



## CASE STUDY

**SUNNYDOWN SCHOOL**  
[sunnydown.surrey.sch.uk](http://sunnydown.surrey.sch.uk)

‘ Sunnydown School is a maintained Special school for boys with Communication and Interaction difficulties (COIN). Boys who attend the school (from year 7) have an EHC Plan (Education Health and Care Plan) outlining their needs in this area. The school complies with the requirements outlined in the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (2014).

The school has 80 places which include provision for 23 weekly or part weekly boarders. To benefit from the provision, the students should be able to access a mainstream curriculum that leads to GCSE exams at the end of Year 11.’

*Sunnydown SEN Information Report*



## FEEDBACK FOLLOWING TASTER SESSION

**FROM: Andrea Jenson - Whole School Literacy**

**Erica Tomcova- Teaching Assistant**

**SUNNYDOWN SCHOOL**

Brief description of activities across the workshop:

The session was based on movement and dance that we might recognise from sports based activities.

Length of contact time students experienced with dance practitioners:

Each Key Stage 3 year group had 1 hour and a half with the dance practitioners.

Number of students and year group participating:

Sunnydown School is a COIN school with the majority of pupils having high functioning autism and communication difficulties. All pupils in Key Stage 3 were given a chance to participate, with 2 form groups per year group, a total of 6 classes and 51 pupils.

The pilot workshop went well because:

All pupils in Key Stage 3 were given the opportunity to be involved, there was no pressure. So those pupils that really wanted to participate really enjoyed it and got involved. It included many pupils that would not normally get involved with anything that is physically active.

The pilot workshop would have been even better if:

The activity was an hour long rather than an hour and a half. Pupils could have chosen music to move too and the starter was shorter. The workshop evolved and changed as the day went on as a result of this.

Outcomes discussed at pre- programme meetings for your school:

Inspiring boys through dance as a non-verbal form of expression; using story telling through dance. Broader outcomes are to raise self-esteem, verbal communication social skills and aspirations of the pupils. There is a possibility of facilitating the whole school in a performance production (set-building, costume etc).

Please detail any changes or developments to these outcomes arising as a result of the pilot workshop:

Dance workshops are to start at an hour and a half per session on a Friday from 9.15-10.45 a.m. This forms part of the diverse curriculum offered to pupils on that day. Then eventually the time will increase to 11.05 and onto 12.05 p.m. This will start at the earliest in the Summer term and only be a term long. The dance practitioners will come in beforehand to give some idea of the performance on a Monday morning during our fifteen minute assembly.

Please detail next steps agreed by school and dance provider:

We are hoping for a performance outcome with Matthew Bourne's version of Edward Scissorhands and we are also considering where this will take place. Either at school with other end of term activities, or hire out a local venue or include local primary schools which we have worked with in the past. We are hoping that through this experience a longer term legacy will happen and include CPD for staff, maybe from the PE department to take on this exciting challenge.



PROVIDERS: **NEW ADVENTURES**

FACILITATORS: JAMIE AND PAUL

PHASE TWO

### AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- \*To challenge perceptions of young people, parents and teachers of who dance is for
- \*To raise learning aspirations
- \*To see young people's interpersonal skills develop throughout the duration of the project
- \*For practitioners to develop their skills when offering accessible opportunities

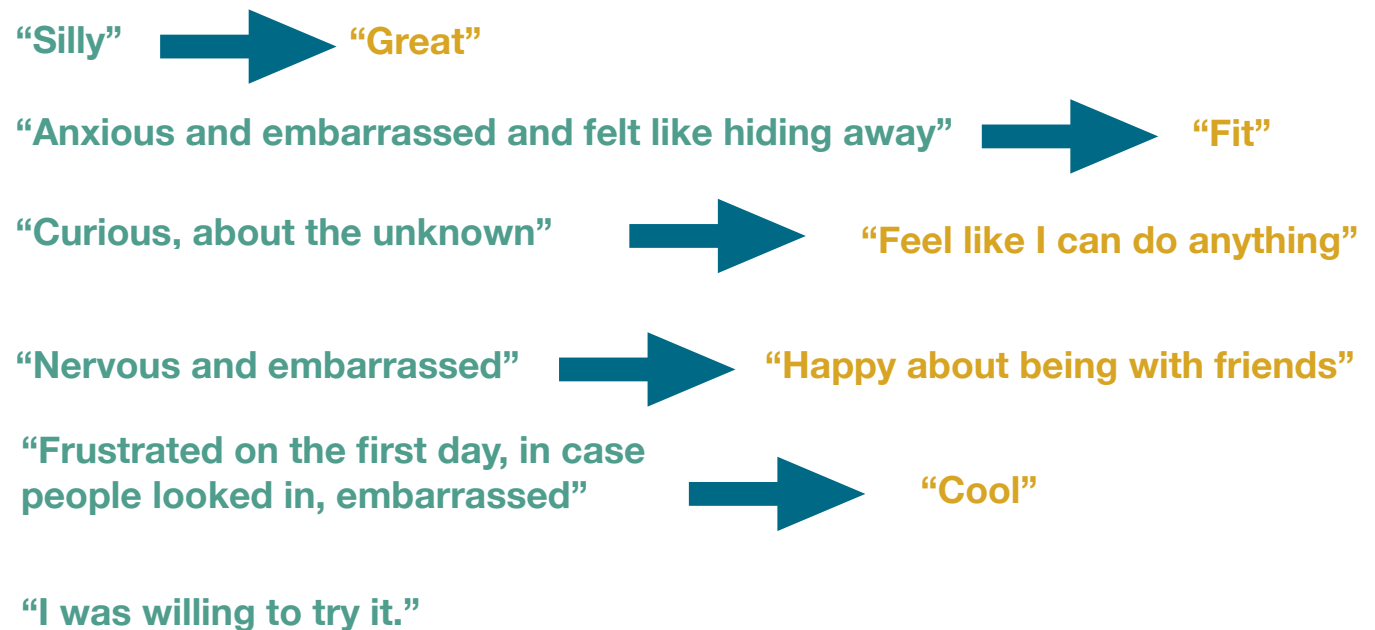
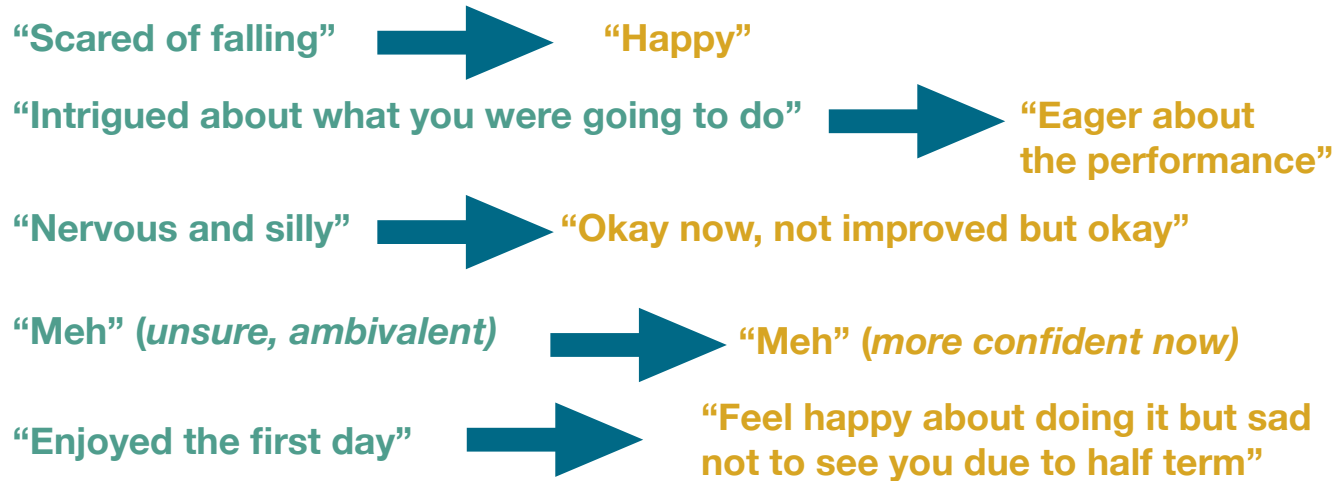


### STRUCTURE

- \*New Adventures held a taster day comprising 3 workshops with different age groups.
- \*12 boys, across different age groups, signed up for the 10 regular one and a half hour weekly sessions during the Autumn 2019 term
- \*The project was inspired by Matthew Bourne's version of 'Edward Scissorhands' which explores the theme of 'difference'. Culminated in a 10 minute performance piece for students, staff and parents
- \*CPD for Class teacher, Erica Tomcova, taking part in all of the sessions and supporting the students throughout the project

# FEEDBACK

At the end of the **FIRST** and **FOURTH** session students were asked how they had felt whilst they were taking part and working together as a team.





After the final session and performance **STUDENTS** were asked what they had learnt, what they found challenging and what they felt that they had achieved? Afterwards their teacher, **ERICA TOMCOVA** added some of her thoughts alongside each of the students comments.

“Learnt not to give up, to keep going. Enjoyed the dancing as it put me in a good mood” “He learnt to be more self-confident. Found doing all the moves at once challenging to remember. Enjoyed the dance as a way to express himself.”

“Something came out of A when he was given a role”

“I think I gave my character a backstory all of the way through.” “He learnt how to fully engage, inhabiting a character. Became more focussed. Challenges: Trying to contain all his energy. He mastered it by



focussing on what he was doing rather than what he felt like doing. He's self-aware when he gets carried away, apologises and then gets stuck back in. He enjoyed the acting and creating different scenarios and using his imagination.”

“Learnt the Edward Scissorhands story.” “Found the whole process challenging but overcame it by practising. Enjoyed everything, even though at the beginning of the process he stated that he “hated” it, now he kind of enjoys it.”

“I learnt that dance isn't just for girls, it's for everyone. Dance makes me feel good and happy. I've enjoyed the whole experience, even though other people said that dance wasn't for men it didn't stop me” “He didn't feel good at the beginning “I can't do this” but when offered a role it made him think “I could do it” because others believed he could.”



## WRITTEN FEEDBACK - FOLLOWING PHASE TWO

Erica Tomcova - Teaching Assistant



### **What do you think the perceptions of dance were before this project began at Sunnydown?**

I think we as a school, students and teachers, weren't sure what to expect at first. We all thought it will be non stop dancing. As we are a boys only school we were really unsure how if the boys would bite into the idea of them dancing. That's why having a session when they could come along and just have a look to see what it is about, was great idea.

We were all excited to see how it was going to work. Sometimes the boys like to try new things, but could be put off by their friends. So some of the students who came and had a go then decided to stay and carry on which was great. Others found it was not for them which is great too, as at least they now know what it is about.

### **Before this project began what were your expectations of the students trying something new and facing new challenges?**

This project is amazing, as I am personally taking part in it and I love anything that is new and I love challenge too. At the moment we have 12 boys who are taking part which is absolutely amazing. Every session they have learnt something new. They are showing lots of resilience, patience , cooperation and they are willing to learn new things. It is lovely to see them enjoying every session, laughing , giggling , doing activities that involves parts of dancing. Boys might not even realise they are dancing already. Some of the boys ( including staff) were shy at the beginning but each week we were able to slowly get used to taking our socks off and performing in front of each other.

### **What are some of the skills the students have developed while taking part and what have you all enjoyed ?**

I really liked each session, It was fun and different each time. It is a full work out so at the end I feel like I have been to gym! We are constantly smiling. It is also great to sit at the end of each session and hear feedback from everyone about how the session went. I love it.

I would love us to work together again in the future and maybe more boys will join now that they have seen the performance.



## TEACHER INTERVIEWS - FOLLOWING PHASE TWO

Andrea Jenson - Whole School Literacy and Erica Tomcova - Teaching Assistant

Who took part in the project?

**Andrea:** We agreed that New Adventures would come into an assembly and explain what the project would be and share videos about who New Adventures were. There was a lot of interest, Paul and Jamie brought a lot of energy to the session and the following week they invited the students to enjoy a taster session.

**Erica:** Everyone could join in, see what was happening and following the session we had ten who attended regularly. As a TA I thought it was important to get involved in every session. If the boys see me taking my shoes and socks off and taking part then they can think that if she can do it so can I.

**Andrea:** With a school that has 80 students, boys with special educational needs and communication and interaction needs, that is quite a high percentage of the school.

Had you heard of New Adventures and their work before the beginning of the project?

**Erica:** Yes, because Andrea had got tickets for us to see one of their shows before the project. I expected the workshop to be very similar to the performance but they were different and worked with our students very well. For me it was amazing, really really good.

**Andrea:** Yes, I've known about New Adventures for some time and have seen all of their shows. I encourage everyone I know to come to their shows, it's unbelievable, it's ballet but not ballet, just not what you'd expect at all.

Did you have any reservations about the company coming into school?

**Andrea:** I didn't, because I really believe in movement as being a form of expression and communication, especially for a school like ours. However, I did understand the reservations of some of the other members of staff who said that the boys won't buy into this project, they don't like anything new, they don't like to be out of their comfort zone, they won't do dance, even if it's called movement. But, that all changed, we called it dance and went for it, the boys loved it.





**Erica:** I think sometimes there is so much peer pressure that stops the boys taking part in things. There was one student who said that his friends had told him that dance was boring but he said that he was glad that he took part and he really enjoyed it.

I was sceptical at the beginning as I thought it was all going to be ballet. As each week went on it was good to see how things came together. It was stressful, having to work with behaviour issues, but at the end to see how everyone responded was brilliant.

**Were you surprised by any of your students engagement levels or behaviour during and/or following the sessions?**

**Erica:** We had one student that was really enjoying the sessions and joining in until we said that there was a performance at the end. He didn't have the confidence to perform in front of everyone so dropped out. He did enjoy the eight sessions that he came to and watched the performance too.

**Andrea:** There was another student who Erica worked closely with who does need that 1-1 support. It was moving for staff and other students to see how he followed instructions, so fully engaged, PERFORMING! It was really brilliant actually. You could see him thinking about what he had just done, what was coming next, sequencing ideas, all so important for him.

**Erica:** At lunch time and breaks we would practise the moves together and his eyes would light up. He told me that he practised at home in the kitchen. Before this he would say that he didn't like dance and that he didn't want to do it but everything changed for him, he wants to do it everyday now. I'm so proud of him.

A lot of the boys who came to the performance were surprised at what the others had done.

**Andrea:** When we sat down to watch the final performance I don't think any of us knew how brilliant it was going to be. It was phenomenal. It was quite short but as a piece of art it kinda blew our minds! You can't anticipate that. The 10 weeks on their own had been brilliant but for that piece at the end, it was just perfect.



### Have there been any challenges?

**Andrea:** Logistically there were lots of things to organise because we needed the gym so had to move the sessions that originally took place in there to another space. We needed the staff, Erica, Ben and Richard but over the weeks Ben and Richard had to be in different places. Getting the buy in from the staff was tricky, some didn't think it was going to work .

**Erica** It was quite challenging as I was the only teacher in the sessions supporting Paul and Jamie but was also working 1-1 with a student and looking out for the other students as well.

### Overall what have the benefits been to you, your students and other members of staff?

**Erica:** Both Paul and Jamie worked really well with the boys, they saw when they were getting restless and found ways to relax and defuse situations, they were brilliant.

**Andrea:** Quite quickly Paul picked up on the posters around the school and incorporated the semantics of how we learn at Sunnydown into the sessions. Other staff members were amazed at the performance and many had 'moist eyes' seeing how certain boys responded and how well they did.

### If there was funding to deliver another arts project would you like to take part and what elements would you suggest were kept the same and what might you change?

**Andrea:** If we would be able to have New Adventures in again for another project, please let them come back, I think we would have an even bigger buy in, especially after seeing the performance.

**Andrea:** I think it highlights that as a school we really value the arts and that we can adapt and find space to make sure its part of a students experience. We can pull them off timetable. Adapting and changing things is something that people with autism can find difficult to do. Their positive response has been an unexpected bonus.

**Erica:** It is important to show that dance isn't just for girls. As Paul said to the boys, "if you want to dance just go for it."

**Andrea:** It was so important for the boys. I think it had a positive impact on their behaviour.

## INTERVIEWS - STUDENTS 'O' & 'G'

### Had you done any dance before this project?

**O:** I have danced before, at school.

**G:** I've danced at school before.

### Did you enjoy the project:

**O:** I liked Paul and Jamie, they were nice.

**G:** It was really good, really nice to have freedom just to dance. I've never been to a performance before where there is just dancing and no speaking at all. It made it easier, it can be hard to remember words.

### What things did you learn?

**O:** It was very fun and good to do acting and miming too.

**G:** I learnt that it's exhausting! The entire school, parents and teachers came to the performance and really enjoyed it. I hope that we can do it again. We're going to carry on dancing now!



## Engaging Lives Through Creativity and Culture

Culture Box Surrey is an independent partnership.

The current members of this group are:

John Stephens (Chair), Senior Manager, Surrey Arts - Surrey County Council (SCC)

Richard Beales, Strategic Manager, Artswork

Imogen Kinchen, Executive Director, New Adventures

Kathryn Mills, CEO, Delight

Marie Cahill, Headteacher, New Haw Community Primary School, Addlestone

Sarah Lewis, Headteacher, St Mary's C of E Primary School, Oxted

The management and facilitation of the Culture Box Surrey requires resources and this role is currently provided by SCC/ Surrey Arts

[cultureboxsurrey.org.uk](http://cultureboxsurrey.org.uk)

