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Final Report

October 2015

A collaborative research project during the 2014-2015 school year between: cultural providers and the Royal Opera House Bridge; Billericay Teaching School Alliance and 18 teachers and their enablers from 13 primary schools in Essex; and academic staff from the Department of Education at Anglia Ruskin University.

Acknowledgements:

This project was supported by a financial grant from Royal Opera House Bridge and funding from Essex County Council.

We are grateful for the work of Lyn Corderoy, Head Teacher, Grange Primary School, Wickford, for provision of support and facilities for meetings and workshops.

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Essex Music Hub <https://schools-secure.essex.gov.uk/other/music/Pages/music.aspx>

Make Believe Arts <http://www.makebelievearts.co.uk/>

House of Illustration <http://www.houseofillustration.org.uk/>

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**Creative Writing through the Arts
Final Report
October 2015**

Executive summary

The Creative Writing through the Arts project took place throughout the 2014-15 academic year as a collaboration between: cultural providers and the Royal Opera House Bridge; Billericay Teaching School Alliance and the 18 early career teachers and their enablers from 13 primary schools; and academic staff from the Department of Education at Anglia Ruskin University.

The fundamental aim of the project was to promote children's creative writing skills through the use of music, drama and illustration activities in classrooms. The project was also designed to enable the professional development of early career teachers. Finally, the project aspired to assess the value of creative learning in schools and raise awareness of the value of working in partnership with the cultural sector to develop curriculum and pedagogy.

The project included: an Inspiration Day (at which the project was introduced); a full day workshop each term, led by a creative practitioner with a focus on different expressive arts (music, drama and illustration), followed by a half-day visit to the school by the expert who led the workshop; and a full day workshop on action research plus three, termly, twilight sessions. Each early career teacher implemented a project in their school, linked with development of children's writing through music, drama and/or visual arts, and evaluated this through action research.

In summary, the findings demonstrated that the project met its aims and was of benefit to children, teachers and schools:

Aim: To develop children's writing skills through creative processes

- Children developed open-ended writing skills including: powers of description; ideas and imagination; thought processes and reasoning ability
- Children developed technical writing skills: structure; vocabulary; and elements of writing style, such as use of figurative language
- Children derived other benefits: independent learning, engagement and enjoyment; confidence in independent writing; enhanced quality and quantity of writing
- Children made expected progress or more and this was particularly noted for previously reluctant writers

Aim: To provide structured support for early career teachers to lead action research on an area of learning for their school

- Teachers' positive professional identity was reinforced
- Teachers were motivated when they saw children inspired, engaged with learning and making better than expected progress in their writing.
- Teachers gained many new ideas for activities, plus strategies for planning and implementing creative lessons, in writing and across the new National Curriculum
- Teachers increased in confidence and some showed leadership in facilitating the arts across a year group, or Key Stage or throughout the school

Aims: To articulate the value of creative learning in schools and raise awareness of the value of working in partnership with the cultural sector to develop curriculum and pedagogy.

- Schools' engagement with creative and cultural learning has increased
- Schools reported expansion of creativity with increased use of creative teaching techniques by early career teachers and their colleagues
- Schools have seen gains in teachers' confidence in teaching through the arts and also children's confidence to participate in arts activities and to write
- Schools have appreciated the growth in skills of early career teachers, including experience and aptitude for future leadership roles.

The Creative Writing through the Arts project team was awarded the 2015 British Educational Research Association / British Curriculum Foundation Routledge Taylor-Francis Curriculum Journal prize: <https://www.bera.ac.uk/news/2015-berabcf-routledge-taylor-francis-curriculum-journal-prize>

The project has generated a strong collaboration and a sense of successful engagement between schools and academic and cultural providers to support the professional development of early career teachers, to promote creative learning and to foster children's writing skills. Discussion between all stakeholders will inform decisions about the next steps to take this project forward.

Creative Writing through the Arts
Final Report
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1. Introduction

This is the final report of a research project which took place through the 2014-2015 academic year in England. The project was innovative in its design and represents a collaboration between: the Royal Opera House Bridge and creative practitioners sourced through this organisation; Billericay Teaching School Alliance and the eighteen primary school teachers and their enablers from thirteen primary schools in Essex; and academic staff from the Department of Education within Anglia Ruskin University. The collaboration demonstrates a strong partnership between the different organisations, with each organisation having different roles within the overall project but working holistically to ensure the elements were linked and the overall focus of the project remained the children. The project has been awarded the national 2015 BERA BCF Routledge Curriculum Journal Prize for collaborative curriculum development work between schools and universities.

The fundamental aim of the project was to develop children's creative writing, enabling teachers in their classrooms to make use of music, drama and illustration activities to engage children in developing their writing. The project was also designed for sustainability. It enabled the development of early career teachers through workshops with creative practitioners and workshops with academic staff to provide continuing professional development to support the teachers' ongoing classroom practice. The project also aspired to engage schools in cultural activities, with the potential to lead to opportunities for whole school development of this area of their work.

2. Background and Context

Henley initially reviewed Music education for the UK government in 2011 and this was extended with a review of cultural education that was completed in 2012, recommending the development of Bridge organisations to create networks, connecting schools, arts and communities. In England, these Bridge organisations have been brought about through Arts Council England, with the aim to support children and young people to have rich experiences of the arts. For this project, the collaboration has been with the Bridge in the East of England, Royal Opera House (ROH) Bridge. The collaboration also includes Billericay Teaching School Alliance (TSA) and, through them, the schools and teachers in the region. The Henley (2012) review included 24 recommendations, and our project enacts several of these: the recommendation for broad cultural education for all children (1), new local partnerships (7), managing closer partnerships (8), and training (NQ) teachers (16)

The project was designed to build the case for creative learning in schools, and to raise schools' awareness of the value of working in partnership with the cultural sector to develop curriculum and pedagogy. The design enabled the early career teachers to commit to the development of their classroom practice, through an action research project. The schools signed up to support these teachers. The ROH Bridge engaged creative practitioners and supported their work with schools. Billericay Teaching School Alliance was the central communication point to schools. Anglia Ruskin University academics supported teachers with their action research projects and have carried out the final evaluation of the project as a whole.

3. Aims and Design of the Project

The aims of the project were:

1. To develop children's writing skills through creative processes
2. To provide structured support for early career teachers to lead action research on an area of learning for their school
3. To build the case and articulate the value of creative learning in schools
4. To raise schools' awareness of the value of working in partnership with the cultural sector to develop both curriculum and pedagogy.

3.1 Location and duration

This was a one year project carried out in primary schools in Essex, England. Schools within the locality were contacted in summer 2014 by Billericay TSA and given the opportunity to be part of the project. Thirteen (nine Primary Schools; three Infant Schools; and one Junior School) of thirty seven schools (35%) took this opportunity and agreed to:

- Support an early career teacher to attend development days
- Support this teacher to carry out an action research project
- Release the teacher from school, with funding for cover costs if this was during school time
- Appoint an enabler from the senior staff at the school to facilitate the success of the project and to attend an initial information day and a final celebration day

All schools expressing interest were able to be part of this project.

3.2 Participants

Eighteen (18) early career primary school teachers in thirteen schools in Essex, England were the principal participants in the project. Early career teachers (ECTs) are teachers who, after gaining Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), have been teaching for more than one and less than five years. The teachers were working across classes from Reception (age 4-5 years) to Year 6 (age 10-11 years). Average class size was 30 children, so that in total some 540 children were able to directly benefit from the project. This included: 30 children in reception class; 210 children in Key Stage One (age 5-7); and 300 children in Key Stage Two (age 7-11). The ECTs in each school had the support of an identified **enabler** whose main role was to provide support and guidance for the participating ECT(s) from their school throughout the year.

3.3 Design

Schools identified one or two early career teachers to be part of the project and these teachers, with their enabler, attended a briefing event and an Inspiration Day in July 2014. These events served to set the scene for the project, to clearly state the requirements and expected outcomes, and to provide key dates for the year.

Each ECT identified and implemented an action research project within their school, linked to the development of children's writing. They developed a research question, identified evidence to be used and evaluated and reported their project, captured in a project blog and a display at the final celebration event for the project.

During the 2014 – 2015 academic year the early career teachers attended professional development days designed to support them with using music (in the Autumn term), drama (in the Spring term), and illustration (in the Summer term) within the planning and delivery of their teaching. There was a particular focus on ideas for activities that could be linked with writing. The Royal Opera House Bridge (as active investor, broker and advocate for the project) engaged skilful creative practitioners, via prominent arts organisations. The creative practitioners (an Advanced Skills Teacher for music, seconded from her school to Essex Music Hub, two actors from Make Believe Arts and four visual artists from House of Illustration) facilitated these three one-day events, and the early career teachers had follow up visits within their schools to enable activities and ideas to be embedded at local level. Preparatory work was undertaken by the early career teachers prior to the school visits to maximise the opportunities provided by the visits.

The early career teachers also attended workshops to support them to design and carry out their action research projects. These were facilitated by academic staff from Anglia Ruskin University. An initial training day supported understanding of educational action research and opportunities for cycles of teacher enquiry through the project. Termly twilight sessions, comprising two hour early evening meetings, supported the early career teachers to identify research questions, identify potential evidence, carry out their projects and draw conclusions. A final celebration day enabled the participants to display their work. These research projects encouraged teachers to maintain a record of what they did with their classes, collect data and make judgements about how the changes they had made in their teaching had benefitted the children and supported their progress with writing.

In summary, the ECTs:

- Attended a full day workshop each term, with a focus on different expressive arts (music, drama and illustration) followed up by a half day visit to their school by the expert who led the workshop (this element funded through ROH Bridge and Essex County Council and organised through ROH Bridge);
- Joined a full day workshop on action research plus three twilight sessions, one each term (delivered by academics from Anglia Ruskin University, part funded through ROH Bridge);
- Contributed to a final summative event in summer 2015 at which the findings were presented (part funded through ROH Bridge).

The enablers, who were members of the senior management team within the school, ensured that the ECTs were able to attend the full day workshops and twilight sessions. The enablers also linked the work of the ECT to the meeting of strategic aims from their School Development Plan, encouraging the ECT to disseminate practice and skills gained from working on the project to benefit other school staff. The enabler committed to attend the briefing event and Inspiration Day and the summative event. The enabler also supported and monitored the action research project, from a school perspective.

During the project we were able to make use of a creative learning zone within Grange Primary School, and Wickford Collaborative Learning Centre, a purpose built development site, to enable the workshops and meetings to take place. The Director from Billericay Teaching School Alliance acted as the project lead, forming a central communication point with all collaborators and participants.

3.4 Data collection methods

In order to collect data from the teachers' projects, but also from the enablers and from the teachers themselves, we used a number of data collection methods. This enabled us to evaluate the project, in detail, from a variety of perspectives. These methods included:

- Initial expression of interest forms completed by the head teacher
- Initial and final self-evaluation tools completed by the enabler and teacher
- Initial questionnaire to teachers to gain demographic data
- Benefits identification by the teachers at the twilight workshops
- 'Journeys' drawn by the teachers
- Creative practitioner visit notes
- Teachers' reports of their action research projects (blogs)
- Summaries of individual teacher projects
- Display material and evidence from children's writing at the celebration event

3.5 Design summary

Project inception and planning, engagement of collaborators	
Expressions of interest. Identification and sign up of schools July 2014. Initial data collection from schools.	
Workshops and visits from Creative Practitioners, one workshop and visit per term per teacher, Music, Drama, Illustration Data collection from visits	Workshops on Action Research, one per term Data collection from teachers and by teachers via their individual projects
Celebration day, June 2015 Final data collection from schools and projects	
Project completion	

3.6 Ethical considerations

The project was approved by Anglia Ruskin University Faculty of Health Social Care and Education Research Ethics Panel. Participation was voluntary. Good practice in research ethics was maintained throughout the project, adhering to the British Educational Research Association Ethical Guidelines (BERA, 2011). Ethical considerations and protocols were discussed with the early career teachers as one aspect of the action research training day and as a recurring theme during the termly twilight sessions.

3.7 Data analysis

The different types of data were analysed separately and then collectively to identify the main findings and consider these against the overall aims of the project. The process for analysis of the different data sets is provided in the findings section below.

4. Findings and Analysis

All schools involved in the project submitted completed initial expressions of interest and initial and final self-evaluation tools. Seventeen of the initial eighteen teachers submitted all aspects of the data requested.

4.1. Demographic information

Prior to the start of the programme demographic information on the participating schools and early career teachers (ECTs) were collected through expression of interest forms and a baseline questionnaire. Demographic information on the 18 participating ECTs from 13 schools are provided in Table 1 (see overleaf). Year groups taught varied from Reception to Year 6, year of teaching ranged from second to fourth, and years since having qualified teacher status (QTS) varied from one to 15 years (but the latter participating teacher had had a long career break from teaching). Participating teachers had various specific responsibilities within their schools, and varied greatly in their previous arts-based experience with 10 referring to previous qualifications in arts-related areas (five of whom had relevant qualifications at degree level, and three at A Level), eight with other arts-related interests and experience, and two citing no relevant experience or interest.

Table 1: Demographic information about participating schools and ECTs.

School	School description	Teacher code	Year of teaching	Year group taught	Years with QTS	Specific responsibilities	Art/ music/ drama experience & interests
1	Small rural primary school	T1	2 nd	Year 2	1	P.E. teacher	A Level Drama
2	Large rural primary school	T2	3 rd	Year 5	3	R.E. subject leader	Degree in Drama Studies
		T3	4 th	Year 1	3	Art subject leader; Art & School Council	Speaks Gaeilge; general interest in music & drama
3	Large urban infant school	T4	3 rd	Year 1	2	RE subject leader/co-ordinator	Interested in musicals and plays
4	Small urban primary school	T5	2 nd	Year 3	1	Modern Foreign Language co-ordinator	Competitive cheerleading coach
		T6	2 nd	Year 2	1	Healthy schools and PSHE	Degree in Textiles Design; print making; computer design.
5	Small rural primary school	T7	2 nd	Year 3/4	1	History subject leader/co-ordinator	Part of local amateur dramatics group; singing; ballet
6	Small urban infant school	T8	2 nd	Year 1	1	n/a	Music A-Level equivalent; plays tin-whistle and violin; Irish dancer
7	Large urban primary school	T9	2 nd	Year 5	1	History teacher; Gifted and Talented Team	Grade 8 singing; grade 5 flute & saxophone; just started playing piano; drama degree, sign language
8	Small rural primary school	T10	3 rd	Year 2	2	Science subject leader	-
9	Small rural infant school	T11	2 nd	Year 2	1	Music; outdoor curriculum	Done some music courses; played some musical instruments for pleasure
10	2 form entry (small town school)	T12	1 st	Year 3	1	Drama; Creative Arts co-ordinator	Two drama degrees; used to run drama academies; 3 years running physical theatre company
		T13	3 rd	Year 4	15 (incl. break)	Music co-ordinator	Music degree; keen actor; violinist; pianist; plays various other instruments
11	Large urban primary school	T14	2 nd	Year 5	1	Class teacher	-
		T15	3 rd	Reception	1	Class teacher; PE subject leader	Qualified gymnastics coach, cheer tumble coach
12	Small urban primary school (2 form entry)	T16	3 rd	Year 4	2	R.E. co-ordinator	Taken some piano exams; enjoys visiting the theatre; enjoys listening to a range of music
		T17	3 rd	Year 6	2	Art, D&T, library co-ordinator	GCSE Drama; AS Level Performing Arts
13	Large urban primary school	T18	-	Year 3/4	2	Arts cluster (P.E)	Attends proms season at Royal Albert Hall, visits art galleries and museums

In recent years, the arts have taken something of a back seat in our school. We wish to enhance creative provision for all pupils and link this with writing. (School 6)

Teaching in the school has tended to lack some creativity and we are keen to improve the provision for our pupils... (School 12)

One of the participating schools identified that a lack of creativity in teaching could have stemmed from an initial focus on the foundation stones of learning in core subjects, whereas now the school wanted to build on this:

Nearly all of the school representatives anticipated that the programme would lead to creative teaching, for example:

We anticipate that our early careers teacher's participation in the project will impact on teaching creatively across the year group team and beyond. (School 3)

Work in new and creative ways to teach literacy through arts based subjects. (School 7)

A few respondents also expressed an anticipation for the programme to stimulate creative interest in pupils:

...pupils becoming creative thinkers...drama, music and art...it stimulates creative interest in children of all ages. (School 2)

This programme will support us in finding other alternatives in delivering English which will engage, stimulate and bring out the children's creativity. (School 8)

Some school representatives expressed a specific desire and expectation for the programme to provide the participating teachers with new ideas in their teaching, for example:

...I hope that this course will be able to provide me with new and exciting ideas to introduce to this phase group... (School 11)

...develop new ideas and understanding of other creative techniques to implement creative and imaginative teaching and learning. (School 5)

4.2.1.2 Achievement and Attainment in Literacy

Another theme which emerged from the expressions of interest relates to pupils' achievement and attainment in literacy. A number of school representatives anticipated an improvement in writing as a result of the programme:

...improve attainment and progress in writing for all children across the school. (School 8)

Improved writing content – impacting on choice of vocabulary and descriptive language. Increasing opportunities to develop speaking and listening in children – impacting on wider vocabulary and sentence structure. (School 9)

Three of the school representatives emphasised their expectations for boys in particular to improve in writing as a result of the programme, for example:

Boys achievement in literacy in particular, has been an issue for some time in our school and although we are closing the gap, we would love to see boys...achieving better results in writing. (School 1)

Boys' writing was an issue here last year. ...we have begun the task of creating a criteria for staff that establishes what makes a quality writing prompt and we are creating a directory of ideas that are 'real' to the pupils. By using music, drama and the arts to supplement this thus creating further exciting writing opportunities for our pupils fits our current drive. Standards of writing have already risen this year due to this work and this project will help us, I believe, to accelerate progress even more. (School 10)

4.2.1.3 Learning

In addition to improvements in achievement and attainment, another theme to emerge from the expressions of interest was an expectation that both pupils and teachers would increase in their overall learning. A large majority of the schools' representatives outlined an expectation for the programme to increase the learning of the participating teacher/s by enhancing their teaching skills, their leadership skills, their understanding of the arts, building on existing knowledge, and contributing to their continuing professional development (CPD), for example:

...continuing own professional development. (School 8)

Improving skills in teaching the creative arts, improving skills in using creative arts as a stimulus for writing... (School 9)

As a participating teacher, the programme will help me to deepen and enrich my foundation subject knowledge and equip me with new and exciting ideas to teach cross curricular learning in our school. (School 11)

As well as developing their [*participating teachers*'] expertise, it will also allow both to develop some leadership skills... (School 12)

A number of the school representatives also anticipated that the programme would increase pupil's learning and improve their experience of learning:

...increasing their [*pupils*'] love of learning... I recognise that this method of teaching provides more entry points to learning than traditional subject style teaching. (School 11)

Pupils developing more independence for their own learning. (School 2)

4.2.1.4 Enjoyment

A number of school representatives expressed a desire for pupils to enjoy learning at school, and anticipated that the programme would facilitate this. Some anticipated greater engagement and enjoyment in lessons generally, for example:

I would like the children to enjoy using creativity in core subjects as well as foundation subjects. (School 5)

Stimulating children to want to learn and to enjoy learning...an enjoyable/valuable experience for the children. (School 9)

Others expressed a desire for pupils to enjoy writing in particular:

...we would love to see boys enjoying...writing... At the moment, there are too many children who see writing as a chore rather than something they enjoy. We would love to see them smiling about the prospect of writing rather than groaning! (School 1)

4.2.1.5 Inspiration

School representatives also anticipated that the programme would inspire those taking part. A number of teachers expected the programme to inspire pupils, either in general, in their writing, or in their thinking:

To inspire pupils! (School 4)

...we are keen to improve the provision for our pupils, so that they aren't just happy with the way that they learn but that they are truly inspired...art and music to inspire and act as a catalyst for writing... (School 12)

One school also expressed a particular expectation that boys would be inspired to write:

...inspire boys to write... (School 3)

4.2.1.6 Confidence

One further theme to emerge from the expressions of interest relates to the expectation for pupils and staff to increase in confidence as a result of participation in the programme. An anticipation for pupils to grow in confidence was expressed by two of the participating schools:

Pupils growing in confidence (School 2)

...increasing their [*pupils*']...self-esteem and self-confidence. (School 11)

Likewise, two of the schools anticipated that the participating teachers themselves would grow in confidence in their teaching abilities and skills:

To develop literacy provision and teacher confidence, particularly in years 2 and 3 through the arts. (School 4)

By the end of the programme, I would like to develop my confidence in teaching... (School 5)

4.2.1.7 Whole-school impact

When expressing their expectations of the impact of the programme, nearly all participating school representatives referred to a school-wide impact, for example:

Long term, I would like to sustain the creativity in teaching and develop this into a whole school approach. (School 5)

Following our Ofsted inspection in October 2013 when our school secured 'good', after previously being a satisfactory school, our next goal is to work towards 'outstanding'. This programme will support our whole school drive towards this. (School 8)

Achieving an impact on the whole school was largely anticipated through shared learning between colleagues, or Joint Practice Development (JPD), for example:

...they [*participating teachers*] will deliver CPD to other members of staff to ensure that the impact of them attending the project is school wide. (School 12)

...learn some new skills that [*participating teacher*] could...share with other colleagues so the school feels more empowered to get creative with children. (School 1)

We have the opportunity to disseminate innovative ideas learned by the early careers teacher on CPD days to our wider staff, to broaden the impact of learning across the school, and we relish the challenge of sharing ideas across the TSA. (School 3)

...have the opportunity to share teaching experiences with colleagues as part of the literacy team. (School 7)

This programme will enable [*participating teacher*] to support the senior leadership in our strive for better outcomes in English, whilst continuing her own professional development. (School 8)

A number of school representatives also referred to programmes aimed at improving writing which were already in place at their schools. When referring to the anticipated impact of the present programme, they expressed their expectation for it to complement and support existing school-wide programmes. The most frequently mentioned was 'Talk For Writing' which enables children to imitate the key language they need for a particular topic orally before they try reading and analysing it. This was described by representatives from three of the participating schools:

...a way to support the teaching and learning of Talk For Writing. ... we are extremely excited about the impact TFW has had across the school. It has not only raised standards but has also encouraged children to love writing. This project will enhance these attitudes shared by both pupils and staff. (School 2)

We are always looking for new ideas and initiatives to support our 'Talk For Writing' approach that we adopt. (School 8)

Specific ways in which the present programme would impact on the whole school were mentioned in the expressions of interest. The most frequently mentioned was its anticipated impact on the curriculum, for example:

We anticipate that the CPD opportunities our early careers teacher will experience as part of the project will be woven into our subsequent curriculum planning... (School 3)

Using skills/experiences to influence other teachers, curriculum and pedagogy across the school and in doing so, giving 'status' to [*participating teacher's*] position as a teacher/co-ordinator early in her career. (School 9)

In terms of a whole school impact, participation in this programme will help to ensure that the new National Curriculum is implemented in our school in a creative manner and digital media is used in teaching and learning. (School 11)

4.2.1.8 Wider impact

Finally, a few of the schools' representatives referred to the potential impact of the programme outside of the individual participating school. For example, representatives from two participating schools expected to establish relationships with other schools:

An opportunity to share ideas, plan and develop new links with colleagues in other schools and those working in the cultural sector. (School 2)

To make links with other schools beyond our town. (School 4)

The representative from another school also anticipated an impact on the community as a whole and on initial teacher training (ITT) provided in the local area:

...would be enriching for our whole community...As a National Support School and a school that links closely with the Billericay SCITT [*School Centred Initial Teacher Training*] to deliver ITT we would be able to spread this focus on creativity and the enrichment of writing experiences beyond our school. (School 6)

4.3 Baseline Questionnaire

All 18 participating teachers completed a questionnaire prior to the start of the programme. When asked in this questionnaire which of three options best described creative learning in their school, the majority selected that their school used some creative learning (see Table 2). The most frequently selected reason for getting involved with the project was their head teacher suggesting it would be a good idea, followed by an interest in cultural enrichment and needing to develop this aspect of their work (see Table 3). All five participating ECTs with relevant degree-level qualifications cited an interest in cultural enrichment as a reason for getting involved in the project. Eight out of the 10 ECTs without relevant degree-level qualifications cited a need to develop this aspect of their work as a reason for getting involved in the project (as opposed to only one of the five with arts-based degree-level experience). Fifteen participating teachers indicated that they received support to undertake their teaching role. Thirteen of these teachers received in class support from a support assistant, two worked with a mentor, two were involved in team teaching, and one had in-class support from a specialist.

Table 2: Responses related to creative learning.

Which of these best describes your school? (please tick one answer)	Frequency
We currently use a lot of creative learning in our school	2
In our school we use some creative learning	13
There is not a lot of creative learning in our school	3

Table 3: Reasons for involvement in the project.

What made you get involved in this project? (tick all that apply)	Frequency
My head teacher suggested it would be a good idea	15
I thought it would be something different	5
I am really interested in cultural enrichment	9
I need to develop this aspect of my work	9

The questionnaire also asked the participating teachers to rate their levels of experience with art, drama, music and other cultural activities on a four-point Likert-type scale ranging from ‘I have no experience’ to ‘I have a lot of experience’. As can be seen in Table 4, the majority of participating teachers reported having just a little experience with art ($n=9$), music ($n=8$) and other cultural activities ($n=12$). The same number of teachers reported having just a little experience with drama ($n=6$) as having a lot of experience with drama ($n=6$). Ratings coincided with previously cited drama, art and music qualifications and experience. As can be seen in Table 4 participating ECTs cited most experience with drama with 50% citing some or a lot of experience.

Table 4: Frequency of reported levels of experience with art, drama, music and cultural activities.

	I have no experience	I have just a little experience	I have some experience	I have a lot of experience
Art	2 (11.1%)	9 (50%)	4 (22.2%)	3 (16.7%)
Drama	3 (16.7%)	6 (33.3%)	3 (16.7%)	6 (33.3%)
Music	3 (16.7%)	8 (44.4%)	4 (22.2%)	3 (16.7%)
Other cultural activity	2 (11.1%)	12 (66.7%)	3 (16.7%)	0 (0%)

Table 5 shows responses to questions about confidence with developing children’s writing skills through engaging with cultural enrichment, and confidence in carrying out an action research project. The majority of participating teachers reported having a little confidence in developing children’s writing skills through cultural enrichment ($n=10$), and the majority of participating teachers reported having a fair amount of confidence in carrying out an action research project ($n=9$). As can be seen in Table 6, those with degree-level arts-related qualifications were most likely to have a fair amount of confidence in developing children’s writing through engaging with cultural enrichment.

Table 5: Confidence ratings.

	I am not at all confident	I have a little confidence	I have a fair amount of confidence	I am very confident
Overall, how confident are you to develop children’s writing skills through engaging with cultural enrichment?	0	10 (55.6%)	8 (44.4%)	0
How confident are you in carrying out your action research project?	1 (5.6%)	8 (44.4%)	9 (50%)	0

Table 6: Breakdown of responses to ‘Overall, how confident are you to develop children’s writing skills through engaging with cultural enrichment?’ according to arts-based qualifications/experience

	Degree-level	A Level	Other experience	No experience
I have a little confidence	1 (20%)	3 (100%)	4 (50%)	2 (100%)
I have a fair amount of confidence	4 (80%)	0	4 (50%)	0

Seven out of 18 participants said that they had support in their class from someone with specific art, music or drama experience. Four teachers explained that a music specialist came in to their class to teach music, either every week or every other week. Others explained that other regular members of staff have specific art, music or drama experience.

When asked about ways in which they currently develop children's writing, all 18 participants responded. The most frequently referenced approach was 'Talk For Writing', which was mentioned by 12 participants. This was followed by storytelling/story-writing and drama techniques (e.g. freeze frames, hot-seating), mentioned by five teachers each. Four participants mentioned handwriting activities, and four described methods of peer and self-assessment. Three teachers mentioned using role-play, three mentioned guided group writing, and three described using shared writing and reading in general. Two participants mentioned phonics, and two referred to editing and improving. Other techniques and methods were also described by one teacher each.

Eight participants said that they had carried out action research before, and eight participants had a draft or firm research question for their action research project at the point of filling in the initial questionnaire. All eight of these participants either provided their initial research question or indicated the topic their question would be on. The research questions and topics included: independent writing; confidence in writing; imaginative writing; attainment in writing.

Responses to the question '*From your experience with the project so far, please indicate which of the following are true for you*' are provided in Table 7. The majority of teachers reported being excited about the project (17 out of 18), looking forward to trying something new (16 out of 18), expecting to use activities based on a number of aspects of cultural enrichment (14 out of 18), and having a few new ideas for use in their teaching (12 out of 18).

Table 7: Initial experiences from the project.

From your experience with the 'Improving writing through the arts' project so far, please indicate which of the following are true for you. Please tick all that apply.	Frequency
I am excited about the project	17
I am looking forward to trying something new	16
I expect to use activities based on a number of aspects of cultural enrichment	14
I have a few new ideas for use in my teaching	12
I already have a lot of ideas	3
I expect to focus my attention on one particular type of cultural enrichment	1
I am confused about the project	0

Two participants chose to make additional comments at the end of the questionnaire:

Can't wait to get started!

I want to focus mainly on the music and art side as I felt less excited about the drama side.

4.4 School self-evaluation at the start and end of the project

4.4.1 Baseline and Follow-up whole school self-evaluation

Before the beginning and after the end of the programme, the enabler and participating teacher from each school completed a whole school self-evaluation tool (see Appendix A). This comprised three subscales: indicators of emergent practice; indicators of established practice; and indicators of innovative practice. Each subscale contained statements which the

respondent scored either 0 (not met), 1 (partially met) or 2 (fully met) according to where they thought their school was on a continuum which culminated in excellent and innovative practice. The indicators of emergent practice scale comprised eight statements (e.g. '*Children of all ages are encouraged to express themselves through the arts and are introduced to foundation skills*'); the indicators of established practice scale comprised eight statements (e.g. '*Progression in learning is assured in foundation arts subjects*'); and the indicators of innovative practice scale comprised seven statements (e.g. '*Opportunities exist for pupils to lead and shape cultural learning experiences with peers and the wider school community*'). Baseline and follow-up self-evaluation scores for the 13 participating schools are presented in Table 8 and Figures 2 and 3. Scores on the established and innovative subscales were normally distributed therefore paired t-tests were used to compare scores. Scores on the emergent subscale were non-normally distributed therefore a Wilcoxon signed ranks test was used to compare scores.

As can be seen in Table 8, total scores on the subscales significantly increased on the emergent and innovative subscales. Individual item mean scores significantly increased on all subscales. An explanation and discussion of these findings can be found in section 5.4.

Table 8: Baseline and follow-up self-evaluation tool scores ($n=13$).

	Time 1 Mean (SD)	Time 2 Mean (SD)	Difference Mean (SD)	t/z	p
Emergent total score	12.15 (3.26)	14.69 (1.97)	+2.54 (2.88)	$z=2.567$.010*
Established total score	12.15 (3.26)	13.31 (1.89)	+1.15 (2.79)	$t=1.489$.162
Innovative total score	3.92 (2.69)	7.54 (2.03)	+3.62 (3.15)	$t=4.138$.001*
Emergent individual items	1.52 (.41)	1.84 (.25)	+0.32 (.36)	$z=2.567$.010*
Established individual items	1.19 (.37)	1.69 (.23)	+.49 (.34)	$t=5.252$.001*
Innovative individual items	.56 (.38)	1.08 (.29)	+.52 (.45)	$t=4.138$.001*

* $p<.05$

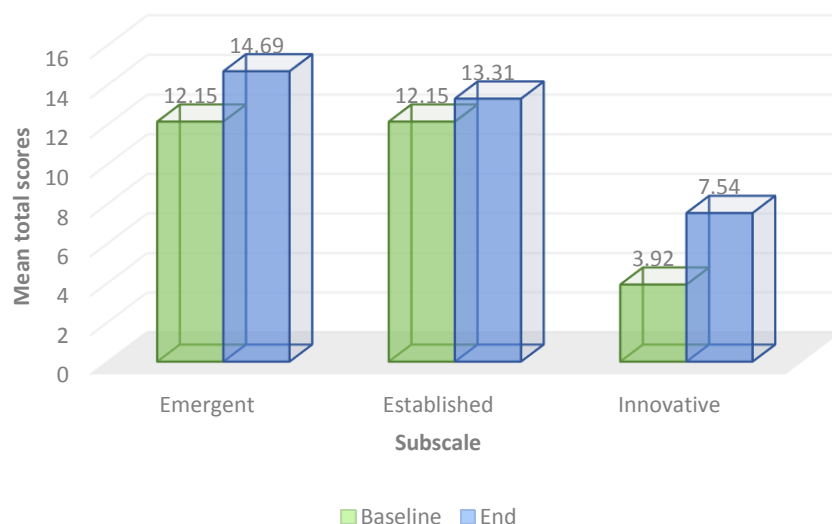


Figure 2: Mean total subscale scores at baseline and the end of the programme showing reported increases in all aspects of practice relating to Creative and Cultural Learning

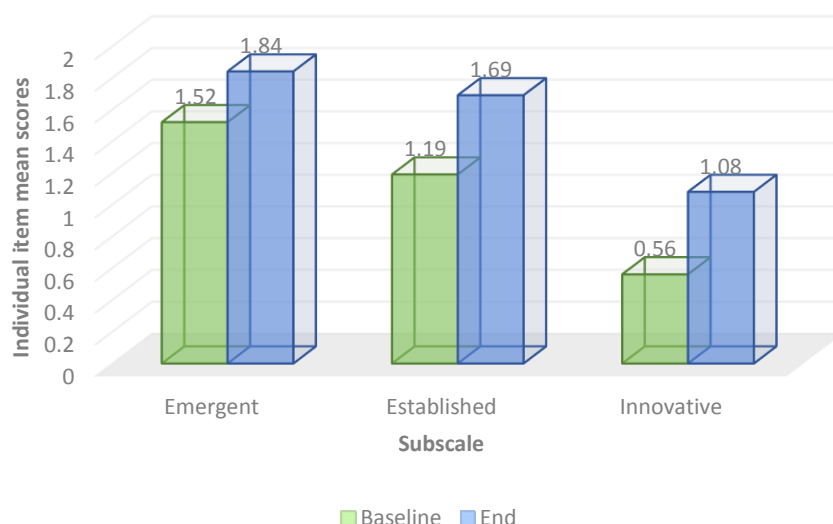


Figure 3: Individual item mean scores for each subscale at baseline and the end of the programme.

4.4.2. Free-text responses

In the follow-up whole school self-evaluation tool, participating schools were also asked to provide free-text responses to the following questions: What has been the impact of this project on your school; what will you do next (i.e. consider; ECT ongoing development, ECT/Enabler partnership on Whole School approaches to cultural learning, working in partnership with other schools locally), and an opportunity to make any other comments was provided. The data were again provided jointly by the enabler and the participating teacher. The free text responses were analysed thematically.

4.4.2.1 What has been the impact of this project on your school?

Three themes were evident in the free-text responses to this question.

Creativity

Schools identified greater creativity within children's writing within the classes led by the participating teachers:

Greater creativity in writing lessons (School 2)

Schools also identified creativity being shared across year groups in the school, and more widely within school planning:

In the year groups where a teacher has been a participant in ECT (Yr4/6) the planning has been shared and delivered across the year group – enhanced creative element to planning (School 12)

Innovative ideas trialled and rolled out in cross curricular planning (Science/Art/DT/literacy/maths). (School 13)

Confidence and attitude

The enablers and participating teachers identified development of confidence and more positive attitudes in the children and the development of greater confidence in the teacher.

Children's confidence to participate in drama activities (School 1)

Encouraging children's desire to write. (School 7)

Pupil's perception of writing has changed. Pupil's attitude towards writing as well as enthusiasm has increased. (School 2)

Confidence to present at ROH conference in London. (School 13)

Involvement in the project has given our ECT the confidence to put forward more creative ideas in collective planning sessions. (School 6)

Skills development

The project was identified by enablers and participating teachers as having a positive effect on the development of skills for both the early career teachers and for the children. The skills developed in the teachers were identified as those of developing leadership and collaborative cross school working:

It has also helped to prepare [participating teacher] for further leadership... (School 5)

It has provided opportunities for teachers to explore the new National Curriculum and explore ideas shown. (School 8)

For the children, the development of skills in writing included a range of technical and motivational elements:

Focus group have exceeded literary targets – 71% exceeded compared with 57% of higher attainers in other classes. (School 3)

Increased imagination, vocabulary and memory to retell a story. Encouraged participation and stamina for writing. (School 4)

Developed children's creative imagination. Developed children's writing skills (School 8)

Staff now are more aware of the impact that the arts can have upon writing standards and writing ability. Staff have seen the power drama and music has to inspire literary skills. (School 10)

4.4.2.2 What will you do next?

In response to this question on the follow up whole school self-evaluation tool, enablers and participating teachers identified their expectations to disseminate the good practice from the project across the whole school and to develop external partnerships and links.

Dissemination within the school included both general and specific expectations, for example:

ECT/Enabler/HT to share findings with whole school. Develop a whole school approach to cultural arts learning (School 2)

ECT to deliver staff training to extend across the school (School 3)

Adapt ideas to fit other topics and year groups. (School 4)

Look at establishing art club after school. When we review the curriculum we will examine arts activities in foundation subjects. (School 7)

I will ensure learning is passed onto new staff in September (School 8)

Work with enabler to introduce to different year groups. (School 11)

Every term my creative arts leads will run a staff meeting modelling/suggesting ideas for outstanding practice. Each term teachers will use a sample of these activities and create work so the display is updated termly (School 10)

The development of external partnerships and links also included both general and more specific plans:

Possible partnerships with other schools (School 1)

Links with close schools. (School 4)

Plan a ... Community Trust wide cultural arts week ... linked to non-pupil day Feb 2016 (School 2)

Develop further opportunities for artists/authors to visit the school (School 7)

Developing use of artists across the school/artist visits (School 12)

A variety of other comments were included on the final self-evaluation tools. Some of these re-iterated and re-enforced earlier comments, for example:

It has been a great opportunity to learn different approaches to teaching writing. We have gained a huge bank of resources to use in further teaching. ECT is more confident when approaching planning from a more creative beginning. (School 6)

Other respondents identified the positive experiences of being part of the project, for example:

Very successful and beneficial! ☺ (School 4)

A really worthwhile project and a fantastic opportunity to see all the hard work come to fruition. Looking forward to displaying [*participating teacher's*] project work in school for staff, children and parents to see on Open Day. Thank-you! (School 5)

Been amazing credibility of providers and professionalism of exposure to wide range of creative arts. Accessible to ECT level of skills and planning opportunities fed straight into the classroom. (School 13)

We would be interested in taking this further next year ... and have several ideas regarding this. (School 7)

It has been a great programme and benefitted both the teacher and children involved. This will now impact on every teacher and therefore every child in the school. (School 10)

4.5 Creative practitioner visit notes

The creative practitioners ran one-day development sessions for the early career teachers, and these were followed by individual meetings within the schools with each teacher. Notes were made by the creative practitioners to summarise their visits and the analysis of these notes is summarised here.

A wide range of drama, music and illustration activities were used by the practitioners and teachers as creative approaches to inspire children to write. These included:

- Use of different objects as instruments
- Using pace, pauses, volume of music and voice
- Choosing and using different types of music to enable writing
- Using music and songs to support classroom routines
- Use of soundscapes, for example a beach, a rainforest
- Dramatising scientific concepts such as the water cycle
- Dramatising historical events, for example evacuation in the second world war, Florence Nightingale, particularly through a focus on the characters and location.
- Use of process drama, with children engaged in developing the story
- Use of a range of short starter or warm up activities, both from drama and music
- Using space available in different ways, and extending the use of the space into halls or corridors
- Use of collage, lift the flap and calligram techniques
- Use of image making, including use of light and dark, use of space
- Making a book
- Creating an imaginary creature
- Story acting, based on books, poems, traditional fairy tales, including drama, music and illustration activities
- Using drama, music and illustration collaboratively in planning, not just separately

The creative practitioners were a source of inspiration for the teachers and were also able to provide a range of resource materials for the activities undertaken and for future activities. In some cases the resources were emailed to the teacher, in other cases the creative practitioner was able to identify a web location with a range of existing resources for the teacher to access. The teachers stated that they felt supported and had many ideas to be used in future planning. The creative practitioners also supported the teachers to identify next steps, to embed what they had learned so far but also to plan how to extend this within the classroom activities planned for the remainder of the year. In some visits, the creative practitioner identified next steps for both the teacher and the enabler. For the enabler, the ideas contributed to cross class or whole school initiatives, for example how to share good practice, ideas for generating resources and developing a bank of suitable resources for whole school use, ideas for cultural visits.

The specialists went into classrooms to support the teachers in delivering classes. Where this occurred, the teachers particularly valued the involvement of the creative practitioners in the classroom delivery of the lessons. The teachers stated that they gained most benefit from trying out activities with the specialist in their class, and then developing these activities for future use. This immediate feedback enabled the growth of the teacher's confidence. On some occasions the illustration specialists worked with the teacher separately to support ideas generation, or to share their role as an illustrator with the children. While this was seen to be beneficial, the 'hands on' development was preferred by the teachers.

4.6 Teacher action research blogs

Each of the participating teachers recorded activities and progress through the project in the form of a blog with posts at the beginning, middle and end of each term and with each term representing a single cycle of action research. The teachers identified questions, as a focus to guide their actions, all of which were linked to children's progress with writing and the development of writing skills. The style and tone of each blog was unique to the individual teacher and varied from lively social media style reports with a chatty style and accompanying hashtags, to reflective narratives, to brief and factual reports.

Initially these blogs were hosted using 'Blogger' with the idea that individual teachers could maintain their blogs and others could follow and comment. The need for confidentiality, requested by several of the participating schools, meant that the blogs could not be open access. We experimented with blogs that were open to selected invitees, which would have been successful had it not been for multiple technical glitches (e.g. invitations failing and access expiring). The idea was to make life simple for the teachers and for them to maintain a record of their project without adding significantly to their workload and so we adapted to reports saved as documents in a shared Dropbox folder. Sixteen of the initial eighteen early career teachers completed reports of their action research.

The systematic content analysis of the teacher blogs was undertaken with a focus upon each of the project aims in turn. The first and primary aim of the project was to develop children's writing skills through creative processes. All of the individual teacher action research projects were focussed upon this aim, although specific research questions varied. Each blog was analysed in turn. The first step in the analysis was to highlight and then cut and paste all references to children's writing from the blog together with the supporting evidence from photographs from that person's display at the celebration event. The parts relating specifically to a writing skill were then italicised. The second step was then to summarise, as bullet points, the writing skills that were evident in the blog according to type of writing (e.g. poem, story, non-fiction) and form of stimulus (i.e. music, drama and/or illustration). This was done for each of the sixteen teacher blogs. All the evidence for writing skills was then tabulated to list the skill achieved, the type of writing in which the skill was shown, the Key Stage (1 or 2), the stimulus (music, drama and/or illustration) and, for reference, the source of evidence. The individual tables were then compiled onto one spreadsheet, bringing together the findings and making it possible to look at the combined evidence for children's development of different writing skills according to genre and type of stimulus across all sixteen projects. It also made it possible to look at the findings by Key Stage.

When tabulating the evidence the skills were categorised according to whether they were: open-ended writing skills that are difficult to measure precisely (e.g. use of imagination); specific and more measurable writing skills (e.g. increased vocabulary); and other features associated with learning (e.g. levels of engagement) including evidence of the progress of certain pupils. The identified skills were then organised into themes and sub-themes (as shown below). For example, 'description' became a main theme with descriptive detail, description of settings, description of characters and description of feelings as four sub-themes.

The main challenge when undertaking this analysis was the differing amounts of detail in the teachers' reports. Some teachers gave very rich and informative accounts in their blogs whilst others were quite brief. For example, whilst one teacher gave specific details of children's developing uses of similes, metaphors and personification, another made a broader reference to increased use of figurative language and yet others just mentioned enhanced writing style or great improvement in use of language without expanding upon precisely what this entailed. Nevertheless, it was possible to tabulate evidence of development of children's writing within each of the teacher's reports and to bring this data together to show corroboration between

the sixteen different accounts. There is, therefore, quite substantial evidence, from the various schools and classrooms, of the particular benefits of the project for children's creative writing. The key findings are shown below.

4.6.1 Open-ended writing skills

The category of open-ended writing skills includes aspects of children's writing that can be perceived as distinct and observable positive characteristics of their writing, when reading and assessing their work, but that are difficult to measure or quantify with precision. The themes within this section are children's increased use of **description**, richness of **ideas and imagination** and cognitive abilities that we have termed **thought for writing**. These themes and associated sub-themes are listed here:

Description

Increased **descriptive detail** in writing was shown in both Key Stages, in poetry and stories, and also in descriptive writing tasks in Key Stage Two. Descriptive detail was reported as an outcome from activities with music, drama and illustration and especially associated with drama activities in Key Stage One. Drama activities such as creating soundscapes, 'conscience alley' and 'story squares' encouraged children to focus upon and explore elements of experience in depth and this translated into more descriptive detail within writing.

Skill in **describing characters** was shown in story writing in both Key Stages with illustration as a main stimulus. Where pupils created collage characters or painted scenarios for characters to inhabit they developed a sense of the character that seemed to scaffold their writing. Music was also found to support description of characters in Key Stage One and drama in Key Stage Two.

Describing feelings and emotions in poetry and story writing was elicited using music in both Key Stages, often via listening to classical music and writing words and phrases to capture emotions that could later be used in a writing task. This was also shown through the use of drama in Key Stage Two, where characterisation exercises encouraged empathy.

Teachers also documented children's ability in **describing settings**, in stories, poetry and descriptive writing. This was strongly linked with drama in Key Stage One and linked with all of the art forms, but especially music, in Key Stage Two. The BBC 'Ten Pieces', and other musical stimuli, were played and discussed to invoke a sense of place that was then expressed in writing.

Ideas and Imagination

All art forms were found to be beneficial for **generating ideas** for all genres of writing. In Key Stage One the use of music was found to be the most powerful means for generating individual and group ideas for poetry and story writing whereas in Key Stage Two drama was the most effective stimulus.

A wider **range of ideas** for writing and **extending ideas** for writing was also an outcome from the use of arts activities to foster creative writing. This was unsurprising as for the teachers, too, the various workshop activities opened up many possibilities for introducing and developing writing in new and exciting ways and the techniques learned, in music, drama and illustration, were shared enthusiastically with children.

One Key Stage One teacher and several Key Stage Two teachers also reported **combining ideas in novel ways** in descriptive writing initiated through use of illustration. This was stimulated through collage where different human and animal bones and body parts were combined to create new creatures, beasts and aliens and this fusion of different elements was also evident in the accompanying creative writing.

Thought for Writing

This final theme, termed ‘thought for writing’, encompasses the other open-ended skills that were identified as cognitive benefits from the creative writing through the arts processes. These included: **reasoning**, in Key Stage One, and the ability to express ideas and thought processes, facilitated through activities that involved listening to and making music.

Children’s improved **comprehension** skills, especially the ability to understand and re-tell a story effectively, were noted in Key Stage Two and fostered through drama. The drama activities focussed strongly on narratives and storytelling both telling and playing out familiar tales and also acting out stories that the children told and wrote.

Related to these was the children’s ability in **organising information**, particularly when writing non-fiction accounts including non-chronological reports. This was supported by illustration, in both Key Stages, as having imagined and portrayed an image (such as a new animal constellation in the night sky) children were then able to describe it in writing.

The final sub-theme in this category is a little different as it brings together findings from the teacher’s evidence that we have termed **sensory awareness**. This is used to describe skills such as appreciating and creating the sounds and rhythms of words in poetry (encouraged via music in Key Stage Two) and also drawing upon, exploring and incorporating all five senses when writing poetry stimulated via music (also in Key Stage Two).

Table 9: Summary of benefits from Creative Writing through the Arts – Open-ended writing skills.

Description	Ideas and Imagination	Thought for Writing
Descriptive detail	Generating ideas	Reasoning
Describing characters	Range of ideas	Comprehension
Describing feelings	Extending ideas	Organising information
Describing settings	Combining ideas in novel ways	Sensory awareness

4.6.2 Specific and measurable writing skills

The skills included within this category are those that are more clearly defined and quantifiable. The three themes here, each with linked sub-themes, relate to: the ways that children learned to **structure** their writing; make effective use of **vocabulary**; and to develop skills in the use of words and expressions that can be termed **figurative language**.

Structure

Story openings, inspired by music as a stimulus, were noted as a feature of writing in Key Stage One. Clear **openings and endings** were identified as improved elements in the structure of stories, descriptive writing and factual writing, underpinned by all art forms, in both Key Stages. One teacher with a Key Stage Two class focussed specifically upon structure and organisation of pupils' writing with linked introductions and conclusions as a main feature.

Drama activities provided support for effective **planning** of writing (e.g. stories and letters) and **plot development** in both Key Stages. Acting out scenarios and exploring and expanding upon aspects of familiar tales seemed to facilitate this, perhaps allowing pupils to verbalise and internalise story structures before recreating them in writing.

Improved use of **paragraphing and subheadings** to structure factual writing was promoted through the use of illustration in both Key Stages, for example in non-chronological reports where children created collages of imaginary beasts and then described, in turn, their characteristics, diet and feeding habits and habitat.

Writing dialogue within stories with accurate use of **punctuation** (including 'speech marks') was prompted by drama activities in Key Stage One classes, where conversations were rehearsed, through role plays, before being committed to paper and, similarly, in Key Stage Two activities, that included work on devising play scripts.

Vocabulary

Children's use of powerful and **adventurous vocabulary**, in their story writing, followed music activities in Key Stage One. This was also reported in Key Stage Two, with an increase in topic related vocabulary when working on various projects (for example, on evacuees, Romans, or volcanos) and incorporating drama and illustration.

All art forms were associated with increased use of **adjectives** in stories and descriptive writing in both Key Stages. Music and soundscapes were used to evoke descriptions. Drama activities in which children found and described mystery objects and creating and illustrating characters also encouraged use of sophisticated adjectives and pairs of adjectives. In Key Stage Two, teachers also reported increased use of a wider range of **connectives**, with children using a wider variety of words to join sentences and link ideas within sentences.

Movement activities linked with music and drama, especially in the early part of Key Stage Two, stimulated children's use of **verbs**, such as *creeping*, *running* and *scampering*, and associated **adverbs**, for example, *quickly*, *slowly*, *carefully*.

Realistic dialogue was another feature of creative writing engendered through drama. Acting out dialogues and 'dialogues' that demanded thought about how different real life, historical or fictional characters might speak and react served as a prompt for the writing of realistic dialogue in children's story writing in Key Stage Two.

Figurative language

Use of **similes** in poetry and story writing, in both Key Stages was provoked through music, with images and objects being selected to link with a piece of music and then words used to make descriptive comparisons.

Similarly, use of **metaphors** and **personification** were evident in children's writing in Key Stage Two, prompted by music, for example listening to Fingal's Cave to stimulate writing a poems about the sea.

The imagery that children managed to incorporate within their writing was supported by use of **alliteration and onomatopoeia** in poetry and stories prompted by music and drama, in both Key Stages.

Table 10: Summary of benefits from Creative Writing through the Arts – Measurable writing skills.

Structure	Vocabulary	Figurative Language
Opening and endings	Adventurous vocabulary	Similes
Planning and plot development	Adjectives and connectives	Metaphors
Paragraphing	Verbs and adverbs	Personification
Punctuation	Realistic dialogue	Alliteration and onomatopoeia

4.6.3 Other features and wider benefits for learning associated with the project

In their action research reports, teachers also identified skills, attitudes and characteristics that were important for children's progress in writing and indicative of the success of the project but that could not be categorised as features of children's writing. We have categorised these under the twin themes of **dispositions for writing** and **transferable skills**. Teachers also reported on the improvements in writing made by classes, target groups and individual children and we have summed this up under the theme of **progress**.

Dispositions for writing

Independence in learning and in writing is a quality that all teachers were aiming to foster in their classes. This was encouraged through the creative and open-ended task where pupils became more prepared to have a go at writing tasks and less reliant on teacher and classroom assistant support. Specific scaffolds to support writing, such as the provision of 'writing frames', were replaced by the looser structure of engagement with a music, drama or illustration activity to support subsequent writing.

Engagement and children's increased motivation to write was widely reported. Children of all ages expressed enthusiasm for writing activities when using drama, music and visual arts. Children were described as '*engrossed and eager*' when music was used to introduce a lesson. The teachers believed that engagement with drama activities and illustration was reflected in the raised quality of children's writing.

This engagement and enthusiasm was attributed to children's **increased enjoyment** of lessons and activities. Children enjoyed different activities according to their own preferences for music, drama or illustration and in many cases the teachers' own enjoyment of teaching through the arts was reflected in children's positive responses and increased enjoyment of writing.

Children's raised **confidence** in their own ability to tackle writing task was also widely reported. Some children had found writing worrying and difficult but incorporating the

different art forms meant that they had more ideas for what to write about and how to approach their writing and, consequently, became more self-assured writers as the year progressed.

Transferable skills

As the project progressed, several teachers commented on the increased **quality and quantity** of writing produced by children. Quality encompassed many of the features described above whilst quantity refers to the amount written within a lesson and the length of stories and other written pieces. Teachers in both Key Stages reported increased quality of writing, and also a greater quantity, in English lessons and across the curriculum stimulated by creative arts.

As a result of working on activities designed to foster writing, in particular drama activities, children in both Key Stages showed improvement in their **speaking and listening** skills. This was particularly evident in their ability to express ideas and to listen and respond to the ideas of others. Music activities were also perceived to be beneficial for enhancing pupils' listening skills.

Memory skills were also promoted and in particular the ability to recall and retell stories. This was associated with drama activities especially in the lower years of Key Stage Two. Working on a narrative or text and committing it to long term memory then enabled innovation and variation.

In both Key Stages and with all art forms children showed **creative responses** within their writing, in particular: fluency of ideas (no longer being stuck not knowing what to write about); the addition of detail, for example, features to make a story character more credible; and also innovation through the inclusion of novel and original ideas within written pieces.

Progress

All teachers tracked and reported children's progress throughout the academic year as part of their action research projects. This was a challenge as the new National Curriculum brought changes in the ways that attainment was measured. The National Curriculum 'levels' that were previously used to report pupils' attainment and progress were replaced by a broader requirement to assess whether pupils were on track to meet age-related expectations by the end of the Key Stage. Other methods of assessing progress were also used such as sampling and comparing children's writing at the beginning and end of the year. All children who were monitored as part of the project were found to make **expected progress or more** in writing.

Whilst this improvement cannot be attributed solely to the project, as there were other variables that may account for the progress, nevertheless the teachers felt confident that the enrichment provided through creative approaches to teaching did have a positive effect on children's writing. **Raised attainment** was regularly reported for 'reluctant writers' who were inspired by the arts activities to get started, stay on task and produce work that met the teachers' lesson objectives and success criteria.

Some teachers focussed specifically on children who were in receipt of **pupil premium** (funding designed to raise the attainment of children from socio-economically disadvantaged groups. In some schools extra curricula visits to theatre productions and other arts events were sponsored using this funding and sometimes specifically targeted towards this group of children. The attainment of some of these children was lower than their peers at the beginning of the year, for example children in Year Two assessed on 'P scales' (performance attainment targets for children with special educational needs who are unable to fully access the National

Curriculum). Positive progress in writing was reported for children in this group with increased confidence and ability to express ideas in writing.

For the past twenty years, concerns have been expressed over a perceived gender divide in literacy with particular focus upon underachievement of male pupils in reading and writing. It is therefore unsurprising that some teachers commented specifically upon **benefits for boys** and highlighted positive changes in their attitudes towards writing and consequent progress. Engagement with music, drama and illustration activities, appeared to encourage concentration upon writing tasks and the production of more and higher quality work that could be positively assessed.

Table 11: Summary of benefits from Creative Writing through the Arts – Wider features of learning.

Dispositions for writing	Transferable skills	Progress
Independence	Quality and quantity of writing	Expected progress or more
Engagement	Speaking and listening skills	Raised attainment
Enjoyment	Memory	Pupil premium
Confidence	Creative responses	Benefits for boys

4.7 Benefits identification by participating teachers

At the final twilight session with participating teachers, data were collected through a brief survey, seeking the teachers' views on the main benefits of the programme, and the evidence for these benefits. Responses to the survey were requested under three headings, perceived benefits for children, for teachers and for the school as a whole.

4.7.1 Benefits for children

Benefits for children included a range of factors which had increased the overall experience of learning, as well as specific factors related to writing.

Enjoyment and excitement of the children during lessons emerged as a universal benefit:

Excitement, children enjoy all the work that we are doing... *[Evidence from]* what children have said in class, how they react to stimuli/ideas/lessons

...excited by the activities...

Give excitement in their stimulus, this is out of the norm.

Enjoyment and enthusiasm... *[Evidence from]* conversations with children

Enjoyment at literacy lesson

Participating teachers also cited increased engagement and motivation amongst their pupils:

Children have been eager to write... more ideas and motivation... [*Evidence from*] general attitude in lessons.

Engagement... [*Evidence from*] Writing in books, photos, illustrations, smiles, questionnaires

Desire to write... [*Evidence from*] Pictures, clips of pupils speaking, LSA (learning support assistant) notes on success, other teachers.

The new experiences and opportunities both for pupils and themselves were identified by the teachers:

More opportunities... [*Evidence from*] Children's work and improved content of writing.

New experiences, range of activities not done before, introduced to new people in the industry – ask questions.

Range of new experiences, working with new people. Opportunities to be creative... [*Evidence from*] Learning journeys, children's work.

Experience of having various adults leading sessions.

Opportunities they may not have had... [*Evidence from*] Enthusiasm when having the workshops and behaviour.

Gained a confidence in trying out new activities... [*Evidence from*] Children exposed to different activities and willingness to join in.

Teachers also cited increased inspiration and imagination amongst pupils:

Freedom to produce from imagination... [*Evidence from*] Characters they created. Children verbally talking about characters and sharing ideas. Display completed from all work.

Helping children think outside the box.

Inspiration to write... [*Evidence from*] Quantity children are writing in extended independent writing.

Pushed the boundaries of their imagination... [*Evidence from*] work produced, teacher observations of conversations.

Finally three teachers made reference to pupils' increased skills and achievements:

Immediate high quality work.

Developing listening skills.

Collaboration skills improved, desire to share work with others.

In relation to children's writing specifically, the most dominant theme to emerge from participating teachers was increased imagination and inspiration in writing:

Increased imagination... [*Evidence from*] their work.

Imagination...children using ideas generated in writing... [*Evidence from*] work produced, displays.

The variety of ideas and stimuli that have been used have been great sources of inspiration. Producing great descriptive writing.

Pushed children to be more creative and stretch imagination from the norm.

Huge improvement shown in their imagination... Shown in their independent writing and discussions between children. Low achieving children less “dunno what to write” due to prior work.

Children have more ownership over what they are writing – lots of variety in their work showing they have been inspired in different ways.... Children writing with a more varied and complex vocabulary. Extending their ideas more in their writing.

Better context/ideas included in stories.

Encouraging children to discuss and develop ideas – deepen thinking and not just write down their first thoughts! ... [*Evidence from*] example of work, both before and after to compare.

Length of writing as more ideas... More adventurous vocab in story writing.

Ideas to help start sentences and stories... [*Evidence from*] Books with pupil work, comparison of work length at start and end of year.

Teachers also cited an increased enthusiasm and motivation for writing amongst the children:

...motivation...

Enjoyment of writing for a purpose... Letter to African children, non-chronological reports.

Excitement.

Enthusiasm for writing... progress evidence in individual books.

More work being written.

Reluctant writers now engaged.

Seven teachers also cited improved language:

Increased language.

Descriptive language.

Level of description and imagery has improved.

Improved vocabulary – quality and quantity, improved structure.

Wider range of vocabulary.

Increase of adjectives in writing.

Wider vocab.

All seven of these teachers cited that the evidence for this was found in their written work, with two teachers providing more specific examples from pupils' work:

Pupil work: Shades of meaning; Figuration features; Use of a thesaurus; Adverbial phrases.

More adventurous vocab in story writing; Adjectives in poems; Children understood water cycle more clearly after drama; Levels, writing.

Finally teachers also cited increased confidence in pupil's writing:

Increase in confidence for low achieving writers... less "dunno what to write" due to prior work.

Writing is more confident.

4.7.2 Main benefits for participating teachers

The participating teachers universally identified benefits to themselves from participating in the project. Some of these benefits were directly related to the aims of the project, others were more generic in respect of the teachers' development. The most frequently cited benefits for the teachers themselves was the provision of new ideas for lessons which made lesson planning easier and quicker, mentioned by ten participants. For example:

Made lesson planning easy...2 weeks lessons done in an hour!

The huge bank of ideas that I have gained. The different more creative approaches I now have to teach writing.

Activities and ideas gathered and tried in class.

Lots of new ideas put in place... able to apply ideas to new themes and to complement planning next year.

Different activities that can be adapted for lots of topics.

Four teachers also cited increased enjoyment for themselves, and also satisfaction from seeing pupils enjoying lessons and progressing:

Lessons more interesting to plan and teach... More motivation to plan and teach.

Inspiring creative writing, the children unable to put their pens down! ...children are excited to write and stay on task.

Excited to teach a subject I struggled with.

Engagement and progress.

Six teachers additionally cited an increased confidence in their teaching and abilities due to improved skills to deliver creative lessons, for example:

Confident teaching creative subjects.

Confidence with planning and time taken to do it shortened.

Improved my confidence and skills to deliver creative lessons... *[Evidence from]* My confidence and positive attitude to teaching in this way.

Confidence, knowing I am improving.

Finally two teachers made reference to the benefits of having the time and freedom that came with the programme:

Given a free range to experiment and try techniques out.

Time out to be inspired and to have an outsider to work with me.

4.7.3 Main benefits for the school

The most frequently mentioned benefit for the school was the opportunity to share ideas and learning from the programme throughout the school, which enabled a whole school impact from the programme. This was mentioned by nine of the participating ECTs, for example:

Sharing good practice with colleagues.

Ideas have moved across the school – especially within my year group.

Chance for myself and *[other participating teacher]* to inspire and pass on what we've learnt... *[Evidence from]* All year groups beginning to use a variety of stimulus.

Able to share ideas across year group and therefore influence the teaching of others.

Shared lesson plans/team teaching... *[Evidence from]* Year 3 and Year 4 planning visual arts lessons – sharing knowledge for future teaching.

Other teachers taking on board ideas... *[Evidence from]* Lessons taught in other classes after my staff meeting input.

This sharing of ideas and learning was specifically identified as encouraging creativity across the school by three of the participating ECTs:

Encouraged creativity in everyone... *[Evidence]* Teachers wanted to look at plans to have a go (T1)

More varied planning and lessons across the school – teachers more willing to experiment with creative forms.

Fresh knowledge and creativity for lessons more “buzz”.

4.8 Drawings of teacher journeys (end of programme)

Fifteen of the participating teachers created drawings of their journeys mapping the stages and process of the programme at the twilight session on the 10th June 2015. These drawings of journeys were displayed at the final celebration event in July 2015. Thirteen of the

participating teachers began their journey with their research question and six of these ended their journey drawings with the answer they had reached (see Table 12).

Table 12: Research questions and answers

Question (START)	Answer (END)
"How do creative arts influence imagination in independent writing?"	"Huge increase in creative ideas; Adjectives ☺; and increased confidence to write."
"How can music, drama and visual arts improve the structure of writing?"	"structure is likely to be of a better quality if the pupil's enjoy it."
"Does the genre of music have a different influence on writing?"	"the genre doesn't matter, it is more important that the music is unknown."
"How does creative inspiration improve progress in year 4 boys' writing?"	"Children don't despise/hate writing anymore."
"Can the arts improve the quality of writing in foundation subjects?"	"Yes, it aids creativity and is important but is one of many important factors."
"How do creative arts influence imagination in independent writing?"	"improvement in language; improvement in imagination; and improvement in perseverance."
"Do creative activities promote independent writing in EYFS?"	-
"In what ways can non-written forms inspire writing across the school?"	-
"How does cultural experience effect pupil's desire to write?"	-
"In what ways can non-written forms inspire writing across the school?"	-
"How do creative arts impact on the use of children's adventurous vocabulary?"	-
"Impact of art on attainment of pupil premium children."	-
"How does creativity impact on progress in writing?"	-

All 15 teachers who completed a drawing of their journey in the programme mapped out the main stages of the programme: inspiration/introduction day, twilight sessions, music training day and workshop with class, drama training day and workshop with class, illustration/visual art training day and workshop with class and the sharing event/showcase. Other more specific events were mapped in some of the drawings: thief character descriptions; collage; trip to Royal Opera House ballet; trip to War Horse; trip to National Gallery; presentation at Royal Opera House Workshop; Role on the Wall; Stone Age percussion; space week; performance using African instruments (in school assembly); World War 2-based drama with characterisation, role-play and letter writing; drawing fossils; class assembly using drama. Twelve teachers also added descriptive words in relation to activities on their journeys, describing positive feelings and responses from pupils and/or themselves, and positive outcomes for pupils and/or themselves. In relation to this, the most dominant theme to emerge was inspiration and creativity, with seventeen references to this, for example:

Inspired [music visit]

Other teachers in school using some ideas [after first twilight event]

Ideas [drama training day]

Really captured child imagination [*drama in school*]

Lots of new drama ideas to use with my class and share with year group [after drama visit]

Other teachers beginning to use course ideas and ask for support [half way through journey]

Scope to be creative [illustration]

People are thinking outside the box [*art visit*]

Improvement in imagination [*end result*]

Ideas – action through the school [end point]

The second most frequently referenced theme in the drawings was enjoyment and excitement, with fifteen references to this, for example:

Excitement of project [*after music day*]

Children excited, all motivated [music visit]

Enjoyment [drama workshop with class]

Children loved it [*drama session in school*]

‘I loved being an evacuee’ – boys [*characterisation, role-play, letter writing*]

So much more involvement and enthusiasm from boys! [*In between art day and visit from artist*]

Loving it [visual arts session in school] and pupils enjoy.

‘Look at my fossil! This is so cool!’ [*quote from child in relation to illustration visit*]

The drawings also contained seven references to improved writing and language skills amongst pupils, for example:

It produced fantastic writing [*drama session in school*]

This increased language [drama in school]

Asked to lead project next year in school because of pupil progress [*towards the end*]

Boys have made good progress – YES! [*towards the end*]

Four references to increased confidence for pupils and/or teachers were also made in the drawings:

Confidence boost [*drama visit*]

Confidence booster [drama session in school]

Confidence building [Illustration CPD day]

Increased in confidence to write [end result]

A few negative feelings, concerns and disappointments were also referenced, some of which were only experienced at the beginning of the journeys:

Unsure! [Inspiration day]

Nervous [*induction day*]

Nervous [*music training*]

Disappointed with results of [*music*] session: activity too difficult? Lack of imagination?

Others expressed concerns about lack of time and missing sessions:

SATS pressure – no time for fun. Being creative takes time [*middle*]

Missed drama session day ☹

Missed visual arts day ☹

Couldn't come ☹ [*second twilight session*]

Not enough time to do what I want to do [*towards the end*]

Too much to do! [*towards the end*]

Another theme to emerge from the drawings was how the programme linked in with other subjects:

Links to History: WW2 [*drama*]

Links to Science [*drawing fossils*]

Links to Science – LOGS [*illustration visit*]

Finally, another theme to emerge from the journey drawings was the idea of the journey continuing beyond the programme, with the impact on the school continuing. A number of the drawings did not have an end or finish line, but the journey pathway continued beyond the page. Some explicitly stated that the journey was continuing, as illustrated in these snapshots from two drawings:

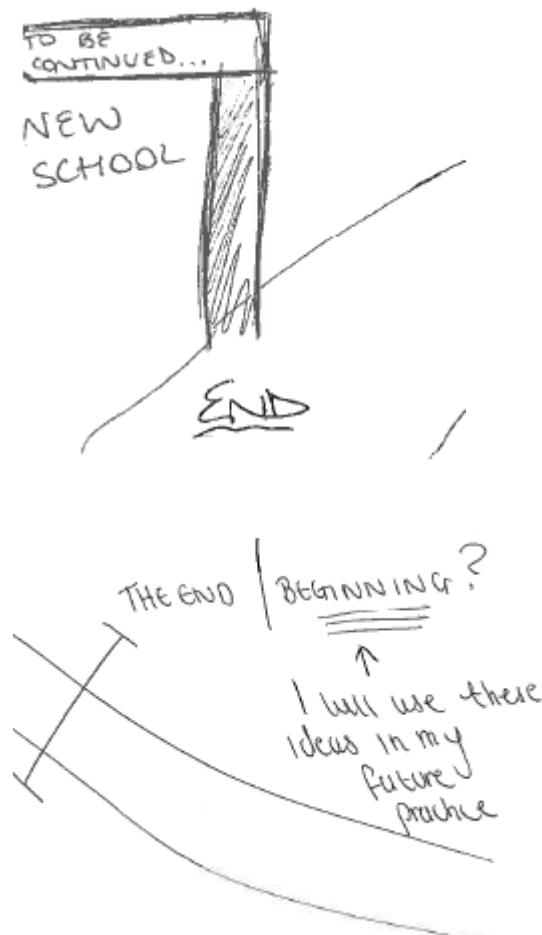


Figure 4: snapshots from two ECT journey drawings

4.9 Open comments from participating teachers

During the final twilight session in June 2015, teachers were asked to identify what aspects of the project they considered to have gone well over the year, and aspects which could have been improved. Post-it notes were used to record ideas anonymously.

4.9.1 What went well?

All participating teachers identified the value of the inspiration days, the training sessions with the creative practitioners, and the development to support their action research projects. They identified positive effects relating to their own teaching practice:

All the CPD days.

Practitioners planned great sessions with lots of ideas full of inspiring ideas that could be taken straight to the classroom.

Opportunities to experiment with art and music in a safe environment with other ECTs.

Informative, fun and useful activities, easily transferable to school.

The music and drama specialist training sessions and the follow up visits within the schools generated the greatest enthusiasm from the teachers' responses. These visits enabled the teachers to introduce changes to their classroom practice:

Have a go at new things and not be afraid

Simple but effective ideas

The teachers identified additional ways in which the project had enabled positive outcomes for themselves and their school. For example:

I am much more confident and quicker with planning.

Sharing ideas with your peers.

I enjoyed the workshops. It was nice working with teachers from other schools.

I had useful planning time with the specialists in music and drama.

Literacy lessons are now more fun to plan and to teach.

A few cross-curricular activities have inspired writing in other subjects too.

Teachers across school becoming more open-minded and trying a range of activities with their pupils.

The teachers also identified the positive effects on the children as a result of the teachers' participation in the project:

Children thoroughly enjoyed the activities and were engaged.

The drama afternoon in school. Children were fully engaged and keen to write any ideas down.

Children's focus was better than expected in all activities. They moved from activities to writing incredibly well.

The drama and visual art activities truly inspired children's writing and the results were amazing, so descriptive and entertaining!

4.9.2 What could have been better?

The June twilight session additionally provided the opportunity to invite the participating teachers to identify improvements which could have been made to the project.

Many of the teachers indicated that they would have liked more time, or for the timing to be different:

More time given to organise/write presentation/final sharing event.

Time provided by school for workshops to follow up from organised visits.

It would have been better if it finished in May or July, June is too busy.

Not all of the teachers valued the 'blog' report because they could not see the personal value of this. A blog, or an alternative form of report, was a requirement of participation, There had been initial technical difficulties in setting up a shared blog space, which were only resolved after the first twilight session in November.

Blogs did not seem necessary. The discussions that take place are enough with the school experiences.

A more user-friendly blog, perhaps a forum to share good practice as you go.

In some cases the visit from the creative practitioner had occurred some time after the CPD day

Specialist visits nearer to the CPD days, I had large gaps between the CPD and the visit for all three.

The creative practitioners' experience had been valued by the participating teachers. Where the creative practitioner lacked experience of working in schools, this limited the amount the teachers could gain from the individual visits:

xxx visiting schools didn't seem as confident or as aware of school needs as others.

Awkward moments with xxx and the confusion on what their role in school was to be.

Two teachers identified that they would have liked to be working in a cross school capacity at an earlier stage in the project:

If other staff had got involved from an earlier point. Staff meetings needed for information to be shared.

My question involved creativity across the school – it would have been helpful if other teachers had a go earlier in the year (but doing more now)!

These comments from the teachers were useful to consider in future plans.

5. Discussion and overall findings

This project was innovative in design, involving considerable collaboration between the three organisations involved in delivery of the project, as well as collaboration with the schools, teachers and creative practitioners who played important roles in ensuring the success of the project. In this section, the findings are discussed in relation to the four original aims of the project.

5.1 Anticipated benefits

At the start of the project, the invitation to participate went to 37 schools, and 13 schools responded indicating their desire to participate. This positive move on the part of the schools to 'sign up' to the project was seen as important to the success and future outcomes of the project, because it was a choice not a requirement. Places were made available for the 18 teachers who responded, so that all those expressing an interest could be accommodated. Head teachers had to consider their own time and commitment to the project. The project was directly relevant to targets and policy drivers and this enabled head teachers to link the project to their School Development Plan. The head teacher also had to consider the provision of an enabler to support the participating teacher in enacting the project within the school. This required time allocation to the enabler. The enabler was a member of the senior team, and on some occasions the head teacher took this role. The project team identified this role of enabler to be very important in ensuring the link between the participating teacher and the whole school impact.

The initial expressions of interest from the school staff demonstrated hopes and potential outcomes from being part of the project. School staff were optimistic about the ability of the project to develop creativity within their schools and to develop children's learning, achievement and attainment. School staff also identified the potential for enjoyment, inspiration and the development of confidence through engagement with the project. Finally, school staff were expecting there to be whole-school impact and recognised the potential for wider impact through engagement with the project. They were prepared to put time, effort and resources into the project in anticipation of positive gains.

5.2 The development of children's writing through creative processes

The overall driver for this project was to improve children's writing through engagement with cultural activities and the first aim of the project was to develop children's writing skills through creative processes. Evidence to support positive outcomes related to this aim was drawn from: the action research projects themselves (including blog posts, photographic displays, examples of writing from children); the benefits analysis carried out with the participating teachers; and the whole school self-evaluation data.

Evidence from the individual action research projects carried out by the early career teachers demonstrated the impact that the interventions had within classes. A dominant theme to emerge from the projects related to children's writing was increased imagination and inspiration in written tasks. For example: *'Huge improvement shown in their imagination... Shown in their independent writing and discussions between children'; 'The imagination and vocabulary they used was fabulous!'; and 'Children have more ownership over what they are writing – lots of variety in their work showing they have been inspired in different ways ...'* These rich and imaginative ideas were revealed in increased descriptive detail within children's writing. Teachers also cited an increased enthusiasm and motivation for writing and

greater confidence of the children in writing: *'... children's overall enjoyment of lessons and activities has increased ... children have certainly expressed much more enthusiasm when conducting a writing activity using drama, music and visual arts; 'Enjoyment of writing for a purpose... Letter to African children, non-chronological reports'*

Additionally, teachers reported specific improvements in the use of language in pupils' written work, particularly structure of writing, use of vocabulary and figurative writing: e.g. *'Children writing with a more varied and complex vocabulary. Extending their ideas more in their writing'* and *'Pupil work: Shades of meaning; Figuration features; Use of a thesaurus; Adverbial phrases'* and *'More adventurous vocab in story writing; Adjectives in poems; Children understood water cycle more clearly after drama; Levels, writing'..*

The data obtained from the self-evaluation tools reinforced the above findings. A particular point made by teachers and enablers was the positive engagement of those children who were previously reluctant writers in writing activities: *'Reluctant writers now engaged'*.

5.3 Provision of structured support for early career teachers

The second aim of the project was to provide structured support for early career teachers to lead action research on an area of learning for their school. The structured support for the action research projects was provided in the form of an initial action research day, followed by termly twilight sessions to support the teachers' action research projects. Most teachers had heard of action research, and some had undertaken action research projects before, but the specific understanding of how to undertake this was limited. Information about the process was provided through worksheets, discussion and activities during the one day and twilight sessions. Most teachers were able to readily identify an area related to children's writing for the focus of their project. The teachers who were not able to identify a focus for their study were able to do so following a short discussion about opportunities and priorities within their school.

Support was needed to enable the teachers to write research questions, to identify potential sources of evidence, and to consider the answer to the question. Some of the teachers were concerned that there may be a requirement to *'write a report'* or *'write an essay'*. The use of the blog to record the individual projects was welcomed by the teachers. Two teachers would have preferred not to record their project at all, but to report it in discussions at the twilight and the final event. There was clearly a time commitment for teachers here, but the value of undertaking all elements of the action research project enables the understanding of research by the teacher, and hence the likelihood of sustainability, and repeated use of such a way of working to improve practice.

The participating teachers were positive about the support provided (benefits analysis and feedback during twilight sessions), and identified the value to them of concentrating on a particular element of their work, gathering evidence about the intervention, and considering progress. The practical elements of delivery supported teacher engagement. For example, the venue was a purpose built creative space, the meetings were timed to take place shortly after the end of the school day, refreshments were provided, and meetings were agreed a year in advance. During the final celebration day, the teachers presented a display of their work from the past year. These displays were universally positive, forward looking, and demonstrated that the teachers had taken pride in their work and the achievement and progress in writing made by children. They considered that they had made significant strides in their own development as well as supporting the attainment of children in their class.

Structured support was also provided in the form of whole day professional development sessions led by different creative practitioners, one each term, covering illustration, music and drama. Teachers reported that these days were inspiring and gave them ideas for activities and resources to use. These were followed by in school visits for every participating teacher. The whole day events enabled teachers to practice and to think about how things could be done differently, away from the pressure of their classroom environment. The visits were particularly highly valued by teachers, and enabled the teacher to translate ideas gained from the development day into lesson plans to fit with the requirements of the curriculum. At the final action research twilight meeting, the teachers drew the 'journey' of their project, indicating key points in the year. Of the 17 participants at that meeting, all 17 made reference to the inspiration and creativity as a result of the individual visits by the creative practitioners and 15 made reference to how enjoyable they were. For example after a drama visit to her school, one participant wrote: *'lots of new drama ideas to use with my class and share with (the) year group'*. After a visual arts visit a different teacher indicated: *'(I am) loving it and pupils enjoy'*. The visits enabled teachers to make links across the curriculum, for example to history and to science. The visits from creative practitioners were a vital component of the overall project, providing the early career teachers with strategies and approaches to use within their own classrooms, with these ideas forming the basis of their action research projects.

The support provided by the enabler within the school was important to provide the school wide forum for the project, to empower the teacher to make changes not only within her own classroom but also across year groups or across the school. The enablers saw increasing confidence and developing leadership within the teachers. In several cases, an individual teacher's engagement with the project resulted in them becoming facilitators and leaders for the arts with whole school impact. The enablers were members of the senior management team of the school, and this was important to ensure integration of the project into the whole school development plan.

Participating teachers were asked to complete a response sheet in relation to perceived benefits to themselves from participating in the project. Most frequently cited was the provision of new ideas for lessons, which made lesson planning both easier and quicker. For example, *'Made lesson planning easy... 2 weeks lessons done in an hour!'* Additionally, teachers gained enjoyment and satisfaction from seeing their pupils enjoying lessons and making progress: *'Excited to teach a subject I struggled with'*. The teachers also gained confidence in their ability to deliver creative lessons and to plan for this in the future. The importance of having freedom and time within the project was identified *'Time out to be inspired and to have an outsider to work with me'*.

At the start of the project, some of the teachers identified that they were anxious about what the project would involve. Some had been identified to be involved by their head teacher rather than selecting this for themselves. Some teachers initially had concerns about the amount of work involved, and whether they would be required to write a dissertation. These fears were allayed very early by clear communication during the briefing day and the opportunity for questions and answers during the action research twilight sessions. The facilitative style of these sessions was appreciated by the teachers. The networking between early career teachers at the action research twilight sessions and the cultural workshops was very evident, and is likely to have contributed positively to the success of the project. Teachers gained confidence in the use of action research.

5.4 The value of creative learning in schools

The project's third aim was to build the case and articulate the value of creative learning in schools.

Teachers and enablers were asked to jointly complete a 'Whole School Self-Evaluation' questionnaire, in order to rate engagement with 'Creative and Cultural Learning', at the start and at the end of the programme (see Appendix A). This comprised three subscales: indicators of emergent practice; indicators of established practice; and indicators of innovative practice. The enabler and teacher rated these according to where they thought their school was on a continuum which culminated in excellent and innovative practice for cultural engagement. Total scores on the subscales significantly increased ($p < 0.05$, see detail in section 4.4 above) on the emergent and innovative subscales demonstrating that across the schools staff considered they had moved closer to the highest point on the scale of 'excellent and innovative practice'. There had also been an increase in the third subscale, established practice, although the overall results for this were not significant. This is not surprising given the short duration of the project and the expectation that established practice would not be identified until the new academic year.

In the follow-up whole school self-evaluation tool, participating schools were also asked to provide free-text responses to two questions, about current and future impact. These replies, together with benefits reported by the early teachers on response sheets, through their illustrated journeys and in the action research reports, indicated the value of the project for schools as a whole. In response to the question **'What has been the impact of this project on your school?'** three themes emerged, corroborated in other data.

- Creativity: there had been an increase in the use of creativity in all schools, with elevation of the status of arts subjects and appreciation of the importance of creative arts both for their own sake and to support learning across the curriculum. A feature of the project was the sharing of creative activities, learned on the professional development days, when planning with colleagues in year groups and across curriculum areas. For example *'In the year groups where a teacher has been a participant in ECT (Yr4/6) the planning has been shared and delivered across the year group – enhanced creative element to planning'*. This meant that creative techniques were incorporated regularly in teaching throughout year groups and phases. In some schools creative arts were used to inspire writing throughout the school, with ideas and successes shared at staff meetings, in school assemblies and on dedicated display boards.
- Confidence: schools reported gains in confidence evident in both the children and the early career teacher. Children's confidence was evidenced, for example, by an increased willingness to participate in drama and to experiment with arts activities as inspiration for writing. Teachers became more confident in their understanding and articulation of the importance of different arts forms as means of communication and expression. Early career teachers' confidence was also evidenced by their willingness to participate pro-actively in planning across year groups and across the curriculum and their ability to present the work from their project to others, for example *'Involvement in the project has given our ECT the confidence to put forward more creative ideas in collective planning sessions'*. Some evidence of emerging leadership amongst the early career teachers as a result of participation in the project is evident, for example *'Developing leaders of the future in self-confidence and desire to help others'*.

- Skills development for teachers and for the children: The project had a positive impact upon children's ability and willingness to write; targets for literacy were met and exceeded by children at different levels of attainment, for example: *'Focus group have exceeded literary targets – 71% exceeded compared with 57% of higher attainers in other classes'*. Teachers had the opportunity to use their talents in music, drama and arts and to share ideas and approaches to develop the skills of colleagues. Early career teachers not only increased their own skills in arts subjects, through the workshops and follow-up visits, but also fostered the skills of others. This emerging leadership amongst the early career teachers, as a result of participation in the project, was of benefit to the school and also enabled early career teachers to develop skills for further, future leadership roles e.g. *'It has also helped to prepare [participating teacher] for further leadership'*

In response to the question **'What will you do next?'** two main themes were identified.

- Dissemination within the whole school: several specific plans as well as more general intentions to disseminate the project within the school were identified, for example dissemination across year groups, across staff including the leadership team: *'ECT to deliver staff training to extend across the school Look at establishing art club after school'* and *'When we review the curriculum we will examine arts activities in foundation subjects'*.
- Develop external partnerships and links: for example schools were planning visits from and to cultural providers and partnerships with other schools were being considered: *'Will incorporate into collaboration work with xxx and will link with local work being done on global learning'*

In summary, schools identified the value of creative learning to schools with benefits across the school as well as benefits for children and for the early career teachers. Most successful was the opportunity to share ideas and learning from the programme throughout the school and between schools, an example of emergent Joint Practice Development, which enabled positive whole school impact from the programme. There is commitment to continue the work of the project and to make use of the learning from the current project in the following year's activities.

5.5 The value of working in partnership with the cultural sector

The fourth aim of this project was to raise schools' awareness of the value of working in partnership with the cultural sector to develop both curriculum and pedagogy.

Prior to the development of the Bridge organisations in England, the UK Schools Creativity Programme was in operation to support creativity within schools between 2002 and 2011. Sarah Davies (2012) considered ten schools involved in this programme and identified eight values for schools of working in partnership with the creative sector. These values are evident within the findings of our project. Some of the key values were strongly articulated by the participating teachers and these are identified below.

Firstly, Davies (2012) identified the value of the expertise of the creative practitioners and the resources identified by them. This is clearly evident in our project from the participating teachers' identification of the importance of the development days and the one-to-one visits made by the creative practitioners to the schools. These practitioners were able to identify existing resources or easily accessible additional resources for use by the teachers. The

creative practitioners demonstrated expertise in translating music, drama or illustration activities into activities which could be incorporated into classroom practice. This third value identified by Davies (2012), of being able to identify different perspectives and new approaches, and embed these into teaching practice is clearly evident within our study.

We found that the creative practitioners who had previous experience of working with teachers and schools quickly understood the project aims and were able to fully engage with and fulfil these aims. For creative practitioners with limited experience of working with teachers or schools, there is a need for much more explicit articulation of how the creative practitioner and the teacher and school will be working together, recognising the constraints within which teachers and schools operate. Time is needed in project planning to ensure all the creative practitioners understand project aims, but more time is required when the creative practitioner lacks experience with schools.

The variety of ideas and opportunities suggested by the creative practitioner was of direct relevance to each school's and teacher's context. The diversity of the activities was identified by teachers and enablers as relevant beyond the teaching of writing, and could be useful across other elements of the curriculum, supporting the fourth and fifth values identified by Davies (2012). The ability of the creative practitioners to effectively lead professional development days, and additionally to effectively engage on a one-to-one basis with the teachers at their place of work was very important to developing the ability of the teacher to plan creative activities into their lessons, and from there to consider how the creative activities could contribute to the wider curriculum and wider school. Effective one-to-one sessions with creative practitioners were identified by the participating teachers as very important to the overall success of the project.

Davies (2012) also identifies the value of longer term relationships between the cultural providers and schools, and linking to the local community. This is an element of the project which we refer to in the next section, as a recommendation for change if the project was to be repeated, so that local providers can be used. As a project group, we have continued to engage with schools and teachers involved with the project, and see the value of extending the work completed during the last year. We particularly see the value of the participating teachers as champions to promote cultural engagement across the school.

6. Reflections and recommendations

The fundamental aim of the project was to promote children's creative writing, enabling teachers in their classrooms to make use of music, drama and illustration activities to engage children in developing their writing. Evidence from the children, the teachers and the enablers clearly identifies the development of children's writing skills through the project. We did not know what kinds of evidence the teachers would identify to consider the development of the children's writing. In their action research projects several teachers analysed samples of children's writing at the beginning, middle and end of the project. In a future project of this type, writing from children (at different levels of attainment) in all classes could be sampled more systematically with analysis of skills development by the writers themselves, by the teachers and by researchers. This project has been valuable in exploring the evidence available to the teachers and the evidence generated by the project. Those who develop similar projects will be able to make use of the range of evidence identified in planning these projects.

The project was also designed for sustainability. It enabled the development of early career teachers through workshops with creative practitioners and workshops with academic staff

to provide continuing professional development to support the teachers' ongoing classroom practice. Teachers engaged with both their development as a researcher and their development within the arts and cultural sector. The commitment required from the teachers was considerable and was in addition to their role in school. However, this commitment had benefits for the teachers in both these areas of development included gaining new ideas for teaching, greater satisfaction and enjoyment in their work, and increased confidence in their role. There is the potential to take this development further, to build on the teachers' new knowledge and skills and to share these within the school through mentoring and supporting other staff, and through whole school initiatives. Staff could potentially take a lead role within their school.

We have not been able to judge the longer term impact of the project on the early career teachers themselves. Engagement with the action research projects may have had an impact on the teachers' attitudes to the development of evidence based teaching in the future. We would need to follow up with the teachers to enable us to explore this. Whether participation in this project has had an impact on teacher retention is not possible to judge from this project. The enjoyment and sense of development which the teachers experienced suggests that there could be a positive impact on teacher morale and positive professional identity, but a follow up study is needed to identify whether this is in fact the case.

An element of the project which had not been planned, but became important, was the community of practice which the teachers began to engage in informally. The professional development events enabled teachers to come together to discuss ideas, opportunities, and experiences. This informal networking was seen by the teachers to be important, and has the potential to continue.

The project also aspired to engage schools in cultural activities. There was clear evidence of teachers communicating effectively with their enabler and across the school team to identify the potential to make wider use of their new learning. In some schools this was in its infancy, but in others considerable activity had already taken place, and initiatives were being followed through for subsequent academic years. Head teachers identified opportunities and placed these firmly within their School Development Plans. This has the potential to lead to opportunities for whole school development of this area of their work.

There is the potential to develop stronger links within the local community, to enable provision of creative practitioners from local organisations, thus providing an opportunity for sustainability of a community of practice beyond the life of the project.

If this project were to be repeated, there is potential to make changes to further improve the design of the evaluation. During this project, teachers identified their own research questions and their own sources of evidence. This could be developed to enable a number of teachers to address the same question, or to identify particular sources of evidence which could be used commonly across the projects. In this way, data from projects could be accumulated, with the potential to provide sets of quantitative data for analysis in order to measure and evaluate progress for a whole cohort of participants.

Finally, there was a great deal of collaboration within the project, between the three main organisations, between the participating schools and teachers, between the creative practitioners and teachers, as well as between the teachers themselves. In their action research projects, several teachers enabled the participation of children and took the children's views into account. There is the potential to collaborate further with the children,

enabling their views and opinions to be heard and taking account of their voices in relation to the development, evaluation and outcomes from a project.

Overall, engagement with a collaborative cultural learning project has: supported children to develop writing skills through creative arts; enabled early career teachers to lead and research an area of learning for their school; and shown the value of creative learning in schools, in particular the benefits of working in partnership with the cultural sector to develop curriculum and pedagogy. Royal Opera House Bridge, Billericay Teaching School Alliance and the Department of Education at Anglia Ruskin University anticipate continued collaboration to further develop this important area of work.

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Appendix A. School Self Evaluation Tool.

Whole School Self-Evaluation Tool - Creative and Cultural Learning

Use 'best fit' to these descriptors to gauge where your school is on a continuum which culminates in excellent and innovative practice.

Score: 0 not met, 1 partially met, 2 fully met.

Indicators of Emergent Practice	Score	Indicators of Established Practice	Score	Indicators of Innovative Practice	Score
Children of all ages are encouraged to express themselves through the arts and are introduced to foundation skills		The school offers a broad and balanced arts curriculum. Cross-curricular learning including the arts is encouraged		Opportunities exist for pupils to lead and shape cultural learning experiences with peers and the wider school community	
The school is developing strengths in one or two arts curriculum areas. Foundation subject teaching often includes arts activities		Progression in learning is assured in foundation arts subjects		Progression in learning across the whole arts curriculum is assured and creative use of digital media integrated into the curriculum	
With support and encouragement some teachers will experiment with creative approaches to teaching and learning		With support, and encouragement most teachers will experiment with creative approaches to teaching and learning		Cross curricular learning through arts subjects is common and encouraged. The majority of teachers are confident to experiment with creative approaches to teaching and learning	
School visits to cultural sites and events are valued but opportunistic rather than planned.		Learning outside the classroom includes planned opportunities for pupils to experience live professional performances/exhibitions			
Teachers and parents with particular creative skills are encouraged to share them with the school community		Artists/writers/storytellers/parents work creatively with children regularly		Pupils co-create work alongside professional artists from diverse cultures and are introduced to the professional roles that make up the cultural industries	
The school has one or two after school clubs that help to enrich the arts curriculum offer		Children often present and share their creative work in a variety of settings		Pupils write for different audiences using many media e.g. online publishing	
Pupils use their artistic skills in assemblies and whole-school celebrations		After school clubs & 'Arts weeks' enrich creative and cultural learning opportunities.		Pupils can be observed selecting their own arts processes through which to communicate	
There is a display policy and the school environment reflects pupils' creative work		The school recognises the need to integrate digital media into their curriculum, but it is work in progress		The school is experienced in action research and comfortable with developing projects with partners	
TOTAL		TOTAL		TOTAL	

Appendix B. Key findings and sources of evidence

Key Finding	Sources of evidence in report
Children developed open-ended writing skills including: powers of description; ideas and imagination; thought processes and reasoning ability	4.6.1 4.7.1 4.8 and 4.9
Children developed technical writing skills: structure; vocabulary; and elements of writing style, such as use of figurative language	4.6.2 4.7.1
Children derived other benefits: independent learning, engagement and enjoyment; confidence in independent writing; enhanced quality and quantity of writing	4.4.2.1 4.6.3 4.7.1 4.8 and 4.9
Children made expected progress or more and this was particularly noted for previously reluctant writers	4.6.3 4.7.1
Teachers' positive professional identity was reinforced	4.6 and 4.8
Teachers were motivated when they saw children inspired, engaged with learning and making better than expected progress in their writing.	4.7.1 4.7.2
Teachers gained many new ideas for activities, plus strategies for planning and implementing creative lessons, in writing and across the new National Curriculum	4.5 4.7.2 4.8 and 4.9
Teachers increased in confidence and some showed leadership in facilitating the arts across a year group, or Key Stage or throughout the school	4.4.2.1 4.7.2 4.8 and 4.9
Schools' engagement with creative and cultural learning has increased	4.4 4.7.3
Schools reported expansion of creativity with increased use of creative teaching techniques by early career teachers and their colleagues	4.4.2.1 4.7.3 4.8
Schools have seen gains in teachers' confidence in teaching through the arts and also children's confidence to participate in arts activities and to write	4.4.2.1 4.7.2
Schools have appreciated the growth in skills of early career teachers, including experience and aptitude for future leadership roles.	4.4.2.1. 4.8

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