

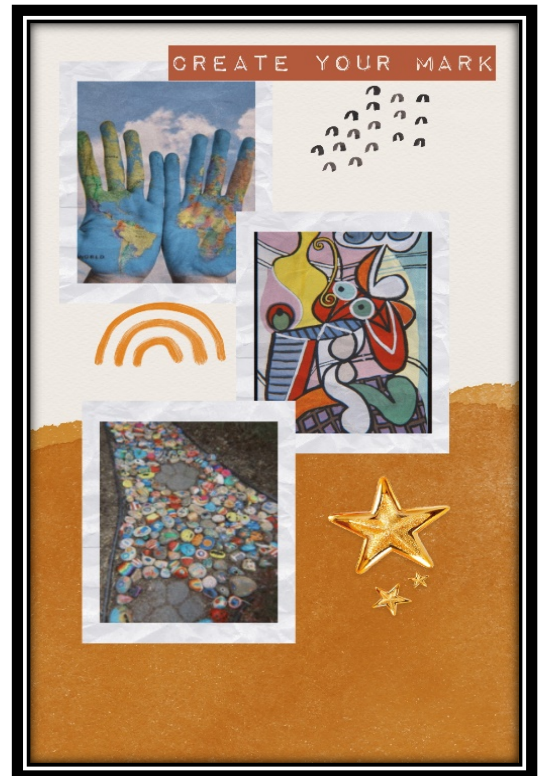
Laurie Horne -Smith – ‘Creating Your Mark’

Swansfield Park Primary School

Focus:

At Swansfield Park, so many of our art projects are about connection and the sharing of our experiences within our community and cross Key Stage. Following the unpredictable and uncertain nature of life for our children living through a National Pandemic, I believe that now more than ever, it is important to re-centre our thinking towards our children to cultivate their confidence, sense of self and their individual value within the school and wider community.

My idea for the project was to create a whole school focus on the children engaging critically with the project title and the images on my style scape, to form the inspiration for child-led discussion and debate. From this, children would plan and create their own art using rocks as the surface for their artwork. The aim of ‘creating your mark’ was that the children would develop the confidence to express themselves and lead their own learning, creating their own individual ‘marks’ in a sustainable way, installing them as they chose to in their own classroom gardens.



Challenges

As with any project, time is needed. I was very aware and mindful of the pressures we already have within school to catch our children up on missed learning. I spent time communicating with staff to relay my vision for the project and why I felt that it was so important for our children to engage in some process over product art with an emphasis on their wellbeing. The inability to communicate face to face due to the ongoing Covid restrictions, meant some staff who were not as confident in the delivery of art, were uncertain how to initiate the project. To help overcome this and to create a sense of confidence in delivery amongst staff, I created some focus slides with some starting point open ended questions alongside the visuals contained in my style scape for initial engagement ideas for the children.

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Development/outcomes

The project developed differently across the key stages. The Early Years children engaged with the colours within the Picasso painting and focused on how colours made them feel different emotions, whilst Key Stage 1 focused on the idea of making their own 'mark' and 'what makes me, me?' Further up the school, in Key Stage 2, the children engaged in some critical literacy and used the images as a focus question: What is art? They enjoyed debating about the use of contemporary art to provide alternative lenses to view the world.

Creating your mark was successful because the children were engaged, they were critically thinking and they all felt they were important contributors to each stage: ideas, planning and creation. The project increased pupil confidence as regardless of the outcome, they had no fear about what they were producing and were able to enjoy the process.

Reflections

This project and the confidence I have gained during the Cultural Leadership in Education Course, have been invaluable in helping me redefine my own role as Art Subject Coordinator. My aim over the next few years, as we work to re-establish our school cultural identity, is to help mend those broken ties created during the pandemic and re-establish a child centred learning focus within school, providing a strong cultural offering where we value not just the 'product' or the acquisition of skills, but the 'process' of developing thinking skills and individual imagination. This project has demonstrated that if we embrace creativity, this in turn will create emotionally resilient and engaged learners who are ultimately more equipped to create their own mark on the world.

