

Sir William Ramsay School, Hazlemere

Bucks County Council

let me
atom!

Creative Partner: Subhadassi

Creative Agent: Rosie Prue

Year Group(s) / Young People involved: Fifteen Year 8 students

Start Date: 14/07/2008

End Date: 25/02/2009

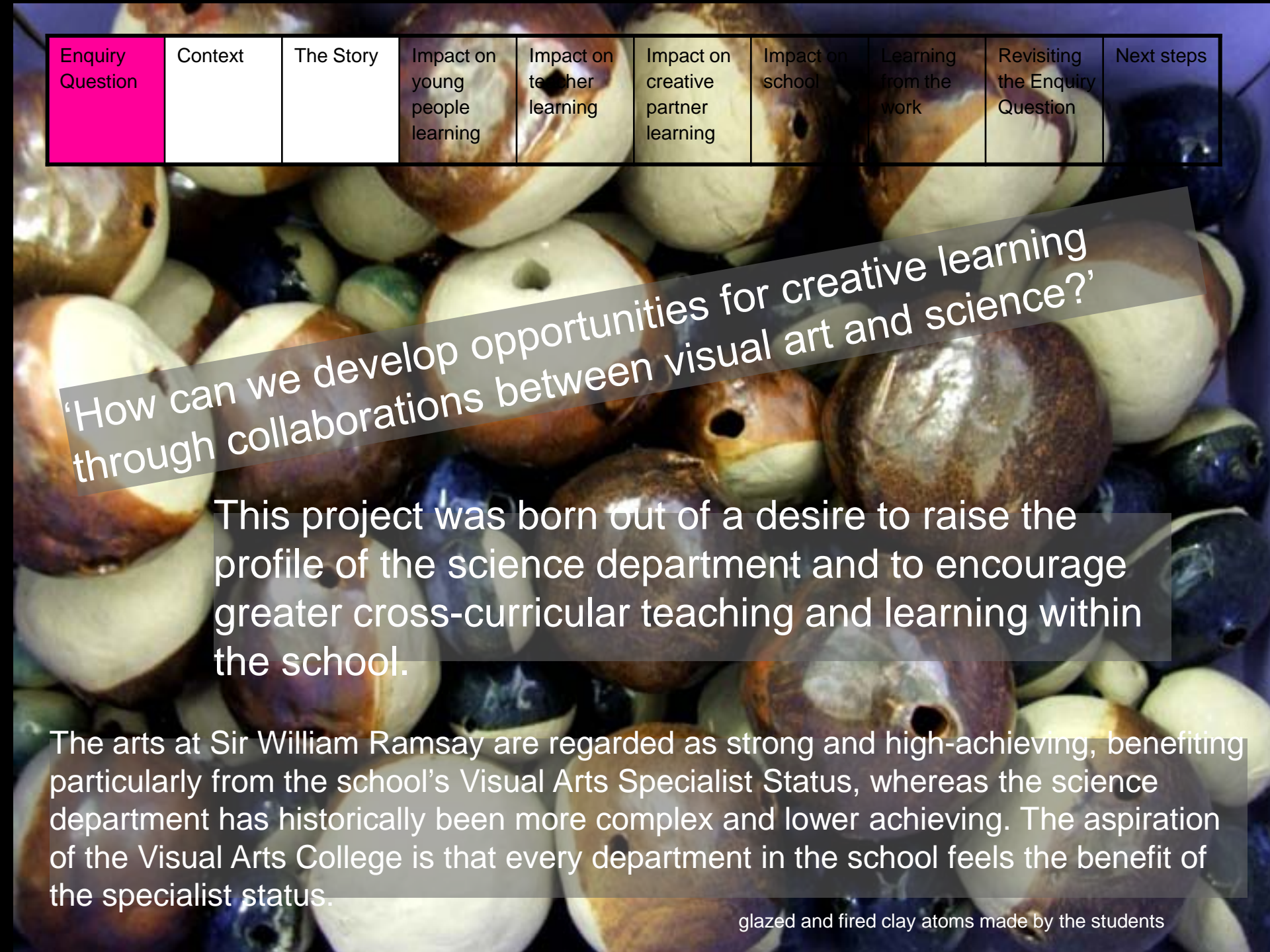


let

me

atom

photo: students collaborating on and negotiating ideas for presentation of 'atom boxes'



| Enquiry Question | Context | The Story | Impact on young people learning | Impact on teacher learning | Impact on creative partner learning | Impact on school | Learning from the work | Revisiting the Enquiry Question | Next steps |
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‘How can we develop opportunities for creative learning through collaborations between visual art and science?’

This project was born out of a desire to raise the profile of the science department and to encourage greater cross-curricular teaching and learning within the school.

The arts at Sir William Ramsay are regarded as strong and high-achieving, benefiting particularly from the school’s Visual Arts Specialist Status, whereas the science department has historically been more complex and lower achieving. The aspiration of the Visual Arts College is that every department in the school feels the benefit of the specialist status.

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poster 1: photographic and written exploration of relationship between science and art

This cross-curricular approach sought to provide pupils with opportunity for creative development – encouraging them to try out new things, take risks, solve problems and reflect on their learning.

The Specialist Arts School Status Section of the School Development Plan refers to the aspiration to develop creative learning opportunities across the school and details intentions for teachers in art and science to work together to raise attainment in science through a visual art and science module with a lower school group.



poster II: photographic and written exploration of relationship between science and art

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The science and art departments selected 15 year 8 students to take part in the project. They were chosen as they are either students who would particularly benefit from this creative approach to learning, or who would contribute well to the strength of the project.

Main project activity took place over 14 sessions spread over the time period Nov-Jan 2008. During these days the group of pupils and staff came off normal timetable for the entire day in order to work together on the project. The creative agent was involved in helping to inform the project enquiry, in artist recruitment and initial planning stages and supported reflection and evaluation via the 'deep conversations' process.

This project very much links to the new KS3 Curriculum which demands greater emphasis on both creativity and cross-curricular working,

Two science teachers and one art teacher, as well as the Creative Partner, formed the core of the planning team, with the students involved in shaping the planning from the interview stage onwards. One of the science teachers dropped out of the project early on into activity. The Creative Partner was recruited to the project because of his creative abilities in both photography and poetry and because of his previous background in science.

Delivery began in November 2008

Students investigated the science of atoms, elements and compounds through engagement with a variety of artistic media - ceramics, photography, poetic text and collage. As the project developed, they also began to enquire into the relationship between art and science through photography and writing.

photo: atom research session

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“I think most of us are very hands-on people and it gave us an opportunity to do that”

Pupils feel they look at photos in a new way now –more analytical
 “I kind of realise more that they plan their photos...they put a lot of effort into it so you’ve got to appreciate it.”

Pupils valued the unique contribution that the creative partner brought:“I thought he was a bit weird...but that was a good thing...because his way that he taught and the way he approached people were completely different...”“I think he was quite interesting because he brought his experience..”

Pupils enjoyed having access to an experience that they wouldn’t normally have that early on in the school (eg. photography usually for older years) “we don’t normally do it in class time”“I began to take more photos of weird things...’ooh that looks good – I’ll take a picture” – experimenting, being more critical.



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“It was good because it was like a different way of learning because instead of sitting in a classroom for an hour, for a whole day you get to be more creative.”

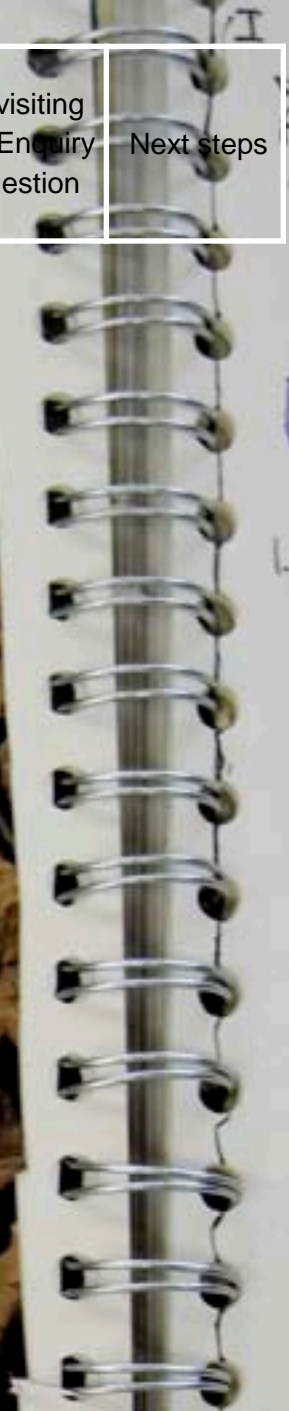
so much depends on the plastic cups on the water

colours like

blue, red and white

that get darker

all through the night



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Pupils learned to work effectively in collaboration with each other, negotiating decisions together. They developed a sense of enquiry and self-direction as the project progressed.

A large proportion have enjoyed the photography element of the project so much that they are now considering taking it for GCSE when they hadn't considered it has a viable option beforehand.

photo: photoshop session on student's images

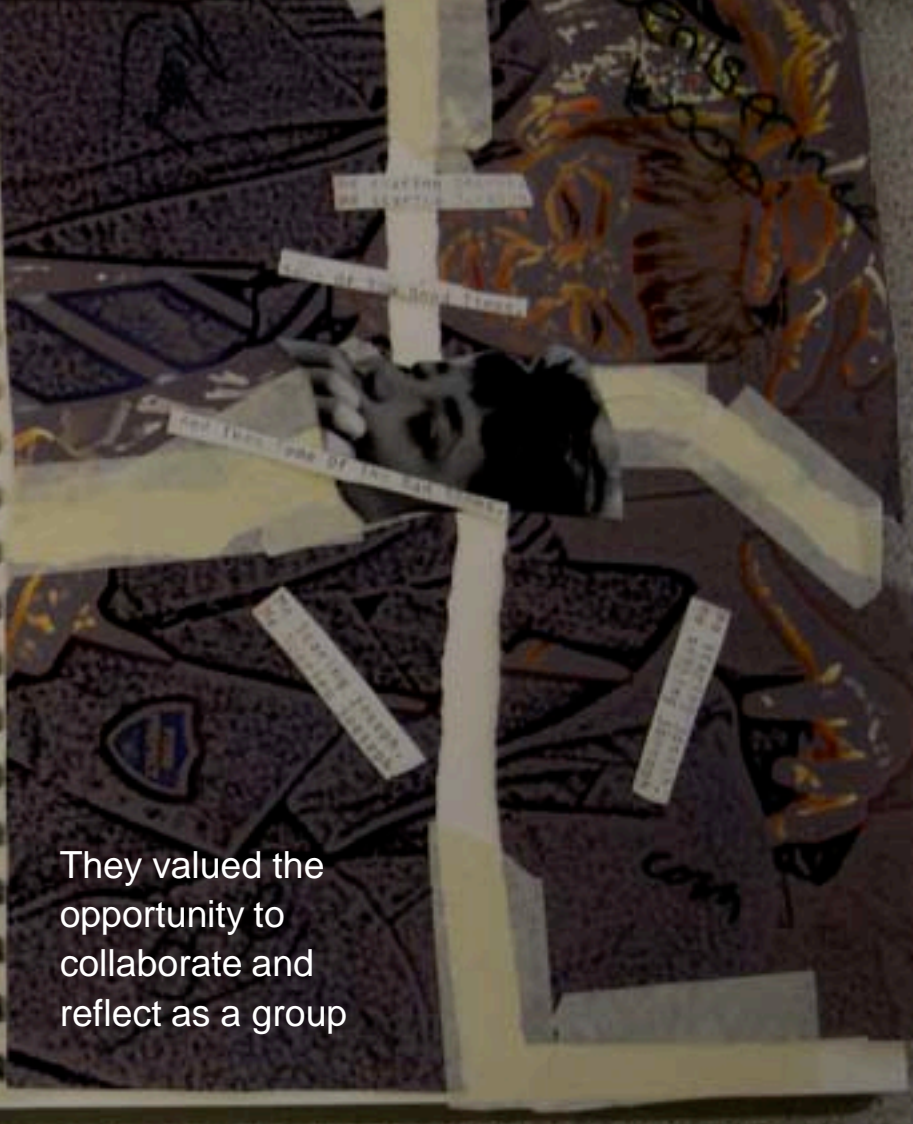
Whilst it was felt that students had enjoyed learning about science in new ways, participants questioned whether creative thinking/learning skills specifically applied to science had been as fully developed as originally intended through the project.

It was evident that creative skills had been developed through the project through the encouragement of critical thinking and reflection.



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photo: student workbook two
- photography & collage



They valued the opportunity to collaborate and reflect as a group

photo: student workbook three - atom research collage & project reflection

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Alongside the development of new arts skills (especially photography) and increased science understanding around the chosen topic, pupils demonstrated creative skills development particularly in regard to critical thinking, reflection and expression of opinions.

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“Personally I had to allow myself tolet things be much more slow and very different...but by doing that it allowed me to reflect and see a different way of delivering...”

Teachers benefitted from the experience of a cross-curricular, creative and open-ended, more process-driven approach which moved them out of their normal comfort-zone – although this was at times challenging and frustrating.

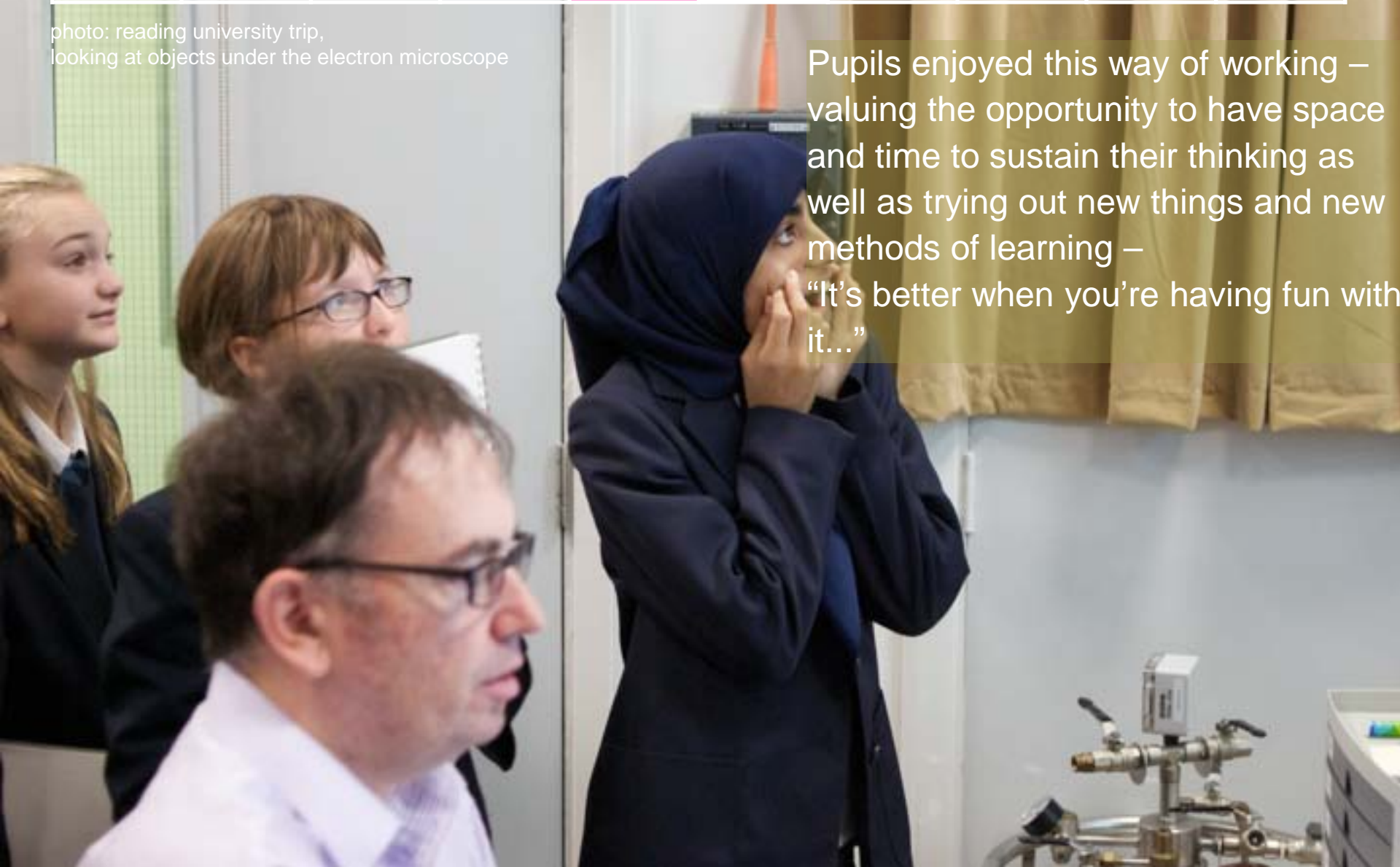
Teachers also valued the opportunity to allow pupils to lead the learning through the process of evaluation and reflection together. As a result of the project they aim to create further opportunities for peer-led teaching and learning in a classroom context.

The partnership struggled at points with communication - finding it difficult to liaise sometimes because of time pressures and needing to plan at a distance, as well as needing greater clarity around input and success criteria. However this was improved by ensuring that regular post-session conversations were held to keep each other informed and to steer future planning.

photo: a cheerio being gold-plated for the electron microscope, reading university trip

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photo: reading university trip, looking at objects under the electron microscope



Pupils enjoyed this way of working – valuing the opportunity to have space and time to sustain their thinking as well as trying out new things and new methods of learning – “It’s better when you’re having fun with it...”

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The creative partner identified a 'culture clash' between Creative Partnership values and the school's existing values and way of working – usually more product heavy than process driven. can be easy for the qualitative dimension to get lost within school context.

The project gave the creative practitioner the opportunity to rigorously examine his creative practice, to challenge and analyse his core values and beliefs – exploring what is effective and what really matters in this kind of work. As a result he feels a stronger sense of the need to establish real clarity in communication and expectation within future partnership work. "(It) gives grist to the mill of my own reflection – why I do this work...it touches my core values"

The constraints of the school system and a lack of clarity of communication around collaboration and real expectation hampered some of the potential of the original project idea.

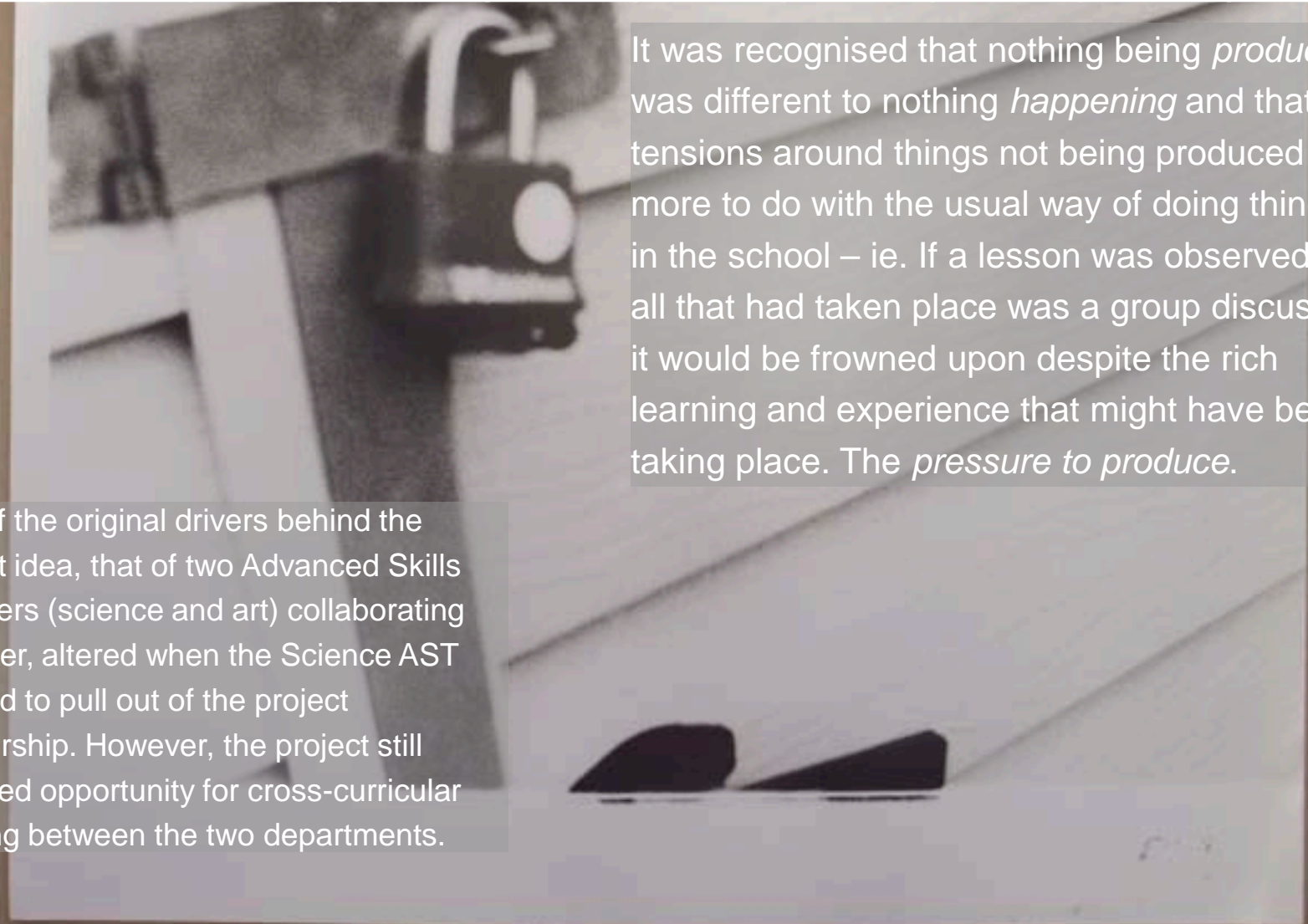
I enjoyed making connections with the young people.

"conditions were such that my contributions were not always optimised..."

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It was recognised that nothing being *produced* was different to nothing *happening* and that tensions around things not being produced was more to do with the usual way of doing things in the school – ie. If a lesson was observed and all that had taken place was a group discussion it would be frowned upon despite the rich learning and experience that might have been taking place. The *pressure to produce*.

One of the original drivers behind the project idea, that of two Advanced Skills Teachers (science and art) collaborating together, altered when the Science AST needed to pull out of the project partnership. However, the project still provided opportunity for cross-curricular working between the two departments.



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Whilst it was felt that students had enjoyed learning about science in new ways participants questioned whether creative thinking/learning skills specifically applied to science had been as fully developed as originally intended through the project.

...Felt that the project could have been more effective – drawing out the specialism of the partner a bit more than was achieved....

It was felt that the project had become a bit more one-sided towards art than originally intended.

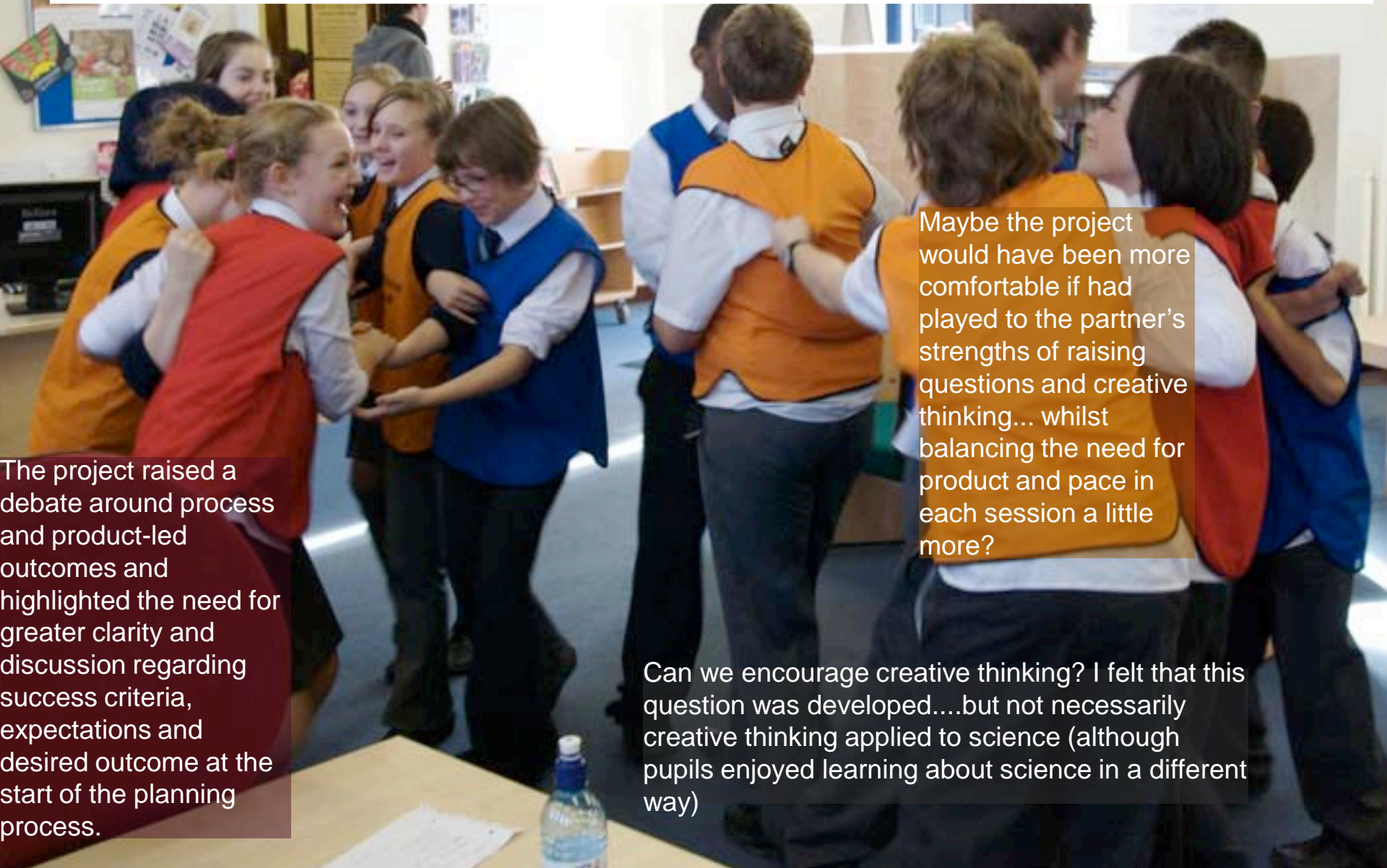
...Assumptions were made on input at the start – further clarity was needed all round...Greater clarity around success criteria and outcome needed.

That said, it was evident that creative skills had been developed through the project through the encouragement of critical thinking and reflection.

The creative partner wasn't sure whether the original ambitions of the enquiry had been fully met – didn't feel the arts/science collaboration had been as fully developed as intended.

“It was a discursive environment...so what comes out of it is knowledge about each other...” “They learnt facts about the teachers that they'd perhaps never usually know...”

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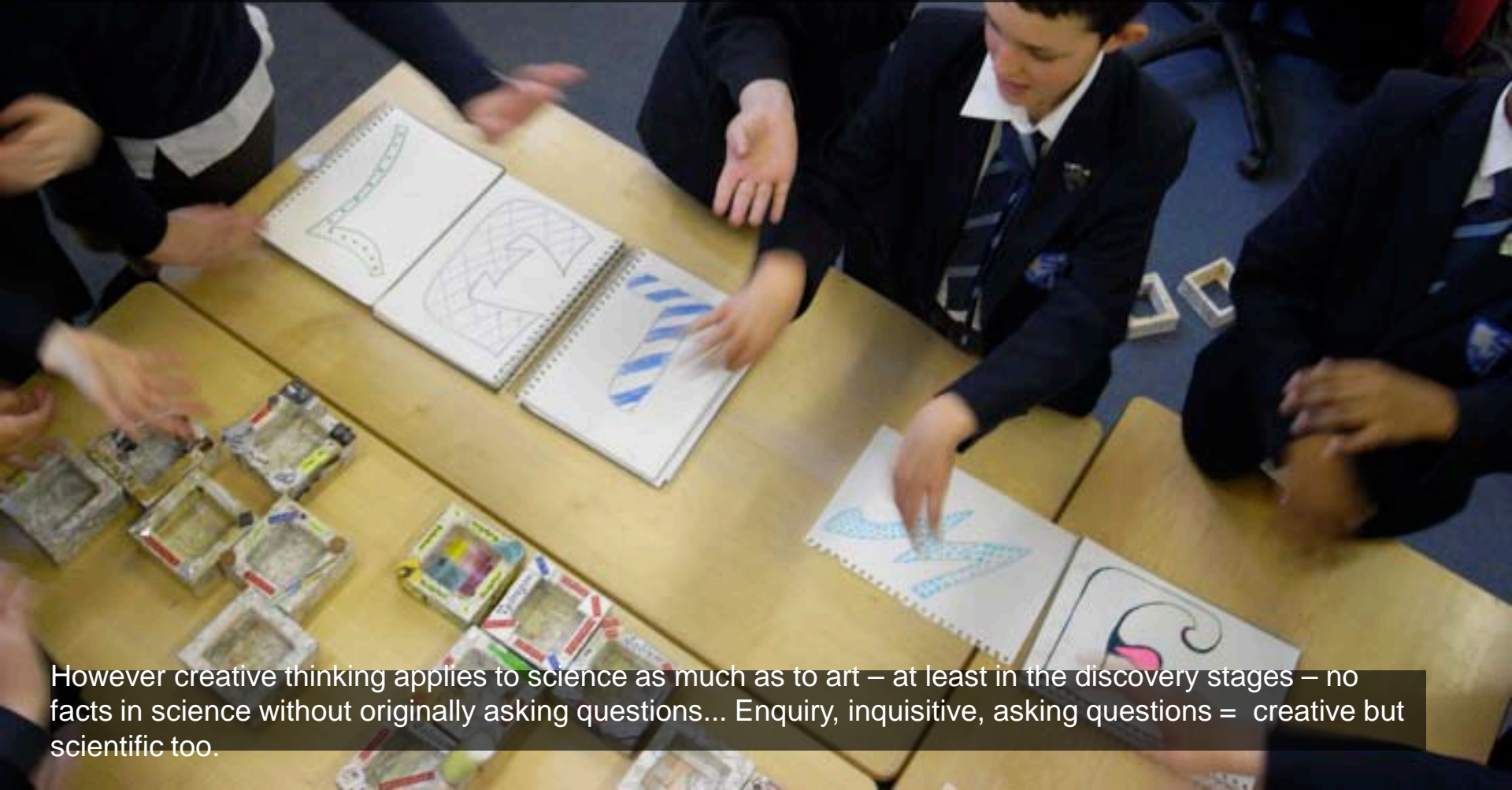
The project raised a debate around process and product-led outcomes and highlighted the need for greater clarity and discussion regarding success criteria, expectations and desired outcome at the start of the planning process.

Maybe the project would have been more comfortable if had played to the partner's strengths of raising questions and creative thinking... whilst balancing the need for product and pace in each session a little more?

Can we encourage creative thinking? I felt that this question was developed....but not necessarily creative thinking applied to science (although pupils enjoyed learning about science in a different way)

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There was an increased understanding of some of the similarities and differences between art and science. ie. a practical session in science is recipe-based, doesn't have room for personal interpretation whereas in a practical art session, whilst an example of an end result may be given, there is more scope for self-expression/less restrictions in the process and final outcome.



However creative thinking applies to science as much as to art – at least in the discovery stages – no facts in science without originally asking questions... Enquiry, inquisitive, asking questions = creative but scientific too.

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The project process has encouraged teachers to continue to explore and develop opportunities for creative thinking and enquiry within their teaching as well continuing to build on creating pupil-led learning opportunities within a class setting.

If was to do the project again would want to establish more clearly the levels of collaboration and risk that the school was prepared to take from the start.

I enjoyed being reminded of creative thinking/enquiry processes and encouraged to keep using them.

We would like to continue to build on creating pupil-led learning opportunities within a class setting, increasing pupil ownership of learning and teaching – peer learning / peer teaching.

