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MANCHESTER CURRICULUM CASE STUDY:

NORTH MANCHESTER HIGH SCHOOL FOR BOYS

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The Manchester Curriculum in North Manchester High School for Boys Case Study written by: Dr Jonathan Savage, Institute of Education, MMU

Background Context

North Manchester High School for Boys (NMHSB) is an 11 – 16 comprehensive school which specialises in the visual arts and media. This academic year is a watershed one for the school, with it closing in its current form and reopening in September 2009 as an Academy. The OFSTED monitoring letter about the school's progression towards becoming an Academy makes reference to the demanding timetable for transition although, as the final paragraphs of the letter make clear, in July 2009 'there still remained much to do in a short space of time before it opens' (Ofsted 2009).

It was against this backdrop of considerable change and, as will become apparent, uncertainty, that the school agreed to participate in the RSA project. One senior manager at the school took responsibility for organising the project. Early on, this is what he wrote about it:

Relevance and recognition are key motivators and drivers for learning. Too often we ask our students to study without the meaning or context that they can appreciate. Using Manchester as our key driver we know from experience that this localised curriculum will be an ideal vehicle for developing the competencies and skills that enhance a students abilities to be able to learn. The immediacy of the locality is of interest and value and stimulates students to further their involvement. (Written statement by a Deputy Head-teacher at NMHSB)

Project Description

The project was called 'What makes Manchester great'. During a three week period, students visited key areas of significance within Manchester. They collected a range of audio and visual material, including still digital photos and digital video, during these visits. At the end of the project they were asked to work together to produce a film that presented their discoveries on their journeys with the people and places in Manchester. Approximately ninety students were involved in the three week project. A composite film of the best of the students' works will be displayed on the large screen in Exchange Square during the next few months.

From the perspective of the school, the location of Manchester is the vehicle for the delivery of the Opening Minds competencies and skills. In documentation about the project, including the comprehensive handbook that was given to each student, these fifteen competencies are overtly stated and regularly visited. As will become apparent below, in conversations with the senior manager and other staff, these competencies drove the learning opportunities within the project and became appreciated by students as they progressed.

The five key competence areas are:

- Managing Information;
- Managing Situations;
- Relating to People;
- Managing Learning;
- Citizenship.

Each area has three competence statements. I will not list them all here, but, for example, the Managing Situations competence area is broken down into:

- Show initiative, creativity and entrepreneurial skills;
- Manage your time and unexpected changes in your project well;
- Know how to handle both success and disappointment, reacting to uncertainty.

The point needs to be made here that the focus for learning within the project is clearly not with what one might call a subject orientated approach to curriculum design. By this, we mean an approach to curriculum design which flows from the inclusion of individual subjects within a curriculum framework and any collaboration on curriculum projects within that design is initiated and sustained by individual subjects and their teaching staff.

As part of the project, the school brokered relationships with a number of key venues across Manchester. The school noted how willing these organisations were in working with the school. Venues included Quarry Bank Mill, the Imperial War Museum, Manchester United Football Club, the BBC, URBIS, the Manchester Velodrome, Manchester Transport, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester Fayre, Manchester Town Hall, Manchester Library and the Arndale Shopping Centre. All these partners showed enthusiasm and willingness to help develop ideas and flexibility in when and how they supported the school. Their support and encouragment was highly appreciated by the school.

The project had a clear structure. During the first two weeks students undertook a range of visits. These visits were interspersed by a planning and evaluation day, i.e. evaluating the previous visit and planning the subsequent one. In the third week, students worked in small groups to create short films (2 minutes long) about their work. These films drew on the interview footage, digital photographs and digital video material that the students had collected. These short films were then combined together by staff to make a longer 8 minute film which was presented to the whole cohort of students working on the project at a final event held at Manchester College.

Review Methods

During the project I visited the school twice to observe students working and presenting their work and took fieldnotes during these visits. During the second visit, I spent time interviewing the senior manager with responsibility for the project and a group of teachers who had worked on the project. Kathryn Burns, the RSA lead for the project and a former teacher at the school, also conducted interviews with the staff involved in the project. The following text presents an analysis of these interview materials in the context of the two visits made. We also received a

copy of a substantial, and most helpful, student handbook that had been put together specifically for the project. Although the school did issue a pupil, staff and partner questionnaire, this data was not available in time for this case study.

Key Learning Points from the Perspective of the Senior Manager

1. Curriculum Design and Ownership

One of the key points to emerge from this interview relates to the process of curriculum design, innovation and the perceived sense of ownership. First of all, this piece of curriculum design had its roots in the experience, or existing practice, of the senior manager:

Originally my first thoughts were based on a model I used from years ago which was a project within my previous school, combining various departments, looking at, if you like, transferable skills within departments themselves.

On top of this level of existing curriculum design experience, the perceived requirements of the model being presented by the RSA were considered:

The competencies and the skills of the RSA took over in terms of this particular model but the key was to get a model, as far as goals were concerned. There must be a visible progression; there must be something about the experience that these students have had that will be notable and something that they can take forward with them, otherwise, again, it's a wasted experience.

It is interesting to note here that the manager is keen to synthesise these elements to a certain extent, and also project these into students' future learning experiences ('something they can take forward with them'). He was also keen to tie this into previous work that the school had done with the Opening Minds curriculum and the broadly titled 'competency' curriculum:

The school development, in terms of the curriculum, has always been one of looking to a model that best suited our pupils and, therefore, as we've developed along the road of competencies and skills, data proven valid and appropriate to the school is built into the school development plan, that we're looking to extend this through Years 8 and 9. (Interview with Ms K. Burns)

Having considered the framework within which this might occur, the manager was keen to allow the teachers involved in the project planning a certain degree of autonomy:

I might actually make suggestions but it really was, and I wanted it to be, their [i.e. the teachers] model of what they developed, of what they come up with. I also said, whatever they come up with, it doesn't really matter what the end result is, in terms of the learning that the students have had, because the knowledge base is secondary. What we're really looking to – back to the competency skills and driving them forward, so everything is around about driving these.

2. Subject Knowledge and Competencies

This interesting reference to the 'knowledge base being secondary' moves us into a second consideration which was raised during our conversations with the staff, relating to the balance between subject skills and the broader goals of attaining the competencies. Was there any problem with the balance between these aspirations from the perspective of the school?

The experience the students have and 'support' may not be the experience you want those students to have and I take your point that they could better have used cameras, or have better have used whatever skills, or better have prepared themselves, but my point is, what I wanted was the competencies and skills of working together. Now if that's what I wanted then they may lose out having honed to perfection, but we've got here, are a group of lads who will now willingly will take on more work of this nature, willingly want to learn more, and those opportunities will exist in the Academy. You're right in that they should be able to take them further and they should have the opportunity to make a better end product.

Within this project, it was clear that the main focus of the learning was to be the development of the broader competencies. Such an aspiration raises interesting questions, in the longer term, for schools such as NMHSB with their specialism in the visual arts and media; for example, they encourage us to reflect upon whether or not subject based skills and curricular competencies are distinct or inter-related. Current pieces of curriculum reform in this sector, such as the new National Curriculum for Key Stage 3, for example, contain many components including individual subjects (and a call for a greater degree of cross-curricular working) as well as a range of competency type content (e.g. personal, learning and thinking skills). The precise way in which these elements are combined and delivered within a whole Key Stage is not a straightforward or unproblematic task. This interview presents clear evidence that these balancing acts are an ongoing challenge for senior managers with responsibility for the curriculum at this level.

3. Making Contacts Within the Local Community

One of the key benefits of this project has been the links that the school has made within the local community. Whilst in the early stages this was not the easiest process to manage, the involvement of certain key players (including the RSA point of contact and the BBC) helped get the process started. As the following quote shows, getting through to the right person quickly was key to success:

When they told me that they'd decided they were going to get a film that was going to be shown in Exchange Square, I think I almost walked out of the room. No, you can't do that; it's not possible, but then we started contacting people and the BBC bought into it straightaway and that really helped us. Everyone else bought into it, very little convincing needed. Late pushes – Quarry Bank Mill. Phoned them up on a number of occasions but the message never really got through to who it needed to, so I went down and asked to speak to a certain person who's fantastic and, basically… did something quite similar with the Imperial War Museum. The issue with these events is getting in touch with the right people. I actually believe that so much of Manchester commerce, industry, the infrastructure of Manchester, they want to work with schools and they'll do it as long as you get through to the right person.

Perhaps having the luxury of being able to chase up contacts and people is one that many teachers lack? Certainly, the teachers involved in the project often had many competing demands on their time. In these circumstances, finding the right person quickly and being able to sustain that contact for future use is vital. Such links as had been made are now being seen by the school as a basis for further development and maintenance:

That being said, I think our key role is to go back and re-affirm those links. The feedback has been brilliant so far. We've got Quarry Bank Mill saying they're wonderful kids, and so on. We don't normally get things like that said about our kids.

4. Mixed Student Groupings

One of the particularly interesting aspects of the project was the way that the school was able to mix up the student groupings across the two year groups. This is not easy to achieve and meant that the whole Key Stage 3 timetable had to be collapsed for three weeks. The benefits of mixing students across the year group boundary were noted by the senior manager in an early interview:

To put them in cross-year groups, immediately you have challenged their social strata and therefore they are having to associate and work successfully with other pupils and they'll want to work successfully because the outcomes for them are important so it immediately challenged them in that way. It challenged also the normal sort of assumption that year X are much better than year Y because they are older, and so forth, and so they must be. All of this, as the project moved on, was very successfully incorporated in terms of pupils working together disregarding age, disregarding ability. They worked as teams. That was absolutely at the core of the different purpose. (Interview with Ms K. Burns)

This point was picked up during interview at the end of the project too:

The difference it should make is that the kids have learned different relationships and I deliberately mixed up year 7 and 8s. I wanted to see the interchange between two different year groups. I wanted to see how these students would work together and they have worked together. I wanted to see if they could develop relationships in a short space of time that needed to work, otherwise they couldn't work, and that worked.

5. Senior Management Support and Staff Commitment

The following quotation is possibly the most telling comment in the interview as it makes clear the personal and organisational challenges involved in developing projects such as this:

You've got to have someone, or people in it, who commit. That's the one thing I would say, that you can't do this without commitment because there are times when the easiest thing is to walk away and then you've got to have someone like me who doesn't listen to anyone and says they're going to do it anyway because I could move the hurdles out of the way… you can't do it if you're not in that position to do it and I believe that has been the problem at one or two places.

Commitment is obviously a key element of making a major piece of curriculum development of this type work. But commitment is not enough. You need power and authority to provoke change (to 'move the hurdles out of the way') in order for this to occur. Significant pieces of curriculum development that involve the collapsing of timetables, the movement of students around a city, the reassignment of staff, etc. all indicate that the support of a senior manager is essential. But I think it is important too, to acknowledge that the commitment and enthusiasm of individual members of staff is also vital. It is to their story that the case study will now turn.

Key Learning Points from the Perspective of the Teachers Involved

It was great to have the opportunity to interview the group of teachers involved in designing and delivering the project. We met on a Friday afternoon shortly after they had returned from the

final presentation morning held at Manchester College. There was a definite 'buzz' in the air about the project and the work that the students had achieved. Despite having to rush around and resubmit applications for their own jobs (as part of the school's re-designation as an academy), staff were keen to share their experiences with me in a small office belonging to the drama teacher. The transcript of the resulting interview presented some interesting data.

1. Linking In With Existing Curriculum Priorities

In a similar comment to that of the senior manager, the teachers stressed the importance of linking new pieces of curriculum development with existing practice. The idea of a competence curriculum provided the link here. It was something that the teachers were familiar with:

Well we run the competence curriculum here and the whole idea of the project, wasn't we're making a film, or we're making whatever, it was competence-driven. I think we need to develop the competencies more but that was the initial idea behind it.

But it was pleasing to note that these teachers were not complacent. There was a considerable amount of comment about how the existing competence curriculum in the school needed to be revitalised:

I think with the competence curriculum, that's run for four years, and we definitely hit a stage, this year, where we needed to change it. That cycle of it had come to its natural end and, actually, what this enabled us to do is to think about the competence curriculum again and, as a result of the planning of this, I know that […] and I, in our unit of work, had trialled lots of other things this year.

To that end, this project was a timely intervention and a useful way for the school to re-imagine what a new approach to the delivery of a competence curriculum might be.

2. Collaborative Approaches to Curriculum Design

The second major focus of the interview dwelt on how these teachers had worked together. The first point to make is these teachers really enjoyed the challenge of being able to work together:

I think the first – our initial ideas – I can remember at a residential and sitting, you remember, round the table, and we were literally just brainstorming ideas and something clicked between us because I'd always said about this group, the way that we've been working, is we've always been problem-solvers. It's never been dwelling on things that have not worked, or anything. We sat down there and we were bouncing ideas off each other and we came up with tons that day. We could have gone in loads of different directions.

There was obviously no shortage of ideas here! The dynamics of the group were lively and the ability of each member to initiate and respond to the thoughts and ideas of others was noteworthy. This was evident in the conversational interplay of the interview itself. But communication and co-ordination between willing members of staff in a busy school is something they all commented needed constant work and support.

At times, the school felt surprised at the willingness expressed by some external organisations to work with them, and this surprise resulted in the school perhaps not making full demands of these organisations in terms of educational outcomes or goals. This was an important learning process for the participating teachers in terms of coming to understand how relationships

between the school and external partners could be initiated, developed and nurtured. In particular, staff felt at the end of the project that they could have created more opportunities to work more collaboratively with partners to develop curriculum:

Teacher 1: We allocated trip visits and, say, you design some activities for Man Utd; you design some activities and, actually, these members of staff hadn't been involved in the project all the way through so, as a result of that, they were quite cold to it and, you know, we talked them through the project and it was fine but, actually, just thinking about it now, that was a massive mistake; it should have been done earlier on.

Teacher 2: In our school, though, that was bound to happen because I think, part of it, for me, is that sense of, oh, my God, they actually do want to work with us! Whereas, now we know it's very easy to get partners to work with you, next time we will be far more clear and demanding of our partners.

Teacher 1: But can I say that, that time between September and Christmas, we didn't use very well because we could have gone out to those places. Couldn't we?

Teacher 3: We could have met a lot more.

Teacher 1: Yes but had more useful –

Teacher 2: But we always knew we were doing something very new and, therefore, we were quite tentative. Next time round it will be [clapping sounds] and we will have much more confidence in doing that.

The staff expressed joy at the idea of having the opportunity to repeat and develop a project of this type, and expressed new confidence in their own understanding of what they could bring to the table as a school in terms of expertise in teaching and learning.

3. Recognising the challenges of the task

The project involved the highly ambitious task of students developing their own film, a task that requires all the competencies the staff were hoping to develop, as well as a set of technical and artistic skills. Many of the teachers were aware on completion of the project that students might need more support in certain aspects of their film-making, in particular around artistic understandings:

We have underestimated the task. We haven't had enough technical staff with us. We haven't had enough teachers who have been there. So, all those issues have been that the kids have not been led as well as they might have been.

Despite this, however, the teachers were confident that the project had achieved its goals in terms of students learning and inter-personal relationships:

… so, on a very superficial level, you get, 'we went to the Velodrome, it was brilliant'; 'we went to Man Utd, it was fantastic'. But what actually came from my group was, I pulled my group out, and did little interviews, and the thing that came out was, that they were given choices in the way that

they learned; they were not told off for talking; we can talk to each other. We worked really well together.

Whilst I have not been able to observe the students learning in 'normal' class situations, the fact that this teacher was able to comment on this and raise it as unusual in its frequency is noteworthy.

4. The Centrality of the Learning Process: Learning beyond the end product

Whilst it might be easy to criticise the end products (the films) that came out of this project, it is important to remember that the vast majority of the learning competencies being focussed on here relate to the 'process' of learning. This raises questions about how we value success in terms of curriculum development, but I was delighted to hear these teachers recount stories such as this during their interview:

It's the stuff that wasn't recorded in the competency or anything else. We were sitting in Quarry Bank Mill with six kids talking about the Manchester slave trade because they were looking at a guy who'd made millions selling cotton that black people were picking, and that isn't recorded in the film, but that learning absolutely happened. We were sat in a café outside Manchester City's ground talking about public art - 12, 13, 14 year old lads talking about public art in Manchester. We hadn't even intended that. The B of the Bang is there and that kind of got the discussion going. They had a treasure hunt where we had walked around all the kind of visible art in Manchester and, you know, lads talking about art in their city!

Another teacher reported the experiences of being in the city offered informal learning opportunities and opportunities for students to build collaborative learning relationships:

I also had – on the treasure hunt – we walked past two women kissing in a bus station and we ended up having a whole conversation about gay people. It was really informal and they were really going, 'is that right?' Well, there isn't anything wrong with it and you think, well, I teach sex education, as you do, and that conversation came out really naturally and really relaxed and we were just walking along, you think, that was priceless. We were walking down to the CLC and we all walked together. These were lads who hadn't worked together, a couple of them knew each other and they'd formed very good working relationships with each other which, in this school, is something that we find difficult – you know, the friends kind of work together – and it was a real moment when I saw them do that.

Another quotation from one of the teachers demonstrates the opportunity that the project afforded for staff and students to develop positive relationships based on understanding of each other as people as well as professionals:

They also saw – and I think it's so valuable – they saw staff having a laugh with other kids, staff having a laugh with each other, staff having businesslike conversations with each other.

The development of these teachers' relationships with their pupils is not something that is easily measurable or accountable. But it is absolutely vital to the future educational exchanges that will occur between them. Finding space within the curriculum to facilitate this type of exchange is something that this project managed to achieve most successfully.

5. Modelling Competencies and Behaviours

Finally, it was instructive to hear teachers talking about the competencies that they were working with (and developing) through the project. Whilst one might presume that the focus for learning these would have been solely on the pupils, the teachers here saw their role in modelling these competencies as being equally valuable:

Teacher 2: What I was saying before about what I really have been aware of, and quite like, is the fact that we, as a group of adults, have been mirroring the competencies and demonstrating them quite openly to kids.[...] How to face disappointment. You know, we've not hidden behind, oh, everything's fine, we've handled disappointment; the kids have been aware of that, as we've handled managing information. The kids can see the link. If we're openly working through the competencies, the kids can see that.

Teacher 3: And what I really like and, again, I'm a bit like [Teacher 1], you're kind of shoved in your room all day. You don't kind of see anybody and, if it is, it tends to be problems and it's just really nice to have a network of support. Like I can walk down the corridor now and just look at [Teacher 1] and laugh because we're under so much stress and time limits. We didn't say a word to each other; we just looked at each other and we just knew and I formed a relationship, then, I think and that's what's making me want to do it again.

Teacher 2: And it's appreciating an individual's particular strengths. I have been in awe of you getting that booklet together because it all hinged on one person being willing to take that task on. There's no way I would want to do something like that. [Teacher 1] did. It drove her barmy. [Teacher 3's] organisational skills are just –

Teacher 1: They're unbelievable.

Teacher 2: And I would never have seen that

Teacher 3: I think I've mentioned before what I've really liked about it is, we clicked from the moment we sat down. It's always been a group of 'what can we do?' If an obstacle's come our way, we've not dwelled on it, we've not gone, oh, well, we can't do that; let's change it or let's forget about that; we've just moved on with it and there's been no negative feedback. It's just been such a positive experience.

To this end, I was pleased to see that Stenhouse's belief that there is no curriculum development without teacher development is still as relevant in today's curriculum climate as it was in the 1980s (Stenhouse 1980). Teachers today have a vital role in mediating the requirements of the curriculum to their students. They are not passive communicators. They are dynamic and responsive agents in mediating and illustrating learning objectives or competencies to their students. This point was picked up in an early interview with the senior manager of the project:

To be honest, the best support you can get, in terms of curriculum and innovation, is leeway, these days, for staff to start and develop ... Developing something new and releasing staff to do that, is refreshing. I fell into the trap when they said what they were going to do with this film, believing it to be impossible. They've proved me wrong and that's good and, as long as we can release staff to do

that, they'll be innovative. Innovation exists within education as long as staff are free to actually do it and not be challenged. (Interview with Ms K. Burns)

Within this project, teachers found it hard to maintain the ongoing nature of the innovation week by week. But the experience as a whole was very valuable. The element of teamwork between the individual teachers should also not be underestimated. This allowed them to go further than they would have done working in isolation. In response to a question about what they felt allowed teachers to experiment and take risks with curriculum innovation they commented on:

Teacher 1: Their surroundings, by far, the support of the others, which has been a major, major impact on me this time.

Teacher 2: I think the relationships between the staff involved have pushed us further than we would normally have gone as individuals.

Teacher 3: Definitely. I think, when we first had an initial meeting, we were trying to play it safe a little bit and the more we discussed and the more ideas were flowing the more they progressed and the more they got a bit more experimental. (Interview with Ms K. Burns)

When done skillfully and reflectively, the results of collaborative innovative curriculum development are of benefit not just to the students themselves, but also become a key component of the teachers' own individual and collaborative professional development.

Notes on the Visits

Visit 1: Students working at the City Learning Centre

The session took place at the CLC attached to St Matthew's High School. Students were split into three main teaching areas, with one teacher and one member of support staff working with each group. Students were split into teams of 8. Each team was then divided into four pairs, each charged with producing a 2 minute film using their collected video and photographic materials.

Students were using state of the art iMac computers for their work. This was the first time that the majority of students had worked on the Macintosh platform. This did not seem to be a problem. They used Comic Life software to storyboard their ideas for the film. This had been done the previous day. During the morning I observed, students used iPhoto to view and manipulate their photographic materials and iMovie to edit their video materials.

At various points throughout the morning, staff referred students to these competencies in a gentle, yet very helpful way. This was often done in the context of conversations with individual or pairs of students.

Students had been given a handbook that contained information relating to each of the trips that they had undertaken and associated worksheets for them to complete. Students have also been asked to evaluate their learning against some predefined questions (contained at the back of the handbook). The responses in the handbook that I looked at had been quite full and were impressive. The final part of the handbook contained some advice for students about how to structure their film and also how to edit their materials. Students had also received a 'master-class' in using the chosen software packages. They were then left to get on with the various tasks and given support on an 'as and when needed' basis. Student handbooks were not seen in the classroom on this visit.

During my visit I observed the students compiling the static images and video materials into a 2 minute film segment. They did this by searching through collections of materials that they had collected during their visits to particular locations around Manchester. All materials had been collected under the 'What makes Manchester great?' theme for the project. The students that I observed tried to sequence their ideas in response to a storyboard for their film that had been completed the previous day. However, this was done mentally as I did not see any evidence of any students referring back to their storyboard (completed in Comic Life).

Having found appropriate material for their film segment, students manipulated it in a variety of ways. For photographic material, this included using some of the basic tools in iPhoto, including cropping and panning techniques. For video materials, students used iMovie to select the start and end points of particular video clips. They also enjoyed finding transitions to insert between photos or video clips. The majority of students also produced narrative elements such as titles or occasional words and sentences in order to structure their film.

As I was walked around the classroom I took the opportunity to talk to several groups of students about the project. Most seemed happily engaged in the above activities and had obviously enjoyed several components of the project, including having the opportunity to cycle around the Velodrome and have a guided tour of Old Trafford. Some students were keen to participate in activities other students had been involved in.

I asked students whether they had ever done anything like this before. They said no. I wondered whether they had ever done any film-making of any type. Again, most said no. But when pushed, several students commented that they had used their mobile phones to grab images and videos at certain points. Some pupils had used their mobile phones as part of this project, although this was not a key component within the creative process. One student gave an elaborate story of how he had shared this video with his friends. Another student had worked with a friend on his computer in putting together video collected from a mobile phone onto YouTube.

Visit 2: Presentation day at Manchester College

Introduction

The lecture theatre is a lovely venue. It is like a modern cinema with comfortable seats, a large screen, modern decoration etc. Getting students into a modern, FE college is a great opportunity to link together education opportunities for them. It represents a very positive aspect of this project, i.e. connecting together students with Manchester as a location, employers, the public at large, FE college, other schools, etc.

Students have been asked to present their films at a lecture theatre at Manchester College. This has been organised by the senior manager to provide an endpoint for the film making work that has gone on this week. But only three groups of students have completed their films. This stage of the work has taken a lot longer than the school had anticipated.

Staff encourage the students to rehearse their presentations and to move into spaces to do this. There are no microphones so students are encouraged to project their voices. Students are happy and keen to work through their notes. There is a good buzz of activity but students seem reluctant to move about. The space does not encourage this.

The new principal provides a few words of introduction. She thanks the staff (applause) and comments on the very positive reports that the students have received from the various sites that they have visited. She mentions that the school is going to become a creative and media college and there will be plenty of opportunities for future work. She tells students that their work is going to Penketh High School (for further editing) and then to the BBC (for broadcast in Exchange Square).

Reflections on specific skills and broader competencies

In reflecting on my visit to the school, there were a number of issues that I noted about the artistic dimension of the work students were undertaking. Although these were not the aims of the project, such questions are useful in examining the relationship between specific skills and broader competencies, both amongst students and teachers in the design of projects such as an area-based curriculum: they can be phrased as questions to prompt further reflection in the development of such complex and ambitious projects as these:

1. How might schools effectively manage large amounts of digital footage collected by pupils to aid access and use of such footage?
2. How might students be supported to frame and select their material before shooting rather than relying on the editing process?
3. How might students use found sound or copyright free sound in their film production?
4. How might student ownership of the films be enhanced through the editing process?
5. How might students be provided with access to expert film-making practice as a model for their competency development, exploring how the competencies are enacted in authentic professional settings as a means of exploring the relationship between specialist expertise and broader competencies?