What was the school trying to achieve?

Year 7 groups come into the school from a wide range of primary schools and from different localities. The Art Department wished to develop a scheme of learning for the Year 7 groups, which encouraged pupils to use a range of familiar skills, exploring creative writing, drama and drawing in response to an image of a sculpture or painting from the past.

Writing formed the basis of a narrative suggested by an image, which was then acted out, photographed using still shots and developed into a comic strip using a combination of Adobe Photoshop, painting and drawing skills and Windows Moviemaker.

How was learning organised to achieve these aims?

The project began in October after an initial introduction phase for the Year 7 groups. The initial phase aimed to ease the transition from primary school to a large single sex secondary school. The first six weeks involved beginning to work in sketchbooks, looking at a variety of basic skills and techniques as a form of initial assessment. These sketchbook activities were designed to explore the development of drawing skills, analysis and reflection.

The project was introduced through the use of a variety of paintings and sculpture from different periods. The pupils were encouraged through discussion and collaboration to develop a narrative based on the imagery within the work they had chosen. Creative writing was used as a starting point for the pupils to allow concentration on the developing narrative.

All pupils are familiar with creative writing throughout the primary curriculum and at this initial stage developed confidence in expressing themselves through the written piece. Many pupils only had a very limited experience of thoughtful engagement with art in its historical context and exploration of the imagery and narrative within a piece of work.

The creative writing of the pupils was then developed into a visual storyboard, limited to ten images, which explored a variety of drawing and painting techniques. This involved the groups of pupils negotiating to develop scenes. The pupils were encouraged to make props and chose environments from around the school in which to set the scenes for the narrative. The storyboard was then developed into poses, which were acted out by the pupils and photographic stills of the poses were used to record the process.

These images then became the focus for the development of a comic strip, which would lead to comic strip animation. The images were manipulated using hand drawn methods as well as Adobe Photoshop before being loaded into Windows Moviemaker to complete the animation.

How well did the school achieve its aims?

The teachers had to develop a scheme of learning, which explored a diverse range of teaching and learning strategies and techniques. Curriculum planning involved teachers experimenting and developing approaches to the new technology within the department, exploring issues of time management within the existing lesson structure, allocation and management of space, cameras, computer workstations, developing confidence using the programs and technology – digital cameras, scanning and using the Adobe Photoshop and Moviemaker programs.

The incorporation of new technologies and techniques in response to a piece of art engaged the pupils in seeing how art and art history can inform and develop ideas in the present – developing pupil's understanding and appreciation of the value images and artefacts across times and cultures, developing awareness of the cultures and contexts in which they were made. Pupils worked with traditional and new media developing confidence, competence, imagination and creativity.

Pupils explored areas, which were new to them, including ideas, techniques and processes, reflection and evaluation, peer assessment. Personal evaluation developed an engagement with contemporary art, craft and design as well as an awareness of the importance of art history and art's context. The exploration of media processes and techniques in 2D, 3D and new technologies encouraged the development of friendships and collaborative learning within the groups.

The New Secondary Curriculum approaches, which were implemented within this project, provided an exciting, stimulating and creative learning environment which challenged both teachers and learners to develop new attitudes to the possibilities of what art education can be.

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