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An Evaluation of the Process and Impact of *Articulate* Phase 2 the National Gallery's Secondary School Literacy Project 2008-2009

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Jocelyn Dodd
Ceri Jones

Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG)
School of Museum Studies
University of Leicester
Museum Studies Building
19 University Road
Leicester
LE1 7RF
Jad25@le.ac.uk

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“People read [their work], people like it and [the writer] knows what he’s doing. Teachers they’re good but not as good”.

Jamika, Hounslow Manor School

Summary

Articulate: the context

Increasing evidence demonstrates that museums and galleries can make a valuable contribution to the learning experiences of primary and secondary school students. In 2002 the National Gallery developed the *Articulate* project, funded by Deutsche Bank, in response to the extension of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) to secondary schools. *Articulate* was a three-year project that aimed to support London schools that were under-performing in literacy to implement the NLS and improve the attainment of young people. Using the National Gallery's collections as a starting point, students worked closely with authors, poets, scriptwriters, playwrights and journalists in a masterclass to develop their writing skills, exploring the variety of ways that images can be used to encourage different styles of writing. The work produced at the Gallery was continued and developed with English departments back at school. Schools were chosen in consultation with Local Education Authority (LEA) literacy advisors and the cost of the project, including transport costs, was entirely subsidised to enable the schools to access the National Gallery. The success of Phase 1, with 1360 secondary school students taking part, encouraged the National Gallery and Deutsche Bank to run a second phase of *Articulate* from May 2006 to July 2009.

Articulate is an example of where a cultural institution has responded to the increased importance of literacy to the UK and global context in the twenty-first century. Literacy is increasingly regarded as a complex, cultural and social activity, crucial to gaining access to subjects in school and regarded as an integral part of life and important to the personal growth of young people and their development as democratic citizens. Museums and galleries can play a vital role in the development and support of literacy, both in terms of formal education provision and lifelong learning. Through the resources that museums and galleries have at their disposal students can be provided with a purpose to write that can stimulate their imaginations and motivate them. Providing a context for literacy is particularly valuable for disadvantaged young people who may not have access to cultural and wider experiences through their home lives.

Articulate: the evaluation

The Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG), based in the School of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester, was approached by Karen Hosack, Head of Schools at the National Gallery, to evaluate Phase 2 of *Articulate*. RCMG researchers have a long experience and deep knowledge of museums and museum education and this has informed both the research design and the analysis and interpretation of the data. The following research questions have been used to frame this evaluation:

- To what extent have the *Articulate* masterclasses influenced the content of English lessons in partner schools and how relevant is the project to the KS3 National Curriculum?
- Have teachers' and students' attitudes towards museums and galleries changed as a result of participating in the *Articulate* project?

- To what extent do teachers feel they have been supported in the *Articulate* project by the Gallery; the writers and their own school?
- What impact has participating in the *Articulate* project had on the KS3 pupils who have participated?

From March 2008 to August 2009 data was gathered from multiple perspectives including National Gallery staff, writers, teachers and students to give both the short-term and longer-term, retrospective impact of *Articulate*. Three schools were selected as case-studies in consultation with the National Gallery and collectively their experiences gave a view of *Articulate* from two schools that have participated in the full six years of the project (Phases 1 and 2), one of which is a special school, and one school that has participated in Phase 2 of *Articulate*. RCMG also drew upon extensive experience of research into the learning characteristics of museums and galleries as a context in which to nest the findings from this evaluation.

***Articulate*: the key findings**

- **An influential and significant programme**

Clear benefits were reported by teachers and students that participated in *Articulate*. They valued very highly the opportunity to work with high profile professional writers in the context of the National Gallery and to come into contact with real works of art from the Gallery collections. From the writers, teachers learnt new ways of working and approaching literacy that could be integrated into the curriculum; they were inspired and motivated to take their students on new avenues of exploration back in the classroom. The young people involved valued the opportunity that *Articulate* offered them to improve as 'writers', particularly those students who struggled with literacy in an academic context.

- **A highly successful concept**

Articulate was a unique project based around the effective masterclass concept. The three-year project created a sustained period of contact with targeted schools. This was crucial to helping the schools develop their confidence in accessing and using cultural institutions like the National Gallery. This sustained relationship enabled schools to become confident users of the National Gallery and embed the project into the practice of the school. Over time the schools have become 'critical consumers' with increasing levels of sophistication and more discerning in their response to the project. It is unlikely that the schools would have been able to access this kind of activity except through *Articulate*.

By targeting secondary students at Key Stage 3, *Articulate* took place at a very significant time in the lives of the young people involved. At a formative stage in their development, it is critical to engage young people in their learning during this period. Students understood that literacy was critical within school but also to the world beyond the classroom. Supporting students at this age, therefore, is a real critical investment in the future of students who are amongst the most vulnerable.

- **A highly inclusive programme**

The three case study schools had a number of characteristics that presented particular challenges to the teaching and learning of literacy. The schools were located in deprived areas of London, their students experiencing a range of backgrounds which may work against their achievement in literacy. In all three schools there are very high proportions of students with English as an additional language, up to three-quarters of students. It was critical for the *Articulate* project to inspire and support the learning of these young people, because these are experiences that they may not otherwise be exposed to, for example in their home lives. For young people who struggle in the more academic context of school, the opportunity to learn in a new environment with unfamiliar adults who did not know their 'reputation' at school gave them new impetus to respond and find their voice. Activities based around the visual stimuli of a painting rather than a written text appealed to different styles of learning, suitable for those who may have English as an additional language or special educational needs. Some of the young people were very aware that their ability to recall a subject increased when they could link it to a visual stimulus. The writers and teachers considered that the value of visual stimuli was that artworks enabled an immediate reaction from the young people, whatever their ability, which could then be developed into a deeper understanding. The different learning context of the National Gallery encouraged different behaviour from the young people, particularly those who may be disaffected or disengaged from school. Those students who do not flourish in an academic context were often the ones who thrived in *Articulate* because it offered them a new context in which to learn.

For Woodfield School it was hugely important to be part of a programme for mainstream schools, rather than singled out as a special school. It increased the teachers' confidence to be valued by the National Gallery equally to mainstream schools, and the students gained enormous value from it as it increased their self-esteem.

Visits to the National Gallery broke down some of the barriers to young people from disadvantaged backgrounds from using art galleries, however they still regarded the prospect of visiting alone very daunting. It poses the need for support for young people visiting the National Gallery beyond the school context.

- **The significance of using professional writers in a literacy project**

Through the masterclass the writers engaged the young people by using the National Gallery's collections as a stimulus to develop their skills and confidence in literacy. The concept of a masterclass implies quality and expertise. It was critical therefore that the National Gallery was able to access quality, high-profile writers. Students responded well to the writers' creativity and differentiated between the focus and motivation of teachers who are bound by the National Curriculum and the structures of school. The focus is on exams and achievement. This was contrasted with the writer where the motivation to write is inwardly driven, it comes from the person rather than to meet the needs of the curriculum. Students responded well to the creative freedom offered to them by the writers, who understood that the importance of literacy goes beyond the academic context. Writers were reluctant to engage with supporting the curriculum which they felt was very constraining to literacy.

The relationship between the young people and writer was critical to the success of the masterclass and it was essential that writers were effective facilitators in their work with vulnerable young people, who often have low self-esteem and low confidence in their learning ability. Their manner and approach was very important. Effective writers were able to read the needs of the group and respond to the young peoples' needs inclusively. They valued working with young people. On the other hand, the young people were very sensitive to writers who were less aware of their abilities and needs. Resilience is seen as essential in learning to give "an enhanced capacity to take things forward when the going gets tough. Resilient learners are able to resist difficulties and maintain momentum" (Hooper-Greenhill 2007: 180). For young people who lack such resilience, their confidence was easily crushed by adults who were less responsive to them and their needs. With the schools working hard to build resilience in their learners, effective writers were those who reinforced this work.

- **Using paintings to support literacy**

Articulate was an intersection between professional skills, high-quality collections of paintings and a focus on literacy. The link between a visual stimulus and literacy was incredibly strong, particularly for young people who struggle with written text or who have English as an additional language. For some students their visual memory was really important and powerful as a stimulus to learning and they recognised that they remembered more when they could attach it to something visual. Discussion and verbal activities around the painting also helped those who lacked confidence in their writing. The use of the art collections and context of the National Gallery reinforced the importance of enabling young people to have real and concrete experiences that inspire them to be creative in new ways and give them actual substantive content which they can then write about. The most successful writers enthused the young people about the artworks and used the story of their chosen painting as a 'hook' to draw the young people in, facilitating the development of vivid pictures in the young peoples' minds which they could then write about.

- **Creating memorable experiences**

With amazing ability young people were able to recall huge amounts of detail of their *Articulate* experiences, suggesting the significant impact it has had across their school careers. They remembered the paintings they looked at, the writers they came into contact with and the content of sessions. Year 11 students from Woodfield School remembered vividly their experiences of *Articulate* five years later especially working with Sarah Phelps and Scarlett Johnson from Eastenders. This memory had endured across their entire secondary career.

Unfortunately the impact of negative memories, which were rare, can be just as enduring. Where the young peoples' needs are not met and they do not feel that they benefit from the session, it can be damaging for young people's confidence and even close doors for them, discouraging them from pursuing career ideas in the future.

- **Influencing the content of English lessons**

Articulate clearly influenced the content of English lessons at the three case study schools. Teachers reported that they had been well supported by the National

Gallery and the senior management of their schools in embedding the programme in the curriculum across the three years. The three schools involved in the evaluation had very idiosyncratic approaches to the integration of *Articulate* in the curriculum, but common to all the schools was the way in which *Articulate* has given the teachers new approaches and ideas to the teaching of literacy, using the collections as a visual stimulus to fulfilling the requirements of the National Curriculum. Hackney Free took a very highly structured approach and produced in-depth resources for schemes of work over a sustained time (half a term), which embedded extensive use of paintings as a stimulus. *Articulate* therefore had a very strong impact on the structure of English lessons, with each unit of work arranged around the Gallery visit. The other case study schools were less highly structured in their approach but nonetheless clearly made the connection between *Articulate* and the development of English lessons. Hounslow Manor and Woodfield School were much more flexible and relied more on the perception and judgement of the teachers as to how the *Articulate* sessions were incorporated in the schemes of work. Teachers reported that they used the *Articulate* sessions as an introduction to a scheme of work or genre of literacy, or drew on the skills and approaches used in the Gallery with the writer back in the classroom.

There was a risk however that where sessions were not quite so effective the learning was not built on or incorporated in the curriculum; sometimes teachers seemed to lack the confidence to incorporate them or did not have a deep investment in the project to embed it into teaching. It is suggested that the National Gallery could also model some of the ways in which schools might incorporate projects like *Articulate* into the curriculum. The development of a wider community of practice of schools involved in the project could be one mechanism through which this could be achieved, although there are many barriers to establishing such a community amongst secondary schools.

- **Going beyond the curriculum**

The experience of the three case study schools reveals that *Articulate* has supported the implementation of the NLS very successfully. However, as the writers discussed, and the students also understood, the significance of *Articulate* goes beyond the National Curriculum. As mentioned previously, young people were able to differentiate between teachers, whose approach to literacy was constrained by the focus on the curriculum and examinations, with the writers whose inwardly-driven motivation to write enabled them greater creative freedom. This creative freedom really benefited the students who thrived in the learning context of the gallery, even those students disengaged by learning in the classroom context.

- **Demonstrating the power of learning in museums and galleries**

The experience of the schools involved in *Articulate* clearly reflects wider findings about the power of learning in museums and galleries. Enjoyment was a clear factor in the experiences of teachers and students. Previous studies have shown that teachers consider enjoyment to act as a catalyst to a range of other learning outcomes. If students enjoy their experience at the museum or gallery they are more motivated to learn. The importance of an emotional or personal connection to learning was also highlighted. The experiences at the National Gallery were memorable because they engaged the young people's emotions as well as their intellect, evidenced by the enthusiasm that students had for the paintings and writers

that they had worked with often several years later. There was a 'wow' factor for many of the students coming into contact with real paintings, their value and status evidenced by being in the National Gallery. Although the National Gallery was unfamiliar to the young people, it was a safe and secure environment in which they enjoyed learning and the National Gallery staff noticed how increasingly relaxed and confident their behaviour became over the three years. Outside of the classroom, coming into contact with new adults, the students were able to develop new identities as learners. Young people who might be disaffected in the classroom or struggle with more formal approaches responded well to the new environment, often finding a voice and wanting to contribute. Some of the teachers linked this to the different relationships established with adults who are not teachers. They have a different kind of authority which the young people respond to well if they feel comfortable and able to participate. These findings therefore point to the National Gallery as making a strong contribution to the creation of a "rich and tangible learning environment... providing enjoyable, effective and stimulating pathways to learning for all [young people]" (Hooper-Greenhill et al 2006: xv).

Section 1

Introduction

This report outlines the findings of an evaluation of *Articulate*, the National Gallery's secondary school literacy programme, carried out by the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG), based in the School of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester. *Articulate* was developed in response to the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) being extended to secondary schools in 2002 with the aim of supporting under-achieving schools in London to implement the changes and improve their students' attainment in literacy. Through the project, the National Gallery has enabled young people to come into contact with a variety of professional authors, poets, scriptwriters, and journalists through a masterclass format. This model has enabled students, teachers, gallery staff and the writers involved to gain new perspectives on how the visual arts can be used to inspire creative thinking, learning and writing. From May 2008 to September 2009, RCMG has explored the impact of the programme on the participants, gathering data from multiple perspectives, including that of the teachers, gallery staff and writers, and placing it within a broader context of the importance of literacy to the twenty-first century and the characteristics of learning in museums and galleries. Section 2 gives an overview of the evidence that suggests the ways in which often powerful learning experiences engendered within museums and galleries can contribute to the development of literacy skills in young people and support the work of schools.

Section 3 provides an overview of Phase 1 and 2 of the National Gallery's *Articulate* project and the background to the evaluation. This is followed by a description of the research methods and research activities and how these methods corresponded to the aims of the evaluation.

Sections 4 to 6 give three different perspectives of the *Articulate* project. Section 4 describes the National Gallery's aims and objectives in developing *Articulate* and their perspective on the process of the project and its impact on the schools involved. Section 5 describes *Articulate* from the perspective of three of the writers involved: the playwright, Diane Samuels; the author, Sherry Ashworth, and the journalist Victoria Neumark. It describes their backgrounds and experiences, the impact that *Articulate* has had upon their work and their opinions on the expected impact that the project has had on the teachers and students they have worked with. Section 6 outlines the experiences of three schools that were chosen as case studies for the evaluation. These were selected in consultation with the National Gallery and collectively their experiences gave a view of *Articulate* from two schools that have participated in the full six years of the project (Phases 1 and 2), one of which is a special school, and from a school that has participated in Phase 2 of *Articulate*.

The final Section 7 draws on the experiences of National Gallery staff, writers, teachers and students to identify the key findings that have emerged from the evaluation. These key findings are placed within the context of the research questions that structured the evaluation and the wider context of how museums and galleries can support and enhance learning in the curriculum and beyond.

Section 2

Museums and galleries: their contribution to literacy

Increasing evidence demonstrates that museums and galleries can make a valuable contribution to the formal learning experiences of primary and secondary school students. The National Gallery's *Articulate* project is one example of where a cultural institution has responded to the increased importance of literacy skills to the UK and global context in the twenty-first century, reinforced in the National Curriculum and the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy to secondary schools in 2002. This section briefly introduces *Articulate* and places it within the broader context of how proficiency in literacy has increasingly come to define the 'successful citizen' of the modern world. This is followed by an overview of the evidence that suggests the ways in which often powerful learning experiences engendered within museums and galleries can contribute to the development of literacy skills in young people and support the work of schools.

2.1 The National Gallery

Established in 1824 by an Act of Parliament, the National Gallery houses the national collection of Western European painting from 1250-1900, providing free access all year round to visitors. The Gallery's aim is to care for the collection, to enhance it for future generations – primarily by acquisition – and to study it, whilst encouraging access to the collection for the education and enjoyment of the widest possible public, now and in the future (National Gallery, undated). To this end, the Gallery runs a varied and comprehensive learning programme for schools, universities and colleges, adult learners, community groups and others.

2.2 The *Articulate* project: Phases 1 and 2

The National Gallery developed the *Articulate* project in 2002 as a response to the extension of the National Literacy Strategy to secondary schools. It aimed to support teachers and students from under-achieving schools in the teaching and learning of literacy through the concept of a masterclass led by a professional writer, who would demonstrate the potential of using paintings from the National Gallery collections as an inspiration for literacy work in the classroom. Funding was provided by Deutsche Bank, which had previously funded a schools project at the National Gallery in 2001. This project, the 'Deutsche Bank Schools Project', involved ten secondary schools (with no previous relationship with the National Gallery) using the Gallery collections 'as a resource to develop students' analytical and creative skills in a variety of curriculum subjects' (National Gallery undated). In contrast *Articulate* focused on one area of the curriculum. Another important aim of *Articulate* was to raise the attainment and aspirations of students from some of the most deprived areas of London:

"[What] we really wanted to do was to introduce pupils to the idea of writing being a possible career... to open doors for them" (Alex Hill, Schools Officer).

In consultation with a focus group of Local Education Authority (LEA) literacy advisors from four London boroughs, eight schools with lower than national average examination results from the boroughs of Hackney, Islington and Brent were selected to work in partnership with the National Gallery to explore the ways in which paintings could be used to support the revised English framework and develop literacy skills. Visiting the National Gallery was also important in terms of encouraging the students' understanding and appreciation of it as 'one of Britain's key cultural institutions and collections of art' (National Gallery undated). Many of the students from the targeted schools would not have visited the National Gallery before their involvement in the project so it was important to make it accessible to them:

"I think there's lots of value; coming to a place like this in central London for these particular schools is really important because often they don't actually leave their own neighbourhoods... [And] the experience of being in a very public, very grand building". (Alex Hill, Schools Officer)

Schools were committed to being involved in the project with the same cohort of Key Stage 3 students for three years. Every student in the year group took part in the project over Year 7 (age 11-12 years), Year 8 (age 12-13 years) and Year 9 (age 13-14 years). Once every year, the students and their teachers visited the National Gallery to take part in a masterclass and work with a different writer, which included poets, screenwriters, journalists, playwrights and authors. Over the course of the three years students and teachers were exposed to the ways in which paintings can stimulate literacy work across different genres, and to the possibilities of different careers that involve literacy.

The success of Phase 1 encouraged the National Gallery and Deutsche Bank to run a second phase of *Articulate* from May 2006 to July 2009, working with ten more secondary schools from Greater London with lower than average examination results. Schools were selected following the recommendations of LEA literacy advisors. The three-year model was repeated with schools visiting the National Gallery once a year to take part in an hour-long masterclass led by a high-profile writer and followed by a tour of selected paintings from the National Gallery collections.

2.3 The curriculum and the context for literacy in the twenty-first century

In the twenty-first century literacy is increasingly seen as the key to becoming a successful citizen in Western society. No longer seen merely as the ability to read and write it is increasingly regarded as a complex, cultural and social activity. This is due, in part, to the popularity of socio-cultural perspectives which favour the use of 'literacy' as a means of describing a number of practices related to 'competencies' or 'capabilities' or 'knowledges' which individuals demonstrate in specific areas. For instance the concept of 'cultural literacy' describes the types of knowledge that young people are thought to need in order to participate effectively in social life as active and informed citizens, or 'computer literacy' which describes the skills and knowledge needed to use a computer (Lankshear and Knobel 2006). What it means, then, to be literate in the twenty-first century is not only the ability to read a variety of 'texts' (whether digital, visual or print), to write, speak and listen but it is recognised

that it involves an 'active process of interpretation and exploration' (Nicholson 2000:176).

Increasingly, evidence points to the importance of literacy to future life chances and participation in society. Although the relationship between disadvantage and literacy 'does not always reflect direct causal connections' (Dugdale and Clark 2008:5) poor literacy has been linked to social deprivation including unemployment, imprisonment, teenage pregnancy and drug and alcohol abuse (Lankshear and Knobel 2006:7-8). Poverty of 'circumstances and aspirations puts some individuals at a disadvantage from an early age' (National Literacy Trust, undated: 6). Adults with low levels of literacy are much more likely to be in low-paid jobs, be unemployed or dependent upon state benefits, to live in poor housing and have poor health. It also has an impact on democracy and citizenship as individuals with poor or low levels of literacy are less likely to vote or have an interest in politics, and are less likely to participate in their community (Dugdale and Clark 2008). The evidence that educational failure is strongly associated with the process of social exclusion has fuelled the UK government's approach to social exclusion since 1997 where 'tackling educational standards, and literacy in particular, was an important dimension' (National Literacy Trust undated: 3).

Driving the impetus towards increasing levels of literacy in society as a whole are underlying processes of change in Western societies, towards the so-called 'knowledge economy.' The changing nature of employment, the workplace, communication technology and leisure activities are seen to demand different kinds of literacies from citizens, not least the growth of the Internet. There is a contrast between those who can take advantage of the highly mobile nature of the post-industrial society and those who are 'immobile' through poverty, exclusion and inequality (Luke and Carrington, 2004). In recent years it has been argued that adult literacy levels are not high enough to meet the demands of the 'knowledge economy' (Stannard and Huxford 2007) and that the education system has failed 'to ensure that all learners became literate to the extent required to live 'effectively' under contemporary conditions' (Lankshear and Knobel 2006:10). However, the UK government recognises the importance of ensuring that all children and young people are prepared for the 'challenges' of the twenty-first century which are expected to include continuing rapid economic and social change, competition from overseas, jobs that demand higher level skills and capabilities and 'climate change and the challenge of learning to live sustainably on our planet, which can only be met through great creativity and international co-operation' (DCSF 2009:15).

Understanding the context of individuals is regarded as crucial, therefore, to understanding how we form our views on reading and writing. We exist in a specific cultural and educational context which influences our responses to different 'texts'. Factors may include gender and ethnicity, but also the expectations and attitudes of adults, especially parents (Kress, 2004). In particular, gender has been identified as having significant implications for a young person's response to literacy, with longstanding evidence of boy's underachievement for instance (Moss 2007). Readers will also bring their own experiences to the text (Arizpe and Styles 2004).

Whilst literacy has clearly replaced 'reading' and 'writing' in the language of formal and informal education (Lankshear and Knobel 2006), approaches to both teaching and learning have been hotly contested, as have the theories which underpin the

teaching and learning of literacy. Evidence however points to the importance of motivation and encouraging resilience and confidence in learners. This is particularly relevant to those at risk from exclusion in terms of 'changing the deeply-held negative attitudes and beliefs individuals may have about themselves as learners... When difficulties arise, learners need to believe that their own efforts will make a difference to what they can achieve' (National Literacy Trust undated: 21).

In England the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) in primary schools in 1997 and extended to secondary schools in 2001, assured the importance of literacy in the curriculum. Not only is it crucial to gaining access to subjects in school but it is regarded as an integral part of life and important to the personal growth of young people, and their development as democratic citizens (Lewis and Wray 2000:4). However, since its implementation the curriculum has been both applauded and criticised for its approach to literacy. Briefly, the argument is that it is overly prescriptive - pressurising teachers to teach to the needs of the curriculum rather than 'take the time to develop it in interaction with their learners' (Grainger 2004:2) - particularly the NLS which, despite being non-statutory, was 'almost universally viewed as obligatory' (Alexander and Flutter 2009:11). The result (at worst) was an emphasis on learning the technical aspects of literacy, devoid of any creativity or enjoyment for young learners. An emphasis on the technical, surface aspects of reading and writing also risks limiting how literacy develops meaning and its role as a complex social, cultural and historical activity (King 2004). The number of technological innovations (computers, the internet, texting, blogging, social networking, and visual literacy) which have transformed the way in which we communicate and make meaning has also raised the concern about the perceived contrast between the literacy of formal education and the 'literacies of everyday life' where 'many children are operating in a multi-modal textual environment in their homes and communities, yet their teachers are expected to operate in a print-bound frame in school' (Grainger 2004:2).

Creativity and person-centred approaches to literacy, therefore, are seen by some as vital for instilling in children and young people the motivation to read, write, listen and talk. Children make meaning in a multiplicity of ways through a range of modes, means and materials, often using body and mind together to communicate in ways that may seem unconventional to adults (Kress 2004). It is suggested that teachers need to acknowledge a child's lived experiences and the interplay between 'official' and 'unofficial' literacies as learners actively draw on home and school learning, particularly those learners with a different home language (Grainger, 2004). King considers that young people need to be empowered as writers, so that they can understand the potential of writing and how they can appropriate it as an 'active social process within their own lives' (2004: 289), whilst Veal and Coffin highlight the need to develop within young people a sense of 'critical literacy', enabling them to understand how language works and the ways in which knowledge is constructed rather than being 'trained unthinkingly to reproduce knowledge and practice' (1996:226). Bearing this in mind, we now turn to the ways in which museums and galleries have contributed to the teaching and learning of literacy in schools.

2.4 Museums, galleries and literacy

The role which museums and galleries can play in the development and support of literacy is a broad one, both in terms of both formal education provision and lifelong

learning. For instance in 2003 Resource (now the Museums, Libraries, and Archives Council) and the National Literacy Trust outlined the ways in which museums, along with libraries and archives, were responding to the Government's basic skills agenda, 'Skills for Life: the National Strategy for Improving Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills'; most respondents were providing some kind of informal provision (Barzey 2003). In terms of their support of literacy, this section will concentrate on museums and their relationships with primary and secondary schools, providing a brief overview of the ways in which museums can contribute to the learning (and teaching) of literacy, and the characteristics of that learning.

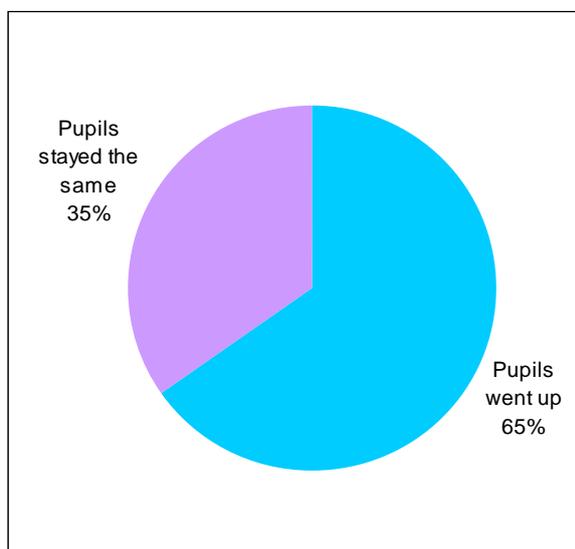
The rationale for developing programmes and resources around literacy for museums often links into a desire to contribute to the literacy curriculum, for example Manchester Museums and Galleries who, in 2004-2006 implemented a partnership between the NW Museum Hub and Manchester Education Partnership to put in post a Primary consultant to work with Primary Schools in the Manchester area, known as the Manchester Museums and Galleries Pilot (MAGPIE). The intention was to enable collaboration between museums and schools to jointly develop their education provision. The schools involved had a number of aims for their involvement including the development of pedagogy, professional development for teachers and enriched learning experiences for pupils, most of which were met by the project to some degree (Stanley 2006).

Museums and galleries can help to mitigate many of the concerns raised by those who are critical of the National Curriculum. For instance, there is evidence that literacy needs to be taught in a 'meaningful context' (King, 2004) and one of the strengths of museums, galleries and their collections is that they can often provide this meaningful context for writing, enabling children and young people to interact with tangible objects, artworks and buildings for instance. In essence, through the resources that museums and galleries have at their disposal students can be provided with a purpose to write that can stimulate their imaginations and motivate them. In particular, the 'power' of museum objects is frequently attested; they inspire interest because they are real, and, where young people are invited to question what they see, can encourage talk and discussion as a catalyst for writing (see Watson, Dodd and Jones 2007; Renaissance North West 2008). Providing a context for writing is particularly valuable for young people who may not have access to cultural and wider experiences through their home lives, for instance young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, both in terms of material poverty or poverty of aspiration, or who may be at risk from exclusion.

Developing the skills of visual literacy is one way in which museums can contribute to curriculum learning. Visual literacy is regarded as increasingly important to navigating the many ways in which images are used in society to communicate meaning, often in a highly potent manner. Children are, in particular, thought to respond well to images as they provoke an immediate and affective response, transforming a 'visual symbolic system into a verbal symbolic system when they express in words what it signifies' (Arizpe and Styles 2004:186). The way in which images can help inspire young people to write can be illustrated by a group of 'lower ability' secondary school students from Manor Community College in Cambridge, who visited the Fitzwilliam Museum to participate in a session looking at artworks and use them as a stimulus to build vocabulary, language and writing skills. The pupils fared significantly better than their teachers had expected; although they had thought the visit to the

museum would be 'dull' the pupils worked hard during the session, surprising and pleasing their teacher with their behaviour and work. Two of the pupils 'attributed their improvement to the paintings that they had seen at the museum which they felt helped them to write better... "Like you describe better and that" (Watson, Dodd and Jones 2007:24). The visit to the Fitzwilliam Museum enabled most of the pupils to raise their attainment marks in comparison to previous work that they had produced. Forty-nine pupils who completed a museum-based assignment had their marks compared with two previous assignment marks; 65% of pupils experienced an improvement in their marks for the museum-based assignment and 35% of pupils achieved the same level as their previous work. No pupils experienced a decrease in their marks and all benefited very positively from the museum visit (Watson, Dodd and Jones 2007).

Figure 1: Assessment marks. Pupils from The Manor Community College, breakdown by increase or decrease in marks



N=49

There is growing evidence that museum programmes can help to raise pupil attainment. Pupils from Bierton CofE Combined School in Buckinghamshire were able to increase their performance by one level in their trial SATs after taking part in a session at Waddesdon Manor. In the 19th century manor house they discussed the story of Sleeping Beauty in conjunction with a series of seven paintings by Léon Nikolayevich Bakst (1866-1924), followed by a tour of the house. Having this real experience to draw upon, the pupils were able to write at much greater length and were more enthusiastic and imaginative. Their vocabulary showed increasing sophistication and they improved their written descriptions, producing much more substantial work than before (Hooper-Greenhill *et al* 2007). The MAGPIE project also saw an increase in pupil progress for two terms, although this increase began to decline in later assignments suggesting that the gains made through museum programmes need to be sustained once back in the classroom (Stanley 2006:27).

Other reported benefits of museum visits include giving time to reflect upon, talk about and discuss ideas; one of the reported concerns about the National Curriculum is that it diminishes the role of speaking in literacy (Alexander and Flutter 2009). The

excitement of the visit and being in a different place provides a contrast to school which many pupils value, immersing them in a multi-sensory environment. Working with museums and galleries can bring children and young people into contact with experts, not only museum staff but writers, artists, performers, historians and so on. A three-year research project in partnership between the Tate Britain and the Institute of Education, University of London found that young people became effective writers when they were able to perceive themselves as writers and 'the more they saw writers at work and the more they became familiar with writing processes the more able they were to see themselves as writers' (Carnell and Meecham 2002:78). Museums can respond to different learning styles and enable independent learning; 'young people taking control of their own learning and being encouraged to find out for themselves' (Watson, Dodd and Jones 2007:18). Such factors have been demonstrated to help and support young people in their learning. For teachers too, the reported benefits include exposure to new ways and methods of teaching, increased confidence and enjoyment as a result of greater pupil engagement, greater 'freedom' to teach literacy away from the constraints of the curriculum and a chance to experiment or try out new techniques (Stanley 2006). There is a sense for both teachers and pupils it can give them a greater sense of creativity and imagination.

Whilst it is not possible to identify exactly how many schools across the UK use museums and galleries to support literacy work, four studies carried out by RCMG into the impact of museum learning for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Museums Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) between 2003 and 2007 reveal that a fairly consistent proportion of primary and secondary teachers used their museum experiences to promote creative writing (Table 1).

Table 1: Form A. Responses to 'To what extent will you be using the museum experience to promote creativity?' Teachers ticking 'very likely' and 'quite likely.' Comparing RR1:2003, DCMS/DfES1:2004, RR2:2005 and DCMS/DCSF2:2007

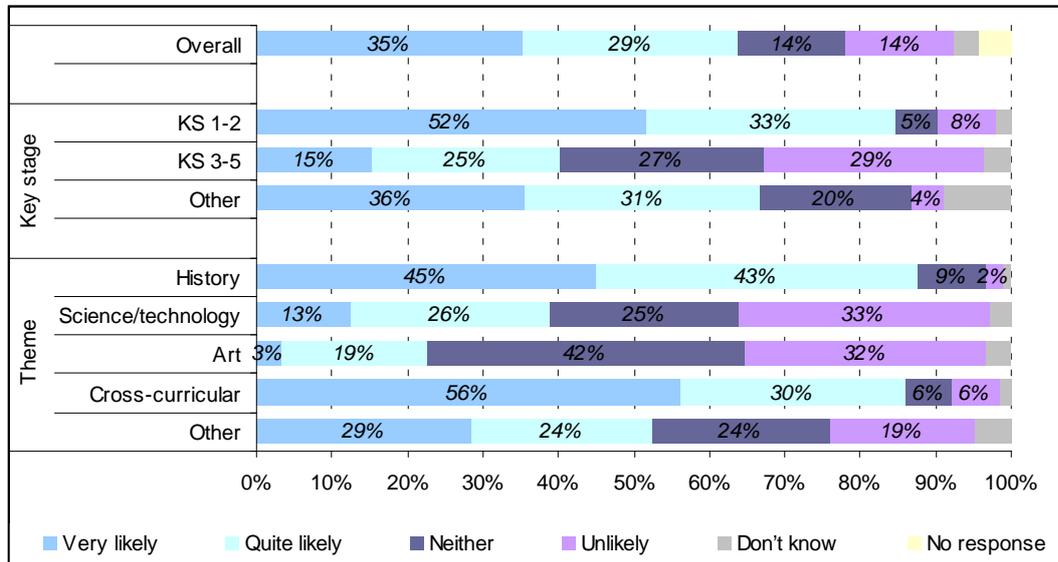
Enjoyment, Inspiration, Creativity	Very likely' and 'quite likely' RR1:2003	Very likely' and 'quite likely' DCMS/ DfES1:2004	'Very likely' and 'quite likely' RR2:2005	Very likely' and 'quite likely' DCMS/ DCSF2:2007
Exploring new ideas	89%	92%	88%	91%
Creative writing	79%	73%	74%	64%
Designing and making	75%	88%	76%	69%
Other forms of creative work	75%	74%	70%	63%
Dance/drama	45%	41%	49%	38%

RR1:2003, N=936; DCMS/DfES1:2004, N=503; RR2:2005, N=1632; DCMS/DCSF2:2007, N=407

Whilst these figures are positive, there is perhaps the incentive to encourage more teachers of the value of using museums and galleries for literacy-related activities. The most recent study for DCMS (Hooper-Greenhill *et al*, 2007) revealed that there is a large discrepancy between primary and secondary teachers using museums and galleries to promote creative writing. As Figure 2 demonstrates, whilst 85% of primary

teachers were either 'very likely' or 'quite likely' to use their museums experience to promote creative writing, this can be compared to only 40% of secondary teachers.

Figure 2: Form A. Q.11: Teachers' responses to 'Creative writing' by Key Stage and Theme, DCMS/DCSF2:2007



N=387 for KS, 362 for Theme

The importance of providing compelling evidence for the impact that museums and galleries can have on literacy work and attainment cannot be underestimated in order to encourage more secondary schools to see the potential benefits of engaging with museums and galleries in supporting and developing young people in their literacy skills and confidence.

2.5 Conclusion

This section has established the context for the National Gallery's *Articulate* project by nesting it within wider concerns about the crucial importance of literacy to twenty-first century societies in education, work and leisure contexts, and the role that museums and galleries can play in supporting schools to fulfil, and enhance, the teaching and learning of literacy in the National Curriculum. Four large studies of the impact of education programmes in museums and galleries undertaken by RCMG for DCMS, DCSF and MLA have been introduced, which also provide a context for the findings of this evaluation. The following section introduces the specific context for *Articulate* and the evaluation commissioned from RCMG by the National Gallery.

Section 3

The evaluation of *Articulate*: context and research methods

This section gives an overview of Phase 1 and 2 of the National Gallery's *Articulate* project and the background to the evaluation. This is followed by a description of the research methods and research activities and how these methods corresponded to the aims of the evaluation. The research design was confirmed and agreed with the National Gallery prior to the commencement of the evaluation.

3.1 *Articulate* Phase 1

The *Articulate* project, funded by Deutsche Bank, enabled schools from London to take part in a three-year project exploring the way in which paintings from the National Gallery's collections could be used in conjunction with a master-class from a high-profile writer to increase the attainment of students in literacy. In response to the extension of the National Literacy Strategy to secondary schools in 2002, the National Gallery worked in partnership with eight schools from the boroughs of Hackney, Islington and Brent to explore the ways in which the Gallery's collections could be used to support the revised English framework. Schools were chosen on the basis that they were struggling with pupil achievement in literacy and all of them faced significant challenges including high percentages of young people eligible for free school meals or with special educational needs. Schools were chosen in consultation with a focus group of LEA advisors and the cost of the project, including transport costs, was entirely subsidised by the National Gallery to enable the schools to take part.

The initial phase of *Articulate* involved 1360 secondary school students taking part in writing 'masterclasses' at the National Gallery, led by professional writers. Using the collections as a starting point, students worked closely with authors, poets, scriptwriters, playwrights and journalists to develop their writing skills, exploring the variety of ways that images can be used to encourage different styles of writing. These techniques were then used back in the classroom to develop finished pieces of work. The Gallery was able to attract a number of high profile writers to lead the workshops, including John Hegley (poet), Jacqueline Wilson (former Children's Laureate), Sarah Phelps and Scarlet Johnson (respectively scriptwriter and actor from *Eastenders*). Resources from the project, information about the paintings and a selection of the students' responses were made accessible via the *Articulate* website.¹

3.2 *Articulate* Phase 2

The success of Phase 1 encouraged the National Gallery to propose a second phase of *Articulate*, working with ten more secondary schools from London with low examination marks in literacy. *Articulate* Phase 2 ran from May 2006 to July 2009,

¹ <http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/articulate/> [accessed 29 07 2009]

following a similar model as for Phase 1. Schools were invited to the National Gallery to take part in an hour-long master-class led by a high-profile writer, followed by a tour of the Gallery highlighting a small number of paintings, led by one of the freelance gallery teachers who work with the Education department. Schools were chosen by a focus group of LEA advisors, who recommended to the National Gallery schools in London which would benefit from a partnership focusing on the raising of achievement in literacy. The target audiences for the project were:

- Key Stage 3 students attending schools with lower than national average examination results
- English teachers working in schools with lower than national average examination results
- English teachers and advisors from across the UK via website resources.

Schools were committed to the project for three years with the same cohort of students from Year 7 (age 11-12), through Year 8 (age 12-13) and Year 9 (age 13-14). Across the three years of *Articulate* the schools visited the National Gallery each year to take part in a masterclass with a different writer, exposing them to different professions including poets, journalists, authors and playwrights. The work produced at the Gallery was then continued and developed with English departments back at school.

In summary, the aims and objectives of the second phase of *Articulate* were to:

- Support teachers and students with the National Literacy Strategy
- Encourage 11-14 year olds to engage with paintings at the National Gallery as a stimulus for writing
- To improve attainment in literacy over the course of 3 years
- Work with entire year groups (usually around 200) providing every student from a year with the same opportunity
- Work particularly with under-achieving schools, many of whose students have English as an additional language
- Encourage a sense of familiarity and ownership of the Gallery and the collection
- Build partnerships between the Gallery, LEA literacy advisors, London secondary schools and professional writers
- Build an awareness of career options in art and creative writing
- To provide a lasting resource for teachers, pupils and other education professionals via the *Articulate* website.

Another critical element of the project was providing access to the National Gallery for young people from relatively deprived areas of London, including the subsidy of all transport costs for schools involved.

3.3 The evaluation of *Articulate*

The Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG), based in the School of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester, was approached by Karen Hosack, former Head of Schools at the National Gallery, to evaluate Phase 2 of *Articulate* in order to gain an external and objective view of the programme and to place it in a

broader national context of learning in museums. The impact of *Articulate* on pupils and teachers will therefore be discussed in relation to four large-scale national studies commissioned from RCMG by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), the characteristics of museum learning demonstrated in those studies and captured using the Generic Learning Outcomes (GLOs), and more generally, to how museums and galleries can contribute, and even lead, curriculum developments.

The following research questions have been used to frame this evaluation:

- To what extent have the *Articulate* masterclasses influenced the content of English lessons in partner schools and how relevant is the project to the KS3 National Curriculum?
- Have teachers' and students' attitudes towards museums and galleries changed as a result of participating in the *Articulate* project?
- To what extent do teachers feel they have been supported in the *Articulate* project by the Gallery; the writers and their own school?
- What impact has participating in the *Articulate* project had on the KS3 pupils who have participated?

The evaluation focused on capturing the impact of *Articulate* Phase 2 from a selection of the teachers and students that took part. From March 2008 to August 2009 a number of research activities were carried out in order to collect in-depth information from the schools, writers and National Gallery education staff involved in the form of interviews, focus groups and observation. The emphasis was placed on gathering data from multiple perspectives in order to most effectively capture the impact of the project. The evaluation aimed to investigate the longer-term impacts of the *Articulate* project through retrospective evaluation as well as the short-term impact of engagement with the National Gallery for sessions taking place in 2008 and 2009. RCMG researchers have a long experience and deep knowledge of museums and museum education and this has informed both the research design and the analysis and interpretation of the data.

At the National Gallery the evaluation was initially managed by Karen Hosack, Head of Schools, who was replaced by Alex Hill, Schools Officer, when the former went on maternity leave. In 2009 Alex Hill went on maternity leave to be replaced by Miranda Baxter, Schools Officer. During this period the post of Head of Education at the National Gallery was also vacant. The National Gallery's perspective is therefore provided by Alex Hill who was manager of the evaluation for most of the research period.

3.3.1 RCMG research experience

Since it was established in 1999, RCMG has developed a reputation for the quality of its research and evaluation, particularly in the fields of museum learning, education and the social roles and responsibilities of museums. Located in the School of Museum Studies, University of Leicester, RCMG combines academic and professional expertise and is concerned with informing museum practice through its analytical approach. Projects vary in scale and scope and are selected to extend a range of themes and research interests. The interrelationship between research projects is an important facet of the work of RCMG and it has extensive experience of evaluating and

researching learning in museums, including four large national evaluations for DCMS, DCSF and MLA (discussed below), a study of the impact of museum visits on the attainment of secondary school pupils in the East of England for Renaissance East of England and MLA East of England (Dodd, Watson and Jones 2007) and a three-year evaluation of the National Gallery's Education and Community Strategy for the *Madonna of the Pinks* (Hooper-Greenhill, Dodd, Gibson and Jones 2007).

RCMG has a proven track record for the delivery of innovative, high-quality research and evaluation in a range of contexts, working with government departments, strategic bodies and individual museums. Research teams are selected for projects on the basis of their experience. Team members have extensive research experience using qualitative and quantitative research methods; experience both in museum practice and as researchers of museums as formal and informal learning environments; and extensive experience of the national policy frameworks and their local implications. RCMG's work to date has enabled the development of a unique set of skills, experiences and perspectives.

This evaluation has drawn upon techniques and methods used in four previous large-scale evaluations commissioned from RCMG by DCMS and MLA. The four evaluations were carried out by RCMG between 2003 and 2007, producing a large body of data with a high degree of generalisability in relation to the use of museums and galleries by schools and the perceptions of teachers and students as to their value. These were:

- Hooper-Greenhill et al (2004), *What did you learn at the museum today? The evaluation of the impact of the Renaissance in the Regions Education Programme in the three Phase 1 Hubs* (August, September and October 2003), London: MLA
- Hooper-Greenhill et al (2004) *Inspiration, Identity, Learning: The value of museums. Evaluation of the DCMS/DfES Strategic Commissioning 2003-2004 National/Regional Museum Education Partnerships*, London: DCMS
- Hooper-Greenhill et al (2006) *What did you learn at the museum today? Second Study. Evaluation of the outcomes and impact of learning through the implementation of the Education Programme Delivery Plan across nine Regional Hubs*, London: MLA
- Hooper-Greenhill et al (2007) *Inspiration, Identity, Learning: The Value of Museums, Second Study. An evaluation of the DCMS/DCSF National/Regional Museum Partnership Programme in 2006-2007*, London: DCMS

The four linked studies involved 3,579 teachers and 64,063 students completing questionnaires and participating in discussions. The same research methods were used across the studies (with some minor alterations) to enable comparisons to be made between and across the four studies.

3.3.2 The characteristics of learning in museums

Specific to these evaluations was the use of the Generic Learning Outcomes (GLOs), an approach developed by RCMG for MLA as part of the Learning Impact Research Project (2001). The GLOs consist of five categories of learning that can be identified as outcomes experienced by individuals in museums, galleries and other cultural settings:

- Knowledge and understanding
- Skills
- Attitudes and values
- Enjoyment, inspiration, creativity
- Action, behaviour, progression.

The GLOs were founded upon a view of learning that is broad and open-ended, and goes beyond the acquisition of knowledge. Learning is seen as a lifelong and complex process in which learners actively construct meanings for themselves from the experiences they encounter: 'Learning always involves the use of what is known already, and this prior knowledge is used to make sense of new knowledge and to interpret new experiences' (Hooper-Greenhill 2007: 35). In the four studies, the GLOs provided both a conceptual structure for the research tools and for the analysis and interpretation of the data. Drawing on the data from across the four years (Hooper-Greenhill 2007; Hooper-Greenhill et al 2007), some general points can be made about the characteristics and significance of learning in museums and galleries, specifically the power of museum and gallery experiences to inspire and motivate learning:

- Enjoyable learning experiences for students of all ages
- Teachers value the inspirational quality of museum work because it enables their pupils to better understand their subject
- Memorable experiences that engage the emotions as well as the intellect
- Flexible learning resources for formal and informal learning
- Safe and secure environments for learning – pupils are excited but not threatened; they can relax, feel confident
- There are no preconceptions about the students' identity as a learner – self-confidence and motivation are linked to being successful in a new environment with unfamiliar adults
- 'Wow' factor associated with coming into contact with real and iconic objects
- Learning that shapes and develops the self – highly personalised
- Embodied character of learning - the power of immersion in physical experiences to generate knowledge, understanding and enhanced self-confidence
- Unusual, unfamiliar activities and spaces encourage the adoption of a receptive and open frame of mind, to make sense of events as they occur – open minds encourage the reception of new ideas
- Inclusive –the potential to respond to learning needs across a broad spectrum, using a range of learning styles and resources not always available in the classroom.

The conceptual framework of the GLOs and the characteristics of museum learning as identified from the four linked evaluations will provide a framework in which to nest the evaluation of *Articulate*.

3.4 Methods of data collection

The evaluation of *Articulate* drew on qualitative research methodologies as these were felt to be most appropriate in answering the research questions and capturing the impact upon the participants. Qualitative research is based on interpretive

philosophies where the focus is on understanding specific events in specific contexts. It is recognised that there are multiple interpretations of events and diverse responses to social settings; therefore interpretative research has a particular concern with the meanings that are accorded by individuals to situations. Whilst there are many forms of qualitative research, all have in common an emphasis on holistic understanding of events in their contexts and a concern with meanings and actions. Within the research there was, therefore, an emphasis on collecting data from multiple perspectives. Data was collected from the perspective of the National Gallery, the writers leading the sessions and the schools involved in the programme. The schools were selected as a case study for the research on the basis of specific criteria to include a special school, a school that had been involved in both phases of *Articulate*, and a school that had been involved in Phase 2 only.

For the purposes of the report, each of these perspectives will be discussed and analysed in a separate section, with the findings drawn together in a concluding section. Table 2 describes the constituents of each 'perspective' and identifies the research methods that were used to collect the data.

Table 2: Description of the perspectives involved in the *Articulate* evaluation

Multiple Perspectives		Research Method(s)
National Gallery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alex Hill, Schools Officer 	Interview
Writers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diane Samuels • Victoria Neumark • Sherry Ashworth 	Interviews
Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodfield School • Hounslow Manor School • Hackney Free and Parochial CofE School 	Case study: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-visit to school • Observations @ National Gallery • Follow-up visit to school • Interviews • Focus groups • Response cards

3.4.1 The National Gallery

To explore the context and background for the *Articulate* project an interview was held with Alex Hill, Schools Officer at the National Gallery. Secondary evidence was provided by the National Gallery in the form of the proposal for funding from Deutsche Bank and a description of the project.

3.4.2 Three writers

Interviews were held at the National Gallery with three of the writers involved in *Articulate* sessions for 2008-2009. These were Diane Samuels, an award-winning playwright who worked with Woodfield School; Victoria Neumark, a journalist who has written for the Guardian and Times Educational Supplement amongst other publications and worked with Hounslow Manor School; and Sherry Ashworth, author of teenage fiction who worked with Hackney Free and Parochial CofE School. The protocol covered the following themes:

- Background and experience as a writer
- Experience of the National Gallery
- Process of using the painting
- Impact of the session on young people
- Value of the project.

Table 3 below gives a full list of the writers involved in Phase 2 of the *Articulate* project; the three writers interviewed as part of the evaluation have been highlighted to show the number of schools that each has worked with.

Table 3: The writers involved in *Articulate* Phase 2 2006-2009

School	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9
Hackney Free & Parochial CofE School	Poet - Valerie Bloom	Script writer - Margaret Glover	Novelist - Sherry Ashworth
Hounslow Manor School	Poet - John Hegley	Novelist - Alan Gibbons	Journalist - Victoria Neumark
Brentford School for Girls	Journalist - Brian Flynn	Screen writer - Emma Frost	Novelist - Alan Gibbons
Woodfield School	Journalist - Victoria Neumark	Novelist - Alan Gibbons	Playwright - Diane Samuels
St Marylebone CE School	Novelist - Roy Apps	Poet - Valerie Bloom	Journalist - Brian Flynn
St Augustine's CE High School	N/A	Journalist - Brian Flynn	Novelist - Alan Gibbons
Pimlico School	Journalist - Victoria Neumark	Playwright - Diane Samuels	Sherry Ashworth
St George's Catholic School	N/A	Novelist - Sherry Ashworth	Brian Flynn
Cumberland School	N/A	Novelist - Sherry Ashworth	Poet - Valerie Bloom
Longford Community School	Novelist - Beverley Naidoo	N/A	N/A

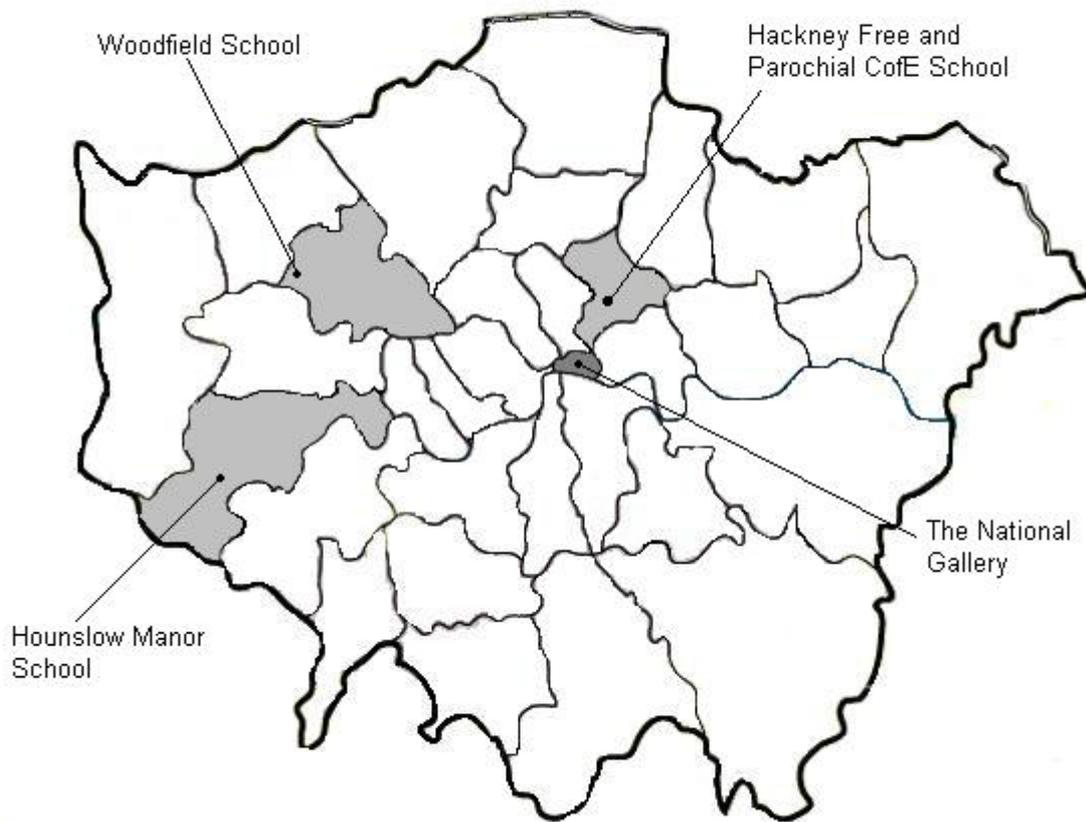
3.4.3 Three case-studies

Three schools were selected to be the focus of case studies to capture the impact of the *Articulate* project both in terms of a retrospective evaluation looking at their involvement across the three years (2006-2009) and the impact of the sessions at the National Gallery in 2008 and 2009. These schools were:

- Hackney Free and Parochial CofE School, Hackney
- Hounslow Manor School, Hounslow
- Woodfield School, Brent.

See Table 3 above for a list of the writers that each of these schools have worked with over the course of Phase 2 of *Articulate*. Figure 3 below gives the location of the schools in relation to the National Gallery in central London.

Figure 3: Location of the three case study schools, Greater London



The schools were selected in consultation with the National Gallery on the basis of specific criteria. Hackney Free and Parochial CofE School was chosen as an example of a school that had been involved in Phase 1 and 2 of *Articulate*, and one which had successfully integrated the project into their English curriculum. Woodfield School was selected because of its status as a special school; the school had also been involved in both phases of *Articulate*. The third school, Hounslow Manor, was involved in Phase 2 of *Articulate* and was the most suitable for a third case study being committed to taking part in the sessions for 2008/2009.

In the research design, each case study had been envisaged of consisting of the following three elements. Firstly, a pre-visit to the school to capture the expectations of the teachers and students as to their Year 9 visit to the National Gallery, with the potential to capture retrospective evidence of the previous years. This was followed by an observation of the visit to the National Gallery, gathering evidence of the organisation of the visit, the structure and content of the masterclass with the writer, and the responses of the students and teachers to the experience. The third opportunity to capture the impact of the *Articulate* sessions came in the form of a follow-up visit to the school, where it would be arranged to interview a range of teachers (e.g. class teacher, head of year, head teacher) and a selection of students to gauge their impressions and opinions of their experience.

For the interviews and focus groups with students and teachers, a protocol was designed which could be adapted to suit the context for each school. Each protocol covered a broad range of questions under the following headings:

Teachers

- The context of the school and literacy teaching / learning
- The value of *Articulate* to the school / teachers / pupils
- The impact of *Articulate* on the school / teachers / pupils
- Management of the visit.

Students

- The experience of the visit and National Gallery
- The painting
- Impact on school work
- Meeting real writers
- Value of the session
- Context (about themselves, experience of school etc).

Additional data was designed to be collected from students in the form of a response card with an open-ended question, 'The most interesting thing about the *Articulate* project was...' It was planned for the response card to be completed by all students involved in Phase 2 in order to give a broad overview of their experiences of taking part in *Articulate* and provide a useful context with which to compare the in-depth data from the case studies.

3.5 Research activities

Table 4 gives an overview of the research activities that took place as part of the evaluation of *Articulate*. These activities will be described in greater detail in the relevant sections of the report:

Table 4: Overview of the research activities undertaken for the evaluation of *Articulate*

Date	Activity	Venue	Researchers
15/05/2008	Initial meeting with Alex Hill, Schools Officer	National Gallery	Jocelyn Dodd Ceri Jones
23/06/2008	Visit to Woodfield School to interview Year 11 pupils	Woodfield School	Jocelyn Dodd
30/09/2008	Pre-visit / observation at Woodfield School	Woodfield School	Ceri Jones
13/10/2008	Observation of writer's masterclass for Woodfield School	National Gallery	Jocelyn Dodd
	Interview with Diane Samuels, playwright	National Gallery	Jocelyn Dodd
19/01/2009	Observation of writer's masterclass for Hackney Free and Parochial CofE School	National Gallery	Jocelyn Dodd Ceri Jones
	Interview with Sherry Ashworth, author	National Gallery	Jocelyn Dodd

Date	Activity	Venue	Researchers
27/01/2009	Observation of writer's masterclass for Hounslow Manor School	National Gallery	Jocelyn Dodd Ceri Jones
	Interview with Victoria Neumark, journalist	National Gallery	Jocelyn Dodd
02/03/2009	Interview with Alex Hill, Schools Officer	National Gallery	Jocelyn Dodd
24/03/2009	Follow-up visit to Woodfield School	Woodfield School	Jocelyn Dodd
10/06/2009	Follow-up visit to Hackney Free and Parochial CofE School	Hackney Free and Parochial CofE School	Jocelyn Dodd Ceri Jones
16/06/2009	Follow-up visit to Hounslow Manor School	Hounslow Manor School	Jocelyn Dodd Ceri Jones

3.6 Research Ethics

All research has been carried out within the University of Leicester's Research Code of Conduct and Data Protection Code of Practice, which can be viewed at <http://www.le.ac.uk/academic/quality/Codes/index.html> and <http://www2.le.ac.uk/institution/committees/research-ethics/code-of-practice>.

The following guidelines also provide a framework for RCMG research:

Statement of ethical practice for the British Sociological Association, <http://www.britsoc.co.uk>

Ethical Guidelines, Social Research Association, <http://www.the-sra.org.uk/>

Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research, British Educational Research Association, <http://www.bera.ac.uk/>

Guidelines for research among children and young people, Internet research guidelines, Qualitative research guidelines and the responsibilities of interviewers, The Market Research Society 2000, <http://www.mrs.org.uk>

Researchers working with young people have obtained enhanced disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). Care was taken to obtain the informed consent of participants to take part in the research and to use their words in all outcomes. It was the responsibility of the researchers to inform them, in meaningful terms, the purpose of the research, why they were involved and how it will be disseminated and used. Following best practice this was through an information sheet and written consent form (examples of which are given at Appendix 3). For young and vulnerable people this included obtaining the consent of a suitable gatekeeper, usually their class teacher or parent/guardian. Consent forms will be archived by RCMG for a minimum of five years. To protect their confidentiality the names of all teachers and young people involved in the evaluation have been changed in the report.

3.7 Challenges encountered during the research

It is acknowledged that research takes place in the 'real world' and there were some challenges to carrying out the research of *Articulate* as it was originally designed.

Working with secondary schools, the researchers encountered a number of general challenges. Secondary schools tend to be time-pressured environments with highly structured curriculums, which can have an impact on:

- Contacting teachers during the school day when teachers' time is committed to teaching, pastoral and management activities
- Arranging a mutually suitable time to visit the school
- Ensuring an adequate amount of time to interview teachers and students
- The teachers and students who are available to speak to researchers.

Building relationships with schools and establishing trust can be difficult in these circumstances. Long-term staff illness in the English department and delays in visits to the National Gallery because of bad weather exacerbated these more general challenges and as a result it was not possible to make pre-visits to two of the case study schools during the research period. Follow-up visits to the schools were also affected by the bad weather, which meant that some took place far later than had been originally planned, e.g. at the special school. This may have had an impact on the students – who had very challenging learning, social, emotional and behavioural needs– and their ability to recall their visit.

The special school was able to be much more accommodating to researchers because of their more flexible curriculum. However the needs of the young people made the pre-visit critical to understanding the ways in which they communicate so that evaluation methods would be appropriate, as well as understanding child protection issues in terms of ensuring 'informed consent' to participating in the research. An additional visit was made to Woodfield at the request of the school in order to interview a group of students from Year 11 who had been involved in Phase 1 of *Articulate* and whose language abilities made it possible for them to communicate their experiences to researchers.

It had been envisaged that response cards would be used with schools visiting the National Gallery to complete after their visit. In the event Woodfield School was the only school where their students completed response cards. It proved difficult to ask mainstream schools to complete the cards for the following reasons:

- It is very difficult to get mainstream schools to complete response cards when back in school and time was very pressured at the National Gallery to enable time to be built in during the visit to complete the response cards
- It was difficult for the National Gallery to build a 'community of practice' amongst the schools, which limited ways of communicating to them the value of the evaluation
- Response cards were not always appropriate for young people who may have challenging special needs
- Staff absence and less than positive experiences at the National Gallery also limited staff motivation to encourage their students to complete response cards (which was rare).

It was also not possible to collect evidence to demonstrate the impact of *Articulate* on the attainment of young people as this would have necessitated the young people completing a set piece of assessed work after the visit that could then be compared with their marks for previous assignments.

Changes in personnel in the Education department at the National Gallery due to maternity leave had an effect on the relationship built between researchers and individual members of staff. This became fragmented over the research period and was exacerbated by the vacancy of the Head of Education.

3.8 Conclusion

The evaluation of *Articulate* involved the collection of data from multiple perspectives using predominantly qualitative research methods. Interviews were held with National Gallery members of staff, the writers who led the sessions at the Gallery and three case-studies were undertaken with schools chosen to fulfil specific criteria agreed between the researchers and the National Gallery. There were some challenges encountered during the course of the evaluation, which necessitated flexibility from researchers and some amendments in the research design and methods used, however many of the challenges were to be expected when working with secondary schools and a large amount of data was collected through the research methods used with the co-operation of the schools, writers and National Gallery staff.

This report presents the findings from the evaluation beginning with the aims and impact of *Articulate* from the perspective of the National Gallery (Section 4), followed by the perspective of the writers involved (Section 5). Section 6 discusses the experiences of the three schools which were chosen as case-studies. Section 7 draws all the findings together, nesting them in the context of RCMG research on the impact and characteristics of learning in museums and galleries. The Appendices contain details of the references used in this report and the research tools used in the evaluation.

Section 4

Articulate: the National Gallery's perspective

4.1 Introduction

This section describes the National Gallery's aims and objectives in developing *Articulate* and their perspective on the process of the project and its impact on the schools involved. The perspective of the National Gallery comes from an interview with Alex Hill, Schools Officer, who replaced Karen Hosack – the originator of *Articulate* and the initial manager of the evaluation - when the latter went on maternity leave. The vacancy in the post of Head of Education at the time of the evaluation meant that it was not possible to gain a broader management perspective on the project.

4.2 The development of *Articulate*

External funding from Deutsche Bank was critical to enabling the National Gallery to develop *Articulate*, which focused on one area of the curriculum (literacy) and targeted specific schools, which the mainstream education programme does not provide for. The National Gallery had already established a relationship with Deutsche Bank through an earlier project in 2001 and was looking to build on the project's success whilst at the same time contributing to the development of the literacy curriculum in secondary schools.

4.2.1 Inspiring creative writing: the value of visual stimuli

From the National Gallery's perspective, the value of paintings to stimulate creative writing is founded upon the idea that responses to artworks are more immediate and accessible than other textual forms, particularly to young people of different abilities and learning needs:

"I think paintings are a great starting point because I think they appeal to lots of different students... [They] are much more immediate, everybody seems to have a reaction to them" (Alex Hill, Schools Officer).

Engaging young people with real artworks from the Gallery collections are an essential part of *Articulate*. Critical to the project was raising the students' awareness that whilst "paintings may be made up in somebody's mind" they can be used as "a starting point", or stimulus, for writing. By learning about the painting and the story behind it, the young people have the material with which to build text around and, eventually, construct a narrative:

"[By] the end of the sessions they all know something about them and they all have a feeling about them... a pretty good starting point actually for building text around. It's a different way of reading, it's not text" (Alex Hill, Schools Officer).

The response that young people can have to a painting is not restricted to creative or descriptive writing but can inspire a number of different genres or types of writing in the broadest possible sense:

“ [You] can get information from them, you can write about them in a very factual way, you can create poetry from them, create song lyrics from them, drama scripts” (Alex Hill, Schools Officer).

This ‘reading’ of a painting for the specific purpose of writing was contrasted with the concept of ‘visual literacy’ in that the former is using elements within the painting as a creative stimulus for writing, whereas developing visual literacy would focus more on the painting itself and seeking to understand how to ‘read’ it and the ‘messages’ which might be interpreted from it. The manner in which the masterclass with the writer is structured at the Gallery ensures that students are exposed to both approaches:

“ [What] the pupils get is a contrast between working with the writer who is getting them to look at the painting in a very particular way for a particular purpose, and then going around the gallery on their guided tour which is led by freelance lecturers [who are] teaching the pupils how to look at [the paintings] and how to find out about them” (Alex Hill, Schools Officer).

4.2.2 Selection of schools

To encourage a sense of familiarity and ownership of the collection by schools, and to enable each student to be given the opportunity to work with a variety of writers, the programme was designed so that whole year groups from each school involved visited the National Gallery three times over the course of Key Stage 3 (ages 11-14). When choosing schools to be involved, the National Gallery targeted specific boroughs in London and worked with the Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to identify schools that would not only benefit from the project, but would be committed to taking part in a three-year project with the same student cohort:

“ [What] we wanted them to do is to recommend schools that were possibly struggling, bouncing along the bottom with their English results and could cope with doing something on this scale” (Alex Hill, Schools Officer).

The funder, Deutsche Bank, was another potential source for selecting schools. As a ‘key member’ of the Bank’s Enriching Curriculum Learning programme (National Gallery undated) the National Gallery could draw on a list of targeted schools put together by the Bank.

4.2.3 Creating links between *Articulate* and the National Curriculum

From the beginning of *Articulate* the link to literacy and meeting the needs of schools that were underachieving in this area was central to the project focus. The project aimed to support teachers and students through the National Literacy Strategy, and improve attainment, through engaging students in different genres of writing and using artworks as a stimulus to writing. Critical to this support was ensuring that the session at the Gallery was relevant to the school and the work that they would be

doing in the classroom and the project involved a process of planning with the teachers to ensure an appropriate writer was chosen, as Alex Hill explained:

“[The] whole idea behind the project was to liaise with the teachers and try and pair them up with writers that they were actually working with... for example year nine were doing a war poetry unit, we might think yes perhaps a journalist who’s been to say Kosovo might be a perfect person to work with. They could then choose a painting based on war and conflict so really trying to work quite closely with what they’re trying to do in schools as well”.

In terms of developing the content of the sessions, however, this was largely left up to the writers with minimal input from the Gallery:

“It’s pretty much their choice actually because I tend to give them the same or pretty much the same briefing... I try not to be too prescriptive and I think that suits them better because they’re creative people”.

4.3 The impact of *Articulate* from the National Gallery’s perspective

4.3.1 A positive impact on students and teachers

Generally, the project has had a significant impact on the schools involved from the point of view of the National Gallery. Very positive responses from the teachers, students and writers involved in Phase 1 of *Articulate* encouraged the development of a second phase in 2006 to build upon its success. The first phase of *Articulate* enabled 1360 students to take part and the National Gallery received positive feedback from the schools involved, which included (National Gallery undated):

- Teachers gained new perspectives on how the visual arts can be used to inspire creative thinking, learning and writing
- Students were excited to work with high-profile authors such as Jacqueline Wilson
- Students learnt new literacy skills and wider applications for literacy outside the classroom
- Expected increase of student attainment in English
- Many of the young people had never visited the National Gallery (or a museum or gallery) before the project
- The project helped to highlight schools from ‘less privileged areas’ in a positive way.

A significant impact on teachers has been a much greater awareness of the potential that paintings have as a stimulus for writing and how to use them as resources for teaching literacy in the classroom. Interacting with other professionals provides teachers with opportunities to reflect on their teaching and expose them to new ideas and ways of working. *Articulate* has also been successful in raising awareness amongst teachers of the value of the National Gallery as a learning resource for their students, changing their perceptions that it is old-fashioned and inaccessible for young people:

“[A] lot of [the teachers] hadn’t actually been here or really known about the gallery before or possibly even thought that paintings could be a really good

way in... it has actually opened a lot of people's eyes that it's not a musty old dusty place full of old master paintings, that actually they can still be quite relevant and that teenagers today can still get things out of them" (Alex Hill, Schools Officer).

In terms of the impact on the students, their reaction to the Gallery and a change in their behaviour over the three years has been the most noticeable outcome for Gallery staff:

"When they came first of all in Year 7 they were very unsure of themselves... [They] didn't really know how to take the Gallery or the building and a lot of them, it wasn't cockiness it was actually lack of confidence, [they] didn't know how to take the paintings and assumed a sort of boredom really - 'I'm too cool for this' sort of attitude - which has gone" (Alex Hill, Schools Officer).

The three-year relationship with the Gallery has made it more accessible for students and has given them a sense of ownership. According to Alex, by the third year the students "walk about as if they own the place... they're obviously feeling a lot more comfortable in their surroundings, they know that it's somewhere they can come and they've got every right to be here as much as everybody else". The students gain increased confidence in their literacy skills, evidenced by the number of students who want to read out their work to the writers during the masterclass. The students' growing confidence has also been noted, and remarked upon, by teachers, who often see their pupils responding very differently to how they might respond in school:

"A lot of the teachers seem to be really delighted with the pupils' behaviour... the pupils have continuously surprised them with the questions that they've been asking... [It] reminds them why they're doing their job... it makes them understand I think that their pupils aren't just numbers in a school - that they're all individuals as well" (Alex Hill, Schools Officer).

4.3.2 The value of contact with professional writers for young people

Vital to the success of the project from the National Gallery's perspective is the use of professional writers who are not only experts in their field but also "real life people with so much charisma and such interesting lives that are so different from the pupils own lives". Whilst the writers may have different experiences from the students there may also points of reference that help to 'humanise' the writers for the students, for instance Sherry Ashworth who told the students that "she grew up in the same road that a lot of them actually lived in, bringing it to their level" (Alex Hill, Schools Officer). By exposing the young people to three different writers over the course of the *Articulate* project, the intention is that students can understand that outside the classroom there are many different reasons, and opportunities, for writing as a career choice:

"So when they come throughout their three years here they see very different types of writers, a poet, maybe a performance poet, they may see a journalist who writes very factual informative articles, they may see a novelist who writes for pleasure" (Alex Hill, Schools Officer).

It was important for the National Gallery to choose the writers carefully so that they had the appropriate skills for working with young people. From the point of view of Alex Hill, an effective writer for *Articulate* is one that is able to engage the students through treating them like young adults rather than relying on an overly student-teacher dynamic:

“[The] pupils are very aware that they’re not in school and to have somebody talking to them as if they’re a naughty Year 8 pupil is not what they want especially when they’re in a public place in a gallery and they’re in front of other people.”

An effective writer is one who is committed and enthusiastic about the project, and is able to convey this to the students and to ‘carry’ the students along with their enthusiasm. Building a relationship with the writers was crucial to ensuring these needs were met. Getting to know the writers and their particular strengths and skills enabled Alex Hill to match schools more effectively, for instance for the special school it needed a writer who would be able to work with young people who had very little communication ability:

“I knew that particularly one of the groups had very little language and Diane [Samuels, playwright]... she’s a person who responds to particular situations. She will plan things in advance but she’s very good at dealing with exactly what’s thrown at her on the day. So I had a feeling she’d be a really good person to work with them and she turned out to be fantastic.”

4.4 Managing *Articulate*: challenges and concerns

Whilst the *Articulate* project in both its phases have been a success for the National Gallery, the organisation and management of the project has not been without its challenges. The following is a summary of some of the issues and challenges that have been encountered over the lifespan of the project:

- Sourcing writers especially the more popular or well-known ones
- Co-ordination between writers and schools when planning sessions
- Short timescale in which to liaise with the LEA advisors
- Unexpected challenges like bad weather which led to re-scheduled visits
- Convincing schools of the benefits of the project e.g. subsidised travel costs and resources available from the Gallery
- Schools pulling out the project due to staffing issues, high staff turnover, changes in key contacts and decisions made by senior management, which can all take their toll on school commitment
- Inviting teachers to come to sessions outside of the school day e.g. a twilight session at the Gallery which would bring teachers from the ten schools involved in the project together was not well attended
- It has not always been possible to show the students the ‘real’ version of the painting - “unfortunately things like that do happen in the gallery, rooms closed or pictures taken off for conservation, we can’t always control it”.

It was also considered that there had been a variable response to the integration of the project into the curriculum by schools. Some schools were seen as more effective

at following the project with a substantial amount of work back in the classroom than others. Hackney Free and Parochial CofE School for instance had been involved in both the first and second phases of *Articulate*, and were regarded by the National Gallery as a school that was confident in the use of artworks "to teach literacy and writing and English". For schools such as Hounslow Manor School the involvement in *Articulate* from Alex Hill's point of view was less about the content of the session than the experience of doing literacy in an alternative context to the classroom: "They're one of the schools who don't tend to mind exactly who they got or what they did; they were more concerned with the pupils' experience of coming out of school and working in a different setting".

Whilst the nature of external project funding means that *Articulate* is not going to be continued by the National Gallery after 2009, the Education department will continue to provide access to the website and will potentially be able to adapt the existing mainstream hour-long gallery tours to meet teachers' needs in terms of literacy, for instance by providing "a tour based on characters, based on looking at poetry and arts" (Alex Hill, Schools Officer).

4.5 Conclusion

From the perspective of the National Gallery the *Articulate* project has been a success with very positive outcomes reported by the teachers, students and writers involved. Through the project, young people from deprived areas and under-achieving schools have been able to work with high-profile, professional writers in a unique and exciting context, many students visiting the National Gallery for the first time. Such experiences can change perceptions of the Gallery, making it accessible, relevant and enjoyable to young people. Engaging with real writers and real artworks can inspire and stimulate young people to want to write - building on their enthusiasm and interest in the paintings - and by introducing them to the many different ways in which literacy skills can be used in the 'real world' outside the classroom, it can raise their aspirations and potentially open new doors for their career choices in the future. Teachers too are inspired and motivated by exposure to new ideas and ways of using visual stimuli in their teaching. Although there have been some challenges encountered as part of the management and organisation of the project from the National Gallery's point of view the project has been a very positive experience.

Section 5

Articulate: The writers' perspective

5.1 Introduction

Central to the *Articulate* project has been enabling young people from secondary schools, which are under-achieving in literacy, to work with high-profile writers. This section describes *Articulate* from the perspective of the writers involved in the three case studies: the playwright, Diane Samuels; the author, Sherry Ashworth, and the journalist Victoria Neumark. It outlines their backgrounds and experiences, the impact that *Articulate* has had upon their work and their opinions on the expected impact that the project has had on the teachers and students they have worked with. This is followed by a discussion of the process of working with the National Gallery and the writers' thoughts on how this aspect of the project has been managed. Lastly, as an example of an effective and enormously successful session, described within this section is an encounter between the poet John Hegley and Hounslow Manor School, which resulted in a significant and lasting impression upon the students and teachers who participated.

5.2 The three writers – experience and background

5.2.1 The playwright: Diane Samuels

Born and raised in Liverpool, Diane Samuels worked as a drama teacher and an education officer at the Unicorn Theatre for Children before becoming a full time writer in 1992. Her work for theatre is extensive and she has won awards for her plays. Diane has also produced plays for radio, written short stories and regularly reviews children's books for *The Guardian*. She runs writing workshops, is writer-in-residence at a school in London and became a Royal Literary Fund Fellow at the University of Westminster in September 2008.² Diane became involved in *Articulate* via a contact through a writing group. In Phase 2 she has worked with two schools, including Woodfield School one of the case study schools for this evaluation, and she has also used the Gallery collections as part of her role as a writer-in-residence. In her work with schools, Diane considers that it is more important to develop the students "as artists" rather than fit into the needs of the National Curriculum, which she regards more as the role of the teachers. In her opinion, the way in which the curriculum approaches writing can actually be off-putting for young people:

"I think the way creative writing is taught in schools is ill-informed. It's not the way any writer works. So there's a huge gap between what writers do and how [the National Curriculum] teaches writing. My experience is that most people are put off writing by the way it's taught in schools or alienated from it. And a lot of people are frightened of it."

² Biography of Diane Samuels <http://www.writewords.org.uk/diane.asp> [accessed 28 07 2009]

Diane's approach to writing therefore values creative freedom and exploration, for instance as a writer-in-residence at a London school she gives the students notebooks in which to jot down their ideas and "write things their way". Her aim is to enable people to "discover ways in which they can become confident expressive writers, whether they want to do it professionally or not for their own pleasure or for just their own processing of life." This, she considers, encourages more confident writers.

5.2.2 The author: Sherry Ashworth

Born in London, Sherry Ashworth was formerly a secondary school English teacher before becoming a full-time writer. Now based in Manchester, she writes almost exclusively for young people and lectures on creative writing and English at Manchester Metropolitan University. She describes her fiction as "a marriage with the kind of way I write fiction with my interest in teenagers... I do lots and lots of school visits and work with [teenagers] extensively." Sherry's work is popular with young people and her published novels include 'What's Your Problem?' (1999) about bullying, 'Disconnected' (2002) about exam pressure and 'Paralysed' (2005) which won two awards for its portrayal of a young man dealing with a spinal cord injury.³ Her work is described as "gritty and realistic, issue based" and she derives an immense amount of satisfaction from the relationship she considers she has developed with her audience:

"I still like to work with teenagers because of course it's a two way process, they inspire me and I hope I inspire them... I feel very, very passionate about writing for teenagers and trying to communicate with them through the empathetic discipline that is fiction."

There are many reasons why Sherry enjoys writing for teenagers but particularly because she considers that they are at a turning point in their lives and literature is one way in which they can learn about their own lives through the experience of others:

"I feel that teenagers deserve to have a body of fiction for them because of the stage of life they're at, they're coming to terms with so many things for the first time, so many changes."

Literature is also a means to convey a meaningful message to teenagers about difficult or challenging subjects that they may not want to talk about with an adult or 'authority' figure:

"I know how much I'd prefer my teenagers to learn about drugs, sex whatever in the pages of a novel with an adult mediating than actually try these things for themselves."

Sherry became involved in *Articulate* through a project she was doing with the Royal Bethlem Hospital. The detrimental impact that she considers the National Curriculum has had on the teaching and learning of English was one reason to get involved with a project that aimed to support schools through creative approaches to literacy:

³ Biography of Sherry Ashworth
<http://www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/?p=auth519DFCC71dc321BC96RyPx269886>
[accessed 29 07 2009]

"[We] live in an age where the school curriculum has been strangled by testing... As a result teachers are increasingly teaching towards specifications and criteria and I've seen English taught very badly in some schools as a result."

The philosophy of the project therefore complemented very closely Sherry's own approach to literacy, which for her was very exciting:

"[*Articulate* is] bringing back a certain creativity to literacy which I think we're in danger of losing, hopefully the tide is turning."

5.2.3 The journalist: Victoria Neumark

Victoria Neumark is a journalist with thirty years of experience. She now works as a senior lecturer in journalism at London Metropolitan University. Victoria has written for, amongst others, the Times Educational Supplement and The Guardian, producing "mostly education features but I've also written news, reviews, interviews and columns." Similarly to Diane Samuels and Sherry Ashworth, Victoria has a background in teaching and working with young people of various ages, spanning primary, secondary and higher education.

Victoria's approach to literacy is seeing language as a flexible tool which individuals can use in order to communicate meaning to others, a very practical approach which reflects her background as a journalist. However that is not to say that Victoria does not value creativity in writing:

"Language is not just following a banal narrative... So if you can at least start them on a feeling that they can be flexible - that there's more than one way to express things."

Central to literacy is having sufficient command over or the confidence to master language, to make "lexical items and also the structures work for you to convey your own individual message". Critical to her work with young people through *Articulate* is enabling them to understand that different responses to, for example of the same artwork, are all valid interpretations. That language can be used in different ways as a form of expression:

"To show them look, this is just one painting, you've got these different responses to them, all of these responses are good. They're all interesting... [and] they have all used language in a slightly different way."

5.3 The impact of *Articulate* on the writers

The three writers all had different experiences of using artworks as a means to stimulating and motivating young people to write, the central focus of the *Articulate* project. The most compelling impact on a writer's practice came from the interview with Diane Samuels who, prior to her involvement with *Articulate*, had not tended to use paintings to inspire her writing. Instead she had drawn on "written source materials and a lot of oral history" and maybe used photographs. However she found the collections at the National Gallery a useful and inspiring resource. In the session

with Pimlico School, for instance, Diane used the painting 'An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump' by Joseph Wright of Derby (1768). Using this painting she encouraged the young people to do some 'free writing' where the aim is to "release a kind of uncensored flow" and write without thinking. The details in the painting provided plenty of scope for developing exercises that would stimulate the young people:

"And I also got them to look at the picture and think about who in the picture they wanted to write as. So they then wrote, did another free writing in front of the pictures in the voice of one of the characters."

The painting also inspired Diane to write her own creative piece for the *Articulate* website;⁴ for it she spent ninety minutes in front of the painting 'free writing': "I just didn't stop, in front of the picture." She not only described the sense of freedom that 'free writing' gave her but also the deeper insight it gave her into the picture itself, encouraging her to think critically about the messages it was trying to communicate to the viewer:

"What I discovered in the free writing was loads about the [picture]... about the natural philosopher who's conducting the experiment who, you know, it's a scientific experiment but he's wearing this red robe and flowing grey hair and he doesn't look anything like you think a scientist ought to look and it doesn't look like he's conducting any kind of rational exercise at all."

The project also had an impact on writers who were already confident using artwork as stimulus for motivating young people to write. As an English teacher Sherry Ashworth had "used photographs and paintings as stimulus material", a practice that she considered should be more routine in schools and "something that a lot of English teachers might want to do". However working with the National Gallery enabled her to use real artworks on a larger scale than previously, helped by "the support I've been given by the Gallery". Coming into contact with young people through the *Articulate* project was also highly significant for Sherry's personal validation as an author. Hearing the young people talking about her books and enjoying them was very gratifying:

"It's wonderful like today when I said I've written my novel 'Paralysed' and some kid said I've read that... when I was summarising it he was joining in! He knew all the names of the characters. Now that's why you write isn't it!"

5.4 The impact on teachers

The writers considered that *Articulate* would have a positive impact on the teachers accompanying their groups to the National Gallery, particularly in terms of teachers being exposed to new ways of approaching literacy. Enabling teachers to put aside their usual role of taking responsibility for their student's learning, to step back and watch a session led by a professional writer, who is an expert in their subject was seen as very beneficial for teachers. Where teachers were actively involved in the process with their students they could be exposed to the work of the writer at close hand:

⁴ See http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/articulate/projects/ds/ds_story.html for Diane's story [accessed 16 09 2009]

“I think there’s something about teachers being able to participate on some level with the workshop where they get an opportunity to engage with the work and process it for themselves. They get that opportunity not to have to run the session or to hold the session... they can see the strategies at play” (Diane Samuels).

Professional writers tend to “have their own distinctive take on things” which can give teachers fresh perspectives on teaching literacy. Seeing their students engaging with and responding to different adults can also help to refresh teachers in their practice:

“They can learn more about their students... they get to play a bit. They get a bit of nourishment themselves” (Diane Samuels).

The impact on the teachers, however, would depend greatly on how far they involve themselves in the sessions and see the benefits of it for themselves:

“I think that [impact] varies from teacher to teacher, you know. I felt that the main teacher in each group did get quite a bit out of it, but I wasn’t so convinced about the assisting teachers. I felt it was to some extent they were just going along with it” (Victoria Neumark).

5.5 The impact on the students

5.5.1 A positive impact on literacy

For the three writers, the involvement in *Articulate* was expected to have a positive impact on the young people’s confidence and motivation in literacy. For students who may be low-achievers, one of the most critical aspects of the sessions for Sherry Ashworth was creating a safe and supportive environment in which young people could develop their confidence, to create a memorable experience that students could draw upon in the future:

“I think realistically that those children who had their work read out or read their work out and got approved by the peer group, teachers and me will have a huge rise in their self esteem a rise which might not carry them through GCSE but will impact on them in a way they will never forget.”

For Diane Samuels, one of the important elements of the session was to create a ‘learning space’ within the Gallery where young people were given the freedom to explore ideas and space to think reflectively, which, in turn, helped them to process the experience more effectively as part of their learning:

“So what the workshop does, it enables them to have a space to process it, to work it through, to reflect on it or just in some way I think that’s very useful because it can enable you to learn. It can, you know, enable things to connect more to. It’s reflective space as much as anything, exploratory space. It’s learning space.”

5.5.2 The value of images: immediate and accessible to young people

All three writers agreed that for the young people, interacting with artworks from the National Gallery's collections was very valuable. The significance of the visual image in inspiring young people was predicated on the idea that visual images are more immediate and accessible to young people than other forms of 'text', particularly written text. In our "image literate culture", visual signs and imagery are something which young people are familiar with and can respond to whatever their level of ability:

"Images are the way we operate really. And so what I find is images, pictures speak very directly to children, to anybody, in a way that language is more complex and maybe a bit more inaccessible actually" (Diane Samuels).

From Diane's point of view, the positive impact on the students' writing came from enabling the young people to connect with the artwork "in a very meaningful way":

"Something about the relationship we have with the art and of it being alive... enabling it to communicate with us and for us to communicate our lives in relation to it. So it's something about really bringing it all alive... and it takes you out of your own world into the world... So there's something of being transported."

Sherry Ashworth also described the relationship that she saw as being created between the students, the writer and the painting, a relationship that enthused and motivated the students to work at a higher level than they might in the classroom:

"It's about a synergy between a writer and a painting and the student writer, they forget all about that and it's liberating they get involved with the painting and they do respond to the excitement of the painter, and as a result they punch above their weight in literacy. The teacher I was working with said that himself he said he did not know those children were capable of writing in that way."

Whilst it was not always possible for the writers to articulate the actual nature of the impact on the students in terms of their learning outcomes, at the very least it would create a memorable experience for the students, which they would be able to draw upon in the future:

"[Even] when they are adults they will look back and remember, and I am not being naive, that's what we're all like we all remember back some of the worst and some of the best experiences at school" (Sherry Ashworth).

"I think the children will remember the painting and I rather hope that is what they remember. They have spent a lot of time looking at this one image and I think that has definitely made some impact" (Victoria Neumark).

5.5.3 Learning outcomes can be variable for young people

Whilst the writers attributed potentially positive impacts of *Articulate* on the young people's learning, both Sherry Ashworth and Victoria Neumark were cautious to point out that the actual impact could be variable depending on the young person's background. For young people who face many challenges in their everyday lives, an

hour at the National Gallery with a writer was not, in Sherry's opinion, going to transform the lives of all students. However if it affected the lives of a few students she considered that a very positive impact:

"The reality is these young people have got exciting, demanding sometimes quite traumatic lives and I'm very, very aware they've just had one hour here and some people are going to lose it but it's like planting things, a lot of plants don't flourish but one will and if just one child has been inspired to think I like English to do well at English GCSE and to take it on and to carry that love of creativity and of language further, what an achievement!"

From Victoria Neumark's perspective, the impact of the session on the students also depended upon the support of, and planning with, the teachers:

"One of the teachers hadn't understood what I wanted, so her group actually wasted a lot of time... it would have been valuable really to have talked to the teachers before I think."

5.5.4 Expanding students' horizons

The writers were much more comfortable talking about the broader social benefits of the *Articulate* sessions for the young people than the impact that it may have on their schoolwork. For instance, Diane Samuels commented that she did not take the National Curriculum into consideration in her approach unless teachers asked her to do so:

"I don't take any notice of it. It's not my job. It's not what interests me. Teachers attend to it and if they need what I do to tap into the curriculum then they say specifically what they want. But I'm not a teacher."

Visiting the National Gallery and having a learning experience outside the classroom was seen as highly beneficial to the young people. It brought them into contact with professionals other than teachers, gave them experience of the 'real world' outside of school and home-life, and demonstrated that writing is not an activity that is confined to the classroom. Expanding the young people's outlook in this way was therefore highly significant to all three writers:

"I think it's educationally very valuable to have people who are not teachers teaching and I feel that in my own practice. Really ideally once a term any class should have some input with the real world... I think that is broadening their outlook" (Victoria Neumark).

"I think anything that expands anyone's experience is always worthwhile" (Diane Samuels).

It was equally pertinent for students with learning, social and behavioural difficulties, who may find it more challenging to negotiate the 'real world' outside of highly structured contexts like school:

“I think there’s a level of asking them to behave in the outside world and engage with the outside world in a meaningful way and to give them a space to process that engagement” (Diane Samuels).

From the perspective of Sherry Ashworth, experiences like that offered at the National Gallery can have a positive impact on “teenagers who really are under-privileged in terms of resources and have a lot stacked against them socially”. It was her belief that it was important to raise awareness amongst young people that the Gallery was available for them and accessible to them as an activity they can take part in outside of an educational context:

“[The National Gallery] shouldn’t just be a tourist attraction it belongs to Londoners and in an ideal world you’d want kids to say let’s go into town go to the gallery for a bit then we can go and have a coffee, or we can go to the gallery because it doesn’t cost any money... It’s a fantastic environment” (Sherry Ashworth).

For Sherry it was important to get young people interested in artworks and galleries because they would be the audiences of the future:

“Art is something which is for now and it’s interesting in the National Gallery because it’s not a contemporary gallery in that sense so it’s important to keep these old paintings alive by getting young people in and reacting with them, it’s what the painters would have wanted.”

The benefits for young people interacting in what could be for many students an unfamiliar and even daunting environment was very rewarding for Sherry despite the challenges that it posed, leading as it did to such a positive impact on their behaviour and inclination to work:

“And it’s been so good to take those children out of school and into another place, that changes their behaviour, it challenges them in just the right way and I think the level of behaviour we get from these kids are a lot better.”

5.6 Working with the National Gallery

5.6.1 Positive experience of working with the National Gallery

The writers described their experiences of working with the National Gallery as very positive. Sherry Ashworth was particularly enthusiastic about her experience of being involved in the project, describing it as “absolutely brilliant on every single level”, so not only on a professional level but on a personal level:

“The National Gallery rocks doesn’t it? This is like the best place and the idea of working here for me personally as an individual, it’s like a dream. To be honest I was bought here as a kid by my parents and I always thought it was one of the most wonderful places, so on a personal level to work here has just been fantastic.”

The support given by the National Gallery through clear parameters and briefings enabled Sherry to be very confident about her session being appropriate for the young people participating in the masterclass:

“The great thing about *Articulate* is the level of support I’ve had from the Gallery... everything’s been immaculately organised. I was given such a clear brief by Alex [Hill] in the beginning, how to do the project what the expectations were it made it very easy for me, I was confident that I was going to be able to do what they wanted me to do because the parameters were so clear.”

Victoria Neumark also valued the experience of the *Articulate* project, linked to a personal interest in art as well as a positive experience of working with the National Gallery:

“I enjoy working with Alex [Hill]. It’s a good space. And it’s interesting because I’m very fond of visual art myself so it’s interesting to try and share that from a different perspective with the young people.”

5.6.2 Writers drawing on their personal experience and backgrounds

In developing their sessions for *Articulate* the writers drew on their own personal experiences and backgrounds. The session with Woodfield School enabled Diane Samuels to draw on her experience as a drama teacher, developing a multi-sensory and embodied learning experience for the students that she regarded as was critical to enabling them to engage with the painting:

“It’s this multi-sensory thing with a school with children with special needs to work with drama to enable them to connect with and then kind of inhabit the painting or bring the painting alive in the third dimension.”

Along with the painting, objects were also used to bring the painting to life “using sound and object and movement” in order to facilitate a “direct route to the unconscious”, reiterating that images can be more immediate and accessible than other forms of text which engage the intellect.

Victoria Neumark’s session was deeply embedded in her experience as a journalist, structured around the idea that the students were working in a ‘newsroom’ and were writing an article based on the chosen painting. Key elements that the writer wanted to get across in this respect included the idea that journalism is based on team-work: “the fact that they were working cooperatively does mirror the journalistic process”. The success of the ‘role-play’ depended on Victoria’s credibility as a professional, which she considered the students did respond to:

“One is I have my experience and I know the technical terms, which they didn’t know. And another is I think they did respond to the fact that I obviously know what I’m talking about, therefore I have authority.”

Whilst introducing herself as a published author was not something that Sherry Ashworth would normally do when working with schools, she understood the significance of stressing her background as a professional writer to the young people

involved in *Articulate* as part of the project's aims to encourage young people to see writing as a possible career option:

"It sounds a bit up yourself and I normally wouldn't do that with kids particularly unless I think they are going to benefit from that in our celebrity-based culture... but I know exactly how long to spend doing that enough to make the children think she's a bit different to what we normally get."

She was keen, however, not to glamorise the job of an author to the young people:

"People always think writers are rich because they're a bit famous but it's not true! The average income of a writer purely from writing is something like seven thousand pounds per annum; it's ridiculous so we all have to have day jobs of one sort or another."

5.6.3 Challenges experienced by the writers

In developing their sessions for *Articulate* and working with the different schools, there were some challenges experienced by the three writers. These can be briefly summarised as:

- Choosing a suitable painting
- Working with young people with challenging learning, social, communication, emotional and behavioural needs
- Sessions which did not turn out the way the writer expected, suggesting the benefits of planning with the school beforehand.

The paintings chosen by the three writers for the third year of *Articulate* Phase 2 were very different in terms of age, content and style, suggesting that writers are given a great deal of freedom in this respect. Whilst Sherry Ashworth and Diane Samuels chose, respectively, *Surprised!* by Henri Rousseau and *The Umbrellas* by Pierre-Auguste Renoir, which were relatively uncontroversial, the choice of Victoria Neumark – 'Salome receives the Head of Saint John the Baptist' by Caravaggio – pertained as it did to some potentially difficult subjects for the writer particularly with its themes of child abuse and religion (in this case Christianity). Concerning the issue of child abuse, whilst the writer was anxious that there could have been young people in the school who had been abused, because young people are likely to be exposed to such things in the media every day, the journalist considered it was not a subject to be shied away from:

"[The students] see this all the time; they're flooded with the media who deal with this stuff. Baby P for example, there can't have been a child that didn't know about that."

It also enabled Victoria to make a further link between art and journalism in that both "confront reality", albeit in a different way and for different motives. As for the religious element of the painting, this was something which the writer also had to consider carefully, particularly as the school was very multi-cultural and multi-faith:

"I tried to make it very general and I also was very conscious talking about religion, that some people being devout Christians and some will not know

what it is... I was careful to say Christians believe this and so forth. I definitely thought about that quite a lot."

Challenges were presented to the writers in terms of working with students that had differing social, behavioural, learning, emotional and communication needs, including young people with English as an additional language. For Diane Samuels, who worked with a special needs school, one of the challenges was expecting young people with quite severe learning and behavioural difficulties to take part in group activities:

"Often with special needs kids, they live in their own world and they don't take much notice of other people... So the main challenge is getting them to listen to each other, to follow instructions, to pull together in a group situation really instead of all working on their own level, you know, and just go off in their own world."

The key to understanding the young people, therefore, was not only knowing the level at which they could engage with the activity but also how they would respond, especially where levels of communication may be limited: "They won't talk about the picture in the same way, but they're probably getting as much out of it, they just need a mode of expressing it". It was the role of the writer therefore to facilitate the young people's mode of expression, which Diane Samuels aimed to achieve through the use of embodied learning techniques. Where groups are of a very mixed ability, there can also be concerns about pitching the session at the right level so that it is accessible to all young people; as Victoria Neumark explained it "needs a different kind of preparation and preferably with the teacher." Sherry Ashworth drew on her extensive experience as a teacher in order to respond to potentially challenging situations: "you need to be experienced to a degree to be able not to get too phased by things that might happen."

Whilst Sherry Ashworth and Diane Samuels considered that their sessions had both gone very well, Victoria Neumark had a very different experience with the school she worked with in Year 3 of *Articulate* Phase 2. The sessions had not turned out quite how she had expected, nor had the premise really worked very effectively with the young people:

"Well I came at this particular project to look at writing, both from the point of view of vocabulary and from the point of view of structure. So news is good because it has a very fixed structure... and then I divided it up into art, crime and interview, trying to elicit and trying to get them to use different sets of vocabulary. That didn't work that well I think".

The journalist gave several reasons why she considered that the session had not worked in the way that she had intended. The young people had struggled with the notion of 'role-play' and getting into the spirit of the session, which the journalist had intended they would "pretend we were in a newsroom and we were looking for a story". The young people were too self-conscious to become involved, they "didn't want to pretend." The time allocated for the session had also been very short compared to what the journalist wanted to achieve and the number of students had made group work slightly more challenging "because if you're trying to get them to workshop their writing, you do need to have a lot of input". The difficulties

experienced during the session suggested to Victoria Neumark the value of planning the session with the school beforehand “which I didn’t have the opportunity to do”. Having some ideas about what the school wanted or the nature of the students in terms of their ability and background would have been very useful in terms of planning the session and would have enabled the writer to build on the work done in the classroom, structuring it more closely to the needs and abilities of the students, for example interviewing techniques:

“I think their teacher actually had done that with them cos... he’d done closed and open questions and so forth. So I’d develop that. I’d develop writing for different markets and also interviews. And I think what would be very good to do would be to prepare an exercise with interviews, where they interviewed each other and then swapped. I think that would be excellent.”

5.7 From the schools’ perspective: working with memorable and inspirational writers

From the interviews with schools it emerged that working with the writers was one of the most memorable and inspirational elements of *Articulate*. Students in particular recalled the value of working with an expert in their field, the advice that the writers could give them and the confidence this instilled within them to develop their literacy skills, especially their writing. Five years later, Year 11 students from Woodfield School who had been involved in the first phase of *Articulate* could remember working with Sarah Phelps and Scarlett Johnson, scriptwriter and actress respectively from *Eastenders*, and the way in which working with them helped them to understand the painting ‘Saint George and the Dragon’ by Paolo Uccello. Year 9 students from Hackney Free and Parochial CofE School discussed how working with a writer made them more confident about their own writing, particularly as they trusted and valued the advice that a professional writer could give them. Furthermore, these students got a great deal of enjoyment from working with professional writers. Research by RCMG has demonstrated that enjoyment and other forms of emotional engagement are valued by teachers as it is a route towards increased motivation to learn in their students; the quality of the facilitation provided by the museum and the teacher upon return to the classroom are other important factors in the success of a museum or gallery visit, including the pupils’ preparation for the visit, the level of information the students were given about the visit, the teachers’ engagement with the visit and institutional support given (RCMG 2006). Although the schools’ experiences will be discussed in more detail in the next section, the following example of Hounslow Manor’s interaction with the poet John Hegley (who was not interviewed as part of the evaluation so it was not possible to give his perspective) provides compelling evidence of an instance where these elements combined to create an experience with a professional writer that was memorable and had an identifiable impact on the students’ work.

5.7.1 A memorable session for the students

The impact that John Hegley had on the students and teachers who came into contact with him reverberated through the interviews held at Hounslow Manor with teachers and students. The school took part in a session at the National Gallery with John Hegley in the first year of *Articulate* Phase 2 and two years later both the

teachers and the students were able to recall the experience in some detail. For the students, the session with John Hegley was the most memorable of the three sessions that they had taken part in at National Gallery. Although the students were thinking back to a session that had taken place almost three years before, it was clear that it had made a lasting impression upon them. They were able to describe in detail the content of the session:

“Well in the first year we went and there was like a poet and... we went to look at pictures and he was like telling us to write a poem about the different pictures. Then some people went up and read out their poem... .. he had a poem that he made and like he was telling us it” (Pete).

One student, Kosoko, could recall the story of Orpheus and Eurydice from the painting they had worked with and all the students said that they enjoyed learning about paintings based on the Greek myths, the stories of which captured their imaginations and created a ‘hook’ with which to draw them into a painting:

“Cos everyone likes the Greek myths because it’s a bit fancy and fiction kind of thing and like the paintings are really good with the whole background, the whole story behind” (Shanice).

“It’s really interesting... because it’s what someone believed long ago” (Kiara).

5.7.2 The value of working with a (famous) poet

Working with a professional poet motivated the students to work harder, although for some students it was quite intimidating at first. Shanice described the process as “scary” because “he’s like a poet or something you thought oh gosh it better be good because if he picks someone to read it out”. It was the first time that most of the students had met a poet. Meeting John Hegley changed their expectations of what a poet would be like and how they would behave. Jamika thought he would look “a bit famous” and expected a poet “to think a lot of themselves” and was surprised to find that John Hegley was quite “ordinary” in appearance. However, it was his skill and ability that impressed the students:

“He seemed like he could make stuff up on the spot” (Shanice).

“He’s professional – it’s the way he talks and the way he makes poems just by looking at a picture. He’s different from us kids because he’s had more experience” (Jamika).

The students remembered that John Hegley was engaging and interesting, with a personality that encouraged them to warm to him and want to be involved:

“But he had more personality than a professional I think cos he wasn’t like a robot, he didn’t stand in front of us like telling us facts and that. He like brung himself into it... his whole personality. He wasn’t just like straight and that” (Kiara).

They compared him favourably with their teachers, describing him as more funny, friendly and open:

“It was weird because we kind of like listened to him more than we’d listen to like a teacher” (Shanice).

As a published poet, they understood the credibility that he brought to the session, particularly in terms of his performance:

“He knows the way the poem’s meant to be read so he reads it with different expressions and stuff” (Jamika).

5.7.3 A memorable experience for the teachers

For the teachers of Hounslow Manor, John Hegley was memorable because he made the session entertaining for both students and teachers. A performer as well as a poet (the teachers remembered how he walked around the gallery with his mandolin) he provided something extra ‘special’ which could not be replicated back in the classroom:

“[It] was just the way he like got [the students] to come up in front of everyone and sing a song based on a painting. I couldn’t do that certainly. And most of them were really up for it and he also got a lot of the staff involved which obviously worked for the kids... just the way he made responding to a visual text quite engaging and fun ultimately” (Mr Iqbal, English Teacher).

Furthermore he “made it very, very clear what the students needed to do” (Ms Walsh, English Teacher). The enthusiasm generated by the poet meant that the teachers were keen to draw on the session for their work back in the classroom and the experience was linked to a unit of work in Year 7 on poetry. From the teacher’s perspective the session at the National Gallery “enabled a large number of students to... respond very personally to poetry” and encouraged them to take a more flexible, creative approach, “so it wasn’t just about sitting down and writing and mainly following a form or something” (Mr Iqbal, English Teacher). In particular Mr Iqbal was able to link the session to performance poetry and convey to the students how “poetry wasn’t exclusively meant to be read on dead paper, it was for performance and that’s how it started”. It provided new avenues for him to explore with his students.

The enjoyment and success of the session had a clear impact on the student’s work according to their teachers; “some of the stuff that they produced was very, very good” (Mr Iqbal, English Teacher). The students produced such high quality work because the poet was good at ‘scaffolding’ the work for the young people, building up to the activity of writing rather than “expect the students to start writing straight away” (Ms Walsh, English Teacher). This was particularly important for their students, the majority of whom have English as a second language or find literacy a challenging subject.

5.7.4 An effective and successful session

Drawing on the recollections of the teachers and students, in summary it can be suggested that the session with the poet, John Hegley, was successful because:

- The session was unique and enjoyable

- Students and teachers responded to the poet's creative talents
- It enabled an exploration of the images and stories behind the paintings
- It allowed the students to talk about their ideas
- The poet built on the students' ideas verbally, not asking them to write straight away
- It created really vivid pictures in the students' minds which they could then write about back in school
- John Hegley was very 'student-friendly' but also appealed to the teachers.

5.8 Conclusion

The three writers interviewed – an author, journalist and playwright – shared very positive experiences of their involvement in *Articulate*. They were enthusiastic about having the opportunity to work within the context of the National Gallery, seeing the value and significance of using national collections of artworks as a stimulus to literacy work with schools. The support from Gallery staff, access to resources and, in particular, having access to collections of Western European paintings with international significance enabled the writers to provide a rich and supportive environment in which to work with under-performing schools. The underlying ethos of the *Articulate* project was shared by the writers and they valued the opportunity to work with and provide access to the collections for young people who might not otherwise be able to access such opportunities outside of the project.

The support provided by *Articulate* enabled the writers to provide opportunities for schools to work in an environment of creative freedom, the writers seeing the value of literacy much more widely than the narrow targets of the National Curriculum. The writers were given the freedom to explore the paintings with students and teachers, enabling meaningful connections to be made with the content of the paintings which could then be used as a platform for creative writing by the young people. The writers could see the improvement in the confidence and literacy skills of the young people they worked with. For the teachers as well as the students the atmosphere of creative freedom could be 'nourishing' providing them with new ways of working and thinking about literacy from coming into contact with professional writers. For both teachers and students writers such as John Hegley provided access to the creative process through enjoyable activities and the skill of their performance. Students were able to recall a great amount of detail about the content of sessions and were memorable many years later. For example Year 11 students from Woodfield School recalled details of their *Articulate* experience five years later, evidence of the lasting impact that writers hope to have.

The collections also stimulated the writers in creative ways and had an impact on their creative practice. For writers like Diane Samuels, who had not previously used artworks as a stimulus in her work, the exposure to the ways in which artworks can stimulate creative thinking with young people helped her to develop her own practice, for example as a writer-in-residence at a London school she had brought the students to the National Gallery to do some 'free writing' inspired by the artworks.

In planning and developing their sessions for schools the writers reported that they had been supported very well by the National Gallery. However there were several challenges identified by the writers to ensure that the masterclasses were effective

and successful for all students. Where sessions did not go according to plan, it was suggested that there could be increased opportunities for contact between the writer and the school prior to the session, which would be beneficial for planning.

Section 6

Articulate: the perspective of three schools

6.1 Introduction

This section will outline three case studies of schools that were carried out for this evaluation. Case studies were chosen as a means of collecting evidence of the impact of *Articulate* because they enable the exploration of events and situations in depth, the collection of data from multiple perspectives, and facilitate an understanding of the issues and contexts that produced these perspectives.

Three schools were selected in consultation with the National Gallery as the focus of the case studies to capture the range of experiences of schools involved in *the* project. Their collective experiences gave a view of *Articulate* from a school that participated in Phases 1 and 2 of the project over six years, from a school that participated in Phase 2 of *Articulate* and from the perspective of a special school. Table 5 gives an overview of the characteristics of the three schools selected as case studies:

Table 5: Overview of the characteristics for the three schools involved in case studies

School	Characteristics
Hounslow Manor School	Involved in <i>Articulate</i> Phase 2 Very culturally diverse school with high number of students with English as a second language Supportive and enthusiastic of the project
Woodfield School	Involved in <i>Articulate</i> Phase 1 and 2 Special school – students have very specific and challenging needs e.g. language and communication Very keen for the students to be involved in a mainstream project
Hackney Free and Parochial CofE School	Involved in <i>Articulate</i> Phase 1 and 2 Taken the project on board and embedded it within the curriculum Keen to have dynamic and engaging writers Challenging school – high number of students eligible for free school meals and English as a second language

Each case-study school is presented separately below with a description of the school and its context; a description of the research activities and the experience of the

school at the National Gallery; and the key findings that emerged from an analysis of the data collected.

6.2 Hounslow Manor School

6.2.1 Context for the school

Hounslow Manor School describe themselves as ‘a thriving, 11-18 age community school of 950 pupils with over 100 students in the 6th Form, over-subscribed in all year groups, with a reputation as being a small school with a strong vision and sense of purpose’. The school is located close to the centre of Hounslow on a large site not far from the High Street, and with extensive public transport links. The most recent Ofsted report (2009) describes the school as ‘satisfactory’ and rapidly improving in raising the attainment of its students. Although one of the less well academically-achieving schools in the borough, it is, however, recognised for its multi-cultural, multi-faith and socially-inclusive ethos. Three-quarters of students come from a minority ethnic background and most of these students speak English as an additional language. Students originate from over sixty different nationalities and nearly seventy languages are spoken. There are also above-average numbers of students with learning difficulties and disabilities including emotional and behavioural difficulties, and dyslexia. Due to its proximity to Heathrow airport there is a high turnover of students, many of whom may be refugees and/or asylum seekers. The number of students therefore ‘transferring to and from the school other than at the planned time of admission in September is much higher than the national average’ (Ofsted 2009:3).

6.2.2 Research activities

Two visits were carried out in conjunction with Hounslow Manor School for this case study; Table 6 gives an overview of these.

Table 6: Overview of research activities for case study with Hounslow Manor School

Date	Activity	Venue	Researchers
27/01/2009	Observation of writer’s masterclass for Hounslow Manor School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview with Victoria Neumark, journalist 	National Gallery	Jocelyn Dodd Ceri Jones
16/06/2009	Follow-up visit to Hounslow Manor School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview with English Teacher who arranged the visit • Interview with Head of Year 9 • Interview with English Teacher and Leader of Learning • Interview with two groups of Year 9 students 	Hounslow Manor School	Jocelyn Dodd Ceri Jones

A number of challenges, including bad weather which delayed the visit of Hounslow Manor to the National Gallery, made it difficult to visit the school prior to their masterclass. Details about the school were therefore collected through telephone

contact with the English teacher who organised the visit to the National Gallery, Mr Iqbal.

Hounslow Manor School visited the National Gallery on 21 January 2009 for their masterclass with the journalist, Victoria Neumark. The visit was observed by Jocelyn Dodd and Ceri Jones. On their arrival the school was divided into two groups so that one group would take their tour of the Gallery whilst the second group participated in the masterclass. Both sessions were structured along similar lines, although the second session was adapted in the light of the response of the first group of students. In the masterclass Victoria Neumark presented to the students that they were journalists in the 'newsroom' who would be writing a story based on the painting 'Salome receives the Head of Saint John the Baptist' by Caravaggio (1607-10). The students were encouraged to give their initial impressions of the painting, reproductions of which were hung around the room.

Figure 4: 'Salome receives the Head of Saint John the Baptist', Caravaggio (1607-10)



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Before they looked at the painting in more detail, the students were introduced to the different types of newspapers that people read, e.g. red-top, free sheets and broadsheets, and some of the technical terms such as 'ear piece', 'headline' and 'by-line'. In groups the students were asked to identify some of these elements in a selection of papers. After this activity the journalist told them the story behind the painting and that, as her 'news-team' the students were going to write articles based on the painting. Divided into six groups, the students were given three different types

of article to write in their groups: two groups conducted and wrote an interview with 'Salome' the key character in the painting⁵; two groups wrote a review of the painting from the point of view of it being an artwork; and the final two groups were asked to write an article about the crime aspect of the story. At the end of the activity there was time for the students to read out the opening sentences of their articles. From the session Victoria Neumark reinforced that she wanted the students to take away the following five things that were essential to establishing in any story or in the first sentence of an article:

- Who
- When
- Where
- What
- Why.

The students were also taken on a tour of the National Gallery collections by one of the freelance educators. Table 7 describes the list of paintings that the freelance educator picked out for one of the groups. It was noticeable that during this tour the students did not have the opportunity to see the Caravaggio painting in situ in the Gallery.

Table 7: List of paintings on the gallery tour, Hounslow Manor School⁶

List of paintings viewed on tour of gallery (in order)
The Adoration of the Kings, Jan Gossaert (1510-1515)
The Adoration of the Kings, Pieter Bruegel (1564)
Self-Portrait in a straw hat, Elizabeth Vigee le Brun (after 1782)
Man at his bath, Gustave Caillebotte (1884)
Bathers at Asnieres, Georges Seurat (1884)

The follow-up visit to Hounslow Manor School was made several months after the observation at the National Gallery as the school was unable to make a second visit to the National Gallery until much later in the year. Jocelyn Dodd and Ceri Jones visited the school on 16 June 2009. There was the opportunity to interview Mr Iqbal English Teacher and second-in-charge of the English department, the Head of Year 9, Ms Walsh, English Teacher and Leader of Learning, and ten students in Year 9.

6.2.3 Key findings

- **Teaching literacy in a multi-ethnic, socially inclusive school**

The context for Hounslow Manor School and its positioning as a socially inclusive school presents very particular challenges for the teaching of literacy and English. Three quarters of the students are from an ethnic minority background and most of these students have English as an additional language; in total over 70 different languages are spoken at the school with students representing an international mix including Afghanistan, Nepal and Eastern Europe. Being close to Heathrow Airport Hounslow Borough is often one of the first areas that refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants will be housed, often temporarily before they are housed more

⁵ A member of the Gallery staff and one of the teachers represented Salome

⁶ Recorded by the researchers

permanently elsewhere. As a consequence the Borough has a transient population largely living in privately rented accommodation. The school, which is in an area of high social and economic disadvantage, has an above average turnover of students:

“ [A] lot of children would literally be here for a few weeks and then they'd be gone. Because they come into England... they've settled in West London because it's so close to Heathrow and then they're moved permanently elsewhere” (Mr Iqbal, English Teacher).

Students therefore will be at different stages in their schooling. Some may not have attended school at all prior to coming to the UK. In the current Year 10, for instance, only half of the students had started at Hounslow Manor School in Year 7. As an 'inclusive' school, Hounslow Manor has an above-average proportion of students with special educational needs, e.g. around 40% of students in the current Year 7. Many of the students who attend the school come from challenging or difficult home backgrounds. Young refugees and asylum seekers may have had experience of war and conflict in their home countries. The school also takes in those students who may have struggled in other schools or been excluded for social, behavioural or emotional issues:

“We have students who are on second chances, referred from the pupil referral unit, who have been kicked out of other schools. We generally... act as a haven for any students that are having difficulty trying to be placed elsewhere within the borough” (Mr Iqbal, English Teacher).

Such characteristics present significant challenges to the teaching and learning of literacy and great emphasis is placed on the social, emotional and personal development of students as well as their academic achievement. This was demonstrated by the teachers' commitment to and the value placed upon providing extra-curricular opportunities for students, both within and outside the school context, with the desired outcome of widening their students' horizons and aspirations.

- **A positive learning experience outside the classroom**

Speaking to the students and teachers who had been involved in the *Articulate* project, the impact on the students' learning was very positive. The students had enjoyed visiting the Gallery and interacting with the different writers over the three years and they were able to remember a great detail of information about the content of the sessions they participated in and the paintings that they had worked with. The students really saw the value of working with a professional writer and appreciated the positive impact it could have on their work in terms of learning from an expert. From the teachers' perspective there was a sense that the young people had really thrived in the Gallery context in terms of their educational, social and personal development. Whilst there had been some initial concerns that the young people would not behave so well outside of school, the Head of Year 9 linked the success of the visits to the students being somewhere different; “they enjoyed the fact it's a day away from their normal learning environment and I think they do value it”. For Ms Walsh, English Teacher, the atmosphere created at the Gallery enabled the young people to have a certain amount of freedom compared to the classroom, which could often be perceived as 'claustrophobic' by the students. This freedom was regarded as significant to stimulating the students' interest and “promoting their

learning because they're interested not because someone's making them". It was not about the curriculum or exams but "actually appreciating something for what it is". The focus on enjoyment was also important in that respect as the enthusiasm of the writers, the students and the teachers had a positive impact on the subject; as Ms Walsh commented, "It reminds you that you can enjoy literature for what it is". The trips to the National Gallery were reinvigorating for the teachers as well as the students.

Of the three sessions that the school had participated in, the session with John Hegley in Year 7 was seen as a particularly successful and effective session (discussed in section 5.7) because it had been a unique, enjoyable and stimulating session for teachers and pupils that had an identifiable impact on the enthusiasm of students and teachers to continue the topic back in school.

Motivating disaffected students: Adam's story

The Head of Year 9 had firsthand experience of how one student had benefited from the opportunity to take part in *Articulate*. Adam is "a white working class disaffected boy, your classic underachiever who does under-achieve, whose attendance is very poor, who is more often than not a refuser in lessons, doesn't really engage... Not ADHD but certainly not really that focused or engaged". However, Adam actively took part in the tour of the Gallery, wanting to answer questions and asking his own questions about the paintings they saw:

"And for him that trip was outstanding in terms that he was actively contributing more than any other person in that group and was almost like a little group leader and would tell them to be quiet and would answer every single question there was."

Unfortunately for Adam he came to dominate the group rather too much for the lecturer who "was starting to ignore him to give the others a chance... .. because he did sort of dominate it too much". This may have been because the other students in the group had very little English. Adam's obvious engagement was, however, "fantastic". The Head of Year 9 attributed it to the value that Adam placed on the National Gallery as a learning context that was separate from school:

"I think it was because he wasn't in the presence of what he considered to be an authoritative person. I think you get that classic kind of thing where students do not like teachers because they are authority... I think it was somebody who allowed him a voice that he probably isn't allowed at other times and that's ultimately why he got a bit annoyed when it stopped."

- **Working with real professional writers: inspiring students and teachers**

The students and the teachers saw real value in having the opportunity to work with a variety of different writers through *Articulate*. From the perspective of the teachers, enabling the young people to come into contact with credible professionals from the 'real world' of industry provided students with new approaches to writing and ways of doing things, which could inspire and motivate them in literacy. It is something "fresh" for the students:

"I think it's just with all teachers... you have a set formula in doing things because you've been trained in an educational way and it's nice sometimes to get people who are non-teachers to actually approach it because it's more relevant to the industry that they're working in" (Ms Walsh, English Teacher).

Students are exposed to the idea that English and literacy are not only confined to the classroom, that there are a number of careers where they play an important role. Teachers also gained new ideas and inspiration for using back in the classroom. Not only did they gain new material to incorporate within curriculum schemes of work but also seeing the writer interact with the students in the context of the Gallery could inspire teachers to take those schemes of work into new directions:

"And you have a scheme of work.... You have an idea of how things are going to pan out but when you have something like an *Articulate* trip in the middle of that then it does enable you to take, if you need to, the different direction" (Mr Iqbal, English Teacher).

For example, a new avenue that opened up for Mr Iqbal after the session with John Hegley in Year 7 was connecting the masterclass with performance poetry, for instance 'Def Jam' poetry and the Beat generation.

From the perspective of the students, working with real writers and benefitting from their expertise helped them to become better writers themselves. They recalled how Alan Gibbons (who they worked with in Year 8) had helped them to write short stories by giving them lines based on the painting 'Perseus turning Phineas and his followers to stone'. Without this support, Pete did not think that he would have been as successful at writing his story; "If he hadn't given us lines I'd have been a bit stuck but because he gave us lines it made me like good." The students appreciated the value of working with professionals and really trusted the advice that they offered them. Their profession gave them more credibility, for instance in comparison to their teachers, writers "know what they're doing" (Jamika). The praise they gave the students for their writing also seemed to have more weight than that given by teachers because they were published writers, as Jamika explained: "people read it, people like it and he knows what he's doing. Teachers they're good but not as good". Because it is their job to write, to the students writers are in a better position to give "advice and skills" (Kiara). This confidence in the experience and expertise of the writers increased the students' confidence in their own ability to write:

"You feel like you're doing better... he comes round and he says that's good, you think that you're good because he's a writer" (Pete).

Most of the students had worked with writers before in a school context as well as at the National Gallery and they valued this contact highly. Some of the students interviewed were already keen writers, however even for those students who struggled with literacy writers could be inspiring role models. Kouame, for instance, found English a challenging subject but coming into contact with writers gave him ideas for what he might want to do in the future, "because they can tell you about their career. Like if you want to be a writer when you're older you have to ask other people how it's like, is it hard and stuff". Although Kouame wanted to be a builder when he left school he still thought it was important to hear about other careers because "one day you might change your mind".

- **The excitement of engaging with real paintings**

Coming into contact with real writers and real works of art at the Gallery engendered a sense of excitement in the teachers and students of Hounslow Manor. There were many benefits to the teaching and learning of literacy in enabling the young people to have real, concrete and tangible experiences like that at the National Gallery. Such experiences offer a number of different learning styles for young people who might struggle in an academic context, including visual and kinaesthetic ways of learning, and students who respond more effectively to "direct hands-on experience". Such experiences provide young people with specific things to write about and the teachers stressed the importance of engaging all the young peoples' senses in helping them to be creative in their writing:

"When you're doing lessons on descriptive writing you bring something into the classroom that's really real that they can touch, they can smell and they can taste and it always is more exciting for them" (Ms Walsh, English Teacher).

The students and teachers described the importance of being able to see real artworks and the impact that they could have on their understanding. For the teachers it was "really inspiring" for the students to be in the gallery and to see the real paintings "which aren't projected on the screen" where they "can seem unreal". Being in the presence of the real painting was exciting and "allows for a greater imaginative appreciation of what they're seeing". They engender interest because instead of a flat image students "can see the textures... see the brushstrokes" and the students can also see the painting in the context of other works of art. The experience is 'special' because it is not something that the students see in their everyday life:

"Lots of students aren't exposed to these kinds of environments; they're not exposed to real works of art. They might see them on the internet but there's something much more tangible about seeing something first-hand" (Ms Walsh, English Teacher).

Seeing real paintings in the context of the gallery was one of the most important elements of the visit for the young people. Seeing a real picture was "bigger and better" (Pete), and "you can see the texture" (Eden). Another enjoyable aspect was learning the stories behind the paintings:

"I like learning about the paintings... learning about what you see and then what it isn't and what the painter painted it for it to portray" (Shanice).

Learning about the story behind the painting helped to give the students "more of an insight and feel more involved in it" (Jamika) and gave them more material and ideas to help them in their writing. In particular, the session with Alan Gibbons had helped the students to look beyond their immediate response to the painting and think about deeper meanings in the painting, something which Shanice was then able to apply to other paintings in the Gallery:

"[When] you look at it first of all he said what do you think this picture is? Well it's pretty obvious and then when he like broke it down and that you start to see oh my gosh and then when you go and look at another painting you think in your head well let's have a guess to think about what it could be, not what it is obviously in front of us".

For their writing the students were able to “get loads of different scenarios from the picture” (Eden) and they also grasped the idea that different people could have different interpretations of the same painting. Such was their enthusiasm for looking at paintings some of the students were keen to spend more time in the Gallery on a tour and to have more choice over the paintings they could look at.

Visual stimuli supporting learning in literacy: Kouame’s story

Originally from the Ivory Coast, Kouame speaks three languages including English, which he does not speak at home. He described the difficulty of having English as an additional language:

“In English, yeah, some of us don’t know all the words in English. In our own language yeah we know the words and we get confused so we ask our teacher what this mean cos you know them by heart in your own language”.

Before his visit to the National Gallery, Kouame expected it to be “boring, just looking at pictures and that’s it”. However he was impressed by how “interesting” it was because he “saw different kinds of pictures that I’d never seen before.” He was especially captivated by the age of the paintings, some of which were “really old”. He recalled they were “precious”, remembering the gold frames and the use of precious stones to make paint (“stone colours”). Seeing the paintings was his favourite aspect of the visit, which was “excellent cos the pictures innit. I’ve never seen them before but when I saw it I was thinking how good it is.” Whilst Kouame can be “a bit silly” in school, he really thrived in the Gallery context. According to teachers “He was really, really focused and really engaged and even if someone else was distracting him he wanted to be involved in that” (Ms Walsh, English Teacher). Kouame was able to describe how the surroundings of the gallery, the concrete experiences of interacting with the writer and the paintings enabled him to learn more effectively:

“You go and talk about all this stuff and when you like go there you see everything and it just goes into your head, you can just summarise it and stuff... It was more quicker to learn.”

The crucial aspect of this learning was the emphasis on having a visual stimulus, seeing something for real, “cos like before we was talking about this and I didn’t remember it but now that I’ve seen it I can say and think about it”. Engaging with the paintings in this way enhanced opportunities for learning because “it makes you think hard”. He liked learning about the stories behind the paintings and he was particularly interested in learning about other cultures from all over the world, such as the Egyptians, and looking at historical paintings to learn about “how the world developed”.

- **Adding value to literacy in the curriculum**

Taking part in *Articulate* had a positive impact on the curriculum at Hounslow Manor and the aims of the project fitted very closely with the approach to learning practised by the school. A significant emphasis was placed on using different learning styles to engage students who may struggle with more traditional, academic approaches to learning, so for instance using visual and kinaesthetic styles of learning to engage all

the senses and enable intellectual access for students at very different levels of understanding:

“ [It’s] about being creative, about using stimulus material and then responding to them in your own creative way” (Mr Iqbal, English Teacher).

English teachers were readily able, therefore, to incorporate *Articulate* into their curriculum, although in a much more flexible manner compared to Hackney Free, for instance. Rather than highly structured schemes of work and teacher resources used at Hackney Free, the way in which the *Articulate* sessions were incorporated into the schemes of work seemed much more based upon the teachers’ perception and judgement:

“It’s very loosely based around the schemes of work and you do it as an introduction but following the visit we do a debrief of the core skills that the students have learned and how to apply those skills” (Mr Iqbal, English Teacher).

The kinds of skills covered in *Articulate* sessions varied depending upon the type of writer. In the Year 9 session with Victoria Neumark, some of the key skills that the students had been introduced to included the idea of writing to deadlines and being concise, which the students would increasingly need to be aware of as they progressed through school. The students could also see the benefits of learning new skills from the writers and the positive impact these could have on their schoolwork and exams.

Articulate sessions could also be used to make direct links with the different genres and styles of writing that are introduced in the curriculum; the session with John Hegley enabled an exploration of different kinds of poetry, including performance poetry, the session with Victoria Neumark introduced non-fiction writing, and the work on short stories with Alan Gibbons sparked off a unit on ‘the novel’ back in school:

“In Year 8 the novel is another unit of work so we used what we’d learnt with Gibbons to base it around a scheme of work which the outcome was to write a short story using the conventions that they had learned in the National Gallery” (Mr Iqbal, English Teacher).

Even if sessions were not immediately relevant to the curriculum, teachers could see future links whereby they could use the visit to the National Gallery as an experience to draw upon. For instance, the painting used by Victoria Neumark, ‘Salome and the Head of John the Baptist’, would be relevant to a unit at GCSE level around literature poetry which included Carol Ann Duffy and her poem ‘Salome’.

The impact that *Articulate* had upon the curriculum of Hounslow Manor was valuable in that it built upon practices and approaches to teaching and learning already practised by the school. Teachers were familiar with using artworks in their lessons as a way in which to encourage the students’ thinking skills and critical skills, however working with the National Gallery gave teachers and students the opportunity to come into contact with real artworks, which was not possible in school. The school was also used to bringing in outside speakers, including professional writers, to speak to the young people “about motivation and sort of about the pitfalls... just basically

practically how it works to be a writer" (Mr Iqbal, English Teacher). However the additional value that the relationship with the National Gallery gave the school was access to higher profile writers and taking the young people out of the classroom and into a new, different learning environment which the young people benefited from.

- **Improving literacy can help learning across the curriculum**

The context of the school, the high numbers of students with English as a second language and those who struggle with more traditional ways of teaching means that experiences like *Articulate*, with an emphasis on visual stimuli, are essential for enabling young people to engage with and be inspired in their literacy work. For young people who have English as a second language, being supported in their literacy is critical as poor levels of literacy can have a detrimental impact on their performance in other subjects, not just English:

"Our basic problem is literacy. We have, you know, kids who come in who can get a level 8 in mathematics in Year 9 but can only get a level 3 in English and therefore won't get a GCSE" (Head of Year 9).

Many students will struggle to reach the higher levels because they are learning a new language (English) at the same time as progressing their learning in their subjects. Even students who are very able are potentially held back because they are not proficient in English to the required level. Differentiation is therefore critical to making English as a subject accessible to all students:

"It's a comprehensive in the truest sense of the word, the range of ability, so you have to make English entertaining and engage them and also accessible and how you do that is hopefully through a range of learning environments and a range of learning techniques" (Mr Iqbal, English Teacher).

The experiences of three students from Afghanistan – currently the largest proportion of non-British students at the school - can be used to illustrate the challenges that they face in learning English and the difference that experiences like the *Articulate* project can make to their learning literacy. Most students from Afghanistan have come to the school under refugee status. Farzan, Hakim and Shayan are three of these students. They have had slightly different experiences of schooling in the UK. Farzan came to Hounslow Manor towards the end of Year 7, whilst Hakim and Shayan had both been to primary school in the UK. Like most teenage boys they enjoy playing sports such as football, kickboxing and rugby. English is only one of several languages that they speak and none of the students speak English at home. When they leave school Farzan and Hakim have aspirations to work in business - in professions like accounting or trading – and Shayan wants to work in engineering. They all realise the importance of being able to reach a certain level of proficiency in English for their chosen careers: "if you're doing accounting or stuff you have to write in English cos most other countries even if they don't know your language they speak English" (Farzan). There were many challenges for the students when using English including having the correct vocabulary, grammar and ensuring it makes 'sense', particularly when translating from another language into English:

"[If] I write in our language it's gonna sound proper like with the rhythm, the rhyme. Back in school we change it to English it's gonna be hard cos all the vocabulary and the grammar's totally different" (Farzan).

The students had a good memory of the writers they have worked with at school and also at the National Gallery. It was clear that they really enjoyed the opportunity to go and see the collections, being very specific about why it was a worthwhile activity:

"[Basically] if you go to the National Gallery, one it's more exciting, two these [paintings] are very expensive so it's more fun to look at more expensive things and third, if you go you'll find out more about ancient time and how was the life before now, how much has changed" (Farzan).

They recalled the trip to the Gallery that they made in Year 8 and meeting Alan Gibbons who was described as "funny". They remembered less about John Hegley as only a couple of the students had been on the trip in Year 7. The painting they used in Year 8 however was very memorable - 'Perseus turning Phineas and his followers to stone' by Luca Giordano (1680s) – because of the dramatic action at the centre of the painting where the protagonists are focused upon "trying to get" the "head with snakes". They liked that there was lots of dramatic action taking place that they could then write about. They preferred paintings with lots of detail in that told a story or had an impact on their opinions: "It's good experience because the pictures they can like tell the whole story. You can look at it and it changes your mind I think" (Hakim). The students were very aware of their own learning preferences and that they were much more able to access visual rather than written 'texts'. *Articulate* in that respect was a very effective project because they were able to remember far more because of the link with the artworks:

"Cos if you look at this picture like after two years we still remember that we saw that back in Year 8 or Year 9 at the National Gallery but if you give me a piece of paper and you say revise it and you ask me like a week later I wouldn't remember" (Farzan).

"It's good to see a picture more than like writing for example the newspaper we do a lot of writing on it but I can't remember it. I remember the picture" (Hakim).

The experience of the Gallery, coming into contact with real writers and real artworks created visual images which were memorable for the students; pinning the experience to these visual images helped them to remember lots of detail. For instance, from the session with Victoria Neumark they remembered that she was a 'journalist', someone who "kind of like [sic] gossip" and finds information about things and "spin [sic] it around." They considered that journalists had the additional responsibility to tell the truth which made their role 'less easy' than that of other types of writers:

"You have to be more careful how you say it cos some people might get offended by what you say so you have to like go over it, over it to make sure that it's right or wrong".

Farzan in particular understood the importance of collaboration in journalism (the news team) and the responsibilities that journalists have: “you have to share your ideas with other people, you have to think will it harm someone else”. He was able to make the link between the work of the journalist and the work that they did in English, e.g. drafting and redrafting their writing until it ‘makes sense’.

- **Wider than literacy: the importance of visiting the National Gallery**

As well as adding value to the literacy curriculum, the participation of the school in the *Articulate* project fulfilled the teacher’s concerns to expose their students to experiences that they would not otherwise be exposed to in their home lives. With many students from economically deprived and challenging backgrounds, the school considers that it is very important for them to provide those opportunities instead. Despite living in London, very few of the young people have the opportunity to travel into central London or “be in Trafalgar Square in the heart of London” (Mr Iqbal, English Teacher). Whilst some families have the “knowledge and resources” to take their children to cultural institutions such as museums and galleries, many families experience other, more pressing priorities which will prevent them or they do not have the ‘family background’ of visiting such institutions. Taking young people to museums and galleries in the school context is therefore seen as critical to instilling the young people with confidence that these places are accessible to them and belong to them, as well as a ways of raising the aspirations of students to use them in the future:

“They realise as well that it’s not out of their reach and they’re not excluded from these experiences because sometimes in their own minds as well they might feel that they’re not worthy of going or that the type of person they are shouldn’t be going to these things. So I think it changes their perceptions as well” (Ms Walsh, English Teacher).

Being in the gallery, surrounded by members of the public is beneficial for the students. It not only suggests to the students the importance of their trip to the Gallery, it “reconfirms that fact... that actually what they say is important and is interesting and general members of the public find it interesting too” (Ms Walsh, English Teacher). Seeing ‘ordinary’ members of the public (like them) using the National Gallery also conveys to the students that is an activity available to them:

“[The] idea that art was open to them despite the fact that they were working class or despite the fact that they were ethnic, this kind of high culture was available to them and available to them for free” (Mr Iqbal, English Teacher).

Experiences such as *Articulate* have an identifiable impact on the social and personal development of the students. Young people are taken out of the safety and (over) familiarity of the classroom and into a new learning environment, which can make them “better prepared... for different challenges in life” (Head of Year 9). There was a noticeable impact on their behaviour with some young people behaving differently to how they might behave in school. What encourages this change is the tremendous amount of respect that the young people have for the National Gallery and its collections:

“The first thing that I picked up on which was significant is a lot of the kids were genuinely blown away by the fact that some of these paintings had been

there for something like three hundred years... ..The gravitas was not lost on them I don't think" (Mr Iqbal, English Teacher).

The impact of seeing 'the real thing', coupled with the 'grand' setting of the gallery, was linked by Ms Walsh to the value that the students invested in their trips to the Gallery:

"[Being] in a very kind of beautiful environment where you're surrounded by lots of grand pictures in a very grand setting, it's quite impressionable amongst the students and they really enjoy that. So it gives them a greater sense of seriousness about what they're doing and a greater sense of importance."

The students recognised that there was a difference in their behaviour at the National Gallery. It was obvious to them that the art gallery has a high status and that there were different codes of behaviour that needed to be observed:

"[When] you like go into a room and it's got loads like the pictures, the frames, the gold and things and everyone's like quiet until you get out of the room and everyone's like loud again" (Shanice).

The students were impressed with the age and the value of the paintings, "most of them are more than a million [pounds]". They knew they were valuable, understanding their importance and status: "you don't get to see them every day, they come from all over the world, it's not just from the UK. And they're paid for by the Government mostly" (Farzan). It was not just the Gallery itself that was 'special' but its surroundings as well in Trafalgar Square, which Kouame described as "clean" and having "special stuff there like statues."

Three visits to the National Gallery spread across three years were significant in developing a sense of belonging for the students, but they were still diffident about visiting the Gallery on their own. This is not only in terms of physical safety but also intellectual safety. They were anxious that it would be a completely different experience if they went outside of school; "you're not gonna get to meet people like you would with school" (Jamika). Without someone there to explain the paintings to them the students considered that "it's not going to be that interesting" (Eden). This is perhaps linked to a lack of confidence e.g. not having the required knowledge to appreciate the paintings:

"Sometimes you might not understand everything and if you don't understand then sometimes that can put you off because you feel like you're excluded in terms of being able to read what's happening" (Ms Walsh, English Teacher)

Other concerns that the students had were that the Gallery was a long way for them to travel. For some students it was "quite frightening... to go into central London" (Ms Walsh, English Teacher). The surroundings of the National Gallery were impressive but the students' lack of confidence in negotiating it made it an intimidating place. Some of the students felt "uncomfortable" there because did not always think that the gallery was a place for young people; Pete mentioned "the security guards sitting in the chairs all looking at you" and Eden commented that it "felt like somewhere the Queen would go". The young people were therefore beginning on their journey towards accessing museums and galleries; however they were not yet comfortable enough to access it for themselves outside of the school context.

- **Characteristics of effective, and less effective, masterclasses**

In section 5.7 an example of a particularly effective and successful session between Hounslow Manor and the poet John Hegley was given. It was considered that this session was successful for the students and teachers because of the following characteristics:

- The session was unique and enjoyable
- It enabled an exploration of the images and stories behind the paintings
- It allowed the students to talk about their ideas
- The poet built on the students' ideas verbally, not asking them to write straight away
- It created really vivid pictures in the students' minds which they could then write about back in school
- John Hegley was very 'student-friendly' but also appealed to the teachers.

Writers worked best where they were outwardly engaging and friendly people who made a safe environment in which the young people could feel involved and able to contribute. Alan Gibbons, for instance, was praised for the way in which he interacted with the students, understanding their need for differentiation; "...they really liked him, he was engaging and he completely had them eating out of the palms of his hands" (Mr Iqbal, English Teacher). It should be noted that Alan Gibbons had previously worked with the school because the teachers were very aware that the specific needs and abilities of the students could create challenges for writers in terms of developing appropriate sessions for their students. Some of the challenges came from the writers not being prepared for the multi-cultural and socially inclusive context of the school:

"I think if I was going to give [*Articulate*] my criticism at all really it would be that its initial premise was a little bit too 'Middle England' ... because I think it assumed that the young people would have certain prior knowledge" (Head of Year 9)

The extreme difference in ability between the most able and least able students is another aspect specific to the school, particularly the high proportion of young people with English as a second language. Not all students therefore are able to communicate clearly and this lack of confidence in speaking can be wrongly seen as disengagement; "their lack of response is not necessarily disinterest, it's just an inability to respond" (Head of Year 9). It was important therefore that people working with the students took into account their lack of confidence in English and to support them, particularly in an unfamiliar environment like the National Gallery. From the teachers' perspective, effective facilitators therefore would seek to build a relationship with the students; "to actually gauge where they are, to build a relationship with them to make them feel safe" (Ms Walsh, English Teacher).

The most recent session that the school had participated in with the journalist, Victoria Neumark, was praised by the teachers for having a good idea behind the session in terms of looking "at newspaper articles, to look at how things were done... the idea of trying to present a news report". However the way in which the session was delivered highlights some of the challenges of working with young people when their context

and ability is not adequately understood. Significantly, the writer was not able to engage with the young people in a way that they found comfortable or develop a relationship with them:

“There are people who are fantastic in their profession but you put them in front of a couple of kids and they just can’t do anything” (Mr Iqbal, English Teacher).

The session was very fast-paced and the students, particularly the less able students, struggled with the writing task and needed lots of support. The writer admitted that with the first, less able, group of students she “was much more thrown by [them] and I think [it] was harder to manage anyway.” The teachers suggested that the writer could have ‘scaffolded’ the activities in the session to build the students’ confidence before asking them to start writing. It would also have been more effective if she had allowed more time for discussion with the students to find out about their prior knowledge and experience:

“There were quite a few students who did struggle a bit. Maybe just making it a bit more clear and letting them build ideas before setting them off to do it on their own would have been maybe a bit more helpful” (Ms Walsh, English Teacher)

The combination of the writer’s manner and the lack of clear instructions did not help the students’ confidence in their learning, as Ms Walsh suggested “people have to feel safe to actually learn... Because she hadn’t gauged where the students were at and what the students knew, I think it caused problems for the students in terms of feeling they had the authority to actually contribute and so they were quite frightened”. The session was quite tense with “clear frustration” from the students “when they couldn’t do it” and for the writer “maybe anxiety on her part that they couldn’t do what she wanted them to do”.

The students confirmed that they did not feel supported or encouraged during the session with the journalist. They struggled to understand what was expected from them and this had a detrimental effect on their relationship with the painting and also the potential for learning from the session. The students had expected a degree of freedom and encouragement from the writer to inspire their creativity. Instead they felt constrained:

“She kind of like boxed you in because like first of all we were more interactive with John Hegley and then with Alan Gibbons we were interactive and he gave us ideas... She was just like this is the headline, this is the splash, blah blah blah” (Shanice).

The students felt intimidated by her manner – “I was thinking oh gosh, what have I done” (Eden) – disengaged with her approach and confused about what they had to do; “She didn’t give us any more instructions like do what you want to do, she was do that, do that, do that” (Kosoko). Rightly or wrongly, the students gained the impression that Victoria Neumark did not want to engage with them: “It’s like she didn’t really want to be with us. She wasn’t like she was bothered. It’s like she’d rather be somewhere else than here” (Eden). This experience had a detrimental impact on their attitudes and opinions towards journalism. Jamika thought that “journalists were meant to be like more friendly” and have “big personalities”. Eden

had wanted to be a journalist but changed her mind as a result of the experience: "after that I didn't... Because I thought the way she was coming across she said that when she's a journalist you have to do this and you have to do that... it seemed a bit dead and just confusing and boring".

Whilst it emerged that one of the most significant elements of the visit to the National Gallery for the students was the opportunity for interaction with real paintings, their enthusiasm and enjoyment needed to be nurtured by the writers. The disappointment of the session with the journalist therefore impacted upon their response to the painting. The Caravaggio painting was considered by the journalist to be an engaging painting for the young people because of its dramatic story:

"I decided to choose Caravaggio because it's very dramatic and [Alex] told me that the children would be streetwise. So I thought that this subject would cause them to be engaged very readily and that its treatment is also very dramatic" (Victoria Neumark).

Whilst there were some challenges to choosing this painting because of the subject themes (see section 5.6.3) the teachers agreed that it was a good choice of painting because "it's stark, it's very dramatic for the kids. It presents a good story immediately" (Head of Year 9). These opinions however were not borne out by the students' attitudes towards the painting. Whilst some of the students could see the painting was interesting, others described it as 'horrible'. Compared to other paintings they had worked with the students found it far less appealing. Some of them found it difficult to link the story told to them by the journalist with the painting, for instance Kouame who commented that the important bits of the story were not shown in the painting so "it could be about anything". As a consequence when it came to writing a headline about the painting "it was hard because we had to find the headline about this and there wasn't that much there." The way in which it was presented to them also played a role in their negative response. Kiara considered that if John Hegley "would have done it then it would have been better." The students struggled to make the link between the work of a journalist and the painting. Even though John Hegley had been a poet "he related that to the painting" whereas the journalist "didn't explain to us what the picture was about and then we had some other random newspaper thing which was nothing to do [with it]" (Jamika). For the students the importance of the engagement with the paintings is that it is this close engagement that inspires and motivates the students to write. Without that close engagement they did not feel inspired or enthused; "The painting's an interesting painting and it would have been good to write about it but it was just talking about newspapers" (Jamika).

The session at the National Gallery was originally linked to a unit of work "How to be a reporter" and the masterclass was intended by the National Gallery to promote access to media texts and techniques. The experience of the session however did have a limited impact on how the teachers used the session back in the classroom, with disruption caused by the cancellation of the SATS and the delay in the visit to the National Gallery creating more challenges to incorporating the session into the scheme of work. In other words there was little incentive for the teachers to follow-up the work:

“With this one I didn’t develop it as much, just because it... wasn’t a positive experience for the students. And maybe that’s something I should have done on reflection, to actually make it more positive for them” (Ms Walsh, English Teacher)

6.2.4 Conclusion

From the perspective of teachers and students from Hounslow Manor, a successful masterclass would provide a unique and enjoyable experience that could be accessed by young people of very different abilities. Effective writers take the time to establish a relationship with the young people and create a safe, supportive environment where young people feel confident to share their ideas verbally as well as through writing. Effective activities are ‘scaffolded’ so that students are not asked to write immediately but can explore ideas and build up vivid pictures in their minds from the paintings that they can then draw on in their writing. The students also valued close links being made between the content of the session and the painting itself, which for many students seeing the real painting was the highlight of their visit. They wanted to be enthused and encouraged by the writer because it was this encouragement from a professional that enabled them to gain increased confidence in their own writing. Two of the sessions that the school had participated in at the National Gallery had provided these highly effective experiences, enabling the teachers to draw on the experiences back in the classroom and enhance the experience of literacy for students. The students were very aware of their preferred learning styles and for many students, particularly those with English as an additional language, the emphasis on visual learning through artworks was seen as very beneficial to their understanding. They found the sessions memorable and could see the impact on their writing back in the classroom. Coming into contact with real professional writers had increased their confidence and made them into ‘better’ writers.

The particular context of the school created many challenges for the teaching and learning of literacy, and the school was very focused on using a variety of learning techniques and approaches to assist students who are at very different levels of ability, as well as a high proportion of students who have English as an additional language. The challenges experienced by students were shown to have an impact curriculum-wide rather than just in English and literacy. Projects like *Articulate* therefore become critically important in expanding the range of opportunities that students have to improve their confidence and enthusiasm for literacy, and the students had undoubtedly benefited from their involvement. The project built upon experiences offered by the school, such as bringing in professional writers to speak to the students, and enabled the students to learn in a new environment that was very different to their school and local context. It was special and unique because it was not ‘everyday’.

The wider social and personal development benefits of visiting the National Gallery and its location in central London chimed with the desire of the teachers to enable their students, many of whom come from deprived and challenging backgrounds, to be given access to opportunities that they would not otherwise experience due to busy or chaotic home lives. The families of many young people who attend the school were not likely to have a background of visiting cultural institutions like the

National Gallery. Despite the concern of the National Gallery and the school to raise awareness amongst the young people that the Gallery was free and accessible to them whatever their background, the students continued to experience a number of barriers – intellectual and social as well as physical - to visiting the National Gallery outside of a school context. In order for them to become more confident users it was suggested that there needed to be more exposure to the Gallery than three days over three years. It was also suggested that the depth of the impact on the students' literacy skills and understanding would be improved if much longer, more incremental sessions could be developed with the students spending more than one day at the National Gallery. The students also wanted to spend more time at the Gallery, some of them considering that half a day was not long enough to see everything that they wanted to see.

The many positive benefits of the *Articulate* project had been slightly overshadowed by a disappointing session in Year 9. The way in which the writer had approached the session had not been enjoyed by the young people, and many of the ways in which a masterclass might be considered effective were missing from this session. Due to the very specific needs of the young people from this school it can be suggested that planning between the writer and the school beforehand would have been an advantage. The teachers could have supported the writer in developing the sessions, for example drawing attention to the extreme levels of ability across the student cohort, the need for differentiation and preferred learning techniques for students who have difficulty accessing the English language. The teachers were very knowledgeable about the kinds of activities that would engage the students and it perhaps would have increased the writer's own confidence to discuss some of these issues beforehand. As explored in section 5.6.3 the writer had some reservations about the Caravaggio painting before the session as to whether it was appropriate for the students and she considered that it would have been very useful to have talked it over with the teachers. It is acknowledged that direct contact between schools and writers is very difficult to achieve but the benefits of such an approach are clear when the alternative is a session that has a very detrimental impact on the young people it is designed for. The opportunity for greater synergy between the needs of the school and the choices made by the writer would be a very positive step towards ensuring that sessions offered to schools are effective and have a positive impact on their learning.

6.3 Woodfield School

6.3.1 Context for the school

Woodfield School is a mixed special school for students aged 11-19 years, located in the London Borough of Brent and situated in a suburban area about a mile from Wembley Stadium. It is a small school of around 120 students. Young people are referred to Woodfield from both mainstream and special primary schools and it has a wide catchment area. After completing their schooling, students will either go on to college at sixteen years or remain in the sixth form. A recent Ofsted report (2008) describes the school as 'outstanding'. It is a school for students with moderate learning difficulties and other needs including autistic spectrum disorder – a quarter of students have autism and there is a separate Autism Unit – and a quarter of students have behaviour, emotional and social difficulties. Many come from disadvantaged backgrounds and nearly fifty per cent of students are eligible for free school meals.

Around half of the students have English as an additional language. Students may be admitted with a history of school failure, poor attendance or low self-esteem. Woodfield was judged to be very effective in improving the performance and confidence of their students through the systems and practices they have developed, coupled with 'outstanding leadership and management' (Ofsted, 2008:4).

The school operates as a secondary school with the curriculum structured around different subject areas, with specialist subject teachers and advanced skills teachers. The curriculum is very flexible and is focused on meeting the needs of the students, each of whom are given individual targets. Students' needs are highly varied and complex; some students have no language, some have particular emotional needs:

"It is very loose and open-ended and... we just work from the students' needs" (English Co-ordinator).

There is a high ratio of very highly qualified teaching assistants to support the young people in their learning. The focus is on creating a secure environment for the young people, where routine is particularly important for them. The school focuses on celebrating the students' successes, which is evident from the displays of photos of events and activities around the school.

Given the nature of the students' complex needs it can be a challenge to take them out of school since not all of them are easily able to negotiate the outside world. For many students, whose home experiences are very insular and limited in scope, school provides the only access to wider experiences, so visits are very important. However transport costs limit what it is possible for the school to do. Therefore the chance to be involved in the *Articulate* project was valued by the school for several reasons. It provided new experiences of the outside world for students, it provided free transport, but it was also highly significant because it was part of a programme for mainstream schools:

"[It's] nice that a special school's included with something that quite clearly could be just a mainstream project" (Deputy Head Teacher).

Woodfield School has been involved in both the first and second phases of *Articulate* over a 6 year period, and they have worked with writers Victoria Neumark and Alan Gibbons previously.

6.4.2 Research activities

A number of research activities were carried out as part of the case study with Woodfield School. Given the complex needs of the students, pre-visits were made in this case study to fully understand the context of the needs of the school. Table 8 summarises the research activities undertaken by RCMG researchers.

Table 8: Summary of research visits made, Woodfield School case study

Date	Activity	Venue	Researchers
23/06/2008	Visit to Woodfield School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with Year 11 students who participated in <i>Articulate</i> Phase 1 • Informal discussion with Head Teacher and Deputy Head 	Woodfield School	Jocelyn Dodd
30/09/2008	Pre-visit to Woodfield School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation in classrooms • Informal discussion with Deputy Head 	Woodfield School	Ceri Jones
13/10/2008	Observation of 'masterclass' and tour of the Gallery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview with Diane Samuels, playwright 	National Gallery	Jocelyn Dodd
24/03/2009	Follow-up visit to Woodfield School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview with Deputy Head • Interview with English Co-ordinator • Interviews with Year 9 students from two classes 	Woodfield School	Jocelyn Dodd

The first visit to the school took place on 23 June 2008 when the researcher, Jocelyn Dodd, had the opportunity to talk to Year 11 students who had taken part in the first phase of *Articulate*. The school were eager for their experiences to be captured before they left school at the end of the academic year (2007-8) as the school felt *Articulate* had been especially significant for these young people. Moreover these three students were much more able to communicate their experiences to the researcher than the students who were to be involved in 2008-9.

The three students involved in Phase 1 of *Articulate* - Gurpreet, Richard and Marco – were finishing Year 11, about to leave school and embark on sixth form or college courses. Speaking to the students gave the opportunity for a retrospective view of their experiences of *Articulate* five years before when they were at the beginning of their secondary school careers in Year 7. Table 9 gives an overview of the writers and paintings that the students would have worked with over the three years of *Articulate*:

Table 9: Overview of *Articulate* Phase 1, Woodfield School

School Year	Writer	Painting
Year 7	Sarah Phelps, scriptwriter, and Scarlet Johnson, actress, Eastenders	'St George and the Dragon' by Paolo Uccello, about 1470
Year 8	Margo Henderson, poet	'An Allegory of Venus and Time' by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, about 1754-8
Year 9	Brian Flynn, journalist	'Whistlejacket' by George Stubbs, about 1762

The students were able to remember their visits to the National Gallery in incredible detail, and to recall many aspects about the painting and the activities they were involved in, which took place five years earlier and right at the beginning of their secondary school careers. In particular they remembered the visit in Year 7 and meeting Sarah Phelps (scriptwriter) and Scarlet Johnson (actress) from *Eastenders*. An informal discussion with the Head Teacher and Deputy Head Teacher yielded background information to the school's involvement in the project and the value that is placed on *Articulate* by the school. Particularly for this school the repeated nature of the project over the three years suited the students as they respond well to the familiar; for instance, the same schedule, same facilitator in the gallery and same procedure to the visit.

Prior to the school's visit to the National Gallery in 2008 as part of Phase 2 of the project, a visit was made to Woodfield School on 30 September 2008 by Ceri Jones. The purpose of the visit was to meet the Year 9 students who would be taking part in the session at the Gallery, spread across two English classes and also some students in the Autistic unit (the students in the Unit are taught to a different timetable to the rest of the students in Year 9). After an opportunity to observe the students in their classroom settings, a discussion was held with the Deputy Head Teacher, and separately with the English Co-ordinator, about the forthcoming visit and the specific needs of the young people in terms of their ability and appropriate methods of communication.

A visit to the National Gallery was made by twenty students and their teachers from Woodfield School on 13 October 2008 and was observed by Jocelyn Dodd. The group was split into two groups of ten, each group taking part in the 'masterclass' with the playwright, Diane Samuels and followed with a tour of the National Gallery collections with one of the freelance lecturers. Each master-class with Diane Samuels lasted forty-five minutes and focused on the painting 'The Umbrellas' by Pierre-Auguste Renoir (see Figure 1 below). The real painting was away from the Gallery on loan and reproductions were used. The session placed an emphasis on embodied learning techniques to explore the painting, including drama activity, role-play and object-handling. The students discussed the painting, looking at the colours used and the characters involved. The playwright got the students to 'become' one of the characters and imagine what their lives would be like and what they would be thinking. She demonstrated this first for the young people. A basket of objects was given to the students so that they could choose an object linked to their character and they brought 'the spirit of the painting alive' by creating a soundscape for it using their senses.

Figure 5: 'The Umbrellas' by Pierre-Auguste Renoir (c.1881-86)



Photo © The National Gallery, London.

A follow-up visit to Woodfield School was made by Jocelyn Dodd on 24 March 2009 to capture the impact of the observed session on the students. It was carried out later than envisaged due to bad weather. At the school discussions were held with Year 9 students from two classes, including the class taught by the English Co-ordinator. Two students, Hannah and Ahalya, were interviewed about their experiences of *Articulate*. The session with Diane Samuels was the first *Articulate* session that Ahalya had taken part in, whilst Hannah had been on the two previous visits. Interviews were held with the English Co-ordinator and the Deputy Head Teacher to capture the impact of the sessions on the school.

6.3.3 Key findings

- **Students with very complex needs**

The students at Woodfield have very complex learning, social, emotional, behaviour and communication needs. The school is also seeing in recent years increased numbers of students with more complex needs than previously (Ofsted 2008). Such complex needs create challenges not only for the ability and the engagement of the young people in *Articulate* sessions, which had to be adapted by the writer, Diane Samuels, to accommodate the diverse abilities of the two groups, but also for capturing the impact that these sessions have had on the young people. Some young people were not able to communicate very well through speech. This was particularly pertinent for the students involved in the 2008 session, who had lower levels of communication ability but also challenging learning needs that limited their ability to make sense of their experiences or make links between the session and their own learning:

“You know, the kids take part and they may not recall it” (Deputy Head Teacher).

The school provides a very effective learning environment for the young people, setting them individual learning plans which take into account their diverse needs. Learning for their students is a very considered and incremental process and for many students achievements will be very different from mainstream school.

“[A] lot of them, even in school and they see us five days a week, but it could take an entire half-term for them to be able to secure some sort of basic knowledge” (Deputy Head Teacher).

Different home backgrounds

As well as complex learning needs, the home backgrounds of the students can be very different which will have an impact on their experiences of the National Gallery. Of the Year 11 students, Richard, who is quite able and on the autistic spectrum, has very proactive parents who are involved with the school and give him lots of support, stability and experiences outside of school. Marco, who came to Woodfield from a mainstream primary school, by contrast comes from a very complex home background. He lost his mother when he was young, and was brought up by his sister. There have been lots of changes in his life as well as the involvement of social services. Gurpreet, who has English as an additional language, has led a very insular life and is not exposed to many experiences at home. The value of visits through school like that to the National Gallery is therefore very significant in his life.

- **A very positive impact on the students**

The school's involvement in *Articulate* was extremely positive for the students, creating a memorable learning experience that was also beneficial in terms of their social,

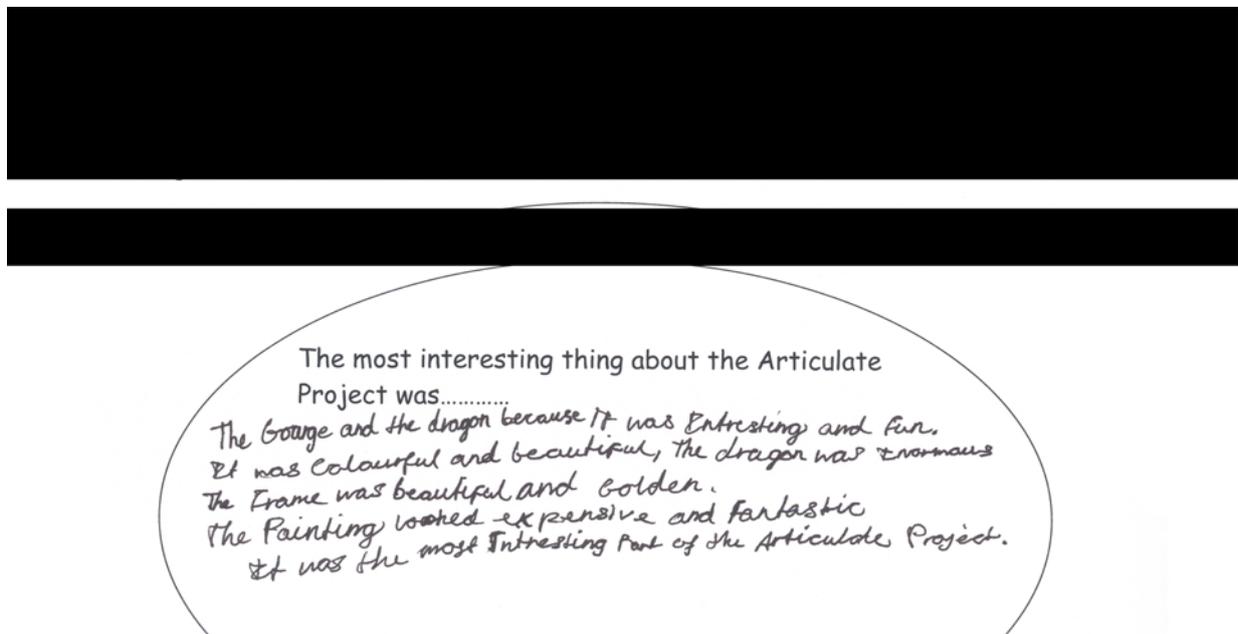
personal and emotional development. Taking them out of school and into new environments was very significant for young people who may face many challenges in the 'real world' and whose home backgrounds may keep them sheltered from such experiences. The National Gallery provided a welcoming, safe and supportive space in which the young people came into contact with professional writers, many for the first time, to explore ways in which paintings could be used to improve their literacy skills.

The Year 11 students were able to recall a significant amount of detail about the visits they had made to the National Gallery over five years before, and the school had been keen for them to be involved in the evaluation because the experience of *Articulate* had such a significant impact upon them. The most memorable experience for students was the session they took part in Year 7 because they met someone famous from television and she helped them with their writing:

"We met this famous lady, Scarlett Johnson... She writes scripts like in plays, like in shows. She gave us a hand with the work. So she told us to write in play scripts."

Response cards completed by the students confirm that this session, which focused on a painting of Saint George and the Dragon, had made a lasting impression on them. Richard wrote that the most interesting thing about *Articulate* was 'The George and the dragon because it was interesting and fun. It was colourful and beautiful, the dragon was enormous. The Frame was beautiful and golden. The painting looked expensive and fantastic'.

Figure 6: Richard (aged 16), response card completed 26/03/2008

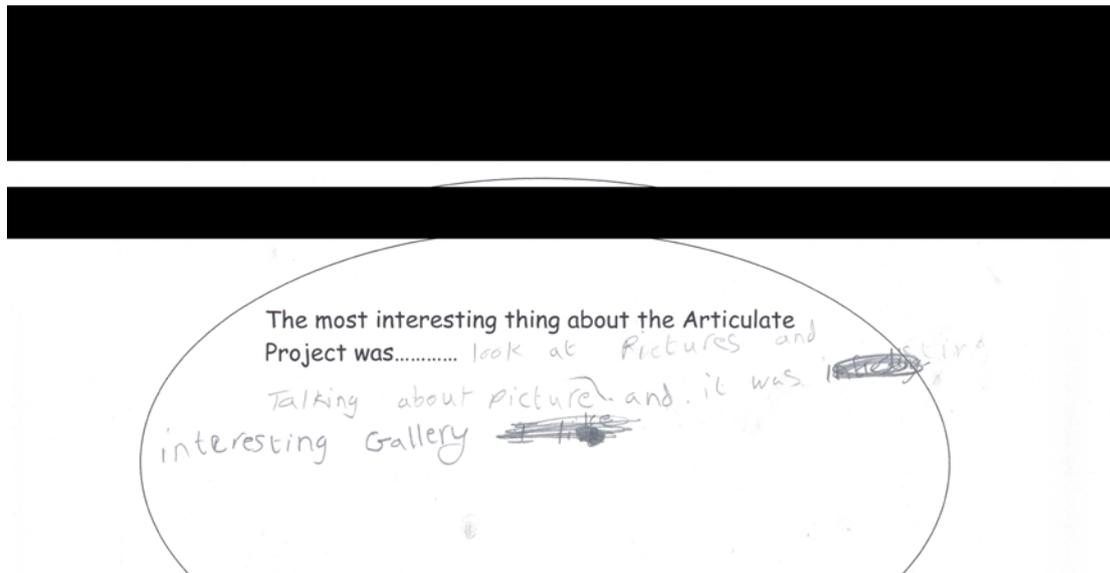


The Year 9 students, Hannah and Ahalya, were much more limited in their ability to communicate their experiences to the researcher but they both enjoyed visiting the Gallery. It was an interesting experience for them, as Ahalya explained "because we saw all the paintings, the statues. The people were nice there". Ahalya had felt a "bit shy at first" going in the Gallery but in the end it was not as big as she had expected it

to be. They also liked the fact that other people were there because it "feels like other people are interested in the pictures".

Response cards completed by the Year 9 students after their visit to the National Gallery revealed that they enjoyed looking at the paintings and taking part in the drama activity with Diane Samuels. Tamar, aged 13, wrote that the most interesting thing about the Articulate project was 'look[ing] at pictures and talking about pictures and it was interesting gallery'. He responded positively to the real, tangible artworks on display in the Gallery.

Figure 7: Tamar (aged 13), response card completed 24/03/2009



Amad, aged 13, wrote that the most interesting thing for him was 'the lady holding the basket looks nice', referring to the basket of props that Diane Samuels used with them in the drama related to the painting.

Figure 8: Amad (aged 13), response card completed 24/03/2009



The very different levels of ability that these young people have to express their ideas can be seen in these two response cards; Tamar was in the more able group and Amad was in the less able group. For their teacher, the needs of the less able students were such that it was enough that they had a “wonderful experience” and were able “to articulate a sentence or so about what they enjoyed” (English Co-ordinator).

Impact on identity and self-worth: Ben’s story

Ben is a student in Year 9 who comes from a very challenging home background. At school he also struggles to come to terms with being at special school, having come from a mainstream primary school. As a result he does not feel like he ‘fits in’. However the *Articulate* project had a very significant impact on his sense of identity and self-confidence. In a session with his psychologist Ben used *Articulate* as an example of something which made him feel better, something that made him feel good about himself. Why? Because it was a project that involved mainstream schools too. It was not specially for a special school, nor had he been selected because of where he lives.

“He comes from a very underprivileged background, but he said when he’s done stuff before they’ll say oh it’s because you’re underprivileged that we’re doing this, but actually this had nothing to do with him growing up on an estate, it had nothing to do with the fact that he was at just an SEN school. But he took part in a project that he said, you know, it was about me”.

- **The impact on literacy**

For the students, the *Articulate* project did have an impact on their literacy skills and motivation, although their progress cannot be compared with the incremental development of mainstream students. The Year 11 students described how participating in *Articulate* “boosts up your confidence in writing”. This increased confidence came from a combination of working with a professional writer and valuing what the writer had to say, the clear focus on writing during the sessions, and the special ‘tips’ that the writers gave them which they considered would help to improve their writing. They remembered that Sarah Phelps had “helped us think about the painting and how we could put it into perspective”. She had given them “tips” how to write “like she told us to look at the painting first and then write about what you see in the painting.” The students thought it was a “great experience” at the Gallery because they learnt how “to know how to write more in your own words basically.” Working with the poet Margo Henderson had developed their confidence in writing poems; “It helped us in our poems, to improve.” One significant piece of information the poet gave them was that “poems don’t always have to rhyme. It can and it can’t.” Working with the poet encouraged them to write more because they understood what a poem was after taking part in the session:

“Cos it inspired you to do more when you come back to school and then you know what they’re talking about when they say oh we’re doing a poem today at school.”

Encouraging young people to 'inhabit' a character in a painting also helped them to develop their skills of empathy. In the session with Sarah Phelps the Year 11 students described how one of the 'tips' that they had been given was for them to imagine that they were one of the characters in the painting:

"Like think that you are George and imagine that you were George and think how George would have felt and stuff like that."

This helped them to write from the perspective of the character. The students could remember that Saint George "must have felt brave to fight the dragon" and that the princess would have felt "frightened." Similarly in their coursework the students had to write a story where "we had to use emotions to think how other people... how people feel and reacted." They considered it difficult to write about emotions because "It can be a little bit hard because you have to think about what the story's trying to tell you and what you're writing it about", however their engagement with the painting had facilitated that process.

For the Year 9 students it was very difficult to establish a picture of the impact on their English and literacy work, partly to do with the very limited ability in this cohort of students who have complex needs and less capacity to reflect on or articulate their experiences. The English Co-ordinator, who taught the lower ability group, considered that for this group it was enough for them to have enjoyed the experience as they would have struggled to process the experience for themselves in their literacy work:

"It's just so difficult trying to make it right for them, definitely for this group. And equally I didn't really do a lot of follow-up with this group whereas I did last year because I had a more able group... For them writing is a chore... we had a chat about it when we came back but beyond that I think I'd take the pleasure away in a way with this group".

For the school the involvement in *Articulate* had shown them the value of using artworks to help inspire and motivate young people and increased their confidence in using artworks in the classroom, which "can be intimidating". The teachers had been able to draw upon and incorporate some of the elements which the professional writers had used with the young people in their teaching:

"We replicate what we're seeing. So if you can use visuals and very professional pieces of artwork to stimulate creative writing, the creative flow of the children, getting them to discuss themes or what they can see in just a single piece of artwork" (Deputy Head Teacher).

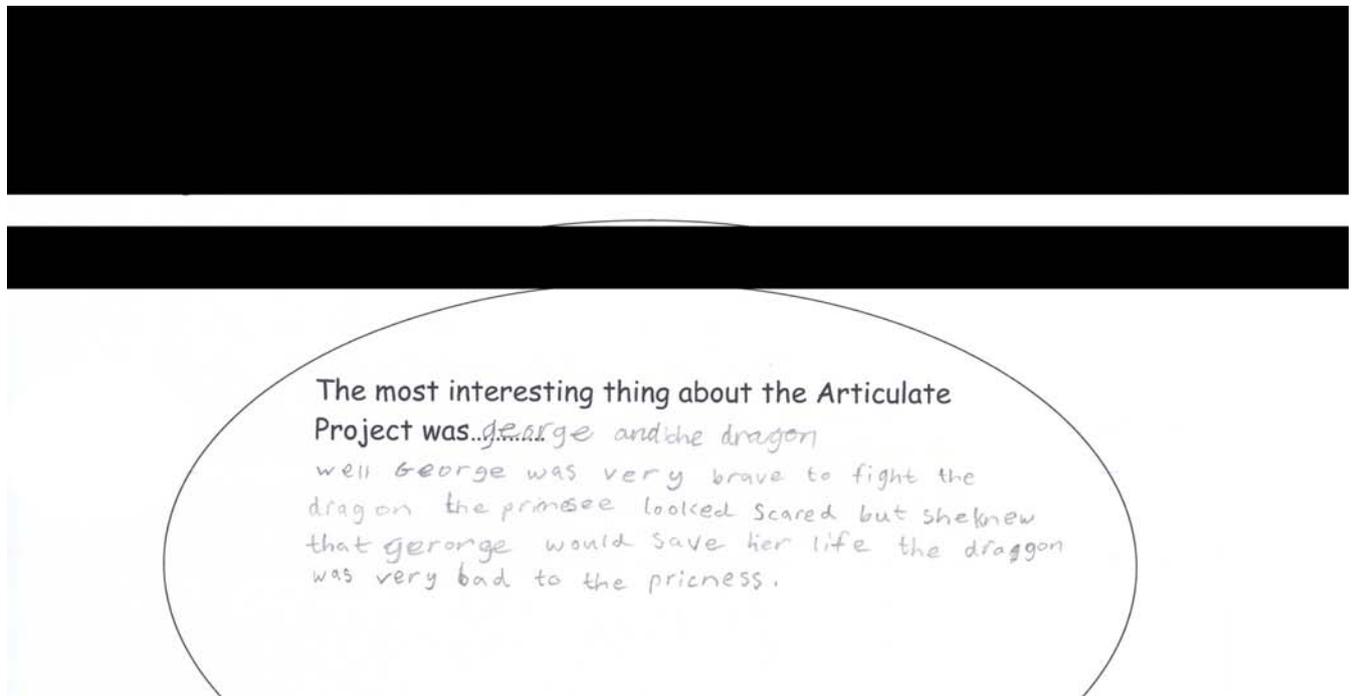
For a school that finds it difficult to take their students out of school the use of online resources, such as the National Gallery website, was also very valuable:

"For us, what we've found is its user friendly because you don't have to physically be there to be able to take advantage of it... The art gallery website's quite powerful because you can choose images and get them enlarged" (Deputy Head Teacher).

- **The power of images: the use of real paintings**

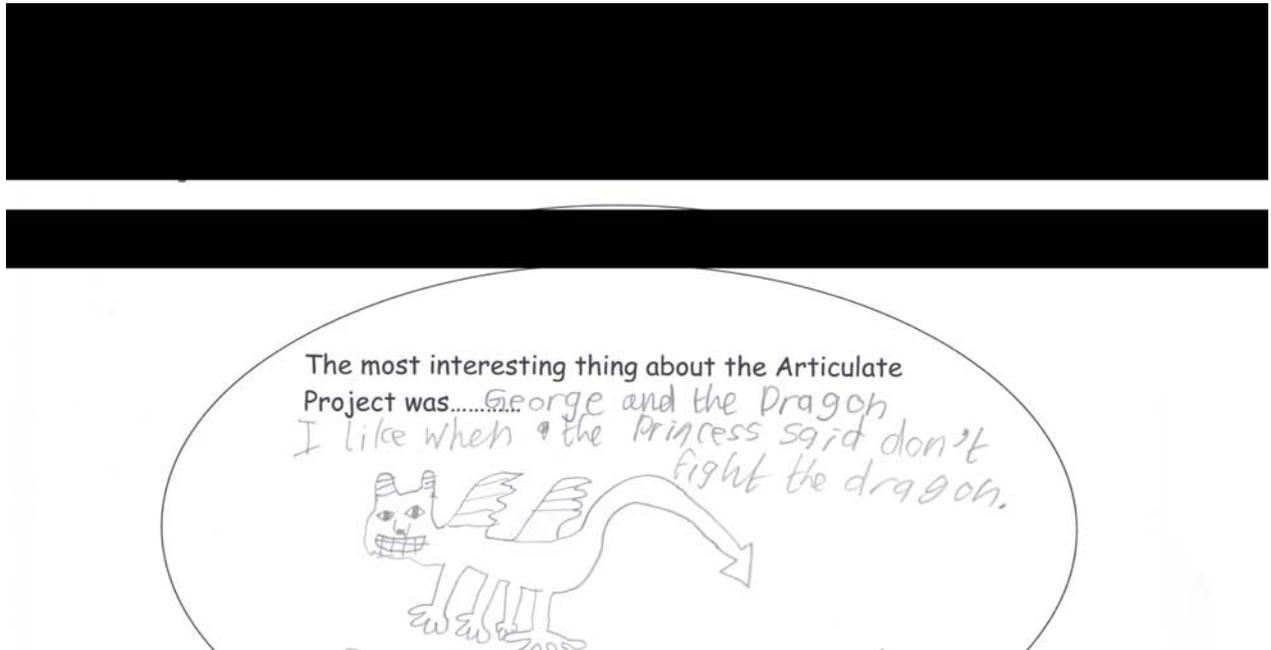
The interviews with the students and the response cards that they completed demonstrated the powerful impact that coming into contact with real works of art had for the young people. For many of the students, the paintings in the National Gallery collections were the most interesting aspect of the visit. For the three Year 11 students who participated in Phase 1 of Articulate, the painting of 'George and the Dragon' was predominant in their memory. Robert remembered that "it was kind of arty and stuff. It was like the princess was dressed in pink and had blonde hair. And George had his armour suit on ready to fight the dragon with a sword in his hand." In their response cards, Marco and Gurpreet chose to write about the painting. Marco wrote that the most interesting thing about *Articulate* was "George and the dragon well George was very brave to fight the dragon the princeess looked scared but she knew that George would save her life the dragon was very bad to the pricness" (Figure 10).

Figure 9: Marco (aged 16), response card completed 26/03/2008



Gurpreet wrote that "I like when the Princess said don't fight the dragon. My favourite part of the project is George fighting the dragon with a sword and a shield. I like the painting" (Figure 11).

Figure 10: Gurpreet (aged 16), response card completed 26/03/2008



The writers they worked with encouraged them to look closely at the paintings, which perhaps helped the students to recall them so vividly: “[Brian Flynn] needed us to have quite a good look at the painting to see what was good about it, what was bad about it.”

From the session with Diane Samuels, Ahalya remembered that the painting they worked with, ‘The Umbrellas’: “Main colour is blue, maybe light blue. The tree, the sky... looked grumpy.” In the response cards completed by Year 9 students some of the students wrote that they enjoyed the paintings, however very few students wrote about ‘The Umbrellas’. It may have been because the real painting was on-loan and so because the students worked with a reproduction and did not see the real painting so it did not make as much of an impression upon them than the other aspects of the master-class. The English Co-ordinator certainly considered that seeing the real painting would make a difference to the engagement of the students:

“[Because] the real thing is just so much more glorious, rich and the texture and the colours... also this is a real painting rather than a resource they can see on the internet... I just think it just enriches the whole thing, and also it’s fun to say we’ve seen the picture, this is the real thing. It’s exciting.”

There was some evidence from the students and teachers that the content of the painting helped some pictures to be more memorable than others. The English Co-ordinator preferred to use paintings with “tons of stories” and this preference seemed to be supported by the opinions of the Year 11 students. They preferred the painting of ‘Saint George and the Dragon’ to the one they looked at a year later, ‘An Allegory of Venus and Time’, because they could get more out of the story for their writing:

“Cos [George and the Dragon] had more interest than Venus. Venus is just like a picture of a woman. George and the Dragon had lots of things, like dragons, people, caves. Venus only just had a person and that’s it.”

- **Working with real writers**

The teachers really valued the opportunity for the young people to come into contact with professional writers through the *Articulate* project. The ‘wow’ factor of working with a high profile writer and exposure to their “creative process” provided the teachers with an experience for which to draw upon with the young people back in school. The fact that someone of such importance was working with the students made them feel special and valued:

“[The] children just have such a wow factor with that and they kind of feel like wow this person’s actually come to do a project with me and they’re not really involved with such heavy projects... they know that this is someone who’s quite important, what their role is and they’re actually working with them” (Deputy Head Teacher).

The Year 11 students clearly understood the value of working with professional writers. They appreciated the ideas and writing ‘tips’ that the writers gave them, which boosted their confidence. They valued the expertise of the writers and learnt about the different types and genres. Whilst these young people had very different aspirations to being a writer, they could differentiate between the different types e.g. they considered it was “more hard work” to be a journalist than an author “cos you need to get the facts of people and of the stories”. They remembered that they worked with different types of writer including a screenwriter, a journalist and a poet. For the Year 9 students, whose needs were far more complex, it was much less clear that they understood they were working with a professional writer; to them Diane Samuels was a ‘nice lady’ or ‘happy person’. It highlights the importance of the writer adapting to their needs, and Diane Samuels was much more hands-on, using real objects and drama techniques to engage the young people with the painting.

- **The management and organisation of *Articulate***

The school had been very pleased with the support given by the National Gallery and with the management and organisation of the project. In terms of inclusion, the project was critical for the school. They were aware that as a special school the nature of the students’ complex needs, the intensive support and the smaller group sizes meant that for the National Gallery their involvement in the project was less ‘valuable’ in terms of measurable impact:

“[Because] I think there’s really easy evidence for a mainstream school that could be produced for the National Gallery... which they don’t get from us because our children make such small steps of progress over so many years.”

The investment of the National Gallery in the project and the way in which the school had been treated was valued enormously by the Deputy Head Teacher: “the sort of inclusion side of it feels like even though it’s only 20 children, they’re being valued as equally as a group of 300”. They could see the value of continuing the project and even extending it in order to give the young people more opportunity to process the

experience both in the classroom, by embedding it more into the curriculum, and with further visits to the National Gallery:

“There’s nothing that I think stops us from going as well though because it’s so close for us and that should be our next planning steps if it were ever to happen again... [To say] we’re going to come back in a week’s time...”
(Deputy Head Teacher).

Whilst the session with Diane Samuels had been regarded very highly by the school, there were some issues raised about the lack of planning that had taken place between the school and the writer prior to the visit to the National Gallery. The English Co-ordinator considered that in order to embed *Articulate* more effectively within curriculum it was important to include the teachers within the planning process as it would have helped her to prepare the students for their visit. This was particularly pertinent for the less able students but also for the teacher’s motivation to include the session in her work. With some prior information she “could have thought about the sorts of writing I might have got about of it.” The importance of pre-planning was also made in conjunction with one of the earlier *Articulate* sessions with a journalist where the session had been pitched far too high for the students and they had got very little from it. Whilst the teacher understood the value of working with professional writers it was also important for them to understand the needs of the students, which in this teacher’s opinion could only be achieved through consultation with the teachers. However, from the Deputy Head’s perspective there was also a balance to be struck between preparing the students and retaining the ‘wow factor’ that came from the students seeing the painting for the first time in the context of the National Gallery:

“It’s trying to get the balance because I think there’s a part of it for the writers where the first time the child sees it, they’re trying to build on that sort of initial sort of shock factor or trying to get the child’s creative flow versus a teacher-led idea, because if we know the artwork, we can prepare them”.

6.2.4 Conclusion

Woodfield School have gained enormously from being involved in the *Articulate* project for the past six years. It has provided students, who have very complex needs and often come from very challenging backgrounds, with memorable experiences outside of the classroom that have had an impact on their learning, as well as their social, personal and emotional development. Being in a public place like the National Gallery and journeying into central London was a huge experience for very vulnerable young people who face many challenges in negotiating the real world successfully. They have the opportunity to meet high profile professional writers and work with them in the context of the Gallery. The masterclasses were profoundly memorable for students; five years later students in Year 11 could recall the content of *Articulate* sessions and especially the writers and paintings they worked with.

The project has had an impact on literacy teaching, increasing the teachers’ confidence in using artworks as part of the curriculum and exposing them to new ideas. The more able students described their increased confidence in literacy from working with real professional writers, whose expertise they valued. For the less able students who do not “have that sort of memory ability to be able to take what they

had before" it was more difficult for them to process the experience or communicate its value. Therefore the impact may appear to be quite limited. Evidence from the teachers and the response cards suggested that they enjoyed the experience and most students were able to describe at least one element that they found interesting, which was regarded by the teachers as significant.

For most students at Woodfield School, these experiences would not have been available to them outside of *Articulate* and it is unlikely that the school would have been able to offer this opportunity without the support of the National Gallery. There remain, however, substantial barriers for the young people to visit the National Gallery outside of the school context, young people who have limited confidence and skills and a limited ability to conceptualise their experiences.

For young people who find writing very difficult the appropriateness of the sessions becomes crucial if they are to benefit from the experience. In the observed session, Diane Samuel's approach through embodied learning techniques, utilising drama, role-play and object handling, and encouraging the young people to use all their senses to understand the painting was appropriate. Here the focus was more on broader communication skills. However the impact on the session on the students' literacy work and confidence was very difficult to ascertain because it was challenging for the students to communicate their experiences.

The project illustrates the inclusive approach taken by the National Gallery. It was incredibly important for the school that they had been included in a mainstream project at the National Gallery. This was reflected in the poignancy of Ben's experience (the young man who had come to Woodfield from a mainstream school) where *Articulate* was one of very few positive experiences in his life. However to really meet the needs of all students more could be done to ensure that there is careful sourcing of session facilitators and writers that are appropriate for young people with such complex needs. This was emphasised by the experience with the journalist who had pitched the session too high for the students and they had gained little from it. Facilitators like Graeae, the disabled-led theatre company (<http://www.graeae.org/>) and others who are skilled in this area might make fruitful contacts for the National Gallery. Rather than a case of 'one-size fits all' more could be done to develop sessions that would really benefit the young people in the longer-term. Where the needs of the students are complex, the need for planning is even greater. The opportunity for the teachers to have more in-depth planning in conjunction with the National Gallery and the writers would have been welcomed.

6.4 Hackney Free and Parochial CofE School

6.4.1 Context for the school

Hackney Free and Parochial CofE School (abbreviated to Hackney Free) is located in the Borough of Hackney, an area of high deprivation. A recent Ofsted report (2006) describes the school as 'good'. It is a smaller than average mixed school for students aged 11-16 years. Three-quarters of students come from minority ethnic backgrounds - mainly Black African and Afro-Caribbean - and almost half of the students are eligible for free school meals. One third of students have English as an additional language and there is a higher than average number of students with special educational needs. The school has specialist status as a sports college and runs an

extended schools programme. Although standards are lower than average, students make good progress through “satisfactory teaching and very good extended learning opportunities that occur outside the normal school day” (Ofsted, 2006:2). The school had taken part in Phase 1 and Phase 2 of *Articulate* and had been involved with the National Gallery for the full six years.

6.4.2 Research Activities

Two visits were made by researchers in conjunction with the case study with Hackney Free. These visits are summarised in Table 10 and described in greater detail below.

Table 10: Overview of the research activities undertaken as part of the case study with Hackney Free

Date	Activity	Venue	Researchers
19/01/2009	Observation of writer’s masterclass for Hackney Free and Parochial CofE School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview with Sherry Ashworth, author 	National Gallery	Jocelyn Dodd Ceri Jones
10/06/2009	Follow-up visit to Hackney Free and Parochial CofE School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview with Head of English and Ms Mehra, English Teacher • Interview with two groups of students; Benjamin, Aisha and Nurul and Mia, Sienna, Lamar and Reuben • Focus group with 3 English Teachers; Mr Taylor, Ms Singh and Ms Williams 	Hackney Free and Parochial CofE School	Jocelyn Dodd Ceri Jones

The long-term illness of the Head of English made it difficult to visit the school prior to the session at the National Gallery and the school’s context and involvement in the project was discussed via telephone contact. The visit to the National Gallery by the school on 19 January 2009 was observed by Jocelyn Dodd and Ceri Jones. On arrival at the National Gallery, the school group was separated into two smaller groups; one group took part in the masterclass with the author, Sherry Ashworth, whilst the other group took a tour of the Gallery collections. For the masterclass, Sherry Ashworth had chosen the painting ‘Surprised!’ by Henri Rousseau (Figure 4).

Figure 11: 'Surprised!' by Henri Rousseau (1891)



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At the start of each master-class Sherry Ashworth introduced herself to the students and read two extracts from her novel 'Paralysed' about a boy who experiences a spinal cord injury. This introduced the students to the idea that writers use their imagination to write about things they have not experienced, which created a link to the painting which was done from Rousseau's imagination. Both sessions followed the same format. The students discussed the painting with Sherry and explored the atmosphere, sounds, textures, colours, smells, and the thoughts and feelings of the tiger. Once they established some basic ideas about the painting, Sherry asked the students to do a piece of writing based on the painting, a paragraph for each of the following headings:

1. **Set-up** - What does the tiger see, feel, think?
2. **Action** - What happens next?
3. **Results** - What happens as a result of the action described?

The students were given lots of freedom by Sherry to write what they wanted. With the author they also went to look at the real painting on display in the Gallery, spending about five minutes in front of the painting and discussing more ideas. Towards the end of the session some of the students read out their work and some of the students had their work read out by the author. Their responses to the painting

were praised by Sherry and the teachers, their work showing imagination and very diverse interpretations of the same scene.

A follow-up visit was made to the school on 10 June 2009 and the morning was arranged so that the researchers Jocelyn Dodd and Ceri Jones could interview the Head of English and Ms Mehra, the English Teacher who co-ordinated the visit to the National Gallery. This was followed by interviews with two groups of Year 9 students. Benjamin, Aisha and Nurul had all been involved in the project for three years. In the second group Reuben and Lamar had only participated in the session with Sherry Ashworth, whilst Mia and Sienna had taken part in *Articulate* in Year 8 and Year 9. A focus group was held with three English teachers; Mr Taylor and Ms Williams had taken part in *Articulate* for the first time that year whilst Ms Singh had been involved in *Articulate* the longest, for four years.

6.4.3 Key findings

- **Making literacy accessible for students who may struggle**

The backgrounds of the students who attend the school means that many may find academic work challenging. In respect to literacy this may cause them to struggle with aspects such as writing:

“ [Many] of the children who are at our school do not come from a home background where there is a history of academic studies, let’s say. They do have their own, strong oral traditions but in terms of translating that into sitting down and having to write for themselves is often quite difficult” (Head of English).

Students may also have English as an additional language (EAL) or special educational needs (SEN) that further complicates their relationship with the subject and, as an ‘inclusion school’, Hackney Free takes in young people who would previously have gone to a special school. One of the beneficial aspects of the *Articulate* project was that it helped to make English more accessible for all students, especially those students who might struggle in the classroom with the technical aspects e.g. grammar:

“I think one of the main impacts is accessibility because the beauty of the visit and the way it’s designed, provided we have a good writer, is that there is something for everyone” (Head of English).

- **A very positive experience for the students**

The positive experience of *Articulate* was reflected in the students’ enjoyment and their ability to recall many aspects of previous visits including the writers they worked with and the paintings that they had seen from several years before. Aisha remembered working with the performance poet Valerie Bloom who “taught us about Jamaican patois”. Benjamin was able to recall the painting they looked at in Year 8 which he described as “kind of a war scene with people on top and people fighting below”. The students liked that the National Gallery provided an environment in which they “could be more relaxed” (Lamar). The writers allowed them a greater amount of creative freedom compared to school:

"[It] also was a set task which we were allowed to write in basically any style of writing, you could write poetry, a story... but in school they'd probably tell you what style you had to write" (Mia).

"She just gave us the topic and we could write our own views onto it" (Sienna).

The students enjoyed taking part in the session with Sherry Ashworth and they were all able to take something of value from it. Most of the students were really excited to take part in *Articulate*, including Reuben and Lamar who went to the National Gallery for the first time in Year 9:

"Because it was my first time I found it exhilarating, [I was] like very excited about it... Basically just the fact of us like learning a new experience because obviously I'd never actually seen this painting before in my life" (Lamar).

"I found it exciting because I saw new pictures I'd never seen before... I was interested" (Reuben).

While a couple of the students were less enthusiastic because they had been before, whatever their views on the actual sessions, all the students considered that it was worthwhile for young people of their age to visit the National Gallery for a project like *Articulate*. They thought it was very positive for young people to see what it is like meet a writer and get "a little bit of experience" (Reuben).

A beneficial impact on student motivation and behaviour: Reuben's story

As a student Reuben is "notoriously difficult round the school" but he really benefited from the session with Sherry Ashworth. Reuben had been really excited about visiting the National Gallery for the first time and seeing all the paintings that were new to him; he thought it "looked very nice and pretty". He admitted that he found English (the subject) difficult at times: "I like it but it depends on what subject, I kind of struggle..." He got to grips though with the task set by Sherry and was able to think about how he would have felt if he had been the tiger in the painting – "we looked at the tiger's face like to see if he's angry or see his emotions." He considered that the tiger was hiding from the rain – "he doesn't want to get wet, he wants to hide under the grass so that the rain doesn't touch him." From the session Reuben learned that artists could use their imagination, they did not have to experience something firsthand to paint or write about it: "you don't need to be there to know about the picture, the man wasn't there but he like [was able to draw the jungle]". After the session he was inspired to do some of his own research on the Internet to find out about the artist and he bought a copy of the book *Paralysed*. However like the other students he lacked the confidence to re-visit the National Gallery outside of school because he was concerned that he would not be able to find it again or would get lost in the many galleries.

Reuben was described by his English teacher as "very bubbly, shall we say, and can be a disruptive influence in the classroom because of his relationships with other students." However the project had a hugely beneficial impact on how he was able to use his talents in new ways and interact with an adult figure that had no preconceptions about him or his behaviour in school:

"There's no doubting that he's verbally intelligent and that he's creative but this project allowed him to channel that in a way that he isn't able to do in the classroom. And because sometimes his issues are to do with relationships and the dynamic between people, having a fresh person to relate to who has no discipline over him... no negative qualities associated with this person standing in front of him, he's able to give to them something that perhaps he isn't able to give on a regular basis in the classroom."

The teacher went on to describe the impact that he felt involvement in the *Articulate* project would have on Solomon in terms of his confidence as a learner:

"I think he left with a greater kind of sense of his own self-worth. Whilst he's praised in the classroom for being a creative thinker, sometimes that praise isn't heard by him because he's hearing it from the wrong person as far as he's concerned, whereas to hear it from, say, Sherry at the Gallery or one of the other teachers there was much more valuable for him."

- **A positive experience for the teachers**

Teachers from Hackney Free were incredibly positive about their inclusion in the *Articulate* project, considering that students of all abilities would "try to take something positive from it". Taking the students out of the classroom context enabled them to see another side to their personality and behaviour, for instance the Deputy Head had been "absolutely flabbergasted at how some kids, who we perceive as being quite naughty and not focused, did really well [at the National Gallery]" (Ms

Mehra, English Teacher). For the most disaffected or disruptive students, the session at the National Gallery gave them a new context in which to 'excel':

"Some of them in the classroom they are a nightmare but take them to such places... you can see the other side of them" (Ms Singh, English Teacher).

For a new teacher to the school it was also an opportunity to get to know the wider student cohort, a "great way to build up relationships with the kids" (Mr Taylor, English Teacher). He considered that the experience would have an impact on how he would respond to young people once back in school:

"Absolutely, we see sides of them perhaps we haven't seen before and that gives us new opportunities and angles on how we'll deal with them in the classroom."

In terms of the project's impact on the curriculum, all three teachers considered that *Articulate* sessions inspired them to use some of the techniques used by the writers back in the classroom, particularly when using paintings as a 'stimulus' to writing:

"I obviously took away some teaching techniques... that's something I've always done in my classroom, using a painting to tease some kind of imagination out of the children" (Ms Singh, English Teacher).

The teachers agreed that the sessions were valuable for their students' learning but they had very different opinions about the specific elements of the visit, for example the tour of the Gallery collections in conjunction with the masterclass with the writer. Two of the English teachers valued this tour because it gave the students a different perspective, an "opportunity to look around and ask questions" (Ms Singh), which had been very positive for the students because of the "enthusiasm of the person taking them round" (Ms Williams). However, Mr Taylor struggled to see its relevance. He thought it would have been more useful if the activity had connected more effectively with the work done with the writer:

"The walk around the Gallery is nice and all but it's a bolt on to what goes on in the education part of it because depending on who was your guide around the Gallery you got a brief twenty-five minute art history lecture and that's all well and good but it was really just added on to the work they'd just been doing."

- **The impact on the teaching and learning of literacy**

Articulate has had a very significant impact on the way in which literacy is taught at Hackney Free. The Head of English saw the opportunity to embed the project into the curriculum as a specific teaching unit of work lasting six weeks. In doing so the school wanted to get the maximum benefit from the project; a day trip out "wasn't going to suffice" (Head of English). The English department also produced learning resources for Years 7, 8 and 9 "based...entirely on the Gallery experience" (Head of English). What made it particularly appealing to the Head of English was the links it made between art and literacy: "the whole idea of using art as a trigger for writing was exciting and interesting", especially for those students who would respond well to visual stimuli. *Articulate* also helped the school to integrate the National Literacy

Strategy (NLS) into the curriculum. Each year the visit was structured around one of the genres of writing that are in the curriculum and related activities which were devised to meet the aims and objectives of the literacy strategy. Paintings were chosen to correspond closely to the genre of writing studied, e.g. an allegorical painting to illustrate allegorical writing. In Year 7 this was creative and report writing; in Year 8 Allegory and Inferential reading; and in Year 9 Creative, analytical and critical writing. The content of lessons was communicated to teachers through extensive resources developed by the English Department. Teaching resources lay out clearly the way in which *Articulate* was used to structure the teaching and learning of literacy. Each year the trip to the Gallery was integrated into the following content for lessons:

- Starter activities prior to the visit to familiarise young people with the National gallery and using collections for literacy
- Content of lessons after the visit including activities which use the paintings and *Articulate* visit as a stimulus for further work. As well as writing this includes active listening, grammar and vocabulary (e.g. verbs, adjectives, similes, metaphors)
- Ideas for discussion as a plenary to the lesson and draw ideas together
- Clear outcome from the lesson e.g. a piece of writing
- Homework ideas and activities
- Suggestions for alternative activities for teachers to develop around the NLS objectives.

These activities are linked to the aims and objectives of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS), and also to develop the students' skills and progress in their learning from Year 7 to Year 9. For instance, the resources developed for Year 9 aimed to 'consolidate Key Stage 3 skills and to develop students' understanding of these key forms of writing in preparation for their GCSE studies' (Hackney Free English Department undated: 1). The *Articulate* Unit introduces the National Gallery and how young people should behave in public places, linked to the NLS objective 'contribute to the organisation of group activities in ways that help to structure plans, solve problems and evaluate alternatives'. As part of the lesson young people produce their own code of behaviour for the National Gallery trip, with ideas for activities that the teachers can do to assist the young people in their understanding of how to behave in public places. Such activities introduce the students to the venue, to create some familiarity and introduce the idea of looking at paintings. A more direct link to a painting was made around the NLS objective 'to present a balanced analysis of a text, taking into account a range of evidence and opinions'. Students were asked to analyse a poem as a class and write a short analytical piece about it. Activities were based on the painting 'Surprised' by Rousseau used in conjunction with William Blake's poem, 'The Tyger'. Students were asked to think about adjectives which could be used to describe the tiger in Rousseau's painting, which could then inform their understanding of Blake's poem. Within the resources direct links are made in this way between the NLS objectives, the piece of work that the students are to complete and the way in which the use of artworks can help develop students' skills, confidence and ability to fulfil the objectives.

The Year 9 students were able to make links between the session at the National Gallery and the impact that it had on their writing subsequently. They learnt that it

was acceptable to use their own imagination when writing, they did not have to experience something first-hand. Benjamin, one of the Year 9 students, explained:

“[Sherry] helped me to realise you don’t have to be like there to be able to write about it, you could be like... in *Paralysed* she wasn’t actually paralysed she just went around, got research, information and then wrote about it.”

The clear headlines that Sherry gave them to structure their writing helped him to focus on what they needed to write:

“You had to think like what happened before, how you got yourself into that situation and what’s going to happen [next] and what you need to do to get yourself out the situation”.

Benjamin knew that he would be able to draw upon the experience with Sherry Ashworth in the future to help him in his writing as she had given him these ‘guidelines’ that he could use:

“It... gives me guidelines, like wider guidelines like expanding it more and if there’s something that I don’t understand I might just recap to that lesson and try and think about what the author told me and what I could do to help it and if I can’t still find out I can ask my teacher.”

The students enjoyed writing from the tiger’s perspective, an approach that was novel for the students and helped them use empathy to develop a story: “she made us sort of write like as if we’re the tiger, write about what we see and what’s happening and I don’t think we do that in English” (Reuben). Using the painting as a stimulus had helped Aisha in particular with her descriptive writing and increased her confidence “because I’m not good at it.”

Although the teachers at Hackney Free recognised that the students gained an enormous amount from their involvement in the *Articulate* project they did not seem comfortable to articulate the impact on the students in terms of their academic work. Whilst the National Gallery had wanted to ‘measure’ the impact of the project on the students’ levels of attainment, the Head of English did not see that it was possible. The teachers were far more comfortable thinking about the impact more broadly in terms of the opportunities for the learning, social and personal development of the students.

- **Working with a professional writer**

The students were extremely positive about meeting a real professional writer and the valuable experience it gave them. After meeting Sherry Ashworth the students were keen to read *Paralysed* or had already read it: “I read that book after, I asked my teacher for it. I thought it was good” (Aisha). Meeting the writers through *Articulate* had challenged their perceptions about who a writer was and what they would be like. Aisha thought that writers “were just like people who stayed in their house” and “have ten cats”. Nurull had expected that they were “lonely people just writing stuff”. Lamar realised that as a writer “you use your imagination quite a lot”. He considered that writers could choose to write in a particular genre but “most people just prefer to write what’s in their heads.”

The teachers saw the value of the young people interacting with a professional writer in terms of exposing them to different, significant adults. The interaction with an expert who had no preconceptions of the young people and who used different methods and learning styles to engage them in literacy was regarded as very positive. However, in some ways the teachers underestimated the impact that working with a professional writer would have on their students. For some students, particularly those who struggled with literacy, the teachers considered that working with a writer would not be that special; they would be “another teacher figure” or would not be “valued as far as they’re concerned because a lot of our kids aren’t necessarily big readers” (Mr Taylor, English Teacher). The Year 9 students, however, valued working with a professional writer far more than their teachers anticipated. The opportunity for doing literacy work with an expert was seen as very special. Writers had different skills and expertise that they could use to help the students to improve their writing. Writers also came without preconceptions of the young people so treated them differently: “Because the teacher’s know us, innit? They know you and the writer they talk to you like [differently]” (Nurul). Meeting a writer was inspiring and motivated students to want to write more: “[I was] inspired because at the moment I write poetry so when I met a writer it kind of inspired me to keep writing” (Lamar). Even students who did not like writing felt encouraged. The students valued the information that the writers gave them in the sessions more highly because they were specialists who knew what they were talking about. The writers wanted to encourage and help them to improve their writing, which was contrasted with teachers who could help them but also wanted them to get their work done:

“[The writers] give you tips on what to work on... like a teacher will tell you what to do and then like will help you but then a writer because it’s their job they know more about it and like they can help you on the little mistakes that you need to make your work even better” (Benjamin).

“They were encouraging you to read and write, the teachers just want you to work and do the work” (Nurul).

Whilst some of the students clearly enjoyed writing, there was not a clear link between their involvement in *Articulate* and regarding the career of a writer as an achievable aspiration. Benjamin clearly saw that it was possible but it was one possibility of many: “there’s different options to life like you could be a writer or anything else”. Lamar already considered himself a writer although he had not published any books. Sienna had “thought about it before but now I’m not sure what I want to be.” She had wanted to be a writer because “I enjoyed writing stories when I was in primary school and coz English was my best subject.”

The teachers valued writers who were dynamic and engaged the students in a fun way like John Hegley who “got them to write down words and phrases which he then turned into song” (Head of English). It was also seen as important that the students saw a ‘result’ from their work, the good writers therefore would set a task that led to an identifiable outcome. The quality of the writers involved in *Articulate* could be quite varied however. There was a contrast between the more effective, lively and dynamic writers who understood the needs of the young people with those who, in the teachers’ opinion, misunderstood their students’ behaviour and needs:

“[They are] inner city, bubbly, can be a bit explosive but engage them, interest them, get them involved and you’ve got them” (Head of English).

The school had experienced a less than successful session with a writer who “thought she was lecturing 18 and 19 year olds and did a slide show” (Head of English). This approach had not been beneficial for the students, who are far more engaged through visual and active stimuli. Similarly, the teacher of the less able students was also disappointed with the Year 9 masterclass, which did not, in his opinion, seem to offer anything different to what he might have done in the classroom. Whilst he found it interesting that Sherry Ashworth asked the students to write from the perspective of the tiger, the structure of the session was less dynamic than he expected:

“There was an element of the classroom about it in the sense that it was a person standing at the front talking to a bunch of people and then they were asked to write and then the work was effectively marked... It was traditional you know, it was successful but it could have been a bit more vibrant” (Mr Taylor, English Teacher)

He considered that the session could have been more involving for students who struggled more with their writing by including them in a more active way that would help them to draw out more ideas from the painting:

“I wonder if it could have used visual stimulus and then maybe instead of going straight to the pen and paper we went to say... cameras or something a bit more interactive, a bit more lively.”

- **The power of images: the value of working with real paintings**

The paintings were a memorable aspect of the visits to the National Gallery for the students and they were able to recall various paintings that they had worked with. Part of their enthusiasm for the visits was going to see the collections at the Gallery, although the two students who had been to the Gallery for the first time were the most enthusiastic. In the most recent session with Sherry Ashworth, the students had liked the painting ‘Surprised’ by Rousseau because there was a lot of activity going on in the painting which they could draw on for their writing, as Benjamin explained:

“It was very interesting because there were lots of things to talk about in it because there’s such... lots of objects over there so we could talk about the leaves, the plants, the colours.”

He recalled a painting they looked at in Year 7, ‘Belshazzar’s Feast’ by Rembrandt. It had been very different to what he considered a normal painting and that had helped him to write about it:

“It didn’t look like a normal portrait that you would actually go see and go look at but that’s what was so interesting about it, you could say a lot of stuff about it.”

Nurul saw how the painting ‘Surprised’ by Rousseau worked on many different levels: “if you look at it normally it’s like just a normal tiger in the forest but [there are] like hidden meanings and stuff like that”. This linked to one of the English Teacher’s objectives in teaching literacy, to enable students to look for depth in texts and go beyond the surface meaning. She considered that visual images such as painting

were a useful method for conveying this to students: "It certainly helped me teach it... that idea of you know there's always something implied here, there's explicit and there's implicit" (Ms Williams, English Teacher).

- **The wider benefits of a visit to the National Gallery**

Significant to the experience of *Articulate* for Hackney Free was the opportunity for the students to be in and learn in a different context, one which was very different to their school and local environment. The National Gallery was not somewhere that the students would visit outside of school and so it was also an opportunity for the students to "expand their horizons" outside of their local context. It was seen as vital by the teachers that cultural institutions like the National Gallery were seen to be accessible by the young people and raise their awareness of what was available for them outside in the wider world, knowledge that they might not always obtain from their home backgrounds:

"And even their knowledge of what goes on around them... some of them didn't have a clue about the National Gallery, the paintings belonging to them, you know it's that kind of an eye-opener bringing them into the real world and making them appreciate and know things" (Ms Singh, English Teacher).

Whilst the wider benefits of visiting places like the National Gallery were not always considered by the teachers to be understood by all of the young people - "they might say oh it was boring but that's their stock response to a lot of things" - the teachers could see the positive impact that such visits had on the social and emotional development of their students:

"It goes without saying these social experiences are enriching... actually getting out of school and the social experience of being on the bus together and being a group and being a group outside of the school gives them a sense of identity" (Mr Taylor, English Teacher).

Whilst the students interviewed at Hackney Free were able to see the benefits of visiting the National Gallery, particularly in terms of the impact on their literacy work and being in a different environment, there were still considerable barriers to them visiting outside the context of a school visit. It was not an activity that they felt confident in doing. Although most of them said that they went into central London with friends, they tended to associate such trips with leisure activities such as 'shopping' and 'eating'. The National Gallery was still a daunting place for them to visit without the structure provided by a school trip. The students wanted someone to show them round because without the guided tour "you don't know what you're looking at" (Aisha). Even outwardly confident young people like Sienna felt that they did not have sufficient knowledge about the paintings to feel confident to make a visit:

"...when you go round the gallery with the people they know what pictures to show us and how to explain it to us but if I wanted to go on my own I wouldn't know."

The building itself presented challenges in terms of its size and location in central London; Reuben and Lamar were concerned that they would not be able to find their own way there through the streets and also the Gallery was very big “so there’s lots of halls so you might get lost” (Reuben).

- **Management and organisation of *Articulate***

The English Department at Hackney Free were very pleased with the amount of support they had received from the National Gallery over the six years of their involvement in *Articulate*; without this support it is unlikely that the school could have provided an opportunity like *Articulate* for their students. The importance of the project was demonstrated by the way in which the project had been embedded into the curriculum and a number of resources had been produced to support English teachers using the project in the teaching and learning of literacy. *Articulate* also enjoyed support from the senior management of the school as the Head of English was careful to include the Head Teacher (at the time) in the planning meetings to ensure that they were on board. There were still many general challenges however to their participation in the project due to the nature of secondary schools, challenges that have been identified previously by RCMG in research with secondary schools. These can be summarised as follows:

- Fitting visits into a highly structured and time-pressured curriculum
- Organising ‘mass cover’ in school for visits
- Ensuring the correct staff to pupil ratio and other considerations of risk assessment
- Preparing a separate timetable for students who (for one reason or another) cannot take part in the trip.

Despite these challenges, the benefits that the teachers ascribed to giving the students the opportunity to learn from a professional writer, interacting with real paintings in the National Gallery outside of their normal environment, was very much worth the hard work:

“It’s a difficult process you know to get everything in place, the paperwork it’s a tedious process but you know we just look at the end product and we want to appreciate after all this hard work, after all this labour, there’s something good for the children” (Ms Singh, English Teacher).

The relationship between the National Gallery and the school had been very positive. Initially, when *Articulate* began, the planning was intensive between the National Gallery and the school. The Head of English would inform Gallery staff about “the aspect of writing that we wished to focus on for that visit” and the session would be very much tailored to fit that need. The masterclasses had therefore been very focused on what the school wanted to do and get out of the visit and as a consequence the writers and the freelance lecturers (who led the gallery tours) were “completely clued in.” More recently the school had felt less included in the planning of the sessions’ content as opposed to the organisational elements of the session. Although the teachers considered that they were very well-informed in this respect, some of the teachers would have preferred more involvement in the planning of the session with the writer to take into account more effectively the needs of their students. In particular, one teacher considered that there could have been

alternative activities for less able students rather than asking them to “sit and write” about the painting. There was also disappointment expressed by another teacher about some of the early ambitions of the project which had not come to fruition, for instance advertisements on buses and the Underground to showcase the work of the young people.

In terms of the sustainability of the *Articulate* project at Hackney Free, a change in Head Teacher and development of a new, more creative curriculum in response to wider changes in the National Curriculum has meant changes in the design of curriculum delivery. The very structured work programmes lasting half a term which resulted from *Articulate* were likely to be a casualty of the changes, although the use of paintings within the curriculum as a stimulus for literacy work will continue to be embedded.

6.4.4 Conclusion

Speaking to the students and teachers from Hackney Free demonstrated that *Articulate* has been an enormously significant and beneficial project for the school. In an under-performing school where many young people struggle with literacy in an academic context, *Articulate* has made literacy accessible for students of all abilities. The emphasis on visual imagery as a stimulus for different genres of writing, including allegory, creative and report writing, had been embedded by the school into the curriculum. Teachers valued the opportunities that *Articulate* gave for students to learn in a different context and come into contact with high-profile, professional writers who can offer a different approach to literacy than is possible in the classroom. Teachers valued most those writers who were enthusiastic, dynamic and offered something very different for students, who could engage their interest. A clearly defined and identifiable outcome was also preferred as this helped to focus the students' attention. This was particularly valuable for students who were disengaged or struggled at school as they would respond more positively to an unfamiliar adult, an expert in their field, who had no preconceptions of them or their behaviour in school. Teachers reported that in this context even the most disaffected students responded enthusiastically.

The students were very clear about the positive impact that *Articulate* had on their literacy skills and confidence in the subject. The National Gallery was valued as a learning environment because of the interest and enthusiasm generated by being in a new context with its valuable and significant collections. Visits were memorable and students were able to recall a great amount of detail of the paintings and writers that they had worked with. Whilst the teachers tended to underestimate the impact that working with a professional writer would have on the students, the young people were very clear about the benefits of working with a writer. They felt much more relaxed at the Gallery compared to school, particularly because they felt the writers enabled them to have more creative freedom than their teachers. It was inspiring to meet professional writers and find out what they were like as people; often this challenged some of their expectations. In the session with Sherry Ashworth the students learnt that writers did not have to experience things first-hand they could write from their imaginations, as did Rousseau for his painting of the tiger ('Surprised'). The students enjoyed having a visual stimulus to work from, especially busy and content-rich paintings that could give them lots of ideas to write about. Where students were given a clear set of instructions, for example by Sherry, they understood

what they had to do and why. These 'tips' or 'guidelines' could be used in the future to help them with their schoolwork. Such advice from published writers was trusted and valued very highly by the students. Praise from an expert was more encouraging than from their teachers. The students felt that often teachers only wanted them to get their work done whereas writers wanted to help them to become better writers. For students who had low levels of confidence in literacy this was incredibly important to their self-esteem.

As well as the impact on the curriculum, teachers valued the wider social, emotional and behavioural impacts of *Articulate*, which enabled young people from deprived backgrounds – in terms of poverty of experience as well as in economic terms – to access a cultural institution in central London they would be unlikely to visit outside of school. Being together as a group in a different learning context was seen as beneficial to the students in forming an identity outside of the classroom, to 'expand their horizons' outside their everyday life and local context. The teachers were clearly in agreement with the inclusive ethos of the *Articulate* project and considered it was important to communicate to the students that places like the National Gallery can be accessible to young people from all backgrounds. Creating a sense of ownership amongst the students was important to the teachers; the National Gallery was there for them to use and should be used because its collections belong to the nation, to people like them.

Articulate demonstrated to the students that they could benefit from visits to the National Gallery. They were able to meet high-profile writers who wanted to encourage them to become better writers. It had an identifiable impact on their skills and confidence in English lessons, introduced them to valuable and internationally significant works of art that they were encouraged to form an opinion about. The visits to the National Gallery clearly inspired and motivated the students and they enjoyed being in the Gallery and looking at the paintings. Whilst some of the barriers to visiting the National Gallery were broken down by *Articulate* the students continued to feel anxious about visiting outside of that context. There were many challenges for the young people in terms of their confidence negotiating central London to find the Gallery. Its scale and grandeur could be daunting for students. They did not always feel confident that they would understand the paintings or know which paintings to look at in the absence of a tour arranged by the Gallery. So whilst the sessions with the Gallery had introduced them to the concept that the Gallery was free and accessible to them, it remained inaccessible in the young peoples' minds outside of the school context.

Over their six years of involvement in the *Articulate* project, Hackney Free has benefited greatly in terms of the contribution that it has made to the English curriculum, supported by the importance placed on the project by the Head of English and its integration into the English curriculum. The school clearly saw the value of being involved in the project and, with the support of senior management, have continued to participate despite numerous challenges presented by the time-pressured and highly structured environment of the secondary school. The English department had been excited by the dynamism and ambition of the project and this was reflected in the whole-hearted way in which it had been embedded into the curriculum and the teaching of literacy. Although there has been a change in the relationship between the National Gallery and the school over time, which has had repercussions on the school's contribution to the content of sessions, the level of

support given by the Gallery and their staff was felt to be very positive. The disappointment of sessions with less appropriate writers however suggested the need for greater opportunities for planning between the school and the writer prior to the session. Such projects cannot be sustained, however, unless these levels of support, and funding, are maintained. Managing the expectations of schools is also crucial to maintaining a longer-term relationship and there is a need for caution when 'selling' the benefits of a project if these benefits cannot later be fulfilled such as the advertisements on public transport that the school were very disappointed did not take place.

Section 7

Conclusions

Established in 2002, *Articulate* was developed in response to the extension of the National Literacy Strategy to secondary schools and ran, in its first phase, until 2006. After the success of the first phase, a second phase of *Articulate* was funded from May 2006 to July 2009. It was targeted at schools with lower than national average examination results with the intention of supporting teachers and students to improve their attainment in the literacy over the course of the three-year project. The specific aims and objectives of *Articulate* were to:

- Support teachers and students with the National Literacy Strategy
- Encourage 11-14 year olds to engage with paintings at the National Gallery as a stimulus for writing
- Improve attainment in literacy
- Work with entire year groups (usually around 200) providing every student from a year with the same opportunity
- Work particularly with under-achieving schools, many of whose students have English as a second language
- Encourage a sense of familiarity and ownership of the Gallery and the collection
- Build partnerships between the Gallery, LEA literacy advisors, London secondary schools and professional writers
- Build an awareness of career options in art and creative writing
- To provide a lasting resource for teachers, pupils and other education professionals via the *Articulate* website.

The Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG) was commissioned to evaluate the second phase of *Articulate* with following questions framing the research:

- To what extent have the *Articulate* masterclasses influenced the content of English lessons in partner schools and how relevant is the project to the KS3 National Curriculum?
- Have teachers' and students' attitudes towards museums and galleries changed as a result of participating in the *Articulate* project?
- To what extent do teachers feel they have been supported in the *Articulate* project by the Gallery; the writers and their own school?
- What impact has participating in the *Articulate* project had on the KS3 pupils who have participated?

Drawing on the material provided by National Gallery staff, writers, teachers and students from qualitative interviews and observations conducted as part of the evaluation, the following section outlines the key findings that have characterised the experiences of the schools involved. These key findings will be used to answer the research questions as posed by this evaluation and will also place *Articulate* in the

wider context of how museums and galleries can support and enhance learning in the curriculum and beyond.

7.1 *Articulate*: an influential and significant programme

The three case studies of schools in this report identify the clear benefits of their participation in the *Articulate* project. Teachers and students reported that they valued highly the opportunity to work with high profile professional writers in the context of the National Gallery and to come into contact with real works of art from the Gallery collections. From the writers, teachers learnt new ways of working and approaching literacy that could be integrated into the curriculum; they were inspired and motivated to take their students on new avenues of exploration back in the classroom. The young people involved valued the opportunity that *Articulate* offered them to improve as 'writers', particularly those students who struggled with literacy in an academic context. Where students were able to conceptualise their own learning they could see the impact of *Articulate* on their work in terms of how the contact with the writer had given them useful skills and tools to help them with their writing. Students considered that working with the paintings helped them to think more deeply about a subject because the writers encouraged them to look more closely. For the young people from Woodfield School, some of their learning difficulties made it difficult for them to communicate their opinions and make sense of the visit. However, they were still able to enjoy the interaction with the writer in the Gallery and speaking retrospectively to students in Year 11 demonstrated that some special needs students had a highly memorable and significant experience which impacted on their literacy work back in school.

Articulate also enabled the development of visual literacy. In a world where visual literacy is often taken for granted – with images everywhere from advertisements to television and film – the ability to 'read' an image and understand the deeper meanings it communicates to the 'reader' is a very important skill. Young people enjoyed interacting with artworks from the National Gallery's collections that represent hundreds of years of history and culture from across Europe. With the writers they learned that their immediate response to a painting could be developed into a deeper and meaningful response by looking closely at the characters and the action portrayed. Some writers encouraged the use of empathy by asking the young people to imagine themselves as a character within the painting. Where this was successful it helped the young people to increase their understanding and built vivid pictures in their minds which could then be used in their writing. The tour with Gallery facilitators reinforced the ways in which paintings can be 'read' in order to understand their meaning and students said that they particularly enjoyed the opportunity to find out about the stories behind the paintings.

The characteristics of an effective *Articulate* session

Teachers valued:

- Opportunities for learning in a new environment
- Unique and enjoyable sessions that were different to what could be done in school
- Enthusiastic writers who engaged and captivated the students
- Inspiring writers who could motivate students and teachers with creative ideas and new ways of working
- The visual stimulus of the artworks which encourages an immediate response from students
- Activities that were 'scaffolded' or differentiated so that students of all ability could participate
- The wider opportunities for young people to expand their horizons of the world outside their school and local context.

Students valued:

- Opportunities for learning in a new environment outside the classroom
- Working with professional writers who they valued as 'experts' in their field
- Learning new skills and tools to help them with their writing
- Learning from a writer they considered they became 'better' writers themselves
- Dynamic and enthusiastic writers who engaged them in the chosen painting
- Exploring the National Gallery and its collections but they were aware that this needed to be facilitated.

7.2 *Articulate*: a highly successful concept

Articulate as a concept created a very special project. Over three years it gave the teachers and students involved exposure to a variety of high-profile writers and a number of different paintings from the National Gallery's collections. Through targeting schools in consultation with LEA literacy advisors it successfully reached schools with the most need, schools that would especially benefit from the drive towards improving young people's skills, confidence and performance in literacy. The three-year long programme created a sustained period of contact with the targeted schools which was crucial to helping the schools develop their confidence in accessing and using cultural institutions like the National Gallery. This sustained relationship enabled schools like Woodfield School to become confident users of the National Gallery and embed the project into the practice of the school. Over time the schools have become 'critical consumers' with increasing levels of sophistication and more discerning in their response to the project. It is unlikely that the schools would have been able to access this kind of activity except through *Articulate*.

By targeting secondary students at Key Stage 3, *Articulate* took place at a very significant time in the lives of the young people involved. At a formative stage in their development, it is critical to engage young people in their learning during this period. Many of the young people interviewed for this evaluation had a clear understanding of how a successful grasp of literacy would affect their lives in the longer term as well as in an academic context. Such experiences reinforce the global importance placed on literacy and communication skills. The students understood that literacy is critical to the world outside of school, for example students with English as an additional language at Hounslow Manor were incredibly aware of how disadvantaged they were. Without a solid grasp of the English language they knew that they would be constrained as to what they would be able to do later on in life and in terms of their career. Underachievement in literacy can also impact upon the students' ability to express themselves, potentially stifling creativity. The impact of underachievement in literacy is not just felt in the subject of English but impacts on achievement across the curriculum and the repercussions can be life-long. Supporting students at this age, therefore, is a real critical investment in the future of students who are amongst the most vulnerable.

7.3 *Articulate*: a highly inclusive programme

Articulate was a highly inclusive programme, targeting schools that are under-performing in literacy. Why are they under-performing? The three case study schools had a number of characteristics that presented particular challenges to the teaching and learning of literacy. The schools were located in deprived areas of London, their students experiencing a range of backgrounds which may work against their achievement in literacy. In all three schools there are very high proportions of students with English as an additional language; three-quarters of students at Hounslow Manor, half of students at Woodfield School and one third of students at Hackney Free. Schools such as Hounslow Manor have very mobile local populations, which leads to high turnovers of students or students with disrupted schooling, for example refugees and asylum seekers. Both Hackney Free and Hounslow Manor are 'inclusive' schools taking in students with special educational needs and/or challenging social, behavioural and emotional needs. As a special school, Woodfield School has seen the number of young people with very complex special needs, including communication, increase in recent years. All of these factors can have an impact on young peoples' learning and their ability to cope with the rigours of a formal, academic environment. For the *Articulate* project to inspire and support the learning of these young people, therefore, was critical as these are experiences that they may not otherwise be exposed to. In their home lives the opportunities that young people come into contact with may be diminished for various reasons including chaotic home-lives, families who are working long hours, economic deprivation, families that do not have a background of using cultural organisations and young people living in insular communities. These and other factors can create physical, social and intellectual barriers that prevent young people from regarding places like the National Gallery as somewhere that they can access. *Articulate* and its inclusive ethos enabled the schools to expose young people to new cultural opportunities and raise the young people's awareness and aspiration that cultural organisations are accessible to everyone regardless of their background, social status and academic ability.

For young people who struggle in the more academic context of school, the opportunity to learn in a new environment with unfamiliar adults who did not know their 'reputation' at school gave them new impetus to respond and find their voice. Activities based around the visual stimuli of a painting rather than a written text appealed to different styles of learning, suitable for those who may have English as an additional language or special educational needs. Some of the young people were very aware that their ability to recall a subject increased when they could link it to a visual stimulus. The writers and teachers considered that the value of visual stimuli was that artworks enabled an immediate reaction from the young people, whatever their ability, which could then be developed into a deeper understanding. The different learning context of the National Gallery encouraged different behaviour from the young people, particularly those who may be disaffected or disengaged from school. Those students who do not flourish in an academic context were often the ones who thrived in *Articulate* because it offered them a new context in which to learn. The writers they worked with had no preconceptions of their reputation or behaviour, giving them a voice that they may not have in school.

For Woodfield School it was hugely important to be part of a programme for mainstream schools, rather than singled out as a special school. It increased the teachers' confidence to be valued by the National Gallery equally to mainstream schools. The students gained enormous value from it. It was very positive for students like Ben, who had come to the special school from a mainstream school and did not feel like he 'fitted in'; this was a project that was for mainstream students, he was not selected because he was from a special school or from a deprived area. Whilst the tangible impact of the programme on the young people with the most complex needs can be regarded as very slight compared to mainstream students, the teachers valued the enjoyment that the experience gave to their students.

A critical part of the success of *Articulate* was the involvement of the entire year group, bringing students of all abilities to the National Gallery. However this was not without its challenges. To really meet the needs of all students could more be done to ensure that there is careful sourcing of session facilitators and writers that are appropriate for young people, particularly for students from the special school who have such complex needs? Rather than a case of 'one-size fits all' could more be done to develop sessions with specialist facilitators and enable the teachers to feel more confident about using the experiences back in the classroom?

Visits to the National Gallery broke down some of the barriers to young people from disadvantaged backgrounds from using art galleries. It was clear from *Articulate* that the young people valued their visits to the National Gallery. Visiting in a school context gave them the security and familiarity of their teachers and peers, not only physically but also intellectually. They knew that there would be facilitators to help them understand the paintings and help them 'know' what to look at. Many of the students wanted to visit the National Gallery more often in order to find out more about the collections and perhaps have more freedom to decide what they wanted to look at. However, in terms of visiting the National Gallery outside of the school context there remained many barriers to the young people feeling confident enough to visit on their own. Various aspects of the journey remained intimidating – finding the Gallery in central London, travelling a considerable distance – and the building itself with its gold frames and grand room settings (far removed from anything the young people experienced in everyday life) could be daunting. The students knew

that a different type of behaviour was expected there. There was a sense that some young people felt that the National Gallery was 'not for them' but for people like 'the Queen'. Intellectual barriers in terms of not knowing what paintings to look at or being able to understand them were also significant; all the students expressed the preference for having someone to show them around the Gallery. For the students of Woodfield School, their profound and complex needs suggest that negotiating the National Gallery outside of a mediated visit would not be possible without support from their families (who are often not museum or gallery visitors themselves). These enduring barriers, therefore, suggest the importance of ensuring that young people are able to access museums and galleries in a way in which develops their confidence over longer periods of time, more incrementally perhaps so that young people become used to being in the Gallery and developing their own opinions about the paintings. It was evident that the *Articulate* project had started the young people on a journey towards becoming confident and possibly independent visitors of museums and galleries, however this does pose the need for support for young people beyond the school context.

7.4 *Articulate*: the significance of using professional writers in a literacy project

Over the three years of *Articulate*, young people came into contact with variety of high-profile writers – from poets, to journalists, scriptwriters to authors – who had been chosen by the National Gallery as experts who could support teachers and students in responding positively to the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) and improve achievement in under-performing schools. Many sessions in other museums and galleries focused around literacy are not led by professional writers but by museum educators. What makes the use of 'real' writers in a literacy project like *Articulate* so special? What is unique about this?

Through the masterclass the writers engaged the young people through using the National Gallery's collections as a stimulus to develop their skills and confidence in literacy. The concept of a masterclass implies quality and expertise. It was critical therefore that the National Gallery was able to access quality, high-profile writers such as John Hegley and Sarah Phelps from *Eastenders*. In the masterclass the writers gave the students tools to help them in their writing and different perspectives from which to 'read' the paintings as a stimulus to writing. Writers such as Sherry Ashworth gave the students the confidence to use their imaginations when they did not have first-hand experience of a subject, like she had done for her novel *Paralysed*. Many writers introduced the students to new ways of approaching literacy, for example through performance or writing a song like John Hegley. Writers stimulated discussion around a painting to give the young people ideas, descriptive vocabulary and inspiration, which helped young people to develop their confidence before they started to write. The most effective writers gave the young people a clear and supportive structure within which they could have the creative freedom to develop their work and the paintings were used for a specific purpose with an identifiable outcome. This sense of freedom, within the context of a clear structure, purpose and outcome, increased the confidence of the young people and engaged them, especially where writers were enthusiastic in their relationship with the group.

Teachers were inspired by the dynamism and skills offered by the writers, and motivated by the ideas they could offer them for taking English lessons into new

directions. The experience 'nourished' them. For the young people, the opportunity to be exposed to experts who are so successful in their field would be very limited outside of the project. Students valued this opportunity to work with professionals whose expertise helped them to improve their work in literacy and made them feel like 'better' writers. That writers had their work published and were experts in their field increased the value of the advice they gave them and the skills that they learnt, especially when compared with their teachers. That they were professionals gave the writers a status and authority to the young people. The emphasis on learning 'skills' was reflected in the young people's statements about what they considered they had learned from their interaction with the writers, skills that they knew would help them to improve their writing and which they could draw upon in the future. Where the schools made direct links between the importance of literacy and the world outside of school – Hounslow Manor were particularly explicit about that link – *Articulate* could build upon this expectation and confirm its value. Whilst teachers often underestimated the value that young people placed in working with writers, the young people reported a greater impact than the teachers expected and were far more sophisticated in their response. Students were able to identify clearly what made the writers special; it was their specific skills as writers and the creativity that they could bring to literacy. The students were inspired by this creativity and enthused in their own work. Engaging with different writers enabled the young people to see a range of careers that were possible with literacy and the different career choices that were available to them. They gained a better understanding of what writers do and who writers are, often challenging their expectations. Writers were special because they were not teachers and approached literacy in a different way. Young people differentiated between the focus and motivation of teachers who are bound by the National Curriculum and the structures of school. The focus is on exams and achievement. This was contrasted with the creativity and skills of the writer where the motivation to write is inwardly driven, it comes from the person rather than to meet the needs of the curriculum. Students responded well to the creative freedom offered to them by the writers, who understood that the importance of literacy goes beyond the academic context. Writers were reluctant to engage with supporting the curriculum which they felt was very constraining to literacy, supporting the views of academics who suggest the National Curriculum is too prescriptive, focusing on technical aspects at the expense of creativity (see section 2.3). With the emphasis on creative freedom, students were more relaxed in the learning environment of the Gallery and those students who struggle in the classroom thrived in this context.

The relationship between the writer and the students was often reciprocal. It was special for the writers to come into contact with such a range of young people and they could be inspired by their responses to the paintings and literacy work developed for the masterclass. Sherry Ashworth especially was very positive about the way in which she could draw from the experience of meeting the young people from Hackney Free, enhancing and feeding her professionally. The relationship between the young people and writer was critical to the success of the masterclass and it was essential that writers were effective facilitators in their work with vulnerable young people, who often have low self-esteem and low confidence in their learning ability. Their manner and approach was very important. Effective writers were able to read the needs of the group and respond to the young peoples' needs inclusively. They valued working with young people. On the other hand, the young people were very sensitive to writers who were less aware of their abilities and needs. Resilience is seen as essential in learning to give "an enhanced capacity to take things forward

when the going gets tough. Resilient learners are able to resist difficulties and maintain momentum” (Hooper-Greenhill 2007: 180). For young people who lack such resilience, their confidence was easily crushed by adults who were less responsive to them and their needs. With the schools working hard to build resilience in their learners, effective writers were those who reinforced this work.

There is much evidence from previous RCMG studies to how significant access to a range of artists and specialists is to engaging young people. Through the DCMS/DCSF National / Regional Museum Partnerships programme 2006-2007, the *Real World Science* project at the Natural History Museum brought young people into contact with real scientists, enabling them to experience science in the ‘real world’ and the real scientific process. This challenged many of the negative perceptions that young people had about science and scientists, whilst at the same time exposing them to specialists who the young people could appreciate gave them access to a very different kind of knowledge to their teachers. From the same programme, the Victoria and Albert Museum’s *Image and Identity* project sought to engage young people in responding to museum collections through the arts. Working with an artist, a group of vulnerable looked after young people from Manchester were given the opportunity for self-expression through the artwork they created, being able to express their emotions in a positive, constructive way. The project enabled the young people to come into contact with significant, positive adult role models who acted in some capacity as mentors, providing solutions to the challenges that young people face. *Articulate* parallels that experience giving access to specialists that the young people value.

7.5 *Articulate*: using paintings to support literacy

Articulate was an intersection between professional skills, high-quality collections of paintings and a focus on literacy. Writers were excited about working with the National Gallery. Literature has often drawn on artworks for inspiration and it gave the writers involved in *Articulate* a real opportunity to push their work in new directions, giving them new ideas and influences for their work. For those writers who had not previously used paintings in their work, *Articulate* could change their practice. Diane Samuels had not previously used artworks as a stimulus in her work and she was inspired her to continue to use them as a writer-in-residence at a London school. The quality of the collection was therefore a critical element of the project, an incredibly rich and flexible resource which the writers were able to take advantage of. The skill that the writer brings is however critical to enabling the young people to engage with the collections. Effective writers developed a structure or framework within which the young people could be given the creative freedom, and confidence, to develop their own work from the painting. Whilst a very disciplined and structured approach, nevertheless it will seem effortless to the young people when it works well. They may not realise that they are learning.

The link between a visual stimulus and literacy was incredibly strong, particularly for young people who struggle with written text or who have English as an additional language. The writers were able to draw on this aspect in their sessions. For the students at Hounslow Manor in particular, their visual memory was really important and powerful as a stimulus to learning and they recognised that they remembered more when they could attach it to something visual. Discussion and verbal activities

around the painting also helped those who lacked confidence in their writing. The use of the art collections and context of the National Gallery reinforced the importance of enabling young people to have real and concrete experiences that inspire them to be creative in new ways and give them actual substantive content which they can then write about. The most successful writers enthused the young people about the artworks and used the story of their chosen painting as a 'hook' to draw the young people in, facilitating the development of vivid pictures in the young peoples' minds which they could then write about. Most of the students were able to recall their visits to the National Gallery several years later which reinforces the significance of learning visually and being able to link those visual images formed with other aspects of learning such as information and skills. The importance of enabling young people to engage with real objects and real artworks in collections is well attested to in the available literature and the example of *Articulate* reinforces the importance of using artworks as a stimulus for discussion and activity that can be used to inspire students to write in creative and descriptive ways.

7.6 *Articulate*: creating memorable experiences

Talking with the students revealed the amazing ability of the young people to recall huge amounts of detail of their *Articulate* experiences, suggesting the significant impact it has had across their school careers. They remembered the paintings they looked at, the writers they came into contact with and the content of sessions that has had an impact on their literacy work back in school, increasing their skills and confidence in writing. Some sessions of *Articulate* gave real highlights, for instance students from Hackney Free and Hounslow Manor remembered working with John Hegley and the skill of his performance as he got them to compose songs from National Gallery artworks. Year 11 students from Woodfield School remembered vividly their experiences of *Articulate* five years later especially working with Sarah Phelps and Scarlett Johnson from Eastenders. This memory had endured across their entire secondary career. Unfortunately the impact of negative memories, which were rare, can be just as enduring, a reminder that the relationship built between the writer and the students is crucial to their confidence. Where the young peoples' needs are not met and they do not feel that they benefit from the session, it can be damaging for young people's confidence and even close doors for them. A less effective session for the students of Hounslow Manor in 2009 was detrimental to their perception of journalists, discouraging one young woman from wanting to pursue journalism as a career idea in the future.

7.7 *Articulate*: influencing the content of English lessons

Articulate clearly influenced the content of English lessons at the three case study schools. Teachers reported that they had been well supported by the National Gallery and the senior management of their schools in embedding the programme in the curriculum across the three years. The three schools involved in the evaluation had very idiosyncratic approaches to the integration of *Articulate* in the curriculum, but common to all the schools was the way in which *Articulate* has given the teachers new approaches and ideas to the teaching of literacy, using the collections as a visual stimulus to fulfilling the requirements of the National Curriculum.

Hackney Free took a very highly structured approach and produced in-depth resources for schemes of work over a sustained time (half a term), which embedded extensive use of paintings as a stimulus. *Articulate* therefore had a very strong impact on the structure of English lessons, with each unit of work arranged around the Gallery visit. The content of lessons was communicated to teachers through extensive resources developed by the English Department. Teaching resources lay out clearly the way in which *Articulate* was used to structure the teaching and learning of literacy. Each year the visit was structured around one of the genres of writing that are in the curriculum and related activities which were devised to meet the aims and objectives of the literacy strategy. Paintings were chosen to correspond closely to the genre of writing studied, e.g. an allegorical painting to illustrate allegorical writing. In Year 7 this was creative and report writing; in Year 8 Allegory and Inferential reading; and in Year 9 Creative, analytical and critical writing. Each year the trip to the Gallery was integrated into the following content for lessons:

- Starter activities prior to the visit to familiarise young people with the National gallery and using collections for literacy
- Content of lessons after the visit including activities which use the paintings and *Articulate* visit as a stimulus for further work. As well as writing this includes active listening, grammar and vocabulary (e.g. verbs, adjectives, similes, metaphors)
- Ideas for discussion as a plenary to the lesson and draw ideas together
- Clear outcome from the lesson e.g. a piece of writing
- Homework ideas and activities
- Suggestions for alternative activities for teachers to develop around the NLS objectives.

These activities are linked to the aims and objectives of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS), and also to develop the students' skills and progress in their learning from Year 7 to Year 9. For instance, the resources developed for Year 9 aimed to 'consolidate Key Stage 3 skills and to develop students' understanding of these key forms of writing in preparation for their GCSE studies' (Hackney Free English Department undated: 1). The Articulate Unit introduces the National Gallery and how young people should behave in public places, linked to the NLS objective 'contribute to the organisation of group activities in ways that help to structure plans, solve problems and evaluate alternatives'. As part of the lesson young people produce their own code of behaviour for the National Gallery trip, with ideas for activities that the teachers can do to assist the young people in their understanding of how to behave in public places. Such activities introduce the students to the venue, to create some familiarity and introduce the idea of looking at paintings. A more direct link to a painting was made around the NLS objective 'to present a balanced analysis of a text, taking into account a range of evidence and opinions'. Students were asked to analyse a poem as a class and write a short analytical piece about it. Activities were based on the painting 'Surprised' by Rousseau used in conjunction with William Blake's poem, 'The Tyger'. Students were asked to think about adjectives which could be used to describe the tiger in Rousseau's painting, which could then inform their understanding of Blake's poem. Within the resources direct links are made in this way between the NLS objectives, the piece of work that the students are to complete and the way in which the use of artworks can help develop students' skills, confidence and ability to fulfil the objectives.

The other case study schools were less highly structured in their approach but nonetheless clearly made the connection between *Articulate* and the development of English lessons. Hounslow Manor and Woodfield School were much flexible and relied more on the perception and judgement of the teachers as to how the *Articulate* sessions were incorporated in the schemes of work. Teachers reported that they used the *Articulate* sessions as an introduction to a scheme of work or genre of literacy, or drew on the skills and approaches used in the Gallery with the writer back in the classroom. Prior to their inclusion in *Articulate* Hounslow Manor had used paintings as a stimulus in literacy, rooted in their understanding of how young people with challenges to learning literacy, such as English as an additional language, need different approaches to build their confidence and skills. The school was also used to bringing their young people into contact with writers and other professionals. The value of *Articulate* for Hounslow Manor was that it gave the school access to higher-quality writers and resources at the National Gallery, writers that inspired the teachers to try new avenues of work and incorporate the learning from the masterclass into English lessons. For instance, the session with John Hegley in Year 7 encouraged the English teachers to focus on performance poetry, reinforcing to the young people that poetry is not only to be read from the page but can also have a visual and aural dimension. Woodfield School had not used paintings previously in their literacy work but they were pleased about the benefits they could give. Through exposure to the methods used by writers and the impact this had on the young peoples' understanding and confidence the teachers became more confident themselves to incorporate the use of paintings as a visual stimulus for literacy into teaching. Teachers also became more aware of the resources that they could use in English lessons for instance access to the National Gallery website and images that can be looked at in greater detail.

From the experiences of the case study schools, *Articulate* proved to be very relevant to the curriculum and enhanced opportunities for teaching and learning, particularly when sessions were successful and teachers could see the benefits for the young people. There was a risk however that where sessions were not quite so effective the learning was not built on or incorporated in the curriculum; sometimes teachers seemed to lack the confidence to incorporate them or did not have a deep investment in the project to embed it into teaching. There was the risk that where teachers were not always confident to develop the work back in school or did not see the immediate benefits for the students the masterclass was not incorporated and remained a 'stand-alone' visit. A teacher from Woodfield School reported that she did not feel confident embedding the sessions at the Gallery into the curriculum because she was not given enough information about the session before the visit and so could not introduce the topic with her students. Teachers from Hounslow Manor were reluctant to draw on their most recent session at the Gallery because it had not been such an enjoyable experience for the students. All three schools would have preferred greater contact between the writer and themselves prior to the sessions in order to be able to integrate the work more successfully into the curriculum, although logistically this may have been challenging. Giving teachers some input into the process – and the teachers stressed that they did not want ownership of the session but the chance to support the writer in developing an appropriate session – is also likely to increase their investment in the project and ensure that it does fit into schemes of work. It is suggested that the National Gallery could also model some of the ways in which schools might incorporate projects like *Articulate* into the curriculum. The development of a wider community of practice of schools involved in

the project could be one mechanism through which this could be achieved. It is acknowledged, however, that there are many barriers to establishing such a community amongst secondary schools, which the National Gallery had experienced first-hand:

“[At] the start I wanted to organise a meeting, a twilight session just to get everybody together to familiarise themselves with the gallery and the spaces... Out of 10 I think representatives of 3 schools turned up” (Alex Hill, Schools Officer).

With the development of the new ‘creative’ curriculum, which will see a steady transformation in the way in which teaching and learning is approached in secondary schools, the emphasis will be on schools having more flexibility to personalise learning to the needs, aspirations and capabilities of their students (QCA undated). Where schools already had a very flexible approach to learning based on the identified needs of their students - Hounslow Manor and Woodfield School for instance – the opportunities are there for the National Gallery to develop a greater synergy between the needs and context of the schools and the creative energy of the writers to develop activities that enhance learning for all types of learners, with the emphasis on personalised learning. This would require more effort in terms of developing the relationship between the school, teachers and writers, however the impact in terms of investment in the project from the schools would potentially be far greater.

7.8 *Articulate*: going beyond the curriculum

Articulate was initially developed as a response to the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) in 2002. The experience of the three case study schools reveals that *Articulate* has supported the implementation of the NLS very successfully. However, as the writers discussed, and the students also understood, the significance of *Articulate* goes beyond the National Curriculum. Indeed, *Articulate* responds very effectively to the way in which the curriculum is changing in 2009 to be much more student-centred and to bring back the creativity which critics of the National Curriculum argue is stifled by a very prescriptive approach. The ability of the schools to respond to these changes is very likely to be influenced by the approach they have taken to *Articulate* in previous years. Where schools have responded very specifically to *Articulate* and linked it in very tightly with the literacy strategy, they may see far less scope for continuing this approach now that the curriculum is changing. However, where teachers are more confident and have used the curriculum more flexibly to support the needs of their students in the past, they may be more likely to see the benefits of continuing to use artworks and visual stimulus in their lessons as the aims and objectives of the curriculum are changing.

The teachers, students and writers involved in the evaluation understood that the value of a project like *Articulate* goes beyond the teaching and learning of literacy. Getting young people out of the classroom and learning in a new context was seen as beneficial for their understanding of the ‘real’ world and having to negotiate spaces and environments that they might not be exposed to through their home context. Many of the young people were from less privileged backgrounds, experienced challenging or difficult home lives, and would not have the opportunity to visit cultural organisations like the National Gallery or go into central London except

through school visits. Many of the teachers saw that they had a social and moral responsibility to enable their students to take part in such opportunities, to widen their horizons of the world outside of school and demonstrate that places like the National Gallery are open and accessible to everybody whatever their age, social background or nationality. Whilst some teachers immediately saw the benefits of using artworks in literacy, for other teachers the project with the National Gallery opened their eyes to the ways in which the collections of museums and galleries can be used to bring literacy 'to life'. For the students, many of which had never visited the National Gallery previously, they really privileged the opportunity to come into close contact with valuable paintings, not something that they would see in their everyday lives. They appreciated the opportunity to learn in a context that was different to their classroom and described the Gallery in very respectful terms, seeming to understand the significance of the collections, for instance in terms of what they can tell us about past cultures and societies.

7.9 Articulate: demonstrating the power of learning in museums and galleries

The experience of the schools involved in *Articulate* clearly reflects wider findings about the power of learning in museums and galleries as identified by RCMG in four linked studies of national museum education programmes from 2003-2007 (see section 3.3.1). Across these four studies the most consistent finding was that teachers felt the strongest learning outcome for their students was 'Enjoyment, inspiration and creativity', which had a causal relationship with the other learning outcomes, particularly increased 'Knowledge and understanding.' Table 10 shows the consistently high rating accorded to 'Enjoyment, inspiration, creativity' by teachers involved in the four RCMG studies compared to the other four GLOs:

Table 10: Form A. Responses to 'For each of the following potential outcomes from the use of the museum, please could you rate the importance of each one in your view?' Teachers ticking 'very important.' Comparing RR1:2003, DCMS/DfES1:2004, RR2:2005 and DCMS/DCSF2:2007

	RR1: 2003	DCMS/ DfES1: 2004	RR2: 2005	DCMS/ DCSF2: 2007
Enjoyment, Inspiration, Creativity	81%	79%	76%	70%
Knowledge and Understanding	72%	63%	68%	62%
Attitudes and Values	58%	55%	61%	43%
Action, Behaviour, Progression	57%	50%	48%	66%
Skills	44%	46%	46%	48%

RR1: 2003, N=936; DCMS/DfES1: 2004, N=503; RR2: 2005, N=1632; DCMS/DCSF2: 2007, N=407

Teachers considered that enjoyment could act as a catalyst to a range of other learning outcomes, in other words if students enjoyed their experience at the museum or gallery they were more motivated to learn. The importance of an emotional or personal connection to learning was also highlighted, even if the experience was not

explicitly 'positive' the eliciting of an emotional response created the conditions for engagement. This was clearly demonstrated by the response of the students from the three schools; where they enjoyed the experience the students could recall the visit more vividly (for instance the experience of Hounslow Manor with John Hegley) and were more able to conceptualise the experience in terms of their learning. Teachers were more enthusiastic and confident to draw on the experience in lessons when it had been enjoyable for their students. With the students from Woodfield School it was more complex in terms of the students being unable to conceptualise their learning from the session with Diane Samuels, however the teachers confirmed that most importantly they valued the enjoyment of the experience for their students.

The findings from the *Articulate* project reflect many of the characteristics that have been identified as the particular ways in which museums and galleries "can be used to promote creativity, build personalised learning and help with enabling all children to be successful" (Hooper-Greenhill 2007:170). Working with a variety of professional writers and artworks was frequently inspiring for students and teachers, which facilitated the young people's understanding of literacy. The experiences at the National Gallery were memorable because they engaged the young people's emotions as well as their intellect, evidenced by the enthusiasm that students had for the paintings and writers that they had worked with often several years later. There was certainly a 'wow' factor for many of the students coming into contact with real paintings, their value and status evidenced by being in the National Gallery. Although the National Gallery was unfamiliar to the young people, it was a safe and secure environment in which they enjoyed learning and the National Gallery staff noticed how increasingly relaxed and confident their behaviour became over the three years. Outside of the classroom, coming into contact with new adults, the students were able to develop new identities as learners. Young people who might be disaffected in the classroom or struggle with more formal approaches responded well to the new environment, often finding a voice and wanting to contribute. Some of the teachers linked this to the different relationships established with adults who are not teachers. They have a different kind of authority which the young people respond to well if they feel comfortable and able to participate (the opposite was the case where the adult did not create this safe environment for the young people). Generally the sessions at the National Gallery, led by the professional writers, were also able to respond to and adapt to the learning needs of young people with abilities across a broad spectrum, including English as an additional language and complex learning, emotional and behavioural needs. Different learning styles were used which appealed to young people who might struggle with more formal approaches, particularly visual stimuli and encouraging young people to respond to those verbally. These findings therefore point to the National Gallery as making a strong contribution to the creation of a "rich and tangible learning environment... providing enjoyable, effective and stimulating pathways to learning for all [young people]" (Hooper-Greenhill et al 2006: xv).

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Teaching resources provided by English Department at Hackney Free and Parochial CofE School were:

- 'Articulate' Creative Writing, the real thing (Year 7, undated)
- 'Allegory and Inferential Reading' (Year 8, undated)
- 'Articulate Unit – Creative, Analytical and Critical Writing, Year 9' (undated)