



# THE IMPACT OF

dot-art

Schools

A SUMMARY OF THE dot-art Schools  
CULTURAL RESEARCH INITIATIVE (CERI) RESEARCH REPORT



### **dot-art Schools**

believes the arts have the power to change and shape young people's lives.



**dot-art Schools** celebrates and showcases visual arts excellence in schools. The competition is designed to nurture talent, raise ambition and take art out of the classroom and into the real world.



Champion the importance of creative skills for future employment



### **dot-art Schools** aims to:

Increase the student's confidence in their own artistic ability



Raise the school's profile and show its commitment to creative education



Demonstrate the quality of work produced to students' families and the wider community



Support schools to achieve Artsmark and meet OFSTED and National Curriculum attainment targets

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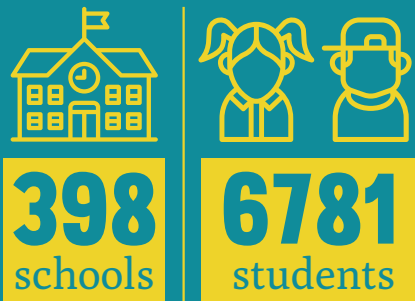
## What is dot-art Schools?

**dot-art Schools** is an interactive, online, inter-school art competition. It culminates in an annual public exhibition of the winning students' artwork and prize-giving ceremony for teachers, students and their families. The competition is open to primary (Year 5), secondary (Year 9) and SEN schools in Liverpool City Region, Cheshire and Warrington.

- Schools submit photos of original 2D or 3D artwork on any theme, which then features on a dedicated school portfolio webpage.
- A shortlisting panel of arts professionals select the top three entries for each school, followed by an online public vote for those shortlisted entries.
- The student with the most votes from each school wins a place in the exhibition.
- A respected guest judge then visits the exhibition to decide on the overall winners and runners up for each age group.

The competition for Liverpool City Region schools was launched in 2012. A parallel competition was also rolled out to Cheshire schools from 2016 – 2019 through a partnership with Liverpool John Moores University.

From **2012-2019**  
the **dot-art Schools**  
competition has attracted



ACROSS LIVERPOOL CITY  
REGION AND CHESHIRE



## What is the Cultural Education Research Initiative (CERI)?

### CERI IS A

partnership between Curious Minds and Liverpool Hope University, designed to support research-informed practice in

**CULTURAL EDUCATION.**



### RESEARCH GRANTS

were available for members of COoL (Cultural Organisations of Liverpool) to support the development of research into a particular aspect of practice in cultural education. The grant supports the development of research defined by the cultural organisation. This research was developed in conjunction with academics at Liverpool Hope University.

dot-art Schools  
*was delighted*



*to be accepted for the*  
**CERI RESEARCH.**

The research offered an opportunity to examine what impact participating in the competition has had on both the school and students and to map and learn more about the social, economic and educational context those schools sit within.



### We wanted to discover

what motivates schools to take part in the **dot-art Schools** competition. We also wanted to investigate the reasons for the diverse quality of artwork entered and address ways to

SUPPORT TEACHERS TO  
IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF  
PUPILS' ART EXPERIENCES.



**Does competing  
build quality?**

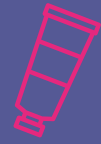
**Do schools produce  
better art as a result?**

# Research methods

The research has two main elements:

## 1. Analysis of historical data

Data about participating schools from 2012 – 2018 was analysed to give a demographic context of schools that have participated.



## 2. Teacher interviews

Our researcher from Hope University carried out face-to-face and telephone interviews, using an agreed set of questions. They covered a range of participating schools from the four cohorts, from schools competing for the first time, to those who take part regularly.



# Historical data analysis



**144**  
**SCHOOLS**

**have taken part in the programme (between 2012 and 2018), which split into four cohorts:**



**LIVERPOOL**  
**PRIMARY**  
**SCHOOLS**



**LIVERPOOL**  
**SECONDARY**  
**SCHOOLS**



**CHESHIRE**  
**PRIMARY**  
**SCHOOLS**



**CHESHIRE**  
**SECONDARY**  
**SCHOOLS**

The **Liverpool** programme has been running since **2012** and in **Cheshire** since **2016**, so the Liverpool region has a higher number of participating schools.

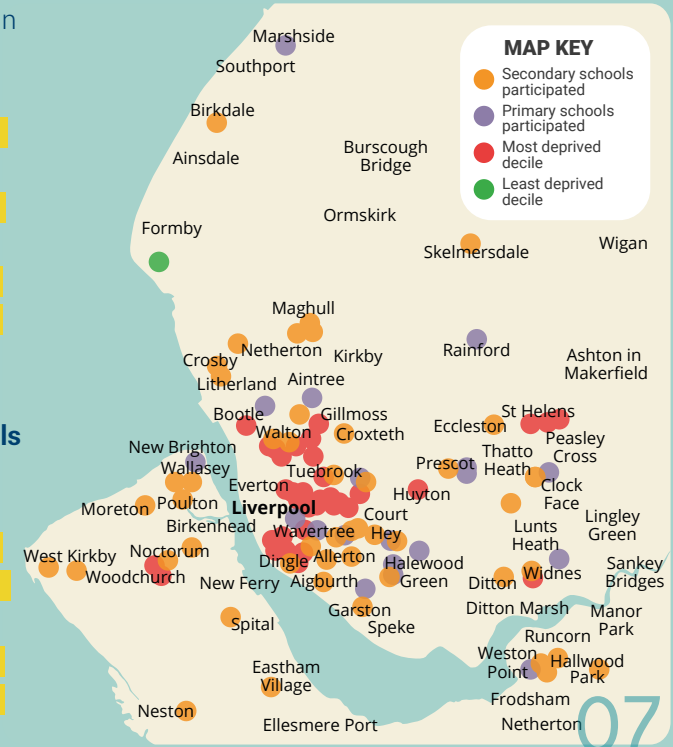
We looked at the types and locations of participating schools from 2012 – 2018 to give a contextual picture of the schools that have participated and their demographic nature. Our researcher used data publicly available on the Consumer Data Research Centre website (CDRC 2018). By linking data on multiple indices of deprivation with our schools, he was able to develop a clear assessment of levels of deprivation each participating school experienced.

Of the **48 primary schools** in the Liverpool cohort:

- **24** are in the poorest **10%** of postcodes in the UK
- **31** are in the poorest **20%** of postcodes in the UK
- **64%** of schools are in the **most deprived quarter** of the UK population

Of the **65 secondary schools** in the Liverpool cohort:

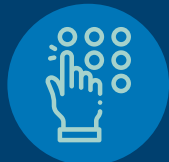
- **19%** of schools are in the **most deprived 10%** of the UK's population
- **50%** of schools are in the **most deprived quarter** of the UK population





# Historical data – statistical analysis

Each school in the competition was given five key variables for analysis:



Its deprivation score  
(based on data from CDRC)



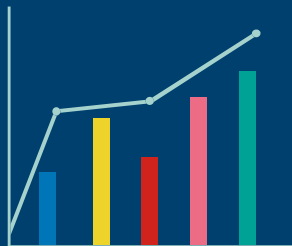
Its most recent  
Ofsted grade



Its Artsmark  
score



The number of times  
it had participated



Success in the  
competition

In order to analyse the historical data, the researcher made use of Ofsted reports and the Artsmark website (Arts Council England, 2018) alongside technical tools including Excel, GB maps, ONS and Mathematica.

After initially examining the contexts of deprivation, Ofsted, Artsmark, participation and success, the analysis then looked at what relationships might exist within the data, to find out if the cohorts differed in a statistically significant way.

Whilst the cohorts differ in measures such as the deprivation index, there is significant overlap in terms of Artsmark and Ofsted grades. Reassuringly, the schools that have been successful in the programme are distributed between the most deprived and least deprived areas in their region.



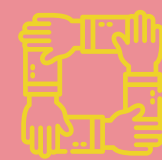
Artsmark

Ofsted

# Key findings of historical data analysis

## Deprivation

There is a strong relationship between deprivation and success in the Liverpool primary school cohort, but this relationship completely disappears by secondary school. The analysis shows that the more deprived a school's location is, the more successful it is likely to be.



DEPRIVATION AND SUCCESS

## Participation

The number of secondary schools has been relatively consistent from 2013 onwards, at approximately 34. Secondary schools are much more loyal to the project, with retention rates over 70% for the last three years, compared to 50% for the primary schools.



RETENTION  
FOR  
SECONDARY



RETENTION  
FOR  
PRIMARY

## Success

Primary schools that have participated four times are almost six times as likely as first time entrants to achieve some success – despite there being only four times the opportunity. This can only be attributed to artwork improving relative to the success criteria.



AS LIKELY TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS

“Given that independent, guest judges make the final decision each year, we can only interpret this as genuine improvement in the quality of work produced.” CERi researcher

## More key findings of historical data analysis

### Ofsted

In Liverpool primary schools and both Cheshire primary schools and secondary schools, competition success decreases as the school's Ofsted grade increases.



In contrast, Liverpool secondary schools with an Ofsted Grade 3 or 4 (3 requires improvement, 4 is inadequate) are more likely to compete in the competition regularly. This may be because those schools performing well with Ofsted are more likely to take risks and try new things, whereas those performing less well want to stay in a competition they trust and that is producing high quality outcomes for them.



There is a positive correlation between Ofsted grade and the number of times a school participates. Schools with 'outstanding' status are the least loyal to the programme, whereas those 'requiring improvement' are the most loyal.



### Artsmark

For both the Liverpool and Cheshire primary schools there is a positive relationship between having Artsmark recognition and being successful in the competition. However, in both Liverpool and Cheshire secondary schools there is no evidence of a link. The only common aspect between the two cohorts is that success and participation have a statistically significant positive correlation so, as participation increases, so does success.



## Teacher interviews

Our CERI researcher carried out interviews with eight teachers (face-to-face and by phone) from three primary, two secondary, and three SEN schools (one being secondary, two being primary). These represent over 10% of the participating schools in 2018, which is in line with expectations for research respondents.

We asked each teacher the same set of 15 questions and recorded their responses.

Teachers were asked about their school's approach to art in the curriculum; why their school participates in the programme; what senior managers' perceptions are of the subject, plus the impact on both students and teachers themselves.

From the interviews, a number of mechanisms are becoming clear



An interplay between art coordinator and the head teacher based around mutual active support in both the **dot-art Schools** programme and the national Artsmark scheme



The head teacher exposes the larger cohort of students to the web-based materials of **dot-art Schools**, usually through an assembly or similar



The art department displays the **dot-art Schools** submissions prominently in school



Parents are informed of participation through newsletters and emails



Years prior to Y5 and Y9 are very much aware of the project and actively seek to participate



The head teacher attends the prize-giving



Students' families attend – this has significant impact in terms of widening horizons



Children reconsider the arts as a career path, as multiple stakeholders invest in the idea

## Key themes from the interviews

Over the next few pages, we've drawn out a number of key themes that recurred throughout the interviews.

### Website

The website is a key tool for student motivation as it allows students to see their work in comparison to work from other schools. This is perhaps a more significant feature than it initially appears. There is no other simple mechanism available to schools to access a substantial body of artwork produced by other schools.

One of the interviewees particularly valued the website as this was shown to the students on a regular basis and allowed them to see which of their works had been included. This is a theme that reoccurred throughout primary and SEN interviews, where the website had been presented to the whole class or school.

In primary schools, this was driven by the head teacher displaying the **dot-art Schools** website during an assembly. This leads directly to students in lower year groups becoming aware of the competition prior to participation, so multiple year groups anticipate and prepare for participation in the competition.

**"We make a big thing of it in the hall... We'll put it on the screen and see who are the top three. It's just amazing – the whole school gets caught up in it. I saw it and signed up for it and my head was fully behind it. We've been there ever since."**

**Primary teacher**



## Prize-giving ceremony and exhibition

**The interviews show there is evidence of clear cultural impact on both the students and their parents.** This is largely facilitated by the prize-giving and exhibition event at the end of the competition, as both parents and students are placed in a potentially unfamiliar cultural space, with students' work at the centre. Teachers talk of needing to educate not just the students, but parents too, on the value of art. This process is effectively supported by this part of the competition.

The primary and secondary teachers interviewed made positive comments about the prize-giving ceremony and exhibition. In general, it was felt to be a major selling point of the competition, in that:

- **Parents attend**
- **Teachers and head teachers attend**
- **Parents can see their children's work in a context wider than just their school**
- **Work can be viewed in a professional gallery setting**
- **Work can be compared to other works of art**
- **Conversations are opened between teachers, parents and children**

**"The fact that they have their work displayed at Liverpool School of Art and Design is just amazing. To have parents coming along really shows the children that this is a kind of career; something you could do in life. It's not something a lot of them had even considered – they were just in awe."** **Secondary teacher**





## Student impact



Throughout the interviews, teachers commented that **dot-art Schools** represents a low risk, high reward competition.

The inclusivity of the competition was highly appreciated. Students could view their work in the context of the entire cohort and gained a measurable sense of self-respect from this process.



**"The students really worked their socks off. All the schools were brought up when it was shown, and then they showed ours. All the children sitting there, in anticipation, thinking 'will mine be there?' The Year 3s and 4s can't wait – they're already asking how many months it'll be until they come back as year 5s. It just builds the excitement."**

**Primary teacher**

**"It's a nice way to celebrate our pupils' work and for them to receive acknowledgement for the work they've done. I think the awards ceremony is fantastic for boosting their self-esteem and getting them out of their comfort zone."**

**SEN teacher**

Students who participate in **dot-art Schools** are also making informed decisions about which high school to go to, on the basis of the school's visual arts provision.

**"One of our high schools is no longer doing art as we know it – it's doing performing arts. Two children said, 'I don't want to go there because they don't do painting and drawing.'"**

**Primary teacher**



## Teacher impact

Teachers look at the work of other schools on both the website and at the exhibition, to compare standards and ideas. They use the website to see what colleagues are doing – not just in the same sector, but also primary looking at secondary, secondary at primary and SEN teachers comparing their work to those from mainstream schools.



**"Personally, I just like being able to say to them: 'Your photo, your artwork is in an exhibition.' That's a real buzz for me, to see their faces. That's the bit I like – the recognition of their work."**

**Secondary teacher**



**"We're just like the pupils in the fact that, as staff, we need reassurance and an acknowledgement that we're doing good. So I think it's really good in boosting staff and teachers' self-esteem and morale."**

**SEN teacher**

## Perception of senior leaders



**"We had a different head teacher when we started our Artsmark journey, but have a new head teacher and she's been really supportive. When I showed her **dot-art Schools** she was really keen to do it and came along when we had the celebration day. She was there with us, supporting the children. That was so important because it was only three children from our Year 5 – you never get to spend that time with those few students when you've got a school like this."**

**Primary teacher**



# Why participate in dot-art Schools?



"I love the idea that every school will have a child that will go into the final and that's been done by votes. In the past we've had children saying, 'my auntie in Australia has been online and voted for me.'" **Primary teacher**

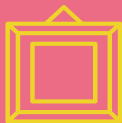
"... it gives our art a platform outside the local borough, which we think can raise the profile of art within the greater environment of Merseyside and Cheshire."  
**Secondary teacher**

"The big prize-giving is really well done. I've been to presentations a couple of times and it's really nice for the parents to see that. From an art point of view, we know how good their work is, but the introduction of the parents seeing their son or daughter's work in a gallery; by default you drip feed parents, who might not be culturally switched on, who then say 'Oh, I didn't know our Billy was so good at drawing or painting.' It opens up a conversation."  
**Secondary teacher**

## Most valued aspects of dot-art Schools



Raises pupils' aspirations and builds self-esteem



Contextualises childrens' artwork when placed in a gallery



Democratises artwork through the website



Crosses geographic and demographic boundaries



Massive impact on parent and child and affects future decision making



# The learning effect

From the historic data, we can identify what we have termed a 'learning effect', where schools that have participated for longer, have a disproportionate chance of success. Given that the competition has a different judge each year, we can only reasonably attribute this to an improvement in the quality of the work. If having more attempts at the competition increases a school's likelihood of success, why is this the case?

- **Following the process through to completion gives the art teacher exposure to the work of other schools and inspires them for the following year**
- **Develops the teacher's awareness of how to successfully engage with the competition**
- **Raises the profile of the art within the school, permitting additional resources to be spent on the work**

All three cohorts (primary, secondary, SEN) reported looking at the work produced by other schools. The **dot-art Schools** website offers insights into both the quality and subject matter generated by other schools. As schools continue to compete, they see what is required for success and can reflect on this.

This learning effect is also evidence of cultural impact; there is a clear change in the outputs of schools as a result of competing.



# Cultural capital

The **dot-art Schools** programme aims to encourage and nurture talent by celebrating and showcasing Year 5 and Year 9 students' artwork, both online and in public exhibitions. This research enabled us to gather measurable data on the impact we're having and analyse that data to develop future strategies to improve our offer.

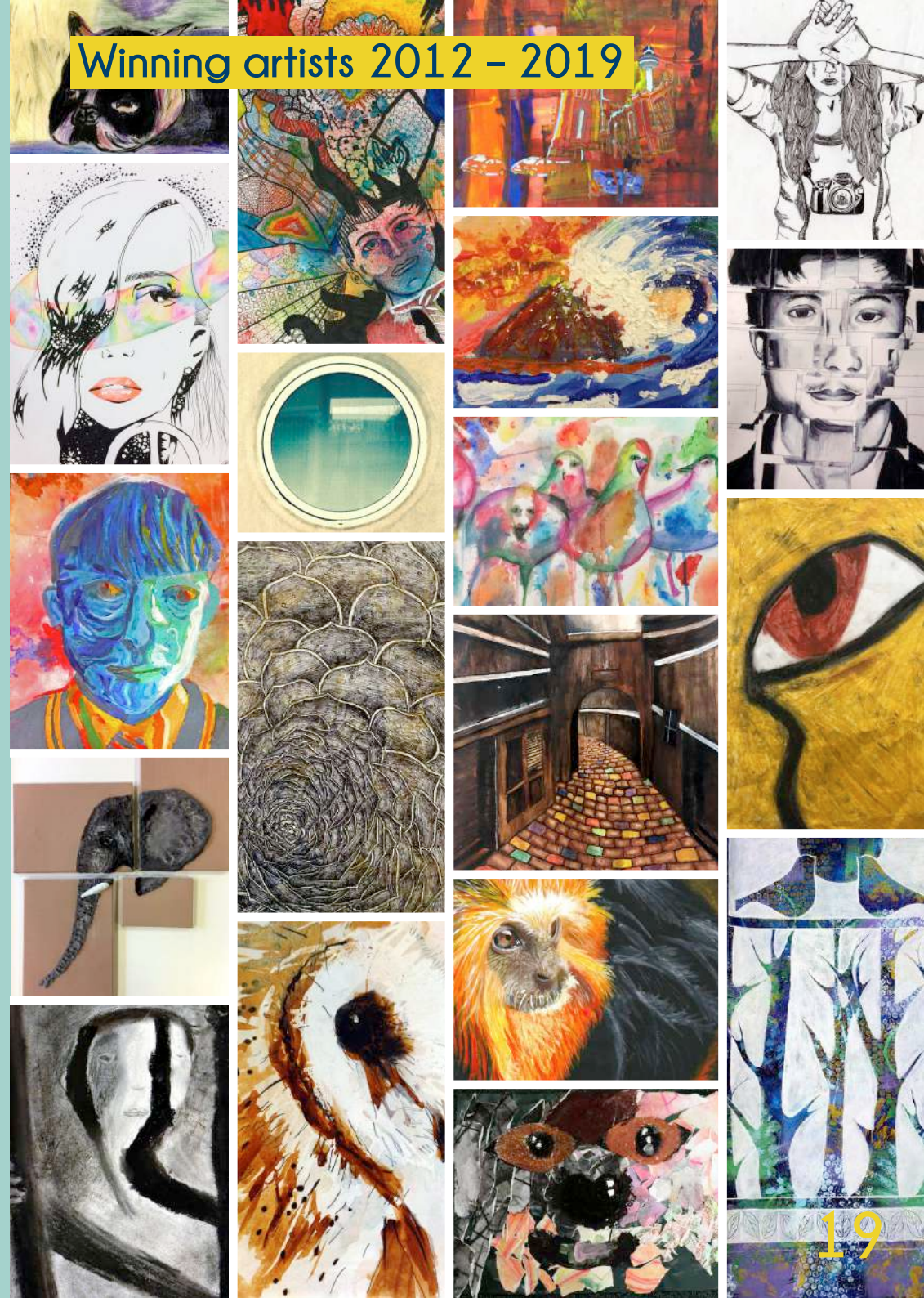
The research has clarified how our work impacts on schools and young people and will inform our planning for new ways we can best support teachers. Ultimately, we want to grow and develop the programme to showcase and support high quality cultural education practice. To achieve this, we continue to be responsive to the changing educational context schools operate in and adapt our offer to support schools.

"The **dot art Schools** programme has reached out to particularly deprived communities in a manner that is not only inclusive, but has brought out the very best that these communities have to offer. As a result, at primary level, schools in highly deprived areas are far more successful than their affluent peers. This is undoubtedly evidence that the cultural capital of these participants has been significantly increased."

CERI researcher



## Winning artists 2012 - 2019





# Acknowledgements

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Childwall Abbey  
West Kirby School  
Acton CE Primary  
The Catholic School, Chester

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