

## Raising the Profile of Visual Art

Chelsea Barron, Hawthorn School

### School Context





Hawthorn is a small inner-city school serving an area of socio-economic deprivation, 56% of children live in poverty. Deprivation and poverty are not used as an excuse for underachievement and we work to raise aspirations ensuring pupils are ready to make a full contribution to society. Within the school we have 23 different home languages; a mixed population, giving our school a rich and tolerant profile.

Hawthorn has been an 'In Harmony' school, since 2012, allowing pupils to have total immersion in music and learn orchestral instruments. This project demonstrates our commitment to providing children with a variety of engaging and exciting arts opportunities that enable them to develop positively in their learning; not only on an academic level but also socially, emotionally and culturally. Children learn life-skills such as discipline, multi-tasking, teamwork and perseverance: all skills that support them in all areas of school and their wider life. We recognised the need to raise the profile of the visual arts to match these musical standards.

### Project Aims

Teaching of the arts is essential at Hawthorn Primary School and we are committed to providing our children with a range of arts experiences and are currently working towards the Artsmark award. As part of this process, we are raising the profile of arts and culture by developing visual arts through sketchbooks, progression of skills across school, clubs, trips/events and parental engagement. We aim to provide extra-curricular opportunities for children and families. Discussions and audits completed by staff and pupils have highlighted aims for the project.

***Our main aim: encourage whole school participation in the development of the Visual Arts.***

-  To provide children with opportunities to explore their artistic skills and knowledge through a range of art activities that can be evidenced and documented in sketchbooks
-  To develop partnerships with local artists and cultural organisations
-  To complete a yearly Art Focus Week showcasing all work as a 'gallery'
-  Invite parents, carers and governors into school to share and celebrate artwork

### Covid-19

The main challenge faced over our project was dealing with the effects of the Covid-19 lockdown. We had to find a fast and appropriate way to deliver learning to children and ensure they had access to the resources either remotely or paper based. Once the lockdown was easing and schools reopened, we had to support children to phase back into their new

class. We approached this through the Arts with a wellbeing theme that culminated in an Arts Focus week. As a high percentage of children in our school have English as an additional language, the Arts gave them the chance to explore the positive and negative feelings they may have felt about returning to school and understanding what had recently happened in society, without having to rely on expressing themselves through language.

### **Development**

We decided to begin our journey of raising the profile of the arts by starting our Artsmark journey. This way we could effectively monitor and develop a thorough and engaging art curriculum across school with our project aims at the forefront of curriculum design.

Teachers had to secure their knowledge of curriculum progression to ensure that their planning supported techniques and skills relevant to their group. This was supported by the work that was completed by myself as Art and Design leader; developing resources to support planning which were shared through staff training.



At the beginning of this school year, our 'Arts Focus Week' occurred where children participated in a range of art activities around a well-being theme; a creative focus linked to PSHCE so children could reflect and express their emotions about the Covid-19 lockdown. Teachers and children planned together what key skills and knowledge they needed to build on to produce a final piece of art. Work was showcased in our Hawthorn Gallery in the hall. Following this Arts Focus Week, we were all able to reflect and evaluate our strengths and areas for development and make future plans. As the Arts Week was so successful, we aim to ensure this is a yearly thing and hopefully next year develop links with the wider community when visits to school are possible. This early win motivated discussions with other members of staff, coming up with ideas for further activities/trips/visitors.

During a Senior Leadership Team meeting, we discussed ways we would be able to showcase and collect children's work other than through photographs and displays. Sketchbooks are now being used effectively to do this and show individual progression and skill development over time. Parents, Governors and the wider community are able to celebrate these with the children and teachers have a foundation for assessing each child, further enriching our assessment and tracking of the arts.

### **Impact**

The main advantage of our Art projects so far has been the partnerships created with cultural organisations. The Baltic, Laing Art Gallery and Sage Gateshead are in regular contact and we aim to keep these relationships sustainable and accessible; organising regular trips/visitors when possible. By working closely with other professionals, staff have developed more confidence to use these cultural resources to enhance learning in the classroom.

On reflection, the project and its aims have had a very positive impact and response from staff and children. Everyone here at Hawthorn has been fully invested with the planning,

organising and raising the profile of visual arts. It highlighted to me, as a leader, how supportive the Hawthorn team are and strengthened relationships with governors and members of staff whose creativity and motivation proved fundamental throughout the development process. I aim to continue working with staff, children and cultural organisations to collaborate and develop the dramatic arts throughout the next year. We aim to develop links with local artists who can support our development of Arts Focus Weeks in the future and have already secured funding from an ex Hawthorn pupil who has kindly offered to support us financially to develop further Arts activities. Finding funding was one of the biggest challenges faced during the project. As the costs of artists, trips and transport can be prohibitive. We have been creative and planned activities that are affordable but still excite the children.