

**School profile: Hameldon Community College is a recently formed 11–16 Comprehensive school with Business and Enterprise, and Language Specialist Status set in East Lancashire, which came into existence in 2006 as part of the BSF programme.**

**What was the school trying to achieve?**

The cultures of the two merging school were very different, one having a high ethnic population, the other none, and both students and staff were apprehensive about the future. Local enthusiasm towards amalgamating the two schools into one had been somewhat muted. Cultural understanding being one of the key concepts in the new curriculum, this was the main focus of the project.

Staff wanted to give voice to the pupils' ideas and involve them in shaping the future. Communicating and sharing this vision with the local community would be a way of generating a more positive perception of the newly amalgamated school. The school was fortunate in that it already had a radio studio with regular in-house broadcasting. Using radio as a vehicle for learning meant that all contributions could be readily shared and made public. Staff wanted radio to become an accepted form on which to 'platform' learning. Thus year seven pupils and a selected cross-section of staff were invited to share their ideas to create a vision of the 'school for the future' using the technology of radio and the common ground of art.

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

Key members of staff were given training in using MP3 recorders and computer editing programmes. They were then invited to focus on year seven and celebrate aspects of learning in their curriculum area that could be recorded. Local radio presenters came in to help pupils with voice technique and a technology bus visited the site. This generated a lot of interest and raised the profile of the project throughout the school. The results were to be put together, magazine style, to be part of the planned national broadcast day.

The art staff from both schools came together with approximately twenty students from across key Stage three, who had accepted the invitation to take part. This meant taking them off timetable for an afternoon in order to brief them and establish working groups. Some of them chose to connect to the radio work by producing advertising material, posters, postcards, logos, or Tee-shirt designs; more worked on the home page design for the radio web-site, whilst others chose to work on large paintings which combined elements of both schools. Working in small groups, they first explored ideas and then recorded images of the school using a digital camera. These were then printed, cut and pasted together to create compositions. The paintings combined acrylic with collage and the process of layering and merging images was the same whether using canvas or computer.

The group worked at lunchtimes and after school to complete the work.

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

Working together in this way gave students an opportunity to express their concerns through their art work and to relate their work to the wider project focused on radio. They were able to use new technologies and unfamiliar materials. The vertical grouping made possible through working outside the traditional curriculum was effective and the pupils showed commitment to learning new skills. Discussion during the sessions was also valuable and an essential part of forging the new school identity. The pupil voice was 'heard' and they gained a sense of ownership for the new school.

The radio broadcast day was a great success and communicated to a wide range of people. Local opinion may not have been changed solely as a result of the broadcast, but it helped create a more benign relationship.

