

CREATIVE *writing*
THROUGH  THE  ARTS

Summary Report

2017-2018 School Year



2017-2018 Creative Writing through the Arts Project Summary Report

Funders:

Paul Hamlyn Foundation is the major funder 2016 to 2019 through its 'More and Better' fund. The programme also benefits from additional matched co-investment by participating schools and the Royal Opera House Bridge.

Participating Teachers and Schools (Cohort Two):

Abigail Gilbert	Collingwood Primary School, South Woodham Ferrers
Ashley Bye	Leigh North Street Primary School, Southend-on-Sea
Bec Wakefield	Down Hall Primary School, Rayleigh
Bethany Dunne	St Peter's Catholic Primary School, Billericay
Charlotte Harrison	Wyburns Primary School, Rayleigh
Claire Dempsey	Runwell Community Primary School, Wickford
Darren Pascoe	Grove Wood Primary School, Rayleigh
Emma Strange	North Crescent Primary School, Wickford
Helen McDonagh	Little Thurrock Primary School, Grays
Isabelle Adams	West Leigh Infant School, Leigh-on-Sea
Jade Clark	Federation of Greenways Schools, Southend-on-Sea
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Rahana Hannan	Briscoe Primary School, Basildon
Sharne Rawlinson	Glebe Primary School, Rayleigh

Project Steering Group

Sally Manser and Roxie Curry (Royal Opera House Bridge); Sarah Goldsmith (Project Manager); Lyn Corderoy (Head teacher, Grange Primary School); Louise Lawton (Wickford TSA); Kath Sansom (Head teacher – Wyburns Primary School); Paulette Luff, Geraldine Davis (until December 2017) and Drew Quayle (from January 2018) (Anglia Ruskin University).

Research team:

Paulette Luff, Geraldine Davis (until December 2017), Faye Acton, Alison Feist, Mallika Kanyal and Drew Quayle, with support from Anna Luff and Louise Newley, School of Education and Social Care, Anglia Ruskin University, Chelmsford, UK.

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Full report:

The full end of year report for this second year of the project, prepared by Anglia Ruskin University, is available to download at: <http://arro.anglia.ac.uk/id/eprint/703659>. Findings from this year will be analysed together with findings from the 2016-17 and 2018-19 school years and a final Creative Writing through the Arts project report will be available at the end of 2019.

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The programme:

The aim of the Creative Writing through the Arts programme is to promote children's creative writing skills through integration of writing with art, dance, drama, film and music and visual art activities in primary school classrooms (from Foundation Stage to Year Six).

In the 2017-2018 school year sixteen primary schools from five Teaching Schools Alliances in South Essex joined the programme and took part throughout the year. Each school identified a class teacher to participate in specific professional development activities across the year. Creative practitioners provided full day 'inspiration' workshops for the cohort of teachers. These were:

- Beth Higham Edwards for Music (Autumn term) <https://www.bethhighamedwards.com/>
- Meera Chauda for Art (Spring term) <https://www.axisweb.org/p/meerachauda/>
- Lucy Blazheva for dance (Summer term) <https://lucyblazhevadance.com/>

Each of the arts workshops gave teachers the opportunity to try out, discuss and reflect upon a range of practical activities and teaching and learning strategies that they could adapt to use in their work with pupils of different ages. The workshops were followed up by mentoring visits within schools, by the artists, and meetings of groups of teachers with the creative practitioners, to support dialogues and the embedding of workshop ideas into teaching practice.

The research

The evaluation of the project is being undertaken by researchers from Anglia Ruskin University. The teachers are co-researchers and they engaged in one full day event and termly twilight meetings to support the carrying out of action research to evaluate the implementation of the project in their classrooms. Children's participation and gaining their views about the arts activities and their writing, via listening to pupil voice is also a key aspect of the project, discussed at each twilight session. The teachers decided upon a main research question:

In what ways do creative arts impact upon children's engagement and development as writers?

Methods of collecting data:

- Each teacher identified nine children from her/his class and collected an initial sample of writing and one piece of writing in response to the creative work each term (four pieces of work per child in total). These were assessed independently by a writing consultant.
- Teachers used a variety of means to collect pupils' views about the project activities and their writing (supported by university researchers with expertise in children's participation).
- Teachers produced written narratives of their experiences each term.
- At each twilight meeting teachers gave a verbal update, shared evidence from their classrooms and reported on benefits of the project for children, themselves and the school.
- At a final celebration event, teachers displayed the outcomes of the project in their classroom and produced a summary poster to report their action research

In addition, as part of the evaluation:

- Head teachers completed a self-assessment tool at the beginning of the project, as a basis for reflection upon the opportunities for creative learning on offer in their school.
- Head teachers were interviewed in the final half term of the academic year to explore their experiences of the programme so far and creative learning on offer in their school.
- Teachers completed questionnaires at the beginning and end of the project year.

Voices and images from the project:

Children:

Year Two pupils:

'I like talking through my ideas before I start. My partner helps me to plan'

'I like it when we get to choose'

'I felt confident. It was tricky to remember all the parts, but I did it!'

'I felt happy, I enjoy this'

'I like this, these are my own memories'

Year Four pupils:

'It really helped me remember step by step and I really enjoyed it.'

'It was fun and it was funny to hear all of the different sounds. I would like to do it more often.'

'I found it exciting!'

'I think this will help me with writing my story because it gave me loads of ideas for writing on my own and I enjoyed the lesson.'

Teachers:

All of the children ... have recalled a correct sequence of events and have recorded it pictorially. This includes children who have had little or no experience of writing. They were all willing to try and wanted to have a turn. Many of the children have also managed to produce letters to accompany their drawings ... This one piece of work has told us so much about our children's capabilities (Reception Class teacher - Music)



We found across the year group that the music session made a huge difference to their writing. It helped them to remember the structure and key points of the story and also helped them to remember interesting language that other children had shared, meaning that their writing was more varied ... (Year Two teacher - Music)

The children have been so engaged with all the activities ... The class are so eager to share their work with their peers and their confidence as writers has blossomed ... Even previously reluctant writers are those who are coming up to me, asking if they can share their work with the class. Children have also mentioned that they are regularly writing stories and poems at home. There has definitely been a shift in terms of enthusiasm to write and what is being produced has been to a better standard than before. (Year Four teacher – Art)



The fact that the children had been physical for a whole morning really helped them to engage with the emotions and fatigue that the marathon race would involve. The children's vocabulary easily flowed ... and the description used was of a high quality. There were plenty of similes, metaphors and personification being used. Some of the children needed help with the structure of the poem but they were enthusiastic and wanted to write. Did dance inspire the children's writing? Most definitely! (Key Stage Two teacher – Dance)



Head Teachers:

'I think every child's a writer; the project has, by hook or by crook, offered that love of writing, playing with language ... playing with words, playing creatively through music or dance, with different ways of stringing things together. I think that that's been one of the key ways of getting children to have that love of writing and take those risks and put the pen to paper and be more confident in doing so.'

'What it's done is actually allowed the teacher to be more creative in the delivery of the main teaching elements and the modelling sessions, which have then enabled the children to access the learning more freely and be more creative with what they present.'

Children’s writing:

Ideas and inspiration

Music, Art and Dance stimuli sparked imaginations and offered children ideas for their writing. Children wrote stories and other pieces that their teachers found ‘amazing’, ‘brilliant’ ‘surprising’ and ‘incredible’. Pupils imagined a range of settings and characters, showing originality.

Language use and vocabulary

Working through the arts supported the use of varied language, helping to bring out and widen apt vocabulary choices and the use of imagery. Children used more extended noun phrases, interesting adjectives and adverbs in their work. These were used to good effect in stories to create atmosphere together with the conscious use of literary devices including similes and alliteration.

Basis for writing

Working through the arts prior to writing provided children with something that they were keen to write about. Arts work offered structure to writers, prompting recall and memory of sequences (especially music). Having depicted a character, scene or narrative through art or dance, children were then able to represent these in their writing.

Quality of work

In their arts-inspired work children were able to write more and to produce work of a higher quality. Notable features include: the ability to create and sustain settings and atmosphere; inclusion of descriptive detail; expression of empathy and emotion through writing; and awareness of genre.

Independent assessment of children’s writing:

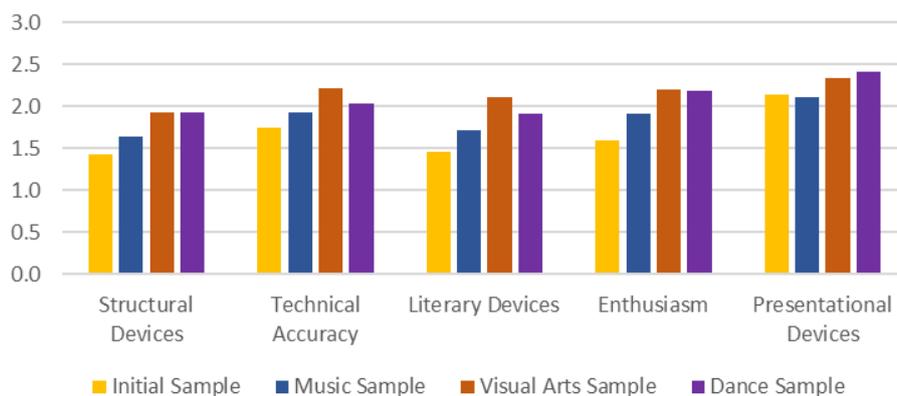
A literacy consultant evaluated writing samples from children in all classes (an initial sample of writing and one piece of writing in response to the creative work each term). Judgements were made based on the child’s use of certain aspects of writing (structural devices, technical accuracy, literary devices, enthusiasm and presentational devices – see definitions below). Each of these aspects has been judged using a score of:

1. if the aspect of writing is not secure or there is little evidence of it within the text;
2. if the aspect of writing is generally secure and there is repeated evidence across the text;
3. if the writing shows secure use of the aspect and there is high evidence throughout the text.

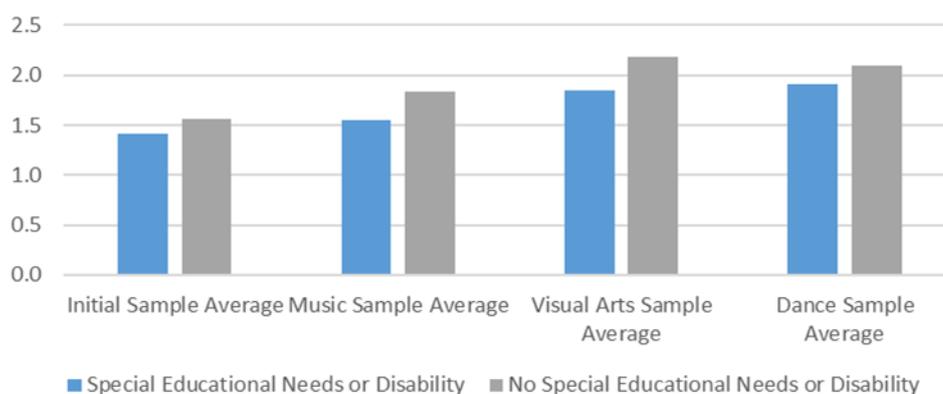
These scores were then tallied and an average recorded. The graphs below have been calculated based on the mean average of all children’s writing samples. The findings highlight differences in attainment on aspects of writing that can be linked with each arts stimulus.

Aspect of writing:	Judged as:
Literary Devices	detail and description through expanded noun phrases, similes and metaphors; emphasis (alliteration, onomatopoeia); development of character and setting; use of rhetorical devices; foreshadowing; symbolism; established use of viewpoint and voice
Technical Accuracy	correct spelling of common words, phonetically plausible attempts at other spellings, correct use of capital letters, and accurate and consistent use of tenses.
Structural Devices	varied length and structure of sentences; use of appropriate sentence forms; variation of sentence starts for effect; use of conjunctions to extend/explain ideas; paragraphs developed around a theme; cohesive devices to link paragraphs; and use of speech (including idioms).
Enthusiasm	evidence of conscious engagement in writing process, maintenance of a style or genre throughout, evidence of empathy and range of vocabulary used, including technical vocabulary.
Presentational Devices	genre-specific devices such as diagrams and pictures, along with headings, sub-titles and labels. NB Due to these not always being relevant and present for all text types, these results are based on smaller datasets

Mean outcomes for each aspect of pupils writing from initial sample and art forms:



Comparison of mean outcomes for pupils identified with SEND and those without:



Pupils identified with SEND and those who do not have SEND all show increased attainment from the Initial Sample. Those not identified with SEND show highest average attainment in the Visual Arts Sample. Pupils with SEND continue to show increased mean attainment in the Dance sample.

Positive findings from independent assessment of pupils' writing:

1. There is an increase in overall writing competencies over the year of the project
2. Both boys and girls show raised attainment
3. 'Enthusiasm' was a notable area of increased attainment, when comparing the initial writing to the writing samples inspired by Dance
4. Pupils identified with SEND made better than expected progress over the year
5. Pupils with English as an Additional Language achieved well
6. Pupil Premium gap narrows slightly between Initial sample and Dance sample

Arts experiences engender motivation and engagement and have been used to immerse pupils more deeply in topic areas, for sustained periods of time. Opportunities to explore characters, settings and events from different perspectives, and through varying media, offer support and substance for subsequent writing. Positive outcomes for writing for pupils with EAL, those identified with SEND and those in receipt of Pupil Premium are notable, perhaps because the multi-modal learning in this project is particularly beneficial for these groups of learners and because the teachers' expectations become more positive when they see pupils' abilities to learn through the arts.

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Additional findings from the project this year	
Children's learning	
Motivation	Working through the arts promoted pupils' engagement with learning. Children responded well to creative tasks and showed sustained attention in lessons. Some work was challenging and pupils felt pride in what they achieved. Different, more open-ended ways of learning offered freedom and flexibility.
Inclusion	Accessible, inclusive environments for learning were created where pupils who tended to be reluctant to write, or who found writing difficult, were able to participate. Arts activities and opportunities to communicate their ideas supported all children to achieve and even to surprise and impress teachers.
Confidence	Arts based learning provided pupils with opportunities to express themselves in different ways and helped to create safe spaces for them to contribute ideas, ask questions from adults and peers and develop a positive mind-set. Children were seen to gain self-confidence and confidence in writing.
Cooperation	In addition to individual learning, arts work gave the pupils a platform to share and work with each other, hence contributing to cooperative and co-productive learning. Children worked well in whole class and group tasks and sharing of ideas supported individuals to write.
Teachers	
Confidence & creativity	After initial feelings of both apprehension and excitement, teachers thoroughly enjoyed participating in the project. They gained confidence in teaching creatively and teaching creative arts. They were keen to implement the arts techniques and enthusiasm for teaching writing was 'reinvigorated'.
Ideas & inspiration	Music, art and dance fitted well within English lessons and were used to create cross curricular links. Teachers found techniques taught by the creative practitioners to be useful and adaptable. Activities were integrated with a wide range of topics and teachers became excited to plan lessons incorporating different art forms,
Professional Learning	Teachers identified positive and lasting influences on their professional development. The participatory learning in the group was a beneficial experience. Co-producing lesson ideas and team teaching with the creative practitioners was beneficial for extending and embedding creative learning.
Children's voice	Teachers also valued the 'pupil voice' element of the project. There was more openness to using children's ideas and a variety of strategies were used.
Schools	
Sharing of ideas	Some ideas were quickly shared with colleagues, especially when co-planning in year or phase groups. In some schools a particular idea was taken forward and used in classes across the school.
Creative practitioners working more widely	In some cases, the creative practitioners visited not only the class teacher but the whole school. Where other members of staff in a year group also observed work with the creative practitioner, during a mentoring visit, it made implementing ideas into curriculum planning easier.
Increase in creative & cultural learning	Classes began using the art forms throughout the school. Learning support assistants joined in with arts-based approaches. There was sharing with parents. Participation in the project was also linked with arts enrichment, such as theatre trips and additional creative and cultural experiences for pupils.
Wider implementation	In several schools, head teachers reported their intentions to work on wider implementation and curriculum development in the next school year. Some schools will work together to embed the project within their local area.