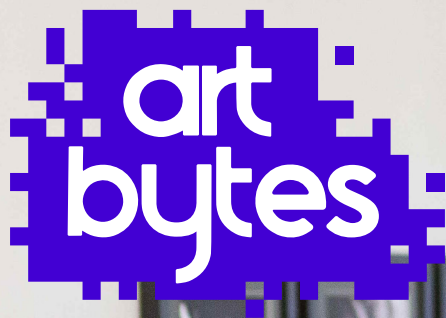




Sasha John
Sasha John's Portrait
Year 7

IMPACT REPORT

ARTBYTES.CO.UK



CONTENTS

WHAT IS ART BYTES?	04
WHO CARRIED OUT THIS RESEARCH?	07
RESEARCH METHODS	08
KEY FINDINGS OF THE DATA ANALYSIS	10
TEACHER INTERVIEWS	16
PRIZE GIVING CEREMONY	18
STUDENT IMPACT	22
TEACHER IMPACT	24
PERCEPTION OF SENIOR LEADERS	28
ART AS A LEVELLER	30
ENRICHING LIVES	34
COMMUNITY AND PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT	38
LEGACY AND SUSTAINABILITY	42

WHAT IS ART BYTES?



Art Bytes is a national **art** and **EdTech** programme for **year 5** and **year 9** students in all educational settings, combining an inter-school art **competition** with a bespoke, immersive **virtual gallery** and in-person **Celebration Events** in cultural venues across England. It is based on 13 years' experience in the North West and is proven to **nurture talent**, raise **ambition** and develop **confidence** and **cultural capital**, as well as support **mental health** and help develop vital **skills for future employment**. Art Bytes gives young participants the opportunity to see their art exhibited online and engage with new technology from the safety and convenience of their own home or school and well as allowing them to see galleries and museums as places “for them” and encourage future **cultural engagement**.

After a shortlisting panel and an **online public vote**, the winning artist from each school sees their work displayed in our virtual gallery. Art Bytes culminates every June with a Celebration Event at a high-profile **cultural venue** in each of the **nine regions of England**, which is also available to schools to live stream or play back in the classroom or assembly. National and regional winners are announced, **certificates** and **prizes** are presented, and the virtual gallery goes live.

The competition is open to Year 5 and Year 9 students in all educational settings. We warmly welcome **SEND** and **Alternative Provision** providers as well as mainstream schools.

From 2022 to 2025 the Art Bytes competition has attracted **6825** students from **273** schools across England.

Art Bytes is **generously supported** by The School of Arts at The University of Liverpool.





WHO CARRIED OUT THIS RESEARCH?

This research was a partnership between dot-art (the organisers of Art Bytes) and the School of Education in Liverpool Hope University. The School of Education has a long history of collaborative research, working with educational programmes within the UK and worldwide. These studies have shone new light on the issues these programmes are tackling, the benefits that the programmes achieve and the opportunities for making an even bigger impact in the future.

We wanted to discover the impact that Art Bytes has on:

- How participating schools teach art and value creativity
- Student cultural capital, confidence and aspiration
- Reaching new audiences, building relationships and widening access
- How schools are using Art-Bytes to enhance their provision

RESEARCH METHODS

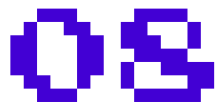
The research has two main elements:

1. ANALYSIS OF DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data about the participating schools was analysed to see if it could tell us more about the types of schools that participated in the programme.

2. TEACHER INTERVIEWS

Our researcher from Hope University carried out online interviews, using an agreed set of questions, talking to teachers from the schools that participated about their experiences. They talked to teachers from a range of educational providers in different parts of the country, trying to get a broad picture of the experiences they and their students had.

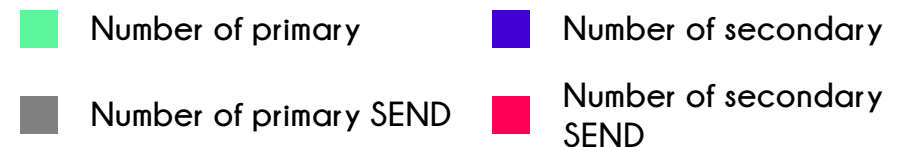
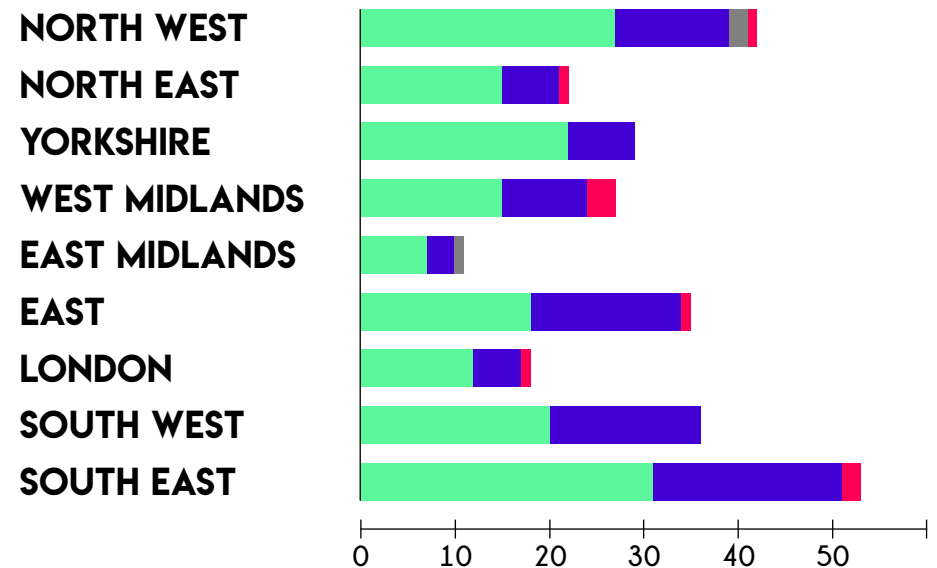


KEY FINDINGS OF THE DATA ANALYSIS

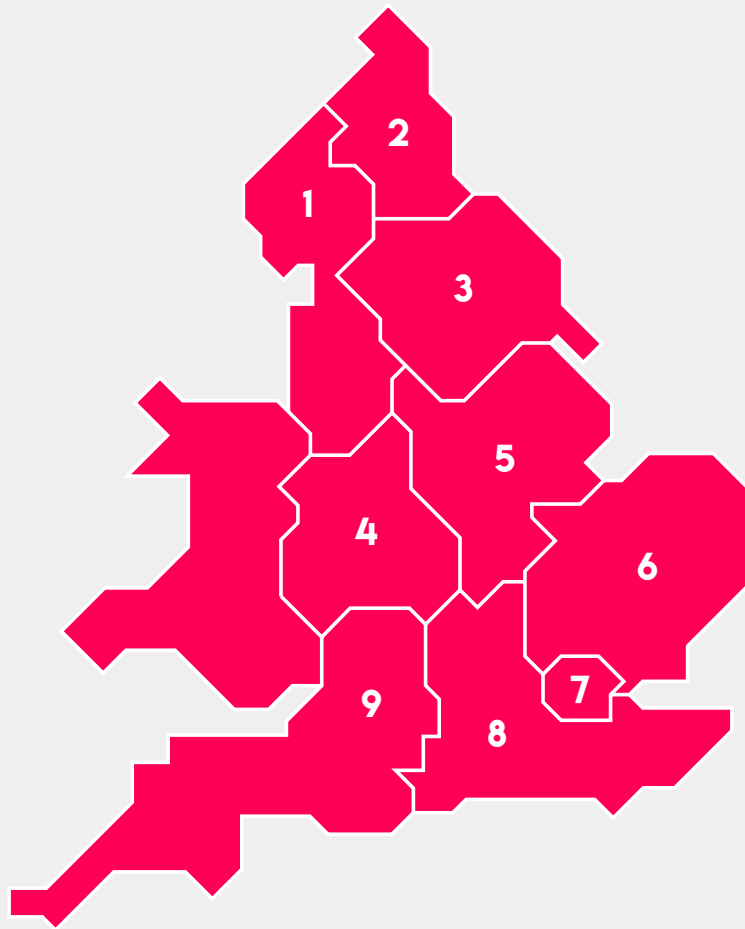
REGIONAL PARTICIPATION

Between 2022-2025 273 schools took part in the competition, across 9 regions in England: North West, North East, Yorkshire, West Midlands, East Midlands, London, East, South West and South East.

The breakdown of participating schools from each region is as follows.



PERCENTAGE OF ALL SCHOOLS WHO PARTICIPATE



1. North West **15%**

2. North East **10%**

3. Yorkshire **8%**

4. West Midlands **10%**

5. East Midlands **4%**

6. East **14%**

7. London **8%**

8. South West **14%**

9. South East **17%**





SUCCESS IN THE COMPETITION

Success in the competition has been spread out across the participating regions, with virtually all regions having at least one national winner. The North East has had the most national winners, an even more impressive feat considering the percentage of schools from that region who participate.

Success, especially at national level, appears to be connected with retention, as the overwhelming majority of schools who enjoy national or regional wins return to the competition in future years. This is likely due to the inspiring effect a win can have on students, teachers and senior leadership teams in schools.

SEND PARTICIPATION

The number of SEND schools that participate in the competition is small relative to the total number of schools (less than 5%), but it is showing a steady increase with 75% more participating in 2025 compared to 2023. Their impact on the competition has been outsized with 2 of the 8 winning schools since the competition began coming from that small number of SEND schools. From this it is easy to see why SEND students and teachers value the competition as a chance to show what they can achieve.



TEACHER INTERVIEWS

Our Hope University researcher carried out online interviews with four teachers, with seven more responding to a questionnaire when it wasn't possible to find a suitable interview timeslot. Of those that participated, 42% were from Secondary schools, 58% were from Primary schools. 25% of those schools were SEND schools. Teachers involved in the research teach at schools across the country, with responses from teachers in the North East, to Greater London and the South West.

We asked each teacher the same set of 12 questions and recorded their responses.

Broadly speaking, they were asked what impact does Art Bytes have on schools and teachers and the perceived value of the subject of Art. This includes questions on impact from the Art Bytes programme on the curriculum, how Art Bytes had developed students' confidence and/or aspirations and impacts from the prize giving ceremony and gallery of student work.

From the interviews, a number of themes in their answers become clear:

- The **prize giving ceremonies** were seen as celebrations offering **recognition** and acting as a catalyst for **wider participation**.
- **Students** gained **confidence**, were encouraged as artists and raised their **aspirations**.
- **Teachers** gained **awareness** and **confidence** and felt it raised the **profile** of art teaching.
- **Senior leaders** felt it raised the **profile** and **value** of arts in school life.
- **SEN students** value art as a **leveller**, allowing them to compete with students in any other school.
- The programme offered **students** new **opportunities** and **authentic experiences** which enriched their lives.
- **Families** feel a collective **pride** in the pupils' achievements, which strengthens school-community relationships.
- As the programme embeds itself in the school culture it ensures a **long-term impact**.

PRIZE GIVING CEREMONY

The prize-giving event itself, as a celebration and recognition of participation, acted as a catalyst for teachers, students and school communities to further engage with the arts.

This shows how the prizes energised not just students and teachers but the wider school communities, ensuring the project has impact beyond the event itself.

“We also won the national award, which you would not believe what a difference that’s made in terms of how the senior learning team view the arts, as being something that is incredibly important for expression and creativity. It’s also put us on a platform that’s elevated what we can offer.”

“Last year, it was all at the Neild Hall... they incorporated a visit to the museum and workshops with local artists.”





STUDENT IMPACT

Participation in Art Bytes builds confidence, encourages new artists to flourish and raises aspirations for future creative pathways. It allows every child to feel valued as an artist, not just those who already excel in traditional academic subjects.

This empowers young people, encouraging them to value their creativity and see artistic achievement as part of their identity. Participation in Art Bytes for some students has also developed their sense of worth in school.

“It’s really ignited her passion for art, and it’s made her realize that she’s amazing at it. And now she comes to an after-school club, and she does really amazingly high level paintings at this club, which I think she definitely could have achieved before, but it’s just she’s suddenly aware ‘I’m amazing’.”

“The winner in particular felt very proud... it has made them grow exceptionally not only on the outside but on the inside.”

“Pupils gain confidence from seeing their work voted on and shared with the wider community.”

**“THOSE CHILDREN
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TEACHER IMPACT

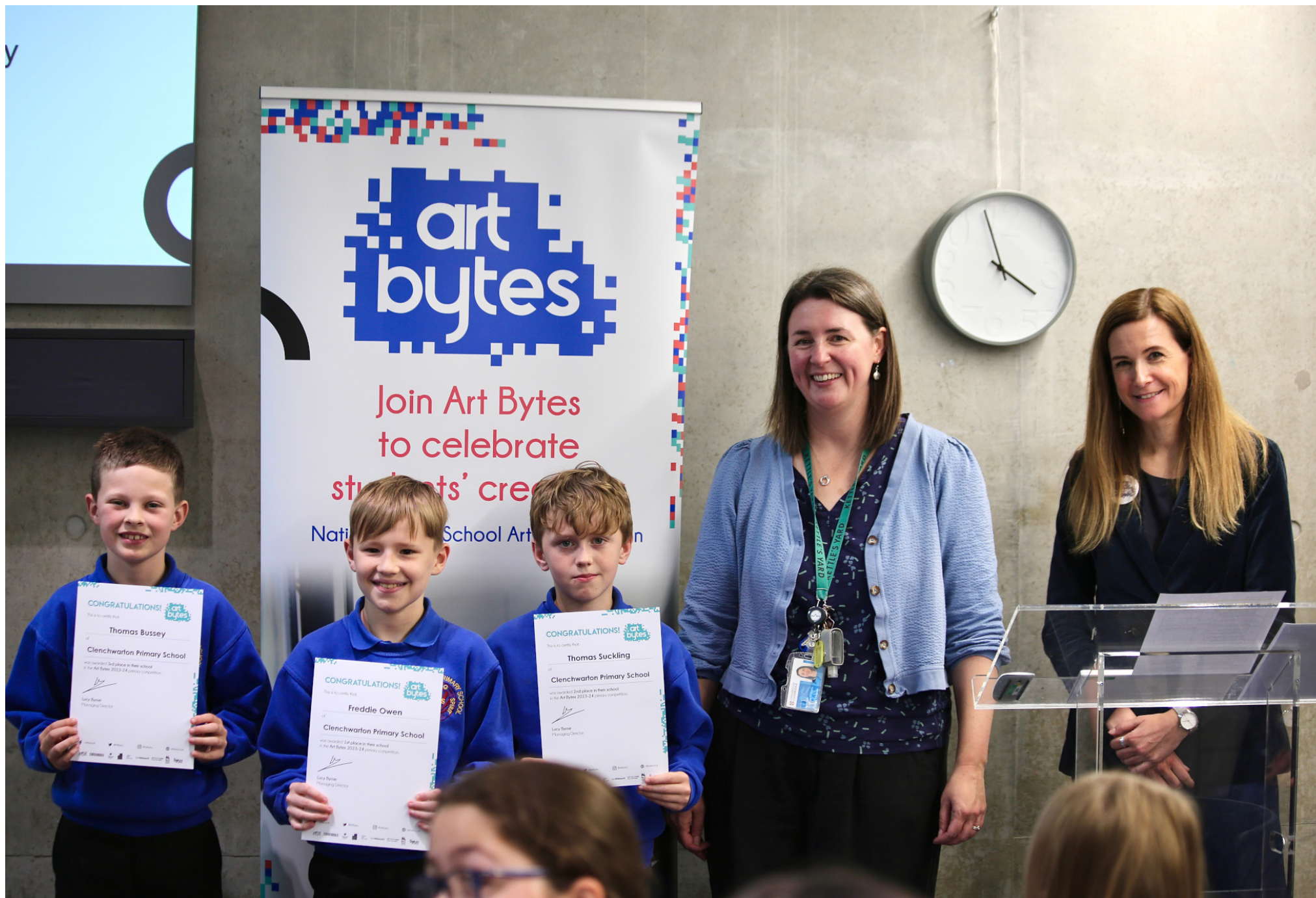
For teachers, involvement develops their awareness of the value of creativity and builds their confidence as teachers of art.

Teachers found that Art Bytes provides ready-made opportunities that fit seamlessly into the curriculum planning, which strengthens whole-school-capacity to deliver high quality arts education. This strengthens whole-school capacity for creative education and raises the profile of art teaching.

“It is different for primary teachers because they have to teach so many subjects. They don’t always have the time and if they don’t have a passion for the arts, it takes someone else to pinpoint that art has a value. The benefit of Art Bytes is it supported me as a lead to support my staff to recognize anything that kids do has a value.”

“The teachers are getting really high quality artists explaining to them what they’re teaching and how the lesson should work. And there’s also pupil videos as well, which help with the quality of the teaching. I think with art, some teachers weren’t as confident as other subjects. But now that’s really progressed, and everyone feels super confident teaching art.”

**“I TRY TO
TELL STAFF
EVERYTHING HAS
A VALUE... EVEN
THE SIMPLEST
MARK MAKING
SHOULD BE
DOCUMENTED.”**



PERCEPTION OF SENIOR LEADERS

Senior leaders see Art Bytes as a way of raising the profile of the arts and demonstrating their value in school life. This recognition ensures that creative subjects are positioned alongside core subjects, rather than on the periphery. This ensures that creative subjects are protected and championed at leadership level.

This is very much aligned with the interim curriculum and assessment review (due Autumn 2025), which will highlight the current government's drive to ensure arts education is accessible to all students and the profile of such subjects are raised.

"It's quite high profile in the school now, art, through the Art Bytes and through the walking galleries and the online galleries. Definitely, Art Bytes puts us, puts art on the map, you know, in the school. It's an event in the year that everyone knows about now."

"We hold the arts really high up... the head's really keen for the arts to be promoted across the curriculum."

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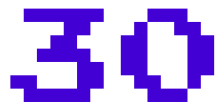
ART AS A LEVELLER

Art Bytes allows young people to see their work presented on the same stage as peers across mainstream settings, highlighting art as a leveller where ability and background make no difference. It promotes inclusivity through the very nature of design and demonstrates the universal value of creativity.

This is of particular value to teachers and students from SEND schools who value greatly the chance to compete on-par with all other participating students or schools. This demonstrates the value and benefits of inclusion and, is arguably, one of the only parts of the school calendar that provides equitable access to all.

“Once they see how many of the schools are involved, and the fact that you can look on all these other pieces of work and that their school is there. And for some of them, it’s the fact that they’re included in with mainstream schools, you know, that they suddenly realise that actually it makes no difference at all.”

“Those boundaries between, oh, you’re a sporty type, you’re an arty type... it sort of shows everyone can get involved.”



“I THINK ONE OF THE THINGS WE WERE VERY KEEN TO DO IS NOT TO HIGHLIGHT THE FACT THESE ARE AUTISTIC CHILDREN OR AUTISTIC STUDENTS, WE DIDN’T WANT THEM TO BE HIGHLIGHTED AS BEING DIFFERENT. I THINK FOR OUR STUDENTS IT HAS ACTUALLY BEEN A REAL POSITIVE. I THINK THE LEVEL PLAYING FIELD WAS BRILLIANT.”



ENRICHING LIVES

Art Bytes gives students access to new opportunities, enriching their lives with authentic artistic experiences. These moments, such as exhibiting in professional galleries, produce a lasting enhancement to their appreciation of art.

This matters because it expands horizons and raises their aspirations for the future. For students from disadvantaged backgrounds, Art Bytes offers them and their families experiences that they might not otherwise encounter.

“One of the big things for us is to be able to go to the gallery, and to see the other artwork in the gallery because we don’t often have art trips out. We have a lot of visitors coming in, but to go to a gallery was a really lovely experience for the children and their families.”

“Our school, it is in a low economic area. You know, there’s a lot of deprivation. There’s a lot of neglect. We have a lot of children in care. So we are constantly trying to provide them with experiences which they just won’t get any other way.”

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“IT’S GIVING THE STUDENTS AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES WITH THE ARTS.”

“ART IS REALLY IMPORTANT TO US IN SCHOOL BECAUSE IT’S SUCH A MOTIVATOR FOR OUR STUDENTS... WE SORT OF USE IT THROUGHOUT THE CURRICULUM, REALLY.”

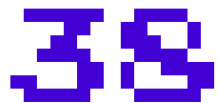
“FOR HIM, THAT REALLY BROUGHT IT HOME. IT WASN’T JUST A PIECE OF WORK, IT WAS A PIECE OF ART IN A GALLERY ON DISPLAY.”

COMMUNITY AND PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

Art Bytes connects families and communities to pupils' achievements, building collective pride. This strengthens school-community relationships and increases parental support for the arts.

The competition actively involves families and the wider community by inviting students and their families to a celebration event. Parents see their children celebrated publicly, deepening support for creative education.

"Parents involved, those whose children have been involved, are just so pleased... their children are being involved in something."



**“THE MUM
CRIED BECAUSE
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A POWERFUL
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LEGACY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Art Bytes becomes part of the school calendar and a tradition that students look forward to, embedding itself in the culture of education settings. This sustainability ensures a long-term impact, continually inspiring new generations of young artists.

In this way, the competition has a potential for lasting impact on future generations of young artists, who have benefitted from a cultural education, not just an academic one. This comes not just from the competition but also its numerous by-products (student confidence, parental pride, continued teacher confidence and development in the arts, and so on).

“The art ambassadors did their own gallery... they went out into the playground with QR codes canvassing parents to vote.”

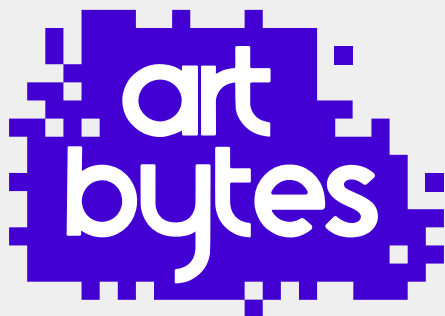
**“YES, WE
ENCOURAGE
ALL OUR YEAR
5 STUDENTS TO
PARTICIPATE...
IT’S NOW PART
OF OUR
CURRICULUM
CALENDAR.”**



“WE’VE ALWAYS JUST DONE THIS EVERY YEAR... IT’S JUST TAKEN FOR GRANTED THIS IS PART OF THE BUDGET.”

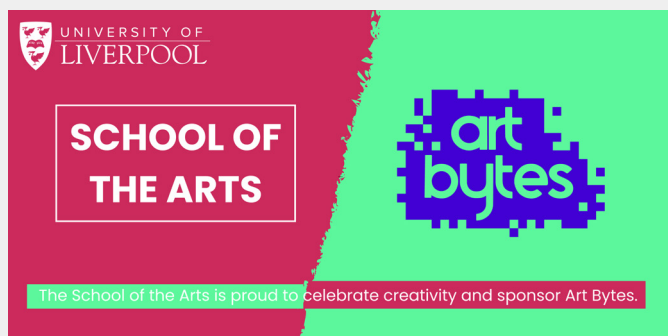
“IT’S BECOME A REALLY IMPORTANT PART OF THE SCHOOL CALENDAR NOW – EVERYONE KNOWS ABOUT ART BYTES.”

“IT’S EASIER THIS YEAR BECAUSE THEY REMEMBER IT AND WANT TO DO IT – IT’S NOW PART OF THE TRADITION.”



Thank you to the research team at Liverpool Hope University for their hard work on this report, and to the teachers that took the time to share their experiences.

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