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# National Gallery 'Picture in Focus': Evaluation of the national roll-out



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This report builds on *The National Gallery 'Picture in Focus' Project: A Research Evaluation* by Dr Dominic Wyse and Laura McGarty (who were at the time from the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge) completed as part of their work for the National Gallery. Their work included two other research evaluations: 1) *The National Gallery Initial Teacher Education Cultural Placement Partnership:*

*A Research Evaluation*, and 2) *Evaluation Report: Out of Art into Storytelling*. The current report is contextualised in the literature covered in these previous reports so doesn't repeat this material. A key element across all these evaluations is the ways that art can be used as a stimulus for teaching and learning across a wide range of curriculum subjects and thematic areas.

## Executive Summary of Findings

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The *Picture in Focus* national roll-out centred on the use of Titian's masterpiece *Diana and Actaeon*. Following a successful preliminary phase the National Gallery's approach to stimulating enhanced educational practice through cross curricula teaching and learning was extended. This research found a rich and complex set of findings that suggest that the highly significant beneficial aspects of the National Gallery's education work far exceed the natural limitations. There is sufficient powerful evidence, from teachers, from young people, from evidence of engagement with profound issues, and from the frequently innovative and high quality nature of teaching, for the National Gallery to continue to invest in and enhance *Picture in Focus*. In summary:

- All teachers involved in *Picture in Focus* projects as part of the roll-out rated the initial one-day introductory workshop by the national gallery very highly.
- The majority of teachers experienced what they saw as the benefits of extending the boundaries of their normal subject teaching because of the cross-curricula approach of *Picture in Focus*
- The majority of students involved in the projects were engaged by the

activities and reported significant interest in the work. Some students were less engaged by the work, often as a result of tensions between what they perceived as 'normal' patterns of teaching and learning and the innovative approaches tried as a result of *Picture in Focus*

- The opportunity to visit the gallery and see the painting in situ was a powerful, and perhaps essential, feature of the most successful projects
- The organisational structures in secondary schools, and assessment pressures, created significant barriers to the successful realisation of *Picture in Focus*. Opportunity to collaborate meaningfully was often restricted.
- The painting was mainly used as a stimulus to relate issues stimulated by the narrative of the painting to contemporary issues and contexts. While this was usually successful the centrality of the painting to such explorations was sometimes in question
- The nudity that is a feature of the painting revealed at least three kinds of responses: a) initial surprise followed by rationalisation; b) in one setting, serious and profound engagement with body

image and nudity; c) for a minority of students, seeing nudity as a serious obstacle to their engagement

- The extent to which schools placed an emphasis on a final product, or not, had a significant impact on the processes of development of the projects.

## Methodology

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### Aims of the Research

In response to the National Gallery project aims the evaluation explored the following three main areas:

1. How the different schools worked as part of the *Picture in Focus* project and how they used their own resources alongside the resources provided by the National Gallery. How the project was realised in each school in different curriculum subjects. This included:

- the curriculum subject involved
- the patterns of planning and managing the cross-curricular work
- the factors that helped or constrained the delivery of the project
- the relevance of the designed *Picture in Focus* project to the national curriculum and the schemes of work for each subject in the schools
- the effectiveness and efficacy of the project as well as its affordance in terms of producing a desired result

2. The pedagogy that underpinned the project and the nature of cross-curricular learning and teaching that took place. This involved mapping:

- the range of educational approaches to *Picture in Focus*
- the teachers' varying perceptions about cross-curricularity
- the possibilities of working within and beyond their subject areas

- the pedagogical innovations that the teaching of each subject through art may have necessitated

3. The reported impact of the *Picture in Focus* project on students and teachers and the implications for future development of *Picture in Focus*.

As part of the reported impact we explored the attitudes and interests of the students, their understanding of the cross curricular nature of the project, their views on learning and the impact of the project on them. We also engaged with the new resources that were utilised during their participation in the *Picture in Focus*.

With regard to the implications of *Picture in Focus* work for the teachers, we studied:

- the changes in their professional practice in order to accommodate the *Picture in Focus* work into their existing practice
- their understanding of art as a resource and point of reference in cross curricular approaches,
- the patterns of collaboration and planning that emerged as a result of the project
- Their attempts to accommodate national curriculum requirements, establish relevance and coherence with the topic

### School involvement and engagement with the project

Ten schools from London, the South West and the South East regions of England were involved finally in the national roll out of *Picture in Focus*, during both the

pilot phase or main phase of the research, with one of these schools taking part in both phases.

A total of 100 students and 27 teachers took part in the national roll-out. Out of those 100 students, there were 60 from Year 7, 31 from Year 8 and nine from the sixth form. Table one details the numbers of teachers involved:

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Number of Teachers</b>
Art	9 **
English	7 *
ICT	2
Music	2 **
German	1
PE/ Dance	1
RE	1
Law & History	1
Geography	1
Science	1
Maths	1
Drama	1
Hospital Education Setting	1

*Table 1: Teachers involved and their subjects*

*\* including one teacher of English and Drama and one Literacy Co-ordinator*

*\*\* The Art and Music teachers who took part in the project during both the pilot and main phase have been counted twice.*

Table 2 details the numbers of students interviewed.

<b>Year Group</b>	<b>Students interviewed</b>
Year 7	60
Year 8	31
Sixth Form	9

*Table 2: Students interviewed and their year groups*

The research adopted a qualitative evaluation research design (Patton, 2004). An abductive orientation to analysis (Lewis-Beck, Bryman & Liao, 2004) allowed *a-priori* features, such as the aims set by the National Gallery, to be

combined with the emergence of outcomes grounded in the data through the *constant comparative method* (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) of data analysis.

## Sample and Data Collection

The sample of schools was all schools who opted to be part of the national roll-out as a result of the promotion by the National Gallery. 22 schools expressed initial interest in being involved in the national roll-out but in the final outcome six schools took part (plus the four schools who were involved in the pilot). This low figure is no doubt disappointing to the National Gallery but perhaps is a reflection on the government accountability pressures placed on schools, and the low status of art as a subject compared to other subject areas such as English, maths, science etc.

In general, across all 22 schools, at least one member of staff had attended the National Gallery training, which universally was found to be beneficial. The most common reasons cited by the schools who did not go on to carry out the project work was timescale for planning, with the majority hoping to do the work in the next academic year.

The final sample of schools in the pilot and main phases was:

School 1 Independent, Mixed, Greater London (pilot phase)

School 2 Foundation Secondary Girls, Kent (pilot phase)

School 3 Voluntary Aided Comprehensive, Boys, Inner London (pilot phase)

School 4 Community Comprehensive, Greater London, Mixed (pilot phase/main phase)

School 5 Community Comprehensive, Greater London Mixed (pilot phase)

School 6 Academy, Technology specialist status (main phase)

School 7 Independent, Selective, Boys school, Berkshire (main phase)

School 8 Independent, sixth Form college, Mixed, Inner London [main phase]

School 9 Secondary, Mixed, Science, Maths and Computing Specialist status, Rural, Wiltshire [main phase]

School 10 Special School, hospital based, mixed, Oxfordshire [main phase]

This report focuses on the data acquired in the six schools who were involved in the national roll-out.

The data sets were:

- Observations of *Picture in Focus* lessons (observations of both standard lessons and *Picture in Focus* lessons during the evaluation of the pilot)
- Photographs of resources
- Semi-structured interviews with teachers involved in the project
- Semi-structured focus group interviews with students who had been involved in the project

All interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed.

Data were collected from each school through one day visit to each site. The data from School 4, which also took part

in the pilot phase, were collected over a number of visits in order to document the work that took place under the different subject areas over a period of a term. Due to the nature of the *Picture in Focus* work in School 4, as well as their extensive engagement across a number of subject areas, this school was studied in more depth over four visits and was treated as a case study within the project.

Nearly all teachers who were directly involved in the project were interviewed in each school. On average six students per school were interviewed. This was not the case with School 4 which formed an extensive part of our research study. In that school we interviewed a total of 42 students across subjects over the two years of the project. The students were selected for interview by their teachers with the expectation that the focus group would reflect a diversity of attainment, gender and ethnic origin. The schools recommended which *Picture in Focus* lessons would be most suitable for us to observe. In the pilot phase this included one *Picture in Focus* lesson and one standard lesson by the same teacher (in order to explore standard teaching elements vs. *Picture in Focus* elements), whereas in the main phase only *Picture in Focus* lessons were observed.

All participants gave their consent to be interviewed. The schools had previously requested the consent of parents for their children to be interviewed. The research team, operating under the British Educational Research Association code of ethics for research conduct, also collected consent forms from students and teachers before the interviews. The interview participants were informed about the confidentiality of the interviews and that they could opt out altogether or not answer questions they did not want to. For the purposes of reporting, the anonymity of the interviewees has been maintained and the school names have been replaced by pseudonyms.

The self-reporting nature of interviews is a methodological limitation; however observation of lessons recorded in field notes provided a means to triangulate some of the perspectives reported at interview. Similarly, the teacher interviews offered contextual information that helped us make sense of the students' engagement with the work and explain their attitude towards it. The nature of the 'non-edited' and direct responses of the students facilitated a clearer understanding of the impact of the *Picture in Focus* work on them, and this enriched what we could elicit from the more rationalised accounts of the teachers.



## Analysis

For initial analysis, key words and themes were allocated to the data in a system of coding. The words and themes were selected following a read-through of all forty nine transcripts and twenty lesson observations, noting each theme which arose, with close attention paid to the aims of the *Picture in Focus* project under evaluation. Following this process, code names were allocated to each of these themes, and the transcripts colour-coded accordingly. This included all answers that were semantically relevant to the identified key words or alluded to comparable concepts. Codes were then amalgamated or sub-divided based upon their frequency and range, and codes from the final list were applied to the transcripts using *HyperRESEARCH*

qualitative data analysis software. Further to this initial coding, the analysis of the texts employed elements of discourse analysis (Kress, 2010) to enable a contextualisation of the utterances in the interviews within the broader framework of teaching and learning practices at school and the gallery.

## Findings

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### The Schools' Projects

Different subject areas came together in varying combinations and emphases across the participating schools. The overview of the curriculum subject combinations that were involved in each school and the year groups that participated in the *Picture in Focus* were as follows:

**School 1:** Art and Design, Dance, English [Year 8]

**School 2:** Art, English, Geography, Science [Year 8]

**School 3:** Art, English, Drama [Year 7]

**School 4 (pilot phase):** Art, English and Drama, ICT, Music, PE [Year 7]

**School 4 (main phase):** Art, Music, ICT, German, and Maths

**School 5:** Art, English [Year 7].

**School 6:** Art. [Year 8]

**School 7:** English. [Year 7 & Sixth form].

**School 8:** Art [Sixth Form]

**School 9:** RE, Law and History [Year 8]

**School 10:** Art, English, Maths, Science and PHSE [Students from all year groups working with the teacher on a one- to- one basis]

The following descriptions only cover the schools involved in the national roll-out. School 4 was involved in pilot and national roll-out so is covered in somewhat more depth after the descriptions of the work of schools 6 to 10.

## School 6

The basis of the Picture in Focus work at School 6 was the subject of Art. The two art teachers involved saw the *Diana and Actaeon* painting as a prompt for creating theatre puppets, which would then be used for acting out the story. The project was planned to run for twelve weeks with all their Year 8 students, who would have one lesson per week. There was an additional plan to engage the Gifted and Talented students in a *Picture in Focus* workshop that involved animations.

The art teachers expanded the curricular boundaries of their subject to get the students to engage in a range of activities within the art session. These involved: making theatre puppets, reading the Diana and Actaeon story, having a debate on fox hunting, writing an argument for or against fox-hunting and copying the original painting in their sketch books. The computer animation activity was not planned to involve the ICT teacher, but would be run as a separate workshop by the art teachers themselves.

The Picture in Focus classroom work was a follow-up to a visit to the National Gallery, where the students saw another painting by Titian and had a workshop based on the theme of metamorphosis.

The first hand experience of viewing the original works of Art in the National Gallery as well the information they were offered in the workshop created the context for working with the painting in the class. The teachers informed us that the Picture in Focus project fitted around their pre-planned artistic activity of puppet making. The *Picture in Focus* project added a conceptual context, characters for the puppets, and a story line which could be the basis of the puppet play that followed. Their idea was to get the puppets to metamorphose, starting off as

Diana and Actaeon and then changing into stag and dogs.

The teachers had already done some preparatory work during the summer, prior to the work, starting by creating the clay heads for the dolls. The students added a paper and carton body to the clay heads and illustrated them with black fine liner and paint. They attached a rod to the back of the clay heads, in order to operate their puppet using strings.

The Picture in Focus project enabled the teachers to foreground the importance of the subject of art as a resource for learning across subjects. Art was seen as the subject through which learning through making is made possible. The Picture in Focus was the prompt that helped the teacher increase the 'affordances' of the subject of Art and extend the boundaries of the subject.

In one of the observed lessons the *Diana and Actaeon* painting was used as a prompt for a debate on fox hunting, conducted as part of the Art lesson. Drawing from the violent and tragic elements in the story, the teachers established an association with fox hunting today.

In the debate that followed the teacher gave out different statements for each of the groups of four to discuss. This resulted in a very energetic and engaged discussion in the class. The students were asked to research the topic further and write up their arguments for or against fox hunting, as part of their homework.

The lesson triggered thoughts from the students about the relevance of this activity to the subject of Art.

*'The lesson just hasn't seemed like Art. It just seems like English with a bit of Drama and Art'*

This was coupled by the understanding that the *Diana and Actaeon* painting as well as the Art lesson could positively generate activities that are usually linked to other curriculum subjects:

*'The lesson we did today, it was more like a discussion, so there were more aspects to it than Art'*

The students also informed us about an activity to copy the painting, in accordance with common practices in some Art lessons. This raised the question of whether it is possible for the art teachers to modify sufficiently their usual practices.

The reception of the project work by the students in school 6 varied significantly. Their interest in the painting and its relevance to their interests rated on average 6.5 in the scale of 1 to 10. Their dislike for the painting was closely associated with their dislike of the specific activities they did as part of their art lesson, such as having to read the story behind the painting rather than hearing it, or making the puppets. They specifically referred to their dislike for copying the painting and their preference for making their own painting.

## School 7

The *Picture in Focus* project at School 7 was initiated by the teachers of English of Year 7 and the Sixth Form and was implemented with these two year groups.

### Year 7

Most of the activities for Year 7 developed within the subject of English.

The teacher offered us a rationale for her introduction of activities and practices in the project:

*'Because the painting is something that's been painted in the 1600s is slightly out of touch, but the narrative, obviously has all these kinds of things'*

The painting was not considered as relevant to life today and this necessitated an elaboration through a selection of themes that were seen as closer to students' interests. The teacher considered that the myth behind the painting could lend itself to different kinds of engagements with it. The narrative of the story of Actaeon and Diana was judged to be important as it had the potential of offering a story line for a play.

In the case of School 6 the painting was used as *'a reference'* for the art work as well as the debate work they did in class about fox hunting. It was also used as *'a model'* and for offering a context and a frame to the puppet making activity by *'reminding them what the whole project is about'*. The art teachers mentioned that they made reference to the painting in every lesson. The main purpose of using it was as a reference for modelling the puppets onto the original characteristics of the figures.

The English teacher worked with one of the four Year 7 classes in the school, who had already visited the National Gallery.

As regards the planning of a cross-curricular project, the Year 7 English teacher who co-ordinated the project envisaged some input from the subjects of Classics and PSHE, so that the students could do presentations to other

students in the school general assembly on the issues of fair punishment. The Art and French teachers got involved very briefly and worked with a small group from the class. In the subject of Classics they had some initial lessons on the legend behind the *Diana and Actaeon* story and on the ancient gods. There was no specific interest to orient their *Picture in Focus* work towards an end product or art work that would show the engagement of all these subjects.

Following on from a preparatory visit to the National Gallery at the beginning of the school year, the *Picture in Focus* work covered the whole of the first term and developed within three units of work in the subject of English through a topic on myths and legends.

### Media and Poetry.

There were six lessons dedicated to newspaper article writing and another six to poetry and film posters. The students embarked on three small projects under each of these units. The work involved a lot of brainstorming sessions and working in groups, as well as writing and some drawing.

The teacher used the themes from the story of Diana and Actaeon and transposed them to contemporary contexts inviting the students to engage with them as news that got reported by newspapers. The aim of the activity was to familiarize with the genre of newspaper and the style of writing for a tabloid front page. The themes selected for the tabloids did not demonstrate direct or explicit links with the painting.

In the class we observed, the students worked on creating newspaper front pages. Some groups were required to create tabloid front pages and some groups broadsheet front pages. The main stories were loosely related to the actual Diana and Actaeon story, for example the

issue of embarrassment was picked up as a theme in a few cases. Small prints of the painting were available to the students as a point of reference, but they did not seem to be used at all during the lesson. They featured however as the main image accompanying their story.



Fig 1. Main story from a broadsheet front page

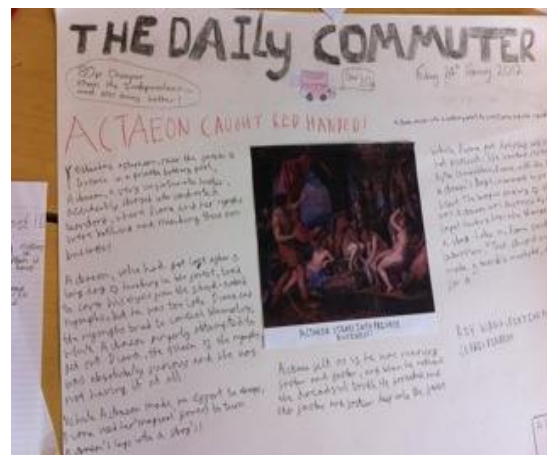


Fig.2. Tabloid front sheet

The *Diana and Actaeon* painting became a prompt for studying the genre of movie posters as part of the Media unit. They studied the conventions of movie posters and their form and features. The teacher

projected the painting on the screen and invited the students to imagine that this was a scene from a movie. They then explored the possible genres of movies this story could belong. Based on that discussion, they had to design and print their own movie poster titled *Diana and Actaeon: The Movie*. The students produced both a digital as well as a hand-drawn version of the poster.

Under the poetry unit, the students wrote poems as a response to the painting. These tended not to be poems about the story of *Diana and Actaeon*, but transpositions of themes from the painting to contemporary contexts. As preparation for writing a free form poem the students engaged with the painting in ways that evoked sensory language. They made a spider diagram and answered questions such as: 'If this painting was a sound, what sound would it be and why?', 'If it was a taste, what would it be?'. The teacher encouraged the students to use similes and metaphors, so that they reinforced the learning that had previously taken place within the subject of English.

It is characteristic that the *Picture in Focus* work went through the same assessment and evaluation procedures followed for all subjects at school. The students had to write about it in their Assessment and Prep Book and evaluate what they had learned in terms of knowledge and skills acquired.

For the purposes of *Picture in Focus* the English teacher experimented with different way of working in groups. This proved successful and satisfying for the teacher, as it was seen as a 'big step forward, in terms of the cooperation of the students with one another'.

The activities pursued as part of the *Picture in Focus* within School 7 are indicative of several attempts that teachers made across the schools to shift the focus of their engagement to a

contemporary version of the Diana and Actaeon story, rather than the myth itself.

## Sixth Form

The sixth form English tutor at School 7 integrated the *Picture in Focus* project in the students' assessed A-Level written work in English. The teacher introduced the painting of *Diana and Actaeon*, inviting the students to discuss the different forms of texts that they could create in relation to, and in response to, the painting. As the focus of their English lessons was on gothic texts, several students decided to engage with the gothic elements in the painting. The teacher challenged the students' perception of what the painting is and can be, by focusing their attention on possible gothic themes arising from the painting, aware that the painting is not a gothic one.

The students' production in response to the painting varied according to the genre of texts they selected to engage with as part of their course work. Some students wrote newspaper articles, while others wrote poems and audio scripts:

*'We had a sort of group brainstorm thing where we came up with different ways we could present our text, and then I individually decided I wanted to do newspapers'.*

*'I have done a series of newspaper articles, and I've sort of, in each article I've looked at a different aspect of the picture'*

*'My coursework on writing a collection of sonnets, mainly based around the relationships between men and women and basing it around a gothic style, like, and obviously the painting is key'.*

*'I did an audio script for the painting. It's for people standing in front of the painting, they put it on, and it's then, they're*

*imagining they're Actaeon in the picture, so it's in second person, and they're sort of directed what to imagine, what builds up to the painting where he looks in on them bathing'*

The students and tutor used the painting as they would use 'any still image', which could prompt them to create a written text. They all recognised the immense potential to teach and learn a range of

## School 8

School 8 forms another instance where the *Picture in Focus* had to support the students' assessed work for the A-Level exams. The key subject that led the exploration here was that of Art. *Picture in Focus* fitted around the requirements of the Unit 1 coursework, as well as contributed to the preparation for their exams, involving looking at artists and their work. The teacher's focus was the 'four assessments objectives of the syllabus: developing ideas, looking at other artists, experimenting with different media, recording first hand and doing their final pieces'.

The *Picture in Focus* project was introduced at the final piece stage of the students' work, under the themes: 'Sanctuary' and 'Encounters and Meetings'. The teacher directed the focus of the exploration to the theme of 'Sanctuary'.

The *Picture in Focus* work took place at school and the National Gallery. The teacher had asked the gallery educators to introduce paintings that were linked to the theme of 'sanctuary'.

*'The purpose of our trip to the museum was to see classic paintings that also relate to our theme. But if we use it, I think most of us did at least study about the painting in order to show what we understand about the painting and our visit to the museum'*

issues from the painting, using it as a prompt to engage with historical knowledge; for example patronage in Europe, the story behind the creation and purchase of the painting etc. The requirements however of their A-Level work dictated a specific orientation to the English lesson and the work they could produce, were they to use a painting as a prompt.

The work in the Gallery proved quite powerful for the students, because apart from encountering original work of arts, they were introduced by the gallery educators to a new way of analysing a painting, which they immensely valued.



Fig.3 *The place of the painting on the classroom display boards*

*'It helped us realise how to analyse a painting, because I have never been taught that'.*

Working with the *Diana and Actaeon* painting was a departure from their usual engagement with Art at school, where

they tended to focus more on modern paintings:

*'We had been focusing on modern paintings, so the teacher wanted us to do something that was classical'*

Apart from creating their own art work or enriching their existing one with themes and ideas from the *Diana and Actaeon* painting, the students were asked to write a short essay on the painting, as a way of exploring the artist and his art.

The Art teacher in School 8 was used to including museum and art gallery visits in the programme of studies for AS in Art. It is characteristic that most of the *Picture in Focus* work took place in the National

Gallery and few lessons were devoted to it at school. The *Picture in Focus* project and the practices linked to it were seen more as a prompt for involving the gallery in the classroom work, rather than as a prompt for cross curricular work. The project fitted around the practice of the teacher, art department and school, that all supported learning in the gallery. It also fitted around the teacher's idea of how students learn in the best possible way and how best to enhance their assessed course work. She valued the direct experience of physically being in the gallery space and seeing the art work in person, irrespective of whether it directly or indirectly relates with their project topic.

## School 9

School 9's involvement in the project was an initiative of the head of RE initially, who saw it as an opportunity for the Gifted and Talented students, as well as a means for cross-curricular enrichment. Due to the difficulties of engaging a wider range of subjects, because of timetabling, *Picture in Focus* was implemented across Art and RE. Nine groups of Year 8 students were involved in the project.

Most of the *Picture in Focus* activities were scheduled to take place within a day dedicated to the project. The key activities developed within the extensive RE lessons, while the Art activities were more limited.

Based on a perception that *'this sort of art would not reach most kids in our school'* the RE teachers decided to build on the students' knowledge of popular culture and attempted transformative versions of the story behind *Diana and Actaeon* by applying it in contemporary contexts and genres.

The lesson observed was one of the first sessions that took place within the *Picture in Focus* dedicated day. The students had to watch a video excerpt from the Jeremy Kyle show and were asked to put a play into action, according to their understanding of what was happening in the picture. Then they had to produce written scripts for their version of a Jeremy Kyle show. In a different RE session the teacher used the painting as a prompt to look at signs and symbols. They had a discussion about forgiveness and watched a TV programme by the presenter Esther Rantzen.

The RE teacher started the work by engaging the students with making symbols using another painting before moving on to *Diana and Actaeon*. The teacher defined the concepts of symbol and sign and invited the students to design their own symbol, which could represent an emotion or an idea. The discussion that followed was based on ancient gods and their symbols as well as their associations with various elements. The teacher finally invited the students to

make drawings and notes about the planning of their own photo-shoot inspired by the painting and the theme of symbols. He projected photos by Sam Taylor Wood on the IWB. These were used as an example of the *'dynamic actions and the exaggerated poses and positions'*, that contrasted with the ones in the *Diana and Actaeon* painting. Both images were offered as a resource to the students so that they could draw inspiration for their photo-shoots.

An instance of the photo-shoots that the students produced showed a *"road rage" driver who knocked over a lollypop lady, while a child and bystanders see the accident'*.

The *Diana and Actaeon* painting generally remained a more remote point of

reference in the activities in the school. This was partly to the teachers' decision not to focus on the painting too much within the same project day.

The nature of the project prompted the teachers to use a different range of activities and tasks within the RE subject. In their effort to reach out towards the cross-curricular dimensions they enriched their lesson with resources and teaching strategies that are often identified with other subjects, such as Art and Drama. This is indicative of what happened across other subjects in the participating schools, where we observed the teachers stretching the boundaries of their subjects and the possibilities for practice that these often entail.

## School 10

The work of School 10 was in a hospital school, a setting that offered a contrasting example of implementation of *Picture in Focus*. The special nature of the setting meant that tuition took place on a one-to-one basis more than in groups due to restrictions to do with the medical conditions that the students were experiencing.

The lessons involved students of all age groups in the secondary education level. Some of the students attended the hospital school for longer periods of time so experienced longer programmes of study while others stayed in for a short period of time attending single lessons while recovering. The ethical and practical difficulties of interviewing young people with mental health and physical conditions meant that interviews with young people were not possible. Our understanding of teaching and learning during *Picture in Focus* lessons was based on an interview with two members of education staff who

worked with the young people in their lessons.

The subjects that were addressed in the *Picture in Focus* project were English, Maths, Science, PHSE and Art. A significant aspect of the curriculum offered by the school became centred on the *Diana and Actaeon* painting for a short period of time. This meant working on the *Picture in Focus* for two sessions in English, two in Maths, two in Science, and one in PSHE in an assembly.

The pedagogy adopted to make the project possible in the school involved working across all curriculum subjects within the time span of a week. The teacher outlined the benefits of working this way: *'It kept things fresh in the students' minds, as they would otherwise find it hard to re-engage with the actual thinking or feelings they had in a previous session.'* This raised a valid point in relation to students in the other schools who carried out *Picture in Focus*



but who were constrained by subject timetabling.

The project in the hospital school was introduced in the assembly. This was followed by an English-based lesson which started with drama and role-play, and looked at different roles and emotions and situations in the picture, leading to the writing of a witness statement based on the idea of a crime being committed by Actaeon. Continuing with a direct focus on the painting the Science lesson was around light and colour, and the Maths lesson focused on the human body, ratio and perspective.

The two PHSE lessons addressed justice and body image. The PHSE lesson on body image used the nudity of the figures in the painting as a prompt to introduce challenging issues about the body, attending with caution to the possible effect this could have on students with psychological issues. The session on the portrayal of women's bodies involved looking at pictures from hello magazine, as well as other images in the popular press of people who have been caught unawares by photographers in non-flattering body postures, gestures and overall appearance. The sophistication and sensitivity required for working with young people, some of whom had eating disorders, on such topics was one of the many impressive features of a setting where art had historically (partly as a result of the art therapy philosophy) been a very important influence on education.

In the Art lessons the arts co-ordinator also used the painting as an opportunity to look at Ovid's writing, his poetry and his poetic techniques. She also used the National Gallery website quite extensively to provide entry points into the *Picture in Focus* work, especially when she wanted a stronger prompt for them to engage with.

The art teacher found that the one-to-one basis of teaching *Picture in Focus* lessons

did not offer the social context of the peer group that was essential for this kind of work.

The overall implementation of the *Picture in Focus* work in this setting, including the use of the National Gallery resources, was done on an ad hoc basis within the week allocated to the *Picture in Focus* work. The examples from School 10 revealed the possibility of the National Gallery web resources to work well in the context of impromptu teaching by addressing the specific needs of the students.



Fig.4 Poster on the theme of body and self-image

## School 4

School 4 offered the most comprehensive approach to the *Picture in Focus*, by engaging the widest range of subject specialists in the creation of an integrated final project. Having had the experience of working with the *Picture in Focus* over the previous year, the teachers, headed by the art teacher, agreed to introduce the *Picture in Focus* through the subjects of Art, ICT, German, Maths and Music.

Approximately 60 students from two Year 7 classes took part in the project. The first class worked on *Picture in Focus* through Art, Music, German, while the second through Art, ICT and German.

The planning in this school was driven by the consideration of what the final project would look like. The subject of Art played the co-ordinating role in the project, as it was the Art teacher who initiated the project in the pilot year so took the lead for the national roll-out year. A total of six teachers attended the National Gallery workshop before starting on the project. Three of them had already taken part in the pilot stage of the *Picture in Focus* and attended the National Gallery workshop the year before.

School 4 worked on the project for an extensive period of time almost from the end of the first term until the end of the third. The time devoted to the project across the various subjects varied a lot, as each subject started the *Picture in Focus* work at different stages in the year. The most lengthy engagement with the project was through ICT and Art, while Music and German were involved for a term and Maths for a one-off session only.

The initial planning involved the creation of 'some kind of installation' with increased input from the Maths and Technology teachers, who were going to contribute with work on 'scaling and

ratios'. The overall design had to change though when the Maths and Technology teachers did not get to take part in the project, as initially planned. Given that the school's initial *Picture in Focus* planning had evolved around an outcome based heavily on the contribution of Maths and Technology, the teachers agreed to work toward a different product that included animations, as these were considered to work best for Art and ICT.

The key contribution towards the final product was made through the subjects of Art and ICT. The work that was conducted in Maths and German was seen as easily linking to the final work, which would be invested with the outcome of the students' engagement in these two subjects.

The way that the final project was envisaged as a media production with sound, involved a layering of the products from all the subjects. The core parts were the animations from Art and ICT, which were enhanced by with sound, i.e. recordings from students narrating the story in German and music especially composed for the purpose.

### Maths

Our understanding of what happened in the Maths lesson comes from the account of the Maths teacher and the students rather than a lesson observation. In the instance of Maths, due to planning limitations, the teacher had the opportunity to do only one *Picture in Focus* lesson with a group of students, which included some who had taken part in the *Picture in Focus*, but who were not actually his own maths students during the year. He perceived the topic of functionality in maths to be the most apt means for establishing a connection between Maths and Titian's painting. Having considered the 'affordances' of the painting, he concluded that long multiplication and proportion were the

most relevant Maths topics that the painting could lend itself to.

The initial planning for the inclusion of Maths in the project involved a more extensive and central role than the subject could ultimately play. The idea was to magnify the painting as part of the Art lesson, as this would lend itself directly to proportion in the Maths lesson. The rationale for this choice was that learning about proportion was rated as highly significant for the students by the Maths teacher. As the team did not implement this initial plan, the way to engage with Maths had to be altered as well.

The maths teacher shifted the focus of his *Picture in Focus* lesson to long multiplication. He started off his lesson with a PowerPoint Presentation and a slide the '*Diana and Actaeon*' painting on the Interactive White Board (IWB), as a way of establishing a connection with the overall project. Only six of the students in this lesson had any involvement in the actual project. These students explained to the rest of group what the painting was about. Following on from this initial presentation of the painting, the rest of the Maths lesson was more focused on the maths behind the flicker-book they had created in their Art lesson, as well as on other animations and videos he projected on the IWB.

Given that the students were involved in two animation projects employing different media and tools on each occasion, one in Art and one in ICT, the maths teacher chose to make connections with the practice of animation. As a way of introducing long multiplication he asked the class to look at how many slides or how many stills would be required in, a) an episode of the Simpsons, b) in a series of the Simpsons, and, c) in all twenty four series of the programme.



Fig.5. A flicker book used in the Maths lesson

The students' descriptions of what happened in the *Picture in Focus* lesson showed the centrality of animation as the prompt for engaging with Maths:

*'A Maths teacher came in and taught us about how many, like, how many things are needed to make this amount of flipbooks and how many pages are needed to make it. So, related to the Maths'*

*'He showed us an example of what The Simpsons, how The Simpsons works, like, how many frames they do per second, and we had to time it by the number of episodes and the number of series, and when we timed it we saw that they had to do so much work, the animators, so we felt for the people that were doing it'*

*'he explained to us in a mathematical way, how many frames you need per second to, how many frames per second if it was going to be used in a TV, animation show'*

All the students' recollections were about an elaboration of the topic of animation through maths. Although the teacher started off the PowerPoint presentation with the painting, this ended up being a remote point of reference in the Maths lesson. It is characteristic that the recollections of the maths students from that lesson were mainly about the *The Simpsons* animation, which seemed to have been used quite extensively.

The teacher delivered the maths lesson by introducing cross-curricular resources, normally associated with ICT and Art. He stretched the boundaries of what is normally included in the content of the maths lesson and of what is considered to be the usual maths pedagogy. The effort made by him was more in the direction of relating his lesson with the art activity of animation they were doing in Art, rather than the painting. This raises the issue of what is at stake when teachers try to make the work relevant to students' lives, drawing from popular culture, and what is the role and place of an original work of art in that process.

## ICT

The ICT teacher participated in *Picture in Focus* through an animation project. The students learned to use animation software, in order to reproduce the *Diana and Actaeon* story using the technique of pivot stick animation.

The ICT teacher devoted all the ICT lessons of one of her Year 7 classes to the *Picture in Focus* project, while trying to fit with the normal curriculum. There was only one Year 7 class within the ICT department that worked on the project. From January until June the ICT lessons (two every fortnight) were exclusively dedicated to the project.

Over a series of lessons the ICT teacher used the painting to create a relevant context for the building of a story line and resources necessary for the design of an animation project. She then introduced the students to relevant software for the production of the animation.

The ICT teacher chose the route of animation as an alternative to the video work they had done for the *Picture in Focus* pilot year. The attempt to do something innovative turned out to be a risky endeavour, given that she was

introducing something entirely new, which she had not previously taught to this year group in that context.

This resulted in her introducing and teaching three different types of animation software to the students. They started off with *Scratch* and then moved on to *Alice*, which both proved complicated for the demands of the project and the abilities of the students. She finally used *Pivot Stick* animation which proved the easiest for the students to manage. Producing something that should contribute to the final product within a short period of time proved quite demanding.

In the initial lessons the ICT teacher created a context for talking about the narrative and what happens next, by showing them another picture of Titian, which depicts Actaeon transformed into a stag. This offered an additional 'visual stimulus to the children as to what happens next, which would be the thing they had to work on in their animations'. This helped them become familiar with the narrative behind the painting and facilitated the creation of *story boards*, as a step before working on the technical aspects of the animation.

The students were initially asked to build story boards using sugar paper. This was in order to reinforce their understanding of the story line behind the painting. They were encouraged to attempt any kind of transformation they wished, in terms of the setting of the story in time and place, and the characters. The students were then split into groups and each group chose a part from the narrative that they wanted to turn into a scene from an animation film.

Several students decided to locate their story in the present, while others chose Henry VIII settings. This meant that they had to do some additional research on the internet and download images, which they processed through a photo editing

software. This work was linked to the first two animation software packages that were tried.

As the students moved on to working with the third animation software package they continued working in groups, sharing ideas about how their stick figures would move in relation to the action within their selected scene. They all eventually attempted modern day versions of the story, using contemporary images from the web as the backdrop to their animation, which ranged from contemporary living rooms to bathrooms.

The painting had not been a constant point of reference in the lessons throughout the year, but worked as an initial prompt. The main emphasis on the picture was in the first lessons where they talked about it, discussed what had happened before in the story, and what was going to happen afterwards. This worked as the basis for the students to engage with the creation of their own stories.



Fig. 6 A shot from the animation where Actaeon is entering Diana's house

The students seem to have received very positively the fact that the ICT teacher took risks and experimented with different software before she actually settled on one. What the teacher described as an experience that may have had a negative impact on students actually had the opposite effect:

*'I like the way, during the ICT lessons, we were trying different animation software,*

*and then, in the end, we settled on an animation software called Pivot, in which you could change the frame and do the animations.'*

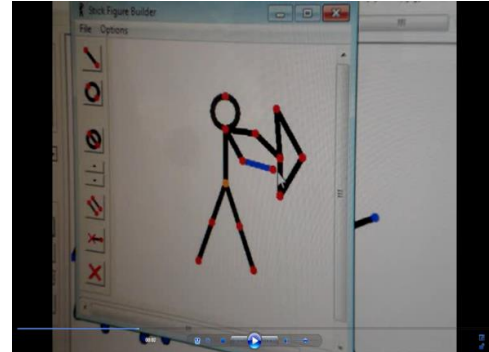


Fig. 7. A screen shot from the animation making process

*'We, like, for, we started with Fireworks, then moved onto Adobe Flash, now we're on Pivot, so we didn't have time, so we move onto Pivot, so we can make the Picture in Focus project much easier and much quicker.'*

## Art

The contribution of the subject of Art in the project was an animation produced by an extensive number of drawings, which were subsequently scanned and turned into a short video. This video transferred the action depicted in the painting into the mode of animated film.

During the first few sessions the teacher introduced the *Diana and Actaeon* painting and the students elaborated on the themes arising from it. The orientation towards the final project meant that the Art teacher had to establish links between the concept of animation, the media and the techniques involved.

The students started off their animation production by making flicker books exploring the idea of frame by frame animation and understanding how it works.

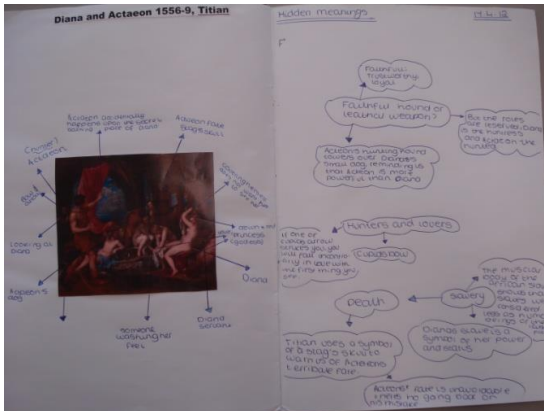


Fig. 8 A two-page spread from a student's Art book with analyses of the painting.

Further to that they created story boards with details from each scene of the narrative behind the painting. These were the basis of their subsequent role play and filming work.

The art class was split into groups of actors, film makers and directors and explored ways to act out and record the various scenes linked to what happened before the scene in the painting, as well as after the scene in the painting. The teacher printed off four frames per second of their film. These were then traced over by the students, using sugar paper placed on light boxes.



Fig. 9. An example of a story board for a scene

The subsequent development of these prints involved the co-ordinated group work of the Art class. One team traced the initial outline with pencil, a second one applied water colours to the outlined

images on sugar paper, while a third one applied ink to the initial outline.

Completing the project involved reproducing several hundred copies of versions of the painting. The students of the Art class as well as some other student volunteers were invited to do some extra work during lunch breaks and break time. The project involved an extensive amount of work for the teacher, such as scanning a large number of pictures for the animation video and editing the video. The teachers' comment best summarises the experience of the project in the last stages of the work:

*'but what's happened with this animation towards the end, it's just become more kind of like a factory line, rather than different activities in each lesson.'*



Fig. 10 An example of a painted and outlined scene which formed a frame for the video animation

Participating in the *Picture in Focus* did not change the Art teachers' practice in terms of the way she approached paintings or dealing with art work. It inspired her however to embark on something more ambitious, large scale and time consuming than she would normally do. A lot of preparatory work had to take place outside the school, before the students actually started working on the project.

The experience of having done the project twice prompted the teacher to reflect on how to develop her way of working within her subject when it came to accommodating the *Picture in Focus* project needs. The amount of work that such a large project generated would in future need to be split up across all the art sessions rather than accumulating towards the end. Instead of starting with extensive introductory work regarding the painting, as a prerequisite before doing the actual practical work, she considered that the best practice would be to spread the engagement with the actual painting across the sessions, while the students are already working on the practical aspects of the project.

The combination of an extensive introduction around the painting and the repetitive nature of the animation task seemed to have disappointed several of the students, who were hoping for something more interesting, relevant to their lives as well as an end product of better quality.

It seems that the students got more directly exposed to the picture through Art rather than any other subject. They had more sessions on it and more discussions about the actual picture, than in any other subject, where the painting tended to be more of a remote point of reference to their other subject work.

The students' religious beliefs and values seem to have been challenged a lot through the issues of nudity, revenge and racism, which came up in the elaboration of the painting.

## **Music**

The role of the subject of Music in the *Picture in Focus* project was to support the final project and enhance it with sound. The students explored sounds and created melodies that could be used

to accompany the animation of the story of *Diana and Actaeon*.

The music teacher devoted all the music lessons of the summer term to the project. These were fortnightly lessons of one hour and 40 minutes duration that were linked to the scheme of work for the term, which was about 'Composing music for Film and TV'. The learning objectives that were driving the lessons of that term were the development of composition skills in response to films and videos. Participating in the *Picture in Focus* involved a slight variation to the prompt for music composition, which became visual rather than kinaesthetic.

Over a series of lessons the teacher explored the visual references in the painting and the narrative behind it, encouraging the students to think of appropriate sounds and melodies that would enhance the action in the *Diana and Actaeon* story. All the references made to the *Diana and Actaeon* narrative during the lessons formed the basis for an exploration of rhythm, pitch and variation in tone, speed, volume as well as other abstract music concepts. The students were encouraged to explore these concepts by improvising musical compositions in groups using their keyboards and headsets.

In the first lesson we observed, the teacher helped the students build resources for composing in response to the demands of the *Diana and Actaeon* narrative. The teacher projected the painting on the IWB and invited the students to split in groups and experiment with sounds and melodies that they considered more apt for the action within specific scenes in the story (e.g. bathing scene, chasing scene)

Each group of students presented their work which was discussed and commented on by the whole class. The teacher offered each group feedback and

suggestions for improving their composition, so as to be able to offer a musical account of action through the appropriate elaboration of sound.

The teacher also presented the students with examples of music compositions that invested filmic action in the best possible way. Videos of Harry Potter and Titanic movies, as well as an animation were projected on the IWB. The students had to establish links between the elements of the action and the kind of music used. This was an invitation for the students to explore the genre of film and animation in relation to musical concepts such as tempo and dynamics. It aimed to help the students understand how their own music compositions would subsequently invest their *Diana and Actaeon* animation.

This work was challenging for the students most of whom had limited technical skills in playing the keyboard. It also assumed an ability to engage with the abstract concepts in films, such as intensity of action and emotion across various scenes. Producing music to enhance the animation of Diana and Actaeon had an additional difficulty arising out of the fact that there was not any finished animation product to which they could directly relate their composition. The students had to use the painting as the point of reference in conceptualising action across various scenes and make choices as to what music would be the most apt for each one.

The second music lesson observed was towards the end of term when the students had finalised their musical compositions. The teacher made several recordings of the composition work of each group both for the Picture in Focus animation project, as well as for an assessment in the subject of Music. He explained the assessment criteria for the subject and discussed ways in which students could enhance their work in order to meet the criteria.

The fact that the Music teacher incorporated the project in the scheme of work meant that he had to assess the students, as he would normally do when using a different prompt, such as a film. It emerged from the interviews with the students, that they got disappointed by this practice of using the *Picture in Focus* project for assessment purposes. They felt that the prolonged engagement with the painting deprived them of opportunities to study music in film as other Year 7 groups did. In addition they did not think that the *Picture in Focus* work adequately prepared them for the assessment demands.

### **German**

The teacher of German and one Year 7 class participated in the Picture in Focus project through five consecutive lessons focused on the painting. The approach to the painting did not vary significantly from the educational practice she usually employed in her foreign language teaching.

The teacher simplified the *Diana and Actaeon* story, summarising the action into 8 German sentences. The language used in these sentences was quite advanced for the student's current level of understanding. The teacher however managed to contain the difficulty by using cognates wherever possible. The students were encouraged to memorise these sentences and familiarise themselves with their meaning.

Part of the language activities included making a story board matching the sentences with images and engaging in role play animating the story while saying the relevant German sentences each time.

The lesson we observed was partly devoted to Picture in Focus, showcasing



the final part of their work, which involved a mini performance with the series of role plays they had previously done. The lesson started with a written task based on the 8 sentences they were familiar with. The students had to match the sentence halves together in order to tell the story. The story of Diane and Actaeon was used as a theme, on which to base a language exercise.

This task was followed by the mini performance. The different groups of students, who had in previous sessions worked on acting out a specific scene, came to the front of the class and acted out and animated the different scenes in the narrative. The performance included short freeze-frame role-play, accompanied by recitation of one sentence in German, which described the action in the performed scene.

The subject of German did not play a key role in shaping the School's final animation project. The initial planning involved some partial investment of the final project with some of the Picture in Focus work, either students' writing or speech.

The students' interview comments offered us an insight into the use of the painting in the previous German lessons. The painting was projected on the IWB and the students were asked to observe details and try to find out what is happening. This was something that the students already knew from their art lessons, but enjoyed recounting, as it proved an empowering experience to share their prior knowledge with the German teacher.

The German class students rated how much they liked working with the painting and on average they gave it a score of 9 in the scale of 1 to 10. These were students of similar background, ethnic makeup and religion with the ones in the Art class who were not so engaged with the *Diana and Actaeon* painting. This is another instance of how the students' interest in the painting is closely linked to particular activities in each subject.

## Findings Across The Schools

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All teachers who took part in the national roll-out were positive about the Diana and Actaeon project. Most of the teachers involved in the national roll-out experienced a range of transformations of their teaching practice. The pedagogy often involved transposing the story and theme to contemporary modes and media. In some of the schools the teaching practice was oriented towards the creation of an end product that would be submitted to the National Gallery.

The research project offered us data about the impact of the *Picture in Focus* that showed that the project:

- stimulated enjoyable work
- supported the teachers' professional development
- provided opportunity to share expertise
- provided opportunity to develop new ideas for teaching
- enhanced collaboration

The following quotes are indicative of the many positive features that the teachers and students noted:

*we found that that was a very good way of developing young people's skills in communication skills as much as anything else, and developing, I suppose, a level of questioning that is going quite deep with them.* (Arts Coordinator, School 10)

*I think for my development it's been fantastic working across the school.* (Teacher of PE, Year 7, School 4)

*I think it's injected creativity back into English, because you can become too bogged down with what they should know and need to know and where they need to be at and their assessment by*

*the end of the half term and are you teaching them in line with the objectives and the criteria. So what it sometimes means is that they feel that they can only go so far with their ideas because we don't allow any freedom, whereas this project has allowed them to take on.* (Teacher of English, Year 7, School 3)

*It gave us links to what the different subjects would be doing as well. So from a creative point of view, it's quite difficult to know how far you expand from it, we stuck mainly to the painting itself.* (Teacher of English and Drama, Year 7, School 4)

*As a teacher from my point of view it's been a brilliant opportunity for me to think about what I'm doing and link into what other people are doing and just having that dialogue and the conversations with people about what their interpretation is, what they've done, and just borrowing ideas from other people as well in different subjects, that's been really important.* (Music Teacher, Year 7, School 4)

*That was really good. It's creative in different approaches, so you're approaching something in different ways* (Teacher of English, Year 7, School 5)

*I think this project has been really successful because it's now moved into three subject areas, so it feels like we're slowly getting the word out that actually cross-curricular is working, it's effective and the kids really enjoy it.* (Teacher of English, Year 7, School 3)

*I enjoyed working on this particular project because of the links between the subjects* (Teacher of English, Year 7, School 3)

*For me it's been quite interesting to get away from our normal curriculum teaching databases and spread sheets  
(Teacher of ICT, Year 7, School 4)*

*I think this school is a huge school and departments tend to be quite sectioned off because of its size, I know quite a lot of teachers in the school but you don't see them an awful lot, so I've really enjoyed working with different teachers, and working with teachers as well, apart from you just getting on and doing your own thing.  
(Teacher of English and Drama, Year 7, School 4)*

*Yes, (the project) absolutely (had an impact), and not just in terms of the students but in terms of my lesson planning, I've been much more aware of the creative process in lesson planning because I'm starting totally from scratch, there's no theme of work that I've inherited from anybody else, there's no scheme of work in a book... (Teacher of Drama, Year 7, School 3)*

*It is cross-curricular, definitely. I think the fact that we all know what everybody else has done, we've had a lot of dialogue and not a lot of meetings, you don't have meetings for the sake of meetings, but we've been able to put time aside to have a catch up every couple of weeks to find out what everyone else is doing  
(Teacher of Music, Year 7, School 4)  
Also for me (it has been important) to work with other teachers and to share ideas, because you do tend to stay in your departments and it's really good to talk to other people. (Teacher of Art, Year 7, School 5)*

*(The cross curricular way of working) it's been a revelation to me.  
(Teacher RE, Year 8, School 9)*

*I've been thinking of using some aspects of it in my MA writing. I'm particularly*

*interested in how it creates new dynamics within the classroom.  
(Teacher of Art and English, Year 8, School 2)*

The painting and the project challenged teachers in terms of pedagogy, expertise and prompted them to take risks:

*I didn't really know how it was going to work. So I was quite open minded about how we could get involved in it and obviously we're very interested in how.  
(Teacher of Geography, Year 8, School 2)*

*It is good, I struggled to start with to find how we were going to use the painting in a meaningful way, that students could actually make progress and really learn from it.  
(Teacher of Geography, Year 8, School 2)*

The project also challenged the teachers' perceptions of the role that art can play in their subjects:

*I've never used art as a stimulus for geography before and actually had wanted to use something like art, music, drama or dance or something like that for a stimulus for geography to add to the creativity, so it's been really good to be able to use it and it was quite far away from what I thought I would be using as an art stimulus.  
(Teacher of Geography, Year 8, School 2)*

*I suppose I've become much more aware of what they're capable of and giving them a bit more responsibility or ownership over what they want to do and allowing them to be much more creative.  
(Teacher of Art, Year 7, School 5)  
The main changes in practice that the teachers referred to were:*

- increased risk taking

- expanding the range and scale of work
- experimenting
- expanding the possibilities of their subjects in terms of content and resources
- increased collaborative practice

Typical of examples of extensive risk taking was the work of the ICT teacher in School 4, who experimented with three different animation software with her students before settling on the most apt approach.

Participating in the *Picture in Focus* did not change the practice of all the teachers. For example the art teacher from School 4 experienced a different way of working that wasn't entirely satisfactory for her:

*The way I teach a lesson I wouldn't say was so different. The way that we talk about paintings, and then we make notes, and we discuss things, but what's happened with this animation towards the end, it's just become more kind of like a factory line, rather than different activities in each lesson.*

*(Teacher of Art, Year 7, School 4)*

However, taking part in the project made her embark on something more ambitious, large scale and time consuming than she would normally do. The teacher mentioned that a lot of preparatory work had to take place outside the school, before the students actually started working on the project.

Overall, *Picture in Focus* work prompted different teaching practices in the classrooms. These allowed the students' work to be more creative and transformative of existing resources.

*A lot of the artwork and the writing we've done is mainly our own and we haven't copied off the board or anything*  
*(Student, Year 8, School 2)*

## Schools' Organisational Structures And Curricula

Most teachers referred to the normal curriculum as a restrictive factor in carrying out cross-curricular projects, due to time limitations, exam pressure, and/or syllabus content that had to be delivered.

The participation mainly of Year 7 and 8 students in the project and the absence of other year groups is a sign of the increased orientation to exams in the later stages of secondary school; it seems also to be the effect of the performativity culture which dictates that teachers deliver external agendas.

The data showed that the following are all factors that impact on the feasibility of projects such as *Picture in Focus*:

- departmental structures within the secondary school
- management styles
- the physical proximity of departments
- the possibility of meeting with colleagues
- the teachers' perception of their subject as fitting in with others
- resistance to opening up to collaborating with the orientation of other subjects
- the limited number of motivated and inspired individuals.

The following quotes of the teachers highlight some of these issues:

*I think this school is a huge school and departments tend to be quite sectioned off because of its size, I know quite a lot of teachers in the school but you don't see them an awful lot.*

*(Teacher of English and Drama, Year 7, School 4)*

*RE has come back into the Humanities faculty this year. And I think these two coming back in has actually made a very big difference, because they're much more open about engaging with other subjects. I don't know if it's the nature of RE or not, but they are. So I think those two things coming together actually have meant that it's been much easier to work together this year.*

*(Teacher of RE, Year 8, School 9)*

*But we're a small faculty, as well, so it's nice to be able to branch out and do other things. And RE fits in with so many other subjects ... it's simply, it's an easy cross-curricular. There's always something, in most cases, something you can do with other subjects, so there's always the scope and the ability to do that. And yeah, we're a small department, so it's quite nice to (branch out)...*

*(Teacher of RE, Year 8, School 9)*

*(The art teacher) was a bit grumpy about doing it to start off with I think ... he felt that usually when he's part of a cross-curricular kind of project day, Art isn't really taken seriously as Art at all, and I think he thought that today, actually it was Art that was involved.*

*(Teacher of RE, Year 8, School 9)*

*The creative flow across the subjects would be nice, if we could be doing this together in the sense that we've got the time to do this, because then that creativity could be used.*

*(Teachers of Art and English, Year 8, School 2)*

*I don't feel as linked to the English teacher just because I never see her in the corridor (Teacher of Dance, Year 8, School 1)*

*RE's marginalised and look down on by, not just some kids, but I think some staff as well, so it's nice to [collaborate]*  
*(Teacher of RE, Year 8, School 9)*

The schemes of work in the school and the necessity to align with them were seen by one teacher as a factor that negatively impacted on seeing the benefits from the project immediately. He however identified longer term benefits:

*... of course you're kind of slightly tied down with the current schemes of work that we have to be doing, so it would take time to filter through, but I think taking ideas to start next year, I think that's definitely when it will start to impact.*

*(Teacher of Art, Year 7, School 5)*

Time was an important factor across schools in relation to cross curricular work and work within subject areas. It was felt that the time to engage in projects such as the *Picture in Focus* had been limited. In most instances this was linked to the accountability of teachers regarding the adequate preparation of students for their GCSE or GCE exams. Shifting the focus away from the usual pattern of work could be seen as having a detrimental effect on students' performance. This may explain the limited time that was devoted to the project across schools as well as within each subject.

*With the seniors, I think you can give a little bit of freedom because you don't have the pressure of the exam. So that helps you a lot. When you are with GCSE it would be different because you have to look at the assessments, so you need to make sure you don't give too much to it (Teacher of Art and Design, Year 8, School 1)*

*I told them (the other teachers) a bit about it (the Picture in Focus), and the things you'd get back would be 'this will mean a massive change to our scheme of work', 'we're not sure whether we want to take the time out to rewrite the scheme of work', 'not sure how it's going*

*to fit in with our current theme or what we're trying*  
(Teacher of Art, Year 8, School 1)

*We were really keen on doing the lessons, but what we found quite difficult was the planning time to sit together and then we had the OFSTED call so we were quite busy preparing for that. So then afterwards we decided that rather than putting it off, because we felt we hadn't done a real scheme of work, because we wanted to do a six week scheme of work, we thought we'd do a day while the students are fresh from the visit and we're fresh from the training*  
(Literacy coordinator, Year 7, School 5)

All teachers made considerable efforts and went to great lengths to ensure that the *Picture in Focus* project was properly integrated into their schemes of work within their subjects. The *Picture in Focus* work in one instance became part of Year 7 students' assessed work in Music. In another it became the main route for enriching the assessed work of sixth formers in the subject of English.

In the instances where sixth form students were involved, the *Picture in Focus* project was closely integrated with their assessed course work or exam preparation work:

*'Well I've integrated it into another scheme of work in order that the children can do their end of year exams and that's on different genres of writing, so writing to inform, for example, writing to persuade. Most of my activities have been designed around different genres of writing but using the painting as the subject*  
(Teacher of English, Year 8, School 1)

The timing of the *Picture in Focus* activities was an important factor that seems to have determined the length of the engagement and the kind of work attempted in each subject. In several

instances the teachers mentioned that due to starting either late in the term or the year and closer to the exam period meant that there were limited possibilities to expand the *Picture in Focus* activities.

In the instance of School 4 which devoted a lot of time to the project, the students and teachers reported difficulties of a different kind, for example the prolonged engagement with the same subject at times became an anti-climax in terms of sustaining the students' interest.

*We need to say, we are going to carry on doing this, and especially because it is our last lesson [referring to the repetitive work in Art in order to finish the project].*

## **Students' Learning And Development**

The experience of the *Picture in Focus* project for the students has varied according to the nature of cross-curricular work attempted by the teachers and the range of activities adopted. Evaluating the impact of the *Picture in Focus* on students is a difficult task. What is actually being evaluated is not one initiative that was consistently applied across the board, but a range of initiatives and context specific approaches under the *Picture in Focus*.

The overall experience was described as positive:

*We definitely feel like it's a really good thing to do, we've learned a lot about it, it's like a different way of learning, we don't really do anything like this.*  
(Student, Year 8, School 2)

*Learning differently I actually feel that it's really good, because I like learning different things but on the same subject.*

*We went to the National Art Gallery, which was quite a big surprise and it was fun. (Student, Year 7 School 3)*

A significant parameter that shaped the students' experience and determined the impact of the project was whether the project work was linked to the gallery visit or not. In those few instances where the gallery visit preceded their engagement with the work, the students had a clearer sense of the art work and the gallery context.

The first-hand experience of similar works of art was unique for several students. It offered them an idea of what these art works looked like, which seemed completely different to their experience through the classroom interactive white board. In several instances the encounter with the gallery educators offered the students different kinds of resources and a new approach to looking at art:

*[The gallery educator] helped us realise how to analyse a painting, because I have never been taught that. (Student, Sixth form, School 8)*

*It was really good for them because when they came back from the gallery they were really excited. So it changed the way I teach them, and also it's really good because they are already prepared. (Teacher of Art and Design, Year 8, School 1)*

*If I had my own department or if I was head of art I would personally do more, because I don't think it's fair to just take GCSE and A level to the gallery, I would take more junior age to the gallery, more younger ones. First of all it helps them to understand. (Teacher of Art and Design, Year 8, School 1)*

For most students the *Picture in Focus* project seemed to have been one of the

few examples of cross curricular work they had ever experienced at school. Only some students could recall a similar instance:

*With science and geography we're learning about renewable energy, so we did the science of it and then we did the geography of it. (Student, Year 8, School 1)*

Students were generally appreciative of the opportunity to focus on the painting through different subjects and engage in cross-curricular work either through different subjects, or within the same subject.

*But when we go to English were doing something completely different and were doing a different point of view from the painting. (Student, Year 7, School 3)*

Most students commented positively on the cross curricular dimension that the *Picture in Focus* project introduced:

*I think it's good to get on a topic from lots of different subjects, because then you've got something to work around and you can use different subjects for another subject. It gives a whole rounding to the whole curriculum.*

*You understand everything about the picture.*

*One learns better this way, because you are more engaged in what you are doing*

*It was quite an interactive, fun subject, and it was a topic that I liked. (Students, Year 7, School 7)*

Sixth form students understood the cross curricular nature of the project as '*the combination of creative subjects*'. They also perceived this as the practice of drawing themes and topics from

something that is the prompt or the inspiration for creative ideas.

*The art, or the picture, sort of act like a base for your English idea. And it's quite good, personally, I think it's quite good, to know the story behind the painting, because it sort of gives you an inspiration or even an example, but you're also free to develop your own idea.*

*So that approach of getting something and then trying to draw whatever you want from it or however you want to draw upon it, it's a lot easier then*

*Well, before, with Art work, I'd actually done the exact reverse. I'd had a look at some stories and then tried producing Art work based around it. So I think with creative subjects like Art or English it is a lot easier to do that kind of combining things, because you're just looking for inspiration from something.*

*(Students, Sixth form, School 7)*

Some students in School 6, where the *Picture in Focus* was pursued only through the subject of Art, did not seem to be happy with the activities involved in their lesson. They specifically referred to their dislike for copying the painting and said they would prefer to do their own painting. This is an instance where one of the activities that was done as part of the *Picture in Focus* involved work that was done according to usual practices in the Art lesson; these often involve 'copying' paintings of big masters.

*So I think it's better when, like, you do your own sort of stuff that you can manage yourself.*

*... Like, your own sort of drawings, you can go the way you want instead of almost copying it.*  
*(Students, Year 8, School 6)*

This raised the question about the extent to which it is possible for teachers to break away from their usual practices as part of the *Picture in Focus*, as the students would have liked.

Students reported their understanding that the Titian painting can lend itself to elaboration through a range of school subjects beyond Art:

*So there were more aspects to it than art*  
*(Student, Year 8, School 6)*

However the students still identified specific practices with particular subjects. In an instance of a discussion that took place within the Art lesson they commented:

*It sounds like an English lesson*  
*(Student, Year 8, School 6)*

This quote was one of the few in the project where students allude to the concept of cross-curricularity, or try to elaborate what the project was all about in terms of curriculum subjects.

*But still, we did Drama, some, and then we drew it, and then we did more writing, and reading, and then we did some more, and then we drew something, and then we did some more, and then we did clay, and it just hasn't seemed like Art. It just seems like English with a bit of Drama and Art*

*It just seems like more stuff you would do in English'*

*(Students, Year 8, School 6)*

The above is also indicative of the students' understanding of the possibilities for working cross-curricularly within the subject of Art. A stronger conception of the benefits of



cross-curricular work, shared with students, might further enhance learning and teaching.

## Relevance Of The Project To Students' Interests And Lives

The Picture in Focus positively impacted on the students who took part, as they managed to find interest and get excited with the painting itself or the activities this prompted across subjects. Most students expressed an interest in the painting and a fascination with the story behind it.

*It's a good painting to choose as well... There are lots of levels to it... You can talk about it quite a lot. There's a lot of features. There are mysteries.*  
(Students, Year 8, School 2)

*I like it, because it's kind of fun learning about a painting that's really famous and is in the National Gallery*  
(Student, Year 7, School 4)  
*I also think it's an amazing painter, to think that it's nearly 500 years old*  
(Student, Year 7 School 4).

*When we found out about the Diana and Actaeon thing, we got excited. We wanted to learn about it*  
(Student, Year 7, School 4).

*I think it's good, because if you usually go to a gallery and look at pictures, sometimes you might not understand what you see. And if you take the picture bit by bit, and understand every single detail, when you finish you'll understand overall what the picture means and why it's painted.*  
(Student, Year 7, School 4)

*(The painting is)interesting because it has a story to it... As we first looked at the painting Miss told us to think what we think about it, most of us didn't find it appropriate but as we went through the*

*story and we went to the art gallery, we fell into the story and we understood it, we used the story to create most of our stuff in the work. So most of us in the beginning we would have thought we wouldn't enjoy it, but now...* (Student, Year 7, School 4)

*I really like this project, because it's fun and we're also learning about a painting that was done quite a long time ago, and I like the story behind the painting*  
(Student, Year 7, School 4)

The students' fascination in several instances had to do with the cross-curricular work and the new possibilities that were emerging for them:

*It's really fun, because instead of just learning the story in English or just doing a picture in art we get to do loads*  
(Student, Year 8, School 1)

*I think that it's fun, because you get to see a picture in real life, and then you get to say what you think about it in, you express it in pictures and words and poems* (Student, Year 7, School 7)

*It was also useful, even if we didn't use the pictures we were shown and stuff, just in the fact that it helped us realise how to analyse a painting. Because, like, I've never been taught that.* (Student, Sixth form, School 8).

*We're all really keen to do it*  
(Student, Year 8, School 2)

*I like it because you have to give your own opinion. So if someone else disagrees with you, there's not really a right or wrong answer* (Student, Year 8, School 9)

Participating in the Picture in Focus project meant on several instances that students had to work more in depth and often harder than they would usually do. Some of them were surprised with how

engaged they got with something they were not initially expecting to be that fascinating:

*The thing is that some of us didn't like the painting at all at first, and then after they explained about everything...  
(Students, Year 8, School 1)*

*In our normal lessons we work half of how we were working now on Diana and Actaeon, because our English teacher told us to do drafts of the story*

*I kind of like it because it's, we're kind of doing more stuff than usual. We're getting up and doing pictures and drawings and stuff like that, so we're kind of doing more than we normally would in lessons than just sitting there writing (Students, Year 8, School 9)*

Alongside the majority of the positive comments about the painting, the project and the new possibilities for engaging with learning, some of the students expressed their concerns about:

- the repetitive nature of work across subjects
- the extensive engagement with the Picture in Focus within a subject at the expense of other topics
- the link of the project to the school assessment regimes, which took away a lot of the enjoyment.

The issue of lack of interest, in those few instances it emerged, was linked to the specific tasks the teachers set within a subject, rather than the use of the painting picture as a prompt across subjects.

Some of the students from School 4, that attempted the most extensive engagement of subject specialists within the *Picture in Focus* project, expressed their disappointment about some of the activities. This was mainly linked to the

repetitive nature of their tasks in Art and Music, as well as the repetition of information across subjects:

*Before this project, yeah, every lesson we used to have a new topic. One lesson it was Vincent Van Gogh, and after it was another sculptor, then after it was something else, yeah, but now it's just gone boring, it's just like (whiny voice): "Diana and Actaeon and all this.*

*It's like, if you had, look, we have Art right now, next lesson German, yeah, so we'll have Art, we'll learn the Diana and Actaeon, same thing, yeah, then we go to German, Diana and Actaeon.*

*(Students, Year 7, School 4)*

*Every lesson we keep doing it...we're not doing anything else, we're just doing the same thing over and over again when they (other classes) are making new stuff.*

*We're doing the same stuff every lesson, and it's not really art if we're like tracing over a picture and then painting it after it's been drawn. Then afterwards we're having to outline it. It just, it's too boring and there ain't no purpose to it (Student, Year 7, School 4).*

*It (the draft of their animation project) was kind of ugly.*

The last comment is also indicative of the high expectations students had when embarking on something new, interesting and beyond their usual school practices.

Some of the students also expressed their disappointment when the Picture in focus work became the subject of assessment. Most students would have preferred to engage in the Picture in Focus as a project that ran independently and not subject to

assessment regimes and curriculum requirements.

Some of the negative comments about the project came from students who were working to complete their project at the very end of the school year. According to the art teacher from School 4 this negativity could also be linked to the time of the year. Getting close to the end of the school year may not be the appropriate time to increase efforts towards completing a final product.

A few students did not seem to be happy with the choice of activities their teachers made for engaging with the painting. They specifically referred to their dislike for copying the painting and said they would prefer to do their own painting. This is an instance where one of the activities that was done as part of the *Picture in Focus* involved work that is done according to usual practices in the Art lesson, which involves copying paintings of big masters.

*So I think it's better when, like, you do your own...drawings, you can go the way you want instead of almost copying it. (Students, Year 8, School 6)*

*No, I like the story being told, but then again, I like drawing but I don't like making the clay heads. I can't even make them. Just, I had to start again. In one lesson! It's quite hard.*

*Too much, always, other stuff, like, writing down around it. It doesn't feel like an Art lesson, it feels like... like, sometimes that's good, like, a little bit, but it just feels like...( Students, Year 8, School 6)*

*And it's just, if you looked at it, you can see that he's, like, not supposed to be with her, but then you have to read the story, and I don't like reading.*

There was discontent amongst some students regarding the extensive use of practices linked to English within the Art lesson. They found that their actual making art time was being compromised by extensive writing and debating about subjects within which they did not see the link to the painting. What may have inspired this discontent was a lesson dedicated to fox hunting, where students could not see any possible links:

*...So it gets boring. Because, like, we've been given homework where we have to do a debate about foxes, and I don't think that's got anything to do...*

*We might as well just do Art in that lesson instead of doing all the other subjects. (Referring to the extra English work within the Art lesson)*

*It doesn't feel like an Art lesson, (Students, Year 8, School 6)*

The comments above are indicative of what may go wrong when cross-curricular activities are introduced, either at the expense of preferred practices within the lesson, or in ways that are not signalling their relevance to the painting.

In School 9 where *Picture in Focus* was pursued through RE and History, one of the students asked the teacher if what they were doing was actually Art. The teacher at the time responded that it was RE.

*I think looking back on that I probably shouldn't have said RE. I should have said, "Well, whatever you make of it. (Head of RE, Year 8, School 9)*

This incident raises the issue of naming and circumscribing the practices involved in *Picture in Focus* within the existing framework of the school subjects. *Picture in Focus* has worked within the project as the incentive to expand the boundaries of the subject

and employ practices from other subjects. The cross-curricular approaches that were attempted within the RE lesson seemed to have been disorienting for both teachers and students, who actually need to locate their practice within subject areas.

Contrary to the interests of the teachers to experiment and stretch the possibilities of working with the painting based on themes deriving from the painting, the students in several instances expressed a preference for learning more about the context of the painting rather than the myth that is being represented:

*We've been learning about the story, but we haven't actually been learning about the painting and the person who painted it.*

*(Student, Year 8, School 6)*

As regards the relevance of the painting to the students' lives, a group from School 4 stated that the picture was not relevant to their lives and interests. Although this discontent comes from a group of 12 students out of the 55 interviewed in the school, it is worth attending to their perspective on the challenging issues of the painting. In this case the nudity in the painting overshadowed the benefit of the cross-curricular work as well as negatively impacted on them generally. The painting challenged them profoundly in terms of their religious beliefs:

*It is against our religion, we are not allowed to look at things like that.*

*We get in trouble, right, because we start laughing, and we're not mature enough to look at pictures like that.*

The students mentioned that working with the painting brought them into a difficult position, as they had to hide it from their parents.

The ethical issues raised by the paintings in some cases productively challenged the students some of whom identified with Actaeon and felt the sense of injustice towards him and the ruthlessness of Diana.

The challenging issues of nudity, slavery, sexism or racism came up in other instances across the schools. The students however would often mitigate the negativity of their statements by stating something positive alongside.

*It's okay, a bit inappropriate, but.... I think it's okay*

*I think it's a good painting, he's good at painting it, but it's just, like, the whole thing's a bit weird*

*It's just full of naked people; he [Actaeon] is just looking at naked people*

*I don't like it because it's full of naked people, but also it's quite, like, pervy*

*(Students, Year 8, School 6)*

*I like the story, but I don't like the way the painting is. It's because there's naked women and it's quite kind of dirty*

*I don't like when Diana just turns to Actaeon, because he didn't know there was a girl there or Diana was in there. He just found it, and then when he looked, it was like an accident*

*Also, I don't like Diana's thing. She hits boys with that...Men... that's unfair*

*And also, it's kind of sad the way he just turned out to, like, he didn't do it on purpose. He just came in, and, like, everyone deserves a second chance*

*(Students, Year 7, School 4)*

## Cross-Curricular Approaches

The nature of collaboration and planning in each school dictated the kind of approaches the teachers attempted in the project. Different understandings of cross-curricularity emerged in the discussions with the teachers.

Several teachers understood the notion of 'cross-curricular' as the expansion of their own subject boundaries through the introduction of approaches and content that is generally identified with other curriculum subjects.

The practice of working cross-curricularly in several instances was perceived as a re-consolidation of knowledge about the painting and the possibility of opening up to something new that they wouldn't necessarily be exposed to otherwise:

*I think the children would probably never have known about it, and they wouldn't have explored it as they explored it with me and with their different subject teachers, so I think it's a really good way of working.*

*(Teacher of German, Year 7, School 4)*

The head of RE in School 9 in another school interpreted the essence of the project as the '*time and contextualisation of the painting*'. By contextualisation he probably referred to any context one can create for the painting through any subject, rather than the historical context of the painting. His concept of working cross-curricularly seems to have been gradually expanded by the end of the interview, through the interaction with the other teachers and the researcher. Starting from an understanding of cross-curricularity as an expansion of the boundaries of a subject (mainly RE) or the coupling of his subject with a compatible one, he moved on to acknowledge the possibility of using any school subject to contextualise the painting. The RE, Law and History

teachers involved there did not view the project as teaching art through other subjects, as is the case in other schools where the art teachers were leading the project.

*You know, there's just scope to do anything else with it. You could do History and Art, or RE and History, and you wouldn't even need to necessarily, it's not necessarily just about the painting, it's about the time and the contextualisation of it. So there's always kind of scope, no matter where it is. There's potential to do something different (Teacher of RE, Year 8, School 9).*

The painting was used more of a visual stimulus and a prompt for different kinds of engagement rather than solely a work of art. There was limited direct reference to the painting during their teaching.

The subject of Art was central in terms of dictating the nature of the cross-curricular collaborations, as this was often the lead subject that would give a final shape to the product of the schools' engagement with *Picture in Focus*. This suggests that the first port of call when it comes to introducing a work of art into the curriculum is naturally the subject of Art. Other subjects tended to be seen as ancillary or fitting around the main activities that were run by the subject of Art:

*I mean, there were hundreds of different ways we could have gone about this, and because I felt that Maths had quite a lot of flexibility here, I was very comfortable to choose and then kind of associate ourselves afterwards. Just really to do with the flexibility and the fluidity of the subject.*

*(Teacher of Maths, Year 7, School 4)*

The teacher made reference to the nature of the subject of maths as flexible and fluid, which would enable the maths

teacher to fit around what others were doing, by choosing from a repertoire of approaches.

The project was highly valued as facilitating the application of different pedagogies that enabled creativity within a subject:

*I think creativity ... it's a method, really. I think, it doesn't take anything away from the writing, speaking, reading, listening, but I think it's a method. And I think there's a place for it everywhere, there's a place with it for the writing, there's a place with it for everywhere. I think it's good, but I think there's some children learn that way. (Teacher of German, Year 7, School 4)*

In the case of the teacher of German in School 4, the only work she felt she had to do in order to accommodate the cross curricular aspect of work for the *Picture in Focus* was to simplify the story. Cross curricularity here was about the introduction of a resource that is traditionally identified with Art into the German lesson. This was in addition to the understanding of cross-curricularity as working with the same resource across different subjects. As regards the rest of the teaching resources the teacher used, like drama and drawing which actually link to the domain of Art and Drama, were not considered for the teacher cross curricular but as part of her pedagogy for learning a foreign language.

*The difference was probably the whole performance, but we do, do role play, we do have pairs coming up to the front, doing a conversation or some group work, but it wasn't completely different to what they're used to with me (Teacher of German, Year 7, School 4).*

Cross curricular practice seemed to have been in line with several initiatives in School 4 and was favoured as a way

of working. *Picture in Focus* work was aligned to a wider interest in such work, as several teachers thought to be the case:

*The overall practice of cross-curricular projects is really being pushed as a really good method for teaching and working (Teacher of Dance, Year 8 School 1)*

*You're always told in teacher training it's a really good idea to do cross-curricular projects and you should try and do this and that. And when you go to school and you go to do these things and you want to do it and you've been told these are really good ideas and it doesn't happen, you don't get the school support on it, you don't find the subjects are willing and able (Teacher of Art, Year 8, School 1)*

*I think there is a movement towards cross-curricular working, definitely, and I think it's a positive thing (Teacher of English, Year 8, School 1)*

It is characteristic that in one instance where the subjects of Art, English, Science and Geography were involved, the teachers' perceptions varied significantly:

*It's not as cross-curricular as I think we'd like. (Teachers of Art and English Year 8, School 2)*

*It is massively cross-curricular, probably more so than a lot of the topics that we've done (Teachers of Geography and Science, Year 8, School 2)*

*We wanted to make it really cross-curricular, that's why we wanted to have one final outcome from every single subject to produce one thing at the end. So that was our main priority when we were thinking about it (Teacher of Art, Year 7, School 4)*

Some teachers commented on the suitability of cross curricular practice for specific age groups:

*I think for year 7 definitely it's a really interesting possibility. When you haven't got quite so much curriculum, it's the exam syllabus, it's about the school wanting to prepare year 9 for year 10, and going oh no but year 8s at that time of year are always doing this, and I quite like the idea that year 7, as a transitional element as well from primary school, where they are used to doing project work with one, well they should be (Teacher of Drama, Year 7, School 3).*

Student's understanding of the importance of cross-curricular work varied. In most cases they seem to have enjoyed the experience the project made possible for them. The experience was new for most students, as it made them realise the possibility of engaging with a work of art through a range of subjects.

The topics, activities and practices the teachers adopted as the most apt for the *Picture in Focus* project within their subjects were often indicative of the challenges of cross curricula practice. Teachers often stretched the possibilities of engaging with the painting in ways that were not closely related to the painting.

The students in a school that engaged with the *Picture in Focus* project through English, created contemporary newspaper front pages, drawing inspiration from the themes of the painting. The painting in this instance remained a remote point of reference. An alternative possibility would have been to attempt to engage the students with ideas and resources that reflected more closely the historical period of the painting. For example there could have been an investigation of the 'news' at the time the painting was created, of English language at the time, or the printing

techniques available at the time of Titian. However we recognise that this would make demands on teacher knowledge although this could be enhanced through collaboration with the necessary subject specialists in the school. The increased challenges in terms of gaining specialist knowledge could also be the reason why the painting often became a remote point of reference in the *Picture in Focus* activities.

Another issue that emerged as a challenge to cross-curricular work was the adequacy of resources to support it. Several teachers found that use of art as a prompt in cross curricular approaches requires high quality data projectors or visualizers to project a good quality image. We observed that the interactive white board that was extensively used across all school does not seem to be adequate as a resource for projecting good quality images.

The subject of art was significant in dictating the nature of the cross-curricular collaborations. Art tended to be the lead subject that would give the final shape to the product of the school's engagement with the *Picture in Focus*. Art was seen naturally as the first entry point when it came to introducing a work of art into the school.

*I could include the History students in it, but I'd be (the one) organising it. But that's okay, I don't mind.*  
(Teacher of Art, Sixth form, School 8)

The teacher emphasised twice in this excerpt that, in the event of repeating the project in a cross-curricular format, she would be the one organising it. This reflected her motivation and interest to control the whole endeavour. It also reminds us of the centrality of the subject of Art, when it comes to creating work or a final product that would be representative of the collaborative cross-curricular work attempted.

The centrality of art was also underlined by the experiences of visiting the National Gallery. Several art teachers saw the gallery visit as an integral part of working in a project, rather than attempting transformations of whatever resources (including the on-line ones) in the classroom.

The art teachers acknowledged the various ways to use a painting within the subject of Art to develop different areas of the curriculum, but attributed equal significance to the actual making of art. Their practice in art in general, but also within the project involved making art inspired by the painting as well as developing themes that touch upon other curricular areas.

In those few instances where Art did not have a key place, it was because other subject teachers had the interest and eagerness to expand their usual practices and incorporate art into their subjects.

*I think there's lots of ways in which you can use a painting to develop different areas of the curriculum. But the actual doing of the art has been important as well. (Arts Coordinator, School 10)*

## Increased Communication

Communication with colleagues across departments was an essential prerequisite in setting up a cross-curricular project in the school. The typical focus of early meetings was described by one of the teachers:

*So we sat down and shared our ideas and worked out what sort of approach we're going to take and where the links are between the different areas. Now we've started developing the project with the students and I think we'd like to meet again and see how that's been going*

*with each other (Teacher of Art, Year 8, School 2).*

The communication between departments was increased particularly in those instances where the different departments were aiming to produce a final product. The project was a prompt for collaboration and for understanding the kind of pedagogical approaches of other subject teachers. Most teachers acknowledged that the project enhanced their understanding of cross curricular learning. Even in those instances where teachers did not achieve what they were hoping to do in terms of collaboration, they expressed an interest and desire to pursue that further through various opportunities using art as a prompt.

In most instances communication was mainly about setting up the project and committing to work with teachers from other subjects, rather than continuous planning of the whole project collaboratively. The teachers agreed to use the picture as the prompt for engagement and pursue activities linked to the syllabus of their subject. There was often only limited understanding of how the project developed across different subject areas.

Attending the National Gallery workshop was an important trigger in communication between the teachers and an inspiration to take the work further:

*We had a meeting afterwards, quite a lot of ideas came out of it when we were actually at the gallery and then we had a meeting afterwards and bounced ideas off each other. Some of us had more developed ideas than others and we bounced ideas off each other and took (Teacher of Science, Year 8, School 2)*

*It (the cross-curricular project) does (work) because we have an opportunity*



*to actually meet other teachers (Teacher of ICT, Year 7, School 4)*

*We were talking about what we've all been up to and it's been very interesting how it seems that what they've been doing in art has filtered into what they've done in English and they have spoken to each other (Teacher of Art, Year 7, School 3)*

*As a teacher from my point of view it's been a brilliant opportunity for me to think about what I'm doing and link into what other people are doing and just having that dialogue and the conversations with people about what their interpretation is, what they've done, and just borrowing ideas from other people as well in different subjects, that's been really important (Teacher of Music, Year 7, School 4).*

The quality of cross-curricular work was challenged when communication routes were not in place and when the planning was not detailed:

*The main thing that hasn't worked, we've all kind of had an idea of what we were all going to do, but I think there's been overlapping. Like one lesson I said ok we're going to be doing this, and they'd already done it, they knew this, that and the other, or they'd done storyboards, so that's a bit tricky, the communication between people, it's just impractical, and who's going to read emails every five minutes from someone saying I did this in my lesson. So the practicalities of it, and again no one plans out (Teacher of English and Drama, Year 7, School 4).*

Some teachers referred to an increased understanding of what was happening across subjects. This was seen as the benefit and outcome of cross-curricular work and collaboration:

*Yes. And I think that's been good because I've gained an understanding of*

*what goes on in the art department for example, and if you were to extrapolate it out to the whole school, having more cross-curricular things... (Teacher of English, Year 8, School 1)*

*But because we know what each other's doing, when we're talking to the students we can relate to what they're doing.*

However, the practicalities of meeting with people from other subject departments and the timetabling constraints were a serious challenge:

*It's the time constraints, trying to meet with people, and it doesn't always work. I think there's a lot of talk about doing cross-curricular stuff, but the reality is that you need time off timetable to be able to organise it and the idea that it will be straightforward, that just isn't going to happen (Teacher of ICT, Year 7, School 4)*

In most cases of cross-curricular collaboration teachers did not have a direct experience of the kind of work taking place in other subjects.

## **Experiencing The National Gallery**

All teachers were enthusiastic about their National Gallery workshop experience. The content of the workshop was an inspiration particularly for the teachers of subjects other than art. The interaction with the gallery educators, the experience of a workshop offered the inspiration and motivation to engage other colleagues at school. Creating a positive and memorable learning experience for the teachers in the training session triggered the interest to reproduce it for the children.

Participating in the National Gallery workshop for a second time for some teachers was still seen as beneficial; a

'good recap on a few things' as it provided an opportunity to speak to other people and find out what they have been doing.

*The workshop was 'really good*

*It did it engage people, offering people different ideas of how they could go about in their own subject areas*

*(Teacher of Art, Year 7, School 4)*

It is characteristic that none of the teachers made any reference to the on-line resources offered by the National Gallery.

Visiting the National Gallery before engaging with the *Picture in Focus* was highly valued by both students and teachers. The experience of viewing original works of art in the NG as well learning new things from the gallery educators created conditions conducive to learning, when working on the *Picture in Focus*.

Both the school trip to the National Gallery and/or *Picture in Focus* project inspired most students who were keen to explore the Gallery further.

There were a few instances where the visit and the experience of the *Diana and Actaeon* painting deterred the students from visiting the Gallery, due to the large number of nude figures in western art and the clash with their religious beliefs.

## **Sustaining Picture In Focus**

Most of the conditions that could make the project sustainable and efficacious are beyond the control of the National Gallery and have more to do with national curriculum requirements and the exams and results driven approach to teaching and learning. However new spaces for innovation are opening up as a result of the academies programme

that may provide future opportunities for the kind of work reported here.

On-line materials that provide extensive and detailed links to all the curriculum subjects, along with the relevant subject knowledge may facilitate the future work of teachers, who would not have to design the project from the beginning. However there are benefits from teachers' having the control to build what they see as innovative new curricula, so resources offered would need to take this into account by offering a range of possible routes.

Prior knowledge of the possibilities for collaboration within each school as well as the knowledge of what *Picture in Focus* was all about were both important for those teachers who seemed eager to repeat the project. The National Gallery may want to consider including in their INSET information about the different shapes the project could possibly take or has taken across the board. This should include references to possible difficulties.

The invitation of the National Gallery to work towards an end product led the teachers who took it on board to embark on larger scale projects and make greater investment in terms of their time. This was the case in two schools where the Art teachers had a key role to play in the project.

Smaller scale projects of shorter length that would not necessarily culminate in a final project may be more feasible within some secondary school settings. Working more intensively within short blocks of time and pursuing activities that are not resource-consuming maybe a reasonable recommendation.

*Yes, if we wanted to make it cross curricular, I think we talked about the possibilities for developing it, we could collapse the timetable, if it were to be*

*done for the whole of year 8 you could have a week off timetable for example, team teach, use different rooms and resources*

*(Teacher of Geography, Year 8, School 2)*

*And I think because it's sort of a stage thing, it starts with a trip and then it's the project day and things like that, I mean, I don't know the practicalities, but I think it would be something that we know what the picture is next year and see whether we do it with year eight again or with a different year (Teacher of RE, Year 8, School 9)*

When addressing the issue of timing the National Gallery may want to consider:

- patterns of work that may be more appropriate in terms of sustaining engagement across the different times of the school year and the demands in each school
- connecting the work with extra or cross-curricular activities that are already established within the school and have been allocated time in the school year. This would be potentially easier than setting up the infrastructure for cross-curricular collaboration from the beginning.
- Implementing a cross-curricular project requires not only working creatively within one's subject, but also networking with and managing a range of people. Working at that level as well would require extensive consultations and collaboration with subject co-ordinators, year tutors and heads. This increases the work load and the difficulty of the subject specialists. It also requires the support of senior managers.

The following excerpt reminds us of all the factors that impact on the sustainability of such a project. These include the extra

effort to liaise with others, the work and time required and the difficulty setting it up:

*The reason people don't do it is because it's extra effort to liaise with other teachers. Sorting things out, meeting up, a lot of it you have to kind of do in your own time, it's extra kind of work, and I think most teachers think they're just going to do their thing and that's it, but I think if you're thinking of what's best for the students, then they need to have some kind of cross-curricular... Because you can't, you can't, you can do cross-curricular yourself just in a lesson, but it's not the same as actually doing it all across and then linking it all together in the end, and all working together (Teacher of Art, Year 7, School 4).*

As regards the selections of themes, activities and pedagogic approaches to the Picture in Focus, we observed that:

- There was a widespread practice of focusing more on the narrative aspect of the painting and its relevance to today's themes rather than any historical aspects. This was alongside attempting transpositions of the story to contemporary contexts.
- There was interest by teachers and students alike in finding out more about historical aspects of the painting.
- Teachers of subjects other than Art would not consider themselves as knowledgeable so would need time for support from colleagues with the necessary knowledge.

Given the depth of expertise required in order to pursue activities that are more closely linked to the topics of the painting, the National Gallery may want to consider:

- The development of historical resources for a range of subjects (e.g. arts and sciences at the time of the painting, social structures, society and the role of patrons and painters, values and beliefs of people, understanding of nudity etc.).

Addressing challenging issues, such as nudity and slavery could be facilitated by the National Gallery in the form of additional teacher training or electronic resources. Teachers would need the sociological, historical and anthropological resources in order to help students understand the cultural and historical specificity of what renders something 'inappropriate or indecent', as well as the historically shaped discourses that regulate it.

Our experience researching the national gallery approaches and pedagogy for engaging young people in art works has been rich and rewarding. In our view the highly significant beneficial aspects of the National Gallery's education work far exceed the natural limitations. While no research can offer final definitive positions, and all research has limitations, it is our view that there is sufficient powerful evidence, from teachers, from young people, from evidence of engagement with profound issues, and from the frequently innovative and high quality nature of teaching, for the National Gallery to continue to invest in and enhance *Picture in Focus*.