



Cleveland Road Primary School

# Synergy Arts Week



# INTRODUCTION



Synergy Week was designed to enable the whole school to create pupil-led, mixed media art pieces that challenged both students and teachers creatively. Inspired by a poem written by Michael Rosenberg, the synergy brief each class responded to was: to create a piece of art that brought together two seemingly unconnected topics (e.g. Geography and Textiles; Sculpture and Spanish). The teaching emphasis was on exploration and development of ideas, prioritising the *process* over the final product, and allowing the children to be the driving force behind the decision making.

## Key Aims

### 1. CPD

To build more confidence in teaching staff by offering ongoing support from arts specialists.

### 2. Pupil Ownership

To allow pupils the creative space to interpret the brief and create their own responses facilitated by the teacher.

### 3. Process over product

To challenge teachers to be experimental and allow the project to develop into the finished piece, over time.

### 4. Involving the Community

To culminate the project and celebrate the outcomes with a gallery exhibition, open to the community, highlighting the significance of the Arts within our curriculum.

Prior to developing the project, an audit was conducted to evaluate how staff felt about Cleveland's current art provision. Synergy Week was designed as a response to this audit.

The audit results enabled us to identify key areas of development which could be addressed through the Synergy Week:

- Arts CPD to build confidence
- Planning sessions with Arts specialists
- Resources made readily available
- Pupil-led learning
- Sharing work between year groups and beyond

# THE BRIEF

Staff were introduced to the concept of Synergy Week through the poem *Possible* by Michael Rosenburg. The poem plays with the idea of linking unexpected activities together in the name of creativity. The poem became a good starting point for Synergy Week for staff because it identified the possibilities of exploration and experimentation in the Arts, rather than expected and predictable final outcomes. Pupil ownership was a key aim of the project, creating a second challenge for the teaching staff. Teachers were encouraged to

allow the children to lead the exploration through facilitating discussions and exercises in class.

## Possible

This morning,  
I started to:  
Sing a song  
Write a story  
Carve a statue  
Draw a drawing  
Act in a play  
Play a guitar  
Paint with a brush  
Film with a camera  
Design a film  
Rhyme a poem  
And  
Dance a dance

This afternoon  
I will:  
Sing a statue  
Write with a camera  
Carve a play  
Draw a song  
Act in a drawing  
Play a brush  
Paint with a story  
Film with a guitar  
Design with words  
Rhyme a dance  
And Dance a poem

by Michael  
Rosenburg

Each year group was assigned two subjects which they would explore and combine in order to create an art piece. While the two subjects were to be used as inspiration, how each class chose to follow the brief was left very open. As the year groups at Cleveland Road are four-form, it provided an opportunity for staff, pupils and parents to see how one brief could result in four very different, distinct pieces of art. These varied outcomes provided a visual reinforcement of the varied, interpretive and exploitative journeys that each class had taken.



## SUBJECT ALLOCATION

**Reception:** Geography and Textiles

**Year 1:** Clay and Music

**Year 2:** Poetry and Maths

**Year 3:** Science and Movement

**Year 4:** Computing and Collage

**Year 5:** Sculpture and Spanish

**Year 6:** SPAG and Film/Photography

A Teachers Handbook can be found in the resources folder.



# PLANNING AND DELIVERING



## Key steps

1. Teacher facilitates discussion with class, submits 'Initial Thoughts' form
2. 'Initial Thoughts' form discussed and explored with teacher and Arts Specialist
3. Feedback to class and focus on main concept to be explored
4. Teachers to complete 'loose plan' forms
5. Arts Specialists to provide in-class workshops on the identified art medium, as a basis for exploration
6. Specific CPD sessions for teachers, as needed
7. Class piece to be created during Synergy Week
8. Further discussion between teacher and pupils about how to display work and present it to visitors during exhibition
9. Rehearsal of presentation

**Initial Thoughts and Loose Plan forms are available in the resources folder on the school Artsmark page**

To take into account the audit feedback of increased specialist support, advanced planning and easy access to resources, our in-house team of arts specialists worked with teachers throughout *Synergy Week*. Rather than teach the pupils directly, the specialists provided CPD, resource sourcing, help with equipment and drop-in clinics to discuss any element of the project with teaching staff.

Instead of more formal lesson plans, teachers worked with a loose structure to help format the project. Emphasis was placed on having flexibility within the plan, so that each class could explore where the brief would lead. Student responses were key to shaping the pathway that each class ultimately followed.

# CLEVELAND EXHIBITION

In preparing for the exhibition itself, the aim was to transform the school into a gallery space, providing a professional platform for the pupils to share their work. Given the varied responses to the brief, there was a mixture of video, performance, installation, sound design and mixed art media which filled the school across its three floors. Children were appointed as 'Gallery Guides' to direct guests around the exhibition and to explain the creative process behind

the art on display. To encourage children and visitors to visit the whole gallery and not just their child's work, a treasure hunt with prizes was organised. This worked well as a device to lead all visitors across the different floors of the exhibition and provided an incentive to interact with the work on show.

**Exhibition treasure hunts are available on the Synergy Arts week, Artsmark page**



**Miriam from Year 5 explaining the process behind the Spanish-inspired sculptures.**

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From the school newsletter:

This week Cleveland Road Primary School presented its very first art gallery opening for parents and carers. The school was transformed into a gallery of wonder and imagination, as children in each year group showcased the work that they created during *Synergy Week*. We are sure that you will agree that it was a truly spectacular event which really

demonstrated what creative, inventive and innovative children we have in our school. Well done to all the children for creating a really wonderful spectacle. We know you will agree that the gallery guides, did a wonderful job providing explanations and commentaries about each exhibit and demonstrating such passion and enthusiasm for their creative journeys.

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# OUTCOMES



Opening up the school and creating such a professional atmosphere had a big impact on the visiting adults. It was clear that the event had allowed visitors to enjoy and appreciate the whole school's contribution, from Reception to Year 6, while sending a clear message about the school's commitment to the Arts.

1. Building confidence in staff
2. Pupil-led learning
3. Experimental art lessons
4. Community involvement

Teachers were supported with the non-linear element of this project and found it to be experimental and eye-opening as to what their children were capable of. It put a lot of our teaching staff outside of their comfort zones and allowed them to demand more creativity from their pupils. General feedback from staff indicated that, for many, genuine pupil-led work within art, when there is an added pressure of an exhibition date, is daunting. However, many teachers found that their pupils had more ideas for tackling the brief than they had themselves, and found them to be a great creative resource! With the support of the arts team, teachers gained more confidence to experiment with art themes, and create less prescriptive art, with the children at the forefront of the decision-making process.

We wanted pupils to be able to speak confidently and authentically about their creative process. From initial ideas, to techniques that they experimented with, to collaborative input, to the way the work was exhibited, they had a voice. By emphasising the *process* of creating rather than having an expected outcome, children had high engagement with the project from start to finish. Our Gallery Guides were the stars of the exhibition and highlighted how much ownership the children had over their own work. They chatted confidently and intelligently to audiences about the significance behind the work their class had created. A particular highlight for many staff members was watching some of our children with EAL speaking so eloquently about their art pieces.