



## Specialist Leaders in Cultural Education:

To what extent can cultural education close the attainment gap for Pupil Premium pupils?

An evaluation

This report was produced on behalf of Curious Minds  
By Dr Sandra Hiett  
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### **About the author of this report**

Dr Sandra Hiett has extensive experience in pedagogic practice and research in visual arts, creativity and cultural education. She has worked in partnership with schools and cultural institutions over the past 23 years demonstrating skill and experience in building sustainable, professional relationships across the sector. With a strong track record of undertaking research projects with teachers, young people, schools, galleries, archives and other cultural organisations, Sandra Hiett is an independent researcher specialising in Arts and Education. In addition, she is a co-founder of the Artist Teacher Associates, Senior Lecturer in Teacher Education at Liverpool Hope University and is Deputy Editor of the international Journal of Art and Design Education.

## Introduction

This evaluation has been prepared on behalf of Curious Minds and reports on the third year of the Specialist Leaders in Cultural Education Programme from September 2015 to September 2016. Specialist Leaders in Cultural Education (SLiCE<sup>®</sup>) is an initiative developed by Curious Minds, the North West's Bridge organisation.

Curious Minds is a charity based in Preston and serving the North West. We develop the skills and capacity of those working with children and young people to increase opportunities for their active participation in arts, culture and creative learning. We connect with schools and make sure young people know what's on offer to them and we support schools to integrate arts and culture into the delivery of their curriculum.

([www.curiousminds.org.uk](http://www.curiousminds.org.uk))

The SLiCE<sup>®</sup> initiative was set up as a direct response to Darren Henley's independent review of Cultural Education in England (2011) and at the outset of this initiative, Curious Minds (2013) made the following declaration:

To respond to Henley's recommendations, Curious Minds is embarking on a two year programme of investment and activity. This will enable Teaching School Alliances to play a key role in increasing access to and raising the standard of cultural education for children and young people in the North West of England.

The **Specialist Leaders in Cultural Education** (SLiCE<sup>®</sup>) Fellowship is one such initiative. This one year Fellowship is focused on developing a lead teacher's capacity to strategically support cultural education in their own school and across the Alliance.

The focus on Pupil Premium pupils was determined by Curious Minds in response to evidence from the first and second year of the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Programme (Hiett & Smears 2014; Hiett 2015) and reflects a national drive to address the attainment gap in English schools between children from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers (DfE & EFA; Ofsted 2014). In 2015 to 2016 there were two SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows in their third year, six in their second year and three in their first year of the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Programme representing a total of forty-two schools, sixteen Cultural Partners and approximately one thousand children.

The scope of this research includes the analysis of twenty-five in depth interviews undertaken over a twelve-month period with SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows and Head Teachers, systematic analysis of quantitative data from forty-two participating schools and approximately one thousand children, tracking pupils' progress before and after their participation in the cultural education projects.

The main objectives of this evaluation were to:

- Evaluate the impact of SLiCE<sup>®</sup> on the performance of Pupil Premium pupils
- Identify emerging patterns of professional development of SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows
- Evidence the legacy of SLiCE<sup>®</sup> for participating organisations.

The primary audience for this report is Curious Minds and all those participating in the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Programme including; the Curious Minds' team, SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows, participating Cultural Partners and Teaching School Alliances. In addition, these findings may be relevant to the wider

education community, the cultural sector, education policy makers, curriculum leaders, experienced and beginning teachers.

## Executive Summary

This evaluation found that cultural education had a beneficial impact upon the academic and personal development of disadvantaged children through taking part in the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Programme. The majority of participating Pupil Premium pupils made greater academic progress than their non-participating peers and demonstrated higher scores in relation to character strengths associated with greater reliance and achievement in adult life. Key findings are summarised below:

- Taking part in cultural education narrowed the attainment gap with 62% of participating Pupil Premium pupils improving their academic scores compared with 49.99% of non-participating Pupil Premium pupils over the same period of time
- There was significant correlation between children's engagement in cultural education and the development of their character strengths. This is indicative of an enhanced ability to succeed in formal education and in adult life
- Overall, participating Pupil Premium girls scored marginally higher than participating Pupil Premium boys but participating pupils scored consistently better than non-participating pupils in each category regardless of gender
- The SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Programme enabled the development of systems leaders who were proactive, rather than reactive, and ensured they were accountable for their effectiveness against explicit goals and expectations
- It takes three years to develop cultural education through the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Programme from inception to embedded, sustainable practice
- Curious Minds plays a critical ongoing role in supporting the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Programme but the need for support changes over time from high dependency to critical friend and expert mentor as SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows become more established in their role as systems leaders.

## SLiCE<sup>®</sup> in Context

There are four underlying themes informing the development of the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Programme in 2015 – 2016, and this report. These four themes are:

- disadvantaged children and underachievement at school
- Pupil Premium
- character education
- systems leadership.

## Disadvantaged Children and Underachievement at School

Of the twenty local authority districts with the highest proportion of most deprived neighbourhoods in England, eight are located in the North West (Department for Communities and Local Government 2015:10). There is, therefore, a significant number of children taught in the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Alliances who are from disadvantaged backgrounds. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds lose out at every stage of their education, compounding the gap in their attainment year on year compared to their peers, with the poorest children's development already nineteen months behind by the age of five (Lampi 2015). Underachievement of children from disadvantaged backgrounds is not, however, limited to England and is a global problem. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) identifies that 'many students are trapped in a vicious circle of poor performance' leading to a repeated pattern of demotivation and underachievement (2016). According to PISA, underperformance affects not only the individual life chances of a student but, when a large number of the population lacks basic skills, it impacts upon long-term national economic growth. Underachievement of disadvantaged children is an issue for everyone and not just those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

PISA identify universal patterns of the conditions that enable and disadvantage children in their academic attainment at school, making clear distinctions between those experiences that lead to a high risk and low risk of underachievement in their formal education.

[A] "low risk profile" is a 15-year-old student who is a boy, does not have an immigrant background, speaks the same language at home that is spoken at school, lives in a two-parent family, in a city, has attended pre-primary school for more than one year, has never repeated a grade, and is enrolled in an academic track. On the opposite end of the spectrum, a "high risk profile" is a girl who has an immigrant background, speaks a language at home that is different from the language spoken at school, lives in a single-parent family, in a rural area, has not attended pre-primary school, repeat a grade at least once, and is enrolled in a vocational track.

(PISA 2016)

In the United Kingdom, gender differences have been found to influence the relative achievements of disadvantaged children. High achieving boys from disadvantaged backgrounds are fifty percent less likely to obtain three 'A' levels than high achieving girls from disadvantaged backgrounds (Lampi 2015). Enrichment experiences, such as reading at home, going on educational visits, and other cultural activities have been found to have a positive impact on reducing the attainment gap.

Continuing to have outings and enrichment experiences with parents during primary school as well as engaging in individual activities like painting, reading and dancing also almost doubled the chances of otherwise disadvantaged children being high achievers at the end of Key Stage 2.

(Sammons et al 2015:16)

At the Pupil Premium Summit on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2015, in her role as Secretary of State for Education, Nicky Morgan made a commitment that every child, regardless of their background should have the opportunity to reach their full educational potential. She argued that it is not enough to close the attainment gap, but that Pupil Premium children should be encouraged to go further than 'simply catching up' with their peers and realise their full capacity.

## Pupil Premium

Pupil Premium was introduced by the Coalition Government in 2011 providing additional funding for schools. Pupil Premium funding is made available for any child who has a special guardianship order, a child arrangement order, a residence order, been adopted, received free school meals and those whose parent(s) are, or have since 2011, served in the armed forces (Jarret et al 2015:3; DfE & EFA 2014).

The purpose of Pupil Premium funding is to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and 'close the attainment gaps between them and their peers' (DfE & EFA 2014). In 2014, Ofsted reported that Pupil Premium was making a positive difference in many schools identifying a direct correlation between good and outstanding leadership and the attainment of Pupil Premium children (2014:9).

Reporting on the use of Pupil Premium funding Ofsted (2014:10) stated that most frequently it is used to pay for additional staff, including teachers and teaching assistants, delivering one-to-one support and small group tuition, typically focusing on English and Mathematics. In addition, funding in the first three years, was often used to enable pupils to participate in after-school clubs, educational visits and other similar activities. Speaking about the Pupil Premium Awards in 2016, Lincoln Abbotts, Executive Director of Strategic Developments at the Association Board of the Royal Schools of Music, reinforced this point when he stated that 'getting involved with music can transform lives' and 'bring people together'.

In its evaluation of Pupil Premium in 2015, The Sutton Trust challenged thinking about 'narrowing the gap' arguing that it was more important to provide all children with a high quality education than compare them with other children in their class.

What matters to children from low-income families is that a school enables them to achieve a qualification to get on in life. If a low-income student gets a poor education

from a school, it is little consolation or use for them to learn that the school served the higher income students equally poorly (the school's 'gap' was small).

(The Sutton Trust 2015:22)

Great schools, claims The Sutton Trust (2016), provide all their pupils with a great education. They argue that there is a significant correlation between educational institutions enabling pupils in receipt of free school meals (FSM) also enable non-FSM children to achieve at the highest level. A great education, however, is not limited to teaching curriculum subjects; it also develops children's confidence to believe in themselves, persevere when facing setbacks and have the motivation to achieve their goals (DfE 2014).

## Character Education

Character Education targets the 'soft skills' that enable young people to thrive within their education. In this context, 'character' is a set of person qualities that generate specific emotions, inform motivation and influence behaviour (Arthur, Harrison & Wright 2015). In a study of over 1200 children, Rashid et al (2015:88) found a direct relationship between pupils' character education scores and their academic achievement concluding that 'character strengths help individuals to build person resources which help individuals to attain other desirable outcomes'. There is no definitive list of character strengths among those publishing research in this area yet there are ten characteristics that are most commonly cited and it is these that have informed the SLICE<sup>®</sup> research in 2015-2016:

- **Creativity:** [ingenuity; originality]: thinking of novel and productive ways to do things
- **Curiosity:** [interest; novelty-seeking; openness to experience]: taking an interest in all of ongoing experience
- **Judgment:** [critical thinking]: thinking things through and examining them from all sides
- **Love of learning:** mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge
- **Courage:** emotional strengths that involve exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, external or internal
- **Perseverance:** [persistence; industry; diligence]: finishing what one starts, completing a course of action in spite of obstacles
- **Social intelligence:** being aware of the motives and feelings of self and others; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick
- **Teamwork:** [citizenship; social responsibility; loyalty]: working well as member of a group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share
- **Leadership:** encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done and at the same time maintain good relations within the group; organizing group activities and seeing that they happen
- **Hope:** [optimism; future-mindedness]: expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about.

(Rashid et al 2015:86)

## Systems Leadership

Systems leadership is a strategy established to develop school-based leaders to 'work with schools outside their own' ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) 2016). The National College for School Leadership (NCSL) (2013) identified effective partnerships as having a key role in reducing the inequality of educational provision between schools and in this way providing better education for all pupils, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The need for 'high-calibre leaders' who can work in partnership, argues the NCSL, has never been so great and, they claim, is in short supply.

A self-improving system will [...] depend on building a culture of collaboration and collective support and challenge at all levels of the system, not simply at a governance and leadership level, if it is to become embedded. To build a collaborative culture you need networks within schools before you can build networks between schools. So the onus is on schools and leaders to see that effective

collaboration in the curriculum and in improving teaching and learning practices, between departments and across the hierarchy, is embedded and that all staff, including support staff, have the opportunity to lead improvement.

(NCSL 2011:15)

Specialist Leaders (SL) of Education were first introduced in the Department for Education's white paper 'The Importance of Teaching' (2010:24) anticipating that Specialist Leaders would be drawn from existing 'excellent professionals in leadership positions below the head teacher (such as deputies, bursars, heads of department) to support others in similar positions in other schools'. The DfE identified the specific roles of the generic Specialist Leader to:

- Carry out diagnostic visits
- Develop action plans, identifying key priorities and SMART targets
- Provide one-to-one or group support
- Offer coaching and mentoring support
- Provide access to resources and training.

([www.harristeachingschool.com](http://www.harristeachingschool.com))

09/06/2014)

Specialist Leaders in Cultural Education (SLiCE<sup>®</sup>) are not included in the DfE's Specialist Leader initiative and yet they fulfil all of the Specialist Leader functions and more. The role of the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellow is fundamentally a systems leadership role. SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows lead Cultural Education across their school Alliance working with between four and twenty-six schools and up to three partner cultural organisations. Furthermore, enabled through Curious Minds, they work collaboratively with each other to share good practice and respond to collective challenges. Within the Curious Minds' model, specific roles of Specialist Leaders in Cultural Education are:

- To access the needs of other schools around cultural education, support them, select and commission the right cultural partner
- To use culture appropriately in a specific curriculum area or to tackle a particular learning need
- To support teachers to recognise quality cultural activity when they see it – in the process of teaching and learning and in end result
- To offer advice and signposting for schools and teachers on Artsmark and Arts Award
- To lead on strategic activities that will raise the profile and highlight the value of cultural education across the Alliance
- To make the case for deploying budgets for cultural education and that any investment is most appropriately targeted
- To ensure that budgets for cultural learning and enhancement activities are suitably programmed so that they are inclusive and engage young people appropriately
- To champion and raise the standard of cultural education for children and young people in their school, the Alliance and in the North West.

(Curious Minds 2013)

Research undertaken by the NCSL (2013) found that a wide range of National Leaders of Education were leading their schools in different ways and yet found similar patterns of behaviour and skills in working effectively to close the attainment gaps for Pupil Premium pupils:

- drive and determination to make a difference for all pupils
- ambition to transform the culture of the schools they were working with
- leadership of teaching and learning
- close personal interest in individual pupil progress
- regular monitoring and tracking of performance
- vision and strategic grip to select and sequence the most appropriate set of intervention strategies, and in some cases searching for quick wins to steady the ship

- knowledge and professional networks to engage a range of professionals to support families and raise expectations
- optimism and a drive not to give up even when the challenges appeared daunting. (NCSL 2013:53)

## Methodology

A mixed method approach informed the research design overall, providing a combination of statistical data and deep insights in relation to the aims of this research set out in the Introduction (Greene, Kreider & Mayer 2005). Qualitative data was gathered through twenty-five in-depth semi-structured interviews with eleven SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows and three Head Teachers from participating schools. SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows were interviewed twice in the academic year; in February or March and again in June or July 2016. Head Teachers were interviewed between May and July 2016. The interviews were audio recorded, transcribed and coded (Somekh 1995; Campbell, McNamara & Gilroy 2004) in relation to the aims of SLiCE<sup>®</sup> and the research objectives.

Quantitative data was gathered by the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows throughout the school year from approximately one thousand children. Base-line evidence was gathered for participating Pupil Premium pupils' academic attainment (Appendix B) and scores against six character strengths. The character strengths were:

- Creativity
- love of learning
- perseverance
- well-being
- teamwork
- leadership.

Additionally, children's participation in cultural and arts activities outside school were recorded before and after their engagement with the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Programme (Appendix A).

At the end of the project the assessment of children's academic attainment and character strengths was repeated. In addition to the participating Pupil Premium pupils, randomly selected control groups of 5% non-Pupil Premium pupils were evaluated against the same measures for each Alliance.

The SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Programme is underpinned by a Practitioner Action Research methodology and all SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows are co-researchers as part of their Specialist Leader role. All SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows received research training from Curious Minds and on-going support with data gathering and analysis. Each SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellow is required to submit an interim and final research report about the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> project in their school Alliance in partnership with cultural organisations (between one and three cultural partners depending on whether they are in year one, two or three of the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Programme and the nature of their chosen project). This report was informed by, but independent of, the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows' reports.

## Discussion of Findings

The research question, 'To what extent can cultural education close the attainment gap for Pupil Premium pupils?' influenced the nature of the data gathering and analysis but did not dictate the focus of the cultural education projects in each Alliance. There were several project themes including:

- Literacy and drama
- Literacy and history
- Literacy and creative story writing
- Literacy, Shakespeare and poetry
- Local history (industry, canals, railway) and drama
- Performing arts (dance, music, drama)
- Contemporary visual arts

- Film, theatre and contemporary arts
- British values
- Social, moral, spiritual and cultural.

Seven Alliances worked with one Cultural Partner each, three Alliances worked with two Cultural Partners and one Alliance worked with three Cultural Partners between September 2015 and September 2016. Cultural Partners varied from large international organisations, to small regional and local organisations including individual arts practitioners (such as musicians, poets and dancers). The focus of some projects were influenced by the specific needs of Pupil Premium pupils whilst others were designed for a wide range of children regardless of their status but included Pupil Premium children within the group. The majority of projects took place over a six to eight-week period, although the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows and Cultural Partners were actively involved over the whole school year.

### **Cultural education and the attainment gap for Pupil Premium pupils**

There were considerable differences between the location and types of school participating in the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Programme from September 2015 to September 2016. Of the forty-two schools, twenty-seven primary, twelve secondary and three special needs schools took part, from a range of rural, suburban and inner city contexts. Whilst SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows all had an acute awareness of government requirements to demonstrate how the schools they serve support Pupil Premium pupils to close the gap between their attainment and that of their more advantaged peers, this represented significantly different challenges to each school. In every Alliance, there was variance between the number and distribution of Pupil Premium children across schools and therefore SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows had to manage different aspirations and challenges between schools. Emerging patterns across the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> schools revealed three distinct groups:

- schools with little or no Pupil Premium pupils,
- schools with a number of Pupil Premium pupils where the attainment gap had already been closed, and
- schools working towards closing the attainment gap for Pupil Premium pupils.

Each SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellow generated a cultural education project for, and in collaboration with, his or her school Alliance and designated Cultural Partner(s). Curious Minds influenced the pairing of SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows and their Cultural Partner(s) in negotiation with all parties.

SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows reported that those schools identified as having little or no Pupil Premium pupils were initially sceptical about what insight they might gain from the focus of this research arguing that children in these schools were regularly achieving their target grades with no evidence of any children being left behind from an academic perspective. Yet, by the end of the project, SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows observed that many of the non-Pupil Premium children's performance against the character strengths showed significant improvements in their ability to demonstrate leadership, team working and perseverance from similar non-participating children. This insight led several SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows to question the extent to which pupils' attainment, regardless of their Pupil Premium status, was teacher dependent and demonstrated deep and sustained learning or short-term surface learning.

A number of schools with larger numbers of Pupil Premium pupils reported that they had already been successful in putting in place strategies that had eradicated the attainment gap in Mathematics, English and Science. SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows reported that schools in this category did not expect cultural education to offer any specific benefits for Pupil Premium pupils although they expected all participating pupils to gain from the experience. One SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellow stated:

The research question assumes there is an attainment gap for Pupil Premium pupils. In this school, this is our remit already and so that work has already been done!

Contrary to SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows' expectations, Pupil Premium pupils showed significant development in their academic progress. Analysis of the tracking data found that 12% of the participating Pupil Premium children made at least one level more academic progress than non-participating Pupil Premium pupils over the same period. A strong correlation between children's academic progress was evident, not just within the curriculum areas

associated with the cultural education (such as drama, dance, music or art), but in their achievement overall. Consistently, girls made more progress than boys with 12.99% of girls making between one and four levels of progress among the participating Pupil Premium pupils. This finding challenges global trends where girls from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to underachieve than boys (PISA 2016) yet is consistent with national data in that girls in England tend to outperform boys (Sammons et al 2015).

At the end of the school year, SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows reported that they had seen significant gains in terms of character strengths for all pupils, but particularly Pupil Premium children. The quantitative data revealed a similar trend. The number of participating Pupil Premium pupils making positive progress against the character strengths were consistently higher than non-participating Pupil Premium children by

- 59.9% in creativity
- 50.48% in love of learning
- 33.81% in perseverance
- 50.48% in leadership
- 11.27% in team work and
- 38.5% in terms of well-being.

In the end of project interviews, SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows concurred with the findings of Sammons (et al 2015) in that cultural education generated opportunities for children to develop character strengths in ways not normally available in the school curriculum.

SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows commented that in developing children's character strengths they saw greater levels of independence and self-reliance in many of the Pupil Premium children suggesting that they were now less dependent on specific strategies for their progression. In this regard, SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows reported, other vulnerable children (not on the Pupil Premium register) benefited from the experience; a group whose needs are often as great as those of Pupil Premium pupils who are not entitled to any specific provision. Pupil Premium pupils, the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows reported, were not always the neediest and several cited children not on the Pupil Premium register at risk of falling behind because of factors such as a lack of social skills, parent ill health, changes in family circumstances, children's health (mental and/or physical) and poor parenting. Those children not meriting Pupil Premium funding but in need of additional support were considered more likely to underachieve, SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows argued, because of financial constraints and over-stretched resources in schools. SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows most frequently talked about children in this category as demonstrating most notable development through the cultural education projects and were often those they found to have developed most in terms of their social and academic achievements.

One SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellow described how teachers had 'stopped treating children as robots' and that she had witnessed a significant increase in children's motivation and enjoyment in their engagement although their academic scores had not significantly changed. In creating divergent and open-ended learning opportunities pupils had flourished, many SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows claimed, in a way that they were not able to within a highly structured, 'data-driven' pedagogy. Comments by two SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows in the July interviews serve to illustrate this finding:

Some year 6 pupils are just too cool for school, and these children particularly demonstrated a deeper engagement in what we were doing in the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> project. (SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellow A)

Working with a musician; he had less constraints and more flexibility than the classroom teacher to make the experience child-centred; it was the approach that benefited children even more than the skills. (SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellow B)

Among the schools where there was an identified gap between Pupil Premium pupils' academic attainment and their peers, SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows anticipated a higher level of academic progress among Pupil Premium children. The tracking data did not support this claim, however, demonstrating similar gains between participating children across different schools.

A number of pupils showed some regression in their scores at the end of the project among both participating and non-participating groups. On further investigation, two impact factors emerged. The first was that the majority of pupils demonstrating regression were from one school. This was the only school out of forty-two that reported, by SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows, to be reluctant to participate in the programme being slow to respond to correspondence, repeated cancellation of meetings and postponement of workshops at short notice. The second was the impact of external factors associated with Pupil Premium students' underachievement such as severe episodes of disruption in their home life.

### **Career progression for SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows**

Job mobility was a benefit for SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows, with 18.5% receiving a promotion within one year, of which 11.1% were within the same school and 7.4% in other establishments. Two SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows relocated to other schools in a similar post, and a further two SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows remained at the same scale but received enhanced job titles, for instance, from 'assistant head for creative education' to 'assistant head for creative education and research'. One Head Teacher spoke of the importance of the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> role in retaining a valued colleague in school, recognising that 'given his passion for the creative arts he could easily transfer into the cultural sector'. This Head Teacher identified the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Programme as having a direct impact upon the significant rise in pupil recruitment of nearly fifty percent (from 87 to 173) in year seven, an improved school reputation, and an increased Ofsted judgement of SMSC education from 'satisfactory' to 'good' within three years. Seeing the impact of his SLiCE<sup>®</sup> role on the good practice and reputation of the school, the head said, was a key factor in keeping a highly motivated and skilled teacher at the school.

In one case a primary curriculum leader was appointed as a Deputy Head Teacher at another school at the end of her second year as a SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellow by leapfrogging the usual progression to senior leader. It was reported that she had been specifically targeted for promotion as a direct result of her success on the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Programme. This is particularly noteworthy when many primary and secondary schools across the country are looking at reducing their curriculum offer to make financial savings (Knights 2014). In the visual arts, a recent survey found art education had been decreased in Key Stage 1 by 43%, Key Stage 2 by 38% and Key Stage 3 by 44% in 2015 to 2016 (NSEAD 2016). In contrast, curriculum time for cultural education subjects (Henley 2012) being at least maintained, and in some cases increased, demonstrated a distinct difference from national trends in non-SLiCE<sup>®</sup> schools.

The retention of SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows within the teaching profession has been slightly higher than average with a ninety-three percent retention rate compared with national figures of ninety percent (NUT 2015). Teachers' unions and the national press have raised issues about the lack of teacher retention. Reduction in curriculum time for the visual and performing arts in a number of schools, because of the English Baccalaureate, is a trend challenged by Henley (2012) and the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Programme. National data (DfE 2016) shows a reduction of 2.5% of teachers in the secondary sector and a rise in teacher numbers in nursery and primary education of 2.1% in England; an emerging pattern driven by changes in pupil numbers. Of the twenty-nine SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows, 2013 to 2016, two have left the profession (one retirement and

one recently qualified teacher leaving for another career) with the remaining twenty-seven are still actively employed within the sector.

## Professional development through SLiCE®

The majority of SLiCE® Fellows reported that they had become much more effective in their systems leadership skills and echoed in the comments of the three head teachers. SLiCE® Fellows reported that, through the SLiCE® Programme, they were challenged to work more strategically, and with a wider range of stakeholders than ever before. One Head Teacher described how the SLiCE® Programme made demands upon the SLiCE® Fellow that were not required of other Specialist Leaders in Education (SLE) in school.

[The SLiCE® Fellow] has a much heavier workload than other Specialist Leaders in school by quite a significant margin. You can be a Specialist Leader in Education in this school, or any other for that matter, and it may impact on your workload over the year as you get taken out to offer support elsewhere. What [our SLiCE® Fellow] does is something quite different entirely. What she does is a shining example of systems leadership; it has had an impact way beyond this school with lots of people. One of the particular things she does is to get people together and say 'right let's get things done, let's get behind this and look at it together for the benefit of young people and teachers'. I think there are very few Specialist Leaders in Education of which you could say that.

The SLiCE® Programme had been successful in supporting the development of highly engaged and successful systems leaders. Head teachers differed in their views as to why the SLiCE® Programme had been so effective in this respect but three significant factors emerged including; the individual's commitment to cultural education, the clarity of goals of the SLiCE® Programme and the accountability of the SLiCE® Fellow to Curious Minds. One Head Teacher commented that:

In terms of the systems leadership of the SLiCE® Fellow [at our school], I don't see any skills over those of other SLEs but what I do see is how being held to account to produce, to evaluate, to create projects and finish them is what makes the difference.

Not only has the SLiCE® Programme contributed to the required growth of Specialist Leaders (NCSL 2011) it has also created a context for systems leaders to have greater impact across school Alliances in collaboration with Cultural Partners. Curious Minds has played an important role in making SLiCE® Fellows accountable for meeting their objectives and this has been pivotal to the achievement of consistently high standards and sustained progression of cultural education in participating schools and cultural organisations.

Cultural Partners have contributed to, and benefited from, continuing professional development through the SLiCE® Programme. SLiCE® Fellows, in their second and third year of the programme, were much more likely to identify staff development as a target of their annual project than those in their first year. In some instances, this was a joint venture between SLiCE® Fellows and Cultural Partners in developing CPD programmes for in service teachers and Initial Teacher Trainees within the Alliance. In other cases, the SLiCE® Fellow has supported the Cultural Partner to develop their CPD programme for wider participation. The need for CPD provision to be bespoke was a common finding across the programme, with 'off the shelf' provision found to have limited impact.

Two SLiCE® Fellows spoke of how the CPD for teachers had made outstanding impact upon the quality of teaching, learning and curriculum development. There was, they noted, much greater emphasis on creative pedagogy among experienced and recently qualified teachers

because of bespoke staff training. There were, however, differences in levels of teacher engagement with some demonstrating more proactive engagement and others still not engaged in cultural education. One SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellow reflected that:

Working with schools that don't fully commit is a challenge – not getting back to you fast enough can threaten the success of a project. Schools that respond quickly get the most out of it. Poor communication derailed the project for one school this year.

Many of the more experienced SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows systematically targeted groups of teachers as part of an ongoing strategy to improve engagement across the Alliance. They saw CPD as instrumental to the level of teacher engagement and therefore to the capacity for the sustainability of SLiCE<sup>®</sup>. One SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellow noted that:

One teacher missed the CPD and she was the only teacher who absented herself from the delivery.

SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows in their second and third year provided CPD for Cultural Partners, particularly when these were solo arts practitioners unfamiliar with specific educational settings. In several cases, this has benefited the CP beyond the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Programme in that they are now able to work with a wider range of age and ability groups in a range of educational settings. SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows in their first year were less likely to see the potential in supporting cultural partners' professional development and more inclined to replace their cultural partner with a substitute organisation.

### **Enhanced subject specialist skills and pedagogy**

The SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Programme had a significant impact on pedagogy resulting in a greater investment in creative approaches to learning. Exposing children, and their teachers, to excellent arts practices has enhanced children's cultural production beyond their expectations. Equally, challenging Cultural Partners to develop bespoke learning experiences for schools has enhanced their pedagogy and their programming. There has been a reciprocal benefit for SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows and Cultural Partners through SLiCE<sup>®</sup>, and multi-agency partnerships have extended practice further. One SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellow talked about her SLiCE<sup>®</sup> project embracing 'dance, poetry and architecture' stating that 'working with different arts disciplines' has the power to 'take good practice further'.

Specialist drama skills, one SLiCE<sup>®</sup> reported, were 'really useful in extending 'teachers' pedagogy' and in engaging children. This has resulted in higher attainment in individual and inter-disciplinary subject skills. For example, the introduction of digital technologies in film and media have 'transformed practices in drama and creative technologies' in one Alliance. During interview, one Head Teacher was keen to point out that 'you need to have experiences like this for children so that learning does not become stale'.

A SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellow in her third year spoke of the benefits of the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Programme for developing newly qualified teachers, in particular claiming that this gave them the 'confidence to give children more autonomy'. Confidence was also an issue for some experienced teachers as one SLiCE<sup>®</sup> declared when acknowledging how the understanding that there would be some sort of public performance gave rise to a 'fear of failure' and a sense of 'peer pressure'. She wrestled with conflicting tensions between giving pupils an authentic creative experience, ownership over their cultural production and her need to ensure a public performance reflected well on the programme as a whole. Looking back on the experience, she commented that:

The performance became part of the process – nothing was lost – but in my head I was thinking 'an audience is going to see this'!

### **SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows as researchers**

SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows have found the research aspect of their role to be consistently one of the most challenging and unfamiliar. They reported that support from Curious Minds has been important in developing their research skills and report writing. In the first year of the

programme SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows identified their research question with support from Curious Minds with no consultation with their Cultural Partner and many found this a particularly difficult part of their role. In the second year, the research questions were written between the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellow and Cultural Partner(s) enhancing the collaborative nature of the working relationship. It was evident that SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows had greater confidence in their research focus in year two, although many found difficulty in understanding the difference between reporting the outcomes of the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> project and writing up their research in light of their research question.

In the third year, the research question, written by Curious Minds, gave consistent focus across the programme. SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows found the shared research question helped them to make a clear distinction between project development activities and the research focus and gave them great confidence in the research design and data gathering tools. SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows preferred to have the data collection methods prepared for them, such as the tracking sheet and questionnaire in year three. Largely, this was due to limited experience and, in some cases a lack of confidence in their skills as researchers. However, Curious Minds indicated that the research reports at the end of the third year were of a higher standard.

Collective research, through a shared question and data gathering protocol in 2015 to 2016 generated a significant body of research that contributed new knowledge to the education and cultural sector. Individual research foci, as developed in the first and second year of the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Programme, had direct impact upon the immediate partnerships, policy and practice with the Multi Academy Trusts and School Learning Alliances.

## The legacy of SLiCE<sup>®</sup>

The boundaries between schools and cultural organisations as sites of learning have become less distinct as SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows and Cultural Partners develop longer-term collaborative practices. Over time, a shared understanding of each other's roles and how each institution works has resulted in greater understanding of how to create new and better cultural education opportunities together.

Evidence suggests that it takes three years for the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Programme to embed within an alliance. Tracking the development of SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows over the programme has revealed dominant trends that indicate a sequential pattern of evolution:

	SLiCE <sup>®</sup> Fellow focus	Cultural Partner focus
YEAR 1	Establishing lines of communication Generating research focus Advocacy across the Alliance Pupil orientated activities Uncertainty in commissioning CPs	Developing relationship with Curious Minds Providing expert knowledge, skills and resources Developing bespoke opportunities for children Giving SLiCE <sup>®</sup> Fellow insights behind the scenes
YEAR 2	CPD focus to develop capacity of teachers Shared research focus and improved report writing skills Curriculum development Extending reach to more pupils across alliance More confident commissioning of CPs	Developing relationship with SLiCE <sup>®</sup> Fellow Contribute to development of research questions Developing relationships with other CPs Accessing CPD from SLiCE <sup>®</sup> Fellow Developing programme for young people Focus on developing CPD for teachers
YEAR 3	Systematic strategy for development of SLiCE <sup>®</sup> Programme and working with multiple partners Targeted approach to recruitment of new schools across the Alliance and CPD of teachers More purposeful data collection and analysis More confidence in researcher role Confident commissioning of CPs	Embedding SLiCE <sup>®</sup> into planning and programming Refine cultural offer to schools Deeper understanding of how schools work and how that impacts upon the partnership and development of SLiCE <sup>®</sup> Established relationships with SLiCE <sup>®</sup> Fellows

Year one of the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Programme is, by nature, generative and SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows focused upon developing learning opportunities for children as their main concern. Developing relationships with cultural partners SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows honed in on gaining access to resources to provide learning experiences for children. SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows had a tendency to struggle with the research role, often finding it difficult to distinguish the difference between the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> project and the research question. Much of the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellow's 22 days released from timetable were spent developing effective lines of communication between other schools in the Alliance and their Cultural Partner. The four-day placement was pivotal in the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellow gaining insights into how cultural organisations work and in helping to understanding what

expertise they bring to the Cultural Partner. Advocacy in year one, and pupils' successful cultural production, generated interest from other schools in the Alliance, in many cases leading to participation in year two. In year one, Cultural Partners reported that they were attracted to participate because of the cultural capital of working with Curious Minds. There was a greater reliance on Curious Minds by both the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows and Cultural Partners in developing and understanding of the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Programme in year one. SLiCE<sup>®</sup> schools were reliant on funding through Curious Minds to make it possible to dedicate a teacher to the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellow role.

Year Two of the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Programme was developmental and often focused on the continuing professional development of teachers. In year two, SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows were better able to operate as systems leaders and have a greater realisation of how they could use their time to greater effect. Often year two saw the project include a larger number of schools extending the reach of the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Programme. SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows had higher expectations of Cultural Partners in year two and raised their aspirations for the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> project. In the second year, Cultural Partners engaged in SLiCE<sup>®</sup> because of the strength of their working relationship with the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows and their Alliance schools. SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows and cultural partners sought support from Curious Minds as trouble-shooter, expert mentor and confidential critical friend. In year two, SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows became more aware of the benefits of being part of the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> network. SLiCE<sup>®</sup> schools were able to part fund the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> project through the Alliance schools, as one Head Teacher revealed:

Schools have found that working together they have generated pockets of money to make projects happen that would not be realised otherwise.

By the third year of their participation, SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows saw greater benefits from their systems leadership and were increasingly able to delegate aspects of the role to other colleagues. There were indications that the recruitment of schools across the Alliance was more strategic, often with smaller numbers of teachers and/or schools but with clear aims to facilitate specific forms of impact. In year three, SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows targeted Continuing Professional Development as at specific teachers within their school Alliance and extended the offer to Cultural Partners. At this point SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows were increasingly confident project managers and spoke about being more proactive commissioners of cultural education provision from cultural partners. They had developed their research design skills and data collection strategies with more confidence and higher quality research report writing. SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows looked to Curious Minds as critical friends and facilitators of the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> network. SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows began to seek support from Curious Minds in applying for funding from other external agencies and began to use research evidence to underpin their applications.

## Conclusion

This evaluation finds that not only can cultural education close the attainment gap for Pupil Premium pupils through the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Programme, it can support disadvantaged children to exceed teachers' expectations (Morgan 2015). At a time when financial constraints are leading some Head Teachers and governing bodies to reduce the curriculum offer in their schools (Knights 2014), the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Programme demonstrates why the visual and performing arts are vital to the educational and personal well-being of all pupils, and particularly the most vulnerable children in England's schools.

Working with high quality Cultural Partners and high status organisations raised the aspirations and self-esteem of teachers as well as their pupils (Henley 2011). Cultural education, through the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Programme, actively developed pupils' character strengths in creativity, self-esteem, teamwork, leadership, perseverance, well-being and a love of learning. These qualities are important factors in breaking the cycle of poor performance (PISA 2016) and giving young people the skills to exceed in life (Sammons et al 2015) as well as their education.

Curious Minds has created a national benchmark in the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Programme. The SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellowship has developed an outstanding model of systems leadership (NCSL 2013) that is proactive in generating a self-supporting community, a body of specialist skills and knowledge, that impacts positively upon the work of Multi-Academy Trusts and Teaching School Alliance in partnership with cultural organisations.

SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows are powerful advocates for cultural education within and beyond their school Alliance, increasing the capacity for high quality cultural education through the commissioning of cultural organisations and continuing professional development of staff. The SLiCE<sup>®</sup> network, maintained by Curious Minds, includes SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Fellows enrolled in the programme and alumni membership. This network of pioneers within cultural education have already begun to extend the reach of the SLiCE<sup>®</sup> Programme disseminating their research practice through school websites, national presentations, regional and international publications.

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## Appendices

Appendix A: Character Strengths record sheet

Appendix B: Pupil Tracking Sheet

Appendix C: Data Analysis

## Appendix A CHARACTER STRENGTHS BEFORE [NOVEMBER]/AFTER [JULY]

Pupil Premium Unique Pupil Number: .....

School: .....

Characteristic	1 ( None )	2 (once)	3 (repeatedly)	4 (consistent)
<b>Creativity</b>	Uncomfortable taking risks or experimenting	Beginning to show novel thinking/doing	Some novel thinking/doing	Regular and confident novel thinking/doing
<b>Love of learning</b>	Shows no interest in learning	Shows occasional interest in learning	Often engages in learning willingly	Consistently engages in learning willingly
<b>Perseverance</b>	Easily discouraged. Gives up after first attempt	Will continue with encouragement	Sometimes finishes work despite obstacles	Frequently overcomes obstacles with confidence
<b>Well-being</b>	Easily upset and finds social interaction difficult	Has demonstrated some social skills and occasionally happy in school	Often enjoys school and builds positive relationships with some others	Has good social skills and consistently enjoys school and interaction with others
<b>Teamwork</b>	Does not work well in a team	Has some ability to work in a team	Frequently demonstrates good team work	Consistently works well in a group. Shows loyalty to others
<b>Leadership</b>	Shows no leadership skills	Shows some ability to motivate a group and can build working relationships with some people	Shows a frequently ability to encourage a group and maintain good relations with most people	Encourages a group to get things done and maintain good relations with all members of the group
<b>What Cultural activities does s/he engage with outside school?</b>				
Visit architecture	Watch films	Listen to classical music	Read stories	
Visit the theatre	Visit galleries	Listen to popular music	Visit museums	
<b>What activities does s/he take part in outside of school?</b>				
Making art	Composing music	Designing a product	Singing	
Drama	Learning crafts	Playing an instrument	Other please name	

[Please highlight appropriate criterion]



## Appendix C

### Academic Attainment

NUMBER OF LEVELS	+4	+3	+2	+1	0	-1	-2
PARTICIPANTS Total n=79	1 (1.26%)	2 (2.53%)	11 (13.92%)	35 (44.3%)	25 (31.64%)	3 (3.79%)	2 (2.53%)
Participants Girls n=41	1 (2.43%)	2 (4.87%)	9 (21.95%)	16 (39%)	9 (21.95%)	2 (4.87%)	2 (4.87%)
Participants Boys n=38	-	-	2 (5.26%)	19 (50%)	16 (42.1%)	1 (2.63%)	-
CONTROL Total n=12	-	-	1 (8.33%)	5 (41.66%)	5 (41.66%)	1 (8.33%)	-
Control Girls n=6	-	-	1 (16.66%)	3 (50%)	2 (33.33%)	-	-
Control Boys n=6	-	-	-	2 (33.33%)	3 (50%)	1 (16.66%)	-

### Character Education: Creativity

NUMBER OF LEVELS	+4	+3	+2	+1	0	-1	-2
PARTICIPANTS Total n=85	-	-	11 (12.94%)	47 (55.29%)	26 (30.58%)	1 (1.17%)	-
Participants Girls n=41	-	-	6 (14.63%)	23 (56%)	11 (26.82%)	1 (2.43%)	-
Participants Boys n=44	-	-	5 (13.63%)	24 (54.54%)	15 (34%)	-	-
CONTROL Total n=12	-	-	-	1 (8.33%)	11 (91.66%)	-	-
Control Girls n=6	-	-	-	-	6 (100%)	-	-
Control Boys n=6	-	-	-	1 (16.66%)	5 (83.33%)	-	-

### Character Education: Love of Learning

NUMBER OF LEVELS	+4	+3	+2	+1	0	-1	-2
PARTICIPANTS Total n=85	-	-	9 (10.58%)	41 (48.23%)	35 (41.17%)	-	-
Participants Girls n=41	-	-	5 (12.19%)	22 (53.65%)	14 (34.14%)	-	-
Participants Boys n=44	-	-	4 (11.36%)	19 (43.18%)	21 (47.72%)	-	-
CONTROL Total n=12	-	-	-	1 (8.33%)	10 (83.33%)	1 (8.33%)	-
Control Girls n=6	-	-	-	1 (16.66%)	5 (83.33%)	-	-
Control Boys n=6	-	-	-	-	5 (83.33%)	1 (16.66%)	-

### Character Education: Perseverance

NUMBER OF LEVELS	+4	+3	+2	+1	0	-1	-2
PARTICIPANTS Total n=85	-	-	9 (10.58%)	41 (48.23%)	34 (40%)	1 (1.17%)	-

Participants Girls n=41	-	-	5 (12.19%)	22 (53.65%)	13 (31.7%)	1 (2.43%)	-
Participants Boys n=44	-	-	4 (11.36%)	19 (43.18%)	21 (47.72%)	-	-
CONTROL Total n=12	-	-		3 (25%)	7 (58.33%)	2 (16.66%)	-
Control Girls n=6	-	-		1 (16.66%)	4 (66.66%)	1 (16.66%)	-
Control Boys n=6	-	-	-	2 (33.33%)	3 (50%)	1 (16.66%)	-

## Character Education: Well Being

NUMBER OF LEVELS	+4	+3	+2	+1	0	-1	-2
PARTICIPANTS Total n=85	-	-	4 (5.06%)	33 (41.77%)	35 (44.3%)	5 (6.32%)	-
Participants Girls n=41	-	-	1 (2.43%)	21 (51.21%)	18 (43.9%)	1 (2.43%)	-
Participants Boys n=	-	-	3 (6.81%)	12 (27.27%)	17 (38.63%)	4 (11.36%)	-
CONTROL Total n=12	-	-	-	1 (8.33%)	5 (41.66%)	4 (33.33%)	-
Control Girls n=6	-	-	-	-	3 (50%)	2 (33.33%)	-
Control Boys n=6	-	-	-	1 (16.66%)	2 (33.33%)	2 (33.33%)	-

## Character Education: Team Work

NUMBER OF LEVELS	+4	+3	+2	+1	0	-1	-2
PARTICIPANTS Total n=85	-	-	6 (7.05%)	39 (45.88%)	37 (43.52%)	3 (3.52%)	-
Participants Girls n=41	-	-	3 (7.31%)	21 (51.21%)	17 (41.46%)	-	-
Participants Boys n=44	-	-	3 (6.81%)	18 (40.9%)	20 (45.45%)	3 (6.81%)	-
CONTROL Total n=12	-	-	-	5 (41.66%)	5 (41.66%)	2 (16.66%)	-
Control Girls n=6	-	-	-	1 (16.66%)	4 (66.66%)	1 (16.66%)	-
Control Boys n=6	-	-	-	3 (50%)	2 (33.33%)	1 (16.66%)	-

## Character Education: Leadership

NUMBER OF LEVELS	+4	+3	+2	+1	0	-1	-2
PARTICIPANTS Total n=85	-	-	4 (4.7%)	46 (54.11%)	29 (34.11%)	4 (4.7%)	2 (2.35%)
Participants Girls n=41	-	-	3 (7.31%)	23 (56%)	13 (31.7%)	1 (2.43%)	1 (2.43%)
Participants Boys n=44	-	-	1 (2.27%)	23 (52.27%)	16 (36.36%)	3 (6.81%)	1 (2.27%)
CONTROL Total n=12	-	-	-	1 (8.33%)	11 (91.66%)	-	-
Control Girls n=6	-	-	-	-	6 (100%)	-	-
Control Boys n=6	-	-	-	1 (16.66%)	5 (83.33%)	-	-

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