

Probing The Picture

Using Photography To Extend Learning

The education of all pupils is constantly under review to ensure that teaching and learning results in improved performance and higher standards.

The Spirit of Enquiry that is so vital to the education of Gifted and Talented pupils, is important for all pupils. Barry Hymer's research into the factors that produce "Outstanding Lessons" points to three important factors:

1. Discard disconnected approaches to teaching and learning
2. Delay closure – solicit alternative answers to questions
3. Encourage creative analogising – encourage connections, promote the novel and ensure joined up thinking

The issue for schools is that pupils require more challenge in their learning if they are to achieve higher standards, the issue for teachers is about how to produce that challenge:

"What the research shows consistently is that if you face children with intellectual challenges and help them to talk through the problems towards a solution, then you almost literally stretch their minds. They become cleverer, not only in the particular topic, but across the curriculum. It can therefore be argued that teachers cannot afford to allow their pupils to miss out on the opportunities for deep thinking."

Professor Philip Adey, 2008.

This publication shows how teachers have used photography as a means to stimulate intellectual challenge. It has developed the skills of observing, responding, investigating, questioning, researching, analysing, synthesising, interpreting, imagining, reflecting, evaluating, applying, expressing etc.

Pupils have enjoyed the physical act of taking photographs. It is a popular skill in life and it goes beyond the mundane into the field of creativity, experimentation

and the development of expertise. It is visual, dynamic and produces a satisfying end result, which has been changed, adapted, modified and improved – skills to be transferred into other curriculum areas.

Teachers have worked together, shared ideas and facilities, extended their own knowledge and worked across Key Stages and schools. Successful networks have been developed – not only across schools, but using parents who have knowledge and expertise in photography and sometimes using professional photographers and studios. For the pupils, Photography is a skill that has status within their lives and expectations. They have spent time looking at the experts of – wild life, fashion, news and have observed the special skills that each sector requires. Teachers have used the experts themselves, referring to the work of Bloom and Fischer in developing thinking. Above all, everyone has enjoyed improving the initial image to produce a worthwhile end result, something not always enjoyed in other curriculum areas.

Photography encourages everyone:

TO LOOK
TO TAKE TIME TO ABSORB
TO THINK
TO INSPIRE
TO ENCOURAGE
TO ENJOY

The pupils involved in these projects range from four to nineteen and the adults from eighteen to sixty. Each has learned from each other. Success does not always come quickly, there are ups and downs. Persistence and perseverance are needed. Everyone has their own view of the images used and produced. The dialogue never ends. The learning continues.

Teaching for life and work

Current debate by employers has reviewed the qualities they seek from employees. This follows comments by universities and by employers that students entering further education or employment lack the qualities needed for the twenty first century. Often Gifted and Talented pupils have many skills but may not succeed in all the areas of experience that are required.

Both employers and society seek:

- People able to deal with new technologies
- People able to deal with information overload, who know where to look and how to evaluate
- People able to work on their own initiative
- People able to solve problems
- People able to work in teams
- People who understand how society works and the values which are underpinned

Providing those experiences

Education is not about a spoon feeding approach to learning, which works against independence. It is not about sitting still for long periods of time. It is about experimentation and enquiry rather than remembering facts. This increase in engagement and independence takes time to complete and works well if that time involves being in school and out of the school environment.

Lifelong learning develops inquisitive thinkers who have the freedom to learn from their mistakes, to be critical and creative, to think and act autonomously, to be self managers and to respond to change. It does in fact mirror real life.



The role of the Teacher

Schools are looking for ways to challenge pupils' learning. What does "Challenge" mean?

"CHALLENGE" "To test ones abilities"

For pupils this means going beyond their comfort zone, probing deeper and discovering new learning as a result of the involvement in worthwhile activities. For the teacher it means working with colleagues to inspire and innovate, to coach and support. It means working with Senior Leaders in school to review curriculum arrangements and to experiment with organisation that will enable teacher and pupils to have the time to go deeper and to really extend their thinking to whole new areas of learning.

ENJOY THE CHALLENGE OF BEING INNOVATIVE