

Watch This Space 4
Gallery Educator Case Study

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Gallery: Gallery Oldham
School: Limehurst Primary School

Art Into Words: the design and delivery of a gallery literacy session for Key Stage One, Level 2 pupils

Introduction

As a freelance educator my research into the Literacy Framework in the past had mostly been limited to on-line and text based literature when planning a Literacy loans box resource. Since that time, however, changes to the Literacy Framework (NLF) had been implemented. The resulting Primary National Strategy (PNS) now allows more freedom in teaching Literacy and involves a dozen or so less prescriptive strands to be covered. As schools are being encouraged to embed the core subjects, Numeracy, Literacy and ICT across all subjects whilst also bringing creativity into the curriculum, the project presented a potential forum where teacher and gallery educator could mutually support and inspire.

Project Summary

From observing three 'Literacy Hour' lessons delivered by the teacher in the classroom, alongside further lessons in numeracy and physical education, the project work involved planning and delivering a literacy focused session plan for use with KS1 pupils in a gallery setting and follow up work in the classroom.

Context

I wanted to work with Limehurst Primary in order to extend my relationship with further members of staff at the school in encouraging future freelance opportunities. The school was also familiar with and local to Gallery Oldham, where I had worked in another role, and is located in the area in which I live which ensured easy access.

I worked with Julie Hirst the Primary Art coordinator and a flexible teacher who often spent time working in partnership with organisations and student teacher schemes. Where other classes in the school had mixed year groups, the Year 2 class chosen (6 to 7 year olds) had an even level of abilities and conveniently represented the age group targeted in the previous Literacy research which could then be further built on.

Project description

Aims:

- To understand the requirements of teaching and learning KS1 Literacy and gain insight into current emphasis in teaching Literacy in Greater Manchester schools.
- To extend pupils' Literacy speaking and listening skills through viewing and experiencing art.

Objectives:

- Observe and evaluate 'Literacy Hour' lessons and cross curricular approaches in class.
- Work alongside children to gain insight into Literacy skills and abilities in Yr2.
- Negotiate, plan and deliver activities within a gallery setting which appropriately enhance Yr2 Literacy skills and abilities.
- Use techniques in the gallery that enhance pupils' speaking and listening.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of planned literacy activities, pupils' understanding of artwork and their experience of the project.
- Observe the teacher's transfer of the gallery visit back in the classroom and provide project resources for further use.

Exhibition

Sandy Brown's sculptural ceramics exhibition 'Ritual: The Still Point and the Dance' at Gallery Oldham provided the stimulus, however, the activities created were generic. From a freelancer's perspective this was important so that the learning outcomes of the project could be transferred across any employing gallery or exhibition.

The observations

The observations carried out in school revealed a number of characteristics of learning Literacy at KS1, Level 2. Every day, pupils engage in building speaking, listening, writing and reading skills. Children each had their own 'busy books' and were required

to write in them every day copying lists of spellings written on the board and practicing handwriting, capital letters and full stops. The teacher also listened to each pupil read three times a week. Initially I was surprised at the level of writing which was incredibly difficult to decipher. I was informed by the teacher not to put too much emphasis on spellings when giving feedback. It was important to check whether full stops and capitals were in the correct place and that letters were written the right way round. At this stage pupils were learning to write words with similar sounds or phonemes such as 'make', 'bake', and the previous week 'sigh' and 'high'.

Session Planning

The teacher was flexible in her approach to teaching and cross curricular working.. After recording a number of techniques used to teach literacy in the classroom, I started to plan the gallery session and generic literacy through art activities. At initial meetings with Julie I had discussed the possibility of using artwork on display within the gallery visit to inspire poetry writing as the main part of the project. This had been an aspect of the curriculum I had previously researched. Although, in reply, the teacher explained that the class had not yet encountered poetry writing, the activity was agreed and further lesson planning to introduce poetry writing before the gallery visit was implemented by Julie.

Activities

A number of approaches and techniques, some new to me, were explored to engage the children with artwork to inspire responses through speaking, listening and writing. Alongside a learning journal written by the children charting the evaluation starting point, and recording further activities within the gallery visit, a class poem was devised after small group descriptive work around the sculptures.

A number of quick paced activities focused on gaining personal responses from pupils followed a clay sculpture modeling workshop.

Follow up Literacy work in the classroom involved pupils recounting their visit and it was collected and evaluated to compare with initial responses.

Literacy Activities at the Gallery

Session Plan

Aims

- expand literacy speaking, listening and writing skills
- To use creative processes to make personal responses to art

Planned Learning Outcomes: including 5 of the 12 Primary Framework strands for Literacy (DfES, 2007)

- To question/identify/verbalise descriptive words about the sculpture.
- To draw the patterns and shapes of the sculpture from description
- To make a learning journal of the visit
- Write an acrostic poem and a class concrete poem based on responses to the sculpture

Activities

The exhibition of sculptural ceramics by contemporary artist Sandy Brown provided striking stimulus from which to inspire learner in literacy activities involving:

- Drawing a thought bubble in the learning journal and writing what they thought sculpture was before entering the exhibition. This also served as the starting point for evaluation
- Sitting around the sculptures in groups and discussing words to describe them:



- Handling artworks provided for touching in the exhibition to inspire words to describe how they feel, look and smell.
- Recounting and verbalising descriptive words and vocabulary to be collected and recorded



- Drawing the sculpture with pastels in the learning journal without looking at it by listening carefully to a partner's description. Pupils were asked to sit back to back in pairs and in turn describe the sculpture to direct each others' drawings.
- Contributing to creative writing with peers in the form of an acrostic class poem about the sculptures using their own descriptive words:

Class Acrostic Poem

Sculpture is art

Cylinder shapes

Up to the sky

Large and long

Patterns, spots and zig zags

Twirling and twisting

Under arms hooped

Round like pumpkins

Exciting!



- Transferring what they had seen and spoken about back into artistic form through making their own models.
- Recounting what they had accomplished on the visit through a formal written recount back in class (often a requirement of KS1 assessment tests). This also served as the project evaluation exit point:

Outputs

Pupils each completed a learning journal with a written sentence or word to describe what they thought sculpture was alongside documentary drawings derived from pupils' verbal descriptions.

They each made a clay model inspired by Sandy Brown's sculptures

They wrote a formal recount of the sculpture and their visit, again in their learning journals, after the visit when back in the classroom.

Learning Outcomes - pupils

In the initial evaluation starting point many of the pupils could not write down, describe or did not know what they thought sculpture was. At the end of the session, all pupils verbally offered words to describe the sculpture and listened carefully to each other's descriptions to make drawings of it.

Children had encountered some difficulty in describing the sculpture in the gallery session in regards to their texture, feel and weight, again due to prior knowledge and

experience levels. However, being able to handle specified pieces in the exhibition assisted here contributing to the following descriptive words offered by the class and collected by myself in the gallery session:

“tall, like a spoon, colourful, like a key, stripy, spotty, with wavy stripes, pumpkin shaped, round, patterned, 3D, like a number eight, rough, twirly, multi-coloured, like a snake, it bends and turns”

REVIEW AND EVALUATION

I asked the teacher to comment on the session and follow up activities

Teacher’s feedback form

1. In your view, was the children’s vocabulary extended and if so, how?

The children’s vocabulary was extended through activities that required descriptive comments to be made and clear instructions to be given to a partner.

2. Which activities best extended their speaking and listening skills?

The activity that required one partner to describe the sculpture for another partner to draw is a fun and interesting way to develop “speaking and listening” skills. The children were expected to give clear, concise descriptions and needed to listen carefully in return.

3. How well did the activities prompt the children in asking “good questions”?

Children in K.S.1 find it difficult to formulate good questions. The activities required descriptions or instructions rather than questions.

4. How appropriate was the level of work for the children (poem writing, formal recount, art skills for example)?

Children managed activities well. I was pleased with the level of literacy observed.

5. Are there any ways the session could have worked better for you (timings, resources, level of activities etc)?

The session was well paced, keeping the children interested and involved. Would have benefited from longer at the gallery.

6. In your view, what was the main highlight of the gallery visit?

The children enjoyed making clay models and finished them the following day. Personally I enjoyed producing a class poem.

7. ...and finally on a more personal note, how did you rate my presentation and delivery skills in front of the class (please feel free to be honest)?

I think your presentation and delivery were very good. You spoke with interest, waiting for their attention before starting and involved a variety of children.

IMPACT OF WATCH THIS SPACE 4

For the school the project enriched the Literacy curriculum and offered an abundance of stimulus which effectively assisted pupils in shaping texts both in the class poem and evaluative written recount. The pupils engaged excitedly with the Literacy tasks in the gallery and were encouraged by the teacher for the work they had undertaken. The setting brought the speaking and writing to life and allowed for closely assisted group interaction and whole class work in comparison to the usual individually desk based versions encountered in the classroom. The teacher particularly voiced her approval of the poetry writing along with surprise at the pupils' results in writing creatively which they had not encountered before.

For me the gallery educator

I am confident in the knowledge that the Literacy activities planned at Key Stage 1, level 2 in the generic gallery session were directly related to the current national emphasis on speaking and listening within the new Primary Framework for Literacy and can be further put to use. I have also recognised that interaction with individual teachers to find out their current Literacy objectives prior to a school visit to a gallery is important in cross curricular planning and that a lot can be achieved, even in a one and a half hour session! Pupils will always be excited by the gallery environment, the making activity where they are allowed to be more messy than in school, or even the journey there on the coach but will equally engage with the required Literacy objectives when planned seamlessly into the visit.

In the future I will definitely be more confident in negotiating initial meetings with head teachers and the experience has led me to believe that I would like to embed Literacy, as teachers are doing, across any gallery school session. I would also attempt to negotiate with teachers ahead of a visit to incorporate literacy in gallery session planning.

The next steps are to pursue my career further and gain employment within the gallery education sector. I now feel my skills have been further honed and knowledge of the school curriculum and emphasis within it has been updated.

References

DfES (2007). Primary Framework for Literacy. Learning Objectives Year 2. 2.8.07:

<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primaryframework/literacy/learningobjectives/years/Year3/Presentation/>

Photos Lindsey Milnes