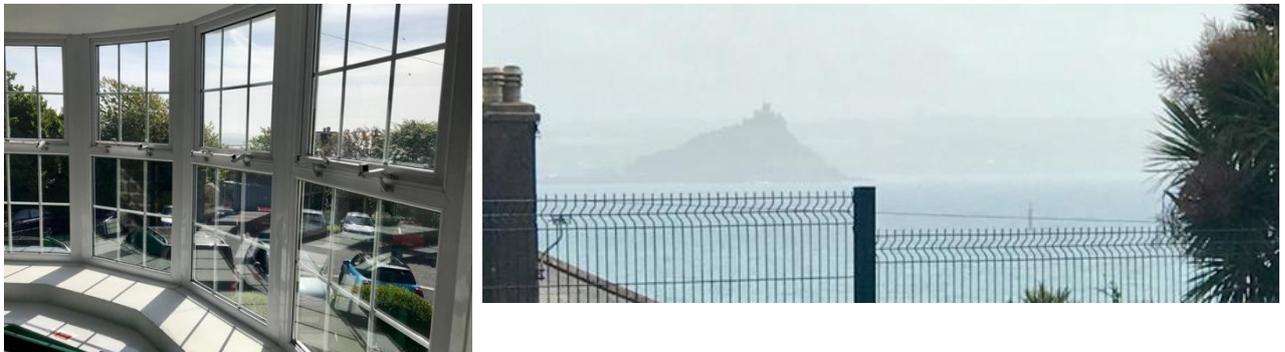


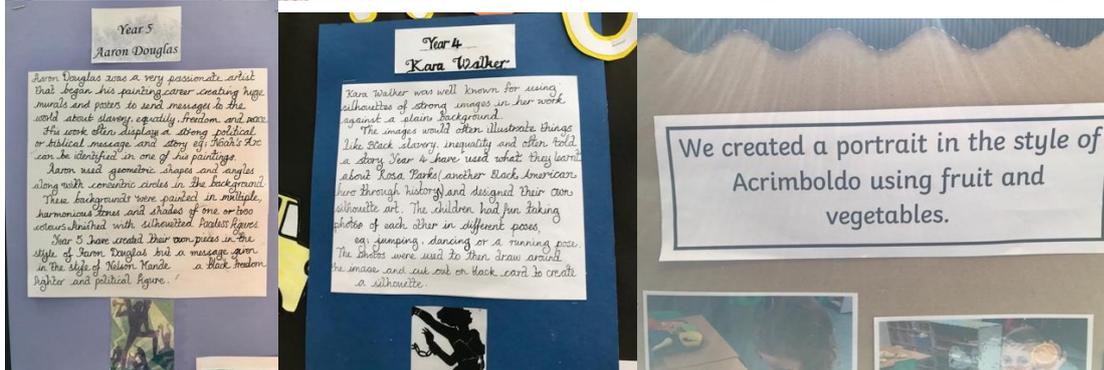
Newlyn: The opportunities and challenges of a seafront Cornish arts-rich primary school



Newlyn is a small fishing village on the south coast of Cornwall, just over a mile west of Penzance. The school of 120 students sits just up the hill on the seafront. Even on a misty morning, you can see [St Michael's Mount](#) from the library's big bay window.



Four years into her role, she talked about the massive changes she had made to change the curriculum in order to change the reputation of the school and raise the aspirations of the students (and staff). This has involved foregrounding the arts which now drive 'everything'. Students study a wide range of diverse artists and focus on skills progress and conceptual understanding.



The children spoke of their recent visit to a workshop by ex-Brixton resident [Denzil Forrester](#), as part of Black Voices of Cornwall's [Captured Beauty exhibition](#) at the [Newlyn Art Gallery & The Exchange](#). Denzil's large canvas in the gallery was of a reggae sound-system event, full of dancers, DJs and selectors.

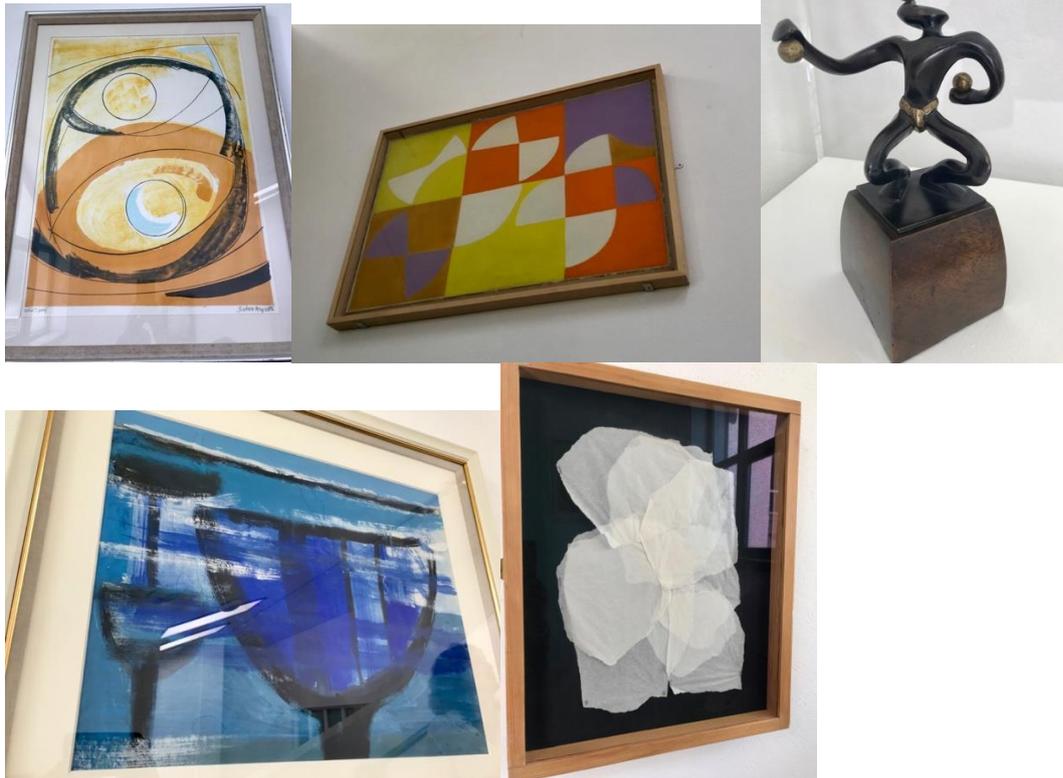


Denzil told the children how he used to sketch in the semi-darkness of the dancehalls, capturing the dynamic free-flowing movements of the dancers. The students were excited about the workshop and their own 'gestural drawings', sometimes with charcoals and pencils in each hand.

The students also talked about their visits to the dramatic cliff-top open-air [Minack Theatre](#) to watch plays and musicals and to perform themselves. We learned how Year 5 were putting the final touches to their performance of a scene from *The Tempest* in collaboration with other local schools.



We were excited to discover that Newlyn Primary has its own art gallery. A diverse range of paintings, collages and sculptures are currently on loan from Newlyn Art Gallery and Cornwall Council as part of the *Think, Talk, Make Art* project funded by [Arts Council England](#), the first time such art works have ever allowed into a school. These include a large canvas by local (St Ives) artist/sculptor [Barbara Hepworth](#). The school established links with [Newlyn Art Gallery](#) to facilitate the selection of the pieces and make plans for the children to act as curators and guides once the art works had been re-installed in their original home (still delayed by Covid). The scheme has been extended by a successful application for [Paul Hamlyn Foundation Teacher Development](#) funding to get artists from Newlyn Art Gallery to train teachers.



Isabel talked about being ‘properly terrified’ at the monetary value of the art works; one child said ‘I can't believe that Newlyn school children are allowed something like this’. Once again, we had to remind ourselves that we were in a primary school, not a contemporary art gallery. Isabel described the impact of the gallery as ‘absolutely huge’. *‘All of the work I was doing on behaviour and respecting others could be reinforced by the fact that they had the gallery’* she explained. *‘The children were trusted with something and their behaviour towards it has always been totally respectful’*.

She also talked about a rise in the students’ self-esteem and their vocabulary and language from guiding many visitors (like us) around the art works and offering their commentary.

Like many other schools, Newlyn were rebuilding their strong music and performing arts provision after Covid. Cornwall schools were hit much later than other regions – but just as hard - due to their geographical isolation.



The students’ art works on the walls and in their sketchbooks matched the vibrancy, diversity and impact of those in their gallery:



The students talked to us about doing arts projects around tin mining, fishing, Saint Michael's Mount, dragons and local legends. They also described printing onto paper with actual fish! They were also excited at being involved in the upcoming [Golowan festival](#) parade.

'I think you've got to be quite brave to focus on art' Isabel explained. Rest assured that the 'brave new world' promised in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is taking shape in the form of this fascinating arts-rich primary school.

Many thanks to Head Teacher Isabel Stephens, Art Coordinator and Year 4 teacher Rebecca Rollason, teacher Julie Wood, TA Rowena Baldwin and the Year 4 and 5 students we spoke with on the day.

