

PRESS NOTICE

12th January 2009

ED BALLS TAKES TO THE STAGE IN SUPPORT OF THE DIPLOMA

Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, Ed Balls, today visited the Half Moon Young People's Theatre in Tower Hamlets to see how the Diploma in Creative and Media is helping to inspire the capital's next generation of actors, directors and set designers.

The Diploma provides a new and different learning experience for students, combining theoretical study with hands-on, practical experience in the workplace. Half Moon is supporting students studying the Diploma at Southwark College, helping them to complete a two week project to devise and develop a professional theatre performance. Students take on roles as designers, directors, technicians and actors and are supported by professionals including a composer and director to bring their ideas to life in a working theatre environment.

During the visit, the Minister met with students and took part in workshops on stage lighting, musical composition and set design –skills which will be used as part of the students' live performance at the end of the project taking place at Half Moon on 15th and 16th January. The project is part of the collaboration between Southwark 14-19 Partnership and Southwark Theatres' Education Partnership (STEP). The collaboration works with theatres and arts organisations across Southwark and surrounding boroughs, including Tower Hamlets, to ensure the successful delivery of the Diploma in Southwark and help develop its delivery in other boroughs.

The visit reflects Southwark's growing reputation for innovation in 14-19 education. Southwark has embraced the government's reform programme and young people in east London are benefiting from the innovative, exciting and inspiring approaches local schools and colleges have developed to deliver the Diploma with support from Southwark 14-19 Partnership and STEP

Tower Hamlets and Southwark schools and colleges are among the first in the country to offer the Diploma, which started in September 2008. This year, students in Southwark began studying the Diploma in Creative and Media and Engineering and students in Tower Hamlets began studying the Diploma in Information Technology. From 2009 students from across east London will also be able to study the Diploma in a range of subjects including Construction and the Built Environment, Business Administration and Finance, Hair and Beauty Studies and Hospitality.

The Diploma, which has been developed by employers, schools, colleges and universities, aims to help young people aged 14 to 19 realise their potential and gain knowledge and skills in a 'real world' environment. It can be taken alongside GCSEs, A-levels and vocational subjects but it differs from these traditional qualifications as it combines theoretical study with practical learning, aiming to equip students with skills they can apply to the next stage of their development; be that university, college or the world of work.

The Diploma in Creative and Media covers a range of disciplines including visual and performance arts, design, film, TV and fashion. Students of the Diploma will gain knowledge, experience and skills enabling them to master processes common to all creative industries.

Ed Balls said:

"It has been fantastic to see how organisations such as STEP and the Half Moon Theatre are supporting the delivery of the Diploma. Providing students with opportunities to learn outside of the classroom is a vital part of the Diploma and it is important that organisations within the community work together to give young people the opportunity to gain practical experience."

Beccy Allen, Creative Director of STEP said:

"It is great to see the students getting involved with the practical, hands on side of the Diploma and embracing the chance to work with professionals in the creative sector. The project has inspired the students to be creative and use the theory they have learned to

produce a complete production, which they are able to share with their friends and family. We are particularly pleased to be working with Half Moon as they have a long-standing reputation for nurturing the talents of young people pursuing activities in performance arts.”

“STEP works closely with theatres and performing arts organisations in Southwark to help make their work accessible to local schools. To support the Diploma in Creative and Media, STEP and Southwark 14-19 Partnership are committed to providing students with hands-on experience of the creative and media industries in their local area. We hope that projects in Southwark and Tower Hamlets will inspire other local authorities to work with their local theatres so that all students studying the Diploma in Creative and Media can access the facilities and expertise of organisations locally. “

Chris Elwell, Director of Half Moon said:

"Half Moon Young People's Theatre is pleased to be a partner in this exciting new learning opportunity for local young people. The Diploma is a wonderful chance for a professional, community based organisation, such as Half Moon, to use our expertise and resources to contribute to the development of the creative and technical artists of the future."

The collaboration between Southwark 14-19 Partnership and STEP continues in the coming months with similar projects taking place at Theatre Peckham and Oval House Theatre, supporting the delivery of the Diploma in Creative and Media at The Charter School.

Cllr Lisa Rajan, Southwark Council's Executive Member for Children's Services and Education, said:

"Southwark Council is delighted that local schools and colleges are among the first in the country offering students a new learning approach, which is not only practical but offers hands-on study. By offering such unique diplomas we hope to be reducing the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training.

"It's great to see so many students getting involved and I encourage other students to take up some of the new courses on offer this year."

- ENDS -

Notes to editors:

For further information on Diplomas, please go to www.direct.gov.uk/diplomas

1. The Diploma is part of a national programme to widen the choice of courses for young people to motivate them and encourage them to continue learning for longer. It will help them to gain the qualifications they need for success – at work, at college or at university.

2. Diploma teaching began in five subjects in selected areas of the country in September 2008. By 2013, 17 Diplomas will be available to all 14-19 year olds in England. The table below shows the different Diploma lines and the year teaching will begin:

Diploma subject	Date available
Construction and the Built Environment	September 2008
Creative and Media	
Engineering	
Information Technology	
Society, Health and Development	
Business, Administration and Finance	September 2009
Environmental and Land-based Studies	
Hair and Beauty Studies	
Hospitality	
Manufacturing and Product Design	
Public Services	September 2010
Retail Business	
Sport and Leisure	
Travel and Tourism	
Humanities	September 2011
Languages	
Science	

3. There are three levels of the Diploma – Foundation, Higher and Advanced – that students can choose to study at different stages in their education.

4. A Foundation Diploma is equivalent to five GCSEs, a Higher Diploma is equivalent to seven GCSEs and an Advanced Diploma is equivalent to three-and-a-half A levels.

5. Alongside compulsory modules, Diploma students have the opportunity to choose from a range of other subject options, whilst continuing to develop core skills in English, maths and IT. This learning is advanced by work experience, which provides a chance for young people to learn from and be mentored by professionals working in their chosen field.

6. Southwark Theatres' Education Partnership (STEP) is a borough-wide partnership linking the theatre community and education sector in the London Borough of Southwark. STEP's objective is to work closely with Southwark schools, youth and community groups, theatres and performing arts organisations to develop creative approaches to learning and provide innovative projects which stimulate children and young people's personal development and contribute to their educational attainment.

7. Half Moon Young People's Theatre is a leading specialist professional theatre in London with a focus of work for and with young people from birth to age 19 exclusively and through them, their teachers and leaders. Half Moon has two main areas of activity:

- producing and presenting professional theatre at the base, in venues and in youth and schools settings;
- providing an extensive participatory programme, including youth theatres, school and community projects.

Half Moon places a particular emphasis upon engaging those often excluded in terms of culture and ability with a strong track record in delivering work for those considered to be or in danger of falling into the NEET agenda at sometime in the future. Half Moon is a regular funded client of Arts Council London delivering a vast range of projects throughout the year with schools across London.