

darts

A photograph of a woman with long grey hair and a blue long-sleeved shirt, smiling as she crawls on a red carpet. She is flanked by two children: a boy on the left and a girl on the right, both also crawling and smiling. The girl has a blue headband. They are in a classroom setting with bookshelves and a blue chair in the background. The text 'Creative classrooms' is overlaid in large white letters, with a small orange smiley face graphic below the word 'Creative'.

Creative classrooms

Case Study
Artist Development

Beth's Experience as a Creative Classrooms Artist

What is Creative Classrooms?

Creative Classrooms is a drama programme designed for primary schools, Years 1 to 4, to support students to develop their emotional literacy, while building communication and empathy skills. The work is rooted in darts' approach which draws on over 30 years' experience of delivering creative activity in partnership with schools.

Professional theatre-makers work with a whole class for a half term, using an age-appropriate story to increasingly understand a range of emotions the characters are feeling, and in turn, we might feel too. As part of Creative Classrooms, teachers and teaching assistants receive professional Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in using drama in the classroom and supporting students in understanding their emotions.

Over the weeks of participating, class teachers reported that Creative Classrooms gave students the emotional confidence and communication skills to build stronger connections with their peers, as well as the artists leading the sessions. This equips students with the tools, emotional literacy and communication skills that are essential in coping with the challenges of exams, friendships and the move towards secondary school. This is of huge benefit to their social and individual development.

This Case Study is drawn from three years of Creative Classrooms delivery funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

Artist Development – Beth's Experience

Beth is a drama practitioner with extensive training and a passion for theatre-making. Bringing this together with her experience as a primary school teacher, having taught for nearly ten years across the full primary age range from 4-11 year olds, Beth brings a wealth of knowledge to Creative Classrooms, whilst building up a rich portfolio of skills and experience through delivering with darts.

Throughout the delivery of the Creative Classrooms programme, Beth told us she felt that darts provided her with unparalleled support, which meant that she was able to respond to the needs of the students who took part. The close involvement of this collaborative way of working was beneficial to both the students' emotional wellbeing and communication skills, as well as the artist's own creative practice.

How significant was the impact on those who were participating in the programme?

Through Creative Classrooms, darts works with teachers by sharing a range of drama techniques to embed within the Creative Classrooms approach. Teachers have a legacy of approaches and

techniques that they can use independently of the artist, meaning that Creative Classrooms has a scope beyond the life of the project and long-lasting impact within the schools that darts works with.

“Not every teacher is confident with drama, but they are performing in their classroom all the time.”

By working closely with teachers through co-planning and delivery, and delivering these sessions within schools, artists are able to build a strong connection with both teaching staff and the students who take part in the sessions. Beth told us that she noticed huge improvements in the engagement and emotional development of the students throughout the course of the Creative Classrooms programme. With school teaching staff equipped with the CPD training provided by darts artists, these benefits experienced by students will be embedded long term.

“The programme is so needed – for teachers and children. Finding ways to lighten the load for teachers – strengthening the systems around the child helps strengthen the child as well.”

Artists working on Creative Classrooms noted how the programme works with schools to provide a rounded and varied education by providing students with essential tools that fall outside the scope of the standard curriculum. Going forward in future programmes, Beth considered the benefits that Creative Classrooms could have on different age groups of students.

“There’s a huge focus on being able to write, but not much focus on talking to be able to write, which obviously Creative Classrooms would support brilliantly.”

How did the project impact on your own creative practice as an artist?

Beth told us that through a working partnership with school teaching staff and darts, her creative practice developed immensely as a result of Creative Classrooms. The collaborative process of co-delivery and co-planning meant that artists were able to benefit from new ideas and the research carried out by darts, as well as ideas and techniques shared by other artists. Beth shared with us the impact of darts on her work as a drama practitioner:

“I’ve developed so much from having other people’s perspectives... being able to respond to the curveballs that kids will throw when they give you something different to what you were expecting them to say...”

For emerging artists who joined the team as trainees, across the board, they report that the process has been a real journey of development – not only in terms of working with young people in a workshop setting, but also the value of observing specific facilitation skills to support participant development, respond to issues or provide the best possible experience for those in the room.

How well did darts support you as an artist?

Beth told us that darts provided unparalleled support in her work as a drama practitioner and in delivering workshops for Creative Classrooms. Artist support is key to every one of darts’ programmes. darts provides close communication, co-planning and shadowing, alongside training videos and scientific research to equip artists with the knowledge and support needed to deliver brilliant and impactful sessions within Creative Classrooms.

“Honestly darts is the most supportive organisation I have ever worked for.”