

darts

art club



Case Study

Arthur and Finley's Experience

Art Club – Arthur and Finley’s Experience

What is Art Club?

Art Club is a programme of creative activity for children and their families in Doncaster, with weekly sessions taking place at The Point – our state-of-the-art community space in the centre of Doncaster. Art Club is open and accessible to all, with a particular focus on those facing barriers to arts engagement, including low-income families, families with English as a second language and Disabled children and young people.

Creative activity is delivered by darts’ team of highly-skilled professional artists, who design workshops around the regularly-changing exhibitions showing at The Point’s light-filled gallery, increasing participant engagement with the artworks on display and exploring topics such as the climate crisis, natural world and local histories. Over the course of each block of sessions, workshops explore a particular medium, such as printmaking or textile dyeing. Sessions are participant-led, and are designed for everyone, regardless of level of need or ability.

Arthur and Finley’s Story

Finley has been coming to Art Club with his dad, Arthur (not their real names), for around a year. Having attended mainstream school for several years, Finley and his parents found that, although the education system he had been part of had systems in place for students with Autism, it wasn’t equipped to meet the needs of young people diagnosed with trauma on an individual level. Having struggled and failed to gain the relevant support for their son from the local authority, they finally decided to move their efforts into educating and supporting their son full time.

Arthur told us they were looking for a local group for Finley to join to help build his confidence, create social opportunities, have fun, and learn new skills. They found this a real challenge where we live due to a lack of relevant support in their area so decided to look further afield and found All Aboard Art Club.

“Schools are treating him for Autism but really it was trauma – totally different things... we’ve been trying to match what he gets in school through different things. Of course, this place compliments everything else.”

The accessibility of Art Club

Like many of darts’ programmes, Art Club is free and open to all, with the aim to reduce barriers to arts engagement and accessible for everyone. Arthur told us that, to ensure the best provision for his son, he stopped working so that he could focus on providing a quality education for Finley. However, the local authorities did not provide any financial support and the family struggled to find high-

quality activities to compliment Finley's learning which wouldn't place further financial burden on them as a family.

"Finding Art Club has made a real positive impact on us all, especially our son, and we are so grateful that such a valuable resource is available to us, especially due to the financial impact home education has had on us as a family."

With a range of art forms introduced in workshops by professional artists, Arthur and Finley found that Art Club provided something different and allowed Finley to try a huge range of new creative techniques, from music workshops with professional musician Dyzelle, to visual art workshops with textile artist Karen.

"In such a relatively short period of time our son has accomplished many things at Art Club that we wouldn't have thought possible. This is all down to the amazing staff who put in so much effort each week."

Inclusive arts activity

Taking a person-centred approach, Art Club is designed to respond to participants' needs on an individual and collective level, fostering a relaxed and inclusive environment that can be enjoyed by young people and their families together. Arthur and Finley found that, not only was it a way for Finley to meet new people, but also a way for father and son to spend quality time together doing something that they both enjoyed and found value in:

"I'm a graphic designer by trade, so that's what we try and instil in our Finley... he wanted to go to college to do media and photography... so we're working to get to speed up to there."

Art Club designed so that families can attend, providing the opportunity for children and their parents/guardians to make and share art together. Arthur and Finley found that, as a family with a creative background, the weekly Art Club sessions brought them closer together and enabled them to share an activity they enjoy whilst learning new skills and meeting new people. Although they have to travel an hour each way to and from Doncaster, they found that Art Club was a unique offering which makes the weekly travel worthwhile.

Arthur and Finley's experience of Art Club

As they became regular participants in Art Club, Arthur and Finley found that The Point and the sessions came to provide them with a safe, welcoming and familiar environment that they both looked forward to being a part of:

"We find All Aboard Art Club sessions are well organised, engaging, informative, supportive and inclusive of all who attend. Each session is held in a relaxing and inspiring space, and our son really enjoys learning new ways to experience and appreciate many different forms of art."

In making the switch to home education, the family found it was essential for Finley to gain new opportunities to socialise and make friends whilst trying something different. Finley and Arthur told us that, in coming to Art Club they found an activity that was enjoyable and sociable for Finley, and inspiring for Arthur, too:

"He gets socialisation, he gets to try different stuff. And it's a really inspiring place to be as well. I'm feeling creative and inspired... I love coming here."

A final word...

“It’s brilliant isn’t it... definitely worth it.” – Arthur

“It’s fun, inspiring, sociable and good to meet kind people.” – Finley