Big School
An evaluation of the Belgrade Theatre’s Theatre in Education project on transition from primary to secondary school

Dr Hannah Grainger Clemson
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The Belgrade Theatre would like to thank Dr. Hannah Grainger-Clemson for conducting this evaluation, and the teachers and pupils who completed surveys and post-show research activities in order to make it possible.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

i. This evaluation report was commissioned by Coventry City Council and the Belgrade Theatre in 2014. Its purpose was to evaluate the impact of the ‘Big School’ Theatre-in-Education (TiE) programme, on individual pupils’ ability to deal with the transition from primary to secondary school. It provides an opportunity to articulate the responses of pupils and teachers to the experience of ‘Big School’ coming to their school.

ii. This programme was developed in the belief that TiE offers young people a unique level of engagement with their own learning about the world around them; an approach that has a 50-year legacy at the Belgrade Theatre. The programme comprises pre-performance lesson packs; a professional theatre production in the safety of the primary school environment; interactive workshop sections during the performance; and post-show education activities for teachers to lead with pupils.

iii. Recent research has highlighted key issues in the transition from primary to secondary school and stressed the need for a range of stakeholders to provide adequate support to pupils and their families.

iv. As demonstrated in the report, the unique model of TiE gives Year 6 pupils the opportunity to reflect on their individual apprehensions and preconceptions about their forthcoming transition from primary to secondary school. In conjunction with other transition activity, the benefits of this programme significantly complement and enhance the impact of other transition activities delivered alone.

v. There is evidence that the project achieved immediate impact on the pupils’ confidence, sense of self-belief and agency; dealing with social relationships; and problem-solving in general. The types of relationships include friendships, the teacher-pupil relationship, and the problematic issue of bullying.

vi. With low levels of attendance at, or participation in, live performance, the interactive ‘Big School’ performance offers an often rare shared aesthetic experience, engaging the imaginations of the pupils in a fictional scenario whilst also helping them to creating new understandings of their present real world.

vii. It is recommended that the programme is continued, with funding support where possible, in order to continue and expand the important work with regional schools and teachers. There are also possibilities to expand the work by developing the content and resources, and create opportunities for new and more long-term partnerships between the theatre and schools, pupils, teachers, and families.
BACKGROUND

Theatre in Education at the Belgrade

Theatre in Education (TiE) reflects a learning that is child-centred and experiential, seeking to engage young people with and through their humanity, not simply skilling them for the job market. In post-war Britain a number of pioneering teachers and educators who had always used drama to enhance the learning process, were joined by a small number of theatre makers ready to play with theatrical forms for the educational benefit of young people.

In the 1960s, the Belgrade Theatre made a bold attempt to break the distant relationship between schools and traditional British Theatre, taking devised drama and workshops into local schools in order to find new and more inclusive ways of dealing with social and historical issues. The first TiE programme began in September 1965, for which the Company toured three productions. The simple model was that after watching a piece of theatre on a particular narrative or historical event, pupils then discussed the content and ideas raised, and then together or in smaller groups improvised short scenes. By the mid-1970s, the company consisted of twelve actor-teachers and its impact continued to intensify. During 1975, in one half of one term alone, it reached over 6800 pupils. This growth, along with the continued development of TiE nationally, meant that a growing TiE community existed in the UK.

During the 1980s and early 1990s, the company’s work remained both ambitious in content and flexible and evolutionary in form. It was notable for its wide-ranging use of drama conventions, group activities and creative work. One such production was Zones of Becoming (1995), a primary programme that used a fictional galaxy as a site of exploration for the hopes, dreams, fears and dangers of human civilisation. In a company booklet describing the programme, there is explicit reference to the theories of a range of educationalists, psychologists and philosophers, demonstrating the duality of pedagogical and sociological considerations at the core of the work with young people.

The Education Reform Act of 1988 meant that the management of school budgets was devolved to individual institutions, and Local Education Authorities lost the power to provide citywide schemes. In the mid-1990s the TiE company was brought under the main theatre budget, however, the Belgrade Theatre was ordered to tackle its growing deficit and the Belgrade TiE Company in its original form was disbanded.

The theatre continues to run its Youth Theatre programme (free of charge) as well as ‘Acting Out’, a work-related programme for teenage pupils, and workshops associated with current productions. In 1999, there was a reaffirmation of the Belgrade’s commitment to TiE as it established ‘Big School’ – the annual programme of TiE aimed at young people making the transition from primary to secondary Education - supported by fixed-term funding from the Local Authority. Further decentralised school budgets and changes to curriculum and assessment requirements continue to create challenges for TiE work as it enters its 50th Anniversary year in 2015.

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1 For a more full account see Belgrade Theatre, 2010
2 Williams, 1993
Key issues in the transition from primary to secondary school

Recent research has highlighted key issues in the transition from primary to secondary school and stressed the need for a range of stakeholders to provide adequate support to pupils and their families. This is in order to ensure that ultimately pupils have the best opportunity to succeed.

Positive experiences of transition to school and between educational levels can be a critical factor for children’s future success and development while negative experiences can have lasting difficulties leading to problematic behaviour and poorer educational performance. Transition from primary to secondary school has been identified in different education systems as a significant and potentially stressful event for pupils. Difficulties with transitions can be even more significant for particular groups of pupils. Important characteristics such as gender, ethnic heritage, socio-economic status (SES) and special educational needs (SEN) may aggravate pupil’s difficulties in secondary schools despite average (or even above average) performance in primary school if there is no adequate response from the system. Also the importance of family and school support has been recognized by several researchers. Education systems and the organization of transition plays a crucial role in this process.

From N° EAC/17/2012 Study on the effective use of early childhood education and care (ECEC) in preventing early school leaving (ESL)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problematic aspects of transitions(^6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Difference between primary and secondary school environment, e.g. greater emphasis is being placed on evaluation of students;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- School is larger and more competitive;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Ability being of higher value than effort;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Need to adapt to different teacher expectations and teaching styles;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Keeping up with the demands of the secondary school, with pressure to achieve arising from variety of sources (parents, teachers, peers)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^3\) Niesel & Griebel, 2005 ; Woodhead & Moss, 2007; Moss, 2013
\(^4\) Sutherland, Ching Yee, & McNess, 2010
\(^5\) European Union, 2014
\(^6\) Mackenzie et al., 2012
**Approaches to ‘pupil-readiness’**

Aside from liaising on academic levels of achievement of students, primary and secondary schools typically undertake a range of activities in order to prepare pupils and their families for transition.

These include:

- Open days/evenings
- Information from the council about applications
- Literature about the school
- Discussion sessions with primary class teachers
- Visits from secondary school staff
- Sessions with other staff such as school counsellor / behaviour manager
- Pupil induction visits (end of summer term or start of autumn term)

According to the case study teachers involved in this project, they do devote some school-based activities to improving the transition process, where time allows. Whilst some teachers refer to a longer process across the academic year, the chief focal period is after the completion of Year 6 SATs, lasting approximately 6 weeks before the summer vacation.

A key challenge that the primary teachers face in assisting their own pupils is encouraging pupils to share their concerns in discussion. Those pupils who are more confident are less likely to voice concerns, compounding the fears of those less confident who are also reluctant to speak out. From the secondary school point of view there seems limited opportunity to give the pupils a flavour of the school before they begin Year 7. For both primary and secondary schools the ability to offer a practical, physical pre-experience, on top of mentally and emotionally developing the pupils, seems limited.

**The ‘Big School’ Project**

The most recent version of the ‘Big School’ production explores the idea that transition is central to the lived experiences of young people; that they are innately capable of confronting it themselves, and “credits young people with a complexity of thinking” (Themen in Belgrade 2010, p.18).

It is a half-day (approximately 1hr 30) programme designed to explore transitions with children in Year 6. It addresses their feelings about the move to secondary school and seeks to equip them with useful strategies for dealing with issues of transition. The programme combines professional theatre – a play entitled ‘Becoming Me’ by Marielle van Sauers7 - with participatory activities that engage children in a collaborative exploration of their expectations and concerns. Each performance is facilitated by three experienced actor-teachers, and the tour is supported by a professional stage manager.

‘Becoming Me’ tells the story of three primary school children – Skye, Sumara, and Zak – on their last day at primary school, during the summer holidays, and on their first day at secondary school. The characters are seen dealing with a range of issues: leaving their familiar surroundings; their

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7 Developed with Justine Themen, Ola Animashawun, and the original company (Kim Hackleman, Shereena Glean and Jon Morris), re-mounted with additional content by Therese Collins.
friendships; family relationships; getting to school and navigating a new campus; encountering a strict teacher and some school bullies; and finally looking forward to the future.

The TiE programme is accompanied by a full set of teacher’s materials, including all resources needed to deliver activities with pupils, such as a soft ball, mirror and scrapbook. The pack draws on key objects from the programme, using the meaning invested in them during the play to extend the drama exploration with the class.

The three actors present the Maths class. Characters (from left to right): Maths teacher; Sumara; Skye
METHODOLOGY

Focus of the enquiry

Throughout the 15-year life of this particular Belgrade TiE project, basic feedback on its value in addressing transition issues has been regularly gathered. Annual tours to an average of 35 Coventry primary schools were booked on the basis of testimonies from pupils and teachers who had experienced the programme. However, as funding for this work has become less secure in recent years (2014 marked the final year of funding from Coventry City Council), it was evident that more concrete evaluation data would be a vital tool in demonstrating the significance of this work in the future and to better understand:

1. **What is the immediate impact on the participants?**
2. **What is distinct about the TiE model in exploring issues of transition?**
3. **What is the possible life for this programme beyond local authority funding?**

These three questions above, posed by the Community and Education team at the Belgrade Theatre, guided the methodology of the evaluation, in terms of generating and analysing useful data. Each question has a particular focal point:

- The first question relates mostly to the experiences and opinions of the pupils themselves, and their sense of the usefulness of participating.
- The second question explores the uniqueness of the theatre-based approach within a broader context of varied transitional work that schools regularly carry out. It is a consideration of the dramatic and aesthetic form, and the distinct actor-audience relationship created in TiE.
- The third question discusses both the perceived current need for such programmes and the challenges that may be faced. It is not intended as a financial study per se; rather a consideration of the next steps the Belgrade Theatre may need to take should local authority funding no longer be available.

Generating data

The project ran in four phases:

1. **Pre-workshop:** teachers were offered the opportunity to attend central workshops to learn more and discuss the forthcoming project. Information on the schools and their perceived needs of the young pupils were gathered through survey and face to face dialogue.
2. **Workshop session:** a 90-minute interactive performance by 3 actor-teachers from the Belgrade Theatre. Class Teachers and Teaching Assistants were also present during this session, which took place at schools (or host school if a joint session) across the city.
3. **Post-workshop:** the day(s) after the workshop, teachers and pupils from five schools were asked to complete a short survey questionnaire. Individual teacher and focus group pupil interviews took place at four schools.
4. Follow-up work: teachers were encouraged to undertake sessions using the materials provided in the resource pack and were invited to complete a post-project survey.

Scale of the project in 2014

The following matrix outlines the methods used to generate data. Copies of the questionnaires can be found in the Appendix.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>METHOD</th>
<th>CONTENT</th>
<th>PARTICIPANTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online surveys</td>
<td>1. Previous/typical experiences of transition issues and concerns</td>
<td>1. Invitation to all participating teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Reflecting on performance, pupil responses, and follow-up work with</td>
<td>Total responses = 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>resource pack</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>Interactive performance ‘Becoming Me’</td>
<td>Single researcher observing actors and audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Detailed discussion with a single researcher about the interactive</td>
<td>4 individual teachers and 4 pupil focus groups (total of 19 pupils)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>performance experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
<td>Experience of workshop – process &amp; attitudes (print)</td>
<td>Total of 176 pupils in 5 schools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evaluation measures

This study undertook both a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data.

Through multiple choice and scale questions, it was possible to infer the degree of impact of different elements of the performance on pupils. Other open survey questions and discussions in interviews allowed for a more subjective exploration of the impact, as well as a broader consideration of the nature and future need of such programmes.

There were no previous formal evaluation outcomes to measure against. The following matrix summarises the focal questions, desired outcomes as derived from the questions, and outcome indicators:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enquiry focus</th>
<th>Desired outcome</th>
<th>Outcome indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immediate impact on the participants</td>
<td>Positive impact on pupils, including:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Engagement with subject matter</td>
<td>Pupil interaction during live performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Enjoyment of performance experience</td>
<td>Pupils positive responses in questionnaire and interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Raised confidence regarding transition issues</td>
<td>Teacher positive responses regarding pupils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Raised confidence regarding personal &amp; social issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Increased understanding regarding practical 'know-how' for transition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Increased understanding of functional social relationships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinctiveness of TIE model</td>
<td>Recognition of what interactive performance and drama-based activities do aside from other school/classroom approaches</td>
<td>Pupil and teacher responses in questionnaire and interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Appreciation of live performance as positive aesthetic experience</td>
<td>Pupil engagement/responses during live performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential future life of the programme</td>
<td>Pupil perception of a positive need for the programme for other pupils</td>
<td>Pupil and teacher positive responses in questionnaire and interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Teacher perception of a positive need for the programme for their school and other schools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ANALYSIS

Four key themes emerged from the analysis, both in terms of teacher and pupil preconceptions and their responses during and after participating in the performance:

1. Developing a personal sense of agency
2. The ability to develop practical knowledge and skills through watching and interacting with the performance
3. Developing an understanding of social behaviour and relationships with others
4. Understanding the benefits of the TiE model / Drama in Education

These are addressed in turn, with evidence of positive impact, and a discussion of how this was achieved during the process.

In the CONCLUSION, the three focal questions are addressed as a summary evaluation of the project.

A drawing from a Pupil Questionnaire response
Developing a personal sense of agency

Context and key questions

Data from the pre-survey on teachers’ impressions and needs for the transition process cite the following issues that they believe their pupils are unsure or worried about:

- Bullying
- Leaving old friends and making new ones
- Homework, the amount and level of work in general, and exams
- Navigating the new school and getting lost
- Teachers
- Moving on to a new routine and set of rules, and having the right equipment

These are consistent with wider research. In terms of the evaluative outcomes, the existence of these concerns and needs related by the teachers, ultimately leads to the desire for:

- A raised confidence in pupils regarding specific transition issues
- A change in pupils’ sense of agency – i.e. the feeling that they are empowered to tackle challenges; a ‘can-do’ attitude
- The pupils’ perception of a positive need for the programme for themselves and other pupils
- Teacher perceptions of a positive need for the programme for their school and other schools

Capturing pupils’ concerns and acting as a catalyst for change

A challenge in developing confidence and a sense of agency is the ability to successfully construct characters and performance content that pupil audiences can identify with. Pupils were asked the open questions of what was similar in the production to their own experiences.

In terms of issues, the most popular response (30%) was ‘arguments/resolving them’. Other popular issues were: bullying, getting lost, stealing, and nervousness – supporting the teachers’ survey responses as to pupil concerns.

Pupils also identified with the characters playing as friends and the inclusion of football in the interaction. The ability of the interactive performance to develop an understanding of relationships with others is discussed in a later section.

For the teachers, the interactive performance is important in becoming a springboard for future useful conversations and activities with their pupils. As one teacher notes, “There’s so much going on that we might not see the worries”. For another teacher the performance acts as an important catalyst in getting the pupils to think about particular issues and ask appropriate questions for themselves.
Confidence levels

In the questionnaire, pupils were asked how their feelings had changed since watching the live performance. The pupils were asked to describe these feelings in their own words and to give examples. For analysis, these various responses were grouped into four categories in order to understand the broad impact on pupils’ confidence levels.

A total of 77% (136 out of 176) responses indicated that they either ‘Felt better’ and/or ‘Know now what to do’ since watching the performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. pupils</th>
<th>Feel better</th>
<th>Know what to do</th>
<th>(Still) nervous/worries</th>
<th>Not changed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>119</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>(16 also Feel better)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Pupils were asked to consider the value of the performance for other pupils and other schools. They were asked to complete the following sentence (one response per pupil):

“I think it is good for schools to have these visits because...”

This acted to triangulate (verify) the individual responses they had previously given as well as evaluate the pupils’ sense of the value of the project as a whole.

The similarity of their responses meant they could be grouped into categories, described in the table below along with the proportions.

Notable is the popular response of getting a better sense of what secondary school will ‘be like’, which is taken to mean in terms of how lessons and teachers might be, and how people might behave. This is discussed in more detail in the next sections.

| A sense of what secondary school will be like | 75 | 42.6 |
| You feel better / have more confidence      | 56 | 31.8 |
| Seeing actions / issues dealt with          | 22 | 12.5 |
| It is funny / fun                           | 17 | 9.7  |
| You can interact                            | 3  | 1.7  |
| It is by adults / grown up                  | 2  | 1.1  |
| Other                                      | 10 | 5.7  |
Just under a third (56 out of 176) said that the visit gives children more confidence, supporting the individual response of increased confidence levels.

Another key figure is the number that responded about actions and issues. These were the 12.5% of responses that specifically stated that the pupil audiences would know ‘what to do’ or realise ‘what the problems were’.

It can be claimed that the increased confidence stemming from an increased awareness of what secondary school will be like and the issues to be faced groups these three categories together. In which case, the combined response is even stronger at 83% (146 out of 176, having subtracted duplicated responses) and is close to their self-reported individual changes in confidence levels.

**Sense of self worth**

Part of the narrative centres around a mirror, given to the character Skye that she says is a gift from her parents to remind her to be herself. The mirror goes missing and Sumara becomes a suspect, having asked her father for one.

When asked in the survey questionnaire about what was the most ‘interesting’ part of the performance, the most popular response was the argument about the mirror (47 pupils – more than double the second most popular response about being lost). In another question, pupils were asked what new things they have learned. Responses included:

“Where ever [sic] you are, you will always be you”

“Always stay strong and believe in yourself”

This suggests a direct and positive impact of the performance content on some pupils’ self-belief.

One teacher also described using the Mirror activity card from the resources pack. She described how the activities addressed issues regarding transition but also worked well regarding issues they were currently struggling with. She relates how pupils enjoy them because they are different but also because they are very short and simple (often theatre companies will supply a mass of paper for follow up work), so the teacher and class can take it in any direction. After 3 weeks following the performance, they had completed 3 or 4 of the activities. The first one she chose was the Mirror activity as some members of the class were having confidence issues. The pupils were asked to write about themselves – what they saw in the mirror – and these were put up on wall for other pupils to comment. Their peers offered things they had missed. For the teacher, not only was it good to see children who don’t normally interact suggesting things, but it also worked very well as a collaborative way of raising confidence. In her words, it was a “novel way to do follow up” and, true to the spirit of the production, the teacher did the task as well so was “in there with them”.

“It gave the message of moving to another secondary school very well … and it gave me a new confidence in myself that it might not be as bad as I’m actually making out.”

*(Pupil during interview)*
Pupil agency as an immediate need

Teachers referred to a number of pupils for whom the performance had had an immediate impact – in other words, the pupils’ levels of confidence or attitudes had been changed at the time of the performance and also in a way that had a positive effect on their current actions in primary school.

A teacher was worried about a girl in her class who struggled to give her opinion and was very quiet in lessons. The teacher knew her difficulties and assumed, especially with another school visiting, that she would remain quiet as usual. However, during the interactive elements, the girl put her hand up numerous times. “It blew me away because she doesn’t do that and she actually has done a lot of it since the performance.” The same girl has had friendship problems she has since the performance she has proactively come to the teacher about to try and remedy them, in a way that did not happen before. “That for me would sell it – one response from one child.”
Teachers’ evaluation of the benefits of the production visit

The case study teachers describe how pupils will often ask many practical questions – such as what to bring or where to go – but not necessarily consider the other elements. For the teachers, the positive impact on pupils’ confidence and sense of agency stemmed from:

- Time for reflection – “For pupils to think about the issues”
- Enjoyment – by pupils and “I also really enjoyed it”
- Engagement - “Even the ones who find it a bit tricky to make the right choices, they were still focused”
- The interpersonal – “It’s how they deal with friction that they need preparing for”

A teacher noted that one of her pupils was showing signs of depression and taking time off school. He would become tearful when talking about transition and his demeanour lowered. She then noticed that he became a lot happier since he watched the production. “He had major concerns about going up and he seems to me to have come out of himself a little bit more ... The scale of it to him was massive and he seems to be settled a lot more since seeing the performance ...” The boy agreed that his mind had been put at rest about a lot of things he was worried about. He also took less time off school. “His whole persona has just ... the smile’s back...”

A drawing from a Pupil Questionnaire response
Developing practical knowledge and skills through watching and interacting with the performance

Context and key questions

Each performance took place in the primary school hall. It is worth noting the context as being within the pupils’ own present and familiar education space, rather than their future secondary school. Many schools offer visits – bringing the primary pupils to the secondary school for an introductory day and/or sending staff to the primary schools to answer questions – or pupils can glean information from older siblings and friends. Despite this, many pupils may struggle to get a sense of what they need to do to prepare themselves in a practical way. Some are also less likely to be supported by parents who are either less supportive or empathetic themselves, or who do not have sufficient language skills to interpret the school literature.

The key question is How can the primary pupils more effectively gain this knowledge in advance and what does the interactive performance add to such ‘pupil readiness’? Given the context, the outcomes that should be evaluated are:

1. An engagement with subject matter – a desire to consider and start to problem-solve the issues facilitated;
2. And increased understanding regarding practical ‘know-how’ for transition – evidence that pupils have gained that knowledge and recognise its value.

In the production, the pupils are invited to watch and interact with key moments where practical preparation and know-how are key:

- Packing the rucksacks for the characters
- Walking in the school corridor
- Using a map of the school
- What to say when lost or late

Positive engagement

All interviewed teachers noted the engagement of their pupils, corroborated by the researcher observing the pupil audiences, who smiled, laughed, gasped, and offered plenty of advice to the onstage characters. One teacher noted how the content of the performance touched on all of the right topics that regularly concern her pupils.

The evidence of their positive engagement is clear not only by the recall afterwards of the practical elements of the production, but also by their recognition that these factors were ‘good’. The engagement with the production is discussed later, however, it is important to note this engagement as a fundamental step in developing knowledge, understanding, and problem-solving skills within the dramatic frame.

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8 Teacher Interview
Preparing for the future

“I think it was really good because it gives children an opportunity to see what ... secondary school is like”

In the questionnaire, pupils were given an opportunity to describe the benefits of the production touring to schools. They were given free choice of what to write and a significantly large number (42%) said that it ‘shows what secondary school will be like’, compared to other suggested benefits, signalling that they appreciated the experience of having a visual and tangible sense of their future school existence.

Despite the ‘real’ context of the primary school hall and the adult actors, this image of secondary school was taken to be a very ‘real’ version of what they might expect; as one pupil describes, “It makes an exact image [of] what it would really be like” (Pupil Interview). The immediacy of the theatre genre is also recognised as adding to this positive experience: “People wouldn’t have actually engaged with [a film version] then they wouldn’t have felt ... actually what it would’ve been like in real life” (Pupil Interview)

Responsibility for possessions

In the performance, members of the audience are invited to help pack the schools bags for the characters, deciding which objects go in which bag and therefore making judgements on what is required. The value of some of these objects is also discussed by the actors with the audience.

School bags, maps, and timetables were mentioned in both the questionnaires and interviews, as one pupil recalls, “[Packing the bags] was interesting because you know what to take … we have the responsibility of our own stuff” (Pupil Interview)

Navigation

Clear from the abundance of responses relating to navigation across all data sources, many of the pupils have concerns about getting lost and found this element of the production important. As several teachers noted in the pre-survey, and as one teacher describes, “They really worry about what the school's like; what the building's like ... so anything that tackles that ... element” (Teacher Interview).

Via the teacher pre-survey, pupils were asked what words come to mind when given the words ‘secondary school building’. Frequent responses (see word cloud) included ‘scary’, ‘big’ and ‘crowded’, clearly showing their concerns.
In interview, the pupils noted their increased knowledge and resulting confidence having watched the characters deal with the worrying situation of being lost: “They told us on our first week ... that it doesn’t matter if we’re late cos we don’t know our way around and have to find our ways and different paths of how to get to different places” and “You can just say “I’m late” it doesn’t matter” (Pupil Interviews).

When asked in the post-performance survey questionnaire about their new ideas, a change in pupil understanding is evident, although concerns still prevail:

“That if I get lost I can always ask people”

“Nervous about getting lost”

“I don’t think I will get lost”

“I am not as excited because I could get lost easily”

When given opportunity to draw about a significant moment, 27 drew about navigation, or being lost, or the use of a map, signalling how important this is as a concern but also a possible solution.

Drawings from Pupil Questionnaire responses
**School corridor**

One of the interactive tasks required the audience to stand and walk around the edges of the performance space as if walking down a school corridor. They were invited to improvise conversations that pupils might have. As the bell (sound effect) rang, the chatter became loud and the pupil audience began to jostle for space. The adult actors in character weaved in and out as fellow pupils.

The pupil audience reacted to this task in different ways. Pupils recognised that it was ‘good’ to know what it might be like, however some did not enjoy the chaos and showed some concern that they might have to experience the same. Some pupils noted how they and their peers did not necessarily approach the task as they would do in ‘real’ life but took the opportunity to play within the drama frame, away from the constraints of school rules and acceptable social behaviour, pushing others.

The varied responses suggest a number of effects that contribute to the desired outcomes of the project:

- Pupils are given practical/physical experience that they value as useful ‘rehearsal’ for future experiences
- Some pupils do not necessarily ‘enjoy’ the experience but are offered a controlled and temporary risky space in which they are required to confront fears
- Some pupils willingly entered the narrative, talking in role, whereas others used the activity as purely physical activity. Both indicate a relaxed engagement with the space and activity, collectively creating the environment for their peers but also the actors in a duality of fictional and real worlds.

“...the play really showed what secondary school is like. It’s difficult when people talk about it. When I get to see it in action it’s a bit more clearer... You don’t get to see what it’s actually like. People say it’s crowded but you don’t actually see how crowded but the play showed us.”

“*It showed us the good and bad sides of what happens*”
Developing an understanding of social behaviour and relationships with others

Context and key objectives

As identified in questionnaires and in the research that supported the development of the production content, an important consideration is that friendships and issues surrounding the negotiation of relationships with fellow pupils. This is a prevailing issue for young people, however, can easily become a source of anxiety given that many social groupings are broken up during the course of transition and new ones formed. Again, this is also at a time of early adolescence when forming social identities can become a priority.

Social behaviour in school settings also includes concerns about bullying. Transitioning from being the eldest in a small institution to the youngest in a much larger one can leave pupils feeling vulnerable, if not actually becoming a target for bullying. Even so, as one teacher noted, the concerns should not be exclusively for these pupils, as some primary school pupils are also at risk of becoming ring leaders themselves, or at the least drawn into social groupings that “make bad choices.”

The intended outcome for the production in this respect is an increased pupil understanding of functional social relationships; how to negotiate change and separation; and making choices under social pressure.

Three key relationships are explored in the production:

1. Friendships – ongoing between the three characters
2. Teacher and pupils – Skye and Sumara attend a Maths class
3. Bullying – Zak is bullied

Evidence of impact on the pupils is drawn from both the interview and questionnaire responses.

“Before I saw the play I felt quite unprepared for secondary school because I didn’t know what to expect. Although my sister did go to secondary school, I didn’t see an awful lot of her because she literally got given tonnes of homework every night and that made a problem on its own because I felt as if I wasn’t going to see the light of day... because I’d be getting homework every night. I didn’t get to ask a lot of questions to my sister but she did give me some advice. Like she said you need to just be yourself but I was worried that people might not like myself but after seeing the play and seeing how people were just being them... And like Skye, instead of being mean to Sumara because she thought she’s stolen her thing, she actually took pity on her and she gave it to her and I want to be a bit like Skye and so I took that in and I thought, well, if I can just be myself then people will just like me and I won’t have to worry about friends in secondary school because I’ll know the true friends when they come around because they’ll actually like me for who I am and not for a mask, a kind of person I’m putting on. They’ll like me for what I do ...”
Watching and identifying with characters

The actions and attitudes of the characters in the production had a clear positive impact on the pupil audience. The key moments that they felt were interesting concerned the relationships between a character and their peers:

Researcher: What was a particular bit that you thought was quite good?
Pupil 3: When Zak got bullied and how he went through the problem and how he resolved it.

Because ... I've been bullied before and I've resolved it in a different way ... but I've learned how to resolve it properly.

Researcher: So it's something similar that you can identify with?
Pupil 6: I thought it was interesting as well because it gives the child's point of view. And the children had different life stories ...
Pupil 5: Sumara. Her dad left her on New Year’s Eve.
Pupil 4: I like that people like Sumara played football and she worried about going to secondary school that people were going to bully her for playing football cos she’s a girl and everything.
Pupil 1: I liked... it was Skye, she didn’t know what to do and then Zak he helped her by saying “I got lost. I’m late.”

The positive response from this audience is not just about being engaged by the plot or perhaps identifying with a particular character, but includes evidence of an increased knowledge of problem-solving in Pupil 3, for whom the bullying scene was a key moment.

In the drawing task, over a quarter (27%) drew an image of the three characters together as friends, often in or near the tree that they climb at the end of the performance – a key scene in re-establishing their bonds and finding a small part of the campus to meet.

Drawings from Pupil Questionnaire responses


**Teachers and pupils**

There are two teacher figures in the production. The primary school teacher is unseen, although the characters are seen answering questions in class. The secondary school teacher also appears in only one scene. The action, therefore, is focused very much on the pupils.

The pupil audiences’ own teachers and teaching assistants are also brought into the action early in the performance, accused of having the mirror of the character Skye. This typically achieved an outburst of laughter from the pupils. Here the teachers are the first to interact with the performance, making it safe for the pupils to follow suit. In this action they were also shifted from their usual authoritative position and treated as equal members of the audience.

The scene with the Maths class was performed with a mixture of humour and seriousness. The maths teacher (played by a male actor) was a caricature of a British army sergeant and initially caused the pupil audience to grin and laugh. To the pupil audience, the teacher was both “funny” and “scary”, with a general acknowledgement that not all teachers will be like that, as described by one pupil.

“[The reaction they wanted was] a bit of shock I think. Because as primary school students – I think my classmates will agree with me – most of us are used to nice teachers ... and I think they were hoping to give us a little bit of a surprise at how strict the teachers were. Like if you don’t hand in your homework, they’ll come down hard on you. I think it’s also important that you realise – that they also showed us that – that you realise. They don’t do it because they’re horrible, they do it ... they just want us to be a better person and I think the Belgrade Theatre got that through to us really well.” (Pupil Interview)

The characters of Skye and Sumara were late and then were picked on by the teacher, who encouraged the pupil audience to join in calling out times table questions until Sumara ran out. Unwittingly, the pupil audience was drawn into this having helped cause the loud confusion and were then faced with watching the consequences in the following scene with Sumara hurt and refusing to return.

**Bullying**

Bullying was not a central strand in the plot and occurred near the end of the performance where Zak entered asking the audience for his shoe and his lunch to be returned. However, it was still referred to as one of the more interesting moments (13 in a direct question about interesting moments, and 15 in the picture task), along with the maths class, getting lost, and the argument between the friends.

Furthermore, in the picture task, the pupils were able to write a description. A few chose to write that the character of Zak was helped by his friends, demonstrating that this element of the plot had remained with the pupils.
From talking to pupils in interview, bullying is an obvious concern of theirs, but it seems to be almost an inevitable part of transition from their perspective:

“When you’re here you’re like bigger and older and when you go up to secondary you’re like the smallest. And they bully the new people.”

Pupils appear to be influenced by their own understanding of social relationships as well as the characters as portrayed in the production. The character of Zak appears to be more confident than the other two characters. One pupil picked up on this and stated how “Zac, he got bullied because he thinks he’s all big and everything. And people are gonna go in there thinking they’re big ‘n’ bad and get bullied.”

The performance offered an opportunity to discuss various solutions. After seeing Zak struggling with the bullies, the action stopped and the pupil audience were asked what he could do next. Various suggestions ranged from telling others, to even fighting back. All options were accepted but also evaluated, with pupils also suggesting the consequences. The action then restarted with the three characters improvising a conversation that incorporated many of the suggestions. The audience were therefore able to see their social values and understandings presented back to them.

These possible actions stayed with the pupils as memorable information, which they shared in interview:

“If someone’s bullying you, talk to your friends or tell a member of staff.”

“I think if you stay with your friends and if they know you have friends they’ll stop you bullying you.”

The dichotomy between possible action and consequence also had an impact on their perspective:

“Cos I remember ... if someone gets beaten up they said what consequences it would lead to and why it was not such a good choice after all.”
Understanding the benefits of the TiE model / Drama in Education

Context and key questions

The teacher and pupil survey questionnaires were able to generate useful data on the amount of previous experience of drama and theatre that the pupils have.

The pupils are most likely to watch a film at home at least once per week (74%), whereas they are likely to go to the cinema at least once per month (58.5%) and go to the theatre once per year (64%). Their theatre experience is dominated by pantomime, performed at the Belgrade, with a very small number having been taken to watch another play or West End musical.

80% of pupils said that this differed to their normal work in school, which is unsurprising but is also a reminder of the distinct nature of drama as a tool for learning and personal and social development. Only 23 pupils said that they took part in a weekly drama club, with 122 (out of 176) saying that they did not partake in drama activities at all.

Of the teachers surveyed before the tour, most said that they had had some experience of using drama as part of their teacher training and half had as part of professional development. Teachers will use drama as part of their lesson once or more per term but very rarely (2 respondents) on a weekly basis. Schools will organise a trip to the theatre once per year and/or bring in a visiting company.

The purpose of this part of the evaluation is to explore the uniqueness of the theatre-based approach within a broader context of varied transitional work that schools regularly carry out. It is a consideration of the dramatic and aesthetic form, and the distinct actor-audience relationship created in Theatre-in-Education. The desired outcomes to be evaluated in this case are:

- An appreciation of live performance as a positive aesthetic experience
- A recognition of what interactive performance and drama-based activities can contribute to the transition process aside from other school/classroom approaches

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9 This data was difficult to quantify as 95 pupils took the question of the ‘last play they saw’ literally and wrote this production. Nevertheless, the proportions are fair to assume as accurate.
A theatrical experience

Given the pupils’ limited experience of drama and theatre, the visits by the Belgrade Theatre company have an added responsibility in promoting a positive attitude towards professional theatre.

Pupils were asked in the questionnaire about their opinion of the merits of various elements of the production: the actors; the plot (stories); being able to take part and give their opinion; being there with others in their class; the use of props (objects).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TOTAL responses</th>
<th>Actors</th>
<th>Stories</th>
<th>Taking part</th>
<th>Being with others</th>
<th>Objects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GREAT</td>
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<td>118</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>74</td>
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<td>51</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>57</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOT GOOD</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DON’T KNOW</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was a strong positive response to the actors, with **96% pupils rating the actors as great or good** (118+51 out of 176). The same positive response was given to the **plot/content - 74%** (Stories 66+65 out of 176) and **collaboratively experiencing the event with peers - 82%** (Being with others 92+52 out of 176).

The pupils were also given an opportunity in the survey questionnaire to say what they would advise the actors to ‘do better’. This was not a multiple choice question but entirely open to the pupils’ opinions and imaginations. Whilst 15 pupils purposefully said that the actors could do ‘nothing’ better, 37 recommended the use of more props, more scenic items, or more actors. This suggests that whilst the pupils were willing to suspend their disbelief and engage with the performance, their understanding of the dramatic form is based on a certain degree of realism.

One teacher noted with pleasure that her pupils “got it totally” and followed the subtle changes of mood from light-heartedness to more serious scenes, obvious in their responses as an audience. Another teacher noted her pupils were evidently engaged and picked up on a lot of information. In her opinion, they do not do enough drama or have enough live theatre in school. The pupils are likely to think of theatre as going and sitting and listening; they possibly also have stereotypical views of the kind of person who goes to the theatre. The production is able to challenge this.

**Connection with characters – drawing an emotional response**

The skill of the actors was noted by the pupils. There were 163 responses (out of 176) to the open question of what the actors did well, with many adding a few suggestions on the same line. A significant majority of 66% described the actors’ expressions (including faces and voices) as being good. 13% noted their interaction, and 21% described other aspects. This focus on a realistic characterisation suggests the importance to pupils of being engaged with the content of the production via a range of emotions that they could empathise with. Other pupils in interview also
talked enthusiastically how the actors “acted their feelings really well.” This seems to be not simply a matter of having something interesting to watch but also was an element of building the impression of the possible future secondary school.

Despite being adult actors, the practitioner-facilitators were able to engage the pupils on a personal level, where they could see and understand the intricate fluctuations in emotions and relationships. This is a crucial element of the dramatic frame in contrast to a member of (primary or secondary) school staff answering questions in a straightforward classroom discussion on transition.

**Theatre in the school space**

Pupils were asked in interview about the difference of their experience to seeing a film on transition or going to a theatre to watch the same performance. This was done to investigate their sense of the impact of space. Three groups of interviewed pupils agreed that a visit to the theatre might mean that more actors could play the roles, together with scenery and props to make it more “realistic.” However, they also recognised that it would be difficult to interact in the same way with the performance (discussed below).

Interviewed teachers elaborated on this, noting that the familiar school surroundings create an important safe space within which the pupils of varying degrees of confidence can respond to the personal issues that the production raises. The focus is also very much on the content rather than the excitement of a school ‘trip’ and the logistics are much easier for schools with the greater flexibility of day and time.

“I think if they are gonna get involved in the play like they did … I think it needs to be done in school. And particularly in the way that it was presented. Because if you are thinking about going to a theatre and doing it on a stage, you’re asking children to get up on a stage and suddenly that fear… overwhells them. And only the confident ones would want that. And also the time it takes to get from the seats to the stage, and there’s just that distance, whereas I think they felt more familiar in their own surroundings. The stage was considered a mat … it was just that ‘Yep, this is safe to do and I’m in my own safe surroundings rather than ‘Oh my gosh there’s a big stage and I’ve got to perform to a whole row of people.’” (Teacher interview)
Interaction – the actor–audience relationship in TiE

Sharing opinions and problem-solving

When asked directly, 74% of pupils surveyed said that the ability to interact and give their opinion was a great or good thing. This is classed as a positive response to the interactive nature of the TiE model. It was not something that the pupils cited as a particular benefit of the production, preferring to describe how it gave them an understanding of future secondary school life and hints for problem-solving. Nevertheless, in observing the interactions of some school groups, the range of solutions that comes from the pupils themselves is obvious:

Here the pupils have been asked why someone might have stolen Skye’s mirror:

Pupil 1: They are jealous…maybe they can’t afford it.

Pupil 2: …or their parents don’t spend enough time with them...

Pupil 3: They think they could probably get away with it.

This highlights the ability of the interactions to draw existing knowledge and understanding from pupils in order to weigh up social situations and also co-construct new knowledge as they listen to each other. The child-centred approach is clear in this type of interaction, maintaining respect for the pupil voice whilst framing it in such a way alongside a fictional narrative that leads to new learning.

Becoming fellow performers

As discussed above, the interaction could have added benefits in incorporating pupil suggestions into the fictional dialogue and playing out their debate for them. The interactive nature of the performance also engaged the pupils and assisted their understanding of practical solutions. A further third positive impact is the ability to place pupils within the narrative but without the need for expert drama skills.

One example is where pupils become Sumara’s football-playing friends, kicking a ball. She suddenly stops and says “I gotta go, my dad’s here. See you guys”. Without breaking from the fictional frame, the pupils are acknowledged as both characters and fellow actors, connecting them more closely to the ‘onstage’ action.

Another example is in the bullying scene. Pupils in interview described how they would have preferred to have had more actors in order to see more of the intricacies of the situation. Here seems to be a desire to examine in more depth what causes such situations and how they play out. It could be possible by one of the female characters switching role, or by employing more actors (as suggested by the pupils in interview). The actions of the ‘bully’ are not seen, only implied in the missing shoe and lunch, with Zak backing off from imagined figures that are stood behind the audience. Importantly, he also asks the audience, as if they were a crowd of pupils, if they have seen his shoe or if they could please give him his lunch back. Although they may struggle to imagine the bully without the physical body of another actor, perhaps more important is the way the pupil audience are implicated in the
more powerful position of another bully or uncaring pupil. Like the boy who felt guilty for laughing at the Maths lesson, the pupils are able to see situations from the perspectives of others that they are able to become within the fictional frame.

You know if you get bullied and people laugh at you because they find it funny, yeah, but that person that got bullied, it’d be like they’d feel five hundred times worse. (Pupil interview)
SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this evaluation is to respond to the following questions:

1. What is the immediate impact of the project on the participants?
2. What is distinct about the TiE model in exploring issues of transition?
3. What is the possible life for this programme beyond local authority funding?

The first two questions are considered here. The third is addressed in the following section, RECOMMENDATIONS.

Immediate impact

Measuring against key outcomes, the project was seeking for all pupils: an engagement with subject matter and enjoyment of the performance experience; a raised confidence and increased understanding regarding personal and social relationships as well as transition issues; and an increased ‘know-how’ and practical ‘pupil-readiness’ for transition. Other outcomes related to the teachers and schools and their positive perception of the benefits for their pupils.

Pupils clearly expressed a marked increase in confidence, in the region of 77-83% of pupils surveyed. This does not mean that all fears had been eradicated or that pupils thought that the issues had disappeared. On the contrary, some pupils reported no change – for better or worse – and some felt more nervous, having been confronted with the challenges.

The overriding factor in achieving this increased confidence is for the pupils to acquire a tangible understanding of what their initial secondary school experience will be like. Where fears are based on the unknown, being able to at least begin to actively problem-solve the issues of navigating new spaces and relationships seems crucial.

Aside from the issues associated with transition, there is evidence that the project achieved immediate impact on the pupils’ sense of self-belief and agency, dealing with social relationships and problem-solving in general. These relationships include friendships, the teacher-pupil relationship, and the problematic issue of bullying. A number of pupils gained this empowerment from the narrative and characters of the interactive performance alone. However teachers recognised the benefits of follow-up work, although there is little evidence of this work being done (the busy end-of-year schedules caused both the lack of evidence from teachers and work done).

Alongside their improved personal and social understanding, pupils’ practical know-how – i.e. equipment, navigation, what to say, and being able to project into an imagined future to prepare the self – was reported as being increased. Not all pupils necessarily ‘enjoy’ the experiences but are offered a controlled and temporary risky space in which they are required to confront fears, in their mind or in a ‘real’ and physical way, which they value as useful ‘rehearsal’ for future experiences.

The teachers involved in the 2014 programme also emphasised the need for such a programme to remain available. One teacher that was not involved in 2014 was known to have said they felt they were ‘missing out’.
The distinct model of Theatre in Education as a tool for exploring transition

In evaluating the distinctiveness of the TiE model, what the project is offering is an experience that is distinct from – and therefore with additional benefits to - class discussions, school talks, printed and online literature, videos, or visits.

This report concludes that the interactive performance offers a shared aesthetic experience, engaging the imaginations of the audience and entering a fictional world whilst also creating new meaning collaboratively. Pupils were engaged with the onstage action, reacting to both the comic and more serious moments in the narrative. The pupils appreciated the skill of the actors in portraying rounded, emotional characters that they could identify with or challenge. The pupil audience was drawn into the action, but were also kept at a distance – acknowledging the ‘play’ that could stop and start in order to comment on it. Ultimately, the imaginations of the pupils were crucial to the process in both fleshing out the physical space and believing in the buildings and people that were not actually present, and in projecting themselves into the position of the characters in order to interpret them and offer solutions to their problems.

With the performance event taking place within their present school, it is within a safe and familiar space in order to more confidently explore and imagine. That familiarity then becomes a tangible reference point from which to enter the parallel world of the characters (leaving primary school themselves) to then move forward and be challenged with problems along the journey. This challenge is then given another dimension as multiple perspectives are woven into the collective meaning-making with adults and peers. The TiE model creates a distinct space within the school, which is a conceptual space of learning, not just of entertainment.

The experience takes place within a particular ‘dramatic frame’. There is a simple cohesive narrative that weaves in many threads and details of social issues and relationships. The actor-facilitators are able to portray rounded child characters that the pupil audience can empathise and make a connection with. They are also able to skilfully manage and incorporate audience verbal and physical contributions – those audience members becoming both actors and spectators.

The dramatic frame is a particular social transaction. The (pupil) audience draw on their past experiences and project them onto their understanding of the (onstage) people. Whereas that may be the full extent of a typical theatre event, in the TiE model, the (pupil) audience are able to voice their thoughts and opinions, empowering them not only in the context of the future onstage action but also in a projected future action in their future lives at secondary school. This lies at the heart of their own reported positive change: that they know what it will be like and what to do. It is not just that the content of the performance has informed them, but that they have themselves acted upon it.
RECOMMENDATIONS

This section takes into account the perceived current need for such programmes and the challenges that may be faced.

a) It is worth noting the **three-fold impact of personal and social development, dealing with transition issues, and creating a positive theatre experience.** The current programme has strong evidence of working beyond the core subject matter of transition, and future programmes could promote this broader impact.

b) It is believed that the programme should endeavour to **continue to tour to schools** and, in order to achieve equal access, should ideally be made available to all schools. In terms of cost, the 2014 programme was described as ‘value for money’ by teachers. In order to maintain this, early consideration should be given to the level of funding available or required in addition in the future.

c) Based on the responses to the content, it is recommended that the programme continue the **current performance format of a narrative weaving various themes and issues whilst also interacting with the audience.** In terms of the narrative, there is scope for tailoring it in different ways, either with a single reworked script or focusing on different issues depending on the school context. This places extra demands on the actors and would also require time and funds for script development, although development pre-tour is a natural and necessary part of the actors’ work.

d) Some teachers and pupils suggested an **extended programme** whereby actors stayed or returned to the school in order to interact with the pupils in a workshop format, leading drama activities and exploring the characters and contexts in more detail. Although there would be costs involved, this may provide greater (quantity and quality) practical transition/PSE work in schools where teachers were less likely to make use of the Resource Pack.

e) An alternative online filmed version does not have the capacity to interact with pupils in the same way, although some online resources for use after the visit may be easy to use by schools and may also be able to provide feedback data. Although a range of resources could be provided, given the data generated and the varying (low) levels of drama participation by pupils, the **emphasis in post-visit resources should remain on drama-based approaches** if that is a function of the programme, rather than the single visit being the only ‘theatre’ element.

f) The capacity for the programme to **improve the demographic of the Belgrade’s audiences** should be considered. The timing of the tour is ideal for the issues it discusses – after the half term break in the Summer Term – however it is less ideal for pre-visit or follow-up work. Therefore, **building relationships with and opportunities for local teachers and schools** – or clusters of schools - is needed at other stages of the academic year.

g) Given that the programme is now fully established and with a content that is effective across a range of schools, there is the consideration for **sharing the work more broadly.** This may be in the form of a creating an additional satellite tour for another adjacent local authority (internally managed), or packaging the programme for use by other theatre companies with recognition of the original production programme. With the planned ‘TiÉ Anniversary’ celebrations in 2015, it would seem prudent to consider this programme within a broader context.
h) Finally, future evaluations could be of use by taking alternative approaches and foci, including a financial cost-benefit analysis and a longer term investigation into pupil and school impact\textsuperscript{10}.

\textsuperscript{10} A second phase of an evaluation similar to this would ideally include interviewing pupils during their first year at secondary school about how well they were settling in. It could evaluate data such as their achievement levels, attendance records and teacher observations. For a further assessment of the benefits of the ‘Big School’ programme specifically, comparisons could be made between pupils who experienced it, those who had other transition activities at primary school, and those who had neither. Following the progress of these pupils throughout their secondary education would provide the most in-depth evaluation of whether the programme had achieved its central aim. That is, to ensure that individuals have a better chance at succeeding in a number of aspects of their lives, as a result of coping well with the primary to secondary school transition. Evidence from other sources could be evaluated in conjunction with this, for example the numbers of young people in Coventry who are ‘NEET’ has historically been low compared to other areas of the UK. This is believed to be in part due to Coventry City Council’s preventative approach which seeks to support young people through key transitions in their lives.
References


Teacher Pre-Survey

1. What is the name of your school? Which class do you teach? Do you undertake any other duties besides teaching?

2. How have you found preparations for the Belgrade Theatre’s visit? Excellent - Good – Satisfactory – Below satisfactory

3. What is your previous experience of this kind of work? (YES/NO)
   - I have experienced the project (or similar) before
   - I know a lot about theatre and drama in education
   - I was given sufficient information from the Belgrade
   - I attended a meeting with the Belgrade
   - Other experience (please specify)

4. Have you explored and developed teaching skills in using drama in schools before through:
   - Your initial teacher training?
   - Professional development courses/workshops?
   - Other? (Please specify)

5. How often do… (Once or more per week/half term/term/year)
   - You use drama in your teaching (i.e. in lesson time)?
   - Your pupils experience a theatre performance via a school trip?
   - Your pupils experience a theatre performance with a visiting company?
   - Your pupils have the opportunity of extra-curricular drama (a club or school play)?

6. What do you personally see as being the main challenges for pupils in the transition to secondary school? [Multiple choice?]

The next two questions should be responded to after asking the pupils in your class. It does not have to be a long discussion and you may introduce it as you wish. Please list key words or provide longer examples if you can.

7. What do the pupils see in their minds when you say:
   - Theatre; Performance; Imagination; Play; Secondary school building; Secondary school pupils?

8. At this stage what do the pupils think are:
   - The things to look forward to about moving to secondary school?
   - The things that they are unsure about or less looking forward to?
9. What are your expectations of the visit?

- How do you hope or think the pupils will respond to the interactive performance?
- What will the main benefits be to the pupils?
- What do you see your own role as being on the day?
- As a teacher, what do you hope to get out of this project?

10. Does your school have a policy / formal initiative for incorporating drama and theatre into the pupils’ school experience? If so, please briefly describe the schools’ approach.
Post-project Teacher Survey

1. What is the name of your school? Which class do you teach? Do you undertake any other duties besides teaching?

2. a) Please rate the following: (Excellent/Good/Satisfactory/Less than satisfactory)
   - Logistics of the visit (communication, arrival/departure)
   - The content of the performance (storyline)
   - The standard of the performance (actors)
   - The opportunities for pupils to interact
   - The relationship between the actors and the pupils
   - The level of pupil engagement
   - The support of other school staff
   - The usefulness of the additional material

Please comment on any of these – or something else - that was particularly good or could be improved on.

3. What element of the performance / drama approach did you find the most powerful in engaging the pupils?

4. What do you think is the main challenge or barrier to working in this way?

5. Having observed the workshop, please describe one part that you found the most significant in addressing issues of transition.

Please respond to the following having done at least some of the activities in the Teacher’s Pack:

6. Please rate the following: (Excellent/Good/Satisfactory/Less than satisfactory)
   - The clarity of the Teacher’s Pack
   - The variety of activities
   - The suitability of the activities for incorporating into lesson time
   - Your own experience of leading the activities
   - The pupils’ responses to the activities

Please feel free to add any comments about your responses.

7. a) After the workshop and having led the activities, what do you find beneficial about this way of working – i.e. drama - in exploring issues of transition, and b) What are the challenges?

8. Please describe up to 3 individual pupils that you feel the performance &/or the activities had a particular impact on. Please describe what the impact was and what they said or did that revealed it. (You do not need to give their names and they will remain anonymous – use Pupil A, Pupil B, etc.)

9. Please give some examples of the ways you think your class may have changed in their attitude or actions through being involved in this project.

10. If you were to make a recommendation to another local authority that also had a local Theatre in Education company, what are the two key points that you would make?
Pupil Questionnaire

Thank you for taking part in our performance. We hope you enjoyed it.

We would like to ask you some questions about the visit from the Belgrade Theatre. We would like to know what you thought about the play and now what you think about going to a new school.

1.

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<tr>
<th>NAME OF YOUR SCHOOL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YOUR CLASS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YOUR AGE:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I AM A (please tick)....</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. a) When you are not in school, how often do you: (tick the boxes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Every week</th>
<th>Every month</th>
<th>Every year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Go to the cinema</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go to the theatre</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch a film at home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go to a drama club</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b) What was the last play by adults (performance in a school or theatre) that you watched?

__________________________________________________________________________

3. Which of these words are the best ways of describing the Belgrade Theatre visit?

*Circle as many as you agree with:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funny</th>
<th>Scary</th>
<th>Enjoyed</th>
<th>Boring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difficult</th>
<th>Sad</th>
<th>Happy</th>
<th>Weird</th>
<th>Clever</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shocking</th>
<th>Real</th>
<th>Interesting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Is there another good word we have not written? Please write it:

__________________________________________________________________________
4. What did you think about:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>GREAT!</th>
<th>GOOD</th>
<th>OK</th>
<th>NOT GOOD</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The actors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The stories</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being able to take part and say your opinion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being there with other people in your class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of objects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. What was the most interesting part of the performance?

__________________________________________________________________________

6. Which part did you think was similar to something you or your friends experience?

__________________________________________________________________________

7. The stories were all connected to the topic ‘going to secondary school’, but thought about it in different ways.

a. What is a new thought that you now have about this topic?

__________________________________________________________________________

b. How have your thoughts and feelings changed by watching the play?

__________________________________________________________________________

8. The theatre wants to visit as many schools as possible.

If you were writing a letter to the person in charge of schools, what would you say is a good reason for having these visits?

I think it is good for schools to have these visits because
9. Is this work different from what you usually do in school?

________________________________________________________________________

10. Imagine you are in charge of the Belgrade Theatre next year. What would you say to the actors?

a. I think that one thing you do really well is...

________________________________________________________________________

b. I think that one thing you can do better is...

________________________________________________________________________

11. Please draw a picture of the part of the performance that you think really said something important about going to secondary school.

[Blank space for drawing]

A FEW WORDS TO DESCRIBE THE PICTURE:

________________________________________________________________________

THANK YOU! Just one more question:

12. Please write your name to say that you agree with this statement:

I know that this questionnaire will be used for a report on the Belgrade Theatre visit. Some of my answers may be used but my name will not appear in the report.

MY NAME: _______________________________________
June 2014

Dear Parent/Guardian,

We are writing to you as this month your child’s class will be taking part in the Belgrade Theatre’s Big School project. This involves a visit by our company to perform a play that explores issues relating to the transition from primary to secondary school.

This touring production is now in its third and final year and has received funding from Coventry City Council. We are undertaking an evaluation of the project in order to learn more about its impact and develop our work in the future, as we wish to continue to provide quality experiences for children and young people across the city.

We would like to give you some information about the evaluation. We are asking the teachers and pupils to complete short questionnaires about their experiences. We also have an independent evaluator observing performances at some of the schools and interviewing a small group of volunteer pupils afterwards. We may also take a few photographs of the performance taking place with the pupils watching and interacting.

This information will be used to write the evaluation report and we may include examples of some of the pupil responses, although these will be kept anonymous. The report will be read by the City Council and may also be shared with other theatre education departments and interested organisations.

If you specifically do not wish your child to be interviewed or have their photograph included, please let us know by returning the slip below. You do not need to return the slip if you are happy with the arrangements.

If you have any questions about this evaluation, please contact Claire Procter via email cprocter@belgrade.co.uk, or by phone 024 7684 6741.

Kind regards,

The Belgrade Theatre Community and Education Company

BELGRADE THEATRE IN EDUCATION PROJECT – ‘BIG SCHOOL’

I do not wish for my child to: (please tick)

Be interviewed

Be included in photographs

Name of child: ___________________________ Class: ______________

Parent/Guardian signature: ___________________________ Date: _____________
# TEACHER CONSENT FORM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Title:</th>
<th>Belgrade Theatre 'Big School' Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of Evaluator:</td>
<td>Hannah Grainger Clemson</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tick each box to show that you agree to the questions:

1. I have read, and understood, a description of the evaluation
2. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions I may have
3. I agree to take part in a short interview after the project as well as informal discussions at the time of the visit
4. I understand that a description of my part in the project, and some of my questionnaire and interview answers might be shared in the report

Please write your name and the date here:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YOUR NAME</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evaluator

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PUPIL CONSENT FORM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Title:</th>
<th>Belgrade Theatre ‘Big School’ Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of Evaluator:</td>
<td>Hannah Grainger Clemson</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tick each box to show that you agree to the questions:

1. I have listened to, and understood, a description of the evaluation

2. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions I may have

3. I agree to take part in a short interview with some of my classmates

4. I understand that a description of my part in the project, and some of my questionnaire and interview answers might be shared in the report

Please write your name and the date here:

__________________________ ____________________________
YOUR NAME Date

__________________________ ____________________________
Evaluator Date