

Arts Backpack UK February update

With schools in Scotland not returning to in-person teaching after the Christmas break, we faced the challenge of re-designing our pilot *again*. Some schools requested to pause the pilot until they were back working face-to-face, however it has become increasingly clear that schools will now not return until the end of our pilot period (31 March). Cue further reinvention, and redoubled efforts to help teachers deliver creative learning experiences online. Below you will find a breakdown of challenges, adaptations and engagement with the pilot so far. It is worth noting that despite Covid-19, we have seen successful engagement with the pilots in some schools. We look forward to delivering CPD in the coming weeks, as well as two new activities designed to be done from home.

CHALLENGES:

- We only had a few weeks in the classrooms at the very beginning of the pilot. Children have been home-schooling since December and are likely to remain at home until we finish piloting on 31 March.
- Until mid-January 2021 no online teaching was allowed in Fife. A strong emphasis remains on ensuring that all children have the same home-learning experience, meaning activities that require extra materials which can only be found in school (for example craft materials) are not possible.
- Four out of six schools have given this project to probationer teachers. We have found that the two non-probationer teachers who were engaged with designing the pilot are more engaged. There are concerns about pilot longevity in the schools where we are working with probationers.
- The Arts Backpack website was designed to be used by teachers, not children. Some teachers have found ways for their students to engage with website content without issuing personal logins.
- The Arts Backpack workbooks arrived as Scotland went into lockdown, and so have not been disseminated.

ADAPTATIONS:

- We have widened CPD out to all the teachers in each school, to ensure wider impact and longevity.
- We have commissioned two at-home activities for all the schools: three *Wakeup Shakeup* videos, which are being integrated into weekly online wellbeing sessions; and a competition to design a logo for the Arts Backpack. The logo competition will include an introduction video about what makes a good logo, helping children develop critical thinking through looking at other logos, and demonstrating to children a potential avenue for working in the creative arts (as a graphic designer).
- The element of students choosing activities has not featured as heavily in this pilot as we would have expected, due to the limitations of home-schooling. Teachers have been making activity choices, some with guidance from Amanda.
- Now that online teaching is allowed in Fife, we are planning to conduct some evaluation with the children participating in the pilot - aiming to gather anecdotal evidence about their Backpack experience.
- We are considering a case-study within the evaluation of school(s) where engagement has been high.
- We are planning to fundraise for a further pilot in Fife in late 2021/early 2022, working in the same schools and where possible, the same classes.

ENGAGEMENT:

- Four out of six schools have engaged with the pilot.
- Levels of engagement have varied hugely - one school has already completed four Backpack activities and is now at the point of commissioning a piece of content; others are just engaging with their first activity.

FUTURE PILOTS:

- We are thrilled that the Leicester pilot of the Arts Backpack UK in partnership with the Spark Arts has been selected for the Aviva Community Fund. We are 60% of the way to our first target, with a stretch target of £5,000 (the total sum needed for this pilot): <https://www.avivacommunityfund.co.uk/the-arts-backpack-uk>
- We have met with the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and Arts Council England to discuss our funding applications for future pilots.
- We have five pilots in the works for 2021-2022 across England, Northern Ireland and Scotland.