

Driving Inspiration

A *Creative Bucks* project
awarded the Cultural Olympiad
Inspire Mark



Evaluation of project work 2008/09

WheelPower, Bucks 2012 Group, Disability Arts
Online, Arts Council England



Rachel Gadsden



Caroline Cardus



Signdance Collective

Contents

1. Project Partners
2. The Background
 - Lessons Learnt 2007/08
 - Planning for 2008/09
3. Project 2008/09
 - Aims of the project
 - Format
 - Who took Part 2008/09
4. Outcomes
 - The Music
 - The Assemblies
 - The Interviews
 - The Artwork
 - The Dance work
5. Evaluation
 - The process
 - The feedback
 - Young people and teachers
 - Artists
 - Paralympians
 - Partners
6. Conclusions and the Way forward

Olympia - the birthplace of the Olympics
2784 years on -the whole world knows this fact!

Stoke Mandeville – the birthplace of the Paralympics
How many people know this?

Driving Inspiration is about creating a legacy that celebrates the birthplace of the Paralympics and raises the profile of the disability arts sector in schools and communities in Buckinghamshire and beyond!

1. Project Partners

The original idea of Driving Inspiration came from Creative Bucks, (previously Bucks Arts Partnership) and WheelPower, a national charity promoting wheelchair sport based at Stoke Mandeville Stadium. Creative Bucks is supported and managed by Aylesbury Vale District Council, Buckinghamshire County Council, Chiltern District Council, South Bucks District Council and Wycombe District Council, and received some funding from the Arts Council England South East for the pilot work in 2007/08 and 2008/09.

In 2007/08 support also came from Dada-South, the South East's disability arts agency. In 2008/09 additional support has come from the Bucks 2012 group and from Disability Arts Online.



Paralympian John Harris and Artist Rachel Gadsden during the interview session at Cressex Community School. Signdance Collective at Heritage House, Drawing from pupil at Heritage House, Pupil from Buckingham Primary School in her 'gloves'.

2. The Background

Driving Inspiration is collaboration between disabled artists, Paralympians and disabled and non-disabled young people.

It is about telling the story of the Paralympics and Paralympians and inspiring young people through dance/theatre, visual arts, creative writing, music and film.

This evaluation follows the development of the project through from the pilot year to year 2, a developmental phase, and the creation of a plan for 2009-2011.

Lessons Learnt in 2007/2008

The 2007/08 Pilot evaluation suggested:

- Profiling the artists and partners in the assemblies
- Providing marketing material on the project directing young people to partners' websites
- Allowing for more planning time with artists and Paralympians
- Outreach to other schools
- More school planning time

Planning for 2008/2009

In October 2008 The 2007/2008 team (partners, artists and Paralympians) were brought back together for a full day to plan out and agree the future approach based on their own experiences and the evaluation.

WheelPower at Stoke Mandeville Stadium hosted the event and an independent facilitator was contracted to help us through a complex project with a wide team.

The day confirmed the partners' shared aims, individual contributions in terms of support and a proposed management structure. In addition we developed a budget and an outline plan for project work over the next 6 months.

It was also agreed that a secondary school, Mandeville School based close to the stadium became a fifth focus school, with additional funding being provided by Aylesbury Vale District Council.



Work with Caroline Cardus

3. Project 2008/2009

Aim of the Project

- Driving Inspiration is about creating a legacy that celebrates the birthplace of the Paralympics and raises the profile of the disability arts sector in schools and communities in Buckinghamshire and beyond!

Through:

- Recording and drawing on the personal, human stories of the participating artists and paralympians.
- Providing a unique experience for artists to engage with Paralympians
- Raising the profile of the disability arts sector and Stoke Mandeville Stadium in Buckinghamshire and beyond
- Exploring changing attitudes to disability/breaking down assumptions/raising awareness of achievement in the sector.
- Being exciting and engaging for young people
- Exploring links with 2012, Accentuate and the Regional Cultural Olympiad
- Producing artwork that could lead to welcome posters.
- Publicising the project and showcase outputs on Disability Arts Online.

Format

The format of the 2008/9 programme was over 2 days, with about 2 weeks between day 1 and day 2.

In early planning meetings with Mandeville School they asked if they could also do a music project and found over two thirds of the money, enabling this to happen.

The musicians were selected as they had experience of working with Signdance Collective who would ultimately use the music to inspire their dance work, alongside the visual material.

After planning, the musicians carried out a three day residency working with the school's jazz orchestra. Initially they explored the emotions around being a participant in the Paralympics and through a series of improvisation lessons translated this into a 15 minute piece of music.

Day 1

Assembly

- In most cases the assemblies were introduced by the school, a demonstration of their engagement.
- A short introductory presentation from the Creative Bucks Coordinator about the project and its aims and the history of Stoke Mandeville as the birthplace of the Paralympics.

- Presentations from each of the 2 visual artists and the Paralympian. The artists showed images of their work and talked about it. The Paralympians talked about their careers, did demonstrations, showed their medals and photos.
- An opportunity for questions.

Interviews

- questions were written on separate sheets and laid down facing up all over the floor of the room. The questions were based on those asked informally throughout the day last year. (Questions in visual forms were also produced to help those with special learning needs engage fully).
- Young people were instructed to select a question they wanted to ask of either the artists or Paralympians, but they had to be willing to have it asked back of them. They could also devise their own question.
- Everyone sat around in an informal circle and a volunteer was asked to begin with their question.

After the interviews the young people were divided into two groups, one to work with Rachel and one to work with the Paralympian, swapping half way through the day. During this time small numbers worked on a rota basis with Caroline. At the end of the day time was put aside for reflection and immediate evaluation.

Visual Arts work

Rachel Gadsden:

Rachel got the young people to look at the branding of the Olympics and Paralympics by looking at copies of past material. They also discussed the emotion and energy behind participating in something like the Paralympics reflecting on what the Paralympian had said in the interview and assembly. They were then asked to design their own images. They could use physical work that the Paralympian was doing with another group to help with their work.

Caroline Cardus:

Caroline worked with small groups to get young people thinking about what inspired them. Their thoughts were then used to inspire writing on and decorating surgical gloves. They were then photographed using a Mac package and allowed to chose special effects.

Paralympian work

Andy Blake –divided the young people into groups to devise new inclusive games, with rules and regulations. Then the groups were brought together to play the games and test them out and make a choice as to which one worked best.

John Harris –warmed the young people up by getting them to tie balloons to their ankles with the aim of bursting everyone else's balloon by stamping on it

and therefore becoming the winner. It was fast, chaotic, a bit scary, very noisy but loved. He then played ball games with them getting them seated in chairs allowing limited movement. They played competitively in teams. John also allowed them to try out his wheelchair and timed races.

Clare Strange – worked with young people using a variety of ball games that were very inclusive.

Sophie Christiansen – had devised a number of techniques to teach young people about what it is like to have cerebral palsy for example they had to balance on gym balls, write with their left hand if they were right handed 'I am learning what it is like to have cerebral palsy and draw plans of their homes and think about access issues for people.

Day 2

Assembly

- Where some different young people were involved , a similar introduction to that of Day 1 was repeated
- Performance from Signdance Collective about communication.

Young people were provided with postcard about the project after the assemblies.

Dance theatre work

Signdance Collective:

Prior to the week of Day 2 Signdance Collective were provided with the music and visual artwork to act as an inspirational tool to devising dance work with the young people.

They began their sessions with a series of improvisations getting the young people to relax and lose some of the inhibitions they can have as teenagers. Through this process they explained the philosophy behind their practice and the influence of 'signing'.

They bought with them a simple set, a cloth with peep gaps for projecting the images on to, their technician and a musician to add to the music score.

Through the course of the day the work was developed with the image projections and a mix of the live and recorded music. It was then performed to a school year group. Time was allowed at the end to reflect.

Who took part

The Schools

The 5 focus schools Buckingham Primary, Cressex Community School, Beaconsfield School, Heritage House School and Mandeville School were identified through the local education authority for their inclusive policies and learning needs status. 4 of the 5 schools involved have integrated policies. The fifth school, Heritage House is for young people with learning disabilities.

One of the schools from the pilot dropped out of the project in December at short notice due to other contracted commitments, emphasising the need to issue contracts to the schools. The education authority helped us select an alternative school, Cressex Community School. Pupils at the school are predominantly from Asian backgrounds with 80% receiving free school

meals. They were an excellent choice and were fully engaging and gave us many new ideas.

There was a mix of disabled and non disabled young people involved approximately 30% and 60% respectively. The remaining 10% were made up of young people with school statements. Approximately 25% of our participants in 2008/2009 were from ethnic backgrounds. Mandeville School was a new additional school for 2008/2009 taking the total from 4 to 5. They are based a short walking distance from Stoke Mandeville Stadium, have excellent music and sports department, with pupils from a mix of ethnic backgrounds and an integrated policy. It felt it was essential to have a school close to Stoke Mandeville Hospital itself, and they were an excellent choice again greatly contributing to the development of the project.

In addition to the 5 focus schools, work at Mandeville School and Beaconsfield school was attended by a total of 4 other schools with whom they have a working relationship.

In total around 900 young people participated through the assemblies, with 170 of these directly involved in the activities. A total of 13 teachers/carers also took part.

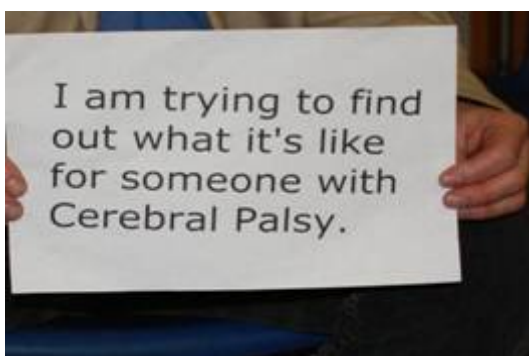
The artists

2 disabled visual artists, Rachel Gadsden and Caroline Cardus, and 2 disabled and deaf dance theatre artists, Signdance Collective, and 3 musicians (1 disabled).

The Paralympians

4 Paralympians – Andy Blake (Basketball), Clare Strange (Basketball), Sophie Christiansen (Equestrian) and John Harris (Discus).

In addition, a local film making company attended the days to record events.



Clockwise from top left: Work with Paralympian Sophie Christiansen, Music production, young persons drawing work with Rachel Gadsden, Paralympian and artist interviews.



4. Outcomes

The Music

- Through exploring the emotional and physical aspects of Paralympians the young people engaged in a debate about disability that they fed into their composition
- The work pushed their ability to improvise within a large group
- Each participant had to lead a section of the music, which was a new experience for the majority.

The Assemblies

- The clear structure of the assemblies enabled the young people and teachers to understand the project and engage in the life and work of both the artists and the Paralympians.
- The assemblies were remembered as exciting and inspirational by the young people and teachers in the evaluation.
- The postcard was viewed as a good idea to enable participants to investigate into disability arts and sports after the event.

The Interviews

- The process provided a great way for the young people to really engage with the artists and Paralympians and develop an in depth understanding of them as a person.
- The questioning back to young people by the artists and Paralympians broke down the barrier of dealing with successful school guests, famous people! It made the young people think of their own stories, setting the scene for the work to come later in the day.
- The questioning back created debate and discussion beyond expectations. One young man explained to the group about his own disability something he had never done at school.
- Young people talked about their own families and disability, recognising that disability comes in many forms by the end of the interview process.

The Artwork

Rachel

- Looking at previous branding and discussing it built young people's awareness of 'image' and 'portrayal' of disability
- The work was seen as fun and everyone happily engaged with the tasks. Many were very surprised by the skill they had and were unaware of. Considerable pride was acquired
- It provided another opportunity to look at Rachel's work and discuss her approach and also to ask her about her disability
- Looking at branding also engaged the young people in the Paralympic movement
- Discussing movement and how this might vary prompted further reflection on physical disability

Caroline

- The task gave young people an opportunity to think about their own personal stories and to consider what inspiration was and what inspired them
- The task was engaging, all were very willing to take part and the instant capture of the work and immediate feedback worked very well to foster enjoyment and gratification.
- Young people had to think about how they wanted to be portrayed in their image and what this might say about them, the skill of reflection was developed
- IT skills were developed using Caroline's Mac computer

The Dancework

- Most of the young people took part but there were some that really did not want to dance
- Most of the young people enjoyed and engaged in the work, though it took time for this to happen
- Some who were sceptical about participating found they really loved it
- The task raised awareness of the dance disability sector, and how both Isolte and David managed their careers as dancers
- The task developed skills in improvisation and team work.
- The task made young people reflect more deeply about what inspired them

Summary of Outcomes

The physical outcomes:

- The project obtained an 'Inspire' Mark award
- A piece of music was composed
- 4 interviews with Paralympians and the artists were carried out involving everyone in questions and answers
- Art work providing ideas for welcome posters was produced
- Dances were devised and performed, drawing on the visual art work and interviews
- The work was celebrated on Disability Arts Online
- Detailed evaluation took place and a two year development plan was produced.

Non physical outcomes: The majority of participants

- Felt very inspired by both the Paralympians and the artists
- Learnt new skills that they were unaware they had in art, music, dance, interviewing and integrated games
- Learnt about Stoke Mandeville as the birthplace of the Paralympic games
- Learnt to work with teams of young people that they did not know from within their own schools and from other schools
- Developed a better understanding of disability
- Learnt where to go for further information
- Really enjoyed participating!

5. Evaluation

The Process

- During the days through informal recording
- At the end of each day in a reflection session with the young people, and then with the artists and Paralympians
- At a visit to the school a few weeks later when the Creative Bucks Co-ordinator ran separate focus groups with young people and staff. During these sessions young people were asked to decorate a paper plate in response to a series of questions half about the project they had just done and half about what they would like to do in the future. The same method was offered to the teachers, although some preferred general conversations.
- In addition I-Van a local film company was commissioned to film the whole project capturing its development and recording its purpose.

Detailed Feedback

Young People and Teachers

Young People: Nearly all the young people enjoyed the work and had remembered aspects of it in detail. Preferences were widespread across the art, sport and dance theatre work. A high number, over 50% had enjoyed an aspect of the work that they had not expected to enjoy or be good at. The majority had learnt about or reflected on the theme of disability since, when asked what they had learnt from the artists and Paralympians one girl from Buckingham Primary said 'All people are special whatever their ability'. This was a common response. A word often used in reflection regarding the people they worked with was 'Amazing'. Where schools had invited partner school to participate in the work all the children really enjoyed it despite feeling shy to begin with, 'I was really proud of making a performance with people I didn't know'.

Teachers: The teachers felt the young people benefited enormously from working with other schools. In most cases they felt the level of activity on Day 1 worked well, though a few felt that the sports activity was at times distracting. 'The young people wanted to try new things' Mandeville teacher. A general comment was that to have some kind of lesson plan in advance would help teachers engage more and support the work with greater confidence.

Artists

Musicians: 'This was a new experience for us and to some extent we did not know what to expect. The young people and teachers were fantastic and produced what we think is a brilliant piece of music'. The teachers felt that the musicians could have pushed the young people further and that some kind of lesson plan would have helped everyone understand the process better.

Rachel: 'It is amazing how the young people respond to the project, they all try. I would have liked to have had more time to develop the work a little further. However when I reflected and looked back at the work I realised how fantastic it was'. Some wonderful work was produced in a short period of time which could be used for the development of posters but was not complete enough at this stage requiring more time.

Caroline: 'I was really pleased with the simplicity of the process I developed and how manageable it was. It has left me thinking hard about how you ask young people a question like 'What inspires you?' My initial approach did not work, I had to dig deeper. The images they produced looked great and the young people liked them. I led on the interview process and was really pleased how this went. Getting young people to look more deeply into what inspired them was a hard process even working in small groups. For example if football inspired them, getting them to explain why was very hard to extract and needs more exploration to enrich future work.'

Signdance Collective: 'We worked with some wonderful children and young people. We do not normally do 'workshops' and our approach, improvisation based is quite challenging. SDC were good at getting young people think about what inspired them in more depth, but two schools felt that their way of working risked disengaging some. The joyous feedback from one disabled boy at Mandeville School some weeks later had the audience close to tears, he had never danced before and now couldn't stop.'

Shared comments:

More planning time. The crossover of work did not work as well as it might despite time being put aside. The need to be flexible with schools and realise that they are large companies with complex operations and cannot always be as flexible as we would like. The high level of amazing young people and teachers worked with. The success of the interview process.

Paralympians

John Harris: 'I love it! It is what I enjoy most, the kids are amazing, all special. I feel that if I can inspire them just a little that I have done a worthy job. We all need encouragement and this project gives them something to make them feel special'.

Andy Blake: 'I had a great time again and found the assembly slightly less nerve racking. It has made me realise that I have a lot in common with the artists, they are also very driven'.

All the Paralympians fed back positively about their experience of interacting and working with the young people and artists.

There was no negative feedback about the work of the Paralympians. The young people responded well to the Powerpoint presentation that Sophie had devised and the images of her when she was younger.

Partners

Creative Bucks Partners: The Creative Bucks partners attending some of the activities in their respective areas. The number of partners means the feedback required can be diverse, reflecting their various agendas and in future it would be important to feedback school by school. Aylesbury Vale said The workshops provided an excellent introduction to understanding the challenges and achievements of a Paralympian. The work with the artists that followed enabled the participants to explore those experiences further. The art workshops introduced participants to new skills and provided insight into the processes employed by a professional artist. These workshops contribute

towards the council's Every Child Matters agenda. They also play a key role in "place setting" as part of the council's growth agenda, by raising significant awareness within young people of the role Stoke Mandeville Hospital played in the development of the Paralympics.'

Buckinghamshire County Council agreed with this and added 'we need ensure that at the end of each day there is time for the students to reflect properly on the day's activities and what they've contributed in order that they can really appreciate what they've learnt'.

If the project is to become part of Accentuate, Outcome 4 it was also considered essential that the monitoring take into account the agreed objectives such as skills developed. The postcard and the certificates used to promote the partners and their work in the disability sectors were seen as a very positive step forward.

WheelPower: Wheelpower provided information for the assemblies on the history of the Paralympics and Stoke Mandeville. They were pleased with the way this information was provided feeling that it met the main aims laid out at the start. They feel that the different approaches by the Paralympians were all successful and that it was important for individual personalities to work in a way that they were comfortable with, but it was also useful for them to see what others had done.

Disability Arts Online: The initial plans had looked at enabling young people to write up the interviews and put sound bites online through Disability Arts Online. The timescale did not allow this to happen. Getting images and sound snippets online needed more consideration/planning than previously anticipated. Ways of allowing the voice of young people to direct this work needs exploring, for example could a number of young people at the focus schools take on this role as the project is fully implemented over the next three years.



Artwork with Caroline Cardus and dance work with Sigdance Collective



6. Conclusions and the Way Forward

What did drive their inspiration:

- The assemblies
- The interviews
- Tasks that were fun and that they were given an understanding of
- Work that did not put them in them too much in the limelight
- Work that made them reflect upon themselves
- Working in teams that crossed year groups and schools
- Having a memento of the work (a postcard and certificate of participation)
- Being allowed to input into development ideas

Raising the level of inspiration:

- There is no such thing as too much planning, ensure that a form of lesson plan is devised for the different areas of work and address the issue of how effective crossover of work takes place
- Getting young people to really explore what inspires them needs further thought and consideration. We need to consider how we develop thinking and reflective skills as part of the project development.
- Organise trips and opportunities to come along to Stoke Mandeville.
- Once the work is finished it is important to maintain momentum and ensure the follow up work, evaluations, getting information online etc happens. Next time organise a day shortly after the last event to pull this together as a team.
- Ensure all access issues are covered well in advance
- Capturing the moments of discovery and joy is difficult, consider an instant pod casting point during the project days. It is these stories that are the real evidence of life changing experiences. We see them happen and miss the moment to record it.
- Allow more time to develop work for showcasing

The Way Forward – What's on my plate?

The way forward was explored separately with each school at part of the final evaluation, to ensure that the young people and teachers input into the planning process for 2009-12. It was also devised through discussion with the partners, artists and Paralympians, taking consideration of becoming part of the delivery programme for Accentuate Outcome 4.

For 2009-11 we identified that:

- The focus schools programme must take account of the schools' ability to work off curriculum and timetable
- A clear lesson plan needs to be devised with specific objectives
- Day long outreach programme must be linked to the focus school work and what has been learnt from the pilots programme

- Training for artists and Paralympians was required to assist them in devising presentations, planning for workshops in schools and with community groups, and understanding the project.
- The project should develop as part of Accentuate, particularly linked to the Outcome 4 relating to archive development and understanding of disability and opportunities for showcasing.
- The type of artforms and Paralympians the schools are interested in are diverse
- Schools were keen to explore opportunities that led to international links
- The project was capable of developing wider life skills beyond the original aims of artistic skills, like team working, debate, reflection and investigation. Outcomes for this should be developed with teaching staff at the focus schools.
- Allow adequate time for evaluation at the end of the day so that the young people can realise and appreciate what they have learnt
- That information was required at the end of each project to ensure that participants knew where to go for further information on the disability arts and sports sector, and a way of monitoring the longer term effect of the project needed to be devised.

What the plates said:

Type of artistic work

More of the same, street dance, rock music, pop music, movie music, film, animation, art (drawing and painting), digital art, more gloves, a dance performance to do with the torch. All were keen to have their work showcased in some form. Mandeville School were particularly keen on music and the visual arts with links into English through the interviews, blogging and pod casts. Cressex School were keen on more of the same and animation. Beaconsfield School were keen on the visual art side, Buckingham Primary were very keen on dance, and also the visual side. Heritage House loved it all but would like to look at animation.

Type of sports

Tennis, swimming, Wheelchair racing, basketball and rugby were the most popular.

Duration of work

2-3 days in the senior schools. Up to 1 week at Buckingham Primary School and Heritage House school, to enable more in depth work.

Ideas for International links

All the schools had formal or informal international links that they would like to draw on for interviewing Paralympians from overseas.

General

Working with the young people from the other schools, working with other young people in our school. Chances to visit the stadium. Chances to watch some Paralympic events. Chance to play some Paralympic games and use wheelchairs. Wanting to hold a torch. Lots more interviews and lots more assemblies.

