

## The Integrated Design Department in Action

### The interaction of art, craft, woodwork, metalwork, needlework, and home economics in an open unit at Kaskenmoor School

Ron Heath

*Kaskenmoor School, Oldham*

The word 'integration' is often used to describe situations where various practical activities take place in close proximity, but it means far more than mutual assistance and co-operation. Kaskenmoor has a purpose built, integrated craft area which has specialist facilities for all types of practical activity. With team teaching and the omission of traditional subject names a start has been made on the road to integration.

#### Organisation

The school was formed in 1966 by the amalgamation of an existing Grammar and Secondary Modern School and the craft area was completed in 1967 and designed originally to cater for the 180 comprehensive annual intake. Twelve members of staff teach full time within the area. Each broad aspect of work has a responsible teacher – art and light craft; wood, metal and drawing; needlework and home economics; in general, each area has a compliment of four members of staff. As can be seen from the accompanying plan, the specialist areas are arranged around an open quadrangle. These areas are all connected, often by swing doors so although there is not a completely open planned area, many groups can work together in larger areas. Subsequently we removed some of these doors and indeed would now move others were it not forbidden by fire regulations. The central working area has many different types of benches which enable wood and metal to be worked as well as other materials such as stone, clay and polystyrene. Circulation space is also work space and displays, demonstrations and films can be held in various places. The terminology of the areas shows simply the facilities which are available in that area for handling a particular material and the specialist teacher, who is always available, is based in that area. He is responsible for the general organisation of that particular area even though it may be used by as many as five or six colleagues with different groups of children during the course of one week.

To ensure the success of an organisation of this kind the teacher must be always available. This does not mean that he always has a teaching group. Indeed it may be that three staff may find themselves with twenty children and the way in which this group is split is decided mutually. Staff absences within the area are covered internally and the need to substitute from the rest of the school is rare.

A danger is that the craft area is so self sufficient as to become detached from the school as a whole. This is overcome by the fact that every member of staff is either a form teacher or a house tutor which entails constant involvement in general school

matters. Many links have been forged with the rest of the school. Indeed academic teaching staff are bringing their own pupil groups to use the facilities in the craft area.

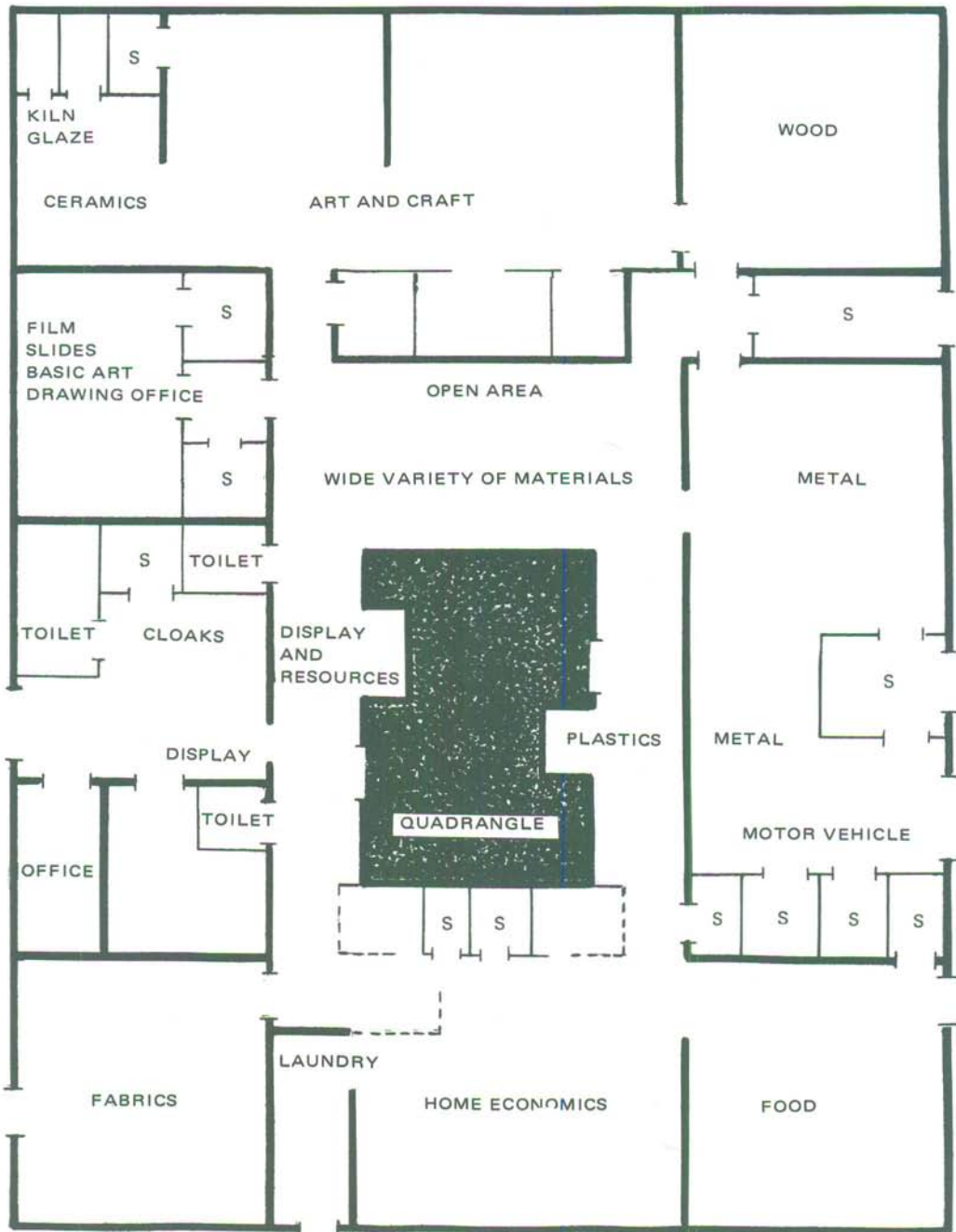
All Kaskenmoor pupils in the first year spend one day a week in the craft area as do second year pupils, but in each case a whole morning and a different afternoon make up the time allocation. Thus Tuesday morning sees 207 eleven year olds being absorbed into the craft area. Each child is encouraged to choose either one or two friends and then they are arranged into four groups of around 52. These are further split into three giving teaching groups of 16/18; each group has pupils from each of the seven forms in the first year. In this way we have completely mixed ability groups and no differentiation whatsoever is made between the boys and girls. The twelve members of staff are divided into four teams. Each team of three is made up of one specialist teacher from each of the three broad aspects of work (art/craft; wood/metal; home economics/needlework). This team then assumes responsibility for one of the groups of 52 pupils and these are the only pupils that the three teachers will be with during year one. This is the starting point for staff to involve themselves in a far wider field of teaching than is usual. The teacher of woodwork takes his own groups for metalwork as well as aspects of design drawing during this basic course; the art specialist works in pottery and printing work. Some teachers now extend this range of activities further.

There are two important features of teacher activity. Every member of staff is actively involved and has a responsibility for the work done in that particular field, it is not possible to opt out and sit on the side lines. Secondly, teachers are encouraged to teach in the presence of other teachers. There are occasions when one member of the team of staff is directing the attention of 50 children towards some particular aspect of work whilst two colleagues "watch", he is the expert in the team of three on the matter concerned.

This type of team teaching has now been practised for nearly three years, and we are all becoming much more adept in its use. But are still not ready for the stage when the 50 pupils can be sent to the team of staff who will then organise everything themselves. At the beginning of the year one of the groups of children is directed to a particular member of the team and sometime during the course of the morning they move to another teacher before seeing the third member of the team on the afternoon later in the week. This change over during the morning is arranged mutually and will vary from week to week as the team is entirely independent of the school bell times and also other teams within the craft area. Soon the teaching groups themselves begin to interchange due to different interests and abilities. This is encouraged, care being taken that one area and teacher does not become overloaded.

### **The basic first year course**

The basic course itself is art based which means that the starting points for interpretation are such things as colour, shape, texture and proportion. No written scheme of work is produced, the emphasis being on a different approach by each team. Films and slides are our main starting point and may be shown to a whole team and early in the year may indeed be shown to the whole group, before breaking down and interpreting the theme in different materials. A follow-up use of selected slides may then



--- INDICATES LOW WALL OR ROOM DIVIDER

S - STORE

Integrated studies area at Kaskenmoor



be employed by any teacher and odd corners and store-rooms are often used for this purpose. Much of the work done in the area has an immediate link with basic art but it would be foolish to try to teach home-economics by making coloured cakes. Having accepted this we find numerous occasions when a natural link occurs. The colour and arrangement of a salad leads on to a discussion as to why one should appear more appetising than the other; textures on the tops of cakes; pastry shapes lead to similar debate. In this area a series of cards have been prepared to enable children to find out for themselves about materials and equipment used in the home, foods, hygiene, etc., all of which can be done at the speed and depth relevant to the child's ability. The cards are designed for practical interpretation and a reference area as well as a science area is available. Sometime during the work session, children working on similar types of problems sit and discuss their results but formal notes at this stage are discouraged. What used to be referred to traditionally as the needlework area is now very closely linked with work in art, fabric printing, collage, tie and dye and weaving.

Articles produced in the wood and metal areas tend to be largely non-functional. On many occasions the work being produced is built up to form a large creation which is displayed in the school library or house rooms and gives considerable satisfaction to the children. Alongside this work is a need for the individual functional item which may, for example, be different coloured timbers of the same width and thickness cut to varying lengths and glued on a base board to produce a table mat. A key tag brings in work in aluminium, etching on copper, casting in plastic or free shaping in wood. An art based course does not mean that the approach to work is completely free. A child may for example judge where to make a saw cut in a positive and negative theme but still has to use marking knife and try square on the timber to produce that line. But techniques are stepping stones for future progress and not an end in themselves.

The work in art obviously ties together much of the work in other areas and the art teacher is a key member of a team of three. On many occasions it is impossible to concern oneself with only one aspect of the basic course. Texture, for example, is a relevant factor in practically all work. Similarly colour has a more important role to play in the art area than perhaps in metalwork where the range is not so great. Much of the work done on paper or card in the art area can be a starting point for three dimensional work in other areas but this same work need not necessarily be continued for the length of time that it will take to produce an article elsewhere.

## **Year Two**

Thus the whole of the first year is designed to show the child all activities in the craft area and to encourage him to pursue a theme or topic as far as possible. Until recently our course in the second year was a continuance of the first year but we began to feel that perhaps some of the more highly specialist activities of staff were required in order to ensure a high standard of work. The art teacher, for example, could no doubt cover the very wide range of work undertaken in year one but in year two the pottery specialist would be better in covering his aspect of the work. Thus a different type of team teaching is now being employed where staff are re-grouped within a given theme but the pupils stay in the same mixed groups as year one. Three members of staff adopt a theme of 'The



The scene at Kaskenmoor



Home' and cover home management, food, house and room planning, scale drawing, home adornment, colour pictures and pottery. An art and home economics specialist work closely on textiles, wood, metal, fabrics, clay; cards are used in a theme of animated forms. A more scientific theme is introduced studying the strength of materials, use of plastics, experimental cookery, study of fabrics, making toileteries and cosmetics.

### **Year Three**

This type of arrangement once again encourages the individual to tackle problems and find out for themselves, the only disadvantage at present is that after a period of weeks the groups move around, thus ensuring that at the end of the year they have worked within each of the themes. Up to the end of year two, then, no actual choice of specific activity has been made by the child even though he or she has determined the type of work within an area. Similarly as far as the child is concerned woodwork or pottery is no longer a subject but really an area where this material can be used. Year three entails a reduction of the wide based pyramid which forms the basic course. The top two ability groups within the school begin specialist sciences and thus now spend one morning per week in the craft area. Until this year these children had not covered the basic course and thus they chose two broad aspects of work for study, i.e. heavy crafts, art and craft or home economics and textiles. Now we are in a position to continue themes of teaching with these top ability pupils which will eventually lead to C.S.E. Mode 3 on 'The Home' for example, or perhaps the A.E.B. paper Craftwork - Design, Communication and Application where a design problem can be answered in the material chosen by the candidate. The other four ability groups within the third year still spend overall one day per week in craft which is split up into three separate occasions. In one three period session a choice of activity is made from each of the three broad aspects of work undertaken within the area, again there is no differentiation between the sexes. On another occasion within the area a theme is undertaken by one team. A particularly successful one has been a theme of toys organised in close co-operation with the local nursery and infants schools. This has enabled mixed groups of boys and girls to tackle large projects such as a see-saw, a truck, etc., as well as soft toys, bricks, dolls house and cot. Other themes have included light, noise, personal adornment and so on. As can be seen, the choice of theme is very wide to allow for free interpretation and apart from a football rattle, the theme of noise tends to develop around musical instruments. On the third occasion within the craft area these third year pupils are involved within a school project "Myself and the World". In a practical way we cover the following topics for a period of four to five weeks before moving on to another topic; home repairs, motor vehicles, cycles, decorating, home electrics and plumbing, furnishings, first aid, buying and selling a house, legal problems, gardens, sheds, paths etc.

### **Year Four**

Within the fourth year this same project is continued for the lower ability groups. This year the boys are concerned with an extension being built on to the craft area. The girls study child management and beauty care and both boys and girls make much use of television and radio productions.

The school flat is in constant use by girls for varying periods during their fourth year. Whilst living in the flat they invite guests to lunch either from the staff or outside school, old age pensioners, local contacts with industry or visitors to the school. This type of home running is furthered by a two week period in a housecraft centre within the authority. Two houses are owned within the town for these purposes and a resident housecraft specialist employed. For boys we now run a simulated industrial plan. Two boys spend a period of two days working in and around the school. They report each morning for 'work' and are given job cards which are selected as being suitable for the boys in question to tackle the problem on their own with the workshops as a base. Recently we have converted the bedroom of the flat into a bed-sitter by adding a room divider with working top and a simple cooker. Thus the two boys will be able to make their own snack type meals and generally use the bed-sitter as though they were living in 'digs'.

The children in the fourth year opting to stay on at school have a series of 'four line' choice subjects which are over and above their compulsory maths and English. An interview with each child, parents, headmaster, housemaster and careers master determines the choice from each line and although craft is on three lines, no child is allowed to choose it more than twice. Having chosen craft then any specialism may be continued up to external examination level. These numbers vary from year to year but on one line, for example, if 30 children chose craft, only two out of that number may choose pottery. These two are time-tabled alongside fifth year pupils and on occasions sixth and third year pupils. It may thus be possible in an extreme case of finding a number of children in one teaching area whose ages range from 14 to 18. As indicated previously the design of the craft area lends itself to this type of individual teaching where ones and twos can find their own corner or area to work in if the need arises. 'A' level studies are now being undertaken by small groups of students in a wide range of work whereas art was originally the only one of our subjects studied to this level at the original Grammar School.

### **Staff decision making**

The absence of a written syllabus is demanding on staff time. We must meet as a complete group of thirteen teachers to discuss and arrange general policy and organisation but a group of this size tends to be too large and take too long to reach agreement. Thus regular meetings by the teams of three staff is absolutely essential. One member of each team acts as leader and the four team leaders meet to discuss common elements. Each teacher responsible for an aspect of work also requires occasions for meeting with all staff teaching within that area and these same three meet frequently with the writer to formulate policy. These meetings normally take place at lunch time but this year we have been fortunate in time-tabling one period each week where every member of staff has no teaching commitment.

I believe few people having had this experience would wish to return to an isolated room or workshop. Not only have we as teachers much to learn about ourselves, our pupils and our colleagues, but we are also surrounded by a wealth of specialist activity sufficient to stimulate even the faint hearted.