

Art Rooms in KS1&2 Schools: The Elms Junior 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 Anna Morrow from [The Elms Junior School](#) for sharing their art room story.



The Art Room at The Elms Junior School

"The Elms Junior School, is an independent co-ed school in the East Midlands with approximately 400 children aged 0-11. The school has expanded and evolved a lot over the last nine years, under the tenure of the existing head. This evolution has been both a physical change with the creation of new buildings, and a philosophical one, with an overhaul of how we educate our pupils. Both changes have helped to develop the school into an excellent and vibrant place to learn and teach in. The profile of Art, DT and IT have risen significantly, to the point where the school has a dedicated Art/DT for KS1 children and purpose built separate Art room and DT room, both with specialist teachers who teach all of the children from Y3 upwards.



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The move from Art being taught as a general classroom-taught subject, was born out of the need to offer a more consistent experience to the children, as at that point, the quality of art taught was very much dependent on whether the teacher had the skills or interest in art. There was a desire to move away from some lessons that were craft experiences, which had the tendency for the end product to look rather uniformed, to lessons that gave experiences and skills which young children

need to help them to develop as artists and give the children the scope to express themselves creatively. Physically our infant classrooms did not lend themselves to a full immersive art experience, which is why a new room was created. This room had the resources to hand, enough space to make and store work and importantly surfaces that could with stand a good dollop of creative enthusiasm - mess! The children in KS1 are taught by their class teachers, but they follow an art scheme that introduces the skills the children need, in a way a non-specialist teacher can follow and adapt to suit their class and topics.



One of ten glass fused panels made by Y6, part of the 2015 leavers legacy window

Our KS2 children are taught in a lovely room, where their experiences extend beyond the normal curriculum and they explore a wide range of mediums, including lino cut, willow and wire work and glass fusing. I am the children's specialist teacher. I have a degree in Art, as well as being a qualified and experienced Primary teacher. I worked as a class teacher in the state system for a large proportion of my career, before I joined The Elms as a class teacher, where I taught both infant and junior classes. As our school's direction

changed, I became the specialist teacher for art. Initially I confess I was not keen to give up all of the other subjects I enjoyed teaching, but now, four years into the role, I love it! I have found that I can weave the other subjects I also enjoy, such as history, science etc, into my teaching, so I am enriching the subject further with this knowledge. Subject specialism is already well established at The Elm's, in MFL, Music, Science, Games and P.E, most of these being taught from Reception up. Art, DT and IT joined the list in the last few years for KS2. Both children and parents have embraced this change and it is a huge selling point for the school - which is a business, in a way a state school isn't. Prospective parents are always impressed by the facilities and especially by the work the children have produced.



Mixed media collage of a dragon by Y4 child, inspired by Uccello's St George and the Dragon

The children are hugely enthusiastic about art; many tell me it is their favorite lesson. The work they produce is of a high standard, which can be seen in the work that is displayed in the art room and around the main school. The children are

confident in the room, they know where everything they need is kept and are independent in organizing and caring for the equipment they use. They experience a rich art-based language and can talk confidently about the elements of art they use, using the terminology. They respond to challenges well and are willing to take risks in their work. I am lucky enough to see them develop from Y3 to Y6, which is a privilege.



Felted and embellished Lowry style figure by Y5 children

As a school we are free from having to follow the National Curriculum, so I have developed my planning to suit the children I teach. The work they do engages them in all of the elements of art, through topics such as William Morris and our 1920 building and 'Fishy' work in Y3, Dragons and 'Emotion and Masks' in Y4, 'Insects world' and L.S Lowry in Y5, Banksy, 'Sweets treats' and Pop Art in Y6. A small sample of the themes that allow the skills to be covered in a stimulating and captivating way.

In KS1 the work often linked to topics they are covering in other subject areas and is delivered by their class teacher. The children revel in the space a dedicated room offers, it is a vibrant room and once inside the scene is clearly set for the learning about to take place. As in KS2, the children enjoy the change of environment and both rooms have a buzz about them. Work is focused and the pace is fast, a huge amount is crammed into an hour, but the children never fail to respond.



Soft pastel observational drawing of a passion fruit by Y4 child

Being an independent school is a factor that makes dedicated art rooms viable. The income allows the school to develop such fantastic opportunities for the children, these then help to attract more children to the school. Times in the independent sector have been and still are, very tough, with many schools falling by the wayside. However, with a visionary head and a team of excellent teachers, schools such as The Elms, continue

to thrive and offer an outstanding education (as supported by our recent excellent ISI inspection). This school has small classes which make a big difference to the amount of attention children get individually, this focus helps all of our children to progress further than they otherwise would. While the physical space is very important, it is the teacher who is able to stretch, inspire and nurture children's artist skills, this is still the key to a top quality art education. At The Elms this is what we are collectively aiming for, by putting those teachers into specialist positions to offer the very best education to our children, the people who matter the most in our school."

Anna Morrow

[The Elms Junior School](#)

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