Evaluation Report of Prospero's Island: an Immersive Approach to Literacy at Key Stage 3

A joint venture between Punchdrunk Enrichment, Hackney Learning Trust and a secondary Academy

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Executive Summary

Prospero's Island is an immersive theatre project created by Punchdrunk Enrichment and sponsored by Learning Partner, London Borough of Hackney (Hackney Learning Trust). The project sought to inspire and motivate students' engagement with the English curriculum, and to develop an immersive approach to teaching literacy that would improve students' learning.

Hackney Learning Trust (HLT) works with over 350 schools across the UK. With 500 professionals in 21 specialist service areas, the Trust explores innovative and evidence-based approaches to delivering improvements in classroom practice and pupil attainment. Punchdrunk Enrichment (PE) is the educational arm of Punchdrunk, an immersive theatre company that encourages audiences to participate actively and creatively in theatrical events. PE transforms areas in schools into fictional worlds in which students play an active role in the narrative.

Project rationale

Prospero's Island was HLT and PE's first secondary phase project. Both partners were concerned about the pressures of the performance culture in contemporary education, the introduction of exam skills in Key Stage 3 and the side-lining of the arts in policy and practice. A reduction in school arts activities is believed to represent a particular risk for socially-disadvantaged students who have little or no access to such experience outside school (Warwick Commission, 2015). *Prospero's Island* was designed to bring experiential theatre directly into the English curriculum, providing a creative and stimulating approach to teaching and learning. Based on *The Tempest*, the project also supported teachers in developing interactive approaches to teaching Shakespeare: bringing his work to life, overcoming students' fear and resistance, and promoting their active engagement with plot, characters and themes in order to support long-term understanding (see Salvatore, 2010).

Project description

Prospero's Island took place in a secondary academy in Hackney, London over two school terms (autumn 2014-spring 2015). The project was embedded in existing schemes of work, and included the following elements:

- An immersive theatre installation for Year 7-8 students (aged 11-13 years); this took the form of an interactive game based on *The Tempest*; over a two-week period groups of students participated in this experience for a morning or afternoon (*autumn term*);
- A Teaching and Learning Day (TALD) and eight twilight CPD sessions on immersive learning techniques for school staff and teachers across London (*autumn term*);
- A return to the installation for one lesson, led by English teachers (*autumn term*);
- Follow-on work by teachers to develop immersive learning in English lessons (*spring term*);
- An independent evaluation of the project (*autumn and spring terms*).

Evaluating the project

The evaluation was undertaken by an Open University-led research team. It investigated the value and impact of the project, focusing on:

- students' attitudes to and engagement in English;
- students' writing;
- English teachers' pedagogical practice

The evaluation focused on the experiences of Year 7 (11-12 year old) students. Data were collected from the whole Year 7 cohort and, at a greater level of detail, from 18 case-study students within three focal classes. Case study students included a gender mix and reflected diversity within their class and across the year group, particularly in terms of ability. The evaluation combined quantitative approaches (measuring changes to students' writing and their attitudes to and engagement in English) and qualitative approaches (looking in greater depth at activities carried out in the installation and in English lessons, and students' and teachers' responses to these).

Data analysis covered:

- Year 7 students' performance in writing tasks, completed before and after their participation in *Prospero's Island*;
- Year 7 students' attitudes to and engagement in English before and at the end of their participation in the project;
- Observation of three focal classes' participation in the *Prospero's Island* installation and follow-on English lessons;
- Detailed information from/on case-study students;
- Detailed information from English teachers working with three focal classes;
- Information from participants in CPD sessions, and HLT and PE staff.

The *Prospero's Island* experience

Prospero's Island was structured as an episodic game with a quest format. Groups of students entered the 'Hub' - the dark centre of operations (a transformed Reading Room) – to be greeted by the disembodied voice of the 'Games Master' and his three assistants (all PE actor-facilitators). Over a two hour period the students unlocked the story of 'a storm, an island, and a man with unfathomable powers' by working through seven levels in the game, engaging in text-based activities and venturing on problem-solving missions to areas elsewhere in the school. For example the school greenhouse became Prospero's 'Magic Lab'; a tent on the roof the 'Nobles' Camp'. Each part of the installation comprised detailed artefacts and multiple sensory stimuli, and offered insights into characterization, plot and themes of the play. As each level within the game was achieved, parts of the Hub were transformed to reveal hidden compartments and new spaces with stories to tell. The experience clearly captivated students and provoked their 'dynamic curiosity' (Machon, 2009: 61). It provided opportunities for collaboration, problem-solving, discussion, textual interpretation, an understanding of Shakespeare's language and the development of student interest in and knowledge about *The Tempest*.

The teacher-led return to the installation was framed as literacy, with a more explicit focus on widening vocabulary and a sense of trajectory towards the written assessment.

The impact of *Prospero's Island*

Impact on students' attitudes to and engagement in English

- Data from the Year 7 cohort suggests that the immersive experience impacted positively on students' motivation, engagement and learning in English;
- Case study data suggests the *Prospero's Island* installation created a sense of 'awe and wonder', inspiring students' curiosity and imaginative engagement;
- Teachers of focal classes commented that the participation levels of lower-attaining or normally disengaged students were particularly positive in the installation;
- Case study data suggests that teachers' later utilisation of immersive elements in English lessons enhanced students' enjoyment and motivation. Students noted that the use of music, pictures and objects, problem-solving and collaborative approaches were effective in supporting learning and engaging their interest;
- Reflecting on the immersive experience as a whole, teachers commented that students showed increased interest in Shakespeare and literature, confidence in lessons and willingness to volunteer suggestions or take creative risks;
- Case study students commented that the immersive experience had expanded their concept of literacy; promoted a sense of ownership of their learning; empowered them as active learners;
- At the end of the project there was some improvement in Year 7 students' general rating of 'English' and 'writing', independently of *Prospero's Island*; however ratings were not significantly different and were difficult to assign to the project alone.

Impact on students' writing

- Case study students reported that *Prospero's Island* provided a powerful and inspiring context for writing and enhanced their eagerness to write; they commented on having more ideas for writing than usual, being better able to imagine the scene and empathise with characters, and enjoying writing more;
- Teachers of the focal classes observed an improved attitude towards and confidence in writing amongst students;
- The analysis of case study students' scripts shows that many were able to write convincingly about the perspective and feelings of the play's characters;
- Evidence from scripts suggests the project prompted students to use advanced vocabulary in writing;
- Impact on writing scores was more complex. The majority of Year 7 students improved their scores by one or more sub-levels. There were differences between classes, however, and a significant minority did not improve. Figures need to be interpreted with caution as many of the gains above are not easily measured by standard assessment criteria, and factors other than the immersive experience may also have affected performance.

Impact on teachers' pedagogy

- Teachers of focal classes felt they had started to make changes as a result of the project, although this was seen as just the beginning of a professional journey;
- The teachers reported an enhanced understanding of immersive learning and teaching;
- Teachers also reported using, in English lessons, a wide range of stimuli directly linked to the project, including images, music and artefacts to develop inference and deduction skills and inspire written work; this was confirmed by researcher observations;
- Teachers had begun considering, as a future activity, the transformation of their classroom space to support students' learning;
- Teachers' focus was more on the adoption of specific techniques than on the development of a distinctive and principled immersive approach.

The longer-term implementation of immersive techniques will necessarily face a number of practical challenges: time constraints, assessment pressures, the requirement to focus on more structured support for students' writing, behaviour management, as well as teachers' need for continuing guidance and support.

Summary recommendations

The evaluation indicates that *Prospero's Island* made a positive impact on the Year 7 students' attitudes to and engagement in English, afforded inspiration for their writing and vocabulary, and began to influence the teachers' pedagogical practice. It also afforded a rich opportunity for active engagement with Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

In order to enhance the value and longer-term impact of the project it is recommended that *Prospero's Island* is fine-tuned to offer a trajectory of support for teachers, to help maintain momentum and embed key principles. HLT's knowledge and understanding of educational practice created an effective bridge between PE and the academy that hosted the project; from the outset their involvement was pivotal. In future iterations of immersive projects such involvement will be important. Specifically it is recommended that future partners, individually and collaboratively, consider:

- Developing a shared understanding of immersive teaching and learning;
- Supporting teachers to observe and document students' creative engagement;
- Increasing the time set aside to plan, support and embed follow-up work within the curriculum;
- Sustaining the joint CPD and TALD offer and providing complementary CPD on working in role;
- Constructing criteria to counter the assessment emphasis on technical/organisational features of writing;
- Establishing artefact boxes to support immersive practice;
- Maximising the use of social media during and after projects;
- Exploring the learning principles and educational potential of alternate reality gameplay;

- Examining the scope for student agency;
- Planning lighter-touch immersive projects within school schemes of work;
- Supporting teachers as action researchers of their own immersive projects;
- Creating in-school evaluation procedures.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Prospero's Island: an Immersive Approach to Literacy at Key Stage 3 was developed by Punchdrunk Enrichment in collaboration with Hackney Learning Trust and a secondary Academy in Hackney[1]. In June 2014 The Open University tendered to undertake an evaluation of the project and, through dialogue, objectives for the work were negotiated and agreed. The evaluative study was undertaken in the school year 2014-2015, with data collection concentrated in the autumn term 2014 and the spring term 2015, and data analysis undertaken in the summer term 2015.

1.1 The development of the *Prospero's Island* project

Punchdrunk, a British theatre company formed in 2000, is well respected as a pioneer in immersive theatre, a dramatic form that engages the audience in co-creating their own narrative experience (Machon, 2013). Punchdrunk's Enrichment department, formed in 2008 by Pete Higgin, works to explore the ways in which the company's core 'engagement ethos' and artistic principles can be developed and mediated in educational contexts for the benefit of young people (Punchdrunk, 2012). As Higgin observes:

> *A key aim … of Punchdrunk Enrichment's work is the power of giving pupils rich and unexpected experiences, providing fuel for their imaginations and empowering them to create.*
>
> (Higgin, in Punchdrunk, 2012)

Punchdrunk has received very positive feedback about its enrichment work in primary schools: their flagship project 'Under the Eiderdown' (UTE) has, since its inception in January 2009, been delivered in 30 primary schools across six London boroughs and reached over 10,000 pupils. To date, the company has undertaken its own evaluations, summarised in the company's own *Under the Eiderdown: Evaluation Report 2009-12* (Punchdrunk, 2012). In reflecting upon their intentions for this primary focused work, Higgin (quoted in Punchdrunk, 2012) also notes:

> *The overriding aim for Under the Eiderdown (UTE) was to make our audience (in this case primary school pupils) feel 'punch-drunk'. Experiences differ from individual to individual, but this feeling of being punchdrunk comes with a desire to share an experience rich with memories and sensory textures. A feeling that compels you to speak, to write, to draw and to create.*

Drawing on data gathered from a number of schools, in the form of oral responses from children, parents, teachers and head teachers, the Punchdrunk (2012) report suggests that UTE has made a marked impact in a number of ways. In particular, the company argues that UTE has positively influenced children's preparedness to engage orally and their eagerness to write, as well as having a positive impact upon their attainment in writing at Key Stages 1 and 2 (5-11 years). They argue further that immersive theatre as a distinctive art form can enrich children's engagement in education, that schools can be a valuable context for narrative imagined experiences and that the involvement of teachers from the outset contributes to the success of their work.

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[1] For ethical reasons, we have sought to respect the anonymity of the school – see Section 3.4.2.

Hackney Learning Trust was formed in 2012. It built on the work of the earlier 'Learning Trust', established in Hackney in 2002 as the first private, not-for-profit UK company to take over and transform a Council's education function. For over a decade the Learning Trust helped to deliver some of the most improved and sustained educational results in the country; Hackney moved from a position as one of the lowest performing Local Authorities to one where 91% of primary pupils, 98% of secondary pupils and 100% of special school pupils attend an outstanding or good school. Literacy programmes have been an integral part of this success, including: The LIT Programme; Year 1 Daily Supported Reading Programme; Reading Recovery – Key Stage 1; Hackney Reading Standard; Writing Support; and Hackney Loves Reading.

In 2012, The Learning Trust was incorporated back into Hackney Council and is now known as Hackney Learning Trust. The Trust sells its services on a not-for-profit basis and currently works with over 350 schools across the UK, employing 500 professionals working across 21 specialist service areas. The Trust is particularly interested in exploring innovative and evidence-based approaches to delivering improvements in classroom practice and pupil attainment, and researching and developing new approaches to literacy.

In 2014 Hackney Learning Trust developed a secondary phase partnership with Punchdrunk Enrichment and an Academy in Hackney, a school catering for 11-19 year olds. Hackney Learning Trust and the Academy were joint funders of a project developed by Punchdrunk Enrichment and based on Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. The project was entitled *Prospero's Island: an Immersive Approach to Literacy at Key Stage 3*. It included the following elements:

(i) An immersive theatre installation based on *The Tempest*, for students aged 11-13;
(ii) A Teaching and Learning Day (TALD) and eight twilight CPD sessions on immersive learning techniques for school staff and teachers across London;
(iii) A return to the installation led by English teachers;
(iv) Follow on work by teachers to develop immersive learning in English lessons;
(v) An independent evaluation of the project.

A tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was drawn up between Punchdrunk Enrichment, Hackney Learning Trust and the Academy, with Hackney Learning Trust and the Academy as the learning partners and Punchdrunk as the artistic partner. Planned learning targets were to increase engagement and improve standards in extended writing, and speaking and listening, at Key Stage 3, as well as to provide wider enrichment and social learning. The three partners agreed to work together to refine the learning outcomes around literacy before the work commenced.

As a rationale for the project the partners agreed that, against a background of dramatic changes to the national curriculum and a culture of increased accountability, it was challenging to inspire and motivate students to develop a positive inclination to learning in English and in particular to engage with Shakespeare's plays. This, they perceived was partly the result of a more linear Key Stage 4 curriculum which means exam skills are being taught much earlier in the Key Stage 3 curriculum. Whilst targeted approaches may help schools to deliver improvements in attainment, the risk remains that such

instrumental approaches may reduce student engagement and motivation. More generally, the partners were aware that there has been a move away from the arts in many schools as they refine their focus on attainment in core subjects. The Warwick Commission (2015) claims that there has been a significant decline in the number of state schools offering arts subjects taught by specialist teachers. The Commission also suggests that the cost of young people taking part in some extra-curricular activities means these are beyond the reach of low-income families. Thus the partners planned the work in order to engage pupils and help them access Shakespeare in an invitational and accessible manner.

The new National Curriculum for English (DfE, 2014) requires all students read two Shakespeare plays in the first three years of secondary education. Yet critics warn of the danger of 'force-feeding' entire plays to an age group that often finds Shakespeare inaccessible, observing that a generation of students may be 'turned off' Shakespeare for good if subjected to traditional approaches to teaching and learning. E.g.:

> *'If a teenager, who has never before experienced the world of Shakespeare, is compelled to sit in a classroom and take it in turns reading a play composed in a quaint, confusing language with intricate plots and sub-plots that were never intended to be read in a book anyway – it is no great surprise that pupil-engagement does not naturally follow' (Lloyd, The Telegraph, 11th March 2014).*

Thus the rationale for funding the project and the subsequent evaluation was based on a desire to explore creative approaches that could be mainstreamed alongside and as part of the National Curriculum.

1.2 Designing the evaluation of the project

In responding to the remit which outlined the new partnership's intentions and aspirations for the evaluation, The Open University (OU) team recognised that the proposal outlined an 'evaluation of the installation to measure the impact on engagement and attainment in literacy for Years 7 and 8', with particular reference to 'the learning targets' which were, as noted above *'to increase engagement and improve standards in extended writing, and speaking and listening at Key Stage 3'*. The OU team accepted that the evaluation needed to include quantitative information alongside more artistic and qualitative documentation, and planned accordingly. They noted, however, that the variables that were likely to influence the young people's spoken contributions and their writing could not be isolated, and that across the school year numerous other factors would impact upon the students' performance. As a consequence, the OU team suggested that data collection should mainly be concentrated in the autumn term (when the installation was planned), in order that the impact of the installation was measured within an appropriate time-frame – a time-frame that could more easily highlight any links between activities carried out in the installation and work produced by students. Given the major focus in the project on attainment in literacy, the OU team recommended a pre- and post-installation writing assessment, while also recognising that this would need to be treated with due caution and supplemented with rich documentary evidence. Thus they recommended the collection of quantitative and qualitative data from participants in the form of an attitude survey, observation of activities, interviews with participants and more detailed information from a set of case study students. The potential of documenting the impact of the immersive experience on students' writing

and on attitudes and motivation (via the survey) *as well as* documenting sustained work in the classroom was recognised by all. In order to achieve a broad picture and a more focused one (through the case studies), and because the evaluation was relatively small-scale, it was agreed this would focus on a single year group, Year 7 (11-12 year olds) at the start of their secondary education. It would encompass a subset of six children from each of three classes, drawn from across the ability range within the year group. The teachers of these classes were invited to participate and they too collected data on the case study students at two points in the year. (See further Chapter 3 on the methodology for the evaluation.)

Additionally, the HLT/Punchdrunk and Academy partnership and the OU team recognised that the extent to which the immersive experience was built upon and developed by the teachers would make a difference to the potential impact of the work. It was therefore agreed the evaluation should encompass the three teachers' professional learning and the ways in which they built upon the experience and the CPD sessions in order to enrich their pedagogical practice. Whilst *Prospero's Island* took place in the last two weeks of November (with each Year 7 and Year 8 class taking part in a session timetabled during an English class), the core installation for *Prospero's Island* (the Hub) was left in place for an additional week to allow further work by English teachers and students. In the spring term, teachers in the English department designed and carried out further work that built on *Prospero's Island*. Whilst Hackney Learning Trust offered support for the development of a scheme of work in the autumn term based around *The Tempest*, it was intended that in the spring term the teachers' professional practice would be documented without input or structural support from the Hackney team, and that teachers themselves would lead on this. It was believed that this would afford more diversity in follow-up practice and would prompt professional ownership of new ways of working developed from the immersive experience.

The following objectives were agreed as the basis of the evaluation. The evaluation sought to examine:

1. the impact of Punchdrunk Enrichment's immersive theatre project* upon Year 7 pupils' writing;
2. the impact of the Punchdrunk Enrichment project upon Year 7 pupils' attitudes to and engagement in English;
3. the impact of the Punchdrunk Enrichment project on three Year 7 English teachers' pedagogical practice, and any specific developments associated with the related CPD.

** In this context the Punchdrunk Enrichment project is deemed to include the immersive experience of Prospero's Island as well as the teachers' autumn term return to the installation with their classes, associated CPD activity, and follow-on work led by the three teachers in the spring term.*

It was also agreed that the evaluation would include recommendations with regard to future joint ventures, not only for the three core collaborators but more broadly for Punchdrunk Enrichment's partnership work in secondary education with Hackney Learning Trust. The longer-term aim of the evaluation was thus to inform the future work of Punchdrunk Enrichment. This report, representing a specific case study evaluation of work at the Academy, may usefully be read alongside the wider research and evaluation study into Punchdrunk Enrichment work undertaken by Middlesex University (Machon and Thompson, 2014).

1.3 Background information on the school setting

The Academy hosting the evaluation is a secondary school in Hackney, taking students from 11-19 years. At the time of the evaluation it had just over 1,000 students on roll. In 2015 the academy's student body was characterized by Ofsted as follows:

- The academy is larger than the average-sized secondary school and has more boys than girls.
- The vast majority of students are from minority ethnic groups, and the proportion is much higher than the national average. The three largest groups are from Any Other Black background, those of Caribbean heritage and those from Any Other White background.
- A high proportion of students are eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding provided for students known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after by the local authority, or with parents in the armed forces).
- The proportion of students who speak a first language other than English is high.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is well above the national average.
  (Ofsted Inspection Report 2015)

In its inspection report, Ofsted rated the overall effectiveness of the school as 'good', and commended the school's leadership and management, students' safety and well-being, achievements, behaviour, the quality of teaching, sixth form work, and the governing body.

The school decided to target the Punchdrunk Enrichment immersive theatre project in Years 7 and 8 as it was perceived this would offer new entrants and those in Year 8 a positive, collaborative experience and would support relationship building in new classes. The work was planned to link to the English Department's focus on Shakespeare potentially fostering a sense of 'awe and wonder' through the immersive experience.

1.4 The structure of this report

In the report which follows, in Chapter Two we set the project in context by reviewing the relevant research literature, examining aspects such as drama in education; immersive theatre; creative partnerships between arts organisations such as Punchdrunk and education; and work on digital game play (as *Prospero's Island* was framed as a digital game). We highlight in particular strands of this research that connect to the development of students' writing, engagement and the development of creative pedagogic practice. In this chapter we also attend to the professional policy and practice context and the curriculum and assessment requirements for teachers at Key Stage 3 in England to afford a context for *Prospero's Island* and associated work by teachers. In Chapter 3 we offer a detailed account of the methodology designed for the evaluation: the data sources employed to investigate the impact of *Prospero's Island*, according to the three objectives outlined above; the data analytic procedures adopted; and the ethical protocols followed. Chapter 4 offers a descriptive account of the two phases of the project: the immersive theatre experience in the autumn term 2014, (led by Punchdrunk Enrichment) and the immediate return to the installation (led by the teachers), as well as the phase two follow-on work in the spring term 2015 (led by the teachers).

Chapter 5 offers a more reflective commentary on the Punchdrunk Enrichment project, with specific attention to the immersive experience, and the teacher-led return to the installation in the autumn term. The following three chapters present analyses of data relating to the evaluation's three objectives. Chapter 6 focuses upon the impact upon the students' engagement and motivation, Chapter 7 addresses the impact on students' writing and Chapter 8 the impact on the three teachers' pedagogy. Chapter 9 draws together points from the previous four chapters, synthesises themes evident across these chapters and discusses key insights offered by the evaluation as a whole. This concluding chapter also makes recommendations for future work based upon the evaluation and offers specific suggestions regarding the dissemination of the evaluation's findings.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this literature review, work undertaken in a variety of academic fields and disciplines is considered in relation to *Prospero's Island*. Research literature that explores the impact of artistic partnerships in schools, and drama in education as well as immersive gaming is examined and their relevance discussed in order that the hybridity as well as the specificity of the approaches adopted in the project can be better understood. These foci have been selected in order to explore the terms used and aims expressed by project participants, both in the brief and in interviews and discussions with those involved, whilst also allowing for a related focus on student engagement, writing and pedagogy.

2.1 Artistic partnerships

A number of international studies over recent years have highlighted the impact that the arts can have on children's learning in educational settings: Champions of Change (Fiske, 1999); Reviewing Education and the Arts Project (REAP) (Heatland and Winner, 2001); Critical Links (Deasy, 2002); Evaluation of School-based Arts Education Programmes in Australian Schools (ACER, 2004) and The Arts and Australian Education: realising potential (Ewing, 2010). Anderson and Dunn argue that 'taken together, these reports provide compelling evidence of the positive role the Arts can play in enriching learning, with this now substantial body of work demonstrating why they deserve a space closer to the centre rather than the periphery of learning' (2013: 7). This evidence notwithstanding, these scholars note that 'with some notable exceptions, Arts disciplines across the globe struggle for curriculum space' (Anderson and Dunn, 2013: 7).

In the UK, many have argued that the arts in the national curriculum are being marginalised by the culture of 'performativity' (Ball, 1998). This subjects teachers and schools to accountability measures, including students' performance in standardized tests, inspection evidence and other external monitoring of teachers. Performativity is frequently described in English education as the enemy of creativity. However, the work facilitated by Creative Partnerships (CP) in the UK, described by Thomson et al., (2013: 6) as 'the most ambitious, biggest and longest running arts education intervention in the world' has shown that even in performative cultures, creativity can be fostered. From 2002-2011, CP provided funding for creative practitioners to work with over 5000 schools across England. It aimed to 'transform students' experiences of schooling expand teachers' classroom approaches and dramatically improve the ways in which schools functioned and performed' (CP, 2013: 3). Focusing on both the intrinsic and extrinsic value of arts in education, CP regularly worked with schools struggling to meet national targets and whose pupils might have had limited access to the arts for social or economic reasons. Even without such funding, some schools seek to set up their own partnerships, as in the project *Prospero's Island* where Punchdrunk Enrichment, the Academy and the Hackney Learning Trust worked together to support the learning of young people in one of London's more economically deprived boroughs.

In the sub-sections that follow, the impact of CP projects on learning and pedagogy are discussed, as these areas are directly relevant to the focus of this evaluation.

2.1.1 Impact of artistic partnerships on student learning

Thomson et al.'s Critical Review of the Impact of the Creative Partnerships Archive suggested that:

> *[Whilst] there is some research evidence in the archive for CP supporting modest gains in learning within formal school curriculum areas, as measured by tests and exams. There is stronger evidence for it encouraging enjoyment and engagement in school: this evidence ranges from improvements in attendance to increased motivation. Our analysis of the publicly available research in the CP archive suggests that overall the programme did produce considerable benefits for young people in the areas of wellbeing, citizenship and work.*
>
> (Thomson et al., 2013: 2)

The report's authors suggest that CP was committed to the school improvement agenda and that their educational work and research 'was framed by a policy settlement which relied on school autonomy, standards based accountability measures, continued self-evaluation and national curriculum tests and targets' (Thomson et al., 2013: 6). Nevertheless, they argue that CP aimed to both meet and disrupt this agenda. Many of the case studies reported demonstrate that when creative approaches were used this increased teacher and student motivation, and that improving learning and impacting on standards was the most challenging area for CP.

The findings of research into CP projects provide a useful context for our evaluation of *Prospero's Island*, the impact of which we seek to examine in relation to students' engagement and attitudes, their writing and teacher pedagogy.

2.1.2 Impact of artistic partnerships on pedagogy

Thomson et al.'s (2013) review of the CP archive recognises that teachers developed their practice through collaboration and the professional development opportunities on offer. However making comparisons between the impact of different partnerships on pedagogical practice is problematic due to the variety of approaches/models used and the variables inherent in comparing settings with different management structures and whole-school approaches to change. These scholars argue that:

> *There are obvious differences between what an artist in residence can do and someone who is on a fixed term project, and these differences also extend to the ways in which school staff are involved and what they have the opportunity to learn.*
>
> (Thomson et al., 2012: 9)

Drawing on research which had a specific focus on teacher learning (such as Galton, 2010) Thomson et al., (2012) identify three 'types' of learning occurring:

1) *when teachers took the skills made available by the artists and were then able to emulate them, using them in a not dissimilar manner;*
2) *when teachers took the skills made available by the artists and were able to transfer these to other similar topics*

3) *when teachers were able to understand the pedagogic principles offered by the artists' work and then were able to use them as the basis for developing new practice.*

They note that the last type of learning was less common than the others, but that 'according to CP researchers, teacher development within CP was more than just professional development in and of itself –it involved fundamental changes in the institution and the individual teachers within it' (Thomson et al., 2012: 12). Thus individual and whole school change was implicated.

Whilst creative practitioners brought their 'signature pedagogies' (Thomson, Jones and Hall, 2009) rooted in their own world views and professional practice into schools, teachers' pedagogies too were informed by their professional practice and school contexts. Contemporary English schooling might be described as having its own signature pedagogy, which Thomson et al., (2009) describe as the 'default' pedagogy.

> *We think here of 'the lesson', with its opening and closing plenaries and the middle period of direct instruction followed by individual or small group practice. In England the default lesson should begin with an outline of a curriculum objective; students are expected to understand how this objective will assist them to achieve a specified level of attainment set out in a curriculum framework. Teachers therefore plan lessons around particular objectives, and exercises and tests are designed in order to determine what level they have achieved.*
>
> (Thomson et al., 2012: 10-11)

The extent to which teachers' pedagogy was 'transformed', and the 'default pedagogy' of schooling disrupted by work with professional artists appeared to be influenced by the level of opportunities for dialogue and interaction between artists and teachers. Thomson et al., (2009) observed that across three studies they sampled, staff in arts-related disciplines and those who regularly engaged with creative practitioners were more likely to display aspects of the artist's signature pedagogies themselves and to use these in their teaching. The specific approach to artistic partnerships can therefore be seen to directly influence the extent to which significant shifts in practice are made possible. In this report we outline the way in which the *Prospero's Island* partnership between the artists and teachers was structured and investigate the impact of this project on the teachers' pedagogical practice.

2.2 Drama

Punchdrunk's work has been described as 'immersive theatre', a term which is central to understanding the framing of 'immersive learning' within *Prospero's Island*. No less important however is to situate the project within the broader contexts of the traditions of theatre and drama in education, in order to highlight the project's resonances with the work of other educators attempting to develop young people's writing through drama.

2.2.1 Immersive theatre

Experiences described as immersive theatre are diverse in their approaches and characteristics. White (2012) outlines a few of these variables, including the 'distance' between audience and actors, narrative structures, and use of space. This diversity makes reaching straightforward definitions of the genre difficult. Nevertheless, some common aspects of the hybridity and visceral experiential nature of performances have been articulated by researchers attempting to better understand the nature of these theatrical

events (e.g. Machon, 2009). The interplay between physical and cerebral experiences is useful to note as the immersion may be both physical and mental. Sensory engagement, the agency of participants, and the use of space in immersive theatre are all also of sufficient significance to require further exploration.

Physically, immersive theatrical events may aim to literally immerse their audiences in architectural environments and sensory landscapes. Such physical interactions underpin the audiences' sensory engagements. Describing Punchdrunk's work for adults, White explains that:

> *…these works are immersive in an almost literal way – they require the audience to move within the space occupied by the performers, a space that is replete with associations and which becomes performative in new ways in consequence of the audience's presence within it.*
>
> (White, 2012: 4)

Punchdrunk director Felix Barrett argues that during performances 'the audience have to make physical decisions and choices, and in doing that they make some sort of pact with the piece. They're physically involved with the piece and therefore it becomes visceral' (cited in Machon, 2009: 89). Machon explains that 'the architectural impact of the site makes the audience aware of the haptic quality of spatial presence and their position within that' (2009: 57). In a site specific performance, the theatrical experience is, she suggests, multidimensional, producing 'textural layers of meaning for the audience to absorb and interpret.' (Machon, 2009: 57). From an intellectual perspective, the audience are metaphorically immersed in meaning-making and interpretive processes, as when engaging with any other art form. For Machon, the physical environment, and the sensations and feelings this stimulates, influence and shape the sense making and support imaginative play: 'when an audience is encouraged to experience the various layers of "meaning" in the work by becoming part of the ludic play at the heart of the form itself, a dynamic curiosity is ignited' (2009: 61).

The agency of participants is an important element of immersive theatre. Disrupting the relationship and the traditional dramatic hierarchy between audience and performers is not new and many have explored the political and social implications of empowering participants to shape drama (Boal, 1979; Schechner, 1977, 1995; Malina and Beck, 1971). In referring to Punchdrunk's work, Machon notes that the company 'emphasise the fact that the active participation of the audience as voyagers through each performance event is vital to their practice' (2009: 61). Barrett suggests that 'a central feature of the work is the empowerment of the audience. It's a fight against audience apathy' (2009: 89). This apathy, though, is not to be interpreted in a political sense; rather it is related to reframing physical and intellectual engagement. Whether this reframing constitutes a granting of agency is, however, open to debate. Describing the experience of attending Punchdrunk's production *Sleep No More*, Worhten argues that it 'immerses its audiences in a paradoxical practice: we write our individualised plotlines in our own movements, but are constructed within the spectacle as realist voyeurs, watchers, and readers, not agents.' (2012: 96) In Punchdrunk's Enrichment work in educational contexts there has perhaps been more flexibility and scope for participants to shape the narrative, maybe as a result of smaller audience sizes and the relative intimacy of the experience (Machon, 2013). In *Under the Eiderdown* (2011) primary school children shaped the experience through their story writing, whilst participants in *The Uncommercial Traveller* (2011) engaged in improvised dialogue with performers, co-creating the experience and, to some

extent, shaping the performance through their suggestions and input. Contrastingly, in their project *Prospero's Island*, although the participants were positioned as players whose collective actions 'unlocked' stages of the narrative, appropriate actions and use of spaces were predefined within a highly structured narrative and game framework.

The use of space in immersive theatre is another important characteristic that sets it apart from more traditional theatrical performances. Punchdrunk often appropriate large labyrinthine spaces for their performances. Writing about this, White suggests that they 'make work that is site-sympathetic: create the work for the site where it is to be performed, but without responding directly to that site's history or context' (2012: 3). Spaces are transformed into new worlds to be explored by participants who often roam freely, and contain such detailed scenery that whole narratives may be developed in the minds of audiences through their engagement with artefacts in rooms. Spaces inform both the choreography of performers and the pathways of audiences who weave in and out of rooms in the search for new meanings. Thus far, Punchdrunk's Enrichment work has involved appropriating the streets of East London, an old depot (*The Uncommercial Traveller*) and transforming spaces in school buildings (*Under the Eiderdown*). In *Prospero's Island* at the parts of the Academy were appropriated and redesigned for students to explore as directed.

2.2.2 Drama in schools

In bringing their performances to schools, Punchdrunk Enrichment follows in a long tradition of drama in schools. Two movements that have been particularly significant in shaping children's experiences of drama in UK classrooms over many decades are Theatre in Education (TIE) and process drama. The former (in its 'classic' form) is primarily concerned with creating a participatory *performance* for young people in order to support their learning and understanding of particular topics (often linked to the curriculum). The latter is concerned with the *process* by which young people use dramatic conventions to explore issues, scenarios and themes and build a work of fiction that they inhabit. A further key difference is related to the people who lead the experiences: traditionally TIE performances have often been directed and shaped by professional artists visiting schools (albeit often encouraging and facilitating audience participation), whilst process drama is primarily shaped by the young people themselves (although the process is facilitated and co-created by their teacher also in role).

Prospero's Island can be seen as aligned with TIE traditions, although in the follow-on work in classrooms some teachers incorporated drama techniques derived from the traditions of process drama. Although there are differences between TIE and process drama, there are extensive similarities and overlaps in approaches. Bolton (1993) identifies four key similarities: mode of engagement, structure (teacher and actor-in-role), purpose, and engagement in meaning (Bolton, 1993). He explains the mode of engagement in both traditions is related to 'whole group experiencing' (Bolton, 1993: 40), making connections with, and relating to, the lived experiences of participants. The modes are rooted in imaginative play. Drawing on the work of Vygotsky (1978), Cooper observes that 'through the imagination we are able to know the world in a different way. We can reach beyond the present moment and our actual daily lives to envisage possible worlds' (Cooper, 2013: 55).

In secondary schools exploring the worlds created by Shakespeare is not usually the domain of the Drama Department; studying his plays is the responsibility of English Departments. The Key Stage 3 learning objectives, however, acknowledge that play scripts should be approached not simply as texts to be read, but as drama and theatre to be experienced. Students are expected to understand *'how the work of dramatists is communicated effectively through performance'* and to engage in roleplay themselves, *'improvising, rehearsing and performing … in order to generate languages and discuss language use and meaning'* (DfE, 2014). The challenge remains for all teachers to develop active and interactive classroom approaches which bring Shakespeare to life and capture their students' imaginations – approaches which position learners as participants, not passive receivers. As Salvatore (2010) observes, such strategies are necessary not only to overcome 'fear and resistance' amongst students but to engage them with the plot and characters in ways which support long term understanding.

> *Once inside the dramatic event, students begin to locate similarities with the characters in the plays, and Shakespeare's world becomes less foreign and more accessible. Students remember key plot points, understand the conflicts that drive forward the narrative action, and empathise with certain characters or situations because the relationships between the characters become clear. Instead of hearing about these relationships in a lecture, students actually experience them in a kinaesthetic way, and they retain details over the long term.*
>
> (Salvatore, 2010: 381).

The project *Prospero's Island* avoided any sense of lecturing and sought to involve the participants in an immersive, interactive mission-based secret agent game whose narratives and themes were informed by *The Tempest*.

2.2.3 Drama and writing

Scholars have long argued that children's and young people's engagement in drama can impact upon their written work (e.g. Pelligrini, 1984; Moore and Caldwell, 1993; Crumpler and Schneider, 2002). Working with kindergarteners, Pelligrini (1984) for example demonstrated that dramatic play was highly related to total word writing fluency; although this was only shown through single dictated words. In a quasi-experimental study, Moore and Caldwell (1993) found that drama was a more effective precursor to writing than traditional planning and discussion and Crumpler and Schneider (2002), drawing upon five small scale studies of process drama and writing, found that writing composed in drama had more depth and detail. Drama is viewed by many educators as an integral part of process drama, complementing talk and improvisation. It is argued that it 'has the potential to contribute markedly to composition and effect in writing, producing writing that captures and maintains the interest and attention of the reader' (Cremin et al., 2006: 289).

Research which has explored the impact of writing in role on children's writing has also noted that it appears to support children 'to "get under the skin" of the character and identify with him/her on an affective as well as cognitive level' (McNaughton, 1997: 79). This research, undertaken with primary aged learners who engaged in drama prior to writing, claimed that as a consequence pupils wrote more effectively and at greater length, using a richer vocabulary that contained more emotive and expressive insights. Crumpler and Schneider (2002) posit that drama becomes a conduit which facilitates a

flow of imagination between process and product when students write in-role. Three different forms of 'in-role' writing have been identified, these include:

> *Writing in role: this is undertaken during the imaginative action, and can serve to shape the unfolding drama and is written from inside the lived experience. Writing alongside role: this is undertaken after the dramatic action, and can serve to reflect upon the drama, it may be written from a distance. Working 'as if' in role: This is undertaken without any drama experience and may be undertaken cold or following in-depth discussion of the text.*
>
> (Grainger et al., 2005: 91)

In drama it is argued that children engage in a 'dialogue with the text and with the author, entering the world of the story, and taking on a narrator's voice and role' (Barrs and Cork, 2001: 209). Writing in role, during dramatic engagement, has been seen to be particularly effective in supporting children's understanding of linguistic characteristics of different genre (Barrs and Cork, 2001) and improving boys' attitudes to writing and their vocabulary (Bearne et al., 2004). In other case study work, it has also been claimed that drama positively enhances primary pupils' attitudes to writing (Grainger et al., 2005; Cremin et al., 2006). This view is supported by Neelands (1993) from work with secondary aged pupils, who he claims recognise the mutually reinforcing relationship and empathetic potential of drama and writing. Other scholars assert that drama can enhance students' persuasive writing (Wagner, 1998) and contribute to their historical writing (Goalen, 1996). Quantitative research has also indicated the positive effect of drama on learners' achievements in writing and other core subjects (Fleming *et al*., 2004).

In one study, the main features of drama which influenced the children's engagement and facilitated the production of effective writing were identified (Cremin et al., 2006). These included: the presence of tension, full affective engagement, time for incubation and a strong sense of stance and purpose gained in part through role adoption. When all these connecting threads were evident and a moment for writing was seized, the children's writing was recognised as high quality- 'full of stance and scenario' (Bruner, 1984:198). It appeared that the drama helped them build belief and deepen their involvement in the narrative and that as part of the process of creating and inhabiting fictional worlds, the children enriched their own voices with the words and actions of others.

It is widely recognised that the frameset of a traditional writing classroom, with its attendant space for direct instruction and the rehearsal of specific skills, is set to one side during periods of process drama. Also that when students write during drama the focus tends to be on composition and effect, not on spelling and handwriting. It is perhaps unsurprising therefore that the impact on writing in most of the studies noted here has been measured in terms of students' engagement with themes and characters and their use of a personal in-role voice in writing, rather than text structure, punctuation or grammar. However the rubric for the assessment of writing employed in secondary schools nationally, and thus in the Academy, tends to be oriented towards the technical/organisational features of writing.

2.3 Games

Games have been variously defined, but a useful reading is to see a game as 'a system in which players engage in artificial conflict, defined by rules that result in a quantifiable outcome' (Salen and Zimmerman, 2004: 80). The immersive project *Prospero's Island* was framed as a game to support and motivate students' learning. It was the first time

Punchdrunk Enrichment had explicitly positioned their work in this way and in doing it may have added new layers and depth, for as Machon observes:

> *Work that straddles disciplines such as theatre, dance, visual art, virtual realities, online gaming, closed circuit surveillance, opera, pop-music or stand-up comedy is increasingly prevalent and defies categorisation*
>
> (2009: 29)

Pete Higgin, the Punchdrunk Enrichment Director, in a press release about the project described it as an instance of the 'gamification' of learning. Gamification, a relatively new term, has received little academic attention to date; as a result 'there are few well-established theoretical frameworks or unified discourses' (Hamari et al., 2014) upon which to draw. Though its use, definition and significance is contested, it generally refers to the 'use of game design elements in non-game contexts' (Deterding et al., 2011) and to the way in which game design elements are beginning to shape people's interactions with everyday tasks. McGonigal has referred to the move towards 'gamefulness' in society as distinct from 'playfulness', thereby distinguishing between free play and rule bound play shaped by game design structures and conventions. The term also refers to the ways in which game design elements may shape developments in curricular and learning design. Much of the discussion around the potential benefits of gamification centres around perceived and predicted effects on students' motivation and engagement. Deterding et al. (2011) summarise this perspective:

> *Since video games are explicitly designed for entertainment rather than utility — they can demonstrably produce states of desirable experience, and motivate users to remain engaged in an activity with unparalleled intensity and duration. Thus, game design is a valuable approach for making non-game products, services, or applications more enjoyable, motivating, and/or engaging to use*
>
> (Deterding et al., 2011: 2)

In *Prospero's Island* the Punchdrunk Enrichment team took such an approach and made use of game design elements to shape the experience, although these were not realised in digital form. Nevertheless, rule structures and references to 'levels', 'challenges' and the 'gamemaster' were designed to resonate with students' prior experiences of games, along with music which underscored the mounting tension during challenges. The experience also resonated with the culture of immersive gaming (sometimes referred to as pervasive gaming), a game genre commonly targeted at adult audiences. Punchdrunk have explored immersive gaming with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology using digital technologies to support participant engagement in their New York production *Sleep no More.* They also worked with the company Coney to design a pervasive game, The Gold Bug, which was embedded in *The Mask of the Red Death,* though for the Enrichment team this venture into 'gamification' was new.

2.3.1 Immersive gaming

Whilst 'immersive gaming' describes a range of games, we focus on Alternate Reality Games (ARG) as an instance of this immersive practice. McGonigal explains that 'this genre is also dubbed by players as "unfiction" and "collective detecting," and is known for its reliance on cooperative game play and constant insistence: "This is not a game."' (2003). ARGs blur the boundaries of the spaces and rules used in traditional games so as to integrate play into players' everyday lives and may 'appropriate objects, vehicles, and

properties of the physical world into the game (Montola, 2009: 12) . This blurring of the game's spatial boundaries can include online and offline spaces.

Discussing early ARGs, McGonigal (2003) argues that the designers used 'natural settings as the immersive framework' and 'co-opted real environments to enable a virtual engagement with reality'. For the designers of *The Beast* (2001) McGonigal (2003) suggests that '"immersion" meant integrating the virtual play fully into the online and offline lives of the players' (2003). She suggests 'the computer-driven alternate reality *The Beast* created was make-believe, but every aspect of the player's experience was, phenomenologically speaking, real', and that this was key to the immersive aesthetics of the game, which required players to adopt 'stereoscopic vision' (McGonigal, 2003):

> *this kind of immersion made the game world less of a 'virtual' (simulated) reality or an 'augmented' (enhanced) reality, and more of an 'alternate' (layered) reality [...] one that simultaneously perceived the everyday reality and the game structure in order to generate a single, but layered and dynamic world view.*
>
> (McGonigal, 2003: 3)

The moments where the Punchdrunk Enrichment experience most closely resembled immersive gaming were those in which the students, as game-players, left the confines of the Hub and explored the everyday familiar environments of the school, over which the game-context had been overlaid. As we will exemplify later, it was in these moments that the players arguably adopted 'stereoscopic vision' (McGonigal, 2003) as they examined real-world spaces with a ludic purpose in mind.

Another defining characteristic of ARGs is that they not only support collaboration but require it. Puzzles and challenges are often too complex to be solved by individuals; clues needed to solve problems are often distributed and require players to collaborate online. McGonigal also argues that 'immersive aesthetics can generate a new sense of social agency in game players' (2003: 1) and that 'collaborative play techniques can instruct real-world problem-solving'(2003: 1). Key to this is the players' confidence in their own collective abilities to solve problems. Although, the students in *Prospero's Island* did not use digital technology to collaborate, they needed to work collaboratively across teams to gather clues from satellite installations before collating and interpreting their significance together as a whole group.

2.3.2 Games in schools

There have been many persuasive arguments which advocate the use of digital games to support learning in school settings, suggesting that digital games can encapsulate and embody sound learning principles (Gee, 2003; 2009). However, there are still relatively few empirical studies that investigate the use of games in classroom contexts. In a recent literature review of digital games learning, McClarty et al. (2012) suggest that most of the empirical research 'focuses on the impact on student motivation, attendance and attitudes towards curriculum subjects.' They argue that:

> *Despite the strong debate on how games can improve education and how useful they can be for teaching complex concepts and skills, very little research has been performed on the relationship between games and academic performance.*
>
> (McClarty et al, 2012; see also Ke, 2009; O'Neil et al., 2005)

McClarty et al. conclude that whilst the research suggests digital games can facilitate learning, stronger assertions are not easy to make at the current time.

Although immersive gaming is more commonly designed for adults, over recent years there has been increased interest in its potential to shape learning in education. ARGs created for school settings documented in the literature, include: *The Arcane Gallery of Gadgetry* (Bonsignore et al., 2012; 2013); *Black Cloud* (Niemeyer et al., 2009); *The Tower of Babel* (Connolly et al., 2011), *To the Spice Islands* (Carroll and Cameron, 2003) and *The Mighty Fizz Chilla ARG* (Colvert, 2009, 2013). The games in these projects were designed to be played in mainstream classrooms with the aim of supporting learning. Although Colvert's (2009; 2013) study is the only one that explicitly investigated the way in which immersive gaming might support children's literacies in classrooms, all the studies engaged students in 'situated meaning making' (Gee, 2004) during game-play and provided opportunities for meaningful writing.

2.3.3 Immersive games and writing

There is some evidence that participating in immersive gaming in classroom settings can support players' literacies. However none of the studies exploring the impact of ARGs on learning have quantitatively measured their impact on students' literacy attainment, this has to be inferred. Immersive game-play in these studies has engaged students in writing and creating films for their peers (Connolly et al., 2011) and utilised technologies such as forums (Colvert, 2009;2013; Bonsignore et al., 2012; 2013; Connolly et al., 2011), blogs (Carroll and Cameron, 2003) and Twitter (Niemeyer *et al*, 2009). Where children were given the opportunity to design ARGs with and for their peers, this created opportunities for extended transmedia writing and required them to use their knowledge of genre conventions, (traditional and new), and appropriate modes and media (Colvert, forthcoming). Whilst Colvert's qualitative study does not seek to measure improvement in literacy attainment, it does provide evidence of the ways in which the cultural, critical and operational dimensions of literacies, (Green, 2012) and more specifically multimodal writing, can be supported through immersive gaming.

In *Prospero's Island*, the students' writing was assessed before and after their participation in the installation as part of a wider curriculum focus on *The Tempest*, although as discussed further in Chapter 7 it is recognised that to attribute directly any improvements in writing to the experience is somewhat problematic. Having reviewed the relevant literature, it is to the methodology utilised in this project that we now turn.

Chapter 3 Methodology for the evaluation

The evaluation of the immersive theatre project *Prospero's Island* was informed by, and has the potential to feed back into, the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. The present chapter discusses the methodology adopted in the evaluation. Section 3.1 reproduces the objectives for the evaluation and discusses how these were realized in the research design. Later sections provide information on data collection (Section 3.2); data analysis (Section 3.3); and the ethical procedures followed throughout the evaluation (Section 3.4). For further reference, data collection instruments are included in Appendix 1 to this report.

3.1 Objectives and research design

The agreed objectives for the evaluation set out in Chapter 1 were used as the basis for the research design.

The evaluation seeks to examine:

1. the impact of the Punchdrunk Enrichment immersive theatre project upon pupils' writing
2. the impact of the Punchdrunk Enrichment project upon pupils' attitudes to and engagement in English
3. the impact of the Punchdrunk Enrichment project on three teachers' pedagogical practice, and any specific developments associated with the related CPD

These three points guided data collection and analysis. The 'immersive theatre project' was taken to include two broad phases of activity across the autumn and spring terms, 2014/5:

Phase 1: Autumn term 2014

- CPD sessions on immersive theatre in education, run by Punchdrunk Enrichment for teachers from the school and other institutions
- Students' participation in the *Prospero's Island* installation, an immersive theatre experience designed and led by Punchdrunk Enrichment
- Students' return to the *Prospero's Island* installation, activities designed and led by members of the school's English department

Phase 2: Spring term 2015

- Follow-on activity in English lessons, designed and led by members of the school's English department

Data from students, teachers and other participants were collected across these phases, allowing the OU research team to evaluate the impacts of the project on different participants and at different points in the autumn and spring terms.

Prospero's Island may be seen as an educational intervention, designed to have positive impacts on students and teachers. The evaluation of the intervention, operationalized in the objectives above, had as a major focus the impact of the *Prospero's Island* installation in Phase 1 of the project in the autumn term (including Punchdrunk Enrichment- and teacher-led sessions) and the associated CPD. Impacts were assessed particularly in

relation to students' participation in writing tasks, and surveys of their attitudes to and engagement in English. For teachers' pedagogical practice, the focus was on teachers' autumn term responses to the installation and the associated CPD.

The activity in Phase 2 in the spring term is an outcome of the intervention – so a further opportunity to evaluate its impact. It is also part of a further, continuing intervention, albeit one that is less clearly demarcated (it is built into everyday class teaching and there is no fixed end point). While we are mainly concerned with the spring term as outcome we are also able to offer some evaluation of its effectiveness as continuing intervention, mainly in terms of students' perceptions and teachers' perceptions and practice.

Across these phases the evaluation drew on a wide range of data from students, teachers and other participants in the project, and combined complementary quantitative and qualitative approaches in the analysis of these data. Quantitative approaches were used in particular to measure any changes in students' writing (as reflected in their scores in assessed work) and attitudes/ engagement (as reflected in responses to questionnaires). As mentioned in Chapter 1, however, quantitative patterns need to be interpreted with caution, and qualitative analysis proved valuable in this respect (e.g. the analysis of open-ended questionnaire responses, interviews and reflections, observations). Qualitative analysis informed the interpretation of quantitative patterns and also provided rich documentation of process: the kinds of activities that were carried out in the installation and in English lessons, and immediate responses to these. Qualitative approaches predominate in the commentary on the project provided in Chapter 5, and the analysis of teachers' pedagogical practice in Chapter 8.

3.2 Data collection

3.2.1 Identifying participants to contribute to the evaluation

As a Key Stage 3 initiative, *Prospero's Island* involved classes in Years 7 and 8. However given the scope of the evaluation, and the need to document both broad quantitative patterns and the detail of the process students and teachers took part in, it was agreed that the evaluation would include data only from Year 7 (11-12 year olds), at the start of their secondary education (see also Chapter 1).

Quantitative information was collected from the whole year group of 187 students. The year group included eight classes grouped into sets on the basis of ability, with two classes per set; and a 'nurture group' – see Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Year 7 sets and classes

Sets/classes	End of Year target
Set 1 (two classes)	National Curriculum levels 6c-7c
Set 2 (two classes)	National Curriculum levels 5c-6c
Set 3 (two classes)	National Curriculum levels 4c-5c
Set 4 (two classes)	National Curriculum levels 3c-4c
Nurture group	National Curriculum levels 3c-5c

Note: at the time of the project, expected levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 were levels 5 or 6. Like many schools, the Academy specified levels and sub-levels (a, b, c) in setting targets for year groups. In this case 'c' means that a child is working at the lower end of the level.

More detailed qualitative information was collected from students in three classes, identified by the school to reflect the ability range across the year group: these 'focal classes' included one class each from Sets 2, 3 and 4.

The installation accommodated a maximum of 15 students, so classes were divided into two groups that took part separately. In carrying out observations in the installation the researchers focused on one group in each focal class. In the spring term students were working in their normal classes, and whole classes were therefore observed.

Within each of the three groups observed teachers identified six case study students, whose experiences were considered in greater depth: 18 students in all. The selection of case study students included a gender mix and was designed to reflect diversity within the class, particularly in terms of ability. The case study students are listed in Appendix 2, with a brief description of each student explaining the teacher's selection.

The teachers of the focal classes were interviewed and provided brief reflections on their experiences, and a larger body of teachers provided feedback on CPD sessions.

3.2.2 Data sets

A wide range of complementary data was collected for the evaluation, designed to provide information on students' writing before and after their participation in *Prospero's Island* (Objective 1); students', teachers' and other participants' perceptions of the project and its impacts (all objectives); and direct observations of activities and experiences (all objectives). The types of data collected are shown in Table 3.2 below, and the schedule of data collection across the Punchdrunk Enrichment project is shown in Table 3.3. Chapters 4 - 8 list the data sets drawn on in their accounts and analysis. (See Appendix 1 for data collection instruments.)

Table 3.2 Data collected

Data on/from the Y7 year group

1 Two pieces of student writing produced by all Y7 students, before and at the end of their work in the *Prospero's Island* installation. Writing tasks were comparable in terms of genre, administration and marking criteria. They were designed by teachers, set as part of students' class work, and marked and commented on by teachers following their usual practices. Marking was moderated by a member of the research team with secondary teaching experience.

2 Two student questionnaires completed by all Y7 students, the first administered by teachers before students' participation in *Prospero's Island* and the second in the spring term, after students had participated in *Prospero's Island* and engaged in some follow-on work in English lessons. Questionnaires elicited information on students' motivation and engagement in English classes, their views on themselves as writers, and whether they thought their views had changed as a result of participating in *Prospero's Island*.

Additional data on/from case study students

3 Background information provided by teachers on the case study students: each student's ability level, reasons for the teacher's selection of the student, their views on the student as a participant in English lessons and as a writer.

4 Teachers' observations of case study students, focusing on their participation and engagement in the writing tasks.

5 Two group interviews with case-study students from each focal group, conducted by a researcher at the end of their work in the *Prospero's Island* installation and during the follow-on activity in the spring term. Interviews elicited students' perceptions of *Prospero's Island*, what they felt they had learnt about *The Tempest*, work carried out in English in the spring term, and the usefulness of the project for their writing. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed.

Data on/from teachers of focal classes

6 Two group interviews with class English teachers conducted by a researcher, the first before the teachers' participation in *Prospero's Island* and the second during the follow-on activity in the spring term. The interviews focused on teachers' motivations for taking part in the project, expectations about the project, current teaching approaches and perceptions of immersive approaches; and whether/how these had changed as a result of working on the project. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed.

7 Brief open-ended reflections from teachers, immediately after each Punchdrunk Enrichment- and teacher-led *Prospero's Island* session, and after spring term English lessons that were visited and observed by researchers. Reflections were audio-recorded and transcribed.

8 A final brief written reflection from teachers at the end of the project.

Data on/from other participants

9 Interview before *Prospero's Island* with the Punchdrunk Enrichment Director and with the Senior English Teaching and Learning Consultant at HLT, conducted by a researcher. Interviews focused on their plans for the Prospero's Island Project, including the installation and CPD. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed.

10 Brief open-ended reflections with the Punchdrunk Enrichment Director following CPD sessions, and with actors following *Prospero's Island* sessions.

11 Fuller e-interview with the Punchdrunk Enrichment Director at the end of *Prospero's Island*, eliciting his views on the project including the installation and CPD; potential benefits of the project for students; the partnership between Punchdrunk Enrichment, HLT and the school.

12 Fuller interview with the Senior English Teaching and Learning Consultant at HLT towards the end of the Spring term. The interview was audio-recorded and transcribed.

13 Feedback sheets completed by participants in CPD sessions.

Observational data and collection of associated materials

14 Detailed, open-ended observations of focal classes/groups as these took part in:

- *Prospero's Island* session for each group, designed and led by Punchdrunk Enrichment
- *Prospero's Island* session for each group, designed and led by the class English teachers
- Follow-on activity in two English lessons for each class in the spring term

Field notes of observations were supplemented by audio-recordings; photographs; and documentary evidence, including planning documents (schemes of work, Punchdrunk Enrichment plans for sessions), materials prepared for or produced during the sessions.

15 Detailed, open-ended observations of CPD sessions designed and led by Punchdrunk Enrichment:

- Teaching and Learning Day (TALD) for all school staff
- Two twilight CPD sessions for school staff and others in the borough

Field notes of observations were supplemented by documentary evidence, including planning documents, materials prepared for or produced during the sessions.

Table 3.3 below provides a breakdown of how these data were collected across the autumn and spring terms, 2014/2015.

Table 3.3 Data collection schedule

Data collected before the *Prospero's Island* installation: October/November 2014

Brief initial interviews with the Punchdrunk Enrichment Director and with the Senior English Teaching and Learning Consultant at HLT

First group interview with English teachers

English teachers' selection of case study students and completion of background information

TALD session for school staff – observation and collection of participant feedback sheets

First Y7 student questionnaire

First Y7 student writing task:

> First-person monologue, students write about their feelings/fears as crew members on Alonso's ship before it sinks.

English teachers' first observations of case-study students, associated with writing activity

Data collected as part of the *Prospero's Island* installation: November/December 2014

Prospero's Island sessions run by Punchdrunk Enrichment – observation of session with group from each of three focal classes and collection of associated material

Reflection on sessions with class English teachers

Twilight CPD sessions - observation of two sessions and collection of participant feedback sheets

Prospero's Island sessions run by English teachers – observation of session with group from each of three focal classes and collection of associated material

Reflection on sessions with teachers

First group interviews with case study students

Second Y7 student writing task:

> First-person monologue, written from the perspective of one of the characters in *The Tempest* in the form of a diary entry

Teachers' second observations of case-study students, associated with writing activity

E-interview with Punchdrunk Enrichment Director

Data collected during follow-on activity in English lessons: March 2015

Follow-up sessions in English – observation of two sessions with each of three focal classes and collection of associated material.

Second group interviews with case study students

Second group interview with class English teachers

Second Y7 student questionnaire

Second, fuller interview with the Senior English Teaching and Learning Consultant at HLT

Final brief written reflection from English teachers

3.3 Data analysis

As discussed above, the evaluation adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative analyses. Quantitative methods provide a measure of change (in students' writing scores, and their attitudes/engagement in writing and English). Qualitative methods put flesh on the interpretation of quantitative patterns and, in their own terms, provide a more detailed, contextualized account of how the project worked. Qualitative analyses adopted here involve the systematic scrutiny and comparison of evidence from different data sets, the identification of recurring themes that emerge from this scrutiny/comparison, and sometimes the identification of telling cases – episodes that may be atypical but that nevertheless shed light on particular events or practices.

Individual datasets have been analysed as follows:

- Students' writing tasks completed before and after the *Prospero's Island* installation were marked by teachers according to agreed criteria and independently moderated to identify any changes, particularly in vocabulary use, whole-text and sentence-level structure, and attention to task, audience and purpose. Quantitative analysis of scores across the Y7 cohort was supplemented by qualitative scrutiny of case-study students' writing and teachers' comments on writing.
- Students' questionnaires completed before the installation and in the spring term were analysed to identify any reported changes in attitude or motivation in English and writing. Quantitative analysis of students' ratings of their attitudes/motivations was supplemented by qualitative analysis of open-ended responses.
- Teachers' observations of case study students were analysed qualitatively, adding further information on students' writing and their motivation/engagement in English.
- Observations of installation sessions, English lessons and CPD sessions, along with any accompanying audio-recordings, were analysed qualitatively, with a particular focus on interactive processes between participants. Close analysis of verbal exchanges, linguistic choices, body language, role-playing, use of space and resources, provided insights into participants' responses to the intervention and students' engagement and motivation.

- Audio-recorded interviews and informal reflections with teachers, case study students and other participants were transcribed and coded to identify both shared and individual responses to various aspects of the immersive theatre project, and its perceived impacts on students' learning and teaching practice.

3.4 Ethical procedures

The evaluation was carried out in accordance with the Open University *Human Research Ethics Committee,* and followed ethical guidelines on research involving adults and children set out in the British Educational Research Association (BERA) *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research,* 2011.

The evaluation was explained to participants, with the aim of ensuring that 'all participants in the research understand the process in which they are to be engaged, including why their participation is necessary, how it will be used, and how and to whom it will be reported' (BERA 2011:5). Particular care was taken in providing clear information to students.

3.4.1 Participant consent

Consent to participate in the evaluation was obtained at six levels:

1. The Headteacher of the school was provided with a memorandum of understanding for signature, outlining the aims of the evaluation, the role of the researchers in school, and how the data collected would be used.
2. Participating teachers were provided with a briefing sheet explaining expectations regarding their participation and how the data collected would be used. They were asked to complete a consent form.
3. Information about the project and its evaluation was sent to parents of all Y7 students. Parents were invited to opt out of the evaluation if they did not wish their child to be involved.
4. Teachers administering questionnaires to Year 7 classes were given a briefing sheet to use with their class, explaining the completion of the questionnaire and assuring students that their participation was voluntary and that responses would remain confidential. Students were also told that the research team wished to look at student writing and, again, that participation was voluntary and the writing would be treated as confidential. Students were given a consent form in student friendly language.
5. Students identified for case study were invited to participate and a consent form in student-friendly language was provided. The form explained the purpose of the case-study interviews and that participation was entirely voluntary.
6. Participating members of HLT and Punchdrunk Enrichment were provided with a briefing sheet and a consent form explaining expectations regarding their participation and how the data collected would be used.

The memorandum of understanding and participant consent forms are included in Appendix 3.

All participants were assured of their right to withdraw at any time during the data collection process: no participants opted to do so.

3.4.2 Participant anonymity and data protection

The project was registered with The Open University's Data Protection Coordinator. Staff and students were assigned participant numbers. Case study students were assigned pseudonyms. Interview and questionnaire responses, student writing and any extracts from observation notes that are drawn on in the analysis have been anonymised. Participants' names will not be revealed in any dissemination of the evaluation, including this report. The report takes particular care not to distinguish individual teachers because of the possibility of identification. Photographs used in dissemination, including this report, will not show students or other participants unless permission has been obtained for their use.

Chapter 4: An account of *Prospero's Island*

This chapter offers an account of Punchdrunk Enrichment's immersive theatre project *Prospero's Island*, based on Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. We discuss how the project was planned and how it worked. We attend chronologically to its two phases - Phase I: the immersive theatre experience in the autumn term 2014, (led by Punchdrunk Enrichment) and the immediate return to the installation (led by the teachers); and Phase II: follow-on work in the spring term 2015 (led by the teachers). Each section draws upon diverse data sources (noted at the outset) and seeks to report what occurred without any accompanying evaluation.

4.1 Phase I: Autumn term 2014 - The Punchdrunk Enrichment immersive theatre

This section characterises and describes the immersive theatre experience designed and led by Punchdrunk Enrichment, which took place at the Academy in Hackney in the second part of the autumn term (semester 2). To set this in context, we first consider a related scheme of work planned by school staff.

The section draws on the following data sets:

- Documentary evidence from the Punchdrunk Enrichment team including planning documents for the immersive theatre sessions, the 'scripted text' (for the Games Master but not the Assistants, who improvised), the details of each task, and the company's daily notes
- The researchers' observations and field notes of the immersive theatre sessions
- Class teachers' immediate reflections after the immersive theatre sessions
- Related units of work prepared by school staff

4.1.1 The related scheme of work and introduction to *The Tempest*

Prior to *Prospero's Island*, towards the end of the first part of the autumn term (semester 1), students in Years 7 and 8 were set half-term home learning on Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. This had been planned by a member of staff in order that students would be better prepared for the *Prospero's Island* experience. Students were given bite-size summaries of each act and a creative task which focused on staging the scenes, noting that: *'Shakespeare's plays were not designed to be read, but to be brought to life on stage'*. This homework offered examples of how international theatre companies had chosen to stage the play; it represented both an introduction to the tale and a form of introduction to the concept of staging (see Appendix 4).

A related six-week Scheme of Learning was designed by a staff member, supported by the Senior Consultant from Hackney Learning Trust. This explained that the Reading Room would be transformed into *Prospero's Island*, and that students would have a half-day 'immersive experience' alongside their in-class study (see Appendix 5). The school's learning outcomes and associated literacy assessments for this unit of work were:

Learning outcomes:

- *To experience text in performance through immersive and drama activities.*
- *To develop inference skills to explore character motivations and formulate their own opinions about them.*
- *To engage with Shakespeare's language through immersive learning adventures*
- *To develop vocabulary and apply in a piece of descriptive writing.*
- *To provide young people with a high quality and unique learning experience which produces awe and wonder.*

Assessments:

- *Writing a monologue from the perspective of one of the characters – Miranda or Antonio?*
- *Marked on vocabulary, meeting TAP [Type, Audience, Purpose], whole text and sentence level structure.*
- *Reading: Exploring the change in Prospero as the play progresses.*
- *Marked on using evidence, inference and writer's point of view.*

In all, 16 lessons were outlined for staff in Years 7-8, which encompassed support for the students' initial writing task and detailed lesson plans for the first four lessons, with PowerPoints for the first six lessons. In addition the dance teacher planned an accompanying unit of work, which was intended to consolidate learning, creating a multi-curricula scheme of learning so that students would *'gain a creative and varied learning experience in which they will develop transferable knowledge'*.

4.1.2 *Prospero's Island*: the Punchdrunk Enrichment's immersive intentions and installations

Prospero's Island was designed as an immersive theatre experience that drew on a digital game format likely to be familiar to students. In developing their plans for the project, the Punchdrunk Enrichment team set themselves a series of aims within the agreement with their partners. These were to:

- Create a thrilling experience for Year 7/8 students designed to promote improved attainment in literacy and encourage a greater engagement with Shakespearian language through immersive learning adventures.
- Place the students at the heart of an experience that gives them new perspectives on the central characters and the key themes of *The Tempest* allowing them to discover, share and develop their own ideas and deepen their understanding of the play.
- Ensure that the tone of the experience is mature enough to challenge the students. Intriguing, mysterious, dangerous – a dark fantasy that blurs the real and unreal to thrilling effect.

The team developed the plan iteratively and improvised until the final shape was agreed and the stage management team created the *Prospero's Island* installation across a

weekend at the school. This included the core of the operations: 'The Hub', and nine satellite installations at various places around the school: 'the Magic Lab', 'the Forest Room/Woods', 'Caliban's Lair', the 'Nobles' Camp', 'Ariel's Space', 'the Drunks' Scene', and three lockers belonging to Miranda, Caliban and Ariel. The Hub was created out of a school Reading Room, transformed into a dark centre of operations. The focal point of the game, it was made into a hexagon with a round table placed in the centre with three working microphones, around which stools were placed. There was very limited light, there were no windows, a filing cabinet rested against one wall with an old electric fan on it, some battered suitcases lay on the floor. The Hub was somewhat reminiscent of an old-fashioned space for confidential meetings/briefings, and was not dissimilar to a poker-playing den in old films, although its time and place were non-specific. It felt enclosed and highly atmospheric. Multiple elements within it were transformed during the game to reveal new spaces and places with stories to tell. For example, the wooden table around which the students initially sat was inverted on completion of the first level, to reveal a 3D island, also recognizable as the Academy itself complete with grid references. (See Photograph 4.1) This was later used to identify locations for missions around the school. Additionally, in alignment with Punchdrunk's other work, hidden within the Hub's walls were scenes that contributed significantly to the theatrical experience:

> *...the scenographic design within a space is ... manipulated to reveal narratives and to expose themes and ideas at the heart of the work.*
>
> (Machon, 2013: 87)

Photograph 4.1 The Hub: showing the character portrait wall and the island

As the 15 students playing the game at any one time progressed through successive levels, parts of the Hub's walls opened and new compartments were revealed. These included: a detailed installation of Prospero's bookcase (see Photograph 4.2); two sets of taxidermy with several animals denoting Captivity and Freedom; a complex scene denoting the Brave New World wall with mirrors set at various angles and a model of a boat suspended in the air in front and sand on the shore below; a portrait swinging loose to reveal a live screen with a two minute video montage of historical and contemporary imagery themed around power, loyalty and treachery; a Hub wall that opened at the climax of the Game to reveal the outside world of the playground.

Photograph 4.2 Prospero's bookcase in the Hub

The satellite installations around the school, from the smallest (e.g. Miranda's locker) to the largest (e.g. the Magic Lab, the school greenhouse/Bio Dome) (see Photograph 4.3) were meticulously executed. In most there was limited light – battery candles were often used. Cloth helped to construct each space, and artefacts and props evoked a sense of place. Music was often playing and a smell wafted through. These installations were in unusual places in the school (e.g. on the roof - an area normally out of bounds for young people) (see Photographs 4. 4). Cupboards, lockers and store rooms were transformed, such that The Woods, for example whilst actually a small room, was unrecognisable as such, and those who entered were obliged to duck and dive through the undergrowth to reach a tiny clearing in the forest before they could stand up. (See Photographs 4.5). This use of installations was novel to the young people and most of the adults who had not experienced immersive theatre before.

Photographs 4.3 Prospero's Magic Lab

Photographs 4.4 The Nobles' Camp: inside and out

Photographs 4.5 The Woods entrance and inside

The experience was planned in the same way as a play, with an attendant script and daily show reports from the stage manager. Whilst clearly the experiences of each individual student as they sought to interrogate the story were different, the structure of the experience was the same, as reflected in the script and the set of tasks and levels to be completed. A brief description of the experience is offered below and a summary grid of the process and the levels, alongside some contextual notes, are given in Figure 4.1. A fuller description is given in Appendix 6.

4.1.3 *Prospero's Island*: the immersive experience

With a ten-minute break, the game lasted for around two hours and 30 minutes. It commenced with the students entering the dark other worldy Hub and encountering the disembodied voice of the Games Master, who explained:

> *I have a simple challenge for you. Hidden in the darkness of this room, somewhere in the shadows, is the story of a storm, an island, and a man with unfathomable powers. Your task is to unlock that story, and you have two hours to do it, piece by piece. Do you think you are capable of completing the challenge?*

The experience of *Prospero's Island* then unfolded and, as Figure 4.1 below indicates, a storm at sea erupted - the room darkened, sounds emanated, panicked sailors' voices could be heard and built to a crescendo before dying away, at which point the Games Master informed the students they were now in Level One. His three Assistants introduced themselves. The rules of the game were then explained - that the students needed to communicate and listen to each other, and that they needed to keep their discoveries a secret.

From this point onwards the students were challenged in three groups of five to work together to unlock each of seven levels. They were supported in this process by the Assistants, and the Games Master who personally afforded a controlling influence on the game. Adults within the school also supported the students as they travelled to diverse satellite installations around the school to unlock the story (see Photograph 4.6). Each level began with a task. Although different for each small group, most tasks involved some text-based activity: as the Games Master noted: '*the secrets of the world are hidden within these words, and their power should not be underestimated'.* Students were also set missions, which were more open ended and often physically active activities.

Photographs 4.6 A school locker and inside

The text-based tasks encompassed making use of scenes and speeches from *The Tempest* and undertaking time delimited discussions and activities, for example, examining the text in order to respond to a key question, or creating a Government report or a character profile based on a text extract. Missions involved activities such as: solving a riddle; opening characters' suitcases and exploring the contents in order to find a clue; and matching portraits to characters and returning them to their places on the wall. Several missions involved teams moving beyond the Hub to locate a code or symbol in another installation.

The pace was very fast, with five minutes afforded each text based task. 'Countdown style' music offered a warning at four minutes which produced a heightened sense of focus and urgency. This was also sustained within the missions with Assistants urgently communicating with teams on walkie-talkies to help them complete their challenge and return to the Hub at speed in order to share their information with others and unlock the level. At the completion of each level, the Games Master announced the students' success, which triggered a new revelation in the Hub and an extract from the text of the play became illuminated on the walls.

LEVEL	TASK/ MISSION/ RESOURCES	STUDENT GROUPS		
		Alpha	Beta	Gamma
2	Task – from play text	Why is she so upset? (Miranda)	Who is the man on the island? (Caliban)	What happened to them? (Miranda, Prospero)
		A riddle leads students to a safe with a combination lock.		
	Mission – search in suitcases	Gonzalo's Suitcase	Antonio's Suitcase	Ferdinand's Suitcase
		Numbers from suitcases, when added, identify the code and open the safe. This contains pictures of characters in The Tempest: students match these with labels on the wall and hang pictures. LEVEL COMPLETE		
3	Task	Complete ID papers for the Poisonous Slave	Complete ID papers for the Airy Spirit	Complete ID papers for the Enchanted Man
	Worksheet	ID Paper	ID Paper	ID Paper
		A riddle leads students to an electric fan to find 3 keys Students given grid references for lockers – somewhere in school, to be opened with keys		
	Mission	Go to Caliban's Locker	Go to Ariel's Locker	Go to Miranda's Locker
		Students take a piece of map from lockers back to Hub and place into map Prospero's Bookcase opens LEVEL COMPLETE		

4	Worksheet	Government Manifesto	Crime Report	New Species report
		Quote leads to 3 books Students place task cards over numbers in books to get grid references		
	Books	Under the Greenwood Tree	Microscope	Earthly Paradise
	Mission	Go to Ariel's Roof space	Go to Nobles' Camp on roof	Go to Drunks' Scene in school grounds
		Discover and memorise code, return to Hub Leads to page, line, word references in books Words discovered are: Blood, Red, Sword Title of another book which is a lever TV compartment opens and students watch brief film LEVEL COMPLETE		
5		Charm GM using Ferdinand's words	Reveal a different side to Caliban	Intimidate GM using Ariel's words
	Worksheet	Ferdinand Notepaper	Caliban ripped speech	Prospero Notebook
		Speech leads back to Miranda, Caliban and Ariel portraits Open them and discover keys Told to look for symbol, go to rooms		
	Misson	Go to Forest Room	Go to Caliban's Lair	Go to Magic Lab
		Phrase leads back to safe World's greatest wonders lie: somewhere on the shelf: look again inside the safe Discover laser pen: Insert in book 'World's Greatest Wonders' Hits Brave New World wall which slides open LEVEL COMPLETE		

6		Complete Government Report	Unearth every reference to nature in Prospero's words	What does the majestic vision look like? Complete Prospero's Notebook
	Worksheet	Crime Report	Prospero's Notebook	Majestic plan
		Told to return to the last places they visited		
	Misson	Go towards Forest Room then suddenly diverted by an Assistant to Caliban's Lair for small group 5 on 1. Told to remember SLAVERY	Go towards Caliban's Lair then suddenly diverted by an Assistant to Magic Lab for small group 5 on 1. Told to remember IMPRISONMENT	Go towards Magic Lab then suddenly diverted by an Assistant to Forest Room for small group 5 on 1. Told to remember CAPTIVITY
		Return to Hub have to say Freedom! Taxidermy revealed Door locked from outside LEVEL COMPLETE		
7	Task	Why should Caliban have his freedom? His fate lies in your hands	Why should Ariel have his freedom? His fate lies in your hands	Why should Miranda have her freedom? Her fate lies in your hands
		Find puzzle pieces in bookcase Slot into table, room goes UV Have to enter codes in padlocks on red box Open and push button Epilogue read by Games Master LEVEL COMPLETE Door to outside playground opens, students exit		

Figure 4.1 *Prospero's Island* Level by Level, adapted from Punchdrunk Enrichment team 'Levels: Step by Step'.

4.2 Phase I: Autumn Term 2014 - Teachers' and students' return to the installation

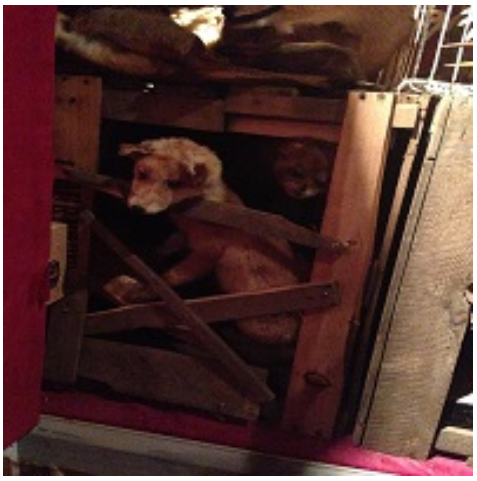
In this section, we draw upon the researchers' observations of the three teachers' sessions when they returned to the installation with their classes, the documentary evidence of their plans, and related teacher and student material.

It is worth noting that the Punchdrunk Enrichment team were aware of the Hub's potential for later work. One commented: '*I think it gives them a frame of reference to refer back to …'.* The Director also observed:

> *We are exploring this idea of dystopia and utopia, and trying to make sure this area of science v magic and this idea of conspiracy and the struggle for power … they need to be able to come back and reference them and then think what happened in the experience there? What was that? What part of the play did that relate to? What characters can we explore? So I hope … they will be able to use the experience as a springboard into further work.*

The return to the Hub was undertaken the week immediately after one class's first visit, in the other two it was undertaken a fortnight after their first visit. The teacher who visited first planned her work and shared this with her colleagues, who emulated it as part of their work on *The Tempest*. As each of the first full immersive experiences were with 15 students, it was expected that the numbers on the second visit would increase, but this was not the case: there was a school trip which kept numbers at 16 in one class, in another, a small class, the numbers even as a full class were only eight, and in the last class, only half the students came (15). Whilst the remainder were meant to arrive half way through the lesson, this did not happen. Two of the lessons observed lasted 45-50 minutes. One started in the classroom and the class thus had 20 minutes less in the Hub.

The teachers stayed within the Hub for the lesson; it was the only area remaining from the Punchdrunk Enrichment installation, they did not venture beyond it. The Hub retained its core features, with the circular table/map of the island with stools around Prospero's library and three windows/portals visible: the mirrors (the Perspective portal), the owls, bats and other birds (the Freedom portal) and the stoats and other stuffed land animals (the Captivity portal) (see Photograph 4.7). In addition, the suitcases, though now empty, remained on the floor. Throughout the lessons observed, the 'Island music' used by the Punchdrunk Enrichment team provided a backdrop.



Photographs 4.7 Some of the portals revealed in the Hub

In each lesson a worksheet was used, one each was produced related to each of the three portals, as per the Freedom portal example below. The title of each portal influenced the first and last question; the remaining questions were the same.

L/O Develop vocabulary to help create vivid descriptions in my writing.

- *What does freedom mean?*
- *What objects can you see?*
- *What colours can you see?*
- *What textures can you see?*
- *Can you write a smile describing what you can see?*
- *Can you write a metaphor using ideas from this portal to describe a character?*
- *Can you use personification to give a human quality to an object in this portal?*
- *What characters could freedom relate to? Explain your answers.*

Each of the teachers used these worksheets as the core of their lessons, though they afforded slightly different degrees of attention and space to the production of the related vocabulary. One focused on generating vocabulary about the three portals after reflecting on the experience, but also provided time to explore the Hub. Another, who had spent half the lesson in the classroom only had time for the students to record their vocabulary on the worksheets as they examined each portal. The last focused more on the character of Caliban and sought to make connections throughout to his character and appropriate vocabulary, whilst also using the portals to generate vocabulary. A more detailed account of each lesson is offered in Appendix 7, thus enabling subtle similarities and differences to be identified.

4.3 Phase II: Spring Term 2015 - The teachers' follow on work

In this section, we draw upon the researchers' observations of six of the teachers' follow on sessions (two per teacher) in semester 2 of the spring term, and related teacher and student material. Whereas the teachers had collaborated with Hackney Learning Trust when planning the scheme of work in the autumn term, the spring term follow-on work was planned independently, without input from the Trust or the Punchdrunk Enrichment team.

In the first semester of the spring term, the teachers had planned to focus on non-fiction with their classes. However, this curriculum content was not deemed to align easily with immersive techniques, so instead the teachers opted to trial new pedagogical approaches in the second semester, by adapting a scheme of work that focused on narrative and creative writing. This scheme of work, planned almost a year prior to the Punchdrunk Enrichment project, centred upon the wordless graphic novel *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan. This is a detailed metaphoric and representational account of an immigrant family as they arrive in a new city. During the follow-on lessons through integrating immersive teaching techniques into their lessons, the teachers aimed to develop students' inference and deduction skills and their use of emotive and descriptive language.

The researchers observed six lessons in total: two lessons run by each of the three teachers. In two of the classes there were approximately 30 students, in one 15. Lessons lasted approximately 45-50 minutes, and teachers and students did not venture outside their classrooms. The layouts of the classrooms were not significantly altered; tables and chairs were arranged in the usual way so that students were able to be sit in familiar groupings with their peers. Each session began with the teacher sharing the learning objective, either verbally or by displaying it on the whiteboard. This was followed by an introduction to the task, and by opportunities for the students to work in groups, pairs or individually. During several of the sessions the teachers encouraged and reminded the students to use technical language such as metaphor, simile and personification. Reference was also made to the need to extend vocabulary use for the assessments which would follow. In most sessions various kinds of worksheets were used in order to provide both learning prompts and space for students to note down their ideas. Most sessions concluded with a plenary in which students shared elements of their written work and teachers provided feedback on the ways they had met their objectives.

As the teachers were all working from the same scheme of work there were similarities between the learning objectives and teaching materials used. However, the teachers' lessons differed in the way they chose to incorporate immersive teaching techniques. During these follow-on sessions the teachers reported that they had chosen to integrate a wider range of stimuli in order to support and inspire the students to write creatively. Those observed included: music and sound effects, objects and images. For example, in two of the sessions, teachers played extracts of music; students were asked to describe these, sketch an image that the music brought to mind, and note down words that described the emotion they experienced. Another teacher used an urban soundscape in order to support students in incorporating references to the sense of hearing in their writing. In two sessions observed, teachers introduced found/collected objects to their classes, asking students to examine them and, and using inference and deduction, construct character profiles for their owners. These examples all related to themes of immigration and difference evident in *The Arrival.* A further two lessons used images as stimuli. In one, video clips related to the theme of immigration were employed to develop the students' empathy with characters, and prompt them to include the range of senses in their writing. The second involved students using images from *The Arrival* to create their own graphic novel. One teacher had also created an original audio-visual resource, pairing images taken from *The Arrival* to Led Zeppelin's Viking-themed 'Immigrant Song'. The teachers reported that the use of these varied stimuli represented a departure from their usual teaching practices. A more detailed account of each lesson is offered in Appendix 8.

Chapter 5: A commentary on *Prospero's Island*

This chapter offers a reflective commentary upon the pivotal experience of the project, the immersion within the *Prospero's Island* installation in the autumn term 2014, designed and led by Punchdrunk Experience; and the teachers' return with their classes to the core installation, the Hub. It does not focus upon the teachers' follow on work in the spring term 2015, as this is examined separately in Chapter 8 in relation to the project's third objective on pedagogy. In order to understand the perspectives of all those involved in this multilayered and complex experience, evidence was gathered from a number of data sets. Nonetheless the chapter should be read alongside Chapter 6, which focuses upon one of the evaluation's three objectives: to assess the impact of the project upon the students' attitudes and engagement.

Data sets drawn on include:

- The researchers' observations and field notes of the Punchdrunk Experience- and teacher-led *Prospero's Island* sessions in the autumn term
- Group interviews with case study students in the spring term (after all *Prospero's Island* sessions)
- Punchdrunk Experience actors' immediate reflections after their sessions
- Class teachers' immediate reflections after *Prospero's Island* sessions led by Punchdrunk Experience and their own sessions
- Interviews with the Punchdrunk Enrichment Director, the Senior English Teaching and Learning Consultant at HLT and class teachers

5.1 Phase I: Autumn term 2014 – The students

5.1.1 Entering an unknown world of surprises

On entering the Hub the students stepped into another world, a surprising one that held their attention. Their previous experience of Theatre in Education in primary schools is likely to have positioned them as passive audience members, with perhaps a few pupils participating in improvised scenes with limited props and scenery. The Punchdrunk Enrichment team had created a radically different environment; the Reading Room with which the students were acquainted, was unrecognizable. The newly transformed space was dark, somewhat cramped and full of foreboding; it made an immediate impact on the senses and is likely to have raised their expectations of what might unfold. The element of novelty and surprise was strong: as teachers noted '*Normally when they do a school workshop it's in a classroom and they know the environment but here there was nothing recognisable'* and *'it's all completely new and not what they expected!'*

As they lined up outside, many students were excited, perhaps anticipating time off-timetable and influenced by rumours of what might be in store. Others, unsure and irritated that their schedules were disrupted, waited somewhat disinterestedly, but on entering the Hub their curiosity was immediately captured. The booming voice of the Games Master welcomed them, the shipwreck scene unfolded, and they rapidly engaged in the game. An actor observed '*one girl who was slumped in that first one minute, then just like, grew like a flower*!' She was reported as commenting afterwards '*I thought it*

was going to be really boring - I wanted to do trampolining, and then actually it was MUCH better than trampolining!'

For nearly two and half hours each group of 15 students were involved in playing an open-ended, high-quality memorable game based on *The Tempest*, sculpted by professionals whose attention to detail was exceptional. The Hub contained many mysteries. These were hidden within its walls, in the language heard and read, and in the riddles the students solved that took them to mysterious satellite installations in other transformed spaces in the school. As the Hub space revealed more of the tale there were frequent collective intakes of breath, and students often spontaneously voiced their surprise and approval: 'th*at's sick', 'wow', 'oh my god'.* The whole experience involved venturing into the unknown with the nameless Assistants, and surprise was woven throughout. There were also unexpected revelations on the completion of each level. The students' responses to the experience indicated they valued this. Many spoke of how '*exciting', 'thrilling'* and '*mysterious*' it had been, '*you never knew what was going to happen next',* and '*we were brought into this room and not even a single person knew what they were doing!'*. This is unusual in a school context where traditionally English lesson objectives are named at the outset, time frames are known (50 minutes per period) and the journey towards the written assessment might reasonably be predicted. In addition, in the world of *Prospero's Island* their teachers were not in the lead; indeed they too were engaged and curious, responding to the unexpected events as they unfolded. The fact that the students were asked by the Games Master to keep their discoveries to themselves also heightened this sense of mystery.

5.1.2 Multisensory and imaginative engagement

From the moment the shipwreck assaulted their senses at the outset, the young people were perceived to be deeply engaged and highly motivated to solve the clues and succeed at the game. Across the experience, there were only transient moments when a few individuals lost full attention. The complex melee of the new world to inhabit, the live 'computer' game to play and the sustained backdrop of sound which punctuated and shaped the experience, alongside interaction with the actors, Games Master and each other captured, their imaginations and commitment. The rapid pace of the experience and the challenge of completing levels at speed, combined with the exceptional multisensory detail afforded by each new space (lighting, smells, music, sounds, artefactual detail), is likely to have contributed to their engagement. Even completing tasks by torchlight in the Hub was atmospheric, and prompted focused attention. (See Photograph 5.1)

Photograph 5.1: In the Hub: A group task by torchlight

© Punchdrunk Enrichment/Photographer: Paul Cochrane

Our observations suggest that the students were sensually, physically and emotionally engaged. 'Being in the moment', as Machon (2013: 83) notes, can highlight 'his or her *praescence* within the sensuality of an immersive event'. Their multisensory awareness revealed itself in physical responses (huddling, holding hands, high fives and running) and in their verbal descriptions of how they were feeling and responding. One boy was observed quietly re-reading the first illuminated quote from the text. Despite the fact that his group had moved on, he appeared held within the moment. Another pointed out what he perceived to be a footprint belonging to Caliban in the dirt on the roof floor, and yet another on entering the Magic Lab. He observed to his peers, *'He (Prospero) must be at home, the lights are on*'. This was not offered as a humorous quip, but as a serious comment and appeared to be received as such. Each of these and the following 'in the moment' observations evidence the students' affective, multisensory engagement and embodied learning.

> *As the voices of the sailors fade and the storm reaches its height, everyone seems to be listening intently. There is a spontaneous physical response to the storm. Several students reach upwards as if they are sinking/drowning, others huddle together in small groups around the table. One girl's eyes widen and her mouth opens slightly as if she might call out for help/plead. She doesn't. But it seems evident the unexpected and highly realistic construction of the storm is experienced aurally and kinaesthetically by all of us - as an embodied event.*
>
> *Adapted from observation field notes 27.11.2014*

For some students, as their sensory perception accentuated, it appeared that they became more observant and open to imaginative possibilities, as the following two vignettes reveal.

> *The group seems to believe there may be a real person lying under the covers; a boy ventures to reach out and touches the boot, whilst others watch in trepidation. This*

unsettles a girl who backs away, positions herself near the teacher, and keeps repeating she is 'right scared' and asking 'it isn't real is it?' of each of the adults. She notices a small chrome box on the roof near the Nobles' tent and wonders aloud who it belongs to, what might be inside? She is clearly imaginatively engaged. (It is part of the school's ventilation system).

Adapted from observation field notes 27.11.2014

Five students gather around an Assistant in the Magic Lab. She is in role as Ariel and observes, 'I've been expecting you'. They appear incredulous and express fascination, asking 'How could she get out? 'How is that possible?' and 'You're the ***real*** *Ariel?' She sustains her role, the students move from questioning to intense listening and concentration, their eyes fixed upon her. Later when she asks them to promise to voice 'freedom' on their return to the Hub, several reply 'Yes Ariel.' As the group return, they walk together for first time, still talking intently about having met Ariel. During the debrief meeting one continues to assert he has met the 'real Ariel'.*

Adapted from observation field notes 27.11.2014

The in-role work of the actors, who, towards the end, took up roles as one of the play's characters, was commented upon by many of the students who appeared to find this particularly engaging: '*It was like real - you know',* and *'I knew it was just him, but it was cool'.* They also appeared to find responding to the Games Master imaginatively engaging and some asked afterwards: '*Where does he live*?' and '*What does he look like?'* Intriguingly, none of the teachers commented upon the multisensory or imaginative nature of the students' engagement - perhaps because, engaged also as partial players within the game, they were not easily able to step back from the experience and simultaneously analyse it. As a computer-styled exploration of *The Tempest*, the experience was unquestionably polysemic. Nonetheless they readily recognised the students were highly enthusiastic and affectively engaged: '*they were really switched on', totally focussed', 'bubbling with excitement' 'there was a lot of like - wonder'.*

5.1.3 Opportunity to work together

In organisational terms the groups were expected to work together. The work involved a mix of small group work and whole group work as well as individual reporting on behalf of their groups. The students frequently commented upon the pleasure of working together *'I enjoy being in a team and investigating'*, *'it was fun doing it together'*, although the actors expressed surprise at the students' lack of experience at collaborating: '*I don't know whether it's the age, but it's not their instinct to work together - did you notice that?'*, *'I think we forced them to!'*, *'I wouldn't say it's something that comes naturally at all!'*, and *'I was really shocked on site - they don't share their ideas'*. The game, which was often perceived by the groups as competitive, appeared to trigger a strong sense of group camaraderie and offered multiple group-work opportunities. The researchers also noted that the three groups rarely worked fully as groups, despite this being emphasised by the Assistants. The students however had not yet known each other for a full term and may have been unused to working together in teams in their classrooms. Additionally, the pressured time frame may have constrained this. The teachers also sought to encourage teamwork and in contrast to the actors and researchers, tended to comment positively on this:

> *I thought it was really good that they [a boy's group] were getting him to speak and they were realising okay we need to take turns, everybody needs to participate which is I think one of the great things about this project - teamwork!*

These contrasting perceptions may have been a result of different conceptualisations of teamwork and collaboration.

5.1.4 Knowledge about and interest in *The Tempest*

As the students saw the table flip to reveal the island/their school, worked through the levels, and visited satellite installations, they were in a position to develop their knowledge of the play through their imaginative engagement, and through action and interaction. The teachers frequently commented that the experience prompted increased knowledge about and interest in *The Tempest*, contrasting this approach with their own work in English and their more limited use of drama. Some students too appreciated this was an aim of the work: '*Punchdrunk wants to get our minds more deep down in the story of The Tempest to figure out what's happening'.*

The Punchdrunk Enrichment Director also noted he wanted *'to inspire [students] to delve deeper … the more you kind of pick it apart, the more you can discover I suppose, and that says something about this space, the more you unpick, the more of the space is revealed and the richer it becomes'*. His observation focuses on both *The Tempest* and the spaces in the Hub/satellite installations. As a consequence in the script the Games Master highlighted the value of students paying attention to the language of the text in order that the Hub would reveal more of the play's narrative. As he said: *'I suggest you study them (the text tasks/extracts) carefully, because the secrets of the world are hidden within these words, and their power should not be underestimated …'.*

A focus on comprehension was evident throughout; this was shown in the nature of the many tasks and activities and in particular in the attention afforded the language and text of the play. The young people became motivated to attend to this and to read, hear and use the language of Shakespeare's play. On several occasions, specific words from the text were discussed (e.g. Boswain and Aery) in the whole group, and others were reflexively considered in conversation in the small groups. The rapid-fire text-based tasks often involved the Assistants expressively reading extracts of the text prior to each group's focused examination of this and in their responses to the Games Master, individuals sometimes used phrases and extracts from the text. The Games Master set riddles which rested on the ambiguity of language and he and the Assistants borrowed from *The Tempest's* speeches when in role or reading the epilogue for example. Additionally, each time a level was completed a new text extract was illuminated on the wall and read aloud by all the game players. This literally highlighted the language and valuably drew the students' attention to it. Thus seamless opportunities existed for the young people to experience and use the language of *The Tempest*. As one teacher noted, '*usually we just read the words but in that [the experience] they actively engaged with the text'.*

The focus on the play's characters also deepened the students' knowledge and prompted them to explore the characters' different views and experiences. There were multiple opportunities to consider the nature, words, motivations and actions of the key characters, for example when creating the portrait wall/family tree, and undertaking tasks such as developing a Character ID for the Enchanted Man, or a description of a new species (Caliban) and considering questions such as 'Why was Miranda so upset?'

Significantly too, students were able to engage with the characters' spaces through the satellite installations and the portals in the Hub, for example examining Caliban's lair, Prospero's bookcase, Ariel's evocative roof space and the suitcases belonging to Ferdinand, Gonzalo and Alonso. These spaces and objects, tasks and missions variously provided opportunities to open up the characters and promoted new interest and understanding about them. This was a common perception amongst the students and the teachers. As one case study student noted in interview:

> *When we're reading the book, Miss says, 'Try and imagine how it looks'… but when we went to the Punchdrunk we could actually imagine how it was.*

Throughout the experience there were also opportunities to explore the play's themes. These were explicated through text tasks, the voice of the Games Master and the scenographic detail as well as whole group discussions such as that which focused on different perspectives in the Brave New World scene. Seeing things differently through the mirrors appeared to help students grasp this concept visually. The film montage of historical and contemporary imagery also appeared potent; it was watched with intense concentration and afforded scope for making life to text and text to life connections. As one teacher noted, referring to the whole experience: '*I think it just allowed them to have a much greater understanding of the plot and different perspectives'.*

The fast pace of the game may have slightly constrained the development of the students' articulation of the themes during the experience, although it is likely these were intuitively grasped as the game unfolded. The experience clearly afforded an opportunity for sensitive connected follow-up by the teachers who were convinced the themes had been grasped. The teachers were also unequivocal that it motivated sustained interest in the play on the part of the young people, and voiced the view that it had a particularly marked impact upon the less experienced learners. as the observation below regarding a student in a low ability set indicates.

> *After the Punchdrunk debrief in the library, the group is sent to accelerated reading support (for those with reading difficulties). Instead, one boy goes to the Shakespeare shelf, finds three different copies of The Tempest and urgently seeks his teacher's advice re suitability. He discusses the options with her and then checks out one copy.*
>
> *In the case study student interview a fortnight later, he brings the book, perhaps positioning himself, somewhat unusually, as 'in the know' alongside his peers. His enthusiasm for the text and his replies suggest he has read some of the play and is both knowledgeable and interested in the characters, particularly Caliban. He is proud of this.*
>
> *Adapted from observation field notes 27.11.2014*

In sum, the experience clearly motivated the students and enabled them to develop their knowledge and interest in *The Tempest,* its characters, plot and themes in an engaging and memorable manner.

5.1.5 Game play and boundary crossing

The students found the experience resonant with their own lived experience of games, of 'choose your own adventure books' and in particular of computer games. They connected G*rand Theft Auto, Black Hearts, Indiana Jones* and *Call of Duty* to the experience in various ways and were aware of differences and similarities between

their games and *Prospero's Island*. In the following vignette from an interview, R = researcher and S = students).

S: It's kind of like a game you play with the playstation as you have to pass the level.

S: It's a bit like Black Flag or something like that, no Assassins' Creed I mean [general agreement by the rest of the group], it's basically I think they go to an island as well and like all video games they go on different levels and it's a bit like The Tempest as it [Assassins' Creed] has a boat and an island too.

R: What were the parallels?

S: How they designed the room - like a game-

S: It's like a puzzle kind of game, like a Beast Quest where you have to answer all the puzzles and like at the end you have to put the pieces on the table,

R: Is that a computer game?

S: No miss it's a book with loads of mysteries in it.

Students were pleased that the immersive experience connected to their own cultural practices and interests. One noted it also drew upon his family practices: '*I used to play missions like with my brother … we would set ourselves challenges and try to complete them and have a target to complete'.* Framed as a computer game, there were multiple references to unlocking the story, and the language of levels, rules and teams and as in computer games there was constant musical accompaniment. The sounds and countdown for example added to the sense that this was play not work, fun not schooling, which the students noted (see Chapter 6).

Positioned as game players with all the attendant tension and excitement of this alternative reality game, there was novelty in this 'in-school yet not-in-school' boundary crossing experience. Whilst it offered an opportunity for an in-depth alternative exploration of a classic text, and was undertaken on school property, there were few markers of school and to some degree it offered time-out of school rules, for example blazers did not need to be worn and on missions, students often ran to find the location. The teachers responded slightly differently to this, some sought to affirm school rules, whilst others for example accepted running in this context. Some of their responses drew attention to the boundaries the students were crossing and may have temporarily 'shattered' the fictional illusion, but their responses did not appear to impact significantly upon the students' engagement.

A number of other boundary crossings were observed. Some individual's voiced comments that suggested the boundary between reality and fantasy, fact and fiction was for them at least a hazy one. For example one asked an Assistant urgently about the Games Master, '*Can we see him - is he human*?' Another during the closure of a text task, asked an Assistant '*Did they manage to kill Prospero? Tell me'.* Both these questions were voiced sotto voce with a deep sense of belief and a desire to receive an answer. Additionally as the students travelled in between spaces they crossed boundaries. In

these liminal spaces - such as the corridors and staircases - which were neither the Hub nor the satellite location, game players snatched brief and excited conversations with other students who were not currently involved in the experience. The urgent inquiries from previous game players demonstrated the camaraderie that developed amongst those involved. When visiting places normally out of bounds, the blurring of the game's boundaries - 'school- not school', 'real-imagined' - were more pronounced. This is demonstrated in the following observation.

The actor has directed the group to the top of a flight of stairs. Having reached the destination, the children huddle in a tight group facing a black door. A sign on the door reads 'PLANT ROOM No Unauthorised Access'. There is another sign too which is clearly a warning. The students group together at some distance from the door and do not approach it. They appear uncertain as to what they should do and they stand there in a group staring at the door for what feels like quite some time.

The actor [who is in the Hub] contacts them over the walkie-talkie and asks them to share their location which the students do. There is some miscommunication though as the actor appears to believe that they have opened the door already. She instructs them: 'Beta team tread very, very cautiously - you do not know what's up there. Over'. The whole group respond with the sound 'wooooooah' (expressing playful trepidation and uncertainty). They are nervous. The actor contacts them again: 'So Beta team what is up there? Over'. A student instructs the radio operator: 'Say we're not going in there – we're not going in there'. The group chuckle nervously again.

After a short while the teacher and actor intervene to prompt and, eventually, direct the students to try open the door:
Teacher: 'Do you think we can go in there?'
[Many students respond at once]
Student: 'No it says, 'No unauthorized entry!'
Teacher: 'Well do you want to tell her [the actor] that?'
Student with walkie-talkie: 'It says there's no unauthorized entry over'.
Actor: 'OK. So you've gone up there or …? I'm trying to understand where you are and what you can see. Over.'
Student without walkie-talkie - 'Shall we open the door and see'?
Another student without walkie-talkie: 'No, no, no, no!'
[They move towards the door as a group]
Teacher: 'You want to try?'
Actor: 'Beta team I need you to ***communicate*** *with me. What can you see? What's going on? Over.'*
Student with walkie-talkie: 'We can see the plant room and one of my friends is trying to open
the door. Over'

The students cannot initially open it and inform the actor that it's locked. The teacher asks them to try again and the actor assures them that the door should be open. They try it again and it opens. The door leads to the flat roof. As they step through the door and gather on the roof the actor reminds them of their mission. The students cautiously, and tentatively, explore the roof space, remaining on the path at all times

(Adapted from observation field notes, 26.11.14.)

As the Punchdrunk Enrichment Director observed in relation to their work *Under The Eiderdown,* the narrative environment '*bleeds into the real world*' (Higgin, 2011). This was again evidenced when one group on receiving their liberty at the end of the game, burst onto the playground shouting '*Freedom, Freedom, Freedom'*. Several students from the group leapt onto a bench, and, waving their arms in protest, continued to chant '*Freedom, Freedom, Freedom'.* The rest joined them. This reflected their exhilaration at completing the game combined with their sustained imaginative engagement in the narrative. Whilst they had crossed the final boundary and had returned to the world of the school playground, their desire to remain in the game was evident. In contrast another group, prompted by their teacher, lined up quietly before leaving the Hub, and thus prepared for the boundary crossing in a more traditional school style fashion.

5.2 Phase I: Autumn term 2014 - Teachers and other adults

5.2.1 The teachers

The teachers valued the experience personally; they described it as '*awe-inspiring', 'exciting', 'engaging and enjoyable'.* They also valued it professionally, and one viewed it as *'hopeful'* in the sense that it offered a wider sense of the purpose of education:

> *We are so bogged down with standardized testing and measurement … it becomes such a driving force behind the curriculum and when there are things like this and an opportunity for students and people to be engaged with it, it shows the bigger picture of what education is about … you learn that learning is living and life and you are learning on the go!*

Some, though not all, had experienced Punchdrunk productions before, but there was still a strong element of surprise about how radically the setting was changed and how *'smooth'* and '*well produced'* it was. One also noted that they ' *didn't expect it to be quite so professional'.* All teachers commented that the work had enabled their less experienced, less confident and often disengaged learners to become unusually engaged and focused, enabling them, in the words of one teacher, '*to bloom'*. This may have been due to the physically and affectively engaging imaginative frame, the rich opportunities for multisensory engagement and the different, less conventional approaches to learning employed. For example, one teacher noted about her less able set:

> *I was so pleased with all of them. They were just totally engaged. I was pleased with [a named student] particularly as he is the one that often gets in trouble and doesn't listen to people and says quite rude things to people sometimes and that can get him into trouble. But I was really pleased by the way he was in the group and he was taking part and he was bought in and frankly I thought maybe he wouldn't be bought in!*

This issue of the less experienced learners' response to the experience is discussed further in Chapter 6. It may also have been influenced by different expectations of the students on the part of the actors, as one Assistant noted: '*We've got the luxury of not knowing them'.* In contrast, the actors and one of the teachers noted that '*so-called'* more academically inclined students *were 'more reserved', 'quite nervous',* and *'quite quiet'*. One actor also observed: '*They don't want to get it wrong, they don't know the rules and they're used to getting it right so they find it quite challenging in a different way'.* Additionally some teachers commented upon a perceived difference between the Year 7

and Year 8 students responses, particularly in terms of developing their understanding of the play. Whilst this is not the focus of our evaluation, it is noted for future reference:

> *My Year 8 class went in last week and their understanding of the play is so good now, like they had a good understanding and now it is just brilliant and they … really know the play and are able to be really critical about it and give different interpretations about it as they understand it better. … They have a full understanding of the play that they didn't have before.*

The Punchdrunk Enrichment actors also acknowledged that the '*experience was slightly more challenging for Year 7',* but in tune with the teachers, the actors perceived that *'they rose to this challenge'*.

The teachers as noted earlier, often referred to their own felt engagement and found the experience stimulating. They perceived they were positioned as observers and chaperones by the Assistants, and tended to watch/participate whilst in the Hub and accompanied the students on missions offering support. Some commented on seizing the opportunity to observe their classes' engagement and learning, others noted they were '*thinking how I could build on this in my own session'*. Many Teaching Assistants accompanied students to the Hub several times. These colleagues were not interviewed, so the extent to which they capitalised upon the opportunity to learn more about students with whom they worked, and/or built upon this later is not known. Their concentration occasionally waned due perhaps to the heat and repeated visits. On one occasion a teacher was seen to be distracted, although this too may have been a product of visiting several times and the heat in the room. Another teacher took a subtle but more active role, sometimes prompting or encouraging students and also engaging in light behaviour management, as illustrated in the observation and reflection extracts below.

[In accompanying her group to find Caliban's locker] the group walk past the right locker. The teacher knows this but doesn't intervene … [on the way back to the Hub] she prompts them to think about the contents of the locker: 'Who has old books?'

[Later in the Hub] the group has to complete a crime scene report. The teacher encourages N to report back to the Games Master via a mike. Afterwards in her reflection she says he probably wouldn't have done this otherwise - a question of confidence as much as ability.

Some boys in the teacher's group are leaning heavily over the table. The teacher says *'Boys, get off the table*' – quiet voice. They sit back down.

(Observation field notes extracts, 26.11.14.)

Later in her reflection she refers to such incidents:

… that push and pull, where do I step in between and intervene or let it organically happen. And I guess, like for me if I get a gut reaction that I need - because it's dark and because I'm worried about safety and because I don't want the props to get ruined - … I can generally do it by touching their back or saying their name really quickly and they will stop. I don't feel that any time I've intervened it has changed the direction of what's happening.
(Reflection transcript, 26.11.14.)

5.2.2 The Games Master and his Assistants

The Games Master who had a disembodied voice, in some way paralleled the traditional role of a teacher as he was in control and held a position of authority within the game. He was simultaneously powerful and attractive, a kind of hybrid game-show host. Some of the students found him an unnerving character and held back a little from speaking to him, whereas others addressed him directly and responded quickly to his questioning. It was clear he was revered; when praised by him, several replied '*thank you*' and seemed honored by his commendation. One of the Games Master's key roles was aiding the students' interpretation of the text; he asked for evidence and interpretation on each occasion they fed back, and sometimes sought to help them elaborate. There was limited time for this, but it was often skillful and focused. There appeared to be some differences between the interactional styles of the two different Games Masters, and a teacher felt that on one occasion the questioning could usefully have been extended further in order to increase the students' reflection:

> *I think … checking their knowledge and understanding there needs to be more of that! There are 2 different Games Masters. The first time I did it the Games Master really pulled them, really didn't allow just a really basic yes or no answer they needed to expand, I think [he had] higher expectations of them, making them formulate proper answers.*

This teacher also drew attention to the differences she perceived between the Year 7s' and 8s' replies to the Games Master and felt that more could have been expected of the Year 8s. She felt that the younger students would have benefitted from more time to review their answers in small groups, in order to consolidate their knowledge before voicing it:

> *Maybe giving them a little bit more time. When the 5 minutes are up let them have a minute's debrief – 'okay, what are we really answering, how do we answer this question properly, what evidence really proves that'.*

In working with the whole group and different small groups, the Assistants were engaged to some degree in a form of team teaching, improvising together as they shaped the experience with a clear sense of direction, but also being responsive to the students' ideas in the moment. They pushed the students on and set a fast pace within the tasks, and played a mediating role between the students and the Games Master, for instance encouraging one group member to feedback and supporting them as they did so. At times their questions clearly sought to ensure the students understood particular words and phrases, and they took on roles as expert text interpreters. Sometimes they asked open questions and gave frequent reassurance and praise, at others their questions seemed somewhat leading and more traditionally teacher-like using an initiative – response – evaluation format (Mehan, 1979). There often seemed to be 'right answers' or at least specific brief answers were needed for the group to complete the task and be ready to feed back to the Games Master. The Assistants were highly responsive to one teacher's comments about her class and adapted their engagement accordingly, which was impressive on the hoof. This teacher, working with a less experienced group, felt the Assistants were very skilled and supportive:

> *I was worried that they (the students) wouldn't understand it but they did, I was worried that some bits they wouldn't be able to access but I think the Assistants are very good at scaffolding and sort of supporting where there were areas of, where the*

young people didn't know what was going on, they were good at questioning them and getting them to the right answer!

5.3 Phase I: Autumn Term 2014 - A commentary on the teachers' return to the installation

Whilst the teacher-led return to the installation differed from the experience developed by Punchdrunk Enrichment, the same structure for the reflective commentary has been used: firstly, we focus upon the students' responses and views about the session and then the teachers'. It is worth noting the perspective of the Punchdrunk Enrichment Director with regard to the return to the installation:

> *I am very much about giving that resource to the teachers and trying to give them as much information as possible in advance so that they can use that for their own purposes because I think for the project to benefit teachers in the right way of really informed practices so they have to be thinking how can I use this myself, how do I want to implement this?*

5.3.1 The students

The autumn term lessons observed in the Hub were arguably more 'typical' of school work in that they were led by teachers with specific learning objectives and were structured with an opening frame, group activities and a plenary. However, the location offered a degree of difference from conventional lessons, and potentially increased interest, even intrigue for some students. To return to the Hub enabled them to recall their previous affective experience there which was underscored by two of the teachers. The students were keen to return, and in particular commented this gave them the chance to scrutinise the space, to look more closely and for longer:

> *When there were actors in there we couldn't really just go up to it and … touch the books and start playing with the animals and looking in the mirror.*
>
> *When I looked deeper into it there were more things that I didn't realise on the day, like some of the animals inside the cages in that section and some of the mirrors and the effects at the bottom of the screens.*

The lessons also offered opportunities for students to work together, though these were not always taken up or capitalised upon. Whilst in some lessons students were sharing ideas in pairs and small groups, there was limited evidence of them really working together collaboratively to produce joint understandings. In some groups this may have been due to limited experience of working together. However the students were focused, on-task and motivated by the opportunity to examine the Hub and its many portals and they made many connections to *The Tempest.* Their positive reactions to the sessions were linked to the opportunity both to revisit and to examine the Hub's interior, which was variously noted on this occasion as '*mysterious', 'curious', 'fascinating'* and '*weird*'. There was even a sense that on entering this space a more relaxed sense of engagement came into play. One student described their lesson as '*fun and playful'* and another commented that '*I'd rather be doing this than doing work*', suggesting that in her eyes the experience was not 'work'. For others the sessions, understandably, were viewed as less engaging than the previous experience: 'It *was*

quite dull because we already know the secrets and the secret's out already' and *'We already knew some of the things and it wasn't really as surprising as the last time'.*

Nonetheless, the teachers perceived that the students' memories of the immersive experience, the music playing in the follow-up sessions, and students' access to the objects displayed in the portals prompted a much wider than usual range of vocabulary:

> *Everyone was on task … the ideas they were coming up with were better than I expected! It's almost as if the room takes over and they become quite intrigued by everything! I didn't even mind too much that some of them were looking into other spaces! They are (a lower set) and their vocabulary is weaker and sometimes their ideas are weaker, but they do have it!*
>
> *I do like to push them on vocabulary so I generally will and they were coming out with the words that I wanted – and some of them, I mean P came up with 'they had their liberty' and for me that was quite an advanced thing to say and then Q saying the thing about the light hitting their eyes - I thought that was beautiful!*
>
> *So this room…just being in here did prompt the memories of what they learned when they were here. ..it got them to think about being caged and I thought it was good they were talking to each other…even though weren't necessarily right, it was good they were trying to link things to the play.*

Looking closely at the high quality artefacts also appeared to prompt the students to speculate about what they were seeing and to trigger connections to their previous experience and *The Tempest*. The teachers noticed that some of the students quoted phrases from the play, though from our observations and the teacher reflections it was not evident that the groups fully appreciated the portals represented common themes within the play. It may have been that the focus on the learning objectives, which mainly addressed vocabulary, oriented students towards searching for key descriptive adjectives, metaphors and similes related to the portals.

5.3.2 The teachers

As documented in Chapter 4, there was a common structure to the teachers' lessons, this was evident in their use of the portals, worksheets and music, though they operationalised their own lesson in a subtly different manner. The teachers all framed the work as part of the journey towards the students' end-of-unit assessment and the objective 'to focus on vocabulary to generate a wider range of words in order to make their assessed writing more descriptive', was stated on the worksheets. With this mind, the teachers asked questions of the students as they explored the portals, drawing out words and ideas in order to support their writing, as well as encouraging the students to commit these to paper.

In their reflections, each teacher also talked of the way in which they perceived the session could or would lead to another activity as well as the end-of-unit assessment. This included writing a poem using the literary language noted, and borrowing from the vocabulary and metaphors they had voiced and recorded in later creative writing – for instance:

> *[Students] will each have time to look at each portal, and then for each portal they have to, like, list objects - see colours etc. - and the whole idea, the whole point of this is they are trying to develop their vocabulary, because they're going to be doing a*

piece of creative writing, … to have vivid descriptions in their writing - so that's the purpose of what they're doing.

So this piece of [work] today is trying to get them to think about their characters, and even though they can talk quite a lot about the characters and what they think, when it comes to actually being the character and thinking about their perspective, they don't have that much to say … so really coming in here today was to get them to think of different aspects of their character … specifically in kind of metaphorical ways … so that could maybe translate that into their writing.

Notwithstanding the feed-forward into possible new work and the potentially instrumental focus on the end-of-unit assessment, the teachers believed the space made a difference to the lessons. The observation notes record that two teachers emphasised the specialness of the Hub to their students, and made explicit connections to the immersive experience (the third may have done so in their classroom prior to arrival), and all three teachers capitalised upon the scenographic displays. One noted afterwards in the brief follow up reflection with the researcher: '*it's interesting how changing the space changes the power dynamics sometimes and the way you operate a class*'.

One teacher set aside time during the session for the students to explore the Hub. This created a rich imaginative interlude in which all but one of the students 'played', demonstrating the sustained power of the place and the students' latent desire to revisit the magic and mystery of the experience. Several students seized the time to touch the sand and the books, on one occasion almost reverently, and some remained silent for several minutes as they looked intently. One sat down beside a microphone and addressed the absent Games Master '*Hello we're ready to carry on the adventure*', another immediately followed suit, '*Games Master we are now ready*'. Both looked expectantly up and around them. Later when the students were allowed to leave, the door genuinely became jammed. Their response was immediate, one student exclaimed: '*Oh my god it's locked*', another asked '*Are Caliban and Prospero still alive?*' and others started to call '*Freedom' 'We want our freedom'*. This became a rallying cry revisited from the close of the previous immersive experience and involved the whole group, who seemed disappointed when the outside door was used and they could leave.

In another class, whilst time for open exploration was not set aside, students were again observed to engage playfully and imaginatively, though not by the teacher. One student when standing near Prospero's bookshelf, observed quietly *'the magical hand is moving … the magical hand is Prospero'.* The students near him began to reminisce about the immersive experience, and referred to the moment when one of the Assistants had taken a book from the library and as he had done so a ray of light had crossed the room. As a student touched that particular book, the eyes of several travelled to where the trigger light had appeared during the experience. The group were highly animated at the memory of it. Another, with evident delight reached down into the library and looking around him conspiratorially, pretended to take something from the pile of old texts, noting to a peer '*This is my souvenir*'. The students' desire for imaginative re-engagement was clear.

The teachers mainly focused upon tapping into the potential of the artefacts present since *'The pull-up screens were really surreal for them as it was happening and it was "wow", "oh my", but they never really got the time to really focus and stare'*. One had originally prepared quote sheets and planned to get the students to analyse the quotes in the Hub, but had revised this, *'I thought, no I want to use the space more, I don't want it*

for analysing, but they will finish their plan … so this will be a starter … and then on Tuesday they will write'. Another had wondered about exploring the *'back story behind one of the titles of the book or one of the animals'*, and creating a model so that the students could use this, but in the end had not done so. It was not clear if this was because as a team the teachers had chosen to focus on vocabulary or due to other reasons. The Punchdrunk Enrichment Director had hoped the return to the installation would go *'in lots of different directions'* and that:

> *The teachers aim to take risks a little bit, and do things that surprise them and push themselves and hopefully they will see their pupils in a different way … I would want them to feel like they are challenging one another and getting really outstanding work out of that installation!*

This was not entirely the case as the common direction was vocabulary; there were no obvious examples of risks being taken, and drama was not used. Such decisions were influenced no doubt by the pressure of work, the need to feed forward into the students final assessment and the timing which was towards the end of the term. Nonetheless, in reflecting on their sessions, the teachers were positive, commenting that: '*coming in a second time is great because it does get them thinking again'* and that it was '*enriching, tangible and reassuring', 'energetic, surprising and fun*'. Though one teacher, who perceived the students had not enjoyed the lesson, observed it was '*less exciting'* and a '*real challenge'* to follow-on from the Punchdrunk Enrichment immersive experience.

> *It was so amazing when they came in [the first time] that almost anything you do afterwards seems a bit boring, even if you planned lessons that you think were great, and actually after this, most lessons seem – well dull – not dull but they don't have the … and actually they're being asked to think a bit more about words … and I think probably that's what they disliked the second time, that they were having to do a bit more traditional work I suppose.*

The interviews suggest that the teachers, perhaps over-awed by the Punchdrunk Enrichment immersive experience and driven by the wider assessment agenda, did not choose to innovate in the space, or develop another aspect of the game-like imagined experience. Thus their follow-up work in the Hub, planned immediately following the experience, tended to position Punchdrunk Enrichment as the core creators and themselves and their students as the receivers of this artistic expertise which they then used to support a more traditional English focus. Interestingly however, the teachers did not ask the students to reflect critically upon the set design or why the designers had chosen the metaphor of birds in cages for example. Perhaps if another session in the Hub had been available, or other installations had remained, the teachers might have seized the space for dramatic engagement and more productive, less receptive/responsive English work. Nonetheless it was widely recognised by that the return to the installation was a valuable enrichment experience that enabled the students to connect to and build on the immersive theatre experience *Prospero's Island.*

5.4 Summary and conclusions

This chapter provides a commentary on the immersive theatre experience of *Prospero's Island.* It indicates that the multisensory event was responded to enthusiastically by both students and teachers alike and that it was recognised by all as affectively engaging, enjoyable and memorable. It also indicates that the students' return to the Hub, led by the teachers, was valued, enabling them revisit the Hub for the purposes of

an English lesson. Whilst this was fairly conventional in form, the portal artefacts and the space itself afforded opportunities for students to re-engage and some responded imaginatively to this. Analyses of the datasets reveal that a number of themes emerged and these are noted below.

For the students the immersive experience of *Prospero's Island* was characterised by:

- Surprise - the significantly transformed spaces (both the Hub and the nine satellite installations) contributed to the students' sense of wonder and amazement, which was further extended as they journeyed together into the unknown tale of *The Tempest*. The highly novel experience involved numerous unexpected events and revelations, missions and mysteries, which excited and engaged all the students.
- Multisensory and imaginative engagement - the exceptional multisensory detail evident in each installation (lighting, smells, music, sounds, artefactual details) is likely to have contributed to the students' focused attention. There was evidence of students' imaginative engagement as they examined different spaces belonging to the characters and voiced multiple possibilities and ideas. The in-role work of the actors also appeared to make a contribution to students' imaginative and affective engagement.
- Opportunities to collaborate - these were woven through the experience. Team work opportunities were noted positively by students and their teachers, although the actors and researchers perceived these were not always fully capitalised upon.
- Developing interest in and knowledge about *The Tempest* - all the teachers expressed the view that the lived experience made a significant contribution to the students' interest in the play and enhanced their knowledge about the characters, the plot, the language and themes. Students too voiced the view that *Prospero's Island* had prompted their curiosity, and enhanced their knowledge and understanding of the play.
- Game play and boundary crossing – the experience was game-like in nature and styled in the manner of a computer game. This was recognised and valued by the students who tended to view it as 'play not work'. It encompassed boundary crossing to which the teachers responded slightly differently: some sought to affirm school rules, whilst others remained open to difference in this context.

The teachers valued the immersive experience, both personally and professionally, in one case contrasting this with the assessment-driven nature of the English curriculum. Teachers were surprised by the very high standard achieved by Punchdrunk Enrichment and the marked transformation of school spaces. All perceived the less experienced learners benefitted in particular from the experience; one, alongside the actors, felt the more experienced students were quieter and less assured in this context. The teachers commented positively on the actors' skill sets in supporting the students, though one felt more stretching would have been beneficial and that more time on tasks to consolidate understanding would have helped the younger students. The teachers tended to use the opportunity to observe their classes' engagement and learning, and one also took a slightly more active role in supporting students and managing

behaviour. Some teachers and Teaching Assistants accompanied several student groups on the experience, and in this case there was a danger of distraction as the novelty of the experience wore off.

The teacher-led return to the Hub installation was arguably more 'typical' of school work, with a limited time frame and learning objectives focused on widening vocabulary leading towards a final written assessment. All the teachers followed the same overall plan and used common worksheets related to the portals. Nonetheless the space afforded increased interest and enabled the students to enthusiastically recall their previous experiences there and examine the Hub and its many portals more closely. They were keen to do this. The teachers felt the space and its connotations and artefacts prompted a wider than usual range of vocabulary to be generated. In two classes students seized informal opportunities during the lesson to play imaginatively. Only one of these was facilitated, observed, and 'sanctioned' by the teacher. The students took considerable pleasure in this imaginative play, which demonstrated the sustained power of the place and their desire to re-engage in the Hub's mysteries. The teachers did not choose to innovate in the space, or develop another aspect of the game-like imagined experience. This may have been due to the challenge of following the Punchdrunk Enrichment immersive experience and by a desire to examine the artefactual details. It may also have been influenced by the wider assessment agenda. The teachers' follow up work implicitly positioned Punchdrunk Enrichment as the creators and themselves as the pedagogues tied to a more traditional English focus.

Chapter 6: Impact on students' attitudes and engagement

This chapter focuses on the impact of the autumn term immersive theatre experience, and the follow-on activity in the spring term, on students' attitudes and engagement in English. A key learning objective identified in the Memorandum of Understanding between Punchdrunk Enrichment, Hackney Learning Trust and the Academy was to increase engagement in English at Key Stage 3. In particular, an objective of the six-week autumn term scheme of work, developed by the English department in collaboration with partners, was to help students *'engage with Shakespeare's language through immersive learning adventures'* and provide a '*unique learning experience which produces "awe and wonder"'*. The spring term development work was intended to build positive attitudes by employing immersive techniques to engage students in the theme of immigration and the graphic novel. The evaluation team therefore sought to establish:

- The impact of the Punchdrunk Enrichment project[2] upon Year 7 pupils' attitudes to and engagement in English.

To explore the outcomes of the project for students' motivation, the evaluation drew on both quantitative and qualitative evidence.

Data sets drawn on include:

- Questionnaires completed by Y7 students in the autumn and spring terms
- Group interviews with case study students in the autumn and spring terms
- Teachers' immediate reflections after Punchdrunk-led *Prospero's Island* sessions in the autumn term
- Group interview with Teachers in the spring term
- Final brief written reflection from class teachers' on completion of the project

(Y7 student questionnaires, case study student interview schedules, teacher interview schedules and a sample teacher reflection sheet are included in Appendix 1.)

6.1 Year 7 students' perspectives on attitudes and engagement

All year 7 students were invited to complete two questionnaires during normal class time, one in the autumn term prior to students' experience in the installation, and a second towards the end of the spring term follow-on work. Both questionnaires were administered by English class teachers using a common protocol which included an assurance that students' responses would be read only by the research team and treated as confidential. Questions were designed to elicit students' attitudes and feelings about English lessons generally and about writing in English specifically. Students were asked to respond to attitude statements by selecting one of five possible options: strongly agree/agree/neither agree nor disagree/disagree/strongly disagree. They were also asked to identify from a range of options any writing activities they engaged in outside school.

[2] In this context the Punchdrunk Enrichment project is deemed to include the immersive experience of *Prospero's Island* as well as the teachers' autumn term return to the installation with their classes and the follow-on work led by the three teachers in the spring term.

In addition, some open response questions were included so that students could elaborate on any lessons or writing activities they had particularly enjoyed. Identical questions were asked on both occasions, but an additional open question about the impact of the immersive experience was included in the second questionnaire (questionnaires are included in Appendix 1).

179 students completed the first questionnaire and 162 completed the second. Of these, 137 students completed both – 57 girls and 80 boys from eight classes. To identify any change in students' rating of attitude statements or their personal writing practices over the period of the project, the responses of all students who returned two questionnaires were analysed statistically for the cohort as a whole, and the data split by gender and by ability grouping[3]. To examine students' views about the impact of the intervention and aspects of English they particularly enjoyed, the written responses of all students who completed questionnaires were analysed thematically. It is important to note, however, that owing to absence or for other reasons, not all students who returned questionnaires had participated in the initial Punchdrunk Enrichment-led session and/or all of the teacher-led sessions. As it was not possible to identify how many students missed these core elements of the immersive project, this is not accounted for in the analysis.

Before participation in the immersive experience, attitude responses for the cohort as a whole indicated that the majority of students held positive views of English lessons. Average ratings against key indicators for interest and motivation in English were high: over 70% agreed or strongly agreed that they *look forward to English lessons* and *see the value of the work they do;* 68% that they are *interested in the books they study.* The majority also expressed positive perceptions of their enjoyment and engagement in English lessons: over 70% agreed or strongly agreed that they *try as hard as they can in English lessons; often make suggestions and contribute to group discussions*; *enjoy taking part in drama activities in English;* and *enjoy writing*. Self-efficacy ratings for writing were also high: 82% of all students agreed or strongly agreed that they were *good writers.* These views were also relatively consistent across different groups. It was not the case, as might be expected, that more negative views were expressed by boys or by students in lower ability groups. Indeed, the average ratings of boys were marginally above those for girls on key motivation indicators and the responses of students in the lowest ability groups were the most positive overall for both perceived motivation and engagement. There were minor gender differences on some indicators for writing persistence. More boys than girls agreed they had *trouble concentrating on writing for long* and more girls than boys were *happy to write extended pieces*. As might be expected, students in lower-ability groups (sets 3 and 4) were more inclined to agree they had *trouble deciding what to write* and *trouble concentrating on writing for long* than others. Even so, the differential between groups on these items was small. Almost all students claimed to do some writing outside school, notably text messaging (67%), social network messaging (46%) and notes (42%). Approximately a third of students reported writing diaries, lyrics and instant messages.

From this positive baseline, the statistics show little change in attitudes for the cohort as a whole following the autumn and spring term initiatives. The average rating for each of

[3] Year 7 English classes at the Academy are organised in four broad ability bands, with set 1 classes representing the highest ability (end-of-year target level: 6c-7c) and set 4 the lowest (end-of-year target level: 3c-4c): see Chapter 3.

the attitude statements remained more or less the same: on the five-point scale, none increased or decreased by more than 0.13. This is perhaps unsurprising given the high ratings initially returned. There was little scope for improvement, for example, when the average rating for *I try as hard as I can in English* was 4.5 at the start; in fact the rating for this item declined slightly (by 0.1). There was nevertheless a small positive shift for the cohort as a whole on some indicators: average ratings for the statements *I see the value of English, group work helps me with my writing,* and *I enjoy writing* increased slightly (by a little over 0.1). Students were also asked to identify how often in English lessons they felt *so interested in their work that they didn't want to stop* and marginally higher frequencies were recorded following the autumn and spring term initiatives. Interestingly, there was also an increase in the range of genres students claimed to practise outside school, although this cannot be attributed to the immersive experience. More students reported writing essays, letters, lyrics and reviews than previously.

When split by gender the statistics show a slightly more positive shift in the perceptions of girls than boys on some items. In their spring questionnaire responses, the average rating of girls for *group work helps me develop my ideas for writing* increased by 0.3. Girls also disagreed more strongly than previously with the negative statements *I find the work we do in English boring* and *I don't find writing in English interesting*. By contrast, boys' average ratings slipped by 0.2 for effort (*I try as hard as I can*) and interest (*I look forward to English lessons*), although they still remained positive overall. When analysed by ability group, some average ratings improved and others declined. A wider range of indicators improved for students in middle sets (2 and 3) than others, and particularly for writing items. Students in the lowest sets were more inclined to *see the value of English* and rate themselves as *good writers* than previously, but less inclined to find English lessons interesting. However, the small number of students in these ability groups, and particularly in the lowest sets, makes these statistics unreliable.

The statistical evidence suggests that from a positive baseline, the immersive experience and spring term development work may have had a small beneficial impact on students' engagement and motivation in some respects, particularly for girls and students in middle sets, although the changes in ratings were slight and overall not statistically significant. The qualitative questionnaire data, however, provides a somewhat different picture. Students' written responses to open questions indicate that both the autumn term and spring term projects had a positive impact on many students' enjoyment and engagement in English. When asked to describe any lesson or writing assignment they had particularly enjoyed, the majority of students who gave specific examples referred to work associated with the immersive experience, notably *The Tempest*, graphic novels such as *The Arrival*, or both (81 references). They described this work as *'different'*, *'extremely exciting'*, *'interesting'* and *'fun'* for a range of reasons: *'it was active'*; *'it got everyone involved'*; *'it gave us a chance to share our writing ideas'*; *'it was full of mystery'*; *'it was like a surprise'*; *'I had to discover what happened'*; *'I like putting myself in someone's shoes'*; *'the tempest is a really interesting story'*; *'you can get creative'*; *'we are in a team'; 'we were imagining we were going somewhere'; 'I really enjoy reading graphic novels'*; *'we did some role play'*. There were also 33 non-specific references to enjoyable lessons that had involved role-play or interactive learning: *'doing plays and acting'; 'drama work'; 'role-playing as a person'; 'acting activities';* '*interactive lessons'*; *'active things';* and *'group work'.* Students described English lessons

in which they had become *so interested in their work that they didn't want to stop*. The following longer responses provide further examples:

> *When we (were) studying the Tempest and we had to write as Miranda, I was so into the writing that I carried on writing a few minutes after we were supposed to stop! I probably would've carried on if my teachers didn't warn me personally … before Punchdrunk, it was kind of hard to imagine the situations and atmosphere. Afterwards, everything got easier.*
>
> *The Punchdrunk experience was a lesson I really enjoyed because the experience opened my mind on English … (a) recent enjoyable piece of writing I have experienced was the Tempest since the writing was creative.*
>
> *Yesterday's lesson was really good when Miss (…) putted a song on and told us to close our eyes and feel how it will be to be there. it helped me allot.*
>
> *(I like it) when I am learning about new things such as the comic 'Arrival' and the book 'Unpolished Gem' … I like writing descriptive diary entries. I enjoyed writing (about) the arival, the tempest and neary every day I wish to cary on non-stop … I love writing in English*[4]*.*

Furthermore, many students felt that these experiences had impacted *'a lot'* on their perceptions of English: '*over the semester I have changed my points and views in English'*. Of the 122 students who responded to the open question, *Do you think your views have changed since taking part in the Punchdrunk (Enrichment) project?* the majority (80 students or 66%) claimed their motivation or engagement had improved; 7 (6%) students were unsure and 35 (29%) claimed there had been no change. Those who claimed their views were unchanged did so for both negative and positive reasons: *'I don't enjoy English lessons and I didn't before'*; *'I still love writing in English'*, although many gave no explanation. A range of reasons were given for enhanced interest in and enjoyment of English. Students observed that lessons had become *'more exciting'*; *'more fun'*; *'more active'*; *'we act things out more'*. They perceived that the immersive experience and subsequent development work had had a direct effect not only on their engagement but also on their confidence, learning, and skills in English. For instance:

> *I think it made me creative and more interested in stuff*
>
> *It got me focused*
>
> *It got us more interested in literacy*
>
> *It made me get more ideas*
>
> *I used to hate English now sometimes I look forward to it*
>
> *I saw a new side of imagination*
>
> *I get the point of English and drama and why we do it*
>
> *It made me remember things I am good at*
>
> *It made me more confident*
>
> *I found English more exciting*
>
> *It changed my way of thinking in English*

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[4] These responses come from students with differing levels of ability in English. Original spellings are preserved.

It made me get more involved and it was fun

It helped me improve my skills

6.2 Case study students' perspectives on attitudes and engagement

The 18 case study students were interviewed in their class groups on two occasions, once after their experiences in the installation and again in the spring term towards the end of the follow-on work designed by their teachers. Interviews were recorded and transcribed, and responses analysed thematically (student interview schedules are included in Appendix 1). A number of key themes emerged which were shared by all or the majority of students. Some themes were common for both the autumn and spring term work, although the emphasis differed.

Following their sessions in the installation, case study students were unanimous in describing the experience as captivating and awe-inspiring: *'astonishing', 'amazing', 'very, very exciting', 'surprising', 'fascinating', 'fantastic', 'wonderful', 'mysterious', 'unexpected', 'puzzling', 'totally different'.* The impact was perceived as immediate and affective: '*We were kind of afraid'; 'It was a bit scary'; 'We never knew what was going to happen when we entered the room'; 'It was a bit dark and awkward at the time ... I didn't understand it'; 'You don't know if you're there for a good reason or a bad reason'; 'Normally our class is a bit chatty. But when we went there, surprisingly no-one was talking'.* This combination of excitement, trepidation and curiosity had been sustained as events unfolded and continued to surprise: '*they made it exciting, like we didn't know what was happening and it was a mystery'; '(there was) a theme of secrecy'; 'you never knew what he was going to say next'.* All agreed that the experience had captured their imaginations and heightened their sense of enjoyment and motivation: '*it was one in a lifetime', 'the best thing ever'*. They attributed this to a number of factors – in particular to the problem-solving and game elements of the experience; the multi-sensory impact of the different spaces and encounters; their identification with the characters; and the collaborative and interactive way of working.

These students associated their experience in the installation with play not work. They described it as *'fun and playful', 'totally different of what we do in our classroom'; 'I'd rather be doing this than doing work'.* They particularly enjoyed the problem-solving tasks and were keen to recount the cracking of codes and solving of clues: *'It was fun to work out the different puzzles'; 'I really liked the one where we had to go and search for a code to fix up a puzzle'; 'you had to explore to find keys and items to bring back to complete the levels ... we only had a certain amount of time to get (them)'.* They compared the 'missions' to quests and challenges they encountered in computer games such as *Indiana Jones, Assassin's Creed* and *Call of Duty.* As learners, they felt they had been repositioned in the role of investigators: '*I was like a spy ... like James Bond ... like detectives', 'like Indiana Jones', 'we had to figure out'; 'we had to solve puzzles ... we didn't write a lot'.* This was perceived as a welcome break from everyday 'learning': *'in everyday school time we don't really have so much, well not fun ... but let's say, we don't get a lot of time to solve these little clues and we don't get that much time to think about other things than learning'.* Nevertheless, many of these same students also identified ways in which the 'play' element was not merely motivating, but also a productive means of 'boosting' knowledge about the play, creative thinking and 'learning skills':

> *It's like a game and children like to play games, so they wanted to mix a game and like the Tempest learning together so it would be an enjoyable session.*

If you are interested in something you are learning at the same time too, but if you're doing something boring and like you don't really want to do it and you feel tired, then you are like, I don't want to learn, I don't understand this etc., so when you are trying to have fun then you get more interest and develop learning … so they want us to use our creativity, to use our minds to develop our learning skills.

It was kind of action … and you were still learning … We did these good things to boost our knowledge about the Tempest, cos you can't really learn everything by reading books and books.

They especially enjoyed working together in groups and pooling their findings to solve problems: *'I liked how we all worked as a team to complete it.'* They saw this as a different and more efficient way of working: *'if we just sat down and read a book, we will just waste a lot of time trying to understand it … but if we do it together, like this, we can understand it more and it will help us … in the class we do one activity and we focus all on that, but if we split up we can get things done quicker'.*

Students also identified the multi-sensory nature of the experience as inspiring their curiosity and imagination. They were fascinated by the scenographic detail – *'the bones, the dead mouse, the leaves'*; '*when I looked deeper into it there were more things that I didn't realise on the day, like some of the animals inside the cages in that section and some of the mirrors and the effects at the bottom of the screens'*. They wanted to look more closely and handle the objects: *'When there were actors in there we couldn't really just go up to it and say oh, touch the books and start playing with the animals and looking in the mirror'.* They were alert to the smell and atmosphere of the different spaces: *'we had to go into that small cramped room together and the way we had to go to the greenhouse and squeeze into it'; 'it was scary as it was dark in the room … and the animals were smelly'.* They felt these sensory details contributed to their understanding of the setting and themes of the play:

I couldn't set the scene in my head but then once I saw all the caves and areas and little pieces, the things around us now that would picture the island … it's made me imagine more.

The things we saw inside like … in the freedom one the cage was broken and it was open but the birds weren't flying away … and the captivity one, they are like totally blocked and they can't do anything inside.

The way the paper looked, the paper looked like in them kind of days … it was like yellow kind of colour, to give more suspense.

There was a wine bottle on the floor and loads of skulls, the book didn't tell me all them details.

Students perceived themselves as participants in the drama and identified with the characters*: 'When we went through that, we actually felt like Caliban, we actually felt like some of the characters … because like Caliban was locked in and Prospero said he wasn't going to let us go until we'd completed the levels'*. They referred to standing *'in Caliban's and Prospero's shoes'*, *'living it'* or *'passing through'* the characters' world, enabling them to see *'other people's perspective, going in their shoes and seeing everything how they'll see it'*. This experiential dimension was seen by students as central to their 'felt' understanding of the play*: 'we got to know how it was for the Tempest and how it was like to actually live it … to experience how they were living on the island'*; *'the books never really help explain how was it feeling, it's just telling us what happened'*; *'What I've gained*

is more experience (of) how … (Caliban) felt when Prospero took over his island or when his mother left and how he was captured'. It also enabled them to engage with Shakespeare's language: *'During the missions these messages on the walls popped up and we had to read it in his perspective … as if it was us going through it and that's how we developed the language in our heads'*.

Reflecting on the follow-on development work in the spring term, students identified a number of elements that they perceived as new and engaging in English lessons. Whilst these elements were inevitably less theatrical than the autumn term experience, students nevertheless made connections with the Punchdrunk Enrichment sessions. They reported that the introduction of objects, music and pictures in the classroom drew their interest: Sensory engagement with objects and music was seen as a powerful prompt for imagination and writing:

> *It's drawing our attention more because of the different things that they're using now that we didn't use in the first semester, the new things they've introduced … the wordless book, the music, the creativity and art, like cutting and stuff, and comics.*
>
> *Sometimes when you hold an object you can actually feel what you're imagining.*
>
> *If you're looking at it, like it's the senses. What can you see? Well you can see the patterns … you just describe it better cos you can see the real thing.*
>
> *Miss (…) put a song on and she told us to close our eyes and to imagine we were in that place, and what do you think and how do you feel, and it made all of us really emotional, and after she told us to write really creative writing, and I think it helped us in our assessment cos we were just putting the emotions in the writing.*

They also observed that group work and collaborative problem-solving were more prominent than they expected in English lessons, and they valued this as an effective way of learning:

> *I never knew English was more about (working together), like I knew it was working with people sometimes, yeah, but in English (now) … we don't do a lot of like individual work, we're doing more group work.*
>
> *In English lessons we've mostly done like group work, like table work, and it's beneficial … cos you learn from like your friends.*
>
> *Working together in partners or groups and like discussing it helps us, cos we're looking at different people's perspectives and from that we can learn from what they think and use it in our writing because different people have different views and they can describe it in different ways.*
>
> *We normally do it in groups, like we get a sheet in front of us and then we all say what we think the answers are, we all work together.*

Students frequently referred to having to '*find out'* for themselves, *'infer'* meaning or '*work out'* a solution, as opposed to listen to instructions or be told the answers by teachers. Teachers provided *'starters'*, *'a few steps of thought before'*, *'little clues'* but the onus was on students to discover, and they enjoyed this challenge:

> *(The teacher) gives you part of the puzzle, like one piece of the puzzle by giving you the text and we have to find like the evidence behind it and the clues to find the rest of the pieces.*

Because the Arrival don't have any text, we have to use our imaginations to build the story ourselves. So all of us, we used to go through one panel at a time and work out what that image is talking about and what significance it has to the story.

When you actually open the book yeah, like it says something – I think it was in another language. We didn't understand it at first but as a class we all tried to find (out), we all started guessing at first and after our teacher gave us a little clue and then we found out … whatever we didn't know about the Arrival, because it just shows pictures, so like we had to find out by ourselves what the pictures meant and what they were trying to do, where they were going and their emotions.

Students asserted that these *'new'* and *'special'* features had challenged their perceptions of literacy as passive reading and writing, and caused them to re-envisage English lessons as '*fun'*:

It shows you that [the Academcy] is not like a boring school where it just does writing and reading and stuff, they actually put some fun stuff into literacy.

It was actually exciting and not me just sitting there and listening but I got to create my own story as well. … .I thought it would be a boring lesson and then I realised it was actually a fun lesson.

Each day English gets better. There's more into it. Like usually English is just…writing and all that stuff but with Miss […] we act and we make English more fun.

When I first started … I thought we were going to be always writing and writing and writing, but no, it's fun activities … and learning new things.

In conclusion, case study students reported that the autumn term immersive experience and follow-on work in the spring term had expanded their concept of literacy teaching and learning. English lessons were perceived as more collaborative and creative than they had expected, and therefore more enjoyable. As learners, students felt they had greater autonomy and ownership of the process and the outcomes.

I thought English will be "Do this" and you're off with it, you can't ask any more questions … (the Punchdrunk experience) actually helped me because I could twist it my own way (to) help me understand … everyone could use their own way … 'cos it wasn't like a fixed thing that you have to do … you don't have to go specific you have to look for it yourself … when I used to write I always used to thought you have to specifically do this, but now my mind flows differently, so it helps me with my writing with different words and other things.

6.3 Teachers' perspectives on attitudes and engagement

The teachers of the three focal classes were asked to comment on their students' responses during the Punchdrunk-led and teacher-led sessions in the installation, and subsequently to reflect on the wider impact they felt the autumn and spring term initiatives had on students' motivation and engagement in English. The observations below are drawn from three sources: teachers' immediate reflections after the Punchdrunk-led sessions in the autumn term; their comments during the second group interview undertaken towards the end of the spring term; and final written reflections once the project had been completed (teacher interview schedules and a sample reflection sheet is included in Appendix 1). Responses across these datasets were analysed thematically.

All three teachers observed the enthusiasm and enjoyment with which students had engaged during the Punchdrunk-led sessions in the installation: '*There really was the wow factor. And I think for the students it was better than anything that they thought it would be. You know, we had comments like "Oh I don't want to go to this lesson, I want to come and do it again". Like they really, really enjoyed it. So I think in terms of their enjoyment it was brilliant'.* They agreed, however, that participation levels varied in ways they hadn't expected. Initial concerns about students with behavioural problems had proved unfounded: *'I was quite concerned about their interaction. And they were just on point, they were amazing'; 'I was pleased with A … particularly as he is the one that often gets in trouble and doesn't listen to people and says quite rude things to people sometimes and that can get him into trouble, but I was really pleased by the way he was in the group and he was taking part'*. Students with weaker literacy skills who were often quiet in class were observed to be *'far more vocal and interactive'* than more able students who *'sort of withheld and weren't sure'.* The more reticent response of higher ability students was attributed to their familiarity with more *'academic and less hands-on'* approaches to teaching and learning. Whilst it was impossible for the evaluation team to compare students' 'usual' classroom responses with their responses during the Punchdrunk-led sessions, the three teachers were unanimous in observing a positive difference in those of weaker students, both in their own and others' classes:

> *What I found the most impressive was watching students who generally are either disengaged or behavioural problems and them just jumping in. And often what I've noticed throughout all the groups, and even today's session, the students who have lower levels in literacy are the first to speak out and give answers, while the students who are more well behaved and more able in their writing and reading are more reserved.*
>
> *The first group I saw … was lower ability but they still seemed to be, no matter what the ability they were, still very engaged.*
>
> *The low ability students just really engaged with it and were like hands up and really getting involved and weren't really worried about getting an answer wrong, they were just really keen on giving their feedback. Whereas some of the higher ability students I think being put in that scenario that they didn't know the answers, because it was problem solving and working out, I think they were a bit more reserved. And I was quite surprised that there was more interaction from the weaker students than the higher ability students.*

When asked to reflect on the longer-term impact on motivation in English lessons, teachers remarked particularly on students' excitement and interest in Shakespeare, and these comments were consistent with the student data reported above. The teachers also perceived that the Punchdrunk experience had enabled students to find new ways of thinking about and interacting with literature more generally:

> *I think one big thing - I just think it made them excited about the play and I think when you study it in class we try and use role play and hot seating and some drama activities, but you know there is nothing like doing something like this … I just think it made them interested in (the play) and excited about it!*
>
> *I think they will always take that they had a really fun experience and they will always remember the characters of Prospero and Caliban. Like I think they'll always remember those characters and they'll know about those characters for their whole life.*

They found new ways to engage with literature.

I believe that the impact on students was a love of Shakespeare. It made English fun and they saw literature in a new light … there is an excitement around English with my class.

They observed that the immersive experience had opened up a new space for students to take risks and be creative without fear of failure: *'there isn't a right answer; it's about your idea'*; in the context of tightly prescribed curricula and assessment criteria, it had freed students to take ownership of their own learning and build confidence:

It was nice to see them all giving answers and not being worried about giving the right answer … just being really open and keen to give answers and try things.

They are far more willing to be dramatic in lessons when we are discussing stories and characters.

We are so bogged down with standardized testing and measurement … it becomes such a driving force behind the curriculum and when there are things like this and opportunities for students and for people to be engaged with it, it shows the bigger picture of what education is about.

The other classes that I teach that didn't go through the Punchdrunk experience, they're still sort of stuck in those previous limits.

6.4 Summary and conclusions

This chapter provides evidence of the positive impact the autumn term immersive experience and spring term follow-on work had on students' attitudes towards and engagement in English, based on students' and teachers' perceptions. It should be noted that the positive effect was more apparent in students' qualitative responses than in their quantifiable questionnaire responses. This may be because the quantifiable questionnaire items were necessarily non-specific and focused on general attitudes to English and writing; students may not have associated their post-experience answers directly with the immersive initiative. Furthermore, attitude responses were collected when Year 7 students were relatively new to secondary school; their perceptions and expectations of secondary English lessons were still forming and their views inevitably shaped by primary school experience. Generalised attitudes are also slow to change: very small changes may become more visible over time, and other potential impacts emerge which repeat measures over a short time frame cannot capture. For these reasons, the quantitative data should be treated with caution; any apparent change in attitudes towards English or in personal writing practices cannot be attributed directly to the immersive experience. Nevertheless, the quantitative and qualitative datasets together suggest that the immersive experience and follow-on work impacted on students' motivation and engagement in English in several ways:

- From a positive baseline, there was a slight improvement in students' average rating of some attitude statements for English lessons and writing in English, particularly amongst girls and students in middle sets, although these differences were not significant.
- The majority of students who responded to an open question asserted that the immersive experience and subsequent work in the spring term had impacted positively on their motivation, engagement and learning, and identified a range of ways in which their attitudes had been changed.

- Case study data suggests that the autumn term experience in the installation did indeed create a sense of *'awe and wonder'* amongst students. In particular, the multi-sensory impact, elements of surprise, and characterisation, inspired students' curiosity and imaginative engagement.
- The three class teachers observed that the responses and participation levels of lower-attaining or normally disengaged students in their classes were particularly positive during the initial Punchdrunk-led sessions.
- Case study evidence suggests that teachers' utilisation of immersive elements in the spring term enhanced students' enjoyment and motivation in English lessons. In particular students reported that the use of music, pictures and objects, problem-solving approaches and collaborative ways of working were effective in supporting learning and engaging their interest.
- Reflecting on the impact of the immersive experience as a whole, the three class teachers observed students' increased interest in Shakespeare and literature, confidence in lessons and willingness to volunteer suggestions or take creative risks.
- Case study students claimed that the autumn and spring term activities had expanded their concept of literacy and promoted a sense of ownership of their own learning. They asserted that new ways of working had empowered them as active learners and provided them with more imaginative resources as writers.

Chapter 7: Impact on students' writing

This chapter focuses on the impact of the autumn term immersive experience on students' writing. A key learning target identified in the Memorandum of Understanding between Punchdrunk Enrichment, Hackney Learning Trust and the Academy, was to improve standards in extended writing at Key Stage 3. In particular, an objective of the autumn term scheme of learning was to help students *'develop vocabulary and apply (this) in a piece of descriptive writing'.* The evaluation team therefore sought to establish:

- The impact of Punchdrunk Enrichment's immersive theatre project[5] upon Year 7 pupils' writing.

To gain a meaningful view of the outcomes for writing, the evaluation drew on a range of data sources, both quantitative and qualitative.

Data sets drawn on include:

- Y7 students' scores on writing assignments carried out before and at the end of the students' participation in the *Prospero's Island* installation in the autumn term
- Teachers' written feedback to students on these assignments
- Case study students' scripts
- Teachers' written observations on case study students' participation and engagement in the two writing tasks
- Group interview with teachers in the spring term
- Final brief written reflections from teachers' on completion of the project
- Group interviews with case study students in the autumn and spring terms

(Teacher observation sheets for case study students, teacher interview schedules, a sample teacher reflection sheet, and case study student interview schedules are included in Appendix 1.)

7.1 Writing assignments

All Year 7 students were assigned two assessed writing tasks during the autumn term as part of their scheme of learning on *The Tempest*. The first piece was completed early in the scheme, prior to students' experience in the *Prospero's Island* installation; the second at the end, after students' participation in the installation (i.e. in Punchdrunk Enrichment sessions and sessions run by English teachers). Both assignments were planned and written during class time, with one lesson dedicated to planning and one to writing. The first task involved writing a first person account of the shipwreck in *The Tempest* and the second a monologue from the perspective of one of the characters in the play in the form of a diary entry. The assessment focuses identified were: *vocabulary, meeting TAP (Type, Audience and Purpose), whole text and sentence level structure.* Students' scripts were marked by their English teachers using standardised Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP) criteria and a National Curriculum level and sub-level assigned. For the purposes of moderation, the 36 scripts produced by case study students were also reassessed by a member of the OU team. This provided a moderation

[5] While the Punchdrunk Enrichment project includes both autumn term and spring term activity, in this chapter the focus is specifically on the autumn term: the immersive experience of *Prospero's Island* and the teachers' autumn term return to the installation with their classes.

sample of 32%, reflecting a gender balance and a spread in terms of students' perceived ability. There were some minor discrepancies (at sub-level only) between the two sets of marks but this had no significant impact on the results overall and teachers' assessments were therefore retained for the analysis.

Two writing scores were obtained for 112 students – 49 girls and 63 boys from seven classes. It is important to note, however, that owing to absence or for other reasons, not all students who completed the two assignments had necessarily participated in the Punchdrunk Enrichment and/or teacher-led sessions in the installation. As it was not possible to identify how many students missed these core elements of the immersive experience, it is not accounted for in the analysis. Writing scores were analysed statistically for the cohort as a whole, by gender and by ability band to identify any patterns of change amongst different groups.

Across the cohort as a whole, many more students improved their scores than not, as shown below (Figure 7.1). 65% of all students improved their scores by at least one sub-level, 19% remained at the same level and 16% reduced their scores by at least one sub-level. The average change was an improvement of almost two sub-levels.

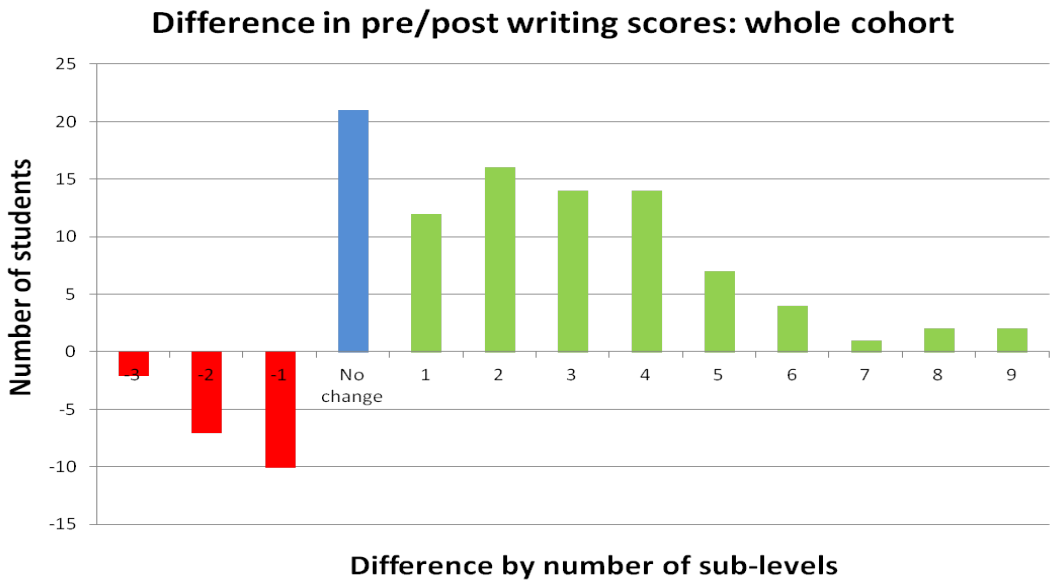
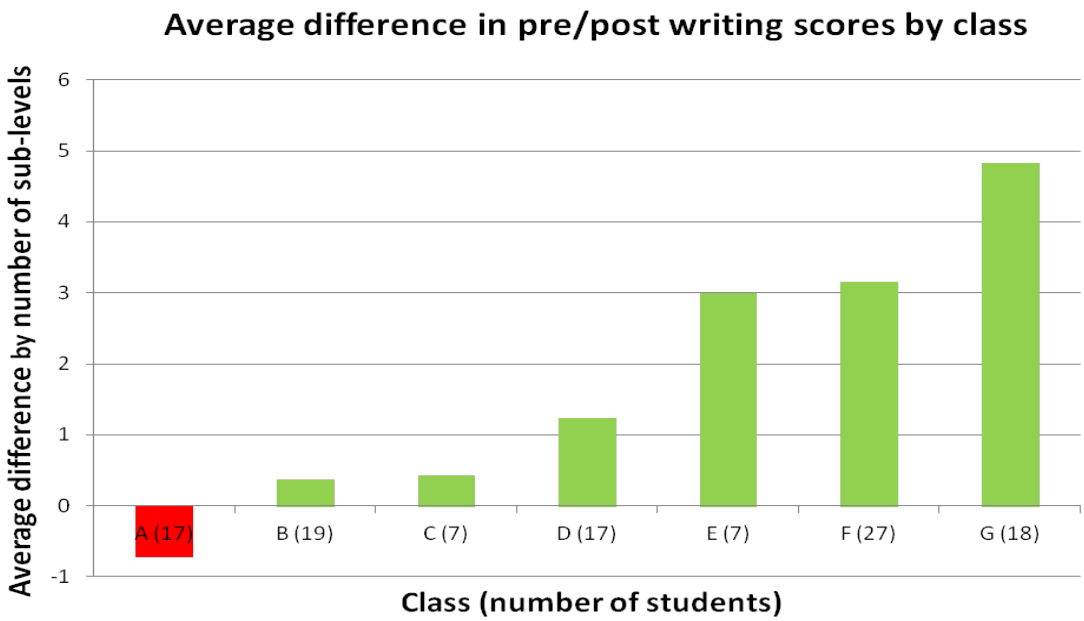


Figure 7.1 Difference in pre/post writing scores: whole cohort

However, the difference in students' writing scores varied markedly from class to class, as shown in figure 7.2. In one class all scores improved. In another no scores improved and some decreased, resulting in a negative average. The average increase for one class was almost five sub-levels, a substantial improvement, whilst in two others it was less than one half sub-level.



Note: classes are ordered by average difference in writing scores, where A = low and G = high

Figure 7.2 Average difference in pre/post writing scores by class

When analysed by gender, the statistics show some difference in the degree to which boys and girls improved their scores, as shown in figure 7.3. The average change in boys' scores was an improvement of 1.6 sub-levels, whereas for girls it was 2.3 sub-levels.

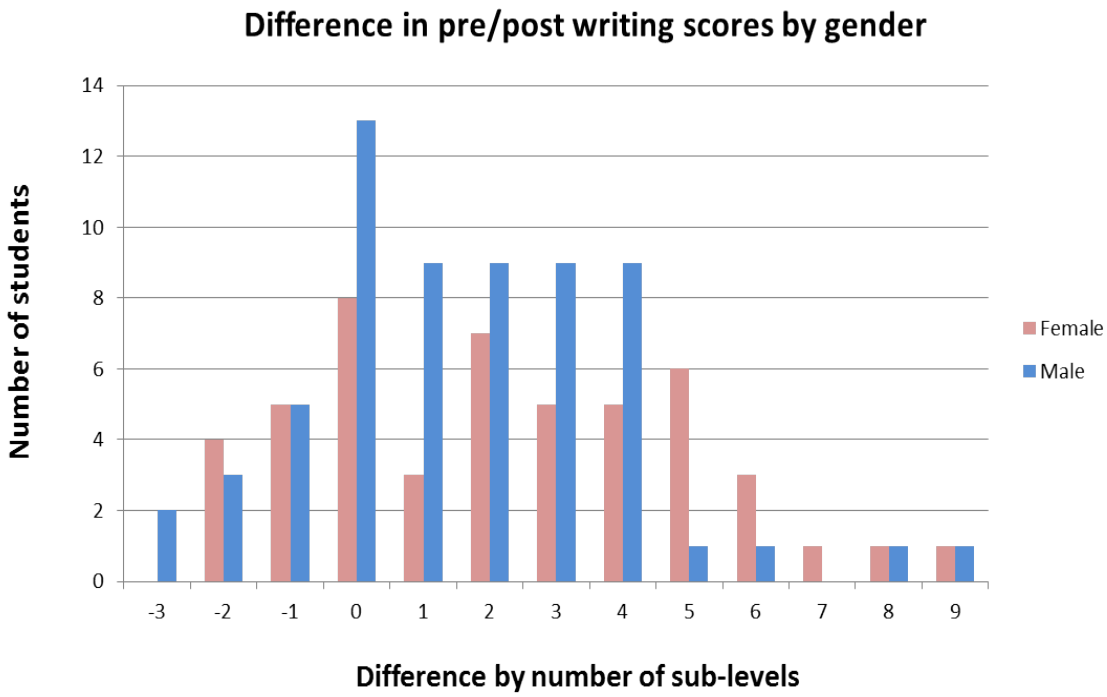


Figure 7.3 Difference in pre/post writing scores by gender

The writing scores were also analysed by ability band[6] to ascertain whether students in different sets improved their scores more or less than others. Data was available for one class in set 1 and for two classes in sets 2, 3 and 4. As shown in the graph below (figure 7.4), the average increase for the one highest achieving class was greater (just over 3 sub-levels) than for other groups and for the set 2 classes the average increase was lower (less than 1 sub-level). It should be noted, however, that the small sample sizes within ability bands and the marked variation between classes in average differences means that these figures should be treated with particular caution: the two set 4 classes comprise only 14 students, for example, and there was a considerable difference in the average improvement in scores for each of the two groups; more notably, there was an extreme difference in the average change in scores for each of the two set 3 classes, with some reduced scores in one and some substantial gains in the other impacting significantly on the combined average. It is therefore very difficult to draw any reliable conclusions about patterns of improvement by ability band.

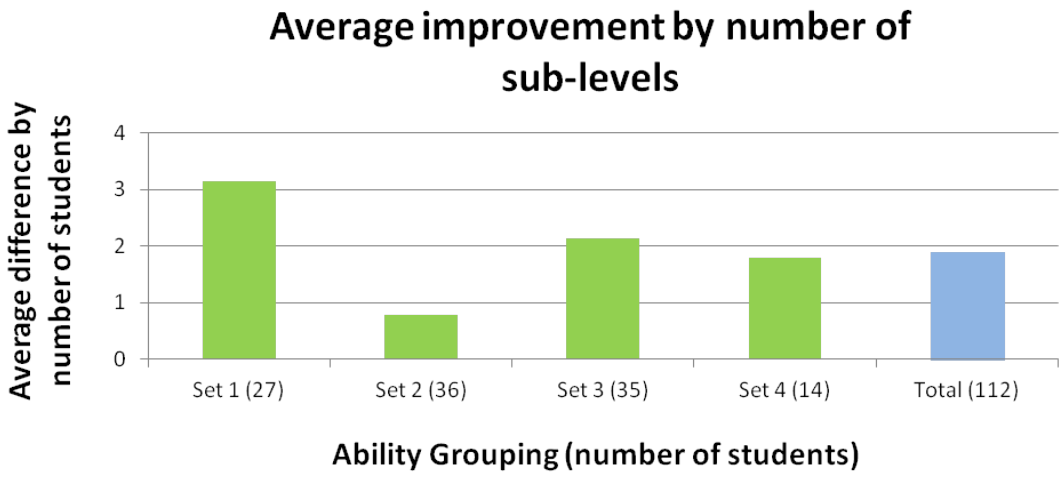


Figure 7.4 Average improvement by number of sub-levels

Where available, teachers' written feedback to students was examined to identify any patterns of response in terms of strengths or weaknesses. Written comments on 271 scripts were obtained – 160 on students' initial assignments and 111 on students' post-experience assignments. All feedback was provided under the headings of WWW (What Worked Well) and EBI (Even Better If). For analysis purposes, specific references made within teachers' feedback were extracted and categorised under seven broad headings: technical accuracy; language devices; vocabulary choice; sentence structure and variety; descriptive detail; text organisation; and holistic features. For both tasks, WWW and EBI comments most frequently referred to technical accuracy, sentence structure and variety, or organisational features. Of the 897 references identified within all teachers' written feedback, 367 of them (41%) addressed these aspects; a further 184 (21%) addressed vocabulary choice; 145 (16%) referred to descriptive detail; and 121 (13%) addressed language devices such as rhetorical questions, similes, metaphors and personification. Holistic elements such as ideas, voice and perspective, were

[6] Year 7 English classes at the academy are organised in four broad ability bands, with set 1 classes representing the highest ability (end-of-year target level: 6c-7c) and set 4 the lowest (end-of-year target level: 3c-4c) – see also Chapter 3.

comparatively neglected, with only 80 references or 9% of total references within either WWW or EBI comments. The focus on technical and structural features of writing at the expense of meaning and voice is understandable; it reflects the relatively narrow framing of assessment criteria and the particular emphasis in national targets on grammar and vocabulary. There was, nevertheless, an apparent difference in the type of holistic *strengths* teachers identified in students' pre- and post-experience scripts: whereas reference to holistic elements was rare in response to students' initial texts (9% of WWW references), it was more frequent in response to second assignments (28% of WWW references). In students' post-experience texts, teachers identified the following holistic strengths in particular: *strong character voice*, *perspective, empathy* and *tone* (half of all holistic comments); *good knowledge of the play* and *contextual referencing*; and *creative, imaginative and relevant ideas*.

7.2 Case study students' writing

The pre and post-experience scripts of the 18 case study students were explored for evidence of individual change and illustrative text examples. Whilst any improvements in writing cannot necessarily be attributed to the immersive experience, the qualitative evidence suggests that a number of elements introduced explicitly during the project had been utilised in students' diary entries in the second assignment. These included detailed recall of the narrative and relationships in *The Tempest*; extended thematic references; specific advanced vocabulary; Shakespearean terms and quotations; and creative imitation of archaic and poetic language. These elements were less apparent or not at all apparent in students' earlier scripts, although this is not surprising given the timing of the first assignment early in the Shakespeare scheme.

In a number of the scripts examined, utilisation of material and language encountered during the immersive experience was highly effective, although rarely sustained. In others it was not entirely successful, nor necessarily reflected in increased writing scores. For example, whilst detailed explanation of narrative and relationships often showed good understanding of the play, it was sometimes pursued at the expense of conveying character, as the task required. Attempts at sophisticated imagery and poetic language were sometimes clumsily juxtaposed with modern idioms. Advanced vocabulary was not always correctly introduced and/or spelled. However, incomplete control is only to be expected when students introduce new elements or techniques in writing. It is unfortunate that such errors or stylistic infelicities have a potentially negative impact on summative writing scores, even when they arise from creative experiment. They may nevertheless represent advances which will be realised more fully in the medium term.

Much of the writing was evidently committed and clearly demonstrated imaginative engagement with the themes and characters of the play. For example, some students referenced the themes of freedom and captivity with imagery of birds and animals, drawing on the metaphor of caged wildlife that had been constructed as part of the installation: *'I had freedom. I was free as an eagle'; 'Prospero turned me into his slave, Caged up like a Beets*[7] *(beast), tamed like a bog (dog)'; 'I feel like an abandoned animal'; 'she trapped me there and left me for dead'.* In the best writing, this imagery was extended and used to contrast past and present. The extract below was written by a

[7] Writing is cited from students across the range of marks awarded, and who have different levels of control of features such as spelling and punctuation. Original spellings/punctuation have been preserved.

high-achieving student in set 2. The script was described as a good achievement by her teacher, particularly in its use of advanced vocabulary and sentence structures, although it received a slightly lower score, by one sub-level, than her pre-experience piece.

> *At first there lived a liberated child … able to walk on the oceans, fly with the clouds, play with flames and dive into the scorching hot fire! ... however, I become conscious of my today and that I'm still stuck in the impenetrable darkness. Swiftly I have to fly through the air that once was sweat (sweet) but now it is suffocating me, the clouds try to st(r)angle me. I beg for my freedom day and night.*

Many students referred to the themes of utopian and dystopian worlds, sometimes explicitly, in descriptive passages which contrast the idyll of the natural island with the *'hell'* it has become for their character: *'The sound of the beautiful air and the smell of the dilicious berries … the beautiful, gorgeous nuture on the island will make you feel like you own this utopia but … now (I live) in a drity, smelly, horrible place which makes me vomeit'*; *'I love my smooth sand my shiny pebals and swaying trees (but) now … Im looking everywhere and it is not the same the sand is all rusty pebals are worn out'*. The best examples develop this contrast with effective choice of vocabulary and imagery to convey the impact that changed circumstances have had on their character. The extract below was written by a student in Set 3 for whom spelling was a particular challenge. His teacher observed that he *'was the first student to get writing on his assessment … His plan was detailed and he had obviously prepared whilst at home. He wrote until the end of the lesson reading over his work'*. Whilst there was no difference in his pre- and post-experience writing scores, his teacher particularly praised his use of imagery and sentence starters in the second piece:

> *Tasting the sweet berries dancing on my tounge, while the birds were peacfully singing, I entered my deriliced abandoned house. I sat down and remembered all the good times I had with my mother Sycorax who died and left me this bewatiful island wich has been tacken away from me with violence by a controlling man named Prospero. I am destroyed and icelated considering that I am now his slave … the trust between me and Prspero has broken like scattered glass on the ground.*

A few students also engaged imaginatively with the themes of magic and the spiritual world, alluding to the powers of spirits, witches and wizards, '*mystical*' and *'enchanted'* objects, religion and *'souls'.* In the best writing, the theme is developed with creative imitation of poetic and dramatic language.

The extract below was written by a student in set 2 who improved her writing score substantially by five sub-levels. Her teacher particularly praised her choice of adjectives and use of imagery.

> *I was a young girl, enslaved by Sycorax; born of the Cecilic Spirit, Pandical. I Ariel am from the magical line of twilight and was taken by the evil, demonic and revolting Sycorax for slavery at the spiritual age of 6 years … I was later found by Prospero who used his majestic powers to free my soul … when I found that Sycorax had died I was quite elated yet infurieated and struck Sycorax with my powers so that she may never return and she shall stay benith the coal and ashes of the underworld.*

Students of all abilities employed emotive adjectives and verbs to convey their character's sense of injustice, often echoing those introduced during the immersive experience. They describe themselves as having been *enslaved, imprisoned, confined,*

captured, betrayed, trapped and colonised: *'He enslaved me like I was dirt'; 'He vielted (violated) my child'; 'I loath Prospero because of his betrail'; 'I really can't believe he conalised my Island'; 'I will make him feel the pain of being betraid'.* Their opponents are described as *'demonic'*, *'evil'*, *'treacherous'*, *'vishes (vicious)'*, '*ignorant'*, *'black hearted'*, *'selfish'*, *'wicked'*, *'cruel'* and *'harsh as stone'.* In several scripts, rhetorical questions and exclamations are also used to emphasise their character's predicament and feelings: *'How would you feel if you were chained up like your nothing?'; 'What do you think is that fear?'; 'Who was going to free me?'; 'That slave caliban!'*; *'Oh this island! It is my utopea, my home'*. Some weaker writers incorporated exclamations and impressive vocabulary to convey their character's perspective. The extract below was written by a student in set 4, described by his teacher as a reluctant writer with poor basic skills and low self-confidence who nevertheless possessed the best vocabulary of the group. On this occasion he was proud of the page he produced, although his writing score decreased slightly by one sub-level.

> *many year's ago my tretres brotver Antonio left me and my baby on a termite in fested bote. The Jerny was scery thinking the bote will brack eny second. The bote was so small I collde not stretch my legs or lay down. I cold not bleve he walld do such a thing. But now I am grat full. He sent me to my new life On the island. Oh my island. We met a vishes monster. It colls itself Caldan. He vielted my child … that posen us slave Clban … I will all was be king on the island forever. no-one will ever replas me. not even Clban or my Mranda. If they do they will fill raft (the wrath) of Prospro.*
>
> *(Many years ago my treacherous brother Antonio left me and my baby on a termite-infested boat. The journey was scary thinking the boat will break any second. The boat was so small I could not stretch my legs or lay down. I could not believe he would do such a thing. But now I am grateful. He sent me to my new life on the island. Oh my island! We met a vicious monster. It calls itself Caliban. He violated my child … that poisonous slave Caliban … I will always be king on the island forever. No-one will ever replace me, not even Caliban or my Miranda. If they do they will feel the wrath of Prospero).*

In a few scripts direct or approximate quotations from the Tempest were included, drawing on those rehearsed during the immersive experience: *'Thou liest'; 'He insults me "Thou poisonous slave!"'; 'He is a thing divine'; '(I) am disgusted by the half fish half man creature known as caliban'.* On occasions, imitative poetic form was used effectively, for example to resolve writing in the style of an epilogue: *'Memories take us back to the past but dreams bring us forward to the future … yours only, Ariel'*.

7.3 Teachers' perspectives on writing

Case study students were observed by their English teachers during both writing tasks. The teachers made notes on these students' engagement in their writing, and commented on the extent to which their final written outcomes represented their normal work. Teachers observed improvements in engagement, as well as enthusiasm and confidence, amongst the majority of case study students during the second writing task, although this did not necessarily result in improved writing quality or grades. Compared with their typical achievement, seven of the 18 students were felt to have improved aspects of their writing or produced their *'best'* writing overall. In particular, more ideas, more interesting and emotive vocabulary, greater descriptive detail and the use of sentence structure for effect were identified.

The three teachers also reflected on the impact, if any, they perceived the immersive experience had had on the writing of all students in their class. During a group interview towards the end of the spring term, and in final written reflections, all three teachers noted specific improvement in both motivational and textual aspects and agreed that the experience had boosted students' confidence as writers. For weaker writers, it had made '*accessing the (writing) task overall easier. Ideas were easier to generate than in previous assessment'*. For some individuals, confidence in class writing had '*sky rocketed in the last couple of months'.* All observed a level of imaginative engagement in Shakespeare, which had impacted positively on writing. Enhanced *'understanding of character development'* and *'the importance of descriptive writing'* manifested itself most notably in the *'detail'* and *'depth'* of students' descriptions and characterisation. The acquisition of new vocabulary was identified as having a longer-term impact on writing as students became *'more comfortable using words they maybe wouldn't have used before'*; '*I think there are long term effects … They've learnt some key vocabulary, which they keep coming back to. So things like utopia, dystopia, perspective'.* Greater ownership of writing was also observed, as students gained confidence and became more adventurous.

> *They're more open to the idea of possibilities I'd say in their writing. They don't limit themselves as much. I find … they don't ask permission if they can write something when it comes to creative writing … for them now (it's) that idea that they can make it, mould into something that is theirs.*

Nevertheless, teachers recognised that significant improvements in writing levels were not necessarily achieved or achievable in the short term. The two teachers of lower set students noted that whilst students gained inspiration, new vocabulary and understanding of themes and characters, they often lacked the basic skills necessary to express their ideas in writing. To impact more significantly on writing standards, they felt that immersive learning needed to be balanced with more traditional teaching of the skills required to succeed at GCSE:

> *I think vocabulary and language it's definitely improved. I think where it hasn't improved … is those kind of basic skills. We're still struggling with some classes with punctuation and structure. So I think it gives loads of ideas but then I think we still need to do some work which isn't immersive on, you know, writing skills … It needs to be hand in hand with then, unfortunately, more traditional "Now we're going to write about something and here's how you structure your response about writing", because ultimately it's wonderful that we've got them inspired but in their GCSE exam in a few years' time they need to sit and write. And I think what we didn't spend time on was the "How do you turn this into a written response?*

There was a perceived tension, therefore, not only between creative aspects of writing and the academic or transcriptional skills that are assessed, but also between the kind of teaching and learning styles needed to deliver these. The benefits for writing of an *'immersive learning experience'* were perceived as distinct from the benefits of *'routine'* or *'traditional'* teaching of skills for weaker writers: *'immersed within a routine of reading and writing versus immersed in an immersive learning experience'*.

> *I think in terms of them understanding the play and understanding the characters … they were able to see them alive, breathing, and that really helped their understanding of the story and understanding of themes … I think we focused so much on this immersive quality and them understanding themes that when it came to them doing*

the writing assessment where they had to really do an academic answer I found that they lacked, that the results weren't as impressive … My year sevens they still need that routine of "This is how we structure PEE. This is how you use a quote". And because it was so much more about being immersed, there wasn't that routine … sitting down and saying, "OK you're going to write a paragraph, you're going to peer assess this paragraph, you are going to find a quote and analyse the quote".

7.4 Case study students' perspectives on writing

The 18 case study students were interviewed in their class groups on two occasions, once in the autumn term after their experiences in the installation and again in the spring term after they had completed their final assessed writing task. Interviews were recorded and transcribed, and the data analysed thematically. A number of key themes emerged which were shared by all or the majority of students: increased motivation for writing; new ideas for writing; enhanced capacity to write from the perspective of characters; and enhanced ability to describe settings in detail.

There was a consensus view amongst students of all abilities that they felt more motivated and better equipped to write about the play following the immersive experience than previously. Students attributed their interest in writing to the *'feelings'* and *'ideas'* generated during their time in the installation: '*books never really help to explain how was it feeling, it's just telling us what happened, and when we went to the Punchdrunk … I had more ideas (for writing)'.* They felt the experience had *'expanded our information (and) helped us understand more about the characters'.* Weaker writers could anticipate greater success in writing: '*I know now when I'm writing I am going to get a getter grade than I would before as I now know Caliban and every detail'* (this student did indeed increase his writing score by two sub-levels). Only one student was ambivalent about writing, suggesting he was now more inclined to read Shakespeare but not to write. The most prominent reasons given for enhanced capacity to write were better understanding of the play's setting and of the characters' feelings. Students identified the sensory experience of the different spaces as helping them to imagine the scene and therefore to describe it in detail: '*We could use the information we collected today, like what colours we could see, brown, silver, orange, we could say the textures to describe more'*. They also identified the affective nature of their role as participants and their interactions with the different characters, suggesting that this enabled them to understand the perspectives of characters and empathise with their predicament: being positioned *'in their shoes'* made it easier for them to write with authority about, or from the perspective of, characters in the play: '*You can write in other people's perspective, going in their shoes and seeing everything how they'll see it and then write about that instead of writing about how you'd feel'.* As witnesses and participants, they felt they were able to draw on their own knowledge and experience to describe events and characters:

> *By getting the experience and getting a clear image or a scenery of what it would have been like, we could describe it in our own words because we would have seen what would happen and we could look at it from a perspective and describe maybe the scene and what it would be like … Although it's not real, it helps us with our description and helps us like engage more in the topic.*
>
> *Well the descriptive language we had to use for the last assessment was about your own knowledge … when I was doing in Ariel's shoes, I was actually using lots of*

descriptive words, so going back to (the immersive experience), I used lots of words from that much more in my writing to help.

Students also reported that they had been able to rehearse language and vocabulary during the experience that they were able to utilize in their writing: '*when we had all those letters appearing, we all read it together and it was like we memorised it in our heads so we all remembered what each and every word was'; 'It's made me imagine more … and be able to answer questions if asked on the Tempest better and give a better idea, like I could describe it as a utopia'.*

Students saw a *'great difference'* between writing that was based on experiential learning – '*living it*' – and writing that was based on classroom reading: '*because you're passing through it, you'll remember it, and when you read it sometimes you forget'.* Lower-attaining students in particular observed that writing about things they had seen and done was easier than writing about things they knew little about or didn't understand, although this was not necessarily reflected in higher writing scores.

It was a positive action for me, 'cos instead of writing loads of things yeah, and I don't really understand it and I don't understand what miss is saying and even if she explains it I won't understand it, but if I actually do it and in the process I looking at the mysteries what they had to do, then I understand it more … I know more information to write and more details to put in, things like expressions.

When we're reading the book, Miss says, 'Try and imagine how it looks' … but when we went to the Punchdrunk we could actually imagine how it was … you could actually see what was happening, so when you read it in a book sometimes you just doze off, but with this one you could actually see.

When we read something … sometimes I get puzzled. I don't know what to write. When we did the Punchdrunk thing I think it would be easier for me to write about it … because you actually feel the atmosphere of how it feels in the room.

If you're writing an assessment and you just read the story … I don't really think you're going to do good, because you don't really know … the nature and habit … (but) because we saw the things and we know how Caliban feels like, so if we are doing the diary, we can just say things about him, we can say how we feel and some adjectives to describe the place.

7.5 Summary and conclusions

This chapter provides tentative evidence of impact on students' writing. It should be emphasised that any improvements in writing cannot be attributed directly to the immersive experience. Nor can any conclusions be drawn as to whether the initiative had more impact on writing than normal teaching; without comparative or control group data, it is not possible to assess whether improvements in writing were any greater than they might otherwise have been. Changes in the pre- and post-experience writing scores should therefore be treated with caution. That said, the quantitative and qualitative datasets suggest that the autumn term immersive experience had the following impact on students' writing:

- The majority of Year 7 students improved their assessed writing scores following the immersive experience and some students made significant gains. Whilst the degree of change varied markedly from class to class, when considered more broadly by ability band and by gender, an average gain was made by all student

groups. Nevertheless, over one third of students did not improve their writing scores and 16% received lower scores. In some classes the average change in scores was negligible and in one case negative.

- The immersive experience provided a powerful and inspiring context for writing and enhanced students' eagerness to write. Case study students reported having more ideas for writing than usual; they were better able to imagine the scene and empathise with the characters than previously; they felt writing was easier and more enjoyable as a consequence. However, these perceptions did not necessarily translate into improved writing scores.
- The three teachers all observed an improved attitude towards and confidence in writing amongst students in their classes, although this was not necessarily reflected in improved writing scores.
- There is some evidence that sensory engagement with the scenographic elements of the experience impacted on students' descriptive writing. Case study students asserted that they had more concrete information to draw on and their teachers were unanimous in observing greater descriptive detail in students' writing following the immersive experience than previously, although it is not possible to determine whether or how this impacted on assigned writing scores.
- Textual evidence from case study students suggests that the interactive and affective nature of the experience enabled many of them to convey convincingly in writing the perspective and feelings of characters in the play. The students themselves felt the immersive experience had helped them understand and write from the character's point of view.
- There is some evidence that the immersive project was effective in generating advanced vocabulary and prompting students to use this in their writing. Many of the case study students utilized sophisticated terms introduced during the experience in their writing, and some drew on Shakespearean language rehearsed during the experience or imitated poetic expression, often to good effect.

It should be noted that many of the gains identified by teachers and students, such as inspiration and motivation for writing, creativity and ownership, imaginative engagement and empathy for characters, are not easily measured by standard assessment criteria. Nor do they transfer automatically into well-crafted, well-organised, accurate writing. Nevertheless, good writing depends on them. Criteria for discussing and evaluating such gains are sorely needed to counter the assessment emphasis on technical and organisational features. Furthermore, increased control of new elements in writing takes time: impact on writing standards may only become apparent in the longer term and is likely to be dependent on structured opportunities for consolidation and development.

Chapter 8: Impact on teachers' pedagogical practice

The Memorandum of Understanding between Punchdrunk Enrichment, Hackney Learning Trust and the Academy included objectives that touched on pedagogy: the development of pedagogy, informing the pedagogy of immersive learning, and developing a model that could be used in other schools. Against this broad set of interests, the evaluation focussed specifically on the pedagogical impact of *Prospero's Island*, seeking to establish:

- The impact of the Punchdrunk Enrichment project[8] on three teachers' pedagogical practice, and any specific developments associated with the related CPD.

To address this objective the evaluation drew on qualitative evidence from interviews and complementary observations.

Data sets drawn on include:

- Group interviews with English teachers in the autumn term, before their participation in the *Prospero's Island* installation
- Group interviews with English teachers in the spring term, after their participation in the installation and while they were engaged in follow-on lessons with their classes
- Researcher observations of six lessons (two with each focal class) taught in the spring term
- Initial interview with the Punchdrunk Enrichment Director and the Senior English Teaching and Learning Consultant at HLT prior to the start of *Prospero's Island*
- Fuller e-interview with the Punchdrunk Enrichment Director at the end of *Prospero's Island*
- Fuller interview with the Senior English Teaching and Learning Consultant at HLT towards the end of the spring term

(Researcher observation sheets and interview schedules are included in Appendix 1.)

In group interviews, teachers were asked to reflect on what they expected and hoped to gain from participation in the project, and their experiences of the project itself and its impact on their work. The Punchdrunk Enrichment Director and the Senior English Teaching and Learning Consultant at HLT were also asked to reflect on their expectations for the project and any evidence they had with respect to its impact on teachers' understandings and practice. Such data provide evidence of participants' views and understandings, but evidence of practice is necessarily indirect. Interviews were therefore supplemented with observations of lessons.

[8] The Punchdrunk Enrichment project, in its largest sense, includes the immersive experience of *Prospero's Island* as well as the teachers' autumn term return to the installation with their classes and the follow-on work led by the three teachers in the spring term. In this chapter the spring term work is taken as evidence of teachers' developing practice, insofar as this may be seen to be affected by their autumn term participation in *Prospero's Island*.

8.1 Teachers' understandings of immersive teaching and learning

The extent to which and the ways in which teachers understand immersive teaching and learning are important as these are likely to inform pedagogical practice. Developing teachers' understandings was seen as a potentially valuable outcome of the CPD sessions. In reflecting on evidence from earlier Punchdrunk work, the Senior English Teaching and Learning Consultant at HLT commented: '*all these teachers are coming together … to actually formulate their own ideas for immersive learning and that really chimed with me as it's something we can transplant to our Borough and see something equally exciting'*. The Punchdrunk Enrichment Director also had this as an aim, while conceding there were limits to what could be achieved in a single CPD session: '*that is a … challenge to … do all the work that we do and get justice - get across the principles and the reasons and the whys and wherefores in the amount of time we've got, but I think we will give a taster*.' Participants themselves were positive in evaluating the understandings they had gained from CPD sessions. In providing feedback on the TALD (Teaching and Learning Day), for instance, 82% felt they had achieved an excellent or good understanding of immersive practice. (Fuller notes on the CPD sessions are included in Appendix 9.)

Before their participation in *Prospero's Island*, the three English teachers contributing to the evaluation had already begun to reflect on the term 'immersive teaching'. In the first interview it was clear that their conceptualisation of the term reflected the ways in which this reframes the relationship between teacher and students:

> *So if it's immersive teaching I would, it wouldn't be me leading it, it would be more organic, there would be lots of other elements taking place whether it be an object in the room or a student taking on a role, or music, or environment, or atmosphere, but it's not – it's less traditional its more organic.*
>
> *[It's] more exploratory rather than being taught – less teacher-led, more students exploring things themselves and coming up with their own answers.*
>
> *[As a] teacher you become more of a facilitator; someone who has more to point the right guide, not necessarily point in the right direction but sort of just corral almost!*

The third teacher cited above returned to the idea of facilitation and guiding in the second, spring term interview, but interestingly had strengthened the role of guide:

> *It's about guiding, pointing in the right direction … like the idea of Punchdrunk …. They're discovering. You're leading them … you've created the environment for them … you've already built the trail that they think they are making, you know, so it gives the illusion of control and power which is central to education and learning.*

Just as Punchdrunk Enrichment had planned a structure for the immersive experience, determining the tasks that needed to be completed successfully, so too the teachers' role was now seen to involve providing a structure in planning the learning 'trail' which students would follow.

The opportunities for participation provided by the *Prospero's Island* installation had clearly shaped the teachers' understanding of immersive teaching. During the second interview one explained that it was about 'making students more active in their *learning'*, stressing that '*immersive goes hand in hand with them being active … those two things are really interlinked*'. Another argued that:

> *[It's] like learning as you're doing. It's like making the road by walking it you could say because you have to, you know, as much as the environment or the journey [in the Punchdrunk Enrichment installation] was controlled for them … I think the perception that they were in control does a huge amount [for students'] confidence.*

Again, student agency appears to be conceptualised as a feeling of control within a preordained structure. This echoes the participatory aspects of immersive theatre and game-play as outlined in the literature review, but differs from the principles of process drama in that students were not expected to lead or shape events in any emergent way.

The sensory experiences of the *Prospero's Island* installation were also significant in shaping the teachers' understanding of immersive teaching. In attempting to define its characteristics, one teacher argued *'it's just like the whole sensory experience I guess'* and suggested that *'having things [which are] tangible and something that they can interact with*' supported the students' understanding of the play and made it '*exciting*'. This focus on the sensory aspects of immersive teaching and learning was not apparent in the first interview with the teachers. It appears to have developed as a result of their experiences of the installation and also, perhaps, their participation in CPD sessions: the TALD, for instance, included a popular workshop on 'Detailed design' that explored the use of artefacts. Teachers' ideas resonate with those outlined in the literature review in Chapter 2, and informed their use of resources in lessons in the spring term. Our observations show that the teachers used a wide range of stimuli in these lessons, incorporating images, music and objects. The ways in which these were integrated into and shaped pedagogical practice is explored in Section 8.3.1.

Teachers, then, identified a number of characteristics of immersive teaching/learning: active learning; a feeling of agency although working under the close guidance of teachers; the importance of the sensory experience, achieved in the provision of a wide range of stimuli. We do not have evidence, however, of a broader or more theorised understanding of immersive teaching/learning principles.

8.2 Teachers' expectations of *Prospero's Island*

Although the three English teachers had slightly different expectations of how the project might support them in developing their pedagogical practice, we were able to identify three key areas in the initial interviews in the autumn term: opportunities to use drama techniques, to learn through play, and to engage in curriculum design.

8.2.1 Opportunities to use drama techniques

During the initial interview there was a shared intention expressed by the teachers to try to transform the teaching of plays in the classroom, building on previous experiences of teaching drama at the Academy. Looking forward to exploring alternative ways to inspire students through drama, one teacher commented:

> *To be quite honest I love drama! I love any sort of kookiness, getting involved, stepping outside the box … I just think it's really good to step outside of the basic ways of teaching, and if we can inspire kids to improve their English skills in a different way than just sitting and reading and writing I think it is amazing.*

In particular, this teacher hoped that by observing how the actors created characters, the students would develop an understanding of the value of drama and characterization, and that this in turn would inform their work in the classroom:

> *[By] experiencing something like Punchdrunk, [the students] are getting to see … how speaking and listening can be important, [and] acting etc. But mostly for me it would be just keeping that alive in the classroom, keeping this idea of character and how do we embody a character – what sorts of things do we need to include to create a character, make them diverse, make them 3D, make them interesting. I just think drama often is a really good way to make that happen.*

Another teacher also expressed a desire to learn more 'drama techniques' in the CPD sessions, and to make studying Shakespeare about '*text and performance rather than text and analysis'.* The extent to which the performative aspects of drama, and in particular the embodied performance of characters, were explored in the spring term will be further examined in section 8.3.2.

8.2.2 Opportunities to learn through play

The teachers shared an interest in exploring opportunities for playful approaches to learning. For one, *Prospero's Island* was seen as a chance to explore an interest in immersive art in a curriculum context. The teacher explained:

> *I love the study of curriculum … and I'm also a huge fan of immersive art. … Being involved with organizing immersive art and interactive art things has been part of what I've done in my spare time.*

In particular this teacher hoped to embrace the playfulness of the installation in order to support and encourage learning, arguing that:

> *when you play you lower your inhibitions so you become more accepting, more open to certain aspects or certain suggestions, and I think there is more freedom there as you can go anywhere, and I think restrictions that are often placed on us from different perspectives, social, cultural, work, friends, family … if you are going in with the ideal of play where anything is possible, you can navigate with a sense of freedom and then you accept more information …*

This translation of playful engagement into classroom practice was also of interest to another of the teachers, who hoped to support the students' management of their participation in learning opportunities they found exciting, arguing that:

> *while [the students] can be boisterous and that can be a challenge, actually [the installation] will enable them to see that if we can control ourselves … look at how much fun you can have and look how much this helps your learning. So hopefully we can translate more of that into the classroom. But I think I'm really looking forward to just learning some new strategies I can use that I didn't know about before to develop … in my own teaching.*

8.2.3 Opportunities for curriculum design

Prior to the project, all three teachers noted in their interview that they were looking forward to the challenge of responding creatively to the installation and developing new

opportunities for learning. Two expressed their interest in seeing how the school's involvement in the project might shape curriculum provision:

> *[I'm] kind of interested on a curriculum level really, so thinking about Key Stage 3 as a whole, I think Key Stage 3 is a really exciting curriculum area as you don't have the restrictions that you do in Key Stage 4 of external examinations and kind of teaching to a test so much, and so I really wanted to look at what kind of pedagogy we could develop in Key stage 3 curriculum to make learning more fun, to engage the students and see what we could learn from the project as a whole – that was my rationale.*
>
> *I think especially working in the Academy and especially teaching English we feel the pressure of time and marking and we don't take the time to – I find I don't take the time to really think creatively, spend the time really delving into something with the kids because we don't have the time, and I think what this might do for us as a department is sort of - take a second and think. You know what, we could make a far more exciting curriculum if we can just take a breath and step back.*

The ways in which the teachers' built on their experiences of the installation and CPD will be addressed in the following section, in which they reflect on the new pedagogical approaches they were developing, and in section 8.4 where they reflect upon the constraints and challenges they faced.

8.3 Teachers' development of new pedagogical approaches

The teachers' understanding of immersive strategies informed their approaches to teaching in the spring term, during which they began to use a broader range of stimuli in their lessons; made greater use of certain drama techniques; and, in line with the game format adopted in *Prospero's Island*, sometimes reframed tasks as competitive challenges. Teachers also suggested that, in future years, they would aim to transform their teaching spaces in various ways. Not all of these strategies were observed by the researchers, but in drawing on interview data we present the teachers' reflections on the influence that their involvement in the project had upon their pedagogy.

8.3.1 Using a broader range of stimuli

This was not something that was anticipated by teachers in their initial interview, however their experiences in the *Prospero's Island* installation and associated CPD sessions prompted them to use a wider variety of stimuli in their sessions and to reflect on how images, music and objects might be used to develop students' inference and deduction skills, and inspire their written work.

The use of images was seen to be an important development in supporting students' skills. The scheme of work followed in the spring term, based on the graphic novel *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan (see Chapter 4), had been planned before the project began and was viewed as an appropriate one within which to integrate approaches aligned with immersive teaching. As one teacher explained in the spring term group interview:

> *It was something we were planning on doing and I think it links quite well with the problem solving and enquiry [based learning] 'cos I think the whole [reason] we were doing the graphic novels was to teach … inference … and I think that the images have been [effective] … especially in The Arrival 'cos*

they're so evocative, it's been really good at that enquiry-based learning. You know, like asking questions about 'What do you think's going on here? Why do you think that's going on? How would you feel in that situation?'

The teachers were prompted during the interview to reflect on the use of images in CPD sessions and in the installation itself and to consider whether this resonated with the way they had approached images in their teaching in the spring term. The teachers' responses suggested that they saw many parallels, with one arguing that:

[The installation] had those whole areas … to explore, you know, and the small details. And we learnt [in] the CPD about the set design and art design, [and] the extent they go to in which to create the sense. And I think you could see the kids engage with it … looking at the different animals or the books and, you know, [asking] 'why is that there and what's going on?' It's that idea of discovery isn't it? [Students are] discovering something. And I think the lessons that I've done which have been the most successful this semester [are those] where we've … used a really interesting image.

Among the lessons observed in the spring term, one included the use of extracts from films and still images, based on the theme of immigration. Students were prompted to make inferences about characters represented – their lives, what they might be feeling, even the smells they would be surrounded by. It was clear the students were engaged in this activity. The teacher also used such imagery to generate vocabulary and particular sentence structures.

Two teachers used props in their sessions. One, who already used them in classes before the project began, explained in the autumn term interview that:

[I'd] give them all a different prop, like a shoe or something like that, [and ask them] who does it belong to? [And ask them to create] a character from that and then introduce themselves as that character - or something like that - and that was quite successful but I haven't done that recently and I don't know why I haven't done it.

Participating in the project prompted a return to this strategy as a method of supporting students' engagement with characters:

[In one session] I brought in objects and each of [the students] had an object, and that object belonged to somebody who had moved countries and was the thing that they'd taken with them. And they had to create the persona - who was this person? - based on just one object. And that idea of discovery, they really enjoyed that because they could create a whole idea of a character. But it had to be realistic, it couldn't just be something, you know, random. But that idea of discovery just from something that they hadn't seen before, I think that just gets them more excited, it gets them motivated to have a go.

Researcher observations of this lesson offered confirmation of the teacher's view that this was a valuable teaching strategy. The artefacts the teacher had brought along engaged students' attention, encouraged them to make inferences about the people who had owned particular objects and, with the teacher's support, triggered focused discussion and critical dialogue between students. Both of the teachers who used objects in their sessions commented that they found them a useful means of prompting students oral engagement and supporting their reflections on characters.

A further stimulus used by the teachers was music. As mentioned in Chapter 4, two of the observed lessons used music to support students in generating emotive language. The researchers noted that musical stimuli worked well in these lessons, that all students were engaged in the task, and that imaginative ideas were articulated in response to the music. In one (unobserved) session, a teacher commented that they had prompted the students to make conceptual links between particular lyrics and the themes in *The Arrival*:

> *We looked at Immigrant Song by Led Zeppelin. We listened to it. We read it. We broke it down and we talked about certain lyrics and what they meant and then how they transitioned, about both you know the push and pull factor, because Immigrant Song is a bit more about the Vikings … and their imposition upon certain people as well as their own reasons for their adventure … or their moving, and that created the dialogue amongst students.*

The teacher was pleased with the impact of this on the students' learning:

> *Pairing [The Arrival] with Immigrant Song worked really well and helped give them some structure to the language they had to use and to drive their story and sort of pull … some of those themes out, which was good.*

This teacher had created an audio-visual resource that linked images from *The Arrival* to the song. Although this activity appeared to focus primarily on the lyrics rather than the music, other teachers did consider the emotional content and impact of music. One discussed the use of music to create an atmosphere before the lesson started:

> *Before we start looking at poems maybe when they walk in the room I'll have some music that reflects maybe the tone or the mood of the poem to get them thinking in that tone or mood, I suppose, before they even look at it … and that's new, that's definitely new for me.*

8.3.2 Using drama techniques

In their initial autumn term interview, teachers had expressed the hope that their experiences in the project would lead to the increased use of drama. Two teachers had some prior knowledge of drama techniques and had integrated these into their teaching before the project began. These had, though, been occasional uses of drama, described by one teacher as *'islands of practice'*. When asked, in the spring term interview, to explain the ways in which they had incorporated drama into their teaching, the same teacher responded:

> *Kind of in the usual ways you would probably expect in English. So we do … freeze frames [and] role-play … we've been doing Stone Cold, for example, with year eight … so we read a part of the book and they went off and role-played that part of the book together to kind of get them to understand. [We've done] hot seating, so getting them to come to the front and having the four main characters and asking them questions. They're kind of the main things. They're probably things that I do more of now. Like they're things that I always knew about but I think I'm just aware of the benefits of doing it a bit more now. So I try … I actively try and do those things whereas before I probably wouldn't.*

Involvement in the project, then, did not seem to have broadened this teacher's knowledge of drama. However, the project reminded the teacher of the value of drama and its potential to support the students' imaginative engagement. In this way the

project acted as a trigger to use drama more frequently. In particular, the teacher chose to integrate drama strategies into sessions in order to develop students' empathy with characters. Explaining the impact of drama, another teacher said of the students that:

> *They're very visual, so if you're trying to create a motivation or you're trying to create something, a take off point for emotion, the drama can help because they could look at someone, their fellow student or themselves, [and] they can internalise something a bit more. They can be empathetic. They could try to … decipher the different elements of the emotion that a person is feeling.*

The teachers had clearly begun to reflect on their use of role-play techniques, and all reported making more use of these, although this did not occur in the lessons observed by the researchers.

The teachers also planned to make opportunities for students to perform their own work by reading it aloud to their peers in the hope that this would '*give them more confidence'* and make them more *'meticulous in their work'*:

> *If you're going to read something out loud to everybody it needs to be good … you want it to represent your best work. So I think that motivation is helping to … well, hopefully, will help them to produce, you know, the work that reflects the best of their ability.*

This teacher hoped that performing their work would support students in conveying characters and their emotions:

> *We'll be making sure that they read it … with enthusiasm and [consider] 'Who is the character? Are they a sad character? Are they happy?' [And] try to get some of that emotion through in their performance as well.*

Reading aloud was not new, and another teacher, in the autumn term interview, explained that before the project began they had tried to model reading with expression. In the spring term interview the expectation that students read their own work aloud was perceived to be key in supporting peer engagement with each other's work. One teacher suggested that '*feeding back to each other [was something] I think they did really well during Prospero's Island, and we want to try and foster that a bit more*.'

It appears then that participation in *Prospero's Island* led the teachers to reconsider student involvement, particularly through reading their own work aloud and providing peer feedback, and also reminded teachers of the value of drama, thus prompting them to employ drama techniques more frequently.

8.3.3 Reframing tasks as competitive challenges

In their autumn term interview teachers did not return to the idea of learning through play. Two teachers, however, discussed the potential of teamwork and competitive challenges, which may be associated with the game structure in *Prospero's Island* and a focus in the evening CPD sessions on setting challenges within a broader mission framework. One teacher commented that:

> *Getting [the students] to get excited by, you know, reading comprehension and analysis is kind of tough. So it's more of like a challenge and … I've been using lots of rewards. So … whatever challenge you get to you get a positive or you get a merit or you get a postcard … and then the red-hot challenge is*

> *something I use with my Year 7s and 8s quite a lot. So 'Can you do the red-hot challenge?' … I always use that term and then they're like, 'I've done the red-hot challenge!'*

For this teacher, the reframing of tasks as challenges was a subtle change, and one related to terminology rather than a shift in pedagogical practice. It was a change to *'the semantics of what I'm calling tasks'* but one that was believed to have a significant impact on some students' engagement.

Another teacher described a similar incorporation of elements of competition and teamwork into some sessions:

> *I think I do a lot more competition-based stuff … I do small competition group work. I'll even just cut separate questions up, have them on the table, and they have to finish one question and then, you know, as a table they have to finish it together. So it's this group work rather than the individual. … it's this idea of teamwork and this idea of really working together and competition, and this … sense of like 'Yes we did something, we just tackled that one thing, now we can move onto the next thing'. So they do have a sense of achievement along the way, which is really nice. … I'm the Quiz Master, they have to show me - [it's] just really been since Prospero that I've been doing it.*

In this case the teacher's repositioning as Quiz Master was perhaps associated with the Games Master in the *Prospero's Island* installation.

While both the teachers recognised that these were small changes, they noted that they had seen significant increases in motivation and in some cases a marked increase in the quantity of work produced as a result.

8.3.4 Transforming spaces

The *Prospero's Island* installation and associated CPD sessions also prompted teachers to consider whether transforming the spatial aspects of the learning environment might also transform learning. One teacher commented: '*We did a whole workshop [during the twilight CPD] on space and I think, you know, we can change the classroom quite easily just by changing the chairs or putting a piece of cloth up. It changes it and kids buy into it so easily*'. This did not actually occur during the spring term, however. A teacher commented in a reflection after one of the lessons that they had hoped to use a yurt to transform the classroom and support students' engagement, but this had not been possible because of time constraints. Similar transformations were, however, discussed by teachers in relation to future projects:

> *I'm doing* An Inspector Calls *next semester with the tops at Year Ten and I'm already thinking about what am I going to do? How am I going to set up the classroom? I might change the whole set up of the classroom. You know, just things like that, making it different, making them feel like they're stepping into a different world that I think would be quite enjoyable. Maybe I'll bring some costumes.*

In the following semester the teachers also planned to focus on telling stories '*around a campfire'* in order to develop understanding of '*oral history and storytelling'.*

8.4 Constraints and challenges

The teachers highlighted a number of constraints and challenges experienced when they attempted to plan for and engage in immersive teaching. These included time constraints, as noted above, as well as assessment pressures, the need to provide technical support for students' writing, long-term planning processes, and managing students' behaviour.

In their autumn interview, before their participation in *Prospero's Island*, the teachers noted that their teaching practice was shaped by the broader assessment agenda. They referred to their responsibility to ensure students were prepared for their assessments, which had an impact on the way they introduced and approached texts in the classroom. One teacher elaborated:

> *It's the restrictions that the curriculum places on us, and the time limits. It's like, right what do we need to do? We need to write down a response, you need to respond to this, and you need to analyse the language and you need to analyse the feelings, and that's the main things really*.

This often led to them presenting students with extracts for discussion rather than whole texts, e.g.: '*here are some key quotes, what do these quotes tell us?*' Such practices were seen to curtail opportunities for '*developing curiosity in the students*', and the teachers were keen to find '*time for consideration and extension, where you can go deep into the more social, cultural contexts*'. Such challenges were reiterated in the spring term interview:

> *You are just so strapped for time … they come up with a few ideas [that are] interesting but the Exam Board want you to say this, so this is the interpretation that we [share with them] and it is very sad but that is eventually what happens.*

During the spring term the students undertook their reading assessment. This assessment had been adapted from the previous year and involved interpreting an extract from a graphic novel alongside an extract from a conventional novel. Students also had to complete a writing assessment. For the teachers this brought to the fore tensions between integrating immersive techniques, which often supported comprehension, and ensuring that transcription skills and compositional techniques were still supported:

> *I think we focus so much on this immersive quality and them understanding themes that when it came to them doing the writing assessment where they had to really do an academic answer … the results weren't as impressive, and I think that's just because we didn't focus as much on it. And I don't know about Year 8 but for my Year 7s - they still need that routine of 'This is how we structure PEE [Point Evidence Explanation], this is how you use a quote.' And because it was so much more about being immersed there wasn't that routine.*

This was expressed as a dichotomy by the teacher, summarised in the phrase: *'immersed within a routine of reading and writing versus immersed in an immersive learning experience.'* When supporting writing, compositional techniques were seen as important, and it was clear that the teachers were reflecting on how they could integrate these with immersive learning:

Whilst immersive learning is great … it needs to be hand in hand with, unfortunately, more traditional 'Now we're going to write about something and here's how you structure your response about writing' because ultimately it's wonderful that we've got them inspired but in their GCSE exam in a few years' time they need to sit and write. And I think what we didn't spend time on was the how do you turn this into a written response?

Integrating immersive techniques into curriculum planning also presented challenges. There was a recognition that long-term changes would need to be planned well in advance and that this would take time. A teacher who, in the autumn term interview, expressed a keen interest in exploring opportunities for Key Stage 3 curriculum design (Section 8.2.3) was the most reflective on this point:

I think the reality is that takes more planning time and I think that's probably why we haven't done it as much as we … would have liked to in the last term. Because the reality is we can't plan … the Punchdrunk project every day. But I think, you know, long term when we change our schemes of learning etc. and update things we'll be integrating that into it.

I personally feel we haven't really embedded it as much as we'd have liked to in the curriculum and I think [this] is more of a long term aim … I guess the reality of schools is that we plan schemes of learning for September for the whole year and that's … set out, and to … re-plan the whole thing, it's just people don't have time … I think when we are re-planning our whole curriculum … now for next year, … that's when we'll see more of the pedagogy being embedded in the schemes of learning and curriculum generally.

Another teacher also suggested that the pedagogical changes could be further embedded over time:

I don't think I've necessarily worked it in as … day to day yet [but it could be] something that you definitely can work in.

Our observations of CPD activities note that teachers were encouraged to consider educational outcomes and how immersive learning opportunities might link to a curricular project. There was, however, relatively limited opportunity for discussing the practical steps needed to implement plans, and timeframes for developing schemes of work were not addressed. A participant (not one of the Academy teachers we worked with) commented: '*[the workshop has] given me loads of ideas, but how you align this with what we HAVE to do in the curriculum – I just don't know*.'

In their autumn term interview, one of the concerns shared by the three Academy teachers was related to the way students would negotiate boundaries. A teacher commented: '*there is a significant number of students who do struggle with boundaries … and they need to be [explained] very, very clearly even in Year 7*'. In the spring term it was clear that trialling new approaches remained challenging, and managing behaviour remained a concern:

There needs to be … a routine and … if you are going to do more of these things you need to be confident that the class are going to be able to deal with that. And I think with Punchdrunk - because it was so exciting, you know, they all behaved really, really well and that was brilliant. I think with some classes it is a bit of a struggle because there are some kind of behaviour issues and it's

difficult to do more of those things sometimes when you've got a class that's maybe a bit naughty.

8.5 Summary and conclusions

This chapter has considered evidence of the impact of the Punchdrunk Enrichment project - *Prospero's Island* and the associated CPD - on teachers' pedagogical practice. In looking at this evidence, we should note that pedagogical change is rarely a quick process: teachers' skills and understanding develop over time. During the spring term, the teachers felt that they had started to make changes but there was a sense that this was the beginning of a professional journey, one in which they would build confidence and accrue a repertoire of approaches. Nevertheless, the teachers did perceive certain impacts, and our observational data provide additional evidence of the approaches the teachers were developing in their classrooms in the spring term. Impacts on pedagogical practice include:

- Teachers' understanding of immersive learning and teaching developed during their work on *Prospero's Island* and the associated CPD. They highlighted the ideas of active learning and student agency, albeit within a carefully controlled environment; and the provision of a rich sensory experience based on a wide variety of stimuli.
- Teachers hoped to develop the use of drama in their lessons. In the spring term they did not draw on new techniques but did report making greater and more consistent use of techniques that were familiar to them (such as students performing their work, and providing peer feedback).
- In line with their developing understanding of immersive teaching and learning, teachers reported using a wider range of stimuli in their lessons. Our observations also provided evidence of the use of images, music and artefacts to develop students' inference and deduction skills, and to inspire their written work. These practices could be directly linked to the *Prospero's Island* installation and CPD activities.
- *Prospero's Island* drew on a digital game format (see Chapter 4), and two of the teachers began using the language of games when referring to setting tasks or activities in English lessons. They reported that they had begun to reframe tasks as challenges and had introduced competitive dimensions in order to motivate students.
- Teachers reported considering how they might transform classroom spaces as a way of supporting students' engagement in English; there had been insufficient time for this in the spring term but they were making plans for the following semester.
- Across this range of impacts there was less evidence of the underpinning of teachers' work by more general principles of immersive teaching/learning. The focus seemed to be more on the adoption of specific techniques than on the development of a distinctive and principled immersive approach.

Any new forms of teaching need to fit within a particular educational environment, including existing and continuing teaching activity. Teachers reported certain challenges and constraints in the implementation of immersive techniques. These included time constraints; the demands of formal assessment; the need to provide structured support for students' writing and the difficulty of integrating this with an immersive approach; the need for advance planning and guidance to embed new

approaches within the curriculum; and the need to manage students' behaviour. The perceived disjunction between developing an immersive approach in English and providing structured support for students' writing (what one teacher referred to as *'immersed within a routine of reading and writing versus immersed in an immersive learning experience'*) is clearly something that requires further thought and eventual resolution.

Chapter 9: Review and Recommendations

In this final chapter we revisit the key insights gained though the evaluation of the immersive theatre project *Prospero's Island* undertaken in the Academy in Hackney in the autumn and spring terms of 2014-15. Initially, we revisit the immersive experience and the teachers return to the installation in the autumn term and then turn to the three objectives of the evaluation work, namely the impact upon the Year 7 students' attitudes, engagement and writing and upon the pedagogic practice of the three English teachers involved. We review the impact documented and discuss issues arising under each focus, making links to the research literature where appropriate.

As the longer-term aim of the evaluation was to inform the future partnership work of Punchdrunk Enrichment, we turn next to recommendations. Drawing on this case study of *Prospero's Island,* many of our recommendations are specific, relating to possible activities worthy of consideration before, during and after the immersive experience, whilst others are more exploratory in nature. We then offer recommendations with regard to future joint ventures, not only for the three core collaborators, but more broadly for Punchdrunk Enrichment's partnership work with Hackney Learning Trust and other collaborators. The second set of recommendations seek to support Punchdrunk Enrichment and Hackney Learning Trust in finding strategic ways forward to ensure that the value and impact of their work is strengthened. These recommendations are offered to complement those detailed in the wider research and evaluation study into Punchdrunk Enrichment work undertaken by Middlesex University (Machon and Thompson, 2014). We close with specific suggestions for disseminating the evaluation's findings in order to ensure that the work of the partnership and the impact of the project are widely shared and recognised.

9.1 Review of *Prospero's Island* autumn term 2014

9.1.1 Immersive theatre experience led by Punchdrunk Enrichment

In Chapter 5, our reflective commentary upon the immersive experience of *Prospero's Island* demonstrated that this captivated and engaged students and teachers alike. In the context of the Warwick Commission's final report, *Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth* (2015), which recognises that young people in areas of socio-economic hardship are unlikely to gain access to the arts in any form, the project may have offered some students their only first-hand experience of the arts to date. It was undoubtedly a very positive one. The students' response was enthusiastic, they viewed the experience as enjoyable and memorable, and they were seen by their teachers to be deeply engaged and unusually focused in the world of *The Tempest*. The researchers and the Punchdrunk Enrichment actors also observed the students' energetic pleasure and involvement. Observation and interview data indicate that the event encompassed considerable mystery and a degree of 'awe and wonder' on the part of the young people. It was characterized by the presence of and the interplay between five core themes, namely: surprise; multisensory and imaginative engagement; opportunities to collaborate; game play and boundary crossing; and the development of the students' interest in and knowledge about the play. We comment upon these in turn, and also consider teachers' and teaching assistants' participation in the immersive experience.

Surprise

The school spaces used for *Prospero's Island* were significantly and professionally transformed by the Punchdrunk Enrichment team and this contributed to the sense of wonder and surprise which permeated the experience. Transformation, particularly of space, is recognised as a key element within immersive theatre, and the Hub and the nine satellite installations, were radically redesigned to create an alternative world for the experience. The clever use of the island map within the Hub allowed connections to be made between this, the centre of operations, and the other locations around the school. As one actor noted '*The Island is [the Academy] and [the Academy] is the Island for this game.'* The defamiliarisation of the known physical environment and the invitation to enter into and live within an alternative world, packed with mysteries and unexpected events and revelations, provoked the students' 'dynamic curiosity' (Machon, 2009: 61).

Multisensory and imaginative engagement

Students' immersion within these new environments was underpinned by an unavoidable sensory engagement. Meticulous attention to multisensory detail was evident in each installation, where lights, sounds, smells, music and a plethora of artefactual details combined to shape the students' engagement and no doubt contributed to the sense and meanings being made, individually and collectively. This multisensory detail is likely to have influenced students' emerging understandings of the characters and the play itself, and represented an opportunity for embodied learning.

Not only were the students' senses engaged, but so were their imaginations. As White observes about Punchdrunk's work for adults, the transformed spaces in *Prospero's Island* were 'replete with associations' (2012: 4), in this case linked to *The Tempest.* As the young people examined different spaces and objects belonging to characters, went on missions, hunted for clues and responded to extracts from the play text, they discussed what they sensed and felt and voiced their interpretations. In so doing some made novel and imaginative connections; they became observant of details and attentive and open to the potential for possible clues in the texts and contexts. The extent to which this was sustained beyond the experience is not known, but it affords scope for future development. The students' interaction with the Games Master and his assistants, particularly in their adopted roles as characters from the play, seemed to contribute to the students' imaginative and affective engagement. Many students found this role adoption highly engaging and responded to the characters with commitment and 'belief'. For some this interchange was seen to be particularly salient. Perhaps their experience of work in-role had been limited in primary school, where there is an emphasis on the discrete use of single drama conventions in literacy. Such practice, endorsed by the National Strategies (DfES, 2007), is rarely enriched by more in-depth or extended process drama work in which students *and* teachers engage in building a sustained fictional world through role adoption.

Opportunities to collaborate

Students worked within a predefined and structured narrative and game framework in which they were positioned as game players who worked in teams. As in other Punchdrunk Enrichment work they were 'given roles and responsibilities' in the

fictional world (Machon and Thompson, 2014: 12), and had a sense of agency as players in the game whose actions 'unlocked' stages in the narrative and drove this forward.

Students worked both in small teams and as a whole group of 15, and there was considerable scope for collaboration. Students voiced their pleasure in the teamwork involved and the teachers also appreciated this. The actors and researchers, however, perceived that such opportunities were not always fully capitalised upon. This may have been influenced by the rapid pace of the experience and the students' previous, perhaps limited, experience of teamwork in schooling.

Although students' participation offered a sense of collective and individual agency, as they were working in a highly structured environment their actual agency was relatively limited. This contrasts somewhat with the agency offered students in *Under the Eiderdown*, in which it appears their story writing contributes to and shapes the unfolding narrative (Machon and Thompson, 2014). While they could not roam freely within the installation spaces, as in Punchdrunk's adult productions, there is perhaps scope for greater volition to be afforded the young people in *Prospero's Island*, particularly as the numbers of participants involved are relatively small.

Game play and boundary crossing

The novel game-like nature of the experience was widely recognised and well received by the students. This aspect of *Prospero's Island* connected to their own cultural capital and in-depth experience of computer games, and was a highly motivating form of 'collective detecting' (McGonigal, 2003). In responding to the Games Master, solving clues, and undertaking missions students worked to unlock levels in the manner of computer games. In the process they traversed boundaries, including venturing into out of bounds spaces, not wearing blazers and 'running' around the school. The teachers responded slightly differently to these boundary crossings. Some were more flexible than others, and their responses may, to some degree, have influenced the students' lived experience of the game. This raises the issue of careful briefing of school staff, as well as teachers' own openness to different practices within arts events.

Developing students' interest in and knowledge about the play

The teachers felt that the immersive experience made a significant contribution to the students' interest in the play and enhanced their knowledge about the characters, the language, the plot and the themes. A focus on active comprehension, interpretation and the co-construction of meaning was evident through the tasks and activities and drew the young people's attention to the language and text of the play. They were motivated to read, hear and use this. The teachers noted that the experience impacted particularly upon the less experienced and sometimes less engaged Year 7 learners who were more than usually motivated and engaged; their knowledge about the play was recognized as particularly enriched. One teacher also noted that the Year 8 students' knowledge and understanding had shifted very considerably through the island experience. Though this was not a focus of the evaluation, it remains noteworthy. A focus on comprehension was evident throughout; this was shown in the nature of the many tasks and activities and in particular in the attention afforded the language and text of the play. The young people became motivated to attend to this and to read, hear and use the language of Shakespeare's play Student also felt they had considerably developed their interest in and knowledge about *The Tempest*. Teachers applauded the actors' skills in supporting the students' examination of the text extracts and artefacts, though one felt more time

on the extracts would have been beneficial for the purposes of consolidation, especially for the younger students.

Teachers' and teaching assistants' participation in the immersive experience

The teachers often commented upon their own felt engagement; they found the experience stimulating and valued the opportunity personally and professionally. In the Hub the teachers observed their classes' engagement and learning, they did not themselves participate in the game as players. Teachers and teaching assistants also accompanied student groups on their missions around the school. Across the two-week period in which Year 7 and 8 classes participated in *Prospero's Island*, some teaching assistants accompanied student groups many times. Whilst those observed appeared attentive and engaged, there was a danger of distraction as the novelty of the experience wore off. The opportunity was not used for members of staff beyond the English Department to attend. Notwithstanding timetabling issues and staff availability, this seemed a missed opportunity, especially as Punchdrunk Enrichment had led a Teaching and Learning Day with the whole school and it seems likely that staff from other subject disciplines would have valued and benefitted from attending sessions.

9.1.2 Installation activities led by English teachers

The teacher-led return to the Hub installation in the autumn term was recognisable as school work and a common plan was used by all three staff. This encompassed literacy objectives on widening vocabulary, related individual worksheets, a limited time frame and a sense of trajectory towards the later written assessment. Nonetheless the Hub space prompted students' interest, and when time was set aside for discussion, enthusiastic and detailed recollections of their previous experiences were voiced. The teachers perceived that the Hub's connotations and artefacts encouraged students to generate a wider than usual range of vocabulary. In one class, time for open exploration (without the accompanying worksheet) was also offered, allowing students to play imaginatively, seeking to re-invoke the Games Master and rekindle the world they had inhabited a fortnight before. In another class, similar opportunities were seized informally and quietly without the teacher's knowledge. The students took considerable pleasure in these brief moments of imaginative play, which demonstrated the sustained power of the space and their desire to imagine. This aligns well with the previously noted finding that students valued the imaginative possibilities in *Prospero's Island* and the in-role work in which they engaged with the Games Master and with the actors as characters from *The Tempest*.

The teachers' lessons made use of the portals within the Hub as prompts for vocabulary, but did not extend beyond this; they did not innovate in the space, nor use drama, add additional 'found ' objects or venture beyond the Hub. If one of the satellite installations had been left within the school grounds (albeit with some logistical consequences) the teachers might have been prompted to develop an aspect of the game. The teachers' planning appeared to have been influenced by the wider assessment agenda, and by the related written end of term assignment.

It is also likely that the teachers found it hard to follow the Punchdrunk Enrichment experience, developed with the theatre team's considerable expertise. In this case they may have chosen to fall back upon a common 'default pedagogy' (Thomson et al., 2013). All expressed ideas for possible follow-through and alternative activities for the Hub, but did not, in the lesson observed, employ these. With more support from the

Punchdrunk Enrichment team in planning their sessions, the teachers may have been prepared to take '*risks*' and go '*in lots of different directions',* as the Punchdrunk Enrichment Director had hoped. Instead their follow up work implicitly positioned the Enrichment team as the artists, and themselves as the pedagogues tethered to a traditional English focus. This issue of teachers' as creative pedagogues and the challenges of developing arts partnerships are returned to later in Section 9.4.

9.2 Review of impact on students' attitudes to and engagement in English

In Chapter 6, our analysis provided evidence that the autumn term immersive experience and spring term follow-on work had a positive impact on students' engagement and motivation in English, based on students' and teachers' perceptions. This effect was more apparent in students' qualitative questionnaire and interview responses than it was in their quantifiable questionnaire responses. This may have been related to the necessarily non-specific nature of questions which focused on general attitudes to English and writing: students may not have associated their spring term answers directly with the autumn term immersive experience. New to the school, the Year 7 students' attitudes were also still being formed and their views may have been influenced by their primary school experiences of literacy/English. As a consequence, we advocated caution in interpreting quantitative data. From these data alone it was not possible to attribute any apparent change in attitudes towards English (or in personal writing practices) to *Prospero's Island.*

The combined quantitative and qualitative datasets, however, suggest that the immersive experience and follow-on work did impact on Year 7 students' motivation and engagement in English in various ways. From a positive baseline, a slight improvement in students' average rating of some attitude statements for English lessons and writing in English, were noted, particularly amongst girls and students in middle sets, though differences were not statistically significant. In responding to more open questions, the majority of students who replied stated that the immersive theatre experience and its attendant follow on work in the spring term had impacted positively on their enthusiasm, engagement and learning in English. This is in tune with findings from across the Creative Partnerships dataset, which indicate increased student enthusiasm and engagement in learning when creative approaches, such as immersive theatre, are used (Thomson et al., 2013).

The case study data confirmed these findings, with students unanimously describing the immersive experience as captivating and awe-inspiring. Commonly they noted the experience had inspired their curiosity, captured their imaginations and heightened their sense of enjoyment and interest in the text. They attributed this to a number of factors, which align closely with the characteristics noted earlier in Section 9.1: problem-solving and the game elements of the experience; the multi-sensory impact of the different spaces and challenges; their identification with characters in *The Tempest*; and the interactive and collaborative way of working with the actors and their peers. As a form of alternative reality game, *Prospero's Island* required collaboration within and across teams in order to solve the puzzles. This was well received by the students, and in McGonigal's (2003) terms, may have generated a form of social agency and confidence in the game players who found this way of working highly motivating.

Case study students commonly viewed the immersive experience (and to some degree the return to the installation) as enjoyable and associated it with 'play not work'. As Vygotsky (1978) argued, pleasure cannot be removed from play. This may create a

challenge for practitioners who, whilst they may wish to foster an exploratory play-like approach to learning, are still required to deliver the set curriculum and abide by accountability measures. Nonetheless, the positive engagement and enthusiasm shown by students is encouraging, particularly in the light of research evidence that in schools with substantial pupil intakes from socio-economically disadvantaged contexts, such as the Academy, students may, in response to the strong pressure on staff to raise attainment, become disengaged and develop passive stances towards learning (Lupton and Hempel-Jorgensen, 2012; Mills and Gale, 2009). *Prospero's Island* appears to have acted as a temporary counter-balance to the pressures of a performativity culture in which teachers feel tied to teaching to the test (Ball, 1998), though maintaining such a balance was demanding for the teachers involved.

The case study students also asserted that the autumn term immersive experience and return to the installation, along with the spring term activities had expanded their concept of literacy and supported a sense of ownership of their own learning. They commented that the various new ways of working had begun to empower them as active learners and provided them with more imaginative resources as writers. They reported that their teachers' use of immersive elements in the spring term enhanced their enjoyment and motivation in English lessons and noted in particular that the use of music, pictures and objects, problem-solving approaches and collaborative ways of working were effective in supporting learning and engaging their interest.

The teachers observed that the experience made a particularly positive impact upon the attitudes, responses and participation levels of their lower attaining and normally less engaged students. This was commented upon not just in relation to the immersive experience, as noted earlier, but also in relation to later English lessons. Reflecting on the impact of the immersive experience as a whole, the teachers also commented upon students' increased interest in Shakespeare and literature, confidence in lessons and willingness to volunteer suggestions or take creative risks.

9.3 Review of impact on students' writing

Chapter 7 provided evidence of impact on students' writing. As with the quantitative data on attitudes and engagement, we advocated caution in interpreting differences in students' writing scores. These cannot be attributed directly to the immersive experience. Nor is it possible to assert that *Prospero's Island* had more impact on writing than normal teaching since this was not a randomised control trial.

Nonetheless, in combination the quantitative and qualitative datasets suggest that the autumn term immersive experience did impact on students' writing in various ways. Following the experience, the assessed writing scores of the majority of Year 7 students improved and some students made significant gains. When considered by ability band and by gender, an average gain was made by all the student groups. However, the degree of change varied very considerably from class to class, over one third of students did not improve their writing scores and in some cases scores decreased.

The immersive experience provided an inspiring and potent context for later writing. It enhanced students' eagerness to write about *The Tempest* and offered them considerable support for this. Case study students specifically reported that they were better able to imagine the scene and empathise with the characters than previously and perceived that they had more ideas than usual. As a result they felt writing was both easier and more enjoyable. Teachers also observed an improved attitude towards and

confidence in writing amongst students, some of whom they perceived were taking more risks as writers, although this was not necessarily reflected in improved writing scores.

Whilst holistic comments were not commonly offered by teachers on the students' written texts, when they were included, a stronger sense of perspective, character voice, empathy and tone was recorded in relation to the students' second piece of writing following their participation in *Prospero's Island*. This is consistent with other studies which indicate that deep engagement in drama may lead to enhanced writing (e.g. Grainger et al., 2006; McNaughton, 1997; Bearne et al., 2004). However, unlike these studies, the students taking part in *Prospero's Island* did not adopt characters' role perspectives during the experience; they were positioned as game players exploring the play and its characters. The majority of the teachers who commented on the students' second piece of writing observed an increased sense of their character's voice and perspective. Analysis of case study students' written texts suggests that their ability to evoke the perspective and feelings of characters was facilitated by the interactive and affective nature of the experience. The students themselves voiced the view that the immersive experience had helped them understand the characters and write from a character's point of view. The opportunity to interrogate the text, to investigate characters' words, actions, belongings and living spaces, appeared to have expanded their knowledge of the characters. This helped them make connections and give voice to individual characters' perspectives; they often employed emotive language, which echoed the language introduced and used during the immersive experience, to convey their character's sense of injustice.

In particular there was some evidence that sensory engagement with the scenographic elements of the experience – the visual, spatial and tactile elements - made an impact on students' descriptive writing. Case study students stated that they had more tangible information upon which they could draw in their writing. In Sharples (1999) terms, their multisensory engagement appears to have operated as a 'primary generator' of writing and a supportive prompt for generating and specifically for using more advanced vocabulary. Many of the case study students made good use in their writing of some of the sophisticated terms that had been introduced during the experience. Additionally some drew on Shakespearean language heard, spoken and read during the experience, indicating that the immersive experience operated as a kind of rehearsal for their later writing. Others also imitated poetic expressions previously employed, which effectively captured the interest and attention of readers. Evidence from teachers affirmed case study students' perceptions and the analysis of their texts. Teachers commented that following the immersive experience the descriptive details included in students' writing were enhanced. Whilst it is not possible to determine whether or how this impacted on assigned writing scores, with structured opportunities for consolidation and support it is possible that the enriched use of language noted could impact upon students' writing standards in the longer term.

In commenting on their classes as a whole, the teachers agreed the experience had afforded considerable confidence to their young writers, and noted specific improvements related both to textual and motivational aspects of writing. They also observed that the students' enhanced level of imaginative engagement in Shakespeare had impacted positively on their writing. These views affirm the findings noted above with regard to the case study students (drawn from analysis of their assessed writing,

and their own and their teachers' perspectives) that *Prospero's Island* had influenced students' understanding and use of character development and descriptive writing.

In summary, it appears that the students' verbal, physical and mental play within the multisensory world of *Prospero's Island* was not only motivating; it represented a rich and supportive resource for the young writers. Yet problematically, many of the gains that the teachers and students identified, including inspiration and motivation for writing, imaginative engagement and empathy for characters, and creativity and ownership, are not easily measured by the current national assessment criteria. As a consequence, although high-quality writing depends on them they are often side-lined. There is a need for alternative criteria that recognise and celebrate these essential features of writing, and that counteract the current over-emphasis on the assessment of technical and organisational features. Without such measures for discussing and evaluating the kinds of gains in writing prompted by *Prospero's Island* and similar experiences, when students experiment creatively with new techniques and vocabulary the impact on their writing 'standards' may be perceived as negligible or potentially negative.

This links to a tension the teachers perceived between creative and traditional pedagogies for teaching writing, which is discussed in the following section.

9.4 Review of impact on teachers' pedagogy

Chapter 8 examined evidence of the impact of *Prospero's Island* and associated CPD activity on teachers' pedagogical practice. We emphasised that pedagogical change takes time, it is a complex process, and indeed as research repeatedly indicates, teachers' pedagogy is not easily or speedily transformed (Alexander, 2000; Fisher, 2004). While the teachers involved in the project felt that they had started to make changes during the spring term, they recognised that this was just the start of an extended professional development process.

Nonetheless, the teachers did perceive the project had impacted upon their pedagogy and our observational data provide additional evidence of the approaches they were trialling and developing in their classrooms in the spring term. They sought to sustain and build upon the initial burst of interest and engagement generated by the Punchdrunk experience and worked to extend their repertoires of approaches and enrich their understanding. The range of impacts on pedagogical practice was arguably underpinned by an emerging understanding of the nature and scope of immersive learning and teaching. This was fostered through: the experience of *Prospero's Island;* the associated whole school Teaching and Learning Day (TALD); the after school CPD sessions for the Borough; and the teachers own planning discussions and classroom work. Whilst participants involved in the TALD and CPD sessions were very positive and felt the CPD was inspirational, engaging and enhanced their understandings about immersive teaching and learning, the project only followed three English teachers through into the classroom, to ascertain the impact on their pedagogical practice.

These teachers felt that by the spring term they had a somewhat more developed understanding of immersive teaching and learning. They saw this in particular as encompassing: active learning, a higher than usual degree of student agency, and the inclusion of a wide range of stimuli to support students' multisensory engagement. In relation to active learning, the teachers were aware that students were physically, affectively and cognitively involved throughout the experience, engaged in numerous

tasks of a varied nature which changed rapidly. They saw this as key, although it was perhaps surprising that the teachers did not specifically highlight teamwork and/or collaboration as part of this, even though they had identified teamwork as a beneficial feature of the immersive experience. As many scholars have argued, deep learning is fostered when students are engaged in particular kinds of talk and interaction and are:

> *required to explain, elaborate, or defend one's position to others, as well as to oneself; striving for an explanation often makes a learner integrate and elaborate knowledge in new ways.*
>
> (Vygotsky 1978:158)

There was opportunity for such talk within the experience, but perhaps due to the speed and complexity of the game and a sense that talk and collaboration was not a 'new' professional tool, the teachers did not comment upon it. They did though perceive that immersive learning encompassed an increased sense of agency for the students. In education, learner agency is often seen to encompass two dimensions: a student's sense of agency and their actual agency. The former tends to relate to students having a sense of purpose in interaction and behaviours and a belief that their actions can impact upon other people (van Lier, 2008). The latter tends to relate to volitional activity, students making decisions, taking the initiative, ascribing meaning and relevance and co-constructing knowledge (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Talk is considered key to enabling both these dimensions of agency (van Lier 2008). In *Prospero's Island* the teachers perceived that the students developed a sense of agency and purpose as they interacted with one another, the Games Master and his Assistants in order to unlock the levels in the game. However, they recognised that the students' route through the experience was to a large extent predetermined. By contrast in process drama, teachers seek to offer students' agency by fostering their volitional action within the fictional world, enabling them to make decisions, take choices and thus shape the unfolding experience. These differences and dimensions connect to the earlier discussion of agency in the Enrichment team's primary production *Under the Eiderdown* and raise an interesting debate about the nature and consequence of agency in immersive teaching and learning.

At the close of the project, the trio of features - active learning, student agency and the use of sensory stimuli - comprised the teachers' emerging understanding of immersive teaching and learning. Whilst the project did impact upon their practice (as summarised below) there was still scope for the teachers to develop a more fully theorised understanding of the principles of immersive teaching and learning upon which to draw when planning future work.

In relation to making changes to their pedagogical practice, prior to the experience the teachers noted that they anticipated learning more about different drama techniques and ways to perform Shakespeare and hoped to adopt a more playful approach to teaching. They also expected to engage in creatively redesigning the Key Stage 3 curriculum. Whilst to varying degrees, prompted by the immersive experience and the CPD, they did work towards these (as discussed below) the project also impacted upon their practice in other ways.

In particular, based upon their newly found awareness of features of immersive teaching and learning, the practitioners reported using a wider range of supportive stimuli in their lessons to enrich the students' sensory experience and contribute to their affective engagement and motivation. The observational data affirmed this, as we observed teachers make use of a range of still images, extracts from films, music and

unusual artefacts in their lessons. Time was often set aside for students to talk about these stimuli, to share their ideas with one another and sometimes to work in groups. The related lesson objectives focused upon various aspects of English including: inference and deduction skills as a means of supporting students' reflections on characters; emotive vocabulary in order to enrich descriptive details; sentence structures; and more generally inspiring writing. From the work observed and the case study students' comments, it was clear that the teachers' use of sensory stimuli captured the students' attention, engaged their curiosity and supported their learning. One teacher also used music to set the tone for lessons. It was evident that these activities were directly triggered by the extensive use of artefacts and other sensory stimuli within *Prospero's Island* and the CPD activities.

In tune with their expectations, the teachers reported making renewed and more consistent use of drama techniques within their English lessons in the spring term. These ranged from more traditional techniques such as freeze frame and hot seating, to students performing their work, reading aloud from their writing and providing peer feedback on this. Whilst these techniques were not new to the teachers, participation in *Prospero's Island* appeared to act as a reminder of the active nature of experiential learning, and the potency of learning through imagined experience. Through the experience the teachers seemed to become more cognisant of the benefits of drama and performance, such as enhancing engagement, generating ideas, increasing confidence and developing students' empathy with characters. As a consequence, the teachers reported making increased use of this art form. Thus the project, explicitly endorsed by the school, served to encourage the teachers to engage in more drama and performance based activities in order to motivate young people and support their learning.

The third pedagogical impact that the teachers described was their use of the language of games in English lessons. *Prospero's Island* drew on a digital game format and this was seen by the teachers to successfully motivate students. The activities were very fast, challenges and missions were set, and for some students the group work was perceived as competitive. As a result two of the teachers began using the language of games in their English lessons. They reported that they had begun to reframe and re-name classroom English tasks as challenges (e.g. 'the red hot challenge') and that this served to motivate students. Perhaps borrowing from the language of games in this way prompted the students to begin to see the activities as playful encounters, challenges to which they could rise, rather than as 'work' - prescribed English tasks. Teachers also introduced competitive dimensions in order to motivate students and in this context one teacher also referred to setting team challenges, echoing the organisation of those in *Prospero's Island*. However, most of the game design elements used by Punchdrunk Enrichment were not employed by teachers, as although 'game logic' was mentioned in the CPD in relation to levels this was not explored in depth. Instead the focus was more on modelling and structuring immersive stories with the attendant introduction, stages of discovery, climax and resolution.

Additionally, the teachers reported that they had considered transforming classroom or other spaces as part of developing a more immersive approach, but felt there had been too little time to plan for this in the spring term. One did though outline possible plans for integrating the creation of multisensory spaces into their work for the following semester. The teachers felt that whilst the CPD had been highly engaging and valuable in exploring immersive practice and planning from visuals, it had been difficult for them to progress to planning full schemes of work and radically rethinking the use and

transformation of environments. They believed the wider framing of ideas for immersive projects needed to be married with the English curriculum's set requirements and that there had not been sufficient time to encompass both within the CPD. Nor did they feel sufficiently confident to plan this without more support from the Punchdrunk Enrichment team.

In summary, the impact upon the teachers' pedagogical practice was varied: encompassing a wider range of sensory stimuli, more use of drama and performance related work, and the use of the language of games. The project appeared to encourage the teachers to adopt these specific techniques and make more use of active approaches to learning such as drama. It also prompted them to identify some features of immersive teaching and learning, including active learning, increased learner agency and sensory stimuli, although it did not enable the teachers to develop a distinctive and principled immersive approach. In Thompson et al.'s (2012) terms with regard to professional learning, the teachers had taken some of the skills and practices used by the artists and were able to emulate them, but they did not fully understand the pedagogic principles offered by the team's work and were thus unable to use these as the basis for developing more extensive immersive practice. This is perhaps understandable given the time frame of the project and the fact that the Punchdrunk Enrichment team were only involved in the autumn term, as this limited the opportunities for dialogue and interaction between the team and the three teachers. Although the team had involved one of the teachers from the outset and had worked effectively with a consultant from Hackney Learning Trust, the remaining teachers were not involved until a later stage.

There were clearly a number of difficulties and constraints in the implementation of immersive techniques. The three teachers reported that these included the challenge of time and the persistent demands of formal assessment. The pressure of working in a performativity culture (Ball, 1998) on the teachers was very marked: they were highly cognisant of and partly driven by the need to enable students to attain their individually set targets, and to ensure that as teachers they met the Key Stage 3 curriculum requirements. The unremitting nature of the pressure of performativity can result in teachers adopting more performative pedagogies (Bernstein, 2000) that are characterised by teacher-led learning activities, a focus on students' tests results and discipline. Indeed the teachers identified the need to manage student behaviour as another challenge that tended to restrain their pedagogical practice and capacity to take risks. The teachers felt they were additionally constrained by the set nature of their schemes of work and reported that the nonfiction text focus in the first semester of the spring term did not suit an immersive approach; they had therefore postponed their trialling of immersive techniques. They felt more advance planning was needed to embed new pedagogical strategies and approaches into the curriculum.

Another palpable challenge related to the perceived tension between creative and traditional pedagogies for teaching writing. The practitioners felt that whilst students gained inspiration, insight into characters and vocabulary for writing from the immersive experience, a 'more traditional' approach, (which by its nature was not deemed 'immersive'), was needed to teach writing skills. They were acutely aware that students need specific skills to succeed within the current assessment system and felt that structured ways of working, routines and rules were essential to ensure these were taught effectively. Nonetheless they also recognised the need to motivate students as writers and enable them to engage imaginatively in order to foster their creativity in writing. Indeed the teachers valued the Punchdrunk Enrichment project in part as it

offered them a welcome break from routine teaching and learning, one which freed them from required curricula and standardized testing and measurement.

Whilst the teachers recognised and valued the benefits for students' affectively engaged learning and for themselves as pedagogues, they were conscious they needed to balance the immersive approach with the more routine delivery of the skills/knowledge required for GCSE. Testing and assessment regimes do tend to encourage teachers and students to play safe in writing classrooms, to reproduce genres formulaically, to teach to the test and to accept the teacher as arbiter of quality (Cremin and Myhill, 2013). It is not therefore surprising that it was difficult for the teachers to reconcile the demands of the assessment and accountability agenda in writing with the more creative agenda embodied by *Prospero's Island*. Seeking a nuanced balance in this regard represents a not inconsiderable professional challenge in the current climate. Responding to this in partnership with the Punchdrunk Enrichment team may prove a fruitful way forward, such that the work might be fine-tuned to deliver specific secondary English requirements and teachers are enabled to balance their teaching more effectively.

In turning now to recommendations based upon the evaluation summary, we focus first on suggestions with regard to the immersive project *Prospero's Island*, before addressing suggestions relating to the Punchdrunk Enrichment team's collaborative work more widely.

9.5 Recommendations re *Prospero's Island*

On the basis of this evaluation, we perceive that the professionally executed and innovative immersive project *Prospero's Island* made a positive impact on the Year 7 students' attitudes to and engagement in English, afforded inspiration for their writing and vocabulary and had begun to influence the teachers' pedagogical practice. We recognise this was the first secondary phase project the Punchdrunk Enrichment team have led in collaboration with Hackney Learning Trust, and consider it was both engaging and inspirational. The recommendations noted below should be read in this light.

Some of the recommendations are responsive to what we analysed and observed, some are more developmental and scoping in nature with a view to developing more extended collaborative partnerships. Many represent small issues for consideration and discussion by the Punchdrunk Enrichment team and by Hackney Learning Trust with regard to fine tuning *Prospero's Island* in various ways before, during and after the experience, such that a trajectory of support for teachers is offered to help maintain momentum and embed key principles. All the recommendations seek to enhance the value and longer term impact of this work, though we recognise they have both capacity and financial implications.

We recommend that future partnerships of this project consider:

9.5.1 Before *Prospero's Island*

- *Exploring ways to further dovetail the project with specific elements of the secondary curriculum and assessment requirements*. Planned in collaboration with all teachers involved, this would enable focused planning, follow-on and ongoing review with the Punchdrunk Enrichment team.

- *Sharing the extracts from* The Tempest *to be examined during the experience.* This would enable teachers to follow passages up, consolidate students' understanding, encourage reading to enrich writing, and adapt their planning.
- *Exploring ways to seed the project with all school staff.* Enabling departments/ faculties to make connections with relevant themes and issues might prompt increased involvement on the part of staff from these departments, trigger their attendance with groups and possibly produce related work across the curriculum at Key Stage Three.
- *Building the installation during a half term break* such that more term time is available for integration and the return to the installation.
- *Sharing information about the planned experience with teachers/teaching assistants*. Whilst there is a balancing act between knowing what to expect and experiencing the event as 'real', this would help prepare staff to respond within and after the session, and might encourage preparatory student teamwork.
- *Predicting possible entry, exit and other challenges* with reference to school rules and behaviour policies, and discussing these with accompanying staff.
- *Establishing plans for extended follow up work in school from the outset*, framing the work as a sustained arts partnership and offering ongoing support to teachers.

9.5.2 During *Prospero's Island*

- *Reducing the number of tasks and activities.* This would help to ensure there is more time for the text extract tasks, enabling students to consolidate their understanding and potentially enhancing collaboration/teamwork.
- *Working with teachers to ensure they make maximum use of the time in the experience.* This would help to ensure that teachers use the opportunity to observe and document students' creative engagement and learning. Whilst this might compromise the teachers' imaginative involvement, on their second visit staff could seek to document students' learning.
- *Offering teachers an opportunity to feed back during the session's debrief*. This would enable students to appreciate their teacher's own creative participation.
- *Planning to maximize the number and range of school staff who can experience the event.* This would reduce any sense of over-dependency upon teaching assistants and share the potency of the experience with staff from all departments/ disciplines.
- *Exploring the use of flip cameras, mobile phones and iPads on missions.* Film, still images, audio and text messages could be employed by teachers as part of follow up work and/or shared online.
- *Sharing the written work undertaken during the experience,* enabling teachers to build on this. The Crime Scene Notes, amongst other examples, were creatively engaging but underdeveloped due to the game's speed.
- *Extending the use of the team's in-role work as characters from the play*: enriching the students' imaginative engagement and possibly also enabling students to step into characters' roles.
- *Offering space for increased student volition*, supporting both their sense of agency and actual agency.
- *Exploring bridging activities to be undertaken in the classroom.* These would prompt teachers to build on the work immediately. Students could e.g. be given

resources to co-create a character montage or a character's suitcase. Additionally, forums and blogs could provide ways for students to communicate with characters or collaborate with their peers.

9.5.3 After *Prospero's Island*

- *Holding an artist/teacher /Hackney Learning Trust meeting* to prompt focused discussion about students' learning, reflection and consideration of the work, and joint identification of immediate follow up activities and the return to the Hub.
- *Leaving one or more satellite installations for later work*. Given the depth and detail of these atmospheric spaces, their use was short lived. They represent untapped potential that might, with support, enable teachers to sustain the game-like approach. Some of the spaces could be recreated/documented and accessed online through a portal, giving students opportunities to explore spaces virtually through images and film.
- *Making available the televisual montage as a learning resource*. This might be used to prompt discussion, make connections and trigger the creation of student PowerPoint montages related to *The Tempest's* themes.
- *Offering ongoing support from Hackney learning Trust in the follow through stages of the project*, to help retain the profile in the school and encourage and guide teachers.
- *Building in time for teachers to work collaboratively with Punchdrunk Enrichment team* members, with the latter working as coaches/partners. This would develop teachers' understandings of immersive teaching and learning. It might commence with a focus on exploration/adaptation of techniques, working towards planning a more extended immersive project as a department.
- *Planning a year ahead for the immersive experience to be followed up internally*. This would involve the school committing to follow through in the medium and longer term and help to ensure that the teachers' professional learning through the experience influences the next year's English curriculum.

9.6 Recommendations for new collaborations

It was agreed that the evaluation would include recommendations with regard to future joint ventures, not only for the three core collaborators, but more broadly for Punchdrunk Enrichment's partnership work in secondary education with Hackney Learning Trust. The longer-term aim of the evaluation was thus to inform the future work of Punchdrunk Enrichment in this context. In this regard the current report, representing a specific case study evaluation of *Prospero's Island* in a single school, may usefully be read alongside the wider evaluation study into Punchdrunk Enrichment work undertaken by Middlesex University (Machon and Thompson, 2014).

The partnership between Hackney Learning Trust, Punchdrunk Enrichment and the Academy successful delivered the project *Prospero's Island*. The Trust's knowledge and understanding of educational practice and the needs of a secondary school created an effective bridge between Punchdrunk Enrichment and school staff. The Trust was keen to innovate and embed a more creative and immersive approach to teaching and learning in the life of the academy and their involvement at the outset was pivotal in making the project happen.

In the light of this evaluation we recommend that, in future similar ventures, partners consider:

- *Developing a shared understanding of immersive teaching and learning through action and reflection*. This would help to make explicit the pedagogic principles underpinning the approach, and contribute to the shaping of the field, offering newly theorised ways of working for the profession. Such an understanding would help educators to plan, articulate and argue for changes in curriculum design, assessment and planning.
- *Working collaboratively to develop criteria to widen the assessment of writing and writers.* Whilst this would be led by the Hackney Learning Trust and schools, the Punchdrunk Enrichment team would benefit from involvement if they wish to pursue exploring the impact of their work on students' motivation as writers, their imaginative engagement, empathy for characters and creativity.
- *Sustaining the joint CPD and TALD offer to support the profession,* with possible follow through and online sharing of the work developed. Possibly offering follow up planning with Hackney Learning Trust colleagues/and or members of the Punchdrunk Enrichment team.
- *Providing complementary CPD on working in role.* This would support teachers in structuring extended immersive projects, and engaging in role within them.
- *Collaboratively planning with teachers, Hackney Learning Trust and Punchdrunk Enrichment working towards new lighter-touch immersive projects within school schemes of work.* This would be mutually beneficial, enriching partners' understandings of their different skillsets and each other's constraints and developing examples for other teachers and for CPD.
- *Targeting the Punchdrunk secondary offer* and seeking to develop a focused team of senior leaders to supplement Hackney Learning Trust staff in acting as brokers and advocates of the work.
- *Aiming in the longer term to establish Punchdrunk Enrichment Ambassadors* who have worked alongside the company, led projects in their own schools/Local Authorities and who can act as educational advocates and skilled practitioners, able to support new projects.
- *Establishing a Punchdrunk Enrichment Advisory Board* to extend the company's strategic networks and PR in education.
- *Providing models for the use of social media and everyday technologies* such as blogs, forums and webcams to support immersive storytelling and alternate reality gameplay in school settings. This could enhance the work's reach by providing teachers/students' access to transformed online spaces.
- *Supporting teachers as action researchers* as they undertake their own immersive theatre projects, thus fostering learning and providing documentation for the school and the Punchdrunk Enrichment team.
- *Establishing in-school evaluation procedures* that are integrated within projects and seek to help teachers identify and evidence the benefits for students.
- *Establishing a loan system or co-creating artefact boxes* to support teachers as they seek to develop immersive practice. These could include project specific items or a bank of more generic resources.
- *Maximising the use of social media during and after a project.* This would offer short-term support and a valuable online legacy enabling other educators to find out about and interact with a project.

- *Exploring the principles underpinning gameplay* and the ways in which rule structures, levels and goals built into games can support students' engagement and learning.
- *Exploring the potential of student agency*, both their sense of agency and their actual agency in projects, and its contribution to ownership in learning.
- *Bidding for research funds to establish randomised control trials (RCTs)*. These could investigate more directly the impact of the immersive experience on students' performance (e.g. in written work). RCTs, if combined with qualitative case study data, could influence policy and practice in arts and education.

9.7 Recommendations for dissemination

In order to maximise the impact and influence of the evaluation, it is suggested that a Dissemination Strategy is planned, making use of and extending Punchdrunk Enrichment and the Hackney Learning Trust's range of contacts, networks and opportunities and working with the Open University team where appropriate. This might include:

Producing a full-colour Executive Summary of the evaluation and ensuring wide dissemination through multiple organisations, including:

- Department for Education
- Department of Education Northern Ireland (DENI)
- The Scottish Executive
- Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted)
- Arts Council England, Scotland, Wales
- The National Association of Teachers of English (NATE)
- The United Kingdom Literacy Association (UKLA)
- The English Association (EA)
- The National Association of Advisers in English (NAAE)
- The English and Media Centre
- The National Literacy Trust
- The Centre for Literacy in Education
- National Drama (ND)
- The Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC)

Planning publications: Working in collaboration with the Open University team, and considering articles in the following magazines and their accompanying websites: *The Times Educational Supplement*; UKLA's magazine *English 4-11*, National Drama's magazine *Drama,* NATE's magazine *English Drama Media;* the English and Media centre's *emagazine.*

Targeting professional conference presentations and expanding the company's professional networks: The Open University team has strong networks with most English subject associations and will explore opportunities to undertake such presentations with HLT and Punchdrunk Enrichment.

Planning academic papers: The Open University will lead in this area in order to share this evaluation of Punchdrunk Enrichment's work more widely. The Open University team is currently considering submitting a proposal for the UKLA and/or NATE conferences in 2016 or the Literacy Research Association conference in Nashville, Tennessee, December 2016.

Sharing the evaluation as part of the wider work of Punchdrunk Enrichment: This could link to and be integrated within the plans outlined in Machon and Thompson's (2014) report, which includes for example establishing a symposium dedicated to immersive work and undertaking future joint ventures with universities, Local Authorities and other partners.

The above suggestions for dissemination, based on the evaluation, are offered in order to respond to the project brief. They represent particular strategies that seek to enhance the education profession's knowledge of the *Prospero's Island* project, the broader value of immersive theatre in schools, and the pedagogical potential of immersive teaching and learning.

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