

Transitional Summer School 2015

- The Chafford School, Rainham

Week One: 27th-31st July

An introduction to the course:

Bigfoot Arts Education and The Chafford School, Rainham worked in partnership for the fourth year running to run two week long summer schools for new Year 7 students moving up to the school in September. Working on the project each week were four Bigfoot specialists (director, assistant director, course co-ordinator and designer) and 3 members of staff from The Chafford



including Dave Burnett, Associate Head. Working together, the team's aim was to create a creative and engaging transitional week for the students to help make their move from Primary to Secondary school less daunting. Forty five students attended the first week's workshops, a considerable increase from previous years.

Background to the course:

At Bigfoot our focus is to use drama and performing arts to encourage creative thinking, confidence building and team work; the perfect mix for transitional workshops. The students came from a range of different schools, many not knowing one another so our aim was to create a safe environment for the students to form friendships and become familiar with their new surroundings prior to



starting their new school in September. Throughout the course of both weeks the students and staff worked together to create an end of week performance to share with friends and families. This link with the extended community is particularly important to encourage parents and guardians to feel a part of their child's time at Secondary school.

Content:

The aim for the first day was to give the students the opportunity to get to know one another. Team building activities and games were played to create a comfortable working environment in which the students could begin to share ideas and devise.



The focus for the week was 'overcoming challenges'. The students were given the starting point of entering virtual reality worlds and attempting to complete the challenges they encountered. The rest of the performance was down to them. Encouraging the students to devise their own production rather than being given a script gave them more ownership to their work and it also gave us a platform for exploring more specific challenges relating to starting a new school. Drama is a great platform for exploring thoughts and feelings and having members of Chafford staff present to answer any individual queries also helped to ease any nerves. This gave the students the opportunity to see that others may have similar worries about starting their new school and that they are not alone.



During the devising process, challenges were exaggerated with a clear message of how these can be overcome. In the school scenes, dinner ladies were dishing out gruesome food and over the top school bullies were demanding dinner money. All very unrealistic but also quite comical; making their own concerns about starting a new school seem small in comparison.

A range of drama, dance and music techniques were used, introducing the students to tableaux, mime, beatboxing, hip hop, rap and the use of alternative performance spaces. Film was used to create trailers for the virtual reality games the group had created and to give each student the opportunity to share their dreams and aspirations. Having a designer added to the skills learnt with a range of techniques and materials being used to design and create props and costume. Having a designer on the team gave the students the opportunity to take part in all aspects of putting on a show - both onstage and behind the scenes. Art also often encourages conversation; an important part of any transitional process.

Conclusion:

Week One was a huge success with positive feedback from students, parents and staff. The change seen in all of the students from the apprehensive approach of many on day one through to their confident performances on day 5 was a joy to see. Even those who arrived saying they weren't too keen on drama eased into the workshops and felt a sense of pride in their final performance.



It was great that so many students wanted to be a part of the summer school due to the success of previous years, however I would still recommend a group size of 30 max. Having 45 students just meant that each student had fewer opportunities to perform or share their ideas which is fundamental in the transitional process. It can also be incredibly intimidating for those less confident students to perform in front of such a large group.

Overall we were all incredibly proud with what the students and the team managed to achieve. The students created a wonderful piece of theatre as well as becoming familiar with their surroundings and making new friends. Many said that they were now looking forward to their new school in September with their new group of friends.

Here is what they had to say:

Students' comments

"I enjoyed beatboxing and learning new drama skills " (Jessica)



"I learnt how to project my voice across the hall" (Amy)

"I enjoyed making new friends" (Mark)



"I enjoyed playing games and doing art. I learnt how to work in a group and be kind to others" (Morgan)



“I can now go up on stage with confidence” (Kieran)

Parents’ comments

“Sydney loved it! She was up early each day to get there on time. She seems to not feel embarrassed about performing any more” (Joanne)

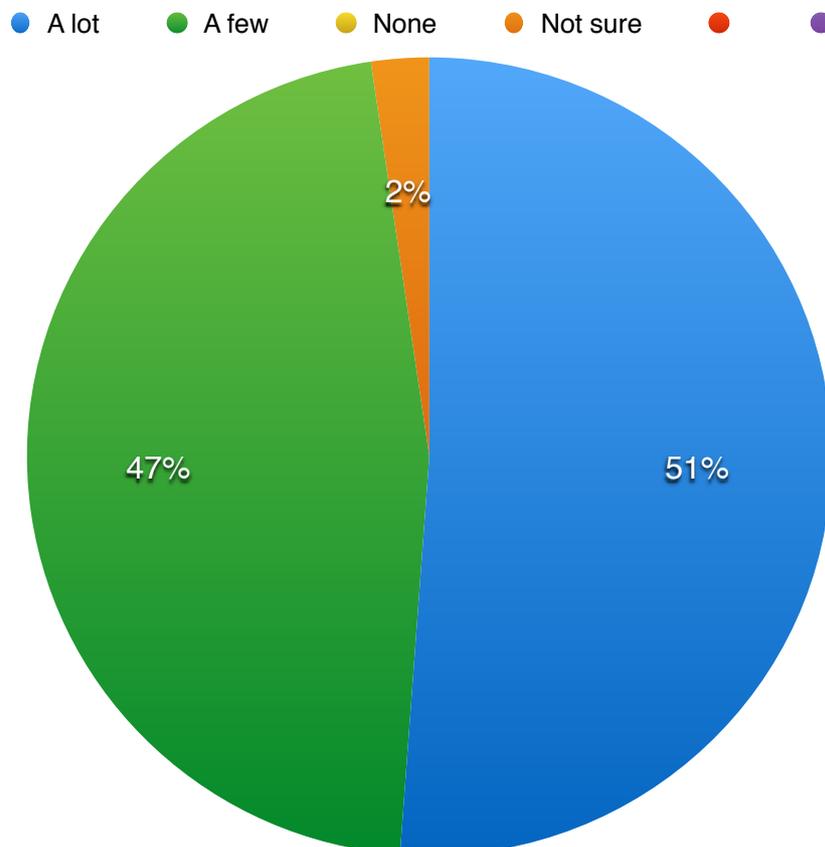
“This was an amazing experience for Ammara. It rid her of all her nervousness and anxiety and made her confident about starting school in September” (Vahitha)

“It was a good ice breaker giving Eloise confidence to make new friends. We come from out of the area and she didn’t know anyone” (Eloise’s parent/guardian)

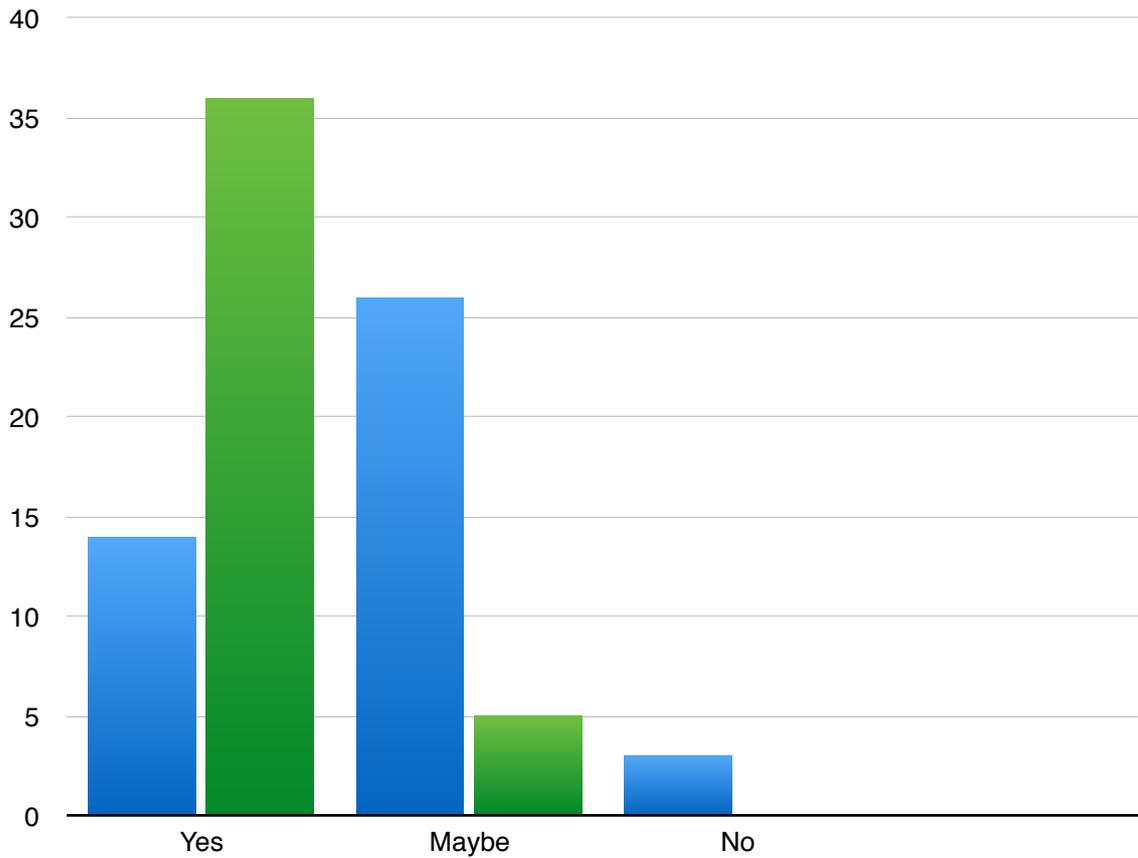
“The course built on the children’s skills and gave them the opportunity to be as involved as they like. Thank you so much” (Manjit)

Statistics:

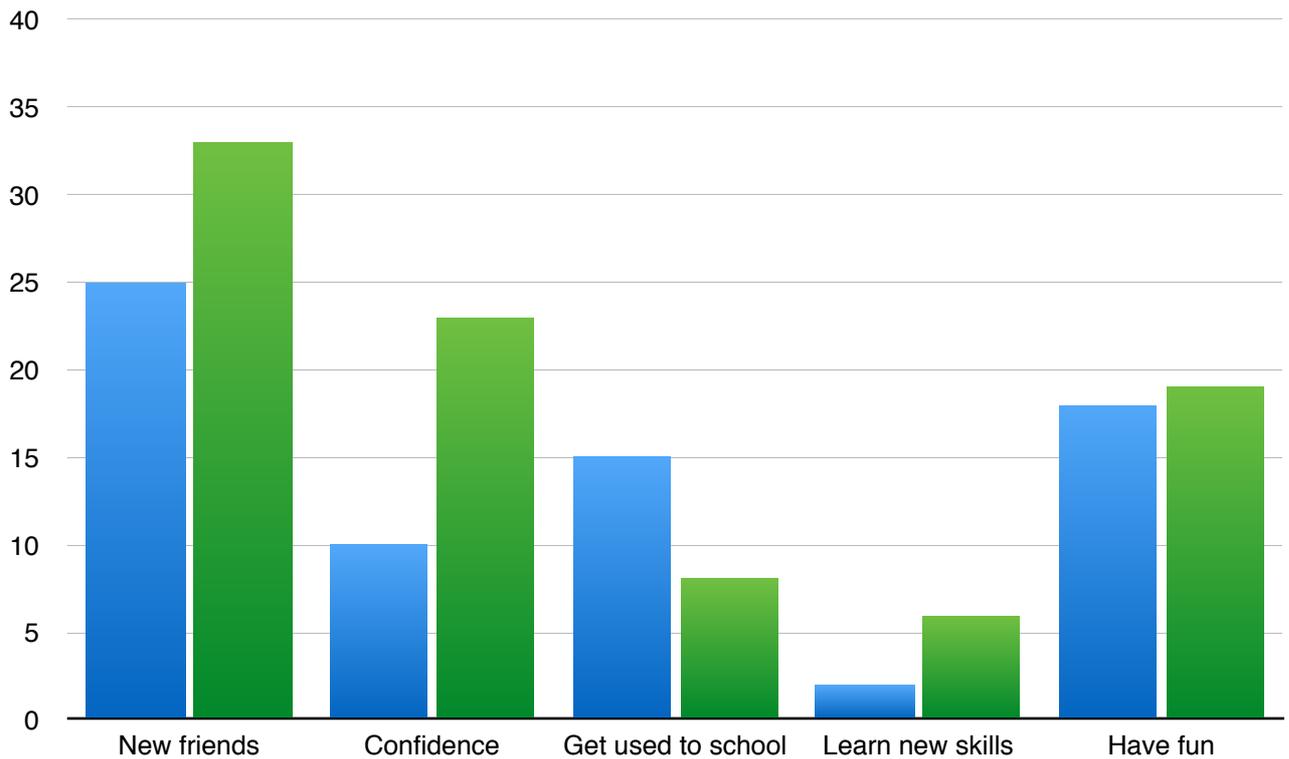
How many people do you know who will be going to your new school with you?

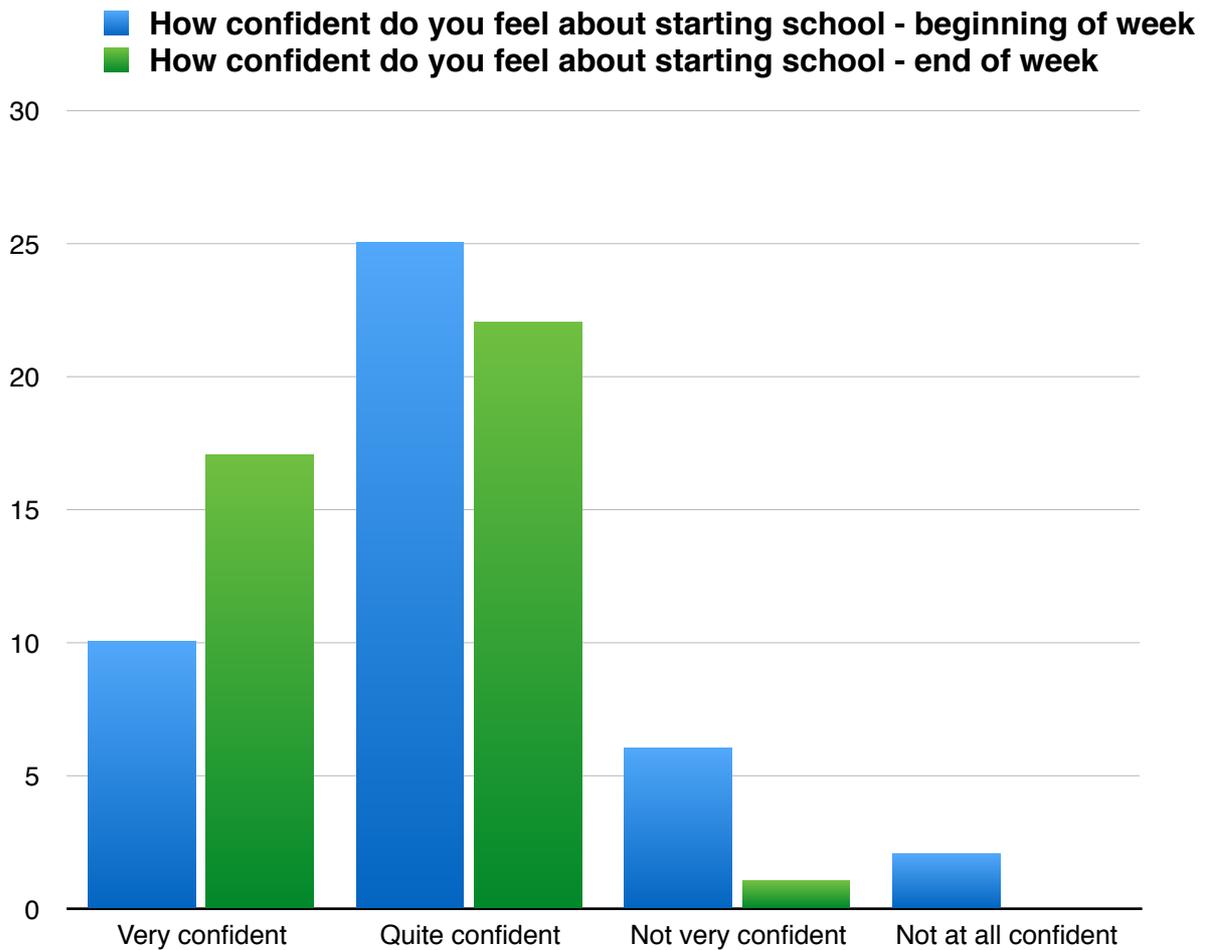


■ Do you think you will feel differently about starting school at the end of the week?
■ Has this course helped you to feel better about starting secondary school?



■ What would you like to get out of this week?
■ What did you get out of the course?





What do you think you'll learn this week?

- How to work with others
- Fun games and activities
- Confidence
- Speaking and listening skills
- Performance skills
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