

As part of our celebrations, we'd love to showcase the inspiring work taking place at Elveden Church of England Primary Academy. We'd especially love to highlight your 'Poetry Project', and how it's supported the development of language to address issues with children entering school with poor language skills.

If interested, I could send you an Artsmark blog structure with question prompts for you to answer. Artsmark blogs usually range from 300-800 words, and we use them to support teachers by sharing perspectives, thoughts, and comments on excellent practice and the Artsmark journey. You can check out our existing blogs [here](#).

Our Artsmark journey has continued to add such an incredible spotlight on the arts at Elveden C of E Primary Academy and the Arts have become the cornerstones for our curriculum. Over the past few years, we have focused on a number of different areas, that we identified as weaknesses within our school.

One such area, was spoken language and vocabulary. Particularly after the Covid-19 pandemic, we were finding that the children were finding it increasingly difficult to express themselves and to articulate their learning and even their feelings. In my role as Literacy co-ordinator, I carried out a Pupil Perception and discovered that not one child, across our whole school, could name a single poet. I was completely gobsmacked! Despite the fact poems did appear regularly on the curriculum, the children were not engaging with them, in the same way that they were with fictional texts. And from this we created our Poetry Project. At this point in time, a lot of our amazing TAs needed a performance management target, which focused on them taking responsibility and accountability for an area and as a team, we decided this area would be Poetry. Each week, the Teaching Assistant, with support from the teacher, would choose a poem for the children to learn by heart and then as a class they practised these together every Wednesday within class and they also sent amazing videos of themselves doing these. It created this incredible love of poetry, love of language and a huge improvement in speaking and listening. The TAs personalised it, creating special poetry books, or poetry corners within class and it really was a resounding success. Every child at Elveden C of E Primary Academy, can now name a poet! Hurray!

Another area I would like to mention, is our Artist knowledge. Again, from a pupil perception, we were able to see clearly that children were very limited in their knowledge of particular artists, artist movements and the lives' of the artists. Our Partner school at the time had recently introduced Artist Days, which we thought was an absolutely fabulous idea and we adapted it to suit us. Once a half-term, every class across the school studied a particular artist (in chronological order) and has the opportunity to recreate their fabulous artwork. This has had a profound impact on the incredible art knowledge and even on their compositional skills. The children were inspired by the life of Frida Khalo (a number of children even came dressed as her for World Book Day) and we created an amazing graffiti mural, which hung on our school building when studying Basquiat! We really enjoyed looking at the textiles work of Faith Ringgold and made our own, 'Elveden Blanket,' with

each child's handprint sewn on. We often begin our year with a more religious themed piece of art to tie in with our church school roots and this year we looked at Michaelangelo's painting of, 'Adam and God, which the children loved painting.

From the resounding success of these days, we have now introduced, 'Musician of the Moment' to try and raise the profile of music in our school. The children throughout the school all listen to music by the same composer/artist and have age-appropriate activities on this. We consider how the music makes us feel, what instruments we can hear, when the music was composed and get a really good understanding of the musicians. We have ensured that a wide-range of music has been chosen from black artists such as Leadbelly for blues, to Lady Gaga for LGBTQ+! We want our children to leave Elveden with a profound love of the arts, of music and how to express themselves through these mediums.

Our Artsmark journey is far from over, but the impact it has made already to our children's knowledge, skills and well-being have been incredible.

