



Putting on a show

Exhibition of GCSE and A' level work in a William Davis show house

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As a 14-19 school we have a large intake of GCSE and A' level students who study textiles (a total of 120 students in the current year 11 and 45 students at AS/A2 level). This makes it difficult to showcase successful work because of limited space in school. Five years ago the then acting Head of Department, Linda Hill, approached a local company building houses in our area about the possibility of exhibiting work in their show house. This first year was very successful and when I took over as Head of Department the following year this soon became an annual event in our calendar.

On average we exhibit the work of over seventy students (many of whom have produced two pieces of work) - a tight squeeze but fortunately William Davis, the company we have worked with for the last 4 years, have two show houses next to each other. Originally we showcased interior design work as this was one of the design briefs many of our students

were using. We have now developed the exhibition to include a large range of fashion and other items.

The exhibition is open from 11am until 5pm (the show home opening hours) during a weekend in June or July. It is an enjoyable two days with a steady stream of visitors (about 200 on average) - some even wanting to buy a house! A member of teaching staff is always in attendance to keep an eye on things and sixth formers usually help out.

William Davis and particularly Claire and Liz have been fantastic in their support over the last four years. Each year they produce professionally printed invitations for all our students along with printed name plates to display next to students' work. They also provide drinks and nibbles for both days of the exhibition and allow us to totally take over their properties! The environment for display is excellent and the products and the homes really complement each other. In fine weather we have even been known to take over the garden as well!

Every year the exhibition has grown bigger and gets more successful. It has helped us raise our profile and develop good links with the local community (important as we are a Technology College). Visitors are always impressed by the standard of the work and it has really helped parents and the wider community understand what we do and what modern Textiles Technology is all about. It is also a success for William Davis too as many visitors are very interested in the properties as their location is within our school's catchment area.

The only down side is that this is likely to be the final year that we can use the current William Davis show homes as their building programme is near completion. Our challenge now is to find another company who are as helpful and who have the space to accommodate what is now a major event.

