

Worms

A Project about Relationships
and Literacy

Explorations. Investigations.
Discourses

Project Web

Threads of interests are gathered and form project webs. The strands of the web respond to children's interests as observed in their play. A web connects the threads and provides us with an overall project. It helps practitioners connect the various themes and interests in the nursery and across areas. Awareness of the threads is an important part of observation. Documentation of threads forms the early stages of investigations.

We practice three strands of reflective practice at Allen's Croft. These are:

Explorations-Children form groups around a shared and sustained interest

Investigations-practitioners offer ways of extending, challenging or informing the exploration. This stage requires team planning and is delivered sensitively so as not to dominate the children's interests

Discourse-this is a final stage where practitioners discuss and reflect on the project as a whole.

Explorations and Investigations are the strands of the web. The Discourse provides a view of the web as a whole.

Explorations

The children have taken an interest in worms they have found in the Forest Garden. They have associated Lauren with the interest and seek her out with questions about the worms and requests to dig.

Lauren responds by mirroring the children's enthusiasm. A group forms; the shared interest brings together a mixed group of children with a core group of three.





Lauren responds to the interest by thinking of ways of introducing new ideas and extending the interest of the children.

She gathers the children who have formed a group around the interest and reads them 'Superworm' by Julia Donaldson.

The children enjoy the story. During the week the children talk to each other and practitioners about worms and 'Superworm'. Practitioners notice the interest across the nursery and start to gather strands of the web.

Lauren gathers the children again and shares how she has noticed how interested the children are. She suggests a group search for worms. By planning for this stage she is able to prepare equipment and tools for documenting.



The children want to spend time actively searching for worms. Lauren plans the sessions providing tools, water, tubs and boxes.

The children say 'That's a family'
'That's baby, big one is brother, and this is just a mom'
'Baby Julie'
'Wiggly'
'It's a family'
'The worms are playing'
'The baby is cuddling the mummy-they are family. They can be our science project we can put them in a jar.'

On a worm hunt organised by Lauren but suggested by the children, they find dead worms.

'Pick up, put in water so they can 'undead'. Poorly worms'

'Find family' the children collect sticks and start to dig into the ground'

'Special sparkly water. It doesn't make them dead'

'Its called patchy-its got all patches'

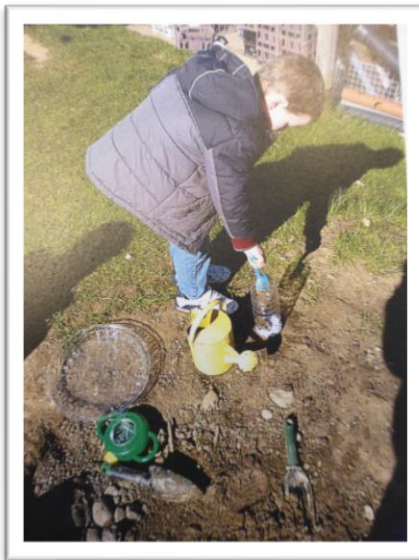
'Its dead shouldn't touch it!'

'Its not cos' its moving. They might need to be in the mud cos' they are cold.'

'Put them worms in the hole'

'Oh I touched it!'

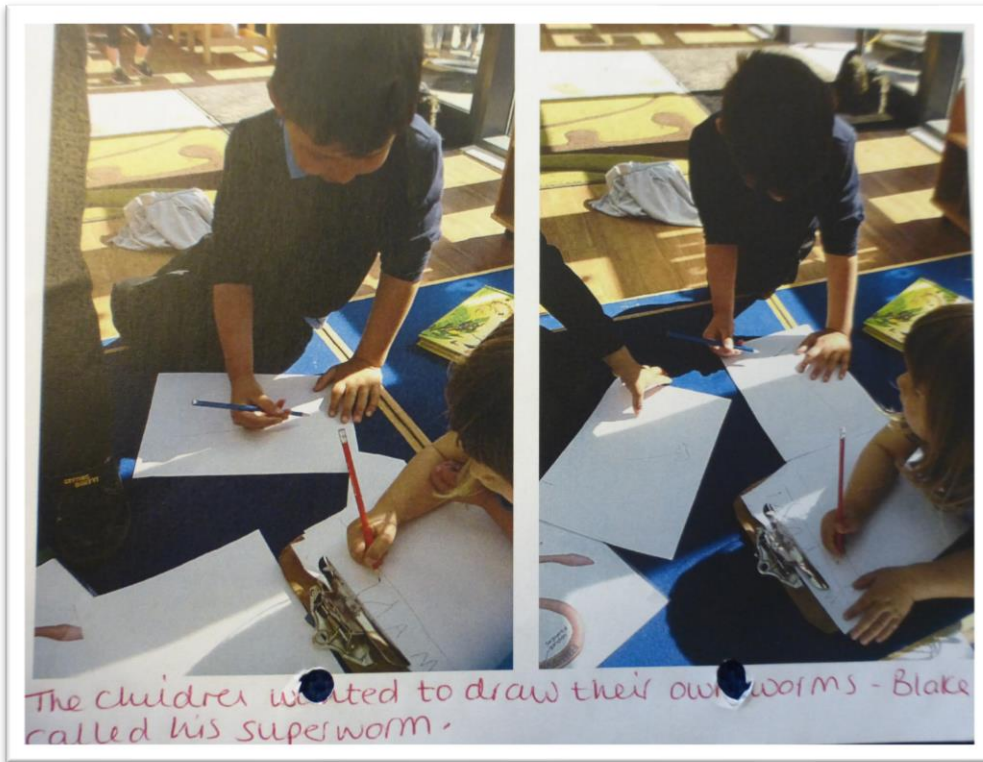
'Magic water to drink, leaf to eat, makes them sleep, sleep on the leaf'



'Found a snail!'
'This is hard' says Lauren 'Do you know what it is?'
'A shell- a snails house'
'Put it on the floor. Wait for it to come out. We need to see what happens so we can tell our mum and dads'
'I'm going to take him home. You can find another'
'No I'm taking him'
'I'll pull him out!'
'No don't do that he will die! We have to wait!'



Investigations



The exploration of the interest takes place inside too. The children draw and in doing so reveal their understanding of worms; their observations describe visually what they understand about worms.

Sharing drawings allows the other children to see that others think differently and that there are many ideas and some questions to which no-one knows the answer. Lauren proposes researching the questions to find the answers. The project starts to develop into a series of research questions. 'Do worms have bones?', 'What is the bit in the middle of the worm?' and 'What do worms eat?'. The questions are further strands of the project and each is researched separately and added to the project folder.

A woman with her hair in a ponytail is leaning over a table, looking at a document. A young boy is sitting at the table, also looking at the document. They are outdoors, with a fence and trees in the background. The image is slightly faded to allow text to be overlaid.

Discourses

A discourse is an attempt to bring together the ideas and themes that have arisen in the investigation of an interest or project. It is usually completed at the end of the project. It helps the practitioner team to reflect on the project web as a whole.

This helps the practitioner to reflect on what has been offered to the children, how this was responded to and explore further questions if they arise.

Lauren asks the children individually and in groups about the worms. New questions are formed provoking further investigations and strands of the project web.

Lauren wonders with the children asking 'What do they eat?'

'Maybe leaves'

'No they don't'

'They eat soil'

'That's disgusting'

'No it isn't that's just what they eat. They need that'

'Didn't you know that me and Amy know everything there is to know about worms. I got a worm centre to keep them. Its at my mums'

'I found another baby one. Maybe it's mummy and daddy have had babies'

'We found another one. This ones a big one, I thinks it's a mummy one'

This conversation lead to reflection and then investigation about where worms lived. Lauren proposed creating a wormery. They researched what they would need and created designs, using clay and drawing, that incorporated the elements needed to survive.

The wormery allowed the children to closely observe the worms and learn about their needs and behaviour. Close observation also led to more questions about the physical body of the worm and what helped to keep them alive.



To create an opportunity for further investigation Lauren initiates making a worm house. They research how to make one using the internet.

This opens up the interest to other children.

When thinking about food for worms they say

Worms like...

'Dead leaves, black grass. Worms like the inside of banana skin'

'We can see on Skype. Remember like last time?'

'Oh Google?' asks Lauren

'Yeah Google- just ask it!'

'I like putting water on the grass so the worms can have a bath. It makes the worms feel happy. The water is all nice and warm. The worms come up. But only water goes in the box.' Mohammed

Amy finds a slug. 'My slug, my friend'. She smells the slug and whispers to it.

'its really little think it was family and friends'

'I need to text mom, tell her I found the worms!'

'We need to find sticks and mud to make a house- for the worm family'

'We need to give them flowers so they can smell them'

'Lets put them in the wormery so they get warm'

'This is a worm girl'

'No it's a boy'

'Lets put them in the wormery what we made'

'Can we see on Google what the worms eat?'

'They eat paper, egg shells, broccoli, tea bags. They eat nice bread'

'Are these the worms bones? Do you think they have bones?' Asks Amy

'Yeah they have worm bones'

'well when I think in the middle of the night I knew the wiggly worm in my hand had two mouths'

'When my mum was gardening I found a wiggly worm'

'Well I'm going to draw Superworm. Lets sing it!'

'Well look at my Superworm I writ'

'Well look at my wiggly worm'

The children sing the Superworm chant as they draw.

'Superworm can look like a swing'

"hmmm its so 'interesting'"



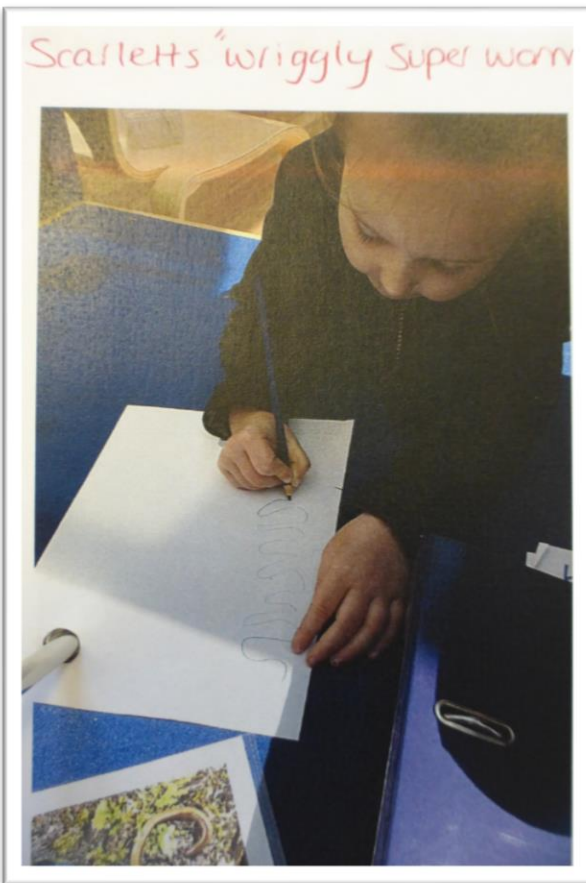
More investigations are planned as the children's interest deepens. Lauren supplies magnifying glasses so the worms can be closely observed.

Blake says 'Hmm, its so interesting'.

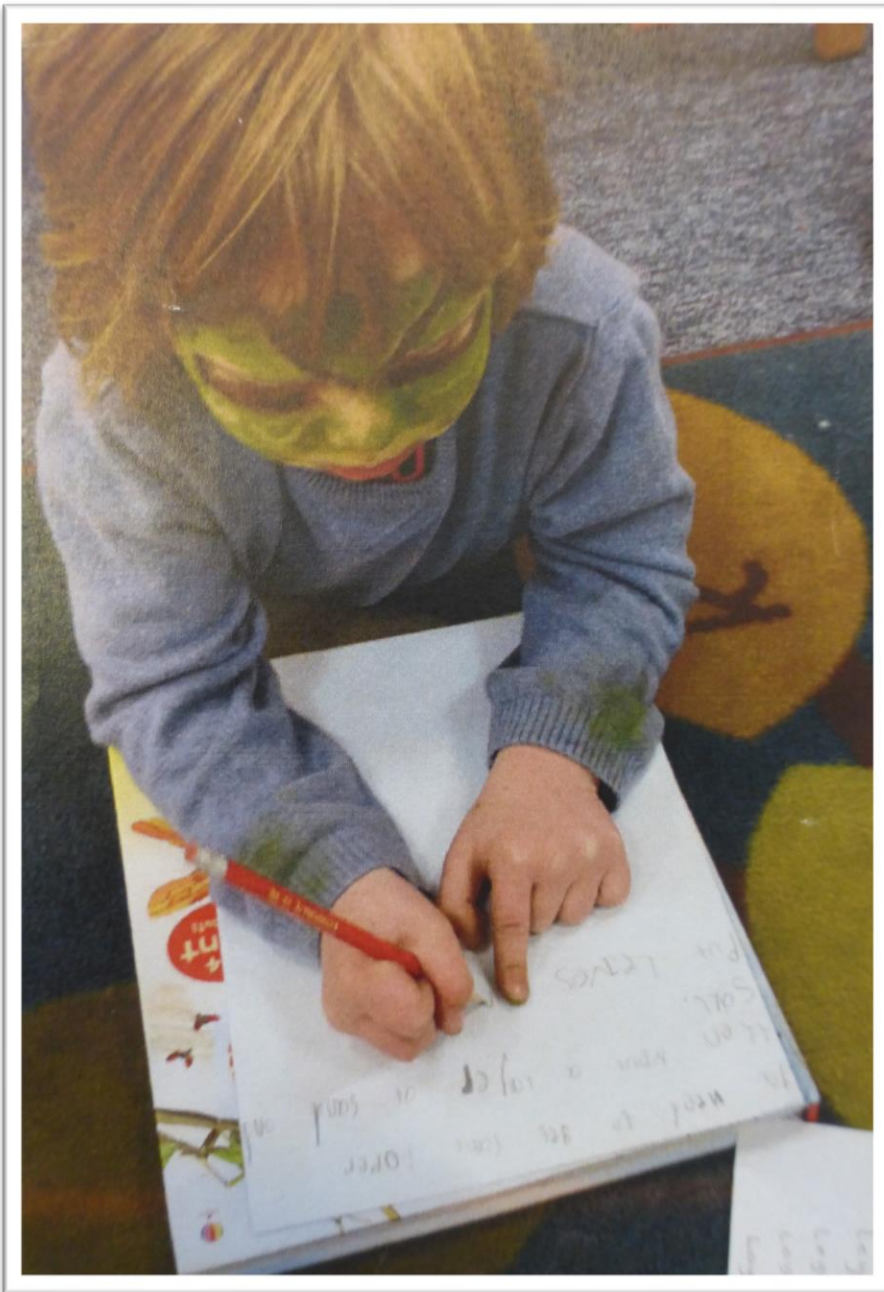
Close examination reveals colour, detail, movement and generates further questions.

Lauren plans and reflects on what has happened. Planning an investigation takes time and responds to the exploration.

Exploration often takes place in free flow time while the investigation suggests practitioner led experiences. A discourse takes place to review the project and discuss 'where next?'



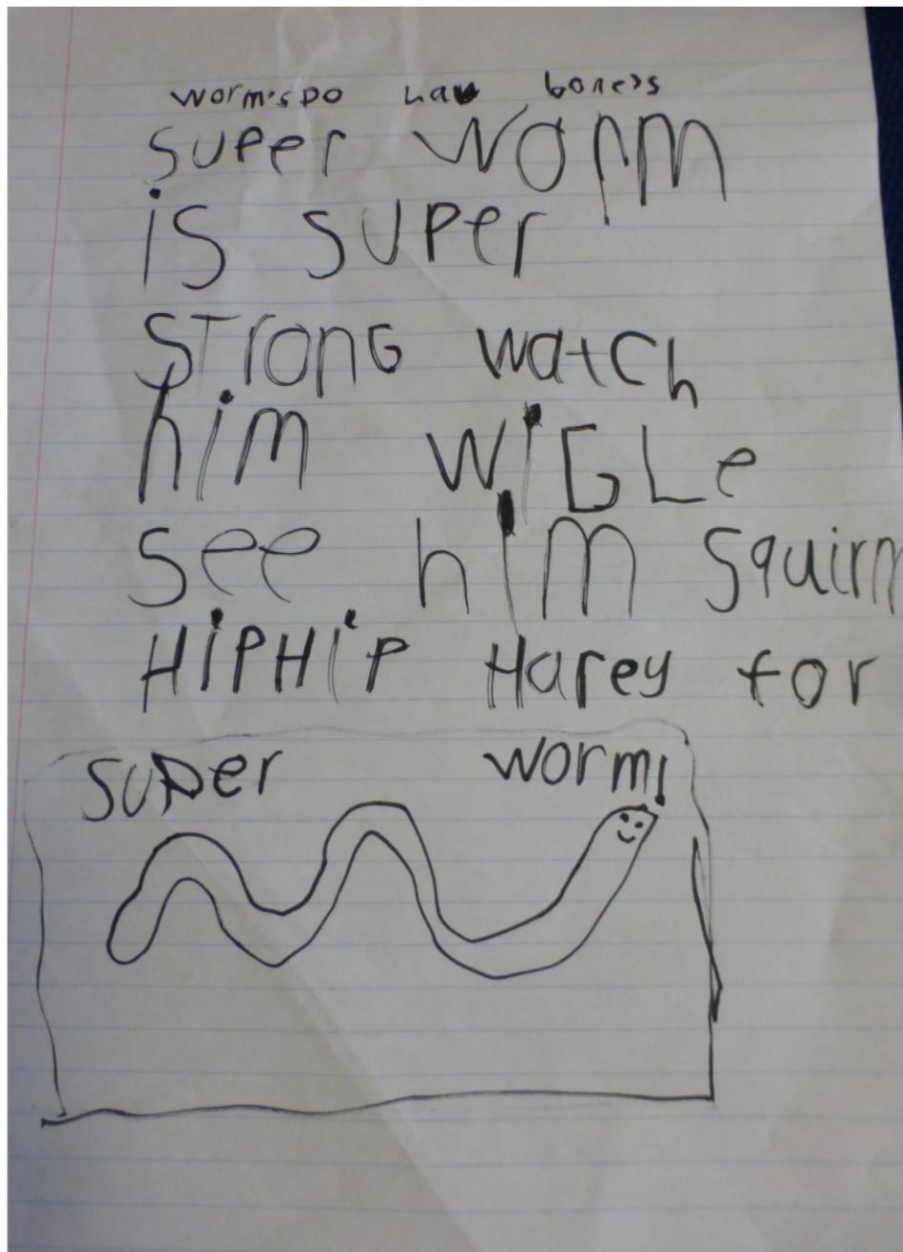
Some investigations involve researching the interest together. Lauren shares the documentation of previous experiences. This often generates questions and is helpful to re-energise the project web, creating more strands of enquiry. ICT plays an important role in helping to answer questions. The information is usually heavy with text and the children need Lauren to explain it to them. She explains this is how she also finds answers to things she doesn't know. The children see that the text has meaning, that it can reveal important information. It has value to them.



Literacy

Throughout the project the children have gathered and thought together about worms. Lauren has often scribed in front of the children and the children have been keen to replicate this.

Charlie Lee is very interested in writing and has an exceptional ability for his age. He has been excited to share his skills and has enjoyed the challenge of describing his investigations.



While some children are at an early stage in their mark marking, exploring rhythm and shape and experimenting with making meaning from their marks, others are able to take the project as a challenge and create complex pieces of writing.

Charlie Lee has recreated the 'Superworm' story, one of the original starting points for the project. He is keen to add his texts to the folder and proudly shares his work.

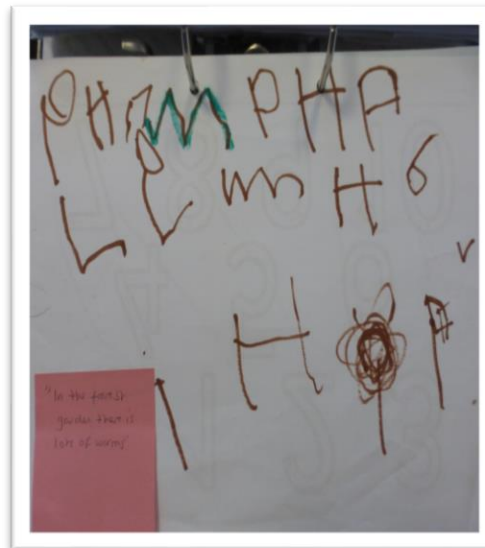
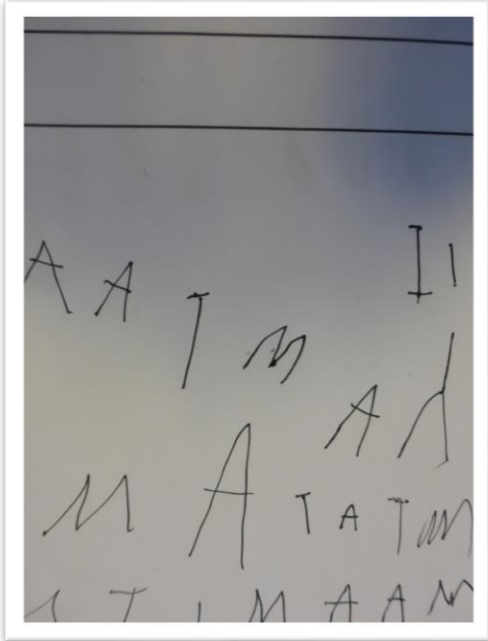
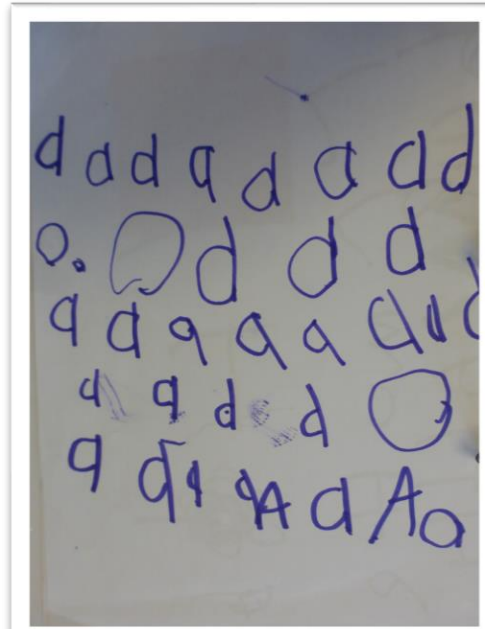
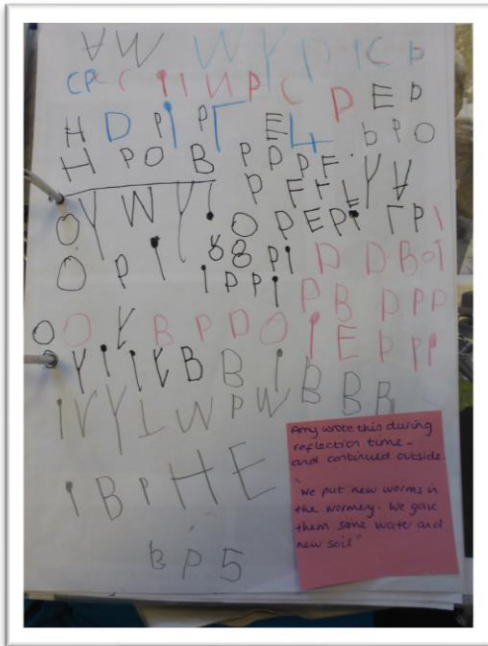
The children are accepting of each others abilities, all work is valid.

Abraham was seen at the mud pit for an extended period of time, filling a container. "I'm making a worm home." After wards, he asked "where can I keep it safe?" He first put it on top of the log in the Beach area and asked me to keep watch. When he realised that I wouldn't be there all the time, he moved it out of sight, next to the log.

Lauren has added text and written accounts of conversation throughout the project. She has scribed in front of the children. When the group has met to reflect, the photographic and written documents have brought the project alive. The children here their words spoken back and see themselves at different stages of the project. This awareness of self, of increased skill and knowledge is deeply satisfying for the children.

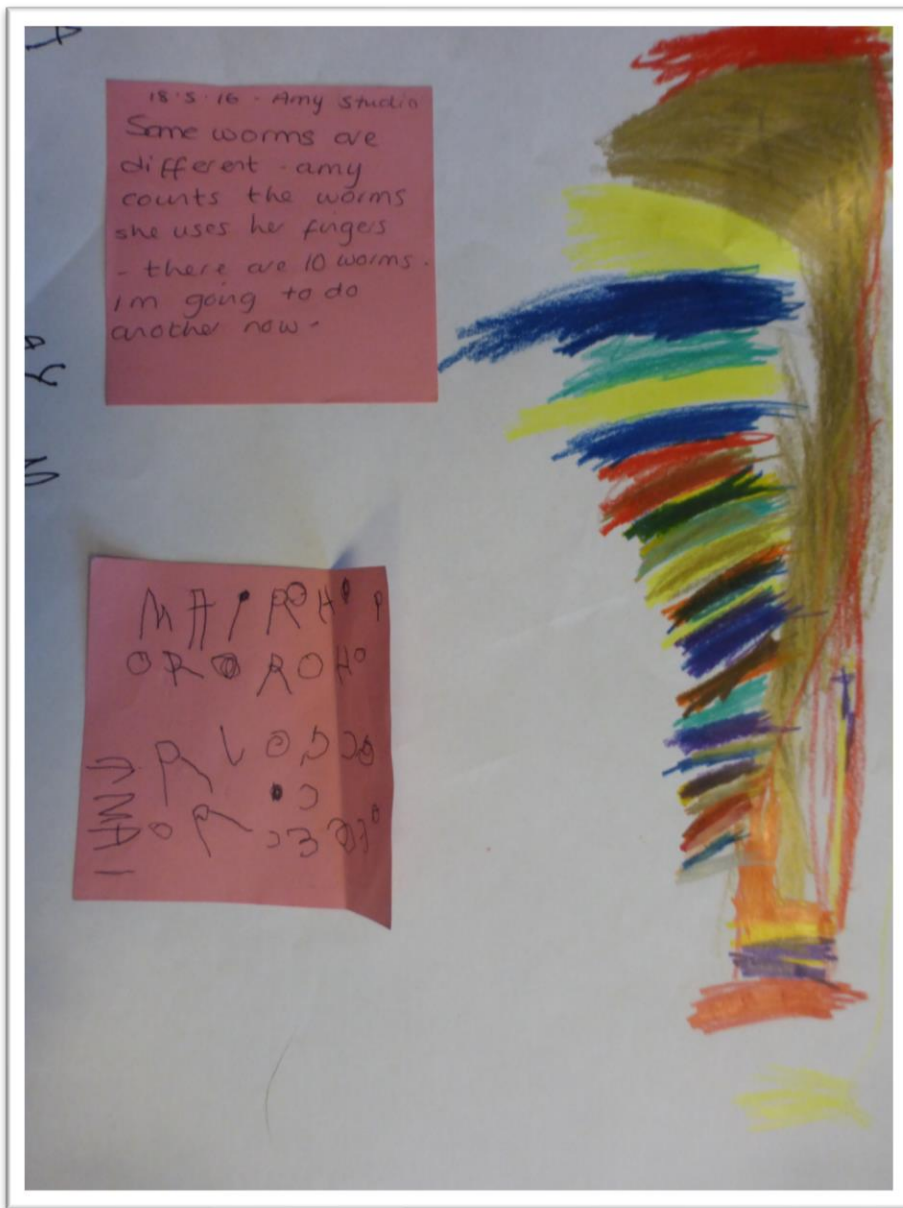
Amy, Isabella, Anna - Reflection
11/5/16
Discussion around saddle - worms lay eggs.
What do worm eggs look like.
Google
Let's search for them in the forest garden.

Q They look different colours
A Yeah that's darker / that's yellow
Q An We could just draw dots cos that's what they look like.
Show picture of hatched eggs
Q A They are white
Q An So baby worms are white
Q A when they grow big they turn in to these 'shows picture of large worm'.
Q A holds ipad takes pics of isabella doing her worm picture
What shall we do next?
forest garden to dig for worms / eggs.
Ipad 16
Q A Lets take teabags to feed them.



All the children in the group attempt to write as part of their reflection time. They proudly show Lauren what they've done. She adds their explanations on a post stick note. Some children add small drawings to the script. Often the marks are put in lines to mimic the appearance of writing.

Some letters are easier to create than others. The familiarity of letters in their own name is often a source of inspiration for early writing.

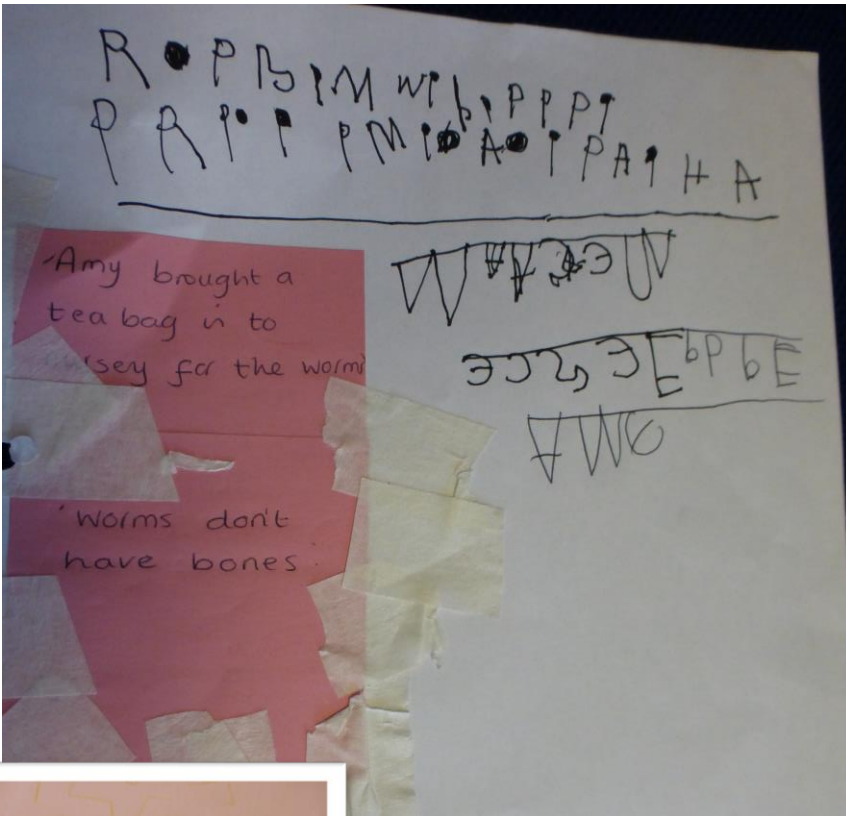


Some children mimic the way Lauren has added text to their images early on in the project. Here Amy writes her own explanation of her drawing and adds it to her work.

'There are 10 worms – I'm going to add another now!' she says.

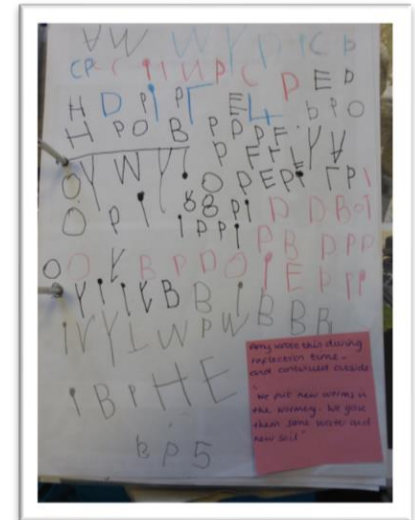
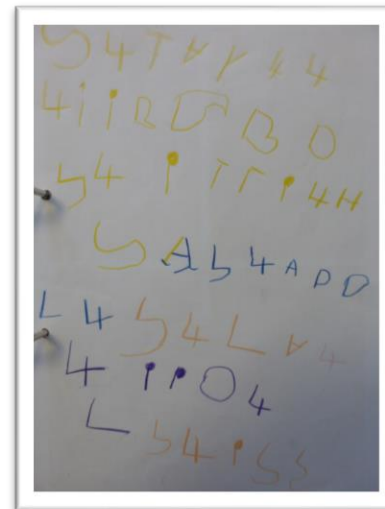
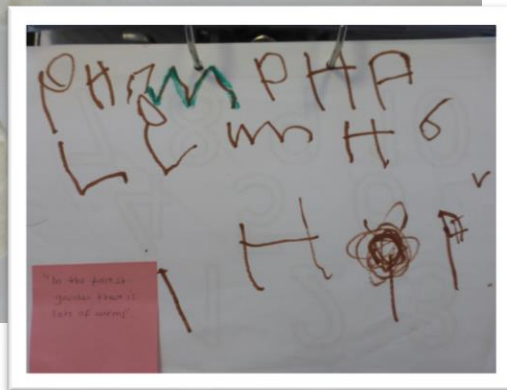
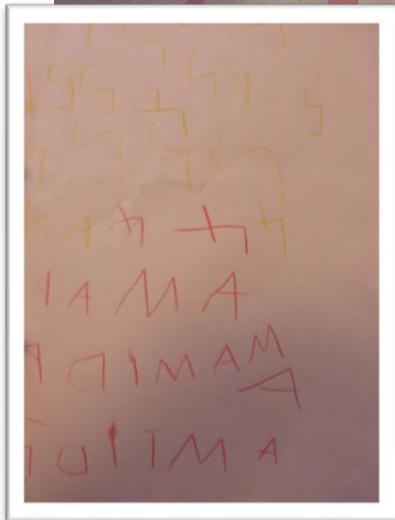
Amy makes the worms separate bodies by using different colours next to each other. She lines them up along the edge of the paper. She says 'There are so many worms. Different worms. Lets count 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9'





Amy writes 'Worms don't have bones'. This is a fact she has discovered after researching the question. She writes to create a record of her discovery.

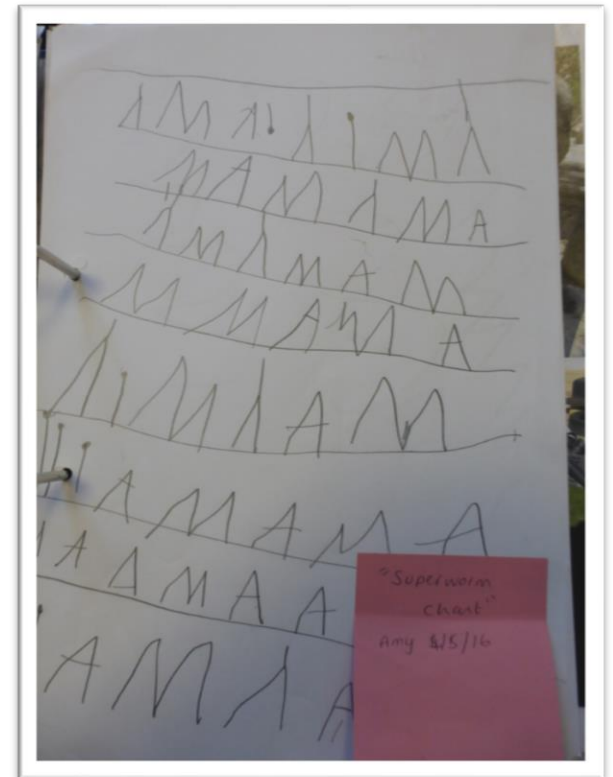
Amy has been a passionate researcher throughout the project. She sought Lauren each day and asked to look through the folder and add new pieces of work. Below are examples of her writing as it has developed over the project.

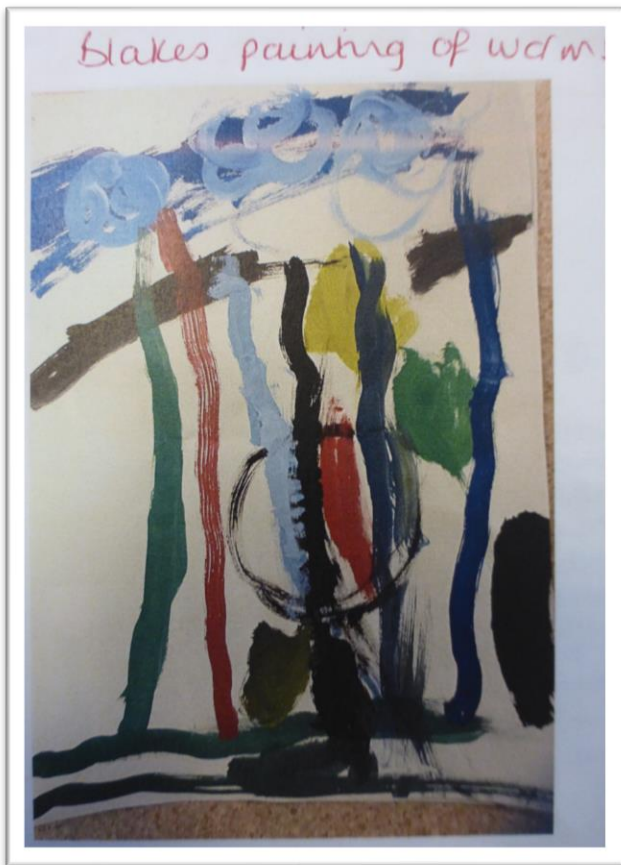




Above Amy has drawn images of worms. The drawings are four weeks apart. In the left her first drawings are small and illustrate numerous worms. On the right the worms stretch across the paper. There is movement expressed in the wiggling lines. Growing confidence and interest in the project is reflected in the marks she makes.

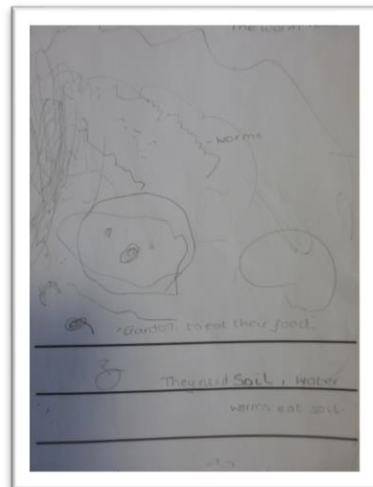
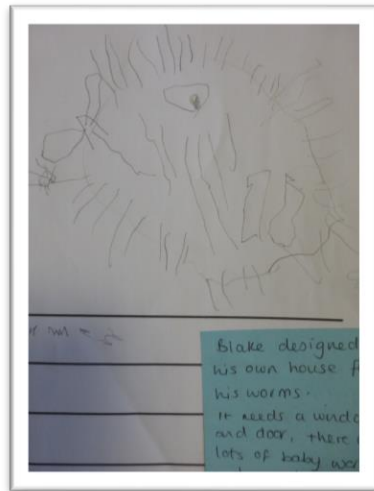
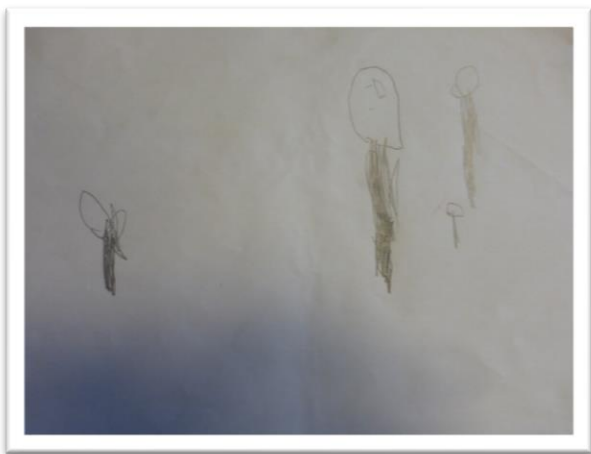
At the end of the project Amy expressed a differing purpose for her writing. On the right she has written a song. Her letters stand clearly on lines. She uses three clear letter shapes and repeats them across the paper. There is a sense of rhythm to the marks she makes reflecting the purpose. She calls it 'The Super worm Chant'.





Blake has painted worms using lots of different colours. He has painted a sky above the worms suggesting the picture is set outdoors. The worms stretch upwards from the bottom of the paper.

Below children draw the worms. The drawings are very different. This difference reflects the children's unique approach to the subject. Some children describe families of worms, worm houses with safe walls and worms with round heads and eyes looking out. The drawings combine what they see in their minds eye as well as what is observed.



Relationship

The relationship between the child and the practitioner is an important part of a successful project web or investigation. The process of sustaining a project is dependent on a shared enthusiasm. In this project the practitioner sustains the interest allowing it to develop at a steady pace over several months. There are many strands to the project web. Children and practitioners are able to contribute strands of observation, discussion, drawing and photos. Open questions are jointly researched, information is held in a safe place and is highly valued, ideas are responded to and explored.

One day Lauren was absent so one of the group took on the role of leading and sustaining the interest. She said she was the 'Worm Expert' and made 'Worm Hunter' badges for herself and her friends. She also saved one for Lauren. Lauren was held in mind by the children until she returned.

When children feel they are valued and that their interests are important they return to the experience again and again. They seek out the positive relationship that confirms they are important and have something useful to contribute, they hear that their ideas are wonderful and they absorb the knowledge that they are competent, skilled and interesting people.