

My

Creative

School

Evaluation

Executive Summary
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A.N.D

Education
Commission
CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK



phf Paul Hamlyn
Foundation

The first year of the My Creative School (MCS) programme has engaged 10 participating primary schools in south London and the Medway in innovative teacher-artist partnerships, or 'Creative Explorations' which have focused on developing new creative approaches to teaching and learning through arts-led experiential activity.

Funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, steering partners the Education Commission, Archdiocese of Southwark and A New Direction (AND) have worked with an estimated 360 Key Stage 2 pupils, working directly with artists in classroom sessions and a further estimated 240 working in classroom activities led by teachers after MCS artist Continuing Professional Development (CPD) inputs. The programme has also engaged 25 primary school teachers and senior leaders and six artists.

The report on the first year of programme activity in the academic year 2016–2017 details successful outcomes from the project in key areas of developing teacher skills and confidence, gains in pupil skills development, impact on attainment in core subjects and wider impacts on whole school culture change.

Teacher Skills Development

All participating teachers reported benefits from innovative arts practice and the ability to observe and learn from new approaches. The majority of teacher self-assessments of their own confidence in working with arts-based approaches reflect these gains.

Development of Creative Pedagogies

The benefits of more open-ended approaches to learning and teaching activity are reported across all schools. Four teachers make specific use of the words 'no right or wrong' in their observations of artists' modelling of experiential learning techniques. They note the contrasts with more prescriptive existing approaches and also note the value of these new approaches in encouraging less engaged children to participate. All other schools report benefits that correspond to this idea, e.g. appreciation of more open and less prescriptive approaches to teaching.

Gains in Pupil Skills

New approaches have impacted significantly on pupils' skills development, with evidence of increased confidence and ability to question and improved levels of speaking and listening in several case studies. This includes significant gains for focus group pupils in related criteria. These gains are reflected in corroborative data from schools' data tracking systems, although more analysis is needed to generate more exact data and identify causal links between MCS inputs and gains in achievement in core subjects.

Artist skills development and learning

The majority of artists (four out of six) report gains in their understanding of the curriculum relevance of their work.

School Development and Whole School Change

Around half the schools have demonstrated a clear strategic direction for the future development of practice, e.g. through a systematic approach to embedding new ways of working and with explicit statements of support for future development from four participating head teachers. In the other six schools, teachers have expressed their intentions to develop work and embed it in their practice, with strategies including training for Teaching Assistants (TAs). Schools that have planned in INSET training for their projects have, from the artists' perspective, been more effective in creating a higher impact for their work. Given the relatively short duration of the project, plans to develop partnerships have not yet fully materialised.

Challenges of Planning and Delivery

Partners have been thorough in their reflections on the challenges which accompanied setting up projects. Partners identified key challenges in a changed ecology for the arts in schools with fewer arts inputs in many schools and a corresponding lack of familiarity among many teachers of arts-based approaches and processes. Differences in expectation created some tensions in the initial phases of the programme, until the benefits of new approaches were evident in practice led by artists in schools. Six of the participating schools made requests for a more straightforward planning process with more planning time for artists and teachers. Artists have also expressed a desire for more training and information about the curriculum. Reflections on these challenges have already informed a more streamlined planning process for the MCS programme in the second year of delivery.