

darts



Teacher Case Study

Inspiring Leaders, Creative Learners

Inspiring Leaders, Creative Learners – A Teacher's Journey

Claire Shaw- Balby Central

Programme Background

Inspiring Leaders, Creative Learners is darts' partnership with the Rose Learning Trust and nine primary schools, funded for its first two years by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation's Teacher Development Fund. The programme supported teacher development and pupil learning through co-delivered creative lessons and dedicated CPDL at The Point.

Across 1,198 creative sessions, teachers experienced major increases in confidence, creative practice and willingness to take risks. All participating teachers now use more creative techniques and have seen improvements in pupils' confidence, collaboration and information retention. The programme also influenced whole-school culture, with Headteachers adapting assessment approaches, embedding creative topics and establishing a Creative Champions model.

It created a strong cross-school network through whole-cohort CPDL days, sustained artist-teacher collaboration and regular Trust-wide leadership meetings, with this community continuing through the new Creative Champions who meet each half term.

Inspiring Leaders, Creative Learners strengthened professional relationships, built pride and confidence among teachers and demonstrated how creativity can meaningfully transform teaching and learning when embedded through long-term, collaborative CPDL.

Claire's Story

Claire Shaw has been teaching for nine years, and before taking part in Inspiring Leaders, Creative Learners she described herself as someone who stuck very closely to lesson plan, PowerPoints and lesson structures routines.

She told us she had reached a point where everything felt rigid in her practice and wanted to make a change to her pedagogy the same and she wanted something to shift.

"I always saw myself as a rule follower rather than a leader. I felt like my teaching was stuck in a rut."

Working alongside darts artists in her classroom helped her see a different way of teaching. Creative activities, shared planning and the chance to try things out in a safe and supported environment alongside the belief and encouragement from her darts artist Beth Powdrill, slowly encouraged her to loosen her grip on following PowerPoints set in stone strict routines.

One moment that stayed with her was hearing darts artist Beth Powdrill say:

“Embrace the chaos.”

At first, Claire thought this was impossible, but over time it became something she wanted to try.

“I stopped gripping so tightly to lesson plans and let the children’s curiosity lead/direct their learning. Lessons became more fluid, engaging and exciting for me and for both the children and myself.”

As she grew more confident, Claire noticed that her pupils were changing too. Children who had previously been quiet, passive learners, began to speak up and get involved more, and the whole class became more willing to embrace the new style of teaching and learning join in and take part.

“Their self-esteem has grown so much. They’re recalling remembering things information more easily because they’re more involved and engaged and taking ownership of their own learning.”

She told us that the pupils she taught in year 1 through the Inspiring Leaders, Creative Learners programme can recall their learning from year 1 and apply it to their learning in Year 3.

“They have brought Mary Anning back to life again with increased eagerness”

Pupils in Year 1 and Year 3 recall topics with enthusiasm and that she sees a new eagerness in them to come to lessons. Claire’s growing confidence eventually led her to support other teachers. This felt daunting at first, but she soon realised the value of what she had learnt.

“I never used to put myself forward for things. Now I do. Coaching others made me realise how much I have changed as a teacher and, how much my pedagogy has changed.”

She also saw her colleagues respond positively to the creative approaches she was using and felt proud that her development was beginning to influence others in school.

Throughout her journey, Claire spoke warmly about the support she received from the darts artists.

“darts artists Beth and Verity brought so much energy and belief to the classroom. They were always ready to help and find creative solutions even when they weren’t in school.”

The pupils responded strongly to the artists too, always asking, “Is Beth coming in today?” and really missed her presence when sessions reduced. Beth has a really strong, positive relationship with the school and its staff.

“The whole school feels it when Beth has been in. People actually ask, ‘Has Beth been in today?’”

Looking back, Claire sees her teaching as completely transformed. She told us that she used to plan every detail and stick to it rigidly, but now she follows the children's ideas and brings learning back to the curriculum with more freedom and confidence.

“There’s such a huge difference between who I was and who I am now.”

When asked to describe Inspiring Leaders, Creative Learners, Claire chose three words: “Amazing. Inspiring. Brilliant.” And she laughed as she added, “Beth hasn’t seen the last of me.”

If you would like darts to continue supporting teachers like Claire, [you can make a donation today.](#)