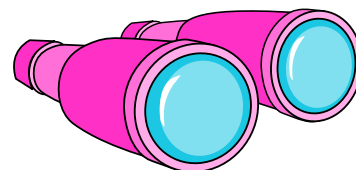
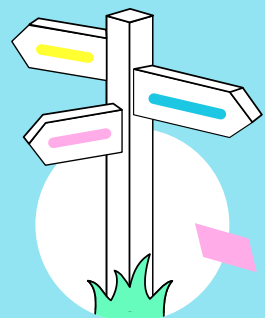




Reimagining how we learn together

Annual Report

2023



Contents

- 2 A Message from the CEO
- 3 A Message from Kate Greig
- 4 Our Strategic Plan and Achievements
- 6 Where we are now
- 7 Our work with Young People
- 10 Music
- 11 Visual Arts
- 12 Tonetic Records
- 13 Youth Advisory Board
- 14 What did Parents and Carers have to say?
- 15 Programme Updates
- 17 Partnerships and Collaborations
- 18 Evaluating our Work
- 21 Our Team
- 22 Our Board of Trustees
- 23 Finance Summary
- 24 Looking Ahead to 2024

A Message from Ollie Briggs, Founder and CEO of Arts Education Exchange

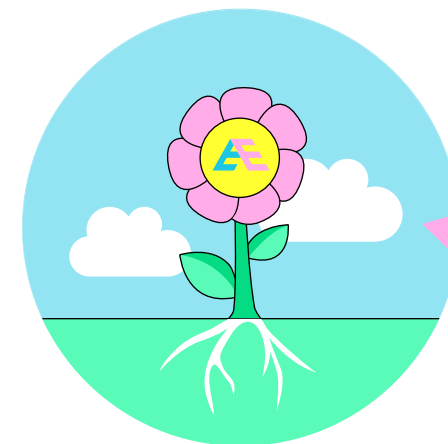
2023 has been a year of settling following significant growth in 2022. The organisation is maturing as significant pieces of work have come to fruition, contributing to the collective mission of Arts Education Exchange.

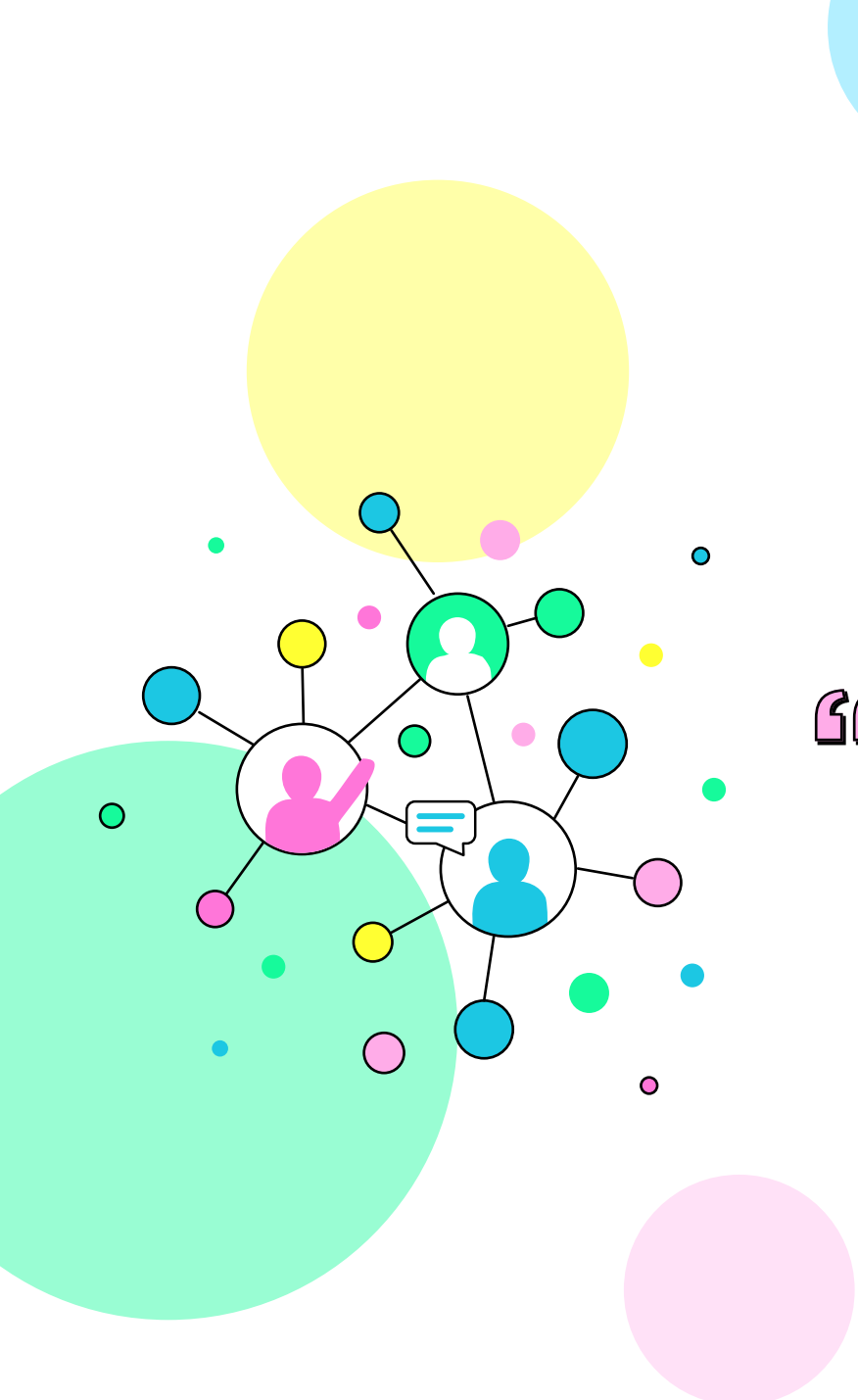
Set against a backdrop of drastic cuts to youth services; startling data revealing school absences and mental health referrals, there is a desire to do things differently at AEE. Our position has been to work with existing systems, while retaining a critical lens and uncompromisable values. We've sought to work in the gaps, slowly planting creative seeds to affect long term social and systems change.

The pride in what we do has been personified by young people's enthusiasm and confidence to tell us what they want us to do differently, why Arts Education Exchange is important to them, and of course this becomes material in the creative work that they make.

Our staff have embodied a tireless dedication to unlocking and nurturing creativity, as defined by our framework of learning and evaluation. We think this is worth it because, as we're starting to see, creativity helps us to imagine and create the lives we want to live.

As business resumes in January, our team will begin planning exercises for our next strategy (2025-2028), community stakeholders alongside young people and staff will imagine our future. The following report is testament to how the organisation is growing up by going deeper into the detail of reimagining how we learn together.





A message from Kate Greig, the CEO of Coastal Academies Trust and Chair of Thanet Secondary Headteacher Forum

“

We are delighted to welcome Ollie Briggs to be part of our Thanet Headteachers forum. Arts Education Exchange has had a massive impact on some of the lives of our young people in Thanet and enabling creative development to bring out the best in people is hugely important, significant and life changing. Thanet is moving forward in the right direction educationally and one of the reasons for this is that so many different groups feel a collective responsibility for our young people - that together we can make a difference. The Arts Education Exchange is part of this group and we are glad they are part of our team.

”

Our Strategic Plan and Achievements

In 2022 we developed a strategic plan through a process of consultation with staff members and trustees. We developed 6 strategic aims for 2022-2025 in the following 3 categories: **Organisation**, **Young People** and the **Sector**.

Our Aims

Organisation

We want to be **inclusive** so we are representative of who we work with and amplify our commitment to equality, **entrepreneurial** so that our financial future is secure and **youth-led** so our decision making process is authentic and includes our beneficiaries, where appropriate.

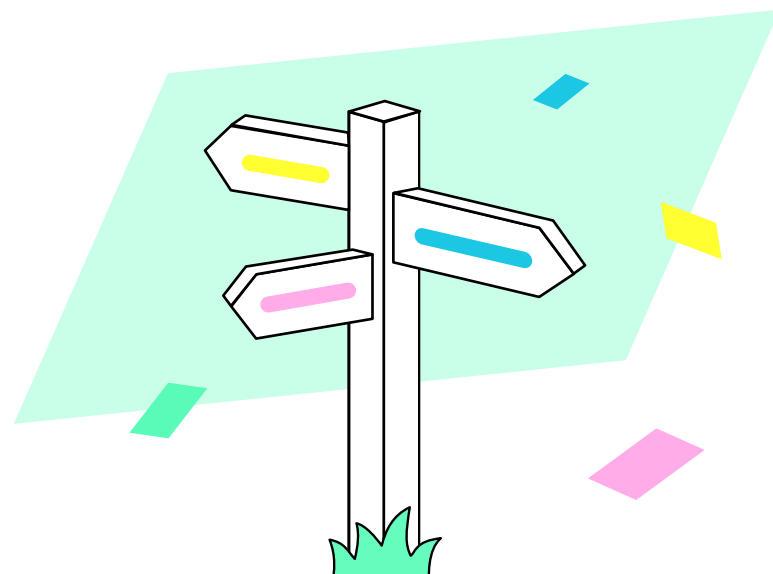
We want to be an established **Alternative Education Centre**, unlocking local authority funding and providing high quality provision for young people, who need an alternative to mainstream.

Young People

We want to make sure young people are **better connected, supported and informed** so that they have every opportunity to thrive in Thanet, including access to **more and better creative and employment opportunities**, bridging the gap between the burgeoning creative sector and continued high levels of youth unemployment.

Sector

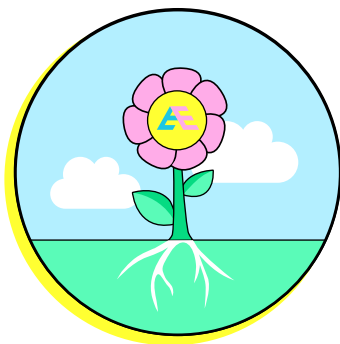
We also want to continue to develop our model so it is **recognised nationally as an example of best practice in creative learning**. We believe that by connecting with innovative organisations and schools across the country, we will strengthen our future and enable us to contribute to a national discourse around arts and education while **advocating for alternative models of education grounded in creativity**.



Our Achievements

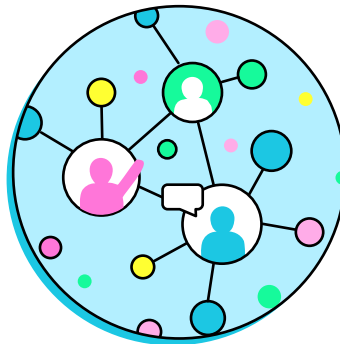
Organisation

- Advisory youth group formed, named by the group as Voice of the Creative Youth (VotCY)
- Contracts secured with schools and local PRU
- AEE becomes a named provider on a young persons EHCP with direct funding from KCC SEN
- First annual report published
- All delivery staff access therapeutic supervision



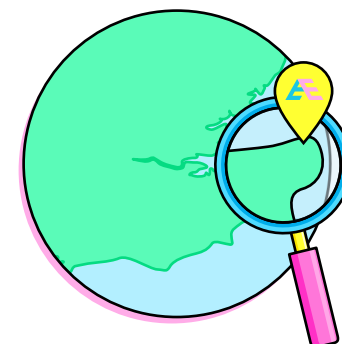
Young People

- We continued to develop and deliver high quality learning with young people
- Developing partnership with Jobcentre to make links with creative jobs
- Testing online workshops with Discord
- Conducting an outreach survey
- Local events showcasing young people's creative talents
- Tonetic Records receiving funding to deliver their strategy developed by young people



Sector

- CEO joins Thanet Headteachers Group to represent AEE and arts education in the local education sector
- Establishes Lacuna, a network for educators, with Open School East and Turner Contemporary
- Develops podcast exploring education and creative learning
- Further development of our learning and evaluation framework
- First external report analysing data published



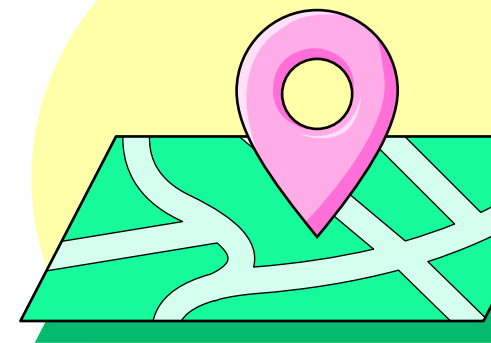
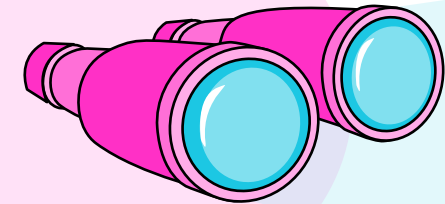
Where we are now

AEE's work straddles youth work and education sectors, offering a range of interventions, youth led programmes and alternative provision. This allows us to create a continuum of access and develop an in-depth understanding of the individual and collective needs of young people in our community, as well as creating internal progression and growth opportunities.

Underneath all the work we do are the same systemic inequalities that fuel individual and group desire for something different. Whether self referring, or attending long term part-time placements, AEE is finding its niche in our community as providing something that does not exist for those we work with.

For the last year we have sought to continually interrogate what we do, find new ways to capture and articulate what works, and how we can improve what we do. This has led to significant evolution through programming and practice.

Our sights are clear, our place across sectors and with our community is established and our ambition is as focussed and urgent as ever.



Our work with young people

1:1

This year 23 young people have accessed our 1:1 creative programme. These sessions offer bespoke creative tuition allowing young people time and space to choose what they'd like to learn, create and explore. These sessions help those who need/prefer a 1:1 environment to build confidence, skills and resilience. This year 12 young people have transitioned from a 1:1 onto one of our creative groups.

Shared Space

133 young people participated in group sessions this year. We run two weekly groups; Visual Arts and Music. These groups give young people the opportunity to collaborate and share a studio space with other young creatives. They provide positive social spaces for young people to make friends and creative connections.

High Demand

High demand for our services has continued throughout 2023, and we have operated a waiting list at all times. This is indicative of the barriers to mainstream education that young people experience in Thanet. A 2023 analysis found that Thanet continues to have the highest rate of children in absolute low-income in the southeast ([KCC analytics, April 2023](#)). As such, nearly 50% of the young people we supported this year were identified as being low-income.



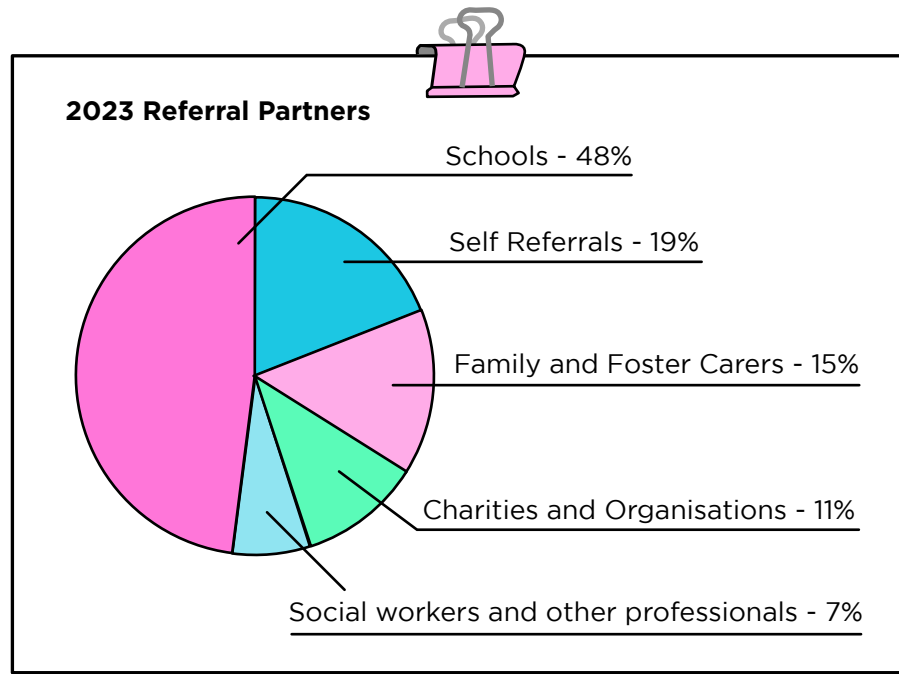
In 2023 we worked with
137 young people,
and ran **618 sessions.**

1:1s: 11 Group: 113 Both: 12



Who refers our young people to us?

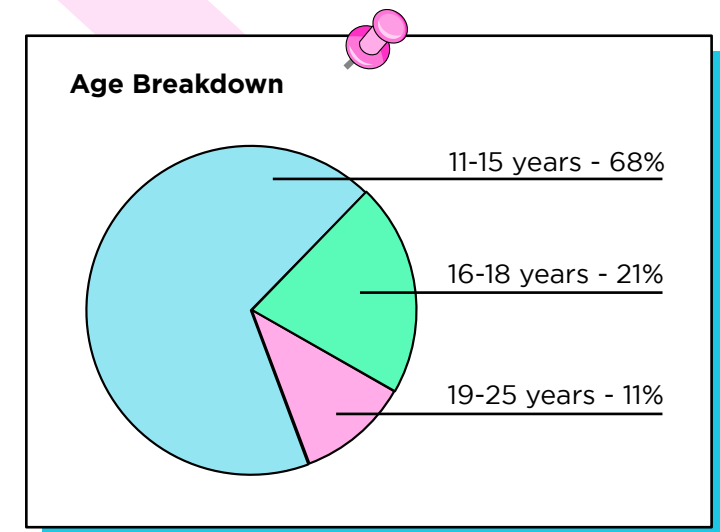
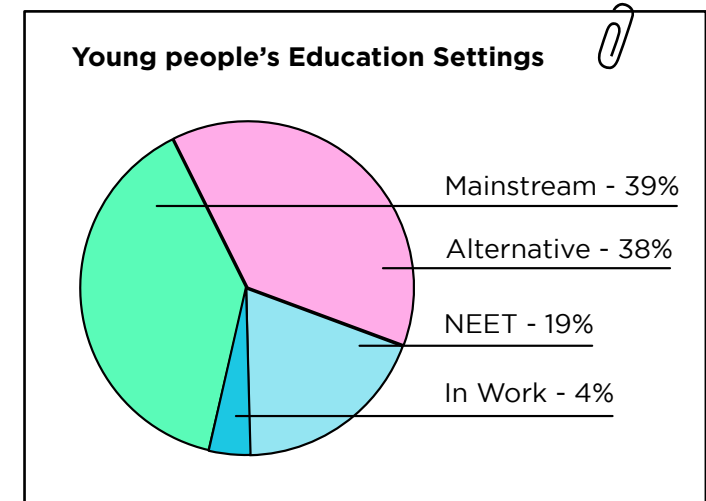
Over the last year, 74% of our referrals have been from Thanet schools and social workers, underlining our commitment to work with existing systems. We have also noted a marked increase in self referrals, an encouraging development which highlights young people's agency within our work.



Age and Educational Settings

Creative learning for young people not in mainstream education

60% of our young people do not attend mainstream education (school or further education)



What Barriers to Education do our Young People Face?

SEN Needs

75% of the young people we worked with were identified as having SEN needs. 38% of participants SEN need(s) was identified as neurodivergence. In the UK under 10% of young people with SEN needs attend SEN schools (gov.uk 2019), and 22% of teachers feel they are unable to meet the needs of SEN pupils (DfE, 2020).

Having a Marginalised Gender

58% of participants were marginalised genders. 48% were female, 7% non-binary, 3% transmasculine and 1% transfeminine.

Being at risk of offending

12% of young people were identified as being part of youth street groups. 10% were at risk of offending and/or violence towards others.

Mental Health Difficulties

55% of our young people have experienced mental health issues and 37% have been identified as having experienced trauma.

Not in Education, Employment, or Training

19% of our young people were NEET.

Being LGBTQI+

17% of our young people were LGBTQI+.

Lived experience of being in care

26% of our young people have experienced being children in care, a high proportion compared to the current 0.7% of UK children in care.

Being a young carer

7% of young people we worked with were young carers, which is high compared to the recent figures produced by gov.uk that indicate only 0.5% of young people (attending school) are young carers.

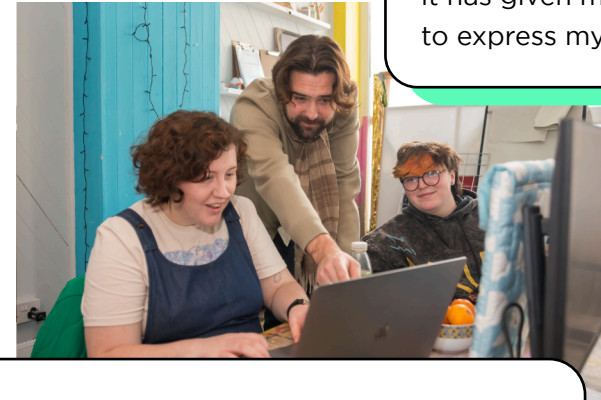
Music

This year, 93 young people took part in creative learning through our music programmes, including regular 1:1 sessions in our music studio, our weekly music group, and in facilitation of the Mark Leckey's Music and Video Lab. The music group has had the opportunity to perform at AEE Unplugged, a cosy evening of music at our Northdown Road Studio to an audience of family and friends. We also ran sessions with Ursuline school and Northwood and Westwood Pupil referral units, where young people had access to both our art studio and music studio. Young people in our studio explored a range of skills, from production, to song-writing, to learning how to play an instrument.

A Message from Joe Kondras, our Music Lead:

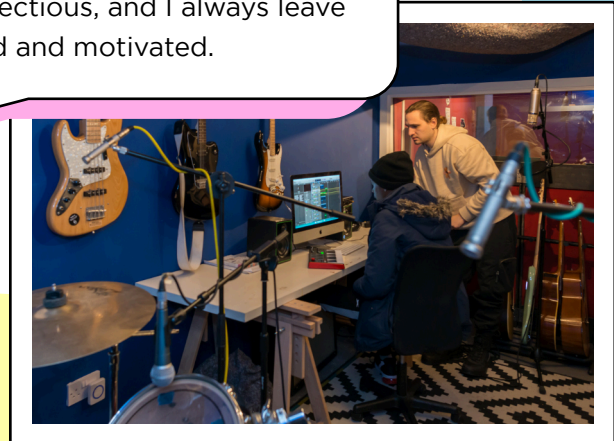
"This has been an intense and developmental year for Music at AEE. We have worked with a broad range of young people; from group sessions with unaccompanied asylum seeking children and attendees of local Pupil Referral Units, to 1:1 recording and writing sessions with aspiring musicians.

This year has affirmed the varied and entrenched challenges young people face in today's Britain and underlined the holistic nature of my role. I am a music practitioner, and equally, a key part of a young person's support network. I am proud of the work we do and of our young people for demonstrating resilience in times of crisis. To see young people take the tools we give them, and bravely use them to create change in their lives, has been beautiful to witness."



I have benefited very much, it has given me a creative way to express my emotions.

The sessions with Joe have been amazing for my well-being, he has a unique teaching style that makes the sessions both engaging and enjoyable. His passion for music is infectious, and I always leave feeling inspired and motivated.



Joe and Tom have helped quite a lot, because a few months ago before the summer, I felt quite low all the time, and coming here and making music in the studio made me have something to look forward to during the week.

Visual Arts

In 2022, 89 young people got involved in creative learning through our visual arts programmes, including regular 1:1 sessions in our art studio, weekly group sessions, and our summer programme “Expressions”. We also ran weekly sessions with Ursuline school and Northwood and Westwood Pupil Referral Units, where young people had access to both our art studio and music studio. Lastly, NEET young people accessed visual arts through Creative Lab, our collaborative project with Turner Contemporary. Young people learning in our art studio developed a range of skills, from painting and graphic design to sculptural work. The Visual Art Group had the opportunity to work with Powell-Cotton Museum and two of the young artists have had their work exhibited.

A Message from Cherelle Sappleton, our Visual Arts Lead:

This year has been a huge challenge, personally, professionally, politically too. This year has been about embracing trust, in the young people and in my abilities as a facilitator. I have returned to what it means to facilitate: to make something easier. It's been a focus of mine to empower participants to engage and find joy where previously they may have felt 'not good enough'.

I've been asking myself, “How can I reduce the barriers to being creative for you?”, “How can I make it exciting, playful or joyful for you?”, “How can I encourage experimentation without it feeling scary for you?”. My thinking has shifted from physical outcomes to being ambitious in creating resources and a well-resourced space where experimentation in a multitude of mediums is possible, and where 'not being good at drawing/painting/etc' is not a stumbling block. This means resourcing myself too and, perhaps, bringing materials and practices I'm not so confident in to sessions, so I can demonstrate that it is ok not to know how to do things perfectly and the beauty of finding solutions together.



“I love going to Arts Ed because I get to use creative materials that I wouldn't normally be able to”

“It helped to connect with others and myself through expression in art and movement. My feelings were validated. I expressed my emotions. Everyone was lovely and supportive and kind”

“When I am having a bad day or have had a bad week, AEE helps me to express my thoughts and feelings in a safer way than how I would have managed them before”

Tonetic Records

Tonetic Records is our youth led record label. We provide an inclusive space for artists to: develop music skills, gain performance experience, connect with others, and access vital industry knowledge. This year, we employed two new young people to work for the label, Lucy and Jack. From gigs at Whereelse, to BBC Kent record of the week, and debut albums this has been an exciting year of growth and development for Tonetic Records.

A Message from Tom Postgate, our Tonetic Records Lead:

“2023 has really laid the foundations for Tonetic Records and I’m super proud of how the label has developed. Ruby, Ryan and Ellie have all been able to develop their artistry through the regular guidance and resources we’ve given them, the quality of their work has shone through and garnered various media attention and gig bookings.

Jack and Lucy have really helped grow the scope of the project, and going into next year I really feel that the project can serve as a beacon of what a music/creative career can look like for the young people at AEE and beyond.”

Check out Tonetic’s music:

Saphyr’s debut album **“Distant Zero”**

Ruby Tipple’s debut EP **“All the days”**

Ellhan’s first and sophomore singles **“got no love”** and **“first glance”**



Image credit:
olivergoodrich.co.uk



“Tonetic Records has given me the opportunity to use music as a means of expression, where otherwise I wouldn’t have the equipment or access to do so. Being able to release my own music has given me a lot of confidence and in this area that’s something unique to Tonetic Records” - Ruby Tipple



Youth Advisory Board

VOTCY - Voices of the Creative Youth

VOTCY has been running since September to provide a nurturing space for young people to come together, share lived experience and engage in change making. So often in today's society young people encounter systems that are not fit for purpose and are not listened to when talking about the barriers they face.

VOTCY aims to create a space that challenges this, therefore empowering youth voice, cultivating skills and creating change within the community and beyond. It has been a pleasure to facilitate space for young people in this capacity, there has been plenty of insightful discussions and I look forward to where the group take VOTCY

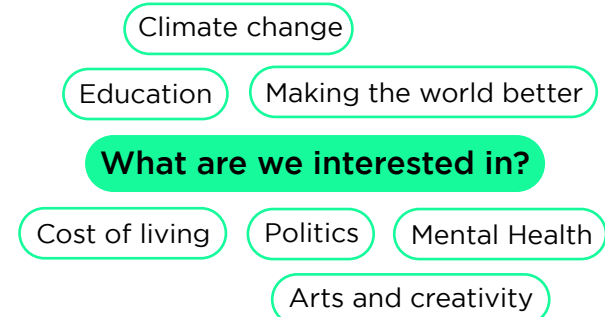
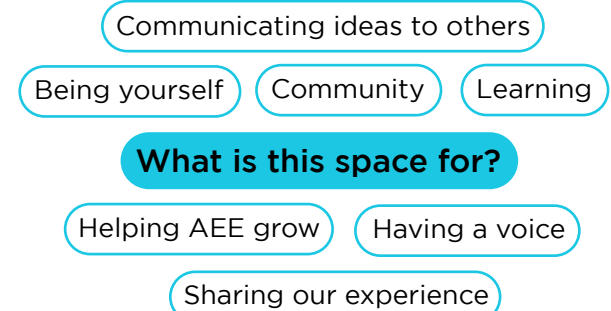
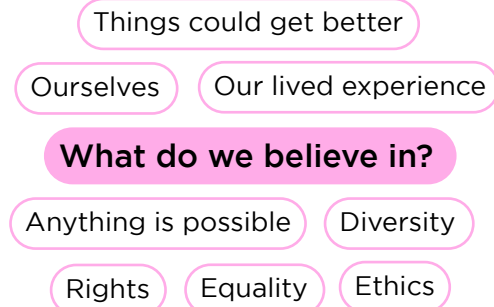
- Alice Dunham, Youth Engagement Producer and programme lead

What young people say about VOTCY:

"It's wonderful to be part of such a dynamic and impactful team at AEE."

"I'm excited about the progress we're making."

"It was a pleasure to be a part of it and I'm thrilled that my input was valuable."



What did Parents and Carers have to say?

We believe it [AEE] has helped him integrate back into a mainstream school environment...and has improved the feelings he had of isolation and loneliness. AEE has been able to widen his access to things outside of school and created a space he can feel a part of.

She looks forward to going each week, and it's given her some way of transitioning into living in Margate.

It has built their confidence, ability to work with others and provided access to great equipment and opportunities.

She has made new friendships in a time that has been really difficult for her and has felt really comfortable being part of the group.

His confidence and self esteem is growing each week and he comes home absolutely glowing.

Programme Updates: Changes to Programme

Creative Lab

In late 2022, we launched a new programme for children and young people who are vulnerable to school and social exclusion. This project was delivered in collaboration with Turner Contemporary gallery in Margate. Our partnership came to an end in October 2023, and we'd like to thank the Turner and the Creative Lab delivery team for their dedication and commitment to the young people accessing the programme.



Royal Harbour Academy

We partnered with Royal Harbour delivering a programme on their site, running a mixture of group and 1:1 sessions throughout the school day.

The young people who attended this programme were struggling with school attendance due to poor mental health (including depression and anxiety) and neurodivergence (including ASD and ADHD).

The school noticed an improved confidence, enjoyment of school and better attendance, particularly on the day of the intervention from the young people involved.

"Creative, enjoyable and beneficial for the students"
- Kris Lasslet, SENCO at Royal Harbour

Creative ESOL

In 2023, over 40 young people got involved in learning English skills through creative activities, on our Creative English for Speakers of Other Languages programme. Our offer for asylum seeking young people has since developed into a weekly drop-in session, where participants can access our art and music studio.



Programme Updates: New Initiatives

EHCP Placements

This year we have had 3 long term paid placements. Providing part time, creative education programmes as part of the educational provision for young people who are in need of an alternative to mainstream education.

School Interventions: ELA and Ursuline

This year we have partnered with Enterprise Learning Alliance and Ursuline College providing 2hr long sessions of Visual Art and Music for students who are facing barriers to education such as; risk of exclusion, disengaged with education, school induced anxiety, mental health and neurodiversity.

These groups have given the young people an opportunity to explore art and music and create pieces in line with their interests without the pressures of a school environment. In the music studio they have written and recorded their own music, learned how to play instruments, including drums, guitar and piano. In the art studio they have experimented with clay, and other sculpture materials, large scale painting, drawing, spray painting, printing and marbling.

Expressions: Summer Holiday Project

Over the summer we ran a 3 day Art, Movement and Wellbeing project called, Expressions. This project combined physical movement and breathing (yoga based) with Visual Art techniques (including, painting, marbling, embodied drawing, collage and mono printing) to develop a wellbeing resource for the participants to take away and use in their everyday lives.

- Total number of participants: 9
- 5 YP attended every session
- Age range: 12 - 17
- Barriers to education: Autism, ADHD, Anxiety, Depression, Eating Disorders, Trauma, CIC



Partnerships and Collaborations

We'd like to say a huge thank you to all the organisations we've partnered and collaborated with this year. We truly appreciate your support of AEE, and we look forward to the new projects 2024 brings us!



STUDIO LEUCA

Turner
Contemporary

DREAMLAND
MARGATE



MARGATE
PRIDE
FESTIVAL

University of
Kent

Powell-Cotton
Museum
Quex House & Gardens

OSE
OPEN
SCHOOL
EAST

Evaluating our Work: The Evaluation and Learning Framework

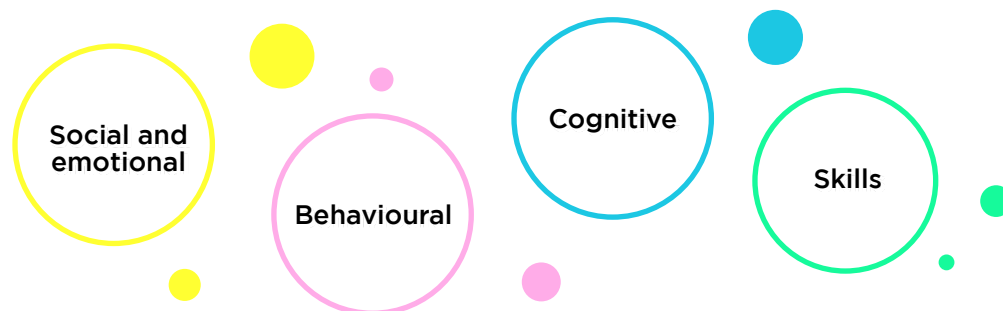
As staff continually test and develop our tools for evaluation, we have questioned:

Who is the evaluation for?

Are our methods creative?

Do they allow for young people to reflect and feedback in their own words?

Although these questions are ongoing we are thrilled to have worked with Anna Cutler, who has analysed the first data produced with our developed framework. Anna analysed our entire set of MEL (monitoring, evaluation and learning) documents for the period of 2 school terms against our 4 areas of learning:





“

Doing the evaluation I thought 'Wow! This is really working for these young people in so many ways. Arts Education Exchange has successfully found a way to make a difference by working creatively with their wants, desires and needs.

- Anna Cutler

”



The following extract from the analysis is hugely encouraging:

Although all different, the young people who attend AEE present a range of similar emotional and cognitive characteristics that impact on their personal feelings, social relationships, and their capacity to learn. For many (if not all) the personal properties of creativity appear absent or limited for the young people when they arrive

A long list of the personal properties required for creativity is offered by Cropley (see page 60 of Creativity in Teaching and Learning). The students' baseline data demonstrate the lack of, or opposite of, these properties. For example, inner directedness is in contrast to 'a lack of motivation'. Ego strength is reported as 'lacking in confidence', openness is met with language such as 'withdrawn or resistant', risk-taking is its very opposite of 'staying in their comfort zones'.

The data present a portrait of YP profoundly affected by social and emotional complexity and trauma. They struggle in group settings and often require 1:1 attention. YP frequently feel isolated and withdrawn, unable to express emotions and lack agency. Fear, high anxiety, and low self-esteem are reported with clear needs for security, safety, and consistency. Behaviour is shown to manifest itself through frustration, disengagement, distraction, a lack of trust and a resistance to learning. The need to stay within known realms of knowledge and the inability to take on others' ideas is evident. Some data reveal a lack of self-care or value, a lack of joy, some defensiveness, as well as little aspiration or hope.

In short, the YP arrive with their creative capacities effectively muted at best, at worst in shut down, and with relationships that are vulnerable and can be few and far between with peers. This is not true of every YP, but the data show this is the majority.

Essentially the YP need to work with AEE to create a sufficient degree of trust, safety, confidence, and hope before they can really embark on creative projects to the full. That said, creative learning approaches when introduced do support and grow this over time as the evidence below reveals:

[Click here for the full report](#)

Evaluating our Work: Outreach Survey

In February 2023, AEE launched the Outreach Survey to capture young peoples' opinions on creativity, being online, our organisation, and access to opportunities.

We now have some valuable data that will help guide us to make more informed decisions about our programmes, and to be more aware of the barriers they face to creative learning opportunities.

[Click here to see the full findings](#)

19 young people aged 14-27 told us...

78%

consider themselves to be **neurodivergent** or have mental health conditions (diagnosed or undiagnosed)

52%

said **time restrictions** prevent them from getting involved in creative activities

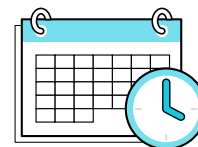
89%

said the main way they get involved with creative activities is at **home**

What's next?



Evaluating our accommodations for neurodivergent young people in our creative sessions



Working on solutions to scheduling barriers around education and other responsibilities in young peoples' lives



Understanding why young people feel more comfortable being creative at home, and making our own space more comfortable

Our Team

Huge thanks to our incredible team, who embody our values and mission every day!

We've also worked with some amazing freelancers this year. Thanks to: Anna Cutler, Clare (Expressions), Carla Knight, Josh Halcro, Sharron Harrison, and Karen Vost.



Our Board of Trustees

We'd like to offer a huge thank-you to our trustees:



Tracie Trimmer-Platman
Chair of Trustees



Paulo Gomes
Fundraising Trustee



Victoria Barrow-Williams
Trustee



Michele Buchanan
Safeguarding Lead



Lizo Ngqobongwana
Trustee



Emma Meades
Treasurer Trustee

Their wealth of knowledge and experience is invaluable to the success of our organisation.

We also sadly said goodbye this year to trustees John Johnston and Alan Meades. We'd like to thank them for contributing so much to AEE and wish them all the best.

A Message from Dr. Tracie Trimmer-Platman, Chair of Trustees

'The team at Arts Education Exchange brim with creativity and energy, engaging safely and creatively with young people who genuinely thrive as a result. This report shows the scope and achievements of a very busy year packed full of impressive work with local young people. Establishing VOTCY, the youth board is a huge achievement lead by young people and will inform our future decisions and directions. With ever emerging opportunities and advocacy for the work that AEE does, we are excited to be considering developmental ideas to make a difference to many more young people in Margate. This year has flown by with its challenges as well as opportunities, and I remain privileged to Chair such a motivational and transformative organisation. I am thankful to Ollie and the team as well as my colleagues on the Board for their continued support and commitment.'

Finance Summary

A huge thank you is owed to all our funders and donors who have supported us this year in providing young people with access to Creative Learning:



Income raised:
£302,478

Looking Ahead to 2024



New strategy

As we approach the final year of our 2022-25 strategy we are preparing to hold a number of workshops and consultations in the new year with staff, trustees, young people, funders and community stakeholders to develop the next ambitious phase of our journey. The Voice of the Creative Youth will play an immensely important role in shaping the future of our organisation, as we seek to realise our vision: Reimagining how we learn together.

Business Plan

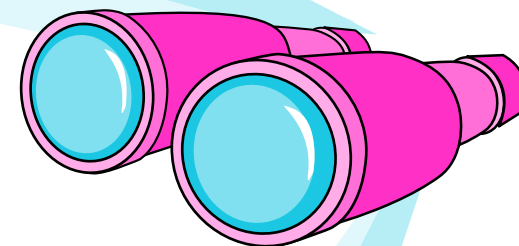
Integral to this strategic planning process will be the development of a new business plan, which will lay our social and financial argument for growth and investment. Central to our plan will be to increase our capacity for part time alternative provision placements for young people with EHCPs and increase our contracting work with schools, unlocking local authority funding and making us less reliant on grants from trusts and foundations.

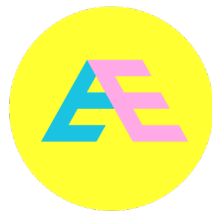


New Building

AEE has long been seeking new premises. Our growth and sustainability depends on increasing our physical capacity to meet the ever increasing demand (our waiting list remains on average 30 young people). However, finding an appropriate building in Margate has proved to be challenging with various prospects not materialising.

New areas of work are being developed including working with teachers and school leaders to develop the professional value and experience of art education in Thanet; establishing a therapeutic arm to address the high demand/low supply of mental health services in the area and outdoor learning.





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EDUCATION
EXCHANGE**

Reimagining how we learn together

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