



"You might  
change the way  
people think"

SCHOOL-CINEMA PARTNERSHIPS IN RURAL AREAS



Education



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SCHOOL-CINEMA PARTNERSHIPS IN RURAL AREAS



Final Report of  
The Devon School-Cinema Project  
2000-2002



Published by *bfi* Education September 2002

**Funded by**

Partners for Study Support  
(Department for Education and Skills)

**Participating schools**

King Edward VI Community College, Totnes  
Great Torrington Community School, Great Torrington

**Participating Cinemas**

The Barn, Dartington  
The Plough, Great Torrington

**Partners**

Devon Curriculum Services  
South West Film and Video Development Agency  
British Film Institute

**Design**

Amanda Hawkes

**Printed by**

PDN Design & Print, Maidenhead, Berkshire, UK



The British Film Institute gives everyone the opportunity  
to increase their understanding and appreciation of  
film and television from around the world

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"We are made to be on Edward's side because we know the real story, his innocence, it's comical too, so we like him. It's like a modern fairytale, and like 'Frankenstein' the message is don't judge a book by its cover. It's like by making a film like this you might change the way people think."

**Key Stage 3 pupil on *Edward Scissorhands***

"I think it was very useful learning how to work with the computers. Thank you very much!! I also realized that a 30-sec composition can take 3 hours to record and feel that we might have benefited from a little more time."

**Key Stage 4 pupil evaluating a Saturday music workshop**

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# Summary

This report describes an experimental project which used funding from the Department for Education and Employment to provide pupils in two Devon schools with opportunities to attend after-school film screenings in their local independent cinemas. The key features of the project were:

- Aim: to offer a new experience to pupils by including archive and non-mainstream titles and the chance to see films together in a cinema
- King Edward VI Community College (KEVICC) linked to The Barn Cinema, Dartington (Totnes)
- Great Torrington Community School (GTCS) linked to The Plough (Great Torrington)
- 26 feature films shown to 1000+ pupils over a 16-month period
- pupils were charged for attendance
- screenings supported by practical production workshops in KEVICC
- screening follow-up discussion groups held in GTCS
- two GTCS pupils attended CineMagic Film Festival in Belfast as jury members
- funding £18,370 grant from the DfEE Partners in Study Support scheme
- additional support from the British Film Institute, Devon LEA and South West Media Development Agency
- staff and pupils involved in programming and promotion
- video collection purchased for Great Torrington Public Library
- both schools committed to continuing links with cinemas and providing screenings for pupils
- both cinemas benefited from the project and are committed to continue

There are also many lessons to be learned from the project:

- Commitment of at least one key member of staff is essential
- School senior management support is desirable
- Support of local and regional educational and cultural agencies is important
- School motivations and internal politics are always distinctive and must be respected
- Programming policy should be agreed between school and cinema, and films selected jointly by programmer and leading member of school staff
- Curriculum-driven film choices are risky for out-of-school-hours screenings
- It is a long hard struggle to persuade pupils to attend screenings of non-mainstream films
- Interest is more likely at KS3 than at KS4 and attendance can grow slowly by word of mouth from a small 'core' group
- Choice of non-mainstream pre-15 cert films attractive to KS3 pupils is limited
- Pupils see arts cinemas as less 'cool' and less welcoming than multiplexes
- Transport problems prevent many pupils in rural areas from attending
- Cinema programmers learned a lot about appealing to teenage audiences
- The project was valued by staff and pupils in both schools and by cinemas
- Pupils and staff attending screenings enjoyed them enormously

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# Introduction

From October 2000 to March 2002, two Devon schools worked in partnership with their local cinemas to provide pupils with after-school screenings, workshops and discussion groups. King Edward VI Community College (KEVICC), an 11-18 comprehensive school in the small South Devon town of Totnes, linked up with the Barn Cinema, part of the Dartington Arts complex just over a mile outside the town, to establish **Magic Movies**. Forty miles away in a much more rural context, the 11-16 comprehensive Great Torrington Community School (GTCS) set up its cineclub, **Watchers**, with the Plough Cinema in the centre of Great Torrington, North Devon.

During the sixteen months of the project, 26 feature films<sup>1</sup> were shown to over 1000 pupils, practical production workshops and discussion groups took place, a special video collection was established in Great Torrington's public library, and two pupils attended the CineMagic Film Festival in Belfast as members of the children's jury. The strongest endorsement of the project's success is that, although the funding ceased in March 2002, both KEVICC and GTCS are committed to continuing the school-cinema link and to offer regular screenings and workshops to their pupils.

This report describes the project, explains what made it possible, and outlines the many, diverse and often unexpected benefits it brought to the pupils, the schools and the cinemas. It also describes the problems that the project encountered and the very particular and different circumstances in each school through which two quite distinct versions of the project emerged. This story may both encourage and help schools and cinemas in other parts of the UK to develop yet more versions of school-cinema links and to offer their pupils the chance to discover the world of film. It may also encourage funders and policy-makers to recognize that projects like this may not be best fostered through "one size fits all" funds or directives but need time – and support – to grow in their own way.

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<sup>1</sup> For complete list of film and attendance figures see page 10

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# People

Educational and arts projects are often described in terms of institutions, as though institutions themselves could unproblematically “decide” to do things and then “do” them. In fact, all institutions are made up of people, and have their own politics, factions, histories and operating contexts. Institutions belonging to the same category – schools for example – also differ from one another and cannot be assumed to function in the same way. This report emphasizes the inevitable diversity of the institutions involved. This diversity gave the project a particular dynamic, which can be learned from, but not necessarily reproduced, elsewhere. The policy implications are that similar projects must be given time to grow and to acknowledge their particular institutional configuration, in order to use it as a strength.

The key players in this project, as in any other, were the people directly involved. First and foremost, one teacher in each school gave enormous amounts of time and effort to making the project work. Although the Partners in Study Support funding enabled them to be paid for their time, their dedication went well beyond a quantifiable hourly rate. Gill Clayton is Head of English at GTCS; her early and clear vision for the strong community inflection of the project was followed throughout. Chris Killock, Head of Art at KEVICC, originally envisaged a project for senior pupils which would be more closely related to the curriculum and would introduce them to a challenging range of archive and world cinema. But the DfES funding meant that the focus had to switch to KS 3 and 4. As a result, Chris worked with Jill Bird, Head of Music, to develop a broader-based programme that could draw pupils into workshops on music and film as well as animation, while retaining the stronger curriculum link. At both KEVICC and GTCS, Gill and Chris tried with mixed results to enlist a wider involvement in the project from other staff.

It is probably significant that the people in the project’s partner institutions already knew each other and were committed to working together. Martin Phillips holds one of the UK’s few specialist media advisory posts, thanks to the commitment of Devon LEA under its director, Tony Smith, to retaining a curriculum-focused advisory structure. The LEA works in unique collaboration with the Picture House cinema in Exeter, part of the City Screen chain, to maintain the Media Centre, which offers film-related services to schools throughout the county. Martin was already therefore experienced and committed to media work and to school-cinema links through the events he runs at Picture House and the Media Centre. Judith Higginbottom, Director of the South West Media Development Agency, also had a track record of support for educational activity in the context of public funding for moving image culture, and had recently secured a promise of funding for a dedicated education officer post whose first year of activity would be focused on Devon. Pippa Marriott was appointed to this post in 2001 and became a valued member of the team. Cary Bazalgette, Head of Education Projects at the *bfi*, had prior experience of working with both Martin and Judith, and was keen to support the project because of its potential as a national exemplar. Pippa Eldridge and, later,

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Selina Robertson from the *bfi's* Programming Unit were soon drawn in as indispensable sources of programming advice.

Once the project was under way, staff at the two cinemas also became involved. Before he left the post of programmer for the Plough in March 2001, Simon Heath worked closely with Gill on the film bookings for Watchers; after he left he drew on some of his other skills to provide data inputting and analysis of the questionnaires that were administered to pupils in both schools to identify their cinema-going tastes and the effects of the project. Kamyra O'Keefe at the Barn developed a strong commitment to Magic Movies and became closely involved in the evolution of the programme. Dartington Arts suggested a competition for the logo design of the project and designed a leaflet specially for KEVICC, using this logo.



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# Motivation and funding

In late 1999 the then Department for Education and Employment offered new funding to schools under a scheme called Partners in Study Support. The aim of the scheme was to raise achievement and enhance pupil motivation by funding out-of-school activities, which would be provided in partnership with a wide range of other agencies. The terms of the funding were admirably broad, and were designed to encourage innovation and risk-taking. The scheme was announced at a time when the British Film Institute was starting to expand and re-focus its educational activities, having convened a working group on film education for the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, whose report, *Making Movies Matter*<sup>2</sup>, had been published earlier that year. The **bfi**'s emerging education strategy had three broad aims:

- To broaden access to diverse moving-image experiences
- To develop the UK's moving image resources to achieve their full educational and learning potential
- To raise standards in teaching and learning about moving image media, in both formal and informal settings.

A key element of this new strategy was to build up the **bfi**'s UK-wide "reach". This was clearly going to involve partnerships, and through 1999 the **bfi** was exploring with different agencies and funding sources across the UK, the potential for establishing sustainable partnerships between, for example, Local Education Authorities, libraries, cinemas, schools and colleges. An early initiative on these lines was an agreement with Devon LEA and the South West Media Development Agency to set up a "Devon Cineliteracy Partnership". 8 schools had been identified as potential members of this partnership, who were to be invited to look at ways in which they could develop moving image media work as part of the curriculum.

The **bfi** sent off an expression of interest to the Partners in Study Support scheme in December 1999. At that stage the plan was highly ambitious, envisaging at least four diverse and distinct projects in different parts of England. Just one of the listed activities was "establishment of a children's cinema club at a local independent cinema where screenings would include a wider range of films than the mainstream, and linked workshops would offer opportunities for practical work such as animation, composition and playing music for films, video diaries, etc." When the idea of a Partners in Study Support bid was presented to the Devon Cineliteracy Partnership schools at their launch meeting in March 2000, it was this activity that was picked up by both KEVICC and GTCS.

Both schools wanted to offer pupils broader cultural experiences, to strengthen their community links, and to establish out-of-school hours activities as normal and enjoyable. For Chris Killock at KEVICC, a curricular focus was equally important. There was already an effective community programme at the school and the

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adjoining arts centre ensured the provision of resources and facilities for adventurous arts work. But the school was developing its second bid for specialist arts status, and there was a strong impetus to develop innovative cross-curricular arts work. At GTCS, Gill Clayton saw unrealized potential in the school's position as a key institution in a large village with a huge and very rural catchment area, whose links with other institutions such as the Plough, then under the wing of the Beaford Arts Centre, were so far underdeveloped. She wanted Watchers to have a strong community ethos, drawing in parents and siblings and becoming a community resource for everyone.

After several meetings of the five partners and Vic Ecclestone, the project's "critical friend" appointed by the DfES to advise on the workability of the scheme, the full bid went ahead in summer 2000 for a grant of £18,370 from Partners in Study Support, focusing purely on the two school-cinema partnerships in Devon. It was clear by then that the more ambitious scheme for additional projects elsewhere would not have been manageable. The formal confirmation of the grant did not arrive until 27<sup>th</sup> October 2000, much later than expected and after both schools had begun work on the project. Films have to be booked for screenings well in advance and too much time would have been lost if the cinemas had waited for a formal start point, so this was a calculated risk.

The funding was much more lavish than the schools were used to. Chris and Gill had to be reminded not to volunteer themselves for extra work but to charge for it on a proper basis at £19.82 per hour. Travel and supply cover for meetings was costed in, as were planning meetings with the programmers, film hire and carriage, workshop providers, and even tea and biscuits for the pupils workshop sessions (they found this particularly amazing). At the same time however, an early and unanimous decision was made to charge pupils for attendance at the screenings. This was partly to ensure their commitment to attendance, and partly to build a basis for long-term stability. To our surprise, this was the only aspect of the proposal questioned by the DfES. Our successful counter-argument was that a revenue stream would be essential if the project was to survive after the end of the funding, and pupils would need to be used to a charge from the start. There was however a difference in pricing between the two schools. KEVICC charged £2 a head – and thereby paid for its coach hire to take pupils to the Barn. GTCS charged £1 a head and used the money to fund a prize draw and to build up reserves for the future sustainability of the project. In the few cases of real poverty, ways were found of enabling pupils to attend for free: being given a small task like ticket collection, for example.

The funding did not cover the staffing and travel costs of the other partners. Meeting room hire, catering and staff time for INSET from Devon Curriculum Services had to be charged to the project, as did INSET fees to the *bfi*, but all other services from the partners formed in-kind contributions to the total cost of the project, which was £32,370.

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# Choosing the films

Before the project began, the Plough was offering a strong programme of film screenings which were mainly 15 or 18 certificate, or art house titles such as *Buena Vista Social Club*, *Kundun*, *Das Boot*, *Solaris*, *Eyes Wide Shut* and *The Idiots*. The cinema is right in the centre of Great Torrington, provides exhibitions, theatre and other events as well as films, and has a pleasant café and shop in the foyer. It was thus an attractive community resource despite its under-serving of the child and teenage audience.

The Barn attracts a wide range of the more middle-class population through Dartington's long-established international reputation as an arts centre. Here the emphasis was more strongly on art cinema with a focus on specialist seasons (Women in Muslim Societies, Sacred Sights and Music on Film) and touring programmes including the Sheffield International Documentary Festival, Human Rights Watch Festival, VIVA Spanish Film Festival and the London Lesbian and gay Film Festival. Kamyra was aware that the 12+ audience had no clear programme slot and that need was not being met by the Saturday young people's matinee.

Chris Killock's first ideas for programming included foreign language films, and archive films such as *Battleship Potemkin* – titles which probably would have been viable with a well-motivated sixth form audience. When the school's plans had to be revised to accommodate Key Stages 3 and 4, Chris came up against the very different tastes and expectations of not only the pupils but also their teachers. *Gladiator*, *The Matrix* and *Titanic* were the kinds of title hoped for. As mainstream Hollywood titles shown in multiplexes in the nearby coastal towns, they were a long way from the vision both of the project itself ("to expose students to a rich seam of both historical and contemporary culture"), of the cinema partners and of SWMDA and the **bfi**, all of whom are committed to "broadening access to a wider range of cinema". For the **bfi**, this meant at minimum showing at least one foreign language title and one classic archive title per term, but this was a daunting prospect for at least some of the teachers. How were the projects going to establish themselves? Was it better to start with known quantities attract students into the cinemas in the first place? Or would this send out a misleading signal, making it all the harder to attract students to non-mainstream material later on?

KEVICC's programme started with *Edward Scissorhands*, targeted at Years 7 and 8, which recruited quite well and inspired GTS to show it as well. The next two films, however, Kenneth Branagh's *Hamlet* and *Erin Brockovich*, recruited just 16 and 12 students respectively. They quickly realized that Key Stage 4 and 5 students were less attracted to the screenings.

Meanwhile at GTCS, Watchers got off to a flying start with *Grease*: a popular musical but old enough to enjoy a little retro chic with adults and pupils. It was followed up with *A Christmas Story* in December for which the audience also held up. Disaster struck with *Pleasantville* in January, to which only 25 pupils showed up, and *American Graffiti* in February, which attracted only 6. Dropouts retorted that they weren't going to see films they hadn't heard of and anyway why didn't Watchers show "good" films like *Kevin and Perry Go Large*?

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Film choices thus became the fraught topic of the partners' project meeting in early 2001. Several key issues emerged:

- Key Stage 4 (14+) was a more problematic audience than Key Stage 3 (11-14). Cinema-going for this age-group is primarily a social event which has to be seen as "cool". They want to attend commercial venue selling popcorn, and to get into 15 Certificate films. They certainly don't want to go to the cinema in school uniform. This was a stronger emphasis at KEVICC where the Apollo, Torbay, and the Warner Village in Plymouth are within relatively easy reach, and in any case the school's catchment area includes much of Torbay.
- The pupils who did attend the low turnout screenings enjoyed them enormously. There was thus the potential to "grow" a smaller but more dedicated core group, through whom "word of mouth" might build, especially at KS3. Some of these pupils also became involved in helping with screenings and publicity.
- The teachers didn't know enough potential titles. Simon Heath produced a list of over 200 "must see" films; Cary Bazalgette circulated a semi-serious e-mail exchange between *bfi* staff on a canonical film list for teenagers; the *bfi* National Library list Now Showing (see [www.bfi.org.uk/education/teachers/classroom/nowshowing](http://www.bfi.org.uk/education/teachers/classroom/nowshowing)) was proffered. All these listed many films the teachers had never heard of, let alone seen.
- The cinema programmers were aware of teenagers' tastes, but hoped to broaden these with titles that would not necessarily be suggested by students and teachers, who tended to stick entirely to Hollywood titles. Chris and Kamyra were trying to achieve a balance between mainstream and less well-known films, to create a mix of experience. However, the range of titles which met their criteria **and** had 12 certificates was very limited.
- It was already becoming notable that when a film was chosen solely on the basis of curriculum need (like *Hamlet*) then attendances were extremely low. The priorities governing programming for a project like this which demanded an out of school commitment from students, needed to be clearer.
- Programming and booking films was much more complicated than the teachers had expected. Several potential films were unavailable – in other words they were not in distribution at all – and this was quite a shock to people outside the film distribution/exhibition sector who had not realized what a volatile sector this is.

Film choices had to be made on the basis of everyone sharing their diverse expertise. A balance had to be struck between enticing larger audiences with "big" titles that did not capitulate to the mainstream but did not alienate the pupils, and including more unusual material – e.g. foreign language films – that would challenge the audience as well as delighting them. However, small cinemas have to wait 6–8 weeks for a 'big' title and then have to book them for at least 6 days. For a one-off school screening the waiting period would be longer. One answer is that cinemas could programme a schools screening into the period for which they had booked a film anyway, depending on a level of advance planning and flexibility from the school.

It was agreed that it was probably better to concentrate on building the Key Stage 3 audience than trying to win over the older students. Risks were taken, and the teachers in particular quickly revised their criterion of success from "big box office" to "high satisfaction". A packed house enjoying a film is highly gratifying, but so is a small audience riveted by something they never expected to enjoy.

The final programmes and Box Office figures were:

KEVICC/BARN CINEMA			GTCS/PLOUGH CINEMA		
Date	Title	BO	Date	Title	BO
<b>2000</b>			9 Oct	<i>Grease</i>	140
			4 Dec	<i>A Christmas Story</i> (+ <i>A Cat Concerto</i> )	104
<b>2001</b>					
24 Jan	<i>Edward Scissorhands</i>	55			
5 Mar	<i>Hamlet (Branagh)</i>	16	15 Jan	<i>Pleasantville</i>	25
14 Mar	<i>Erin Brockovich</i>	12	5 Feb	<i>American Graffiti</i> (+ <i>Keep in a Dry Place</i> )	6
22 May	<i>What's Eating Gilbert Grape</i>	45	14 Feb	<i>Truly, Madly, Deeply</i>	27
13 Jun	<i>Some Like it Hot</i>	14	26 Apr	<i>Jason and the Argonauts</i> (+ <i>Maisie's Catch</i> )	34
21 Jun	<i>Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon</i>	80	4 Oct	<i>Edward Scissorhands</i>	97
1 Nov	<i>Strictly Ballroom</i>	7	1 Nov	<i>A Knight's Tale</i>	142
15 Nov	<i>Shrek</i>	90	31 Jan	<i>Life is Beautiful</i>	32
6 Dec	<i>Save the Last Dance</i>	69	13 Dec	<i>Josie and the Pussycats</i> (+ <i>Cat and Dog</i> )	152
<b>2002</b>					
10 Jan	<i>The Apple</i>	9	14 Feb	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	104
31 Jan	<i>Moulin Rouge</i>	58	14 Mar	<i>Monsieur Hulot's Holiday</i>	38
7 Feb	<i>Stand By Me</i>	18	28 Mar	<i>Ocean's 11</i>	91

In addition, GTCS allocated funding to a purchase of 28 titles on video, which were donated to the local library for loan purposes. The library's existing collection centred on titles such as the BBC's *Pride and Prejudice*, so this infusion of new titles has dramatically changed what is on offer. For this Gill used *bfi* lists, "must see" lists from Simon and from colleagues at school, Halliwell's Film Guide and the Trumedia sales list; she tried to get a range of films and genres from the silent period until the present. Each video carries a Watchers sticker, costs £1 to hire, and are proving popular with library users.

The list of video titles is as follows:

<b>Title</b>	<b>Director</b>	<b>Cert.</b>
<i>Apocalypse Now</i>	Francis Ford Coppola	18
<i>Twelve Angry Men</i>	Sidney Lumet	U
<i>A Bug's Life</i>	John Lasseter	U
<i>A Kind of Loving</i>	John Schlesinger	15
<i>All Quiet on the Western Front</i>	Lewis Milestone	PG
<i>Amadeus</i>	Milos Forman	PG
<i>Amistad</i>	Steven Spielberg	15
<i>Blade Runner</i>	Ridley Scott	15
<i>Brief Encounter</i>	David Lean	PG
<i>Casablanca</i>	Michael Curtiz	U
<i>Citizen Kane</i>	Orson Welles	U
<i>Dr Zhivago</i>	David Lean	15
<i>Faust</i>	Jan Svankmajer	12
<i>For Whom the Bell Tolls</i>	Sam Wood	U
<i>Frankenstein</i>	James Whale	PG
<i>Gladiator</i>	Ridley Scott	15
<i>Gone with the Wind</i>	Victor Fleming	PG
<i>High Noon</i>	Fred Zinnemann	U
<i>Jean de Florette</i>	Claude Berri	PG
<i>Kind Hearts and Coronets</i>	Robert Hamer	U
<i>Lawrence of Arabia</i>	David Lean	PG
<i>Life is Beautiful</i>	Roberto Begnini	PG
<i>Metropolis</i>	Fritz Lang	PG
<i>Modern Times</i>	Charles Caplin	U
<i>Nosferatu</i>	Friedrich Murnau	12
<i>One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest</i>	Milos Forman	18
<i>Prospero's Books</i>	Peter Greenaway	15
<i>Rebecca</i>	Alfred Hitchcock	PG
<i>Rebel without a Cause</i>	Nicholas Ray	PG
<i>Rope</i>	Alfred Hitchcock	PG
<i>Shane</i>	George Stevens	PG
<i>Some Like it Hot</i>	Billy Wilder	U
<i>Spellbound</i>	Alfred Hitchcock	PG
<i>Strictly Ballroom</i>	Baz Luhrmann	PG
<i>The 39 Steps</i>	Alfred Hitchcock	U
<i>The Big Sleep</i>	Howard Hawks	PG
<i>The Birds</i>	Alfred Hitchcock	15
<i>The Day of the Triffids</i>	Steve Sekely	15
<i>The Great Dictator</i>	Charles Chaplin	U
<i>The Ladykillers</i>	Alexander Mackendrick	U
<i>The Madness of King George</i>	Nicholas Hynter	PG
<i>The Matrix</i>	The Wachowski Brothers	15
<i>The Third Man</i>	Carol Reed	PG
<i>Withnail and I</i>	Bruce Robison	15
<i>Wuthering Heights</i>	Willian Wyler	U

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# How it worked

For both schools the start of the project in the autumn term 2000 was slower and more confused than they had wanted, due to the DfEE's late announcement of the grant award. Neither school had established really effective links with the cinemas and misunderstandings were occurring over many logistical and financial details. The DfEE immediately demanded particular accounting procedures that the teachers had to get used to, although neither had done budget profiling or invoicing before. There were varying levels of support from colleagues at each school. Chris had help from about 6 Media Studies and English teachers but had little interest beyond this core group. For KEVICC there was also a less clear sense at first of what the screenings were actually trying to achieve. Gill's attempts to get pupils to attend discussion groups were totally frustrated: "I just wanted to see a film – I didn't want to give up my lunch hour to talk about it!" was one succinct response. She also tried – and failed – to involve a local junior school.

The teachers tackled these problems with characteristic energy and ingenuity. Chris took a stronger lead with the KEVICC staff and gave up trying to please everyone, instead working more closely with Kamyra to plan the programme. Gill set out her concerns and expectations clearly to Beaford Arts, who at that time was the administrative body for the Plough.

Both schools put in huge efforts to publicise the films. Kamyra designed and produced a glossy programme booklet specially for Magic Movies. Two boys at GTCS set up a website for Watchers at [www.gtswatchers.co.uk](http://www.gtswatchers.co.uk) and pupils wrote enticing "blurbs" to attract audiences. Although the initial bid had predicted audiences of 150 per screening, neither school normally reached this. About 30 were regular attenders at GTCS and about 20 at KEVICC, but over the whole 16 months the majority of pupils – some 750 – attended at least once. The teachers had assumed – naively they now recognize – that because it was cheap, pupils would attend. An additional factor in the first half of 2001 was foot and mouth, which hit Devon particularly hard. Many pupils could not travel from outlying farms at all.

By the end of the second term patterns and logistics were more settled. One crucial factor was transport. In Simon's view, transport was the main determinant of attendance: if pupils could not arrange this, they would not go. Some 60% of respondents to the evaluation questionnaire mentioned transport as an issue. Although the Barn is only a mile from KEVICC, it is a mile uphill on a footpath with limited lighting. During the winter, both the weather and early dusk made walking difficult. A hired bus was essential, but in Devon all hireable buses are busy from 3.00-4.15 every day, shifting school pupils back to far-flung villages and farms. In addition, the vagaries of audience bookings meant that Chris could never be sure whether one bus would be enough. In contrast, although Great Torrington is more rural, the school is closer to the cinema and safely reachable by paved footpath in 10 minutes. Pupils could reasonably be told: meet at the cinema at 4.00. At

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KEVICC pupils had to hang about in the cold waiting for a bus and had to be supervised throughout.

There had also been worries for both schools about how the pupils would get home after the screenings: in fact many parents in an area like Devon have already established the systems of lifts and sleepovers that rural teenagers require if they are to sustain any kind of social life. It is however probably true that many pupils simply did not attend because they could not fix up post-screening transport. At this point also there were problems about where either pupils or parents were to wait: the Barn at that time had no café. And needless to say it was the teachers that put in the most effort: not one screening took place, said Gill, without her waiting at least 45 minutes afterwards with one or two children, for a parent to turn up to collect them. At the same time, support from colleagues was often not forthcoming and this could be a particular headache where large bookings necessitated additional staff to maintain the required adult:child ratio of 1:15.

Parental consent is required for all out of school activities, so letters were printed for each film at KEVICC, with tear-off strips for response. Students paid their money to the Central Administrative Office and Chris checked that the parental reply slips matched the ticket sales, on the day of the screening. This system worked well, but unfortunately it did not allow the Barn to capture any data on the core attenders. At GTCS Gill sent out a letter to parents in September 2000 with the Watchers logo on it, announcing the new initiative and inviting their involvement; it warned parents that there would not be a permission letter sent out for each screening but that pupils would be given an information slip for their parents with each ticket they purchased. Tickets for Watchers were sold by teachers at GTCS. Initially all the English staff sold them, but this did not prove satisfactory, so Gill took this on herself. A record was kept of who was attending.

Given the complex logistics and heavy time commitments involved, screenings therefore could not average more than two a term. A full OFSTED inspection at GTCS, and KEVICC's work on its new specialist school status bid, were other factors that limited the amount of associated activity the schools could take on. There had been hopes for joint meetings and larger-scale INSET, but these could not be managed. The staff would have loved to have joint awaydays to plan the whole thing thoroughly. The partnership members did meet together in Exeter on an approximately termly basis and teachers from both schools attended INSET provided by the *bfi* and by Devon, funded from the project.



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# Workshops and discussion groups

Gill's discussion groups were held in Gill's classroom from 12.25 to 1.05 pm the day after each screening. The slow start ended when Gill offered an incentive for attending the third discussion group: a draw for a £10 prize, paid on the spot and funded from ticket sales. Four boys went for it – three Year 10 and one Year 8 – and much to their own surprise found themselves fascinated by the chance to talk about a film in such depth. The film in question was the much-disdained *Pleasantville*: one boy commented on how he would never have dreamt of going to see this at the cinema normally, but he had really loved it, and might now be more inclined to go and see "something unusual". This was the kind of outcome Gill – and indeed all the partners – had been hoping for. The Year 10s signed up to become helpers for the scheme, and from then on the discussion groups began to grow, with attendances of between 10 and 30 pupils at each one.

By January 2002 when Roberto Begnini's *Life is Beautiful* was shown, 17 pupils from Key Stages 3 and 4 turned up on the following day for what was the most intensive and thoughtful discussion group of the whole project. Many pupils had not wanted to attend a subtitled film – some laughed in Gill's face when she tried to sell them tickets – but 32 had been persuaded by Gill and the Head of RE working together to push the film very strongly. Gill's report says: "At the end [of the screening], all pupils said they had thoroughly enjoyed the film; some were moved to tears; one boy came up to me and just shook his head. His mother later told me he had said that the whole family needed to see the film, and that he had been completely bowled over by it. Something made more unusual when you realize this boy can be a behaviour problem, and has learning difficulties." The discussion group's focus for this film was strongly on the content and story, but even so many pupils were able by this stage of the project to comment easily and fluently on the camerawork and editing.

At KEVICC, Chris Killock and Gill Bird set up four workshops on Saturdays: two on animation from 10.00am to 12.00, and two on music and film from 1.00 to 5.00. The animation workshops were provided by Sundog Media who have a strong track record in working with schools. The animator Kayla Parker came to see the school and meet the staff in advance to plan the sessions. At each session there was a 1:4 staff:student ratio, because not only the Sundog staff but also two staff from the KEVICC Art Department and two student teachers from Rolle College, Exmouth, joined in the sessions. The workshop in March 2001 developed storyboarding skills through flip books, and students also worked directly on to 16mm film. The work of Len Lye and Norman McLaren was used as a stimulus, as well as work by Sundog. The sections of 16mm films were spliced together and shown as a complete joint "piece". 20 students from Years 8-10 attended and there was a good gender mix. In the second workshop in November, the students moved on to video and ICT techniques of animation. Each student was given a number to develop and animate as part of a "KEVICC Countdown" version of the opening numbers on a film reel, which could be used to introduce a future KEVICC

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promotional film or to go on to a website. Techniques used included collage, freehand illustration and 3D modelling. 16 students from Years 8-10 attended, with again a good gender mix.

This is a good example of the benefits of the overall partnership: KEVICC booked Sundog on the recommendation of both Judith Higginbottom and Martin Phillips, who both knew them well and could guarantee the effectiveness of their work with schools. It is fashionable to insist upon the contributions that industry or arts professionals can make to schools, but they need to understand how schools work and what pedagogic skills are needed. Chris says he cannot overemphasise the importance of ensuring that outsider provision really is excellent.

Two professional musicians, Ian Wellens and Colin Rea, provided the music workshops. Colin had worked with KEVICC before, as a Learning Support Assistant in the Special Needs department, but is skilled at working with students of all abilities, has composed music for a CD ROM production company and has provided training about music for internet, CD ROMs, games and television. He was the main workshop provider, supported by Colin Spencer. Again, a group of sixth formers ensured a high staff-pupil ratio for the intensive activity of composing music and adding it to film extracts to transform or enhance the meaning of a scene, using Cubase software. 10 girls attended the first workshop, on 10th and 16th June 2001; for the second therefore Jill made an effort to set up an all-boys group. This took some doing and the resulting attendance on 10<sup>th</sup> November by 15 very disaffected Year 9 boys looked unpromising. The experience at this and the following session on 17<sup>th</sup> November was transformative: the boys were thrilled by their success in creating powerful and effective new meanings, and the chance of acquire skills in software they hadn't encountered before. "I didn't think I'd learn as much as I did" was one comment; others included "I've got lots of good ways of watching films now, to look out for where the music should be and where it should stop"; and "There was not too much pressure and plenty of help".

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# Benefits to pupils

In the original bid, both schools saw the screening experience as central to the project, providing pupils with access to films they might not otherwise see, and enjoyable new experiences. This was certainly an outcome, although for far smaller numbers than expected. Broadening access, a key remit for both the **bfi** and SWMDA, is often described in terms of access to world cinema and archive films. But for many of these pupils, seeing relatively mainstream titles such as *Truly Madly Deeply* or *Strictly Ballroom* was a powerful new experience. The opportunity (often not so much an opportunity but a reluctant response to heavy persuasion!) to see something just a little way out of their usual film choices was a first step for these pupils in realising the power and range of cinema.

The findings of the first pupil questionnaire, administered in the first term by GTCS and later in the year by KEVICC, indicate their existing tastes. The Top Ten favourite films for GTCS pupils were *Titanic*, *The Matrix*, *Halloween H20*, *Gladiator*, *Notting Hill*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Blair Witch Project*, *Chicken Run*, *Deep Blue Sea*, *Grease* and *The World is Not Enough*. *Grease* slipped in here following its Watchers screening, so perhaps does not count. The Top Ten for KEVICC pupils were *The Matrix*, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, *Gladiator*, *Gone in 60 Seconds*, *Scary Movie*, *28 Days*, *American Pie*, *Kevin and Perry Go Large*, *The Mummy Returns*, *Pearl Harbor* and *Snatch*. Questioned about what they valued in a film, both boys and girls cited "elicits an emotion" as a key factor, but only boys put "plenty of action" as their highest priority. For girls, actors, plot and genre were more or less equally important. These choices and values faithfully reflect mainstream marketing spend, as one would expect. The most significant changes in the responses to the second questionnaire, administered in both schools in the final term of the project, continued to reflect this. *Lord of the Rings* swept the board at GTCS with *Harry Potter* a distant second; at KEVICC *Shrek* topped the list but closely followed by *American Pie 2* and *Lord of the Rings*. But there was also an interesting finding which perhaps justifies the entire scheme:

One of the most pleasing results is the number of votes for films that were part of the scheme: in Torrington, *Knight's Tale*, *Life is Beautiful*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Josie and the Pussycats* and *Grease* found their way on to the list. In Totnes, Baz Luhrmann received a good number of votes and *Moulin Rouge* and *Save the Last Dance* were voted for [as] favourite film.

**Simon Heath, Film Watching Report 3, p8**

As the project developed, teachers in both schools were able to note and monitor a much wider range of significant benefits to pupils that would have been hard to identify at the outset in terms of "needs to be met". The experience of sitting in a small, relaxed group with an adult, with time to reflect and articulate responses to a film, was new to the pupils who participated in the discussion groups.

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They quickly acquired the basic vocabulary they needed – or perhaps they gained confidence in deploying terms they in fact did know – to talk about how the films achieved the effects they thought were important. This was not esoteric technical jargon, but simply on the level of “the camera was interesting at that point, that point of view shot as if you were Edward looking down the blade. Then that high angle shot of Kim looking down at the body, and that low angle shot looking up at Ed and Kim – that was a spooky, horror moment” (Key Stage 3 pupil on *Edward Scissorhands*). This may seem simple, but it is an important step for Key Stage 3 children to feel that they can advance that kind of analysis and have it taken seriously by others. Pupils also became more reflective and confident about perceiving and articulating deeper themes in the films rather than simply relying upon plot recall as a way of expressing the film’s value to them: “The film was about learning to get over someone, learning not to lose all hope in life, about being given a second chance” (Year 11 girl on *Truly, Madly, Deeply*). This is what the teachers would call “cineliteracy” – the ability to discuss and reflect upon their cinema going in mature and informed ways.

Of course it is important to note that Gill is an experienced media teacher and was able to guide the discussion groups skillfully. But pupils did not perceive this simply as a school activity. Going to the cinema together with the teachers and seeing them cry and laugh was important as a part of social learning: adults have emotions too and don’t mind showing them in that context. “It was always a wonderful moment getting back on the coach,” says Chris. “They’d seen us enjoying it at the same level that they did.” The fact that the age-groups were mixed was also an important factor for pupils normally dragooned into age cohorts. The disaffected boys in Jill Bird’s music workshop were thrilled to have sixth formers there to help them, and the sixth formers themselves acquired valuable social skills working with younger pupils. Amongst the core cinema-going group at KEVICC, friendships developed between pupils of different ages. Going to the workshops and discussion groups with others of different ages was an important experience for pupils in both schools, and was a powerful motivator to more mature behaviour and focus on tasks.

Although the KEVICC workshops were not tied to the films in the way that the GTCS discussion groups were, Chris and Jill saw powerful effects on pupils’ thinking about film. The animation groups were hugely motivated towards extending that experience, and the school will be acquiring equipment to support animation work now that it has gained specialist arts status. The power of music to manipulate and direct emotional responses was a revelation to the music groups and has given them a sense of purpose in their composition work that was lacking before; some have now decided to take Music GCSE, which they would not otherwise have done.

One of the outcomes anticipated by the teachers was that pupils would get involved in running the projects and develop a sense of “ownership”: helping to

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choose films, designing posters and blurbs, designing logos, writing reviews. Some of this did go on, but neither teacher could say that their hopes of getting a group of pupils to do it all for them had been realized. Review writing skills were developed by some pupils at GTCS; animation and music skills by some pupils at KEVICC. One late and unexpected development was the invitation from the CineMagic Film Festival in Belfast for the schools to send two pupils to join the children's jury which awards a prize to the best film of the Festival. Two Year 9 girls from GTCS went to Belfast in December 2001, chaperoned by Simon and his partner. Although they weren't over-impressed by the films they saw, the overall experience was a huge success, bringing the school and the project some publicity and establishing a relationship with colleagues in Belfast that the school hopes to sustain.

Far more important for all concerned was the experience of seeing a film together as a school community, in a darkened cinema, on the big screen, with no gaps for advertisements. This shared experience – the collective gasp at the first shots of the concentration camp in *Life is Beautiful* for example – was what made this particular project so distinctive and so worthwhile.

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## Wider benefits

"It was the least stressful school trip ever!" said Chris. Despite the organizational struggles, it was "a nice way of ending the day" to go off together to a screening. The teachers somewhat shamefacedly admitted that the project actually enabled them to get to know other staff that they hadn't even talked to before. More direct – and admissible – benefits to staff were the INSET provision which stimulated consideration of different teaching and learning styles and of using new technologies in more creative ways. Gill has found herself helping the PE department to buy cameras, for example. KEVICC of course benefited from being able to use the experiences of the project and to cite it directly in their specialist arts status bid, and overall the project has stimulated demand for further INSET and for building on the innovations it has brought.

For GTCS, the project has strengthened links between the school and the Plough, with Gill joining the Plough's steering group and the Plough manager coming into the school to direct a play. Staff valued the development of a common frame of reference with pupils, gained from this shared cultural experience. The teachers themselves got to see films they had never seen, and to see films in a cinema rather than on video.

The project had helped raise the profile of film and media work in both schools and to help argue the case for technological investments such as animation equipment and DVD projection. The pupil booklet developed by Jill for the music workshops has been distributed on CD Rom to 800 other teachers in across the UK through INSET sessions run by Martin Phillips, and the pupils' workshop activities have been exhibited to all pupils in the school.

Particularly for the GTCS project with its community emphasis, the school's profile in the community was raised. Articles in the local press, letters to parents, and the video scheme in the library, have all established the Watchers "brand" as associated with the school and a marker of its commitment to the wider community. Several parents became involved in the project and brought in younger siblings. The Plough has started offering additional screenings with a "Watchers-recommended" tag, such is the credibility of the project locally.

What is clearly important in projects of this kind is the commitment of senior management and the establishment of the project in the whole-school calendar. This was a problem in GTCS for much of the project at first. Dates clashed, colleagues were dismissive of the value of the activity. At KEVICC on some occasions screenings failed miserably because pupils had already seen the film or something similar only the week before. Again, there is a point for funders and policy-makers here: all schools have their internal politics and priorities, and innovative projects have to negotiate these in different ways in every case. The value of a project like this is not self-evident to everyone at the outset: both hearts and minds have to be won over.

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# Futures

Both schools and both cinemas are committed to continuing the project, in modified forms. To switch from generous funding to no funding at all clearly requires a change of strategy and each school-cinema partnership has planned this in a different way. The differences are now all funding-related. They also emerge from the kinds of loyalty and interest the project has generated so far.

In Totnes the school's and the cinema's interests overlap to some extent, but each have separate agendas as well. Embedding film study more firmly in the curriculum has always been an important priority for Chris and Jill, and also for the Media Department under Andrea Standon and the English Department under Rachel Bowler. The school's attainment of specialist arts status has opened up funding which can ensure high-quality DVD projection in school, so that pupils can have access to feature films in a context that approaches that of a cinema screening, and without all the problems of getting to the Barn. Screenings can take place at 4.00, immediately after the end of afternoon school, and can be tied more closely to curricular areas. This in turn is likely to win more commitment from staff. And if films are seen as a "school" activity, Chris believes, it will be possible to screen more challenging material, including foreign language and archive films. Once pupils are not asked to attend as a leisure choice but as something that will benefit their learning, the basis for their attendance is different. KEVICC thus plans a programme of regular after-school screenings, starting in the academic year 2002/3.

At the same time, KEVICC are determined to continue and develop their new relationship with the Barn. What they plan is that visits to the Barn will be more high-profile, special events: whole day "Film Impact" events with external speakers and a range of screenings and workshops, on film music for example.

The "Watchers" brand is there to stay at GTCS. But instead of bringing in films specially for the school screenings, the Plough will now offer extra screenings at 4.00 for pupils, from their current programme. This obviously means that their programming will now include a wider range of 12 certificate films appropriate for school screenings. But the closer link to the current programme means that those pupils who want to see a film again, or to bring their families to it (like the boy who was so bowled over by *Life is Beautiful*) can do so.

Both cinemas have thus discovered that, with the relatively small catchment areas they both have, the "safety-net" of partnerships with schools can help them to build audiences by programming for younger age-groups. The Plough is starting to take the risk of two-week bookings of films, now that it knows it can reach a bigger audience. At the Barn, Kamyra is now able to draw upon the opinions of pupil groups to help her understand their needs and interests and to reach their age-group better. She met with students on one occasion to discuss the whole process of programming. She gave them information on finding out about films on the internet, a "how to" guide on researching a film and writing film notes. This might

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be an area that could be developed further in school-cinema partnerships. The project has made her keen to try and change the audience profile of the Barn and to reach a wider range of audiences. Simon's questionnaire analyses include many additional suggestions for the ways in which cinemas like these could attract younger audiences: a cinebus ticketing scheme; playing "decent" music tapes in the foyers, ordering additional posters and providing these to local schools, and marketing films differently to attract the younger audience. Many art films do include action and comedy elements that are not necessarily stressed by their distributors but could be emphasized for a schools audience.

South West Screen, the new screen agency for the region, recognizes the value of the scheme as an exemplar and will seek to set up similar schemes elsewhere. For the *bfi*, the importance of this project is not only the obvious benefits it has brought to the people and agencies involved, but its value as an exemplar to other parts of the UK, urban as well as rural. The Film Council, regional film theatres, independent cinema chains and to some extent the major chains have all expressed interest in the idea of school-cinema partnerships and school cineclubs working with local cinemas. The Film Society movement has pioneered many ways of giving younger audiences access to film. The industry-funded body Film Education has encouraged meetings and dialogue between schools and cinemas, and their National Schools Film Week each October not only brings the experience of cinema to thousands of schoolchildren but also enhances cinemas' contacts with schools. Nevertheless, it is rare for any scheme to achieve sustainability. This report may demonstrate why that is, and point the way to solutions. The lesson to be learned here is that schemes like this need substantial commitment at a local level: they cannot be "flown in" from elsewhere. To nurture that commitment, regional and national screen agencies in the UK could have a key role to play. This will only be realized if they make the necessary strategic and financial investment.



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# Websites for follow-up and comment

Additional data on the project, and a pdf version of this report, can be found on the education pages of the **bfi** website

*bfi* Education – [www.bfi.org.uk/education](http://www.bfi.org.uk/education)

South West Screen – [www.swscreen.co.uk](http://www.swscreen.co.uk)

Devon Media Centre - [www.devon.gov.uk/dcs](http://www.devon.gov.uk/dcs)  
(a website specifically for the Media Centre will be set up in autumn 2002)

The Barn, Dartington Arts – [www.dartingtonarts.co.uk](http://www.dartingtonarts.co.uk)

British Film Institute – [www.bfi.org.uk](http://www.bfi.org.uk)

# "You might change the way people think"



## SCHOOL-CINEMA PARTNERSHIPS IN RURAL AREAS

### THE DEVON SCHOOL-CINEMA PROJECT

From October 2000 to March 2002, two Devon schools worked in partnership with their local cinemas to provide pupils with after-school screenings, workshops and discussion groups, supported by the DfES Partners in Study Support fund. This report describes the project, explains what made it possible, and outlines the many, diverse and often unexpected benefits it brought to the pupils, the schools and the cinemas. It also describes the problems that the project encountered and the very particular and different circumstances in each school through which two quite distinct versions of the project emerged. This story may both encourage and help schools and cinemas in other parts of the UK to develop yet more versions of school-cinema links and to offer their pupils the chance to discover the world of film. It may also encourage funders and policy-makers to recognize that projects like this may not be best fostered through "one size fits all" funds or directives but need time – and support – to grow in their own way.

Education



The British Film Institute gives everyone the opportunity to increase their understanding and appreciation of film and television from around the world  
[www.bfi.org.uk/education](http://www.bfi.org.uk/education)