

MAKING SPACE FOR RE-ENGAGEMENT

**an evaluation of educational provision
at the Art Room, Oxford**

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MAKING SPACE FOR RE-ENGAGEMENT

- an evaluation of educational provision at the Art Room, Oxford

Executive summary and recommendations

This is a summary of the full report of an evaluation of the educational provision at the Art Room. It covers broadly the same areas as the full report, though with a slightly altered order, but the recommendations are the same. Those interested are urged to read the full report, which is designed to be very accessible, using stories and quotations not included in this summary. The main evaluator and author of the report was Dr Tony Eaude, assisted by Mrs Sue Matthew. Both are former primary school headteachers. Most of the data gathering took place between January and April 2005. We are grateful for the welcome and co-operation of all who helped in the evaluation.

The nature of what the Art Room aims to achieve and its holistic and preventative nature pose some difficulties for any evaluation, notably how to gather information without being unduly invasive and assessing the long-term impact of a short intervention. The methodology, based mainly on observation and semi-structured interviews, with consideration of outcome measures where possible, is described in the Appendix. The report both describes and evaluates the current provision and discusses the strategic options available to the Trustees in the wider context, especially that of funding.

The Art Room uses 'art as therapy' with young people between the ages of 7 and 15 who are experiencing difficulties at school, aiming to '*increase (their) self-esteem, self-confidence, independence and life skills. It aims to enable each child to reengage successfully in school and to better manage the pressures of their daily lives.*' Based in Oxford Community School, a secondary school in a disadvantaged area of East Oxford, the Art Room opened in April 2002 and had to move location within the school in September 2004. A further move is anticipated in Summer 2005 to more permanent accommodation next to a new Inclusion Unit, with the intention of working in close partnership with it. Currently those referred are students at Oxford Community School, a group of traveller students at another secondary school and groups from two local primary schools. The Art Room is open for three full days each week in term time, with financial constraints preventing this being extended to a fourth day.

We characterise the young people for whom the Art Room caters within two broad groups, those who are very quiet and withdrawn and those who exhibit challenging behaviour, though some are in both categories. Many of the young people meet many of the criteria for those schemes designed to identify those vulnerable to mental health difficulties, youth offending and educational failure, notably through low attainment and exclusion or poor attendance. However, we believe that the main referral criterion used - difficulty in engaging with mainstream school - rather than criteria related primarily to the young person's status is appropriate, although the latter might make accessing certain funds easier. Given that the thrust of Government policy, through the 'Every Child Matters' agenda, recognises the intimate link between mental health, youth offending and educational attainment for vulnerable young people, we believe that provision such as the Art Room has significant potential for addressing all three agendas at the same time, within the broader agenda of social inclusion.

The Art Room's approach draws on certain aspects of the philosophy behind art therapy, in particular the importance of using art activities to create images and artifacts to help those experiencing difficulties express and process their feelings, within a safe space. However, the

Art Room uses art activities to release the young people's creativity, and so build self-esteem, and is group-based and short-term as an intervention, though not in impact. Central to the Art Room's approach is a clear set of expectations in terms of behaviour, both explicit rules and the sorts of response and behaviour expected of young people and modelled by adults. One distinctive difference from most provision for emotionally and behaviourally disturbed young people is the emphasis on nurturing relationships, with the young people being attended to and supported in managing their responses, rather than a behavioural approach based on targets and explicit rewards. A second distinctive and successful element is the mix of those who are withdrawn and whose behaviour is challenging.

We conceptualise the provision in terms of three overlapping sorts of space - physical, curricular, and psychological. Despite some limitations with the building, the physical space offers a very welcoming and warm environment, with comfortable and well-equipped areas both for the art activities and for discussion, with sofas, food and drink and a range of high-quality books. The curricular space involves primarily art activities which result in brightly coloured artifacts, such as clocks, painted chairs and self-portraits, which the young people are able to take back to school and home. These are extremely important in building the children's self-esteem, in providing a basis for discussion about their feelings and in making the link with school and home. The psychological space is hard to describe briefly, but involves a context of very clear expectations and immediate and consistent adult support for those attending to process their feelings and manage their behaviour, enabling them to have some respite from the pressures of their daily lives and of school. The opportunity both for individual discussion and, especially for the younger children, to support as a group each other's individual successes and appropriate behaviour are important features.

The evaluation adopted two main types of success criteria, in terms of the impact on young people: qualitative aspects such as confidence and self-esteem and measurable outcomes such as attendance. The evidence, especially from the young people whom we saw and spoke to, suggests that the effect on confidence and self-esteem is very positive both at the time and in the longer term. Their teachers supported this, saying that the Art Room helped many of those who had attended previously to re-engage more with school and to manage better the often considerable pressures of their daily lives. While the Art Room helped the secondary school students, especially, to organise themselves and manage difficult situations better, there may be scope for more activities which encourage greater independence in how they work. There was some evidence of the Art Room's impact in improving attendance for secondary school students, though attendance was only rarely a major worry with the primary school children. The evidence on preventing exclusions is harder to interpret, especially given the small numbers involved, but the teachers gave examples of how the Art Room had helped in this, though such support can be only a part of the support mechanism for, and factors influencing, this. The evaluation was too brief to make secure judgments on the impact on academic attainment, but our observations supported the teachers' view that the Art Room helped most of those who attended to re-engage better in the classroom, so that, at the least, it improved their chances of making educational progress. The older students, those who had previously been referred and their teachers attested to the longer-term importance of the experience.

The main concern of both referrers and staff was that one term at the Art Room was insufficient given the complexity of the difficulties that many experienced. However, our evaluation supports the view that the Art Room offers an important but short-term respite for those with the greatest difficulties, and has had an important longer-term benefit for most of the others. We hope that this evaluation will encourage both the Trustees and the staff in celebrating the quality of the work and disseminating it more widely.

While the Art Room has been very successful in attracting funds, most of this has been on a grant basis, so that it lacks medium- to long-term financial security. The resource pressures on primary schools - in terms of staffing, transport and money - mean that charging is not a realistic option to gain significant revenue, though the need for such provision is clearly identified. These constraints make recruiting new primary schools unlikely if they are expected to make significant financial contributions. Both this, and the current reliance on grants, indicate that the status quo will be hard to sustain and that accessing core public funding should be a priority, though it must be recognised that this will require skilful negotiations and will have implications for how the Art Room is run. In terms of the strategic options, Recommendation 1 (R1) suggests the need for a review of the medium-term strategic objectives and a development plan which identifies the core priorities for action, highlighting the danger of responding reactively if secure funding streams are not established. While the support of Oxford Community School is, rightly, greatly valued, R3 highlights the need for a more formal agreement with the school, especially in the light of the new relationship with the Inclusion Unit. We believe that a significant element of resourcing must come from public funds, the need for identifying appropriate people to approach being highlighted in R4.

Some recommendations are applicable whatever the strategic direction taken, while others are dependent on which is taken. R2 suggests that a 'transferable model' should be developed, possibly replicating elsewhere the Art Room approach but, more probably, with a central base supporting a 'satellite' system with provision in linked primary, or other, schools, using Art Room staff to provide on-going support. R10 relates to the need for more training materials, maybe including video, and opportunities for disseminating the Art Room's approach.

Four recommendations relate to policies and procedures, which will be especially important for securing public funding, though we believe them to be necessary whatever the Art Room's future direction. The relocation during 2005 offers many opportunities, including that of ensuring this, both for the benefit of the Art Room itself and as an example for a transferable model. R5 suggests that the implications of accepting referrals from those other than schools should be considered and R6 that there should be greater clarity and wider publicity about who can refer and the expectations on both sides. R7 highlights the need for a review of policies on health and safety, and possibly child protection, while R8 relates to improved record-keeping, without losing the informality and lack of bureaucracy which is highly valued by those who make referrals.

The current staffing of those who are paid to work directly with the young people consists of Juli Beattie, the Director, and two Senior Practitioners. These are supported by a wide range of volunteers. Juli Beattie's work, in setting up, finding funds and running the Art Room has been inspirational both in its vision and in bringing this to reality from the start. The current Senior Practitioners make major contributions to the Art Room's success. We discuss the qualities needed for staff to work with such children, suggesting that these are at least as important as qualifications or expertise in art. R9 highlights the importance of external consultation and support, which has been valuably introduced. If the Trustees decide to develop a transferable model based on satellite centres, there will be implications both for training less highly qualified staff there, and for the roles of staff at the Art Room. Recruitment and training will need to take account of the ability to support those working in other locations as well as making provision at the Art Room. To make the best use of current staff capabilities and define staff roles in the future, given any changes to the focus of the Art Room's work, the roles required and consequent job descriptions will need to be reviewed, as R11 suggests.

We preface our recommendations by commending the very successful and innovative approach of the Art Room in helping young people re-engage with school, especially through building their confidence and self-esteem; and highlighting the contribution this can make to their improved mental health, reduced likelihood of involvement in youth offending and enhanced educational achievement. We believe that this approach should be disseminated and extended more widely and recommend that the Trustees should:

- R1 undertake a review of their long-term objectives, with a view to drawing up a new development plan for the next three to four years.**
- R2 consider developing a ‘transferable model’ to enable the approach to be extended to other settings, probably involving provision on a central site supporting on-site provision in primary or other schools on a ‘satellite’ model.**
- R3 seek to negotiate an agreement with Oxford Community School setting out more formally the expectations and responsibilities of both parties.**
- R4 identify the appropriate officers in public funding bodies and meet them to highlight the precarious nature of the Art Room’s financial position and discuss and develop possible routes to secure a significant level of the Art Room’s revenue from such bodies.**
- R5 consider the implications of accepting referrals from those other than schools.**
- R6 develop, and distribute more systematically, publicity which makes clear who can refer, the criteria for referral and the expectations of all parties.**
- R7 ensure that policies related to health and safety and child protection are updated and that a check is made at least annually so that those who work in the Art Room are conversant with them and that these are an important and early part of the induction of both paid staff and volunteers.**
- R8 ensure that records are kept more systematically, providing in a readily accessible format what staff need to know about the young person’s previous background, the reasons for referral and basic information; and enabling feedback to referrers so that the Art Room’s provision can more easily form part of a coherent programme of long-term support.**
- R9 continue and extend opportunities for consultation from professionals with expertise in child development, with a clear and practical agenda set largely by those being supervised, usually discussing individual cases or specific incidents and/or dilemmas.**
- R10 develop a range of training materials and arrange courses and conferences to disseminate the philosophy and practice of the Art Room more widely.**
- R11 in the light of this report and further discussions, review the job descriptions of all staff, within a structure to meet the developing needs of the Art Room, especially in terms of its operation, management, publicity and, if appropriate, a wider training role.**

1.i Introduction

The Art Room opened in April 2002, based in Oxford Community School, a secondary school in a disadvantaged area of East Oxford. Using art-as-therapy with children and students¹ between the ages of 7 and 15 who are experiencing difficulty at school, the Art Room aims to *'increase (their) self-esteem, self-confidence, independence and life skills. It aims to enable each child to reengage successfully in school and to better manage the pressures of their daily lives.'*

In 2004, the Trustees decided that the Art Room's educational work should be evaluated. The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and the Omega Foundation generously provided financial support to commission this. Dr Tony Eaude, a Research Fellow at the Department of Educational Studies, University of Oxford, designed and led the evaluation and is the main author of this report. He was assisted by Mrs Sue Matthew. Both are former headteachers of local primary schools. Most of the work took place between January and April 2005. We wish to thank all the adults involved with the Art Room, whose welcome and co-operation was very generous and open, and the children and students, though some were understandably wary about what we were doing!

Several small-scale evaluations of aspects of the Art Room's work have been conducted previously. While this evaluation focuses mainly on its educational provision, it is neither easy, nor in our view appropriate, to separate this from children's and students' wider needs, including their mental health and the prevention of youth offending and involvement in activities such as crime and drug-taking. The DfES Guidance Paper 'Promoting Children's Mental Health within Early Years and School Settings' in June 2001 highlighted the importance of teachers considering children's mental health. The link between mental health, social inclusion and the prevention of youth offending and children's educational attainment, is further reflected in the 2004 Children Act, following the Green Paper, 'Every Child Matters', advocating more coherent and co-ordinated provision, especially for vulnerable children.

The Art Room has been in operation for some three years and has various possible strategic options, which will be both dependent on, and influence ways of achieving, greater long-term financial security. In discussion with the Trustees, we agreed that the report should include both an evaluation of the current provision, based on systematic evidence gathering, and a consideration of the Art Room's future direction, making recommendations on both. As part of this, we consider whether the Art Room can, and should, provide a model for setting up, or advising on developing, similar provision elsewhere. Therefore, some recommendations relate to the existing provision whatever its future strategic direction, while the appropriateness of others will depend on which option the Trustees take. The report's structure is broadly to describe, then to evaluate, the provision, though such a distinction is far from clear-cut, and to consider the strategic options, including possible funding routes, concluding with recommendations.

¹ We generally adopt the convention of referring to those at primary school as children and those at secondary school as students.

1.ii How we approached the evaluation

In many respects, the Art Room provides significant challenges for an evaluator. Three relate to the nature of the evaluation:

- retrospective judgments on the long-term impact of any programme should be treated with caution, especially when the programme is fairly brief and the timescale of the evaluation relatively short. Moreover, we had to rely heavily on the evidence of others as to how this affected previous children and students and current ones back at school;
- evaluating provision which aims to prevent difficulties is problematic without extensive and measurable before-and-after data; and
- any evaluation of an approach which is both holistic and ambitious in scope, is likely, necessarily, to cover only part of the range of intended outcomes, many of which cannot sensibly be measured, though we draw on outcome measures where possible.

This evaluation was conducted within the relatively brief time, with some ten days or so available for data gathering. While we feel able to make secure judgments on what happens at the Art Room, our judgments on the wider, longer-term impact are more tentative. More definite conclusions would require a more substantial longitudinal study. Similarly, while it might be desirable to compare the Art Room to other provision for similar young people to decide on value for money, a comparative evaluation would be needed to make more than a impressionistic judgment on this.

Further challenges relate to how to gather evidence. In an intimate environment, it is difficult to be inconspicuous, so that the effect of ‘observer influence’ is likely to be especially powerful. While we wanted to capture the ‘children’s voice’, individual discussion, especially with older students, easily became invasive; and group discussions were difficult both for the same reason and because of their lack of confidence articulating their feelings in a group. For example, one fifteen year old boy who had answered several direct questions drew the discussion to a close with the comment ‘Questions! Questions!’ More mundanely, discussions were quite often interrupted by the arrival of visitors, especially current or former students. Such interruptions often provided valuable insights but the combination of these factors meant that much of the data was ‘untidy’, gathered through observation and relying largely on interpretative approaches.

After discussion with the Trustees and the Director, we adopted success criteria in three main groupings:

- qualitative aspects for individuals both during and after attendance at the Art Room, especially their:
 - level of self-esteem;
 - level of self-confidence;
 - level of independence;
 - life skills;
 - success of re-engagement in school; and
 - success at managing the pressures of their daily lives.

- quantitative measures related to inclusion and educational attainment for individuals both during and after attendance at the Art Room, that is:
 - the prevention of exclusions, both fixed term and permanent;
 - improved levels of attendance at the referring school for reasons other than those authorised because of known sickness;
 - involvement in violent incidents (in so far as accurate records are kept); and
 - levels of attainment in tests in English, Maths and Science on the basis of scores available, whether statutory or otherwise, where possible compared to projected levels.
- how the Art Room interacts with referring schools, parents and others, especially the:
 - clarity and appropriateness of referral/admission criteria ;
 - appropriateness of information gathered from schools and parents/carers;
 - quality of feedback from Art Room to schools and vice-versa; and
 - quality of information and feedback to parents/ carers.

The first grouping covers qualitative, less measurable, aspects, reflecting parts of the agenda set out in 'Every Child Matters' and the emphasis on safety, health, and enjoyment in the revised Ofsted Framework to be adopted from September 2005. On the second, the more measurable aspects, we encountered some difficulty in coming to secure conclusions, for reasons explained in the Appendix, where we describe our research methods and list our sources of evidence. Although we did not consider the full range of the Art Room's support mechanisms, we comment, and make recommendations, on those aspects most relevant to the educational provision. While adults are usually identified by name, children and students have been given pseudonyms in this report, in recognition of the ethical considerations of such a study, which were paramount in our approach.

2.i How the Art Room has developed

The initial discussions which led to the Art Room being set up occurred in 2000. Juli Beattie, the Director, had trained as a Montessori teacher and worked with troubled children in a range of medical and educational settings and was leading a series of art-based workshops in the Mulberry Bush School. This is a residential therapeutic school working with children who have severe social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Discussions with the headteacher there led her to consider setting up an innovative project using art-as-therapy with troubled children having difficulty engaging in mainstream school.

Richard Organ, the Chair of the Trustees from the start, worked with Juli Beattie to set up the initial infrastructure, recruiting other Trustees and gaining charitable and limited company status. The breakthrough came when the then Principal of Oxford Community School offered good quality accommodation, including heating, lighting and other premises costs, for a peppercorn rent, in return for the school being able to access the provision. The Art Room opened in April 2002 and has been operating for around three

years, catering for both students at Oxford Community School, and children, mostly of primary age, at other local schools. In September 2004, the Art Room had to move to another location, its current one, on the Oxford Community School site.

The new Headteacher of Oxford Community School spoke very positively about the role of the Art Room within the school's range of support and community education provision and indicated his wish to maintain this provision, working in partnership with the school's Inclusion Unit. He has agreed to cover the cost of a further, more permanent, move anticipated for Summer 2005 to a location within the main school building, adjacent to this Unit for the setting up of which a grant of £90,000 from Oxfordshire County Council was announced in February 2005. This presents new possibilities and opportunities to establish the Art Room more securely, but we are concerned that, unless some of this money, or a further grant, is found for the staffing of the Art Room, its financial viability may be in doubt.

The Art Room operates on a budget of around £100,000 per year, most of which is spent on staff salaries. Its financial position has always been somewhat tenuous, relying on a series of grants, the many supporters being listed on the website², and very successful fund-raising. This has involved activities such as auctions and sales of items such as Christmas cards and drawn on the generosity of many individuals and organisations in providing materials at either no cost or a price well below the market cost. For instance, a design firm has offered its expertise for a significant quantity of publicity material, the Said Business School provided space for an exhibition of the children's work, and a volunteer maintains the website, all free of charge. Many other examples could be cited of where high quality resources, donated or provided at cost, have enhanced the Art Room's work.

This support reflects the benefit of being a charity and Juli Beattie's flair in persuading many individuals and organisations to offer support. A significant amount of her time and energy is used in fund-raising. Indeed she developed many of the contacts which have resulted in the funding to enable the Art Room to operate, both in terms of grants, and in persuading a wide range of donors to contribute. In part of because of this success, the Art Room has not developed a secure income flow. Its growth, and the need to recruit and retain high quality staff, means that, while the provision has grown in scope, complexity and cost, this has not been backed by a steady, secure medium-term income. Some income is generated by providing courses and consultation, but, as the Trustees recognised from the start, the Art Room's long-term financial future is uncertain without significant, regular sources of income.

Primary schools have not been charged. This continues for those already using the Art Room, although, from mid-2004, the policy is that new users will be charged, with a group of traveller children supported financially by the Children's Fund, on the basis of £125 per session, approximately half the actual cost.

² www.theartroom.org.uk

The inspirational role of Juli Beattie in setting up, running and publicising the Art Room was attested by all whom we spoke to and by our own observations. Her remarkable success both in publicity and in the operation of the Art Room is reflected throughout this report. However, the centrality of her role in its success presents some challenges, to be considered further, especially in considering how the Art Room can provide a template for provision elsewhere.

The Art Room's innovative philosophy has attracted considerable attention, including several approaches from those keen to make similar provision elsewhere, whether setting up something similar serving a particular school or local area or adapting a secondary school integration/ support unit or primary school session for troubled children. Local mental health professionals have also expressed interest in referring. These approaches have led to training and consultancy opportunities which have brought both revenue and the opportunity to spread the message more widely. Early in 2005, the DfES Innovation Unit provided a grant of £12,500 for dissemination. Various twilight sessions and day conferences have been, or will be, planned and resources developed in the year ahead.

2.ii Art as therapy

We here consider how the Art Room draws on the tradition of using art in a therapeutic role. Creative activities such as art offer a way of expressing and processing feelings without necessarily using words. Its role in helping those who are troubled has a long history and art therapy has developed as a substantial discipline. The overall aim of art therapy, according to the British Association of Art Therapists³, is to *'effect change and growth on a personal level through the use of art materials in a safe and facilitating environment.... It offers the opportunity for expression and communication and can be particularly helpful to people who find it hard to express their thoughts and feelings verbally.'* As Case and Dalley⁴ say, *'for many clients, it is easier to relate to the therapist through the art object which, as a personal statement, provides a focus for discussion, analysis and self-evaluation.'* The art object - image or artifact - gives a valuable 'third dimension', along with the client and therapist, of a triangular process, providing both an assessment tool and a focus for therapeutic discussions, when appropriate. Art therapy is usually undertaken by a trained art therapist and is individual, intensive and long term. The creation of safe space with clear boundaries, drawing on the psychoanalytic concept of containment, is one important feature.

While Juli Beattie is very clear that the Art Room should be seen as art-as-therapy rather than art therapy, its theoretical base draws on art therapy's grounding in the psychoanalytic tradition, especially in terms of a place of respite and safe space, and the importance of the artifact. However, the Art Room's provision is short-term, working in a group, with a strong emphasis on the tangible product being the property of the young person and providing a link between the Art Room, school and home. The Art Room staff make more active suggestions about what to make than would happen in art

³ www.baat.org

⁴ Case, C and Dalley, T (1992) *The Handbook of Art Therapy* (Routledge, London and New York) p 1

therapy, thus focusing on the possibilities that these present for the young person's creativity. It also draws on cognitive-behavioural approaches, with rewards which are implicit and based on nurturing relationships, rather than tangible or visible outcomes, to re-inforce desired behaviour.

2.iii How are children and students referred?

Officially, the Art Room is available for children and students who live, or go to schools, in the Isis partnership, all of which is within, but does not cover the whole of, the OX4 postcode area - the area of Oxford City with the highest levels of social deprivation. As the partnerships are currently configured, the primary schools which refer to the Art Room are in a separate partnership from that of the Oxford Community School. So, this policy is flexibly interpreted, but all the schools which currently refer, or have referred, belong to either the Isis or the Oxford South East partnership and have done so as a result of an introductory visit from the Director.

Currently the Art Room operates in the morning and the afternoon three days a week, with two groups of children from primary schools attending, one for one afternoon a week, the other for two afternoons a week. The traveller students attend for half a morning a week. The other two and a half mornings are used by students from Oxford Community School between Years 7 and 10. Financial considerations at present make the hoped-for extension of provision to four days a week impossible.

This chart indicates the numbers and ages of those attending in January-April 2005, a pattern which broadly reflects the referrals in the previous two terms, except that the traveller children only started in September 2004:

	<i>Morning</i>	<i>Afternoon</i>
<i>Monday</i>	<i>First half: seven students from Oxford Community School (OCS) Second half: two OCS students</i>	<i>Two girls and two boys from East Oxford Primary School (Years 5 and 6)</i>
<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>First half: seven OCS students Second half: two OCS students</i>	<i>Three girls and four boys from Church Cowley St James Primary School (Years 5 and 6)</i>
<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>First half: A group of traveller children from St Gregory the Great Secondary School, with up to three girls and three boys (Years 7 to 9) Second half: two OCS students</i>	<i>As for Tuesday afternoon</i>

The primary school children are chosen by their teachers. Both teachers interviewed described how they chose groups which would provide a balance of gender, and of some quiet and some more 'acting-out' children. For example, the Church Cowley group had three very withdrawn girls, and one who was quiet but not so withdrawn, two boys with challenging behaviour and one boy who was usually withdrawn but did at times exhibit challenging behaviour. Currently, only groups of children from the same

school have attended, but in the past a group was made up of children from two schools, which all concerned thought to be a success - somewhat to the staff's surprise.

The usual pattern for Oxford Community School students is for teachers to refer students via a liaison teacher and for these to be discussed with the Director and allocated a suitable time, to fit with the rest of their timetable. Several students had requested to be referred, through the school's liaison teacher, as a result of a previous referral or hearing about it by word of mouth. While, on occasion, a student has been accommodated at short notice, for instance after a bereavement, the school and the Art Room staff have agreed that it should not be used as a 'rapid response' service, to avoid disruption to existing groups or being used as a 'dumping ground'. In addition, some students visit the Art Room for other reasons. For example, we observed one boy, late for a lesson and without a pencil to write with, rush in to borrow one. Such behaviour is discouraged, though staff are keen that students should feel welcome and informal, but less frantic visits are encouraged.

Once chosen, it is expected that children and students attend for a whole term. Most complete the whole term, though, especially with the older students, patterns of non-attendance or exclusion may make their attendance patchy. This results at times in very small group sizes, so that at times the adults present may outnumber the students. Staff both at the Art Room and in the referring school considered that often one term was not long enough. Some primary school children have been referred for a second term, despite the pressure for places. Some older students have been enabled to attend for a second spell, either with students of their own age or as 'helpers' with the primary school children. At times, asking them to help was a way of engaging students who might otherwise be reluctant. Our observations suggested that, in these sessions, most of the older students worked largely on their own projects and interacted little with the younger children. Occasionally, they modeled undesirable behaviour, with one female student talking inappropriately with the younger children. Although, at first, staff thought that she should no longer come, they decided, after a consultation with external professionals, that she should continue, following an explanation of why this behaviour was inappropriate. This seemed to resolve the difficulty. We also observed older students working well with the younger children, at times, notably when two of the more settled students worked with them. Defining a role, as helpers, or more formally as work experience, appeared to assist in ensuring that older students were not embarrassed to be working alongside younger children.

All children and students from schools other than the Oxford Community School are brought as groups to the Art Room, the primary school children by a senior teacher, the traveller students by a driver in a school minibus. In the two primary schools, a senior teacher spends most of the afternoon bringing and collecting the children in her own car. Both reported that the journey provides an opportunity for discussion which they welcome and that delivery and collection give a brief but essential informal opportunity to exchange information and to participate in the end of session discussion where children's work is discussed and celebrated. However, the number of children attending is limited by the size of the teacher's car and staff sickness, or an emergency in school,

may result in a session being cancelled, often at short notice, as happened on one occasion during the evaluation. In practical terms, if the accompanying adult were to walk or travel by bus, s/he would have to stay at the Art Room, as there would be insufficient time to return to school and then to collect the children to make this worthwhile. Concerns about some children's behaviour led one deputy head to say that she would not allow them to go only under the supervision of a teaching assistant. Even if this were possible, there might be insurance implications. Both schools were doubtful that they would continue to use the Art Room if a charge were made.

Of the three other primary schools we visited, one had referred previously and was keen to do so but had stopped doing so because of the transport and staffing implications. One head of another, non-referring school would have liked to refer but said that he could not release a teaching assistant to walk there and back with the children, although this school was within walking distance. A third had made use of the Art Room premises for a whole-class art experience, but did not refer, in part because she believed that it might be seen as a reward for disruptive behaviour. This reflects one possible danger in terms of how the Art Room is perceived - as one child was reported to have said *'Why can't I be at the Art Room? do I have to be naughty?'*

However, all five schools said that they had many children who needed, but could not access, the sort of support offered by the Art Room. The head of Church Cowley said *'we need Art Rooms in every school'*, describing it as *'non-sticking plaster therapy'*, though she went on that she did not have space for one. So, resource constraints - of staff, transport, space and money - are very considerable issues for the primary schools.

2.iv Who is the Art Room for?

The Art Room aims to support children and students having difficulty in engaging with mainstream education. They fall, in broad terms, into two main groups: those who are quiet and withdrawn and those who exhibit challenging behaviour, though some are in both groups. The withdrawn behaviour is easier to observe, since much of the aggressive behaviour is either not evident within the Art Room, or only observed briefly or in passing. We were able to observe how the type of environment created helps to calm those who are angry and draw out those who are withdrawn, but had to rely heavily on the testimony of other professionals in understanding the level of aggression shown in other settings.

The younger children did not manifest the same levels either of aggression or of withdrawal as the older students. While most of the aggression did not manifest itself beyond inappropriate, usually whispered, or hurtful comments, and was usually dealt with sensitively and immediately, provocation was often evident both in comments made and in immediate responses. It felt that the slightest spark could set off arguments and fights and that this would easily happen in a busy classroom or playground. But it was hard to imagine that three of the girls from Church Cowley or one from East Oxford spoke much in class, given how hard it was to engage them other

than one-to-one, and often even then. They are the almost-silent children who do not receive their share of attention because of the demands of others.

Our observations and discussions suggested the older students can accurately be described within the same two broad categories, though some belonged to both. Some were very withdrawn and absorbed in their own world. The behaviour of others was 'louder' and more overt, especially but not exclusively from boys, and felt more threatening if only because of their size! The behaviour of the latter, in the Art Room, usually conformed to the expected standards of politeness and respect, but several incidents suggested that, in a less calm environment, they would engage in very challenging behaviour, often putting students at risk of serious trouble, leading to exclusion, a reduced timetable or poor attendance patterns. The Head and Senior Manager for Pupil Support said that, of all the many types of on-site provision available, the Art Room was the one that managed with least external support to engage those students whom the school found most difficult to engage. While, therefore, the students were not those referred to Pupil Referral Units or Emotionally and Behaviourally Disturbed (EBD) special schools, they were often close to exclusion, usually with a long history of disaffection.

In many cases, children and students' behaviour results from, and is, exacerbated by difficulties at home, often resulting in chaotic lives. This leads to mental health difficulties, intimately tied up with their educational needs, resulting in low self-esteem and confidence and an inability to form appropriate relationships. The children's emotional fragility was exemplified in one nine year old girl almost bursting into tears when a jewel fell off her model or when a nine year old boy said to me quite forcefully '*you don't like my clock, do you?*' on the grounds that I did not praise it effusively. More seriously, our first visit was interrupted by another nine year old arriving unannounced, on his own, on the wrong day. He had run away from school, as he had the week before. In the turmoil of his life he had run away again to a place that felt safe - a place that was not home. Though the younger children exhibited lower levels of distress than the older students, one should not underestimate their level of need.

These difficulties often severely affect levels of attendance and educational attainment, with several students on the verge of exclusion. We heard, and shared, concerns about many of those at the Art Room, especially older students, in relation to drug-taking, inappropriate sexual relationships and petty crime. The most amusing example was when one adolescent boy said that he had been out 'milking' early that morning. In our innocence, we were puzzled that he should have access to a farm, until he explained that this consisted of collecting full bottles from people's doorsteps! More worryingly, one thirteen year old said that he had been arrested for having a gun, but that '*it was nothing to worry about, the police let me off*', continuing that he was about to go with his mum to collect the gun.

The children and students demonstrate a wide range of ability, including some with considerable potential and some who are very weak academically. Often, though, their emotional fragility means that their attainment levels are lower than otherwise be

expected. While most, arguably all, have Special Educational Needs (SEN), schools have found many hard to place at an appropriate level on the SEN Register, especially the withdrawn ones. While their SEN level should be one factor in referral criteria, we do not believe that referral should be restricted only to those previously placed at School Action + or above, though, arguably, attendance at the Art Room should trigger such a status.

Although not experts in mental health, we believe that the children's and students' mental health needs, manifested in their emotional fragility and lack of resilience, contribute significantly to their lack of engagement with the curriculum, and their levels of achievement. This is exacerbated in many cases by working in large classes with a curriculum the pressure of which gives little time for such children to learn how to relate appropriately to other people. We share the view of one of the primary school teachers to whom we spoke that the pressure and pace of the National Curriculum makes it particularly hard for such children to engage with school.

When we explored concerns about missing other work, and whether this mattered, the senior staff in primary schools said that some other colleagues had initially been concerned about this; but that the Art Room provides both a much greater benefit for the child and some respite, in terms of those with challenging behaviour, for the rest of the class and the teachers. Both parents interviewed said that they too had been concerned, but one, a father, said that *'the maths she misses, we make up'* and the other, a mother, that she had become less anxious as this was her third child and the benefits were so great! For Oxford Community School students, attendance could be fitted more easily into their timetable without disruption, but they were thought to benefit more from attendance at the Art Room than at regular lessons.

Many of those attending the Art Room are members of groups identified as those at risk in the Oxfordshire multi-disciplinary Identification and Support Scheme, demonstrating several risk factors identified there as indicating a greater likelihood of involvement in Youth Offending, whether at family, school, community or individual level. Several, for instance, come from families with a history of offending and/or of mental health difficulties. Some have a defined status within groups such as looked after children, refugees, asylum seekers, or travellers. Such groups are those for whom it is easiest to obtain additional financial support. However, the criteria which operate in practice relate primarily to the individual's emotional state and social skills and his or her failure to engage with school and often with the external world more broadly. While, therefore, referral criteria usually relate either to specific background factors or qualities internal to the child, the criterion of 'difficulty in engagement with school' highlights the importance of the Art Room's work in trying to help develop the skills necessary to succeed at school.

2.v What sort of space does the Art Room provide?

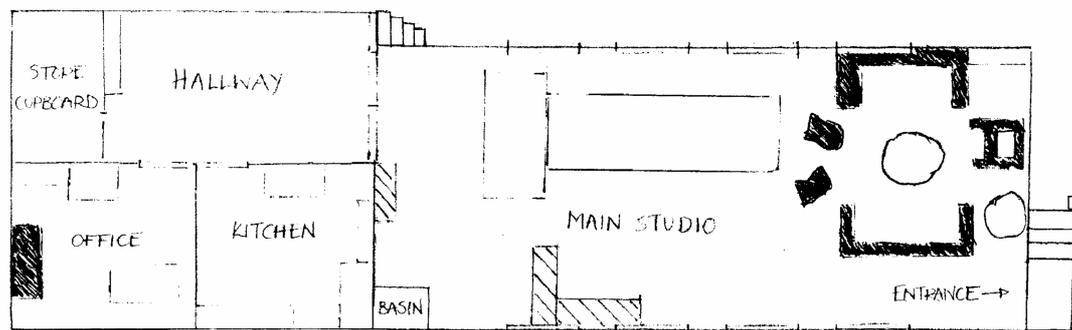
In attempting to articulate the Art Room's pedagogy and philosophy, we describe this in terms of three sorts of space: *physical, curricular and psychological*. The following story about one very withdrawn student, whose behaviour could be very aggressive, highlights important features of all three. His Head of Year described Nick as probably the child in that year who was hardest to engage, and the Student Support Co-ordinator for EBD students spoke of how, within a few weeks of his starting at the Art Room, his attendance, the care he took with his appearance and his demeanour around the school had all improved, ascribing this in part to his time at the Art Room.

Nick, aged 15, arrived just after 9 am, eyes down and unwilling to speak initially. Juli greeted him warmly and walked through with him (and me) to put on an overall. As he did so, she asked about what his dad had thought of the model which he had taken home. He made eye contact and there was the ghost of a smile. Asked to take his hat off, he did so without demur. As other students came in, they ate toast with marmite or jam before settling to their projects. Nick had decided he wanted to make a motor-bike. Amy, one of the senior practitioners, sat with him, discussing and negotiating what features he wanted and what materials to use. Very quietly, she steered the conversation in and out of what motorbikes are like, whether what he was making was meeting his expectations - interspersed with his regular comments that 'it's rubbish' - his feelings and those of other people. She suggested materials, techniques and approaches while leaving him in charge. Mostly, he worked alone, but occasionally would engage with other students. At one point, several students were discussing one teacher, with some imitating and mocking his accent, in such a way that I had a sense of racist behaviour. Amy diffused this situation by talking both about how others might feel and discussing quietly how we talk about other people in the Art Room. When another teacher was mentioned, Nick held his nose, apparently to imitate a nasal accent. Amy ignored this. After some thirty minutes, Nick looked somewhat suspiciously at me and asked who I was (although I had been introduced) before returning to sticking rubber on to the wheels. In total Amy worked with Nick almost exclusively for about forty-five minutes. At the end, he expressed some satisfaction with the unfinished model and commented on what he intended to do next.

physical space

The Art Room is currently based in a free-standing, brick building separate from, but close to, the main school. As with many secondary schools, the campus is somewhat forbidding, if only because of the presence of large number of adolescents, often standing in groups and occasionally engaging in behaviour such as shouting (with Art Room students among those involved). On one occasion, one of the visiting primary school children had provoked an older student with a comment. This makes it the more remarkable that the students who attend the Art Room are protective of the building, for instance by eating lunch next to it. There has been only minimal graffiti or physical damage to the building.

The rather cold exterior gives little indication of the environment within. The plan below may help to give some idea of how the space is used. Those arriving walk straight into the main room, roughly the size of a conventional classroom, to find the walls and windowsills filled with displays of children's work presented where appropriate in good quality frames, shelving with a range of carefully-stored, high-quality materials for art and modelling, a carpet, sink and a book corner, with comfortable sofas - an Aladdin's cave with many of the features of classrooms in primary schools, especially in the 1970s and 1980s. There is no bell and the room is usually quiet, though often music, usually calm and soothing, is playing. Beyond this room is a smaller work area, used mainly for bigger and less-easily-moved projects and the storage of overalls. There is also an office and a store room. Though there is running water, there is no toilet, which poses some problems both for staff and, in particular, for younger children needing to be accompanied to facilities elsewhere in the school. While the Art Room provides a very welcoming environment, this is a result of very thoughtful work by the staff rather than good accommodation as such. The improved accommodation should make it possible to provide an even better physical environment.



- - TABLES / FURNITURE / SHELVES
- - SOFAS ETC
- ▨ - SHELVING / CUPBOARDS

THE ART ROOM

curricular space

As one would expect, the most obvious activity is art. However, the activities are distinctive, often overlapping with Design and Technology, usually involving making brightly coloured artifacts, such as painted chairs, working clocks and large collages, as well as self-portraits which are often decorated with small shiny items such as beads and necklaces. These offer the chance for creative expression, while almost guaranteeing success. There is relatively little of what might be seen as fine art, though staff have considerable expertise in this area. A poster asking 'But is it Art?' is prominently and pertinently displayed. The question is best answered by the Deputy Head of one primary school who had expressed scepticism about this type of work initially, being of a tradition which prized observational drawing highly. However, the children's responses had, she said, completely won her over.

In planning activities, adults seek to listen to and incorporate, if possible, the children's and students' ideas. In this way, individuals can exercise a level of choice and control which may be unfamiliar in the school or home setting. While some projects are done as a group, most are individual, especially in the early stages of the term. However, one good example of co-operation came when two older students, whom one would think were unlikely to work together, reflected that '*we mixed our ideas*' and '*she's a good person to work with*'. Co-operative projects are also undertaken, often with a visiting artist. For example, a video project, which we did not observe, took place during the term and was reported to have gone well.

The emphasis on making things which can be taken home or into school is extremely important. Almost all of those we spoke to, whether adults or young people, highlighted the intense pride which the children and students feel for what they have made. For example, the traveller children's have been placed in the 'best room', reserved for special occasions. At Church Cowley Primary School, three large models were displayed very prominently in the entrance and assembly hall. A table made in the Art Room is in the reception area of Oxford Community School. Several children who came back to visit the Art Room made reference to what they had made. The artifacts were a tangible reminder of their time there. Three separate teachers spoke of how children remembered their success in the Art Room by seeing an artifact they had made and how this gave them support when they were discouraged or finding school difficult. Both parents interviewed emphasised the high impact of the artifacts and how they were, in one case, '*her pride and joy*'.

Juli Beattie described the role of the artifacts in more symbolic terms. Many are made from what has been thrown away and 'rescued' from skips or are surplus to requirement. The sense that something good and attractive can be made out of rubbish may resonate, unconsciously, with children whose self-esteem and sense of self-worth is low. She spoke powerfully of how she imagines that sometime in the future a young person, maybe in prison, might look at something as ordinary as a chair and recognise the possibility of making something special from it as she or he had done at the Art Room. The artifacts are not only personal, important though that is, but make a link

with the family and the school and indeed provided what she described as 'continuity for the next generation' - helping other children who might benefit to see what happens at the Art Room. More immediately, especially for the secondary age students, the artifacts - and what parents thought of them - often formed a basis of discussion and engagement when the students first arrived for a session, as with Nick.

The main activities consists of art and the discussion considered in the next section. In addition, some activities involve letter-writing or other literacy skills, and the Art Room is well stocked with a wide range of high quality children's literature, especially picture books and stories suitable for young children. Sometimes these are used for reference, for instance in finding a picture of a favourite animal, or place. They are also available for more informal reading activity. For example, one nine year old girl, reported by her teacher to be dyslexic and not a keen reader, lay sprawled on the carpet, totally absorbed, reading a book for a sustained period of time. Stories are often read to groups, especially of younger children, often at the start of a session. One striking moment came when Jamie, one of the travellers, aged fourteen - able to read only the simplest of words - who had already said how bad he was feeling, in part because he was the only boy present, asked Amy - with an oblique, barely audible murmur - to read the story of Elmer the elephant. When she had finished, the whole group felt better about starting the morning's activities, but Jamie had found it hard to articulate publicly what he wanted. In this sort of way, the curricular space helps children and students to explore their feelings in a safe and non-judgmental way and so is linked to the psychological aspects of the Art Room's work.

psychological space

While art constitutes the main activity, this is only a means, a route into the more important but intangible work that lies behind how the Art Room works - what one visitor had described as balancing the negative aspects of a child's life by including more positive experiences. We highlight the importance of a containing space where children and students feel safe, nurtured and attended to. These were the features which the children and students referred to, though they, as we do, found it hard to put into words. For many of them, this was deeply unfamiliar and initially very surprising. Yet it helps to calm the aggressive and to draw out the quiet. One young girl articulated what was best about the Art Room as being '*space*'. The older students, over lunch, valued especially the chance it offered for people to '*listen and help sort problems out*'. Perhaps the most poignant moment of the whole evaluation was when one large, aggressive boy, subsequently permanently excluded, described a winding path painted on a clock he had made as '*leading home*'.

Tangible elements such as the physical environment, the framing of pictures and how everyone, often elaborately, offers food and says thank-you when eating exemplify the sort of relationships, of care, respect and courtesy, which the adults model and are expected of everyone at the Art Room. Anyone entering is expected to knock. Newcomers are always greeted warmly. All are expected to take off their hats and put on an overall, or a shirt. Sessions usually start with the group sitting on the sofas, often with toast and marmite or jam, with one or more members of staff discussing events

since their last visit, how their work was received at home and how they feel, before planning the session ahead and moving, in due course, into the activity. A mother said how her daughter's most frequently mentioned memory was of the toast and jam!

Although the atmosphere is friendly, flexible and informal, underlying this are certain non-negotiable elements which delineate the boundaries of a different sort of space with a definite structure, especially of clear expectations in terms of behaviour. For example, one older student who arrived angry and self-conscious because of a very short hair-cut, was persuaded to take off his hat even though he did not wish to, with the words '*you know the rules*'. On numerous occasions, children were quietly but firmly admonished for inappropriate remarks. Rules are set out, and re-inforced, quite explicitly and are complemented by some elements of ritual, such as the welcome, the overalls and the gathering for food, all features which are not only pleasurable but provide security. The importance, to the children and students, of the boundaries being applicable to everyone was emphasised on several occasions when they pointed out when an adult did not follow the rules, for example by taking food before offering some to other people.

The list of rules, or expectations, displayed is as follows:

We arrive on time
We come to the Art Room because we want to be here
We manage ourselves in ways that do not disturb others
We wear overalls
We take care to produce lovely work
We are polite to other members of the Art Room
We are friendly and kind to each other
We talk quietly
We do what we are meant to do
We put the paintbrushes in water when we have finished using them
We use polite and kind language
We share
We stay safe

A story may help to describe aspects of how this works in practice:

As the four girls and three boys of primary age, and one older student, gathered for the session of toast, fruit juice and reflection at the end of one afternoon, Juli Beattie said that there were only four packs of apple juice and asked how the group was going to resolve this difficulty, since all except one had indicated a preference for apple. The older student said that he did not mind having orange, for which he was thanked. First one of the boys, and then the other two, both of whom usually stood up for themselves forcefully, agreed to have orange juice and were also thanked. Surprisingly, none of the girls, three of whom were very quiet, did so. All the girls were successful in getting what they wanted. Juli Beattie thanked the boys and asked the girls to do so, which they did, and said that next time the boys should have preference, a sentiment which the

girls did not seem to share. Soon after, when the children were looking at the work they had done, a whispered comment between two boys prompted Juli Beattie to ask them to repeat to the whole group what they had said. When they demurred, she did not press them to do so, saying quietly but firmly that such comments were inappropriate.

This illustrates how adults model appropriate behaviour and different ways of relating to other people, both implicitly and explicitly; not simply saying what not to do, but suggesting, and more importantly, demonstrating how to behave appropriately. Discussion between adults, commenting on the positive aspects of behaviour or work, with children and students listening as third-parties was frequently observed, as a way of re-inforcing appropriate behaviour or building children's self-esteem. Many of the children and students because of the turmoil in their own lives are either unwilling to assert views directly or unused to doing so appropriately. As a result, many find it easier to respond to an adult's suggestion than to articulate their own strategies. Discussions, usually at the end of sessions, often involved children and students praising and making supportive comments about each others' work.

This relates to a second feature, an expectation that children and students will make appropriate decisions for themselves, but always with the support of adults, where need be. So, all, even the very quiet, are expected to speak for themselves, and given the chance to discuss appropriate responses in an unthreatening situation. Staff address inappropriate responses directly, but without making the individual 'feel small'. Sometimes, this involved a quiet, private reprimand or reminder; sometimes the use of humour, as when Juli Beattie announced to a group, in a voice expressing shock, '*Oh! Your manners have flown out of the window*', or on another occasion, '*let's re-run that*'; sometimes, as in the story above, a public request to repeat an inappropriate comment, but confronting the behaviour, and not the ego, of those concerned.

Lara Cramsie, one of the Senior Practitioners, described very thoughtfully how adults approach points of potential conflict by being '*firm but avoiding a battle of wills*' and certainly not causing public embarrassment. All the staff stressed the importance of not letting anyone 'get away with' unacceptable behaviour. Apart from considerable sensitivity to such points of potential conflict, this relies on an approach of paying attention, and responding, to the child's or student's needs straightaway. We were struck by how the staff avoided 'symmetrical' responses, not being provoked into inappropriate responses which led to an escalation of anger. At no time during our observations, for example, did we hear an adult's voice raised, and very rarely any child's, in anger. The fact that many of these children were, in other contexts, constantly provoking such responses, and that this happened so rarely in the Art Room, is a great tribute to the success of the approach. Lara Cramsie said, rightly, on her return from a visit to another unit, '*I forget how challenging these children are.*'

The warmth of the welcome, expressed on every occasion we observed, was one powerful means of affirming the worth of each individual and a recognition of their emotional needs. This was underpinned by the children and students having the chance to be listened to, by one adult, always almost immediately and often for a sustained

period of time. Towards the end, there is, always for the younger children and usually for the older students, a gathering of all those present. Again with food and a drink, this is a chance to reflect on, and praise, both the work done and how it has been done, offering specific, formative feedback providing positive re-inforcement. The teachers of the younger children are usually present to hear and contribute to this.

Any description of distinctive elements of this approach is inevitably only partial, but articulating this, whether in words, or practice, or both, is essential as the basis of creating what we shall call a 'transferable model' - so that the Art Room's philosophy can be adapted in different locations and contexts. It is worth considering what the Art Room is not, as this highlights what makes it distinctive. Most programmes for EBD children are based on a behavioural model, with specific short-term targets, usually supported by rewards and/or withdrawal of privileges, designed to change patterns of inappropriate behaviour. In contrast to this, the Art Room provides a place of safety, respite and calm where adults attend to the concerns of children and students. Visitors to the Art Room have frequently commented on, and been surprised by, the lack of explicit rewards, or stars, or bribes, which are often used, in other settings, with such children. The Art Room's profoundly different approach is to take pressure off, rather than apply more, expecting appropriate behaviour, but supporting this by the adults' full and immediate attention to each individual.

The staff take great care not to be too invasive, though Juli Beattie in particular is often quite direct about how individuals are feeling, and 'how things are', especially at the start of sessions. Sometimes, these occur in the course of activities. While such discussions are hard for an outsider to observe, she discussed with one of the younger children intimate and painful matters related to him returning to his home country and meeting with members of his family who had been presumed dead. This was done with enormous sensitivity, feeling her way into private space, but frequently checking that such questions were not becoming invasive.

We were struck very strongly both by the high level of 'confidence-in-practice' shown by staff as they worked in the Art Room, and by some uncertainty, even from Juli Beattie, about how well they were doing. It will be apparent that such pedagogy is extremely subtle and relies on the adults involved having qualities far beyond those of technical competence. We hope that this evaluation will help to validate the quality of their work.

2.vi Staffing

The three paid staff who work with the children and students are the Director, Juli Beattie, and two Senior Practitioners, Lara Cramsie, appointed early in 2004, and Amy Wardell who joined in September 2004. We understand that, initially, the Trustees appointed paid staff on a level commensurate with teaching assistants, but that experience suggested, rightly in our view, that the level of experience and qualifications needs to be higher than one would normally expect from a teaching assistant and that salary levels must reflect this. The paid staff are assisted by a range of volunteers, with

currently ten different people working during any one week. This results in a very generous staffing ratio, often almost one adult to each child or student, and on occasion fewer students than adults. While we make no recommendations on maximum and minimum group sizes, the attendance of older students, especially, may be erratic, which suggests that more students should be included in some sessions to try and avoid very small groups.

Informal discussions with both staff and volunteers indicated that the volunteers gained considerable job satisfaction and personal fulfillment. Almost all the adults working in the Art Room are female and white, though one volunteer, a young, black man, has apparently worked successfully there, though we did not meet him. One male volunteer for the first two years of the Art Room's existence has been unable to access the current building because there is no wheelchair access, but hopes to return when the re-location has been completed. While the qualities of individual staff and volunteers must be paramount, we hope that extending the range of gender and ethnic diversity will be possible in the future.

Juli Beattie, as Director, is a charismatic character who has felt until recently a need to be present most of the time when the Art Room is in operation, and usually leading sessions. However, she recognises the need for the two Senior Practitioners to take more of a lead, whether she is present or working at other places, for instance training other groups, so that she spends at least one day each week when the Art Room is in operation not directly involved with leading the sessions. When she was not there, we observed occasions when tensions built up a little more than would probably have been the case than had she been there, but we observed no significant differences. This is a considerable tribute both to the way in which the Senior Practitioners worked and to how well they had been inducted into working appropriately.

All the three staff who organise the direct provision have considerable experience as artists and qualifications related to art. Juli Beattie has worked in mainstream schools as a primary school teacher, an experience she described as especially important in her own development. Both Senior Practitioners have degrees in Art and have experience as artists, with one also training as a psychotherapist and the other having taught art up to A level. This technical expertise is important, though this level of qualification is desirable rather than necessary. Essential criteria relate more to personal and psychological qualities and attributes, rather than qualifications.

These qualities are difficult to pinpoint in words, but it is important to do so in considering the recruitment and training needs of the Art Room and especially if a similar model is to be used elsewhere. In articulating these, we draw on what we saw as staff worked in the Art Room, how they understood their own and each others' qualities and how they described those adults, usually volunteers, who had not been successful working there. Since some adults who lack the necessary qualities are attracted to such work, careful staff selection and induction is essential. Prior to the evaluation, one unsuccessful appointment had been made and several volunteers have needed considerable guidance, with some adapting well and others not continuing. We

understand that the suitability of volunteers is assessed both with an interview and a probationary period of two sessions, which is appropriate.

Among the personal qualities needed is an inner confidence and self-awareness, since the young people's behaviour quickly draws out one's anxieties about oneself. In particular, adults must not use the Art Room to try and resolve their own concerns, nor to need the children and students to like them. An ability to listen and to ask but not to ask too much and so be invasive is important. Sensitivity, unshockability and calmness, often in the face of painful or difficult experiences, help provide reassurance, so that children and students do not provoke inconsistent responses which they are quick to recognise and exploit. So, while responses need to be carefully tailored to personality, background and mood, they must be within the parameters of the consistency that makes for safe space. While, therefore, some aspects, such as body language and eye contact, can be enhanced by training, adults need a self knowledge, groundedness and personal maturity. While this is not necessarily correlated to age, this may be one factor to consider in drawing together a team.

Working with such demanding children has major implications for staff induction and training and for providing appropriate support for adults. Amy Wardell, who now leads sessions confidently, said that she had not felt able to do so in her first term. While this will vary between individuals, our sense is that this length of 'lead-in' time would normally be appropriate. The most important part of the induction process is therefore working alongside, and learning from, other more experienced practitioners, on an apprenticeship basis, an aspect which we believe to have been undertaken with great care and skill, although, since there were no new staff, we saw only those who had been in post for at least one term. It is important to note that the role involves a significant level of supervising volunteers who bring varying levels of experience and expertise. We return to the aspect of induction relating to procedures in the next section.

The most immediate and important source of support is that offered by staff to each other both during and after teaching sessions. Close team-working is an essential part of the pedagogical approach, to ensure consistency of approach and to provide the opportunity both for reflection on the session and for future planning. The way in which this worked was extremely impressive, both in discussing staff's own concerns and planning practical activities.

We understand that an annual appraisal system is in place, with Juli Beattie appraised by the Head of the Mulberry Bush School, who is a Trustee, and other staff appraised by Juli Beattie. In addition, late in 2004, a regular meeting with two senior staff from the Mulberry Bush School was set up. Although the first meeting was thought to be less useful than hoped because the agenda and parameters were not clear, it was reported that a second meeting had been very helpful, largely because it focused on specific incidents and children. We believe that regular but occasional consultation with professionals working with similar children is important, both for the Art Room and in developing similar provision.

Since the remit of this evaluation relates largely to the Art Room's educational provision, our main focus is on this. However, although we did not consider, in detail, the back-up support available, we believe it appropriate to comment in so far as this affects the educational provision. The Art Room is supported, administratively, by a secretary, working officially on the basis of 16 hours a week. While we were not evaluating her role, she is held in high regard by those to whom we spoke and works beyond the hours for which she is employed. However, we suggest that the Art Room may not be making the best use of her abilities and consider that she could undertake a greater role in ensuring that policies and procedures, to which we turn in the next section, are more systematically maintained.

The Trustees bring a wide range of experience to their role and the minutes of their meetings suggest that there is frequent, active and insightful discussion and recognition of the strategic needs of the Art Room. We understand that one of the Trustees monitors the finances and that a finance officer deals with issues related to payroll. The Art Room employs a fundraiser, with a new person filling that role from early 2005. However, we have not evaluated these aspects.

2.vii Policies and procedures

Another strength of the Art Room is its informality and its lack of bureaucracy, which was greatly appreciated by those who referred. We would wish neither to lose the informality and nor to recommend burdensome procedures. However, since the Art Room has grown substantially over the last two years, so that up to fifteen people in any one week may be directly in contact with the children and students, different systems and procedures are needed. We believe that an informal approach, especially with such challenging children, requires rigorous underpinning procedures, regularly reviewed, to:

- ensure the safety of children and students and of staff and enable the Art Room to operate efficiently; and
- receive appropriate information from, and provide feedback to, the referring school, young person and parent/carers, so contributing formatively to the wider pattern of support for those attending.

We address the first of these in this section and the second in the next. In what follows, we recognise that the temporary location has brought particular challenges in terms of health and safety and that some procedures may not have been kept fully up to date, but believe that the forthcoming move, requiring a review of health and safety procedures provides an opportunity to ensure that all the necessary systems are in place from the Autumn Term 2005.

The two salient features in terms of safety are the physical environment of the Art Room and how volatile many of the children and students may be. The basic principle is that for 'site-based' policies, such as fire evacuation and physical health and safety, the Art Room, broadly, adopts that of the host school. We believe this to be appropriate. In cases of violence, other children would be taken out and assistance sought, but there has never been a serious fight. Juli Beattie said how staff feel quite vulnerable, and

have a panic button and a phone. The support offered by Oxford Community School in the event of violent or abusive incidents appears to be appropriate, though we only saw a member of staff summoned once - and then for disruptive rather than violent behaviour.

Given the potential behaviour of the children and students, we believe that more detailed records are required. In particular, we expected to see risk assessments, related both to specific activities, where some potentially dangerous equipment is in use, and the specific groups of children attending. We were surprised that information on those attending, and records of those who attended previously, was at times not readily to hand and that there were not systematic records of the activities undertaken. We were assured that the latter had been in place but that the move of room had resulted in these being temporarily suspended and understand that a brief pro-forma recording activities each session is to be re-introduced, which we believe to be appropriate. For the safety of all concerned, the efficient running of the Art Room and appropriate liaison with other professionals these systems must be put in place as a priority.

We commend the emphasis on staff safety, in liaison with the main school reception, so that unannounced visitors are not admitted without the agreement of Art Room staff and that staff do not stay in the Art Room alone for more than a few minutes after school finishes. This is unlikely to be as serious a concern once the Art Room moves back into the main school. The policy that two of the three paid staff must be present when the Art Room is in operation and that, in the absence of this, a teacher from the referring school would have to stay or the Art Room would close is appropriate. The clarity of the rules, and the way in which these are sensitively but firmly enforced, helps to ensure the safety of all concerned.

The policy on child protection is especially important, given that the possibility of disclosure of abuse is likely to be significantly greater than in a conventional school setting. The Art Room has a policy, approved in September 2002, which appears to broadly appropriate. However, this should be reviewed to ensure that it conforms to current requirements. It is important both that the lead staff are fully conversant with the procedures, as they are, and that the wide range of volunteers are aware of its implications. We noted that the child protection policy was being distributed to all those who work with children during the evaluation. While this may have been the result of just such a process, we recommend as part of Recommendation 7 that a check is made at least once a year that those who work directly with children are conversant with all policies related to health and safety and child protection and that familiarity with this forms an important and early part of the induction of both paid staff and volunteers.

2.viii The effect on the children and students

The effect on the children and students while they are at the Art Room has been implicit in our description so far, but in this section we highlight these in relation to the

first two groups of success criteria set out in 1.ii and offer an overview to summarise our conclusions in relation to these.

Almost all the children and students who found it hard to engage at school were able to engage with, and enjoy, the Art Room's activities. Many who are withdrawn became more confident and articulate over the course of the term and many whose behaviour was described as challenging and aggressive related to adults and each other in a calmer and more civilised way. Although we saw very few examples of children or students exhibiting sustained aggressive and hurtful behaviour, we frequently saw the early signs of this, which, along with the evidence of many adults, convinced us that, in other contexts, this would have flared rapidly. Moreover, as two teachers pointed out, one should not underestimate the extent to which time at the Art Room, especially for those with challenging behaviour, offers some respite to their peers and teachers.

Several comments indicated that the Art Room offers a place of safety and respite. One older student said '*it helps to clear my mind*', another '*adults help you sort out your problems*'. Their enthusiasm about coming and the way in which their demeanour, body language and way of relating to other people changed was powerful evidence about how these very troubled young people found the Art Room a haven from the pressures of the rest of their lives. The experience, symbolised in what they made, was something which several former students treasured and were in many cases able to refer to. It may be argued that such a memorable and enjoyable time is worthwhile, in itself, for those who lead such troubled lives. However, we now turn to the more significant question of the extent to which the Art Room helps children and students to re-engage with school, and in their lives, when they are not at the Art Room.

Our observations supported the view of teachers, parents and young people alike that the most significant impact was on the level of self-esteem and self-confidence for most of the children and students. The focus group of students over lunch spoke very powerfully of how the Art Room had boosted their self-esteem and made them more confident. The most withdrawn were still not able to articulate this, but, especially for the primary school children, where progress was more easily visible, even a few sessions helped them to express their feelings and discuss their work and their lives in a calmer and more confident fashion. One parent said how one nine-year old girl had been enabled to talk about her significant worries which were no longer 'bottled up' and how she had now stopped hitting the parent in question.

We considered whether the nature of the activities, and the high staffing levels, might not encourage greater independence. We concur with the view of one parent that the nature of the experience is unlikely to enhance this directly for the primary school children. The evidence from adults who worked with the secondary school students was that most became better organised, in terms of having appropriate equipment, arriving on time and managing the difficulties that they encountered at school. While this is a difficult balance to strike, we consider that there may be scope for some of the activities to involve less direct supervision and encourage greater resilience by children and students overcoming challenges on their own. The evidence from both students and

their teachers indicated that the Art Room helped them re-engage in school better. The extent to which this helps them to manage the pressures of their daily lives better is hard to judge, but many of the students indicated that this was so.

The prevention of exclusions was not a very important issue for the primary school children, but was a significant reason for the secondary school students' referral. Especially for those with more challenging behaviour, it would be unrealistic to expect that the Art Room could prevent exclusions, given that the risk of this was often a major reason for referral. Indeed, two were permanently excluded during the term. It would be unwise to attribute success or failure to the Art Room as it offers only a small window of respite, but the notes and comments of teachers at Oxford Community School show that they believed that it was for several students a contributory factor in avoiding exclusion or enabling re-integration. However, it would require a larger scale and longer-term study to find substantive evidence to support this. We could not make a secure judgment on whether the Art Room contributed to any reduction in violent incidents, largely because records kept are variable and because such a study cannot isolate the Art Room's contribution to this.

In relation to improved levels of attendance, this mattered less with the primary school children as their attendance was usually quite good and, given how few places were available, those with poor attendance were not considered. For the secondary school students, this was much more important. For some, such as the travellers, whose attendance patterns were often very poor, their attendance on Art Room days was good, but often they were then absent in other lessons on the same day. Oxford Community School students on reduced timetables (attending for only part of the week) attended more on the days when they were scheduled to go to the Art Room and then went to other lessons. More generally, the teachers' evidence suggested that improved personal organisation contributed to better attendance for some students, though the effect of this was uneven, often reflecting other events in their lives at school or beyond.

In terms of educational attainment, as measured by test scores, we discussed with colleagues in primary school whether this could be measured. We agree with their view that any improvement would usually only be a small move within a level and that there are too many factors to ascribe this to the Art Room. In relation to those at Oxford Community School, their enhanced personal organisation and greater ability to manage difficult situations helped those who were not at the most extreme end to re-engage with their work and achieve better. For example, one quiet female student was reported to be unwilling to speak in class, though she was industrious, and improved confidence had helped her to contribute more in the mainstream classroom. One reticent student was 'brought out of himself' by engaging in making the video and this had a positive knock-on effect in other work.

For those least engaged with the educational process, the Art Room could offer the chance to start re-engaging, but the evidence for this would be unlikely to show in terms of test scores. For instance, the traveller students, the group with whom the Art Room staff found it hardest to engage, had very poor literacy skills and self confidence.

It was hard to engage them directly in anything that seemed like ‘work’ and activities which would help with literacy and numeracy skills needed to be introduced obliquely - such as writing letters to put in boxes that they were making or measuring materials in making a clock. While this evaluation provides no secure evidence linking the Art Room with higher attainment as such, we believe that it has a significant role in addressing some of the factors which hamper progress in these areas. Without raising such children’s and students’ confidence and self-esteem, and improving their engagement with the educational process, it is hard to see how their academic standards will be raised. Given the relatively limited scope of this evaluation, a longer, and more outcome-focused, study would be needed to support this, though it would be very difficult to isolate the impact of the Art Room specifically.

Our observation supported the belief of staff and referrers that groups worked best when there was a mix of withdrawn and challenging children, drawing out the former and calming the latter. The withdrawn children in particular benefited from the Art Room’s emphasis on building confidence and self-esteem, while those with challenging behaviour benefited from the secure boundaries and the chance to consider how to manage their behaviour. We do not favour the Art Room being used only for those with challenging behaviour and support the view that it should work with those who are disengaged from school, rather than those who have been excluded, though such an approach could valuably be used for that group. However, for many young people, and especially those with especially challenging behaviour or more severe mental health needs, one term was not enough to enable major long-term change.

None of all the referrers, in any school, wanted a narrower focus on age or type of student. Teachers in Oxford Community School were keen that students of all ages up to Year 10 should have the chance to attend. However, we suggest, tentatively, that the Art Room, in partnership with the Inclusion Unit, might focus more, though not exclusively, on supporting transition and continuity from primary to secondary school, a time of stress for all children but especially those who lack resilience. So, for instance, as has happened successfully, a child who attended when at the older end of primary school could access the Art Room in the first year or two of secondary school. Among the obvious disadvantages are that young people may go to another secondary school, but if such a focus were adopted, without being exclusively for that purpose, this might be attractive to funders and, more importantly, help support students at a time of especial vulnerability.

A summary based on such success criteria tends towards reductionism and does not fully capture the Art Room’s impact. We believe that it provides an extremely interesting, innovative and successful approach to working with troubled young people. While there may be scope for developing children and students’ independence more, for more co-operative work and for linking some activities more to ‘academic skills’, recognising that this may be dependent on the particular groups, these are extremely minor points. We hope that this report will help in articulating this, especially through training, and enabling this approach to be disseminated and extended.

2.ix How the Art Room liaises with referring schools and parents

In this section, we discuss how the Art Room liaises with schools, parents and other groups, using the third group of success criteria set out in 1.ii, and how the Art Room fits into a wider pattern of provision and support. In doing so, we draw on evidence presented in 2.iii and 2.iv.

In relation to who can refer, we note, and share, the Trustees' concern about a possible reduction in the breadth of applications as a consequence of becoming too closely identified with one school. We consider that there should be a broader range of potential referring schools than those linked formally to Oxford Community School. Moreover, the current basis of the school as the only referral agency could usefully be reviewed, though the school must remain integrally involved in the referral process. One headteacher suggested that, rather than publicizing its work solely through schools, the Art Room should promote itself as a community resource, with others such as a range of health professionals, those such as Educational Psychologists or EBD Outreach teams or parents themselves able to refer. While such a change would have major implications for how the Art Room operates, for instance resulting in sessions involving young people from a range of settings, we believe this to be worth exploring. Among the potential benefits is the chance for the Art Room to work with a young person for longer than one term and avoiding some of the transport difficulties. However, referral criteria and costings would need to be clarified and choosing appropriate groups would be harder where young people come from a variety of settings. Whether or not such a change is adopted, greater clarity in the publicity both about who can refer and the mechanisms for doing so will be valuable. Self-referral by students in the host school should be encouraged, as long as this operates systematically through a named contact on the school staff.

We believe, on balance, that broad referral criteria such as those currently used are appropriate. While it will be useful, for other reasons, to ask referrers to highlight the criteria used in an existing multi-agency scheme - the most obvious being the current Identification and Support Scheme -, referral should be on the basis of perceived need rather than status, though these overlap to some extent. However, referrers and funders may require greater clarity about those for whom the Art Room is most likely to be appropriate and some of the intended outcomes. As indicated in 2.viii, we think a mixture of those who are quiet and those who exhibit challenging behaviour to be not only appropriate but a distinctive reason for the Art Room's success.

The letters of many parents/ carers showed deep appreciation of the Art Room's work. The discussion with two parents provided powerful evidence to support this, though one highlighted the importance of how the children are described, saying that she had been concerned about the use of the word 'traumatized', which is no longer used. Both parents said how much they would appreciate more chance to see the Art Room and its staff, perhaps with a parents' party. There is scope for closer liaison with parents both in this way and with brief written feedback.

Much of the liaison with schools, both in the information which the Art Room receives and in feedback to schools is verbal and informal. The location on the secondary school site and the delivery and collection by primary school teachers enables reasonably close liaison. However, some difficulty with liaising with the whole range of teachers in a secondary school was reported and reliance on discussions at the start and end of sessions might have implications in relation to confidentiality. We have referred to basic information not being readily available. The teacher at Church Cowley showed us the Goodman questionnaire which she had used to highlight reasons for referral, and which could form a good basis for this, but this is not used systematically. We believe that simple forms should be devised primarily for liaison with the referring school, but also to include parents/carers, covering:

- reasons for referral, probably including elements of the Identification and Support Scheme criteria, and hoped-for outcomes;
- such basic information as medical needs and contact points in the case of emergency; and
- a feedback form to which the school, Art Room, the child or student and parent/carer could contribute.

This need not be cumbersome or bureaucratic, but, used consistently, would help to provide useful information and feedback helping to indicate progress and, importantly, to record how the Art Room contributes to the longer-term structures of educational and other support, including individual education plans where appropriate. This would be valuable to all concerned and help other professionals, such as the EBD outreach and Educational Psychology services, to know about, access and value the Art Room's work.

3.i Looking to the future

The Art Room is at a key point in its development and faces an uncertain future, both financially and in its role within the wider system of support. The minutes of the Trustees' discussions indicate that they are clear about many of the challenges. Indeed the commissioning, and remit of, this evaluation is indicative of this. While it might be possible to continue largely as at present, financial constraints are likely to make that difficult. Moreover, the Art Room's approach is too important not to disseminate it more widely. Ultimately, such provision could valuably form part of a wider strategic approach to support disengaged and vulnerable children. For this to happen, as the Trustees recognise, the Art Room needs to *'generate a significant percentage of income through more secure, core funding within the next 3-5 years.'*

In making recommendations on the strategic options available, we recognise that some are dependent on the strategic direction chosen, most obviously in relation to an enhanced training role. Consolidation and a degree of carefully managed expansion at the same time is likely to be appropriate. Since expansion is likely to depend on a transferable model, we may be seen to have to some extent pre-empted that decision, but, whether this is the route chosen or not, the Art Room needs a structured and achievable approach, securing its financial future. We recommend **(R1)** that, in the light of this report and other factors within a rapidly changing context, the Trustees should

undertake a review of their long-term objectives, with a view to drawing up a development plan for the next three to four years, highlighting in particular what is to be done in 2005/6 and 2006/7 - and importantly what is not to be done.

The central strategic issue, as we see it, is whether the future direction of the Art Room is to be one of consolidation or looking towards expansion. This may be seen on a spectrum running from:

- consolidation of the current way of working, working in partnership with the Inclusion Unit at Oxford Community School;
- expansion locally by consulting on the setting up or adaptation of 'satellite centres' in primary schools or other units adopting the Art Room's philosophy; to
- expansion more widely by consulting on the setting up of other Art Rooms on a 'franchise' basis.

We believe that the first of the above options is necessary, whether or not the others are adopted, that the second should be considered in detail with a view to developing a transferable model and that the third should be treated with some caution, at least until such a transferable model is developed and trialled. So, four key issues emerge:

- how is the Art Room to be funded in the medium- to long- term?
- what sort of realistic transferable model, or models, can be developed?
- what are the implications in terms of policies and procedures? and
- how are staff best deployed and developed and future staff recruited and trained?

Appropriate solutions to the last three of these depend, crucially, on the answer to the first.

Funding

As indicated, the Art Room has relied heavily on fund-raising. While this has been successful for the early stages of the Art Room's existence, great credit is due to those involved, and the acquisition, and innovative use of, a range of materials is central to the Art Room's philosophy, such a funding base is unsustainable in the medium-term. While it is appropriate, and always will be, for certain expenses to be covered by fund-raising, the basic running costs, especially those associated with staffing, require the certainty provided by a block grant. There is a significant risk of dissipating limited staff time resources and energy in reacting to requests and pursuing, often to generate income, projects which are not central to the Art Room's long- term development.

We therefore believe that the Art Room should seek **both** to:

- retain its distinctive nature, in the type of provision offered and by drawing on the goodwill of those prepared to support a charity; **and**
- secure a significant element of its funding from public funds.

In terms of accessing more secure funding, we consider three main options, but any sustainable outcome seems likely to involve the third of these. These are:

- charging schools on a sessional basis;
- raising finance through other means on the basis of individuals' status; and
- a block grant from the County Council, or another public body such as a Primary Care Trust.

Our discussions with primary schools highlighted the difficulty that they highlighted in terms of transport, staff and money. The Trustees have decided, rightly in our view, that transport to and from the Art Room is not their responsibility. The obvious solution if children are transported to the Art Room - using taxis - is problematic in that they would probably still need to be accompanied and liaison with teachers would be more difficult. The significant amount of the time of senior staff devoted by the two referring primary schools to take the children to the Art Room indicates the value they gave to it, but they were doubtful whether they would continue to refer were even a modest sessional charge to be made. It seems unrealistic to aim to raise significant levels of finance from primary school budgets. While it may be argued that heads and governors should make funding available from devolved budgets, if such provision is indeed a priority, it seems unlikely that any new primary schools will refer within the present set-up if they are expected to pay any significant contribution. However, schools should probably be expected to make some contribution, maybe in terms of staff costs running 'satellite' centres and being trained to do so.

We recommend **(R2)** that the Trustees consider developing a transferable model to enable provision based on the Art Room's approach to be set up in other settings, either with a model similar to the Art Room or on the basis of a 'satellite' model. By this, we mean development of on-site provision in primary (or other) schools, probably on the basis of one or two sessions per week, with initial and on-going support from the Art Room. In several local primary schools, such sessions for vulnerable children have been set up, usually based on opportunities for play. It seems feasible for these to be developed or others set up based on the Art Room's philosophy, though significant support will be needed to avoid a 'diluted franchise', in which quality assurance will be compromised, recognising the many constraints on those setting up such provision. As part of this model, the cost implications need to be considered, though we believe that strategic funders may view such a capacity-building model more favourably than one based on children travelling to an off-site location.

The informal arrangement with Oxford Community School has worked well up to now and there is no indication that this will change. However, the Trustees have, rightly, considered whether the Art Room is too closely associated, in the eyes of potential referrers, with that one school. We believe that the Art Room should both develop the positive relationship with Oxford Community School and also consider, in terms of transferability, the essential elements expected of a host school, many based on what Oxford Community School has offered. We are also concerned that goodwill may be personal depending on particular relationships and recommend **(R3)** that the Trustees

seek to negotiate an agreement with Oxford Community School setting out more formally the expectations and responsibilities of both parties.

As indicated, the travellers were funded by a contribution from the Children's Fund. We have made reference also to a multi-disciplinary Identification and Support Scheme providing some possible funding for individuals. Such schemes will provide grants usually for those with a specific status, such as looked-after children, travellers or asylum seekers. While many of the children and students referred fulfil several of the necessary criteria, we do not recommend that the referral process should depend on these. Such schemes tend to provide only short-term and relatively modest sums of money, in the context of provision such as the Art Room. We have sympathy with one headteacher's strongly expressed view that completing the required forms is extremely time-consuming. While such raising funds through the individual's status should be used when applicable, for instance where a child has a statement of Special Educational Need, this route is unlikely to provide significant funding.

While training and consultancy fees are likely to provide no more than a small, though useful, source of income, and since funding on the basis of a sessional charge to schools, or of individual status, is unlikely to be more than peripheral, we believe that a block grant for at least a significant element of funding come from public funds - probably in practice Oxfordshire County Council and/or the Primary Care Trust - is needed. While it may be possible for a partnership of schools to fund such provision, our experience suggests that this requires a considerable level of energy and time from one individual headteacher. We doubt whether this is likely to be forthcoming unless foundation partnerships develop more fully, with staff dedicated to setting up such projects.

Three complications have been alluded to earlier in this report. One is that the Art Room does not fall neatly into one funding category - education, mental health or youth offending, though in our view it has a considerable contribution to make in all three areas. The second is that it is often hard to access funding for preventative work. A third is that mainstream funding will bring significant implications in terms of policies and procedures. As we have indicated, since a review of these is, in our view, appropriate, it is important to ensure that those put in place will fit the requirements of mainstream funders and be useful to the Art Room, without becoming too bureaucratic.

Our discussions with two senior officers of Oxfordshire County Council in late 2004 suggested that the Behaviour Support Plan did not include funding for provision such as the Art Room. Likewise, our discussions with the Youth Offending Team indicated that following that route would not provide significant funding. However, new funding possibilities should emerge in the development of the Children's Service Plan, following the Children Act, and the time may be right for further discussions with senior officers of the County Council. We are heartened to hear one of these has informally recognised that the County Council should discuss the Art Room's funding needs. We believe that the Art Room should be proactive in encouraging an imaginative response from the County Council and/or the Primary Care Trust. We

recommend **(R4)** that the Trustees should identify the appropriate officers in public funding bodies and meet them to highlight the precarious nature of the Art Room's financial position and discuss possible funding mechanisms, given the benefit of the Art Room's provision to the schools and young people involved and how much money such preventative work can save in the longer term.

This is not to argue that the Art Room should not continue to seek funding from the voluntary sector and foundations. Indeed, given that it is unlikely that mainstream funding will be accessed at once, an application for medium term funding to one of the large voluntary foundations so that efforts can be concentrated on securing this within, say, two years may be appropriate.

Developing a transferable model

We have referred several times to a transferable model, or models, of dissemination of the Art Room's philosophy and pedagogy. If the 'Art Room approach' is to be more widely disseminated and used, articulating its essential features and fundamental principles is necessary, so that it can be adapted flexibly in different contexts, many of which are likely to be far from ideal. We do not envisage this being done only in writing, and a package of training and support, possibly supported by video and/or role play, may be appropriate. We do not underestimate how difficult such a process it will be, both in conceptualising and implementing this, if this route is adopted.

Two considerable strengths of the current set-up may, paradoxically, be problematic in creating such a model. The energy and expertise of Juli Beattie in setting up and developing the Art Room cannot be replicated in each similar provision, so that her role could, and should, in our view, involve training and supporting those setting up such provision. Second, the generosity of Oxford Community School is unlikely to be repeated elsewhere. We believe that the Art Room should secure and develop its base within the school in 2005/6, working in partnership with the Inclusion Unit, and that this presents an opportunity to set itself up as a model of good practice with a view both to developing the direct provision and as more of a training and dissemination organisation. One further concern is that schools may see the Art Room as appropriate for 'extended school' provision, outside curriculum time. While this may be necessary, we would argue that Art Room-type provision should be seen as central to the curricular needs of children and students.

As a minimum, this model will need to include advice on physical resources, pedagogical approach, referral criteria, appropriate support systems and procedures and staff recruitment, training and support. This report is intended to offer pointers towards this. We make no further comment on the physical resources and the pedagogy, beyond what was said in 2.v, since the physical aspects will depend heavily on what is available and we have dealt in detail with the pedagogy and offer no suggestions beyond the minor points highlighted at the end of 2.viii. In terms of referral criteria, we believe that provision on the lines of the Art Room requires referral criteria and procedures which mean that it is not used as a short-term measure - more colloquially, a 'dumping-

ground' - for those who are problems in class. While we encountered no evidence that this is so, largely as a result of close liaison with Oxford Community School staff, we believe that this is a potential danger to be avoided, by clear referral and liaison mechanisms, elsewhere. Other aspects are covered in the next two sub-sections.

Policies and procedures

Drawing on the discussion in 2.ix, we recommend that the Trustees:

(R5) should consider the implications of accepting referrals from those other than schools and so becoming a resource available beyond those schools which do refer; and

(R6) should develop and distribute systematically publicity which makes clear who can refer, the criteria for referral and the expectations of all parties, recognising that the content of this may change depending on the response to these recommendations.

In 2.vii, we commended certain aspects of the procedures currently in place, but expressed concerns, especially in relation to procedures related to aspects of health and safety and to record-keeping. This is the one area where we believe that prompt action is needed, regardless of the strategic choice highlighted above, with the likely requirements of mainstream funders making this a priority. In particular, we believe that relatively simple, unbureaucratic procedures can, and should be, set up, or reintroduced more systematically, covering such matters as risk assessments and effective liaison with the referring school, so that the Art Room's provision is seen to fit into a wider long-term package of support the child. The move provides a good opportunity to have these in place by the end of 2005.

We therefore recommend **(R7)** that the range of policies related to health and safety and child protection should be reviewed and where need be updated and that a check is made at least once a year that those who work directly with children are conversant with them and familiarity with these forms an important and early part of the induction of both paid staff and volunteers; and

(R8) that records should be maintained more systematically to provide information on the reasons for referral, basic information and feedback. We suggest that this should include, as a minimum, three forms are kept on each child or student attending:

- a referral form from the school, giving both the reasons for referral and background on the child's previous history and hoped-for outcomes;
- a form which contains information such as the child's name, contact details, medical history and other information which may be required in the event of an emergency;
- a feedback form, possibly containing a brief report on the child's progress during his/her attendance at the Art Room, comments from the school, and, if appropriate, comments from the child and his/her parents/carers. This could both provide formative feedback and be placed in the child's records to inform future provision and support.

It may be that a form which records individual children's and students' success against specified outcomes will be required, and be appropriate, but we advise that this should not become too specific in terms of behavioural targets, as this might undermine the underlying philosophy of the Art Room.

Staffing and support

In 2.vi, we highlighted the high quality of the staff, though in the context that all are now reasonably experienced. Our previous recommendations will have staffing implications, though the nature of these will depend on the strategic option adopted.

Our sense is that the induction for staff is broadly appropriate, and in the case of training in pedagogy very good. A training /induction package for both staff and volunteers and an appraisal process for all paid staff, appropriate both to the Art Room as it is and adaptable for a transferable model, can therefore be based on much of what already exists. As indicated, procedures for ensuring that this is adhered to and updated regularly are needed.

If a model is developed with satellites based in primary (or other) schools, staffing is likely to be based on teaching assistants, with a relatively low level of qualifications and training both in art and addressing the needs of vulnerable children. They will therefore need significant initial and on-going support, probably involving working in the Art Room for several sessions, setting up the provision with regular support visits and independent operation with more occasional support. We recommend **(R9)** that consultation from professionals with expertise in child development should be continued and developed, in the case of the Art Room with the Mulberry Bush School, and in other settings, using Art Room staff, with a clear and practical agenda set largely by those being supervised, usually discussing individual cases or specific incidents and/or dilemmas.

The transferable model needs therefore to include model job descriptions, based on a recommended staffing model, guidance on premises and equipment, management and other procedures, designed both for those running the centres and their managers. Whether this approach is adopted or not, we recommend **(R10)** that training materials should be developed to disseminate the philosophy and practice of the Art Room more widely. The use of video and/or role play, as well as 'on-the-job' training, on an apprenticeship model, would seem particularly appropriate.

Such a development would have considerable implications for the best use of Art Room staff. While all will need to be able to lead sessions, some at least will need to be trained and recruited with a view to a wider dissemination role. While the present staff team are well suited to this, and significant progress has been achieved, some, at least, of new staff would need to be recruited, where possible, with an eye to supervising volunteers and, possibly, staff in other locations. This highlights the need for recruiting staff where possible with a medium- to long- term commitment to the Art Room and is a further argument for more streamlined administrative systems. Depending on the

strategic decision made, we recommend **(R11)** that, in the light of this report and further discussions, the job descriptions of all staff should be reviewed, within a structure which meets the needs of the Art Room, especially in terms of operation, management, publicity and a training role.

3.ii Recommendations

We make the following recommendations, believing that the Art Room's pedagogical approach has significant potential for helping young people re-engage with school and should be disseminated more widely. As indicated, some are made regardless of the future strategic direction, while others are contingent on the options taken.

We recommend that the Trustees should:

- R1 undertake a review of their long-term objectives, with a view to drawing up a new development plan for the next three to four years.**
- R2 consider developing a 'transferable model' to enable the approach to be extended to other settings, probably involving provision on a central site supporting on-site provision in primary or other schools on a 'satellite' model.**
- R3 seek to negotiate an agreement with Oxford Community School setting out more formally the expectations and responsibilities of both parties.**
- R4 identify the appropriate officers in public funding bodies and meet them to highlight the precarious nature of the Art Room's financial position and discuss and develop possible routes to secure a significant level of the Art Room's revenue from such bodies.**
- R5 consider the implications of accepting referrals from those other than schools.**
- R6 develop, and distribute more systematically, publicity which makes clear who can refer, the criteria for referral and the expectations of all parties.**
- R7 ensure that policies related to health and safety and child protection are updated and that a check is made at least annually so that those who work in the Art Room are conversant with them and that these are an important and early part of the induction of both paid staff and volunteers.**

- R8** ensure that records are kept more systematically, providing in a readily accessible format what staff need to know about the young person's previous background, the reasons for referral and basic information; and enabling feedback to referrers so that the Art Room's provision can more easily form part of a coherent programme of long-term support.
- R9** continue and extend opportunities for consultation from professionals with expertise in child development, with a clear and practical agenda set largely by those being supervised, usually discussing individual cases or specific incidents and/or dilemmas.
- R10** develop a range of training materials and arrange courses and conferences to disseminate the philosophy and practice of the Art Room more widely.
- R11** in the light of this report and further discussions, review the job descriptions of all staff, within a structure to meet the developing needs of the Art Room, especially in terms of its operation, management, publicity and, if appropriate, a wider training role.

Appendix – the research methodology

This appendix explains the research methodology and the rationale for adopting this approach. The challenges for evaluators and the success criteria used were discussed in 1.ii of the main report. As indicated there, we drew, where possible, on outcome measures to consider the more quantitative aspects, though this proved difficult both because many of the hoped-for outcomes are not easily quantifiable and because of the short-term nature of the evaluation. While we have drawn on records relating to attendance, and exclusions for the students at Oxford Community School, colleagues in primary schools felt that this was less appropriate with their children both because attendance and exclusion were not substantial concerns with most of those referred. While we discussed with a wide range of staff in both sectors the impact on academic attainment, we decided that too many other factors affect this to isolate the impact of the Art Room, especially over a period of only one term. In relation to less easily quantifiable aspects, we devised a form for Art Room staff to make a judgment on the various aspects such as levels of confidence, with a scale that could be quantified, with a view to repeating this at the end of term. However, we abandoned this both because there were several categories where quantifying an attribute (such as confidence) seemed both invalid and unreliable - indeed for some children not-quantifiable -, and because the timescale was too short to provide meaningful results. While it would be possible to devise an evaluative method to quantify these aspects more, this would need to be over a period of at least a year, and be on a 'before-and-after' basis.

A previous evaluation had relied on questionnaires in considering the impact on mental health, but had had a very low return from parents/carers. In view of this, and the likelihood of invasiveness and very poor levels of return from students who were reluctant to express themselves, we decided not to use questionnaires with parents/carers or students. So, our prime methods of gathering data were:

- an extensive review of documentation, including the minutes of the Trustees' discussions, the publicity material, the range of policies and paperwork available, records of the teachers, especially those at Oxford Community School and letters of thanks from parents and carers;
- semi-structured discussions, with a wide range of adults, listed below, those working at Art Room, Trustees, those who referred children and students, from both the Oxford Community School and other referring schools, those from schools which did not refer, or no longer did so, and strategic personnel who offered advice on the wider context, especially in relation to funding. We interviewed one mother and one father, of different children. Necessarily, we had to rely largely on these, and more quantitative data, rather than observation, for judging the impact in respect of these aspects on previous students;
- discussion with individual children and students, and in groups, usually in the context of the Art Room's normal functioning and usually led by one of the staff. While we attempted more formal discussions, these were often not completed either because of the children and students finding it difficult to articulate their responses or our concern about invasiveness; and

- observation of the children and students at work, which provided valuable data, especially to support the testimony of adults. The relatively modest scope of the evaluation meant that we relied heavily on critical incidents and an assembly of disparate data to judge changes in behaviour and response.

To counter observer influence, we made more, but shorter, visits to become familiar to the staff and young people than would be normal in such an evaluation. We watched the detail of interactions often for several minutes, looking out for ‘critical incidents’ and taking note of casual and informal remarks and responses both to formulate and to test emerging hypotheses repeatedly against the evidence of what was observed. To counter the danger of being dominated by a narrow range of views, we tried to gather as many perspectives as possible on the emerging hypotheses, in terms both of a range of views and repeated observations.

As well as documentation, the evaluation was based on the following interviews and discussions, in all of which Tony Eade was involved, with Sue Matthew attending some.

Semi-structured discussions with:

- the Chair of Trustees individually in December 2004 and with one other Trustee in March 2005;
- Juli Beattie, the Director of the Art Room, formally twice;
- Amy Wardell and Lara Cramsie, Senior Practitioners, together formally once;
- All three staff together, formally once and informally either together or separately on several occasions;
- the Head of the Community Safety and Youth Offending Service in Oxfordshire;
- the Prevention Manager - Youth Offending Service and the Identification and Support Scheme Co-ordinator;
- the Senior Education Officer - Access and Social Inclusion and the Social Inclusion Officer - Behaviour Support, for Oxfordshire County Council;
- the Deputy Head, East Oxford Primary School;
- the SENCO and Headteacher (separately) of Church Cowley St James Primary School;
- an Advisory Teacher for Traveller Children;
- the Headteacher of Our Lady’s RC Primary School which previously referred children but no longer does;
- the Headteachers of Larkrise and St Christopher’s Primary Schools (separately) both of which are non-referring schools in the Isis Partnership;
- the Headteacher and Senior Teacher (Students) in Oxford Community School (OCS);
- the Student Support Co-ordinator for EBD in OCS;
- the Head of Year 8 and 9 at OCS, who is going to lead the Inclusion Unit from September 2005.

Discussions with children, students and parents/carers:

- one Year 11 male student;
- a focus group of eleven OCS students over lunch;
- joining numerous group discussions while the Art Room was in operation;
- one mother and one father of two (different) children.

Observational visits during ten different sessions.