

# The Young Person's Guide to East London

## Report on work with Forest Gate Community School

This project is centred on the production of an online guide to East London being produced over the next three years by local young people for teenage visitors to the 2012 Games and beyond. Its aim is to offer insights and ideas into what is good, interesting and to be enjoyed in this area from the perspective of those with first hand experience: to produce a real public resource based on youth expertise, while offering participants opportunities for learning and skills acquisition.

During March this year we worked with a Year 10 'English as an Additional Language' group at Forest Gate Community School led by teacher Paul Thompson. Pupils attending this group have difficulties with the normal curriculum for a variety of reasons and these lessons are a means of helping them extend skills and understanding, and to keep abreast of the curriculum. Ten pupils took part. They welcomed the project enthusiastically and were particularly inspired by the idea that they would be contributing to a real resource for visitors. Workshops were led by cSPACE director Loraine Leeson supported by three undergraduate students from the University of East London, allowing for a great deal of individual attention for participants.

Eight sessions were held over a month. Pupils were initially introduced to the project and received preliminary training in use of the cSPACE digital cameras provided. They first experimented with photography around the school, focusing on how to create a sequence of pictures to communicate a sense of place. During a longer session out and about in Stratford they worked in small groups accompanied by teachers and undergraduates to choose and document locations that they felt would be of particular interest to their age group. At subsequent sessions pupils downloaded and edited the results, using digital imaging to manipulate and improve their photographs. They also learned how to save, name and file them appropriately for web site use and to provide information for text readers to enable the information to be fully accessible. Factual information was researched and short reviews written to address future users of the guide, then all entered into a pro-forma for the web site. Finally pupils reviewed their work prior to it being sent off to the web designer. The web site will be under construction for the next few months and all materials produced to date should be online early in the Autumn term.

Participating pupils greatly enjoyed the project while gaining key skills applicable to work in the media industry. They found themselves having to consider practical applications of both their visual and textual literacy, together with the implications of their choices on a wider public. They also learned how to use fairly sophisticated cameras and undertake responsible use of photography in public places. In this way the project helped to boost confidence and self-esteem along with their learning.

