

# Are We That Map?

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The aim of Are We That Map? funded by the [RIX-Thompson-Rothenberg Foundation](#), was to develop inclusive participatory map-making workshops that actively includes and engages children and young people with a lived experience of learning disabilities/difficulties (LD/D). The project was a partnership between Rosetta Arts, purpleSTARS, RIX Centre, University of East London (UEL) and Living Maps Network. Working together we devised, delivered, reviewed and refined a Map Making workshop package in which people with LD/D developed and facilitated, working to their strengths alongside other expert artists and educators. Our diverse group consisted of [Rosetta Arts](#), [purpleSTARS](#), [RIX Inclusive Research](#), [UEL](#), [Tower Project](#) and [Living Maps Network](#). A co-production approach was used, that included people with a lived experience of a LD/D during the development workshops and as facilitators during the workshops in school. Through the development workshops, we carefully designed, prepared and identified possible activities to include in the Map Making workshop package. We invited members from the Tower Project that supports people with LD/D in Tower Hamlets London to help develop and test our Map Making workshop activities to see what would work and what would not. This led to the finalisation of a 4-part workshop to deliver in primary schools.

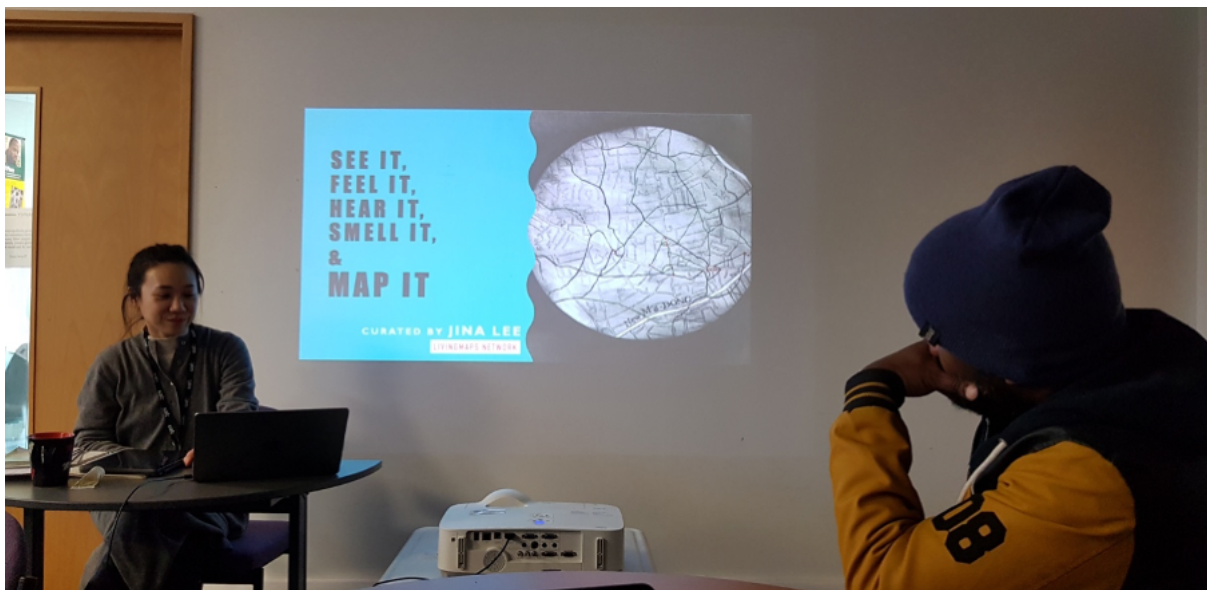
## Objectives:

- Bring teams together to co-develop an inclusive creative mapping workshop suitable for people with a wide range of abilities and support needs
- Build an inclusive team and a resource pack to deliver the project
- Pilot its implementation with a representative sample of participant young people with a wide range of abilities
- Evaluate the inclusivity, quality and viability of the Workshop to be delivered more widely in East London and Nationally
- Prepare a collaboration plan to clarify future partnership terms to intellectual provide workshops from a unified inclusive enterprise
- Refine a market ready package for co-delivery in the field and from the Rosetta Arts Creative Wellbeing Space base.

## Development Workshops

During the 4 development workshops, each of the artists showcased their experience, expertise and an activity for the project group to respond to. The purpose of this was to start conversations and think about how the different ideas presented could be incorporated into the workshops; alongside what considerations, limitations and practicalities need to be taken into account when working in a school setting, and what questions we want the children to think about, like what is a map?, how to look at the surrounding environment from another point of view, and how to make the ordinary ‘extraordinary’. This idea was developed from purpleSTARS member Paul thoughts during a development workshop.

Jina, a director from Livingmaps Network, presented different methods of mapping using various senses and how we could develop these ideas. Jina particularly emphasised the participatory aspect of mapping. ‘Participatory mapping’ is an interactive approach that draws on local people’s knowledge, enabling participants to create visual and non-visual data to explore social problems, opportunities and question<sup>i</sup>. PurpleSTARS actively shared their opinions from Jina’s presentation and proposed suggestions on what they could offer, based on their experience from previous projects.



17<sup>th</sup> January 2023, UEL Docklands, London

After Jina’s presentation, the project group went on an expedition around UEL Docklands Campus to carry out Jina’s and the group’s ideas as a practical experiment. The group collected objects, took pictures and made notes of their observations. In addition, the group tried to archive what they could hear and smell. In doing this, the group found things that they didn’t normally recognise through their various senses. For example, the sound of birds that was hidden by industrial noise, and the smell of salty river water by the riverfront.

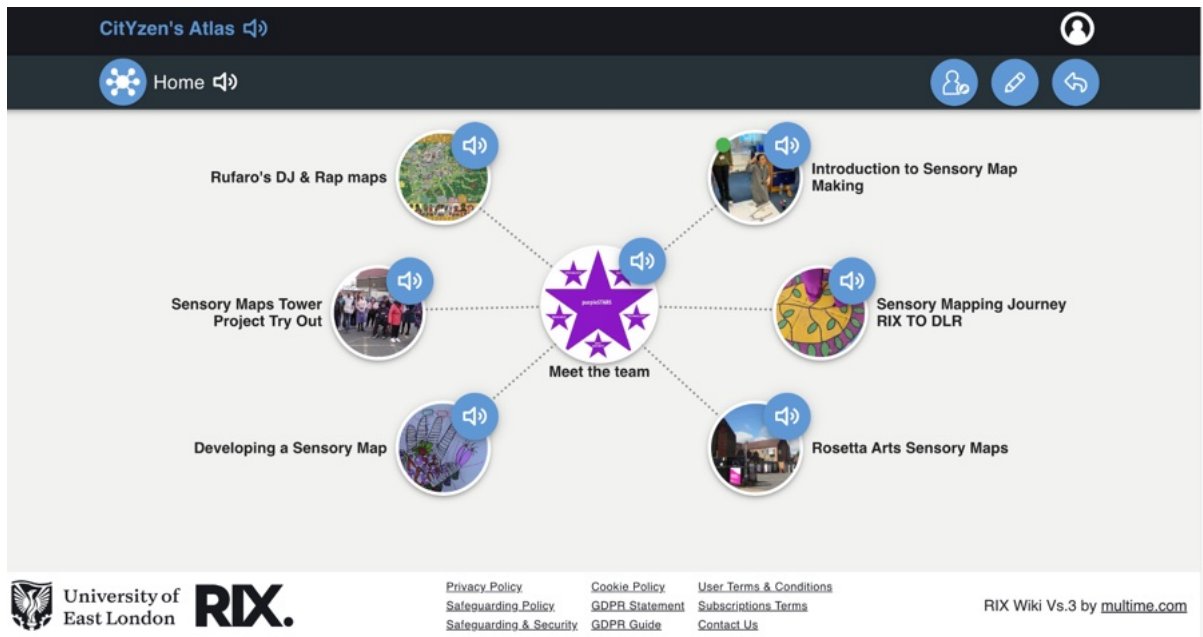


17<sup>th</sup> January 2023, UEL Docklands, London

After the expedition, the group gathered and discussed what they had found, saw, heard, touched and smelt. A large sheet of paper was placed on the floor. Members of the group volunteered to draw a base map of the campus. Some imprinted their feet marks on the paper where they had walked, some added the items / objects they had collected on the sheet and some added additional drawings they made during the expedition.



This particular exercise resulted in the generation of many ideas and plans which were shared on an easy read webpage often used as part of the purpleSTARS research and development called the RIX wiki. This platform gives the group the opportunity to upload images and videos, shar ideas, reflect and discuss findings.



Front page of RIX Wiki CitYzens Atlas Map Workshop Research and Development.

[Research Video example](#) Samantha's visual image map from the RIX to University of East London.

[Research Video example](#) Video documenting developing a sensory map

[Research Video example](#) Video creating a sound drawing.

[Research Video example](#) Video of development and reflection discussion

[Research Video example](#) Video of reflections on maps and connections

The group agreed and decided to focus on 'sensory mapping': sight, touch, smell and hearing for the Map Making workshop package - a series of 4 workshop sessions, based around creating a sensory map using the 5 senses.

- Hearing / Sound mapping - drawing sounds as abstract shapes without looking at the drawing pad
- Touch / Sight mapping - clay slab texture imprints (printing of different textures, for example pavement cracks, tree bark, plants)
- Smell / Taste mapping - collecting smells with a pipette and putting them into "evidence" bags

### Star Primary School Workshops

The 4 finalised workshops were delivered at Star Primary School, across two year groups - year 5 and year 6, between May 2023 and July 2023.

The workshops were offered as part of the The Champions for Children a visual arts programme for children with SEND, 2022-2023. Forty five children with a learning disability from low income areas and diverse backgrounds in the London borough of Newham, have benefited from regular creative classes. The classes are delivered directly by a wide range of local artists which is not possible to achieve through the current school curriculum.

Year 5 pupils had a higher level of special educational needs and disability (SEND) needs. In addition, pupils also have an Educational Health & Care Plan (EHCP) in place, therefore a familiar teaching assistant (TA) was always present to support these pupils during all 4 workshops. All pupils attending the workshop could be supported by the project group facilitators, and did not require specific one to one support.

During the workshops, there were between 15 to 30 participants, which consisted of pupils, TA's, project group facilitators and two artist educators leading on delivery of a particular workshop.

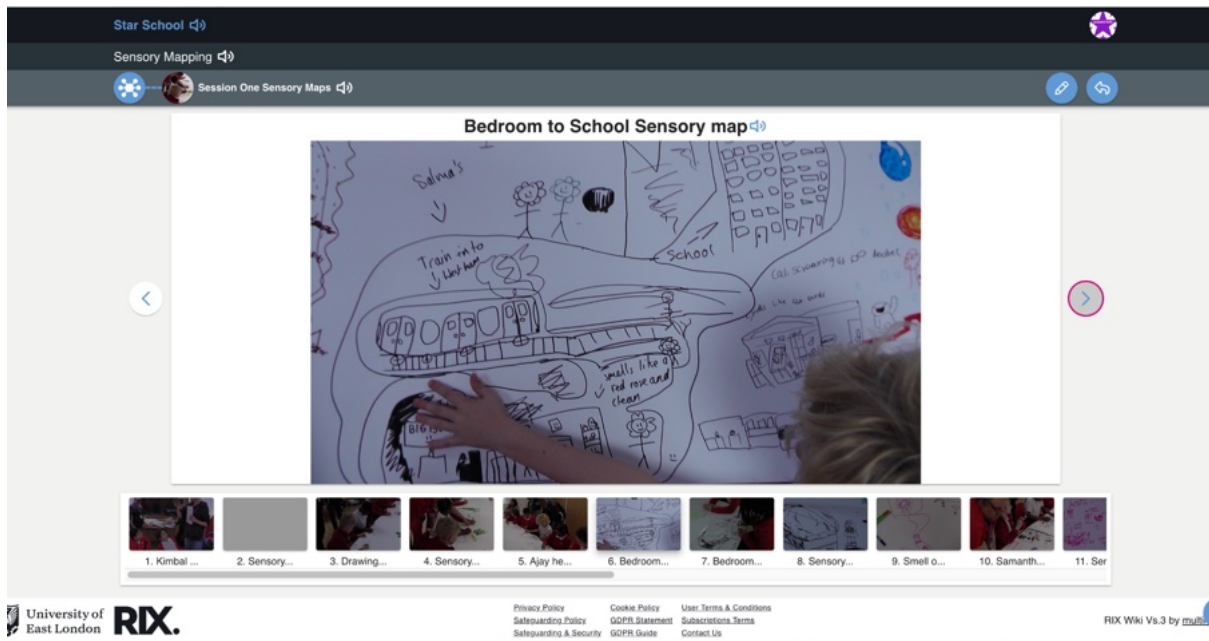
The 4 workshops delivered at Star school have positively impacted the pupils creativity, confidence and wellbeing. The pupils had the opportunity to develop their creative skills through enjoyable, interactive and sensory activities. The project group were always greeted with excitement and anticipation by the pupils at each workshop and it was evident to all present that the pupils enjoyed being creative, were very proud of the art they had created, and were comfortable to speak up and share their thoughts and ideas, often sharing trinkets of their personal stories during the activities.

A collaborative installation was produced over the 4 workshop sessions. The installation represented a sensory map and consisted of 4 different elements produced during each of the workshops.

The base of the installation was a huge collaborative 2D drawing, (drawn by the pupils with their eyes closed) depicting their journeys to school - what they encounter, what sounds they hear, what they see and what they can smell on their way to school.

On top of the communal 2D drawing, pupils placed clay prints they had made and the different textures they had collected from the sensory garden / school expedition. Above the communal 2D drawing and clay prints, hung a string from the ceiling, attached to the string, were a collection of plastic evidence bags that contained smells and objects, which pupils had collected from the sensory garden expedition. Self portrait postcards with a recorded message created by each pupil were placed on the communal 2D drawing. On the outside of the self portrait postcards pupils drew their self portraits, on the inside of the postcard they drew, what is inside them - their thoughts and inner world. The pupils opened their postcards all together and a choir of messages recorded by the pupils could be heard.

At each of the school sessions purpleSTARS documented the activity and added text, images and video to a Star School RIX Wiki. This allowed the group to share remotely the experiences collected during the hour school workshop, respond and if appropriate suggest alterations and enhancements for the next session. The RIX Wiki was also shown to the children the week after the last workshop to collect reflections from the children. The children's response to seeing themselves in images and video creating the maps was very positive.



Page from the Star RIX Wiki showing a sensory drawing of the journey from home to school.

Star Lane school has agreed to display the pupils' work, in order to foster pride and ownership in their creativity, and encourage other pupils (and indeed staff), to become actively involved in local creative endeavours.



## **Session One: Introduction to sensory map making**

### **Session One Activities:**

Discussion activities:

- Pupils asked what does a map mean to them
  - Pupils asked to name the 5 senses
1. Pupils asked to draw a 2D map of their home and or bedroom with their eyes closed or without looking at their drawing on a large piece of plain paper that all pupils can draw on which is laid out over the desks
  2. On the same large piece of plain paper, pupils asked to draw their journey from home to school
  3. Pupils asked to draw sounds and smells during a sensory mapping expedition outside

### ***Activity 1: The pupils were asked to draw a 2D map of their home / bedroom without looking***

The 'no look' sensory map developed from the process of creating drawings of spaces, sounds and feelings without looking, during the development workshops. The project group found this a great introduction to drawing, freed from the restriction of trying to capture reality and encouraging abstract and creative approaches.

### **Observations**

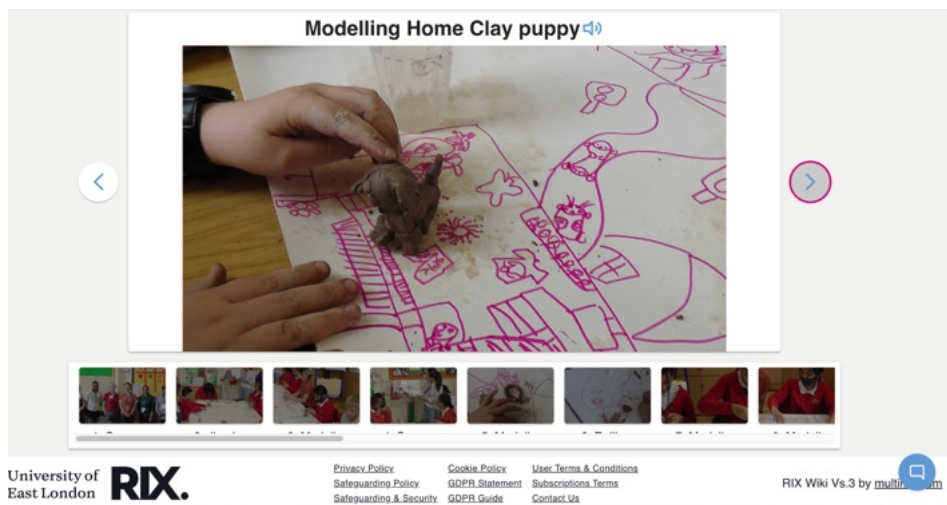
The drawings of the pupils' homes and bedrooms gave insights into life at home and allowed for some great story telling, for example, thinking about a smell at home led to a pupil drawing the mould in their bathroom. Their mother had to constantly bleach it and eventually their



bathroom ceiling collapsed. A drawing of the number of steps a pupil had to climb to reach their flat was drawn with smoke, because it always smelt of tobacco in the stairwell.

The pupils' drawings highlighted the importance of home, of family and in particular their pets. Less confident pupils were happy to tell the story of their home via the drawings of their brother and cat.

Ajay: "It was great to see children thinking about and choosing objects to draw and then listen to them as they shared their stories."

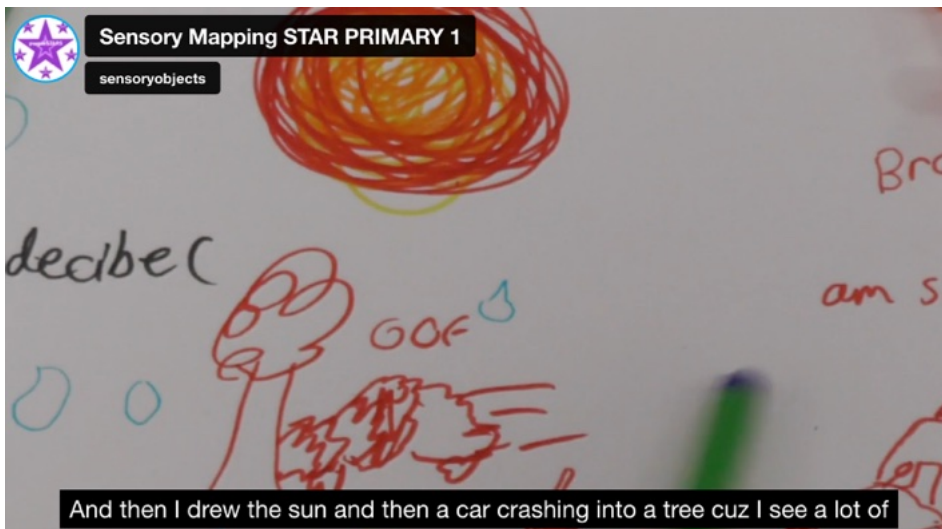


Page from the Star RIX Wiki showing a sensory drawing of home and clay to make the feel of home.

***Activity 2: The children were asked to draw their journey from home to school every day highlighting any sensory information.***

### **Observations**

The communal 2D drawing mapped and connected each pupil's experience of city life and sensory experience of travelling to Star Lane school. Their drawings highlighted and depicted stories of city living, pollution, trains, cars, cat and dog poo, the smell of smoke and takeaway food etc. A tree was drawn by one pupil, to show their story of the sound made when a car crashed into it.



Screengrab show a drawing of sounds, sights and smells of a Star pupils journey from home to school.

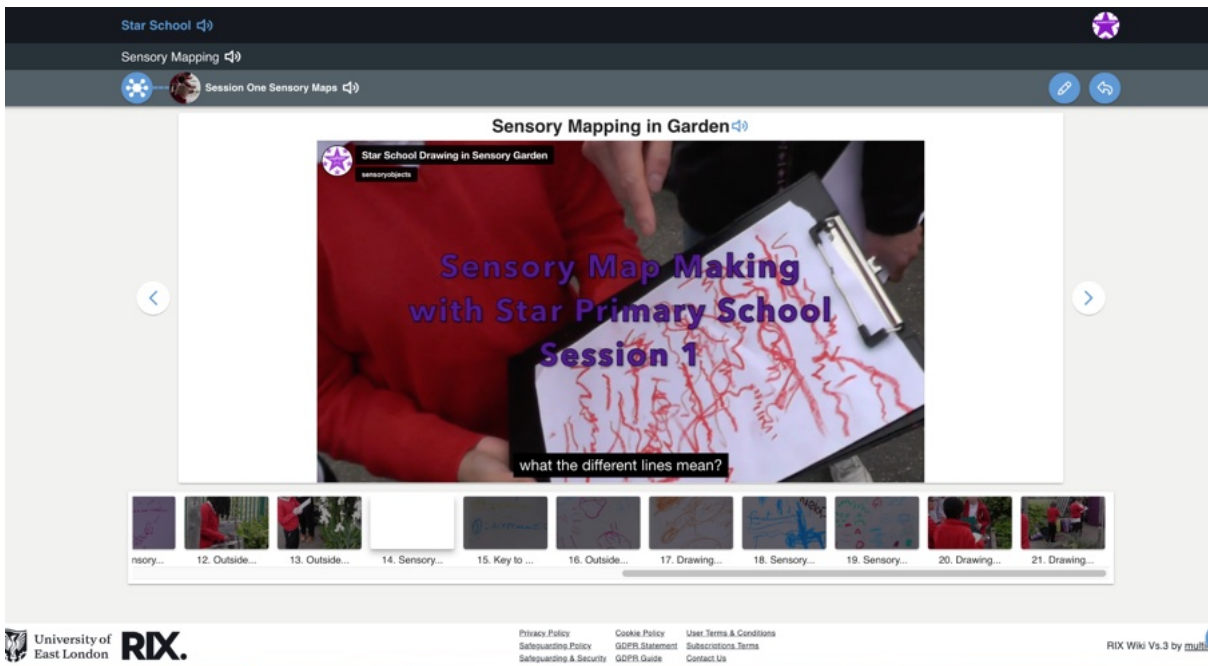
Drawing together on one piece of paper, sensory information as a map, led to sharing the experiences, spaces and storytelling from confident and not so confident Star Pupils.

Ajay: "I liked observing the children using their imagination as they drew. I particularly liked the drawing of the cat."

### ***Activity 3: Drawing sounds during a sensory mapping expedition outside***

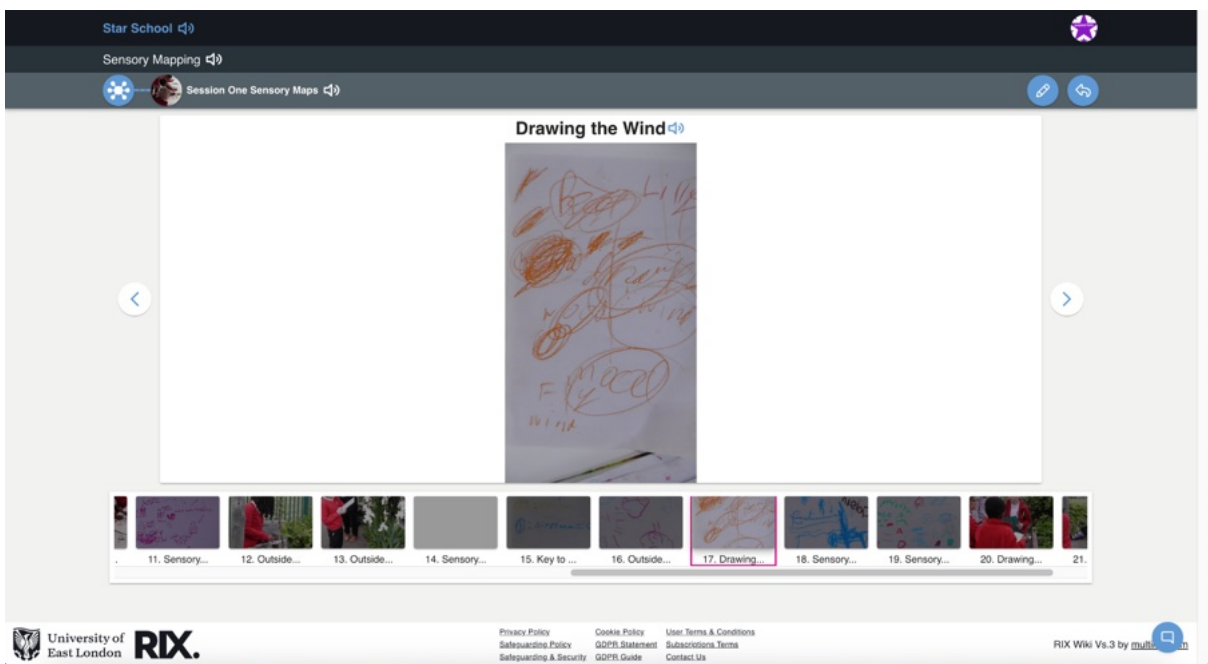
The pupils were asked to draw sounds and smells in the school sensory garden. A similar process of drawing without looking, concentrating on sounds and smells during this activity.

Artist: "You drew a Key for your sensory drawing, do you want to tell us about what, the different drawn lines mean?"



Page from the Star RIX Wiki showing a sensory drawing of sounds outside

Star Primary Pupil: “Yes so whenever there's like spiky lines means there's like a loud noise or something that really stinks and whenever there's like a nice smell, there's um, like a line and there's just maybe like a lot of straight short wavy lines... Cause there's a lot of white noise from the wind and there's curly lines and it's all scribbled up on the page... Cuz I feel like all these noises overlap, and the streets to represent them also overlap...”

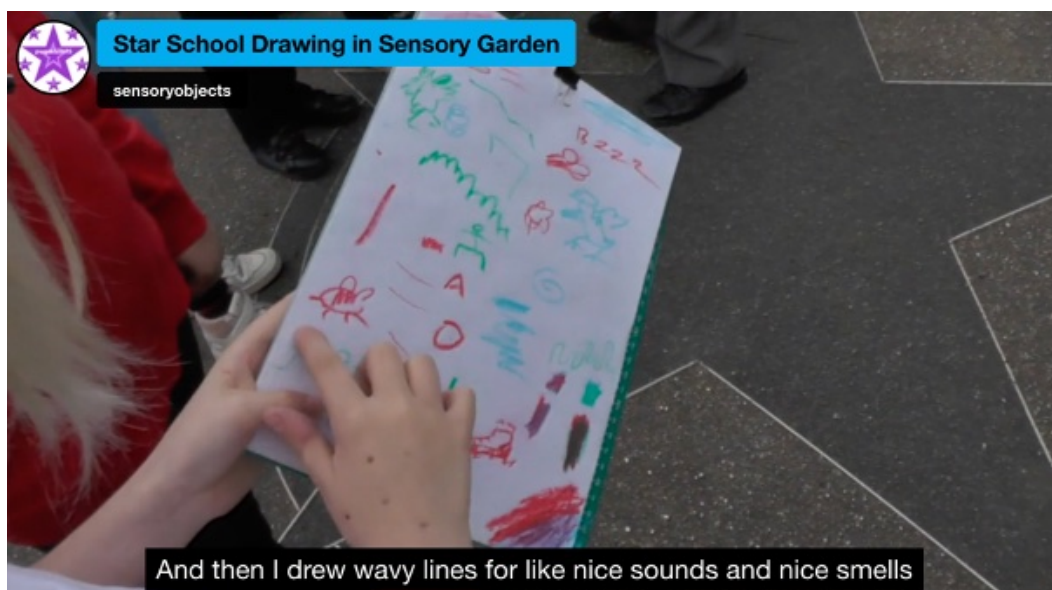


Page from the Star RIX Wiki showing a sensory drawing of the feel of the wind.

Kate: “So this is the wind?”

Star Pupil: “the wind, yeah”

Kate: “That's fantastic!”



Screengrab from the Star RIX Wiki showing a sensory drawing of sound and smell.

Star Pupil: “I drew sounds I heard and how they were,

I heard a person walking and a person stomping a foot.

And then I drew wavy lines for nice sounds and nice smells and sharp lines and smiles for good sounds, like very satisfying sounds.”

### Observations

The pupils created confident abstract drawings of soundscapes and smellscapes. The sensory drawing process encouraged the freedom to capture their personal experience of invisible sensory information such as the wind. The wind as white noise was an interesting observation as was the layering of sounds and smells connecting them to a map of the streets they travel through to and from school.

The pupils focussed well on collecting the sensory information even out in the school garden with a lot of distractions.

Ajay: “The drawings the children created with and without closing their eyes were amazing.”

## Session Two: Sense of touch

Sense of touch, texture, feeling surface texture and feelings as emotions.

### Session Two Activities:

Discussion activities:

- Read the book 'Home' by Carson Ellis to introduce the activity
  - What does home mean to you?
1. Pupils asked to create a model of a feeling of home using clay
  2. Pupils asked to collect textures inside and outside the school using clay slabs

*Activity 1: Using clay pupils were asked to model a feeling of home, as they discussed what home meant to them.*



Page from the Star RIX Wiki showing screen grab of a sensory drawing of home

Star Pupil: "My home is very loud cause I got five people."

Jina: "Oh wow, Lucky you."

Star Pupil: "Yes home.... It's a warm place."

Jina: "Safe. Yes Safety is really important to Safe. Safe in our house."

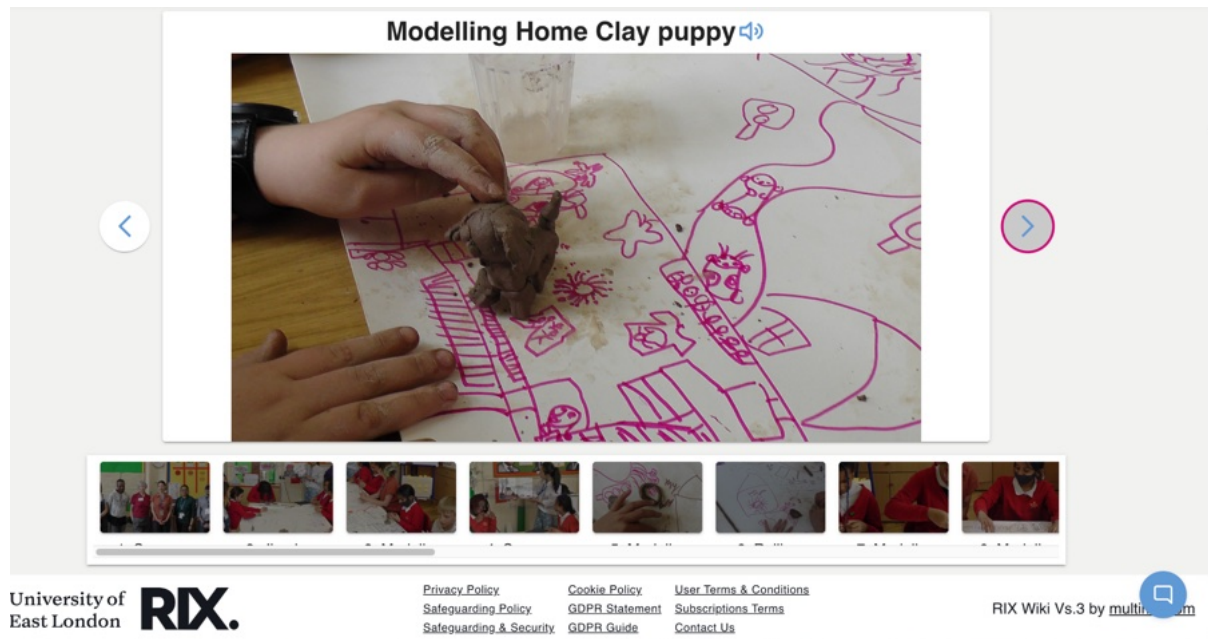
### Observation

The communal sensory map created in the last session was rolled out onto the table. The pupils sat at their drawing and appeared to enjoy placing 3D clay model items onto the 2D drawing.

We discussed feelings associated with home, while modelling the small lumps of clay. The idea of connecting sense of touch with emotion and feelings had occurred in the 4 workshops with purpleSTARS.

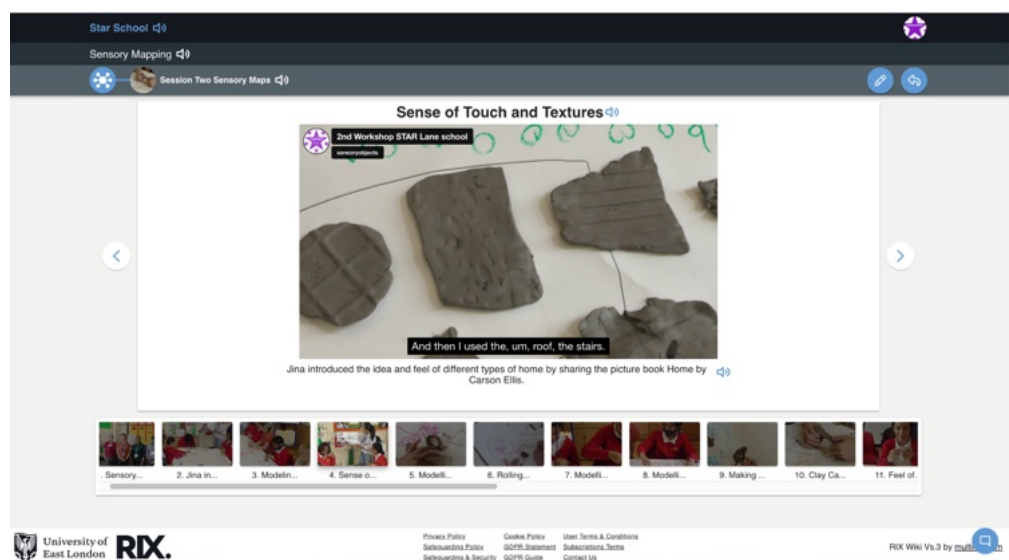
The activity of modelling the clay while talking seemed to create a sense of calm and reflection during the session. Many pupils modelled their pets in the clay, connecting the touch of an

animal with their emotional feelings for their pets. Some modelled objects of importance at home, some were content to continually shape the clay as we discussed how home ‘felt’.



Ajay: “The clay imprints collected in the sensory garden were great.”

*Activity 2: Collecting Textures Inside and Outside using Clay Slabs*



Jina: “Where did you make your print from?”  
 Star Pupil: “Oh, from bricks, yeah from Bricks.”

## Observations

Some of the pupils found it difficult to remember where they had collected their texture from and required a prompt about the areas they took the print from, like the sensory garden, the school corridor or the school building. Once they recalled this, they were confidently able to talk about the texture, it was from a brick, and about the surface of their imprint. Some pupils became interested in the textures they could create by pressing into more than one surface making the flat slabs more 3D.

The pupils were invited to notice differences between textures collected inside and outside. They were also encouraged to imagine the texture slabs as pieces of land. This was something we started to explore in our development workshops, we began to assemble and create imaginary lands and maps from multi-media, that we could continue to develop. These maps might include, for example geographical, political, musical map content.

Jina: “Do you notice the difference between the textures that we collected inside the building and outside here? Outside in the garden, the Garden textures are more organic, whereas inside it's more geometric more man-made patterns.”



Jina: “Let’s imagine these were pieces of land. This one looks a bit like, uh, crops Like a field of crops”

## Session Three: Sense of smell

### Session Three Activities:

Discussion activities:

- Read the book ‘Home’ by Carson Ellis to introduce the activity
  - What does home mean to you?
1. Pupils were asked to create drawings of invisible smells on tracing paper to layer over the communal sensory map of smells of home / bedroom and their map of their journey to school
  2. Pupils were to go on a sensory expedition outside to collect smells using pipettes

*Activity 1: Star pupils were asked to create drawings of invisible smells on tracing paper to layer over the communal sensory map of smells of home and journey to school*



### Observations

Pupils found no problem in inventing ways to draw invisible smells without referencing objects. The pupil in the picture above, developed a clever technique to represent different smells carried by wind or in the air using multi-coloured pens altogether.

Pupils were eager to start and as soon as the colours and paper were placed on the communal 2D drawing, some of the pupils had started drawing before the artist educator had a chance to tell the pupils what they would be doing.

### *Activity 2: Sensory expedition - collecting smells outside*

*Star pupils were given pipettes and pump suckers and asked to collect smells by sucking up the smell with pipettes and pump into an evidence bag and label with drawing or words*



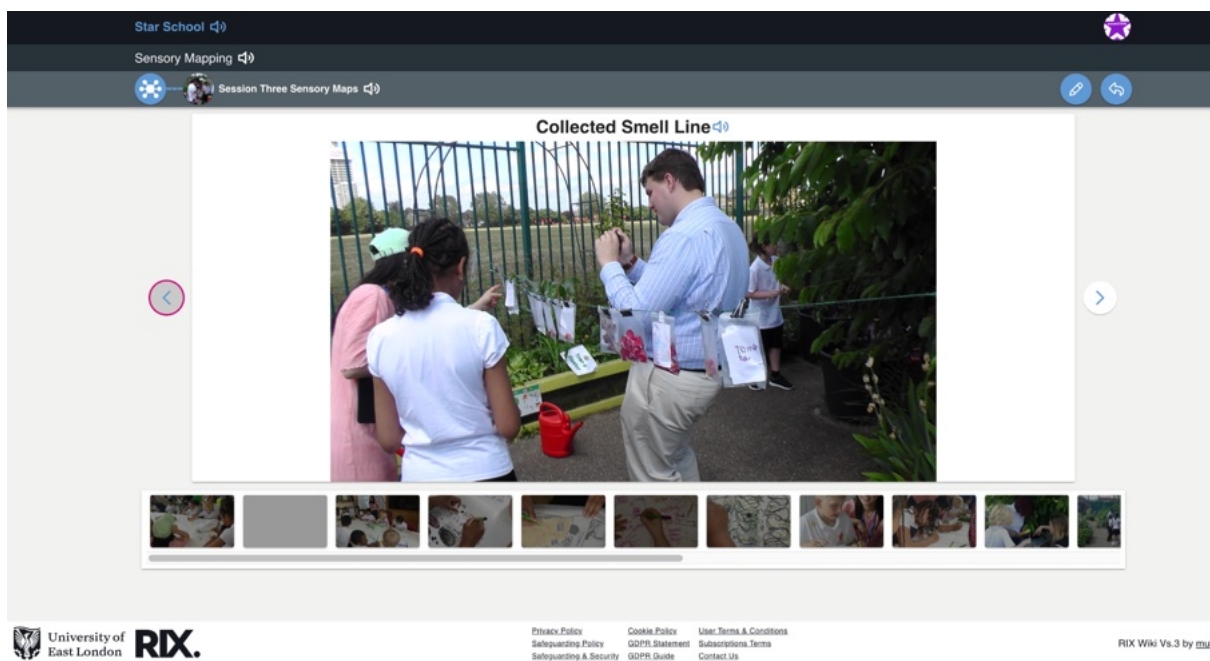


## Observations

This was quite a conceptual activity as the smells didn't really get sucked into the bags. The pupils were confident to engage in the process of sucking up smells, but also added other items such as rose petals or cherries that were on the floor. One pupil filled a bag with water which they described as a 'watery fresh smell'.

After the smells had been collected, a smell line installation was put up in the garden to exhibit the smells they had collected in the space. Several less confident pupils were happy to share their findings.

A useful insight gained from this activity was how objects collected for smells could be preserved to prevent them from rotting / moulding.



Page from the Star RIX Wiki showing a line of collected smells in the sensory garden.






Kanchan: "The pupils were very excited and wanted to take the pipettes and smells home to show their families. Some of the pupils didn't want to stop collecting smells, they were really engrossed in collecting smells outdoors."

## Session Four: Sense of sound and self portraits

### Session Four Activities:

1. Pupils were asked to create a map of themselves and record a sound on a recordable card
2. Pupils were asked to help assemble the sensory installation

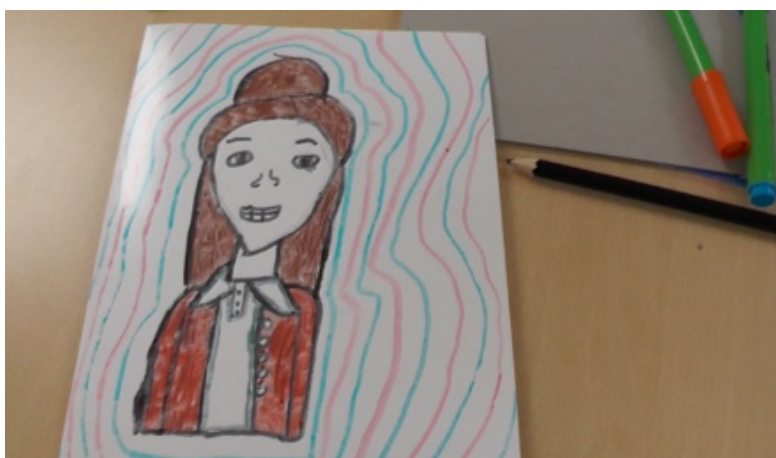
*Activity 1: Create a map of yourself and record a sound*

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Star Primary School</b>  <b>purpleSTARS Young CitYzens Atlas Project</b>                      Sensory Map Making with Rosetta Arts and Living Maps   <b>Mapping the Ordinary to the Extraordinary</b></p>		
 1.00		Create a map of yourself with a self-portrait and record sound on a card.
 1.45		We showcase our sensory map adding and connecting fired textures, collected smells and self-portrait cards to large map drawing

Extract from Easy Read for Workshop Four purpleSTARS member Samantha demonstrates a sound card

**Observation**

Pupils were asked to consider how their self portrait might change from outside the card to inside the card. The self-portrait images were very very telling. The self portrait below, was described by the pupil as showing confident, positive vibes, linking the idea of wellbeing with colour and soundwaves.



Page from the Star RIX Wiki showing a sensory drawing on a recordable card.

The session was very noisy with the whole group as each pupil recorded their own sound recording. We experimented with everyone opening the card and triggering the sounds simultaneously.

Ajay: “The self portraits were really good. They told us about the children. The sounds were hard to listen to and sometimes it was difficult to make out what the children had recorded.”

The pupils had not seen the fired clay pieces they created in session two. They were very excited to see them for the first time. Some of the pupils could not remember what they had created and their names / initials were not easily identifiable on the clay fired pieces. But, the pupils were still happy to look at the objects and place them on the communal 2D drawing.

Ajay: “Some of the children couldn't remember which piece was theirs and they couldn't find their names or initials.”



Elements of the sensory map include drawings of sounds, smells and sights of the journey to school from home, selfie sound cards and textures in clay collected from around the school.

## Sound card Selfie

*Activity 2: pupils were asked to help assemble the installation by adding their self portraits / sound cards, fired clay textured pieces, invisible smells (tracing paper) pieces to the original communal map to create a multisensory map installation*



Ajay: "At times it was difficult to hold the children's focus as they really liked recording sounds."



Final session installation in development with sensory map of the journey from home to school and sound card selfies.

## Observations

Each pupil approached the creation of this artwork differently in accordance with their experiences, interests and needs. This experience was very beneficial for the pupils, there was no right or wrong how they went about each of the activities. The pupils set their own rules, used their own logic to what they created and how they went about exploring. Pupils were able to express and share their unique individualised way of seeing, feeling, creating and understanding with others, aided by the artworks they created.

This session required additional time as we were not able to fully collect feedback from the pupils. We hope to gain further feedback from pupils in another feedback session and feedback from the project team in a separate evaluation session.

## Conclusion

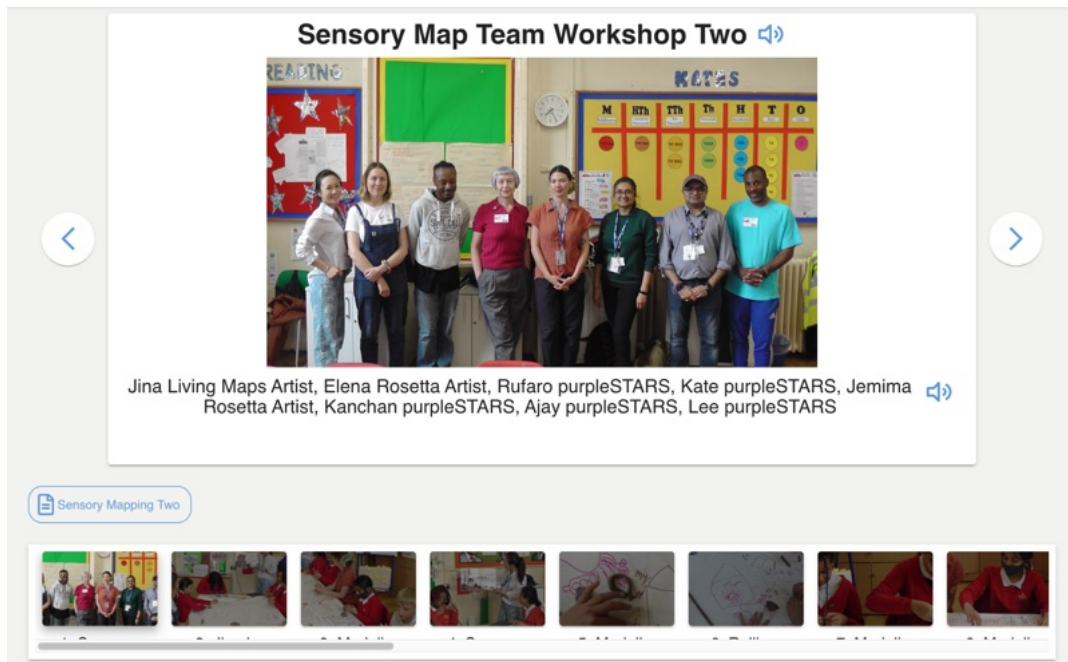
This project has been the result of an ongoing research and development endeavour, with Living Maps Artists, purpleSTARS and RIX Inclusive Research, University of East London, and Rosetta Arts. We are now developing a further term of workshops to be delivered at local schools, with a longer-term goal of sustaining the programme through ongoing funding and relationships. Employing a creative, iterative approach we developed workshops that would be explorative and happy to embrace the unknown, which we recognised had many benefits, but was also risky. We often ran out of time, went off at tangents that were often surreal, sometimes insightful and made connections through creative fun. We aimed to develop a series of exercises that could ‘wake us up’ to notice how our bodies’ sensory experiences create our own unique experience of the world and how we could share this making a map. To simplify the workshop, we divided up the five senses into different sessions. We were keen to embrace chance, where all artworks and engagements were valued, to weave a complex layer of map making from different perspectives. For example, Kimbal led a set of drawing exercises concentrating on mark making of sounds while not looking at the paper. Debbie led a workshop that led us gently into noticing different textures. In the beginning of the session, we sat together as a group looking at different textures in the room. Following this, each of us selected a coloured pencil or pastel and crafted drawings that combined words with images. This served as an introduction to the subsequent activity, which entailed capturing clay impressions in the most ordinary and mundane of places—a carpark. Remarkably, these impressions transformed into exquisite and one-of-a-kind prints, resembling islands, igniting the imaginations of all participants in countless captivating ways.

Although we began sessions with a focus on one of the five senses by the end of the workshop, we noticed how the artwork or map was often multi-sensory. For example, when we gave the children slabs of wet clay to collect the texture of surfaces from the environment. The wet slabs gave the opportunity to notice and reflect on the surface texture patterns, some of the children added their own finger and nail marks into the clay. Jina encouraged the children to notice the differences in pattern textures collected from nature and architecture. Elena asked the children to consider what the slabs reminded them of and to imagine the slabs as pieces of land viewed from space, the children imagined a slab as a ploughed field or as a lunar landscape. While the clay was

wet, the visual aspect of the texture became dominant. Once the clay was fired and returned to the children at another session, the sense of touch exploring the surface of the fired clay took over. While the idea to imagine the slabs as pieces of land was something we had hoped the children might explore further in our installation, we didn't really have a chance to develop this. Reflecting on developing future sensory workshops, for a one hour workshop, we plan to focus on a single location rather than trying to work inside and out of the school.

We really came to value the importance of creating a sensory map artwork collectively. Our inclusive team ensured the development and facilitation of the workshops encompassed diverse approaches and opinions to creative engagement. As an inclusive team we became very aware of how we all learn and create differently. We noted that an example to follow at the start of the workshop and more structure may have aided the less confident children. In the sessions members of the team took on the role of supporters and allies to individual children giving positive encouragement. We all recognised the potential for creativity and critical thinking, collaborating in an open-ended non-judgemental process without a fixed end goal, although we reflected that others may have craved more structure and control.

We all noticed how relaxed, happy and engaged the children were as they created work together and many of the group mentioned they were surprised in such short sessions how intimate and revealing the conversations were with the children as we worked on the sensory map together. The layering of different sensory experiences and the knowledge/permission/freedom that our inclusive group gave, where no artwork was 'wrong' or would be ruled out, led to a map that was very physical and messy, often highlighting the smells of dog poo, farts, mould, cigarettes, the sounds of cars and inner city life which provoked the telling of very personal stories, of surreal amazing imaginative leaps, experiences of mental health, problematic housing and the huge importance of our pets and love of family. At Star Lane Primary the ordinary became extraordinary through this inclusive sensory map making process.



Page from the Star RIX Wiki showing Sensory Map Team for Workshop Two

### **Project Leaders**

Kate Allen, Rufaro Asuquo, Kimbal Bumstead, Ajay Choksi, Paul Christian, Phil Cohen, Elena Juzulenaite, Debbie Kent, Kanchan Kerai, Jina Lee, Lee Phillips, Jemima Senior, Samantha Walker.

### **Project Participants**

Star Primary School Students

### **Tower Project purpleSTARS Advisory Group**

Judith Appiah, Justin Grimes, Julie Ryan, Michael Tapps, Adjoa Weidemann

### **Special thanks to:**

Ajay -taking pictures and uploading materials on RIX Wiki

Leonard Zaleski - capturing and editing videos

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<sup>i</sup> Pathways through Participation, *Using participatory mapping to explore participation in three communities*, p.1, 2010.