



St Ann's School – Merton

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Fiona Copeland talks about the success of one of the students on the programme.

Fiona Copeland, Deputy Head of St Ann's told us about her experience of the programme and its impact on the life of an SEN [severe learning needs] school.

'Having a professional dance teacher working in a special school like ours has made an enormous difference. Having someone who is a skilled dancer and able to teach in a SEN environment is fantastic, it really helps to move forward perceptions and practice of what learners with severe and complex needs can do and achieve'.

Fiona explained how one individual in particular has benefited from the programme.

'There has definitely been raised self esteem, raised public profile within the school and beyond. He has developed skills which wouldn't have been possible without the classes. He has received so much praise in school and gained so much confidence; it has made a fantastic difference. His performance success at Step LIVE! had a hugely affirming effect on him and it was clear that his family were extremely proud of his achievements'.

Fiona feels that the success of this student is part of a changing culture of education in SEN schools, which is supported by the work of Step into Dance.

'It has been the norm that some type of dance would be offered to all students but it would not have necessarily been expected that any one student or students would be able to achieve excellence and most especially to be able to achieve this in live performance work.'

The teachers at the school have also gained a lot from the classes.

'Myself and the other teachers involved with the class feel enabled professionally and have a much broader understanding of dance practice. All of the teachers have grown in confidence, and have a wider understanding of the discipline and how it is taught'.

Fiona and other teachers from St Ann's have participated in the Step into Dance teachers' training days.

'The training days have been excellent, the standard has been extremely high and they have been very useful'.

Fiona explains how her own ideas and suggestions have been welcomed by the Step into Dance team.

'I feel that we have been listened to and respected. Originally we didn't feel that there was enough representation of students with learning disabilities at Step LIVE! and did mention this. Ideas were welcomed and not seen as an inconvenience. At Step LIVE! 2009 we saw wonderful evidence that our comments had been listened to and acted on'.

Step into Dance is a partnership project between The Jack Petchey Foundation and the Royal Academy of Dance.

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