

Upton Hall School FCJ is a Voluntary Aided Catholic Grammar school for girls aged 11–18, maintained by Wirral Local Authority, with Technology and Language Specialist Status.

What was the school trying to achieve?

The school wanted to engage and motivate the pupils and set high professional standards that, not only improved the pupil's skills level, but also gave them a broader understanding of the role of the artist in both the community and the workplace.

The school already has an excellent relationship with the community and as an International School has strong links with other schools across the world.

It wanted to extend the successes of the Art and Design Department by organising extra curricular workshops for adults to run concurrently with an exhibition of pupils and artists in residence work at the Williamson Art Gallery. This artwork also supported the local hospital trust; the aim was to establish an inclusive curriculum.

How did the school organise learning to achieve these aims

The school has received Awards for All Lottery Grant of £7240 to stage the exhibition of artwork at the Williamson Art Gallery, Birkenhead.

To organise learning and maximise the role of the artist within the learning community of the art and design department, the timetable was collapsed for a series of days and a period of a week in order for GCSE and A level students to benefit from longer practical sessions working alongside the artists. The pupils recorded their work and developed ideas in e-sketch pads/ e-portfolios and traditional sketchpads.

All the practical and discursive sessions were videoed for future reference.

During the past eighteen months pupils have explored the working methods of six artists in residence to inform and broaden their own responses and techniques, to create their own visual statements employing painting, textiles, and sculpture and collage materials.

The artists included Ian Murphy who creates textured surfaces using mixed media. Lynda Roberts produces multi-media collages of the built environment. Alison Bailley Smith develops fashion objects using re-claimed television wire and drink bottle tops. Diane Bates is machine embroidery artist, Jackie Cardy, a textile artist and Michelle Molyneux, a collage artist.

The subsequent exhibition, which celebrates Liverpool 2008 Capital of Culture, features work by pupils, staff, parents, and work by pupils in partner schools of the Comenius Project in Sardinia, Poland and Austria plus a group of international women textile artists: www.wta-online.org. The exhibition highlights how pupils have translated the diversity of ideas and approaches of the above artists to convey meaning and skill in their own work. Pupils work features on a calendar and Christmas cards; money raised is to support the Jelly Bean Appeal at Arrowe Park Hospital.

After the exhibition finishes, framed work will be permanently exhibited at the Neo Natal and Maternity Wards of Arrowe Park Hospital. Free art workshops for the local community and parents are organised in the gallery for the month of January 2008. Artists will work alongside pupils for the practical workshops and create podcasts and websites; these will continue as part of an extended school's programme in the summer holidays 08, with crèche facilities for parents and the community.

How did the school know it had achieved its aims?

This two-year planned art and design project has built on learning beyond the school, involving the local and international communities and business links, culminating in an excellent exhibition. It has raised attainment, and improved standards by employing a range of learning approaches. The pupils have utilised cutting edge technology and a wide range of art skills. They have become creative, confident learners and participated in local civic support. This has been an entire planned learning experience, underpinned by a broad set of common values and purposes that has successfully achieved the original aims.

