

# THE BIG SINK



An investigation into the ideal spaces for creative, and specifically visual arts, explorations in schools, galleries and museums.

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### Commissioned by

Artworks: Young Artists of the Year Awards, devised and funded by The Clore Duffield Foundation.

### Supported by

In the context of the Artworks Awards, the Clore Duffield Foundation commissioned this investigation into the ideal visual art-exploration spaces within schools, galleries and museums, in partnership with the Arts Council of England, Tate, QCA (The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority), NSEAD (The National Society for Education in Art & Design), engage (The National Association for Gallery Education) and a range of partners working in the field of art and design education (see page 30 for full list).

### Research report written by

Rick Rogers, Siobhan Edwards & Fiona Godfrey

For more information on Artworks: Young Artists of the Year Awards, visit the Artworks website:

**[www.art-works.org.uk](http://www.art-works.org.uk)**

This report is also available on the Artworks website.

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## Some thoughts on creative spaces ...

‘Arts organisations most clearly reveal the strength of their commitment to their public role by the way they design and develop their learning spaces. Do they invest the same care and resources to the needs of their audiences as they do to the display of their collections? Do they engage their visitors and invite their participation? These spaces should not be a means for separating and hiding away educational activities from the sanctity of the galleries, but rather should be a means for enriching, extending and generating new gallery displays.’

### **David Anderson**

Director of Learning & Visitor Services  
Victoria & Albert Museum

‘The impact of good design on well being and productivity is acknowledged almost everywhere. Joining up the knowledge that exists with talented teachers, educational staff and students with the design process for creative spaces will inspire a fresh approach and new, more flexible thinking.’

### **Frances Sorrell**

The Sorrell Foundation

‘Young people are very discerning about the design of the physical spaces they are asked to work in. A well-designed creative space is an investment. The pay-off is in the quality of work it inspires.’

### **Gillian Wolfe**

Head of Education  
Dulwich Picture Gallery

## Why ‘The Big Sink’?

This research started life with the working title ‘Artworks Creative Spaces’. In the course of consulting the users and managers of creative spaces, it became evident that even the smallest details of a space need careful consideration. One such small detail is the specification of sinks in creative spaces – the size, height and location as well as what goes in and comes out of them. This is why we asked people to tell us about their ideal sink in a creative space, and why this report is called ‘The Big Sink’.

## Preface

### Artworks and the Clore Duffield Foundation

In 2000, as part of its commitment to visual arts education, the Clore Duffield Foundation devised and funded Artworks and National Children's Art Day to promote, celebrate and reward inspirational teaching and learning in art and design.

Artworks: Young Artists of the Year Awards is a national awards scheme that seeks to demonstrate how engaging creatively with artists, galleries and works of art can lead to innovative and high-quality teaching and learning. The Awards aim to:

- motivate and support teachers to develop ambitious art projects
- increase opportunities for pupils to explore and interpret the world through visits to galleries and contact with artists and art works

Support for art education and museum education is central to the funding priorities of the Clore Duffield Foundation.

Chaired by Dame Vivien Duffield, the Foundation has provided almost £20 million to fund Clore Education Centres or hands-on/interactive environments within galleries and museums over the past 15 years. Funded projects include the founding of **Eureka! The Museum for Children in Halifax**; the creation of **Clore Education Centres** at, among others, **Tate Modern** and the **British Museum**; and an interactive gallery at the newly refurbished **Manchester Art Gallery**. Through its Small Grants Programme for museum and gallery education, the Foundation has also funded learning spaces in 27 regional galleries and museums.

In 2001, as part of its commitment to campaigning for visual arts education, the Foundation commissioned and published £2.68, the Artworks survey of art and design resources in primary and secondary schools. (£2.68 is the average spend per head on art and design resources for secondary pupils.) Out of this research came the idea of Artworks Creative Spaces, an in-depth investigation of the spaces available for making and exploring art in schools, galleries and museums.

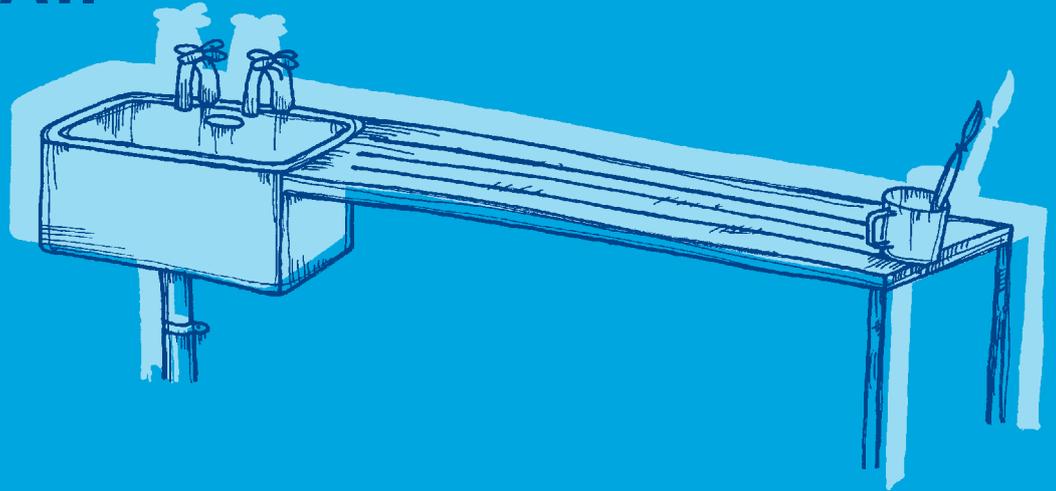
## Background to the Project

In recent years, the National Lottery has allocated many millions of pounds towards developing new galleries and museums, including space and facilities for education. For example, the Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded more than £100 million to support a range of educational activity across all heritage sectors. Private trusts and foundations have also invested significant amounts. The Clore Duffield Foundation has provided over £8 million specifically to develop education areas and facilities – 'creative spaces' – within new or renovated galleries and museums, large and small.

However, the Clore Duffield Foundation has become increasingly concerned that the cultural and educational sectors have few guidelines on what these creative spaces should be like in terms of design, location, equipment, management and use. As a result, many creative spaces do not fulfil their potential or measure up to the innovative approaches to education now being tried out in some galleries and museums.

**‘MY IDEAL SINK IS:  
A DEEP, CERAMIC  
BUTLER SINK WITH  
A BIG DRAINING  
BOARD ... RAKED SO  
THAT EVERYTHING  
DRAINS AWAY.’**

Cornelia Parker  
Artist



For example, a survey for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (published in the report, *A Common Wealth: museums in the learning age*, David Anderson, DCMS, 1997 & 1999) revealed the limited education facilities in the majority of museums. Only 36% had a general teaching room and **less than 10% had a practical art or photography studio or a children's gallery**. Crucially, fewer than half of museums carried out any evaluation of their galleries, teaching programmes, publications or other education provision.

Schools also have problems with creative spaces for art activities. Accommodation overall in about 60% of primary schools falls outside the schools inspectorate Ofsted's definition of 'good', and in about one in ten it is 'unsatisfactory'. A quarter of secondary schools have 'unsatisfactory' or 'poor' accommodation. **According to Ofsted annual reports, art provision is particularly vulnerable when a school's accommodation is inadequate.**

For example, in 2000/1 'accommodation and learning resources continue to have weaknesses in about one in five [secondary art] departments'.

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) has concluded that currently half the country's 'school stock' (buildings) needs replacing and is 'unsuitable for modern school use'.

Between 2001 and 2004, the DfES is allocating £8.7 billion to local education authorities and Private Finance Initiative (PFI) projects to provide additional pupil places and to recoup years of under-investment through new, expanded or renovated schools. According to the government's white paper *Schools Achieving Success* (Cm 5230, 2001), over the next three years 650 schools will be 'replaced or substantially remodelled' and 7,000 schools will undergo 'major building work'. A further 800 are being renovated through PFI agreements. Altogether, that is around a quarter of all schools.

The government's intention is 'to design and create school buildings suitable for a transformed and diversified education service' with 'new types of classroom to improve the learning experience'.

There are other positive moves. In October 2000, the government's Better Public Buildings Group issued a set of principles to ensure that public buildings would be 'attractive, aesthetically pleasing ... fit for purpose and represent good value for money' (*Better Public Buildings: a proud legacy for the future*, PP340, DCMS). In his foreword, **Prime Minister Tony Blair wrote that: '... we know that good design provides a host of benefits. The best-designed schools encourage children to learn.'**

This positive approach is being reflected in such national, but non-governmental, projects as School Works, which is looking at how 'to build, renovate and use school buildings in ways which raise educational achievement and support a culture of lifelong learning in local communities'. A second initiative by the Sorrell Foundation, *Joinedupdesignforschools*, is exploring the potential of partnership between schools and the design community – showing how good design can improve the quality of life in schools, with pupils working as clients, and looking at the educational value of the process of design and how it can inspire creativity in young people. School Works has now been taken up by the DfES.

**‘HOW WONDERFUL  
IF CLEARING UP  
WAS FUN – I WOULD  
LOVE ONE OF THOSE  
SINKS THAT LIGHTS  
UP WHEN WATER  
IS Poured IN!’**

Karen Eslea  
Education and Community Officer  
Turner Centre, Margate



The recommendations made by these initiatives in two reports, *Learning Buildings* (School Works, April 2002) and *Design for Learning* (Demos, 2001), also have relevance for a fresh approach to designing and using creative spaces in schools, galleries and museums.

**The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) is piloting projects on learning environments to encourage creativity.** The Creative Partnerships scheme, developed by the DCMS and the Arts Council of England (ACE), is targeting schoolchildren in 16 areas in England to provide them with exciting opportunities to experience the arts and creativity at first hand. The scheme brings together schools, local authorities and creative organisations with an investment of £40 million over the next two years. The government's one-off Space for Sports and Arts Programme is providing up to £130 million towards improving sports and arts facilities in some 300 primary schools in areas across 65 local education authorities.

To date, 73 projects involve wholly or predominantly arts facilities, of which around a third have an explicit visual arts function.

However, when new schools are built or existing ones renovated, areas for creative work tend to be marginalised or poorly conceived. The DfES has issued detailed guidance on the design and equipping of secondary schools, including art accommodation. (There is no similar guidance for primary schools.) Yet, apart from the statutory requirements for health, safety and disabled access, **guidelines often do not survive the journey to the reality of the school environment.** The range of teaching spaces for art varies greatly between schools. Too many art teachers have to make do with inadequate and often non-dedicated accommodation, equipment and other resources.

In addition, apart from the DfES guidelines and the architectural press, there is a meagre network of information or exchange of good practice on designing and constructing the right sort of schools and creative spaces within them.

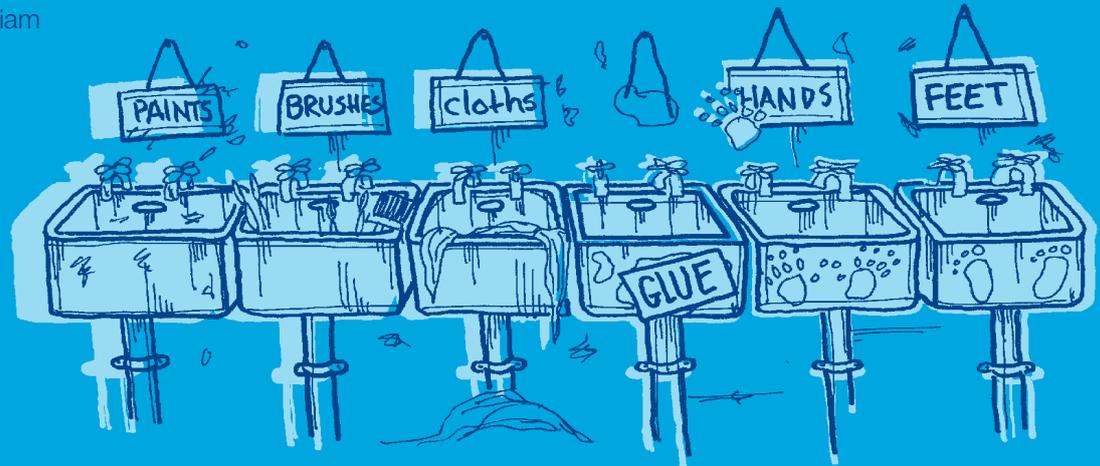
For example, there is little or no collaboration between Local Education Authorities or dissemination of the good practice being developed in the 28 designated Arts Colleges specialising in the visual arts.

Our concern is that the government's new programme of school renewal will miss a vital opportunity to rethink and revitalise the creative spaces for visual arts work and exploration.

The teachers, pupils, and gallery and museum education staff who use, or will use, the spaces that all these government and other initiatives will create have a wealth of knowledge and experience about what works and what does not. They are the people who hold crucial information on the right creative spaces. And yet they have been, and are being, rarely consulted. Nor are they able to help make the key decisions on building and equipping the spaces. **Until now.**

**‘A SEPARATE SINK TO  
PUT ALL THE STUFF  
IN AND ONE TO WASH  
PAINTBRUSHES AND  
THINGS, AND ONE TO  
WASH YOUR HANDS IN.’**

Lindsey Martin, age 11  
Director, Room 13  
Caol Primary School, Fort William



## The Project and what we did

### The Artworks Creative Spaces

#### Project aims to:

- understand the characteristics of successful art spaces within the different environments of schools, galleries and museums across the UK
- provide blueprints or models for future best practice in designing, constructing, resourcing and managing creative spaces, small and large, old, renovated, or new

In fulfilling these aims, the Project team is consulting the people who design and build creative spaces, and those who use and manage them.

### The Project has two stages:

**Stage one in 2002:** A consultative exercise to gather data, experiences and opinions on the ideal creative space, leading to a report on the key factors for designing, building, equipping, using and managing creative spaces in galleries, museums and schools.

**Stage two in 2003:** A series of case studies following the development and use of a range of creative spaces in schools, galleries and museums, leading to a final report setting out models of best practice.

This report represents the culmination of stage one and calls for further views and ideas.

### What we did

In partnership with the Victoria & Albert Museum's Director of Learning and Visitor Services, David Anderson, the Clore Duffield Foundation devised a preliminary list of key factors for designing, managing and using creative spaces in galleries and museums. The list was circulated for comments to a number of education departments in national and regional galleries and museums.

Ten focus groups, involving gallery education and curating staff, teachers and pupils, were held in eight venues to discuss issues of developing, managing and using creative spaces in galleries, museums and schools.

### The eight venues were:

Arnolfini in Bristol  
Compton Verney in Warwickshire  
The New Art Gallery in Walsall  
Tate Modern and the V&A in London  
The Study Gallery in Poole  
The Turner Centre in Margate  
Room 13 at the Caol Primary School in Fort William

The focus groups at three of the venues planning new spaces – the Arnolfini, The Turner Centre and the V&A – also included architects and project management staff. Altogether almost 100 people were involved in these discussions, and we would like to thank them all for their valuable contribution to the Project.

**‘HOT AND COLD WATER; LARGE ENOUGH TO TAKE A BUCKET; SLIGHT SLOPE TO DRAINING BOARD; EASY TO CLEAN.’**

Mary Robertson, Headteacher  
St George’s CE Primary School  
Edgbaston, Birmingham



## The vision

**‘Creative spaces’ are about the experience of learning.** They are dedicated spaces in schools, galleries and museums where people of all ages can explore the visual arts by seeing, enjoying and making art, and by talking about and being challenged by art.

In the context of galleries and museums, this Project assumes that learning is a process that pervades and enlivens the venue as a whole. For example, a gallery or museum should be able to:

- engage its visitors and invite their active participation
- embrace different learning styles and levels of interest and capability
- make learning an integral part, rather than an adjunct, of the gallery or museum and of every activity, from collecting to display and from programming to promotion

An education or learning centre should be a manifestation of this philosophy; and the learning activities should not be separate from the galleries, but a means of enriching and extending the displays and of generating new ones.

Similarly, the arts in schools have relevance and resonance throughout the school, being valuable in themselves and in informing and enhancing other disciplines, as well as meeting a range of practical needs.

The challenge for those who design and run spaces is to make these spaces, as gallery education staff suggest, **‘vibrant, culturally rich, exciting and sociable’** and to create **‘a sense of dynamism and flexibility’**. The Artworks Creative Spaces Project is an investigation into the ideal spaces for creative, and specifically artistic, explorations.

## Creating the right spaces

- What do teachers, gallery and museum staff, and children want from a creative space in terms of design, location, equipment and other resources, usage and management?
- What do they see as the competing priorities of the different users of such spaces?
- How best can they resolve the challenges of turning the ideal space into a reality that suits everybody's needs?

These were some of the key issues discussed by the Project's focus groups. It was quickly apparent that **teachers and gallery and museum education staff have wide-ranging knowledge, experience and perception of what is needed in creative spaces**. The question is, how can they achieve what they want? Or, more pertinently, why do they often fail to get the spaces they need? Gallery and museum staff say that the creative space should reflect the ethos and purposes of the gallery or museum in which it is located. Teachers want the creative space to represent a creativity that should pervade the whole school. As such, getting the creative space right is as important as getting right the whole gallery, museum or school.

For some, this raises the question: When should the creative space be limited to a specific room or area, and when should the whole gallery, museum or school be seen as the creative space, and designed and used as such?

Galleries and museums are increasingly being seen as having a crucial role as 'public learning centres in fostering the creative skills of children and adults, who are the makers and consumers of the present and future' (*A Common Wealth: museums in the learning age*, David Anderson, DCMS, 1997 & 1999). This suggests that the aims of a creative space in a gallery or museum have to be more ambitious than those for the venue as a whole.

For example, the space has to cater for a wide range of activities and users. It has to encourage and provide for all kinds of learning – formal and informal, self-directed and practical as well as traditional and academic – as well as for the full range of learning styles and users. **Spaces should, according to one gallery education officer, be 'challenging, open-ended and springboards for activity'**.

The same can apply to schools, where teachers often define the aims of an ideal space as extending the school's ambitions beyond the commitment to fulfil the requirements of timetables, standard assessment tests (SATs), the national curriculum, and literacy and numeracy strategies.

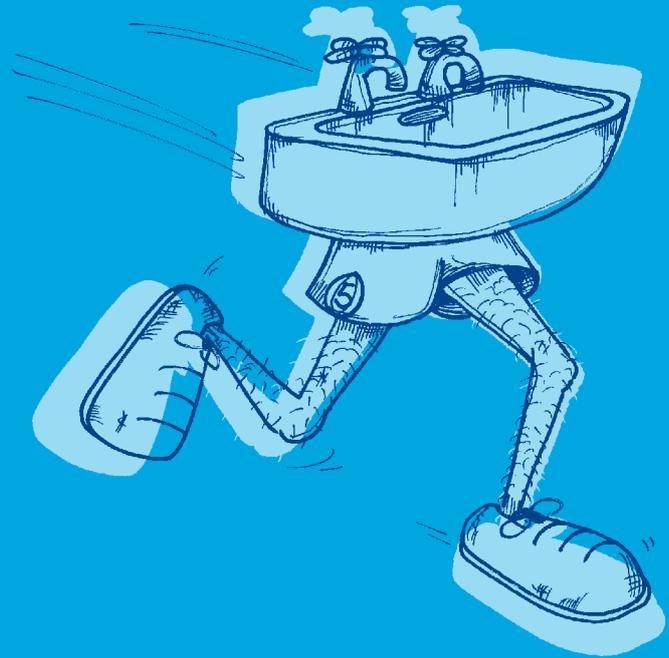
A third consideration is that, in the opinion of many teachers and gallery and museum education staff, creative spaces in galleries, museums and schools should complement one another – but not be, or offer, the same. One teacher commented: **'A creative space is somewhere you can go which isn't "school" and isn't "processed".'**

Fulfilling these ambitions means analysing the creative space from four related perspectives; addressing the challenges that each presents; and involving teachers, gallery and museum education staff at every stage:

- 1 Design:** how to plan and design the space
- 2 Usage:** identifying and catering for all the users
- 3 Content:** deciding what goes on in the space
- 4 Logistics:** how to organise what goes on.

**‘THE IDEAL SINK  
IS THERE WHERE  
YOU NEED IT, IN  
THE WORKSHOP  
ROOM OR IN  
AN ANTEROOM ...’**

Bridget McKenzie  
Artworks Assessor



## Designing creative spaces

### Getting the process right

One of the major problems in getting the right creative spaces is often the lack of involvement of teachers and gallery and museum education staff in the final design and equipping of those spaces. This is usually due to:

- an organisation's prevailing culture and its decision-making structures
- lack of time or confidence to communicate and build working relationships with those doing other jobs in the same organisation
- inadequate knowledge of the language, procedures and expertise of other professions

The consequences are that, in galleries and museums, education staff tend not to be encouraged to work and plan closely enough with curating staff on spaces and their uses.

At the end of one of the Project's focus groups, a gallery curator commented: 'This is the first time I have had the chance to discuss these issues with my education colleagues.' In schools, teachers report that they have too little input into Local Authority plans for modernising, or building new, schools.

Both groups feel isolated from the architects and designers who produce the spaces in which they have to work.

**Collaboration is not easy, but it is crucial.** It helps to ensure that buildings and the spaces within them are fit for the purposes of those who manage and use them. Too often, mistakes are made because those taking final decisions on creative spaces do not realise the significance to users and managers of getting seemingly minor details right. One teacher commented: '**Architects need to observe the way children move and behave.**' We heard reports

from teachers and gallery and museum staff of too few and badly sited sinks or electric points; of poorly sited doors and windows; of creative spaces located around a main corridor; of tables too heavy to move and cupboards too narrow to store work in. For example:

- 'We argued like mad with the architect about having big sinks and big cupboards. He said: "Well, they'll stick out and you'll lose space." They say things and give reasons for it and then you realise they only said that because they wanted smaller sinks.'

- 'The shelves were only designed to take tiny lunchboxes when actually children tend to come with big rucksacks.'
- 'We specified a door from the corridor and big sinks; we got neither.'
- 'There are carpets in areas for wet work.'
- 'When it came to procuring fixtures and fittings, we felt we couldn't keep on asking about each tiny detail because the whole building was so big and complicated. We couldn't have focus groups for every detail such as having the most suitable pegs. Yet for us these things are so important.'

The success that can come from properly consulting and collaborating with people ought to turn these minority activities into the general rule. Suggestions for improving collaboration during the planning process for creative spaces include:

- incorporate into every building or modernisation project sufficient time and funding to consult all those affected by it
- ensure that people are familiar with the technical jargon of other professions, know what questions to ask, and are aware of the decision-making timetable

- have good internal communications between staff across all levels
- establish a consultation process that requires different departments and disciplines to exchange views and information, and to work together in planning a creative space
- ensure that architects talk directly to education staff
- encourage everyone to ask for what they want
- define the function of the space rather than the 'product' as you see it (otherwise you may get what you asked for rather than what works!)
- be detailed, specific and practical
- work out your priorities
- don't think about the problems (including the cost) – let the architect/designer tell you what can and cannot be done within the budget/timeframe
- ask for as much as possible up front – the specifications can be reduced to save costs, but no one is going to be happy if you start adding requirements later on in the process!

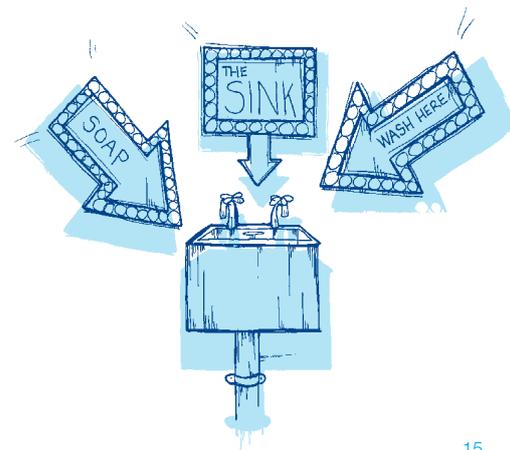
- define clear lines of communication – they are key to the success of the project
- ensure that the head of education or education curator is included, and named, in any list of decision-makers, for a creative spaces project (to assert 'ownership' and significance)
- involve an external, or independent, mentor or facilitator in the consultation and development process (to bring people together from different disciplines and to allow for 'out of the ordinary' perspectives and exchanges of view)

Finally, **this is a two-way process with the onus on all decision-makers to know what they are making decisions about.** One museum head of education commented:

'As well as involving artists and designers in developing the brief, it is important that senior managers and fundraisers are involved at an early stage and understand what the space is going to be used for. They should be fully aware of the practical requirements of the space, and where possible should see other museum education centres or spaces in action.'

## 'FUNCTIONAL SINKS CAN BE AN IMPORTANT FOCAL POINT OF ANY SPACE WHERE WORKSHOPS AND EDUCATION TAKE PLACE.'

Oliver Buckley  
Interpretation Curator  
The New Art Gallery, Walsall



## Consulting children

### Do children know what they want from a creative space?

According to the pupils at the Caol Primary School in Fort William, the answer is a resounding yes. This large primary school has set up 'Room 13', an independent art organisation, with a resident artist, that occupies an average-sized classroom in the school. The room serves as a studio, office, exhibition and storage space. The organisation is run by children elected from years 6 and 7 (the equivalent of years 5 and 6 in England). They take full responsibility for the room as well as managing the accounts and cash-flow, making funding applications and writing cheques.

Room 13 is a great success both within the school and with the local community. The children identify the ingredients of that success as being **the freedom and choice that it offers, their sense of ownership and responsibility, and the fact that they can use 'real' materials rather than children's materials.**

It's not ideal; they would like more, and better use of, space to work and more storage. A separate office area would, they say, ease the pressure on space and reduce noise.

On arranging space effectively, one pupil commented: 'I think it would be good if we could keep things separate; all the business in one room and all the painting in the other.' Another added: 'I'd like a large area for desk work and a lot of space for working in the middle.'

They are perceptive about practicalities. For example:

- 'When we open the windows the blinds all blow in and get in the way.'
- 'Our sinks are too packed into the corner, and you can't get people round them.'
- 'We need a separate sink to put all the stuff in and to wash paintbrushes and things in, and one to wash your hands.'
- 'We want a place to keep the canvases to work on while they are wet, so you don't get other paint on them.'
- 'We need a room off the studio that's just a messy room with plenty of ventilation and protective clothing for people doing work with spray paint or plastering so you don't get dust on other people's work.'

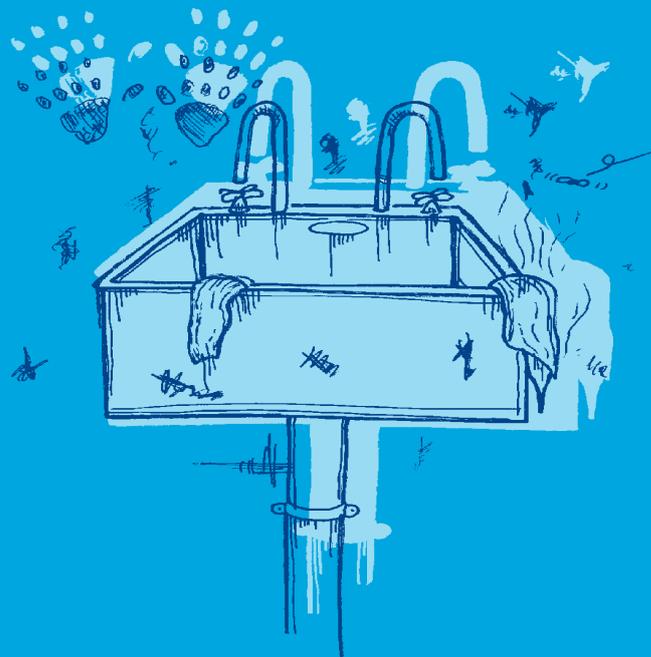
- 'Well, we could do with a whole room for storing junk in, another for storing paintings, another for plaster work, one for painting, a proper photography studio with artificial light and a big darkroom too.'

- 'I think we should have a lot more working tables because usually we end up working on the floor ... and then the wee ones end up standing on them [the art works].'
- 'We should have a first-aid cupboard.'
- 'I think we should have more computers. We've only got one really good one ... and we need about three – one for letters, one for Photoshop, and one spare.'
- 'We should have a touch-and-feel room where the art we make is displayed for disabled or blind people.'

It is clear that **children and young people need to be brought into the consultation and decision-making processes** when creative spaces are being planned, designed and equipped. The question, of course, is how can this be done in relevant and effective ways?

**‘ACCUMULATING  
THE SPLASHES  
AND SMEARS OF  
THOSE WHO USE IT,  
THE STUDIO SINK  
RECORDS THE  
ACTIVITY HAPPENING  
IN THE SPACE  
AROUND IT.’**

Michael Prior  
Access and Education Programmer  
Arnolfini, Bristol



## Users of creative spaces

The learning needs of those who use creative spaces should determine the design and equipping of those spaces. This applies as much in schools as it does in galleries and museums. In its white paper *Schools Achieving Success* (Cmnd 5230, 2001), the government sees the future of the school as 'a focus for learning for the whole community, accessible to all, with modern and attractive learning facilities for families and people of all ages'.

The challenges are to define who those users are and will be, and then to decide how best to accommodate the diverse, and often competing, needs of different groups and individuals. For example, children come to venues in various guises: as part of a school group, or with the family, or on their own. Can the space accommodate these different aspects?

Of course, children are not the only users of creative spaces. For example, other users might include teachers, families, HE and FE students, older people, adult learners and more specific groups such as disaffected young people, holiday-makers, and so on.

This means that schools, galleries and museums may have to address such wide-ranging issues as:

- Do staff have the knowledge and expertise to interact with and support a range of users?
- Can the space offer the different facilities that are needed, for example, by students as well as young children, by families as well as school groups, and by those who want to talk about art as well as those who want to make art?
- Are the furniture, loos and sinks suitable for all age ranges and physical capabilities?
- Do the physical layout and signage suit all users?
- Do the venue's main entrance and the access to the creative space encourage every type of user to step through?
- Can the gallery, museum or school as a whole provide satisfactorily for different groups at the same time?
- If the answer is no to any of the above, how should the venue or school decide what, and who, its priorities should be?

Of course, some elements are common to all users, such as **feeling comfortable and safe, gaining a sense of ownership, being in a welcoming and well-signed environment, and being encouraged to try something new as well as to do familiar things.**

The reality, though, is that many spaces will be able to cater more successfully for some groups and less so for others. One space listed its potential users as 'children, families, elderly people, retired people, holidaymakers, academics from London, looked-after young people, asylum seekers and refugees, and disaffected young people'. This means agreeing a priority for users and planning ahead rather than being floored by the unexpected. When there are unexpected users, the gallery, museum or school should be able to treat it as a positive rather than a negative experience, and ensure that it is the same for the user.

## The content of creative spaces

What happens in a creative space should help to determine its design, and should be determined by the users. It is up to each school, gallery and museum to consider, and to interpret in their own ways, the experiences they offer to their users of all ages, interests and capabilities.

The Project focus groups offered some general guidance, emphasising the importance of:

- facilitating an understanding and engagement between people, art works, artists and venues
- helping people to understand the artistic process by doing it themselves
- investigating ideas and materials
- offering the opportunity to do physical, practical things in an open-ended way
- providing access to specialists, new materials and new technologies
- offering opportunities to work in groups and on a large scale

How these elements are turned into activities depends on the diverse needs of the particular users and the human, material and artistic resources of the school, gallery or museum.

A particular issue that exercises schools, galleries and museums is **getting the balance right between activities for talking about art and those for making art, between analysis and expression**. Workshops are a staple diet of many creative spaces, but there is also a demand from all age ranges and types of group for discussion and lectures. The key question is: Can a creative space be designed and run to provide both?

One approach, cited by teachers and gallery and museum staff alike, is to reproduce the artist's studio. This has been done in schools, for an artist-in-residence, and in galleries and museums. On one level this can combine the needs of looking, discussing and making, in ways and locations that match the artist's life. One teacher regarded the working requirements of an artist and a learner of any age as being complementary:

'... an area for rough work, an area for finished work, and an area for keeping the bits and pieces of being an artist.'

Another issue, which arose through the focus groups, is how far a gallery or museum should base what they do for children and their teachers on the requirements of the national curriculum. Some feel that is the school's job. However, many teachers still want a range of projects and other activities that often include an emphasis on curriculum requirements – partly as a way to justify gallery and museum visits for the children and in-service training opportunities for themselves.

## The logistics of creative spaces

The logistics of a creative space (how it is organised, equipped and run, and where it is located) should be determined by what the users and staff want to do in the space – rather than the content (what happens) being dictated by the logistics.

The needs of and problems faced by schools, galleries and museums are often very similar. For example, several teachers commented that the ‘ingredients for a creative space apply to both locations’. **The problems arising from an inadequate space can be mundane but critical.** One teacher reported: ‘There are no serious facilities for clearing up in my school, so not much wet work goes on.’

One focus group of teachers, gallery and museum staff together listed such mutual needs as:

- comfortable and clean flooring to sit, lie on and crawl around – of a type that’s easy to clean
- lots of accessible sinks and electric plugs
- access to hot and cold water
- lots of windows but with the possibility of having blackout
- furniture that can cater for different-sized people
- space for displaying three-dimensional work
- accessible and moveable storage
- sound-proofing for noisy work
- good ventilation
- moveable screens to create different-sized spaces

Overall, most people want a space that is **flexible in terms of both activities and facilities**. That can come at a price. It can be more expensive to equip and organise such a space; it may also require more staff, and with particular expertise, including being strong enough to move about equipment and structures. It can also be more trouble to keep well-maintained and clean – a vital concern for users and staff. One gallery staff member listed staffing as ‘the biggest problem in terms of adequate numbers and hours’. Again, this is also very much a school issue, especially as technical support for art and design departments has declined significantly.

Some challenges tend to be specific to galleries and museums. For example, many education staff want spaces that are adaptable enough to cater for large groups, accommodate the needs of both the group and the individual visitor, and ensure that children can engage with original art works in a secure environment for both. One gallery staff member posed the dilemma: ‘Can we have children splashing things about in front of valuable works of art?’

**‘I RECOMMEND  
BELFAST SINKS  
– YOU CAN GET AS  
GRUBBY AS YOU  
WANT AND STILL  
THERE’S ENOUGH  
ROOM TO WASH IT  
ALL OFF.’**

Helen Charman  
Education Curator for Schools  
Tate Modern



Another gallery education team wanted it to be 'easy to change the atmosphere and appearance of the room to have an effect on its users'. In terms of activity, the space had to accommodate lectures and seminars, and music and dance events – requiring sound-proofing, portable seating and a sprung floor; as well as different ways of learning, requiring active and quiet areas. While all this may be possible, the architectural response is that if a space is designed to do six things, it is likely to do two of them very well and the rest not so well. In effect, gaining flexibility in one aspect can reduce it in another. The users' and managers' responses should be to check the validity of what can and cannot be done, to set priorities for activities, and to be in on the final decisions.

The process of equipping and managing creative spaces presents considerable challenges to schools, galleries and museums alike. But it is clear from our focus groups that greater collaboration between teachers and gallery and museum staff can offer valuable solutions to some of the difficulties. It is equally clear that education and curating staff should make more regular opportunities to discuss together the issues related to creative spaces raised in this report.

## Deciding on the key factors

From our consultations with teachers, gallery and museum staff, and children, we have compiled two draft lists of key factors to take into account when designing, planning, locating, equipping, managing and using creative spaces – one for schools, and one for galleries and museums. These are detailed below.

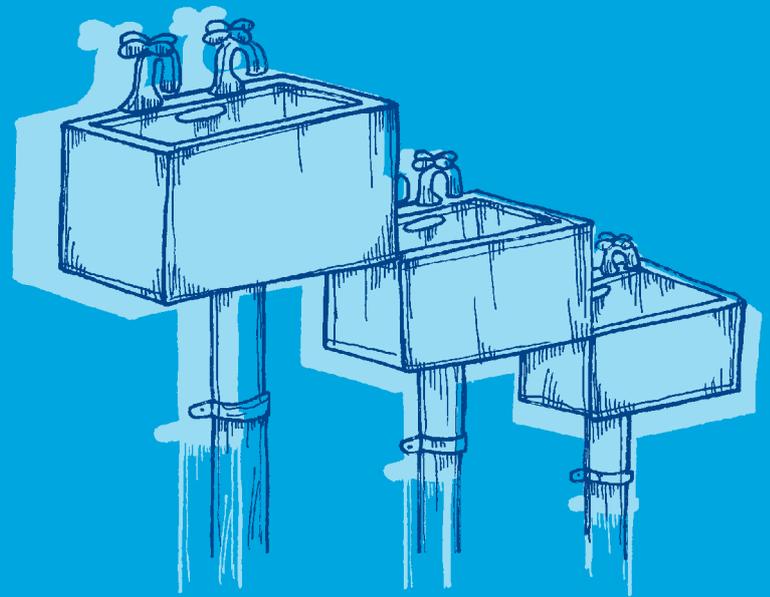
**This is work in progress.** We will continue to consult on these lists in order to improve and finalise them for a second report next year, which will set out models of best practice.

We welcome comments from everyone reading this report. In addition, we plan to carry out a series of case studies of creative spaces that are currently being developed in a selection of galleries, museums and schools. This will give first-hand experience of how best to take account of the key factors for successful creative spaces.

**To tell us your experiences of, and views about, creative spaces, you can e-mail us at: [cloreduffield@aol.com](mailto:cloreduffield@aol.com)**

**‘SINKS IN CREATIVE  
SPACES SHOULD  
BE PART OF THE  
MAIN SPACE AND AT  
DIFFERENT HEIGHTS  
SO THAT PEOPLE  
OF ALL AGES CAN  
USE THEM.’**

Karen Eslea  
Education and Community Officer  
Turner Centre, Margate



## Creative spaces for schools: key factors

### Aesthetics

#### Creative spaces in schools should:

- 1 have white or pale-coloured walls for displaying children's work
- 2 provide plinths or surfaces for displaying 3D work
- 3 feel minimal, clean and uncluttered
- 4 be maintained at an appropriate temperature – not too cold or too hot
- 5 have plenty of light (ideally north light rather than direct sun)
- 6 have interior lighting designed to illuminate children's work on display to best effect
- 7 provide a link with the outside world, either by low windows or doors
- 8 make children feel that the space is theirs, and not someone else's, in the way in which work is left out and displayed
- 9 feel different from other spaces, and engender a sense of surprise and wonder

10 be relaxing and comfortable

11 have windows which are cleaned regularly

### Practicalities

#### Creative spaces in schools should:

- 12 give children enough space not to feel confined
- 13 be small enough for children not be daunted or intimidated, or provide nooks and crannies in which they can feel safe
- 14 include screens to break up spaces into different areas as appropriate
- 15 be flexible, to allow for different facets of the creative process such as discussing, researching, making, reflecting
- 16 be designed to allow for both messy and clean creative work, e.g. photography as well as painting and plasterwork
- 17 be designed to take account of the ergonomics of children's activity through observing children at work and how they move around and use spaces

18 have computers and books available

19 allow pupils to work standing up with work vertical, as well as sitting down with work horizontal

20 provide pupils with spaces for quiet and privacy as well as spaces to work in groups

21 provide ample storage space, with separate spaces for: materials and equipment; finished work and work in progress; and resources including junk and scrap material

22 enable pupils to have their own spaces in which to store their work

23 have accessible storage so that pupils can organise their own work, as well other storage that can be locked

24 have tables and floor spaces that allow for large-scale work

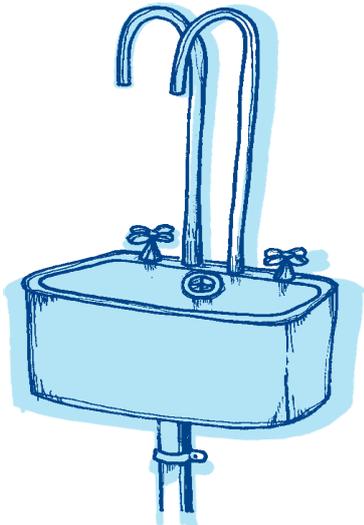
25 have acoustics that enable a babble of voices to sound muted and a single voice to be clearly heard

26 be sound-proofed to enable noisy work, e.g. hammering and sawing

27 have good ventilation for using materials with strong smells

# 'THE IDEAL SINK HAS HIGH ARCHING TAPS AND THE WATER DOESN'T BURN CHILDREN OR BURST OUT TOO HARD.'

Bridget McKenzie  
Artworks Assessor



- 28 allow for messy work and easy cleaning
- 29 have at least three large sinks, at an appropriate height, with ample space for access around them and draining areas for wet equipment
- 30 have water that is hot, not lukewarm
- 31 have tables that vary in height, and can be folded or stacked away
- 32 provide comfortable chairs for small group discussion
- 33 enable things to be hung from the ceiling (without setting off alarms)
- 34 have ample wall space for 2D work to be displayed and viewed from a distance
- 35 have ample power points (16 minimum)
- 36 provide good black-out facilities

## Access

### Creative spaces in schools should:

- 37 be easily accessible, for children of all ages and physical abilities
- 38 be a separate space, not a 'through route'
- 39 provide a straightforward link between inside and outside, enabling work out of doors – and ideally with cover to allow work outside in all weathers
- 40 have sufficiently large doors, and suitable access routes (corridors, corners, lifts), for large-scale art works to be brought in and out

## Management

### Creative spaces in schools should:

- 41 involve children in their design
- 42 enable teachers to exercise their own creativity in the display of work and resources and the arrangement of the room
- 43 be looked after by one person who is responsible for upkeep and tidiness
- 44 not be used as a dumping ground by other people
- 45 enable children to take responsibility for organising their work and clearing away

## Creative spaces for galleries and museums: key factors

### The process of conceiving the new or adapted creative space

#### Principle

- 1 involve artists and designers in creating and renewing the environment and in the programme to be offered there
- 2 involve the users of the space in the design, in both practical and consultative ways
- 3 involve colleagues in considering uses for the space and their impact on the venue as a whole
- 4 adopt a 'visitor up' approach
- 5 encourage thinking about future practice (a space should not simply enable improved organisation of past or existing activity)

#### Practical

- 6 start by establishing the aims of the space, i.e. Why are you building/ adapting? What do you hope to achieve?
- 7 design the space around where people want to go, based on natural 'lines of desire' and research on human behaviour in built environments
- 8 plan for maximum flexibility in the way the space is used
- 9 specify maximum and minimum numbers of users
- 10 list all potential uses; consider the implications of different uses, e.g. clay work (kiln, wheel, disposal of clay); and establish priorities within these uses
- 11 allow for changes of function, taking account of different audiences, needs and times of day, while retaining overall the core educational use
- 12 test the space design with visitors at all stages of development – to check that requirements, priorities, etc. have been properly understood
- 13 think about all cost implications, e.g. staffing, water, electricity, cleaning, etc.

### Where the space is to be sited and approached by users

#### Principle

- 14 make the space highly visible and accessible on arrival at the gallery (but also capable of being shut off, e.g. for class teaching)
- 15 ensure that all visitors know which gallery or museum they are visiting, on arrival – i.e. communicate the identity and purpose through the designed environment
- 16 ensure that all visitors know which space they are in within the gallery or museum
- 17 create a warm welcome – through layout, decor, and trained, customer-focused staff
- 18 make the space somewhere people want to be – and to which they want to return (it should not always look the same)

## Practical

- 19 ensure that the space is not to be a corridor or route to other parts of the gallery or museum (although corridors can be a thought-provoking link between related parts of an exhibition or programme)
- 20 consider access to outdoors for natural light, inspiration and ventilation
- 21 ensure that people can orientate themselves if they start their visit at the space, and can easily find their way back to the space from elsewhere in the gallery or museum

## How to design and equip the space

### Principle

- 22 richness of environment and a good design are vital
- 23 furniture should be suitable for a wide range of ages, sizes and physical abilities

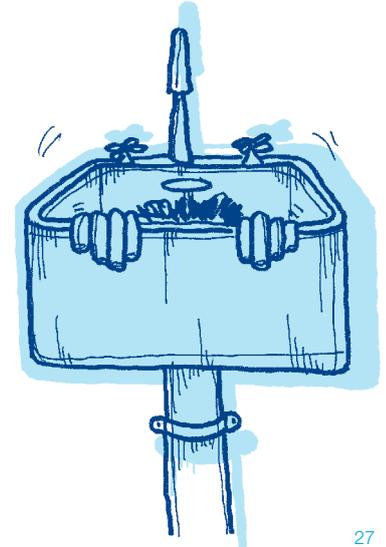
### Practical

- 24 give priority to the usage of the space when considering design
- 25 ensure that the decor does not restrict the flexibility of the space, especially in respect of studio spaces

- 26 ensure that there are good acoustics and lines of sight
- 27 ensure that there is good sound-proofing
- 28 access to water, sink size, location and height of sinks are all crucial (be specific)
- 29 make floors and surfaces washable and hardwearing
- 30 establish a full range of easy-to-change lighting, from natural light to darkness
- 31 allow for the flexible installation of computers and audio-visual equipment
- 32 install furniture that can be readily moved and stored to create clear floor space when needed (think about who will move the furniture and how)
- 33 build in solid, spacious and safe storage for users' belongings and separate space for materials and equipment
- 34 install loos that are well-designed, of good quality, accessible, and easily usable by visitors of all ages, from babies to adults, frequently and in large numbers, such as school parties (more for women than men, and of different heights for children)
- 35 ensure that the loos are regularly checked and maintained

**‘YOU HAVE TO WANT TO USE IT, AND USE IT EASILY WITHOUT DISAPPEARING INTO IT OR PULLING YOUR SCIATIC NERVE.’**

Jem Main  
Director  
The Study Gallery, Poole



## How the space will be used for learning

### Principle

- 36 make *practical activity* the priority
- 37 use the space as a test bed for ideas and to support visitor research
- 38 design the space so that it can foster the full range of learning styles – formal, informal, self-directed, theoretical, practical, traditional, academic
- 39 allow for a variety of experimental and performance activities
- 40 create a wider range of uses and encourage visitor accessibility by, for example, installing a reference library, showing exhibitions, and putting on sessions that show teachers the potential of the space
- 41 use the space to promote, highlight and display the gallery's or museum's education work

## How the space is managed and perceived within the gallery

### Principle

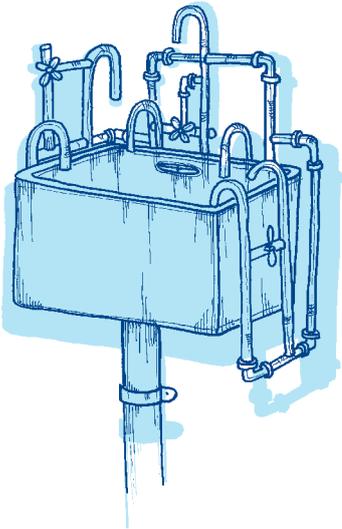
- 42 give the space the same level of care, attention, resources and intellectual investment as for the rest of the gallery or museum
- 43 do not compromise the core educational use of the space when the space is used for unrelated events or activities, e.g. events catering
- 44 provide opportunities for feedback from users
- 45 provide a regular news bulletin on the space (displayed *in* the space)

## Practical

- 46 nominate a member of staff, with an education remit, to be responsible for supervising the upkeep of the space and for being its champion
- 47 ensure that the space has clear sight-lines and is easy to supervise
- 48 ensure that the space is always well maintained, whatever the day of the week or time of day
- 49 establish procedures for the space to be open in the evenings and at weekends, and outside the gallery's or museum's normal opening hours
- 50 devise, and have on public display, a clear policy and contract for users in terms of what they can expect when using the space
- 51 plan for redecoration or upgrading

# ‘IDEALLY IT SHOULD HAVE A MECHANISM WHICH PREVENTS SOLIDS FROM ENTERING THE WATER SYSTEM.’

Deirdre Buckley  
Education and Outreach Manager  
Compton Verney House, Warwickshire



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## Gallery and museum staff

Gallery and museum staff commenting on the key factors for creative spaces in galleries and museums:

Caroline Collier, Director  
**Arnolfini**, Bristol

Katherine Booth Stevens,  
Clare Education Officer,  
**Ashmolean Museum**, Oxford

John Reeve, Head of Education  
**The British Museum**, London

Gillian Wolfe, Head of Education  
**Dulwich Picture Gallery**, London

Sara Holdsworth, Head of Education  
**Manchester Art Gallery**, Manchester

Caroline Rowley, Head of Education  
**National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside**, Liverpool

Emmie Kell, Head of Education  
**Somerset House**, London

Jem Main, Director  
**The Study Gallery**, Poole

David Anderson,  
Director of Learning and Visitor Services  
**The Victoria & Albert Museum**, London

Giles Clarke, museum and heritage  
education consultant

## The Clore Duffield Foundation

was formed in 2000, from the merger of the Clore Foundation and the Vivien Duffield Foundation. The Clore Foundation was established in 1964 by the late Sir Charles Clore. His daughter, Dame Vivien Duffield, became Chairman of the Foundation in 1979 and created her own Foundation in 1987.

The Foundation concentrates its support on education, arts and museum education, the arts, health and social welfare. The Foundation has a particular emphasis on supporting children, young people and society's most vulnerable individuals, through the charities which work to educate, inspire, empower or care for them.

[www.cloreduffield.org.uk](http://www.cloreduffield.org.uk)

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This report is also available on the Artworks website: [www.art-works.org.uk](http://www.art-works.org.uk)

**artworks**  
Young Artists of the Year Awards



*The***Guardian**

**‘A SINK THAT NEVER  
GETS BLOCKED  
NO MATTER WHAT  
GOES DOWN  
THE PLUGHOLE.’**

Dave Eva  
Assistant Headteacher  
Sir William Burrough Primary School  
Limehouse, London

