



CASTLEFORD ACADEMY: MAKING CONNECTIONS, CHANGING LIVES

Kathryn Chippendale strongly believes in the power of connection. As Assistant Headteacher at **Castleford Academy**, it's her job to see the bigger picture and be the watchful guardian of everything that is happening at school, looking for ways to improve the experience for her students and fellow teachers. The 'Partnerships and Community Links' page of the Castleford website lists dozens of organisations, bodies, schools, colleges and people with whom it has a relationship. So, as you might expect, four years of Burberry Inspire have given her a myriad of ideas and experiences to draw on.

CASTLEFORD 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



“As an Assistant Head, it’s really made us look at our whole curriculum offer and how we can ensure pupils have rich opportunities to raise their cultural capital for all. For September, we want to continue the legacy of Burberry to accommodate creativity,” she explains. “We’re currently going through the process of the Artsmark award and from September we will timetable Cultural Capital lessons twice a week – timetabled lessons – where they will have one hour of performing arts and one for humanities.” Part of this will see existing partners from Burberry Inspire continuing their relationship with Castleford Academy. The programme has made such an impact on the school, students and teachers that Kathryn is determined to not only maintain these existing ties, but also form new ones with organisations such as Off the Mark and British Youth Theatre. “We are certain that doing this will really engage and enthuse our pupils in relation to creativity. We have always had a strong enrichment offer but Burberry has certainly been our inspiration and we hope to continue our links with those partners.”



This all sounds very practical, but Kathryn’s passion for bringing these experiences to her school comes from the kinds of life-changing moments that they create for the young people involved. For example, while working with Northern Ballet during lockdown, pupils submitted ideas to a unique competition that would bring their choreography to life. As a result, a student from Castleford had their choreography performed on film by a dancer from American Ballet Theatre. “When we came back after lockdown, we were able to show and share that film with all the pupils across school,” recalls Kathryn. “It was just such a moment to be in that assembly. For that pupil to be able to see her work on screen, it was fantastic.”

Another extraordinary highlight was brought about during Castleford’s time with Leeds Playhouse. The pandemic thwarted plans for a trip to the Playhouse

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THE WHOLE JOURNEY HAS BEEN INCREDIBLE FOR US AN ACADEMY, SO MUCH SO THAT WE’RE LOOKING AT HOW WE CAN EXTEND THE BURBERRY PROJECT IN-HOUSE AND WITHIN OUR TRUST. EACH YEAR THE PROJECT HAS REALLY GROWN AND GROWN, AND – DESPITE THE CHALLENGES OF LOCKDOWN – WE’VE STILL MANAGED TO BE A SUCCESS WITH OUR PARTNERS.

itself, so instead a playwright came to the school. “They worked with some of our more vulnerable pupils and together they created a script based on some of our pupils at school and their journey. And then we were able to show that performance in school. So, rather than going to the Playhouse, the Playhouse came to us.” This, in and of itself, is an excellent experience for the students. But it didn’t end there. With the young writers in front row seats, professional actors performed ‘East is East, and Cas is Cas’ for all students from Years 7 to 9, teaching staff, governors and trustees. “The whole play was based on pupils coming from a different culture and being accepted at school and pupils still talk about it today, about how amazing it was,” remembers Kathryn with a smile. “We even had some pupils who stayed behind after the performance to speak to the main actor to say, ‘I’m from Poland and what you’ve done on stage today has really linked with my own story!’” The production went on to be shortlisted for a Music & Drama Education Award and one might say that it’s a shining example of how, together, the school and the programme have connected young people with their power.

It’s clear that joining the dots has happened in many original and innovative ways. Again, the approach taken by the arts partners to demonstrate the multifaceted nature of the creative industry, has opened the eyes of the students, who now want to get involved in aspects that simply weren’t on their radar before the programme. “As a result of Burberry Inspire, we’ve created a performing arts group called ‘The CAST’ (Castleford Academy Stars of Tomorrow). Before it would’ve been ‘if you’re interested in music and you play an instrument, then you can join the orchestra or jazz band’ or ‘if you’re interested in drama, you can perform in one of our showcase events,’” explains Kathryn. “But The CAST is not just performing and musicians, it’s for behind the scenes. We have pupils involved in lighting, set



design and costume.” Much of this has come through Northern Ballet who, during CPD sessions with teaching staff, showed the performing arts team how to make the most of the equipment they have. The CAST has broken down the silos within creative arts at Castleford and brought many disciplines together in one place. The result? Students are increasingly actively interested in pursuing routes into careers that they may not have previously considered.

Of course, it’s important to remember that this is also a lot of fun. If it wasn’t, it would be far harder to create that level of engagement with the students. And some of Kathryn’s fondest memories are from the times when her students really surprised her. When Northern Ballet came in to do ‘creative dance’, staff were a little apprehensive as to how well the boys would engage. “But within a couple of sessions they were absolutely loving it – in the dance studio, pirouetting!” Northern Ballet, Leeds Young Film and Leeds Playhouse have also all played a part in transitioning Year 6 children into Year 7 during the Castleford Summer School. “Because they were feeling quite anxious about coming up to school because we’d not been able to do the normal transition and get them into school as much given the restraints of lockdown. So, instead we ran afternoons with Northern Ballet and Leeds Playhouse, and a full day with Leeds Young Film, as well as mornings of English and Maths.”

However, creating positive relationships is more than just working with outside organisations. Castleford traditionally fosters a culture of two-way communication, with a well-established ‘feedback loop’ in the form of ‘Pupil Voice’, where a student leadership team cascades questions to the wider student body and reports back. It’s a mechanism that works and is respected by both the students and teachers. “So, we’re getting real honesty from the pupils, and they are very honest about their experiences and what they’ve enjoyed,” says Kathryn. She reports excellent feedback from the



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students who have been involved in Burberry Inspire. This isn't limited to pupils, however, and comments, observations and recommendations are also requested from teachers (regarding CPD) and parents. "Every conversation is relevant and really helpful to us," she says.

The joy that Burberry Inspire has brought to Castleford – and to Kathryn – is crystal clear. It's created a sense of urgency and need to continue. A desire to embed the learnings of the past four years into the school, so that there is a clear legacy, yes, but to continue what's been started, so that future students can also benefit. "We have the valuable contacts now, but I do worry about time and the day-to-day commitments that go on in school," she admits. "We're definitely enhancing our curriculum offer, and we want to have more opportunities. Burberry Inspire pushes you – you get those regular reminders 'we've got to move on now, we have an artist in residency due, we have workshops running...' I wish I could do it all the time, to be honest. I have loved leading on the project and it's such a shame it's coming to an end."



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WE TOOK OVER 300 PUPILS TO WATCH CINDERELLA AND WHEN THE PERFORMANCE STARTED, A LOT OF THE PUPILS SAID, "MISS! THEY'RE NOT TALKING!". I THINK THEY THOUGHT IT WAS THEATRE AND THEY'VE NOT EXPERIENCED BALLET BEFORE, SO IT WAS AN EYE-OPENER FOR THEM!

