

Gomersal Primary School speeches, describing the value of the arts and the remit of their very own Arts Council

Eva

Good afternoon supporters of The APPG for Art, Craft and Design in Education. Good afternoon members of Parliament and the house of Lords and your chair Sharon Hodgson MP and Good afternoon to Susan Coles, secretary to this group, who has invited us to speak briefly about the work that we do.

We are six out of the 15 children that form the current Gomersal Primary School Arts Council. Although our council is only just over a year old, we believe that we have already achieved so much. We are going to use this short presentation to tell you about ourselves, what we have achieved and what we hope for the future.

My name is Eva and I applied to be part of our arts council to make a difference, to improve the Arts in school and to be more actively involved in developing the creative subjects. Each academic year, children in Year 5 and Year 6 have the opportunity to apply to be part of our Arts Council, by writing a letter of application. We then form a working group, who are very much involved in decision making and keeping our eye on developments, within the creative subjects. As a school we massively value the arts, dedicating a high percentage of our timetable to being creative, spending time in our art room, singing, performing and generally loving learning. Last year we decided to form an arts council to improve the arts even further – from a pupils perspective. Giving the children in our school a voice. A voice that we hope can shape our future learning for the good of all our school community.

So... how did we begin?

Grace

I applied to be part of our first Arts Council last year and have been re-elected this year to offer my expertise to our new members. We began by making a valuable link with the 'real' Arts Council Collection. Fourteen children armed with clipboards, questions, microphones and camera equipment descended on their workplace to find out how staff in a real council work together. We worked with a camera man and learnt how to set up, record and conduct an interview. We quizzed curators, education outreach workers, art collectors and people who looked after art behind the scenes. It was an invaluable experience that helped shape our arts council, giving us plenty of ideas of how we could improve arts experiences in school. We worked behind the scenes learning trade secrets and worked with the current Arts Council Collection exhibition at the Longside gallery, learning how to talk to each other about art and sculptures. We also helped to create resources to be used by other children and teachers in an education pack. I believe that art is crucial in every child's education and I think my experiences of visiting the Arts Council Collection has helped me to understand how I can help others improve in their abilities. We have continued this link with the Arts Council Collection and hope to visit there again in June.

Matilda

Good afternoon, my name is Matilda, I applied to be part of our Arts Council because I want to make the arts more important subjects in school. To help to find and develop new ideas we have held a pupil questionnaire and created four suggestion boxes, one for each area of the arts that we concentrate on in school – Visual Art, Dance, Drama and Music. This means that **EVERY CHILD IN OUR SCHOOL HAS A VOICE AND THAT VOICE IS HEARD**. Our children are encouraged to use their creativity and imagination to help to improve our creative curriculum. It allows children to talk about the things they love. As an Arts Council, it is our job to promote the suggestion boxes. We regularly visit the younger children to remind them how to use the boxes and also talk about how to use them during assemblies. We check the boxes regularly and talk about any issues, complaints and suggestions in our meetings. We then discuss anything relevant with subject leaders. As a council we know which members of staff are responsible for each creative subject, we talk to these members of staff in person or write letters to them. Changes have happened in school because of this.

Samuel

Good afternoon, my name is Samuel and I applied to be on the Arts Council because of my passion towards the arts, particularly theatre, performing arts and playing the cornet. We are aware that school budgets are not overly healthy, and in many schools this impacts on the creative subjects. So... we created a business plan! As an arts council we have bought a professional badge making machine. So far we have raised a grand total of £320... and this is just the beginning of our business adventure. Raising our own funds has taught us many valuable life skills. The arts council are still in the process of deciding what we will spend the money on. We want to spend the money in an area that will benefit the whole school so we will talk to subject leaders and students for their opinions. Using inspiration from our link with the Arts Council Collection, we would also like to buy artwork from local artists to form a small art gallery in school. This will widen the opportunities for all our children to regularly see visual arts in school, especially if they do not often get the chance to visit galleries.

The possibilities are endless.

Harriet

Good afternoon, my name is Harriet and I applied for the arts council because I wanted the opportunity to be involved in discussions about art.

One of the bigger projects we are working on at the moment is the making of a radio station and digital recording studio in school with our Arts governor, who is also a real-life radio DJ. This is an exciting time for us all. We want to bring music education into the 21st century by making the creation of electronic music accessible to all children in school. Working with a professional DJ like Andi helps us to realise the different creative careers that are available to us. Just think of the possibilities that we are creating for the pupils in our school.

We are also working alongside our art teacher to use visual art as a way of promoting pupil wellbeing, after all... being happy in school is extremely important. Through our pupil questionnaire we discovered that many children believe coming to our art room regularly helps with stress levels, especially in year 6. During our SATs revision and test weeks we still take part in creative activities. In fact the work in our art room seems to get messier at this time of year.

William

Good afternoon, my name is William and I applied to be part of the Art Council because I wanted to discuss my ideas and share my feelings. In the Arts Council we have already done a lot... considering we are only a year old, but we still have plans... BIG plans! We would like to continue to set a high standard for the arts in this school. We would like to continue to give children a voice in all we do... because children have great ideas! We are helping our teachers to gain Arts Mark and we would like to achieve the Platinum award... we have plenty of ideas to help here too! We would also like to improve the arts in other schools. We have friends in other schools who say they only have art once a term. Or don't have art at all... This shocks us! How can we let this happen? Our friends have said that their schools spend too much time testing and testing and testing. Why? Sometimes other children visit our school for workshops and they say how lucky we are. Shouldn't all children be as lucky as us? What can we do about this?

When it's our turn to leave our primary school and move onto high school... what will our choices be?

Will we still have a voice? Will the Arts still be as important? We are now on a mission to make links with our local high schools. We may be young but we have big ambitions to see changes in the way the Arts are currently represented in education. Thank you for listening to our voices.