

7 Education initiatives

The initiatives

The DfES and other agencies run many educational initiatives.¹ Awareness of museums is relatively high amongst some of these agencies and some have worked with a range of museums in the NW. There is scope for museums to work with these initiatives, as well as to work directly with individual schools. It is often under the auspices of these initiatives that some of the more innovative work takes place. For instance, Excellence in Cities in Manchester enjoys a close relationship with the Manchester Museum, which works closely with schools on curriculum development and raising achievement. It has run schemes under the Aim Higher and Gifted and Talented initiatives which are discussed below.

Each sub-regional area that was looked at has its own mix of educational initiatives and partnerships. The national initiatives are adapted to fit particular local needs, and sometimes specific local ones are developed. For instance Liverpool, as an area of high deprivation, has many schemes. Its 'Curriculum with Character' initiative advocates a broad and balanced curriculum and places particular emphasis on making the most of what the city has to offer, particularly in music and the arts. The citizenship curriculum has been enhanced by the establishment of a Liverpool Schools Parliament and a programme of training that has enabled many schools to establish a school council. Chief amongst the other agencies working in the city is Excellence in Liverpool (the local equivalent of Excellence in Cities). There are three Education Action Zones and four mini Education Action Zones. Ten Sure Start projects are currently in operation, and for several years resources have also been available to schools through urban renewal funding. Excellence Clusters provide many teacher training opportunities, as well as summer schools designed to support the transition from primary to secondary school.

Education Action Zones (EAZs)

EAZs were established in 1998 with the objective of raising standards in schools in disadvantaged areas. They are statutory, independent organizations, separate from LEAs. All zones were initially established for a limited term of three years. A limited term was legislated to encourage innovation and to ensure that successful programmes are mainstreamed into standard practice within zone schools.

Every zone has an Education Action Forum, which is legally responsible for the zone. The Forum is made up of the zone's main partners, which can include the LEA, parents, local community, voluntary organisations, businesses, other organisations (such as the Health Authority) and representatives from the schools themselves. It is the responsibility of the Forum to draw up an action plan to raise educational standards within the zone. The action plan is approved by the Secretary of State, and

¹ For information on a whole range of educational initiatives stemming from the DfES see the department's standards website (www.standards.dfes.gov.uk)

includes stretching targets for each participating school and for the zone as a whole.

Zones attract large amounts of outside support. The first twenty-five Round 1 zones received up to £750,000 funding each year from the DfES. In return they are expected to draw in up to £250,000 a year in contributions from private sector partners. All EAZs will end by April 2005. They will then be incorporated into Excellence Clusters and EiC Action Zones.

In the North West, EAZs exist in Blackburn with Darwen, Bolton (Brightmet and Tonge), Cheshire (Ellesmere Port), Cumbria (Barrow in Furness), East Manchester, Liverpool (Dingle, Granby & Toxteth and Speke Garston), Manchester (Wythenshawe), Salford and Trafford, Wigan (Leigh).

The work of EAZs depends on building partnerships with other agencies, which can include museums. Bolton's EAZ, for instance, works closely with Bolton's Artists in Schools Agency. It also runs, with the Literacy Trust, the Big Book Project. Bolton Museum and Art Gallery is one of the partners in the project. Sixteen large books were commissioned to help with teaching literacy. Schools were linked to a public place or workplace in Bolton and a book was produced about the visit.

Excellence in Cities

Excellence in Cities (EiC) is a targeted programme of support for urban secondary schools in deprived areas of the country where standards are low. EiC provides resources and a programme of strategies focused on teaching and learning, behaviour and attendance, and leadership. The programme is delivered locally by schools working in partnership with their local education authority. Knowsley LEA, for instance, has incorporated EiC into its 'transformational strategy' in order to ensure a consistent approach across all the borough's educational initiatives. Launched in 1999, it will continue to at least 2006.

EiC has a number of strands, some of which are discussed further below:

- Gifted and Talented
- EiC Action Zones
- Learning Mentors
- Learning Support Unit
- City Learning Centres
- Aim Higher
- Study Support
- Behaviour Improvement Programme
- Leadership Incentive Grant
- Specialist schools
- Excellence Clusters
- Primary EiC

In the North West, EiC exists in Knowsley, Liverpool, Manchester, Salford, St Helens, Rochdale, Wirral, Oldham, Blackburn with Darwen and Blackpool.

Excellence in Cities Action Zones

Schools in Excellence in Cities areas face a whole range of problems including low educational achievement across the community, truancy, exclusion and youth crime. EiC Action Zones (EiCAZs) are one of the strands which comprise the EiC initiative and have been set up in urban areas where there is this mixture of social disadvantage and under-performance in schools. The zones enable local partnerships, which includes the private sector, to target action on areas of need and develop innovative solutions for raising educational standards

Each EiCAZ is non-statutory and is managed by the EiC Partnership. EiC Action Zones typically focus on the needs of one or two secondary schools and their associated primary schools. They provide a bottom up approach to overcoming local barriers to achievement.

Each EiC Action Zone receives £250,000 a year for three years, and has the chance to extend that period subject to the strategic requirements of their EiC Partnership. Zones are also encouraged to work closely with local businesses, and any sponsorship is matched by the Department pound for pound up to an additional £50,000, giving each zone the opportunity to receive up to £300,000 a year from DfES.

Excellence Clusters

Excellence Clusters are designed to bring the benefits of Excellence in Cities to small pockets of deprivation. Like EiC, clusters focus on some of the most deprived areas of the country, using a structured programme designed to raise standards. As with the EiC programme, Excellence Clusters are implemented through local partnerships focusing on the needs and aspirations of individual pupils and their parents.

Clusters benefit from extra resources to provide the three core strands of the EiC programme:

- Extended opportunities for gifted and talented pupils
- Access to full time learning mentors for pupils who need them
- Learning support units to tackle disruption.

In the North West, Excellence Clusters exist in East Lancs (Burnley and Nelson), West Cumbria (Workington, Whitehaven and Maryport), Tameside, Crewe, Lancaster, Preston, Skelmersdale, Stockport, Wigan and Trafford.

The West Cumbria Excellence Cluster comprises sixteen schools around Workington and Whitehaven. It has a budget of £750,000 p.a. from 2001 to 2006. The aims of the Cluster include enrichment and extension activities for gifted and talented

children; cultural enrichment including 'Widening Minds' anti-racist and anti-sexist activities. Some of the gifted and talented children are working with the Wordsworth Trust over a period of weeks, rather than as one-off events which is so often the case.

Excellence Clusters in Liverpool provide many teacher training opportunities as well as summer schools designed to support the transition from primary to secondary school.

Aim Higher (formerly known as Excellence Challenge)

Aim Higher is a programme designed to increase the numbers of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who apply for and enter higher education. It began in September 2001 with over £190m to increase the number of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who apply for and enter higher education. Ministers recently announced the extension of the programme until 2006, its expansion into new areas and a further commitment of £130 million for the programme. A key purpose is to improve links between universities, colleges and schools.

Gifted and Talented

Gifted and Talented (or G and T as it is often called) is another strand of Excellence in Cities. It focuses on three areas: intensive programmes in disadvantaged areas through the Excellence in Cities initiative; resources that support teaching and learning nationally and a new focus on regional support, initially in London. It aims to ensure that schools introduce teaching and learning programmes, and complementary out of school hours study support programmes, for their most able 5-10% of pupils.

Under the Gifted and Talented programme a hundred Year 12 students from the Wirral went to the Lake District in the summer of 2003 to take part in a project entitled 'Forms in a Landscape'. They were divided into subject groupings (Art, History, Science, English etc.) and used a range of local resources, including Dove Cottage, the Museum of Lakeland Life and Abbot Hall.

Beacon Schools

The Beacon Schools programme was established in 1998. The programme identifies high performing schools across England. It was designed to build partnerships between these schools and to represent examples of successful practice, with a view to sharing and spreading that effective practice to other schools to raise standards in pupil attainment. The Beacon School programme will be phased out by August 2005. The Government is working with practitioners to think about the best ways of supporting effective networking and the sharing of good practice in primary schools, building on the experiences developed through the Beacon schools programme.

St Cuthberts Primary School in Manchester used their beacon status to develop an inset programme at the Whitworth Art Gallery for teachers from three other primary schools.

Specialist Schools

The Specialist Schools programme helps schools, in partnership with private sector sponsors, to establish distinctive identities through their chosen specialisms and achieve their targets to raise standards. Specialist schools have a special focus on their chosen subject area, but must meet the National Curriculum requirements and deliver a broad and balanced education to all pupils.

Any maintained secondary school in England can apply to be designated as a specialist school in one of ten specialist areas: arts, business & enterprise, engineering, humanities, language, mathematics & computing, music, science, sports and technology. Schools can also combine any two specialisms. *The Specialist Schools Trust is the lead body for the specialist schools programme.*² Arts Learning North West is a network of specialist arts colleges across North West England. There are thirty eight arts colleges in the region, specialising in the visual arts, performing arts or media. Two schools focus on the arts and sciences.³ Bolton's Education Development Plan underlines the need to gain specialist status for the remaining secondary schools which do not yet have it, over the next five years. Currently four schools hold arts status. Bury has one of the first joint arts/science specialist schools in the country. Manchester is committed to supporting schools in developing arts status. Its Cultural Strategy states that it aims to have five schools with specialist cultural status (arts, sports, entrepreneurship) by 2005.⁴

Creative Partnerships

Creative Partnerships is the DCMS, DfES and Arts Council England's flagship programme in the cultural education field. Its aim is to give school children and their teachers the opportunity to explore their creativity by working on sustained projects with creative professionals. DCMS and DfES see the programme as a major plank in the Government's response to the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education report *All Our Futures: Creativity and Education (1999)*. In the North West there are currently Creative Partnerships programmes in Manchester and Salford, and in Merseyside. Cumbria and East Lancashire will be covered in the second and third phases respectively.

Medlock Primary School in south Manchester won the 2004 Artworks Young Artists of the Year Award for its multi-art project which was developed with Creative

² www.specialistschoolstrust.org.uk

³ www.networkingthearts.co.uk

⁴ *Our Creative City: Manchester* p. 6 (n.d. Manchester City Council) (Available from the Cultural Strategy Partnership, Manchester City Council, Town Hall Extension, Albert Square, Manchester M60 2LA Tel: 0161 234 1515)

Partnerships Manchester Salford, The Whitworth Art Gallery and Victoria Swimming Baths in Manchester were the other partners. The project was inspired by the notion of stories trapped in architecture. The school, the gallery and the baths were all constructed at the same time, at the height of Manchester's Victorian expansion. This common heritage was used to help children understand the environment they live in today and to create their own stories through dance and art.

CAPE (UK) (Chicago Arts Participation in Education) (www.capeuk.org)

CAPE UK works to develop the creative capacities of children and young people. It is an independent 'not for profit' organisation which works in partnership with a wide range of agencies within both the statutory and voluntary sector, including LEAs, schools, FE colleges, youth and community groups, and organisations and individuals from the cultural and creative industries, the business and research world. These partnerships explore new ways of working with young people through creative activities and through a variety of programmes.

Arts Council Artsmark

Artsmark is a national award scheme and is managed by Arts Council England. It is awarded to schools which show a commitment to the full range of arts - music, dance, drama and art & design. Manchester aims to have 22 schools obtaining Arts Mark and Sports Mark awards by 2005.

Business Education Partnerships

Business Education Partnerships (BEP) provide opportunities for schools, businesses and wider communities to work together. They do this through such schemes as reading support, mentoring, gifted and talented, curriculum support and work experience. Salford has the largest BEP in the country with fifty staff. Their Gifted and Talented Co-ordinator works with museums in Salford and Manchester. Bolton and Bury BEP has worked with Bolton Museum and Art Gallery to run training courses for teachers. Cumbria Business Education Consortium oversees the five BEPs in the area: Carlisle, Eden, Furness, Kendal and South Lakes and West Cumbria. They currently work with the Dock Museum, Barrow, to host an event for industrial companies offering science and engineering based activities for schools. They also host teachers' CPD days at Tate Liverpool and museums in Manchester.

Sure Start

Sure Start is a Government programme which aims to increase the availability of childcare for all children; improve health, education and emotional development of young children; and to support parents as parents and in their aspirations towards employment. Sure Start local programmes deliver community based services in disadvantaged areas.⁵

⁵ www.surestart.gov.uk

The Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester worked in conjunction with Sure Start and early years providers to develop an under fives area called XPERITOTS. It is located in Xperiment, their hands-on science gallery. Bookable and free activity sessions take place once a month and include puppets, music and storytelling. 50% of the places are reserved for Sure Start groups and 50% for the general public.