

Research into Theatre, Dance and Drama Use in Schools

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Introduction

Background to the Research

The Culture Strategy for Scotland (2020) included an action for Creative Scotland to work with Education Scotland to help improve the access and quality of cultural and expressive arts experiences for learners¹. It sought to ensure these experiences for Scotland's learners were of a high quality, and remove any barriers to access and participation. Within this, it sought to develop a more comprehensive picture of how schools were engaging with theatre, dance and drama. Defining a picture of this engagement and the impact of this work, would be fundamental to identifying barriers and understand how they can potentially be overcome.

As a result, Imagineate was asked to commission research to explore how schools in Scotland engage with theatre, dance and drama, as well as to consider the barriers to engagement. A steering group was recruited to provide feedback at key stages of the research. The group included various stakeholders, arts organisations, teachers and freelance artists with a breadth of experience of the sector. A full list of steering group members is provided in Appendix A.

Due to the timescales involved and the difficulties in engaging with secondary schools for projects of this nature, it was decided that the research would focus on nursery and primary schools only. The research also focused on theatre, dance and drama delivered by professional artists, i.e. artists performing in front of children as audiences (whether in art venues or in schools) and artists delivering workshops or residencies with children in schools, and not peripatetic teachers.

Aims and Objectives

The research aimed to provide data and evidence which could influence approaches to better support schools in engaging with theatre, dance and drama. To achieve this, several specific objectives were set, including:

- to map a national picture of the ways primary schools are engaging with theatre, dance and drama
- to assess primary school's satisfaction with the level and types of theatre, dance and drama offerings
- to assess and compare the impact of these different offerings on delivering the curriculum and supporting children's health and wellbeing, especially post-pandemic
- to identify barriers to increased engagement from both primary schools and arts organisations' point of view
- to develop case studies of successful and innovative interventions

¹ [A Culture Strategy for Scotland - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/culture-strategy-for-scotland/pages/1-introduction/)

Methodology

The research took a mixed method approach. This included online surveys with nurseries and schools, as well as with artists and arts organisations.

The online surveys took place between October and December 2021, with all schools in participating local authorities invited to take part². Schools were either sent an invitation email and survey link by the researchers, or by their local authority, depending upon the preferences of the local authority.

The nursery/school questionnaire sought feedback on the use of theatre, dance and drama and the impact of COVID-19; booking arrangements; reasons for choosing performances/projects; satisfaction with and impact of theatre, dance and drama; and barriers to engagement. The survey also asked respondents to identify any performances or projects which they considered to have been successful.

The artist/company questionnaire sought to understand what work they had done with nurseries and schools; what the enabling factors were that supported engagement; what barriers they encountered; and again asked them to identify any particularly successful performances/projects.

From the survey responses a selection of case studies were identified. These sought to include both rural and urban schools, schools for children with additional support needs (ASN), and included a range of different types of participatory projects and shows/performances. Qualitative interviews were then conducted with teachers in schools, and written contributions were sought from the artist/company involved in delivering the successful case study. Artists/companies were invited to complete a short qualitative questionnaire to provide feedback, or to provide any previous evaluation reports they may have in relation to the project/performance.

Sample Profile

The achieved sample for each of the research methodologies is outlined below:

- 116 responses to the nursery/school survey
- 40 responses to the artist/arts organisation survey
- 10 teachers/schools took part in a case study interview
- 4 artists/arts organisations provided a contribution to the case studies

While responses to the school survey were usable for analysis purposes, they represent a low overall response rate. It was felt that, on top of the normal response issues (i.e. schools receiving a large volume of email communications), the challenges which schools faced in dealing with COVID-19 restrictions and associated staff absences, etc. during the survey period, as well as the timing of the survey (straddling the October half-term holidays), negatively impacted the response rate.

² Three Local Authority areas opted out of the research and so schools were not invited to participate.

Survey Respondents

The respondent profile from the nursery/school survey and the artist/company survey are outlined in the tables below.

School Survey Respondents	Number	Percent
School Setting		
Work with nursery pupils	23	20%
Work with primary pupils	97	84%
Work with ASN pupils	22	19%
Not disclosed	4	3%
Number of Respondents*	116	-
Respondent Role		
Class teacher	40	35%
Head teacher	50	43%
Other member of the management team	17	15%
Both head teacher/member of the management team and class teacher	5	4%
Not disclosed	4	3%
Number of Respondents	116	100%

* Note: Multiple responses were possible at this question.

Artist/Company Survey Respondents	Number	Percent
Respondent Type		
Company/Organisation	22	55%
Individual Artist	17	43%
Not disclosed	1	2%
Number of Respondents	40	-
Work in School in Last Five Years		
Yes	38	95%
In primary schools*	35	92%
In nurseries or other early years settings*	24	63%
Not disclosed*	1	3%
No	2	5%
Number of Respondents	40	100%

* Note: Multiple responses were possible at this question.

Appendix B details the response rate by local authority - this shows the location of participating schools as well as the local authorities which artists/companies had worked in.

Case Study Respondents

In total, 10 school respondents took part in a case study interview. This included five teachers and five head teachers/members of the management team. It included two ASN schools, and covered a range of urban, semi-urban and rural areas, within the following local authorities:

- Dundee x 1
- Edinburgh x 4
- Glasgow x 2
- Highland x 1
- Perth and Kinross x 1
- South Lanarkshire x 1

Research Caveats

The research represents the views and experiences of those who took part, and given the relatively small sample sizes throughout, the results cannot be interpreted as representative of either schools or artists experiences more generally. Rather, the research provides insight into the current situation rather than robust statistical findings.

In addition, while the school survey aimed to gather feedback from those who had not participated in theatre, dance and drama, the response rate from this group was low. Again, the results cannot be considered as representative of this cohort, and indeed, some issues and barriers to engagement may be underrepresented or might not have been captured by the current research as a result.

Case studies were selected to provide a wide range of different experiences, and while some common themes emerged, again, different case study experiences may have elicited different results. It is important to interpret the case study findings in the context which they are intended, i.e. to provide added depth of understanding around specific successful projects/performances and not generalised findings.

It should be noted that, while case study interviews have largely been linked to a specific project or performance in terms of attributing quotes, most schools discussed a range of different projects they had been involved in, as well as different performances they has seen. As such, the quote attribution may not always directly relate to the subject matter discussed within the quotes.

Mapping Theatre, Dance and Drama Use

School Survey

Most respondents who participated in the school survey had taken part in theatre dance and drama.

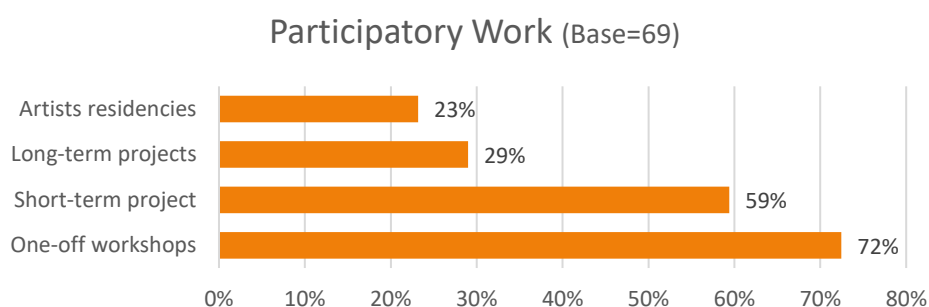
When Engaged with TDD	Number	Percent of Cases*
Before COVID-19	94	81%
During/Since COVID-19	38	33%
Not engaged in last 5 years	12	10%
Number of Respondents	116	-

* Note: Multiple responses were possible at this question.

Of those who had taken part, most (88%, n=91) had watched performances and two thirds (68%, n=71) had engaged with participatory projects.

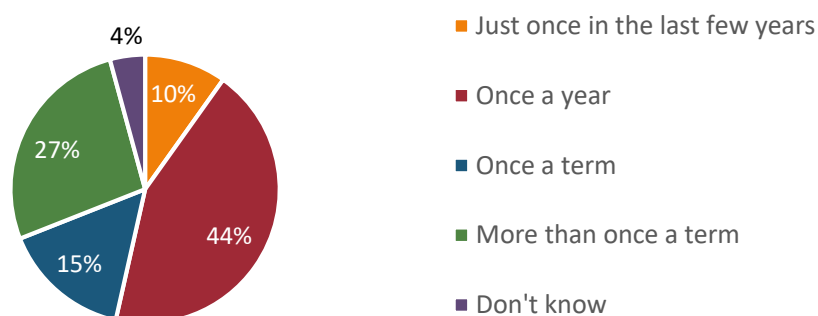
Participatory Engagement

Of those who engaged with participatory projects, the most common was one-off workshops, followed by short-term projects.



The figure below shows that just under half of those who responded to the question took part in theatre, dance and drama 'once a year' (44%, n=31). A further 42% (n=30) participated once a term or more often.

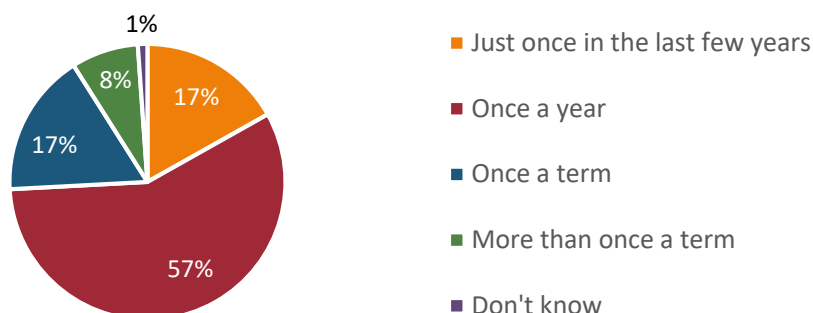
Frequency of engagement with participatory projects
(Base=71)



Watching Performances

Those respondents who indicated that they had watched performances were asked how often they did so, with over half (57%, n=51) doing so 'once a year'.

Frequency of Watching Performances (Base=89)



Respondents had experienced a mix of venues, with 82% (n=72) having watched performances in their school/nursery, and 72% (n=63) having watched them in external venues.

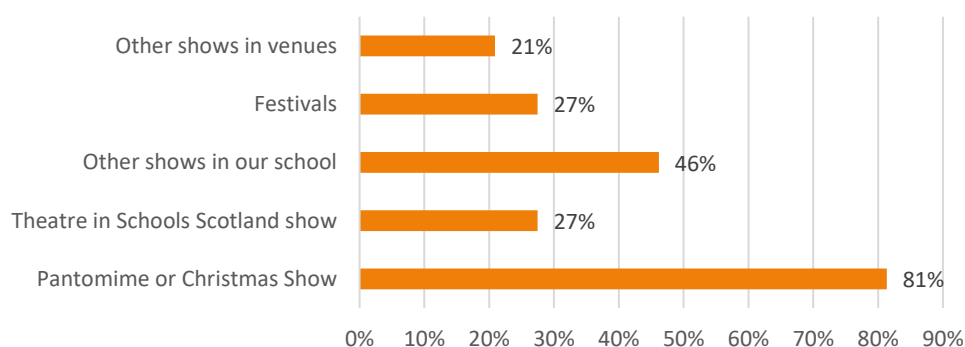
The most common method of travelling to external venues was via coach/mini-bus, with all other modes being used less often.

Method of Travel	Number	Percent of Cases*
Coach/mini-bus	52	83%
Public bus	10	16%
Walked	10	16%
Parents dropped pupils at the venue	5	8%
Other (both involved ferries)	2	3%
Number of Respondents	63	-

* Note: Multiple responses were possible at this question.

Most of those who had engaged with performances had watched a pantomime or Christmas show, while just under half had watched 'other shows' in their school/nursery.

Type of Performance (Base=91)



Building Lessons Around Theatre, Dance and Drama

Most respondents indicated that they sometimes or always build lessons around the performances and/or participatory projects they participate in.

Building Lessons Around TDD	Number	Percent
Always	24	24%
Sometimes	64	63%
No	11	11%
Don't know	2	2%
Number of Respondents	101	100%

Respondents were also asked to outline what materials would be useful in supporting them to develop such lessons. While a range of different answers were provided, there was a clear requirement for both pre- and post-engagement materials:

"Tasks for the children to complete prior to and after the event are useful. Prior to helps children to know what to expect and knowing they will have an 'after task' helps them to focus their attention appropriately." (School Survey - head teacher, primary school, Highland)

Pre-engagement materials were requested most often, with requests including information about the show/project as well as the venue in order to prepare. Suggestions included summary information and/or video-clips etc. to allow teachers and children to develop a realistic expectation of what they would see/do, and to allow teachers to develop any appropriate pre-engagement discussions or lessons:

"Information and a short video clip about what to expect and about the venue. Imagine have been great at doing this and it is much welcomed." (School Survey - member of school management team, working with ASN pupils, Scottish Borders)

"A previous show had the children design [materials] which seemed to engage them before and during the performance as they had ownership of something related to the show instead of just sitting watching." (School Survey - member of school management team, primary school, Highland)

Similarly, post-engagement materials and suggestions to support follow-up discussions, class work or workshops would be welcomed, including the provision of materials to support lesson development and content.

Several also indicated that it would be helpful for any information or materials to make explicit links to the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) such as lesson plans or resources.

A few also called for staff support, training or workshops to assist them in developing skills and confidence to deliver theatre, dance and drama themselves:

“Yes, staff workshops on how to effectively plan and deliver theatre, dance and drama lessons. This opportunity would instil confidence, ensure excellent delivery of practice across the board and offer our learners a plethora of experiences.” (School Survey - class teacher, primary school, Glasgow City)

Visual materials and social stories were also requested as a good way to prepare and engage younger children and those with additional support needs. Those working with ASN pupils also stressed the importance of liaising with the school regarding the needs of the children in advance of any performance/project.

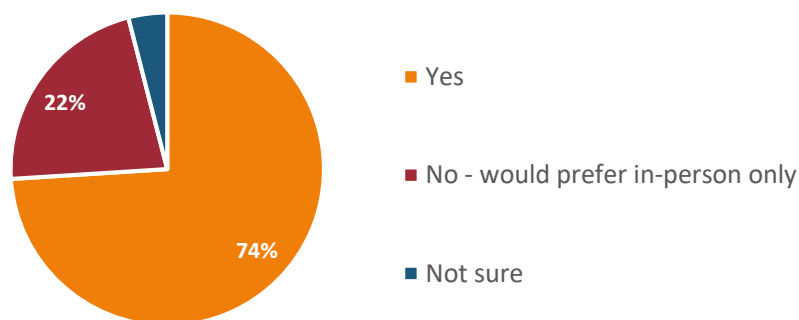
Other specific suggestions included the provision of interviews with the artists, directors, and others involved in the production, and information about the performance, how it came about, etc. to provide context and background and encourage discussion and engagement.

Impact of COVID-19 on Engagement

Respondents were asked if they had engaged with any digital theatre, dance and drama since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, with 68% (n=69) indicating they had.

These respondents were then asked if they would like to continue with a mix of in-person and digital methods for engaging with professional theatre, dance and drama once the COVID-19 restrictions were eased. Around three quarters said that they would.

Prefer a mix of online and in-person (Base=69)

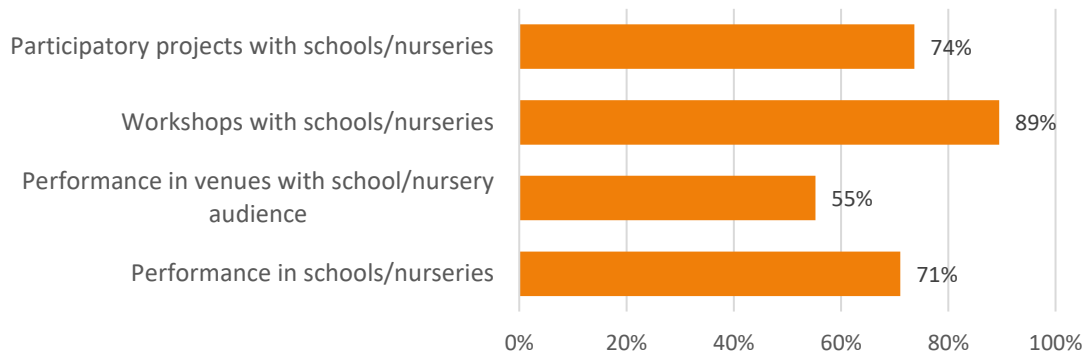


Artist Survey

Respondents to the artist survey had worked with schools across all local authority areas. Several respondents (n=9) reported only working in one area, while most (n=29) worked across multiple areas - this ranged from just two, up to 28 different local authority areas.

Respondents also outlined the type of work they had done with primary schools/nurseries, as outlined below.

Artist Involvement (Base=38)



Only two artists/companies had not worked with schools in the last five years - they were asked to identify the main reasons for this, with the responses outlined below:

- not part of my artistic practice/not relevant for our organisation (n=1)
- no funding for school/nursery work (n=1)
- too difficult to get response from schools/nurseries (n=1)
- no staff time/resources (n=1)

Communication and Booking Theatre, Dance and Drama

Communication about Theatre, Dance and Drama

All respondents to the school survey were asked to identify their preferred method of communication, to make them aware of opportunities and how to take part. Overall, nearly three quarters would prefer information to be emailed directly to the school - this was the preferred method for both those who had engaged with theatre, dance and drama in the last five years and those who had not.

Method of Communication	Those who had engaged	Those who had not engaged	All Respondents
Information emailed directly to the school	74 (72%)	9 (69%)	83 (72%)
Link to a website	9 (9%)	1 (8%)	10 (9%)
Information posted directly to the school	8 (8%)	1 (8%)	9 (8%)
Posters to display in the staff room	4 (4%)	-	4 (3%)
Telephone call directly to the school	3 (3%)	-	3 (3%)
Social media	3 (3%)	2 (15%)	5 (4%)
Other	2 (2%)	-	2 (2%)
Total	103	13	116

Respondents also indicated who they would prefer to receive the information/communication from. A third would prefer to receive this directly from the artist or company, and 21% would prefer it came via the local authority.

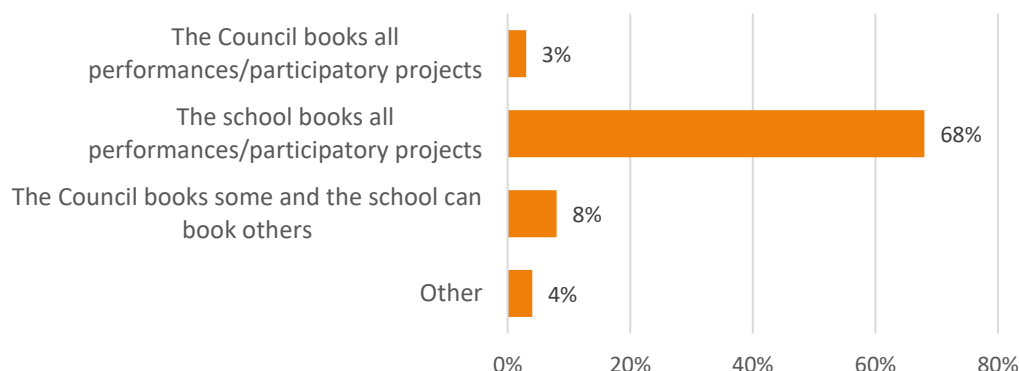
Source of Communication	Those who had engaged	Those who had not engaged	All Respondents
Direct from the artist or company	32 (21%)	6 (46%)	38 (33%)
Via the Local Authority	21 (21%)	3 (23%)	24 (21%)
Via Theatre in School Scotland	14 (14%)	2 (15%)	16 (14%)
Via head teacher or colleague	10 (10%)	-	10 (9%)
I actively seek out information	9 (9%)	1 (8%)	10 (9%)
Via a local theatre venue	9 (9%)	1 (8%)	10 (9%)
Other	6 (6%)	-	6 (5%)
Total	101	13	114

"I don't mind where it comes from but if it comes via an established theatre or the local authority it is credible." (School Survey - head teacher, working in primary and nursery levels and with ASN pupils, Highland)

Booking Theatre, Dance and Drama

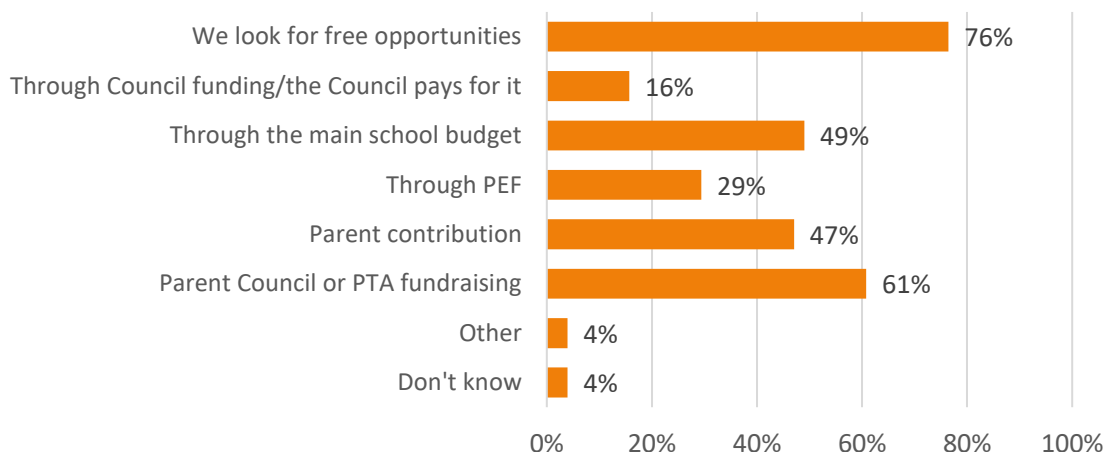
Two thirds of school survey respondents indicated that their school booked all performances and projects. In only a minority of cases was the local authority noted to have any involvement.

Who Books Theatre and Dance (Base=85)



When asked how theatre, dance and drama activities were funded, around three quarters indicated that they looked for free opportunities, just under two thirds raised funds via their Parent Council or Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), and just under half paid for it through their main school budget or via a parent contribution.

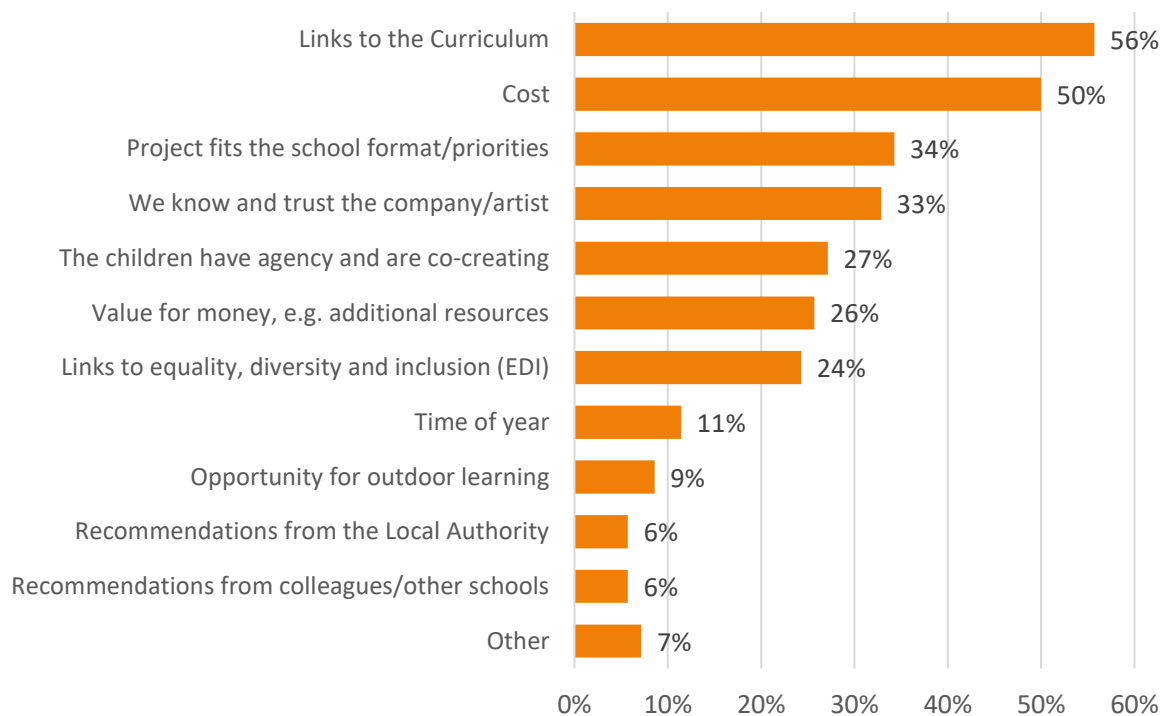
Funding for Theatre and Dance Activities (Base=102)



Priorities when Booking Theatre, Dance and Drama

Those who indicated that they had engaged with participatory projects were asked to identify the three most important factors when choosing what artists and companies to work with. Links to the curriculum and cost were considered important by over half of respondents, with project fit and trust in the artist/company important to around a third.

Priorities for participatory engagement (Base=70)

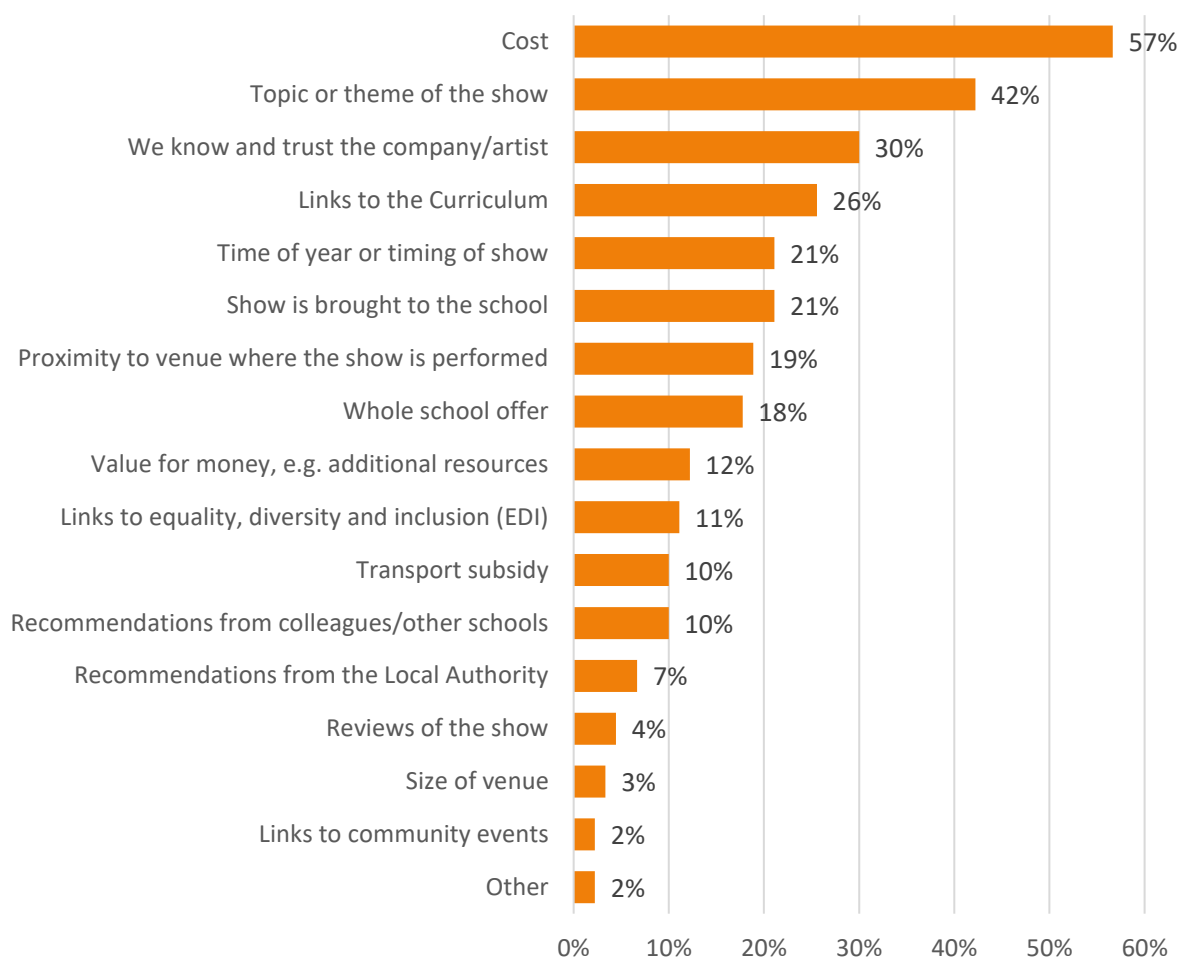


The concept of value for money was also discussed in some of the case study interviews, where respondents tended to indicate that this was not necessarily linked to receiving additional resources, but rather that the work was tailored to the needs of the school/pupil group, that the artist was flexible in accommodating the school's/pupils' needs, that there were wider benefits than simply the direct work itself, etc.:

"Something that probably makes me think about value for money is being hands on, something that pupils can really engage with. It's not necessarily resources, it's just that more a personalised approach." (Case Study School - Fairview Primary, Perth and Kinross, engaged with storytellers, musical groups, sensory theatre and English Opera)

Similarly, for those who had watched performances, cost was considered to be the most important factor, followed by the topic or theme of the show.

Priorities when booking a show/performance (Base=90)



Respondents who had not engaged with theatre, dance and drama in the last five years, or who could not remember what they had taken part in (13 respondents), were also asked to specify the 3 most important factors they would consider if deciding whether or not to take part. The most commonly cited issues were:

- cost (75%, n=9)
- the appropriateness or relevance of the show/project (67%, n=8)
- the logistics or practicality in organising the activity (58%, n=7)
- whether there are any clear curricular links (33%, n=4)

While recommendations from other teachers/head teachers were identified less often in the survey, case study interviews suggested this was still an important factor and should not be overlooked. Several interviewees indicated that teachers/head teachers would discuss performances/projects with colleagues and would either recommend or not particular artists/companies based on their experiences - which was noted to have an impact on their own decision making. One artist who contributed to the case studies also identified this as a key promotional area:

“What head teachers would tend to do is ask each other about their experience with a company and ask what companies they would

recommend.” (Case Study School - Ss Peter and Paul Primary, Dundee, drama workshops over several weeks building to a final performance in school)

“We find that the majority of bookings come from word of mouth, usually a teacher who has either moved school, or a head teacher who has been involved when they were a class teacher, and they then re-book it at their new school.” (Case Study Artist - Out to Play by Eco Drama, working with St Saviour's Primary, Glasgow, to deliver a 6 week residential drama artist to inspire outdoor learning)

One case study school also noted that their local authority ran a framework system for organisations to access/work with schools. It was felt that this eased the booking process and provided some reassurances over quality control:

“It’s really useful to have companies go through [the local authority] framework. That way the central team can promote/recommend companies. This makes it much easier for schools as often school can receive external emails or receive outside calls from companies which schools do not have any background information about. It is difficult to know if these companies meet our required standards. When schools receive information regarding offers from theatre/drama companies from the authority, they are much more likely to access their services.” (Case Study School - Ss Peter and Paul Primary, Dundee, drama workshops over several weeks building to a final performance in school)

Satisfaction and Impact of Theatre, Dance and Drama

Good Practice and Successful Theatre, Dance and Drama

School Survey

Respondents to the school survey were asked to identify any participatory projects and/or performances they had watched which they considered to be successful and to outline why they felt this was the case. 54 respondents provided details of participatory projects and 66 of performances.

Participatory projects' success factors included:

- the pupils had really enjoyed the activities, had engaged well and had either been **exposed to new opportunities**, learnt new skills or had learnt about a subject in a new and engaging way
- the **pupils had real agency** and their input was clearly reflected in the activities and final product
- the work was **suitably tailored** to the needs, interests and abilities of the pupil group
- it had been **inclusive**, all pupils had been able to take part, with different roles available to suit different interests, abilities and comfort levels
- there had been **good communication** between the school and artist/company, both to set-up the activity and to provide feedback throughout
- good **links to the curriculum**, as well as opportunities for (and being provided with resources to support) follow-up work in the classroom
- creative, enthusiastic, and **skilled artists** delivering a high quality product
- **motivated and enthusiastic school staff/teachers**
- **upskilled school staff** to build their confidence in incorporating theatre, dance and drama techniques into their teaching

"It was a totally immersive theatre experience. It was linked closely to school priorities, included all learners and opportunities for parents. Excellent communication between company, arts organisation and school. It was magical." (School Survey - head teacher, primary school, City of Edinburgh)

"Pupils were engaged and enthused, and teachers were observing successful strategies for taking forward the skills learned." (School Survey - member of management team, worked in primary school and with ASN pupils, Moray)

"[It's] personalisation and speaking to the teacher about what they want... we're the experts in the class, so if we can help, we can maybe make the artist's life easier a little bit and they can create something that the children would love, and we might get some [classroom] work from. It could be quite beneficial... there's got to be a bit of a mutual understanding about what we want from the company, what we want from this experience, and what they're looking for from this experience." (Case Study School - Victoria)

Primary, Edinburgh, participating in Stolen Table Comedy Workshops over five weeks)

Performances' success factors included:

- elements which give **agency to the children**, either learning something about/from the show before, being involved in the performance in some way, or via workshops, question and answer sessions, or being shown costumes, props, etc. afterwards
- being relevant to pupils and/or **linked with curriculum** or topic work within the school at that time
- high quality and **engaging performance** - being a live performance was also important for engaging pupils
- **providing cultural/new opportunities** to all, particularly those who may not otherwise experience theatre/a show
- being **suitable for the audience** (e.g. age, abilities, topics of interest)
- **teacher enthusiasm**

"Pupil engagement, pitched at their level, often involved participation. Lively, escapism." (School Survey - class teacher, primary school, City of Edinburgh)

Online performances were also considered to be successful as they had provided a link and exposure to the arts when in-person options were not possible.

Artist Survey

Artists/Companies who responded to the survey were also asked to identify what the main factors were in successful performances and projects - 36 provided a response. The most common element discussed was having engaged teachers who saw the value in theatre, dance and drama and/or an alternative approach to learning. This was important, both to encourage excitement and interest among their pupils, but also to support pre- and/or post-activity work:

"When staff care about and believe in arts based learning (and have an understanding of its potential) projects can be incredibly successful. This leads to staff integrating the work their class are doing with artists into their overall classroom learning, e.g. completing follow up tasks, theming lessons to reflect their arts experiences, etc. Most of the time artists can only work with children for an hour a week, so for the project to be truly impactful there must be collaboration with teachers, and teachers must actively support and engage." (Artist Survey - individual artist)

Another respondent concurred that activities were most successful when they were integrated into the school more holistically, and classroom based activities were undertaken to support and reinforce the learning:

“The most successful projects have been the ones where schools have fully realised the scope of our participatory arts projects, and have been able to integrate project activity into school life beyond the ‘core’ sessions they receive from artists... the most enriching experiences have been reported from schools with teachers who have taken this on board and personalised the project to their classes.” (Artist Survey - arts company)

Other factors that were considered to support successful activities included:

- clearly setting out the aims of the activity and having the offering aligned to the school/pupils involved
- being able to link the activity and learning to the curriculum
- being able to liaise with relevant school staff before the performance/project
- being flexible and having contingency plans in place
- having support from the local authority or national bodies/organisations to support promotion and liaison with schools
- having funding in place

Respondents were also asked to describe any particular performances or projects which they felt had been successful. Of the 32 who provided further details, being interactive and, where possible, providing the pupils with the opportunity for co-creation was most important. This was also often noted as a successful element for performances, where pupils could either learn something about/from the performance in advance, or watch early iterations and provide feedback which was incorporated into the final production. This interaction and pre-performance preparatory work was also mentioned as important within a number of case study interviews.

Less Successful Elements

Schools were asked to outline the least successful part of theatre, dance and drama projects or performances that they had engaged with. While 48 provided an answer, 12 indicated they had all been successful in some way - although a few did indicate that this was because they only worked with trusted providers.

Of those who did highlight issues, several felt that online performances had not been as successful as they were less engaging and interactive than in-person performances, although they had been helpful during the COVID-19 pandemic:

“Some online shows we have watched have lacked that human interaction so it can be difficult for the children to feel connected.” (School Survey - class teacher, primary school, City of Edinburgh)

Some also felt that, where pupils were less engaged or interested, either in the topic or due to some issue with delivery (e.g. large audiences meaning some have difficulty seeing the performance), or where the topic/subject/delivery was not well suited to the age/stage of the pupils, this led to performances or projects being assessed as less successful:

“Sometimes things are not made with children’s age and stage in mind and therefore the audience is not considered enough when making the piece. Makers have to consider the attention and focus of the children and how to engage them.” (School Survey - member of the management team, primary school, City of Edinburgh)

“From our side - not matching our pupils well enough to the performance in terms of duration of performance or genre/theme.” (School Survey - class teacher, working with ASN pupils, local authority not disclosed)

Length of the performance was also mentioned by a few, with those considered to be too long being highlighted as less successful. A few also identified pantomimes and touring pantomimes, or specific performances or projects which they felt had not been successful, although why this was felt to be the case was not always detailed.

Artist Case Studies

Artists who contributed to the case studies also outlined elements which they felt had perhaps worked less well in relation the specific case study project. COVID-19 was considered to have impacted certain projects, with the changing restrictions making the logistics challenging. While again, online approaches were appreciated as allowing projects to go ahead, there was a sense that this created a barrier (at least initially):

“Our first sessions were difficult as we didn’t know the kids, and couldn’t get as good of an understanding of their tastes as if we had been with them in person.” (Case Study Artist - Stolen Table Comedy Workshops, working with Victoria Primary, Edinburgh, to deliver participatory comedy workshops over five weeks building to a final co-created sketch show)

Underestimating the time input that would be required to provide a flexible approach was a challenge for one artist, resulting in them feeling as though they had undercharged for the service.

Another indicated that, while the project had worked well, they might have benefited from more time with pupils, smaller group sizes and no deadline pressures in order to get the best out of pupils:

“I also think sometimes the performance can be very stressful and so I think drama classes without the stress of a ‘deadline’ would be very positive too.” (Case Study Artist - Capital Theatres: Awfey Huge Productions, delivering theatre workshops building to a co-created performance in an external venue, the case study school opted to remain anonymous)

Suggested Changes to Theatre, Dance and Drama

Schools were also asked to suggest any ways in which they would like to change theatre, dance and drama. 26 responses were provided with only a few common themes emerging, including:

- support with costs and funding
- ability to engage with the artists/performers
- providing more in-person opportunities (when the COVID-19 restrictions allow)
- more interactive or participatory opportunities
- make explicit links to the curriculum
- improved sound quality so that the whole audience can hear

Learning Areas

Schools were asked to outline the top three areas of learning which they felt that theatre, dance and drama could help support, with 83 providing a response. The key areas highlighted most often by respondents included:

- health and wellbeing
- literacy (including writing skills, talking and listening skills, and general communication skills)
- building confidence and self-esteem
- encouraging creativity and creative expression

Other areas also highlighted, albeit less often, included:

- groupwork and team building skills
- developing specific subject areas, such as arts and expressive arts based subjects, music, topic, social studies, etc.
- inclusion, as well as equalities and diversity
- developing social skills and emotional wellbeing/literacy
- promoting physical activity

Benefits of Theatre, Dance and Drama

School survey respondents were asked what they felt the main benefits had been for children after watching performances or taking part in projects. Benefits, outlined by 79 respondents, included many of the areas outlined in the section above, as well as academic and cultural engagement; accessing the arts and/or new opportunities; enjoyment; the development of personal and inter-personal skills; and providing inspiration and widening horizons, both in terms of aspects which they might enjoy and for future career options:

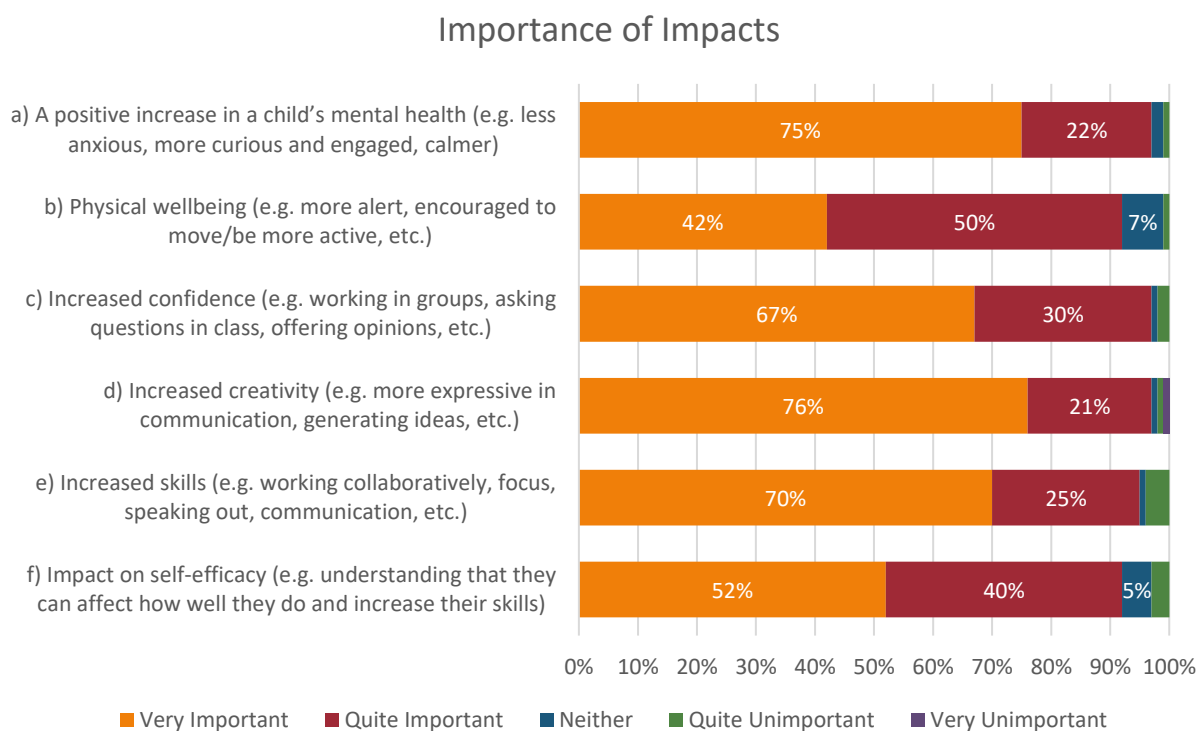
“The main benefits are the rich cultural experiences, where our learners develop a respect for the values and traditions of others around them. The listening skills that they gain through working closely with their peers. The

empathy they develop from taking on the role of another. Their use of language as they learn and take on board the contributions from those around them. Finally, the level of enjoyment that they experience from engaging in fun and exciting learning experiences that provide hope and prospective careers for the future.” (School Survey - class teacher, primary school, Glasgow City)

“Performances have sparked imagination, led to more participation and engagement across the school, given vulnerable children (who have often missed out) new experiences and opportunities to thrive, feel included, shine, learn, [and] provided insight and a safe place to explore the world of work.” (School Survey - class teacher, working with ASN pupils, local authority not disclosed)

Importance of Different Impacts

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of a range of aspects when assessing the impact of theatre, dance and drama on the children. Most of the 103 respondents felt that these were either ‘very’ or ‘quite’ important.



Barriers to and Encouraging Engagement

Barriers to Engaging with Theatre, Dance and Drama

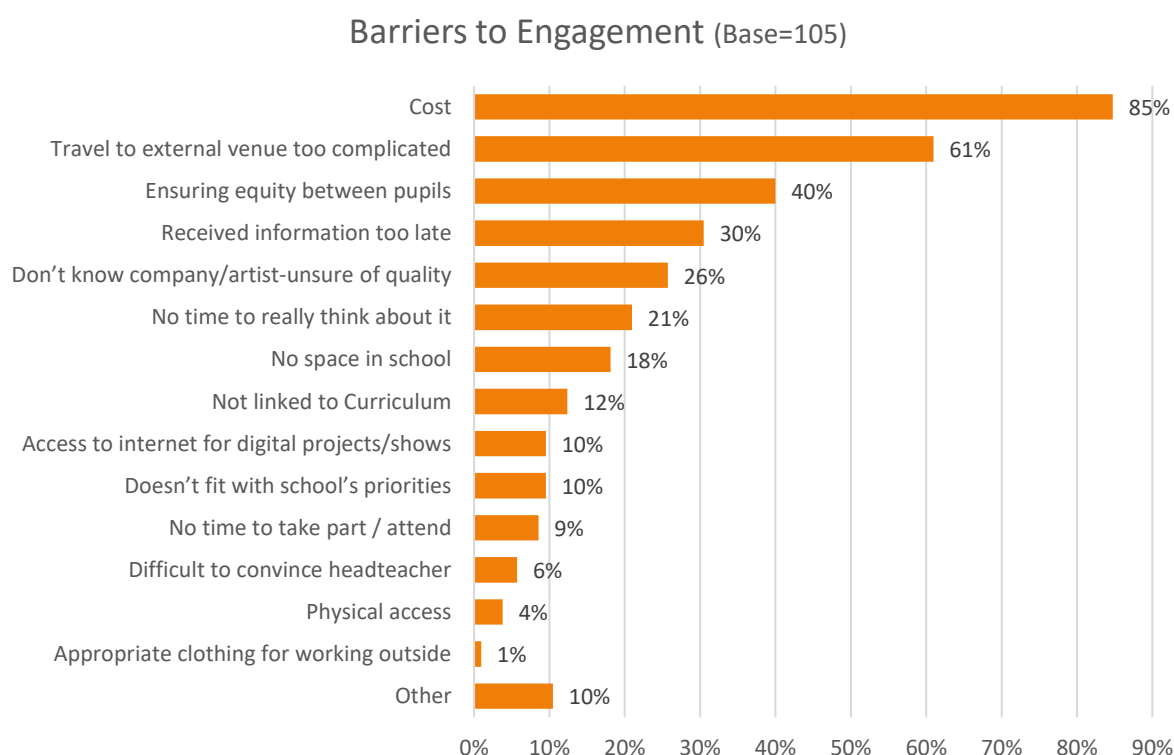
School Survey

All school survey respondents (including those who had not engaged with theatre, dance and drama in the last five years) were asked to identify what they felt was the key barrier to engaging, with 52 providing a response. The issues mentioned most often (when unprompted) included cost (n=28) (both of tickets and transport to external venues) and COVID-19 restrictions (n=17).

Other barriers, mentioned by fewer respondents, included:

- awareness of opportunities
- location of the school (particularly for remote/rural schools)
- competing priorities for schools (e.g. other academic subjects as well as offers from other external partners hoping to work with them)
- difficulties in finding opportunities for the necessary age groups or abilities (this was particularly an issue for nurseries and infant levels, as well as those with ASN pupils)
- the size of the school (particularly small schools)

Respondents were then presented with a list of potential barriers to engagement and asked to identify all of the barriers which they faced.



Again, results showed that cost and travel to external venues created barriers for most respondents. Ensuring equity between pupils (in that some could pay while others some

could not), receiving information too late to fit into school plans, and not knowing the company/artist and therefore being unsure about the quality of their work were also barriers for a significant minority.

A few case study interviews, however, indicated that the cost of theatre, dance and drama in itself was perhaps not always the issue, but rather finite resources and competing demands. One school noted that their head teacher was very supportive of theatre, dance and drama but was often faced with difficult spending choices, while another highlighted that, although they highly valued alternative learning opportunities and tried to dedicate money each year to trips and visits (including theatre, dance and drama), competing priorities limited the amounts available to spend in this respect:

“If I’m speaking to the head teacher at the same time as someone wants to order these amazing reading books, the money’s always going to go with the reading.” (Case Study School - Victoria Primary, Edinburgh, working with Stolen Table Comedy Workshops to deliver participatory comedy workshops over five weeks building to a final co-created sketch show)

“It’s just so hard because there’s such a range of priorities from closing the attainment gap, health and wellbeing and the learning environment and facilities. There’s so many different aspects within the curriculum that you want to develop further but you just can’t do everything. For example, each year will have different priorities and more money may be required to be spend of different aspects within the curriculum or learning environment.” (Case Study School - Ss Peter and Paul Primary, Dundee, drama workshops over several weeks building to a final performance in school)

Artist Survey

Artists/Companies were also asked to identify the main barriers they encounter when engaging with schools - 39 provided a response.

Cost and schools not being able to afford to engage was again noted as a common barrier, although several linked this more to perceptions around value and the arts being undervalued generally. A few noted that having funding attached can make activities more attractive to schools, but one respondent felt that free performances can, in some circumstances at least, make it more difficult to then be paid fairly for other work:

“Teachers don't always fully understand the value in drama and/or don't see the links that can be easily made to the curriculum using drama as a tool to bring certain aspects of this alive.” (Artist Survey - individual artist)

“Another barrier can be cost and making sure they value the project and we are paid a fair price. This totally depends on the project though as if it hits their aims and helps them to deliver something they are already looking to do, or there is CPD involved, they do happily pay a fair fee. For something that is seen more as "added value" like a performance, getting them to pay a

fee that covers our costs can be very difficult. This can sometimes be made worse by the expectation that things are going to be free if they have received a funded project before.” (Artist Survey - profile not disclosed)

The cost aspect was felt to be particularly problematic for longer-term initiatives as this typically required higher fees. It was felt that often, activities ended up being one-off and therefore lost some of their impact, and meant that relationships with schools were difficult to build.

Communication also was flagged as an issue, and in particular, being able to identify and access the correct teacher or those with an interest in theatre, dance and drama. It was suggested that it was difficult to get past ‘gatekeepers’ on occasion, and changes in staffing within schools made it challenging to maintain relevant contacts. One respondent suggested that a national policy/system was needed to ensure equity in provision rather than a reliance on individual staff contacts or interests:

“The key contact. Any of this activity relies on knowing the one person at a school/setting that wants to and can make this happen.” (Artist Survey - arts company)

“The main barrier for access to schools is the lack of an overarching strategy or programme to enable professional work to tour the length and breadth of the country. Our system is over reliant on committed or interested teachers which means certain schools and their pupils get a regular programme of high quality work while others - the majority - don't. Other countries have programmes like Cultural Rucksack in Norway which ensure easy access to a broad range of arts for all children, irrespective of the particular interests of individual teachers. We have programmes like TISS which address this issue in part but only for a small percentage of schools across the nation.” (Artist Survey - arts company)

Other common barriers outlined by artists/companies included:

- competing offers/priorities and school staff being too busy to consider offers or engage in the preparation or activity
- logistics of the activity and timetabling - both in terms of having schools visit external venues, and for the artists to work around other school commitments and have time in the room to set-up and remove their set, etc. around other school needs
- difficulties gaining initial access or accessing new schools - consistent with school responses, artists noted that schools prefer to work with those they know and trust

While not flagged explicitly in the school surveys, the school case study interviews did highlight logistical issues as a barrier to engagement as well:

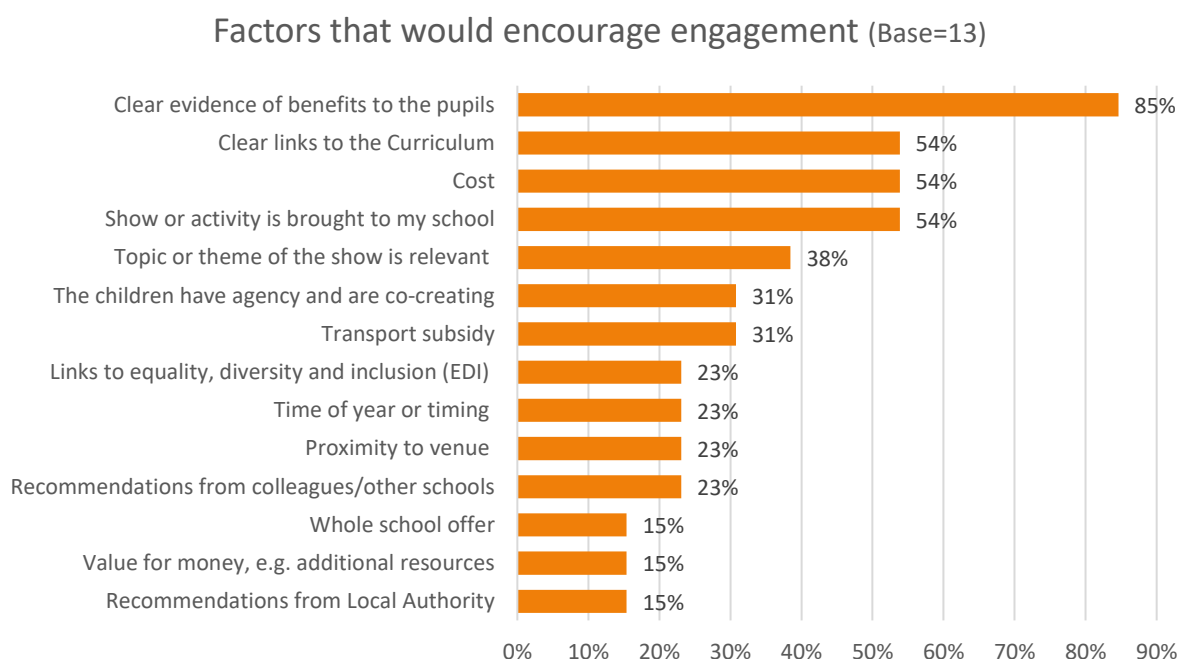
“We have a shared assembly hall cum diner hall cum gym hall, so you sometimes can't book something because it's not your day for a hall, or it's

going to take too long and you're not able to get lunches, etc. That would be the main barrier. You have to work round the logistics of that." (Case Study School - St Saviour's Primary, Glasgow, working with Out to Play by Eco Drama, a 6 week residential drama artist inspiring outdoor learning)

Encouraging Engagement

School Survey

Respondents who had not engaged with theatre, dance and drama in the past five years were asked to identify which five factors would be most likely to encourage them to engage in the future. The results show that most respondents would seek clear evidence of the benefits to the pupils, while just over half would look for clear links to the curriculum, cost, and for the show or activity to be brought to their school.



Respondents who had engaged with theatre, dance and drama were asked if there was any particular type of show or project which they felt was not available but which they would like to engage with. Of the 29 respondents who answered the question, several indicated that they would like access to dance based activities or musical theatre as this was something they felt was lacking. A few also suggested theatre or drama experiences:

"Dance workshops and any live theatre would be amazing, as would drama workshops." (School Survey - class teacher, primary and nursery, Highland)

Several respondents also highlighted a need for more performances or participatory projects which were appropriate for, and sensitive to, ASN pupils' needs, including access to deaf arts for deaf learners:

“We would like our children to experience more theatre, particularly as they are disenfranchised and underrepresented in creative industries. Also more performances for children with additional needs.” (School Survey - head teacher, primary and working with ASN pupils, Glasgow City)

“ASN specific shows/projects are always difficult to come by.” (School Survey - head teacher, working with ASN pupils, Perth and Kinross)

In addition, all respondents were asked if they would do more theatre, dance and drama if they had access to more funding. Most (90%, n=104) stated that they would do more under such circumstances, while only one respondent (1%) said they would not.

Those who indicated that they would do more, were asked to outline what they would like. Some of the 84 respondents indicated that they would simply like to do more of everything:

“I feel all of the arts are equally important in giving children a wealth of different, engaging experiences.” (School Survey - class teacher, primary school and working with ASN pupils, Moray)

Specific activities which schools would like to do more of, and identified by at least a few respondents each, included:

- accessing the theatre and seeing shows and performances, either by bringing them into the school or by visiting external venues
- more interactive and/or participatory activities
- dance and drama were mentioned by a large minority, although it was not clear whether there was a preference for watching performances or participating in these activities
- employ an artist in residence
- have a specialist come into school to teach theatre, dance and drama lessons
- more support and workshops for teachers in order to upskill and build confidence in theatre, dance and drama

Having an artist in residence was also an issue raised in the case study interviews:

“I would like funding to have an artist in residence here to see if that worked and to do outreach from here. I think that would make a difference.” (Case Study School - St Albert's Primary, Glasgow, intensive participatory dance workshops building to a final co-created performance)

A few survey respondents also indicated that they would like the opportunity to explore the range of activities that are required to deliver a performance, including set design and back-stage requirements in order to link this to employment opportunities for young people:

“Have children experience theatre, see a show, but also be involved in learning about the skills required to put it together with links to developing

the young workforce.” (School Survey - head teacher, primary school, City of Edinburgh)

Artist Survey

Artists were also asked what they felt the key factors were in enabling access to schools - 37 provided a response.

Again, the most common enabling factor centred on accessing and developing relationships with key staff (or ‘champions’), which was seen to include those responsible for making decisions around booking and funding as well as teachers with an interest in theatre, dance and drama and/or those the artist would be working with to deliver the activity. It was noted this was helpful in ensuring repeat engagement with individual schools, but was also a useful method of accessing new schools - for example, when staff move they will often engage their new school in the activity, or that word of mouth recommendations between teachers/head teachers was helpful in generating new interest:

“Working with existing good contacts and relationships to build on these is also really key. We find that if we have a champion of our work at one school who has really seen the value, if they talk to other head teachers or council members about this, that's how we have got more work. Similarly, teachers who have loved our work have moved schools and brought us with them, meaning we have begun a relationship with a new school that way.” (Artist Survey - profile not disclosed)

Similarly, a few noted that having access to external funding was helpful so that offers to schools could be subsidised or free. However, one respondent highlighted that such funding needed to be secured early in order to allow meaningful liaison with schools. One respondent suggested that offering free taster sessions was helpful when approaching a school for the first time, while another suggested providing some form of visual example of the activity.

Being supported by a national organisation, such as Creative Scotland or Theatre in Schools Scotland (or a large and well known company), was also considered to be helpful in engaging with schools. It was felt there was an element of quality control built into this which was easily communicated to schools, and that existing relationships were already in place to facilitate access. However, a few suggested that other national organisations could/should also develop a schools’ network to provide similar support.

A few also noted the need to be understanding of the schools’ position and needs. For example, to provide timely information so schools can integrate activities into their calendar, provide clear links to the curriculum, to understand the location of the school, collaborating with the school to meet their needs, not requiring significant input from school staff, etc. These points were also reiterated in the artist case study inputs:

“Good listening and being open to collaboration, meeting nurseries and schools halfway and not demanding too much, if anything, of staff who are

stretched and busy already. The most successful projects we find are the ones in which we can be as self-sufficient as possible.” (Artist Survey - arts company)

Finally, one respondent identified a helpful engagement mechanism provided by one local authority, and suggested this approach could be usefully adopted more widely:

“[Local Authority] sets up a brochure with a list of artists/shows/workshops that teachers can book. This is helpful. I think every council should do something similar to avoid the artist/school direct contact which is laborious and takes a lot of time for everyone.” (Artist Survey - individual artist)

Case Study Interviews

Within the case study interviews, a few school respondents indicated that they would like a ‘one-stop-shop’ to find out about all the different opportunities. There was a sense that schools were missing out on opportunities as they did not know what was available:

“It would be nice if it was like a one-stop-shop of opportunities I suppose that you could go to, cos I’m sure I miss loads of things because you can’t possibly know of everything.” (Case Study School - Fairview Primary, Perth and Kinross, engaged with storytellers, musical groups, sensory theatre and English Opera)

“I’m really into arts, and theatre especially and there’s still things that pop up and I’m like, I don’t really know everything there is on offer... I don’t know how you get involved in [certain opportunities], or I don’t know what other organisations there are... It really feels like a centralised list of organisations who work with schools would help.” (Case Study School - opted to remain anonymous, watched a Christmas performance in an external venue)

One school case study respondent also indicated that a lack of teacher confidence in delivering theatre, dance and drama was an issue, which if addressed could result in greater uptake and engagement:

“As much as I want to say the cost [would improve engagement and success], I actually don’t think it’s that. I really think it’s teacher confidence. I think expressive arts is one of these subjects that is difficult to teach and be enthusiastic about teaching it if you don’t feel comfortable with it yourself... I think that providing more opportunities for teachers to build their own skills and their own knowledge and their own confidence, would really support having more of it in school.” (Case Study School - opted to remain anonymous, participatory workshops building to a performance)

Case Studies - Successful Projects

As outlined above, 10 schools took part in case study interviews to provide more detailed feedback in relation to those performances/projects which they felt were most successful. The artists/companies who had delivered these projects were also contacted and invited to contribute to the case study, with four providing input.

Common Themes

One common theme that ran through most of the school interviews was that communication was key. Successful performances and projects were generally those where there had been good liaison between the school staff and artist/company, this included exploring the activity before booking, having the activity tailored to the school's/pupils' needs, the school having a really clear idea of what would be involved from the outset, school staff and the artist(s) liaising throughout (particularly for participatory work that lasted several sessions), and feedback sessions afterwards.

Those activities which had produced a final product were also highly rated, for example, where the work built towards the pupils delivering a final performance, or where a video was made of their performance:

"The kids getting to be part of something that's so high quality, having that experience, and getting to put on a show. The parents come out of it buzzing, they're all just like "that was absolutely amazing, that was so much fun" and they really enjoyed it. But for [the pupils], it's that sense of achievement and getting to be part of something." (School opted to remain anonymous, participatory workshops building to a performance)

"It's how proud they are of what they've created. My kids are still asking, quite regularly "can we watch our film again, can we see this?"... In years to come, they'll have this to look back on and say, "you know, this is what I created, I made a film that was premiered at an international film festival. I think it's really fab that I've been a part of that", it's really quite special." (St Ninian's Primary, Glasgow, working with In a New Light to deliver a long-term participatory project building to a co-created film)

Good Communication

Across most case study schools, respondents noted that they valued being able to speak with the artist/company to explore the activity and reassure themselves that it would be suitable for their needs. This was generally said to be done ahead of booking anything due to the costs involved and need for value for money. There were conflicting views however about what the initial promotional information should contain, with one school noting it was helpful to have the aims and benefits of the work outlined, while another noted that

promotional materials which push an artist's/company's views of how the activity can/will benefit pupils can be off-putting:

"think having that chance before we started the project, to really tell [the artist] where I was going, [meant] it didn't feel at all like it was an add-on... I just felt like [it] was a fully immersive experience. There was nothing that they were doing in that, that wasn't adding to the learning of the children."
(School opted to remain anonymous, 6 week participatory drama project linked directly to classroom topic work)

The need to liaise with artists/companies from the outset was particularly important for nurseries and schools who had pupils with additional support needs. It was key to ensure that performances or projects could be tailored to their pupils' needs and abilities, and to be reassured about the artist's understanding of this and any previous experience of working with very young or ASN children. This was relevant for both performances and participatory projects:

"We'll often speak with the companies themselves, just to make sure it is going to meet the needs of our pupils... I think it's really important that they're aware of the group of pupils that they're going to be working with and most companies have been amazing, you know, when we explain that some of our children have quite heightened sensory awareness. So we can't really have it as loud as maybe they would normally do, etc." (Fairview Primary, Perth and Kinross, engaged with storytellers, musical groups, sensory theatre and English Opera)

The ability to carry on the two-way liaison throughout the project, and flexibility on the part of the artist, was also important to ensure the work was able to meet the school's/pupils' needs and support other learning:

"I think having really strong communication between myself and [the artist]... she would come in just at lunchtime, so I would sit with her for maybe 15 minutes and say, look this is what we're going to be doing next week. Having the opportunity to not just see that person once a week... but knowing that you can just stick it in an email on a Tuesday for them coming in on Thursday, I think that's quite beneficial." (School opted to remain anonymous, 6 week participatory drama project linked directly to classroom topic work)

Artists also agreed that communication throughout the process was key to success:

"I think having an ongoing dialogue is an essential skill to have as a practitioner... I think having an ongoing conversation about expectations and outcomes is really key in keeping everyone on side and engaged in the project, which will ultimately allow everyone to embrace their role and that can only benefit the project." (In a New Light, working with St Ninian's)

Primary, Glasgow, to deliver a long-term participatory project building to a co-created film)

“We chatted to [school staff] after every session, finding out what the class enjoyed and didn’t enjoy that week, and what they wanted to do again. This was great as it allowed us to change our plans week to week, based on what the class were most interested in.” (Stolen Table Comedy Workshops, working with Victoria Primary, Edinburgh, to deliver participatory comedy workshops over five weeks building to a final co-created sketch show)

Providing Pupil Agency

Another key point for several case studies, particularly participatory projects, was the provision of real pupil agency and co-creation. Projects were considered to be particularly successful where the artist had encouraged/allowed the pupils to develop the direction of the work, the storyline, or key aspects of the activity/performance. This engendered better engagement, and provided pupils with a greater sense of ownership and pride in the final production:

“[The pupils] were really enjoying getting to that main aim [creating a sketch show], you know, and it was that kind of two-way thing, [the pupils] would do something and [the artists] would go “oh was that funny? Did you all laugh at that? Do you want to keep it in?” So it was that asking the children.” (Victoria Primary, Edinburgh, working with Stolen Table Comedy Workshops to deliver participatory comedy workshops over five weeks building to a final co-created sketch show)

Even for performances, case study schools noted the importance of providing some form of interaction with the pupils. This included workshops after the performance to further discuss the themes and reinforce learning from the show, question and answer sessions with the artists, and/or being able to see and touch the props. One school had also communicated by email with the director and set-designer about their work and had sought input/advice in relation to developing their own school show:

“It was so holistic, seeing the performance, then contacting [those involved] and them getting back to us. I mean, even just to get a reply was quite exciting and [the pupils] were asking really good questions... seeing a performance and linking it to your own experiences and your own learning, it’s an amazing thing to do.” (School opted to remain anonymous, watched a Christmas performance in an external venue)

Artists also highlighted pupil agency and co-creation as being an important element and driver of success:

“The collaborative element between young people [across the project] worked incredibly well - allowing them to share ideas, writing, choreography and films with each other that they then responded to themselves... The final film was hugely successful and brought all the ideas together in a cohesive way that still spoke of the voices and ideas from the young people.” (In a New Light, working with St Ninian’s Primary, Glasgow, to deliver a long-term participatory project building to a co-created film)

Identifying Opportunities

Mixed approaches were used by the case study schools to identify opportunities, which included considering promotional materials sent to the school, repeat activities with tried and trusted providers, as well as pro-actively seeking out opportunities (often with local artists and theatres). Despite this range of consideration, once a school had experienced a successful activity and built a relationship with a particular artist/company they were more likely to want to work with them again in the future.

Resources Provided and Supporting the Curriculum

Whilst perhaps not a key success factor for most projects discussed, the provision of high quality, engaging and easy to use resources was considered to be a highly supportive element for teaching staff. A few noted how well the pupils had engaged with materials they had been provided with, while others were highly complementary of quality resources that made it easy for teachers to either lead work necessary for the project, or to develop follow-up lessons to reinforce learning:

“I found the resources to be really good, it was really well organised, the stuff that we were given was really clear about what the expectations were of the children and the staff. Then in terms of the actual teaching for the staff members that aren’t so comfortable with singing or drama, the resources available to support them were really, really high quality, really clear, and really easy to use and access.” (School opted to remain anonymous, participatory workshops building to a performance)

One school also felt it was important (and would encourage greater uptake/engagement from schools/teachers), if resources could make explicit links to the curriculum and the experiences and outcomes. It was felt this would be particularly beneficial for teachers who were less confident about making the links themselves, and would help to embed the theatre, dance and drama experience into wider learning:

“I think definitely having some lesson plans e.g. this is how we might explore this in literacy, that’s where the curriculum links can be made. So if you weren’t so sure, if you had a lesson pack that was curriculum linked with outcomes and experiences across the curricular areas, that could be really beneficial. And again, it’s then not an add-on, it’s about what you’re doing.”

(School opted to remain anonymous, 6-week participatory drama project linked directly to classroom topic work)

For some schools, links to other curricular areas and/or being able to expand the work into literacy, maths/numeracy, health and wellbeing or topic work was important, although being exposed to new opportunities and developing an appreciation of the arts was also considered to be equally valuable. However, it was noted that, where school funding was required to access an activity, being able to evidence links to curricular areas and wider learning was key in securing this. A few also noted that links were generally possible to make for all theatre, dance and drama activities, even if they were not directly related to specific topics or projects in the school at the time, therefore this need not be a significant barrier:

“The majority of the children haven’t seen live theatre or dance before. So sometimes, depending on the show, it’s just the experience, which is fantastic because we want to give every child that experience in the school. But quite a lot of the time, it comes down the learning behind it. [When I want to book something] the head teacher will usually ask me why, and what follow up work will be done. So there’s got to be some kind of work connected with it - and that could be just simply a review or something like that.” (Victoria Primary, Edinburgh, working with Stolen Table Comedy Workshops to deliver participatory comedy workshops over five weeks building to a final co-created sketch show)

“I think that children should have the experience of actually going to a show so they get the whole experience, like the tickets, the seats, how to behave in an audience, getting to enjoy something in a theatre, as opposed to everything just happening in school. And I’ve always found that that’s really good for them.” (School opted to remain anonymous, participatory workshops building to a performance)

One artist also indicated that having linked their project to the curriculum from the outset also helped, while others noted that doing so was an important element of transferable learning:

“Tying the workshops in with different curriculum areas from the outset meant that more class time could be given when it was needed, as opposed to treating the workshops as extra-curricular or wholly Expressive Arts focused time... Flexibility in the curriculum and timetable was also key to this... It allowed the class to spend as much time as they needed working on the project and to learn at their own pace - ensuring nobody in the class was left behind.” (Stolen Table Comedy Workshops, working with Victoria Primary, Edinburgh, to deliver participatory comedy workshops over five weeks building to a final co-created sketch show)

Longer-Term Projects

While most did not highlight the length of the project as a specific element driving success, it is worth noting that many of the activities, particularly participatory work, did involve longer-term projects, generally over the course of six weeks or more. It was felt that this allowed for depth of learning, for links to wider areas of the curriculum to be explored, as well as good constructive relationships to be established between the artist(s) and pupils. This was, however, noted as a key success factor for ASN schools, where time was needed to build trust and understanding of the activities, and one or two others also flagged this as a specific success factor:

“Repetition is really important, and the building of relationships. A one off session can be quite a challenge for some of our pupils. Whereas the more sessions they have with somebody, the more comfortable they are and actually the more you get out of the young people. So by the end, the theory is that they’re fully engaged, they’re quite comfortable, calm and relaxed, they know what’s going to happen and they’re able to join in.” (Fairview Primary, Perth and Kinross, engaged with storytellers, musical groups, sensory theatre and English Opera)

Having a longer-term project was also noted by some artists to be beneficial and support the success of the activity:

“Having a longer period over which we could do workshops (once a week for 6 weeks) was much better than condensing that down into the space of a day long intensive workshop, as it allowed the class to develop their skills over a longer time and bring ideas from the outside world into the things we did.” (Stolen Table Comedy Workshops, working with Victoria Primary, Edinburgh, to deliver participatory comedy workshops over five weeks building to a final co-created sketch show)

Importance of Teacher Participation

Most respondents indicated that they actively participated in most of the theatre, dance and drama examples provided. This was seen as important to normalise and validate the activity for the pupils, and to provide reassurance to those who either felt pushed out of their comfort zone or who felt that being allocated a non-performance role might not be important:

“I think it would be quite easy just for me to take a back seat and just watch it unfold, but they really enjoy that I get involved in the things they’ve created. The pride and confidence that what they’ve created is valid and we’re taking that on board.” (St Ninian’s Primary, Glasgow, working with In a New Light to deliver a long-term participatory project building to a co-created film)

"I think because I showed genuine enjoyment and excitement to go... and I think when I show that, the enjoyment and the worth of it, then it just feeds down to the children. They see it as something worthwhile, and the fact that we talked about it and we learned about it and took it a little bit further, I think it did have an impact." (School opted to remain anonymous, watched a Christmas performance in an external venue)

Several also noted it had a positive impact on teacher/pupil relationships as pupils perhaps saw the teacher in a new light and/or it provided a talking point/bonding experience. Although this was very much a two-way experience, with teachers also seeing new skills or teaching methods to engage particular pupils (this is discussed in more detail under the benefits section below):

"I always try to get involved because it is really nice, that rapport building with the kids. If you're joining in and you're showing them that it's not too silly for you to do, or that informal chat opportunity if you've particularly got a tricky relationship with somebody at that time, then it gives you that chance to have a bit of a laugh and join in and you're not being the bossy teacher for a wee bit." (School opted to remain anonymous, 6 week participatory drama project linked directly to classroom topic work)

One respondent indicated that it was important for teachers to be actively involved in any theatre, dance and drama activity in order to make the curricular links:

"A teacher shouldn't be sitting there correcting a pile of jotters, because they've got to look for the curricular links. It's a partnership, looking for that common dialogue, because you can't expect the artist to do that because that's not what their training is." (St Albert's Primary, Glasgow, intensive participatory dance workshops building to a final co-created performance)

Similar to the 'champions' concept outlined above, the driving force within case study schools again appeared to be either a teacher or head teacher with a passion for the arts or some element of theatre, dance and drama themselves - either in a personal capacity or because they valued it as a cultural experience and/or teaching method for pupils (or both). Artists also echoed this sentiment and highlighted the importance of such supportive input:

"[The class teacher] was also a keen advocate of the arts and outdoor learning. We find that having a passionate and organised key contact teacher to help organise the project within the school is helpful. The [head teacher] is also behind the project's success as they were so on board with the work and helped enthuse the participating teachers." (Out to Play by Eco Drama, working with St Saviour's Primary, Glasgow, to deliver a 6 week residential drama artist to inspire outdoor learning)

Value of Experts

Despite the importance of teacher involvement, a few schools noted the importance of having an 'expert' to deliver the work. It was felt that messages and learning was perhaps better received from external experts, while one also noted that greater added value could be provided when links could be made to wider issues:

"I think the first key element is it's being delivered by other people rather than the teacher. Children will always see somebody else coming in as being more of an expert, even if a teacher's excellent at drama, somebody coming in and doing it is seen as being more of an expert by the children." (St Saviour's Primary, Glasgow, working with Out to Play by Eco Drama, a 6 week residential drama artist inspiring outdoor learning)

"I think bringing somebody outwith is really good in terms of increasing pupil engagement and interest. The children do respond well to seeing and meeting new people and this can generate greater interest." (Ss Peter and Paul Primary, Dundee, drama workshops over several weeks building to a final performance in school)

Benefits of the Successful Theatre, Dance and Drama Activities

Benefits for Pupils

The benefits discussed for pupils were extensive. Similar to the results from the survey outlined above, the main issue tended centre on increasing pupil confidence generally, but also in particular skills/activities. It was also indicated that pupils would learn a range of new skills, such as teamwork, listening and communication skills, improved vocabulary, and becoming more articulate. Further, it was felt that theatre, dance and drama supported the development of a depth of knowledge around a subject:

"When children enjoy something and they feel they've achieved something, that builds their confidence and that permeates all they're doing in the classroom." (St Saviour's Primary, Glasgow, working with Out to Play by Eco Drama, a 6 week residential drama artist inspiring outdoor learning)

"Children often don't see drama and theatre as formal learning, and this enables them to feel more relaxed, which in turn makes them much more open and willing to digest and retain information and understand the learning. I do think that expressive arts, the theatre performances and drama absolutely helps children to engage and helps them to embed their understanding of the intended learning." (Ss Peter and Paul Primary, Dundee, drama workshops over several weeks building to a final performance in school)

"I think it just gives them the opportunity to let their imagination run wild before you try and put pen to paper. I think one of the things you hear all the time is, I don't have any ideas, I don't know what to do. Whereas if they've done it, if they've experienced it, if they've already acted it out or danced through it, putting it to paper is so much easier. So it facilitated a lot of opportunities for us in the classroom." (School opted to remain anonymous, 6 week participatory drama project linked directly to classroom topic work)

Artists also indicated that they had received feedback suggesting positive benefits to the pupils involved in their work. Again, they outlined improvements in confidence and specific skills, as well as having been appreciative of the inclusive nature of the project:

"[School staff were] pleased how wide-ranging the benefits had been across the curriculum, the class were learning without realising it, and [they] were pleased with how quickly they could see their development." (Stolen Table Comedy Workshops, working with Victoria Primary, Edinburgh, to deliver participatory comedy workshops over five weeks building to a final co-created sketch show)

As well as the academic benefits, a few schools also discussed the importance of theatre, dance and drama for exploring emotional resilience. It was felt that such activities provided safe opportunities for this as the pupils were able to develop issues through characters and roles rather than taking a more personal approach:

"Children respond well to drama experiences as it can focus attention on fictitious characters and allow children to focus less on their own experiences. Theatre or a drama performance can help children explore thoughts and feeling through role play situations in a much more safe and relaxing way." (St Peter and Paul Primary, Dundee, drama workshops over several weeks building to a final performance in school)

"A huge thing that's come out of lockdown is emotional resilience. I just feel like drama, music and dance, there's no better way to explore emotions because you can apply it to somebody else. So you're not you in that time and you often find children acting out something they're going through but without ever attaching it to themselves." (School opted to remain anonymous, 6 week participatory drama project linked directly to classroom topic work)

Also, being exposed to new opportunities and finding something they really enjoy was seen as a benefit - it was noted that some pupils had joined extra-curricular classes/groups as a result of activities in school:

"It's just been fantastic, it's been so beneficial for our pupils and it's unlocked so many avenues that so many of them just wouldn't have had access to

before. They're getting things that so many other children aren't actually getting access to, so that really makes it quite special." (St Ninian's Primary, Glasgow, working with In a New Light to deliver a long-term participatory project building to a co-created film)

Theatre, dance and drama was also seen as a powerful medium for inclusion, both in general, and for certain pupils, including non-verbal children, ASN pupils, where English is a second language, etc.:

"They're quite hidden, some of our young people, so to see them enjoying a performance is a real pleasure. It's a joy actually. So it is a bonding experience I think for the staff and the pupils as well." (Fairview Primary, Perth and Kinross, engaged with storytellers, musical groups, sensory theatre and English Opera)

"To be honest, I feel like there was nobody that didn't get something out of it. The kids that love the singing and the drama and the dancing, you know that they're going to get something out of it... But I think for the kids that maybe don't, I've seen it open their eyes to other opportunities. So for some of them, it's confidence or self-awareness that they've learnt... even that sense of working as part of a team. They feel like they're part of something, they're included in something." (School opted to remain anonymous, participatory workshops building to a performance)

There were often surprises noted in the impacts and benefits to particular children. Respondents noted that sometimes shy, quiet and reserved children, or those who did not engage well with academic or classroom based learning often engaged well and excelled (in at least one aspect of the activity - either on stage or back-stage). At least three schools described notable impacts on particular children/individuals who had overcome shyness to fully participate and lead aspects of the activity, or who went on to join extra-curricular/community groups to further pursue their interest in theatre, dance and drama. Others noted impacts on general pupil cohorts:

"[There were] lots of reluctant writers that wanted to tell people jokes, wanted to write a script, offered suggestions, like "here's what I think you should do", or design a set. So they were actually creating something, which was really nice." (Victoria Primary, Edinburgh, working with Stolen Table Comedy Workshops to deliver participatory comedy workshops over five weeks building to a final co-created sketch show)

"With the outdoor learning, what we did find was a lot of children who maybe are reticent to take part in the classroom because of the logistics of writing, etc., were much more vocal, were more participative, they would read things which they wouldn't normally do in a classroom situation... It builds confidence for those children. Sometimes they find their voice doing something like that where they don't have it before." (St Saviour's Primary,

Glasgow, working with Out to Play by Eco Drama, a 6 week residential drama artist inspiring outdoor learning)

“I also think for your children who are maybe a little bit more [neuro]-divergent who potentially have things like ADHD or who struggle with concentration, there’s not so much concentration required in drama. You’re moving all the time, you’re busy all the time. So even if it’s a silent project, they’re busy while they’re doing it, so they’ve got more of an opportunity to explore and let off the energy. And, if you’re giving them a chance to explore something in a way that suits them, as a neuro-divergent child, there’s no right or wrong answers in drama, in music or in dance, so they’ve got the chance to express themselves in a way that they haven’t done before.”

(School opted to remain anonymous, 6 week participatory drama project linked directly to classroom topic work)

It was also considered important for pupils to have access to theatre, dance and drama experiences in order to broaden their future career options. This was important both for inclusion purposes (so that all pupils from all backgrounds felt it was an accessible area), and to introduce children to the wide range of different opportunities beyond the performer role (e.g. to consider set- and costume-design, lighting and sound, directing, filming, etc.). Indeed a number of respondents noted how engaged certain pupils had been with back-stage roles:

“And you’ve had kids that really just hate being on the stage but give them the lighting set and the microphones and they’re just buzzing about it, and they have that kind of control. So I suppose it’s finding the skills and talents in all the kids.” (School opted to remain anonymous, participatory workshops building to a performance)

Benefits for Teachers and the School

Significant benefits for teachers were also discussed, with a particularly common theme being teachers picking-up skills and techniques to engage pupils (either certain individuals or generally), and/or to teach things in a different way. They noted that they had learned ways of encouraging pupils to engage in literacy, had identified tools to enthuse or calm their class, developed ways to communicate and relate to specific pupils, etc.:

“It was great for me to just observe how they were, like I’ll never be a stand-up comedian like that, but it was great to see that I could observe how to teach as well.” (Victoria Primary, Edinburgh, working with Stolen Table Comedy Workshops to deliver participatory comedy workshops over five weeks building to a final co-created sketch show)

“I always get involved so that I can write the ideas down for when I’m doing my own lessons. I always join in, so then I’ve got a whole bank of ideas. That’s where all my ideas have come from, from things I’ve taken part in, or

if I've watched something." (School opted to remain anonymous, 6 week participatory drama project linked directly to classroom topic work)

A few also noted having had an element of CPD (through in-service days or other initiatives) either linked to specific activities or that have been sought out as a result of theatre, dance and drama in the school:

"I think the legacy would be the increase in skills and confidence in the staff. People who were possibly reticent to take their class outside because they liked the safety of the four walls and the blackboard, they suddenly realised there was a lot to be gained from taking the class outside and doing different things with them. You could get the same outcomes using a different method." (St Saviour's Primary, Glasgow, working with Out to Play by Eco Drama, a 6 week residential drama artist inspiring outdoor learning)

"...after a couple of the projects, we've had a push on how drama can support children's literacy development. The quality of the [pupil's] writing improved quite a lot and the actual story lines and the way that they were describing things and their vocabulary came on quite a lot. I noticed a massive difference in that." (School opted to remain anonymous, participatory workshops building to a performance)

One artist also noted that they had received very positive feedback from teachers who had outlined the impacts and benefits to themselves, mostly related to building their own confidence in leading similar activities.

Benefits for Parents

Benefits for parents were also discussed by school case study respondents. These included being able to receive feedback about their child's engagement or enjoyment of new areas which they had not experienced before, as well as being provided with the opportunity to watch their performances (where applicable). This fostered a sense of pride in the parents, but was also said to promote theatre, dance and drama to families generally and encouraged parents to see this as a suitable activity to encourage their child to engage with. For the parents of those with ASN, school feedback provided parents with additional tools to support their child and the confidence to visit theatres/venues:

"So if they're needing 'calm down' time, then [teachers] might take opera music now and build that into that young person's routine, and share that with families as well... So [the parents] might start to listen to opera music, they might even feel confident to take the young person to a performance... If we're able to say "they actually sat the whole time, they were completely engaged", that would give a parent confidence, and that is a huge impact." (Fairview Primary, Perth and Kinross, engaged with storytellers, musical groups, sensory theatre and English Opera)

Benefits for Artists

Artists also outlined a range of benefits which their particular case study projects had provided for them. This included building their own confidence as well as (what they hoped would be lasting) relationships with the schools involved and other companies. It was also noted to have helped artists to refine and improve their offer:

“This project opened us up to working with young people, something which neither of us had considered before but we have both continued to do since! It helped us learn a lot about our own writing and performing process as well, by taking the class through what we do helped us see our own practice through fresh eyes and begin to refine it.” (Stolen Table Comedy Workshops, working with Victoria Primary, Edinburgh, to deliver participatory comedy workshops over five weeks building to a final co-created sketch show)

“The work I did with [the school] has helped me carry my passion for co-creation forwards into my career... It has built my confidence in working with people from all backgrounds.” (Capital Theatres: Awfey Huge Productions, delivering theatre workshops building to a co-created performance in an external venue, case study school opted to remain anonymous)

Recommendations

The research findings highlighted a number of issues which were important to schools when engaging with theatre, dance and drama. These issues recurred throughout the survey and case study responses, and included:

- issues related to cost/finite resources and perceptions of value for money
- good communication between the school and artist/company were vital
- providing engaging and interactive opportunities which allowed the pupils to co-create was a driver of success
- providing clear links to the curriculum were important
- upskilling school staff was helpful in building teacher confidence
- schools were concerned about a lack of awareness in terms of the different opportunities available to them

A range of recommendations were developed which are intended to support artists, art companies and national bodies to boost successful engagement with school:

1. **Communication between schools and artists/companies**

Artists/Companies should build time in for dialogue with the school to ensure projects are best suited to pupils (and teachers') needs, especially for participatory projects. This is also key to build up trust between artists and schools. Similarly, for performances, schools are keen to be able to find out more about the suitability of performances/venues and discuss any potential wrap-around activities. Identifying and building links with theatre, dance and drama 'champions' within schools will also aid engagement.

2. **Making curricular links clear**

Schools are looking for quick ways to see whether a project/performance will help them deliver the curriculum so translating the art offer into educational sector "language" is key. This helps to identify the wider value of the work to schools and can be useful in supporting requests for head teachers to allocate finite resources. This could be an area that Creative Scotland and Education Scotland may be able to support artists and schools with. It may be useful to also build time into projects for discussions with the school around how to embed the offer within wider learning. Key areas that were important for schools were health and wellbeing, literacy (including talking and listening skills), confidence building, and encouraging creativity.

3. **Communicating benefits for children**

Highlight the benefits of the performance or project to the children's learning is important, while acknowledging that outcomes may depend on a particular class or teacher. While it is important to highlight the general expected benefits, it is also useful to liaise with the school in relation to their specific needs, pupil cohort, etc. to identify ways in which the work could be beneficial to them on an individual level, and possibly adjusted depending on circumstances.

4. **Agency in performances and projects**

This is important in driving success and perceptions of value for money. While all work should be artist-led, it is important to ensure that it is also child-centred. For participatory projects, co-creation between the artist and pupils is vitally important, while for performances, a workshop, question and answer session, or hands-on look at the set, props, etc. would be useful. Schools are very keen for children to take ownership of their learning.

5. **Central online portal**

Only a few of the teachers interviewed were aware of the Creativity Portal (and none had made use of it recently), however, many suggested that it would be useful to have a central information portal to improve awareness and promotion of opportunities in schools. This should include a search function to allow schools to identify what is available locally and what would be suitable for their needs.

6. **Increasing staff confidence**

Schools appreciated the opportunity to up-skill staff and build their confidence in theatre, dance and drama, either by involving teachers in projects, or by providing the opportunity for CLPL. Such professional development could either be delivered as stand-alone training offered to schools, or as short sessions when artists/ companies are already working with a school.

7. **Long-term legacy**

Artists should consider the legacy of their intervention and the long term impact they can have on pupils. As well as up-skilling school staff, artists could discuss follow-up work which the school could undertake with the pupils or highlight warm-up exercises, games, or other techniques which could be used in the classroom to support learning. This could also help support the development of longer-term relationships with schools.

Appendix A Steering Group Members

Members of the research steering group included:

- Serena Jagpal: Teacher, Pentland Primary
- Emily Reid: Eco Drama / Freelancer
- Charlotte Mountford: Lyth Arts
- Heather Armstrong: Starcatchers
- Alex Ringham: Creative Scotland
- Vanessa Boyd: Creative Scotland
- Teri McIntosh: Education Scotland
- Karen Anderson: Indepen-dance
- Anna Derricourt: Theatre in Schools Scotland
- KJ Clarke-Davis: Independent Dance Artist
- Hannah Venet: Independent Dance Artist
- Julie Wilson: Teacher, Gigha Primary

Appendix B Survey Responses by Local Authority

Local Authorities school respondents were based in and areas artists had worked in:

Local Authority	School Survey (based in)	Artist Survey (worked in)
Aberdeen City Council	-	12 (32%)
Aberdeenshire Council	2 (2%)	10 (26%)
Angus Council	3 (3%)	7 (18%)
Argyll and Bute Council	9 (8%)	5 (13%)
City of Edinburgh Council	31 (27%)	20 (53%)
Clackmannanshire Council	-	2 (5%)
Dumfries and Galloway Council	1 (1%)	4 (11%)
Dundee City Council	9 (8%)	11 (29%)
East Ayrshire Council	-	6 (16%)
East Dunbartonshire Council	1 (1%)	4 (11%)
East Lothian Council	5 (4%)	8 (21%)
East Renfrewshire Council	-	6 (16%)
Falkirk Council	-	7 (18%)
Fife Council	1 (1%)	12 (32%)
Glasgow City Council	17 (15%)	18 (47%)
Highland Council	12 (10%)	10 (26%)
Inverclyde Council	-	6 (16%)
Midlothian Council	-	6 (16%)
Moray Council	11 (9%)	3 (8%)
North Ayrshire Council	-	5 (13%)
North Lanarkshire Council	-	12 (32%)
Orkney Islands Council	2 (2%)	4 (11%)
Perth & Kinross Council	4 (3%)	13 (34%)
Renfrewshire Council	-	11 (29%)
Scottish Borders Council	1 (1%)	6 (16%)
Shetland Islands Council	-	5 (13%)
Stirling Council	-	8 (21%)
South Ayrshire Council	-	8 (21%)
South Lanarkshire Council	2 (2%)	6 (16%)
West Dunbartonshire Council	1 (1%)	5 (13%)
West Lothian Council	1 (1%)	7 (18%)
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Western Isles)	-	4 (11%)
Not Disclosed	3 (3%)	-
Total	116	38*

* Note: Multiple responses were possible and 2 respondents were skipped past this question as they had not worked in schools in the last five years.