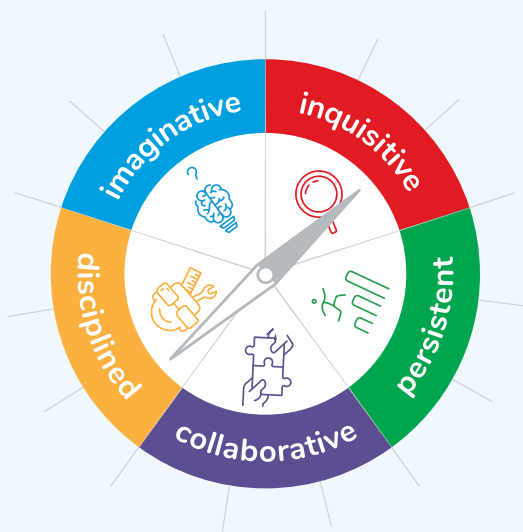




North-East  
**Creativity**  
Collaborative

**Our learning journey**  
A portfolio of reflections,  
insights and ideas.

# About this portfolio



“This work has been important to me because it has made me excited to teach and the children excited to learn.”

Creativity Lead and Teacher

## Purpose

This portfolio of reflections, insights and ideas has two purposes. Firstly it documents in an open and transparent way some of the key learning we have undertaken as a collaborative throughout the last three years as well as some of the individual learning at a school level. Secondly, we hope the portfolio might serve as a compass rather than a map to other schools, collaboratives or trusts who are considering embarking on their own teaching for creativity journey, inspiring you to put our learning from the field into practice.

## Structure

We have structured the portfolio with The Creative Habits Framework, showing how we have lived out the five core creative habits: collaborative, imaginative, inquisitive, disciplined, and persistent. These habits are fundamental to nurturing creativity in children and young people and school staff and are the foundation of the North East Creativity Collaborative. Although presented in a numbered sequence the portfolio can be read in any order that you like.

We suggest that this portfolio is read alongside the North East Creativity Collaborative and national evaluation report which will be published in Autumn 2024. [www.creativityexchange.org.uk](http://www.creativityexchange.org.uk)



Read more

CREATIVITY  
EXCHANGE

## Schools in the North East Creativity Collaborative

**Duchess's Community High School**, Alnwick  
(Original Lead School)

**Cragside Primary School**, Newcastle upon Tyne  
(Associate Lead School)

**Sunningdale School**, Sunderland (SEND)

**Cambois Primary School**, Blyth

**Seahouses Primary School**, Seahouses

**New York Primary**, North Shields

**Fordley Primary**, Cramlington

**Shillbottle Primary School**, Alnwick

**Benton Dene Primary School**,  
Newcastle upon Tyne

**Hotspur Primary School**, Newcastle upon Tyne

**Duke's Secondary School**, Ashington

**Greenhaugh Primary School**, Hexham

## Other schools who participated

**Greenfield Community College**, Newton Aycliffe

**Swarland Primary School**, Morpeth

**George Washington Primary**, Washington

**Benfield School**, Newcastle upon Tyne

# Foreword

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The Arts Council-funded North East Creativity Collaborative (NECC) aptly describes its compilation of reflections, insights and ideas as a 'portfolio' – a term frequently associated with the evaluation of broader competencies. Such competencies – specifically creativity habits in this case – are just what the collaborative's schools are aiming to develop. In this portfolio, NECC offers a two-for-one creative collection. In addition to its other external and internal evaluations, you get a set of self-evaluations based on the three years of its creativity collaborative. Plus, it generously shares a valuable varied-format resource of experiences, understandings, suggestions and illustrations to support others embarking on a similar endeavour. Contributions include written and video stories, photos, animations, filmed events and reflections – a feast of different stimuli. What a compendium of allsorts!

There's much to learn from a group of schools who've never worked together before moving from 'my' to 'our' as a professional learning community. Honest reflections of challenges as well as successes are very helpful. Teachers' and leaders' creative thinking comes through clearly in stories of their enquiries, and the Young Creativity Champions provide a shining example of the benefits of engaging children and young people in leading learning. The importance of partnership is also clearly highlighted – particularly notable are CCE's supportive and encouraging presence throughout, and the inspiring two-way learning between teachers and their creative partners. And it's really good to see 'What next' for the continuing journey. After all, as NECC's metro map highlights, this is a never-ending journey.

## Dr Louise Stoll

Emerita Professor of  
Professional Learning,  
UCL



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# Background to the North East Creativity Collaborative

In 2021, Arts Council England established eight Creativity Collaboratives to test a range of innovative practices in teaching for creativity. Working alongside existing school structures, teachers and educators co-developed creative strategy and pedagogy, tested out approaches to teaching and learning, and evaluated their impact on pupils, schools and communities.

The North East Creativity Collaborative consisted of 12 schools but this number fluctuated as schools withdrew or joined during the three years. The collaborative had one main partner, Creativity, Culture and Education (CCE) and they worked together to bring in a range of stakeholders during the course of the pilot.

Schools were representative of the region, starting at Seahouses Primary in Northumberland and extending as far as Sunningdale School, a SEND setting in Sunderland. The cohort was made up of rural and urban, primary, secondary and special education schools – with pupil numbers varying between 13 and 1650.

Five new schools joined the collaborative as they embarked on the third and final year. Each of these schools was introduced to the collaborative through an existing member. None of the schools had worked together prior to joining the collaborative, and initially none of the schools were part of a Multi-Academy Trust.

The collaborative was led by Ruth Brown at Duchess's Community High School, with support from Alan Rogers, and later by Becky Jackson, Lisa Hall and Ben Harrison at Cragside Primary School.

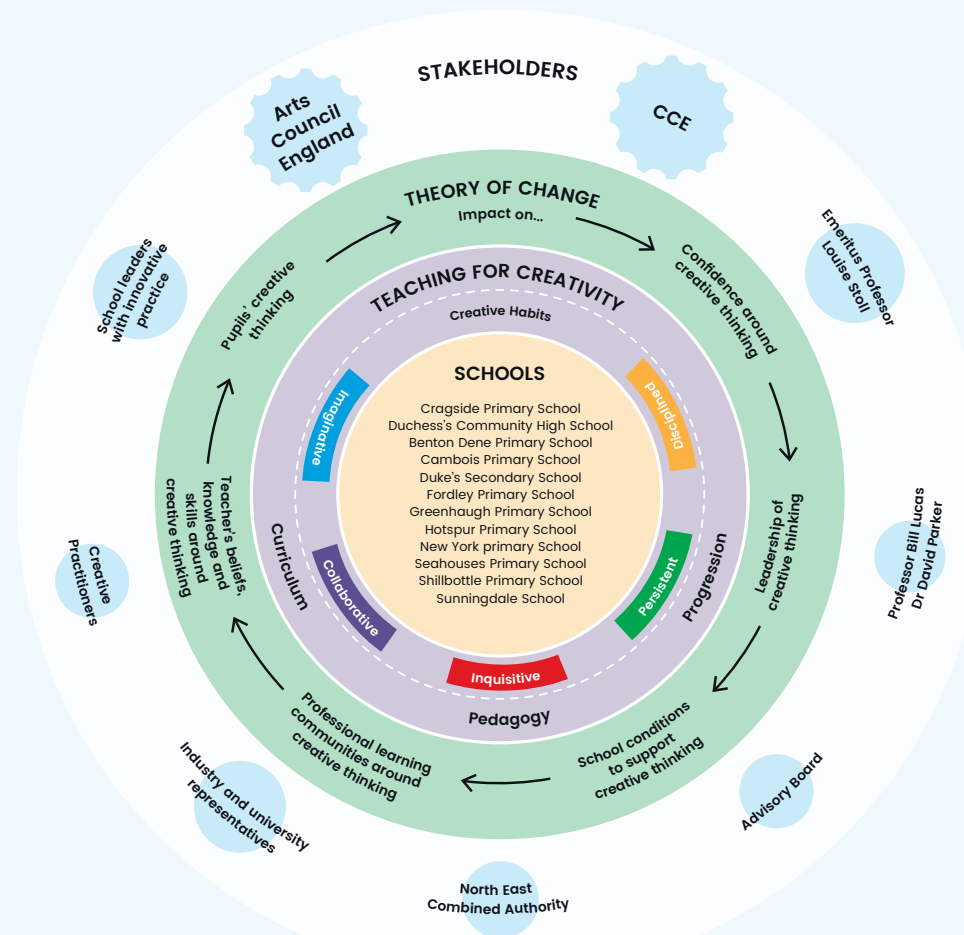
In the early planning stages a theory of change was developed to support evaluation, the design of the professional learning journey and to create awareness around the culture and conditions needed to encourage and sustain teaching for creativity.

In their quest to explore and test approaches to teaching for creativity, the schools in the North East Creativity Collaborative needed to consider what creativity might look like in the curriculum, how it might be ignited through pedagogy and how progress could be tracked, and inform their teaching. Within the relatively short timeframe of the pilot, the collaborative engaged with creativity in the curriculum in most depth; but they view the pilot as just the start of the process!

## Reference

Kools, M. and L. Stoll (2016), "What Makes a School a Learning Organisation?", OECD Education Working Papers, No. 137, OECD Publishing, Paris, [doi.org/10.1787/5jlw62b3bvh-en](https://doi.org/10.1787/5jlw62b3bvh-en).

This illustration, inspired by the school as a learning organisation model from Kools & Stoll (2016), captures our approach to Teaching for Creativity. Underpinned by The Creative Habits, driven by our theory of change and supported by a range of stakeholders.



## Ruth Brown Faculty Lead at Duchess's Community High School (original Lead School)

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From an early coffee conversation, the Creativity Collaboratives sparked a curiosity in me which had been quietly nurtured over years of wanting a better deal for children. A more rounded, creative approach to education, one which enabled subjects to knit together learning and common skills often undervalued or at least underused due to testing and examination pressures. We seemed to have lost the joy of learning and the curiosity of joining dots across disciplines. Creativity is an abstract concept, it's scary, uncharted and exposes our brilliance and flaws with equal measure. Should we be surprised then, if children opt to take the safer middle road.

But are we any different? Teaching is a highly creative profession, no day is the same, no lesson the same. There are always complexities to tackle or bypass but it can be easy to stick to the same routine, the same delivery and the same safe middle road. Why change?

**What started as a personal belief in wanting to find a better language for learning, grew to a philosophy within my faculty, with creativity at the core.**

In turn, this grew into a concept for our bid to be lead school in the North East Creativity Collaborative. There were barriers of course, but as we moved from initial bid concept into actioning our call, we found like minded schools and partners willing to get their hands dirty and explore this new idea, transforming classrooms into spaces of curiosity with critical thinkers and brave explorers.

It's interesting to look back and take stock of the journey after 3 years. It's equally easy to be critical. It's actually hard to process the journey we have been on - many individual journeys are still being formed; we know schools are often slow to reform, but we have all become stronger in our understanding of what can be achieved through small, yet consistent, changes in classroom practice. Being collaborative pioneers through our network, sharing ideas, challenges, opportunities and having the support to 'give it a go'.

Over the course of the programme, I've personally learnt a lot about collaboration and teams, and the importance of timing - aligning the right people at the right time. Undoubtedly, within these teams the biggest support has to come from school leaders. Without their encouragement, challenge, quality assurance, and most importantly explicit trust in individuals, real and lasting change is impossible.

### Insights

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- Build your support system. It is going to be challenging to lead a collaborative and you will need confidantes, curious friends and cheerleaders by your side.
- There are lots of passionate teaching practitioners who want to lead creativity in their schools, but senior leadership support and engagement is essential. For school leaders to have genuine buy-in, they will need to be actively involved.
- Find the warm spots, the individuals who are warm to nurturing creativity but don't neglect the sceptics and cynics - relationship building with people from across the philosophical divide is essential.

# What are the benefits of belonging to the North East Creativity Collaborative?

breaking down fixed mindset



making connections



|  |   |  |   |   |   |
|--|---|--|---|---|---|
| Supported ideas around change and positive curriculum development for both staff and pupils. | Having the opportunity to spend time working on something exciting!                           | Keeping creativity in mind when planning - being open to taking risks and providing more creative opportunities. | Changing our curriculum offer and enriching the learning we can provide for the pupils. | Allowed me to reevaluate the meaning of education - why do we do what we do?  | Visiting a range of thought provoking and inspiring school settings.                        |
| Connected with schools from different contexts who would not ordinarily connect with.        | Opportunity to share good practice in all curriculum areas with a range of school settings.   | Access to research/ case studies - critical friends.   | Building staff confidence in their creative abilities.                                  | Increased staff confidence.   | Practical resources - shared so no one needs to start from the very beginning.              |
| Collaboration with other schools to share 'best practice' & new ideas.                       | Helped me/school to recognise the areas of strength and development when teaching creatively. | Fresh perspectives through peer learning visits and work with creative practitioners.                            | Inspired by a range of settings and meeting other people on creative journeys.          | Provided a framework and vocabulary through which to share creative activity. | Networking with & getting to know colleagues from other settings and phases has been great. |

# The Creative Habits

“I have realised that I am creative and that being creative doesn’t mean being an amazing artist.”

Creativity Lead and Teacher

There are many definitions of creativity but The Creative Habits and its vocabulary is a useful lens for everyone to begin exploring and understanding creativity beyond initial myths and assumptions.

Since this framework was commissioned by CCE and developed by Bill Lucas, Guy Claxton and Ellen Spencer we have become aware of the growing body of evidence that cognition is “embodied,” meaning that our physical actions directly influence the way we think. As such, moving forward we are referring to the framework as ‘The Creative Habits’.

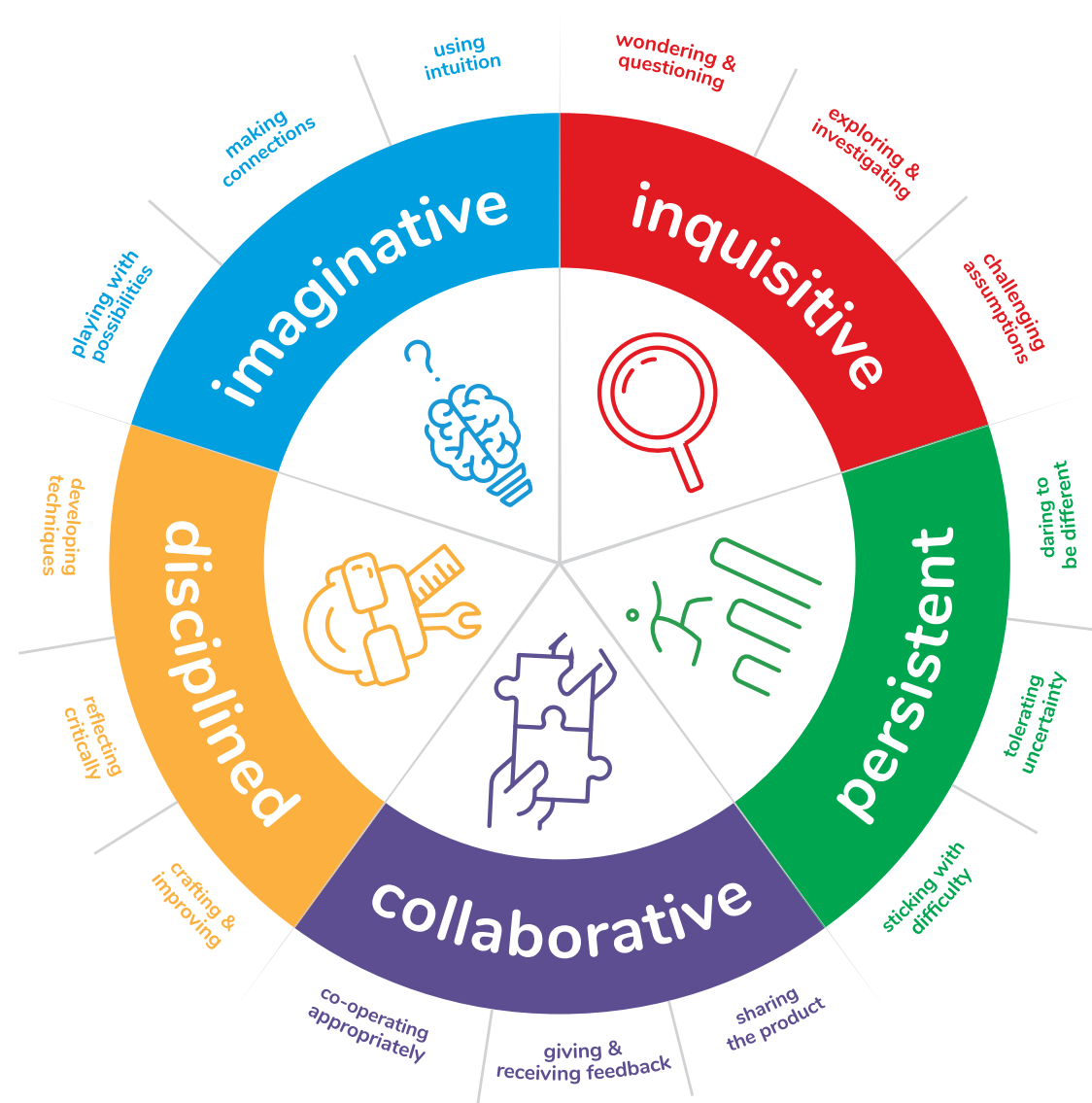
## Insights

- Everyone, including leaders, teachers and pupils, have an agreed definition of creativity.
- Creativity, and its meaning, is coherently and tangibly shared throughout the collaborative – it’s seen, heard and valued.
- This is the first step; everything builds out from here and the habits are put into practice by everyone.

## Reference

Lucas B, Claxton G and Spencer E (2013) Progression in student creativity in school: First steps towards new forms of formative assessments. OECD Education Working Papers, No. 86. OECD Publishing. DOI: [10.1787/5k4dp59msdww-en](https://doi.org/10.1787/5k4dp59msdww-en).

## NECC Creative Habits Framework



# 1 Collaborative School to school, and beyond.



## Our collaborative partner

### CCE - Transforming education globally through creativity

CCE, our partner organisation in the North East Creativity Collaborative, is an international foundation based in Newcastle with the goal to make creativity part of every learning organisation and every system so every learner, teacher and leader can thrive.

The team at CCE worked closely with the lead school in a strategic, mentoring and curious friend role as well as offering administrative and coordination support. They also designed and facilitated the professional learning network meetings, independently initially, then gradually co-creating and co-facilitating as leads in the collaborative gained confidence.

The collaborative benefitted from a range of evidence-based experience from CCE, an accumulation of 16 years of nurturing creativity in education, including teacher and creative practitioner partnerships and frameworks such as The Creative Habits.

CCE commissioned the original research from the Centre for Real-World Learning (CRWL) at the University of Winchester to define progression in creativity, which led to The Creative Habits five-dimensional model. The model has been used by CCE in countries across the world and has been adopted by other collaboratives within Art Council England's pilot.

### Reflections

- The lead school of the collaborative creates the vision for change and brings in a partner organisation. The partners work together to develop a strategy and define roles and responsibilities.
- Weekly 1-hour meetings during term time are planned into the school year for project management activities and ongoing reflective dialogue. Longer planning and evaluation meetings take place at the start, middle and end of year.
- The partners work together to evaluate progress, and identify learning needs, throughout the process.



Read more





As we began working with the collaborative, we considered the range of contexts within the group including secondary, primary and special education settings, and the opportunity this pilot afforded us as an organisation to experiment and evolve, alongside the schools. An early example of this was designing simple icons for each of the Creative Habits to easily communicate their meaning, particularly in primary and SEND schools.

We have a ‘meet them where they’re at’ approach to working with partners as we know change can’t happen freely or deeply when it feels like revolution, rather than evolution. As we got to know the schools in the collaborative and better understood their existing capability frameworks or embedded vocabulary, we created an editable Creative Habits framework which allowed schools such as Greenhaugh Primary School to exchange the term ‘inquisitive’ for ‘curious’, for instance.

One could argue about the semantics of the words and whether they mean the same thing, but this was a justified and sensible adaptation to instigate traction, and an example of a school engaging and taking ownership, without losing the theoretical underpinning. This is also illustrative of the importance of open dialogue and negotiation throughout the process, which calls for an investment up-front in relationship building.

## Ideas

- Once The Creative Habits framework has been introduced, create safe spaces for dialogue and feedback.
- Explore concerns and parameters and work together to find solutions, including being prepared to adapt.
- As a collaborative, be clear on the negotiables as well as the non-negotiables.

“On the imaginative picture, you know it’s imaginative because it has a light bulb but instead of the lightbulb it has a brain. So, like an idea pops out of your head!”

Pupil at Cragside Primary School



## From 'my' to 'our'

The schools in the North East Creativity Collaborative came together through their mutual interest in exploring teaching for creativity. They were not part of a multi-academy trust or the same diocese, they had never worked together previously. They represent the rural north of the region and the urban centre, schools of over 1000 and under 20 pupils.

We ensured time and resources were invested at the start for setting expectations and developing relationships. Everyone involved understood the collaborative was a professional learning community (Stoll and Louis, 2007) with a desire to see everyone succeed, instead of 'my school' the emphasis was on 'our schools'. Although in reality, this collective identity and sense of working towards a common goal took over a year to truly establish.



## Insights

### School agreements

A form of memorandum of understanding, it's not a legal document but it formalises the partnership and outlines what you will do together and everybody's roles and responsibilities.

### Professional norms

The collaborative was a professional learning community, CCE, Duchess's and Cragside wanted those three words to mean something. To ensure the network meetings were not going to be a form of show and tell, a talking shop or a platform for one-upmanship, professional norms needed to be considered and agreed upon.

A foundational norm was an agreement that everyone in the community is a learner, including anyone who was leading the meeting or experts who joined from time to time.

### Meeting spaces

Often hosting the meetings in venues such as museums, hotels, galleries was a necessity due to capacity, but these venues were also beneficial in creating physical and metaphorical distance away from the demands of school, and they created neutral spaces. We managed to negotiate discounts on many of the venues and even secured one venue at no-cost.

# Working with external partners

The term 'creative practitioner' covers a broad range of practices, going beyond traditional fields like Art and Design into STEM-based subjects, industry experts, pedagogical specialists or academic partners. Schools in the collaborative selected a practitioner based on their needs; for instance Seahouses Primary School wanted to explore creative pedagogies and invited a Beach School specialist to work with them over a number of weeks. By Year 3 Cragside Primary School were interested in looking in depth at creativity in the science curriculum and partnered with Durham University. Fordley Primary School worked with artist Dominic Smith to explore how arts practices could support teaching for creativity across the curriculum.

## Dr Dominic Smith Artist

It is important to start by acknowledging the existing expertise in schools and dispel any notion that creative practitioners are necessary to fill gaps in provision. Teachers bring a wealth of practical experience in their fields. Creative practitioners often introduce fresh ideas and inspiration, discipline and persistence to collaborative projects, instinctively following The Creative Habits. When collaborating with receptive teaching staff processes and outcomes can be achieved that are often greater than the sum of either role.

Many creative practitioners are independent of institutions, operating on a freelance/self-employed basis. This brings with it a degree of freedom through which a practitioner can shape a project through dialogue and critical enquiry,

creating an environment of openness from the outset. The confidence to do this comes from an external practice that allows me to suggest change and encourage experimentation without having to worry about challenging internal hierarchies or structures. It also means that once the project is decided, both the practitioner and teacher are working in sync together to deliver an inspiring programme of activity in the classroom. This brings a fresh outlook and approach to a subject - capturing imaginations, sharing a contagious enthusiasm and inspiring children to consider new creative approaches to problem-solving, experimentation and managed risk-taking.

The ethos found amongst practitioners who have learnt their craft via art school and STEM-based pedagogies include practices like peer review in which the budding practitioner learns to communicate and defend their work and learning through shared studio/workspace that promotes natural collaboration, conversation, debate and cross-pollination of ideas. And importantly, creative practitioners are taught not to be precious. They interact with material through incremental change and the continuous refinement of ideas. All of these skills can be applied to social engagement and project development in schools, in any subject.

By bringing these skills and approaches into a school setting and combining them with the curriculum knowledge and craft of the teacher, each engagement presents new opportunities for promoting creative thinking and innovation within schools.



## Ideas

- Consider inviting creative practitioners to collaborative meetings to share their practice and work, to learn alongside members and build relationships and trust.
- Host coaching conversations with individual schools to help them explore the skills and knowledge they're looking for in a creative practitioner.
- Guide schools on best practices for working with a creative practitioner. They'll get more out of the opportunity if they consider them as a school learning partner within a process of planning, action, evaluation and ongoing dialogue.

# 'Asset' mapping

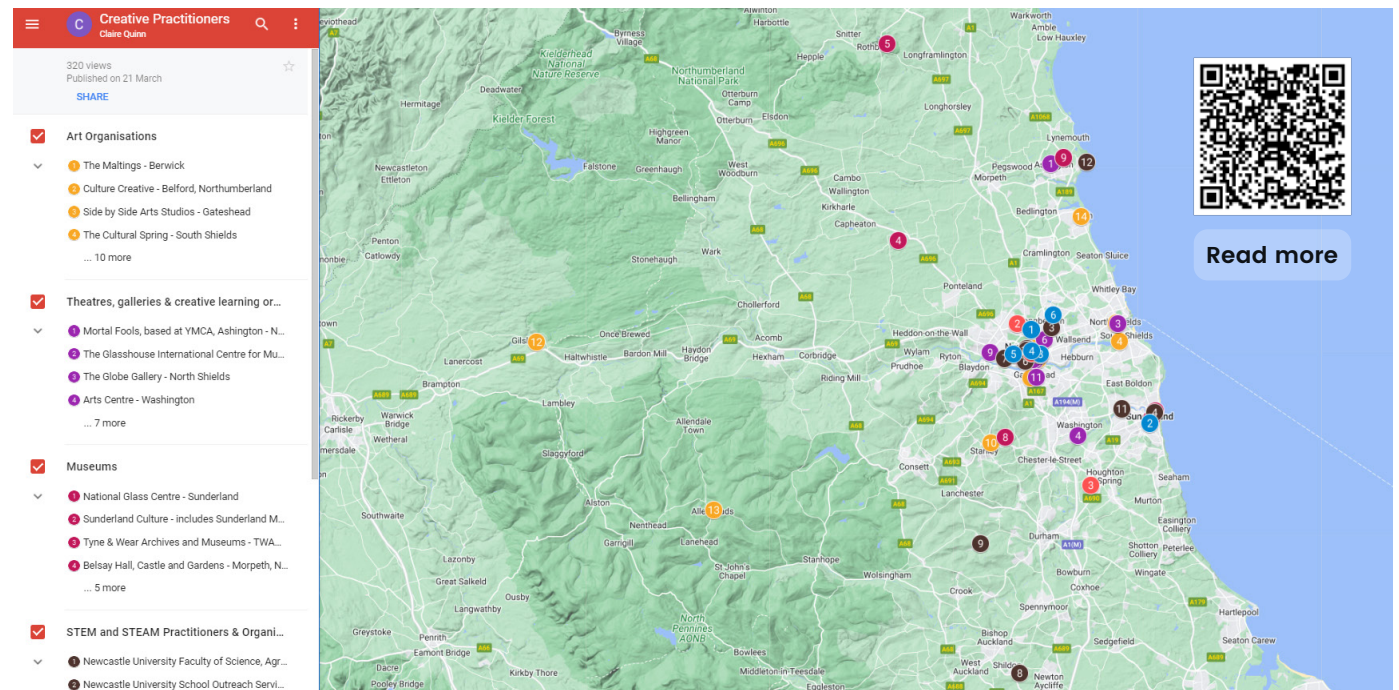
By the end of the final year our contacts and map of external partners and creative practitioners had grown but in the initial stages we had to undertake some heavy lifting to find the right partners, including conducting briefing sessions and meeting with several organisations one-to-one. The right partners for us were people who were willing to explore and learn alongside us, we didn't want ready-made projects or solutions but practitioners who could help us test creative pedagogies and/or creativity in the curriculum, be open to taking risks and take a fresh analytical approach to what they were observing in the classroom.



## Creative practitioners and organisations in the North East

### Ideas

- Develop an 'asset' map by identifying local organisations, universities and individuals who are demonstrating creative and innovative practice.
- Meet with them, share your goals and your challenges.
- Work with them in the classroom or as part of a professional development session. If it goes well, plan further sessions.



## 2 Imaginative A vision for change



## Leading a Creativity Collaborative

Overseeing a collaborative is a unique leadership position which requires a clear vision of the outcomes and the interventions that will get you there. Like the nucleus of an atom, you serve as a catalyst for change, while schools orbit around you, but have little direct influence or control over actioning change in individual settings. Using your imagination and then your intuition, mastering the ability to sense shifts in momentum and adjusting your approach – either accelerating or decelerating change – is key, even if it means deviating from the plan.

As a collaborative leader, you'll need a balance of relationship management, project management, and knowledge exchange skills. Of these, knowledge exchange is often the most elusive and hardest to prioritise, yet it's critical for sharing effective practices in teaching creativity and building capacity.

We were surprised to find that teachers and leaders were often hesitant to share their practices in network meetings. However, when the collaborative lead observed their practice in situ and extended a personal invitation, they became willing and eager contributors. We also experimented with strategies to help teachers and leaders articulate their learning beyond the descriptive, leaning on questioning techniques and giving time and space for people to explore in greater depth.

However, these small challenges surfaced because we had created a clear vision or theory of change (see page 4) which took us from raising confidence around creative thinking towards impacting pupils' creativity. The vision was consistently shared with everyone involved and Creativity Leads were invited to reflect on it and evaluate their progress. Having this vision as our touchstone enabled us to tackle challenges before they became bigger issues, and helped us to make connections and explore new possibilities when change stalled or became inconsistent across schools in the collaborative.

### Insights

- Having a plan and the flexibility to change it when needed.
- Confident, patient and authentic leadership. Having a clear sense of purpose while recognising that everyone will enact change at their own pace, and being honest when you're grappling with challenges and tensions.
- Feedback loops – getting to know each school and the individual members of the collaborative outside of scheduled meetings. Visiting the schools, being inquisitive and encouraging them along the way.

# A headteacher's perspective

## Becky Jackson, Cragside Primary School

One of the fundamental elements we valued in our collaborative meetings was time and space to think about the concepts we were being introduced to and what this means for learning and education as a whole. Back in school, we wanted to make sure that our staff also benefited from this approach, which might look like a luxury to some but to do this properly, we would argue it's a necessity.

Practical ways we did this was through existing diarised meetings. We devoted staff meeting time to explore teaching for creativity together and felt this was important for creating the space but also for it not to be seen as one teacher's responsibility. At the beginning we spent time discussing the 'why'; why is creativity important now and becoming more important as we look to the future, why should we commit to it when we have so many other priorities, why should we do it when we're not being directed by Government or Ofsted to do it?

Once there was consensus on the why, it was time to start putting ideas into practice. I quickly realised that staff needed to feel safe; they looked to me to confirm in different ways that we're in an environment where we're allowed to try things out and make mistakes. I had to be clear that they didn't need my permission to carry out a good idea and if these ideas didn't work, they were stages on a journey, not the destination.

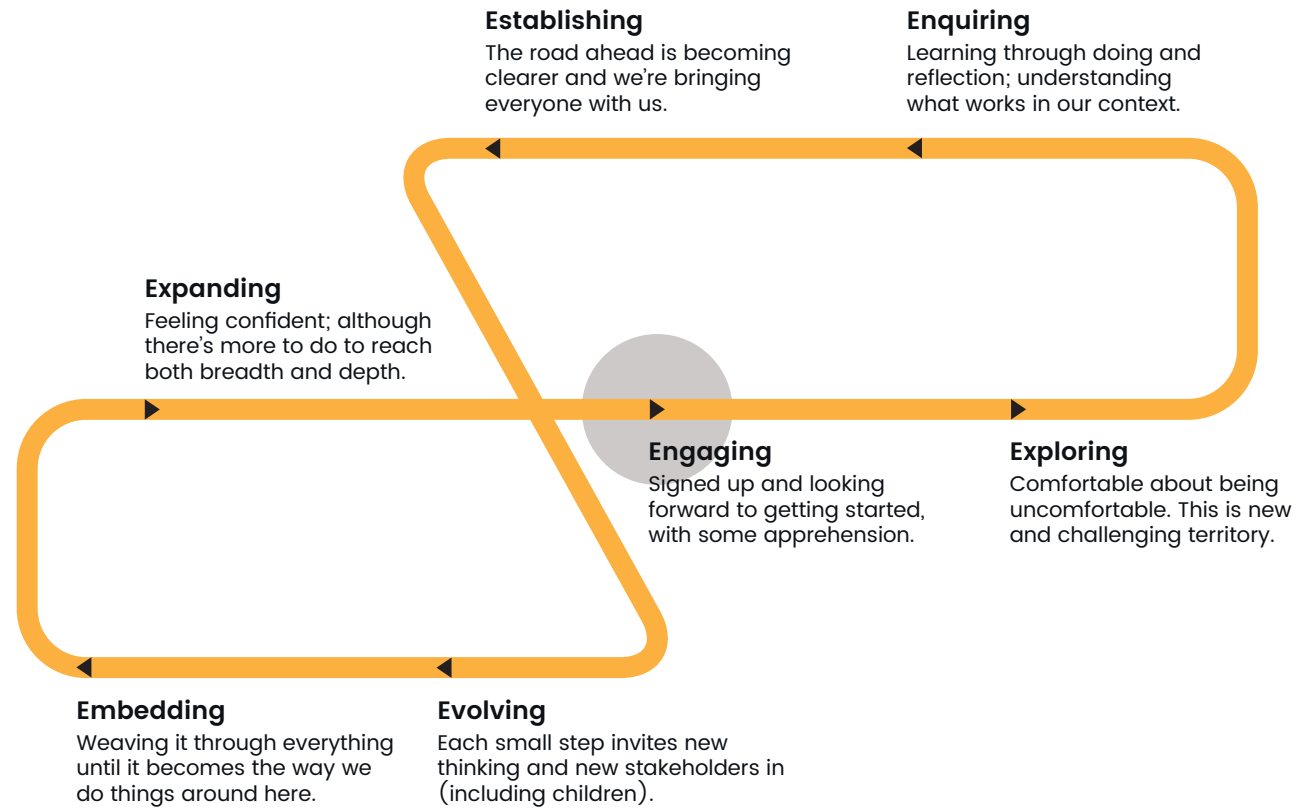
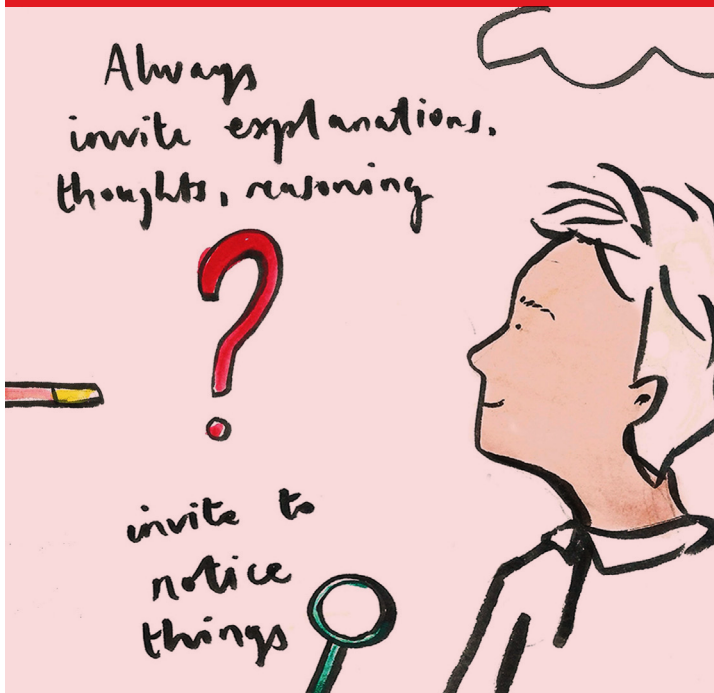


### Ideas

- Taking small steps allows everyone to reflect and adjust along the way. It allows you to pick up on a concern or barrier before it becomes a major risk to the whole process.
- Start from your strengths. Creativity is probably being developed in pockets within your school - look for it, identify it and learn from it.
- Use leadership capabilities to build trust and agency rather than working out all the answers to teaching for creativity.
- Apart from teachers, think about who else you need to work with to help them understand why creativity is vital and how you will bring them with you on your learning journey.

# 3 Inquisitive

## An enquiry approach



Each school moved through various stages of learning and levels of confidence (and back) during their time in the North East Creativity Collaborative. A definitive 'metro map' for how to teach for creativity in different contexts didn't exist for members, therefore we needed to embrace an experiential, dialogic and dynamic professional learning process.

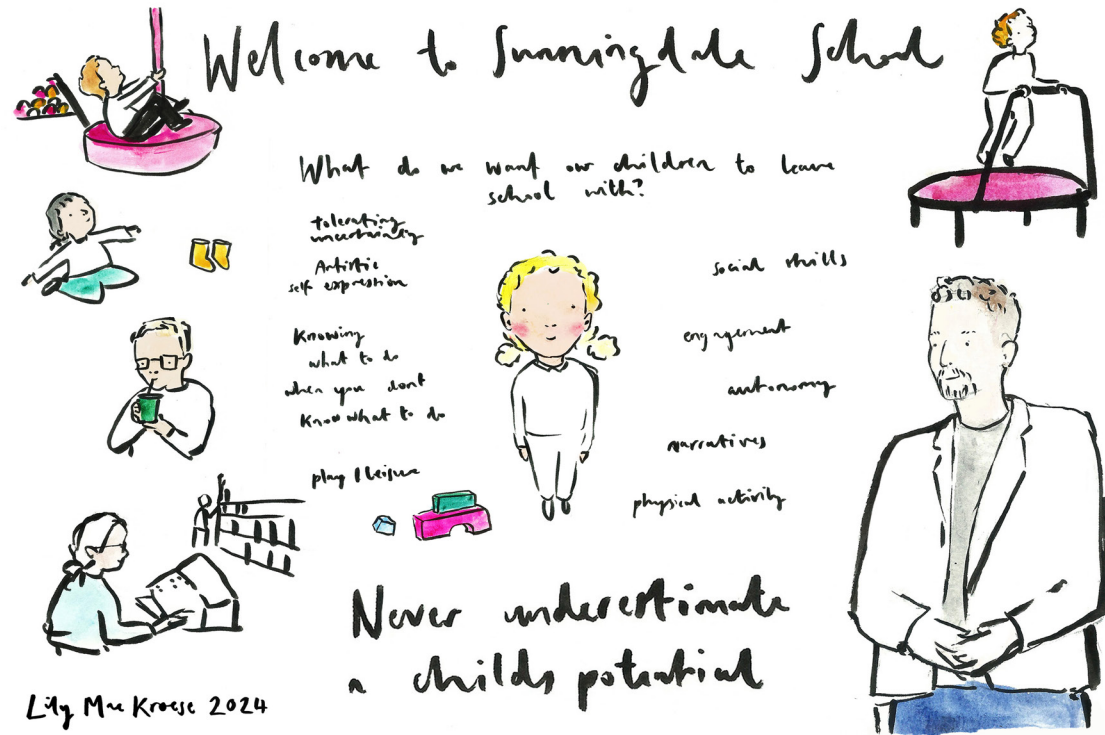
Being inquisitive was a hallmark for each of the stages but the enquiry stage in particular, was a time for asking the difficult questions and experimenting with new ways of working. The case studies that follow are indicative of the distance each school travelled and how they put their inquisitiveness into practice.

## Sunningdale School

### Knowing what to do when you don't know what to do

### Functional learning and practical problem solving for neuro diverse learners

The Headteacher and creativity leads at Sunningdale thoughtfully considered how The Creative Habits framework might be integrated into their existing capabilities model. As they began their work with the collaborative, they were also moving towards a pathways approach and through research, visits to observe innovative practice and internal discussion they opted to explore deeply the habit of persistence and the sub-habit of tolerating uncertainty and made it a core purpose of one of the pathways.



### School Context

- Sunningdale School is a specialist school in Sunderland for children with severe, profound and multiple learning disabilities including those with autism, aged between 2 and 11 years old.
- The school has 141 pupils grouped into 18 classes that are arranged across 4 theoretical pedagogical pathways.
- These begin on transition from the Early Years Foundation Stage and run through Key Stages 1 and 2 until the pupils' transition to relevant secondary provisions at the end of year 6.
- The pathways are the Pre-formal Pathway, the Semi-Formal Explore Pathway, the Semi-Formal Play Pathway and the Formal Pathway.

### James Waller, Headteacher at Sunningdale explains:

The Semi-Formal Play Pathway at Sunningdale School has been designed to meet the needs of pupils with Severe Learning Disabilities (SLD) who are autonomous across a range of contexts, have a more developed ability to engage with their environment effectively but are still continuing to develop their 'realisation' (The Engagement Model, 2020) as well as their ability to apply their learning to varying contexts and functional situations. The overarching goal of the pathway is to prepare pupils in a very direct and explicit way for their life beyond the confines of the school and in preparation for adulthood.

In the school's Semi-formal Play Pathway, we are keen to develop independence and agency which are the foundation for creativity.



**“Allowing children to choose their activities and providing opportunities for self-direction may be especially important in promoting the development of independence for children with disabilities and social interaction among children with disabilities and their peers.”**

Reszka et al (2012, p53)

Essentially, this pathway is aimed at helping our learners to tolerate uncertainty or to know what to do when they don't know what to do. This is what we want for our pupils at Sunningdale School. We want them to be able to develop a wide range of skills, knowledge and understanding, of course, but our main goal is that our pupils leave the school able to apply that skill, knowledge and understanding to the world beyond the classroom; to use it functionally in order to make sense of and interact with the world around them.

Teaching the habit of persistence and sub-habit of tolerating uncertainty for our learners is about giving them regular and repeated opportunities to transfer their skills into new situations. We were inspired by a visit to Kidzania in London as part of our enquiry in Year 1 to create real-world learning environments and as a result we now have a 'Functional Learning Village'. This comprises, 'The Sunningdale shop', a Stagecoach bus established for travel training, a doctors surgery, a salon and a studio apartment. Some of these areas are

accessed as truly functional learning environments that mirror their use in the 'real world' and pupils are taught to apply their classroom learning functionally. The remaining environments are accessed in the form of engaging role play environments where literacy, numeracy, communication, social skills and general understanding can be developed through everyday activities that pupils would encounter in their wider lives.

As the learners' resilience develops, we also believe that this situational practice of tolerating uncertainty can also be applied in the subject areas within this pathway: Communication, Language and Literacy; Thinking, Problem Solving and Maths; Play and Leisure; Physical Development; Expressive Arts; Independence; The World Around Me; Relationships and Health Education; Outdoor Learning and Religious Education.

### References

Reszka, S.S., Odom, S.L. and Hume, K.A. (2012) Ecological features of preschools and the social engagement of children with autism, *Journal of Early Intervention*, 34(1): 40-56.

The Standards and Testing Agency (2020) *The Engagement Model* [gov.uk/government/publications/the-engagement-model](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-engagement-model)



Case studies

## Cragside Primary School

### Whole School Change at Cragside Primary School

#### A Roadmap to Creativity

This case study highlights the work that Cragside Primary School has undertaken in order to bring about whole school change when embedding creativity. It also shines a light on the importance of developing professional discourse and viewing schools themselves as professional learning organisations.



### School Context

Cragside is a pioneering school that provides all children with an outstanding education. An education that:

- inspires and nurtures
- celebrates individuality and diversity
- equips every child to make a positive contribution to their community

An education that will change the world for the better.

Cragside Primary School is a vibrant community school situated a couple of miles out of the centre of Newcastle Upon Tyne, the local area is distinctive for its social, cultural and economic diversity. They currently have 418 children on roll out of a possible 420.

**“Schools, in their structure and organisation can do more than simply reflect the society we have; they can try to be a precursor of the kind of society that we wish to have.”**

Gorard (2010)

### Getting started: staff engagement in teaching for creativity

Over the past three years we've learnt that staff understanding of creativity and how this aligns with a school's ethos/vision is key when working towards system-wide organisational change and this initial phase takes time and space:

- time for staff to understand the inter-disciplinary nature of The Creative Habits
- time to reflect and share with colleagues
- time for staff to try out pedagogical approaches in their own classrooms
- time to feedback and learn from one another

For this to happen, staff require access to quality research and resources to support their creativity journey as well as the support of senior leadership to 'try things out' and permission 'to give it a go'. Making space during staff meetings and INSET days to enable professional discourse, dig a little deeper and reflect on classroom practice is pivotal too.

In this initial stage, a key moment for our staff was the realisation that creativity was not a huge entity that required us to radically change our approach to teaching and learning but was in fact about looking at our curriculum offer through a different lens, e.g. tweaking the way in which we use questioning in our classrooms.

It also made us look at what we are required to teach (National Curriculum). In doing so, we found that we were over-teaching content. This then allowed us to begin to strip back substantive knowledge in lessons which in turn created space for creativity to flourish. This of course is a work in progress and again takes time to develop.

### Mapping out our journey

Embedding creativity is indeed a journey and is one that requires a clear roadmap – it will not happen by chance. This is where formulation of our theory of change comes into play: a plan of action that helped us as an organisation to better articulate the intermediate steps required to fully embed creativity across the school. This tool helped us as a school to evaluate our vision, set our primary goal and intermediate goals, and most importantly the interventions required to achieve this. Actions and outcomes in our theory of change then fed directly into our school development plan.

### Distributed leadership within school

At Cragside, not only do we have two creativity leads but we also have a team committed to being 'pioneers' for creativity and this team has been carefully chosen to ensure that we have staff representation from each phase – EYFS to UKS2.

This has been particularly useful in driving forward creativity in classroom practice and has also meant that we have a range of perspectives on our team, allowing us to highlight promising practice in all year groups and learn from one another. As we all know, playfulness in Year 6 will look and feel very different to playfulness in Reception class.

### Wider stakeholders

To allow whole school change to take place, genuine engagement across the entire community, including staff, pupils, governors, and families is key. At Cragside, termly meetings with governors have meant that we are able to share our practice

and update them on progress. Similarly, information/workshop sessions with families have served to raise awareness and deepen understanding of creativity and its place in our curriculum. We also use our website and weekly bulletin to highlight promising practice which demonstrates to the wider school community that creativity is the heart and spirit of our school.

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### References

Gorard, S. (2010). Education Can Compensate for Society – a Bit. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 58 (1), 47–65. [jstor.org/stable/40962571](http://www.jstor.org/stable/40962571)



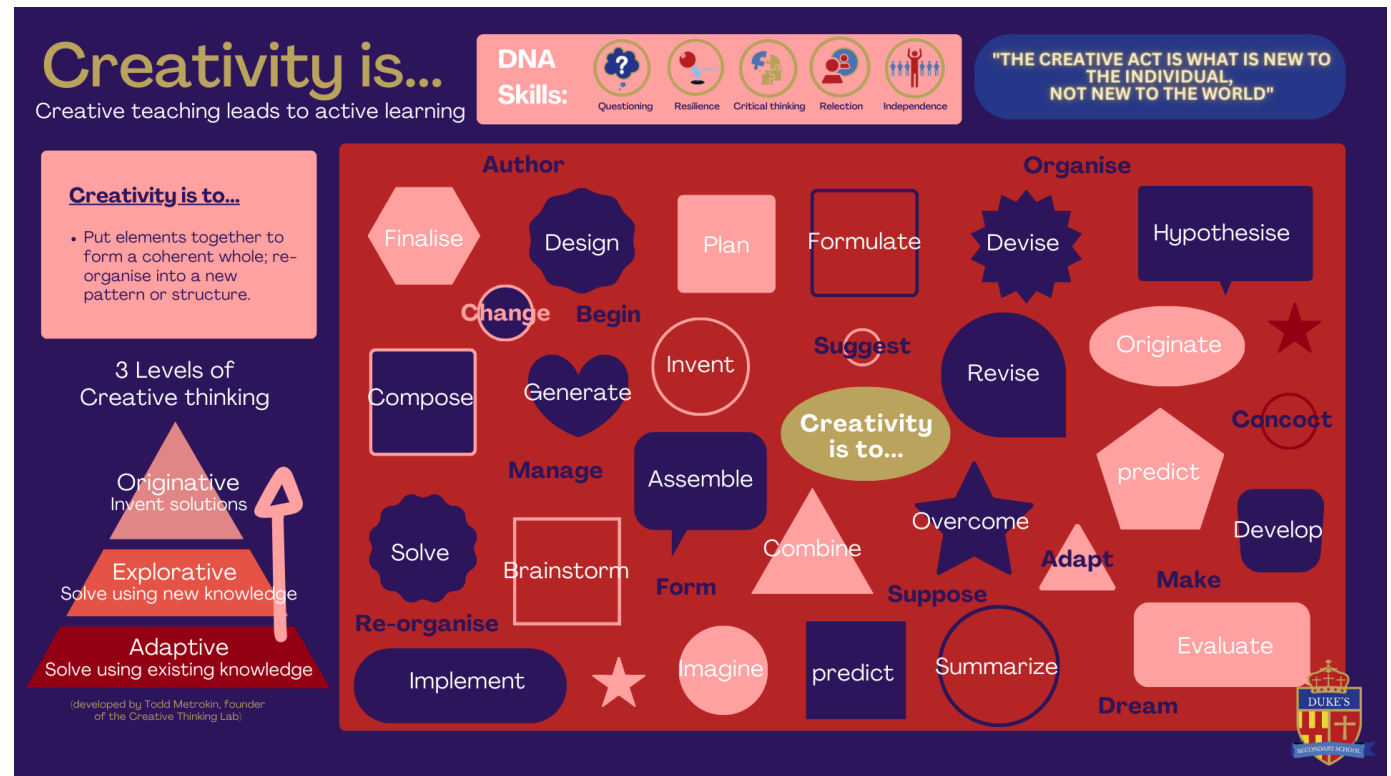
## Case studies

# Duke's Secondary School

## How did we cultivate the imaginative and creative habits in Year 7 students using The Creative Habits and Duke's DNA skills?

Integrating imaginative habits and critical thinking to foster student creativity and engagement at Duke's

This case study details how Duke's Creativity Leads leveraged insights from the North East Collaborative to integrate imaginative habits along with critical thinking into the curriculum thereby fostering student creativity and engagement through targeted activities and workshops. Duke's joined the collaborative at the beginning of Year 3.



## School Context

- Duke's Secondary School is a part of the NCEA Trust.
- Is an 11 to 19 Academy based in Ashington.
- Pupils come from across Ashington, Newbiggin-by-the-Sea and Lynemouth. Many pupils move to Duke's from their partner primary schools within the Trust, but an increasing number of families choose Duke's from other schools in the area.
- Pupil premium eligibility is 51%

As Creativity Leads for Duke's we began our journey by reading the available literature and attending several inspirational North East Collaborative Meetings. These events provided us with valuable insights into some of the creative practices and approaches developed by the collaborative to date and the opportunity to network and collaborate with other professionals and academics. We hoped that working with the collaborative would provide us with the time and resources to explore what creativity means within our school context and would inspire confidence as to how we could embed cross-curricular creativity throughout the school.

## Case studies Duke's Secondary School

After a whole school audit of Duke's creativity, we could see that as a school we most needed to focus on the 'imaginative' habit. We also found that The Creative Habits overlapped brilliantly with our existing school DNA skills of critical thinking, resilience, questioning, reflection and collaboration. Duke's teachers are encouraged to teach with autonomy, but all lessons should be planned around Duke's DNA skills.

Although creativity is one of our school's DNA skills, we had come to realise that rather than its own separate skill, creativity was actually the backbone of all of the DNA skills. Previously, we had completed an audit of our school DNA and found that creativity was the least visible of the DNA in our learning walks. We theorised that this was perhaps because, whilst creativity was taking place, this wasn't always being recognised because staff and students didn't understand the habits which modelled creativity. As a result, we altered the criteria used to describe creativity in our school learning walks so that it highlighted characteristics of the 'imaginative' creative habit of mind. We also updated our school CPD to reflect that the skills used in creativity overlap with the other DNA skills; for example, the best innovators combine critical thinking with creativity.

The sub-habits of the imaginative strand: playing with possibilities, making connections and using intuition, overlapped best with Duke's critical thinking DNA and so we focused on helping staff to recognise this and develop their students' use of the Creative Habits and critical thinking.

We started with our current year 7 cohort as we considered that this would have the greatest impact. The Creativity Leads developed an implementation plan, the first stage being to form a group of creative ambassadors for Duke's, with each department nominating a Creative Ambassador. The creative ambassador for each department then led their own



### Duke's DNA mirrors the 5 creative habits framework

Each time a student uses a DNA skill they are demonstrating a 'creative habit'

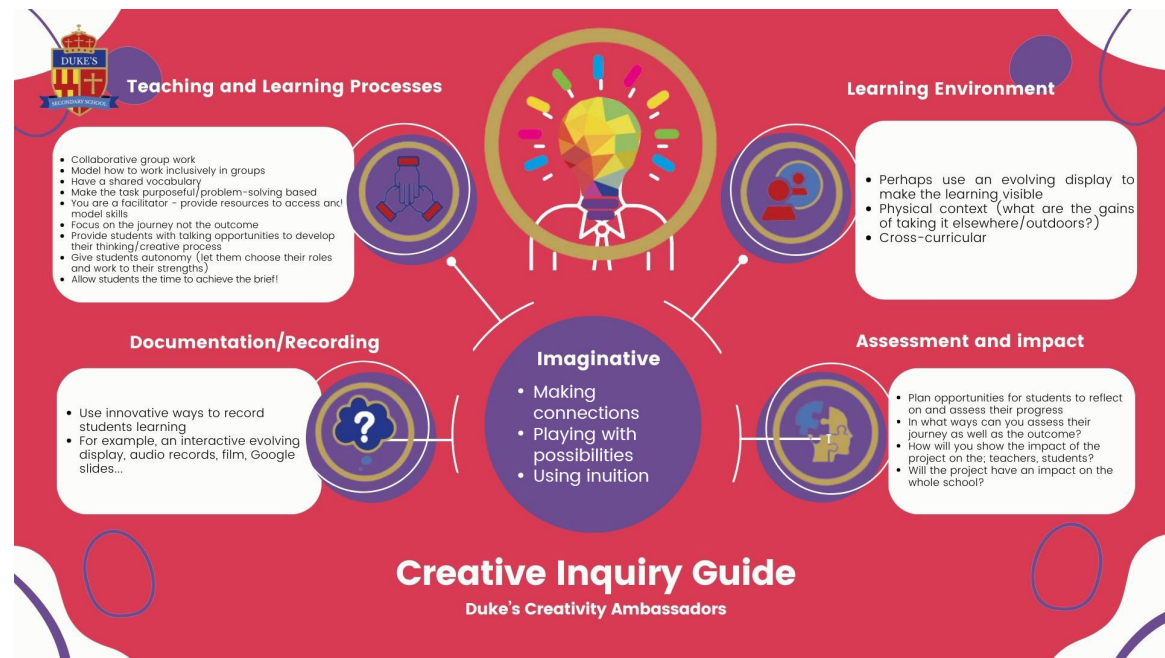
Critical thinking, resilience, reflection, collaboration and questioning all underpin creative thinking.



mini-inquiry into creativity and the imaginative strand within their respective subject, researching and planning a way in which students could develop their critical thinking skills through the imaginative habits of mind. Using resources and CPD from the collaborative, we also designed an inquiry guide to support the ambassadors with this and ran CPD sessions on creativity as a skill, how it overlapped with Duke's other DNA and the similarities and differences between creativity and critical thinking.

Creative enquiries included a DNA drop down day called 'Creativity through Culture' which was meticulously organised by sixth form students. During a comic book workshop with Artist Kev F Sutherland, students used their creativity to design interesting and engaging names for their comic book as well as original characters and plots. 'The Problem Solving Company' also delivered various challenges for year 7 students: these challenges required creative thinking, teamwork, leadership and communication to overcome problems. These workshops also provided rich opportunities for staff to observe practice and pedagogies that cultivate creativity and apply them to their own teaching.

In conclusion, our collaboration with the collaboration and the strategic focus on integrating imaginative habits with critical thinking, have already enhanced the creative culture at Duke's. By embedding The Creative Habits into our curriculum and providing targeted professional development, we have empowered staff to embrace creativity across all subjects. Although this is all still a work in progress, the positive impact on student engagement, independent learning, and problem solving skills demonstrates the potential of our enquiries and underscores the importance of creativity as a foundational element of our DNA and teaching at Dukes.



### Combining critical thinking and creativity...

'The creative act is what is new to the individual, not new to the world'

### The 'Three Ifs':

What would **happen** if I change it (the object/system/social relationship, etc)?

What would I **change or improve** about this object if I wanted to use it in 10 years?

What would I do if I had a one-million-dollar **investment to improve** it?



Case studies

## Cambois Primary School

The importance of primary schools creating persistent learners.

Cambois Primary School in Blyth is a school where learning is fun and everyone is welcome. With 125 pupils on roll, 43 are eligible for free school meals and they cater for a range of Special Educational Needs provision. Cambois has been recognised as one of the most inclusive mainstream schools in England.

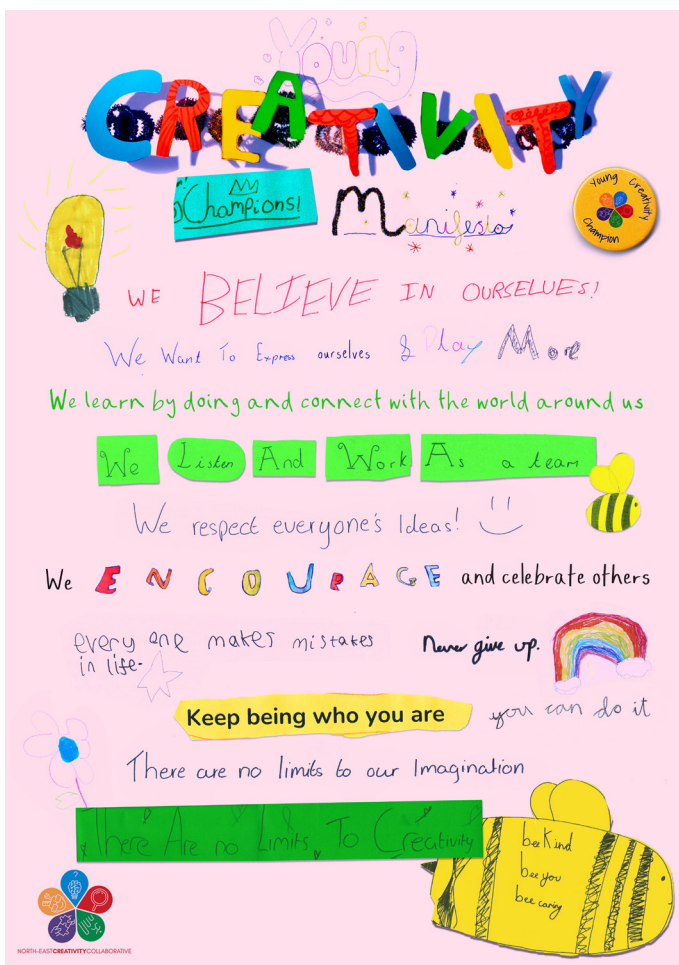
In their first year in the collaborative, a small group of staff worked with creative practitioner Sophie Crocker to integrate creativity into their practice. Their experience is documented in this film.



Watch  
the film



# Young Creativity Champions



We wanted young people to have an opportunity to be heard and take an active role in the collaborative's work within schools. To support this, Young Creativity Champions (YCC) were established in several schools, representing students of all ages, aiming to deepen their understanding of creativity in themselves and others, explore its benefits and significance and to nurture confident, creative young leaders.

**Ben Harrison, Yr 5 Teacher at Cragside Primary School and Creativity Lead, illustrates how their school developed and supported YCC's:**

At Cragside the role of Young Creativity Champions emerged in Year 2. At first, we simply engaged pupil voice and the YCCs provided their input to our enquiry-based activities; however they quickly became involved more directly and actively in the development of creativity across school and in other specific activities. These included working with the Creativity Lead in school on creative task design and later in the year they participated in an event at Sunningdale School to create a child led 'Creative Manifesto' with other schools as part of an immersive day of exploring creativity, facilitated by CCE and additional creative practitioners.

At the start of Year 3 our YCC gained a higher profile in school with every year group from Reception to Year 6 having a representative. These champions have met with our Creativity Lead on a fortnightly basis. In those meetings they have selected tasks for their individual classes linked to The Creative Habits, for peers to complete as part of their class meeting time on a Monday morning. With each class having a YCC, the children were encouraged

to feedback their own and their peers' interest in creative thinking activities in school. From the spring term, the YCC were invited to help create a visual to capture the range of tasks in the classroom which cultivated creativity through using colour coded tokens placed in corresponding jars as and when specific tasks were undertaken in class. This has given the children a greater ownership of the language associated with creativity – the result of this being that staff have observed much more direct child led discussion about specific learning behaviours linked to creativity. More recently the YCC have begun to produce short updates about their creative development in school via our weekly newsletter to families and the wider Cragside community.

## Ideas

- Listen to and reflect on what creativity means to children and young people across all year groups in your school.
- Consider the role that young people will have and the processes and mechanisms that support their involvement in decision making at a school, and collaborative level.
- Explore how you might develop meaningful modes of pupil participation in decision making.

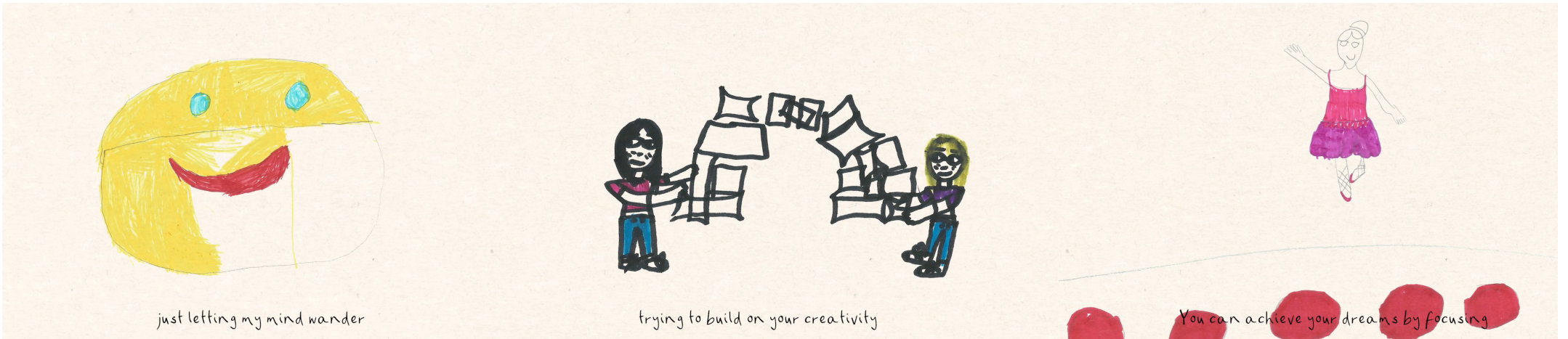
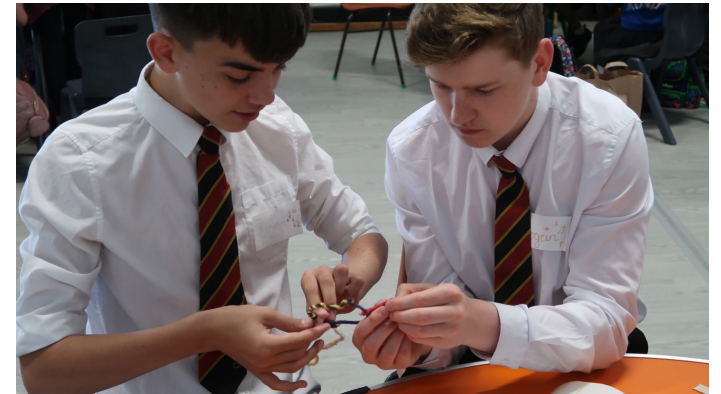
You may want to refer to the Lundy Model of Child Participation, a rights-based model, developed by Professor Laura Lundy to get started [hubnanog.ie/participation-framework/](https://hubnanog.ie/participation-framework/)



Read more



# Young Creativity Champions



Watch the Young Creativity  
Champions Animation

## 4 Disciplined Crafting and improving



Discipline is like you're trying your hardest

## Creativity Leads

The representatives from the schools within the North East Creativity Collaborative were called Creativity Leads and their role was to be active enquirers and thinkers around teaching for creativity. At the collaborative level they needed to be curious friends to each other and be open to hearing and experiencing different approaches to teaching, and the cultures and conditions which support creativity. Going back to the earlier atom analogy, the Creativity Leads were also the electrons who powered the knowledge and understanding back in their own schools, whilst

simultaneously actioning innovations and carrying the learning and critical reflections from these activities back to the collaborative - creating a fluid and dynamic two-way learning environment.

As a collaborative, Creativity Leads and school leaders would meet once every half-term, taking it in turns to meet in-person and online. The online meetings were practical in terms of demands on time, but we all felt the in-person meetings were much richer and more effective.

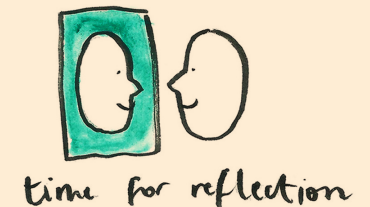
### Insights



Each school has at least two representatives to attend collaborative meetings, for mutual support and encouragement and to continue the professional dialogue and thinking back at school.



There are peaks and troughs, but they understand that this comes with the territory of leading others' professional learning for creativity. This is an iterative rather than 'one and done' process.



Alongside the school leader, they review progress at regular intervals and reflect on their own leadership development.

## 5 Persistent Sticking with difficulty



## Looking out to look in

Any new initiative demands focus. Early on there are so many moving parts there can be a tendency to become insular. However, as a collaborative we were conscious of being seen as an exclusive club or not being generative in sharing our learning with others, or learning with others outside our network.

In years 1 and 2 our learning was shared through articles for the Creativity Exchange platform, the Chartered College of Teaching's Journal 'Impact' and a documentary film. But Year 3 felt the right time, when collaborative members' confidence had increased, to share the work with an audience face to face, and to be open and welcoming to new ideas and connections.

**Imagine If Presents... Teaching for Creativity** was a hackathon conference event with a diverse audience of school leaders, teachers, combined authority, university and enterprise partnership representatives, education and cultural organisations. This was a pivotal moment, because it was the first time for collaborative members to facilitate others' learning, outside of their own schools, and receive immediate feedback. The hackathon format allowed the collaborative to model The Creative Habits by skillfully demonstrating their ongoing desire to wonder and question, challenge assumptions, share the product and so on.

The responses collected during the hackathon supported our ongoing strategic planning for the North East Creativity Collaborative.



Watch the  
Imagine If Presents... film

### What ideas do you have for sustaining this learning so this work can go further, and become embedded?

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Grow the network by bringing new schools and partner organisations on board.

- Begin to look at progression in creativity. What does this look like within the context of your school
  - Be systematic in what you are going to test to know what works and measure the impact
  - Devise an assessment that teachers can easily fit into their work. It needs to be slick, easy to use, and incentivise teachers.
- 

Take the common language you have for creativity and share it more widely in the region.

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It's important to share what hasn't worked as much as what has.

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Make more use of film to share your story and impacts with others by:

- Filming the work in progress
  - Capturing changes over time
  - Capturing reflections pertinent to individual settings and young people
- 

Share successful resources

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Connect with future industry expertise/Link to the world of work

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Develop a structures framework that outlines protocol, processes and expectations.

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Keep developing the culture within the collaborative

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## Insights

### Leaders and teachers as professional learning facilitators

Each school was tasked with facilitating a workshop on an aspect of their learning to date and the impacts they were observing. Workshop themes included:

- A roadmap for change – a whole school approach to developing creativity
- Surfacing potential barriers to creativity across your setting.
- Knowing what to do when you don't know what to do
- Teacher modelling of The Creative Habits and the impacts on learning
- Exploring the importance of culture within a creative setting or environment

### Roundtable discussions

After each workshop, the schools and the audience would come together at pre-designated roundtables to share what they had seen and heard. This allowed the audience to feed back and process the workshops, while the schools were able to reflect on their progress through the perspective of others.

### Hackathons

The questions were designed to model the reflective practice that was a common feature of the collaborative's meetings and to stimulate discussion amongst the variety of professions at each table. For example, what did you see and hear educators doing to support creativity? What do you feel is emerging but not yet fully realised?

# What advice do you have for others who are setting out on their Teaching for Creativity journey?

At the beginning of the third year, members of the collaborative were invited to share their words of wisdom with the new schools joining the group. They were honest about the complexity of this work but also appreciated that it was in the complexity that they found the most powerful learning for school staff, children and young people and resulted in an education system for thriving.

*notice what you're already doing*

|  |  |   |   |
|--|--|---|---|
| Step out of your comfort zone. Be open to change and try new things. | We cannot expect children to be creative and brave if we are not brave/ don't take risks ourselves.                          | Not everything will work (and that's ok!)   | A creative approach to the curriculum can really change children's lives! |
| It takes time.   | Learn from others but also be true to your own setting's values and what's right in your context.                            | Be prepared for the outcomes to change as you explore and become inquisitive of your own setting. | Make sure school leadership is actively supporting the work.              |
| It is not something you can 'complete'.                              | Be open to the expertise, insights, ideas and creativity of colleagues, outside practitioners and children and young people. | Culture is everything but this needs serious investment and constant attention.                   | It's process over product.  |



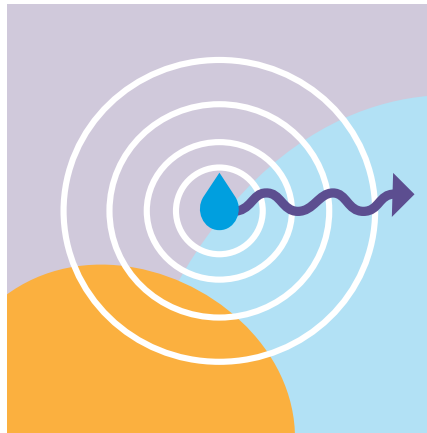
Watch the NECCN film

# What next for the North East Creativity Collaborative?

Since the Imagine If event, the collaborative lead with CCE has been building on the ideas and suggestions to shape the legacy phase.

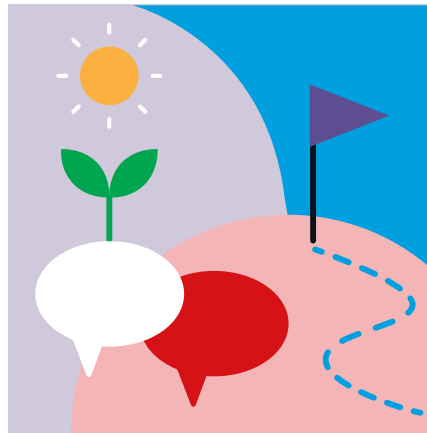
From September 2024 to July 2026 the collaborative will look different but will focus on two core areas:

## Whole-school change



Cragside Primary School will lead a 'Hub' of five primary schools which have the leadership capacity and commitment in place to roll-out teaching for creativity across the school and weave creativity into its fabric.

## Leadership capabilities



The other schools in the collaborative have the opportunity to form a North East Leading for Creative Thinking network with the support of CCE. This strand will work with individual leaders to develop their capabilities in inspiring, influencing and leading others to teach for creativity.

We hope that both strands will be able to grow in time and welcome new members and we are happy to talk about our work and make connections to similar initiatives and potential partners. You can contact us and/or stay updated about both strands through the following channels.



## Keep in touch

### Hub

[cragsideprimary.co.uk](http://cragsideprimary.co.uk)

[office@cragsideprimary.co.uk](mailto:office@cragsideprimary.co.uk)

### Leading for Creative Thinking Network

[leadingforcreativethinking.org](http://leadingforcreativethinking.org)

[hello@cceengland.org](mailto:hello@cceengland.org)

**“My time with the North East Creativity Collaborative has reminded me of the excitement children can feel at school.”**

Creativity Lead and Teacher

# Acknowledgements

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The North East network was one of eight Creativity Collaboratives funded by Arts Council England and the Freelands Foundation, between 2021 – 2024. We wish to firstly acknowledge their generous support but also their encouragement in allowing each collaborative to forge their own path. Each collaborative in the pilot has a unique narrative about their approach and the learning that followed and it's vital that each of these narratives contributes to the body of knowledge around teaching for creativity. This is one of the purposes of this portfolio; this is our story.

We also wish to thank the Durham Commission on Creativity and Education for being the catalyst to Art Council England's pilot.

We are incredibly grateful to Ruth Brown at Duchess's Community High School in Alnwick for getting the North East Creativity Collaborative off the ground and to Co-Headteacher Alan Rogers for his support and commitment. Also, special thanks to bursar Janet Horne.

We also wish to express our sincere gratitude to Craggside Primary and specifically Becky Jackson, Lisa Hall and Ben Harrison for taking up the mantle of leading the collaborative, and driving the vision for the legacy phase.

Special thanks to David Priestley, Martin Smith and Claire Middleton at Greenfields Community College for the energy and passion they brought during their participation in the collaborative.

Educational, academic and industry specialist expertise and support has been provided to the collaborative during the three years and we extend our heartfelt appreciation to:

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Professor Bill Lucas

Dr David Parker

Gwyn ap Harri and XP School Gateshead

Cat Place, Jubilee Park Primary School

Bethan Marks, Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School

Lynne Hughes, Ysgol Gwaun Gynfi

Anne O'Gorman, Arts Council Ireland

John Smith, Royal Grammar School Newcastle

Dr Maryam Haroutunian, Newcastle University

Preetam S Heeramun, Industry Partner

We also wish to thank Advisory Board members Judy Thomas, Adrian Dougherty (to September 2023), Melanie Burgess, Lorraine Coghill, Dave Cookson, Jennifer Barrett and Lalage Bosanquet.

We have been fortunate to have a talented group of graphic designers, illustrators and filmmakers supporting us along the way with thanks to Sally Pilkington, Gyorgy Zador, Lily Kroese and Listen and Like.

Lastly, we want to reserve our final thank you to our partner CCE for their unwavering guidance, coaching and mentorship throughout this most exciting and impactful of journeys.



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