



Re-evaluation for Investing in Children membership

Bowes Museum

Bowes Museum has successfully held Investing in Children membership since 2003. Since the last evaluation the Education Team continue to develop services at Bowes Museum. I spoke to Lisa and Beth to get the background to the work they have been doing over the past year.

The After School Club (ASC) which has been running for four and a half years continues to be a very popular activity for young people. The projects they have been involved in during the past year have included:

- 'Images of Us' exhibition, which was part of Durham County Council's Festival of World Cultures – the ASC contributed images to this project.
- ASC made scarecrows of John and Josephine Bowes so they could take part in the Barnard Castle Scarecrow Festival.
- The ceramics collection at Bowes continues to inspire a lot of the art work of the young people in ASC. They have painted tiles, decorated their own plates and cups.
- ASC has been involved in developing the new Streatlam Galleries on the ground floor. The young people were involved in the early planning stages to find out what they wanted to learn from the objects and artefacts which would help determine how the galleries looked and what was housed there.
- The young people have also been involved in the interpretation of collections to help make the text panels and labels better for children and their families, so that they get a better experience.

There are regularly 10 young people who attend the ASC. The young people continually feed in their ideas and suggestions for activities which the Education Team respond to and makes changes to the programme based on this.

In the previous evaluation it had been recommended that the Education Team got more involved with young people at key stages 3 and 4. The team were unable to do this in an after school capacity but instead engaged in partnership projects with schools, asking them to 'participate in decision making and creative processes'. This has worked well and the young people have worked on projects including:

- The Story Garden with Teesdale School pupils, which is a space in the grounds of the museum to develop creativity, language and communication skills through storytelling.
- Bishop Auckland King James School learned how to do ceramics and held exhibition of work.
- Staindrop Business and Enterprise College learned furniture making techniques and held exhibition of work.
- In October the exhibition of jewellery boxes made by young people was launched. It was given the same respect as all the other things in the gallery. Young people took ownership of the exhibition and the gallery.

Over the course of two sessions and a feedback session I spoke to Lily, Bethany, Sally, George, Rohan, William, Ethan, Alice P and Alice K from the After School Club. They told me they meet every Wednesday between 4 and 5 pm. They all really enjoy the ASC and the activities they do. The young people like the idea that they get choices when deciding on arts activities and the fact that they can suggest any activity.

How they decide on activities

Lily – “Allowed to do our own ideas, and have a vote on them so we don’t get left out. Everyone gets the chance to do what they want.”

Sally – “They let us see exhibitions before they open and children get a comment book.”

Bethany – “All get chance to vote on what exhibits are in Bowes and we do a glossary for young people. We like to get credit for what we do.”

George – “It’s about choice. We get a list of things to do and we tick to make a choice.”

Rohan – “We decided on scarecrows then silk painting, so we did second choice as well.”

William – “I’m happy the way it works – its fair!”

New Education Centre, Interpretation and other work

Lily – “We looked at writing on boards – we can change words to what we understand.”

Sally – “Younger children can see videos if they don’t understand words.”

Sally – “Let us look at exhibitions that have been moved – makes you feel special.”

Bethany – “We designed a new logo for Bowes Museum and put it on bags that are going to be used.”

George – “Before the gallery opening we got to see it. That’s quite good!”

Rohan – “Looking around gives you loads of ideas for arts stuff.”

Opinions on Bowes Staff

Lily – “Teachers (Bowes staff) join in as well – I like that. You can trust them and tell them things.”

Rohan – “They try to get the resources for whatever you want to do, but if they can’t they always explain.”

George – “We can ask to do anything and they (Bowes staff) put it on the list to choose from. But they don’t always have the materials.”

William – “They always explain when couldn’t do it.”

Things to change

Lily – “Also I would like time to finish off what we started if you have been off for a week.”

Bethany – “Would like to see more outdoor activities especially in summer.”

Sally – “I’d like to take things home to finish them.”

William – “Sometimes we spend too much time talking about what we are going to do and not enough doing. And I’d like time to finish things off that we start.”

Rohan – “I’d like smaller tables to work at. Like to have choice for individuals and choice of timescale.”

George – “I want to finish off my work if I’ve been off for a week. We could have different tables for boys and girls.”

Ethan – “I’d like to display what we do more often.”

Alice K – “We could do art outside in the summer, like photographs and portraits.”

Alice P – “Like to do 3D things such as clay modelling.”

Lily – “We could spend one week planning, then one week getting materials then the rest of time doing activities.”

Dialogue and Change

Although there is an ongoing dialogue with young people at every ASC activity session to determine the activities, here are a few specific examples:

Dialogue	Change
It was identified that there was no provision for older young people aged 12+	Bowes Education Team now involve Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils via local schools in activities and decision making for Bowes
In new Streatlam Galleries the young people were unhappy with the interpretation panels which they thought young people may not understand or find interesting	The young people in ASC created a pictorial glossary which can now be used by everyone visiting the galleries
In the Story Garden project the young people identified some additional activities they'd like to do	The Education Team arranged for the young people to what they had identified namely 'withie sculpting' and 'storytelling'

Summary

The young people in the After Schools Club are really enthusiastic about the arts activities they do and clearly love being able to do them in such a magnificent building. They appreciate that they are able to make decisions about what they do and have a good relationship with all staff in the Education Team, where they feel they can address any issues with them. The young people are aware that the staff try to get resources for any arts activity they want to do, and like the fact that they always explain when they can't.

However, the young people did raise some points about changes they would like to see to make a good service even better. This is where the ongoing dialogue between the young people and education staff is crucial to maintain and continually improve the service to benefit everyone.

Recommendations

Over the coming year its recommended that the Bowes Education Team talk to the young people to address some of their ideas and concerns raised in this report:

- Too much time spent planning
- Being able to finish off any work that has been started
- More outdoor arts activities in summer months

The young people also had ideas for solutions to the above and I'm more than happy that over the next year working together the staff and young people will improve the service even further!

Based on the evidence above and with the endorsement* of young people in the feedback session I would like to recommend that Bowes Museum is once again awarded Investing in Children Membership status. I hope that next time around the IiC worker carrying out the evaluation is able to speak to the young people who are contributing to Bowes development through schools at key stages 3 and 4.

* A general murmuring of 'yes' bounced around the gallery where we held the feedback session. This was followed by individual comments some of which are captured here -

“of course they should get it, its great here”; “yes, hope so”; “we work hard together so yes”; “has to be yes I’d say”; “oh yeah!”.

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Investing in Children
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