

What was the school trying to achieve?

The aim was to develop a Year 8 student centered curriculum experience rather an 'imposed' model. It was hoped that this more personalised approach would inspire and engage all students. Through increasing the involvement of the students in structuring their learning, the intention was that they would become far more independent and self directed, passionate and involved in their learning. It was anticipated that Yr 8 students would determine the project themes and develop personal outcomes through the application of previously acquired processes, skills and techniques.

How was the learning organised to achieve these aims?

At the start of Year 8, contextual study sources are introduced as possible starting points. These resources cover a broad range of historical, geographical and cultural contexts from pre history to current practice. The students spend time discussing images, thinking about the contexts in which the pieces were made, considering the media used, and identifying the reasons the images appeal to them. The resources provided by the school allow all students to find inspiration whatever their ability and interests.

Each student selects a starting point and begins to plan their project. They select appropriate media and are encouraged to challenge themselves. Personal initiatives, developments and pathways are negotiated with the teacher. These individual projects evolve during the year, with some students staying close to their initial starting point, while others develop their investigations in a range of diverse ways. As they establish their personal pathways the teachers' role changes to that of facilitator, supporting each individual in their independent learning. Child friendly planning and self-assessment sheets facilitate their evaluative processes. These sheets are discussed with the teacher, who helps the student to identify individual development opportunities.

How well did the school achieve its aims?

Students feel liberated by the personalised approach to learning and have become more mature in their responses, developing greater respect for their own and each others abilities and opinions. The approach has allowed the individual interests and characters to be taken into account and exploited. As a result the students have become increasingly engrossed, talking about their work with palpable energy and enthusiasm.

Students have set themselves appropriate and challenging targets, and welcomed reflective and evaluative discussions with the teacher and peers on how the work has progressed. They have responded positively to a greater level of peer assessment, modeling and support; the teacher has promoted the use of peers as critical friends, teaching the skills required and allowing time for these to be practiced effectively. Great pride is taken in their work and they speak excitedly about what they have done, where their inspirations come from, and how they hope to develop their ideas further.

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