4 The art curriculum

Having explored these activities at home, you can now consider how to structure them to form a coherent scheme of work. The content of the activities needs first to be translated into a series of aims. For example, to introduce your pupils to:

- a variety of ways of making marks in drawing and rubbing by studying and recording the shape and surface of a piece of wood, a stone, a plant or some other natural object;
- the uses of paint, its degrees of thickness, tone, texture and colour, as a means of expression, employing the same objects that were drawn or starting with the drawings themselves;
- the activity of collage, and an awareness of roughness and smoothness, bright and dull, shape, size and texture as ways of expressing further the knowledge gained from studying the original objects or drawings;
- three-dimensional activities – the properties of clay, how it can be used, how to form patterns through the processes of building up, incision and painting;
- simple glove puppets, their use as vehicles of expression and links with literature, drama and music;
- simple weaving activities, showing the variety of wool textures and colours that can be obtained and extending their appreciation of materials that can be used in image-making.

4.1 Schemes of work and lesson plans

Once you have established your aims you can produce schemes of work. These should cover:

- the number of lessons to be taught in the term or year;
- a clear progression from one activity to another with clear reasons;
- the planning of individual lessons;

You should write individual lesson plans including:

1 aim of the lesson;
2 materials to be used;
3 classroom organisation (discussed in Section 5);
4 development of the lesson (whether work is to be completed in this lesson, carried on to another, or is part of a more slowly evolving pattern);
5 method of clearing away;
6 conclusion – possible discussion of children’s work, reaffirmation of the aim of the lesson and how far it has been achieved/improvements.

The work may last one session or two, or three or four depending on the excitement provoked, the involvement of the children and the enthusiasm of the teacher. Some flexibility is necessary. Whether at home or in the classroom you must learn to gauge when a particular aspect of the
creative process has run its course. Sometimes the very best ideas, well prepared and immaculately presented, fail to fire on a particular day. In that event you should not hesitate to change the activity. The time will be right on some other occasion. Each class is different and has a distinct identity. When you are new to a class, it takes time to build trust and confidence in activities in which the children may have had little prior experience.

The children in your class may be familiar with the materials you offer them, may have some confidence in their use and be able to make their own decisions about the form their work is going to take. If not, it will take time for them to appreciate the potential of the materials, and for individuals to gain confidence, both in themselves and in your ability to motivate them, before they can become independent. When this stage is reached, they can take the initiative in decision making, and the work can proceed with everyone fully involved.

In Appendix 2 you will find background summaries on the work produced by the teachers you saw on the video.
4.2 Cross-curricular aspects

Art is an ideal vehicle for relating to other subjects, particularly in the arts field.

Music, for example, incorporates the elements of line, form, colour, texture and rhythm, all of which have their counterparts in the visual arts. Particularly in this century, music has moved into explorations of more abstract sound and colour patterns that explore the rhythms and textures suggested by the juxtaposition of the notes rather than having external reference, such as a scene or emotion.

Scale has importance in music as in the visual arts; when exploring a large clay sculpture or a delicately decorated pot one becomes aware, in the former, of large gestures, almost public in their scale and potential for arresting the viewer's attention, and, in the latter, of an intimate, private communion. Similarly in music the large choral expression contrasts with the intimacy of a song – as the symphony does with the string quartet or trio – in the balance of sounds, their broadness and power, refinement and concision.

In the video, we see Janet's class discuss their drawings and use paper and clay of manageable scale for each child, and Jane's class also deciding on the size of their space objects according to the scale each group could handle and how they related to the rest of the display.

Similarly, in literature, words can evoke feeling for rhythm, pattern or colour. Drama adds movement, action, and the magic of lighting, and has an obvious link with art in the making of puppets. All these activities can feed from one another and be used as starting points for art. A piece of music played, a poem read, a piece of drama acted out can all stimulate visual ideas. Sometimes it is appropriate to combine several or even all of them from a given starting point. Story can supply verbal images which find their counterparts in art, and multiple images or word sounds and rhythms can furnish fruitful ideas. History provides many links, and the study of a period, an individual or event can be rich in visual potential. Science examines small particles, elements, biological forms and the origins of the universe, all rich in shapes and colours, forms and textures.
I have recently collaborated with music and history colleagues in year 6
school projects employing all three subjects. The first was a visit to the site
of a lost village in Warwickshire from which art, music and drama
statements resulted. The second followed a visit to Kenilworth Castle from
which the children gathered historical evidence of the siege and recreated
parts of the castle in terms of texture and form through the medium of
papier-mâché on chicken wire. The third involved a study of Simon de
Montfort from which musical stories emerged, historical research into the
evidence of Simon de Montfort from history, and the creation of large
models of knights and horses to depict the siege.

I have also assisted with the project on Earth and Climate, completed by a
large environmental exhibition of the solar system, which is featured in
the video sequence with year 7 children.
Part of an exhibition of integrated work in St Nicholas Combined School, Kenilworth, arising from a visit to the local castle by year 6 children (9-11 year olds)

All these projects involved subject disciplines providing a firm basis of familiarity with the subject concerned before embarking on the final work. In art, children had to engage in observational drawing to sharpen their awareness and explore the potential of various media as preparation for the final display, again seen on the video. With years 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 I have engaged in work based upon a visit to a local wood or housing complex, which resulted in visual, three-dimensional environmental exhibitions, all following the same initial procedure of observation, experience with various media and a final display, several of which were designed for children to explore physically. As we have seen, a visit, a topic, a walk, or a story are ideal points of departure for visual studies and can be extended to embrace all sorts of sounds which have equivalents in length of line and movement pattern, size and colour.

When exploring these various disciplines it is useful to consider why we carry out an idea in a particular way, why a visual statement is more appropriate in a particular line of study, or a musical one in another and vice versa. Again the work of artists, musicians, historians, etc. would be a fruitful field to explore to stimulate pupils to further exciting possibilities. Simplicity of ideas, not a vast knowledge of all the areas, is what is needed; a keenness to explore with the child, and, once involved, simply extend very gradually one's experience and understanding of the field – music, history or any other.
4.3 Environmental studies

The potential for working together in the visual arts and sharing ideas can be fruitfully explored in creating an environment. ‘Environment’ here means the creation of visual (and sound) material, in a chosen area of a room or classroom, in which a chosen theme, or series of developed images, can be explored.

The original ideas developed from the observation of stones or pieces of wood could lead to a space in which the textures and experiences of a forest can be translated into images in two or three dimensions. The space can be open to being viewed from the front or sides, or can be explored by entering into and passing through it. Drawings, paintings and rubbings can form the background or define the limits of the area, and three-dimensional stones, trees, pieces of wood, leaves, grasses, etc. can be produced by pupils and combined in the space.

Music can be incorporated into this activity from the very beginning, as you can create your own sound responses with a variety of instruments and voices. The magic of such activities can be dramatically enhanced by the inclusion of lighting within the environment and either taped or live music.

The national curriculum provides endless potential for these activities. The visit to a local castle, manor house or palace, or a study of an event or personality in history, can lead to creating and bringing together images in a three-dimensional space or environment. The solar system and space is another ideal topic where stars, planets, black holes, comets, space matter, and possibly rockets and astronauts, can all be created and combined with sounds from musical instruments and voices (see video, year 7).

5 Classroom organisation

For the individual at home and for pupils in the classroom the building of a resources box or boxes is as essential as the acquisition of paints, brushes, and pencils. The use of scrap materials as diverse as off-cuts of fabric, lino, carpets, discarded small pieces of wood, yoghurt/cream pots, straw, string and almost anything you can find will enrich the possibilities for visual expression. Hard and soft, rough and smooth, shiny and matt textures all provide variety and, of course, take up valuable but essential storage space.

The distribution of these materials in the classroom needs careful thought. As a new teacher, you should follow the methods adopted by the usual class teacher. The children will feel confident within these confines, and drastic changes to these procedures should not be made unless you feel completely confident about them and have the support of the class teacher.

It is important to gather materials together before a lesson and decide how they may best be distributed. Generally two distinct ways of teaching art are employed: the whole class together or small groups while the rest of the class is engaged in other activities. In the second case distribution is