

School Profile: Bradley Stoke Community School is a new, 11–16 school, opened in 2005 in South Gloucestershire. It currently has learners in year's seven to nine.

What did the school want to achieve?

This event was for year seven and the aims were to develop skills in and understanding of a contemporary art form – Land Art. As a corollary the school aimed to develop deeper understanding of environmental issues including the role of the arboretum, re-cycling, sustainability, respect for the natural world, and 'awe and wonder'. It was intended to develop group working skills and, for some, to develop a further link to craft activity.

How was the learning organised to achieve these aims?

The curriculum at this school might appear to have a quite standard subject curriculum share. It is however, committed to making certain that learning opportunities are planned that are far from 'normal'. There is 'Personalised Curriculum time' (which covers Learn to Learn, personal challenge and other cross curricular themes) and the whole curriculum is suspended every three weeks or so, entitled 'Session 16s', in which the students undertake learning experiences of a more intensive nature. All subject areas lead on these sessions over the year and are actively encouraged to work in 'alliances' to deepen cross-curricular learning.

Originally, for this project, Art and Design and Physical Education were working in an alliance, with art activities in the morning and orienteering in the afternoon. The plan needed to be revised as students wanted to complete their increasing complex art pieces and it was judged that they had developed their group working skills.

The day started with a presentation about Land Art – Drury, Nash, and Goldsworthy.

The students were organised into small groups within their tutor group. Staff had been able to access the presentation and work tasks in the preceding week. Students had work sheets with the day's tasks explained.

Once in the woods students returned to type – small children picking up sticks and collecting interesting leaves. Staff found this heartening but did wonder how many ever played in the woods or even in their gardens. Many groups found it difficult to begin until one student took the lead and it took some time to wrest the students (and some staff) away from making pictures in leaves. However, by prompting their thinking based on the presentation... ('What shapes did the artists arrange the leaves into?... How did they arrange the colours?... How did they construct the baskets?') Students moved towards more pleasing, dramatic results.

On the way home the students had to write an acrostic poem on their worksheets and Independent Learning (homework) was set. They had to make a nest either from materials collected at Westonbirt Arboretum or at home. There were some magnificent examples – the students seemed truly engaged in this small task. It was satisfying to hear students inspired by working alongside their parents/carers. It seemed to add different values to the work.

Staff and students developed the ideas into more craft based activities looking at specific aspects of Drury's work; paper pulp made from materials collected. Some students, who had responded well to the initial experience, were selected to work for a further day.

These students immediately saw the potential in re-cycling the materials collected. Paper pulp was made from shredded waste paper collected in school and materials from the students' own nests

were added. Having been shown the basic techniques, and some examples of papers made by Junius, the learning and outcome quickly became experimental and individual. The students happily pushed the boundaries of the basic process and explored all the qualities of paper making. By the end of the day they were considering colour, arrangement, construction and engaging in hypothetical and creative thinking. 'What would happen if... I'm going to see if I can make it do this...'

How well did the school achieve its aims?

The whole experience was successful because the initial visit was inspiring for everyone on a number of different levels, from responding to the autumn colours and shapes to just being outside for the day. The activities planned did not involve 'traditional' art skills and therefore high standards in the outcomes could be achieved by all students very quickly. As students were working with non-specialist adults they also felt they could support learning as everyone had the skills to collect, select and arrange. It was great to see refined /design approaches developing in the later pieces.

The themes of diversity, sustainability and respect for the environment were easy to elicit and students could reflect on their roles as responsible citizens not only in relation to the environmental issues but also in terms of the skills they needed to make their team successful.

It was good to be able to deepen the experience of a few students as they explored the craft of papermaking. High level thinking and excellent outcomes from this day were evident.

'It's good for the environment because it helps me respect nature.'

'I think I have developed as an artist because I am more careful about arranging different shapes.'

'If you are not responsible the activity won't get done.'

