

**Creative Partnerships:  
Who you will work with**



# **Creative Partnerships: Who you will work with**



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**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**





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# The Creative Partnerships School Coordinator

Creative Partnerships School Coordinators play a key role in making schools programmes successful. They are responsible for driving the programme, and ensuring it is integrated into the wider practice of the school.

School Coordinators will be members of the school's senior leadership team, and will be accountable to the headteacher. They will influence the thinking and practice of colleagues and other stakeholders across the school community.

### Key functions

#### Developing a creative learning community across the school

- to have knowledge, understanding and enthusiasm for creative teaching and learning as a key to raising achievement, aspiration and motivation
- to build a community of creative learning practice across the school, involving all departments as appropriate
- to involve parents, Governors and other members of the community extensively throughout the programme
- to establish and facilitate a Creative Partnerships Advisory Group in the school made up of teachers, support staff, Governors, parents and community members

#### Ensuring the programme is linked to broader developmental issues

- to develop, through dialogue with the wider school community, an enquiry based approach which addresses a range of issues relevant to the broader developmental needs of the school and its learners and is linked to the school improvement plan
- to facilitate the long-term development of creative teaching and learning at a structural and systemic level, using the *Creative School Development Framework* and other resources
- to establish a Creative Partnerships programme plan on an annual basis, linked to the Creative School Development Framework self-assessment process<sup>1</sup>

#### Programme and project management

- to act as a facilitator in school, able to translate the school's vision for creative learning into practical implementation

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<sup>1</sup> References to the use of the Creative School Development Framework relate to the Change Schools and Schools of Creativity programmes. Enquiry Schools are free to make use of the framework, but are not obliged to do so.

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- to ensure that children and young people play a meaningful and active role in shaping the Creative Partnerships programme, so that it truly reflects their interests, needs and enthusiasms
- to take overall responsibility for programme and project management, delegating extensively across the school community and ensuring roles and responsibilities are understood clearly by all
- to coordinate, in partnership with the Creative Agent, meetings and activities with creative practitioners, school staff and other partners
- to ensure that external partners engaged in the programme are able to develop appropriate communications across the school community
- to ensure all programme activity is carried out with due regard to health and safety and the safeguarding of children and young people

### Working closely with the school's Creative Agent and Creative Partnerships staff

- to maintain a regular schedule of contact with the Creative Agent, working towards the establishment of a long-term dialogue based on trust, challenge and collaboration
- to act as the main point of contact with Creative Partnerships Area Delivery Organisation staff
- to ensure that all systems for project planning and evaluation are used in line with Creative Partnerships established procedures

### Evaluation and sustainability

- to ensure that all monitoring and evaluation requirements are fulfilled and that partners commit to developing reflective practice throughout the programme
- to ensure that the financial management of the programme is managed by the school and integrated into its overall budget management systems, with due attention paid to the financial monitoring and reporting requirements requested by the Creative Partnerships ADO.
- to work closely with the Creative Agent and the whole school team to ensure that effective approaches to creative teaching and learning become embedded across the school

### Advocacy and dissemination

- to ensure that the school participates fully in broader advocacy and dissemination opportunities developed by ADOs and CCE and plays a proactive role locally and more widely to promote the benefits arising from the programme
- to actively network with other school partners and external partners linked with the programme, attending networking meetings as appropriate

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### Time requirements

- A minimum of the equivalent of 20 days a year for Change Schools and six days for Enquiry Schools
- School Coordinators will be expected to be released from other duties in order to ensure this role is allocated sufficient time to attend planning, evaluation and networking meetings<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Supply cover for the Coordinator must not form part of the programme budget.

## The Creative Agent

### What is a Creative Agent?

A distinctive feature of the Creative Partnerships approach is the role of the Creative Agent.

Creative Agents are experienced creative practitioners who are highly skilled in working in educational settings in an advisory and enabling capacity. They are skilled in:

- building relationships
- managing partnerships
- developing and delivering programmes
- brokering contractual arrangements with other practitioners

Most importantly, Creative Agents are skilled at developing reflective practice through fostering the growth of creative learning communities in schools. While Creative Agents are recruited from a broad range of professional creative backgrounds – from the arts, culture, science and beyond, they all have one thing in common – a commitment to working in partnership with schools to help realise the creative potential of all learners and to help to make learning more engaging and effective through creative approaches.

Creative Agents draw on their practical experience of creativity and act as a catalyst, responding imaginatively to a school's specific context rather than applying a predetermined process.

The Creative Agent will:

- help you to identify the creative practitioners who will bring appropriate skills to your projects
- advise on programme development and project management
- act as a 'critical friend' to challenge your thinking and practice.

The critical friend role has the greatest potential to enrich your project, so it is very important that you establish a constructive and positive relationship with your Creative Agent. You should see them as an essential part of your team.

You can expect your Creative Agent to:

- develop an effective working relationship with the school

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- stimulate thoughts and ideas
- help you to develop a reflective approach
- ask questions that will challenge your thinking
- bring a different, but related, perspective
- help you plan the programme, project or area of enquiry
- broker the engagement of appropriate creative practitioners
- help you to meet all monitoring and evaluation requirements

It is important that you do not think of your Creative Agent as the progress chaser, quality controller or source of all knowledge and wisdom. The planning, development and successful realisation of your project are shared responsibilities between the Creative Agent and the school.

Your Creative Partnerships ADO will match your school with a Creative Agent who will support you for an agreed number of days, depending on your programme. You will need to negotiate the details with your Area Delivery Organisation.

If there are problems that cannot be resolved within the partnership and which are adversely affecting it, please call your Creative Partnerships Area Delivery Organisation in confidence. They will do their best to help.

### Hints and tips

- Early on in the programme, make sure your Creative Agent has an opportunity to meet key people in the school informally so they can develop their understanding of the school's context and priorities
- It is important that the relationship between the Creative Agent and the school is underpinned by an understanding of the ethos that drives both parties. Making this explicit and agreeing on commonalities will ensure the relationship gets off to a strong start
- Don't expect too much too soon. Allowing time for a working relationship to develop is an important foundation for future success
- A simple but structured induction programme may be the most efficient way to help your Creative Agent to get to know your school. The best person to guide your Creative Agent through this process will probably be the school's Creative Partnerships Coordinator

# Creative practitioners

## Recruiting and deploying creative practitioners

Area Delivery Organisations (ADOs) recruit and deploy creative practitioners in a variety of ways. It is the responsibility of the Creative Agent working with your school to ensure that suitable partnerships are established that will lead to the development of innovative, exciting and appropriately constructed project activity.

It is the school's responsibility, with the guidance and support of their Creative Agent, to take care of the contracting and deployment arrangements for creative practitioners. It is important for the school to develop its capacity to identify the right sort of creative practitioners to match their needs and then to manage the practitioners' involvement. Learning to do this well will help the school sustain creative learning when it eventually leaves the Creative Partnerships programme.

The following principles characterise best practice in this area:

- Creative practitioners should be recruited initially through a selection process organised by the Creative Agent and the ADO that assesses their knowledge, skills and experience of working in creative learning settings
- The track record of creative practitioners should demonstrate excellence in both creative practice and facilitating creative learning activity
- Creative practitioners should be involved in project planning and development at the earliest possible opportunity, and before the submission of project plans to the ADO
- Wherever possible, creative practitioners should be involved with schools on a long-term basis to develop working relationships with school staff that are characterised by trust and openness. Developing a creative learning community in the school based on collaborative and reflective practice is the key to embedding sustainable change
- Project plans should include an appropriate allocation of time to enable in-depth planning between young people, teachers and creative practitioners. This should be reflected in budget planning
- Teachers and other school staff should always work alongside creative practitioners in the classroom, in ways that allow both skill sets to complement each other
- The strength of the collaborative partnership lies in each partner's understanding of the distinctiveness and complementariness of their skill sets. Creative practitioners

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should maintain the mindset of an external partner, while the teacher makes full use of their expertise and knowledge of pupils' needs and abilities.

### Creative practitioner competencies and qualities

There is a competency framework for creative practitioners. It is used as the basis for professional development activities and includes the following competencies and qualities:

- understanding the Creative Partnerships approach
- developing and managing effective relationships with schools
- understanding the relationship between the creative practitioner's own practice and the creativity of others
- developing as a creative practitioner and working with other practitioners
- encouraging and developing reflective practice
- project planning
- delivering face-to-face activities
- respecting children and young people as co-constructors of learning
- developing the school as a supportive context for creative learning
- developing collaborative pedagogy
- evaluation
- understanding the social, educational and cultural contexts in which Creative Partnerships operates
- understanding creative learning in the context of contemporary educational theory
- delivering long-term creative learning programmes
- celebrating achievement
- effective advocacy

Creative practitioners working on Creative Partnerships programmes will naturally demonstrate varying levels of professional competence in relation to the above areas. Schools play an important role in assisting practitioner learning as an ongoing feature of the collaborative relationship.

### Creative practitioners' experience in the creative sector

Creative practitioners need to be able to share their personal creative journeys with young people and demonstrate pathways into careers in the creative sector. They should be able to relate to young people in ways that are different from the teacher/pupil relationship. This difference is hard to define, but is usually characterised by a greater degree of informality, openness and negotiated practice than might ordinarily be observed in relationships between teachers and pupils.

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Modelling risk taking as a positive opportunity and helping teachers move out of their comfort zone into less familiar territory is equally important. Careful planning, while maintaining the capacity for spontaneity will create the conditions where risk is embraced and 'disciplined innovation' can thrive.

### Possible need for support

Creative practitioners may need support with:

- understanding the learning and knowledge capacities of different age groups
- working within the limitations of school time structures
- understanding the complex demands placed upon teachers working within an 'assessment culture'
- understanding curriculum issues and the need to plan imaginatively to address these

# Children and young people

## Principles

A core principle of Creative Partnerships work is that pupil voice is genuinely valued. Children and young people should be placed at the heart of the decision making process and their leadership capacities developed. We believe that Creative Partnerships programmes are most effective when pupils play a key role in leading them, shaping them, and taking responsibility for their own learning.

It is commonly agreed that strong and effective pupil voice is a central feature of successful schools. Schools involved in Creative Partnerships programmes usually have an excellent track record in developing mechanisms to ensure that children and young people develop the capacity to play an active leadership role in the life of the school.

## Practicalities

Creative Partnerships programme management systems are designed to maximise the development of pupil voice throughout the planning, delivery, evaluation and celebration of project activity. They do this in the following ways:

- Involving pupils in decisions as early as possible about the scope and structure of the programme and projects at the planning stage is a requirement set out in programme and project planning forms
- During projects, end-of-session record sheets include the requirement to consult pupils about the session and the ongoing progress of the project
- Throughout projects, pupils are encouraged to document the activity, their experience and their learning, using whatever media they find appropriate. These rich records of experience become an important resource for pupils to reflect on their own learning, deepening and extending that learning in the process
- The use of the *National Evaluation Framework* is structured around the principle that pupils comment on their own learning as well as the learning of their teachers and the creative practitioners working with them. They also comment on the quality of project delivery and on the distance travelled as a result of the project. When final judgements are made about the overall quality and impact of projects, pupils' views are given equal status to the views of teachers and creative practitioners. The three points of view are triangulated to achieve a full picture of project outcomes
- When Creative Partnerships projects are reported, pupils' opinions should be a key voice within those reports. Pupils are encouraged to act as advocates for the school,

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delivering presentations about project activity and representing the school at conferences, seminars and networking events as appropriate to their age and ability

### School councils, creative councils and young people's advisory groups

Schools develop a range of mechanisms to help pupils develop the capacity to take leadership and decision-making roles. Creative Partnerships seeks to build on established practice rather than imposing a particular approach. Partner schools are expected to establish appropriate systems to ensure that pupils have a genuine role in shaping and leading the Creative Partnerships programme, and that these systems are as inclusive as possible.

Some schools have found that establishing a separate young people's advisory group makes a positive contribution to developing pupil voice in the school and in ensuring that young people's choices are reflected in the shape and content of the programme. Young people involved in groups of this nature develop essential leadership skills. They commonly act as ambassadors for the programme, visiting other schools, representing the school at conferences and other events, and playing an active role in national networks of young people.

### Young people selecting practitioners

A relatively simple method of developing young people's ownership of the programme is to involve them in the selection of the creative practitioners. Schools that have done this have found that it leads to many benefits, including:

- young people realise they need to develop skills in order to recruit practitioners fairly, and they engage positively in acquiring those skills
- young people develop the capacity to work collaboratively and cooperatively
- young people feel greater engagement as active stakeholders. This leads to much higher levels of participation in the programme

### Other ways of developing young people as decision makers and leaders

The National Youth Agency has developed a set of standards for the active involvement of children and young people called 'Hear by Right'. These standards will help schools to establish the appropriate values, strategies, structures, systems, staffing arrangements, skills and knowledge to enable pupils to play an active role in leadership and decision making in the school.

*For further information on Hear by Right, visit: <http://hbr.nya.org.uk/>*

## School staff and the school community

### Leadership and the senior leadership team

Schools in the Creative Partnerships programme must have the full cooperation and support of the senior leadership team. This support must be reflected in the ethos and values of the senior leadership team, together with a connection with the programme at a practical level.

Ways in which the senior leadership team might support the Creative Partnerships programme are set out in the *Creative School Development Framework*

### School Governors

Creative Partnerships schools are required to nominate a Creative Partnerships Governor, who will ensure that the governing body is kept up to date with programme developments. Governors should be encouraged to become familiar with the programme at both policy and strategy level. They should attend Creative Partnerships events, be members of Creative Partnerships Advisory Groups and sit in on project sessions where appropriate.

The school's curriculum committee should monitor how the programme is contributing to the implementation of the school improvement plan.

Parent Governors have a particularly important role to play in helping the broader school community connect with the programme.

### Creative Partnerships advisory groups

The Creative Partnerships Coordinator should develop involvement in the programme across the school community. One way of doing this is to establish a Creative Partnerships advisory group, made up of representatives from the staff team, parents, Governors, young people and other community members.

Advisory groups play an important role in ensuring that:

- the programme reflects the needs of the school
- opportunities for involvement are actively promoted as widely as possible
- all stakeholders have a say in how the programme is developed

### Involving parents and community members

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Creative Partnerships programmes offer many opportunities for parents and community members to play a more active role in the school. Schools are well accustomed to welcoming parents as audiences and use events to help parents feel at home in the school environment. Creative Partnerships encourages schools to build on existing practice and involve parents in project activity wherever this might be appropriate as a way of making use of parents' skills and increasing parental involvement in their children's learning.

Recent research has demonstrated that:

- Creativity improves home–school communication, as children talk more enthusiastically about what they have been doing in school. Parents are then motivated to find out more
- Creative projects make children happier and more enthusiastic about being at school, increasing motivation in all areas of learning
- Creative programmes have a significant long-term impact on children's skills, confidence and wider learning
- A creative curriculum contributes strongly to a distinctive school ethos, where children and families take pride in their school. This is especially true when projects involve children performing or exhibiting in public spaces, bringing the school into the community
- Creative projects reflect families' backgrounds, interests and activities, leading to parents feeling able to support their children's learning because they can contribute their own knowledge and skills
- Through creative projects, parents discover that learning happens in a variety of ways that they can support and become involved in
- Creative projects support children as individual learners, helping them achieve by learning in ways that suit their personal learning styles
- Parents say they would choose a school if it was committed to a creative curriculum. They appreciate the diversity of experiences their children encounter in these environments
- A creative curriculum sends a message that parents are valued by the school, through enhancing the environment and raising levels of interest in what is happening there.

Ways of increasing parental environment include:

- inviting parents to performances and exhibitions
- inviting parents to take part in practical sessions as volunteer helpers or participants

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- involving parents in publicising project activity
- employing parents to work on projects if they have the appropriate skills and experience

*To find out more about how to involve parents, we recommend that you read 'Their Learning Becomes Your Journey', a report based on research by the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education.*

*It can be downloaded from the Creative Partnerships website:  
[www.creative-partnerships.com](http://www.creative-partnerships.com)*

## External education partners

### The local authority

Creative Partnerships Area Delivery Organisations strive to develop high-level strategic partnerships with the local authorities in which programmes are running.

Schools can help the Area Delivery Organisation by identifying key contacts in their local authority and by brokering meetings with these contacts.

### School advisers and school improvement partners

Your Creative Agent should develop a working relationship with all advisers or school improvement partners working with your school. This will ensure that project activity is aligned with the broader development needs of your school and that resources available for school improvement can be combined for maximum effectiveness.

It is increasingly common for Creative Partnerships ADOs to be involved in joint training events with staff from local authority advisory services, creating programmes that capitalise on both parties' areas of expertise.

### Ofsted

Ofsted inspection teams are becoming increasingly familiar with Creative Partnerships programmes and frequently acknowledge the positive contributions made by the programme.

It is important that your school's Ofsted Self-Evaluation Form should refer to your Creative Partnerships activity so that it will be referenced when Ofsted carry out their next inspection.

Following an Ofsted inspection, Creative Partnerships activity could be focused on addressing areas of concern raised by the inspection. There are several cases where the Creative Partnerships programme has helped schools move out of Special Measures or a Notice to Improve, as a result of programme activity aligned with the post-Ofsted improvement plan.