partnership can be, particularly when there is a commitment to long term co-working rather than a project by project approach. Furthermore the partnership has been able to progress from the recognition that working together could serve separate objectives towards the situation where the partnership is jointly setting shared objectives. This has started to happen because aims and funding from the museum sector were able to encompass the setting of recognisable educational outcomes within the educational sector: professional development, attainment, curriculum resources.

The capacity of the Primary Consultant to recruit schools and museums to the project, the effects of the professional development and the way in which the project has been integrated into the planning and priorities of the authority are all valued by the Manchester Education Partnership(MEP). Trust and confidence in the role of Primary Consultant has developed over time, showing that LEA officers fully identify with the objectives of the project.

As, over time, personnel change and institutions reorganise or evolve, the partnership will have to adapt. In the case of this initiative, restructuring of the MEP and capacity issues in some of the Hub museums provide such challenges.

Conclusion

Looked at in terms of the provision of museum education, the achievement of Magpie has already been very great. A museum education session might consist of a couple of hours of learning activities and experiences with a

number of potential learning outcomes and some suggestions for follow up work. The addition of the Magpie planning and support transforms the museum education offer into, perhaps, a half term of teaching and learning. This has been shown to result in measurable progress in attainment, denominated in high status National Curriculum learning outcomes.

In principle, the Magpie approach enormously increases the range and duration of impact that museums and galleries can aspire to, providing that museums and galleries are ready to accept the curriculum objectives, to which teachers will make the museum sessions serve, as their own. This will be assisted, if these objectives can be understood and shared with museum educators and through them, with other teachers. Otherwise, it is possible that some museum educators will see these education outcomes as remote or even irrelevant to their institutional priorities.