Built Environment Education- *A Personal Perspective*
Eileen Adams

School grounds - design for school grounds (drawing and collage) by nine-year-olds.

Architecture and built-environment education is essentially about relationships between people and place. Education programmes must acknowledge how young people experience their environment, how they make sense of it, how they respond to it, how they make informed value judgements about aesthetic and design qualities, and how they are able to affect it. Most importantly, programmes need to encourage young people to see themselves as agents of change, able to deal with the process of change confidently, creatively and responsibly.

The environment is increasingly made, shaped and controlled by human activity. In our concern with ecology, economics and politics, we also need to recognise the importance of the visual and formal qualities of places, the messages they convey and the meanings they generate. Without this perception, the environment comes to represent only utilitarian values and neglect the aesthetic and the spiritual. At the heart of education for sustainability must be relationships between people and places. The need is not necessarily for more science and technology education, but for better design education to understand how we might use science and technology to shape and manage the environment rather more responsibly and appropriately. There is a need for cultural education which questions how we choose to live, envisages better alternatives and addresses issues of how we can work together to achieve better environmental quality and a better quality of life - for everyone. As educators, we need to help our students see themselves as more active players in the scene, where they are able to influence the appearance, feel and meaning of our towns and cities.

Animation - a virtual world, pupils from Vale School working with a computer scientist and an artist.

We need to recognise the value of design, not as creating artefacts, but as a range of processes, as a means of perception, a way of seeing the world, of creating cultural identity, of making meanings, of understanding who we are and creating our environment anew. A good working definition of design is:

That area of human experience, skills and knowledge that reflects man's concern with the appreciation and adaptation of his surroundings in the light of his material and spiritual needs. In particular it relates with configuration, composition, meaning, value and purpose in man-made phenomena (Archer, 1975).

The school curriculum is usually based on the past and what we already know. Design is about what we do not know. It is about imagining the future and making it happen. Design nurtures attitudes, skills and capabilities that will enable young people to deal with the experience of change. Design education requires approaches to learning and teaching, which are based on the generation of new knowledge and the development of skills and capabilities, rather than relying on transmission, absorption and regurgitation of information. It provides experience of working collaboratively and draws on different modes of thought and action primarily concerned with adaptation, transformation, invention and innovation.
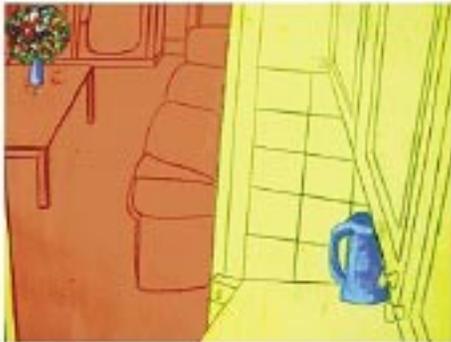
Kitchen - analysis of the interior space in a kitchen Kitchen - analysis of the interior space in a kitchen by a 15-year-old.

Recent initiatives in the UK by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), funded by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, builds on previous pioneering work. It produces publications and supports a network of Architecture Centres around the UK that provide built-environment education programmes for young people, adult citizens and professionals. All of

them encourage inter-professional collaboration in education. Some encourage school-based action research to develop the field, such as that promoted by the Campaign for Drawing. The need is to create a critical mass of educators involved in built environment education and to create more effective means to value, support and disseminate their work. A higher public profile and stronger voice for built-environment education in schools requires concerted and collaborative effort by education and design professionals, local and national government agencies, national organisations and through international collaboration.