



## PARKLANDS HIGH SCHOOL

### MUSICAL YOUTH BAND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT 2009

July 2010



#### Background School Context

Parklands High School is an 11-18 mixed comprehensive school of 550 pupils, situated on the Speke Estate in Liverpool. The school is part of a campus approach within the community with additional facilities such as the Library, South Liverpool Housing, Parklands City Learning Centre, Speke Youth and Community Centre, Austin Rawlinson Sports Centre, and the Speke Day Nursery on site. The school draws 87% of its pupils from the estate, which is in the second most deprived ward in the country, with six SOAs within the boundaries. The most recent data shows that over 50% of our pupils are eligible for free school meals and 43% of the 11-16 cohort are on the SEN register for school action/ school action plus.

Parklands High School is a largely mono-cultural school, with approximately 5% of pupils classed as 'other than White British' and less than 1% of pupils speaking a first language other than English.

The school aims to deliver a high quality educational provision, both within curriculum time and out of school hours. It is only possible to achieve this through an equal partnership between everyone involved in the process: students, parents, teachers, employers and the wider community.

<b>Local Authority :</b>	<b>School /Centre:</b>
Liverpool City Council	Parklands High School

### Case Study Context:

As part of our study support programme, Parklands actively encourages our pupils to experience opportunities available outside the school environment.

Parklands High School embraces pupil ownership as a core value within its ethos. The high level of pupil ownership was evident within the band development project. All of the creative ideas came from the pupils themselves.

The considerable amount of time and commitment required by the pupils ensured that both groups rose to the challenge and led to a successful conclusion to the project. This in itself was a credit to their motivation and dedication in this area.

This band development project was focused around a group of Year 10 and Year 11 music students and involved departmental staff. The pupils were targeted from KS4 Btec music option groups.

The year 11 pupils showed considerable commitment to the course within the school environment, in lesson times and out of hours learning sessions. Although the music department achieves outstanding results, on leaving Parklands, many of the pupils do not continue their music making. The decision was made to provide an opportunity for this dedicated group to experience music outside the local environment, with the long term view of sharing the opportunity for the group to continue music as a lifelong learning experience.

The year 10 pupils had already established a band and performed at school events. The staff within the department felt that we needed an inspiring project to continue to challenge the group and provide them with an end product of which they could be proud, again with a view to establishing a band that would continue to operate post-school, share on my space, NUMU or other networking sites.

The school recording equipment is of a high standard, however, due to a lack of professional knowledge in this area, had not been utilized to its full potential. A resulting combination of a high quality, studio standard end-product and the training that the staff received enabled the department to identify this cohort as ideal candidates.

To deliver the project the Music department at Parklands High School worked in partnership with Musical Youth, a Liverpool based community organisation and the Liverpool Music Support Service.

The overall rationale for the project was to engage young people and provide them with the opportunities to work within the music industry context, such as rehearsing and composing in Musical Youth's professional recording studio and performing on stage at an established music venue.

This offered pupils wider opportunities that go beyond the experiences available within our Music curriculum

The closing performance event was staged at The Picket in Liverpool. The venue has a long history of supporting young bands and gave early support to famous bands including The La's, The Coral & The Zutons.

## Funding

The project was funded by 'Youth Music', a lottery funded charity that provides music-making opportunities for young people aged 0-19yrs. Youth Music commissioned 'Musical Youth' to deliver a range of activities within the Liverpool area, a part of which included the band development project.

### The specific aims of the project were:

- To give access to professional facilities, equipment and a develop music technology skills to both pupils and staff
- To enhance young peoples' understanding of the music sector and the life of a freelancer in the creative industries
- To support music leaders / teachers to develop new skills – particularly music technology

### The expected outcomes of the project were:

- To increase skills, confidence and improve music making of the young people
- For pupils to develop basic song writing or performance skills
- For pupils to perform live at a professional venue
- To enable staff to facilitate professional standard music recording both within and outside of the curriculum Closing Event:

### Project Session Breakdown.

The pupils and staff were involved in the following sessions:

**Staff:** Three, two-hour music technology sessions with Graeme Lycett, the musical theatre music technology specialist, focused on 'how to produce a recording' using a BOSS D1600 and a Korg D3200 digital recording studio.

**Year 11:** Four, four-hour rehearsal sessions at Musical Youth rehearsal studios, arranged in out of hours learning time by the pupils directly with Musical Youth.

The young people also took part in an 'understanding the industry' workshop culminating in a 'Battle of the Bands' sessions at The Picket, a professional venue near the Liverpool docks.

**Year 10:** A six-hour recording session, two sets of three hours, based at Parklands, putting into practice the training staff received from Graeme Lycett

## Project Outcomes.

The project outcomes were varied according to the expectations for each of the target groups

The year 11 cohort took part in music workshops at Musical Youth studios, composed their own song, organised rehearsals and dates for their out of hours sessions.

They also took part in creative activities to explore the themes – The Music Industry, The Life Cycle of a Musical Product and The Life of a Freelance Musician.

The final event gave the band the opportunity to perform for the first time in a professional venue.



A difficulty for pupils at Parklands has been to continue with music outside the school environment. However, by taking responsibility for transport and arranging session dates the band developed confidence and awareness of how to function independently from the school environment. The end result at 'The Picket' was very successful (photos from the gig are featured). The band has continued to work together even after leaving the school.



The year 10 cohort achieved comparable success. The pupils organised their band members, chose their song, rehearsed their performance and arranged a date and venue for their recording. The end product was a successful recording which was then produced to a professional standard.

The success of this band was only achievable through a considerable commitment to out of hours learning. All of the material they performed had to be rehearsed outside normal lessons. Ensuring all band members could commit to the project and reach the

required performance standard showed a high level of organisation, time management and teamwork on their part.

The recording sessions themselves also took place in out of hours learning time. The pupils' attitude to achievement showed a level of maturity above and beyond our expectations. The success of the sessions was only possible due to the high level of SEAL-based attributes the pupils exhibited while microphones were tested, recording levels established and individual sound checks were completed.

In addition to the pupil outcomes, the project also provided support and training for the staff at Parklands to enable them to utilise existing resources to their full potential, setting up a recording studio then mixing and producing a quality end product. In doing so this has provided sustainable growth within the KS4 and KS5 curriculum and enabled staff to offer additional out of school hours activities. Pupils have responded very positively to the quality of the recordings they can now produce and this itself has inspired more ensembles to aim to perform at a higher standard in order to create their own CD

### **Sharing Our Success.**

Successful recordings are disseminated to all year groups and any members of the public, through the schools music MySpace, NUMU.org.uk. Follow the links on the site to 'Pumpin Up Parklands' the schools record label where examples of all the songs can be heard.

### **Sustainability.**

An unexpected outcome that resulted directly from the band development project was that the department has been able to offer music recording as a unit option within the curriculum. This unit provides pupils with the opportunity to: set up a recording studio, learn how to set up microphones, set levels, create master mixes and produce an 'end product' CD.

This sustainability has filtered through to subsequent cohorts. The project enabled the Year 11 pupils to act as sound engineers working alongside the Year 10 BTEC performances, thereby helping to support their peers in raising their achievement. This would not have been possible without participation in the study support band development project.

Another unexpected outcome as a direct result from participation in the project has been the impact that professional standard recordings have had on recruitment from our Year 9 cohort. Pupils are expected to log on to the school music 'MySpace' site and listen to the performances of their peers higher up in the school. Many questions arise from these recordings such as: *'How did they manage to play like that?'* *'I want to play like that?'* *'Can we do that?'* And *'Is that what you do at Btec level?'*

The impact for KS3 pupils listening to these recordings and performances has transformed the department and pupils into positive role models. Self esteem and confidence are always an issue with young people and providing opportunities for

pupils to feel they can learn and produce something of real quality helps to develop these vital attributes.

### What Happens Next?

Following the success of the recording project, a logical extension of this would be not only continue with the sustainability mentioned above but to accompany the sound with vision. The success and professionalism gained through working in partnership with outside agencies has encouraged the department team to source companies who could run similar projects and produce a professional standard music video, with the aim of incorporating this into the btec curriculum encouraging our learners and performers to become complete performers not just musicians.

### Conclusion:

This project has been a success beyond any of our expectations. The attention to detail in all areas of the project stretched the knowledge and skills of all the participants both staff and pupils. On reflection the commitment needed for an out of hours project such as this did not detract from the enjoyment or achievement we all experienced, we would look forward to running further projects in a similar way and as already stated, we are actively seeking agencies that can deliver the standard of quality and professionalism in order to create music videos.



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