

Westfield Arts College

A case study of Artsmark in a SEND setting

Who we are

Westfield Arts College is a highly regarded special school based in Dorset with 213 pupils ranging from ages 4-19. All pupils have moderate or complex learning difficulties and more than half have a diagnosis of ASD. Many of our pupils have a combination of sensory and learning difficulties. The school has an exceptionally committed and skilful staff team. We are the largest maintained special school in Dorset and we're judged as outstanding by Ofsted in 2016.

Children often come to Westfield when they have struggled in previous schools and many start with a very poor opinion of themselves. Our aim is to treat each pupil as an individual and help them to rediscover their feelings of self-confidence and success in whatever ways we can. We are committed to raising the self-esteem of our pupils, so that they can enjoy their learning.

How Artsmark has worked for us

Supporting our ethos

The arts enrich so much of what we do and enhance the support we can give to our pupils and their families: they add colour and light to lives that can be, at times, quite tough. Artsmark has given us a framework that has enabled us to live out our aims and ultimately improve the life chances of our pupils.

Broadening our arts offer

We believe that all our pupils should enjoy coming to school and should have fun whilst learning. We aim to broaden their horizons through offering an exciting and stimulating curriculum which gives them opportunities to take part in a wide range of activities, developed as part our Artsmark journey.

Valuing arts education

Arts and creativity are a very valuable part of the curriculum for our pupils and the Artsmark framework reinforces this. We offer pupils a full and rich programme of arts events throughout the year, often working with local cultural organisations and Artsmark Partners, giving them opportunities to work with professional artists, theatre directors and musicians. We enter pupils from across the school into the various levels of Arts Award and we take part in national arts events, such as the National Theatre Connections festival and the Big Draw.



Adapting to individual needs

Using the Artsmark framework has allowed us to adapt our curriculum to meet the individual needs of our pupils at an appropriate pace and level. The curriculum that we offer, which Artsmark is very much a part of, is so much broader than the confines of the National Curriculum and we are very proud to be able to do this.

Celebrating the individual

Every year we have an end-of-year Art exhibition and Talent showcase and we also have an Instagram page to share and celebrate our young people's creative work. We believe that each pupil should have the opportunity to express themselves creatively and develop their artistic skills. In turn we've found that arts and creative education can help build pupils' self-esteem, positive relationships, confidence, and a sense of ownership and pride in their achievements.



We'd recommend...

During your Artsmark journey we'd recommend that your Senior Leadership Team are on board with your plans from the very beginning and invest in the improvements; this will create a school-wide commitment.

Have a designated member of staff to oversee the planning, reflection and evaluation of the Artsmark process and ensure that this person is given quality time to do this.

Stay reflective throughout the process; when planning think about how you will evidence and evaluate any impact. Analysing data doesn't just have to mean statistics! Think about gathering qualitative feedback from staff and pupils too.

Invest in quality Continued Professional Development (CPD) opportunities to ensure staff have the skills to carry out your Artsmark journey.

Work on building strong relationships with local arts organisations and the wider school community – remember your Bridge Organisation can help with this!

Lastly, with all your arts provision strive to be exciting, inspiring, flexible and engaging for all.

For further guidance about how Artsmark can work for you please see our specialist settings guidance.

<https://www.artsmark.org.uk/support-specialist-settings>