

PRIMARY TAKE THE LEAD AT THE OLD VIC



**EVALUATION
2024-2025**

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With generous thanks to all
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PRIMARY TAKE THE LEAD

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PRIMARY TAKE THE LEAD

Primary Take the Lead is created for Year Six students and draws on The Old Vic's expertise as a theatrical institution to support young people's development. It enables students to take ownership over their next steps, including supporting them with the transition from primary to secondary education. Using theatre techniques and drama practices the project enables students to develop five core skills: self-belief, communication, teamwork, problem solving and self-management.

The project is based on our highly successful Take the Lead programme for secondary and sixth form students. [Find out more about Take the Lead for older students.](#)

The programme consists of:

- A launch workshop for teachers with start-up activities for students
- A full day in-school workshop for Year Six students
- A final CPD session for teachers
- Supporting resources to extend the learning in the classroom.

Primary Take the Lead has three key aims:

- To support young people with the transition from primary to secondary school by focusing on five core skills, including: self-belief, communication, teamwork, problem solving and self-management
- To support the mental health and wellbeing of young people through engagement with the arts
- To nurture and support the development of a network of creatively confident teachers.

'Thank you so much for your work. We thoroughly enjoyed all aspects of the course and workshop, and we look forward to working with you in the future'

Primary Take the Lead Teacher

Our renowned education and community projects inspire learning and connection. Each year we work with over 6,000 people of all ages, from five to 100+, in London and beyond, as well as a further 25,000 through our online learning platform, The Hub. We reach people at all stages of life to support skills development, employment prospects and wellbeing.

Our programmes build community cohesion, open up access to the arts and develop the emerging theatre professionals of tomorrow. We do this through a range of initiatives, including free theatre tickets, workshops delivered at The Old Vic, in schools, in the community and online, and through innovative employability and training programmes.

Our programmes are free to access and focus on engaging with communities who are underrepresented in the theatre industry, or who have limited access to it.

'I enjoyed all the activities because we were able to share our own minds'

Primary Take the Lead Student



EDUCATION & COMMUNITY AT THE OLD VIC

RECRUITMENT AND CRITERIA

Applications for the programme opened in Feb 2025 for seven weeks and were open to all state primary schools based within the M25.

Teachers were asked to complete a short online application form, and each school could apply for a maximum of four Year Six classes to take part in the project (depending on their school's form entry size).

The programme aimed to work with young people who have limited access to the arts, with particular interest in working with young people who are from backgrounds underrepresented in theatre, such as young people from Global Majority backgrounds, young people with access requirements and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

The application form asked teachers why they wanted to take part and how their students would benefit from participating.

We advertised Primary Take the Lead on The Old Vic website. The Education & Community team conducted targeted outreach to primary schools across London. We also shared the opportunity via The Old Vic's Take Part mailing list. We received applications from 55 primary schools across 18 different London boroughs.

We selected six primary schools to take part in the programme

- **Ark Conway Primary Academy** (Hammersmith & Fulham)
- **Crawford Primary School** (Southwark)
- **Forty Hill CofE Primary School** (Enfield)
- **Kender Primary School** (Lewisham)
- **Kingswood Primary School** (Lambeth)
- **Tudor Primary School** (Barnet)

We worked with **10 Year Six groups**, reaching **262 students** in total.

'I really enjoyed this workshop as it was really fun and educational, and it was overall a great experience. Thank you'

Primary Take the Lead Student

PROGRAMME

DELIVERY

Two experienced facilitators attended two days of training before delivering the 10 workshops across London. They were supported throughout by the Primary Education Manager.

Launch workshop for teachers' event

The two-hour event offered an opportunity for teachers to network with other primary schools, learn more about the project, and participate in a practical workshop offering creative exercises to try with their students ahead of the in-school session.

In-school workshops

The in-school workshops took place between Mon 09–Fri 27 Jun 2025. Using theatre techniques and drama practices the one-off workshops enabled students to explore the theme of transition and change.

The workshop consisted of a two-hour session in the morning focusing on drama techniques including: vocal and physical warm-ups, improvisation and devising, while exploring the five core skills. This was followed by a two-hour workshop in the afternoon, which gave participants a series of challenges to overcome using the five core skills. This session resulted in an interactive storytelling session, where students performed in front of their peers.

Teacher CPD

The final teacher CPD took place following the in-school workshops. The two-hour session consisted of exploring practical follow-up exercises that teachers might wish to deliver to their students after the workshop, as a way of incorporating more drama into their classrooms. All teachers were offered a complimentary ticket to watch [*Girl from the North Country*](#) after the CPD.

Moving Schools handbook

To further support students, we collaborated with two secondary schools, Eltham Hill School from the London borough of Greenwich and Kingsdale Foundation School from the London borough of Southwark to create a Moving Schools handbook. The handbook offered:

- A reminder of the ways of working from the workshop (Be Brave, Be Kind, Be Curious)
- A reminder of the five core skills and how these could be used when moving to secondary school (self-belief, communication, teamwork, problem solving and self-management)
- Advice from a secondary school headteacher, a Year Seven teacher and Year Seven students
- Ideas and suggestions on how to make new friends (including conversation starters)
- Exercises for calming anxiety and nerves
- Suggestions on what to do if worried about something regarding moving school.

'Fantastic project — so glad our school could be part of it'

Primary Take the Lead Teacher

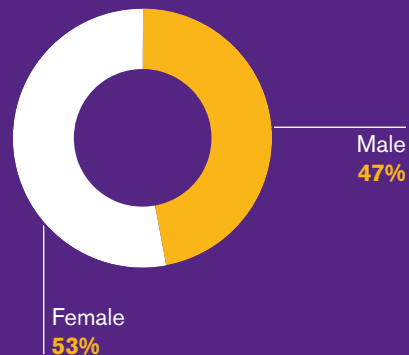
Teachers were asked to complete Equal Opportunities Monitoring Forms on behalf of the students taking part in the workshop.

AGE

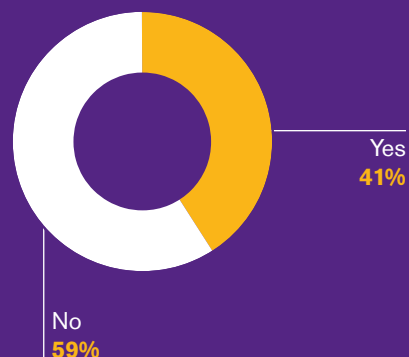
100%

of students were aged 10–11

GENDER



FREE SCHOOL MEALS



DISABILITY

19%

of the students who took part across the schools were considered to have a disability including:

Hearing (e.g. deafness or partial hearing)

Learning, concentrating or remembering (e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia)

Mental health (e.g. anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder)

Mobility (e.g. difficulty walking short distances, climbing stairs, lifting and carrying)

Social or behavioural issues (e.g. neuro diverse conditions such as autism, attention deficit disorder or asperger's syndrome)

Stamina or breathing difficulty

Vision (e.g. blindness or partial sight)

ETHNICITY

2%	Arab
1%	Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi
2%	Asian or Asian British: Chinese
3%	Asian or Asian British: Indian
3%	Asian or Asian British: Pakistani
2%	Asian or Asian British: Other
28%	Black or Black British: African
11%	Black or Black British: Caribbean
4%	Latin American
2%	Mixed: Black African and White
2%	Mixed: Black Caribbean and White
1%	Mixed: Asian and White
5%	Mixed: Middle East and North Africa
2%	Mixed: Other
8%	White: British, English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish
5%	White: Other
17%	Prefer not to say
2%	None of the above backgrounds

Teachers specified: Albanian, Czech, Mixed Race, Portuguese, specifics not recorded, three Arabic countries, many of the children are not identified with any ethnic group

'It was a great experience; we need more workshops like this'

Primary Take the Lead Student

STUDENT INFORMATION

WORKSHOP

Having taken part in this workshop, I now feel confident with my...

TEAMWORK SKILLS

83%

strongly agreed or agreed they felt confident working as part of a group

PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS

73%

strongly agreed or agreed they felt confident to solve problems

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

71%

strongly agreed or agreed they felt confident talking about their feelings and worries

SELF-MANAGEMENT SKILLS

71%

strongly agreed or agreed they felt confident in their abilities and how best to use them

SELF-BELIEF SKILLS

69%

strongly agreed or agreed they felt confident in themselves

'I really enjoyed it because it made me feel very confident'

Primary Take the Lead Student

ENGAGEMENT

Have you been to The Old Vic before?



WORKSHOP

Talking part in this workshop made me feel...
(able to select more than one response)

INSPIRED	49%
CONFIDENT	45%
HAPPY	42%
INCLUDED	38%
EXCITED	31%
PROUD	24%
OKAY	21%

96%

strongly agreed or agreed that the workshop leaders were excellent

87%

strongly agreed or agreed that overall, this workshop was excellent



WHAT THREE WORDS BEST DESCRIBE
THIS WORKSHOP?

surprising neutral inclusive
exciting brave
adventurous active teamwork
brilliant
inspiring **amazing**
motivational educational
encouraging
awesome imaginative
kindness engaging **best**
unique happy **fun** decent long
cool included creative
new caring **interactive**
enthusiastic
curious excellent
good confident wonderful
funny inspirational
learning including **kind**
useful aspirational **helpful**
calm **enjoyable** nice okay
interesting great

PROJECT

100%

of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that:

As a result of this workshop, my group/ students have learned something new about communicating successfully

As a result of this workshop, my group/ students have learned something new about problem solving

As a result of this workshop, my group/ students have learned something new about teamwork

As a result of this workshop, my group/ students have learned something new about self-management

As a result of this workshop, my group/ students have learned something new about self-belief

As a result of this project, my group/ students' confidence has improved

This project has had a positive impact on my group/students' mental health and wellbeing

This project has supported my group/ students with the move to secondary school

As a result of this project, I now have greater confidence using drama activities in my classroom

The launch CPD session before the workshop was excellent

The follow up teacher CPD session after the workshop was excellent

I am now more likely to bring students/ groups to another Old Vic project

Overall, this project was excellent

As a result of this project, my group/ students' confidence has improved.

STUDENTS' NEEDS

100%

of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that:

The workshop leaders adapted to my group/students' needs

Below were some of their reasons:

'They were really kind and patient and never rushed the student let them go at their own pace'

'They helped build children's self-belief without judgement or pressure'

'They were aware of those with SEND who needed more time to process'

'[They] listened to staff present and also reacted appropriately when challenges arose'

'Interestingly, [we had] two different classes and the facilitators adapted to the profile and needs of each'.

'Working on this project has really opened my eyes to some of the children's needs that I might not normally notice in the classroom. It's also given me practical strategies I can use in my everyday teaching, which has been incredibly helpful'

Primary Take the Lead Teacher

TEACHER OUTCOMES

PRE-PROJECT RESOURCES

100%

of teachers used the pre-project resources

Below were some of their reasons:

‘[We used them] to introduce The Old Vic and what to expect’

‘It was a positive experience as the children were prepared for the session’

‘We used them to encourage the children to be open and honest about their feelings about starting schools’

‘They linked so well with our borough-provided sessions and really reinforced key points’

‘The booklets linked so well with our established transition workshops’

‘Reinforced work we had already done. Emotions (role on the wall) and added new exercises’.

SCALE

On a scale of 0–100, how likely would you be to recommend this project to a colleague? The average score was:

100%

0 (not likely at all)

100 (extremely likely)

On a scale of 0–100, to what extent do you feel that The Old Vic is an inclusive environment? The average score was:

98%

0 (not inclusive at all)

100 (very inclusive)

SUPPORT

Is drama well supported in your school?



50%
Yes



50%
No

INSPIRE

Complete this sentence, this project has inspired my students to...

believe in themselves.

explore drama with enthusiasm, express themselves more confidently, and collaborate creatively with their peers.

think at a deeper level about their emotions.

not be afraid and to see change as potentially a good thing, an opportunity.

be brave, be kind and be curious — given them a route map.

be brave! Be themselves! Be resilient!

‘I enjoyed the experience and gained insight into how to support students in developing empathy for others’

Primary Take the Lead Teacher

CASE STUDY SUSAN

'I think the fact that we're working with an organisation like The Old Vic is pretty special. And I know as a school, we were all delighted to get that because obviously The Old Vic is renowned for being a centre of excellence for drama and theatre.'

Susan is a teacher at a primary school in London. Her colleague decided to apply for Primary Take the Lead as they felt it would benefit their students before they transition into secondary school, and they haven't seen any other similar free opportunities for primary school students, *'in my experience of working in primary, it's like gold dust, you know? It's very rare... I do think that actually primary is really ripe for development for drama and from early years, because there's a huge amount of need and there's a huge amount that drama can do to help to benefit primary. So, you know, just the more the better'*.

Susan highlighted that the students thoroughly enjoyed the whole day and were, *'very excited to take part, they really enjoy working out of class in a way that is practical, but also, I think they enjoyed working on the different elements of drama because it was, for some of them, very different. They haven't done that kind of learning before'*.

She also explained the importance of supporting the students with their transition into secondary school, *'it was a really useful process because it comes at a time when you can't ignore what's happening... The transition is coming to them... It's really in their face that they're going to be moving. And so, I think some fear sometimes or apprehension is kicking in, they're not going to say anything. So, to have a workshop that kind of obliquely deals with things like that is really important'*. Susan explained that the core skills the facilitators taught the students in the workshop will stay with them, *'I know (the facilitator) was talking about self-management... I think having that language and having been introduced to those themes and concepts — "be brave, be kind, be curious" that actually supports them in a not obvious way, because they don't need to know all the time that they're going to be transferring because they know they are'*.



When asked if the project supported the students' wellbeing, Susan explained, *'I think it did help their wellbeing because they're doing something that's different, and they were working together in groups. Also, some of them were able to show a side of themselves they hadn't shown before to the rest of the class, and I think that would be important for them, because that hopefully gave them some confidence as well in terms of going forward'*. She also highlighted an example of one student during the improvisation exercise, *'we had one boy become a boulder, and the group he was with is not his friendship group, and there have been struggles to integrate him into the class. But at that moment he was the central person in that improvisation. And the other children worked around him. I thought that was a very big moment for him in a way, because he was integral and integrated into that group. And, I think that experience will have helped him, even if it's just marginally. Then when he goes out to the playground, he's done that with those children and they've experienced that together'*.



Susan was extremely impressed with The Old Vic facilitators and added, *'having outside experts in is so important for children because they're getting to learn with different people... They work in a different way from us. They talk to the children in a different way from us. That's very freeing for the children, I think... They were very calm and they established themselves as the leaders without having to in any way raise a voice'*.

Not only were the students supported by the project, but Susan spoke about how her and her colleagues were also able to learn. She especially enjoyed the CPD session led by the Education Manager, *'just to kind of actually take part in them myself. So, then you realise what you're asking children to do, which was great. It makes you have to think again about when you ask children to do stuff because you've had to do it, and how does it feel for you to do it, so you realise what you're asking of them. So, I really enjoyed the CPD. I thought Tom and his colleagues led it really well. It was very enjoyable. We learned a lot'*. Susan currently runs a weekly drama club that some children attend and she said she is going to bring some of the activities she learnt into those sessions.

Finally, when asked if she would recommend the programme, Susan answered: *'Oh yes, 100%. Because your children are going to get a whole day working with really experienced practitioners who are going to bring them a great day of drama... you can't quantify what children always learn. But you can see when they learn, when they're engaging. And that's what it gave them. And just actually working with different people who've come from outside, that's so important for them in the transition process, because that's what's going to happen to them. They're going to leave their primary school teachers and go to people who they have to work with in different ways. So yeah, it was really, really, very, very good'*.

'I've gained insight into how drama can help to get a message across in a fun way instead of just telling the children things, inviting them to show how they feel was brilliant. They don't know they're learning'

Primary Take the Lead Teacher

TRANSITION

Supporting young people with the transition from primary to secondary school by focusing on five core skills, including: self-belief, communication, teamwork, problem solving and self-management.

One of the main aims of the programme is to support young people with the transition from primary to secondary education. When we asked teachers if this project had supported their students with the move to secondary school, 100% agreed or strongly agreed. 100% also agreed or strongly agreed that their students learned something new about self-belief, communication, teamwork, problem solving and self-management.

Throughout the workshop, students had the opportunity to creatively explore how they navigate change, collaborate effectively, adapt to new environments and overcome challenges. One student mentioned, *'the staff were amazing, they were very kind and very creative. They taught me a lot today'*, whilst another added they enjoyed, *'problem solving and being able to share opinions, use my imagination and learning new skills for life in general'*. One of the teachers on the programme reflected, *'this project has inspired my students to explore drama with enthusiasm, express themselves more confidently, and collaborate creatively with their peers'*, with another adding, *'the children thoroughly enjoyed themselves. It was wonderful to see them so engaged; some of them really came out of their shells, while others showed fantastic teamwork and some brilliant acting skills. It was a genuinely enriching experience for them'*.

To support the students outside of the workshop we offered a series of drama exercises that the teachers could try in their classrooms, one teacher told us, *'it was a positive experience as the children were prepared for the session'*. We also provided the 262 students involved with a Moving School handbook, aiding with their development as they transition to secondary education, as a teacher mentioned, *'we used them to encourage the children to be open and honest about their feelings about starting schools'*.

Students participating in the workshop examined the five core skills and creatively learnt how to apply these when navigating change, empowering them to succeed and thrive in the future, as one student reflected, *'life is change, you have to find a way to deal with things and move on with your life or you'll get stuck'* and another added, *'I've learned to never give up and that I can do anything when I find a solution'*.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Supporting the mental health and wellbeing of young people through engaging with the arts.

According to research conducted by [Mentally Healthy Schools](#) more than one in 10 primary school children aged five to 10 has an identifiable mental health condition — that's around three children in every class. When asked if this project had a positive impact on their students' mental health and wellbeing, 100% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed, with one stating, *'the children responded well to the workshops and found the way of looking at their feelings as a way of opening up and being honest'*.

When the students were asked to choose words to describe how the workshop made them feel, the highest selected were *'inspired'* and *'confident'*, and when asked to write three words to best describe the workshop, the highest word overall was *'fun'* with over half the students independently choosing this word. As one student mentioned, *'I had so much fun with my friends and the staff'*.

A recent study commissioned by the UK government's Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) demonstrates the [positive impact the arts and culture can have on the wellbeing and mental health of individuals](#), *'from reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety to boosting productivity and quality of life'*. The study highlights how engaging in *'arts activities can improve children's self-esteem'*. One teacher commented on how liberating it was for the students to take part in this workshop at the end of term before moving to secondary education, *'the children benefited hugely. They had a hugely enjoyable day, which is really important. You know, they had great fun. They loved it'*.

'You may not be brave all the time but as long as you're helpful you can be a hero'

Primary Take the Lead Student

TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

Nurturing and supporting the development of a network of creatively confident teachers.

Many of the teachers who took part in the programme explained how the CPD sessions made the programme not only beneficial for their students but also for them as educational practitioners, *'it reminded me of things I need to be doing. I had stopped doing some due to time constraints but actually, they are so useful'*. With one teacher explaining how they have already embedded the learning into their classroom and with different year groups across the school, *'I've already utilised some of the activities taught, especially the problem solving with my Year Threes and they loved it'*. When asked how likely they would be to recommend this project to a colleague, the teachers scored it 100 out of 100.

When asked if they thought the launch workshop for teachers and the teacher CPD were excellent, 100% agreed and strongly agreed. 100% of the teachers also said they used the pre-project resources, which is more than any previous year running. One teacher explained their benefits, *'it reinforced work we had already done'*, and another member of staff added, *'they linked so well with our borough-provided sessions and really reinforced key points'*.

This year, we established a Primary Teacher Advisory Group, inviting five dedicated teachers to meet each term and share their expertise across all our primary programmes. Building on the success of this group, we now want to expand and include secondary school teachers. This will strengthen the connection between primary and secondary education, while also supporting our ongoing focus of transition.

'Fantastic opportunity and workshop for adults and children'

Primary Take the Lead Teacher





BACKSTAGE

From October 2025 we will have a Clore Learning Centre in the **Backstage** building, allowing us to host more workshops onsite. Next year we would like to offer schools the opportunity to have their workshop at the theatre in the new space, creating a school trip for teachers and students. We would continue to offer in-school workshops to primaries who would prefer to have the session in their own environment.

The teacher CPD sessions will also take place in our new Clore Learning Centre, allowing us the opportunity to invite and welcome more teachers into our building.

DOUBLE GROUPS

Having successfully run the programme for the last three years, we would now like to increase the number of schools we engage with on the project. We currently offer 10 workshops each year, collaborating with ten separate Year Six classes, and we would like to increase this number to 20, doubling the amount of student participants and increasing the number of schools and teachers participating in the programme.

ADAPTING THE WORKSHOPS

We continually work to ensure participants can feed directly into programmes by developing content based on feedback. There were some comments from students who did not enjoy writing as part of the session, reminding them too much of being in class. For next year we will look at adapting this element of the workshop to ensure we give a more practical way to respond alongside writing opportunities, to appeal to varying learning styles.

**‘I had an amazing time,
and it inspired me a lot’**

Primary Take the Lead Student

IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE

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The Old Vic Theatre Trust 2000 Charity No. 1072590
The Old Vic Endowment Trust Charity No. 1147946