

'Cross-curricular links were not made explicit; pupils were led seamlessly from visual analysis of the formal elements of the art works to a geographical, sociological, historical perspective of the works and their relation to the pupils' lives'

Netherhall School is a large, mixed comprehensive in the city of Cambridge. The art department is made up of five teachers who are striving to integrate creativity across the curriculum. In order to raise awareness about the ways in which

art can be used to inform and expand other subject areas and vice versa, teachers from all disciplines were invited to a museum session to look at works of art. This was the first step in creating a Year 7 cross-curricular project based around a pupil visit to the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, entitled 'The Bigger Picture'.

After experiencing the cross-curricular nature of primary teaching, the head of art at Netherhall concluded that this was an area that could be developed in secondary schools in order to demonstrate to pupils the interrelated nature of curriculum subjects by integrating the art works viewed on the visit into their lessons. Teachers found this to be an exciting opportunity to stretch their own perceptions about the role of art and a way to use pupils' existing knowledge as a building block for learning within their subject.

It was hoped that the project will develop over a number of years and therefore it was considered that undue demands on teachers' planning time would impede the success of the growth of the initiative. Year 7 pupils spent half a day at the Fitzwilliam Museum and were introduced to a number of art works ranging from renaissance painting to contemporary sculpture. The pupils were encouraged to make links to their own lives and experiences by examining the content and the historical relevance of the paintings. The analysis of a Victorian painting, 'On the Brink' resulted in a lively discussion about the dangers of modern online gambling and a comparison of women's rights in the Victorian age with those of the modern day. Cross-curricular links were not made explicit; pupils were led seamlessly from visual analysis of the formal elements of the art works to a geographical, sociological, historical perspective of the works and their relation to the pupils' lives.

The maths department planned a topic of work based around a selection of the paintings discussed at the gallery. Pupils across the year group were set the challenge of scaling up a section of one of the paintings in small groups. The completed large scale images were unveiled before the Year 7s in a year group assembly.

The French department took this opportunity to investigate French culture, an important aspect of the new curriculum, by looking at the life of Monet whose paintings had been discussed at the museum. Pupils were eager to share their knowledge of the artist and his paintings with the teacher and showed a high level

of engagement throughout the discussion which included geographical considerations and social aspects of history. Pupils were then asked to analyse the painting using French phrases, consolidating the visual analysis which had taken place at the museum.

The project is still in its infancy; the department hopes to raise the profile of the cross-curricular aspects by showing staff the success of the follow-up lessons and the flexibility of the ways in which the art works can be used across the curriculum.

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