

Prior Pursglove and Stockton Sixth Form College

A case study of Artsmark in a sixth form

Who we are

Prior Pursglove and Stockton Sixth Form College operate on two sites across the Tees Valley, with approximately 1900 young people studying a wide range of A Levels and Level 3 BTECs. Our ethos is inclusive: we support every young person to progress and achieve, including those with additional learning needs and those who have previously struggled to engage with mainstream education. We are whole-heartedly committed to the arts curriculum and our buildings and facilities powerfully demonstrate our commitment to Music, Performance and Visual Arts.

How Artsmark has worked for us

A flexible, supportive programme

Our Artsmark journey has been a positive and edifying experience which has allowed staff to nurture and develop the arts in a real variety of contexts. The flexibility of the Artsmark programme means that it's just as relevant and viable for a sixth form setting as it is for primary and secondary schools. Artsmark has positively impacted our staff and students across both sites.

Embracing cross-curricular learning

Initially, integrating the delivery of the arts throughout the sixth form experience felt like quite a challenge. However, the more we embraced our differences across the two sites, the more possibilities for cross-curricular learning were discovered.

For example, our Art Club initiative with a local primary school allowed our A Level arts students the chance to contribute within our local community. Sixth form students modelled art techniques, engaging with younger pupils, which delighted and inspired both age ranges. We also engaged local secondary school students who were suffering from anxieties and phobias by creating a wall mural in their base at Stockton Sixth Form where we created further ties within our community.

Creating a sense of community

"Sharing experiences through art and performance has brought the college staff and students together."

Foundation Learning Teacher

At our Prior Pursglove site we also work with Foundation level and high needs learners. Our Artsmark journey supports students to feel part of our wider community, engaging in setting-wide creative activity.



Most recently, these learners organised the Armistice Day memorial service, including large-scale artistic installations, which was attended by the whole student body.

Developing extra-curricular activity

As part of our Artsmark journey we increased our extra-curricular offer available to sixth form students on both sites. This includes a thriving arts enrichment club and regular Open Mic music sessions at lunchtime in the student common room. As we've developed our offer we've also seen an increase in students attending weekly music enrichment sessions to further their creative education.

Advocating for arts education

Our Artsmark journey has enabled us to raise the profile of the arts across all aspects of our college's diverse provision. One way we do this is by working with Artsmark Partners or local cultural organisations. We recently had the pleasure of working with Northern Sinfonia and composer Michael Betteridge who held workshops with our students which culminated in a performance at Middlesbrough Town Hall as a prelude to a Northern Sinfonia concert. This was a hugely inspiring partnership for students and staff alike and helped us advocate for excellent arts education within our wider community.



Photos © Kate Robertson /
Above: Prior
Pursglove College

Left: Stockton Sixth
Form College

We'd recommend...

One of the most challenging parts of the process was developing the cross-curricular aspect throughout a sixth form setting, since students come to study a limited number of subjects only. We'd recommend finding opportunities to collaborate within your community which can offer new opportunities for students to learn in a cross-curricular approach.

In a large sixth form college based across two sites, it's easy to become immersed in your own subject area. We'd recommend really spending time with other colleagues and understanding more about their subjects and how they deliver them when you first start your Artsmark journey. Through greater communication, we found links and opportunities that we would never have considered before.



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For further guidance about how Artsmark can work for you please see our specialist settings guidance. <https://www.artsmark.org.uk/support-specialist-settings>