

**CREATIVE PARTNERSHIPS MANCHESTER SALFORD
PROGRAMME TITLE: CLICT**

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**CLICT: A Creative Partnerships Manchester Salford project with
Partners Workers Film Association (WFA).**

Schools: The Friars Primary, Seedley Primary, St Barnabas Primary, St Mary's RC Primary, St Peters RC Primary, St Marys CE Primary, Crab Lane Primary, Ellenbrook Primary, St Philips RC Primary.

Creative Practitioners: Graham Clayton-Chance, Micci Bromwich, Rowan May, Dan Steele, Simon Blackmore

Creative Partnerships works to give school children throughout England the opportunity to develop their potential, their ambition, their creativity and imagination through sustainable partnerships with creative and cultural organisations, businesses and individuals.

Creative Partnerships Manchester Salford currently works with over 500 teachers, 6,500 pupils and 150 artists on a range of programmes, with the aim of making creativity central to teaching and learning...

There's been some strange goings on at Seedley Primary School in recent weeks. Anyone walking the corridors of the Salford school could be forgiven for thinking the latest Spielberg sci-fi epic was being made next door. If the extraordinary sounds emanating from the classroom were anything to go by, then you wouldn't discount the possibility of abduction by extraterrestrials either.

As it turns out it's a little less dramatic than that. Inside the class, being led by Sound Artist and Designer Dan Steele, a huddle of excited children sit around the computer creating sonic mayhem and playing back a sound collage of unidentifiable thumping, grinding and swooshing noises. In another corner of the room, year four pupils add digital effects to the sound of a dripping immersion heater. Criss-crossing the room and pouring over everything from jam jars to door hinges are eager pupils scurrying about with digital recorders trying to gather the strangest sounds possible.

Welcome to the world of 'audio postcards', an initiative that Dan Steele says improves children's listening skills by getting them to create a snapshot of their environment. As one of several artists appointed by Creative Partnerships Manchester Salford to foster creative learning in schools, 27-year-old Dan says he's been overwhelmed by how enthusiastically the children have engaged with a project that he admits is a radical departure for most.

"When I first came here I was told by the teachers that a lot of the children had poor listening skills and limited attention spans," he explains. "But they've wholeheartedly engaged with this and been spellbound all the way through it. To see them craning their neck to catch the sound of a creaking floorboard or a teacher speaking next door or listening intently to someone squeezing a net sponge is a sign of just how focused they've become."

That focus has very much shifted to a more creative use of computer technology, with Dan keen to share his skills with teachers and firmly embed new approaches to learning.

"What I've seen in schools so far is that they're not using computers in a particularly exciting way and there's so much potential to explore," he explains. "I'm looking to connect teachers with this potential and remove any barriers that may have, up until now, prevented them getting the best out of what equipment they've got."

Sharing information on downloads - in this case Dan is using a free open source software package for recording and editing sounds called Audacity – is one useful signpost. But the main thrust of the CLICT project (Creative Learning with Information Computer Technology) is to make teachers aware of how their computers can be used to create new learning opportunities.

Over at The Friars Primary School nearby, where Steele has also been involved with teaching children with learning difficulties, he's made a radio play of Jack The Beanstalk and presented a children's story, page by page, with pupils' own illustrations and accompanying sound and animation.

"I used a recording programme on the iBook to do the Jack and The Beanstalk play, which the children loved doing," he explains. "We had a narrator, improvised the storyline a little and made everyone a CD of the play. For the children's story I used PowerPoint, Illustrator, a few basic animation packages and made a DVD out of it."

More ambitiously he's also made a short film for Seedley Primary school's centenary celebrations, which, with Creative Partnerships partner, Workers Film Association, saw the children dress in Edwardian costume to recreate the 1900s. "It was very well organised," says Steele. "We had four film crews, a director, a gaffer and a sound producer. They loved it that much that they didn't even want to go on their dinner break."

But with enthusiasm levels in schools across Salford reaching fever pitch because of these initiatives, are teachers not worried that they won't be able to recreate the 'wow factor' in lessons once the projects are over and the school's resident creative practitioner moves on?

"Not really, if anything it's made us realise just how exciting lessons can be," says Charlotte Harrison, a teacher at Ellenbrook Primary School in Worsley. "Not so long ago the idea of using an animation package would have terrified me. I thought I would have to go on several courses to begin to do this kind of stuff. Now I can see it's a lot easier than I thought. It's given me lots of ideas for when term starts again in Autumn and I can't wait to test them out."

For Chris Finn, Creative Partnerships Manchester Salford Creative Programmer, the success of the CLICT project can best be summed up in that it's made schools adopt a completely different approach to learning. "We're talking about children from the age of five up experiencing the high end of digital art and they've taken to it like a duck to water," he says. "The schools didn't just want this to be filtered through the art department they wanted everyone involved. From web design and robotics to film making and animation, this use of technology is applicable to every subject and can really make the curriculum come alive."

And with the schools' creative practitioners equipping teachers with the skills to use their technology to much greater effect, Chris Finn is confident that there will be a strong knock-on effect in terms of advancing children's skills.

"They're getting such a valuable mix of multi-media skills and will be able to decode the media we're surrounded by at a much earlier age," he stresses. "When you've got children using architectural programmes at the age of eight to create cityscapes then I think we're capacity building for a huge quantum leap in how schools will soon be viewing technology."

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Writers Credit: Matt Baker

NOTES FOR EDITORS:

About Creative Partnerships:

Creative Partnerships is the first joint creative education programme supported by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and the Department for Education and Skills and is managed by Arts Council England. Creative Partnerships is currently working nationally in 25 areas and has been given financial investment to roll out to a further 11 areas by 2006.

Creative Partnerships recognises and builds on exciting and culturally relevant creative learning opportunities for young people. It has the support of both the creative and cultural sectors and is regarded as the blueprint for the ways in which our children can be educated to embrace the challenges of living and working in the 21st century.

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About Creative Partnerships Manchester Salford:

Creative Partnerships Manchester Salford Creative Director is Nancy Barrett.

Schools and Cultural sectors involved in the regional partnerships programme from 2002 – present are:

Schools partners are: Barlow RC High School; Birchfields Primary School; Broadoak Primary School; Buille Hill High School; Crab Lane County Primary Schools; Didsbury CE Primary School; Ellenbrook Primary School; Langworthy Road Primary School; Light Oaks Infants School; Manchester Hospital Schools and Home Teaching Service; Medlock Primary School; Newall Green High School for the Arts; New Croft High School; Plant Hill High School; St Barnabas CE Primary School; St Mary's CE Primary School; St Mary's RC Primary School; St Peter's Catholic Primary School; St Philip's RC Primary School; Seedley Primary School; The Swinton High School; Wentworth High School; Westwood Park Primary School and Whalley Range 11-18 High School.

Cultural sectors partners include: Artists & Education; Contact Theatre; Cornerhouse; Commissions in the Built Environment, Greater Manchester Music Action Zone; The Lowry; Manchester Arts Education Initiative; Manchester Art Gallery; The Royal Exchange Theatre; Spearfish; Touchdown Dance; Walk The Plank, WFA Media and Cultural Centre.

For further information about Creative Partnerships Manchester Salford, contact:
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