

**'As an art teacher I find designing posters and worksheets tasks totally pointless and as boring as the students do, so when I was invited to teach a specific element of PSHE and to use my own subject area to my advantage I jumped at the chance'**

There was a time when I started teaching that PSHE was delivered by every form tutor to their form each week for 5 years. However as the visible focus of the ECM agenda the PSHE scheme of work was rewritten and staff could choose an area and a year group and express their own interests through incorporating their subject specialism. So I did.

As an art teacher I find designing posters and worksheets tasks totally pointless and as boring as the students do, so when I was invited to teach a specific element of PSHE and to use my own subject area to my advantage I jumped at the chance. I focused on 'making a positive contribution' to our environment through the studying the purpose and impact of public art, with the intention of my students making a piece of public art themselves.

The objectives introduced Year 8 to the reasons behind the art they find in towns and open public spaces and how they impact on the community they are in. Students had to work as a team in participating in the production of a piece of public art designed to fulfill a set brief. When I first started this module Year 8 designed pieces of public art such as ceramic tiles for the garden and textile banners for the canteen, which not only offered a focal point but drew their fellow pupils' attention to healthy eating and our local environment. But last year I thought we would have to go bigger and more public than simply pupils, staff and parents. So eight groups of mixed ability Year 8 students have made a positive contribution to their environment by making a piece of public art for ASDA in Grantham out of plastic carrier bags which also means they were recycling and making a positive contribution to our planet.

Students began by studying the concepts behind the most famous national public art piece in our country 'The Angel of the North' by Antony Gormley and compared it to local pieces such as 'Exotic Cones' by Peter Randall-Page and 'Where are you going' located on the Glory Hole bridge – both pieces in the nearby city of Lincoln. After researching the dangers plastic carrier bags have on our environment and its creations, we became rather concerned about how carrier bags in the ocean were alone responsible for species of turtles and whales being on the endangered species list.

Students were then introduced to artists who use this material to make art. We were inspired by the community projects of Lynn Settrington who produces quilts from plastic carrier bags using a traditional textile technique the Suffolk puff. Once pupils had mastered the simple running stitch required to make the Suffolk puffs; each of the eight groups spent three of their PSHE lessons puffing and sewing as many plastic carrier bag circles as possible whilst I constructed them into a striking banner with a simple message to the public.

After a year and a half, eight classes of Year 8 students have sewn 2072 plastic carrier bags into Suffolk puffs which are now going to inform the hundreds of members of the public who visit the huge ASDA store in Grantham to think twice about what they do with any plastic bags they leave the store with. The response of the students involved was immense, especially as they could physically see the contribution they were making during each PSHE rotation as the banner grew slowly a foot per class. This has been a fantastic cross-curricular experience for all Year 8 pupils in my school; not only have they learned a traditional textile skill; they have each made a small part of a huge piece of artwork which is on public display exercising their ability to work as a team but they changed their perception of public art and have perhaps saved a few turtles along the way.

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