

A Window to the World

*A Window to the World highlights both the value of creativity and performing and visual arts in every young person's education and development. With policy changes impacting on the provision of arts in schools, teachers **Stéph Cubbin**, **Pete Thomas** and headteacher **Kat Pugh** explain how they were compelled to make this powerful film*

A Window to the World depicts the importance of the arts in a rounded education and seeks to show that the arts are academically rigorous, challenging and dynamic. Arts advocacy, which is based on the view that 'art saved me' or that 'drama kept me out of crime', can diminish the value of the arts education as it is only 'rescues' a marginalised few rather than all school pupils.

Whilst this view has meaning for some it does not convince headteachers to devote time and budget to the arts, nor does it convince policymakers that the place of the arts in education is imperative.

St Marylebone School is a multi-faith Church of England, all-girl, non-selective state school with a mixed sixth form. We have a varied cohort of students chosen from different socio-economic backgrounds and have chosen not to compromise our arts offering because we know pupils thrive, develop and achieve because of these subjects. Our students say: 'The arts have enabled me to develop academically' or 'Studying dance, theory and practice has taught me rigour, theory and application. I'm now studying French and Spanish at university next year.'

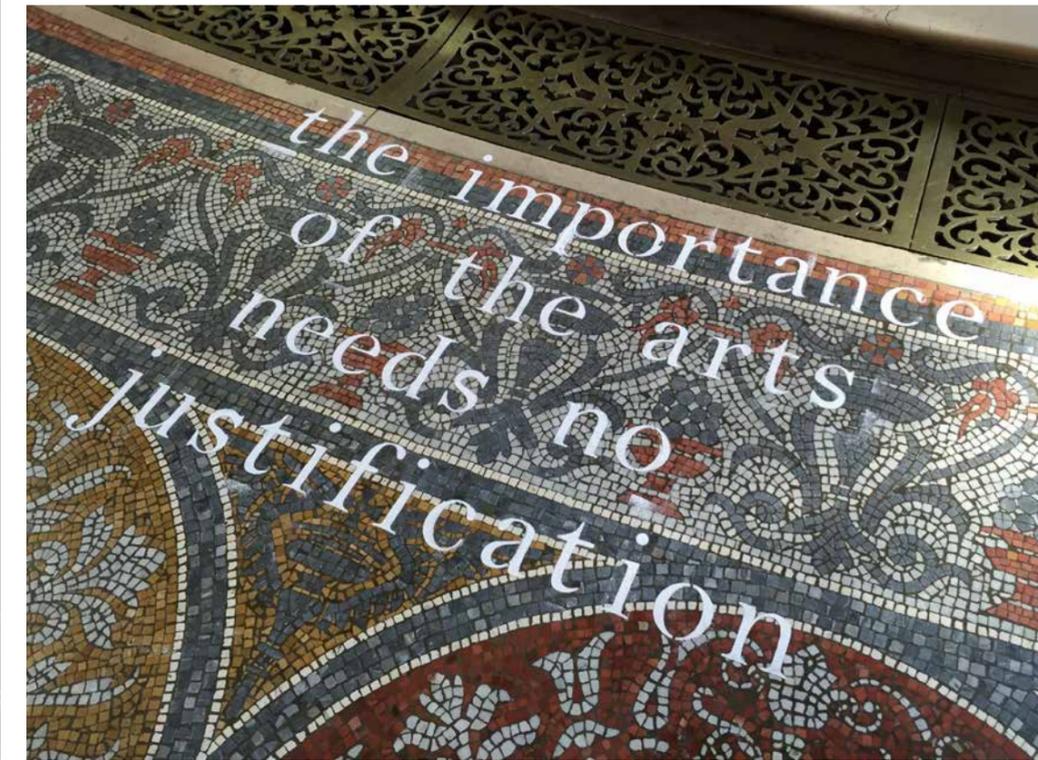
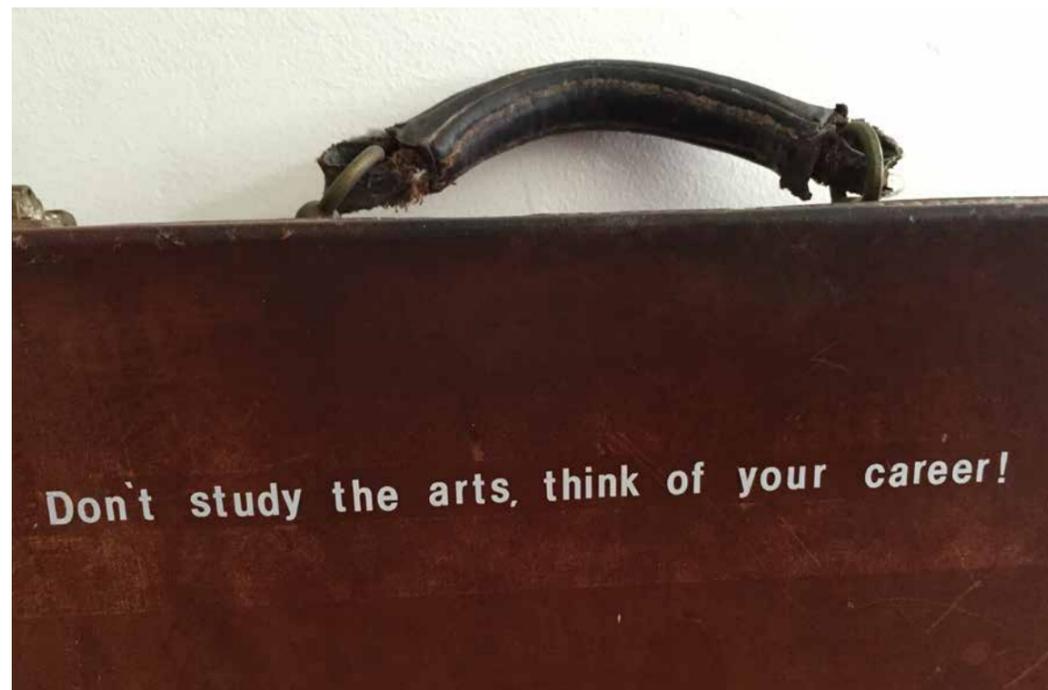
The arts have been the fuel behind the success and vibrancy of St Marylebone for years. It has informed our pedagogy, created a culture of

confidence and achievement, contributed to excellence in teaching and learning across all our subjects.

Meantime, the policymakers' message to parents and young people counters this argument, creating concern that schools should only take STEM subjects. Indeed, the Education Minister Nicky Morgan MP, at a speech given at a 'Your Life' launch, claimed that pupils are 'held back' by studying arts subjects. The view that 'creative' subjects are 'soft' and that hard 'academic' courses only lead to jobs is clearly untrue. Art and design, dance, drama and music are all academically rigorous. What's more, maths, history and science are creative!

At St Marylebone the school community is convinced by this argument, and it is not alone. The National Society for Education in Art and Design (NSEAD) in their year-on-year surveys have tracked a decrease in allocated time for art and design in schools from primary through to A-level. In higher education too, art and design foundation courses as well as degrees have closed in recent years. We made the film at a time of policy change, to provide advocacy and a voice for our subject.

So what will make a difference? We believe in collaboration between organisations and universities, providing up to the minute, vital



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and engaging week-by-week programmes in schools. We believe in courses and curriculums that promote the arts as a way of life and as a career choice, not just as a pleasant pastime. We need more political leaders who have graduated in arts subjects (as many of our excellent senior leadership team did) to fight for funding for schools in which the arts are protected and prioritised just as much as STEM.

Then there's the question of quality. Why would talented artist-teachers enter the teaching profession if they were to be the lone art and design teacher in a school where the arts were marginalised? Add to this that art and design, drama and music PGCEs are studied bursary-free, in contrast to other subjects where course

fees are paid for, and we are looking at a shortage of arts teachers in the future.

There is hope. The arts advocates in our film spoke out because they want to change STEM to STEAM. They want arts in the EBacc. They are hoping that all students receive a full and rounded education, personalised and valued, in which the arts are a full part and where creativity runs through, bursting its banks across all teaching and learning.

The film was made in-house, and we interviewed our participants in-between lessons and in gained time after exam groups left. The contributors, some of which were known to the school, or others known to be involved in advocacy, had been contacted by the teachers asking them to join the chorus singing the value of the arts.

At the end of the summer term, when many students are involved in trips and cross-curricular events, the teachers were given time by the senior leadership team to edit the hours of material. Here, St Marylebone ties its colours boldly to the mast. We hope not to be sailing alone and welcome any support or collaboration which will strengthen our voyage.

The film can be found: [youtube.com/watch?v=CftiEuG6Frk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CftiEuG6Frk) ■

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