

## How New Bewerley Community School unlocked creative talent and curriculum change to achieve Platinum Artsmark status



*New Bewerley embraces music with the In Harmony Opera North team.*

**When New Bewerley Community School started their Artsmark journey in 2017/18 they couldn't have known how it would transform their culture, curriculum and community. What started as an exploration of how the arts can lift learning has since become a force for whole school change. In April 2021 their dedication saw them achieve the coveted Artsmark Platinum award. Read on to discover about their creative journey.**

### Key success factors

- The school's Artsmark journey unlocked creative experiences for all pupils, irrespective of their beginnings and abilities.
- Arts partnership working empowered the school to transform teaching and learning.
- Their Artsmark experience has positioned them as a local and regional cultural change leader, sharing their learning experiences with peers.



### **An inner-city school embracing change through Artsmark**

Founded in 2005, New Bewerley Community School is based in Beeston, South Leeds. They serve a challenging catchment area with high levels of socio-economic deprivation. It is estimated that 50% of its pupils live within the top 3% most deprived wards in England.

In addition, the school supports around 50% of pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) and 30% with Special Educational Needs (SEN). This tough context requires the school to be resourceful and innovative in its approach to school improvement.

Their partnership with Opera North's **In Harmony** programme has had a significant impact; New Bewerley's Platinum Artsmark is proof of this. However, this award is not simply a 'trophy' to sit in a cabinet; it is a creative driver for ongoing change.

*"Achieving Artsmark Platinum is not a kitemark, it is a licence to make arts a priority in school - one that embeds and grows."* **Gary German, Headteacher, New Bewerley**

### **Arts and culture at the heart of school ethos and practice**

In defining their values as: 'Include, Create, Perform', New Bewerley Community School are putting creativity at the heart of everything they do.

Across the school, staff use the arts to animate teaching and learning; Continuous Professional Development (CPD) opportunities enable the staff to achieve this. In addition, the school curriculum is organised to ensure at least 40% of the timetable is reserved for arts-based discovery.

Excitingly, New Bewerley's creative commitment is paying off. Pupil progression and attainment has flourished as have creative practices and partnerships.

Fundamental to the school's success has been their long-term relationship with Leeds-based Opera North. As cultural exploration partners they have broken new ground and impacted multiple lives along the way.

*"For us, it is not just about offering opportunities to practise the arts. Artsmark has helped us to exceed National Curriculum standards. It has enabled staff and pupils to develop new vocabulary and practices through rich experiences and stimuli."* **Ashley Lund, Senior Arts Leader, New Bewerley**

*"Your thoughtful understanding of the value of the Arts to children's overall lives and learning is commendable. Also, your aim to promote social mobility by up-skilling children through an aspirational, arts and culture-rich curriculum is impressive."* **Artsmark**

## Cultural change partners - Opera North's In Harmony programme



*New Bewerley pupils enjoy creative learning through Artsmark.*

Through its Artsmark journey New Bewerley has discovered the value of arts partnerships and programmes, particularly through its partnership with Opera North.

Since 2016, Opera North has been a key presence in the school providing music tuition and choral teaching as part of their **In Harmony programme**. The acclaimed opera company is dedicated in its mission to 'connect with communities' removing barriers to music learning and participation.

Thanks to Opera North's specialist team of music and choral tutors New Bewerley's pupils and teachers benefit from a rich learning input. Early Year Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Key Stage 1 (KS1) receive musicianship learning. Key Stage 2 (KS2) receive musical tuition (to learn instruments such as: violin, viola, cello, double bass, trumpet, flute, trombone, French horn and clarinet) with extra-curricular opportunities and the chance for pupils to take their instruments home and continue their learning there.

Opera North's **In Harmony** programme requires investment in teacher time and school funding. It is designed to work in partnership with school leaders and staff to ensure that it is embedded within curriculum time.

In line with Opera North's inclusivity commitment, the programme honours the diverse starting points and potential of every young person – supporting them to learn at their own pace.

It's not just the pupils that have benefited from Opera North's input, teachers have gained from it too. Staff have explored their own musicality - learning instruments alongside their pupils.

Evaluations show that the **In Harmony** programme has already enhanced pupil self-esteem, team-working, concentration and attainment. Over the coming years, it has the potential to affect and enrich further generations.

The school success flows from the pride it takes in building a multitude of additional arts partnerships; these include [Northern Ballet](#), [Leeds Playhouse](#) and [Wrongsemble Theatre Company](#).

*"The teachers change things that might not be fun and make them more exciting and this lets us become talented artists and musicians. My favourite things about New Bewerley are my friends, teachers and the activities we're able to do."* **Year 5 Pupil**

*"For me, being able to see the opportunities the children have through the school's In Harmony partnership is priceless. The joy seen on their faces when singing demonstrates the value the children get from this."* **Higher Level Teaching Assistant**

*"In Harmony is not just about helping schools meet teaching targets - its impact often goes beyond the curriculum. It is about enriching young lives, building music appreciation, getting up close with live performers and unlocking unforgettable arts experiences."* **Charlotte Perkins, In Harmony Manager**

## **Pupil Voice – how children influence the Artsmark journey**

A key criterion for achieving Artsmark award status is the engagement of pupils in the creative journey; a pupil-driven Arts Council is core to achieving this.

New Bewerley pupils are encouraged to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and passion for the arts. They are involved in discussions around the curriculum and selecting creative partners.

The school upholds Artsmark's Quality Principles to plan and measure the impact of pupil engagement; this focuses on actively involving children, enabling personal progression and developing belonging and ownership.

Pupils certainly feel proud of and part of the creative journey at New Bewerley.

*"Not only do I love the arts at New Bewerley, but so does all my family. I feel so proud when I'm performing music, or dance, or drama, to my family at school. My mum often makes me bring my cello home just so that I can perform for her and my dad in the living room. I enjoy doing this because I see their eyes sparkle."* **Year 5 pupil**

*"Pupil voice is carefully solicited through your Arts Council, which has been integral to securing funding for collaborative projects, including work with Wrongsemble Theatre Company to improve reading skills and increase pupils' understanding and use of high-level vocabulary through drama and art - with measurable effects on achievement."* **Artsmark**

## Upholding creative learning through Covid-19 times



*Every day is a learning day at New Bewerley – weaving creativity into the curriculum.*

Whilst Covid-19 lockdowns and remote schooling limited New Bewerley's ability to run its full, arts-rich curriculum the school kept a firm focus on creativity.

In partnership with Opera North's **In Harmony** team the school trialled virtual music lessons and performances beamed to pupils and parents at home. In-between lockdowns, the **In Harmony** programme ran on a reduced timetable; having familiar and friendly faces in school was a plus during uncertain times.

Off the back of Covid-19, Opera North now have an established range of remote and in-person methods for delivering **In Harmony** which will enrich its live delivery going forward. Whatever challenges the future holds the music shall continue to flow and touch young lives in New Bewerley.

*“These experiences and opportunities haven't only impacted positively on the children within the school, but also on the teaching body, the governors, the parents and anyone who is a part of our school family.”* **Class teacher, New Bewerley**

## Creative leadership and Continuous Professional Development

At New Bewerley leaders and staff are fully invested in the arts as a vehicle for curriculum change. Staff receive ongoing Continuous Professional Development (CPD) that enriches teaching practice and learner experience.

There is an open, collaborative approach to curriculum development in the school; the staff are united in building a creative vision for the future. To support this, each subject lead has created long-term curriculum development maps that are underpinned by arts practice.

Significant CPD value has been drawn from ongoing work with partners such as Opera North. Teachers have been able to explore and take risks; staff are skilled at incorporating music and other art forms within lessons.

*“Our open classroom approach and emphasis on exploring and learning together, helps to build teacher confidence and participation in shaping the school’s long-term creative vision.”*

**Ashley Lund, Senior Arts Leader, New Bewerley**

*“Throughout this process, leaders at all levels have developed and enriched their practice to provide the best education for all of our children.”* **Class teacher, New Bewerley**

*“You have capitalised on the specialisms of your arts partner organisations to support your programme of continuing professional development, so that teachers are confident to take risks in their teaching and have been inspired to learn new skills alongside pupils.”* **Artsmark**

## Cultural exploration beyond the school day



*Pupils enjoy the arts within different cultural settings through Artsmark.*

For New Bewerley, one of the key plusses of being involved in Artsmark has been engaging pupils in arts-rich experiences in and outside of the school day.

Through relationships with Opera North, Northern Ballet and Leeds Playhouse pupils have gained unique access to performers, performances and cultural spaces. Young eyes have been opened to arts disciplines and careers in potentially life changing ways.

In addition, 10% of New Bewerley's pupils have had the chance to participate in the [Yorkshire Young Musicians](#) programme. This regional scheme opens auditions, for bursary-funded places, to youngsters from a range of backgrounds. Some New Bewerley pupils have wowed with their talent; they have the potential to take their music all the way.

New Bewerley are passionate about the power of the arts to unlock new learning and life opportunities. The Artsmark process and experience has played a key part in firing new abilities and aspirations.

*"I am going to be very sad to say goodbye to New Bewerley, however, I know that all the teachers have given me the skills I need to succeed. I remember being in Year 4 and being inspired at the theatre. One day, you'll be watching me on that stage!"* **Year 6 pupil**

*"All my child talks about is the trips and performances that they get to be involved in saying they could do them again and again. Thank you for introducing beautiful art forms to them."* **Year 3 parent**

*"The Artsmark commitment has been 100% worth it; our kids are doing things they never thought they could do."* **Ashley Lund, Senior Arts Leader, New Bewerley**

*"There are a huge number of talented, motivated pupils. The coming period will see us creating pathways to extend young people's musical learning journeys as far as they want to go."* **Charlotte Perkins, Opera North 'In Harmony' Manager**

## Life after Artsmark Platinum – taking the learning further

With Ofsted championing the building of 'cultural capital' within UK schools New Bewerley are firmly on the right path. They are passionate about building on their creative learning and relationships into the future. As Covid-19 restrictions ease an academic year of joyful, creativity awaits.

Disseminating best practice and learning gained from their Artsmark experience, shall remain a priority for New Bewerley. School representatives shall continue to share across local and regional educational, statutory and cultural networks including:- Leeds Trinity University ITT, Leeds CEP, IVE, Artforms, Kirklees Council and a range of local primary schools.

New Bewerley is forever changed by its Artsmark journey. It stands equipped with the tools, methods and partnerships to ensure it continues to thrive as an innovative and inclusive school where pupils and staff can explore and grow their creative selves.

*“This is the best school! I’m excited when I come to school. Learning is fun because it is always different. I like art, drama and music the most!”* **Year 2 pupil**

*“The difference this commitment to an arts-based curriculum has made to everyone in the school is incredible. We are so proud of everything that the children and teaching team have achieved and to have been given this accolade is quite simply the icing on the cake!”* **Gary German, Headteacher**

*“Artsmark has been our yellow brick road – revealing how we can use the arts to support new learning, social mobility and aspirations in our children and young people.”* **Ashley Lund, Senior Arts Leader**

*“I would echo the statement that you have started to position the school as an influencer of ideas, policy and high-quality arts learning and I am so pleased that your work in this area is now formally recognised.”* **Jacqui Cameron, Education Director, Opera North**

*“This is a fantastic achievement and demonstrates your exemplar practice and dedication to arts and cultural education.”* **Dave Clark, Head of Service (Learning Improvement), Leeds City Council**

*“We are so pleased that all of your hard work and dedication towards providing such a rich and exciting array of arts and cultural experiences for your pupils has been recognised and celebrated.”* **Aoibheann Kelly, IVE**

**Learn more about New Beverley’s Artsmark experience on their [website](#).**

Discover here **how IVE can support your school to get started on your Artsmark journey. Sign-up to one of the free online [Artsmark support sessions](#) or get in touch with your sub-regional team:**

- **South Yorkshire – [Jamie and April](#)**
- **West Yorkshire - [Jess](#)**
- **North Yorkshire and the Humber – [Mary and Isabelle](#)**