

Case Study: Wirral Hospitals' School



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We are a small alternative therapeutic setting for young people with mental health issues and anxiety and our aim here is working together to make everything better.

We believe that in order to have a high quality education you have to be ambitious, and you have to find students' individual needs and talents and let that flourish. You should not close the door on anything. So therefore, your curriculum has to be broad, you have to offer a wide range of subjects, and you have to offer subjects that will find a students' unique talents. So therefore, the arts has to be part of that.

We live in Merseyside, we live in a holiday cultural kind of area so in terms of labour market, those are where those jobs and those industries are. So again it's about saying to young people with autism or with mental health you can be part of this world as well. So we're teaching them tools and skills that they can take again into adult life and into the world of work.

So in terms of our SMSC curriculum, citizenship, health and well being we have an area of our curriculum called 'Learn for Life'.

This year again, through the arts, we've got funding for an artist in residence who is a photographer and a media digital artist and again through – behind the lens, behind the camera we've enabled students to go on travel training. So getting on the bus was not all about the bus it was about taking pictures of the journey there, it was about photo work; so again it's that alternative look at using arts and using creativity to teach well it was geography, it was maths because they worked out all the mileages but it was independent life skills.

Next year we're going to really pursue that even more and when we need to get young people out of the building, building their confidence, we're going to really explore using our photographer. It's just, it's a wonderful, wonderful tool for building confidence for young people and again it's not just about doing it in our school

because we're a school for children with poor mental health, every school should have a photographer there, every school should have a dancer and a musician there because these are the skills that is helping the children find themselves and if you're confident and happy then you're a good learner and you'll get good GCSE results.

Every year there is a significant group of Year 11 students who go on to do performing arts, stage management, art and design, and so on in those various subjects, and in terms of them sustaining their places there it is the most successful choice of course. They're still there two years later, they're still there maybe working in the field. So I believe that cultural capital is about young people having a choice; it needs to be delivered to them by their staff, by visitors, by professionals but it needs to be part of their everyday educational diet.

Culture and arts is not a treat, it's not something that we should be involved in it every day and if your school isn't doing that then I believe that you should change your school so that every day is a cultural day.