

**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 (SEND): 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 SEND programmes over the school year from September 2018 to August 2019.

The National Gallery aims to be a truly national gallery, which is accessible to everyone as an inspiring resource on art. Our inspiring learning programmes seek to ensure that visitors from all ages and backgrounds can engage with our great works of art through a wide range of programmes responding to visitors' needs. Our *Explore it!* and *Sense it!* programmes use a variety of creative approaches to enable children with complex needs to access and enjoy the collection, while at the same time developing their communication, cognitive skills and self-confidence. These approaches range from storytelling and practical art-making to multi-sensory, interactive sessions in the Gallery and outreach in their schools or community spaces.



Students from Cricket Green School in Mitcham looked at Uccello's *The Battle of San Romano* (1438-40) and they investigated pattern in the painting to link with their work at school on William Morris. Following an exploration of the painting and close-looking exercise, the students used a range of props and sensory experiences to investigate further; they made drawings in front of the painting and used these close up drawings for press printing in the Gallery's Creative studio.



Children from The Village School in Brent created this work in response to Jacopo Cione's altarpiece (1370-01)

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 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 may be 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 our gallery educators to build up an understanding of the needs of the children and discuss learning objectives with teachers. It also provides 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.

Report on the 2018-19 Programme

Over the past year, we have sought to widen the reach of our SEND programmes, by providing programmes for a wider age range of pupils and extending our reach beyond London as far afield as Cambridge.

During the 2018-19 school year, the Gallery successfully delivered 12 SEND sessions for 143 pupils (plus their teachers and carers) from six different schools. The pupils ranged in age from primary pupils through to students over 16.

Alongside our regular SEND programmes, we have started to develop a new, longer-term project over the last year:

- This builds on the long-term relationships that we have now established and cemented with some special schools. Based on our experience and these relationships, we are now planning an extended six-week project with Riverside School in Tottenham.
- This also develops our work and experience with secondary school pupils with challenging conditions such as non-verbal autism.
- Following a pilot initiated in the previous year, we are also introducing programmes with a Gallery educator and musician who specialises in working with learners with complex needs. Using live music in addition to prepared soundscapes gives us further flexibility to react to students' responses on the day.

This new initiative has arisen from the National Gallery's own learning as a result of the programmes supported by the Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation, and through the relationships we have forged with schools who have taken part in the programmes.

In addition, we are using this project as a research learning opportunity for the Gallery's Learning team to help us investigate the potential to undertake longer-term partnerships with schools to complement and enhance the impact of our shorter-term projects. This project will also enable us to consider how we might enrich and develop our SEND programmes, going forward.

We have now built up a team of Gallery Educators team with a wealth of experience of working with children with both Moderate and Severe Learning Difficulties and Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties. This has enabled us to become more agile in working with schools in ways that are most appropriate for their pupils' learning and curricular needs.

While the programmes use specially designed resources, developed in consultation with SEND practitioners, to bring paintings to life, such as handling resources, soundscapes and audio-resources incorporating sounds and music, we are now also using additional thematic resources to provide greater flexibility so we can engage pupils with a wider range of paintings. For example, if a school is working on a theme such as 'water' or 'journeys', we seek to select a painting that links with this theme and to adapt our multisensory and handling resources to enrich the programme. This enables us to bring the approach of our *Sense It!* and *Explore It!* sessions closer to that of our programmes with mainstream schools.

Another positive development is that we are working more closely in collaboration with the teachers, so that the pupils can start their work in school, prior to the visit, and we can plan their activities together with the teachers to make their programme at the Gallery still more enriching and meaningful. This is particularly beneficial in planning the hands-on art work that the pupils produce during their practical session at the Gallery.



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

The comments below from teachers illustrate the positive impact of our learning programmes:

'Our educator immediately identified the children with needs and was extremely inclusive and kind towards them. All of our children were included in this activity and it reached out to all.'

'We believe the programme is excellent and stimulates pupils, engaging and inspiring them.'

'Our educator was incredibly approachable and kind towards the students, and gave lots of encouragement.'

Promotion

We continue to promote the SEND programme through the SEND hub page on the National Gallery website and through social media.

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

In promoting the programme, we are continuing to target boroughs with low uptake of cultural amenities, recognising that out-of-school visits present particular challenges for schools for pupils requiring specialist resources.



Activities at the SEND Network conference, 2020

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's membership has now increased to 200 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.

The 2019 SEND conference took place at Museum of London, with a focus on the spaces we create, both virtual and physical: **'Sensing Space – Why Here? Explore, challenge and stretch the future of sensory work with SEND School groups in cultural institutions'**. It was attended by 60 people from arts and heritage organisations, special schools and students from across the UK.



Participants at the SEND Network Conference, 2020

The introductory keynote speech was given by Joanna Grace, a sensory and inclusion expert with wide-reaching experience as an author, writer, trainer and educator of children and adults of wide-ranging abilities, and particular expertise in supporting those with neurodiverse conditions and profound disabilities. This was followed by a further keynote by architect Matthew Springett and educator Fiona MacDonald, who through their collaborative venture MATT+FIONA have worked with young people, including children with additional needs, to explore how their built environment can be improved and empower them to bring their vision to life.

The keynote speeches were followed by practical and interactive workshop sessions led by a range of institutions and experts. Each workshop had a different focus, offering a range of different approaches that conference delegates could use or adapt in their own settings:

- Challenging the potential of SEND students' role in their built environment
- Exploring movement through our bodies
- Our hidden landscapes
- Dance Unfolding – the relationships with the spaces we inhabit
- Exploring galleries through the senses

- Using arts activities to open up discussions about careers with blind and partially sighted young people
- Exceeding Expectations – from making art to employability

A copy of the conference programme is attached.

As the SEND network has now extended to include many members outside London, consideration is now being given to restructuring the network to reflect this, and consultation is in progress with members about the future structure and organisation of the network.

As a result of 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 across the UK.



A workshop in progress at the SEND Network Conference

Our thanks to The Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation

We would like to express our deep gratitude to the Trustees of the Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation for their generous support, which has enabled the National Gallery to develop these inspiring programmes for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

Over the last year we have continued to develop these programmes, adding new in depth work in partnership with an individual special school, which we would like to continue to offer in future years, subject to funding. In addition, the support from the Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation has made it possible for the Gallery to share best practice with other organisations through the SEND Network, so further enriching provision for young people with these additional needs.

Thank you again for your vision and generosity in supporting this programme.