

# An Arts Project Evaluation for *'Sense of Self'* Shepway Teaching School Alliance

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ARTSMARK



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“Art is being creative, it can be anything and you use your imagination to do it. Art is about lots of different ways to do things or say things” (Reception child from a project school)

## Introduction

The ‘Sense of Self’ project has been developed from the previous success of the Shepway Teaching School Alliance project ‘A sense of Place’ (2014 -2015) which looked at engaging primary schools to develop their art provision within their curriculum through engaging with the artworks in their locality along with artists. Within this project seven Primary Schools have been developing their art provision with a particular focus on early years and how the art experience can engage the children in creative and language rich opportunities. The focus of ‘A sense of Self’ was developed by the teachers in the initial stage of the project due to the age and nature of working with children in the Early Years. All schools show an increased impact on their arts provision through the development of the project. This evaluation aims to consider the journey of the schools, teachers and children by considering the impact on the engagement and provision in art.

## Current Education Art and Design Context

Art and design is currently in a challenging position within the education field with far greater emphasis on schools to perform in English and Maths. This has implications within the curriculum for the foundation subjects with less curriculum time being spent on art and design. The National Society for Education Art and Design (NSEAD) have recently reported that teachers over the last five years have seen a significant decrease in the time spent on art and design. The teachers highlight this decrease relates directly to the increase pressure on performance in the key stage 2 tests (NSEAD 2016). This is why opportunities and commitment such as these schools have been afforded are vital. Enabling our children in challenging and venerable areas to not only access the Arts but also thrive on the opportunities they allow by engaging young learners in an art and cultural dialogue which influences their academic and personal success. Eisner (2002) suggested that through the process of exploration and representation of something visually children engage in a deep reflection and critical consideration of the subject, which can impact all areas of their academic achievement.

## Folkestone

Folkestone like many Victorian coastal towns finds itself with issues relating to regeneration and employability although it is fortunate to have a rich art landscape due to the Creative Foundation. Folkestone has an impressive art scene with a

nationally prominent art festival, 'The Folkestone Triennial' which over the last three events has hosted art works from an impressive array of high calibre artists from around the world. As a consequence, Folkestone now has a large selection of public art within the landscape of the town. This consists of 27 permanent pieces all commissioned through the Creative Foundation and secured from previous Folkestone Triennials. The works included pieces by prominent world class artists such as Tracey Emin, Cornelia Parker and Mark Wallinger and many others. These artworks themselves enable art to become part of everyday life in Folkestone giving children, parents and the wider community the opportunity to engage in the contemporary art scene.

In a 'Sense of Self' Progress was measured against the eight key performance outcomes:

- The seven project schools engaged in the Arts Award all becoming Arts Award centres
- Five of the project schools have engaged and started the Artsmark journey demonstrating a commitment to an arts rich curriculum going forward
- 373 children engaged and achieved the Arts Award
- Children showed a greater awareness and understanding of the arts
- There was evidence of all schools evaluating and enhancing their arts provision over the life of the project
- Children showed greater understanding of the Arts and artists with an increased enjoyment and confidence within the subject.
- Children developed increased confidence within the arts which impacted on their achievement across the wider curriculum.
- Schools offered rich and diverse curriculum which was highlighted positively during the Ofsted inspection process within two project schools.

Opportunities the project afforded for the schools, children and community: -

- Children had the opportunity and were encouraged to engage in arts in a personalised way to ensure freedom of expression and exploration.
- Schools had the opportunity and support to develop and explore an arts curriculum which reflects their local community.
- Children were encouraged to access Arts and culture-rich opportunities such as those obtained through the Arts Award or the Artsmark.
- Schools and teachers engage in appropriate funded professional development opportunities which enabled reflection on the role of Arts in the curriculum.
- Children had the opportunity to share with their community in the enjoyment of the Arts.

The project 'A Sense of Self' which took place was directly related to a previous project called the 'Sense of Place' which had particularly positive outcomes in the previous year (for further information see website [www.asenseofplace.education](http://www.asenseofplace.education))

## The project: A Sense of Self Project

Each of the seven primary schools nominated a key teacher to lead the project either the Art co-ordinator or the Foundation Stage teacher. The teachers came together in the initial stages to discuss and shape the project which was facilitated by the programme co-ordinator Michelle Charlton-Taylor for Shepway Teaching Schools. The schools quickly established and owned the project. They were established through the identification of the theme 'A Sense of Self' which was inspired by the previous theme but further personalised due to the nature, age and cohort of the children involved.

The seven primary schools involved in the 'A sense of Self' project were:

- Castle Hill Primary School
- Cheriton Primary School
- Greatstone Primary School
- Hawkinge Primary School
- Palmarsh Primary School
- Sandgate Primary School
- Seabrook Church of England Primary school

The project started with an initial meeting from which a programme of events was outlined for the life of the project. This comprised of individual visits and support to schools by the project co-ordinator along with training opportunities particularly for the Arts Award and Artsmark. The researcher was invited to attend all sessions and was able to do so throughout the project.

The programme was outlined as follows:

- Initial meeting Shepway
- Arts Award training
- Five Project Development sessions (Castle Hill Primary School)
- Artsmark Introduction session (QuarterHouse Folkestone)
- Final evaluative session for schools (Castle Hill Primary School)
- Presentation at Arts Conference held at Canterbury Christ Church University

The researcher throughout acted as a participant observer. Having a knowledge and interest in Arts education she at times offered support and advice during the process. The schools were co-ordinated and supported throughout by the project lead Michelle Charlton-Taylor. She recognised and was mindful of the importance of the schools feeling ownership of the project and empowered them to facilitate the process themselves to ensure future success.

It became very apparent early on that the schools' ownership of the project was paramount. This was a project that continued from 'A sense of Place' but it was recognised by all involved that it was not to be a simple repeat of the previous project. Instead it focused on the needs of the project schools and the children they involved. All teachers involved were very positive about the experience. The project was teacher led with individual schools responding differently depending on the cohort their curriculum and also location. The schools felt this was key for the young children to explore, therefore it enabled the group of schools the freedom to explore with their own interpretation whilst also enabling the children personalised responses.

The Arts Award training enabled the teachers to explore their own knowledge and understanding of the term 'Arts' alongside considering the value of the arts in the curriculum. All teachers involved became familiar with the Discover and Explore levels of Arts Award. All schools have since utilised these within their projects and a positive number achieving the awards.

The Artsmark professional development enabled the schools' senior leaders and project teachers time to consider their schools current Arts curriculum. Whilst also considering how the Arts in the future might support the development of their school as well as their children's learning over the coming year and beyond.

## How did the schools engage with the project?

Here are some examples of how two of the schools engaged with the project, drawing on their feedback and success identified.

### Seabrook CE Primary School

The project focused on Reception and Year 1/2, the classes considered 'What is art?' and 'What is an artist?' with the underlying focus on developing a child's sense of self through a range of art-forms. As part of their project the classes explored a variety of Arts, either first hand or online. These included musical theatre, pantomime, ballet, street dance, sculpture, performance poetry and visual artwork. The children explored the similarities and differences and discussed what they thought made them all 'art'. Interesting answers ensued and prompted a discussion about professional artists and those who enjoy art and whether both of these are 'artists'. Children visited local artist Shane Record who showed the children his studio gallery and shared with them his motivation to paint. The children also explored the collage work of Henri Matisse and of nature print artist Laura Bethmann.

The children then took part in open-ended collage and nature printing workshops, inspired by these artists. They played with colour, texture and shape without the constraints of producing a finished product. The project went on to consider self firstly through objects that had significant meaning to the children and then through their relationships to object, their homes and also their image of their self. An identity art installation was created outside school titled 'Window' (see figure 1). Behind each pane was a photo of each child's significant items, their own quote and a portrait of themselves. The children shared their work with both children and parents, through displaying their installation outside school.



*Figure 1 'Window'*

## Sandgate Primary School

Sandgate primary school was the only school which had been involved in 'A Sense of Place' project the previously year. The school had made a conscious commitment to 'A sense of Self' although no funding would facilitate Sandgate to participate they felt being part of the process was beneficial for their schools and children's progression within the arts. Sandgate embarked on the Explore Art Award which they started in the October. As part of this process all children were given sketchbooks to capture their thoughts throughout the journey. This sketchbook engagement had a particularly noticeable effect on one particular child's behaviour. Child A prior to the project had been challenging with emotional outbursts which lead him to regularly exit of the classroom, impacting on his learning.

The children through the journey of Explore Arts Award had opportunity to share work from their sketchbook which particularly seemed to have a positive effect on Child A, who actively wanted to share his sketchbook with his peers. The more he shared, the more confident he became regularly bringing in art work from home. As child A's sketchbook developed so did his confidence to share his work which in turn

lead to a noticeable and significant decrease in his emotional outbursts. The art it would seem enabled the child to find their voice. As Hickman (2005) suggests the art supported the child's expression and communicate of their personal feelings and ideas.

Child A's sketchbook was one of the six requested by Art Award moderators and Child A (along with his year group) passed the Art Award Explore. As well as this, Child A applied for and was elected to become a member of the school's art council. A student body elected to promote the Arts within school. At the school's parent's evening Child A's parents commented upon his demeanour at home, noting how he seemed much calmer and happier. Parents commented positively on the child's A increased enjoyment of school positively looking forward to going to school. This was reflected in the child A's well-being in the classroom, with improved peer relationships and the progress made in their learning. As Eisner (1997) suggests the arts for this child supported their self-expression, which impacted on their development and academic understanding. Enabling the child to develop their creative abilities as an individual. The project impacted on this child's academic success due to the positive relationship with the curriculum. The project also motivated and encourage the school to continue with their Arts Award offer alongside developing the profile of the Arts within the school with initiatives such as the school's Arts Council.

### **Outcomes observed from 'A sense of Self' project highlighted the following areas:**

The following outcomes have all been observed all schools either through questionnaires of children or teachers, observation of practice submission of Artsmark or through the Ofsted inspection process. There was a significant increase in children's understanding of the arts.

1. Children's knowledge and understanding of artists increased
2. Teachers knowledge and understanding of artists within their locality developed
3. Development of the children's confidence in Arts
4. Children's enjoyment and engagement in the arts increased
5. The Arts curriculum has impacted on the wider school development plan

Each objective will be discussed in more detail below.

## 1 Significant increase in children’s understanding of the Arts:

At the start of the project children were asked by their teachers what their understanding was of the term ‘Arts’, as you can see from the answers below many of the children initially felt the arts were related only to painting and drawing. Children also suggested that art was something reserved for the specialist, the fine artist with comments from the children such as:

*“It’s a really hard thing.”*  
*“It can easily break.”*  
*“You choose a person and draw them.”*  
*“It’s made out of wood and it can’t break.”*  
*“My mummy does Art-she’s really good at it- she doesn’t go out of the lines’*

All schools were encouraged to gather data to show evidence of the children’s understanding being developed. As the children were mainly from reception classes this consisted of talking with children on a range of ideas relating to the Arts. All schools stated an increase in the children’s understanding of the different Art forms. The graph below (Figure 2) is an example of one particular project school where each child named art forms, it demonstrates a significant increase in an awareness of ‘what is Art?’. The blue shows the children’s knowledge prior to embarking on ‘A Sense of Self’ project and the orange afterwards.

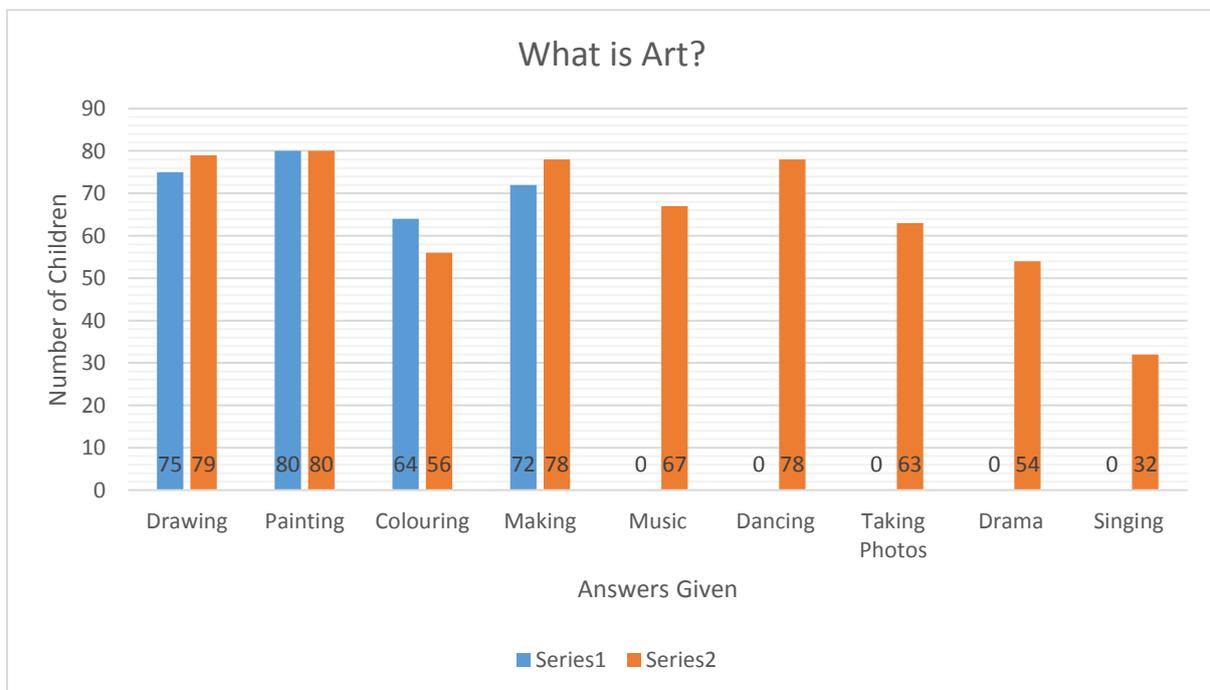


Figure 2 Children’s responses to the question ‘what is art?’

The follow results (Figure 3) demonstrate a similar increase in the children’s knowledge and understanding of different art forms prior to and after the project.

Baseline	
Painting	Cutting
Drawing	Chalking
Making	Acting
Wax	
Printing	
Tracing	
Colouring	
Gluing and sticking	
After Arts Day	
Painting	Sculpture
Drawing – pencil, charcoal	Singing
Printing	Origami
Dance	Music
Printing	Photography
Cooking	Carving
Paper Mache	Graffiti
Wax	Acting
Digital art	

*Figure 3 Children’s identification of different art forms*

The children had the opportunity to consider what defines art and through this questioning re-examining the notions of the ‘Arts’. The process of the Discover Arts Award allowed learning about the process. It ensured teachers and children discussed and explored ‘Arts’ which previously they may not have had the opportunity to or that they had not considered an art form.

“Art is being creative, it can be anything and you use your imagination to do it. Art is about lots of different ways to do things or say things”  
 Reception child

## 2 Children’s knowledge and understanding of artists increased

Throughout the project the children had increased opportunities to engage with a range of artists from ‘The Mighty Zulu Nation,’ an African dance troupe, Shane Record, Tattoo artists and even cake designers. This enabled them to expand the

view and understanding of what and consider who is an artist. As can be seen from the children’s comments below the children did not perceive an artist as someone other than a painter who exhibits their work for sale.

The comments below are Reception children’s views of an artist in the initially stage of the project:

“An artist is someone who... Um... three things: they train really hard to be good at art; they sell their work and put it in... um, special places to show their art.”

“An artist is someone who makes things... people buy their pictures.”

“An artist is somebody who makes pictures and paints things.”

It became apparent some children across the project schools had very limited understanding of who or what an artist could be. They found it particularly difficult to name any artists although this is a requirement within elements of the National Curriculum (DFE 2014). In one of the project schools when all the children within the school were asked to name an artist only half of them could identify any. Through their engagement with the project, children developed a broader sense of the term ‘artists’. When children the same project school were asked in the final of stages of the project to name an artist nearly all could (Figure 4). Thus a significant impact on the children’s knowledge and attainment within the curriculum.

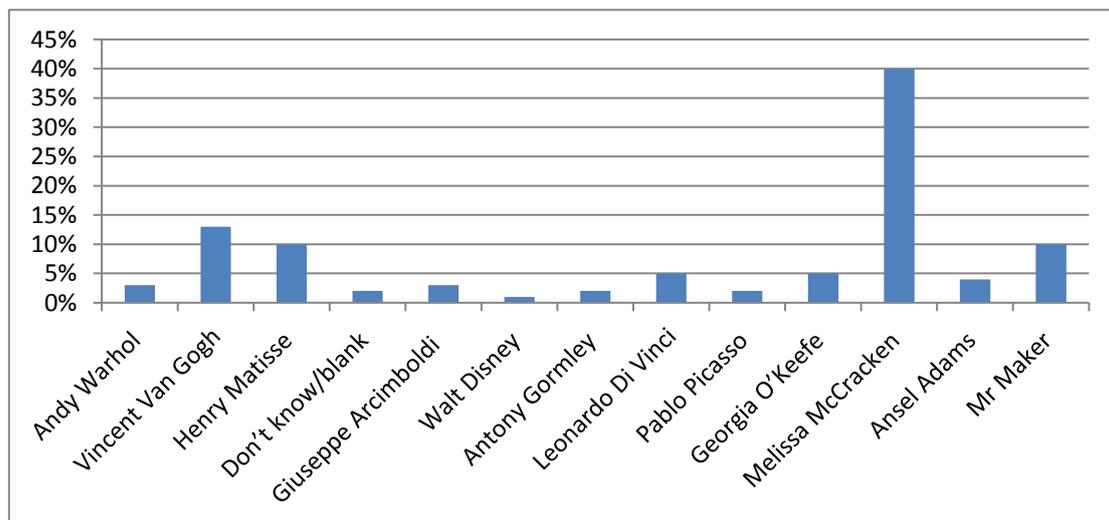


Figure 4 Whole school responses to naming artists

It would seem that all children’s views of artists benefited from the project. One might also consider if this had an impact on the adults’ understanding also. Through posing the question ‘who is an artist’ made the adults working within the school

also reflect and analyse their perception. Children's view of an artist changed through the life of the project and in the final stages the same reception children as above felt an artist was.....

"An artist is somebody who creates something- they could be a musician and play a piece of music or dance to some music, or, or, paint a picture, a collage. We can all be artists because we can all be creative."

"An artist is someone who makes pieces of art, not everyone likes the art they make but they make it because they like it."

### **3 Teachers' knowledge of artists within their locality developed**

This became apparent due to the increase in the schools using and working with artist partners within their local area. All schools had artists visit and work with their children bringing a range of different skills. Both children and teachers benefitted from the artists' expertise. The two schools which experienced Ofsted during the life of the project, both Ofsted reports reflected positively the exciting opportunities children were afforded through work with artists. One Ofsted report stated.....

"You have designed a curriculum which makes good use of the local area and involves interesting activities, many visits and visitors to bring learning to life." (Ofsted 2016)

This directly supports and highlights the positive contribution the project had within the schools.

### **4 Development in Children's confidence in the Arts**

All schools reported that their children had enjoyed the project and as a result of it there was an increased motivation towards the Arts, which directly impacted on children's engagement. One school asked the children to identify if they were a good artist, the school found a marked increase in the children's confidence once they had developed a greater understanding of the Arts (Figure 5).



Figure 5 Children's response to 'are you good at art' before and end of project

Once children realised that the Arts were not only about drawing, children felt more confident in their abilities as artists. Children became confident in their own artistic abilities and expressing their own opinions about art. This also translated into the way the children felt they could talk about artists (Figure 6). This increase in confidence enables children the potential to access new art forms, potentially changing the way they engage in Arts in the future.

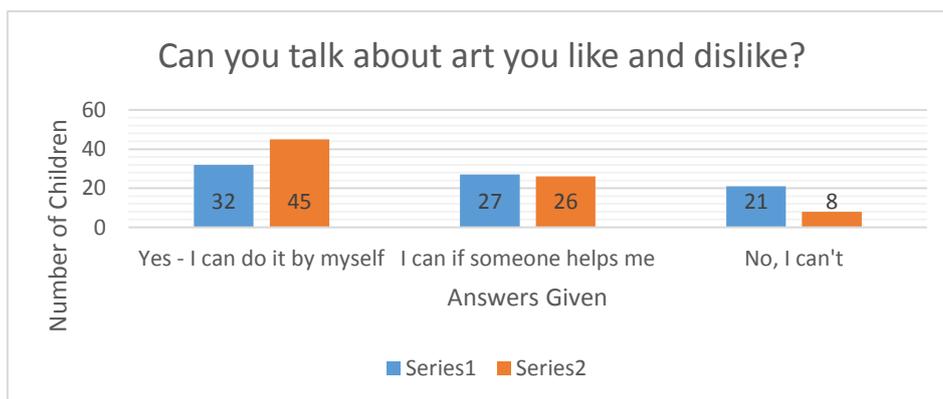


Figure 6 Children's responses to their ability to talk about art.

Children became more confident in their knowledge and their abilities and thus became more confident to express their views and opinions on different art forms. This increase in confidence was also observed in their language and ability to communicate with each other. Which impacted on attainment within the Early Learning goals for the foundation stage children, which the following case study of one particular child's experience of the project will demonstrate.

### 'Wow what a breakthrough!' Case study of a Reception child

Teachers often reported that the project had a significant impacted on the children's engagement within the curriculum. The following is a case study from the school's view on how the project had a profound effect on the confidence of one child. At

the start of the project this five-year-old child had recently joined the school with a number of personal challenges, being fostered and with a diagnosis of both Autism and ADHD, (which includes a sensory processing disorder which makes holding a pencils difficult therefore an Ipad for writing used at school) Alongside there were food related issues which limited the things the child would eat or touch.

The Arts Award project gave the child the opportunity to explore dance, set design, drawing with a tattoo artist and cake decoration with a range of adults which were not always familiar to them. Something the child managed with growing confidence, this was a marked change for the child developing their confidence in other adults. The child engaged with enthusiasm with these exciting experiences, participating working with peers to complete a line dance which was seen as an amazing progression both in working with peers and also engaging in a large group activity. Clear development occurred in relation to personal communication and language development, which was observed in the communication taking place from the child within the group.

However, the aspect which really stood out for the teacher and supporting adults was the session in which the child watched a cake being professionally decorated. This involved using icing tubes, royal icing and an area covered in icing sugar to prevent everything sticking to the tables. The child watched the demonstration then engaged fully. The child was observed testing the icing by licking their fingers with no fear of mess or food which had previously been problematic. The child joined in and completed the task. The adults felt this was a major step forward and a pleasure to see the progress made. Even the foster-parent comment in a letter to school that the child 'has since shown an interest in cookery and has wanted to make and taste cookies which \*\*\*\* has made, wow what a breakthrough!'

This is clear evidence of how engaging with the arts can support the child's development impacting on all areas of the curriculum and also their ability to succeed in the future. Hickman (2005) suggest this engagement of arts can support the child thus the arts aids the child's personal growth and expression, which was evident for this child.

## 5 Children's skills and development within in the Arts increased



*Figure 7 Reception child's design of nature*

As the project focused on working with Reception children the creative arts goals in the Foundation Stage were considered evidence of impact. Comparative data was used from children in the previous year who had not experience the project with those from the current year. Although one should consider the general cohort specific differences, the two different cohorts show a significant increase in the children’s early learning goals with relation to ‘Exploring and Using Media’ and ‘Being Imaginative’ (Figure 8).

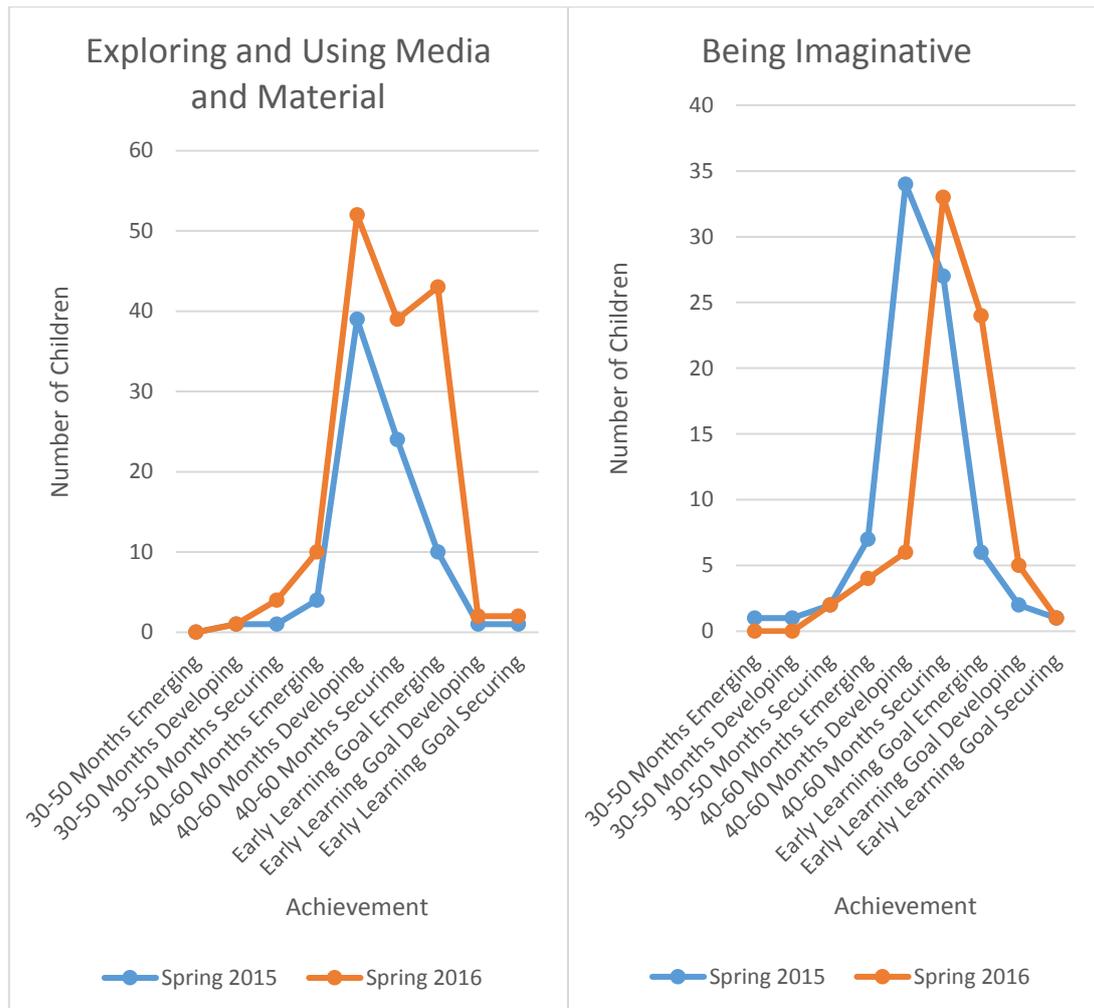


Figure 8 Early Learning goals achievement compared to previous cohort

The data in Figure 9 demonstrates the increase in performance in one particular cohort from start to end of the project. This demonstrates the value of engaging with the arts to increase elements such as imagination which will be a fundamental skill required for the future economic success of many of the children. The imagination enables the ability to problem solve to innovate consider the possibilities and form unique creations.

Exploring and using media and materials	Entry data	Number of children on entry	Number of children on Exit	Being imaginative	Entry data	Number of children on entry	Number of children on Exit
	22-36D	3			22-36D	1	
	22-36S	3			22-36S	5	
	30-50B	28			30-50B	42	
	30-50D	15	1		30-50D	11	0
	30-50S		1		30-50S		1
	40-60B		0		40-60B		8
	40-60D		39		40-60D		22
	40-60S		12		40-60S		25
	B ELG		1		B ELG		2

*Figure 9 Tables both show entry and exit data for one cohort's attainment in the Early Learning Goals relating to the Arts.*

## 6 Arts curriculum impacting on the wider school development

The project focused on reception aged children with each school engaging children in achieving Arts Award discover. All schools engaged with the Arts Award and all became Arts Award centres enabling them to offer the programme in a sustainable manner over time. All schools also committed to the Artsmark journey and attended the initial Artsmark training and are currently in the process of submitting their Statement of commitment. This will see the Arts firmly linked to the school improvement plan raising the profile of the Arts with teachers and governors. These Statement of commitments provide a positive legacy to the project over the coming two years.

Two schools were inspected by Ofsted during the project both receiving positive results one significantly moving from grade three to two, whilst the other maintained their grade two overall. Significantly Ofsted inspectors highlighted the Arts as a strength in both schools. Cheriton Primary school was inspected whilst their Arts and Culture week was underway and the comments below are comments Ofsted highlighted as strengths.

"Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are significant strengths of the school." (Ofsted 2016)

"The diversity of the community is celebrated in daily life and through many activities including cultural festivals, focus weeks such as the music, art and drama" (Ofsted 2016)

The Palmarsh Primary school was also inspected moving positively to a grade two overall and were highlighted for improved provision stating that:

"One of the main factors that has had a positive impact on pupils' achievement is the inspiring and motivating curriculum" (Ofsted 2016)

"The curriculum is enriched with a wide range of additional activities including visits, visitors to the school - these activities help pupils to learn new skills and make a positive contribution to their personal, as well as their academic, development." (Ofsted 2016)

These demonstrate how the Arts impact on the school's life and development of the whole child. The ability for children to achieve and the importance of Arts to supported this. The project enabled the opportunity for schools to focus on the Arts and through financial and professional support develop their offer to the children in their community.

One school observed if a change occurred in children's confidence it also showed across their learning. The teachers believed that through learning new things and understanding the artists process including trial and error to create art, the children may become more confident in learning new things and the opportunities that trial and error present in learning a fresh. The data teachers collected demonstrated that after the project children were more positive about learning new skills and saw that it is acceptable to make mistakes (Figure 10) and try again when learning new things.

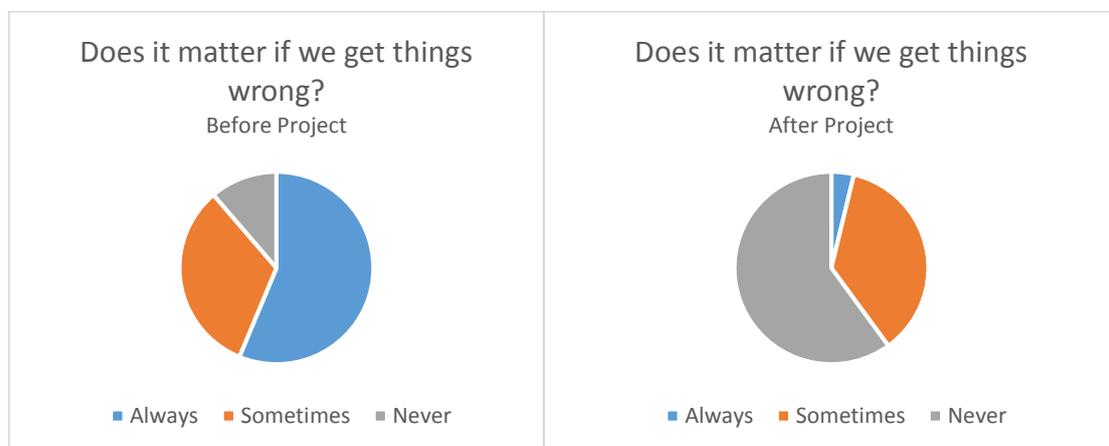


Figure 10 Data showing children's change in attitude towards making mistakes

This change in attitude is significant allowing children the confidence to try new skills, enabling them to be more resilient learners who are more likely to take risks in their learning.

### **Future recommendations in light of the evaluation of 'A Sense of Self' project across the six schools: -**

- Consideration should be given to the impact of the Arts within the participating schools regarding both attainment and curriculum and thus the potential for future schools to have similar positive impacts.
- Participating schools ought to reflect on their positive journey to date and continue with the Arts Awards and their Artsmark journey
- Continuation of collaborative school based networks to engage in Arts projects that impact on children's opportunities within the Arts and teacher's professional development. These should continue to be supported and facilitated by organisations such as Artswork, Local Authority and Teaching school alliances.
- Schools need to consider the role of Arts in school development as a crucial element of offering a broad and balanced curriculum accessible for all.
- The Shepway schools need to consider the legacy of the 'A sense of Place' project and 'A sense of self project' sharing good practice with other schools where possible.
- Acknowledging the potential of engaging with the Arts for enabling children the opportunity to explore their sense of self thus developing their confidence and personal identity.



*Figure 11 Reception child's image of nature design*

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