

North West

Halton Borough Council

Halton is a small unitary authority with 68 schools, of which 64 schools are eligible to apply for Artsmark. In June 2007, 75% of schools have an Artsmark and Halton has a 98% reapplication rate.

Ann Brian

Arts Education Development Officer

Background in Halton

Ann began work in Halton's Advisory Service as Arts Education Development Officer in 2002 when Halton had just two schools with Artsmark awards. Ann implemented a highly effective Artsmark Local Authority Training Support and Guidance Model to support schools to achieve the award.

The Artsmark Training Model in Halton includes the following:

- an introduction to Artsmark for school leaders and arts managers
- writing an Overarching Arts Policy
- detailed knowledge of the Artsmark application form
- a Final Artsmark Surgery with an external Artsmark validator and member of the Artsmark project team

Ann continues to systematically deliver Artsmark training approximately 6-8 months ahead of the application deadline, in order to give schools time to prepare themselves. The training model is always accompanied by bespoke advice and guidance to schools.

Regional Arts Learning

Ann believes that the development of Artsmark in Halton has been a key contributor to building strong and cohesive networks. Once schools have achieved Artsmark, they are then invited to become members of the regional Arts Learning Consortium. This provides a further progression route for schools.

Cohesion

The cohesion between Cultural Services and Children and Young Peoples Services is strong in Halton. The Cultural Services Manager and Halton's Arts Development Team work together through regular Primary and Secondary Arts Education Network Group training, 'signposting' arts leaders to arts CPD, to artists and to quality-assured arts organisations.

Ann has witnessed systemic improvements in the quality and depth of arts education through the comprehensive Artsmark audit. Schools have become fully engaged in the process of striving to attain Artsmark and the impact is hugely positive, both for school communities themselves and also for the local authority.

'We have long-standing Artsmark Gold schools who are demonstrating incremented excellence both within their learning and teaching of the Arts and in contributing to wider regional partnership work.'

'For Artsmark to be most effective, it requires strong arts and cultural awareness from Head teachers and from Senior Managers. A hallmark of the Halton model is strong committed leadership. Head teachers often attend Artsmark training alongside their Arts Managers and regularly contribute to Halton's Arts Education Network Group.'

'I am particularly delighted with the tangible improvements in policy and practice within the arts and the way in which schools have embraced the 'Every Child Matters' agenda through arts learning'. Schools seem to possess a never-wavering enthusiasm for Artsmark, despite its many challenges.'

Artsmark forms one of a wide range of school improvement initiatives available to schools in Halton.

'Halton is seriously committed to engaging our children and young people in wider learning opportunities beyond the confines of the traditional curriculum. The excellent work undertaken locally and reflected in our Artsmark performance is testimony to this. We want our future citizens to have a wider appreciation and engagement in the arts to help make them more rounded individuals. Halton schools, supported by Ann Brian, our Arts Education Development Officer, are leading the way nationally and Halton Borough Council is immensely proud of our continued achievement in this area.'

Cllr Tom McInerney

Executive Portfolio Member for Children and Young People