

**SEND programme  
Bringing paintings to life for children  
with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities**

We would like to thank the Trustees of the Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation for their generous support for the National Gallery's two valuable programmes for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities: our *Explore it!* programme for children with Moderate and Severe Learning Difficulties and our *Sense it!* programme for children with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties.

We are pleased to report to the Trustees on these two valuable programmes over the academic year from September 2017 to August 2018.

The National Gallery aims to connect people with great art and great art with people – and to be accessible to all as an inspiring resource on art. The Gallery's Learning programme aims to ensure that visitors from all ages and backgrounds can engage with our world-renowned collection by providing a raft of different programmes to respond to visitors' needs. Our *Explore it!* and *Sense it!* programmes use a wide range of creative approaches to enable children with complex needs to access and enjoy the collection, while also developing their communication, cognitive skills and self-confidence. These approaches range from storytelling and practical art-making to multi-sensory, interactive sessions both in the Gallery and as outreach in their schools or community spaces.



Programme focusing on Turner's painting, *Calais Pier*, 1803

**Sense it!** : The Gallery's *Sense it!* programme has been developed in collaboration with specialist practitioners for children with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD). Specially developed resources are used to engage young people with Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities and inspire their teachers and carers to use the National Gallery as a resource for learning and enrichment. The National Gallery provides specialist equipment to meet their practical needs, including a hoist. For these bespoke sessions, the Pigott Education Centre and the galleries used for the sessions are closed to other visitors, so ensuring a quiet and calm environment in which the *Sense It!* groups can feel relaxed and comfortable.

**Explore it!**: Our *Explore it!* programme was introduced in 2014 with the support of The Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation, and complements the *Sense it!* programme. It provides sessions to meet the needs of children with Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) and Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD), such as visual or hearing impairment, emotional and behavioural difficulties and autistic spectrum disorder.

For both programmes, the Gallery follows a two-stage process, with a pre-visit to the school followed by a gallery visit. The pre-visit enables gallery educators to build up an understanding of the needs of the children and discuss learning objectives with teachers. It may also provide the opportunity for preparatory activities to take place. During their visit to the National Gallery, the groups focus on a single painting, which they explore through their senses, followed by a practical workshop. Gallery-based sessions use drama, music and custom-designed resources and props to enhance pupils' learning and experience.

Where possible for the children, their visit to the National Gallery starts with a 'colour and texture' walk through the galleries to discover the focus painting. The children are invited to look for clues along the way, looking out for colours or objects similar to those in the focus painting.

The groups then spend time exploring their focus painting through activities, which are carefully designed to ensure that the process is inclusive and takes into account the children's needs and abilities. For example, children who face complex communication challenges may respond to visual stimuli, temperature, touch and smell; the integration of colour, texture and smell can be highly successful ways to learn and have fun, where other more conventional methods might fail. The children may dress up in replicas of costumes shown in the paintings, handle objects of different textures, and use fabrics to create the effects of drapery or experience the noise and weight of different materials.

To conclude the visit a practical art activity takes place in one of the Gallery's studios, Depending on the needs of the children, this may involve simple print making, fabric painting, making paint and mark making.

## **Outcomes**

The Gallery's programme for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities aims to:

- Make all the pupils and their teachers and carers feel welcome at the National Gallery.
- Provide the children with a unique opportunity to experience the Gallery and our great works of art at first-hand.
- Inspire the children to learn creatively and to make meaningful connections with the painting.

- Support children in developing transferable communication and practical skills.
- Provide enriching experiences for the accompanying staff and carers, enabling them to explore using paintings creatively as an inspiration for learning in and beyond the classroom.
- Provide specialist equipment to assist all children in their visit and ensure they feel comfortable outside of their normal home and school environments.

These creative sessions can prompt positive and sometimes unexpected responses from the participating children. The sessions also benefit the teachers, carers and family members, who may have felt unable to visit the Gallery, but are now introduced to new, engaging approaches to enhance the child's learning. In addition, the sessions are a training opportunity for new Gallery Educators and Learning Assistants who have the opportunity to work alongside experienced facilitators to gain knowledge and experience of devising and delivering sessions for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. Through this training we are broadening the pool of educators with skills to work with children with complex needs, and ensuring that these enriching programmes can continue in the future.

### Report on the 2017-18 Programme

During the 2017-18 academic year, the Gallery successfully delivered 12 SEND sessions involving 141 participants (children, teachers and carers). This year we were also able to widen the age range of our provision to include students over 16.

The comments below illustrate the positive impact of the sessions:

*'Just a very big thank you to all of the staff for making our trip a successful one. On the way back all the school staff commented on how friendly the gallery team were and also what a lovely day they and the children had had. Some of the parents even wrote into the school to say that when the children got home they were very happy.'*

*'Overall we felt like VIP Visitors! And this was such a valuable experience for the children to have, to feel that they were welcome at the gallery and that their needs had been catered for, from the closure to other school parties, to having specialist equipment. It was an absolute welcome and refreshing experience to be able to deliver personal care to the children in a space where their dignity was upheld. It was also extremely valuable for the children to be allowed to explore the gallery in a way that was meaningful for them, without time or access constraints.'*

*'The Children got so much from the day and this was evident in their communication and exploration in the gallery. It was also very valuable for a parent who accompanied us to experience a session catering specifically to her son's needs and those of his peers. It is rare that we find places with specialised equipment such as hoists and a changing bed. This not only made the day run more smoothly but also made us feel that our children were important enough to be catered for at a venue open to the 'Public.'*

As a new development, over the course of this year, Gallery educators have worked with a musician who specialises in working with participants with additional needs. This has enabled us to widen our provision. Using live music in addition to prepared soundscapes has given us the flexibility to react to students' responses on the day. The following film shows students from Ickburgh School engaging with Tintoretto's *The Origin of the Milky Way*. One of their themes for the term was space and they were interested in this creation myth: <https://vimeo.com/281465009>.

Our educators visited the school and worked with students to create responses to the painting in sounds and songs. Much of the second session at the Gallery took place in front of the painting, allowing students to experience an actual gallery space.

Our Learning department has now appointed a new Gallery Educators Team, who have a wealth of experience of working with children with both Moderate and Severe Learning Difficulties and Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties.

We are looking forward to working with the Gallery Educator team to develop further workshop ideas and resources that will continue to stimulate all children visiting the National Gallery and in particular those taking part in our *Sense It!* and *Explore It!* sessions.



Art work created by children with Special Educational Needs during a workshop at the Gallery

### Promotion

We continue to promote the SEND programme through the National Gallery website, the SEND hub page, social media and our schools' booklet.

The SEND hub page on our website includes a dedicated page for the programme, which acknowledges the support of the Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation (see links below):

<http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/learning/teachers-and-schools>

<http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/learning/teachers-and-schools/sense-it>

<http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/learning/teachers-and-schools/explore-it>

[https://twitter.com/ng\\_schools?lang=en](https://twitter.com/ng_schools?lang=en)

In promoting the programme, we are continuing to target boroughs with low uptake of cultural amenities. Out-of-school visits present particular challenges for schools for pupils, in view of their need access for specialist resources. Thanks to the support from the Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation, we are able to provide these resources and to make these visits possible.

### Resources

The Gallery continues to use specially designed resources, which have been developed in consultation with SEND practitioners, including handling resources and soundscapes, and audio-resources incorporating sounds and music to help bring the paintings to life.

This year we added new resources for use with Rubens's painting *A View of Het Steen in the Early Morning*, in addition to those for Cuyp's *River Landscape with Horseman and Peasants*, Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne*, Bermejo's *St Michael and the Devil* and Drouais' *Madame de Pompadour*. In addition, the Gallery provides Teachers' notes, a

poster and digital reproductions of the paintings, materials for use in preparation for the Gallery visit (including a presentation guiding the teacher through the Gallery), and suggested activities and lines of enquiry for teachers to use as follow-up activities to the Gallery visit.

In the future we are looking to develop further thematic resources to use with a wider range of paintings.

### **Networking and Advocacy**

The National Gallery has continued to co-ordinate and chair the SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) Network in partnership with Museum of London. Established in 2015, the SEND Network provides a forum for sharing best practice in SEND provision for professionals working in museums, galleries, heritage sites and other cultural venues. The network has around 100 UK and international members and plays a valuable role in enabling the National Gallery's learning team to promote awareness of the SEND programme with colleagues from education, including SEND teachers and practitioners working in museum and heritage organisations.

The SEND Network meets quarterly to hear case studies from members and discuss issues relating to SEND provision in museum and heritage organisations. It provides training opportunities and organises an annual conference each year. Training and skill sharing this year has included Maketon, Access training, sensory resources and active storytelling.

In September 2018 the SEND conference took place at the Gallery, with a focus on the theme of communication: **'Communicate, Create and Share - imaginative approaches to interpreting museums, galleries and heritage sites for visitors with special educational needs and disabilities'**.



Gina Davies speaking at the SEND Network Conference at the Gallery

The conference keynote speech was given by Gina Davies, the founder of the Gina Davies Autism Centre and pioneer of the Attention Autism programme. She is an accomplished conference speaker and highly acclaimed practitioner in autism, drawing on her skill as a speech and language therapist and her passion for communication into practical interventions for both parents and professionals.

Throughout the day delegates had the opportunity to hear case studies from a range of institutions and experts and choose two practical and interactive workshops to attend. Each workshop had a different creative focus but considered different approaches, techniques, and resources that can be used in their own settings.

The workshops included the opportunities to:

- learn more about non-verbal and theatre based techniques for engaging those with additional needs
- Explore the world for people with Sensory Processing Disorder and how this impacts on museum and gallery spaces.
- Investigate animation as a tool for engaging and raising the extreme and resilience of children with additional needs
- Explore how dance and movement can engage participants with profound and complex needs



Participants' feedback indicated the value of the conference in providing an excellent opportunity for learning and sharing best practice:

*"Such a wonderful and rewarding day which focused on a variety of SEND needs/approaches. Has given me loads of ideas on how to incorporate something into our programme."*

Conference delegates' reasons for attending included:

*'Idea hunting and to learn about variety of programmes and approaches to better programme at their own organisation.'*

*'To network and meet people in sector, personal Continuing Professional Development.'*

*'Gain knowledge of SEND developments and ideas and a greater insight into best practice.'*

With the support of the Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation, the National Gallery is thus playing a leading role in encouraging good practice and advocacy for Special Educational Needs in museums and heritage organisations, both in the UK and internationally.



Activities at the National Gallery as part of the SEND Network Conference

### **Our thanks to The Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation**

We are enormously grateful to the Trustees of the Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation for their generous support, which is of critical importance in enabling the National Gallery to provide these dedicated programmes for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

The grant from the Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation has made possible enriching and enjoyable activities for children with both Moderate and Severe Learning Difficulties and Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties.

In addition, it has helped the National Gallery to share best practice with other museums and heritage organisations through the SEND Network, leading to further opportunities for young people with these special needs.

Thank you again for your help and support for these inspiring programmes.