

Learning Alongside

Artist and teacher collaborations at Chantry Community Primary School over an academic year



September 2022 -
July 2023



Learning Alongside

Becky Reed, headteacher at Chantry Community Primary School approached Culture Shift to design a year-long residency to support teachers to deliver the art curriculum.

Anna Atkinson (right) was asked to lead the project. Anna is an artist and art therapist, with experience of working in a primary school as an art therapist and support teacher.



Chantry Community Primary School is a single form entry school in Bexhill serving a mixed demographic with 31% of children eligible for pupil premium. Through Becky's leadership the school has been a beacon of good practice in the local area, gaining a platinum Arts Award in 2019. However, with significant staff turnover Becky felt new teachers would welcome additional support. Becky, Anna and Catherine Orbach, Co-Director at Culture Shift met to explore what was needed from the residency, using a Theory of Change framework to help define goals and outcomes.

Key Goals

With a focus on teachers, Becky wanted them to:

- be more confident and skilled in delivering the arts curriculum
- be able to introduce a broader range of artists
- see opportunities to weave arts and wellbeing into their teaching
- explore the application of arts in other areas of the curriculum

All of this of course was to be underpinned by the children accessing quality creative experiences and cultivating a love of art.

Agreed Plan

- Each year group (1-6) to access 4 half day sessions with Anna over a half term with an additional day for planning and prep.
- Additional resources to be provided to support arts and wellbeing activities as part of the school's monthly Creativity Days.
- Each year group's work to be displayed in school
- Culture Shift to support the development of plans, resources and evaluation

Activity

Each class used two artists' work as a starting point to develop ideas and link with topics children were exploring that term. Plans were developed in advance, with flexibility to adapt as they went. Anna worked to incorporate into each block of work, books and stories, a range of arts skills and media, cross curricular links and a wellbeing focus.

Year group	Topic	Artists	Sample of activities
Y1	Animals	Paula Rego, Cedric Morris	Storyboards, zoo dioramas, printing
Y2	Celebrating Diversity/People who help us	Rachel House, Lubaina Himid	Helping hands sculpture, empowerment prints, trailblazers
Y3	Ancient Egypt	Gustav Klimt, Eileen Agar	Printing, Tree of Life reliefs, masks,
Y4	Colour and shape	Yayoi Kusama, Sophie Tauber Arp	Weaving, installation, stained glass windows
Y5	Portrait vs Landscape	J M W Turner, Pre Raphaelites	Portraits, landscapes, symbolism, poetry
Y6	Transition and self-reflection	Ed Ruscha, Alberto Giacometti	Word art, surrealist matchboxes, collaborative painting

Project Learning: Impact on teachers' skills

Teachers felt the experience was more valuable than regular CPD as they were able to:

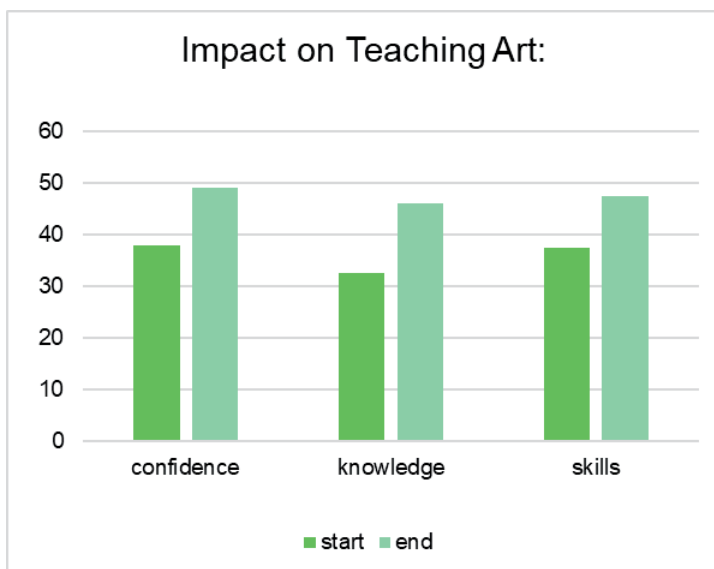
- bounce ideas around with Anna and then team teach and co-deliver.
- be supported when things didn't work and reflect at the end of each session and plan for the following week.
- see Anna model activities and share her thinking process
- have more time to observe children more and offer support where needed
- gain ideas and skills which were transferrable to other subjects

Good to see Anna's process as we reflected each week. Sometimes with art it feels like we are very tied to a structure, good to see Anna flex and adapt. We can now reflect on which activities certain children enjoyed and adapt for next year.

It gave me ideas, even reminded me of things I'd learnt or forgotten. I was interested in how to introduce a new artist in an exciting way. Anna really helped, making links with previous knowledge, giving children confidence.

I could almost be a kid and sit down and do an activity with them. It helped me appreciate what it's like for a child. Watching Anna do it, I could see challenges before they happened. I could reflect 'in action'. It was an opportunity to see personalities in the class.

It's a lot more beneficial to teach alongside someone with skills and knowledge. You can watch a good lesson, go away to do it and it goes wrong. With Anna there you could watch how she tweaked and adapted.



For some the opportunity was a great 'refresher' and rekindled enthusiasm for teaching art, for others who were less confident teaching art, the experience helped build skills and confidence.

All teacher rated their knowledge confidence and skills at the start and end out of 10. The table here shows the aggregate score, with 60 representing all teachers scoring themselves 10/10

Project learning: Impact on wellbeing

With most classes Anna introduced activities with an explicit wellbeing focus. Sometimes this related to 'mindful tasks' that allowed children to zone into what they were doing. Other times there were activities that enabled children to explore feelings, hopes and worries, such as the portal activity and the river of memories with Y6.

Some teachers saw the value of the different ways of exploring self and how that allowed children to explore who they are. The Y6 word art activity and the Y5 portraits with symbols were examples of this.

Lives of artists brought wellbeing to the fore, they explored discrimination for women and for black artists, and mental health -as for instance in the life of Yayoi Kusama who has spent many years in a mental institution.

The Y5 teacher reflected on the impact on children's resilience as they struggled with their desire to be perfectionists and learn that it was OK to make mistakes. The Y4 teacher reflected on the value of collaborative work, in a class that was struggling to work together.

Lockdown had meant they had missed out on school in years 1 and 2 and lacked social skills. *The large group installation enabled them to put their differences aside and get stuck in, especially when in the hall, and not stuck on a chair.*

Feedback from children often focused on the positive impact on their wellbeing of doing art:

Art makes you calm, because you are drawing and its relaxing, you end the week with a calming thing

Sometimes you get messy and that's good

We are more sensible

Art can help you express your feelings very well

(Y3 and Y4 children)



Project legacy

Reflecting on how this work could be sustained, teachers felt confident that the experience had given them the tools to plan for more diversity in artists they work with, in the range of media they use and felt committed to giving children a longer and more immersive experience of art. They were enthused by the resources Anna had shared for example from Tate or Place to Be, all of which would support them to introduce new artists. There is a desire amongst the team to work more collaboratively so they can bounce ideas around with other colleagues and share the enthusiasm and the drive to do new things.

We could do more collaborative working, working with someone fires you up, you enthuse each other. We are lucky to have an artist TA.

Many would like the residency repeated but if that wasn't possible, the input of an artist to CPD and planning would be beneficial.

You've had such a huge impact, I felt very emotional listening to the teachers. They are so much more confident now. There has been a huge impact on teachers' practice and how they take it forwards, you'll be able to see it next year. We started out wanting more diversity in curriculum. It's so much part of what we do now. If you look at the curriculum last year and what we are doing now, there is a real diversity in artists and media, that's the norm now. The impact has been much greater than we anticipated at the beginning.

Becky Reed, headteacher

Ofsted had been in recently and had taken a 'deep dive' into art. They remarked on the quality of the work in sketchbooks and could see the sustained impact following the term Anna had spent in each class. As Becky said 'It was good to see someone else see it.'



Year 1

Theme: Animals

Artists

Cedric Morris (1889 -1982)



Paula Rego (1935 - 2022)



What we did

Developing an animal character

Decoupage and collage

Using art as a portal into an imagined world

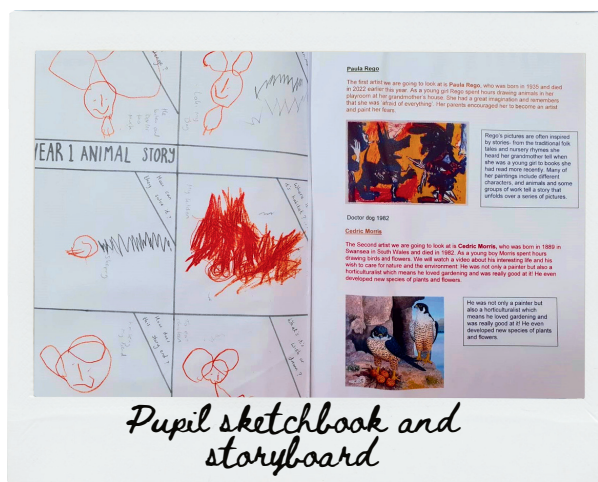
3D diorama using a shoebox

Producing a storyboard in A3

Using our imagined world to understand our own lives

Animal mask making

Printing into sketchbooks using wooden blocks



Wellbeing

Coping with change and transition. Understanding the links between art and wellbeing

Arts skills & Knowledge

Storyboarding, dioramas, collage, printing and visualising in 3D, Line and colour, foreground/background

"Some of them have said, I like doing this because we don't do it at home. They walked out proudly with masks on, it led to a whole conversation with parents. They were getting a response, they were proud of them.." [Teacher]

Year 2

Theme: Celebrating diversity/People who help us

Artists

Rachel Jones (1991-)



Lubaina Himid (1954-)



What we did

Sharing special memories & special people in our lives

Drawing around our bodies and exploring feelings

Building a helping hands sculpture as a group

Producing empowerment prints based on school values

Celebrating special people in our lives

Exploring trailblazers (inspiring people)



Wellbeing

Kindness & help, mindfulness, the body as art, colour & emotion, positive thinking

Arts skills & Knowledge

Printing, group sculpture, oil pastels, colour wheels
Abstract/figurative art

Books and stories

Paper Dolls
by Julia Donaldson
Black All Around
by Patricia Hubbell
My Many Coloured Days
by Dr Seuss

"It's about teaching a love of art & the confidence to explore and test ideas out. I love how Anna taught the children about the artists and how they started out themselves. The children loved learning about individual artists and seeing what they had in common with them too." [Teacher]

Year 3

Theme: Ancient Egyptians

Artists

Gustav Klimt (1862 - 1918)



Eileen Agar (1899 - 1991)



What we did

Making Egyptian dominos

Making headdresses using found objects inspired by Eileen Agar

Egyptian selfie using photos and collage

Decorating masks with found objects

Tree of Life work, exploring shape, pattern and layering

Making a relief sculpture



Wellbeing

Using masks to explore character, mindfulness - layering work and breaking down drawing into small steps

Arts skills & Knowledge

Exploring 2D/3D, group mural, mask making, printing, using self in art, Surrealism, Symbolism and decorative art

Books and stories

My Collection story by Nina Chakrabati

"Art makes you calm, because when you are drawing, it's relaxing and you end the week with a calming thing" [Pupil]

"We'd like to do art every day" [Pupil]

"We are more sensible" [Pupil]

Year 4

Theme: Colour and Shape

Artists

Sophie Taeuber-Arp (1889 - 1943)



Yayoi Kusama (1929 -)



What we did

Exploring how Dada played with imagination

Installation using stickers on found objects

Paper shape Weaving

Create a Dadaist poem

Creating own acetate stained glass window

Walk to church, looking at shapes along the way

Making 3D objects for end of year show

A handmade doodle book or zine



Wellbeing

Art in a mental hospital, doodling for mental health, places that create a sense of calm and concepts around beauty

Arts skills & Knowledge

Shape and form, weaving, observational drawing, site specific art, stained glass windows, zine making, Installation art & Abstraction

Books and stories

The Dot by Peter H Reynolds

"Some children have made real improvements about how they talk about art as well as how they do it. Some kids really found their niche as we did so much ... They didn't realise they could do this stuff at home" [Teacher]

"Art can help you express your feelings very well" [Pupil]

Year 5

Theme: Portrait vs Landscape

Artists

Joseph Turner (1775 - 1851)



The Pre-Raphaelites (founded 1848)



What we did

Looking at how artists express feeling through weather, light & shadow

Drawing landscapes with pencil, crayon and watercolour

Painting exotic places (using postcards for reference),

Illustrating a poem by Christina Rossetti and writing a poem inspired by her

Drawing portraits of each other and themselves, using symbolism

Sketching a range of flowers that express emotion



Wellbeing

Links between flowers and feelings, symbolism around weather and mood and how portraits convey personal stories

Arts skills & Knowledge

Symbolism in landscape and portraiture (people, clothing, objects, backgrounds), wax resist, watercolour, Pre-Raphaelites and Romantics

Books and stories

The Poetry of Christina Rossetti

"Seeing the whole journey the children have been on has been the biggest thing for me. One child was very reluctant at first and then threw himself in, showing real resilience. Learning that things don't have to go right has been a massive breakthrough. Knowing you can make mistakes." [Teacher]

Year 6

Theme: Transition and Self-reflection

Artists

Ed Ruscha (1937-)



Alberto Giacometti (1901 - 1966)



What we did

Creating word art based around children's skills, hobbies, strengths & likes

making a large group landscape to describe feelings around transition

Surrealist version of drawing game 'consequences'

Making lego portraits, reflecting on logos and branding

surrealist matchbox art



Landscape



Lego portraits, matchboxes and word art



Wellbeing

Exploring feelings around transition and developing self-portraits which celebrate who you are

Arts skills & Knowledge

Using words in art, surrealist strategies for exploring the unconscious, 2D/3D, wax resist, Surrealism and Pop Art

Books and stories

'A River' by Marc Martin

"It was lovely to see the children interacting with different styles of art – I particularly enjoyed the 3D art session. They learnt that art can be surreal and fun and they were unexpectedly engaged with the nonsense poetry part of the lesson which surprised me." [Teacher]