

# **Pupil Design Awards 2023-24**

## **End of Year Evaluation Report**

Author: Rebecca Purton

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And most importantly, to the teachers and pupils who have committed so much time, energy, and innovation to the process with special thanks to those who contributed their insights to this evaluation through interviews and focus groups.

# About the RSA and Comino

## About the RSA:

We are the RSA. The royal society for arts, manufactures and commerce. Where world-leading ideas are turned into world-changing actions. We're committed to a world where everyone can fulfil their potential and contribute to more resilient, rebalanced and regenerative futures.

The RSA has been at the forefront of significant social impact for 270 years. Our research and innovation work has changed the hearts and minds of generations of people. Central to all our work are our mission-aligned Fellows; a global network of innovators and changemakers who work collectively to enable people, places and the planet to flourish in harmony.

We invite you to be part of this change. Join our community. Together, we'll unite people and ideas in collective action to create opportunities to regenerate our world.

<b>Open</b>	Always inclusive, transparent and honest, we welcome new thinking and different perspectives
<b>Optimistic</b>	We are confident that together, we can regenerate our world through collective action
<b>Courageous</b>	We champion curiosity, creativity and bravery to inspire better ways of thinking and doing
<b>Rigorous</b>	Rooted in evidence-led thinking, we act with integrity and purpose
<b>Enabling</b>	Through generosity, respect and collaboration, we help others succeed

## About our partner:

The Comino Foundation was established in 1971 during Dimitri Comino's celebrated role as an RSA Fellow. In this long-standing shared history, the Foundation and the RSA have collaborated on several ventures designed to develop young people's individual and collective capabilities so that they are better equipped to live fulfilling and purposeful lives for the benefit of themselves and wider society.



# Executive Summary

## What are the Pupil Design Awards?

The RSA Pupil Design Awards (PDAs) is a free, national challenge-based programme for secondary school and sixth form pupils aged 11-17. This year it celebrates a decade since it was established in 2014 by the RSA and the Comino Foundation. Pupils are encouraged to use their creativity and imagination to tackle real-world challenges to enable people, places and the planet to flourish in harmony.

## Outputs and Outcomes

This is the last year of running the Pupil Design Awards in its current iteration before our transition to a new brand name: RSA Spark, which brings together the Pupil, Student and Catalyst awards under one mother programme. Both the PDAs and RSA Spark share the same ambition to be inclusive and impactful, ensuring all pupils have the chance to unleash their creativity for positive change. As such, we set key areas

of focus that would help us to move forward on those ambitions this year, as well as provide opportunities to capture learnings that support the shaping of RSA Spark. Across the 3 areas of focus we established indicators of measurement, collecting both quantitative and qualitative data to provide an insight into the extent of success of each. One area of focus included a range of targets for diversity, inclusion and representation (output 1), another was to equip pupils with skills and capabilities for life (outcome 1) and the final area of focus was providing teachers with the opportunity to develop their skills too (outcome 2).

Output 1	Outcome 1	Outcome 2
Increase in participation from pupils from disadvantaged and under-represented backgrounds. Disadvantaged is defined as being eligible for free school meals (FSM) and/or Special Educational Needs (SEN)	Pupils are equipped with life-centric capabilities.	Teachers develop their professional skills through participation.
Indicators		
1.1 Percentage participants who are from disadvantaged backgrounds  1.2 Percentage participants who are from regions or subject areas typically less represented in PDA submissions	1.1 Development of individual creativity and imagination  1.2 Consideration for environment as part of idea development  1.3 Engagement with local/global community	2.1 New opportunities to develop skills are recognised by teachers  2.2 Level of support from project materials and workshops

Our evaluation was organised around 4 key questions. Below are the key findings for each.

1. Have the diversity, inclusion and outreach targets for the project been met?
2. What has been done differently in recruitment, communications, support and judging to work towards meeting the targets?
3. How does the project align with the three key areas of focus identified, particularly with our capabilities for life?
4. How can the successes and challenges be incorporated into RSA Spark?

## Topline Findings

### EQ1: Diversity, inclusion and outreach targets and EQ2: Recruitment, communications, support and judging

- Ambitious targets for diversity and inclusion were set in order to foster new strategic thinking around outreach and communications approaches and create opportunities to test and learn. Progress against the targets was mixed, with some areas of success and most needing further thinking to improve.
- This year marked the highest ever number of participating pupils (242), which was 81 percent of our participation target.
- Of the 24 participating schools this year, 17 were new to the PDAs and 10 were state schools.
- Half of participating pupils were from state schools but only 28 percent of the 110 submissions came from state schools (below our target of 60 percent). On average, larger pupil teams were involved in each state school submission compared to independent schools.
- Six of the ten total participating state schools had more than 20% of pupils eligible for FSM, which was our target inclusion threshold. On average, among participating schools, 22% of pupils were eligible for FSM. The target of receiving submissions from non-design disciplines was fully met with five teachers from alternative subjects submitting work (17 percent of total submissions).
- A number of new approaches were trialled for both school recruitment and to support teachers through the PDAs process. Lighter-touch mass recruitment strategies seemed to show limited benefit, whereas more personalised, relationship-based approaches appeared to be more successful in both recruitment and programme completion.

### EQ3: Alignment with capabilities for life

- A key aim of the project process was to provide opportunities for pupils to develop their creativity and innovation skills, their consideration for the environment, and connection to the local community, and for teachers to develop their professional skills too.
- Overall, pupils themselves, as well as teachers and mentors, were confident that pupils had developed their creativity, research, innovation and design skills and their consideration for the environment.
- Building connections with the school and local communities was more limited, with a couple of submissions incorporating user audience feedback on their ideas and prototypes. However, community connections were not a priority for the majority of groups.
- The biggest challenges pupils said they faced was completing submissions to deadline and understanding the project ask, because, although they loved the real world mission briefs, this was quite a different way of working compared to the usual curriculum.
- Teachers also had the opportunity to develop professionally, supporting pupils in creative iteration of design and development, research and teamwork. A challenge frequently raised by teachers was that the volume of content was tricky to balance and was the reason some teachers had not engaged with all content offered. Teachers and mentors suggested more concise guidance with a clear template to follow in future.

### EQ4: Successes and challenges to be incorporated into RSA Spark

- As this was the last year of the Pupil Design Awards, learnings and recommendations will be incorporated into RSA Spark, launching to the public in January 2025.
- This year saw more teachers from non-design backgrounds participating than in previous years, but with numbers still limited. RSA Spark seeks to support more teachers and pupils from non-design backgrounds through working with teachers to ensure mission briefs are accessible and relevant.
- Due to frequent feedback on timescale and capacity being a challenge, RSA Spark will run with an ongoing cycle to remove the time limitations and necessity of submitting to a deadline: this will allay

pressure and allow more time for investment in the design process, development of skills and iteration of ideas.

- Considering some diversity and representation targets were not met, a targeted, multi-pronged approach will be prioritised to increase inclusivity and representation of state schools and those from more disadvantaged backgrounds with tailored communications campaigns.
- Additional support saw mixed take up from teachers, so to complement clear communications, RSA Spark will incorporate Ambassadors and mentor support integrated with the abundant community of RSA Fellows.
- Following feedback that information and support could have been more clear and concise, to ensure RSA Spark works best for teachers and pupils, increased integration of teacher and pupil voice will be incorporated into designing mission briefs and project process. Additionally, RSA Spark will be moving from limited guidance and workshops to an integrated learning curriculum on the user platform.
- Finally, whilst the competition-based nature of the awards has meant that pupils are commended or not, RSA Spark will be moving away from competition and towards an emphasis on collaboration and learning.

***“Pupils really engaged with the project process”***

***“Pupils learnt it’s okay to fail and refine”***

***“Positive change in students was really evident to teachers, and teacher knowledge increased too”***

***One student created a feedback survey to share with their school community and “found many different opinions from other people”***

# Introduction

## About the Pupil Design Awards

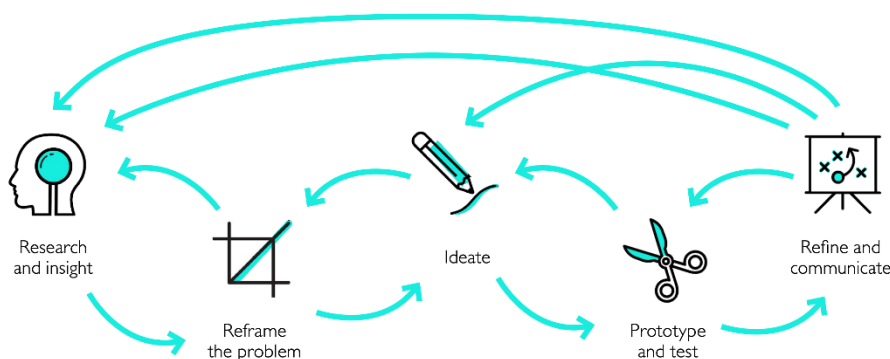
The RSA Pupil Design Awards (PDAs) is a free, national challenge-based project for secondary school and sixth form pupils aged 11-17, established in 2014 by the RSA and the Comino Foundation. Pupils are encouraged to use their creativity and imagination to tackle real-world challenges to enable people, places and the planet to flourish in harmony.

With this vision in mind, the PDAs aim to empower pupils to develop and use design thinking and skills to identify and design solutions for real challenges present in their schools, local communities, and the wider global landscape. Activities involved in the challenge process to enable this include:

- Supporting teachers and pupils to understand how engaging with challenging briefs and utilising resources available to them can be applied to design for social innovation as a process
- Introducing design thinking to teachers and pupils through interactive workshops in collaboration with design education experts (mentors), to support delivery of the project process
- Encouraging connection of schools with local communities to draw pupils' attention to challenges within their communities and inspiring them to design solutions to both local and global challenges
- Supporting teachers to understand how design thinking principles can enhance their curriculum beyond the PDAs through workshops and online resources
- Convening networks of educators, designers, innovators, changemakers and thought leaders
- Providing feedback from experts in the field on commended projects to inspire and support pupils to continue developing their thinking in this way as they approach other projects in future

The PDAs are categorised into three groups for judging and feedback: Years 7 and 8; Years 9 and 10, and Year 11 to 12. The Awards run through the duration of an academic year, with a suggested (flexible) seven week scheme of work for teachers to follow with pupils. Teachers sign up to receive information on the three briefs, sharing these with pupils and guiding them through the stages of the project process with the support of the work scheme. After exploring design thinking and developing their skills, pupils produce an end product of six boards covering key areas of the project process and how they came to the end product or idea. Teachers then submit pupil ideas through sharing the six boards with the RSA. Submissions go through a judging process, where they are assessed by independent judges and some are commended. All pupils with commended entries are invited to attend an Awards Day of activities and celebrations.

### Non-linear design thinking process diagram





## Briefs

Briefs are designed to inspire and guide pupils in tackling key social issues with creativity and confidence. This year, pupils were presented with the following three briefs:

1. **Caring Culture**

How might we improve the lives of older adults and their carers by encouraging and enabling better cultures, and higher standards, of care?

2. **In Your Skin**

How might we increase the skin confidence of every young person to enable their unique identity to flourish?

3. **Earth Smart**

How might we inspire communities to draw on ideas from nature and the benefits of modern technology to address the local impacts of climate change?

## Changes made to 2023-24 Delivery

Key areas of focus this year were to increase and diversify participants, improve the experience for teachers and pupils in order to maximise learning and submissions, and capture learnings to transfer to RSA Spark. In past years, submissions from mainstream state schools, particularly those with a higher percentage of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, have been underrepresented, whilst the majority of submissions have come from independent schools. In an intentional effort to increase representation of state schools and those from more disadvantaged backgrounds, the following new strategies were implemented into the communications approach and provision of support to schools during the project process.

Changes to communications strategy:

### Organic Outreach

Through existing relationships in education space, reached out to expand pool of contacts

### Partner Channels

Fair Education Alliance, Values-Based Education, The Saturday Club and Teacher Toolkit have promoted PDAs through their networks on RSA's behalf

### Gov School Data Mailouts

Extracted data to identify UK schools with over 70 percent of pupils on Free School Meals (around 200) and targeted them with comms

### School Networks

Contact made with pupil referral units, SEN networks, trusts and academies (including individual schools)

Changes to support during project process:

### Prototyping Budget

For state schools to support students develop design thinking, enabling them to create and test prototypes of artefact being developed

## Recommendations from 2022-23 Report

Recommendation	Change Implemented 2023-24
<p>Communications to schools should: emphasise how Awards can be used to prepare pupils for GCSE and A Level non-exam assessments, linked to AQA and OCR boards; provide suggestions for how Awards could be delivered through non-design subjects or adapted for industry focused requirements of BTECs/T-Levels/Apprenticeships.</p>	<p>Updated content on RSA website with suggestions of how pupils and teachers from a range of disciplines and levels could apply the PDAs to their curriculum.</p> <p><a href="#">Click here for more info</a></p>
<p>Bespoke teacher sessions designed for first-time registrants with regular follow-ups to increase engagement and completion, and return year-on-year. Invite teachers who have delivered Awards to share guidance and examples of how to deliver Awards for first time.</p>	<p>Teacher Development Workshops led by teachers. Named so based on feedback from teachers. Titled:</p> <p>‘How to approach briefs – for new audiences’</p> <p>‘How to apply design thinking to subject – for non-design audiences’</p> <p>‘Craft a commended entry in one term – it’s not too late!’</p> <p>RSA invited people interested in the PDAs to the SDA brief workshops (October). Partners presented briefs and offered support/advice on how best to tackle them, including a Q&amp;A session.</p>
<p>RSA should explore expanded role for Fellows/Mentors in supporting pupils to break down complex issues in briefs. Could be through dedicated sessions on briefs, including creative activities to unpack concepts.</p>	<p>Mentors (SDA alumni) worked in advisor capacity, visiting schools and providing guidance through online sessions to support pupils and teachers. Further Comino teacher links peer-supported participating teachers.</p>
<p>RSA should facilitate connections between schools and local Fellows for pupils to gain feedback on ideas. Aim is to overcome pupil reservations engaging with local communities and provide clearer guidelines for teachers for how pupils could approach wider community for feedback and testing.</p>	<p>Tested an approach more focused on promotion of PDAs, including regularly updating Fellows on progress, but we realise promotion alone isn’t enough. This was reflected in the impact which wasn’t as high as other areas.</p>
<p>Prioritise hybrid/digital delivery to widen participation and ensure more schools are able to benefit from mentor expertise.</p>	<p>Mentor support was offered in a hybrid capacity, with the option for mentors to visit in person or provide guidance online.</p>
	<p>Stamping process to highlight and promote submissions from underrepresented schools and pupils during judging and commendation.</p>

# Methodology

The following section details the methodology employed for recruitment, sampling, data collection and analysis of data to assess the indicators identified in the outcomes framework.

## Evaluation Questions

1. Have the diversity, inclusion and outreach targets for the project been met?
2. What has been done differently in recruitment, communications, support and judging to work towards meeting the targets?
3. How does the project align with the three key outcomes identified in the outcomes framework, and with our capabilities for life?
4. How can the successes and challenges be incorporated into RSA Spark?

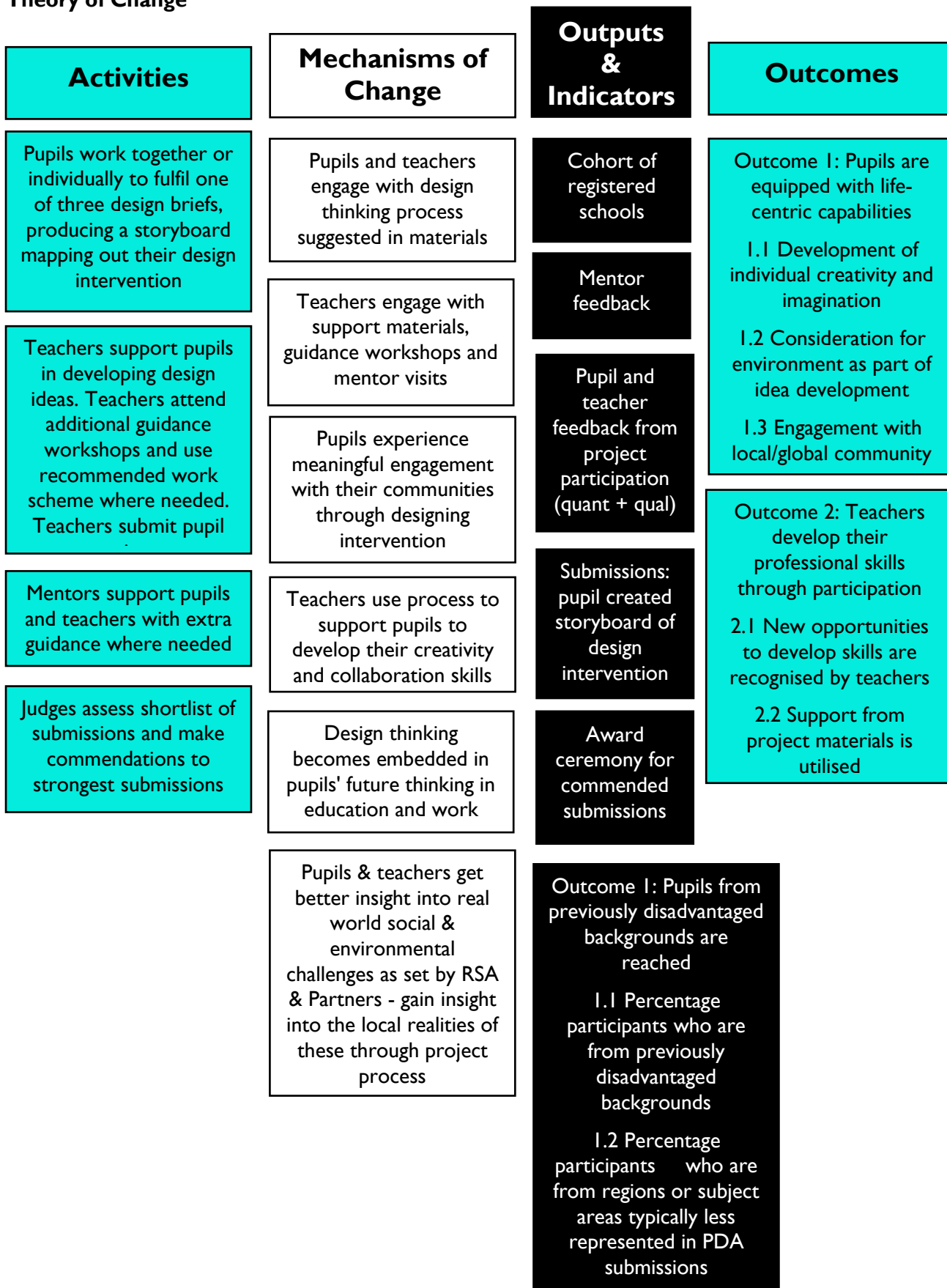
## Outputs and Outcomes

Output 1	Outcome 1	Outcome 2
Pupils from previously disadvantaged backgrounds are reached.	Pupils are equipped with life-centric capabilities.	Teachers develop their professional skills through participation.
Indicators		
1.1 Percentage participants who are from previously disadvantaged backgrounds  1.2 Percentage participants who are from regions or subject areas typically less represented in PDA submissions	1.1 Development of individual creativity and imagination  1.2 Consideration for environment as part of idea development  1.3 Engagement with local/global community	2.1 New opportunities to develop skills are recognised by teachers  2.2 Support from project materials is utilised

## Process

The activities involved in the PDA process are designed to have an impact on the thinking and actions of participants, helping them to develop their capabilities for life and connection with the environment and others. The process involves the activities participants undertake, mechanisms of change they engage with, outputs through which change is shared, and outcomes through which change is measured.

## Theory of Change



## Evaluation Framework: Sampling

Convenience sampling was utilised for recruiting teachers and mentors to participate in the PDA evaluation. The team contacted all teachers and mentors involved in the project as the number involved made this feasible. The team were interested to hear from as broad a range of participants and as many as possible, to encourage insight into a breadth of experiences. Teachers working in state schools were targeted more intentionally to increase insight into participation for schools who were more likely to meet the inclusion targets.

Informed consent was gained from all teachers, mentors, pupils who participated in the evaluation. No incentivisation was provided for participation other than highlighting that any feedback shared would be considered when developing future iterations of awards to improve teacher, pupil and mentor support.

## Evaluation Framework: Data Collection and Analysis

The evaluation framework utilised a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods at different points during the PDA journey to track key data on school demographics and participant experience of the PDA project process.

Method	Explanation	Purpose and evaluation question (EQ) addressed	Number of responses/participants
Brief pack download survey / registration	Teachers shared demographic information about the school and teacher discipline.	To gather data from schools interested in participating, and to enable comparison of demographics of those who registered compared to those who completed the project. (EQ1)	74 total
Survey at point of submission	Teachers completed a short survey at the point of submitting pupil work. Questions focused on school/pupil demographics and teacher discipline, as well as quantitative and qualitative evaluation questions to understand experience of the process.	To track demographics of schools who completed project (compared to those who signed up). (EQ1)  To gain topline insight into experience of project from as broad a spectrum of participating teachers as possible to understand pupil/teacher outcomes and process improvements.	24 responses (all who submitted)
Teacher evaluation survey (for those who submitted pupil work)	Follow-up more detailed evaluation survey utilising quantitative and qualitative questions, shared with teachers who submitted pupil work.	To understand in more depth what pupils and teachers learnt from PDA process: what worked well, the challenges/limitations they faced, and any recommendations for future improvement. (EQ3 & EQ4).	14 responses (out of a total potential sample of 24)

Teacher evaluation survey (for those who did not submit pupil work)	Quantitative and qualitative survey shared with teachers who downloaded briefs and may have participated in some of project process but did not submit pupil work.	To understand challenges and barriers faced by teachers and pupils which prevented them from completing project. To learn what further support can be provided in future. (EQ4)	2 responses
Reflection Studio with pupils	Interactive evaluation session as part of Awards Day, with small group discussion and interactive activities led by an RSA researcher	To gather more in-depth qualitative feedback from teachers and pupils to understand holistic participatory experience, drawing out key learnings and challenges. (EQ3)  Please see Appendix for quantified data.	19 pupils participated
Teacher interviews	Online semi-structured interviews with teachers to understand successes/opportunities and challenges faced by themselves, and their observation of the same with pupils.	To gather more in-depth perspective of teacher involvement for themselves and pupils. (EQ3 & EQ4)	3 teachers (all who submitted work, so it should be noted that this sample is biased)
Mentor interviews	Online semi-structured interviews with mentors to understand successes/opportunities and challenges faced by themselves, and their observation of the same with teachers and pupils.	To gather perspective of a key group of stakeholders involved. Mentors have the benefit of being involved but also serving the role of observers of teachers and pupils. (EQ3 & EQ4)	One mentor interviewed

Descriptive analysis was used to address EQ1 to understand the demographics of the schools involved, and compared these to the quantitative inclusion targets. A similar approach was taken for the quantitative data collected through teacher surveys.

Thematic analysis has been applied to the qualitative data using coding<sup>1</sup>. Coding breaks the data into chunks by key themes, noting connections between different data and collating it within relevant subheadings for summary. This technique has been applied to qualitative survey responses and data collected during the Reflection Studio at the Awards Day.

An inductive approach has been applied to pull out key themes from participant feedback. This means no particular prior hypothesis existed when analysing the data, and analysis was fully informed by the findings presented in the data. Analysis assesses where key themes from the data align with the outcomes framework (namely outcomes 2 and 3) and link to challenges and successful support relating to diversity, inclusion and outreach targets. All qualitative data from different stakeholder groups is combined into one corpus. This choice has been made to ensure key and common feedback points surfacing from the various data collection materials are identified, considered collectively and actioned where appropriate.

<sup>1</sup> (Williams, M. & Moser, T., *The Art of Coding and Thematic Exploration in Qualitative research*, 2019, p.47).

# Findings

In total there were 110 submissions to the PDAs this year. The following tables and charts break down submissions by school demographics and submission briefs.

## Evaluation Questions 1 & 2

### Scale, reach, participation and engagement

Submissions by brief:

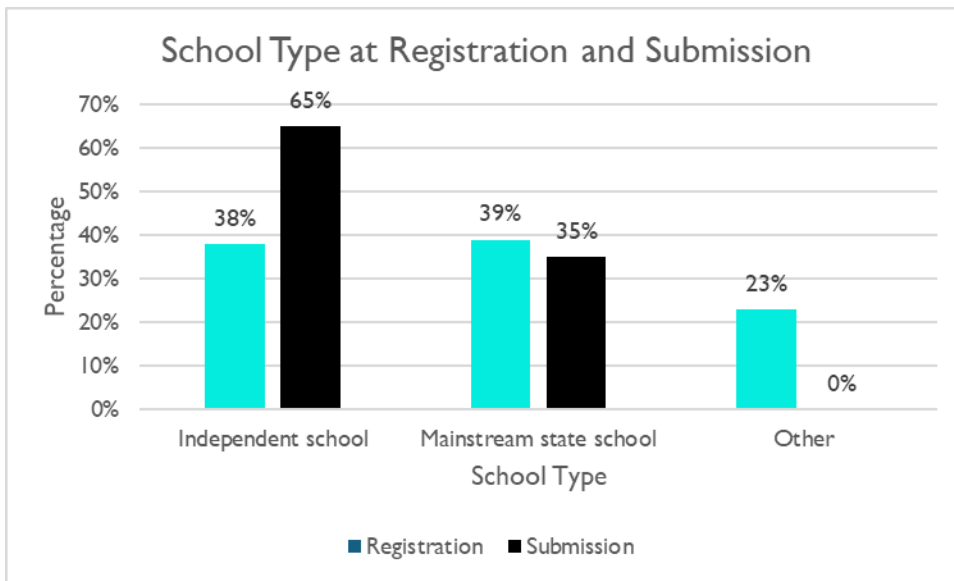
- Earth Smart brief, at 65 percent
- Caring Culture: 24 percent
- In Your Skin: 10 percent

School participation in project process by school type:

School type	Registered	Teacher workshop	Mentor session	Submitted	Commended
State	29	4	4	10	3
Independent	28	3	1	14	7
International	7 <i>(of which all were independent and also counted as such)</i>	1	1	1	0
Other	17	0	0	0	0
Total	74	7	5	24	10

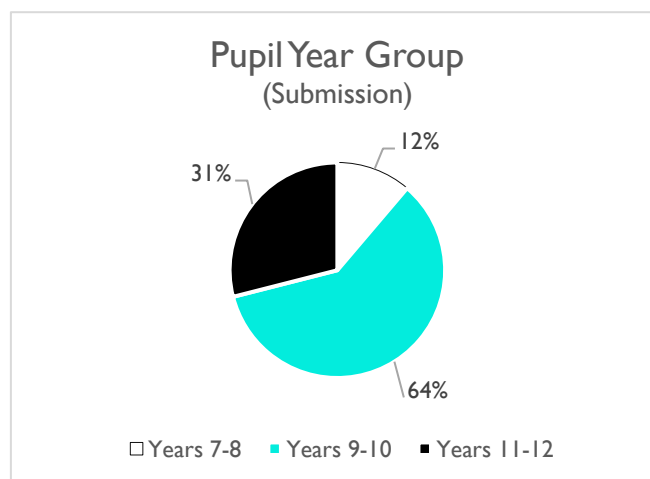
Comparison at registration and submission:

At the point of registration, the percentage of mainstream state schools (39 percent) was nearly equal to that of independent schools (38 percent). However, at the point of submission, independent schools significantly outweighed mainstream state schools -- with 65 percent to 35 percent, respectively. In addition, 19 percent of registrations came from 'other' education providers. These included a grammar school, a multi-academy trust, and two homeschools, but no submissions were made by providers in this category.



Although the rate of submissions from independent schools was higher than that of mainstream state schools, when looking at the data by number of pupils participating in the project process, the picture is much more balanced with 50 percent of participating pupils (n=121) coming from mainstream state schools. Further analysis shows that average number of submissions per mainstream school was lower than for independent schools but average team size was larger, with more pupils participating per submission in state schools.

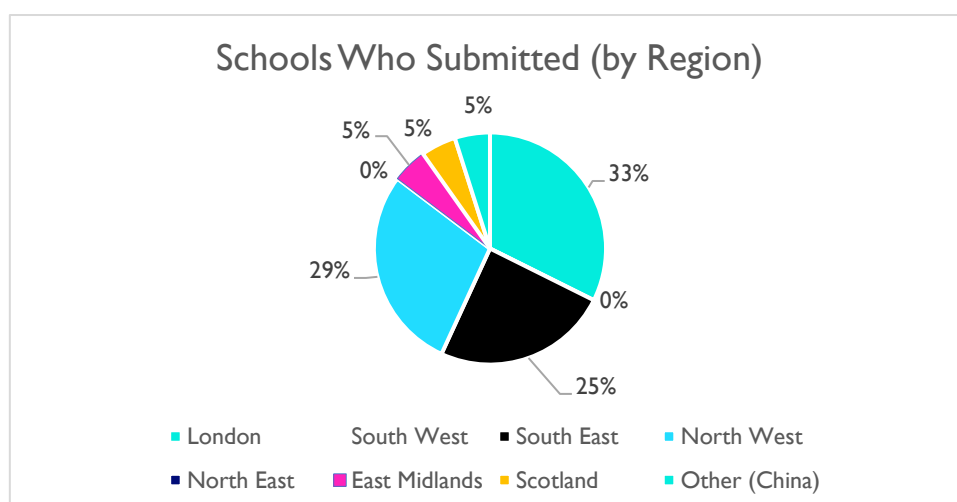
Pupil submission by year group shows that the most submissions came from pupils in Year 9 or 10 (64 percent) and the least came from Years 7-8 (12 percent). The total adds up to more than 100 percent because some submissions were made by pupils in more than one year group.



Regions represented by schools across the UK and internationally at the point of **registration** was relatively diverse, although skewed towards London at 27 percent. A noteworthy point is that 10 percent of registrations came from international providers.

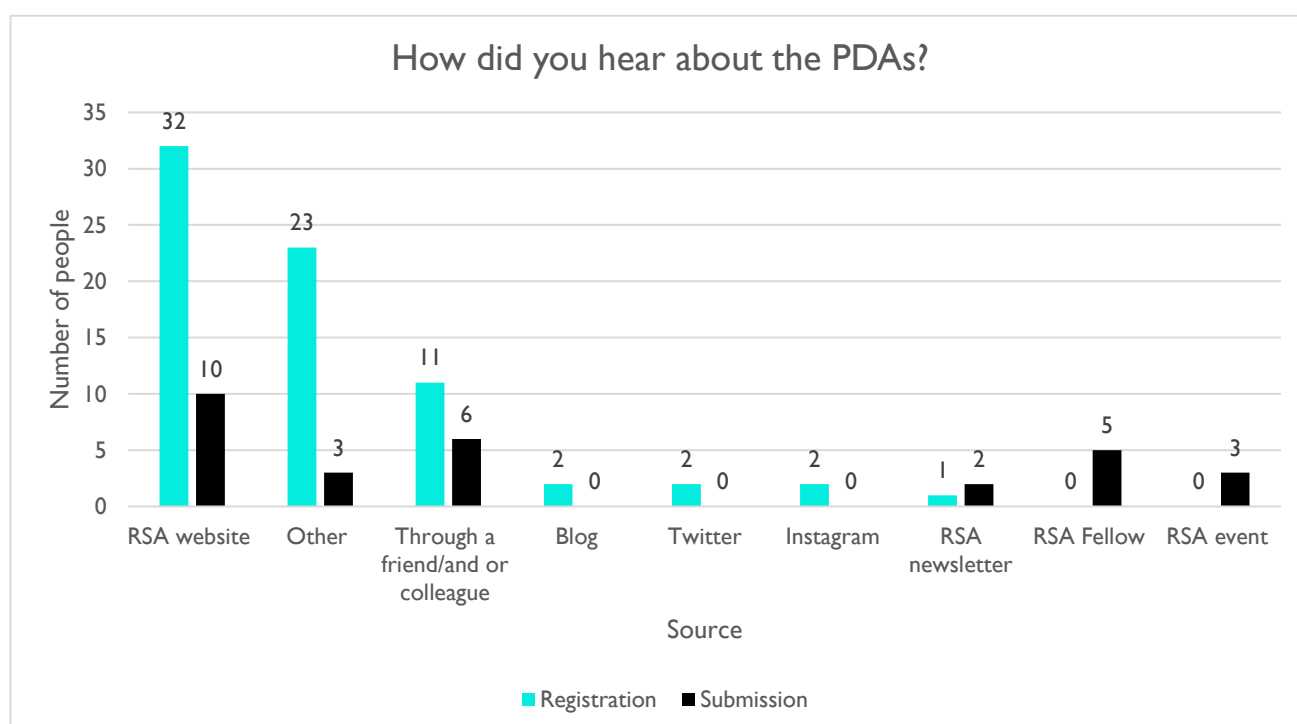
The picture looks similar when assessing the data by number of schools who submitted by region. London was the most heavily represented with 33 percent of submitting schools based in London. 25 percent of submitting schools were based in the South East. And the North West saw good representation at 29 percent. A notable difference is that whilst 12 percent of total submissions came from the East Midlands, these came only from one school, shown below in the 5 percent representation of East Midlands schools.





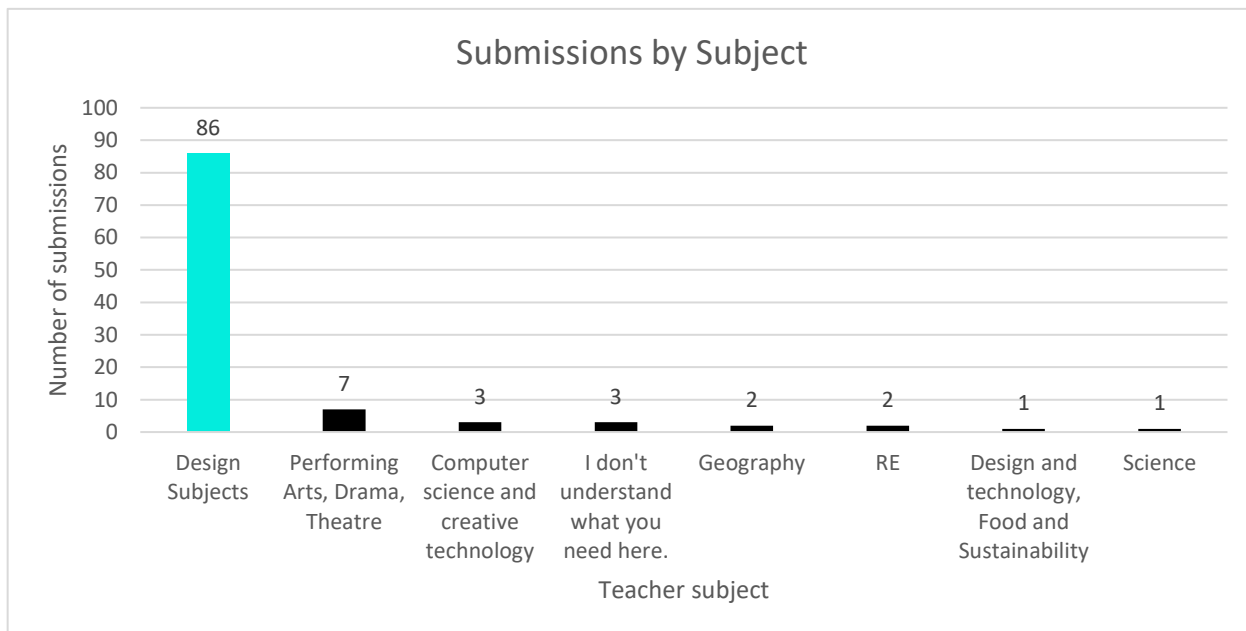
When assessing regional data by individual pupils involved in submission rather than by school, the picture is more diverse across the UK. The North West had the highest number of participating pupils, representing 43 percent of submissions: likely in large part due to the strong support network provided to schools in this area through the North West Comino Consortium (NWCC). London had the second highest number of pupils, with 29 percent of pupils living in this region.

The data in the graph below compares the source through which teachers registering and submitting heard about the PDAs. Some participants selected more than one source and others did not select any source, so the total count for registration is 73 and for submission is 29. The RSA website was the most common way both registering and submitting teachers learned about the PDAs. It is notable that those who submitted work were unlikely to have heard about the PDAs through an 'other' source, but that they were more likely to have heard about the awards through an RSA Fellow or RSA event compared to those who registered interest. Whilst it's unlikely that the exact same people completed this question on the registration and submission surveys, it is unclear why five submitting respondents heard about the PDAs through an RSA Fellow but no registration participants did. But it is interesting to note that for some of the submitting participants, they had a personal connection with the RSA (through a Fellow, an event, a friend or colleague).



**Teacher subject:**

Support provided this year made a particular effort to engage and support teachers from non-design disciplines. The graph below shows the raw number of submissions by subject, and it is evident that overall the majority of submissions derived from design subjects. However, it is worth noting that 17 percent of submissions came from non-design disciplines (namely Geography, Computer Science, Religious Education, Science and Performing Arts). This is a promising outcome that demonstrates growth potential.



**Compared to past years:**

The following table evidences higher numbers of registrations, completions, number of proposals submitted and number of pupils involved in the PDAs compared to previous years. This suggests that some of the focused efforts on increasing outreach and recruitment were successful.

Category	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Registrations	29	50	48	49	58	74
School completions	18	6	15	13	13	24
Total no. proposals submitted	68	25	78	95	79	110
Total no. pupils across proposals	221	54	167	173	133	242

**Returner participation:**

Of the 13 schools who participated in the awards last year and submitted work (2022-23), seven submitted work again this year (two state, five independent). An additional 17 new schools took part in the awards this year who did not participate last year (although they may have participated in previous years) -- eight state, nine independent.

## Output 1: pupils from disadvantaged or underrepresented backgrounds are reached.

The previous section has already provided an overview of the demographics of students and schools involved in the PDA process this year. The following section directly addresses the inclusion targets set out by Comino and the RSA as focuses for this year's awards.

The inclusion targets are detailed in the table below. The majority of targets were not met, but it is worth noting that more pupils than previous years were involved in the awards this year (242), achieving 81 percent of the 300 pupil target. Five teachers from non-design backgrounds submitted pupil work, meeting the lower end of the target of 5-10 teachers from non-design backgrounds. There is still some way to go in supporting state schools to see the project through to completion, as only 35 percent of total submissions were from state schools and only 1/3 of registered state schools went on to submit.

Of the three state schools who were commended, the average percentage of pupils eligible for FSM was 21 percent, and two of these met the >20 percent FSM target. Of the seven state schools who submitted but were not commended, the average percentage of pupils eligible for FSM was 22 percent, and four of these schools met the >20 percent FSM target.

Target	Actual data	Percentage of target met
Receive <b>150 submissions</b> , of which:	110 submissions	73%
60% (90) are from state schools	38 (35% of total submissions) from state schools	42%
<b>90% then commended from state schools</b>	3 out of 10 commended entries	30%
Achieve <b>120 school registrations</b>	74 school registrations	62%
<b>75% (at least 90) registrations should be from state schools</b>	29 from state schools (39% of total registrations)	32%
And 20% (24) should be teachers from non design disciplines	19 (17% of total submissions) from non-design disciplines	79%
Have <b>5-10 teachers from non design disciplines participate in workshops</b>	5 teachers from non-design disciplines participated in workshops	100%
<b>300 pupils participating - either individually or in groups</b>	242	81%
Work with 3 special education schools to get 1 submission from each	Target not met	0%
Target schools that have >20% of students eligible for FSM	Schools were identified using government data and targeted with communications, but with no take up from cold contacts	
Work with 2 alternative provision settings to get 1 submission from each	Target not met	0%

#### Teacher feedback:

At the point of submission, we asked teachers to provide feedback about any areas of particular disadvantage faced by participating pupils, which is presented in the table below. Based on their responses, we estimate approximately 25 percent of participating pupils were facing some form of disadvantage. Each row represents a different school, and the number in the submissions column is how many submissions that school made.

Submissions from schools with the barriers described below were 'stamped' for the judging and commendation process. Stamped schools were mainstream state schools, and particularly those where teachers indicated there was a high percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals and/or had other additional needs or particular areas of disadvantage. This was so that judges were aware and could particularly consider those submissions.

Barrier	Submissions
30% of learners live in most disadvantaged postcodes in UK. Over 70 different languages spoken by learners, and families originate from over 35 countries.	1
36% of learners don't have English as first language (compared to 18% nationally). 36% of our learners are eligible for free school meals (compared to 27% nationally).	5
School is diverse with higher proportion of ethnic minorities compared to nationally. High proportion of pupil premium students who we encourage to take part.	13
Many of our pupils are doubly disadvantaged creating many socio-economic barriers.	1
One of our students submitting a design is a bursary student from an ethnic minority.	1
SEN requirements.	3
School is in 12th percentile of deprivation and in one of lowest funded LEA's in the country.	1
Student is entitled to 25% extra time and rest breaks during exams.	1

Interviews were conducted with three teachers within the NWCC. Feedback linking to output 1 focused on the limitations of the prototyping budget and mentor support. One teacher explained that they pursued both options but the logistics were too challenging to enable using either offering, and another teacher shared that they were unable to follow through with utilising the additional support also. Both areas of support could have been a useful addition for pupils, particularly those facing disadvantage, if the offerings had been clearer and easier to utilise in practice.

#### Mentor feedback:

Feedback from a mentor in the North West supporting a collection of Comino network schools, provided an insight into the key successes and challenges pupils and teachers had faced during the project process. Feedback relating to output 1 centred around the prototyping budget and joining up local networks. The mentor shared that teachers appreciated the availability of a prototyping budget but suggested this could be adapted in purpose and flexibility to support schools with less resources in helping find and access, rather than just fund, additional resources. They suggested the RSA use its contacts to link up schools with local businesses or other educational institutions who had access to more advanced or varied resources (e.g. 3D

printers etc). Furthermore, providing more information and guidance to teachers to explain what the prototyping budget could be used for (with examples) would be helpful. Additionally, the RSA could utilise its networks with universities, design agencies and professional businesses to form partnerships between these and local schools (particularly those in areas of disadvantage) to maximise opportunities for resource access.

Overall, meeting output 1 with this year's PDAs has seen some areas of success, but with continued limitations in diversity and inclusion. More state schools were involved in the project compared to previous years, with 50 percent of submitting pupils coming from state schools. 80 percent of commended submissions came from stamped schools: a win for increased inclusion at this stage of the process. However, overall underrepresentation of those from more disadvantaged backgrounds continues compared to participation of independent schools. Further, low uptake of supports (mentors and prototyping budgets) as well as feedback around challenges utilising these supports suggests that further work needs to be done to ensure supports match the needs of the schools and are easy to access.

## Outcome 1

### **Pupils are equipped with life-centric capabilities**

Outcome 1 focuses on measuring the skills and understanding pupils have developed during the project process that will lead to the flourishing of themselves, their local communities and the wider environment. The three indicators of outcome 1 are:

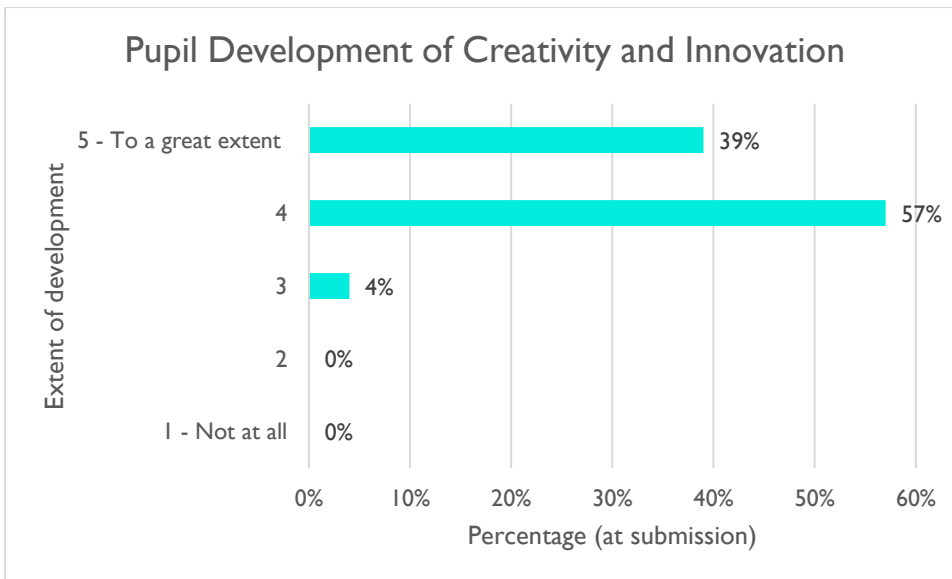
- Development of individual creativity and imagination
- Consideration for environment as part of idea development
- Engagement with local/global community

A survey completed by teachers at the point of submitting pupil work included pulse questions to provide an insight into the indicators of outcome 1. Survey response rate was 97 percent of those who submitted. The following three graphs show the results, displaying responses by percentage. For all three questions, the majority of teachers indicated that pupils had developed life-centric capabilities to a great or good extent.

We also asked pupils about their experience at a Reflection Studio during the Awards Ceremony day. It is worth noting that we only have qualitative pupil data from pupils who were commended, so their experience is likely not representative of all participating pupils.

Creativity and innovation:

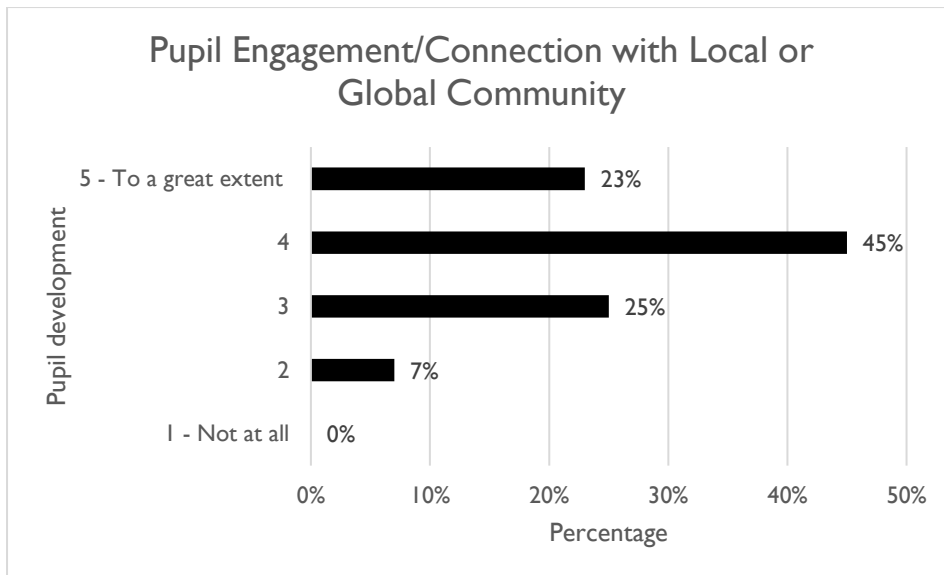
96 percent of teachers agreed that pupils had developed their creativity and innovation skills to a great (5) or good (4) extent, suggesting a strong increased level of connection to self and pupils' own capabilities and perception of these.



Pupils themselves shared during the Reflection Studio that they especially enjoyed the opportunity to develop their creativity and design skills, with some referencing using Computer Aided Design (CAD) and creating prototypes. One group used 3D models and others created scale models and enjoyed the “creativity and freedom in experimenting”. Other groups developed logos and brands for their innovations too. Some students found it challenging to sketch accurate representations of their designs and create models and prototypes. Through the process, pupils learnt the importance of incorporating scale models, prototypes and branding into their design thinking, including developing skills in new technologies, laser cutter skills, 3D printing experience. One group included a well-branded leaflet and another incorporated an animation video to demonstrate their innovation, and referenced the project process as giving them opportunities to “think outside the box”. One student referenced how they struggled to collaborate with any manufacturing companies to create a prototype for them.

#### Engagement and connection with community:

Pupil engagement and connection with the local or global community as part of the development of ideas during the project had the most varied responses of the three questions. 68 percent of teachers indicated their pupils had developed a good or great amount in this area. A quarter chose the neutral option (three) and 7 percent indicated there was very little development in this area among some pupils. Based on interviews with teachers and mentors, some would have appreciated further support to build local connections to enhance the development of pupil ideas.



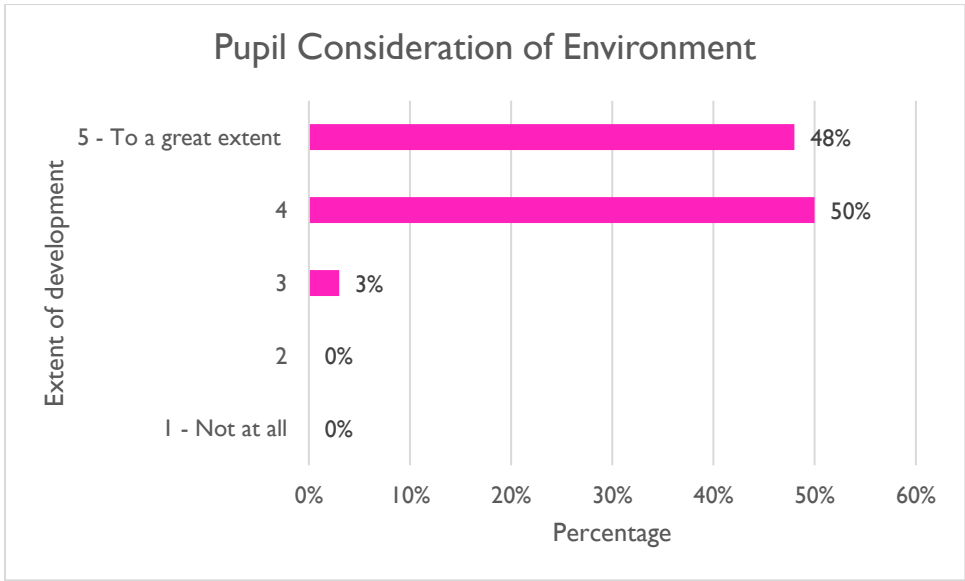
During the Reflection Studio, all pupil groups referenced ‘research’ as being a key area of success as part of the project process, with some of this being desk research and others also incorporating primary research with their school or wider local community. Multiple pupils were able to “successfully collect all the information” they required, and others acknowledged that “better research = better results”. Some pupils incorporated primary research into their design thinking, citing this as a positive and beneficial aspect of the project process where they wouldn’t usually have opportunities for this during the standard curriculum. One group acknowledged their research skills could have been improved further and another reflected that it would have been useful to check the reliability of their sources and have time to interview more people. Whilst not all pupils engaged with the local community, for those who did it was a key aspect of the iteration process.

Some pupils gathered feedback on their ideas and prototypes, from the school community or wider local community. Where this was the case, students felt the feedback they collected was an important driver of future iterations of project design. One student created a feedback survey to share with their school community and “found many different opinions from other people”.

Pupils also frequently cited teamwork as being a key skill required for success in the project process. One student group referenced how they’d collaborated and conferred with other groups working on similar projects in their class and had found it positive and helpful to receive constructive feedback. Some students faced challenges with cooperation, commitment and decision-making within their group and cited this as a key challenge during the process.

#### Consideration for environment:

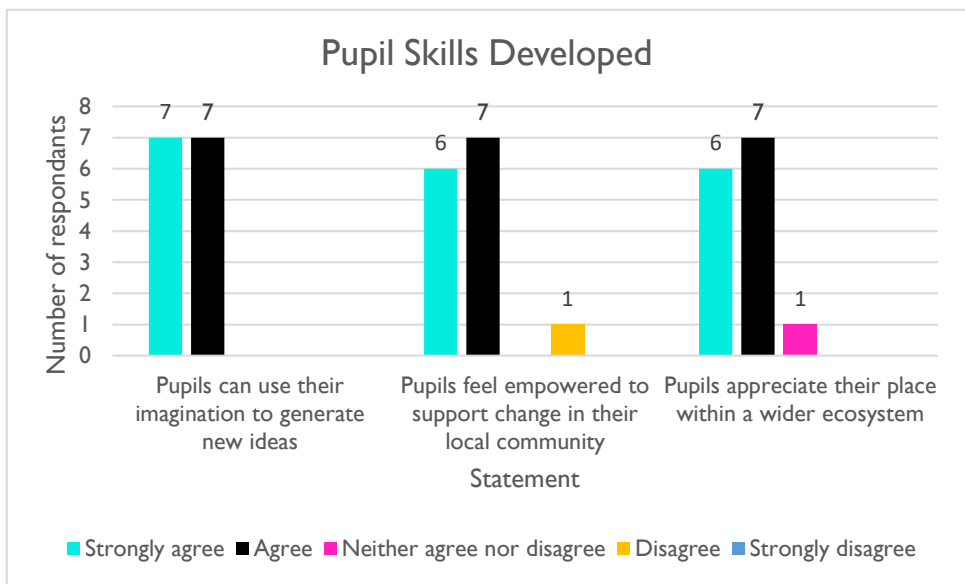
98 percent of teachers said that pupils developed their consideration for the environment to a great or good extent during the project process. Unsurprisingly, those working to the Earth Smart brief were particularly able to develop their thinking in this area. One teacher shared in an interview that they saw the PDAs as a way to encourage pupils to be more caring and involved with climate issues. One mentor supporting a network of Comino schools explained how the PDAs are ideally situated to fulfil compulsory school policy on including sustainability as part of the curriculum in a meaningful way.



As part of the evaluation survey shared with teachers as a follow-up after submission, they were asked to rate on a Likert scale the extent to which they agreed pupils had developed the skills stated in the graph below.

Overall, the majority of teachers agreed or strongly agreed with every statement, suggesting the project process provided opportunities for pupils to consider and develop using their imagination in problem-solving (increasing their connection to self), consider how they can make an impact in their local community (increasing their connection to others), and appreciate their place within the wider ecosystem (increasing their connection to nature/planet).

The main discrepancy between the data from the submission survey results (above) and the data in the graph below is around pupil engagement with local community. Whilst teachers may feel that pupils have the potential to action local community engagement in future, the previous graph on engagement with local and global community suggests this was not a core part of the opportunities provided in the project process for all participating pupils.





In the survey teachers were asked: If you were to give a certificate to pupils for something pupils did really well during the project process, what would it be? Responses reflected soft skills and technical skills used during the project process. The following responses were given:

- Ideation and development of ideas (x3 teachers)
- Teamwork (x3 teachers)
- Problem solving (x2 teachers)
- Innovation (x2 teachers)
- Research (x2 teachers)
- Time & effort put in
- Perseverance
- Sketching and modelling
- Independence
- Genuine empathy with user group

Teachers were also asked what certificate they would give to pupils based on what pupils had learnt during the project process. Responses focused on collaboration, design for real life issues and the impact these had on real people, and included:

- Climate understanding and action (x3 teachers)
- Developing a project to tackle a real life problem (x3 teachers)
- Importance of data collection
- Collaborating with others
- Design impact on different groups of people
- Tackling big problems collectively with smaller solutions
- Considering user needs
- Consideration for fundraising to make project happen
- Creativity and innovation
- Pupil perception of themselves

Responses to what pupils did well and what they learnt reflect pupil connection to themselves, their communities and the climate. Teachers referenced strengths in teamwork and innovation of creative ideas to tackle real world problems, the nature of which were appreciated by teachers and pupils as they don't have the opportunity for working with real issues during the usual curriculum.

Interviews with teachers highlighted the great success of students engaging with the creative and innovative design process, and one teacher particularly expressing that students developed communication and connections with the wider school community. Teachers also expressed the high calibre of submissions by pupils due to the effort they put in.

During the Reflection Studio, pupils themselves described how they were able to develop their research, design and creativity skills during the project process. Effective teamwork was key to project success, although some groups also faced challenges, and where groups were able to conduct research in their local communities, this formed a strong dataset to use as a basis for decision-making. Some students did reference that time management was a challenge as time was limited, and that they would have appreciated more information and guidance for the briefs.

It can be concluded that all three indicators saw success in supporting pupil development of life-centric capabilities, with development of consideration for the environment and ecosystem perhaps the most clearly developed skill by pupils during the process. This was followed by pupil connection to self as they developed creativity, innovation, research and design skills. Engagement with local and global community was also an area of development, but based on the data and teacher and mentor feedback, slightly less successfully than the other indicators as not all experienced opportunities for this.

## Outcome 2

### Teachers develop their professional skills through participation

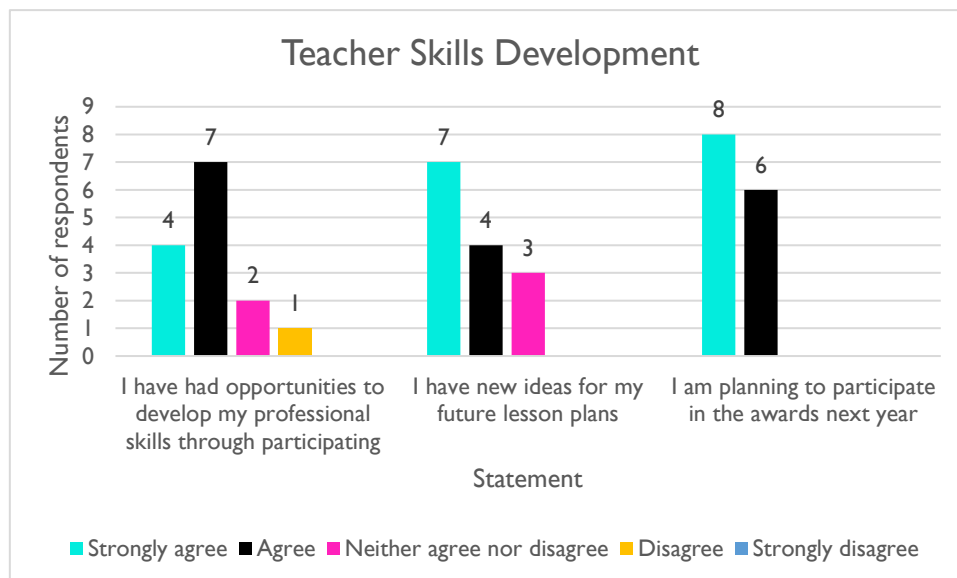
Whilst the primary aim of the PDAs is to support pupil development, an important aim is also the development of teachers' professional skills and opportunities. Empowering all participants of the PDAs to develop their thinking and action both throughout the project, and in their teaching and learning beyond the project process, would be considered a successful positive impact of the project.

Indicators for outcome 2:

- New opportunities for teachers to develop skills that are recognised
- Support from project materials is utilised by teachers

Opportunities for skills development:

Survey feedback from teachers shows the opportunities teachers had to develop certain skills through involvement in the project. The following graph takes data from the teacher evaluation survey (14 responses). The majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had had opportunities to develop their professional skills through participation and they had new ideas for future lesson plans. All agreed or strongly agreed that they were planning to take part in the awards next year.



Teachers were asked to expand on the skills they were able to develop as part of the project process. Responses focused on management of the project process and supporting students in their creativity and innovation in tackling real world issues. Responses are summarised here:

- Creativity process (x2 teachers)
- Developing ideas based on real life issues (x3 teachers)
- Developing thinking skills (x2 teachers)
- Supporting pupils through design development
- Facilitating groupwork
- Time management
- Streamlining planning
- Understanding how to make project viable

Teachers also shared skills areas they didn't have the opportunity to develop during the project process but would have liked to. These focus for the most part on ways of supporting pupils through the process:

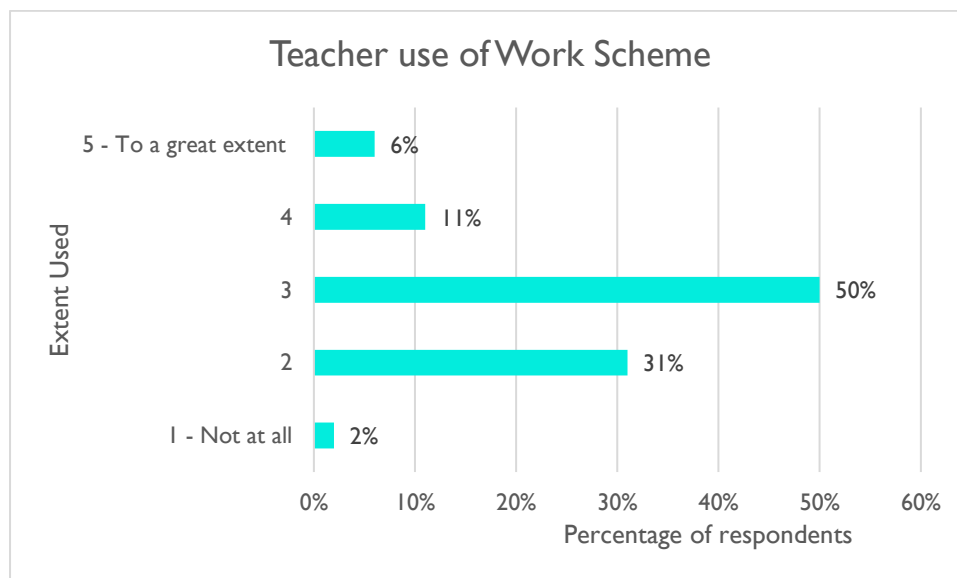
- Face to face training
- Help pupils develop projects more fully
- Give feedback to pupils as they present work
- Work with groups of students more
- Sketching skills (x2 teachers)
- How to engage with real users/make industry connections
- Opportunity to include videos and interviews as part of student projects

Teacher support:

Teacher utilisation of the support and guidance available during the project process, namely teacher workshops, work schemes and the prototyping budget, can be summarised as such:

- Seven teachers attended teacher workshops hosted by the RSA to provide additional support and guidance during the project process: four of these were from state schools and three from independent schools
- Two teachers used the prototyping budget
- 17 said they used the teacher resource pack and brief pack
- Two teachers cited receiving additional support through Comino
- Of the commended entries, one utilised teacher workshops and mentoring and another used the prototype budget (all mainstream state schools)

All teachers responding to the survey were asked the extent to which they followed the seven week work scheme e.g. whether they followed it closely or used it for more general guidance, through to not using it all. The below graph shows a range of extent of use. 50 percent of teachers used the work scheme to some extent (option 3), whilst 17 percent used it to a great or good extent, and 33 percent didn't use it much or at all.



Feedback from one mentor interview provided further detail on the use of the work scheme, suggesting the RSA split the extensive guide into a condensed booklet or slide deck with a summary of guidance per board for the six board submission. This was due to teachers struggling to engage with the volume of information, finding this time consuming and unsure where to start. The mentor also suggested all information and guidance for teachers be kept in the same document to make it easy to track and cross-reference, rather than the multiple different documents shared with teachers.

Interviews with teachers revealed that at times they found the volume of information on the project process overwhelming and time consuming, and would have appreciated more specific and succinct guidance to make the process more accessible for themselves and pupils. This was particularly noted for first-time teachers.

Overall, teachers reported they were able to develop professional, creative, and facilitative skills as they supported pupils through the project process. However, there were still low levels of engagement in teacher support workshops, mentor visits and prototyping budget. In future iterations of the project, it would be worth revisiting and adapting the additional guidance for teachers to enable better usability and clarity.

## **Mentor and Teacher Interview Feedback**

Mentor and teacher feedback with specific relevance to the outcomes has been shared under each relevant outcome. More general and additional feedback will be provided in this section to capture the key points from interviews.

Only one mentor was interviewed due to low response rate. Data shared by the mentor around the successes and challenges of the project process for schools they worked with, as well as suggestions for future iterations, are summarised below. The mentor worked with six secondary schools and two primary schools (although the PDAs are only formally offered to secondary schools). All six secondary schools and one primary school submitted entries.

Strengths and successes of the project:

- Pupils and teachers loved that the project process was different to the usual curriculum, having an open but professional brief to follow. This allowed them to test, refine and iterate ideas, as well as encompass a range of different subjects, bringing knowledge from these together into one innovation. This was noted as very different to the usual division of subjects at school.
- Pupils really engaged with the project process.
- A key learning from pupils as they worked through the process was that it's okay to fail and to try again.
- A positive change in pupils was very evident to teachers.
- Teacher knowledge and ability to teach also increased during the project.
- Some teachers found the RSA resources useful.
- Some found mentoring and the links this provided to industry helpful.

Challenges and limitations:

- Some pupils were overwhelmed at the start of the project as they faced completing six boards. The mentor explained it to pupils and teachers as being the equivalent of creating six PowerPoint slides, which they found much easier to tackle.
- The template needed more prompts to help teachers and pupils understand what was required.
- The overwhelming challenge communicated was the lack of time available for the project process. Teachers would have preferred more time as they were working against what felt like a tight deadline, putting pressure on teachers and pupils. A suggestion was for the briefs to be shared during the Autumn term as this is the term with the most flexibility.

Suggestions for future iterations of the project process:

- The mentor suggested turning the boards into a six slide PowerPoint presentation to help pupils engage and understand the requirement. This would also help teachers keep track of work as it would all be in the same place.
- The mentor was very keen for a similar offering to be extended to primary school aged children!

Three teachers in the Comino network were interviewed and overall shared that participating in the PDAs was a positive and worthwhile experience for themselves and their students.

One teacher shared that they especially appreciated the relationship with the Mentor who provided additional support and guidance. The teacher felt that the information and engagement from the RSA alone was not enough for schools to buy in to the project as the RSA was unknown to the school, but having a Mentor as the 'bridge' between the school and RSA worked well. The teacher suggested more communication with other participating schools to form a network of support. The teacher was keen to be part of the project again next year and recommended more relationships between schools and Mentors they are familiar with to onboard them into participating.

Another teacher interviewed "really enjoyed the experience", although did find it time-consuming, with the biggest challenge being the lack of time. The process was run as an extra-curricular activity rather than part of the curriculum. The teacher expressed thanks to the Mentor supporting them, especially when it came to writing up the process which they found challenging. The most enjoyable aspect was seeing the pupils engaging well as a group and building community and connections across different year groups. The process also provided students with a great opportunity for developing their creative skills. The teacher would "definitely" participate again and recommended adding a checklist of prompts and items to tick off as part of the process to help guide pupil and teacher planning.

Among suggestions for adaptations and improvements from teachers were:

- Design briefs tailored to different age groups
- Mentor support tailored to briefs
- Print outs of resources available
- Access to part submissions for guidance
- More detailed guidance on what to include on each page
- Support with making industry and client links
- Supporting students to identify and gather feedback from suitable clients/users

## Commendations

After a process of judging by external reviewers, one project per brief for each age category were commended. It is worth noting that entries by state schools and those including students with additional barriers were 'stamped' so that judges could particularly consider these entries. Ten projects were commended in total, with eight of these coming from state schools.

### Caring Culture

- Elderly Assisting Machine – Beauchamp College (Y11-12)
- Swushion – Notting Hill & Ealing High School (Y9-10)
- Spin 'n' Eat – Collegiate School (Year 7-8)

### In Your Skin

- My Skin app – University College School (Y11-12)
- Nibblents – Notting Hill & Ealing (Y9-10)
- Believe in Yourself – Passmores Academy (Y7-8)

### Earth Smart

- Baobab Inspired System for Hydration – St Paul's Girl School (Y11-12)
- Eco Sapling Protector – Bradfield College School (Y9-10)
- Eco Bus Stop – St Paul's Girl School (Y7-8)
- Moss Filters – Falinge Park High School (mixed year group)

# Conclusions and Learnings

The changes we have made in this 10<sup>th</sup> year, alongside learnings from the last 10 years of the Pupil Design Awards have yielded some valuable learnings and conclusions about how an educational programme targeted at pupils to unleash their creativity for positive change could be even more impactful and inclusive. We have therefore outlined these learnings and recommendations below, and how these can inform the next decade of Pupils Design Awards, under the new brand name: RSA Spark which brings together the Pupil, Student and Catalyst awards under one mother programme.

The recommendations below are informed by insights and data from the evaluation alongside co-design activities and a Test and Learn group that brought together a diverse community of educators and learners including. The RSA invested Student Design Award restricted legacies to support this collaborative development process which involved:

50 Secondary school pupils and university students (through current awards, School 21 and Saturday Club)

10 Entrepreneurs who participated in RSA Catalyst awards previously

20 Educators including a Fellows Faculty

50 Existing and potential funders and supporters of RSA awards

<b>Evidence and learning</b>	<b>Recommended changes for RSA Spark (previously referred to as Design for Life Awards)</b>
<p><b>From challenge briefs</b></p> <p>Teachers and pupils value the real-world nature of the PDAs briefs. It allows them to connect with industry/employers, better learn about social and environmental challenges and deliver projects that are locally relevant and sustainable.</p>	<p><b>To mission briefs</b></p> <p>Continue to have exciting and diverse real-world Mission sponsors.</p> <p>Shift the tone of the briefs from ‘challenges’ to ‘missions’ focusing more on opportunity and optimism.</p> <p>Mobilise local support from RSA Fellows, Mission sponsors (e.g. regional offices) and other participants (e.g. universities or entrepreneurship incubators) to create greater connection within place-based communities.</p> <p>Provide easier to access stipends to schools so they can invest in the resources they need to turn ideas into actions.</p>
<p><b>From design subjects</b></p> <p>There is chronic disinvestment in design teaching and skills, especially in state schools.</p> <p>A 2022 report from Education Policy Institute found the number of UK pupils taking Design GCSE halved from 2009 to 2020, with pupils in state schools less likely than</p>	<p><b>To all subjects</b></p> <p>Change our language (including the name of the awards – DfLA is a holding title as we work on our new branding) to be less design focused and more welcoming to those from other disciplines – avoiding design-specific jargon.</p> <p>Work with teachers to understand how the skills and Missions we offer can integrate with other subjects’ curricula.</p>

<p>independent peers to study the subject. There are also fewer Design &amp; Technology teachers, with the government failing to meet recruitment targets.</p>	
<p><b>From teachers working hard for the Awards</b></p> <p>Teachers need additional support to embed the awards into their lesson plans. They need longer lead times and more 1:1 time to understand the content.</p> <p>The quality of what the RSA provides (in terms of mentors, workshops and resources) is good, but it is hard to navigate.</p>	<p><b>To the Awards working hard for teachers</b></p> <p>RSA Spark will move away from a September launch to run as an 'always on' campaign. Teachers and pupils will be able to submit at any stage during the cycle and will not be governed by strict competition deadlines.</p> <p>Multi-year briefs will give teachers more opportunity to fully integrate the programme into their day-to-day curriculum any term of the year.</p> <p>The 'prototype stipend' that was tested on the 23-24 PDAs will be easier to access. We are integrating it into educator registrations on the new RSA Spark online platform. There will also be a dedicated Mentor platform with a broader range of mentors available for teachers to access – including alumni, Fellows and peers. Educators could use this to get peer support from those who have already successfully participated in the programme and/or request subject matter expertise or careers inspiration for their pupils e.g. from social entrepreneurs or industry Mission Partners.</p> <p>Finally, we want this support for teachers to extend beyond RSA Spark. That is why we will offer discounted RSA fellowships to educators, and nominations into our youth fellowship for those pupil entrants who are 18+.</p>
<p><b>From privileged schools</b></p> <p>We are not meeting our aspirations on reach and diversity. We need to build on the improvements we've seen in the 23-24 PDAs of state school participation.</p>	<p><b>To all schools</b></p> <p>We will have a multi-pronged approach to increasing our reach including:</p> <p>Targeted marketing, including direct email campaigns and promotion in partner communications (e.g. the RSA becoming Approved Activity Providers with the Duke of Edinburgh Awards)</p> <p>Mobilising RSA Fellows as volunteers;</p> <p>Testing a paid Ambassador model for highest support need communities.</p>

<p><b>From limited guides and workshops</b></p> <p>Teachers value the chance to learn from peers about how to integrate the PDAs into their lesson plans but find it hard to attend workshops during school hours so would prefer this asynchronously. They also appreciate guidance the RSA provide but find this hard to access and not sufficiently step-by-step to guide them through the process.</p>	<p><b>To integrated learning curriculums</b></p> <p>We would create structured, easy to use, hands on resources and modules that teachers can integrate into their classroom.</p> <p>This overall curriculum would support teachers to build core capabilities including creativity, compassion, citizenship and critical thinking.</p>
<p><b>From designing for pupils and teachers</b></p> <p>There have been requests for more teacher and pupil voice in the design and governance of the awards. From best design practice, solutions should always be made in collaboration with the communities they serve.</p>	<p><b>To designing with and by pupils &amp; teachers</b></p> <p>We have already started integrating teacher and pupil voice into the PDA and RSA Spark design.</p> <p>In 23-24, the Earth Smart brief was co-created with advice from Deborah Davidson and Martin Foulkes (Mentors). With their support, we shaped a brief that was accessible to more educators, and it was by far our most popular brief (receiving around 60 percent of entries).</p> <p>We hosted six 14-year-old pupils from School 21 for work experience to improve the relevancy &amp; accessibility of our curriculum. We are finding further test partners with a mix of state and alternative schools from September – December 2024.</p> <p>The new Awards will have built in mechanisms for participants to provide feedback on the Missions, the learning experience, and the overall platform. We will also invite members of this community to participate in decision making e.g. sharing new Mission briefs with them before they go live.</p>
<p><b>From competition</b></p> <p>A competition model is particularly discouraging to less well-resourced schools, who would value other forms of recognition. It also creates disappointment amongst hard-working and passionate pupils who do not go on to win.</p>	<p><b>To collaboration and learning</b></p> <p>Our future focus is less on a pyramid style competition with a selected handful of winners, and more on learning for all with feedback and recognition of new skills learnt via digital badges and certificates.</p> <p>We will create resources and processes for schools to host local celebration ceremonies. There will also continue to be an annual celebration ceremony where they can connect with other teams and Mission partners.</p>



# **Bibliography**

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