"Children need to go to the theatre as much as they need to run about in the fresh air. They need to hear real music played by real musicians on real instruments as much as they need food and drink. They need to read and listen to proper stories as much as they need to be loved and cared for. The difficulty with persuading grown-up people about this is that if you deprive children of shelter and kindness and food and drink and exercise, they die visibly; whereas if you deprive them of art and music and story and theatre, they perish on the inside, and it doesn't show."

Philip Pullman, writer
**OUR CONTEXT**

Our school is situated in Benwell, Newcastle and caters for children from 2-11 years old. We are a multi faith/cultural school with a diverse range of nationalities. (over 60% EAL, 57% DA)

Many of our children and families find it difficult to access formal learning and have little experience of the arts. We wanted to engage our children and families with an inspiring art project and hopefully develop an enthusiasm for the arts.
#INSPIRED BY...

**ACHIEVE POTENTIAL**

This unique partnership programme helps to connect schools in disadvantaged areas with cultural organisations and aims to build sustainable relationships.

The programme is sponsored by Culture Bridge North East.

**CO-CREATE**

We teamed up with Seven Stories because we wanted to co-create an exciting reading space for children. We wanted our children and their parents to fall in love with books and to uncover a passion for reading.

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#OUR HOPES AND AIDS

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

#Provide a once in a life time experience.

#Give children ownership over their environment.

#Empower children (child-led project).

#Co-create an exciting reading space with a local artist and author.

#Raise aspirations.

#Give the children and families a right to access art.

#Improve the subject knowledge and develop skills.
Our project started with a planning meeting in January 2020. We were both really excited as it was our first big art project with an external cultural organisation. At the same time, this was a learning curve for us as we both were newly appointed as art leaders. Our partners were really enthusiastic and supportive but we had to ensure that both staff and parents were engaged and understood the value of this programme.

**Equitable Benefits**

Seven Stories started working on their new exhibition based on the work of Cressida Cowell. Our pupils were tasked to co-produce elements of this exhibition.

**Long Lasting Partnership**

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#I believe this a wonderful opportunity for our children to explore art and to give families confidence to visit many local cultural organisations.# (Member of SLT)

#I hope the children will be inspired to perceive a career in arts.# (Class teacher)

#I am so happy my son will work with an artist. He loves drawing. He draws at home all the time.# (Parent)
“This was the best day of my life! My favourite book is ‘How to Train the Dragons.’”
Joe, pupil

Cressida asked children to help her with the exhibition for Seven Stories. Every child was asked to design their dream reading corner and the children who were selected then had a chance to work with an artist, Alison Ashton, and co-create the pieces for the exhibition.
THE CHALLENGES

In some cases, it was difficult to enthuse parents and to gain consent for their children to participate on the project therefore we decided to integrate the creative sessions into our school day. My colleague and I agreed that we would have loved to be equipped with the skills and knowledge we gained in this leadership course at the start of this project.

MARCH 2020

Despite the brilliant start, we were unable to finish the project and achieve our aims due to coronavirus. We also planned to enable our families to visit Seven Stories, which we still hope will happen.

THE FUTURE

Covid has proved the greatest challenge as many of the children involved in the project have left the school and too much time has passed. We hope to re-launch the project and to enthuse the children, families and staff again.

It will be challenging to relaunch the project in UKS2 with the government focus on a catch up curriculum.