



AIREDALE ACADEMY: DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY

When you talk to educators from the other schools within the Burberry Inspire programme, the same name springs up again and again – **Airedale Academy**. A performing arts school, Airedale has provision for Performing Arts, Drama & Musical Theatre on both its curriculum and extra-curricular offering and is well-known in the area as a place that fosters creativity in these areas. So, why would a school that is already so led by performing arts be part of the programme? **Stephanie Dakin**, the Key Stage 4 lead, who teaches IT and Media has the answer.

AIREDALE ACADEMY PARTNER ALLOCATION:

2019 / YEAR ONE:
THE HEPWORTH WAKEFIELD

2020 / YEAR TWO:
NORTHERN BALLET

2021 / YEAR THREE:
LEEDS PLAYHOUSE

2022 / YEAR FOUR:
LEEDS YOUNG FILM



There is a reason the programme is called Burberry Inspire. Because not every child can be or wants to be a dancer, performer or musician, but the programme brings with it skills that are not necessarily front and centre of the stage, screen or gallery wall. It shows young people what it takes for a piece of work to get there in the first place. “We just don’t have the capacity or the resources in school to be able to film like they’ve had the opportunity to do with Leeds Young Film,” explains Stephanie. So, while the performing arts are far from an alien experience to the youngsters, their depth and breadth of understanding of the world around these disciplines was limited to what the school could realistically provide. And it’s given everyone involved the chance to look around them and see things that little bit differently.

Immediately, a key difference of the programme versus the usual daily life of the students lies in the out of school experiences they were able to have. A trip to an art gallery, for example, would be an exciting outing for most young people, but in a school where nearly a third of children qualify for free school meals, days out are especially hard to come by. A visit to Leeds to watch a performance



of Cinderella by Northern Ballet was beyond expectations. “A lot of them, because of the area where we are based, just don’t get opportunities like that,” says Stephanie. “Even just going to Leeds, for some of them, they thought that they were going on holiday. And to watch a ballet! It was amazing because they’d never had the opportunity to go on a trip like that.” Northern Ballet also brought a male lead into the school to work with students, challenging the wider perceptions and stereotypes around dance. The athleticism of the dancer won over the boys of Airedale and, according to Stephanie, the Head of Dance really enjoyed their time working with the company. “It was obviously the kind of opportunity we’ve never had before. And

an all-male session –the uptake on that was really good.”

Opening eyes to new experiences and ways of seeing the world is at the very heart of the Burberry Inspire programme. At Airedale this was particularly important to the path each student perceives to be ahead of them. Across Years 7 to 9, the students were able to see themselves in a new way, exploring roles and discovering new places where they might be able to picture themselves in the future. Whether it was scripting, filming and editing short films with Leeds Young Film, or creating costumes and stop motion animations. “A lot of them might never get the opportunity to write their own script and then film their own film and edit their own film again,” explains Stephanie. “For someone to be a filmmaker or a cameraman round here would be quite unheard of. So because they got to use the equipment and see how it works, it’s kind of like ‘oh, I could do this!’”

Stephanie speaks of Burberry Inspire fostering a “growth mindset” in some of the children, particularly those who are behaviourally challenging and perhaps struggle to see possibilities. “It’s actually really nice to see,” she says. “Because they come to school here, they stay here, they very rarely leave to go to university or anything like that. So, I think it’s been good for them to look at some other kind of job possibilities, rather than just thinking about what everyone else would choose to do around here. It opens their eyes to some of the other things that are out there for them.”

Burberry Inspire was also a golden opportunity for educators at Airedale to take a step back and watch the teaching practice of others – and how students engaged with new ideas, ways of learning and ambitious projects. Across the board, teachers have taken inspiration from the arts partner practitioners and feel they can bring their approaches and ideas into their future lessons. For the work she did with Leeds Young Film, however, Stephanie is keenly aware that without the programme there are limits to what can be achieved. “When we teach, we teach to thirty kids. When Leeds Young Film came in, they had two leaders and ten kids each, which is a manageable amount to make a film with,” she explains. “Whereas it’s very difficult to take thirty kids out of a classroom in a safe environment and let them make a film.” Under normal circumstances, it would take around a term to make one short film, but of course it would need to be within the parameters of the National Curriculum. “Obviously Burberry Inspire hasn’t had that limitation and we have just been able to kind of focus on the practical elements of it, which has been really nice.”

However, the ‘condensed’ nature of the sessions with Leeds Young Film has meant that it has been



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IF YOU SAY ‘BURBERRY’ NOW, THEY SEE IT AS WHAT THEY’VE DONE IN SCHOOL, AND THEY WILL TALK ABOUT THE ART SESSIONS WITH THE HEPWORTH GALLERY AND WILL TALK ABOUT DANCE.

immediately and clearly observable when the students rise to challenges. And by being one step removed from the core of teaching, Airedale’s educators have had a front row seat in seeing the magic happen. For example, when Year 9 students were asked to apply to be part of the Leeds Young Film cohort, there were reservations when a group of “quite challenging pupils” were selected to participate. But these students proved themselves again and again. “It was really nice to have that experience of watching them do something and be really independent with it and do it really successfully,” Stephanie recalls. “Where I might not have thought that they would have coped with it very well. But they really did.”

It might be assumed that, in a performing arts-led school, that Burberry Inspire has been a ‘nice



BURBERRY INSPIRE

to have' but wouldn't make a discernible impact on students who lean towards the arts anyway. But this assumption would be wrong. "Yes, we're a performing arts school, but after the Northern Ballet worked with the males, the next year we had a massive cohort of boys who picked to do dance as their GCSE – there was a massive jump there. And, yet again, with Leeds Young Film, the majority of the Year 9 cohort who did the filming with them have picked to do media at KS4." These kinds of clear impacts sit perfectly alongside the very real sense of pride in what the students and teachers have achieved with their arts partners. End of year showcases have been limited by the pandemic, but still students regularly ask to break school rules and use their phones to take photos, so they can show off their work to their families. This, on top of the rest of the successes of Burberry Inspire at Airedale, has been a joyful source of surprise to Stephanie. "I teach them IT and Media, so when you see them in front of a computer, some of them can be quite timid – then the next minute I've seen them performing in their own film!"



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I SEE THE KIDS IN A BIT OF A DIFFERENT LIGHT. OBVIOUSLY WHEN WE SEE THEM AN HOUR A WEEK, IT CAN FEEL A BIT LIKE 'THEY'RE IN, THEY'RE OUT' AND YOU DON'T REALLY GET TO, Y'KNOW, SEE THEM.

