

Home Making — The Design of a School Flat

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As the name suggests the school is a residential school for deaf children, most of whom are weekly boarders. The children are taken from a large area as far north as Middlesbrough, North Lincolnshire and the Barnsley, Rotherham, Doncaster area. A few children come from a larger distance and therefore have to remain in school except at long holidays.

Children are taken from 2 and 3 years of age up to 16. There are approximately 200 pupils in the school covering all age ranges.

Most of the children in the sec. department have been resident in school for approximately 9 years. Because of the nature of their handicap and the large number of children involved it is not possible for the children to be trained to be fully independent in getting up and looking after themselves.

I feel that the craft department can do a lot to help at least the girls and perhaps eventually some of the boys to gain some dependance on themselves.

A certain amount can be done in the Housecraft room to train the girls in the basic essentials of housewifery and caring for themselves. Unfortunately this training falls short of the real experiences. The children do not get the opportunity to gain this experience in their homes. They are home for only short periods of time and perhaps do not then get the chance to be truly dependent on themselves.

It is therefore essential for us at school to give the pupils all the opportunities we can afford. In order to do this the craft departments embarked on the conversion of the first floor in the tower block near to the school kitchen. The finished project will give us a flat in which girls can work both under supervision of staff and in the fifth year independently to give them realistic (or as near realistic as possible), experiences in homemaking.

The project was first started in about April 1973 when a suitable site for conver-

sion became vacant. The floor we acquired consisted of 6 small rooms, 2 bathrooms, a toilet and washroom.

We planned to use 4 rooms, one of the bathrooms, the toilet and washroom, with the hope of eventually using the other rooms later.

Planning the best use of the rooms and the necessary work was started in July 1973.

The Kitchen

The first job tackled was the conversion of the washroom into a kitchen. This room was used for the kitchen because there was already water and waste pipes and a tiled floor.

The kitchen plan was carried out by the Housecraft teacher in consultation with the 4th year C.S.E. Housecraft group who had just completed a project on kitchen planning.

The colour scheme of orange and yellow was chosen because it is a bright and clean looking colour for a kitchen.

It was necessary for the electrical work — a 30 amp power supply had to be taken upstairs for the cooker because originally there was only a 13 amp supply, to be carried out by the school maintenance officer together with the plumbing in the kitchen.

We gave the plan and colour scheme to him and sink unit, cupboards and cooker were installed during the summer holiday.

A Belling Compact 4 cooker was bought because of its reasonable price together with most of the features of a larger cooker — easy clean lining, automatic timer, 4 radiant rings and a good sized grill.

When we returned to school in September we began to plan the decorating in the flat, colour schemes and any other work to be done.

We began by choosing wallpaper and paint for the kitchen.

The 5th year girls chose a striped vymura in yellows, tangerine and white for one wall, the kitchen is tiled to about 4 ft. all round.



Fitted Kitchen with Manufactured Units.

For the ceiling and walls emulsion paint was chosen in honeydew with a white door and window.

4th and 5th year girls and boys started the decorating during their practical decorating lessons.

An orange open work net curtain was made for the window by the 5th years in needlework lessons.

The Sitting Room

In homemaking lessons the 5th years discussed colour schemes and decided upon browns and golds for the sitting room because they are restful colours.

It was decided to wallpaper the walls partly to give the pupils experience in putting on ordinary wallpaper and partly to

cover up the walls where a built in wardrobe had been removed. A gold and mushroom flowered wallpaper was chosen together with brown curtains and a mushroom carpet. White ceiling and paintwork were chosen. Again 4th and 5th years painted and put on the wallpaper.

The fifth year girls made the full length curtains using regis tape to give pinch pleating.

Cushions and covers were made by the 4th year girls.

The settee was made by the boys and girls.

A pendant light fitting is in the process of being made.

Two old easy chairs are being upholstered to use in the sitting room.

The Dining Room

The girls chose a bright and cheerful emulsion — Aquarius for the dining room. The built in wardrobe was converted into a cupboard for crockery by putting in shelves. The ceiling and paintwork were painted white and then the walls emulsioned.

The 5th year girls went shopping and chose flowered curtains in turquoise and royal blue to give some pattern in the room.

Bentwood chairs and an old table have been renovated, eventually we hoped, to be replaced by one made the boys.

The Bedroom

The girls chose a traditional pink colour scheme for the bedroom. They painted the walls with a pale pink emulsion and window, doors and wardrobe with white gloss. An old chest of drawers was renovated, painted white with lilac drawers.

At the same time as choosing curtains for the dining room the 5th year girls chose a white and pink curtaining with a magnolia design. The curtains were made up by the girls.



GENERAL VIEW IN LOUNGE SHOWING ITEMS MADE:— (a) Settee (b) Cushions (c) Occasional Table (d) Wall Decor.

We decided to make two continental quilts. At first we sent for one kit which proved to be successful and for the other one we bought the wadding and sheeting and made it up ourselves. The girls say they have never used a continental quilt so it will be interesting for them to use one. I'm sure they will enjoy the ease of bedmaking.

A mauve terylene and cotton sheeting was used to make quilt covers and a patterned fabric for the pillowcases.

One of the 5th year girls made a macrame lampshade. We chose an oval bedroom rug from a catalogue for the polished wood floor.

A valance has to be made for the beds when we find suitable material.

Bathroom and Toilet

The bathroom and toilet are the rooms in the worst condition. They are tiled to almost ceiling height with faded white tiles. At the

moment we have made bright orange, green and yellow flowered curtains to cheer up the room.

Eventually we hope to have a new bath or box in the old one and put vynolay on the floor.

The Classroom

One of the rooms will be used as a small classroom in which language work can be done in conjunction with homemaking lessons by small groups of children with the housecraft teacher.

The Hallway

This was very drab so we decided to paint the lower part of the wall with mustard emulsion and wallpaper the upper part. We painted the ten doors in various shades of lemons and greens.

The Flat (From a Girls Craft viewpoint)

The project has afforded opportunities for girls to take part in the planning of a home which otherwise they would have no experience in whatsoever. They now know some of the snags involved together with frustrations and also pleasure in seeing finished results.

Many opportunities have arisen for both girls and boys to make furnishings otherwise too expensive for them to make individually.

We have:

- Upholstered the settee;
- begun to renovate two easy chairs;
- chosen curtain fabrics to match colour schemes;
- made curtains;
- made cushions;
- made macrame lampshades;
- made two continental quilts, one from a kit and one by ourselves;
- made quilt covers;
- made pillowcases;
- planned the equipment for use in the kitchen and dining room;
- been shopping for kitchen equipment.

All these pieces of work have been done during needlework and homemaking lessons involving group and individual work.

Some of the less academic girls in the 5th year have used some of the items made and decorating done as part of their work for a new C.S.E. mode 35 Examination in C.S.E. Homemaking, all of them gaining a grade.

The Flat (From a Boys Craft viewpoint)

An important part can be played by the boys craft department in the design and manufacture of furniture and fittings.

There are many advantages to producing things other than individual items for the boys to buy and take home. Firstly high cost of many materials prove above the means of some of the children, they can be given the work at the teachers discretion, but this is not entirely satisfactory. In a residential school some of the children have no family to buy work for. Large items can be made for the "community" that for an individual to attempt would be impossible.

To sum up, the flat provided an outlet for large ambitious work requiring co-operate



DINING ROOM:— Items Made (a) Curtains (b) Wall Decor (c) Furniture Renovated.



THE BEDROOM:— Items made (a) Curtains (b) Continental Bed Quilts and Pillows (c) Soft Toy (d) Wall Decor.

group work in both design and manufacture and having made these things we feel that a greater respect for the items during usage will develop.

The Settee

Some pieces of furniture in the flat are old and in time will be replaced. It was, for a variety of reasons generally accepted that we begin with a settee. Basically it needed to be a modern design, to fit in with the flat colour scheme and room sizes and to be within our manufacturing capabilities.

Various designs were considered and finally the selection was made from the Readers Digest Book of Designs. By using something with working drawing etc., rather than an original design we felt we would avoid many of the prototype troubles that occur with 1-off designs. In fact only one part needed modification from the drawings.

Boys of all abilities were involved in the building of this 6' long settee.

It consists of:

- (1) A base frame and legs in Aframosia. On this is stretched 2" pirelli webbing to form the support for the seat cushions.
- (2) "Box" type back supports in softwood carrying foam facings and upholstered; these secure to the base frame from underneath and invisibly interlock with each other.
- (3) "Box" type arms, the same height as the back, again foam faced and upholstered. These also secure to the base frame from underneath and interlock invisibly with the backs.
- (4) Loose box cushions complete the settee.

The settee was, when complete, upholstered by the boys and girls in needlework.

Soft Furnishings in Glass Fibre

Under construction now are two pendent type light fittings consisting of a cluster of cylindrical glass fibre shades. One for the lounge and one for the dining room. The dining room creates special problems as we require a low level light over the table but the ceiling rose is not convenient for this. An interesting design has developed that will balance out the light over the table area. The light fittings have involved the two boys in producing a scale model and:—

- (1) Glass Fibre work for the shades
- (2) Basic electrics to wire up
- (3) Design problems associated with the type of material and electricity, the light and heat produced and the overall effect on the atmosphere of the room the fitting is trying to create.

At present the flat is ready for use although quite a number of small jobs need to be done.

We have purchased a small amount of kitchen equipment and by borrowing some more from the cookery room have all the basic essentials to enable the flat to be used by the girls.

From now until the end of term the fifth year girls in twos will live in the flat for two days, being completely independent, going shopping, cooking, washing and generally looking after themselves.

It would seem that at last the project is near completion and that the girls will begin to gain some benefit from it.

In future it is hoped that groups of pupils will be able to use the flat for homemaking lessons throughout the year and that fifth year pupils will be able to live in the flat for a week at a time before they leave.

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seen as a totality, including as essential its world changing or realisation that it makes an educational case and educational good sense. It is this practical craft element so often ignored because of its workshop connections or 'gentrified' into classroom theorising that gives the touch of uniqueness to the enterprise of designing in education.

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