similar territory. Not only might this provide a way forward but it might also engage the child's interest in the work of that artist. Often at the end of a lesson it is appropriate to reinforce what has been learned. Individuals should be encouraged to talk about their work and that of their fellows, expressing pleasure, suggesting additions and generally feeling a sense of sharing what others are creating. If the emphasis is upon the amazing variety we always find in the work of a class, this helps to break down any possible feeling of inadequacy and reinforce the belief that each individual's creation is unique and an important contribution to visual image-making.

5.4 The classroom environment

The classroom should be a source of visual stimulation. Such items as found objects, colour combinations, textures and patterns, photographs of places and holiday snaps need to be on hand to help train the eyes to observe, and extend experience for successful image-making. The classroom should arouse curiosity, invite the handling of objects, the appreciation of visual stimuli all around. In a school which has strong art traditions you will be met by visual imagery as soon as you enter the building.

Much of the stimulus for successful art studies is provided by an exciting classroom environment. The teacher must ensure that at every stage of the school year the wall displays of children's work, the examples of related work from other artists and the objects on display for examination are accessible and attractively presented, and frequently changed.

Colour corners are stimulating areas for study. Bring together as many different greens, blues, reds and yellows as you can find on various objects; when assembled, these will help with colour, shape and texture. Set out boxes with varieties of stones of many shapes and sizes to be handled, large pieces of wood, lengths of materials, mechanical implements. Farm machinery, car engines and many others provide rich visual stimuli which can often carry a child forward in their work or provide ideas for further image-making. Sometimes the classroom is a broad open space, sometimes confined in places, like a magic grotto into which the children can stray and become enthralled. The development of visual art ideas is a close partnership between teacher and class. If we, the teachers, provide the stimulus and encouragement, and stand firm on our requirements for attention and co-operation, the relationship will eventually be extraordinarily fruitful.

6 Assessment

The national curriculum requires that in the visual arts:

- individual pupils are required to be assessed at or near the end of each key stage;
- this assessment should be as simple and straightforward as possible and based on the teacher's own judgements of the work produced during art activities.
The teacher needs to compare and consider the following:

- the use made of the pencil (or other drawing tool) in successive drawings;
- how the child has increased his or her appreciation of the ways of making marks;
- the awareness of the different ways paint may be applied to provide greater variety and extend expressiveness by the use of brighter colour, the blending and combination of colours and balance of them within the picture;
- the response to new materials/media which may help to increase the richness of the child's image-making.

The teacher must ensure that the children have the understanding and ability to cope with the programme of study they are engaged upon. They should be encouraged to pass opinions critically upon their own work and to discuss ways of improving the final product.

The teacher needs to assess the initial aims for the activity and how well the child has achieved these aims, while at the same time providing 'space' to develop individual responses and confidence in the child's ability to bring personal solutions to image-making. If the teacher shows an example of work to the class from another artist, it should be stressed that it is not to be copied but is shown as the way someone else has tackled the subject. Often the breakthrough can be made by seeing a fresh way of using a particular medium, for example sawdust mixed with paint to thicken, pastels or chalks flaked into a powder and either rubbed into the drawing or flaked on to PVA adhesive to provide texture.


There are times when each child functions better alone (pre- and early school), creating within the confines of their still narrow experience. At later stages of development (middle and upper junior), working together can become a powerful stimulus in creative work, and certainly the sharing of opinions and observations can increase the strength of visual imagery. In the middle years of primary education, the development is variable, concentration levels are improving, and more and more creative possibilities are becoming available as the result of a broader experience of life and the familiarity with a wider range of materials in art and craft to aid expression.

As so often with teaching, it is the way that ideas and materials are presented to children that can so strongly affect their response. Simplicity and enthusiasm can convey so much, and give a child far more confidence than complex and often restricting instructions. Art in the primary curriculum needs to include familiarity with materials, experience in drawing and painting, and acquaintance with the work of other artists and craftspeople. Given the thought, care and preparation of the teacher and the often excited response of the pupils, assessment within the key stage levels can be a source of pleasure as well as progress.