

Immerse

Year 1 Evaluation Report

October 2020



Imagine

c. Kat Gollock

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Introduction

Background

The Immerse project, led by Imagine, is a progressive three-year project based in six primary schools in Edinburgh. The project embeds theatre and creativity in the selected schools through a programme that involves:

- **The Lost Lending Library (LLL)**
An immersive in-school theatre experience, delivered in Year 1 of the project. The intervention involves the visit of a freelance librarian to selected schools where pupils discuss their favourite books and stories, followed by the overnight arrival of *The Lost Lending Library* in the school (a temporary, in-situ library, otherwise referred to as *The Library of Everything*). The library remains in each school for around two weeks during which time the children are invited in to visit, meet its guardian, then go on to find clues, write stories and explore the world created in their school, before the library disappears without a trace. Children are left with a special membership card and a newly ignited love of writing.
- **Artist Residencies**
An artist led experience designed to run for 10 weeks in each school with two artists (one Lead Artist and one Associate Artist) working with pupils and teachers for a full day each week to develop a performance idea. Artists share their knowledge and experience to help both pupils and teachers develop new skills, explore aspects of live performance and push their boundaries.
- **Festival Visit and Associated Creative Learning Project**
Children from each of the Immerse schools were due to attend a production at Edinburgh International Children's Festival before taking part in a 4 day long creative learning project back in school, inspired by the show they had seen. Two professional artists would have worked in each of the Immerse schools, leading this project. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this element of the Immerse project did not go ahead as planned. Instead, Imagine developed the 'Immerse Ideas Fund', a one-off funding to develop creative projects for the Immerse schools, their pupils and families to do at home, while supporting artists in the sector with paid work. Imagine worked with each of the six Immerse schools to provide joyful, exciting and interesting projects and opportunities for children to participate in at home and continue to be creative.

Immerse is funded through the PLACE Programme, a partnership between the Scottish Government (through Creative Scotland), the City of Edinburgh Council and the Edinburgh Festival, with additional sponsorship from Baillie Gifford and the Artemis Foundation.

Project Aims and Anticipated Outcomes

The table below summarises the anticipated outcomes of the project for children, schools and families, as well as for the artists and for Imagine as the delivery partners.

Outcomes - Level 1	Outcomes - Level 2
CHILDREN	
Children experience and enjoy new performances and artforms Children are introduced to new possibilities	Children are excited and inspired about the arts
Children are encouraged to use their imagination in school	Children use their imagination to complete tasks
Children experience new performances and artforms Children are introduced to new possibilities	Children are willing to try new things
Children feel their contribution and opinion are valued	Children participate and express their opinion
Children are motivated to read and write	Children read and write for pleasure and with confidence
SCHOOLS	
Schools attend performances and do arts projects beyond the Immerse project	Schools put art at the centre of their culture
Teachers create their own artistic opportunities	Teachers are confident about integrating arts in their practice
Teachers are more artistically aware and positively engage with the arts	Teachers value the arts
IMAGINATE	
Imagine connects with schools outside of project and beyond it	Imagine and its staff are more connected to schools Schools work is core to Imagine’s programme
Imagine staff really understand the reality of disadvantaged schools	
FAMILIES	
Families attend events at the schools Families are aware and excited about the project their child is taking part in	Families engage with schools around the Immerse project
ARTISTS	
Artists enjoy the creative potential of their experience in schools	Artists make exciting and adventurous work for schools

Participating Schools

Immerse schools are selected on the basis that they are located within communities living with high levels of social deprivation where pupils may have greater than average social needs. The aim is that, by the end of the project, teachers feel confident and are ready to develop their own ideas with Imagine and artists supporting them throughout the process, to deliver more arts-based activities within school to the children who need it most.

The table below shows the number of children who took part in each component of the project in each of the six participating schools, with in excess of 1,650 children and families taking part across the sample.

Project name	School	Stage/Age	Number of participating children
Lost Lending Library	All Schools	Nursery - Primary 7	1,217 children across 6 schools
Artist in Residence	Craigroyston	Primary 7 Ages 10-11	One class - 33 children
Artist in Residence	Canal View	Primary 6 Ages 9-10	Two classes - 61 children
Artist in Residence	St Ninian's	Primary 6 Ages 9-10	Two classes - 45 children
Artist in Residence	St David's	Primary 4, 5 and 6 Ages 8-9	Two classes - 52 children
Artist in Residence	Forthview	Primary 7 Ages 11-12	Two classes - 60 children
Artist in Residence	Brunstane	Primary 4 Ages 7-8	One class - 18 children
Immerse Ideas Fund	St Ninian's	Primary 3	One class - 21 children
Arty Packs	Forthview Craigroyston Brunstane	Across the school	150 children/families



c. Delia Spatareanu

Evaluation Methodology

In order to evaluate the delivery processes and impact of the Immerse project, an independent evaluation was commissioned to run alongside the project.

The methodology included:

- An online baseline survey of schools - to establish their demographic profile and explore current attitudes and experiences in relation to the arts among teachers;
- Feedback on *The Lost Lending Library* - an online survey of participating schools with follow-up telephone interviews (where appropriate) and a feedback survey among parents/carers;
- Feedback on the Artists in Residency sessions - an online survey of teachers, telephone interviews with class teachers and an online survey of artists; and
- Year 1 Summary - telephone interviews with Head Teachers (or Deputies) to discuss the perceived impacts of the overall project in the short, medium and long term and to explore ideas for the next stages of the project.

The same evaluation activities were planned for each of the six participating schools, however, due to the impact of Covid-19 and closure of schools in Year 1 of the project, schools engaged to different levels with both the project and the evaluation.

For example, the residencies were all meant to take place for 10 weeks, however, only two out of six schools received the full 10-week residency (Craigroyston and Canal View). A further three received an 8-week residency but finished early due to Covid-19 (Forthview, St David's and St Ninian's), and one school worked for only two weeks with the artists (Brunstane).

Feedback from schools receiving only part of the project was therefore patchy and the table below provides an overview of the data that could/could not be captured:

		LLL Feedback		Residency Feedback		Year 1 Summary
	Baseline Survey	Teacher Survey or Interview	Parent/Carer Survey	Teacher Survey or Interview	Artist Survey	Head Teachers
Brunstane	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓
Canal View	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	x
Craigroyston	x	✓	x	✓	✓	✓
Forthview	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓
St David's	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
St Ninian's	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Feedback from across the research strands was combined from all schools and the findings are presented below.

Main Findings

Baseline Survey of Schools

All but one of the schools took part in the baseline survey. All schools indicated that the majority of their pupils lived in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation areas 1-3, i.e. the most deprived areas, ranging from 58% of pupils to 93% of all pupils in one school (with an average of 81%).

School	Pupil Roll	SIMD 1	SIMD 2	SIMD 3	Total
Brunstane	235	62%	21%	10%	93%
Canal View	360	85%	5%	-	90%
Forthview	419	36%	33%	17%	86%
St David's	305	37%	28%	14%	79%
St Ninian's	266	30%	19%	9%	58%

Schools had a diverse range of pupil demographics with the proportion of children from Black and Minority Ethnic communities ranging from 6% to 36.5% (with an average of 20% among the four schools who provided this information).

The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language ranged from 10% to 81% across the four schools who provided this data (with an average of 45%).

Schools reported that 'most' staff within the school already valued the arts, and that 'some' felt confident integrating the performing arts into their teaching practice. Three schools indicated that they had staff or peripatetic staff who had expertise in drama, two with expertise in music and only one school each had staff with expertise in dance and visual arts.

Three of the five schools (60%) reported that classes attended performances 'inside' the school around once a term and the remaining schools (40%) indicated attendance once a year. Schools were less likely to attend performance 'outside' of the school, with only one school (20%) saying that classes currently attended around once per term, three schools (60%) indicating once a year and one school (20%) indicating less than once a year.

While four schools indicated that some families/carers engaged regularly with in-school and extra-curricular activities and projects, one school indicated that only low numbers of families engaged. One school noted that parents/carers were likely to engage more when their own children were involved directly in events and another noted that there was better parental attendance if the activities were led by the children.

All schools said that they currently felt connected to Imagine and four said that they had a good understanding of what Imagine did for schools. Only one indicated that they were 'not exactly sure'.

Lost Lending Library Feedback

Feedback from Teachers

Three schools (Brunstane, St David's and St Ninian's) circulated the online survey to their teachers on behalf of Imagine to gather feedback on the Lost Lending Library. A total of 37 responses were received.

School	Number of Responses	% of Responses
Brunstane	9	24%
St David's	17	46%
St Ninian's	11	30%
Total	37	100%

Across the surveys and interviews, teachers overwhelmingly expressed that the LLL had been beneficial to pupils in a number of ways, including:

- inspiring written work including writing stories and letters (including among those typically reluctant to write);
- encouraging discussion and sharing of ideas and children expressing themselves and their ideas more clearly/ sharing stories with others;
- increased use of imagination;
- increased reading frequency and improvements in reading;
- increased creativity and more imaginative writing; and
- children writing freely and feeling less constrained.

"This experience was so beneficial for the children in engaging them in storytelling and writing creatively. The detail that children have been able to share before writing has increased and their confidence in their ideas has made them more adventurous in writing."

Words used to describe the library experience included that it was 'absolutely magical', 'awe-inspiring' and 'imagination capturing' and several teachers spoke of a general "buzz",

enthusiasm and excitement resonating around the school during the LLL installation:



c. Louise King

"It was more than we expected! Although the description and planning sessions were accurate, the actual set, performances and organisation were even more fantastic than we could have imagined. The attention to detail from all involved was amazing. This helped create a very magical experience for all."

In surveys, teachers were asked to indicate, in general, how engaged their class had been with stories, books and reading both before and after the LLL experience (on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 was 'not at all' and 5 was 'highly engaged'). Average weightings for all schools showed that there was a positive impact on pupils with a notable increase in engagement post LLL.

Teachers were also asked if they felt that their classes had developed their speaking skills as a result of taking part in the LLL experience. In surveys, across all schools, teachers gave an average rating of 3.62 out of 5 (where 1 was 'strongly disagree' and 5 was 'strongly agree') indicating moderately positive agreement with this statement.

In interviews, teachers stressed that one of the benefits for pupils was increased confidence in drama, expression and performance as well as teaching more significant underlying messages about persistence and what can be achieved if pupils put their minds to it:

"For some of them, it really pushed them to their limits - a very big class with a lot of children with a lot of different needs who struggle to regulate and manage their emotions. In fact, there were a lot of tears and tantrums! But it was such an important lesson for them that, although things can be really hard, you shouldn't give up. Things in life are difficult, but you keep going and make it work."



Teachers also spoke of pupils being inspired and being more creative in exploring ideas *per se*:

"Pupils were inspired through the arts. They were exposed to a magical drama unfolding in their own school context. This was theatre and art like many will have not seen before. It supported their imaginative talking, listening and writing, by being able to describe their own discoveries."

Teachers described the project as having longevity and being something that pupils would remember for a long time to come:

"Their enthusiasm and eagerness to write after each session increases. It's been very exciting to have it in school and a great experience for the children to have. They'll remember it for the rest of their lives!"

Other comments provided by the teachers included that there had been much enthusiasm about the project throughout the schools and, in particular, a desire among the pupils to write to Mr Peabody and/or visit Peter the librarian:

"The staff were incredible and the children especially loved Peter the librarian. When the children find anything unusual, they want to keep it to show Peter."



Staff described how all interactions with the actors had been stimulating for the children and that they were particularly engaged with the mystery and context of the library. The quality of the installation also featured in feedback:

"The Lost Lending Library exceeded any expectations that we had. I mean, it really was totally magical. The set was incredible and the children were completely hooked in the magic of it. The level of detail was insane, and it is layers

of detail that make all the difference, because children do see through things otherwise. There was nothing that allowed them to get caught up in cynicism."

Another common theme in feedback from teachers was that the LLL had been engaging for all year groups and that having something that appealed to all ages was particularly welcomed. A particular surprise from the library had been that it engaged all age groups, including the older children for whom it released their inner child:

"You really saw the real child in them, the child that you know is still in there but that you don't often see come to the surface. There was a real sense of wonder about it all."

Some of the P7s also 'believed' and this was a pleasant surprise for teachers:

"Even the Primary 7s and the ones who, you know, are a bit cynical, because they were the 'keepers of the secret' they really took that role on. It was just so magical, that even they questioned if it was real or not real. There was a real buzz around the place and a real sense of excitement and joy."

Older peers had also helped to reassure some of the younger pupils who were initially unsure of the library:

"Although some of the children were scared, the encouragement and excitement from their peers was a great support to them. Such a great experience!"

The library had also engaged even the youngest nursery aged children and one of the key strengths was that whole school communities were able to come together to join in:

"There aren't many projects where you get to engage the whole school, so that was really lovely. And, the older pupils going around and helping younger pupils, and adults talking about their experience, and even down to the nursery children."

Only a handful of teachers indicated that there had been a small number of children that did not engage and one school suggested that the younger children may have benefited from more time in the library earlier in the week, instead of at the end of the week, as this would have maximised opportunities to discuss and share feedback on the experience before the weekend.

Several teachers provided comments that the LLL had been particularly beneficial for pupils who may normally struggle with literacy and/or be marginalised for different reasons commenting that the fully immersive approach really benefitted certain cohorts. This included those for whom English was a second language:

"All P1 children, even those with very little spoken English were very keen to communicate their ideas through drawing and to engage in storytelling. Their drawings were a lot more detailed and imaginative than I had noticed before."

Parent/carer sessions after school to give them the library experience had been very well attended with greater than usual parental engagement:

"We had far more parents come to the parents' sessions than for other events we put on. And I think partly, that was because kids were going home and talking about it and we were also sending out mysterious, cryptic messages. Even when parents came into the building, they sensed a bit of the buzz that was going on. Some just wanted to check out what we were doing because their kids had talked so much about it."

One school also commented that the Lost Lending Library and Residency experience that followed had led to an increased sense of community locally. This was evident among parents/carers, pupils and teachers alike:

"There was a shared excitement that you don't get in school all that often and also a lot of inspiration for teachers which I hope will continue."

Parents had been proactive in approaching the school about the project and this was also unusual. Staff felt encouraged by the response of families and felt that it had provided chances to discuss what children were learning at home:

"I think one of the really positive things was the feedback that we got from parents through the children, like, stopping us and asking us more about the work because children had talked so much about it at home. We don't normally have parents come and give us direct feedback. Parents were talking more to us about their children's learning."

"Families were keen to come and visit the project and be able to experience what their children had been talking about. This was an excellent way to involve families and

carers in the school. Families thought it was amazing and commented that children talked about their school day and told lots more stories at home."

In one school, throughout the week that the library was in place, other local schools had come to visit, meaning that the project had an even wider community reach than originally anticipated. Similarly, another school spoke of the LLL enabling them to engage whole school and the wider community in ways they may not usually be able to achieve:

"The whole school was able to embark on a journey together, pitched at a level they could thrive in. Each pupil was able to experience a unique learning environment within this whole school approach, creating opportunities for discussions and debate. As a school, we were able to share with the whole community the opportunity we had, involving them in the daily lives of the school."

Teachers were asked if the LLL had inspired them to do something different in their teaching, including if they were more likely to take on the role of storyteller after participating in the LLL experience. Overall, teachers agreed and some teachers specifically



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commented that they would now be more likely to attempt telling stories off by heart (instead of reading from a book). Teachers also agreed that the LLL had inspired them to use a range of creative techniques.

One Headteacher commented that the project had allowed staff to tap into their inner child, and use this as inspiration:

"There was an element of magic that everyone could tap into... The teachers were given an opportunity to feel like children again. I think the problem is, everyone is under so much pressure as there is a curriculum to deliver, so sometimes that magic gets a wee bit lost. But the fact that this is an ongoing project means we can tap back into that again and keep the magic alive."

One school commented that the project had made them identify development needs that they had previously been unaware of:

"This project was the step towards independent writing we didn't know we needed. The children recognise themselves as writers and I feel I know them as writers now. It gave them a refreshed interest in books and story writing."

The main suggestions for improvements were that it would have been useful to have more structure and/or guidance on how teachers/classroom assistants could support or prepare for the library and a little more collaboration with the teachers regarding the workshop and writing tasks:

"I would have liked more info before e.g. the story that would be shared when in the class session so that we could build it into writing/the curriculum planning."

One Headteacher also felt that they could have taken a more strategic approach to the project:

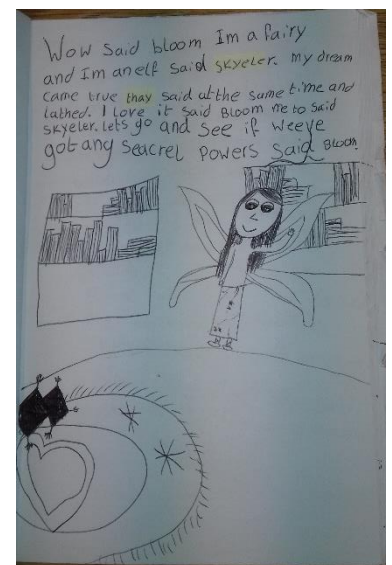
"If we were doing it again, I personally, in a leadership role, would take more time to think about how I could have guided staff to make more of it on a literacy level, without trying to spoon feed too much. I think possibly that might be something that Imagine might want to think about going forward too. How to make schools be more strategic about the project."

At the time of the Lending Library visit, one school had some staff shortages and there was perhaps some sense among senior managers that they were not in control and not entirely on top of what was happening or why.

One teacher specifically suggested that it would have been good to have had information about the content of the writing workshop to help them know how to support it. The same teacher felt that the workshop didn't lend itself well to the writing piece and one other teacher also indicated that the follow-up workshop was not as good as they had expected. There was also one suggestion that more care/secrecy should be taken in removing the library, i.e. ensuring that no children are in school at the time as this can "ruin the magic".

Overall, however, the Lost Lending Library received hugely positive feedback from teachers with some wishing they could have kept the library for longer (albeit teachers did not want to normalise something that was so magical either):

"The project created such magic throughout the school. Children were immediately engaged in the project and they were so excited about their learning. Children who struggle to engage and produce any work, went back to class and independently created lovely pieces of writing... it was such a joy for us as a staff team, to see our children experience and enjoy the magic. I also watched colleagues try more creative teaching experiences for their children. As a result, engagement in learning increased greatly. Thank you so much for giving us this incredible experience. It was unforgettable."



Feedback from Parents and Carers

Feedback on the Lost Lending Library was also collected from a total of 90 parents and carers from across four schools (Brunstane, Forthview, St David's and St Ninian's).

Positive feedback was given in relation to how engaged parents/carers perceived their children to be with stories, books and reading, as well as how engaged children were with writing stories. On both measures, parents and carers indicated a positive shift in engagement for their children post-LLL.

Parents and carers also indicated that they were more likely to read or tell stories to their children following the Lost Lending Library experience in school. There was also a marginal increase in parents' and carers' expressed willingness to attend events at the school post-LLL.

Qualitative feedback from parents and carers complemented that provided by teachers, with many indicating that the experience had been "amazing", "magical", "creative", "mind blowing" and "absolutely stunning".

There was an overwhelming sense that the library had encouraged enthusiasm for reading, writing and storytelling and several parents and carers explicitly noted that their children had been encouraged to use their imaginations more as part of the experience, which was welcomed:

"I think it's really good to bring children's imagination out and excite them about reading books."

A common theme in responses from parents and carers was that the experience had again been good for all ages and stages of development, including the younger children who were still learning to read and write but who nonetheless had enjoyed the storytelling aspects of the experience. One parent/carer of a child with a cognitive disability also specifically commented that, while their child did not usually use expressible language, they had become very vocal after going to the Library and had been "blown away with it all".

Many parents and carers also expressed an appreciation for being invited into the school to share the experience, which they felt had enabled them to understand it in more detail and thus generate more meaningful discussion of the experience at home. Several also commented that it had inspired onward reading, storytelling and writing at home:

"Thank you for the opportunity to see and feel the real magic. I think this will encourage me to join my child in creating, telling and playing magical stories."

Several responses indicated that children had spoken a great deal about the LLL at home and that parents had therefore been keen to get involved:

"This was fantastic, my son was very animated about telling me all about this and I was looking forward to coming and hearing all about it."

The only suggestion made for improvement by one parent was that having more information prior to such an exciting event could dispel any nervous anxiety regarding a new experience.

Artists in Residency Feedback

Feedback from Teachers

Teachers from all schools but one (Brunstane) provided feedback on the Artists in Residence experience. All gave ratings of 4 or 5 out of 5 for overall satisfaction with the residency and all schools said that children had engaged fully with the residency (giving ratings of 4 or 5 out of 5 for engagement). A number of positive impacts were cited, including:

- creating a class bonding opportunity/team building exercise/improved collaboration
- children growing in confidence and expressing themselves more
- development of organisational skills among pupils
- improved communication skills, both verbal and non-verbal
- increased confidence, listening and speaking skills as well as creativity
- children unearthing skills and talents that they (and their teachers) did not know they had
- a chance for children to work in a free and dramatic way
- providing something that all pupils could relate to.

"I also saw a huge development over the weeks with regards to the children being able to discuss ideas, organise themselves and create without arguments or silliness."

The residency experience was also considered by teachers to have introduced transferable skills to children, i.e. learning of new skills which could be applied to different settings and subjects across the curriculum:

"Their understanding of the importance of working together as one big team became a lot more apparent as the project went on. They could see the value of working together rather than just focussing on their own ideas. And this has helped since, with other work in the classroom too."



CASE STUDY

“In terms of individual impact, the biggest impact was on a new boy who was very shy. The project allowed him to work with a variety of different pupils in the class and broaden his social circle. He has come from a country where teaching is very strict so he would never have experienced creative lessons like this before. At the start he was awkward, showing little confidence and was uncomfortable with having any attention on him. Throughout the experience he became more willing to be creative and come up with his own ideas. He really enjoyed the artistic aspect of the experience and getting to show his creativity and attention to detail through this. [The artists] provided fantastic art resources and ideas which really helped to support him. As the lessons went by, I saw him smile more, seem freer, less hesitant about working with those he didn't know very well in the class. Language was a barrier for him but the focus on non-verbal communication allowed him to participate more in the lesson.”

Teachers welcomed that the residency gave the children an opportunity to learn new skills without even realising it and that it introduced the arts to children in an engaging and accessible way, which made them interesting for the whole year group:

“All of the children participated in contemporary dance without even realising. For many this was an opportunity they wouldn't otherwise have had. They enjoyed learning and creating the dances and this in turn boosted their confidence and self-esteem. Some children 'found a voice' and participated in group and even solo singing. It was especially pleasing to see children who rarely participate in group discussions in class willingly and confidently taking lead/solo roles.”

Quotes provided directly by children in one school included:

“I've learned that it's not just about me getting my part in the show right, but I need to help others as we are all working together as a team.”

“I used to get stage fright and not want to be up the front but I really enjoyed this experience and I feel more confident.”

“I've learned that we all have different strengths and we can bring them all together to create something really unique!”

At one school, children had participated in a canal boat trip within their local community as part of the experience and this was seen as particularly beneficial in this school for helping to connect pupils to their community in a more positive way. The creative film that they developed had also been set in the community which provided a bridge to link in with parents and carers:

“The film being set out in their local community was extremely important for the children (and their parents when they viewed the film). It helped them feel value and pride in their community. Equally the boat trip was hugely beneficial. Most children had never been on a canal boat. It was great to see their changing perceptions of the canal.”

Initially when asked they had stated that it was a negative place, polluted and dirty. However, after the boat trip, it became a serene place with beautiful wildlife, something worth looking after. We had some really interesting discussions afterwards about how frustrating it is that others do not value or look after the canal but the children realised that they could in fact 'be the change' themselves, looking after the canal and encouraging others to do so as well. Ultimately it was so important to give the children the chance to be a part of a creative process, to access a quality arts programme at their own individual level and to celebrate their community through this."



This experience had also had unanticipated beneficial impacts for the class teacher:

"As a teacher, it was nice for me to be in their community and gain more of an insight into where they live and their community and it was nice to be reminded of that."

Indeed, all teachers in all schools said that the residency had helped to develop their professional practice, and all but two said that it made them feel more confident to use and discuss arts, theatre and dance in the classroom.

"...I don't teach enough of the creative elements in our curriculum and to have specialists in all these fields coming in to work with the children, build relationships with them and let them create is of huge benefit to the children and myself."

While there was mixed feedback with regards to the extent that the Artists in Residence experience would encourage teachers personally to go and see theatre and dance more often (equal numbers said that it had encouraged them, had not or were unsure), all but one said that it had encouraged them to take their class to see live performances (the other teacher was unsure). All teachers said that the residency experience had made them feel more connected to Imagine.

CASE STUDY

"One of the pupils started off in the periphery and quite shy. She progressed over the weeks to being engaged and sharing her thoughts with her group which was a big deal for her confidence. In the original sessions, her movements were quite small and restrained. By the last week the artists were in, she had much bigger movements and was linking with others in her group. She was also confident enough to share her ideas with her group rather than just being told where to go. My hope was by the end of the residency she would be willing to share her thinking with the whole class but we never quite got there. She showed a great deal of personal growth through the project."

The most useful aspects of the residency listed by teachers were:

- working more creatively, i.e. seeing where an idea took the class rather than working towards an end point
- seeing the transformation in pupils from being reserved to more outgoing and creative/bringing children “out of their shell”
- allowing for more socialising to occur among students who would not usually mix
- allowing teachers to see how dance and music can be used in the primary school setting and learning drama games
- the technical aspects of photography work
- seeing children develop a sense of pride in their work

“It was a wonderful experience which built the confidence of all who were involved. It was lovely to see ALL of the children accessing the creative arts at their own level and being successful doing so.”

One Headteacher expressed that part of the positive impact that the residency had on children was due to the delivery model:

“I think because of the way it was structured, being a full day every week, the children were really positive at the start of the day but then really worn out by the end of the day, but then having a one week break meant that they were re-energised and really looking forward to it again by the next session.”

Children had been encouraged to think about rules in different contexts but in a non-judgemental way, which the teacher felt was a wider lesson that could be applied across life. The sense of ownership that the children took away was also a positive impact for individuals.



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The final performances developed and performed by the children was perhaps highlighted as the key outcome and a mark of the projects' success:

"The final production where all the children came together and worked as a team to create a fantastic show for their peers and families."

"Seeing the children working creatively and work towards a polished performance, and feeling proud."

Overall, artists were described in positive terms and as being "incredibly helpful, positive and patient" and the project as a whole was described as "professional and progressive":

"Having professionals in this creative area plan a progressive program which linked back to the expressive arts curriculum and health and wellbeing curriculum."

Where schools had benefited from contributions from multiple different artists from across different disciplines (e.g. sound, dance, drama and graphic design skills), this had been particularly welcomed.



All but one school gave ratings of 5 out of 5 for the support that they had received from both Imagineate and from the artists during the experience. Only one school rated support from Imagineate as 3 and support from the artists as 4 out of 5.

CASE STUDY

"One of the children who always struggles with any kind of focus on her, sometimes with people even looking at her across the room, went from strength to strength. At the beginning I was unsure she would participate at all due to being so nervous. But the build up from performing with various groups, on her own and then with partners was effective. Then in the last few weeks she was even volunteering to be an example for the class which she never would have originally done. I think it has impacted her in class and she answers much more now."

The main things that teachers suggested could have been improved included more collegiate planning and timetabling prior to delivery and more detailed advanced knowledge of exactly what the project would entail before the artists arrived. In particular, one teacher who was already arts driven and felt that creative arts were already well established in their

own teaching practice said that they would have welcomed a chance at the start of the academic year to make deeper links across the learning for the year.

Closer collaborative planning would have also been particularly beneficial to assist working with children with additional support needs for whom awareness of what to expect is key, it was suggested. Similarly, dedicated time to debrief with the artists at the end of sessions would have been welcomed, since this occurred mainly informally and was somewhat *ad hoc*.

One Headteacher reported that the class teachers perhaps felt a lack of control over the residency sessions but, by the end of the project, seemed more comfortable with that approach to working:

"The teacher was quite worried after the first session as it was far too free and far too loose and she didn't know what was happening. The children also didn't know what would be happening and felt a bit insecure but Imagine spoke with us and helped us to set a structure for the day but still have that 'good' freedom... I think at the end, the teachers felt more comfortable letting the reins go a little bit. And they now know that, even if it is a little bit noisy and messy, sometimes that needs to happen to get the best from the children."

One class teacher also commented that it had been challenging to work with whole year groups and large numbers of children at once, although had mixed feelings about whether this was ultimately beneficial instead of being a barrier:

"The class was large and loud and that was a bit frustrating not being able to control them sometimes, but the staff were great at speaking to them and getting them to calm down a bit. It may have been easier with smaller groups, but it was also really nice, as a teacher, to see them all working together."

More practical suggestions included that sessions could be made to last a half day instead of a full day, as this may be more manageable for some children. Indeed, one of the main things that differentiated the project from other similar projects was the volume and quality of time spent by the artists. While quality and quantity of time was welcomed, one teacher did comment that this did perhaps cause problems for some:

"We don't usually do things in the school where people come in for the whole day and so focussing on one thing for the whole day was a challenge. The artists found it a challenge to keep the pace going throughout the day, especially after lunch."

Another practical suggestion was to provide pupils with notebooks to write ideas each week for their final performances. One school reported that they had used lots of 'loose paper' and a notebook could have provided a better keepsake for the children.

One school indicated that their parental engagement with the project could have been elevated even further if parents/carers had been able to meet the artists directly:

"The residents were really good and it might have been good to have a parents evening at the start for the artists to explain to parents what they were doing so that

they can hear it from the horse's mouth, and also allow parents to share their ideas and thoughts."

Comments showed that teachers welcomed having a filmed recording of performances for the children to keep and watch back and see their hard work and the 'finished product'. This should be continued in any extension of the project, it was suggested.

A final suggestion was that children would like to be able to keep in touch with artists long-term and stay connected with their work:

"I would love the opportunity to take my class on an end of year (they are P7 so in their final year) special trip to the theatre. It would be lovely to be able to do this with the drama artists that worked with us as the children are very fond of them!"

One teacher explained that, when the school's final performance was over, it was the last day that the artists had with the pupils, and there was a "huge rise in emotion" which went unresolved:

"It may have been good to have one extra feedback slot where the artists got to see the children just for a morning or an afternoon to ask how they found it, and to reflect on the whole thing and say goodbye properly."

This same school stressed that they would love to invite the artists back in the future, as the experience had been so rewarding.



Overall, schools were very happy with only minimal changes suggested and teachers who were interviewed (both class teachers and Headteachers) said that they would recommend the project to others as something that aligned well with national curriculum literacy and arts targets, as well as with school improvement plans:

"It totally ticked all of our boxes in terms of what we wanted to achieve and it has certainly blessed our school community this year."

Feedback from Artists

A total of 5 Lead Artists and 5 Associate Artists took part in the residency project and all provided feedback on their experience.

Overall, artists expressed high levels of satisfaction with the project, including the support received from Imagine and from participating schools (with average weightings of more than 4 out of 5 across the group as a whole).

The most useful aspects of the residency for artists included:

- seeing the children grow and develop in confidence and explore, learn and grow in their communication and relationships with others
- being able to explore ideas in-depth with pupils, afforded by the fact that the project ran regularly in schools over a number of weeks
- encouraging creativity among children and *“opening up worlds simultaneously within and beyond themselves”*
- opportunities for artists to work with such a diverse mix of children

“I particularly enjoyed the momentum we managed to build with the young people. There was a significant number of them who found it difficult to engage in the first couple of weeks and they were easily distracted or disengaged. As we continued the project their understanding of what we were doing started to grow and they became more engaged, which was a useful reminder of the importance of us coming in week-by-week and the length of the project.”

The majority of artists said that taking part had impacted positively on them in a number of ways, as follows:

	Yes	No	Don't know yet
It helped develop your professional practice	8	1	1
You felt more confident as an artist	9	-	1
It inspired you to make performances for or work in school settings	9	-	1
It expanded your professional network	9	-	1
You felt more connected to the young audience community	5	2	3
You took part in more Imagine opportunities	6	2	2

All artists indicated that children had engaged well with the sessions (giving ratings of 4 or 5 out of 5 for levels of engagement) and the main perceived impacts echoed those reported by teachers, including:

- growth in children's confidence, trying new things, communicating in different ways (including improved spatial awareness)

- improved relationships with their environments and with one another (including better co-operation)
- increased sharing of ideas and creativity (and trying new things, such as clay, photography, sound/music art)
- a desire to share their learning with others (including families, parents and carers)
- a general improvement in behaviour, for some, i.e. children becoming less disruptive and argumentative as the residencies progressed

"The children were highly engaged and their confidence grew throughout the residency. Some children who were unable to participate in the beginning of the project by the end were fully engaged and flourishing. We managed to engage all the children, even those who were struggling to take part in the classroom. The impact of the residency was very positive."



c. Morwenna Kearsley



CASE STUDY

One boy in Class A usually found being in front of the class very embarrassing and his previous attitude would be to not engage and take part in anything like this:

"He usually feels too self-conscious/embarrassed to take part in any kind of public sharing."

As the project went on, the teacher feared that he would struggle, but in the final performance, this child led what was described as "a very moving movement sequence performance" which parents and teachers found fascinating and were surprised at how confidently the boy performed:

"I was blown away to see this child lead one of the more poignant dance/movement scenes in our final show. His enthusiasm for offering to take on this role was also something that not just myself but a large number of adults in the school noticed."

"His confidence, as well as the confidence of all of the children, grew alongside his understanding of why it would be good to lead something. As a very able child, he realised that he had the capability to lead and then delivered that really well. Even now, I think he feels more confident for having done it."

While the main impacts had been for children, artists also welcomed opportunities for Associate Artists to work with a Lead Artist and share ideas/learn, working across disciplines (dance, music and film), opportunities to trial new methods with children, e.g. sound based activities and being able to 'explore' with the children/not feeling constrained by the project:

"It was great having proper time to be creative with the pupils and the flexibility for it to develop quite organically, I didn't feel the pressure of having to come up with a set outcome which was creatively really freeing. Felt like Imagineate really trusted us as artists which was great."

The importance of being able to share and discuss what was happening with staff as the residency progressed was also welcomed as well as the opportunity to share the final performances with family and carers. Artists also spoke of looking forward to sharing the documentary film outputs with other young people and artists in the near future.

The main suggestions for change from artists included:

- working with smaller groups of children (i.e. individual classes instead of entire year groups) - indeed, several artists mentioned that they had found the larger groups unmanageable at times and urged smaller groups in the future
- possibly changing the order of some sessions, e.g. leaving 'out of school' activities until later in the residency, rather than early on
- exploring more/different mediums/art forms, e.g. music/sound in more detail
- dissuading children and teachers from viewing final performances as a 'show' (which has many associated connotations) and instead focussing on the idea of it being 'a sharing'

One artist suggested that a dedicated debrief with the children may also have been helpful:

"It would have been great had we had a session with the young people to reflect on the project after the sharing; discussing our time together, revisiting some material in order to reflect and to do an evaluation with them."



c. Geraldine Heaney

A number of 'lessons learned' around planning and management were also posited, the main suggestions being:

- allowing for more planning time with both teachers and between the Lead and Associate Artists to benefit the quality of the sessions, the overall project and its impact
- giving Associate Artists a chance to question Lead Artists more and develop final sharing ideas more collaboratively (one Associate Artist suggested that the blurring of roles between the two had been difficult to manage and the nomination of a 'Lead' and 'Associate' Artist had been unhelpful)

"If I had understood the format completely from the beginning, I would have asked more questions in order to allow myself to fully understand my role and [what] the dynamic was between Associate and Lead Artist, instead of trying to figure it out as we went. I feel like this could have been easily avoided had the Lead Artist been clearer from the beginning and us being clear to Imagine from the beginning how we were going to approach planning, delivery and reflection as a team."

Only one artist expressed that more support could have been offered by the participating school/teacher and another suggested that more communication with the school earlier on could have aided the school's understanding of the process involved and what to expect.

Any repeat of the project in the future might benefit from previous participating artists meeting with new artists to share their experience and learning, it was suggested, and to help equip them for the role. Similarly, one artist suggested training for teachers may be beneficial:

"I think the teachers could have been brought along on the journey more, maybe with training time built in before kids were there, so that they felt empowered and able to contribute and felt comfortable in what we were doing. I think separate training time with them built into the project would ensure continuation of some sort of creative arts happening within school after the project ends."

Artists also felt frustrated that they had been unable to complete the residency in a number of schools due to Covid-19 but, overall, there was a sense that the project had given artists a valuable opportunity to explore their artistic practices with young audiences, and this was greatly appreciated:

"Thank you for having the ambition to set up these residencies. They feel important to give artists the opportunity to work in such an invested way in schools. I think it presents a real opportunity for a dialogue between the worlds of education and art and performance, and I felt it was of real benefit for the children to meet and get to know artists, to broaden their awareness of the world and how to be creative and value their new abilities... It was a wonderful opportunity to be part of the Immerse project, and meet and get to know the other artists involved on this project. This has opened up some new professional connections for me."



c. Brian Hartley

CASE STUDY

“[Child A] initially was very anxious about the movement games and activities in the large hall. She was desperate to join in but would lose her nerve at the last minute and remove herself from the class. She was quite tearful at first. She seemed to be anxious about the focus being on her and found activities where she had to participate alone difficult to cope with. She showed this by having a loud angry outburst and hiding in the corner of the room.

By the end of the session she had joined in with some of the group tasks and was gaining confidence. She enjoyed working with her partner and using her creativity. Her confidence was given a boost when she watched herself back on a video that was taken during the session. She was extremely proud of herself for having a go. As the weeks have progressed, she was able to access more and more of the sessions. She was much more willing to attempt learning new skills... She seemed to be gaining confidence each week.

It was lovely to see her creativity and enthusiasm growing. In the final weeks she volunteered to demonstrate a single dance move to the whole class. She confidently executed this and did not find the pressure of the entire class watching difficult to cope with. She still required some input when rehearsing dances, mostly just some gentle encouragement, but she was excited to try out and link new moves together.

In the final week, it was extremely pleasing to watch her stand up, without her friend for support and perform with her peers to the rest of the class. What was especially notable was that she made a few accidental errors during the performance, and what she had rehearsed with me suddenly changed. Had she made an error during a performance in the earlier weeks, she would have become frustrated and would have given up on the dance.

On this occasion, she confidently continued, adapting her routine to cover the mistakes.

She was just in the moment, feeling the music and trying out new ideas whilst the class watched. This new-found ability to be flexible, adaptive and confident was wonderful to see. This is an experience that has been hugely beneficial for her. Hopefully this increase in confidence will continue to filter into other aspects of school life too.”

Other Reflections

Interviews with Class Teachers at the end of the Residencies and with Headteachers on conclusion of the project confirmed that the combined Immerse experience had been hugely beneficial for schools.

Meeting Expectations

Most teachers said that they had not known what to expect but both the Artists in Residence and Lost Lending Library experiences had exceeded expectations of what was possible:

"The Lost Lending Library was just so inspiring for the children. It was so different and there wasn't a single person in the whole school who wasn't excited about what was going on."

Another school who received the Lost Lending Library described it as "Way, way better than what I expected":

"You have it described to you but you can't possibly imagine what it's like until you see it and you don't know what the kids' reaction to it is going to be, and whether they will go along with it or not. But they were all totally hook, line and sinker."



Both projects were very different from anything that schools had engaged with before. The Artist in Residence project, in particular, was described as being “quite free and loose” which, although on the surface seemed to cause problems, was something which ultimately led to the project’s success:

“I think by the end of the project we were all really overwhelmed by how successful it had been and I think that was to do with how much ownership the children had been given. Even though they found it incredibly challenging at times, it almost felt like that was the purpose - that it should be a struggle and a challenge designed to get the very best out of them [the children].”

Despite being a different way of working and approaching tasks with children, the teacher felt that everyone had learned what can be achieved by giving children more freedom, and that this was manifest in their final performance:

“It was one of the most authentic things that I have seen in terms of feeling that it really did come from the children themselves.”

One school that received only two weeks of the Artists in Residence project felt it was ‘as expected’ and had been slightly easier to imagine and plan for than the library. The school were very appreciative of the video made by the artists showing what they had done at the start of their adventure but felt disappointed that the children had missed out on the full experience.

Shifts in Teaching Practice and Understanding the Arts

Schools reported that their staff already valued the arts and that the project had therefore strengthened rather than introduced confidence for staff to integrate the performing arts into their teaching practice.

One school already had three drama graduates in their teaching team which meant that the school was already quite well equipped to respond to arts projects, however, the project had engaged the wider pool of staff and given them more confidence to approach this subject:

“It definitely gave them ideas and stimulus for writing projects and inspired new ideas, so that was great.”

Similarly, another school felt that even the most experienced teachers had been reminded of the value of the arts for stimulating pupil creativity:

“Seeing the impact of the arts on the children’s imagination was inspiring as a school. It pushed it to new levels! Teachers recognise the importance of a stimulus that can challenge pupils to push the boundaries of their writing. Even when it is part of our practice, seeing good examples of this work in action benefits even the most experienced teachers and practitioners.”

The project had also been helpful for highlighting training opportunities for staff interested in developing their skills in the arts.

In another school, the headteacher reported that many of the teaching staff already valued the arts but much of that was based around art and design rather than performing arts, etc.:

"I definitely think that it has opened some teachers' eyes to what the arts are more about. You could definitely see that as the weeks went on."

Teachers in this school were seen as typically less confident in teaching drama and music and more comfortable working with art and design and modelling, etc. Indeed, the project had forced all teachers to try and better understand the arts, as they had to explain this to the children, for whom the concepts of 'artists in residence' and 'performance artists' was quite new:

"The children found it difficult to understand that these two people were artists but that they didn't have paintbrushes in their hands. It definitely opened their eyes to what art can mean."



In interviews, comments were also made that the experience had been inspirational for teachers and had encouraged them to "try something new":

"I personally found it had a huge impact on the children and I was quite inspired by them. I felt, if they are trying something new then maybe I should try something new as well. I suppose it was a good growth mindset project, knowing that you can do anything."

"I would feel more able and more confident to put together a project like this in the future, for sure."

Having artists and staff from Imagine to guide the teachers was mentioned by one Headteacher as something which had helped with teacher confidence:

“What I feel is really important is empowering staff to be able to deliver, because sometimes it feels a bit overwhelming if there is just one thing after another as a classroom teacher, and so the great thing about the ongoing aspects of the project is that someone comes along and guides you through each step of the way.”

The phrase ‘drama artist’ was perhaps misunderstood at the start and, in one school, the class teacher and pupils alike expected some drama alongside more traditional ‘art’ based work so this was a key learning point for them all, i.e. a better understanding of the diversity and role of the arts and different art forms that exist.

The project had definitely given teachers more inspiration and ideas for trying new things, although lockdown meant that most schools had not yet had an opportunity to employ this or to experiment with new things.

In one school, lack of time and space in the curriculum was cited as something which may present a barrier to them being able to embed more artistic practice into the school in the long term:

“It gave the teachers a wee bit more of an idea of how to expand learning, and there will be wee things that staff can take forward long-term, and they can start sharing their experiences and ideas so that it becomes embedded in the school... However, I don’t know if we proactively have the time and ability to offer that within the curriculum. We would love to continue with Imagine but I don’t know if the teachers could plan for such lessons to go on themselves.”

Some teachers were unsure how the skills learned by staff could be used if a new ‘blended learning’ period was introduced following the Covid-19 pandemic, and one school explained that their school struggled to engage children remotely with online teaching platforms. They routinely print copies of materials for pupils who don’t have access to the internet at home, but translating arts and drama into something written would be tough.

However, as part of the recovery curriculum, one school was planning a museum to represent the lockdown experience and felt that they could use some of the skills developed in the Immerse project to help with this (writing, photography, film, interviews, etc.).

Another Headteacher explained that one member of their staff had made up their own magical environment and filled the classroom with glitter and told fairy stories to the class before lockdown (all inspired by the visit from the Lost Lending Library), and had also found a way to continue this, once children had been moved to home learning:

“The teacher organised a variety of mystery readers who would appear in the room with a magical book, all on the themes of fairy tales. Despite lockdown, the teacher managed to record a story for the children to listen to at home, and so this kept the magic alive.”

Accessing the Arts

In interviews, teachers expressed how the project had been excellent for introducing children to the arts in a less obvious way, which had made it accessible to more children:

"It was a great experience, and what was really quite nice was that the kids were given an opportunity to access really good quality art work that they wouldn't normally have the opportunity to do. And, the way it was delivered meant that they didn't even realise that's what they were doing - we called it 'movement' so that none of the boys thought they were dancing, but at the end, even they were quite happily calling it dance... They had no idea that they were learning contemporary dance - it just felt very natural and normal."



c. Brian Hartley

Teachers also commented on how valuable it was for children to have been exposed to such a diverse mix of artists and commented on the quality of what they experienced:

"Just getting an opportunity to experience the arts, and quality arts as well, we feel very lucky and privileged to be a part of it".

In one school, where the local community faced particularly high levels of deprivation, the project was seen as hopefully providing a long-term hook for children and their interests in the arts:

"What was really powerful to me personally was that, we live in an area of really high deprivation... you think you know what poverty looks like, but it really is dire for some of these children. And so, for these children to come in and have a first-hand experience of 'magic' was just mind-blowing. They are living tough realities... and at this moment, it was just a magical experience, and I do hope that as they get older, it

will resonate more widely and that it will plant the seed for them to go to the theatre, to go and see art, exhibitions, etc.”

This same school commented that ‘accessibility’ was the main benefit for the school community that had resulted from their partnership with Imagine:

“I think it’s that accessibility - the Imagine link allowed us to make something that would ordinarily be inaccessible to our children accessible on a different level. And that for me is the biggest and most valuable part of the project.”

Professional Relationships

The Imagine staff who accompanied the Library were described as “*really flexible and wonderful to have around the school.*” Teachers also appreciated the flexibility afforded by the artists and library staff. The training for school staff was also described very positively:

“The training for staff was also really good in terms of how you create new mysteries and how you keep it alive. I think staff really appreciated having time to think about that.”

One Headteacher also commented on how pleased they had been with the level of collaboration between themselves and the artists in residence and the opportunities given to staff to feed their own ideas into the creative process:

“The most valuable part was speaking to the two residents and how they took on our ideas and listened and the fluidity of our discussions and chat was really valuable... The residency was something that we had a lot of input into insofar as the ideas that we were invited to come up with and the two residents were excellent. Again, we didn’t really expect that.”

One Headteacher also specifically highlighted the value of having an ‘on site’ project manager as being a strength:

“It was fantastic to work with professionals from Imagine and create a partnership that truly benefited the whole school community. The expertise the whole team brought into our school ensured a successful and unique project. The planning process and multiple meetings created a clear project where staff knew their role and what was coming next. Having a project manager on site was so beneficial to be able to develop the project in our school context.”

Headteachers reported that they felt more connected to Imagine and what the organisation does for schools. Ratings of 4 and 5 (out of 5) were given for agreement with the following statements in all schools:

- this was an effective partnership
- this partnership produced valuable outcomes for those who took part
- this partnership has benefitted my organisation's work in a meaningful way

- I would recommend a partnership with Imagine to other schools.

One school indicated that there was scope for a more equal and even partnership to have been in operation, and this was largely linked to issues around lack of staff at the time of the residency and the teacher feeling not in control of what was happening. Another school rated partnership equality as 3 out of 5 on the basis that they felt they had received more than they had given i.e. *“There wasn’t equality in terms of what we gave in return, perhaps.”*

Two Headteachers also commented that they felt considerably more connected to Imagine and what the organisation does for schools following year one of the project, and one stressed that this would be strengthened even further going forward:

“The planning and development process helped us understand the reasoning behind the project - the research and impact. Before, during and post production conversations helped build relationships with all the team. This created a positive working relationship and we were always confident to talk through any feedback with the team.”

“Especially because we are still working with them on an ongoing basis for the second part of the project. That level of outreach is incredible and... I like the fact that the ongoing element of it now means that there is continuity.”

One Headteacher reported that there was also a raised awareness of the Children’s Festival as a result of the project, and how schools could engage through the year with different activities, events and resources. The school also felt privileged to have been selected to take part and to be able to include Immerse in their list of school achievements:

“As a school, we feel quite proud that we have worked with Imagine.”

A different school reported that they already encouraged their young people to go to the Children’s Festival each year and had been looking forward to the summer projects, and felt that their links to Imagine had made them more aware of a range of things that their families could get involved with that were not expensive. Financial barriers to accessing the arts was seen as a big problem among the school demographic and so projects like Immerse and the Children’s Festival were seen as key to widening access. This school was keen to stay connected with Imagine in the future.

Long Term Hopes for the Project

Headteachers and class teachers were asked what impact they hoped the overall Immerse project would have on the school community in the long term. Responses included:

- a real ‘hook’ for writing, which was one school’s lowest attainment area, and this was something which the school definitely planned to build upon to keep momentum going by linking writing tasks back to the Immerse project wherever possible

- empowered teaching staff who feel able to deliver these kinds of projects themselves in the future
- for the children to have a greater awareness of the arts and to know that the arts are for everyone and not just 'other' people. This was a key desire for one school because so many of their children live in poverty and it was seen as valuable for the children to learn that art has no boundaries and can involve anyone and everyone.

One school, which had been unable to complete the project due to Covid-19 expressed that they were optimistic that they could use the resources provided by Imagine to re-engage children immediately after their return to school in the autumn to get them back thinking about the Immerse experience. The school decided not to try and engage the children with activities linked to the project during lockdown, as they could not be confident of the level of engagement that pupils would have at home.

In one school, the children had referenced the Library long after it had left the school and there was a sense that it was something that would remain with them for a long time:

"The joy and the memory, I expect that in years to come, when people are asked about memories of school, this will be one that they always talk about."

Finally, in another school, the Headteacher summarised that the project had been beneficial in providing hope and joy for children and staff in an otherwise difficult year, and this would have wide reaching impacts:

"It was just this magical thing that made such a difference to all of us. And I think especially just now [with Covid-19] it is difficult to hang on to hope. But when you start your year with something as magical as that, it gives you a wee 'bank of hope' that you can tap into. I think it's a really meaningful way to bring and hope and joy into people's lives who don't necessarily have that much hope and joy."

Summary

Measuring Success

The data collected show that a significant number of the outcomes for the project were achieved for all stakeholders, as follows:

Children

All schools reported that the children had enjoyed the experience of both the Lost Lending Library and the residency and, for most, the volume and nature of exposure to high quality arts was a unique or first-time experience. Teachers and artists reported that all children engaged well with the project and shared their views and ideas, including those of different ages and stages and those typically less willing to get involved in group activities.

There was also evidence of improved confidence, team building skills and collaborative working, all transferable skills which teachers felt would have longevity well beyond the project timescales.

The project appears to have encouraged more writing and storytelling (including greater use of imagination) and encouraged a number of children to try something new, inspiring even some of the more reluctant children to share their work. Children also spoke positively about the project to their families outside of school and this helped to improve home-school links.

Schools

Schools reported that staff already valued the arts and felt that the project had helped to strengthen existing skills and interests among staff, as well as giving confidence to those who may have feared experimenting with different art forms with their year groups, rather than making teachers artistically aware *per se*. Teachers who took part in surveys and interviews expressed that they felt even more confident integrating the arts into their practice and had learnt new ways of including drama and art in different areas of the curriculum. Schools all reported that the LLL had a positive whole school effect, creating an excitement and buzz that went beyond the school and out into communities.

There was some disappointment for schools who were unable to complete the full residency experience, although schools who received only part of the originally intended project still reported that the contact they had received with the library and artists had been overwhelmingly positive. Despite being cut short, Year 1 also produced some tangible outcomes for children and schools in the form of films and performance pieces which should and could continue to be showcased to ensure longevity of the project's success and inspire more children to come.

Families

All schools reported higher than usual levels of engagement with the project from the parent forum, and the library, in particular, seemed to generate interest and proactive approaches to schools from parents/carers who were keen to find out more (based on what children were reporting at home). Attendance at open events in the participating schools had been well attended by parents/carers, many of whom shared their children's wonder at the mysterious library. Adults expressed that they too had found the experience 'magical'. There was also overwhelmingly positive parental/family responses to the final performances/sharings presented by classes, where these occurred.

The project also seemed to extend beyond immediate pupil families in some cases to create a wider sense of community, including teachers feeling that filming and visiting local community areas as part of the project had reminded them and familiarised them more with their classes' home/backgrounds. This was an unanticipated and added value outcome for teachers.

Artists

The experience received positive feedback from artists as a rare and valuable opportunity to work directly with young audiences and explore their artistic practices freely and in unconstrained ways. All had been overwhelmed by the strong levels of engagement and positive responses from children, who were seen to develop personally as well as artistically from taking part in the residencies.

While not specifically encouraging the development of new pieces among artists, the project was beneficial in strengthening skills around accessing and working in schools and exploring innovative ways of encouraging and presenting diversity of the arts to school communities. While some artists were disappointed not to have been able to complete the original schedule of works due to Covid-19, they were nonetheless keen to share their experiences with other performers and makers in the future to maximise benefits and outputs from the work.

Imagine

All stakeholders gave positive feedback regarding their engagement with Imagine through the Immerse experience, and schools showed a greater awareness and appreciation of the full range of opportunities presented by Imagine, and a keenness to work together again in the future. Imagine had to work innovatively with artists and schools to respond to the changes brought about by Covid-19 and were still able to engage with schools remotely via the Ideas Fund, which schools welcomed.

The robust evaluation approach developed by Imagine gave them considerable insight into the communities in which schools were based, including the deprivation and other

social barriers that schools faced as well as the limited art experiences of children living in those areas. Through their continued communication with schools and artists, Imagineate harnessed considerable data to inform future planning of similar projects, and there were useful lessons learned to inform Imagineate's core work beyond the Immerse project in isolation.

Lessons Learned

The main lessons learned which could be used in taking the project forward include the potential for:

- reducing numbers of children involved in the residency experiences, to maximise engagement and keep the project more tightly controlled
- more in depth and continuous engagement with teachers to ensure buy in and provide greater ownership to schools, including the potential for training before the project and debriefing sessions after the experience
- greater clarity on the role of Lead and Associate Artists to assist in the development of ideas and management of sessions, to ensure that children gain maximum benefits and exposure to different artistic practices.

Overall, however, the projects ran smoothly with clear and consistent communication, planning and delivery, with Covid-19 enforced school closures being the biggest barrier to the project's Year 1 success.

