

SCHOOLS LINKING

Artist Brief





BACKGROUND



Schools Linking is coordinated by Rochdale Borough Council in partnership with Touchstones (Your Trust) and M6 Theatre. The Schools Linking programme centres on social action principles. Children spend time introducing themselves, communicating with their linked partners (via emails, letters and video calls) and reflecting on these questions: Who am I? Who are we? Where do we live? How do we all live well together?

Touchstones has been working with the national Schools Linking programme to explore issues around identity and community since 2023. Participating classes pair for the entire academic year and children spend time getting to know each other both inside and outside the Schools Linking sessions. The project engages a number of primary schools across the Borough, bringing together over 1000 children from different backgrounds. In term one, linked classes watch a performance together at M6 Theatre and explore key themes and ideas. Then in term two, Touchstones organise 2 artist-led workshops back in the classroom for each partnership.

In 2025 the themes focused on **Bravery and Journeys** and **Standing Out and Fitting In**. In workshops children explored these themes and created collaborative masks through conversations with artist Thomas Byrne, and created poems with artist Elmi Ali. See more about their work and other previous Schools Linking collaborations [here](#).

The project culminated in an outdoor [exhibition](#) in Rochdale Town Centre as part of Touchstones' [Side-by-Side](#) community arts festival in August 2025 and visitors also took away copies of zines containing poems created by students.

BRIEF

For 2026 Rochdale Schools Linking programme we are looking for two artists to devise and deliver individual workshops to be rolled out to all the partner schools between March-May 2026.

Workshops should use the stimulus outlined to inspire pupils to explore the following questions. The children will be in Key Stage Two aged 7-10 years old.

Who am I?

Students will explore their own identities and the identities of their peers.

Who are we?

Students will be offered the opportunity to celebrate their diversity together and discuss their similarities and differences.

Where do we live?

Students will learn about different locations, developing a sense of belonging to their communities, locally, nationally and globally.

How do we live together?

Students will champion equality, challenge prejudice in all its forms and promote the idea of students being active citizens.

We are looking for two artists of different art forms to devise a workshop each linking to this year's themes. We are interested in exploring **a range of artforms**, but would encourage activities that offer a **unique experience** that schools would not usually provide. Please see our webpage for examples of [previous projects](#). The themes we would like to explore this year are:

Belonging

Students have been exploring this theme in their classrooms using two different picture books: *Where*, by Jordan Collins and *The and Only You* by Shane Hegarty & Ben Mantle. Both books explore identity and heritage, where we all come from and our similarities and differences.

Acceptance

Students will have explored this theme in their previous meeting. At M6 Theatre they will watch a production of [Little Gift](#). The play explores loneliness and how kindness and accepting others can bring you out of your shell.

STIMULUS

We would like at least one workshop to incorporate an item or painting from our museum and gallery collections as a stimulus for creativity. The item will be brought to each session by our collections team, who will introduce the item, provide the background and answer any questions. We have picked several works for you to choose from which can be used in the workshops.

Below are some suggested items that could be used.



A SPECIAL PLEADER

by Charles Burton Barber, 1893

Oil on canvas
123 x 163 cms

This work was painted in 1893 at a time when sentimental images of pets were fashionable due to the influence of Queen Victoria, who commissioned Barber to paint several works featuring her pets and grandchildren.

The fashion for sentimental images of animals and children disappeared with the coming of the twentieth century. As a result, Barber passed into more or less complete obscurity and paintings of this style were considered worthless by the art world.

It was only in the 1980s that Victorian narrative art saw a tremendous revival, both in terms of popular interest and commercial value. In the early 1980s *A Special Pleader* was reproduced as a colour print and quickly became the most popular selling print of 1983/84.

Barber painted his last picture for Queen Victoria, and during this time that his health gradually worsened. No longer able to travel, he therefore finished the painting in his studio. The Queen did send for him, but the message arrived too late - he died at the early age of 49.



LOW TIDE

by Dorothea Sharp, 1930s

Oil on canvas
86 x 97 cms

Dorothea Sharp studied at Regent Street Polytechnic, London under George Clausen, and in Paris where she was influenced by the French Impressionists, particularly Monet.

She was often found painting outdoors, particularly in St Ives, but also along the coastline of Southern Europe and became known primarily for her informal paintings of children on the beach, paddling or playing on the sands bathed in sunshine. Many of her subjects were the children of local fishermen and she would carry around a wardrobe of pretty outfits to dress the children up.

Low Tide was started on a trip to Cassis, France and completed from studies of a young girl in Sharp's own garden.



BELLROPE MEADOW

by Stanley Spencer, 1938

Oil on canvas
108 x 146 cms

Using a much more natural range of colours than he did in his more imaginative, religious works, Spencer created many landscape paintings. Most of which are views around his birthplace, the picturesque village of Cookham in Berkshire.

Spencer studied at the Slade School of Art in London from 1908 to 1912, commuting daily from his home. He was given the nickname of 'Cookham' by his peers as he talked about it so much. Inspiring, informing and influencing not just his work but his life, Spencer remained fascinated with the area his entire life and described it as '...the holy suburb of heaven'.

While the scene looks very inviting, welcoming you into well loved garden, a line of barbed wire is visible around the perimeter so its not as appealing as it first appears.



OUR TOWN

by L.S. Lowry, 1941

Oil on canvas
55 x 74 cms

L.S. Lowry first started painting scenes of the industrial landscape in the early 1920s.

Spending his days working as a rent collector in Salford and Manchester and his nights attending classes at a local art school, he referred to his landscapes as 'dreamscapes', as they were largely imaginary compositions based on memory and numerous pencil sketches.

He described the bleakness of urban life using a very limited range of colours, ivory, black, vermilion (red), Prussian blue, yellow ochre and flake white.

His work usually blended stark realism with touches of humour; in this work you can see two dancing figures and pet dogs scampering around against the colourless background and the crowds of hurrying 'matchstick' type figures.



CLIO

by Maud Sulter, 1989

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C-type photograph
114 x 115 cms

The Scottish-Ghanaian artist Maud Sulter (1960 – 2008) created her iconic series Zabat in 1989. The works were commissioned by Rochdale Art Gallery to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the invention of photography and were presented in a solo show here titled Photoworks: Zabat: Poetics of a Family Tree.

The series of photographs depict contemporary Black women artists, writers, performers and activists, dressed as the nine Greek Muses. The artist called the works a 'diasporan family portrait', that challenge the invisibility of Black women in art history. The photographs subvert the usual representations of women in Western art and highlight the connections between European and African histories and cultures.

Each of the sitters in the works represents a Greek Muse. Dorothea Smartt, a literary activist, artist and poet portrays Clio, the Muse of history. Poems accompany the portraits and tell the stories of real or imagined historical women. Sulter includes dialects and misspellings to reflect the politics of the Black arts movement, as well as of lesbian and feminist activism.

AIMS

- Devise and deliver 26 artist workshops over 13 days (2 workshops per day) to paired classes engaged in the programme in various schools across Rochdale Borough.
- Pupils create a collaborative output in their pair exploring an art form. The group will be paired so the activity must be something they can create together rather than working in isolation.
- Each workshop is only 60 minutes so anything to be made should be delivered productively in the time allotted.
- Support pupils in producing a creative output that could be displayed or engaged with after the project e.g. an exhibition, video, zine.

SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

- Have an established creative/artistic practice and have evidence of outputs.
- Extensive experience devising and delivering high quality engaging creative workshops for children and young people.
- Familiar working in school settings and understanding of the education sector.
- Confident independently leading sessions with full classes of up to 30 pupils.
- Excellent time keeping and organisation skills.
- Excellent communication and people skills.
- Strong commitment to and understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion.
- The ability to travel to different schools across the Rochdale Borough and transport required resources and materials with limited direct public transport links.
- Able to devise and produce resources for workshops when needed.
- Experience of evaluating projects and capturing feedback.
- Ability to adapt delivery style and content to suit different age groups.

SCHEDULE

- **27 October - 26 November 2025**
Brief live
- **27 November 2025**
Shortlisting applicants
- **1 December 2025**
Contact shortlisted artists
- **3 or 4 December 2025**
Artist interviews
- **December 2025 - January 2026**
R&D to devise and share workshop plan, meet with Touchstones Creative Team, agree dates to deliver workshops and CPD session with teachers prior to delivery on **14 January 2026**.
- **February 2026**
Refine session plans and confirm locations and dates with artists, team and schools.
- **March - May 2025**
Deliver 13 full days of workshops on agreed dates in various schools across Rochdale Borough.



BUDGET AND RESOURCES

Fee £4250.00 development and delivery of workshops 17 days
@ £250.00 per day (3 days development & 14 days delivery inclusive of travel. There will also be a materials budget available.

Assistant Facilitator – we will also engage an assistant facilitator who will be at all of the sessions to support with the delivery of the workshops.

The Touchstones team will also send a member of staff to support as required.

How to apply:

Please submit your application to creativecommunities@yourtrustrochdale.co.uk. Your application must include the following.

- Your CV and/or a link to examples of your work/portfolio e.g. website or social media.
- A short outline of why you would be suitable no longer than 500 words (or 3 minutes and 30 seconds audio or video.)

The deadline for applications is: 11:59pm on Wednesday 26 November 2025.

Interviews will take place on the **3 or 4 December 2025** in Rochdale.

Please let us know if you have any access requirements that we can help you with during the application process.
creativecommunities@yourtrustrochdale.co.uk.

We are committed to the promotion of equal opportunities in all aspects of our work, including management, employment practices with both paid workers and volunteers, access to services and service provision. We fully support the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion.

We recognise that groups and individuals in society are disadvantaged due to discrimination directed against them by both direct and indirect discrimination.

We encourage applications from local artists within Rochdale Borough and from those from marginalised backgrounds e.g. people from the global majority, LGBTQIA+, d/Deaf, disabled, and working class people.

We aim to remove any barriers, bias or discrimination that prevents individuals or groups from realising their potential and to develop organisational cultures that positively value diversity.