

Inspiring Schools

Inspiring Schools is an ambitious, ground-breaking programme which will transform children's learning in 6 disadvantaged primary schools across Edinburgh and the Lothians. The project will bring world-renowned theatre-makers Punchdrunk to work for the first time, connecting their Enrichment department with Scottish schools.



What does the project involve?

The unique power of Inspiring Schools lies in its combination of magnificently produced theatre in a school space, sustained engagement from artists-in-residence, and a three-year scope which provides time and space for understanding each school's needs and effecting meaningful change.

We will work with six schools from August 2019 to July 2022. Schools will be chosen based on their levels of need, considering the proportion of

pupils receiving free school meals and the deprivation index of the local communities.

Each school will receive an immersive in-school theatre intervention, a resident artist, a programme of creative learning and a visit to the Children's Festival every year, for three years. In Years 1 and 2, the interventions will be delivered by Punchdrunk Enrichment. Inspiring Schools will kick off in September 2019 with Punchdrunk's project *The Lost Lending Library* (video [here](#)).

Structure of the Lost Lending Library experience

Punchdrunk Enrichment's immersive production *The Lost Lending Library* will transform 6 school buildings, involving the whole school community in a thrilling 3-week adventure the like of which has not been seen before in Scotland. The creative spark generated from this intervention will then be harnessed across 3 years through artist residencies and bespoke creative projects which will have a profound, lasting impact on children and teachers in our most disadvantaged local schools.



The Lost Lending Library experience begins with a seemingly routine visit to the school from a 'freelance librarian' who talks with pupils about their favourite books. The following week, the

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Head Teacher announces that over the weekend, a door to one room in the school has, inexplicably, been replaced by a bookshelf. Working together, pupils pick up clues to unlock this bookshelf. Behind it lies a magical world full of books that come to life. A mysterious library guardian tells children that the library leaps from place to place, arriving where it knows it can find precious new stories. Each child is invited to become an apprentice of the library by contributing a new story. The library remains in the school for a week, with opportunities for all classes to visit, then the following Monday it disappears without a trace.

Though the library is gone, its legacy will be felt for months to come. Our resident artists will harness the buzz generated by Punchdrunk to tailor a programme of bespoke activities for each school. Children who previously had little motivation for learning will be inspired to re-engage with the curriculum.

Punchdrunk Enrichment, the education wing of Punchdrunk theatre company, have a ten-year track record of innovative work in schools. *The Lost Lending Library* was the subject of a PhD case study, in which 92% of teachers involved reported increased motivation for writing amongst pupils.

'This project has been transformative! The children have been buzzing in a world of magic and fascination for the past three weeks. Stunning and inspiring!' Head Teacher at Linton Mead Primary School, past hosts of *The Lost Lending Library*



'Now everybody reads more. My sister reads more, I read more and even my parents read more. My mum saw The Lost Lending Library and now she reads to my baby brother at dinner.' Key Stage 2 pupil

What difference will the project make?

There is an urgent need for creative ways to realise the potential of disadvantaged children in Scotland. There is a widening gap between the educational attainment of Scottish children from low-income families, and that of children from high-income families. Research shows that learning through the arts can be a powerful means of reducing this attainment gap.

However, many schools' projects currently provided by arts organisations are short-term and unable to tailor interventions to meet the particular needs of individual schools. Disadvantaged schools also struggle to meet the costs of a trip out to an arts or cultural venue, especially when parents are unable to contribute.

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Inspiring Schools will address these barriers, effecting deep transformation in schools that need it most. Artists are given time to get to know school communities and to build strong relationships with pupils and teachers, laying the foundations for lasting change. The structure of the project involves a gradual transfer of leadership to teachers, so that by its end, teachers will be leading their own creative projects with support from artists. The inter-school network of teachers is expected to continue beyond the three years.

Talking about our proposal, Lorna Macdonald, Creative Learning Officer for the City of Edinburgh Council, said: *'It is clear that engaging our young people in such rich, open ended creative learning experiences will impact on their confidence and sense of achievement, hence nurturing the right conditions for wellbeing and attainment.'*

How will it make a difference?

Across 3 years and 6 schools, over 1,800 children and 72 teachers will benefit. In addition, 12 teachers across the schools will participate in a special sustained training programme to develop leadership in arts-based learning. The outcomes will be:

- Pupils with low attainment have increased motivation for learning
- Pupils develop confidence and communication skills
- Pupils discover and nurture their creative talents
- Teachers become confident in using theatre and dance to support learning
- Entire school communities are inspired to engage with the arts



Evaluation will be embedded from the start as there is potential to generate substantial new learning for the education sector. This is an ambitious project, and not without risk. The most challenging aspect is the recruitment and on-going commitment of schools. We have taken proactive steps to address this:

- Local Authority Education departments in all participating council areas have committed to support the project, including assisting with school recruitment.
- Recruitment of schools has already begun, targeting a shortlist of schools who have a high proportion of pupils on free school meals.
- An agreement will be drawn up in consultation with all participating schools, and signed by the Head Teachers, to commit schools to 3-year participation
- Imagine senior staff will monitor the project at fortnightly meetings, addressing potential problems at an early stage.

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Essential Information

Detailed programme

Imagine will work in partnership with each school to devise and deliver the three-year programme using inspiring theatre and dance performance as a springboard to creative learning activities. Alongside year-round support from Imagine, including a programme of teacher CLPL and professional development events, the annual pattern will include:

Term 1: Immersive in-school performances

Term 2: Artist residency in the school

Term 3: Creative learning project inspired by a show at the Edinburgh International Children's Festival, Festival visit and post-show workshop on Talking about Theatre

	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	
YEAR 1 2019/20	Performance: <i>The Lost Lending Library</i>	Artist residency responding to <i>The Lost Lending Library</i>	Artists lead a week-long project linked to a Festival show	* Festival visit * Post-show workshop
YEAR 2 2020/21	Performance: <i>A Small Tale</i> teacher-led adventure	Artist residency responding to <i>A Small Tale</i>	Artists and Teachers lead a week-long project linked to a Festival show	* Festival visit * Post-show workshop
YEAR 3 2021/22	Performance: tbc	Artist residency responding to the Year 3 performance	Teachers lead an immersive project linked to a Festival show	* Festival visit * Post-show workshop

Eligibility

Schools must be located in Edinburgh or the Lothians and be based in areas of high SIMD and/or have a high proportion of pupils in receipt of free school meals.

Commitment and Cost

Schools must be in a position to commit to all three years of the project. The cost is £2,500 per year plus tickets for performances at Edinburgh International Children's Festival.

Teacher time and approach

Teachers must be able to commit time to their own professional development throughout the project and be keen to try out new ideas and approaches to their teaching practice. All schools will

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be part of regular monitoring and evaluation meetings to ensure that the project runs to plan.

Collaboration and flexibility

Whilst some elements of the programme are fixed (eg. the in-school performances must take place in the autumn term and the festival visits at the end of May), the details of the programme will be designed in collaboration with each school to ensure that the specific needs and interests of each school are met. In particular, while the project has been devised for the whole school, we will tailor the final programme with each school to suit their size, needs and priorities.

What to do next

If you are interested in taking part in Inspiring Schools please contact Fiona Ferguson at fiona@imagine.org.uk / 0131 225 8050 to arrange an Imagine visit to your school. There are places for six primary schools and places will be allocated on a first come, first served basis.

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