

Art Rooms in KS1&2 Schools: Gomersal Primary School

As part of AccessArt's campaign to promote the importance of making in schools ([#whatdidmychildmake](#)), AccessArt is keen to identify and share success stories from schools that have created art rooms within their schools. [See all school interviews here](#), and if your school has an art room then please [get in touch](#) to share your story.

Many thanks to Mandy Barrett from [Gomersal Primary School](#) for sharing their art room story.



Gomersal Art Room

Background

Mandy Barrett studied at Bretton Hall university and has an BA

degree in art and education. She has spent 13 years teaching the creative curriculum and during this time has worked as an art coordinator in primary school. 3 years ago the first school she was working in closed down and was moved to a former middle school site. As part of this move, Gomersal Primary School inherited an old, purpose built art room. The Acting Head, Ms Melanie Cox (now the current Head), was supportive of the visual arts and was looking for ideas as to how to utilise the space. Mandy told her about the wonderful things happening in the dedicated art room at Battenford Primary, and they arranged a tour to see the Battenford art room in practice. The Head agreed to convert their inherited room back into a fully functioning art room, and Mandy was given the role of specialist art teacher across the school via PPA cover. The school carried the cost of regenerating the room, and continues to fund art materials and running the kiln (which Mandy comments is always on).

Contact Time

On a dedicated timetable, every class in KS2 spends one entire morning or afternoon in the art room with Mandy, every week. Mandy comments that although to some this might seem a lot of time given over to art, in practice, the activities which take place in the art room spill over and feed into many other curriculum areas, including English, History, Geography, Science as well as developing more general skills including writing, reflection, self-assessment etc. All art lessons within KS2 take place in the art room.



Hanging artwork

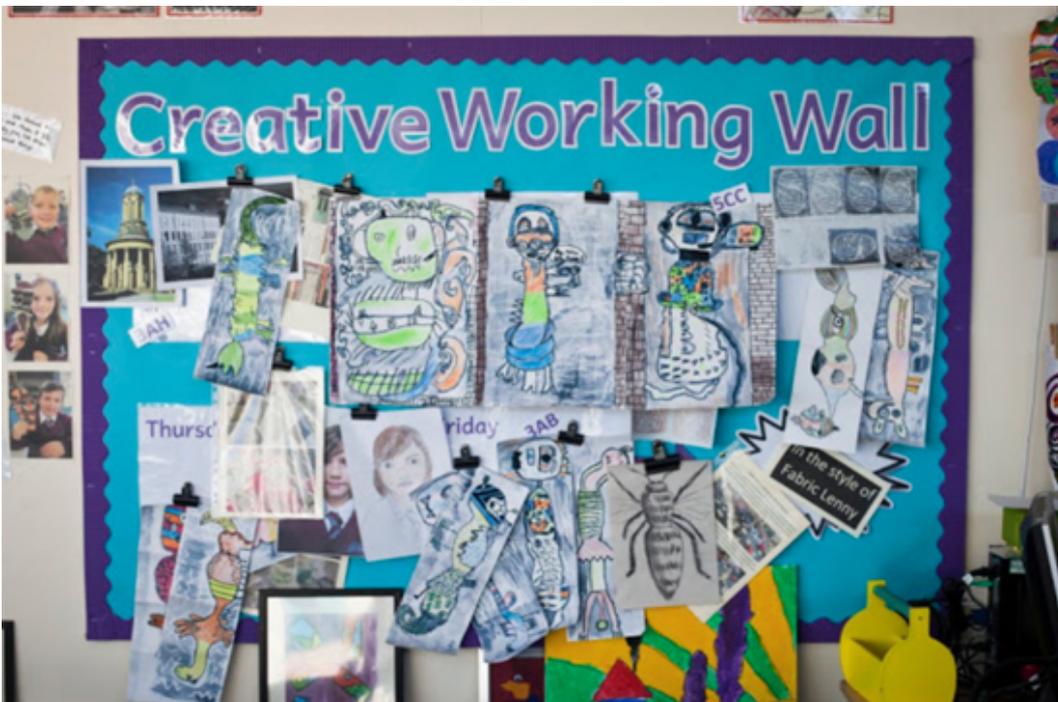
Children in Early Years and KS1 also visit the art room on a regular basis too. This takes place on a rolling timetable every three weeks.

In addition the art room is open two days a week after school

for a variety of art clubs to which parents, children and school staff are invited. Parents enjoy using the space to create their own work; this is a legacy from an old funded project which was successful, and to which many parents and support staff have continued to attend.

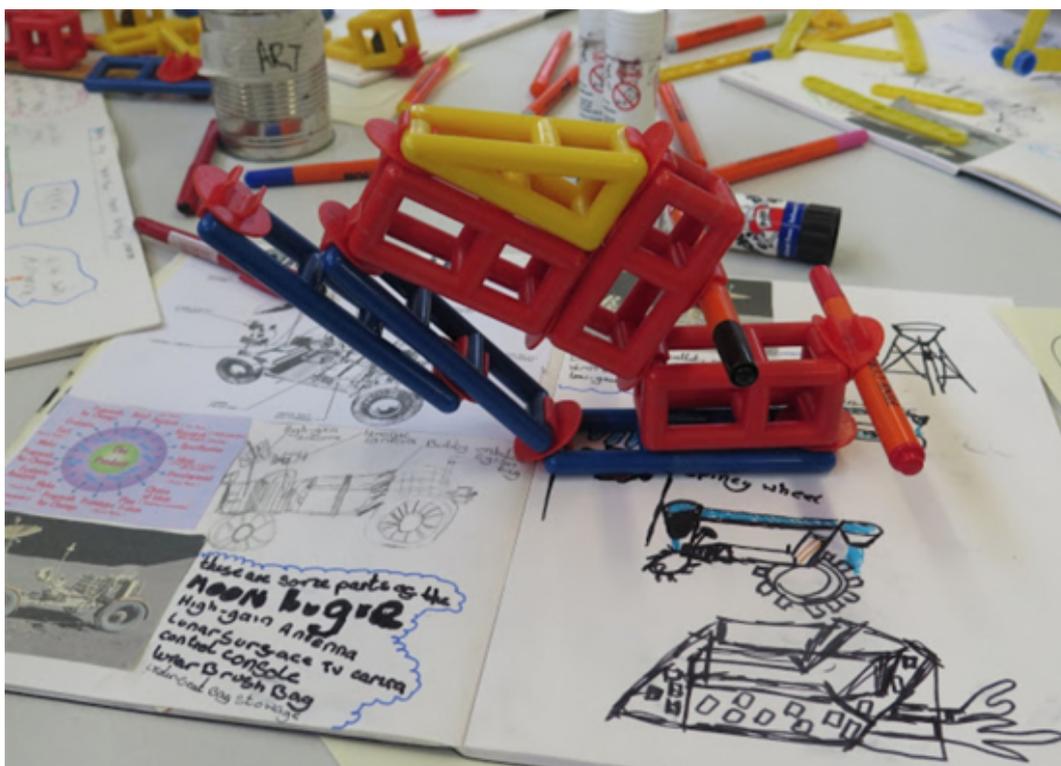
Philosophy

Mandy aims to get all the children in upper KS2 to the stage where they can dictate their own learning journey during art lessons. She comments that in a way this is more of a high school approach. She will ask the Yr 5 and Yr 6 children to "plan the direction of their own work" - giving them a theme - and asking them to make a creative response. This creates many individual responses and ensures the project outcomes do not produce 30 generic pieces of work. They have the skills to do this because of the time invested during art lessons to help build their skills and understanding of art as a process, including developing their ability to question, reflect and act.



Creative Working Wall

Sketchbooks are central and vital to all work undertaken in the art room. They are kept in the art room, but children feel able to access them when they want to, and are free to act in the sketchbooks as they feel. In year 3 children undergo "sketchbook training", giving them the skills (which they can develop over time) to understand how a sketchbook can be used. These books are always on the tables as the children work, they can then explore, create, design, evaluate and reflect throughout their creative journey.



Integration of Sketchbooks

"The children all help to keep the room smart and tidy; learning to wash up and looking after the equipment form part of our lessons."

How is the Art Teacher Supported?

Mandy is an artist herself and her enthusiasm and passion for the subject shine through. Her personal network (including Natalie Deane) has helped enable this project and continues to feed her ideas. Mandy continues to feel very supported by the

Head and has a dedicated art technician who works alongside her for two hours each day.

Impact Upon other Staff

Mandy comments that many of the teachers in the school were quite happy to relinquish teaching art, and pass it over to her. I asked Mandy if she felt that her teaching art almost gave some teachers "permission" to disconnect with a subject that they might not have much experience of, and Mandy says that she works hard to try to get teachers to connect with what she does in the class - by sharing outcomes for example, sketchbooks and consulting class teachers during the planning process. The work that is created in the art room is displayed in classrooms and forms a substantial part of whole school displays. Teaching staff in KS1 and Early Years attend the art sessions with their classes, they are there to support the learning process and gain ideas of how to teach art. This is a great opportunity for regular 'in house' CPD and many teachers in KS1 say it has improved the quality of their art teaching.

Employing Artists

Visiting artists are also invited into the school to run after school clubs. These are self-sustaining financially, with children paying £18 each for a block of 6 weeks, with the money going to pay the artist and the use of materials. Artists also visit in school time paid for out of school budgets and with children contributing various amounts (just as they would for school visits). Strong links have been established with many local artists over a period of years, they continue to attend our after school art clubs and their work is studied and used to enhance curriculum projects.



Day of the Dead Sewing Project

Impact on Children/School

Mandy describes the art room as being a vibrant place, and the resulting art work is very much in evidence throughout the school. The school entrance has recently been renovated with a range of permanent art displays, all created by the children, local artists and Mandy. The general look of the school has been 'up-lifted' with a vast array of artwork. The children are more confident, creative learners which is also evident in other areas of the curriculum.

What factors contribute to all this being possible?

- Inheriting a disused space looking for a purpose.
- A supportive Head Teacher.
- An ongoing healthy materials budget, supplemented by donations from parents (ie. textiles and tiles from parents working in those industries).

Other Initiatives?

Gomersal Primary School also has it's own art blog and twitter account. These are run by Mandy with the aim of sharing good practice with parents and other art practitioners. This is a great way to underline the value the school places on the visual arts, by making visible to all (including parents and children) the activities which take place during and after the school day.

Challenges for the Future?

The school is currently looking into ways in which it can support other local schools with their teaching and delivery of art lessons. Gomersal Primary School is part of a Ten Primary Partnership and is beginning to offer training for teachers within these schools. Mandy is also beginning to offer workshops for Gifted and Talented children within local schools which will be hosted within school time.

Mandy Barrett

[Gomersal Primary School](#)

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