



Newcroft Primary Academy, Leicestershire

Q&A with Issy Veazey,
Artsmark lead and Art & Design Subject Lead



Q We have loved Artsmark and our school is a different place because of it...

background

Issy Veazey became the Art and Design subject leader at the school in September and wanted to use Artsmark to help her in this new role – to help give direction and structure to her plans. Her Headteacher had recommended Artsmark to her, having previously undertaken it at a previous school, and felt it would really support the development of their new curriculum – which was one of the main reasons the school wanted to join Artsmark.

Issy talked to us about their Artsmark story so far...

can you briefly tell us a little bit about your school?

Based in North West Leicestershire Newcroft Primary Academy has a growing population with approximately 400 children on roll from Reception to Year 6. The school is part of a multi academy trust – Symphony Learning Trust. Newcroft Primary started their Artsmark journey in the summer of 2020, just after the first lockdown; they attended their Development Day training in June and then started to put things in place in the Autumn term and, despite the challenges over the last year, have achieved a lot already.

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at a glance

- Newcroft Primary Academy has 400 children on roll from Reception to Year 6
- The main driver for their Artsmark was curriculum design, aligned with developing staff CPD and supporting more teachers to feel confident and see the value of the arts
- Artsmark has helped staff to see the breadth of the arts – that art is not just drawing but dance, design, music, PE, drama
- Students feel that there are more opportunities in school, and parents have also commented and noticed the difference
- The school has received lots of support, information and training from The Mighty Creatives and their partners

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Now we've made so many changes to the curriculum... it has just been brilliant!



what was the challenge or area for development you were trying to address?

The main driver for their Artsmark was curriculum design, aligned with developing staff CPD and supporting more teachers to feel confident and see the value of the arts. The school wanted to really look at the progression of skills in their curriculum – linking art skills progression across the school within their topic-based curriculum - so that the children were building on their skills as they moved through the school.

Issy worked closely with the leadership team, so that projects were supported from the top – and it could be seen that Artsmark was a whole school effort. Issy felt this was really important and feels lucky the Headteacher is so supportive of developing the arts, feeling that without such support it could have just fallen apart. Artsmark has also allowed her to develop new projects across the school and apply for funding to develop Arts Award as well.

what has happened so far?

The first year was very much about putting things in place and planning a new curriculum, and was quite stop/start due to the different lockdowns, but looking back over the last 18 months they have achieved a

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lot, including whole school projects, such as a project linked to British values where every year group painted the Queen in the style of a different artist. **“We sent off a letter to the Queen telling her about the project, and she replied! It was definitely a highlight for me... it was just brilliant!”**

They have also developed art-focused days (e.g. whole school Bollywood dance day), they have developed an art club and craft club, delivered Arts Award projects, and staff have been on training courses and shared their learning - for example, Issy took part in some Sketchbook software training, which she shared back with other teachers and noted **“before you couldn’t tell the difference between English and Art books... but this year we’re trying to make them messy!”**

what outcomes have you seen?

The staff are now much more on board, which was one of the biggest challenges that Issy found when starting out. Artsmark has helped staff to see the breadth of the arts – that art is not just drawing but dance, design, music, PE, drama etc. Staff are also more confident, sharing back from training they’ve attended to share ideas and tips across the school via inset days, so everyone can get new ideas and develop their confidence!

Before they started Artsmark, progression in their Art & Design and Design & Technology curriculums was limited – with often the same activities happening in reception as in Year 2, but this has all changed and they have re-written the curriculum for Art and Design, Design and Technology, Music and PE **“we’ve come up with skills and progression for each of those... so we’ve really changed the curriculum”**.

Children have also reflected that there are more opportunities in school now and parents have also





“The children love it! When you start to see the impact on the children that makes a big difference... the children are much more aware now that they are doing art. Now we’ve made so many changes in the curriculum, which has just been brilliant.



what support have you received?

The school has received lots of support, information and training from The Mighty Creatives and their partners, such as The City Classroom (the local cultural education partnership in Leicestershire). They were also successful in applying for a TMC Arts Award Start Up Package, supporting a number of pupil premium children with Discover and Explore level Arts Awards, and have invited several creative practitioners into school to help them on their Artsmark journey.



what advice would you give another teacher just about to start their Artsmark journey?



1. Don't panic! It can be quite overwhelming knowing where to start at first but it helps to break it down into stages – looking at the next 6, 12 and then 18 months... and before you know it you have a plan!

2. Work with your SLT - don't be scared to have ideas and go to them for support - you just need a clear plan and an idea of what it will help achieve. Getting your SLT on board from the start is really important.

3. Get staff involved – you can organise and lead things but you need to get staff on board to ensure it gets embedded across the school. Issy planned in CPD opportunities for team members and has shared back ideas to build confidence of the team – giving staff a chance to try things out has really helped with their confidence

4. Budgets – don't be afraid to ask for money or help to fundraise from your PTA or similar.

5. Look out for opportunities! There are lots of free things out there, but you have to look for them. This can take time (which is the main challenge), but it can be worth it!

what's next?

The school are planning to submit their final Statement of Impact in the summer of 2022 and this year they have very much focused on putting their new curriculum into practice, embedding the arts more across the curriculum, and seeing the outcomes of this on their young people, staff and school.