

**Macmillan Academy was previously a city technology college and opened in September 2005 following its re- designation as an academy. It is larger than the average secondary school and has a large sixth form. It is a training school and holds leading edge status.**

### **What did the school want to achieve?**

The school wanted to develop through giving students freedom and ownership of the project. The department wanted to encourage students to question openly all adults involved, to facilitate the working in small groups in harmony, and to be pro- active and eager to gather relevant information. The project was designed to give students an opportunity to think creatively about the local built environment.

### **How was learning organised to achieve these aims?**

The regular Academy timetable of 5, one hour lessons a day was completely shut down for Yr 9 students in July after they had completed their SATs tests and option choices. This is part of a whole school policy of giving the new Yr 7 on entry into Secondary education a 'compelling learning experience' through integrating clusters of subjects for their first 6 weeks, and likewise, at the other end of KS3, offering cultural and vocational subjects to Yr 9. The school has called this the 'bookend' curriculum.

The department had the luxury of continuous undisturbed study for the whole week and a budget for minibuses usage, photographic materials and entry to some sites. Students were actively learning out of doors for 3 days of their 5 day week

A number of outside agencies and individuals were involved, including the Mima Team of three education officers, the Middlehaven Development officer, an Architect from the Newcastle firm 'Purvis Ash' and the Manager of the Transporter Bridge Middlesbrough.

Regeneration, and the mammoth changes coming to their hometown soon, was introduced to students using images of the vision for Middlehaven contrasted with recent national claims that Middlesbrough is a run-down city and has a poor quality of life. Discussions on the felt effects that the built environment has upon them began.

They decided that they wanted to explore the concept of regeneration and document their findings in the form of an exhibition in the long corridor space at the end of the week. Evidence was collected that proved 'things were changing', and looked at Gateshead for similarities. Gateshead also had the Baltic gallery by the river and Baltic Quays and Sage. They worked together to make sense of contemporary Art at Mima and the Baltic engaging especially with art of local concern. Ex Macmillan students, now design undergraduates, acted as mentors and role models. Professionals questioned openly so as to gain insights into their links with regeneration included architects, museum education officers, design students and town planners.

They learnt how to sketch using linear perspective after intensive instruction, construct simple architectural maquettes and produce digital photographic joiners. Students collaborated in groups to create an exhibition of their findings and decided they would split into model makers, photographers, visual artists and display managers. The resulting informative and entertaining exhibition was open for the following three weeks.

Links were made with Maths and geometry in design and History in their findings regarding Port Darlington and the History of Middlesbrough.

### **How well did the school achieve its aims?**

Questionnaires completed by all 17 students at the end of the week stated how thoroughly they had enjoyed the experience. Students achieved high levels of technical competence quickly. Students amicably worked together in groups to present their findings and surprised themselves technically with what at the beginning of the week they thought to be out of reach skills such as perspective drawing.

All learnt something about the workings of a successful designer from Cef Madison's 'day in the life of an Architect' talk. They grew more confident in asking questions and in risk taking and formed valid opinions regarding how their hometown should develop and were able to share their views on Alsops Architects quirky designs for Middlehaven.

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