



Photos above: Darcy at one of the Young Masters Visual Art School classes at Sunny Bank Mills Farsley: Giacometti Sculpture

My son Darcy is not enjoying school at all and as he moved into year 6 it has become clear that the pressure he is feeling from SATs has taken its toll on his confidence. Many times he has told us he feels stupid and no matter what reassurance we give him, he said he still gets low scores and knows he is bottom of the class and hates school. One of his biggest complaints in year 6 has been the focus on Maths and English and the reduction of all his favourite lessons, by which he means anything creative. In school so far, Darcy has always loved days where there have been Lego challenges, art days and days of creative ‘forest school’ style activity – days where his learning style is best used and where he is encouraged to be creative and collaborative. However, nearly all of this has been abandoned in favour of practicing for the SATs tests.

Darcy joined Young Masters in September 2016 and I have to say from day one it has been the thing he looks forward to all week. The classes have inspired him to do more art work at home and have really fueled his love of being creative. While he has been struggling so much at school the classes have given him some sense of balance.

Just after Christmas 2016 we received an email from his teacher asking if Darcy would like to take part in the Arts Award and that it would involve additional work including a visit to an art gallery. Darcy absolutely couldn’t wait to get started! He was so excited and told everyone that he was taking an award for his art and it really gave status and value to what was the favourite part of his week. In a world where children are judged on exam results and certificates, this award gave Darcy a chance to showcase himself at his favourite and best subject.

He has absolutely flourished while attending Young Masters. The exhibition was amazing he invited his grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, friends and obviously parents. It was a really big deal and he treat it as such. He was so proud showcasing his work and again gave real value to the thing that means the most to him.

The gallery visit at Cartwright Hall took place in his term time (as Leeds and Bradford had different holidays this year). He spoke so eloquently and passionately to his head teacher about the visit and the arts award that she signed him off school for the day saying it was an important educational visit for him. All credit to Darcy's school for doing this.

On the day of the gallery visit he was absolutely in his element. He asked questions, was able to identify art work he liked and why, completed the worksheet and when he got home he created more art work in the styles he had seen and asked to go back with his camera – which we did. Darcy really dislikes written work and is being tested for dyslexia; however, he has completed all the written work without complaint and done it fully for his Arts Award.

The art classes at Young Masters have given Darcy a focus in a really challenging school year, but the Arts Award has given his passion real value in his eyes. This has meant that he has regained a lot of confidence and is seeing his love of art as something that is really important to him not only now but in his future too. He has already told me he wants to do the next level.

When Darcy receives the award it will be such a key moment for him and I can't wait to see it.

By Mum, Vicky



Photos above: Darcy at Cartwright Hall Bradford for Arts Award Explore Gallery visit, February 2017