

Clore Duffield Foundation and Art Fund Arts Education Symposium Summary

Lizzie Crump and Sam Cairns
Cairns Crump
March 2026

On the 19 March 2026 leaders, policy makers, teachers and funders were invited to gather together at Tate Britain for a [National Symposium on Arts Education](#). They discussed the current landscape and thought through the big issues facing children and young people, communities and the professionals that work with them.

Why a National Symposium?

The Clore Duffield Foundation and the Art Fund extended invitations to partners engaged in a range of flagship programmes; from arts organisations with [Clore Learning Spaces](#), to teachers and artists involved in [Art Fund's Teacher Fellowships](#). The Symposium also marked the [launch of a new funding initiative from Clore Duffield](#): for organisations with existing Clore Learning Spaces to develop and deliver innovative programmes for hard-to-reach state-funded primary and secondary schools.

The day was programmed in response to a survey of arts education professionals, which highlighted that colleagues wanted to talk more about inclusive practice, representation, evidence and data, and school needs, and that they wanted to hear about recent and planned policy changes from those leading them. It was also a chance for people to meet in person to share ideas, challenges and practice.

Across the keynotes and workshops, we heard calls for the sector to be braver, to act collectively with confidence, to be intentional and accountable, to advocate, to listen, to give away and redefine power, and to embrace the opportunities ahead of us.



© Hydar Dewachi / Art Fund 2026



© Hydar Dewachi / Art Fund 2026

Keynotes

The day was opened by **Dame Vivien Duffield, Chairman of the Clore Duffield Foundation** who spoke about the importance of children accessing a range of regular cultural experiences and trips as part of their everyday education, and the foundation of joy and connection that this can bring to their lives. **Delegates were then joined by Minister for School Standards, Georgia Gould MP** who presented the headlines of the government's revitalised vision for arts and cultural education. Earlier in March, the Department for Education published its new [School's White Paper: Every child achieving and thriving](#) and the Minister talked about how and why this is needed. She spoke about the importance of:

- access to shared, civic, cultural spaces for families
- the importance of belonging, and the need for communities to own the cultural spaces in their neighbourhoods
- the potential of the arts to change the way that children feel about who they are and where they live
- the power of creative connection to give children agency and wellbeing as part of their wider learning journey
- the need for a [revitalised curriculum](#), with arts and culture at the centre, and a strong [enrichment entitlement and benchmarks](#) to support it
- plans for a [new £22.5m programme of enrichment co-ordinators](#) in priority places.
- a strong core message and set of school accountability measures ([currently under consultation until May](#)) from government

- the central place of partnership and an integrated cultural education ecology, with the need for a [National Centre of Arts and Music Education](#) to sit at the heart of this work (and to be launched in September this year)
- the importance of close working between the Department of Education and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.



© Hydar Dewachi / Art Fund 2026

The Minister was then joined on stage by **Geoff Barton, Educationalist and Chair of the [Oracy Commission](#) and the [IPPR Inclusion Taskforce](#)**. Geoff called on everyone to join a collective national mission to value the arts, and to empower and support children. He described oracy as the big win for the new National Curriculum, outlining the ways in which it can be used as an inclusion strategy across all subjects; contributing to school-wide pedagogy based on dialogue and debate and used to help flag difference of understanding, as opposed to a binary approach to right and wrong. He discussed the need for children and young people to learn to disagree agreeably, and to have the agency and confidence to become tomorrow's voters. Geoff also called on the arts and cultural sector to recognise that it often operates within a bubble; where all colleagues believe in the central importance of their mission and assume that everyone feels the same. He invited us to step outside, reframe and view things from the perspective of parents, children and teachers.

The day was closed by Keynote addresses from **Margaret O'Shea, Head of Creative and Extended Curriculum at [Ark Academies](#)**, and **Tina Ramdeen, Associate Director of Young People at the [Roundhouse](#)**

Margaret called on arts and cultural organisations to take their place in the cultural ecology by recognising their distinctive USP in providing inspirational experiences, joy and wonder to children and schools. She invited all organisations and artists to think

about their offer and welcome to children and young people, and to consider how to work closely with Multi Academy Trusts – especially as the new White Paper makes it clear that the government plans for all schools to join a Trust of some kind. Margaret outlined some of the enrichment opportunities that such partnerships have the potential to contribute to as part of the government’s new strategy: from the forthcoming [enrichment benchmarks](#), and the new local enrichment co-ordinators in priority areas. She called for arts and cultural organisations to open their doors and to inspire young people – bringing the cultural capital and transformational experiences that schools can’t deliver themselves.

Tina described the practice of the Roundhouse as embedded in a youth work approach; one that enables young people to be heard and to have genuine voice and agency in the activity they engage in and the organisation that they are a part of. She described the ways that progression routes are made real and tangible – from affordable practice spaces to behind-the-scenes access to professional shows. She called on organisations to be ready to listen to and to genuinely act on young people’s feedback – even when it is hard to hear, and she outlined some of the pitfalls of paying lip-service to youth voice and to co-design. The Roundhouse is currently calling for evidence as part of a flagship new [Young Creatives Commission](#), partly inspired by the government’s new [National Youth Strategy](#), and Tina called on everyone to engage with this and truly embed the arts and culture as an equal player in national youth policy.



© Hydar Dewachi / Art Fund 2026

Workshops

Four workshops were programmed looking at inclusion, school's needs, and evaluation and evidence. Across all workshops we heard practitioners calling for colleagues to:

- find routes to really listen to schools and young people
- co-create when it can be done well, and where there is capacity, resource, expertise and integrity
- be honest about the real picture in your organisation, and avoid a defensive standpoint
- plan for the long term, but identify small practical steps and start taking them
- accept they will make mistakes, see failures as engineering problems and identify changes to make next time



© Hydar Dewachi / Art Fund 2026

Improving inclusivity: inclusive principles make all learning better

Jodi-Alyssa Bickerton, [Graeae](#), **Niall Deegan**, [Tuke School/South London Gallery](#) and **Dr Hannah Lee Chalk**, [Manchester Museum](#) ran workshops on the ways that inclusive approaches to meeting the needs of d/Deaf, Disabled, and Neurodiverse children and young people improve the quality of all the learning work that they do. Jodi outlined the [Social Model of Disability](#) and the realities for the Disabled children and young people that she encounters; many are not consulted on what they want to study and are only given the option to take limited subjects that are deemed already accessible to them and don't need adjustment. Many cultural organisations only have provision to meet the needs of one or two students, meaning that young people are not able to participate with their friends and peers. She described the ways that arts organisations can act as advocates and champions, meeting foundational needs and taking a truly person-centred approach to creating spaces for play and progression for everyone. Dr Hannah described some of the partnerships that are embedded in the museum's learning work; including with [PINC College](#), which is a resident in the building. She described ways in which Disabled young people have co-created [resources and interactives](#) which are now embedded in the collections, and some of the [frameworks](#) that underpin the museum's work. Niall talked through the ways that organisations can work to understand the emotional and physical capacity of

Disabled young people, and how they can meet those needs with care – working to accommodate health interventions and support work, and giving young people voice and agency. He talked through the importance of meaningfully measuring success in our work by valuing small moments of connection, joy and understanding. All colleagues demonstrated the ways that an inclusive approach raises the overall quality of learning strategies and practice, with opportunities for better outcomes and resources for all children.

Improving inclusivity: representation

In the representation workshops chaired by **Saphena Aziz** from [Curious Minds](#), teachers **Georgi Bennett** and **Aakhila Fayaz** shared their experiences of developing activities for their [Teacher Fellowship](#) host museums' programmes. These projects developed student's understanding of colonisation and using a decolonisation lens. **Georgi** talked about unpicking her own knowledge and practice through an anti-racist approach and about developing resources for the schools' programme at [Amgueddfa Cymru/National Museum Wales](#). **Aakhila** talked about using a decolonisation lens in her science curriculum at her school, and to develop activities at National Museums Liverpool. Both teachers have created museum activities that ask students to learn about colonialism and then rewrite exhibition text and labels for objects. Key points in the discussion were:

- the importance of prioritising this work
- using auditing as a tool; picking an area to work on and taking small steps towards your goal
- finding people who have already done the work and asking their advice. Sources of help can include charities and local authority inclusion officers

What schools need from cultural organisations

The workshop on understanding teacher needs was chaired by **Shani Crawford-Ashby** from the British Museum. Headteachers **Kim Greenwood** and **Niki Ambrose** talked cultural organisations through a holistic understanding of school trips – reminding colleagues that a successful trip needs to involve purposeful activity for the whole day: how schools get to venues, how they move around, where they have lunch, what else they visit nearby, how they get home; all have to be considered. Colleagues were encouraged to develop strong partnerships and engage in existing local teacher communities and meetings. The teachers suggested that organisations needed to be honest and clear about their offer to schools, and the ways they are able -or unable -to meet the school's needs. The teachers wanted a named contact person and a consistency of approach across

cultural organisations' websites to make it easier for schools to find information to plan trips.

Evaluation and evidence

Laura Drane of the [Audience Agency](#), **Dougie Lonie** from [tialt](#) and **Jacqui O'Hanlon** from the [Royal Shakespeare Company](#) led workshops that explored new and different ways of approaching data, evaluation and evidence, each drawing from their experiences of working in England, Scotland and Wales. Laura encouraged colleagues to think about failure differently – valuing the insight and the learning that comes from things not going as planned and sharing the work of the [Failspace](#) project. Jacqui asked colleagues what we feel a burden to prove and, if we didn't have to prove this, where we could instead redirect our energy into improving what we do. She cited a recent review from the [Cultural Learning Alliance](#) that aggregated evidence of the impact and value of arts learning across different countries and in different ways. The workshop discussed the difference between impact and causality, and asked participants to imagine what it would be like to be intentional, to create a consistency of approach and to have the courage to stop using methodologies that don't serve them and don't help to solve collective problems. Dougie challenged colleagues to look at evaluation through a power and equity lens, asking how we could start by measuring the things that are valued by children and young people, and not the things we think that they should value, how we can be less extractive, and how we can focus on (and learn from) the granular differences of an experience instead of trying to flatten them out.



© Hydar Dewachi / Art Fund 2026