



Like Flying Evaluation

July 2023

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Introduction

The Like Flying Project

In 2022/23, the National Theatre of Scotland (NTS) commissioned Like Flying to be delivered in four secondary schools across Scotland. Like Flying is a collaborative, participatory project that works with young people in the teenage years (with a focus on those living in areas of deprivation and those who may be under-represented) that uses aerial arts (alongside other expressions) to explore and tell the stories of young people transitioning from childhood to adulthood.

First made in 2019, the overall aim of the project was to create a model that strengthens the resilience of young people and which promotes the efficacy of creative interventions in secondary schools. The project also sought to promote good mental health amongst young people by:

- building resilience;
- facilitating and encouraging teamwork;
- building positive mental and physical health;
- improving attainment and attendance in school; and
- lifting attitudes and reducing negative assumptions held by older people in schools, families and communities.

Adapted from the original core model, the Like Flying project that was delivered in schools during 2022/23 was tailored to be run over a concentrated 3-week period. Following an initial 'open' taster session where interested pupils could sign up, young people took part in weekly intensive rehearsals both during and after school hours (including evenings and weekends) and workshop sessions. During this time, pupils were engaged in learning aerial skills, ongoing physical training, exploration of personal development through drama workshops and other artforms and working with the creative team (including the Director, Designer, Sound Engineer and Aerial Dance leader, among others) to develop the narrative and image content which would contribute to a performance piece. A range of roles were available to those who took part (up to 30 in each school) including both performance roles and 'technical placement positions' (e.g. assisting with Direction, Design, Production, filming, music, guiding the audience, etc.)

Final performances were scheduled to take place in schools at the end of the project, delivered to a public audience in various different spaces in the pupils' school environment (both outside and in). The visual performance, featuring aerial acts performed by the pupils, is underscored by a soundtrack which also includes recorded text spoken by the pupils.

Schools were chosen on a self-selection, opt in basis and were required to:

- include pupils from areas in top 20% of SIMD;
- dedicate curriculum time towards the programme;
- be committed to positive mental health in the school community; and
- dedicate spaces within the school for both rehearsals and performances.

Throughout the 2022/23 session, a total of 4 schools took part (3 mainstream and 1 secure school) with pupils from year groups S2 to S6 taking part across the different sites. The model was adapted for the secure school to be run over just one week.

The Evaluation

An independent evaluation ran alongside delivery of the Like Flying project in schools which sought to address six main questions, these being:

1. To what extent is the project successful in reaching a wide audience? (i.e. pupils who may not otherwise be exposed to artistic opportunities in school, those who may not usually engage with such projects, etc.)
2. To what extent does the project help pupils by giving them new experiences, increasing their confidence and self-belief and giving them transferable skills for the future?
3. To what extent do teachers and the wider school community benefit from the experience?
4. To what extent do parents/carers engage with the project, and what positive impacts did they perceive from their child(ren) taking part?
5. To what extent do artists benefit from the experience, in terms of developing or consolidating skills, experience and working with young audiences?
6. What learning is achieved from the project which may help with planning/delivering similar projects in the future?

A mixed methods design was used which combined baseline surveys of pupils, in situ written feedback collected by artists during rehearsals, impromptu audio feedback collected during rehearsals and ahead of final performances, telephone interviews with teachers and artists, independent observations and interactive feedback activities for pupils (such as poster making, sorting tasks, peer interviews and mini-group interviews, completed several weeks after the final performances). The table below shows which evaluation activities were undertaken in each school.

	Baseline Survey Pupils	Ad hoc in-Session Feedback	End of session audio Feedback	Teacher Interview(s) and Feedback	End of Project Pupil Feedback Activities	Artist/Director/ Designer Interviews
Bellahouston Academy	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	ALL
Ardrossan Academy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
St Thomas Aquinas	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Rossie School	✓	X	X	✓	X	

Research Caveats

While attempts were made to gather baseline feedback from teachers (via an online survey) to complement that received from pupils, none of the four schools responded to invitations to complete these surveys. Similarly, learning from some of the earlier school sites that were visited

highlighted that the model of gathering ongoing written feedback from pupils during rehearsals did not work well (due to pupil fatigue and their focus being on learning the piece) and so was replaced by impromptu voice recordings in the next two schools. Due to access challenges, it was also not possible to collect either ad hoc written or audio feedback at the secure school site and this means that the data collected in the four schools was not entirely comparable. In each site, however, there was at least three independent sources of data available for analysis and triangulation and all schools were able to input views from pupils and teachers in at least some form.

Due to logistical barriers (mainly lack of time) schools also did not undertake the collection of parent/carer feedback, despite online surveys being developed to facilitate this. This was perhaps one of the biggest gaps in the research, and so audience feedback was instead gathered vicariously via teachers and members of the creative team who were present and who were able to feedback anecdotally on their observations of the audience response. Independent observation by the research team at one of the school performances was also achieved.

Expectations and Preparations

Feedback from Pupils

Before taking part in the project, pupils across all schools completed baseline surveys which asked about:

- what made them decide to take part in the project;
- what their hopes and expectations were for the project;
- what information they had received about the project prior to it starting; and
- any worries that they had about the project before it started.

A total of 40 responses were received from across the different schools.

Awareness

The majority of pupils in schools had been alerted to the project by school staff, most typically drama teachers or teachers who had been nominated as the lead contact for the project in schools.

A small number of pupils had been alerted to the project by 'word of mouth' or friends/classmates who had been invited to take part and so used this as an opportunity to request a place on the project too.

Several pupils also said that they had been or were actively involved in previous schools shows/drama productions and had been made aware of the Like Flying opportunity through their involvement with those productions.

Motivations

The main reasons cited by pupils for wanting to take part were common across the different school sites, and included that:

- the project looked 'fun';
- it was a chance to try something new and learn new skills; and
- it was a chance to get fit/get some exercise or be more physically active.

Another frequent comment made by pupils was that they enjoyed performance, arts and drama per se, and this had attracted them to the opportunity:

"It's a show and I like shows, and I like performing a lot in various mediums." (Young Person)

"It will be good experience in drama and could introduce me into the theatre world." (Young Person)

Several others commented that they wanted a chance to engage in more purposeful activity in their free time:

"To do something better than being on my phone in the house." (Young Person)

"Give me something to do and take part in and it sounded cool and fun." (Young Person)

"It was better than being in the house and I wanted to try something different." (Young Person)

Young people commented that they perceived the project opportunity to be 'different' compared to other projects they had been involved with before, primarily because of the chance to 'fly', 'climb' and be 'off the ground'. Working outside was also cited as a something unusual and positive. One young person described the project as "exotic" and others commented that the project was 'different' because it was being run by the National Theatre of Scotland which meant it was more prestigious or "impressive" than in-school productions. Several also commented that the taster session had been enjoyable and provided a hook to getting them involved. Some who adopted non-performing or more technical/directorial roles also commented that they had wanted to get involved because of the general hype and excitement surrounding the project:

"I wanted to help because it seems like fun to see everything happening." (Young Person)

"Thought it was cool and I would be a part of something." (Young Person)

"Because it is once in a lifetime experience." (Young Person)

Goals

The things that pupils hoped to achieve from taking part were wide and varied and reflected different personal goals among the young people.

For most, the goals were emotionally or psychologically focussed and were linked to a desire to enhance their confidence, self-esteem, sense of self and personal happiness:

"To be proud of myself." (Young Person)

"Confidence and to be stronger mentally." (Young Person)

"To go out my comfort zone." (Young Person)

"It pushes me to do things I wouldn't usually do." (Young Person)

For others, the goals were more physically focussed, e.g. to get fit, try new aerobic/gymnastic skills, to "hang upside down" or get more exercise:

"I thought it would be fun and I want to become more flexible." (Young Person)

A smaller number commented on relationship goals, mainly to meet new people, make new friends, feel more confident around others, be involved in a team, "to make people smile" or be proud:

"I hope to achieve better confidence in talking to people." (Young Person)

"My family being proud." (Young Person)

"Learn new skills and develop teamwork skills." (Young Person)

Other comments included that the experience was seen as a way of enhancing CVs for the future, to give them life skills, find new hobbies or past-times or simply to have fun. Overall, the main motivations were all centred around the desire to do something that was new, exciting and purposeful:

"I love doing new things and drama stuff and I have always wanted to fly." (Young Person)

Reservations and Concerns

Most young people reported that there was nothing or very little about the pending project that worried or concerned them - most simply expressed excitement or explicitly said there was “nothing to fear”.

One concern raised by just a small number of pupils across the different schools was the prospect of ‘falling’ (i.e. from aerial equipment) or injuring themselves.

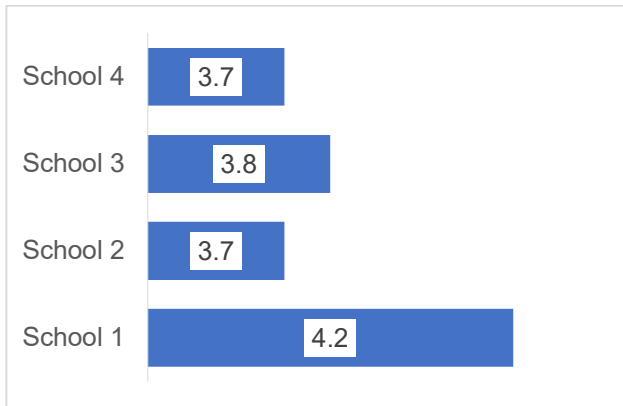
A small number of pupils also expressed concern about people “laughing at them”, or of embarrassing themselves when learning the new skills or when performing:

“Stage fright, might not do well, might embarrass myself or friends.” (Young Person)

Despite these concerns, feedback from pupils mainly reflected that they were ready to embrace the challenge:

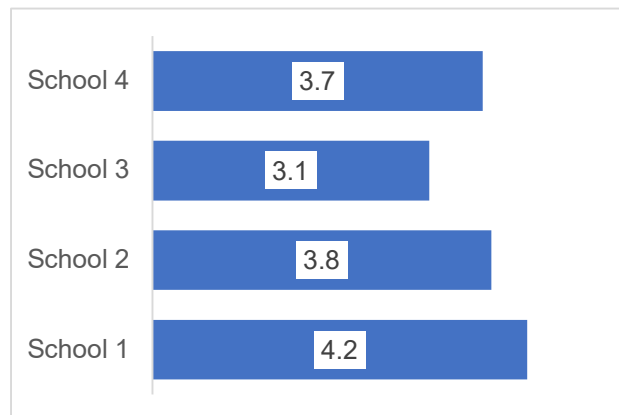
“It will make me face fears I wouldn’t usually get to face, like heights.” (Young Person)

Feeling Prepared



Pupils across all schools were asked, on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 was ‘Very Poor’ and 5 was ‘Very Good’, how they would rate the information that they received from NTS about the project before it started (i.e. the Company Handbook). Feedback from all schools was positive with average ratings being slightly higher in the first school compared to the later visited sites.

Similarly, pupils across all schools were asked, based on the information that they had received to date, how prepared they felt for the project (on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 was ‘Very Unprepared’ and 5 was ‘Very Prepared’). Again, average ratings were strong with pupils in the earlier schools feeling slightly more prepared overall.



Young people generally indicated that they were unsure what ‘other’ information or support would have been helpful to them in preparing for the project. The main suggestions for additional information were:

- information about what would be achieved each week;
- how long the show/final performances would last; and
- if tickets would be needed to see the show/final performances and, if so, how to buy them.

One pupil was unsure if they had to remain engaged with the project throughout, or if they could leave if they wanted to, i.e. “If I don’t want to do it after this week, do I still have to?” (Young Person)

One other pupil indicated that they had been unsure early on if the project was ‘gendered’ but this had been clarified:

“I was worried it was just for girls but I know it’s not now.” (Young Person)

Two pupils (at different schools) also raised practical concerns around whether food and drinks would be provided during rehearsals as well as how safe travel home at the end of sessions could be guaranteed (i.e. if sessions finished late and it was dark, etc.).

Overall, however, the overwhelming sense from young people before embarking on the project was their excitement and anticipation of learning something new and achieving something they could be proud of:

“I’m excited to see what I can do that I didn’t know I could do.” (Young Person)

Feedback from Teachers

Teachers largely indicated that they were unsure exactly what to expect before the project, but that the principle of the project and the fact that it involved something ‘new’ (aerial movement) had made the opportunity appealing. Some indicated that they found it difficult to imagine how the project would translate to their own school environment.

Teachers reported that they had been motivated to apply/take part because they had seen how it worked in other schools and felt that it would really benefit their pupils.

The main suggestion for change among teachers was that it would have been helpful to have visited another school to see the performance/project ‘in practice’ to give them a better idea of what it might entail before/after they started (recognising that the project would always be slightly different depending on its context):

“The whole project was run well by the NTS team, but it would have been good to visit another school while the project was happening and speak to the staff at that school, if possible.” (Teacher)

There was no application process for schools as initial uptake of the project invitation was low. This meant that NTS staff proactively contacted schools to ask if they would be interested in taking part, with decisions made by mutual agreement following informal discussions.

For pupils, there was also no application process per se - teachers were asked to invite pupils from a certain year group that they thought would benefit from the opportunity to take part in the taster session and then it was up to the pupils to decide if they wanted to take part and if they had the availability to be able to commit to the three-week long process. In all schools, a range of pupils from different year groups ended up taking part, with the project being a cross-stage project.

Feedback from Artists

The Director, Designer and Aerial Artist leads all expressed hopes for the project that were primarily linked to empowering young people, opening up access to artistic opportunities and achieving inclusion:

“From a personal perspective I think access to performance was important - I felt excited and inspired by the idea that the project was reaching out to people who weren’t necessarily the best gymnasts, the best dancers, but actually just wanted to become involved and that felt exciting and important.” (Designer)

The creative team were also generally excited to celebrate the Like Flying project, and to explore what could be achieved in the school environment over a short period of time:

“For myself I wanted to achieve the feeling of pride of being able to create something in a school and it felt exciting and challenging.” (Designer)

The original project was also described as “quite nebulous” for young people and the Director wanted to adapt the project to offer a more solid base for the young people. There was a desire to see if they could achieve the transformation of the school environment that they desired, to create something “magical” or unusual for pupils:

“As an artist, I wanted to create something that had a strangeness and beauty about it that took people out of the every day...In the beginning, one of things I really wanted to do was I wanted to ‘make strange’ the school. The thing that people go to every day - how could we turn it around, flip it about and make it that everything has potential to be different?” (Director)

Overall, both pupils, teachers and artists approached the project with excitement, and viewed it as a challenge, both personally, professionally and creatively.

Delivering the Project

Developing the Piece and Rehearsals

Feedback from Pupils

Overall, pupils reported that the project had been fun, exciting, tiring but unique and had largely exceeded expectations. Pupils commented that they had been surprised by how quickly they had learned new skills, and how constructive the different sessions had been.

While most pupils had been allocated roles, instead of always getting the roles that they wanted or requested, most felt that this model of role allocation worked well:

“I liked trying everything at the start and then they helped you decide what you would be best at. It wasn’t just being told, you had the option. I liked having the option.” (Young Person)

One of the things that pupils had particularly liked about the delivery model was ‘circle time’ (which was described as being helpful for bonding and as being delivered in a supportive way). The circle times (which pupils compared to familiar experiences at primary school) had also helped pupils get to know one another better and helped create the feeling of being ‘a family’ and ‘a team’.

The physical/practical aerial learning was a high point for many of the pupils, who felt surprised at how much they had learned in a short space of time. The sensation of feeling ‘like flying’ had also been achieved:

“My family were really interested and they asked me “Does it actually feel like flying?” and I would just say, “Yes, it really does!”” (Young Person)

Pupils commented that it had been “fun” but several also commented on how tiring the physical activity could be. Where people had experienced problems with learning the aerial work, they reported that the creative team had always responded in positive and helpful ways:

“The different aerial activities were much harder than I thought. I kept falling and I was scared but I just had to keep building up to it. The staff who were around were always really helpful and if you couldn’t do it, they would push you and give you different ideas on how to do it. They never got mad at us - they just kept helping us. They felt more like friends than teachers.” (Young Person)

Some expressed feeling frustrated at first, but coming to love working with hoops, harnesses and cocoons, in particular. Some of those who took part and who engaged in other sporting/gymnastic activities outside of school said that the Like Flying project had helped them improve their fitness in general (e.g. core strength) while some who were typically less active noted that their physical health and wellbeing had improved during the project.

Similarly, physical warm up activities during rehearsals had helped pupils to get active and while sessions had been physically challenging and tiring at times, the way that sessions were structured to encourage movement and raise pupils’ energy was praised:

“The warm-ups were so fun and encouraged us to really move.” (Young Person)

The transformation of the various different classrooms and gym/hall/PE spaces was also described as “magical” and really helped the young people to immerse themselves in the project:

“I really thought that the smoke coming in - I don’t know - it just felt like I was in the clouds, or on clouds. And that really made me think about mental health and I feel that really helped.” (Young Person)

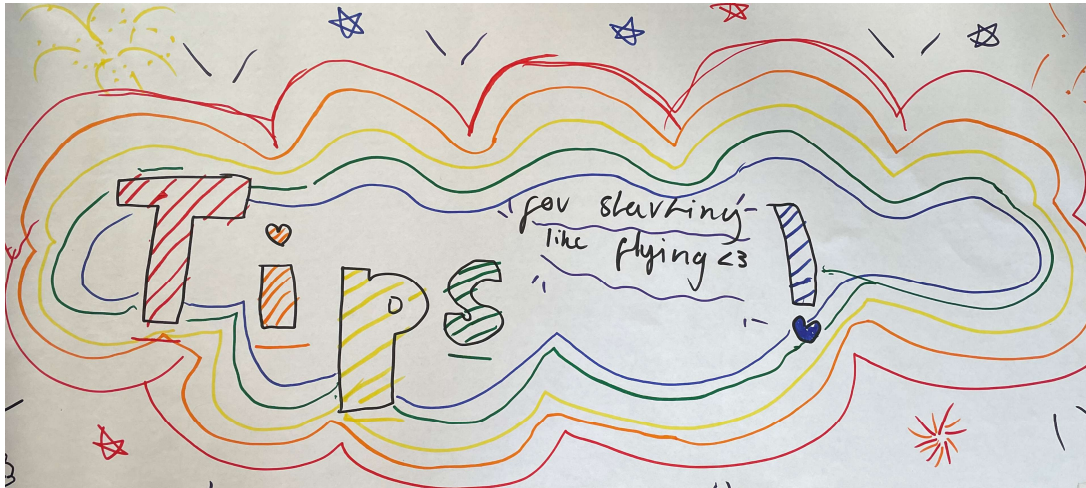
The fact that pupils got to work together, see each other perform and give each other feedback was also praised, with comments that this was always done in a positive way. Pupils also spoke of feeling safe and supported throughout their project experience and of feeling that they developed trusting relationships with the artistic/NTS team in a safe space:

“I felt I was in an open space and that you could always just say something if you were struggling. You could speak in the circle or speak to someone privately.” (Young Person)

Practical things linked to project delivery, like the gifting of personalised water bottles that provided memories after the project had finished were also praised, as well as personal cards from the team about the things the pupils had achieved.

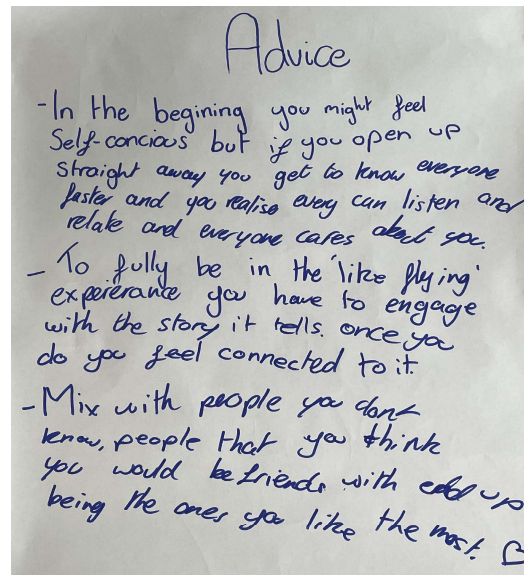
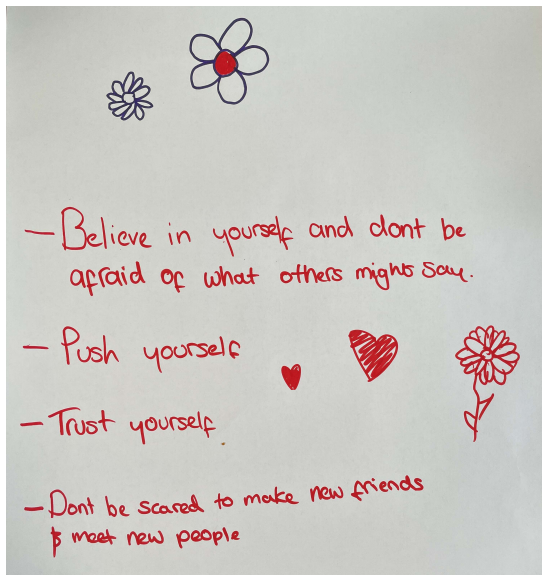
In three schools, pupils were asked what they liked most and least about the project and what, if anything, they would have changed with the most frequent responses being:

Liked Most	Liked Least	Do differently
Making new friends/being with friends	Science parts of the project	Nothing
People being supportive	Some of the people	Better drums/drum kits
Learning new skills	The stress of doing the first show and getting it wrong	Less talking, more doing
Hanging/Flying/Dangling	The rain/bad weather	The timing for certain parts of the show were too slow
The cocoons, hoops and the harnesses	Close up shots on my face	Having no science in the project
Giving the gossip to NTS staff	Injuries/Falling/Feeling sore	Bring the drummers in earlier
Feeling heard	Waiting about	No early morning sessions
The music/playing the drums	Warm-ups	Have more options for different skills
Positive energy/vibes	Standing for long periods of time	Even more aerial equipment
The final performance	Saturday sessions	To try more advanced movement



Pupils were also asked what they would say to someone else who was thinking of taking part in the Like Flying project and the main advice was simply “to take part” because it was “fun”, “exciting” and “unforgettable”. Other more practical advice was also suggested, including the need to wear comfortable clothes for physical rehearsals, to always bring lots of drinks and snacks to rehearsals because the sessions were physical tiring and to not give up if things appeared difficult at first. Other advice included:

- Push yourself to do the best you can
- It's okay not to get it right first time
- Try your very best
- Support each other
- Reflect what you are
- Enjoy it while it lasts because you will miss it!



There were few suggestions among pupils for how the project delivery could have been improved.

The main suggestion for change was more dedicated time outside of the formal sessions just to talk with the group and time to reflect on their experiences. Others suggested that they would like the project to have more longevity, or for there to be roles/engagement beyond the final performance. For example, pupils suggested that they would like to take a mentor or ambassador role, i.e. to promote the project to other schools, or help to supervise and mentor pupils in other schools taking part.

Some pupils also spoke of experiencing physical tiredness as part of the practice and performances, although it was recognised that this was a challenge which was worthwhile in order to achieve the outputs desired.

There was also mixed feedback about the weekend sessions for the project. Some felt that the weekend sessions felt special and helped them to focus:

“You’re more on the ball at the weekend, because you haven’t been all day at school. If I had to go in at the weekend and do extra maths classes then, no! But because it was such an exciting project and it was a chance to make new friends, and was so interesting, it was okay to give up your time.” (Young Person)

In contrast, a small number of pupils also mentioned that they didn’t like giving up their free time at weekends to dedicate to the project (i.e. time away from the Xbox, etc.) and wished that the project had all been run during school hours, instead of evenings and weekends.

Some pupils also commented that they found the ‘talking’ parts of rehearsals less interesting than the hands-on work and wished there had been a different balance of time distribution:

“I think because there was both talking at the start and at the end or rehearsals. It would be best if there was slightly less talking - I just didn’t want to stop doing the activities - so, for me, less talking maybe.” (Young Person)

A suggestion was also made that seeing a film of the final performance from another school may have made pupils more aware of what the aims of the project were at the start and/or what the end point would be (however, this was not unanimous and others enjoyed not knowing what was to come):

“I did the voiceover and the whole concept and what was happening and I didn’t really understand it at that time, but by the end of the project you get it. You need to see it all come together before you really get it, I think.” (Young Person)

Feedback from Teachers

Feedback from teachers indicated that operational delivery in all schools was relatively smooth, with just a few hiccups caused mainly by third parties (i.e. in relation to insurance, rigging, health and safety audits, etc.). Once all logistical barriers had been cleared, however, the project ran largely as expected:

“Operationally, it was as expected. They [NTS team] were really good at explaining to us what it was going to involve and what it would physically run as and look like and it did.” (Teacher)

Excitement about the project was seen to have been sustained from the early taster sessions throughout the lifetime of the projects:

“As a team we realised very quickly that we were going to be able to do something great. We had the first taster session and I think from that, the excitement grew again, and how engaged our young people were. The excitement really just built from there.” (Teacher)

Teachers agreed that the rehearsals and build up to the project had been a positive experience, and again commented on the strong relationships built up between the adults in the creative team and the young people:

“Our kids still speak about it now - all of the different staff, everybody from the performers right through to the production team, they all built slightly different relationships with different children and it was gorgeous to be a part of.” (Teacher)

“At the end of the project the kids were actually crying because they had such a good relationship with the instructors.” (Teacher)

“The connection and trust was the main thing that struck me.” (Teacher)

“The relationships the young people seemed to develop, not just with the core team of people, but even those who came in for just a couple of days, they were building really good relationships.” (Teacher)

Staff commented that the project was delivered with a great deal of professionalism and commented on the significant skills and experience of the NTS and creative team and how this had made them feel at ease with the project. The fact that the project was run by artists of such a high calibre and that the project was associated with the National Theatre of Scotland was also seen to add to the ‘significance’ of the event for pupils:

“It was an amazing thing to be a part of and the kids really felt like they were part of a theatre company.” (Teacher)

Schools also commented on the flexibility of the project and the NTS and creative team in responding to the unique needs of each school:

“Straight away the team from NTS said that they would adapt it to make it our story and to make it work. That real open-minded collaborative approach was just amazing.” (Teacher)

This flexibility was especially welcomed in the non-mainstream school, where challenges brought about by the setting were all addressed quickly and creatively by the team:

“It was very much down to having the right people...all of the professional knowledge that they brought with them but also they were so flexible about our setting, and the needs of our setting.” (Teacher)

The fact that the project ran over 1 week instead of 3 at this site was also described as “non problematic” for the school staff and, indeed, the short programme perhaps helped to maintain pupil focus and engagement, it was felt.

Teachers also commented that they had been pleasantly surprised by the sustained engagement from pupils over the rehearsal periods:

“The rehearsal schedule was quite intense and I had doubts about whether the young folk would attend. But they did, and they were really immersed in it, and that was surprising to us as staff.” (Teacher)

The ‘after-show party’ in one school also gave pupils a chance to self-evaluate and the teachers were amazed by the maturity demonstrated by pupils in reflecting on their own success.

On improvements, for teachers, there were some comments that the rehearsals (and project overall) had been more resource intensive than they anticipated, especially in terms of the staff time required to be committed to the project:

“It was slightly different in terms of the commitment required and how big the project was. There was a lot more to it that I think we originally realised.” (Teacher)

Specifically, the investment required from staff at weekends and in the evenings was described as something which was challenging, and in one school, the school had paid for additional teaching assistant staff time which had been an unanticipated cost in real terms:

“Getting staff to come at night and at weekends was a challenge and some staff carried a particularly heavy time burden...Staff are generous with their time, but asking people to give up family time at weekend is maybe a step too far.” (Teacher)

The same school suggested that it was also very difficult for the lead contact in each school to ‘share the workload’ among a wider staff group, as the project required a single point of oversight in order to run well. Encouraging schools to have a wide team to support the project was seen as really important, right from the start and this could have been better communicated, it was suggested, i.e. having people always on call to help the National Theatre of Scotland team and a team of school staff who all link with the Producer/Director/Performers, etc.

Challenges around finding suitable/sufficient space within the school to both run rehearsals and deliver the final performance was also a challenge for some (but not all) schools. Indeed, one school suggested that better communication in the early stages of the project, around the space and time in different spaces that would be needed would have helped them to better plan in advance, e.g. to avoid clashes with after school clubs and competing demands on the school gym hall availability, etc.

One school also reflected on bureaucratic challenges faced by the school and explained that some of the red tape attached to the project may make it appear off-putting for some, however, if schools could more clearly see the end goal, these challenges could be put in context:

“I think we were the first school who used this model, and so we had to go in blind and hope for the best. It comes with a huge amount of logistical work and needing to pitch it to the Leadership Team, Council room lets, health and safety audits - if I hadn’t really fought for it, it would have fallen through as it does look on paper like a lot of work. Allowing people to see what the end goal looks like at the pitch stage would be helpful, I think.” (Teacher)

In just one school, comments were made that the selection process perhaps inadvertently screened out some of the pupils who may have benefited most, and they questioned if a different model of pupil-selection could be applied to ensure that those who would benefit most from the project might access it:

“The demand of what the project was maybe skimmed out some of the kids who would have benefitted most - we pretty much got kids who would usually be involved in school shows, and we opened it up to everyone but we filled it with kids who were most likely to make the required commitment...If it's a project about empowering young people, mental health, skills for work, but the project requires 3 intensive weeks of pupil and family commitment, and a family who are really supportive, it makes me wonder how you capture those who have caring responsibilities, or those with no support at home. There are some barriers to access that need to be broken down to get the outliers involved too... How can we get some of the young people who might have benefited most to take part? Some of the most excluded - the ones that you want to make the most impact with - I'm not sure how you get those pupils in.” (Teacher)

A final comment from teachers in relation to rehearsals and the build up to the final performance was that there were perceived to be “so many different people involved” that it became confusing and a bit overwhelming at times (with some lack of clarity over the specific roles of some individuals in the NTS/creative team).

Feedback from Artists

Feedback on the project delivery as a whole was also positive among the creative team. Having creative days in advance of going into schools was praised as a chance to explore ideas and prepare before going on site. The team also felt they were able to build on the learning from the first two schools to refine the model as the project went on, including better managing the staffing, resourcing and budgeting of aerial support staff. The delivery of the project over a concentrated period of time also made it easier to get the freelance aerial practitioners on board for the job.

The original project aims had largely been achieved and there was consensus that the 3 week model (and one week model in the secure school) had worked well:

“It felt manageable and exciting, and exciting for the young people as well to be able to see a production come together in such a short period of time.” (Designer)

The condensed model was seen as being particularly helpful for ensuring that young people remained focused and perhaps helped contribute to the high levels of engagement that were observed:

“If I think about it from the young people's perspectives, I think the project worked really well and seemed to get the best out of them because it's quite a short intensive burst. There's no opportunity to dip out and then back in, and that led to a commitment with the young people that was really noticeable.” (Designer)

The creative aspirations for the piece had also been achieved, it was felt, with no compromise on artistic vision and there was praise that NTS had supported such a challenging project which was difficult to deliver. In most schools, the inclusion and accessibility goals of the project had also been achieved:

“There were young people who perhaps culturally, economically or socially wouldn't have usually tried aerial. Also size - we had some young people involved who would maybe shy away from exercise because of their size and what was brilliant was that there was at least one person in every class who really was clinically obese but was choosing to do it

and giving themselves a challenge. That was exciting to empower them that way.”
(Artist)

The set had also met and in some ways exceeded expectations of the creative team. When the set came in, including the large round mirrors and small round mirrors and reflective materials, artists noted that pupils were able to watch their space being transformed through the arrangements, which was a powerful moment:

“It was literally a transformation of their school, which I think is the most beautiful and powerful thing about the work...within the space of three weeks their school becomes completely reimagined and flipped on its head.” (Designer)

On the whole, artists also felt supported by NTS and the wider team throughout the project delivery:

“We felt really supported and that everyone was working together as a team, which was great.” (Artist)

Artists were, however, perhaps the most critically reflective of operational delivery and several suggestions were made for how the project could have run more smoothly, with hindsight.

The main learning was that roles and responsibilities in the project could perhaps have been more clearly defined and it was noted that there was perhaps some confusion about roles and responsibilities early on which meant that some people were picking up tasks that were not entirely within their remit, and which possibly pushed them beyond their capacity. Specifically, there were views that the Production Manager was not in place early enough:

“The earlier we get started with aerial work preparation the better, including having a Production Manager a lot earlier, to alleviate some of the feelings of the project being ‘rushed’ close to the point of delivery.” (Artist)

Similarly, it was suggested that not all staff involved in the wider professional team were as invested as they could have been in the project and were not comfortable working within the school context. This presented some barriers/challenges to the Director and Design team in gaining the support that they needed consistently throughout the life of the project. Staff movement and changes in the team also meant that additional briefing was required at times, which was time consuming.

Because the Like Flying was a particularly complex performance in terms of its production (i.e. three performance routes, multiple performance sites, etc.), frustrations also crept in with regards to timing of when different staff should have become involved. Some early design work put into the project at the start of the commission lay redundant for a period of time before other staff were appointed and there was perhaps some unnecessary repetition of some preparatory activities and some frustration at the slowness of the process at the start. There was a sense that contracts could have been better coordinated. In particular, there were views that the Designer held a heavier burden of work at the early stages of the project, for example doing work of the Production Manager or Stage Manager, which is not typically part of the Designer’s role.

The preparation required to deliver a project that involved aerial work was also perhaps underestimated, in one school in particular. Problems with communication between the school, NTS and the third party company overseeing the school building had been confused and a lack of face-to-face contact in the build up to the project in one of the later schools meant that they

were perhaps less prepared and had undertaken less of the pre-project planning than was required.

Other observations included that there were points where artists perhaps felt disconnected from the group of young people due to having so many different roles/tasks to perform, as well as the fact that the slightly smaller production team in the final school meant that everyone's time was stretched.

Finally, there was also some disappointment among artists that the project had not always reached the widest group of young people possible across the four sites. While the invitations were 'open' and there was no formal audition process, there was still a sense that some screening or filtering of participants had perhaps taken place:

“...the school does perhaps chase up people who they know will do it...Not all schools - I felt one school really did listen to us when we asked to reach a broader audience [but] I think schools don't have the time to organise that...they take the path of least resistance.” (Director)

Final Performances

Feedback from Pupils

For pupils, the final performances were all described in very positive terms, with many simply commenting that the only low point attached to performances was that it marked the end of the project, and many simply did not want the experience to end.

Among the young people, feedback collected by the creative team on the final day check ins captured how pupils' felt ahead of their first performances. Young people reported a wide range of emotions but the dominant view was one of excitement:



Overwhelmingly, pupils also reported that they were looking forward to showcasing their achievements, despite the nerves attached to doing so:

“Excited but feeling bit of pressure doing it in front of real people.” (Young Person)

Consistent with pupil expectations reported at the baseline stage, several comments were made after the performances by pupils related to the uniqueness of the experience:

“[I] will never get to do something like this again.” (Young Person)

Feedback from Teachers

Teachers also commented that the final performances were a high point of the project and had been incredibly professional in their delivery (including access to BSL interpretation/audience liaison) and of a standard unparalleled in the school environment.

Some teaching staff (at all levels) had been surprised at their own reactions to the power of the performances:

“If I’m being totally honest, we didn’t realise the impact it would have on us all and it was just phenomenal. The final production was just beyond anything any of us could have ever imagined it would have been...The final product was beyond phenomenal.”
(Teacher)

“We hadn’t realised how powerful and emotional the interactive performance would be. It also allowed us to see our school in a different light too.” (Teacher)

“The final shows during the last week were also a high point and were very emotional. It was amazing to see the whole show come together and to share in the sense of achievement with the pupils.” (Teacher)

“I cried and the Headteacher cried and we were just blown away by it. To see the young people do what they were doing was just brilliant.” (Teacher)

Teachers also commented on the powerful emotional responses produced among the young people themselves:

“The impact of it far exceeded what we would expect. The young people were quite moved by the piece, and were quite moved about being involved with it, with lots of tears and crying on the final day of the performance and that’s not something we usually see with a school project - that kind of emotional investment.” (Teacher)

The excitement of the final performances was also not restricted only to those who took part, but whole-school ripple effects were explicitly noted in two different schools:

“The whole school noticed and were interested - some children came along to performances to support their friends as well. People were excited by it and wanted to buy tickets.” (Teacher)

“There was an aura that something exciting was happening. The general feeling in the school was definitely of excitement, even though not many people in the wider school got involved. The school ethos and public persona was affected by it positively.” (Teacher)

Some teachers commented that they felt they would like to have showcased things better and indicated that they felt unsure where responsibility for publicity of the final performances sat (with one school commenting that they did not want to ‘step on the toes’ of NTS in sharing information about the project and performances on social media platforms which had constrained their own publicity activity):

“It would have been nice to have had even more of a community feel to it - I feel it could have been better advertised in the local press in the community to allow even more people to see performances.” (Teacher)

Some expressed more general disappointment that there were limited places/tickets available due to the interactive nature of the performance. Being able to have reserved tickets for the school to invite guests of particular interest was also suggested, i.e. for the local Director of Education, local Councillors, etc.

Some pupils did also comment that they would like to have shared their achievements more widely or had more family members see the performances. Many expressed that they would also like to share the final films with relatives, carers and friends (but were unsure if this would be facilitated by the schools or NTS at the time that the research was carried out).

Audience Feedback

Although it was not possible within the constraints of the project to canvass the views of parents/carers and other audience members, feedback received vicariously from teachers suggested that they were also mainly thrilled with and by the final performances:

“The absolute joy that everybody got out of the performances was amazing - pupils and parents as well.” (Teacher)

“A lot of parents who came to see it simply couldn’t believe that their children were taking part!” (Teacher)

“We got loads of Tweets from parents after, and emails sent into the school which were really good and all very much saying that their kids had really enjoyed it and it had been really beneficial for them.” (Teacher)

“A Twitter comment from a local member of the community described it as “The best show I have ever seen!”” (Teacher)

“...when we showcased on the Saturday, we had parents, carers, social workers and local politicians and staff family members because they were really interested to see it as well. The feedback was incredible.” (Teacher)

Teachers at only one school commented that parental engagement had been variable and that this had perhaps been a disappointment (which it was recognised was outwith the gift of the NTS team to fix):

“Some kids had nobody who came to see them and others had someone at every performance. One of the parents also brought food to one of the rehearsals and was very interested and engaged, but sadly that was not across the board, not for all parents.” (Teacher)

In another school, the teacher commented that their Leadership Team had all attended the final performances and were really struck by the power of the performance in terms of motivation, confidence and the sense of belonging that was evoked. The Leadership Team was consequently trying to recapture and recreate the experience for other children in the future.

Feedback from Artists

The final performances were again cited as a high point of the project among artists:

“Seeing the young people pull it out of the bag like that, it’s a phenomenal thing.” (Director)

There was perhaps some disappointment among the creative team that the final performances were not better attended, particularly in one school, and (similar to comments from teachers) there were suggestions that the performances could have been better marketed. It was recognised that this may not be isolated to the Like Flying project and that some wider cultural hierarchies may exist in relation to the types of work that get championed and the types that do not (with annexing of particular types of performance). Like Flying should, however, have been treated as an artwork for the public and more could have been done by the NTS team in collaboration with schools to promote the final performances and attract the widest audiences possible, it was felt.

Overall, however, the final performances were described in very positive terms by pupils, teachers and artists alike, the main frustrations being that pupils and artists in particular had wished to share the achievements more widely.

Impacts and Outcomes

Impacts for Pupils

The main impacts for pupils were consistent across all four sites.

Several comments were made across the schools that the project had been particularly beneficial for helping pupils develop **bonding and teamwork skills**, not only with other pupils, but with school staff and with the NTS/creative team:

“We had each other to remind us that we weren’t doing it alone - you were always with someone so never felt alone.” (Young Person)

One pupil, in the pre-performance feedback commented:

“What I really enjoyed about this was the fact that everybody here has been a really good team...This is like a big happy family of sorts...and I don’t like crying but I know I’m going to cry tonight because I am going to miss all of this and everyone here.” (Young Person)

The creative team also observed strong bonds between the pupils and a sense of teamwork which was reflected in their performances:

“To achieve the collaboration that we did, and to see the young people working as one really had meaning for me.” (Director)

The **spirit of collegiality** was also noted by several participants across different sites, and there was shared ownership expressed by pupils and staff in ensuring that everyone stayed positive and engaged:

“When someone wasn’t feeling great, we were all able to bring them up and keep them positive. We all managed to uplift ourselves and each other.” (Young Person)

“It made me a better person - asking people if they were okay and things.” (Young Person)

Pupils consistently reported that they had not only met new people but had consolidated or strengthened existing **friendships** within the school community:

“I have enjoyed this quite a bit as I’ve got to meet people that I thought I wouldn’t talk to and I’ve grown closer to people that I have spoken to before.” (Young Person)

“[I] have a closer bond with people who were already my friends and made new friends too.” (Young Person)

“The amount of teamwork and effort and new friends I’ve made - people that I was never ever going to be friends with, but I made friends with them through this project.” (Young Person)

Some also indicated that they felt they had “few” or “no” friends before the project and this had now changed. Teachers also endorsed the view that teamwork and friendships had been a key outcome of the project, with longevity again noted for some:

“Seeing how pupils developed from start to finish - they went from fearful to carefree. Their confidence really grew and the group bonded so well - so much so that they continue to lead get together sessions themselves.” (Teacher)

“The pupils have benefited in a number of ways and are still a tight group even after a number of months.” (Teacher)

“A sense of community and sense of belonging - they really felt that they belonged to something.” (Teacher)

Although mentioned by fewer pupils explicitly, the project had also resulted in **positive mental health impacts** for some (alongside the general feelings of pride and increased self-esteem and confidence that were more widely reported):

“My mental health was going down with problems at school and problems outside of school, but this has made me a lot happier.” (Young Person)

“When someone was down, we were all there to bring each other up. We all managed to uplift ourselves and all come together.” (Young Person)

“Being in the air is just so different and it makes you focus on everything that is going on in your head at the time.” (Young Person)

This was also endorsed by teachers in the four sites, and one teacher linked this explicitly to the **safe spaces** that had been created by the creative team:

“I would say that it also helped with mental health, and some children disclosed anxieties and other worries that we weren’t aware of before. The space obviously made them feel really safe and allowed them to share with each other and with us.” (Teacher)

Pupils also commented on improved **physical fitness** as a result of taking part:

“I liked it, definitely more active, way too lazy before this.” (Young Person)

“You’re putting your body through so much more than you do when you’re just sitting around. It was such a physical challenge, but not in a bad way.” (Young Person)

Importantly, young people also noted that they had become more aware of their physical strengths and limitations and had learned through the project to better respond to their own bodies:

“I learned to listen to my body and what I can do and also to have the confidence to say when I just can’t do it.” (Young Person)

Several pupils spoke of **pride** and feeling not only incredibly proud of themselves but also of others:

“I’m just proud of us all.” (Young Person)

Teachers also reported that they experienced pride in their pupils, and also reported vicariously that parents and carers of the young people involved had been proud:

“Many parents stated how proud they were of their son/ daughter.” (Teacher)

Several young people spoke of an increase in their **self-confidence** and **self-belief**:

“I’m thankful that it’s happened because I feel more confident in myself.” (Young Person)

Several teachers concurred that the growth in pupils’ **confidence** was a tangible outcome:

“The most enjoyable part for me was watching the pupils develop their skills and confidence.” (Teacher)

Several young people also reported an increase in their **self-understanding**. Pupils reported that they learned more about themselves, learned that they could be accepted for being themselves, and learned to be more comfortable in their own bodies:

“I am more comfortable to be ‘me’ around other people.” (Young Person)

“[Like Flying] helped me to explore my gender identity.” (Young Person)

“I learned that I can be whoever I want to be - no judgement - we are all accepted.” (Young Person)

Similarly, pupils reported feeling more relaxed around other pupils and around school staff and other adults involved in the project.

The **breaking down of barriers between staff and pupils** was also noted by the teachers who provided feedback, with all noting that there was excitement about the artists coming into school again (both for rehearsals and the film viewings).

Pupils spoke of feeling a new or renewed **interest in the arts and in performance**, and some explicitly stated that they had taken up roles in other creative or performance projects since taking part in Like Flying:

“This is such an unusual project. It’s something that no one else has had an opportunity to do before and it has given me confidence to go on with future projects.” (Young Person)

Teachers endorsed this **uptake in new opportunities**, which they explicitly linked to increased self-confidence developed through Like Flying:

“[One pupil] has grown in confidence and has become involved in a number of drama projects in school. They recently performed in an excerpt of “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” at the school’s summer showcase performance. [Another pupil] has become more confident in himself and his identity. He put himself forward for next year’s school show and is less anxious about how other people perceive him.” (Teacher)

Teachers in three schools explicitly mentioned that the project had opened up thoughts about different **career pathways** for some of the young people too:

“It’s also about looking forward - not just about confidence with this project, but how they can transfer it to other aspects of their life and careers too.” (Teacher)

The project was also described by teachers as being **inclusive** for pupils with a broad range of interests and skill sets. This included young people who were previously shy or reluctant to be in audience facing roles embracing the idea of performance:

“It was really good to see children who wouldn’t usually get involved really throwing themselves into it.” (Teacher)

An unexpected benefit for staff was that young people who chose non-performance roles (i.e. technical placements and those who helped with design, direction and filming) had been fully integrated into the project in a way that they hadn’t foreseen:

“I thought that the people doing ‘placement’ [non-performance] roles wouldn’t be part of the group, but actually then ended up sometimes being leaders of the group - they were not peripheral, but all benefitted equally.” (Teacher)

Teachers again reported that the level of **pupil interest and engagement** had remained high throughout the projects:

“One of my worries was whether they could sustain their interest over time, but they did.” (Teacher)

Teachers commented on **resilience** as a key skill that had been developed via the project and shone through especially for some of the more typically marginalised young people:

“What was incredibly clear was that all of the pupils at first looked at the flying aspects and felt that they couldn’t do it. It just looked too hard. But they all started off in the same boat - no one had done it before and they all felt they couldn’t do it, but over the weeks, they all learned. From that they all really learned resilience.” (Teacher)

“One boy in particular showed incredible resilience. He really struggled with the upside down moves and was close to tears one day and he kept trying and trying and at the end of the show he was actually doing it! It really gave him something! And great for him to see that resilience pays off.” (Teacher)

A small number of pupils focused on the **practical skills** they had learned as being the main benefits, e.g. how to clip in harnesses, etc. Several pupils made more generic comments that the project had helped them to realise how much they could achieve more broadly:

“I think it just made me realise that you can achieve a lot.” (Young Person)

Teachers also fed back that they saw some of their pupils in a different light.

The one area where pupils felt that project had been least impactful was on giving them transferable skills for other school subject areas, etc. Indeed, some comments were made that the project may have interfered slightly with study time available for other subjects, i.e. late nights after rehearsals made it difficult to fit in homework for other subjects, etc.:

“It takes up a lot of your time because you’re so focussed on it all of the time. And it’s not really linked to maths or English - maybe just drama. But it was good to have something not academic to focus on, to be honest.” (Young Person)

During pupil feedback sessions following the film viewings, the main sentiments expressed were again those of self-pride, self-achievement and joy at what had been achieved. While some pupils were embarrassed to see themselves on film, others welcomed being able to see the performance ‘as a whole’, which was something they missed out on at the time, due to having specific, isolated roles. In one school, pupils commented that watching the films made them feel “relaxed” and brought back happy memories which put them “back in a good place.”

Impacts for Teaching Staff and Schools

Across the four schools, there was also evidence that the project had been impactful on teachers, primarily by **widening their exposure to different art forms** and making them more confident to engage in different performance mediums. Teachers had been challenged by the project in a positive way and felt that they had tested themselves to their own personal benefit:

“The project was unlike anything that I had ever taken part in...it took me out of my comfort zone but I feel I have learned new skills in the process and it was worth it to see how much the pupils got out of the experience.” (Teacher)

Staff who held positions in schools where they were likely to be in charge of future school productions also explicitly commented that their involvement with Like Flying, and exposure to the NTS team and creative team, had been beneficial in teaching them **production skills** and giving them ideas for how to better manage performance production going forwards:

“I personally learned a lot about events management and operational management from working with the production manager - I now feel much more confident about putting on events now that I've seen the way that NTS do it!” (Teacher)

“I have gained experience in project management and partnership working and I will definitely be able to transfer these skills to other aspects of my job. There were quite a number of newly qualified teachers who took part the project and I think that this experience will enthuse them to take part in or organise whole school projects themselves.” (Teacher)

There was also evidence from staff that the projects had inspired more senior members of the school leadership teams to **view the arts in a more positive light** and to be more actively involved in seeking out and pursuing other similar experiences for pupils:

“It inspired a lot of senior management and other staff to see the value in drama and the arts.” (Teacher)

All schools reported that their involvement in the project had made them want to pursue more artistic and creative opportunities (either with NTS or others) going forwards:

“As a school we will definitely be interested and more likely to take part in theatre and dance opportunities.” (Teacher)

The non-mainstream school indicated that the one of the main impacts and outcomes had been the relationship that they now felt they had with NTS and the wider creative team:

“The relationships we've built are really a long-term outcome of the project.” (Teacher)

The same school reported that the staff had benefited from 'having fun' and working with pupils on something that had no barriers and commented that this had been facilitated by the ethos of safety and trust that the NTS and creative team had brought:

“We knew our kids were safe and trusted the adults and so we were able to relax and enjoy the project too.” (Teacher)

Similarly, comments were made that the projects had helped staff to build better relationships with their own pupils:

“I don't think staff learned new skills, but the majority of staff did probably gain improved or better relationships with young people, especially in the after school work.” (Teacher)

Teachers also reported **benefits for the wider school community**:

“The project created a buzz in the school at the time and has raised the expectations for the wider achievement of pupils. It allowed the school to open up to the wider community and this is something we would like to build on.” (Teacher)

Overall, teachers felt that staff had benefitted positively and commented that the experience would last with them for a long time:

“It will go down as a substantial memory in my career - it is absolutely up there! And the Headteacher said that he will remember it for decades to come as well. We are entirely appreciative of it!” (Teacher)

Impacts for the Creative Team

Artists also spoke of feeling a sense of self-pride for what they had helped the young people to achieve, as well as simply benefitting from **working with young people as co-creators**:

“A particular high point over the whole project was working with the kids and watching them have control and take ownership of the space, and of themselves as performers and to have a new relationship with the school which felt empowering.” (Designer)

“I’m very proud of Like Flying and very proud of everybody who contributed to that very difficult process.” (Director)

Working with the secure school had also been particularly beneficial for artists, allowing them to explore different ways of interpreting behaviour and conduct among young people and to explore how projects such as Like Flying could be adapted to meet environments with very unique rhythms and patterns.

One of the main impacts for the creative team was also the **experience of working together with other professionals** and learning through observation of one another’s practices:

“Being able to watch the Director work with young people in that context [schools] highlighted the importance of artists working in participatory contexts who have experience of working in participatory contexts. To watch the Director work with young people was phenomenal. The practices that they introduced to the group and the way that they were with the young people, and to see the positive impact of that was great. The same with All or Nothing - just to see what can be achieved when you bring that amount of expertise into the room.” (Designer)

Working with NTS had also been a key benefit to artists, including the support and structure of a national theatre company behind the work. Artists also commented that, for all organisations coming in to work with NTS (especially small organisations) it can be daunting at first, but confidence working with NTS increased among the creative team as a result of taking part:

“It was really brilliant to be involved in a project of this scale and being able to work with the artists and technical team, it was fantastic to be part of.” (Artist)

Overall, the feelings of pride, respect and teamwork were reciprocated by the pupils, teachers and creative team and the collaboration was seen to have been mutually beneficial for all.

Conclusions

Main emergent themes

The 2022/23 Like Flying project in schools received unanimously positive feedback from the young people, teachers and artists involved. A number of cross-cutting themes emerged from the feedback including:

- **Strength of relationships** - both between the young people themselves, the young people and the creative team, between school staff and the creative team and between teachers and young people too. Relationships with NTS were also described in very positive terms and there was consensus that participants both offered support and felt supported.
- **Pushing the boundaries of what can be achieved** - both personally and professionally, by being resilient, taking chances and working collaboratively with others. This was again evidenced by young people, teachers and the creative team who took part, who had all faced and embraced different challenges of their own.
- **Seeing things differently** - both in terms of young people seeing themselves and others in a more positive light, recognising limits and achievements, feeling more confident and having a better understanding of themselves AND physically viewing their school environments in a more positive light as a result of the creative transformations that took place. Similar learning also occurred for teachers and the creative team had a chance to realise success with a participatory piece in a non-conventional setting.

The project appears to have been successful in reaching a large number of pupils (who all remained very engaged throughout), including pupils who may not otherwise be exposed to artistic opportunities in school and some of those who may not usually engage with such projects. There was clear evidence that Like Flying had given young people a chance to try new experiences, had increased their confidence and self-belief and had given them motivation to pursue similar opportunities in the future (as well as learning transferable teamwork and communication skills for the future). Teachers had benefitted in their own professional development and understanding of what could be achieved creatively with the young people and wider school communities benefitted from the buzz created by the project. Artists too benefited from the experience, in terms of developing and consolidating existing skills, collaborating with professional peers and working with young audiences who displayed energy and were genuinely invested in the project.

Learning for the Future

The main learning from the project which may help with planning/delivering similar projects in the future includes:

- Pupils and teachers may have benefitted from having a better understanding of the overall aims of the project from the start to ensure focus and manage expectations around the input required from all those who took part;
- Young people struggled to understand their own role in relation to the wider project at the point of completion and would perhaps have liked a better understanding of the overall aims of the project and to have had a more holistic view of the performance/piece at an earlier stage (which some did not appreciate until *after* the project was complete);
- Future projects could make clearer connections between creative work and the learning and consolidation of transferable skills which may assist with improving attainment, as

this was not directly observable from the current project. While engaging in creative arts was undoubtedly valuable for the young people and teachers who took part, the full potential of the project in this regard was perhaps not fully realised, (due to time constraints and lack of opportunities to reflect and make such connections);

- For future similar projects, clarity over who has responsibility for publicity and exposure of the project (especially any final performances) may also be helpful, including who should take a lead in any social media presence to help better engage families and communities and make performances truly public;
- There may be a need to clearly name and define people's roles early on in such projects and ensure that everyone is properly recognised for their contributions and to ensure that integrity is upheld and people are not working beyond capacity. There may also be a need to better consider how production works in participatory models;
- Despite a significant volume of evaluation data being gathered across the four schools, there were some gaps in the feedback that was achieved. Most notably, there were gaps around teachers' expectations for the project pre-participation, as well as feedback from parents/carers and wider audiences. While plans were put in place to achieve this, lack of cooperation from schools in facilitating this data collection (due mainly to time and competing demands) should be considered in planning for any similar projects in the future to ensure that evaluations are as robust as possible.

Conclusion

The positive feedback received from all who took part in the Like Flying project highlights the value of professional, high standard, well made and well produced performances within schools and work made with and for young people. The fact that everyone involved gave so generously of their time was a reflection of the shared recognition and appreciation of the inherent value of the project. The project created a space for creativity that was welcomed by all who took part and the experiences of those involved were described as unexpected, unparalleled and totally unforgettable.