

CASE STUDY: Building confidence with an intrigued engager school

St Mary's whole school project with Little Angel Theatre

Partners

St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Little Angel Theatre, Islington Cultural Education Partnership (ICEP)

Collaboration with ICEP

Creative Schools worked closely with Islington Cultural Education Partnership (ICEP) to deliver bespoke support across four primary schools in St Mary's ward. Section 106 funding secured through a planning obligation by ICEP enabled each school a pot of funding to commission arts projects proposed by Creative Schools and ICEP cultural organisations with support from the Creative Schools brokerage team.

About the school

St Mary's Church of England Primary School is a diverse one-form entry school based in Islington

61% of students receive pupil premium, above the London and UK average (27%)

The school self-identified as an 'Intrigued Engager' school, with an interest in developing staff confidence in delivering creative opportunities for students



The need

The Creative Schools team met with teachers and senior leaders at the school to identify key school priorities and needs that could be supported with a creative project. The needs identified included:

- Commissioning cross-curricular projects that have a whole school impact
- Supporting speaking, listening and writing across all key stages
- Developing middle leadership across the school



The project

Little Angel Theatre proposed an exciting whole school performance that addressed the school's priorities to deliver cross-curricular projects, and ensure whole school impact while also involving significant co-design with teachers senior leaders and pupils in the school.

Artists and teachers worked together over a term to create a promenade performance that brought to life the St Mary's vision story 'Three Gold Leaves'.

Every student in the school played a part in an absorbing and experiential performance that represented the schools' values and history by creating immersive environments inside and outside the school building. The final performance brought together the whole school community with an audience of over 200 including parents, teachers, governors, siblings, and neighbours.

Impacts

For students...

As part of the project, all St Mary's students took part in a variety of creative activities including lantern making, shadow puppetry, singing, performance and presentation opportunities.

30 children attained Discover Arts Award, and 30 attained Explore as part of the project.

Increased self-confidence

"It made me feel nervous as in year 4 people were voting who should speak for the man and they chose me, and then when people came I felt scared, [and after?] after I didn't feel worried as no one was laughing, they were encouraging me" – *Y5 student*

"I used to be really really shy and afterwards I'm not shy anymore and I don't know how, but doing it front of the whole school changes a lot" – *Y5 student*

"This took away my stage fright and made me become more confident and it also made me improve my speech and that's how I got the auditions [in the Christmas play] I got Joseph" – *Y5 student*

Encouraged students to see themselves as creative

"My cousin goes to this big art club thing and it's for people that are really creative and artistic ...I didn't want to go there as I'm really bad at art and everything and doing stuff ...because I'm not a good artist, but after we had the thing I realised I can do things, and I made a chatterbox and a big box as well and it was really hard but I knew how to do it after a bit and figured out what you had to do and then I told my cousin I'm going to come to that even if I'm not the best art person and I'm good at creating things now because I realised I can." – *Y5 student*

Changed perceptions of Little Angel Theatre

"The first time we went to the theatre with school it was a good experience as I had been to the theatre before I thought that theatres were boring, because it's just puppets but when I went I saw it wasn't, the last one we went to was like a bookshop and the people came over to you and asked about your ideas in the middle of show." – *Y5 student*

"I thought it was for babies as there are puppets and you can see the people but the stories they tell are for all children." – *Y5 student*

For the school...

St Mary's now has an ongoing relationship with Little Angel Theatre, their local arts organisation. A follow up literacy project for Year 6s as theatre critics has already taken place and future plans for collaboration include working with Little Angel Theatre to showcase career opportunities in the creative sector.

As part of their priority to support middle leaders, the school has also started the Artsmark journey.

Increased understanding of cultural opportunities and how they can meet school priorities

"This is the first time we've worked with an outside arts organisation since I've been here which is five years... we did art in the classroom but didn't know what avenues were open to use, or what the opportunities were out there." – *Senior Leader, St Mary's Primary School*

"The legacy is brilliant, there is enriched creativeness going on in the school. It was a really rich experience – beyond the classroom." – *Senior Leader, St Mary's Primary School*

Enhanced confidence in working with artists and organisations

"Since the project we are a lot more open and confident, when we are approached now by other potential partners [teachers] feel empowered and confident to see how this work might enhance the curriculum... and they're not viewed as more workload, there are more open mind sets, the whole leadership team and all the staff." – *Senior Leader, St Mary's Primary School*

"All of the children were able to make something that featured in the final installations and the school worked hard to make sure that everyone had something to do during the time the installations were open, so it felt completely like a whole school project." – *Project Lead, Little Angel Theatre*

Engaged the wider school community

"What an amazing performance from the whole school. Hope this becomes a permanent feature!" – *Audience member*