

Arts Award 2015/16 Case Study

As a class teacher with 29 children in my class, I have an open plan classroom alongside my colleague who has 21 Reception Class children and 8 year ones. When we join any type of project, it is always a case of all or nothing, therefore, our project started with 50 Reception children and 8 Year Ones. When we began this project, our aim was to introduce the children to different types of art and encourage them to have a go for themselves, actually in the belief that as an Early Years team, we already access a great deal of art and that this project would, therefore, in some ways support our current practice. As a team, we decided that due to the fact that the theme was to be, "A Sense of Self," we wanted, wherever possible to use adults who were already involved in some form of art, who were, also, in some way related/known to the children. This just seemed to then bring the whole project home for our very small children.

We began the project by asking the children what they knew about the term 'art' and were given responses mainly surrounding painting and drawing. Through conversation we then employed a tattoo artist (parent), a cake decorator (professional but also a teacher), a tap dancer (again a current teacher), a salsa dancer (teacher) and a set designer (Site Manager of the school). We also looked at chromatography alongside a science TA, as well as ocarina players from Year 4, throughout all of which the children were able to have a go and take part.

One little boy aged five at the moment, joined our school last September having been fostered by a local family after a really rather disrupted start in life. He came to us with a number of issues, including Autism and ADHD, which can of course, both make new and unfamiliar situations events really rather uncomfortable for him. He also suffers from a sensory processing disorder which makes holding pencils difficult (he uses Ipad's mostly at school to write at present) and has huge food related issues which limit the things he will both eat and touch.

In his time with us, child D has made amazing progress, writing with the use of an Ipad, joining in activities which we initially would think he would shy away from and accepting the adults within the room as safe, which have all impacted greatly on his behaviour, relationships and progress.

The Arts Award project has given Child D the opportunity to explore dance (with adults and children that are familiar but not present in our day to day life), set design in a workshop who is unfamiliar, although familiar through the life of the school and is not a daily appearance in his life and meeting and drawing with a tattoo artist, one who is actually very unfamiliar indeed. Child D coped with all this exciting experiences and took part in them all with enthusiasm, although perhaps a little reluctant with the dancing, but then a lot of the boys were initially. He was able to work as a group to complete a line dance which was amazing too.



D spending time dancing with the dance teacher.

However, the aspect which really stood out for his teacher and supporting adults was the session in which the children watched a cake being professionally decorated and were then able to do one of their own. This involved icing tubes, royal icing and an area which was absolutely covered in icing sugar to prevent everything from sticking to the tables so was very messy. Child D watched the demonstration on how to do this and then got stuck in! He was testing the icing by licking his fingers and had no fear of getting messy at all and joined in and completed the task. This was a real leap forward for us and all the adults who know him well had a sneaky little observe of him getting quite so messy, it was that fabulous to watch.



D helping to make the rocket boosters.

When planning activities in the classroom, we are always aware of the needs and concerns of children and whether without the project we would have done such a task without something differentiated for him especially (although there are others), is something I do look back and wonder, but I am ever so glad now the project lent itself to such a fun task and such a rewarding one too.



D joining in and listening to the artist talk about his work and while the others examine a rubber hand used for tattoo practice.

In a letter written on the 3rd March, Mum says, “He has since shown an interest in cookery and has wanted to make and taste cookies which he has made, wow what a breakthrough!”

The whole project has been a huge success and we look forward to beginning it again, this time with Year 5.