

St Bartholomews Primary School

Project title	Dance Tales
Project dates	22 Feb – 26 March 2018
Wellbeing issue	The class teacher hoped the dance project would bring greater cohesion to the class and develop how pupils worked as a team. Historically, there had been some friendship issues between a group of pupils within the class. There was also a higher than average number of dominant characters, who would benefit from developing their abilities to lead collaboratively. Being a one form entry school, there had never been the chance for the pupils to be mixed up with another class in the same year group (a common strategy used by schools to address such issues). Incidents occurred frequently between class mates at break or lunch, when the school day was less structured.
Age/Year group	Year 5
Number of children participating	26
Number of parents participating	0
Lead Artists/Organisation	Rosaria Gracia
Lead Teacher/s	John Mills



Project description

Working with a dancer, children explored modern and traditional dances as a way to explore feelings and tell stories. Using a theme of Volcanoes, children worked in groups to devise different sections of the dance to describe different situations and feelings. Using music, spoken word, props and a variety of movement styles they created a dance incorporating all their ideas. The project culminated with a performance for parents at The Basement.

Successes

There have been no physical incidents involving other people since starting this project. There was one outburst throwing mats in the first session and nothing after that. Usually this type of outburst would have been much more dangerous with the aim of hurting people – the focus has shifted to attacking things not people, and there are better strategies in place to avoid reaching this level of frustration. For one child, there has been a huge boost in confidence – he only watched in week one and ended up as the star of the show.

There are some children that were regularly losing all their golden time – that has improved enormously. There has been attitude improvement, and a better attitude about homework. Children who have improved for periods (but not sustained it), have demonstrated the longest periods of better behaviour seen in class (e.g. gone up from one good afternoon to 3-4 days before deteriorating).

The children feel safer in class with less violent behaviour and can be more engaged and nicer as a result. Children who have been isolated were able to really impress the class with their skills and get spontaneous clapping, which encouraged better behaviour management from them at the performance. Going to the Basement for some children was expected to be challenging, but parents came and were impressed at how well they coped.

Three girls who have been rivals worked together as a group. Despite all wanting to be leaders, they managed to collaborate. The other girls seem to be getting stronger, more confident and are less cowed by dominant characters.

For Rosaria this group learned to improvise quickly and it's really positive to have a teacher who is engaged with allowing students to create the content. It was completely their dance.

Outcomes

Results of children's evaluation at the end of the project:

How you were feeling

BEFORE the project:		AFTER the project:	
Very Unhappy	0%	Very Unhappy	0%
Unhappy	6%	Unhappy	0%
Neither	12%	Neither	0%
Happy	43%	Happy	25%
Very Happy	38%	Very Happy	75%

How much you like the kind of person you are

BEFORE the project:		AFTER the project:	
Very Unhappy	0%	Very Unhappy	0%
Unhappy	6%	Unhappy	0%
Neither	12%	Neither	6%
Happy	31%	Happy	31%
Very Happy	50%	Very Happy	63%

How well you coped with challenges or difficult situations

BEFORE the project:		AFTER the project:	
Very Unhappy	6%	Very Unhappy	0%
Unhappy	6%	Unhappy	0%
Neither	19%	Neither	6%
Happy	25%	Happy	25%
Very Happy	44%	Very Happy	69%

How much you felt liked by other people

BEFORE the project:		AFTER the project:	
Very Unhappy	6%	Very Unhappy	0%
Unhappy	0%	Unhappy	6%
Neither	19%	Neither	6%
Happy	37%	Happy	31%
Very Happy	38%	Very Happy	56%

Did the adults who ran the sessions listen to you?

Not at all	A little	A lot
0%	14%	86%

Did you enjoy the sessions overall?

Not at all	A little	A lot
0%	14%	86%

Was it easy to talk to the artist you worked with?

Not at all	A little	A lot
7%	21%	72%

Did the artist and teachers know how to help you?

Not at all	A little	A lot
7%	7%	86%

Did you learn to do something new?

Not at all	A little	A lot
7%	29%	64%

What was the BEST thing about the activity?

The new dance moves x 4

We learnt how to cooperate and work as a team! x 3

Everything x 3

I got to perform with my friends x 2

Showing the parents

It was very fun

It was fun

The camera picture

Going to the nice venue

What was the WORST thing about the activity?

The ribbons on your wrist and waist x 5

Nothing x 7

For me the dance, I am so bad at it

Challenges

One boy was not happy about doing dance and called in his mum to excuse him as he was so reticent. It only took 5 or 10 mins to engage him and he had the biggest smile of the whole class at the performance. One girl was on crutches, and one had an injured leg. It was difficult for them to take part, but they really took responsibility for what they were able to do and wrote a poem for the performance. There are a range of additional needs in the class which presented challenges. One child didn't take part: they are very high on the autistic spectrum, so this was expected. Two slightly autistic children took part successfully, plus one with additional needs.

John wouldn't have taught dance this term without Rosaria as it's outside his comfort zone. He is more confident now and they've covered all the curriculum elements so he can replicate that. There were concerns around performing on the concrete floor at the Basement, but Rosaria was confident they would cope well having seen their rehearsals.

Learning

It would be great to create some film of the steps to teach with next year. The line dancing formations John feels confident about and also about improving alongside the kids. Knowing they would be creating poetry as part of the project would have been good – John could have tied it in to other parts of the curriculum.

Two sessions in the last week was good – it wasn't initially scheduled but it was beneficial. Ending up with a few shorter sessions really sharpened their focus, and a mix of times is also good. They would consider using face paint and getting the kids to design a face for the whole group with opportunities for a bit of individuality.

