



## **The Primary Consultation notes, 26/01/2021**

On 26th January we met with primary teachers via Zoom, along with primary drama specialists, association members and teaching network partners. We raised various issues which generated an engaged and open discussion.

### **What are the obstacles to teaching drama**

- Some outstanding models of drama being embedded in whole school curriculum were presented, along with the positive impact this had on student's development and wellbeing.
- Teachers believe that as drama is not recognised as a subject in its own right. It isn't assessed and so is not given the value it deserves. It is therefore often seen as a teaching method for other subjects like literacy and English.
  - In light of this, there is a general lack of specialism among primary teachers. When combined with funding restraints there is little opportunity to develop skills through CPD.
- There was reference to a primary drama curriculum by Jim Rose which was not passed by the Conservative/Lib. Dem coalition government.

### **Challenges and obstacles**

- Drama specialists are needed not only to teach, but to support non-specialists in the use of drama as a cross-curricular tool.
- Whether teaching drama as a stand-alone subject or embedding it into the curriculum, it requires senior management support, and significant strategic investment of time, finances, and curriculum research and development.
- Subject knowledge CPD can be difficult without senior learning team (SLT) support due to the cost of teaching cover, travel, etc. However, online CPD, which is increasing due to COVID-19, is on the rise and is far more accessible.

### **Accessing professional theatre**

- One school was able to access pupil premium funds to partially support theatre trips or welcome touring companies into school.
- General consensus that advocating for arts and culture trips to SLT can be challenging.

### **Models of best practice**

- Teachers expressed models of drama teaching which were skills based, teaching drama techniques as a stand-alone subject, and examples of drama being embedded into the whole-school curriculum as a cross-curricular tool and teaching methodology.
- Anecdotal evidence that secondary drama teachers are retraining as primary teachers due to cutbacks in secondary drama.
- An international school gave an inspiring account of drama embedded into their whole curriculum, from English literature to Arabic.

### **What can the DTEA do to support teachers/schools?**

- Advocacy, not only to education bodies but to head teachers.



- The United Nations Convention on the [Rights of the Child](#) (UNCRC), protect children's rights to access arts and drama. Articles 13 on freedom of expression, and Article 31 on participation in cultural and artistic life are key to this argument.
- Manifestos by [ASSITEJ](#), the [DTEA](#) and [Action for Children's Arts](#) are all strong policy documents.

### Participation in Artsmark, Arts Award, etc

- These can be a driver to help a whole school approach to the arts, although the fees can be too much for some schools.
- Lots of positive feedback about Artsmark helping put more focus on Arts. No teachers present doing Arts Award.

### Take away notes for further discussion

- Research on this topic needs to be developed into practical guides and resources to help teachers incorporate into their teaching, and to advocate to SLT.
- Build a network – teachers want to hear from teachers, heads want to hear from heads. Messages from industry may be perceived as being guided by self-interest.
- We need to raise the profile of drama and make a noise. We need to contact the government and find MPs to advocate for us.
- There seems to be some debate on whether skills or process are the best approach – we need to unite these approaches.
- Zoom and online education – has it helped the decline of drama or created the right circumstances for its relaunch? With so much education online students and staff are craving tasks away from devices.
  - One secondary teacher is expecting a significant drop in GCSE drama take-up as current year 9 have not had any experience of practical drama in KS3 due to COVID. Is a steep drop in GCSE Drama take-up imminent?

For more information and updates on the Drama and Theatre Education Alliance's initiative on the teaching of drama in key stages 1-3, visit [www.dtealliance.co.uk/drama-teaching-ks1-3](http://www.dtealliance.co.uk/drama-teaching-ks1-3).