

Beacon round 7: Case study 2 **The Creation Research Project, Wolverhampton Art Gallery**

The creation suite is a pioneering digital art suite at Wolverhampton Art Gallery. It was designed in 2000 to integrate the use and study of the gallery and its art and artefacts, with the cross-curricular needs of the national curriculum with particular regard to art, ICT and literacy. The suite has industry standard hardware and software, but also has a dedicated staff that includes a multimedia officer, a literacy officer with animation skills and a 14-19 age group school teacher, all of whom make excellent use of the suite with young people. The 'creation research project' took place in the creation suite and in a number of special schools in Wolverhampton. It was aimed at using art and ICT with special needs children who had physical or learning difficulties.

Aims and concepts

The 'creation research project' aimed to find out through action research how ICT in art, could be used in the education of young people with special educational needs. Funded by the DfES museums and gallery project, it grew out of the galleries' innovative creation project, of digital artists residencies in schools. The aims were to see if art and ICT could not only help in the formal curriculum, but in the personal and social development of young people with special needs. ICT would be used as a tool for communication, creativity, discovering new ideas, experiences and artworks. The speed at which children can experiment and evaluate art, which would normally take much longer, had proved important when used in the mainstream curriculum. Children with special educational needs may have many barriers which prevent them from developing traditional art skills, eg poor motor skills, short attention span, lack of coordination, so, new technology may provide a way for them to create. ICT offers them faster responses to build on, within a media with which they are familiar from TV, cartoons, and computer games. They are able to enjoy seeing their creations instantaneously on their computer, or projected on a large screen.

Method

Four special schools, specialising in the education of children with: behavioural, learning and physical difficulties. Schools identified aims and objectives and produced a plan of action for artist residencies. Teacher and artist training were carried out. Artists went into the schools and facilitated the development of artwork through ICT. Consultants were used to advise on the project including ICT in art specialists from the Universities of Central England, Birmingham and Wolverhampton.

Results

At Braybrook School for children with behavioural difficulties, the children worked together to produce a series of animation films. This involved mastering technical skills with digital cameras, software and traditional

drawing techniques. Teachers noted improvement in children's skills, desire to learn and their self-esteem. One proud pupil presented one of the animation films at the Victoria and Albert Galleries education conference.

Maggie Bolton, a teacher at Braybrook said: "Since the project, animation has become part of the curriculum and is on the timetable in its own right. The children are very motivated by it. The effect of the animation work on individual pupils can be quite astounding."

Similar achievements in skill, inspiration and personal development occurred within the other schools in the project. It is now planned to revisit the schools and the artists involved in the creation research project, to see how the work with ICT and art has developed since and to update and republish the study for dissemination amongst educators across the county.

Key features

- involvement with the gallery and its collections in an innovative and meaningful way, by children with special educational needs
- training for teachers, artists and other staff on using ICT and art with special educational needs children
- improvement in skills, willingness to learn and personal and social development of special educational needs pupils
- production of an influential paper on use of ICT and art and submissions to conferences

Key Contact

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