

Messy Nessy Pottery

Daisy and the Hexagons



Wildflowers of the Lea Valley



Dear Reader,

Down the River Lea, that flows through a very floral valley, there is a ceramic artist who shares her work with thousands of children.

You will find Vanessa in her studio at the top of Croft Road in the small malting town of Ware, making pots on her wheel or deep into the wild flower composite pieces, made to decorate the walls of the Hospitals and the schools, these are made by children under her guidance. She makes flowers because, she quotes, I only see flowers.

Most schools had their kilns taken away, so for the last ten years Vanessa has been keeping pottery alive by firing all the children's' work, in her kiln at the end of her garden.

As Vanessa wants to reach children everywhere, to pass on clay making and design from geometrical forms to encourage the ceramic makers of the future, she has written the project book series for children teachers, parents and carers to work together in school or at home.

Rules of Clay.

Read the Health and safety rules on the bag.

Do not fold over clay as this will trap air, if this happens, you can knead clay and throw it on the table and knead again to get rid of air pockets but it is not too much a worry when making small flowers you can just pierce the air bubbles if they appear.

Join together well so cannot be lifted when tested.

Prevent clay surfaces from drying out and becoming dusty, so clean up with a damp cloth or wet sponge.



Tie the bag of clay up tight.

**Wash hands scrub fingernails after
using clay and glazes.**

**Glazes are made of minerals, the
lead free glazes are what I use
in schools but children need to
be aware not to put their fingers
in their mouths. They are quite
expensive so do not to knock them
over and waste them. Children need
to know where the glaze comes
from.**

**There is quite a lot to learn but it all
soon becomes easy.**

Getting started.

I use three types of clay, Royal porcelain, Flax paper clay for very fine work but too sticky for the children so I use B17C which has a very plastic body and is very versatile.

This clay can be fired at stoneware or earthenware temperatures, can be used for sculptural flowers or throwing on the wheel all from Valentine Clays.

There is the Oxidised St.Thomas from Potclays that can be acquired through the school supply catalogue, it is fine and dries white so takes colour very well.



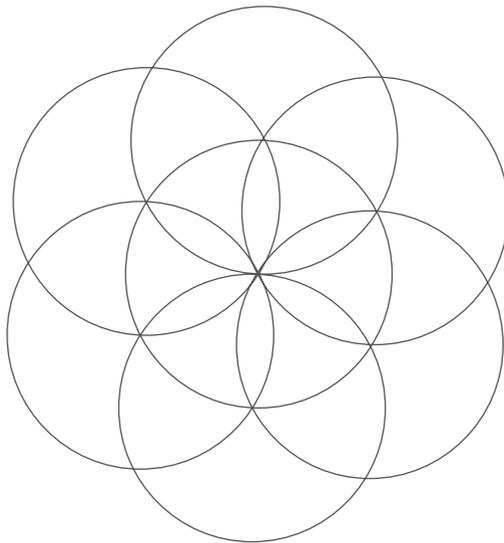
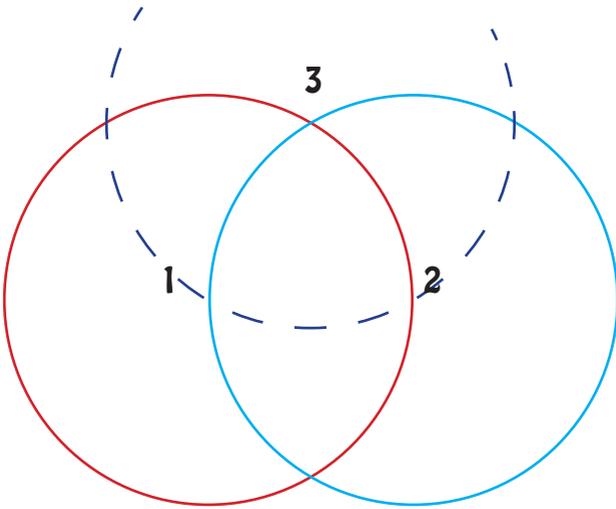
Equipment.

You need a bag of clay, sometimes the school will order it for you from their suppliers at a very small cost or you can contact pottery distributors for example: Valentine Clays, Potclays, Pottery Crafts, for your nearest stockist.

- A4 paper, recycled is fine
- A hole punch
- A compass
- A pencil
- A few pottery tools:
 - A cutting wire (a piece of plastic fishing wire on two corks will be alright) to cut clay easily.
 - A pottery pin, this could also be a darning needle in a cork.

- **Some cutters, depending on age, for the children - pointed lolly sticks, a pottery knife or even a sharp pencil.**
- **A wooden board for example a bread board, something that is not varnished.**
- **A tray, to put all the made pieces on. By laying some paper on first you can move clay shapes around without fingerprints and stretching the clay.**
- **A comfortable chair is good, depending on how many pieces you make.**
- **Glazes to make the work beautiful, I use lead free glazes and a transparent glaze over the top when in school or working with children.**

How to draw the daisy.



Yes let us get going.

- 1. With a compass draw a circle.**
- 2. Place the compass anywhere on the circle and draw another circle.**
- 3. Place the compass where the lines cross and keep drawing circles until the six petals of the daisy appear.**
- 4. Cut out the daisy from the paper.**



Yes let us get going.

5. Trace off a hexagon below.



Yes let us get going.

6. Lay the clay on some A4 paper so it does not stick to the table, gently roll out the clay. Turning clay over helps to take some of the water out of it.



Yes let us get going.

7. Make a few ½ kilo clay balls, giving the clay ball a good pat into shape.

Roll out a few more pieces of clay and with a pottery pin go around the shapes taking the pin off to the edge of the clay, this way the clay falls away from the daisy and the shapes do not move.



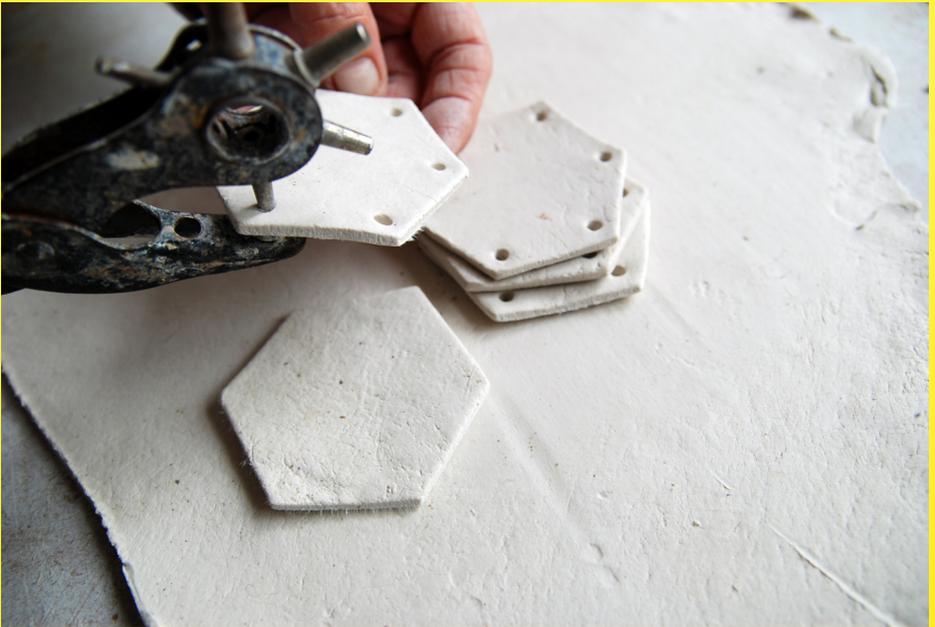
Yes let us get going.

8. Repeat the hexagon shape, leaving them to rest a little while makes them easier to move but you will soon get the idea that a little air helps your clay become manoeuvrable.



Yes let us get going.

9. Punch holes in all the hexagon points with the leather punch.



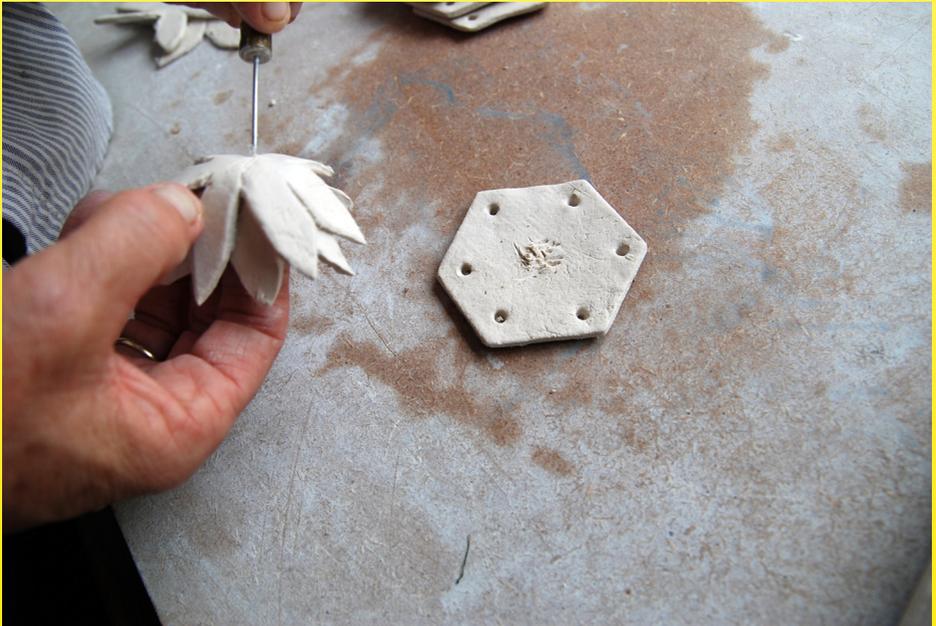
Yes let us get going.

10. Place the 2 dimensional clay daisy in the palm of your hand. Cup your hand to make flower cups, rotate into a 3 dimensional flower and pinch the petals a little to make them thinner.



Yes let us get going.

11. Score (scratch the bottom with the pottery pin) both the daisy and the top of the hexagon give them a scratch add some slip, which is a little water and a little clay mixed.



Yes let us get going.

12. Then press them together lightly, use the pottery pin, press in the middle of the flower, children usually find it easier to press together with their index finger, at this point a circle can be cut from a coin to make a smiley face, still remember to score the work together even this small otherwise when dry all comes apart.



Yes let us get going.

13. Keep Making flowers. As you make, line them up in rows, until you have enough to form a wall hanging.



Yes let us get going.

14. Children can paint their flowers with lead free glazes. They come in many colours, paint the flowers when they are just a little firmer but still damp. Wash hands well as you do not want to leave any glaze behind in your fingernails.

Do not glaze underneath your work and do not allow the glaze to drip underneath, otherwise the flowers will not come out of the kiln, they will be stuck, so you would have to clean up the base with a mask on. Better to not get glaze there in the first place.

I like to give the flowers another coat of under glaze when they are dry, very young children will not be able to do this as the flowers are now brittle. Then, I cover the top carefully with the transparent glaze, just before they go in the kiln for one firing.

Yes let us get going.

15. Fire in a kiln according to the clay and glaze instruction 1150°C to 1280°C. The temperature will be written on the bag of clay or the pot of glaze.

If there is a communal kiln in your area make arrangements to take your work along, the technician will know what temperature to fire it at but to be sure take your notes of the clay and the glazes you used. There is usually a small charge but it is fantastic to have your work fired.

I usually fire my flowers at 1160°C, this temperature gives vivid colours. With the velvet under glazes, the higher the temperature the less vivid the colour.

Yes let us get going.

If you want the work outside in all weathers the temperature will have to be 1220°C otherwise it will not last through cold weather. You have to wait then in anticipation, but when the kiln is opened and there is your work it is like Christmas day, full of presents.

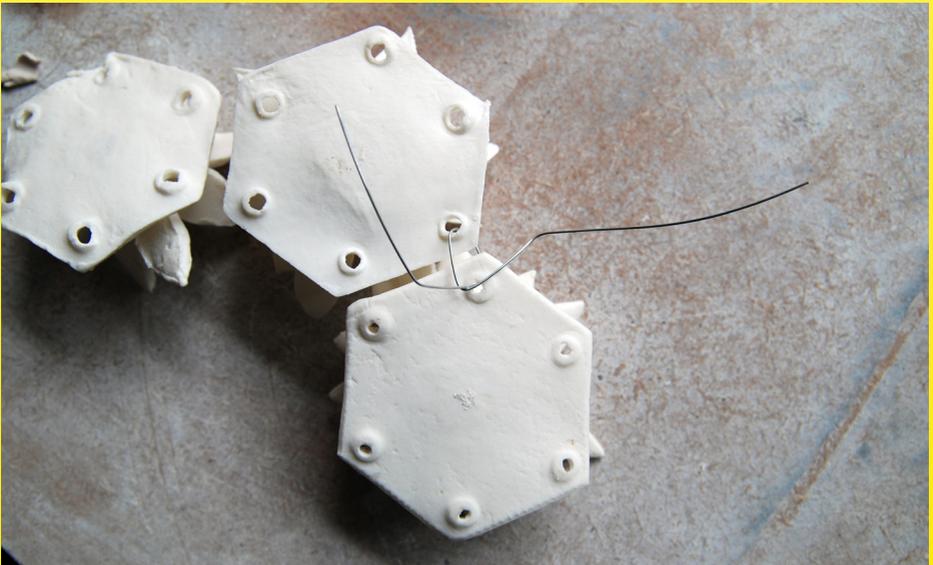


Yes let us get going.

16. Place the flowers upside down on a flat surface. Using stitching wire, a strand at a time, join hexagons together. Twist the wire and trim it with pliers as you sew.

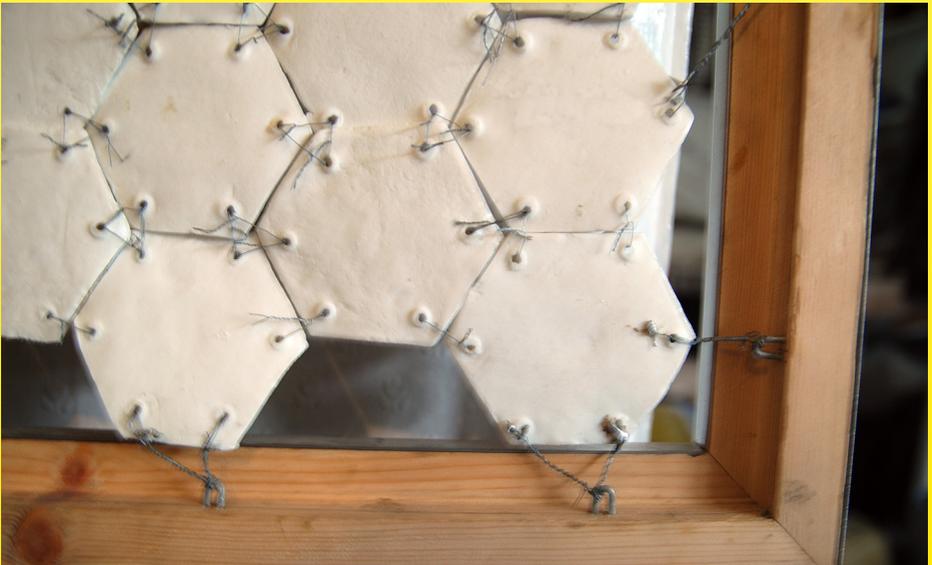
Soldering the ends of the wires gives stitching a nice finish and prevents wires scratching the wall.

An adult will have to supervise this work, but working together will be fun. Children can help cut the wire with the pliers.



Yes let us get going.

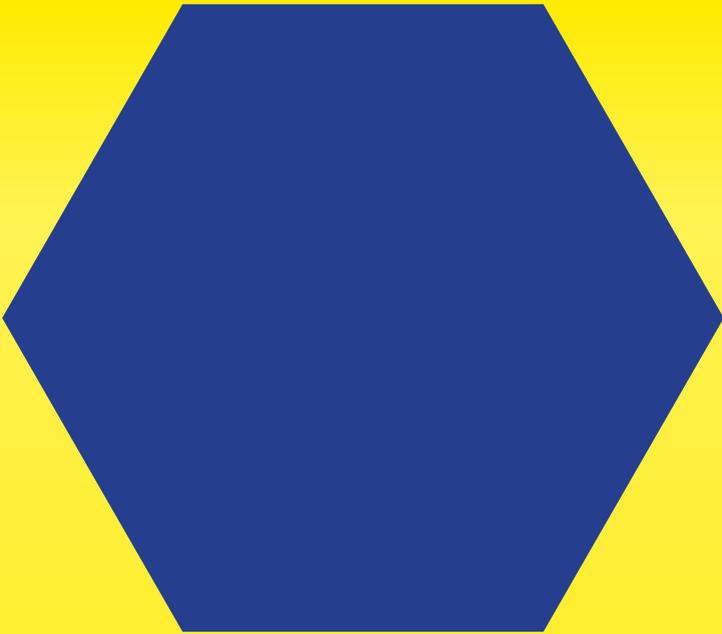
17. You will need quite a strong frame so measure up. If this work is for a public space it is best to get a metal frame made up by for example Mercantile Met Tec. Explain that the frame is for your ceramics, so a very hard wood will be used in the making. Hammer some eyelets at measured intervals - approximately 1.5 times the width of the hexagon.



Yes let us get going.

18. Get some professional help to hang the wall ceramics especially when it will be displayed in a public space, for example school reception or a hospital.





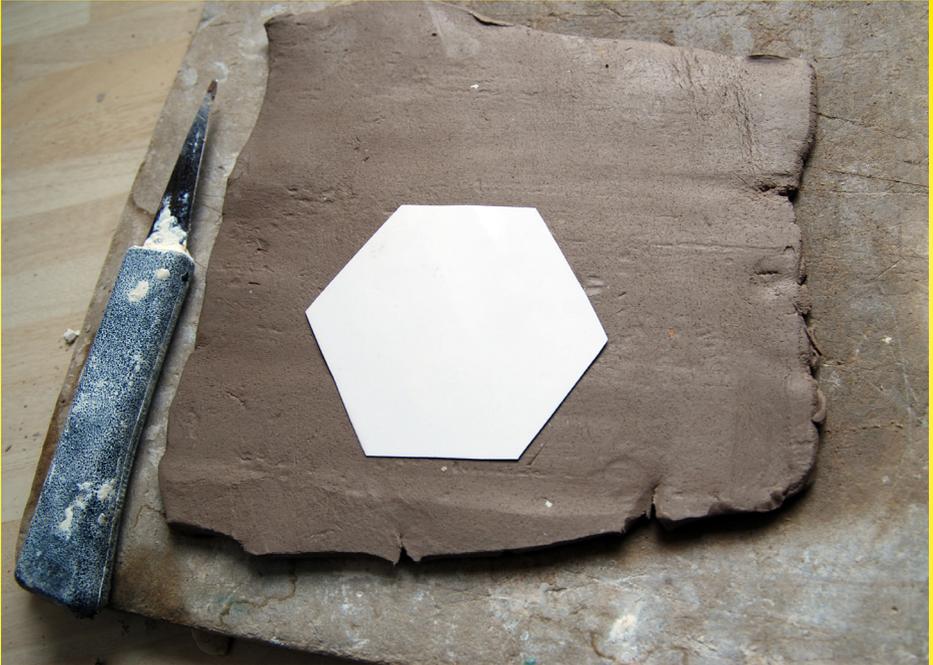
THE HEXAGON

WITH A POTTERY STYLE

**The Hexagon makes a good
pattern on its own.**

Instructions.

1. **Cut out the hexagon.**



2. **Keep clay covered with a cloth.**

Instructions.

3. Work on three hexagons at a time.



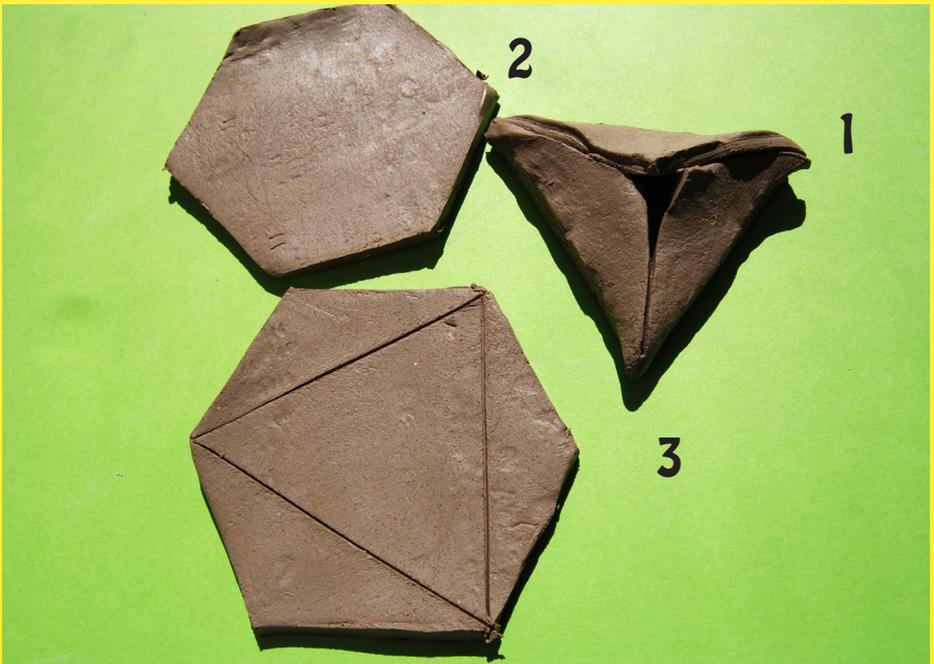
Instructions.

4. Score with a pin or a pottery knife from one point to another.



Instructions.

5. Turn inwards so forming a triangle.
6. Punch holes with the leather punch at the three points.

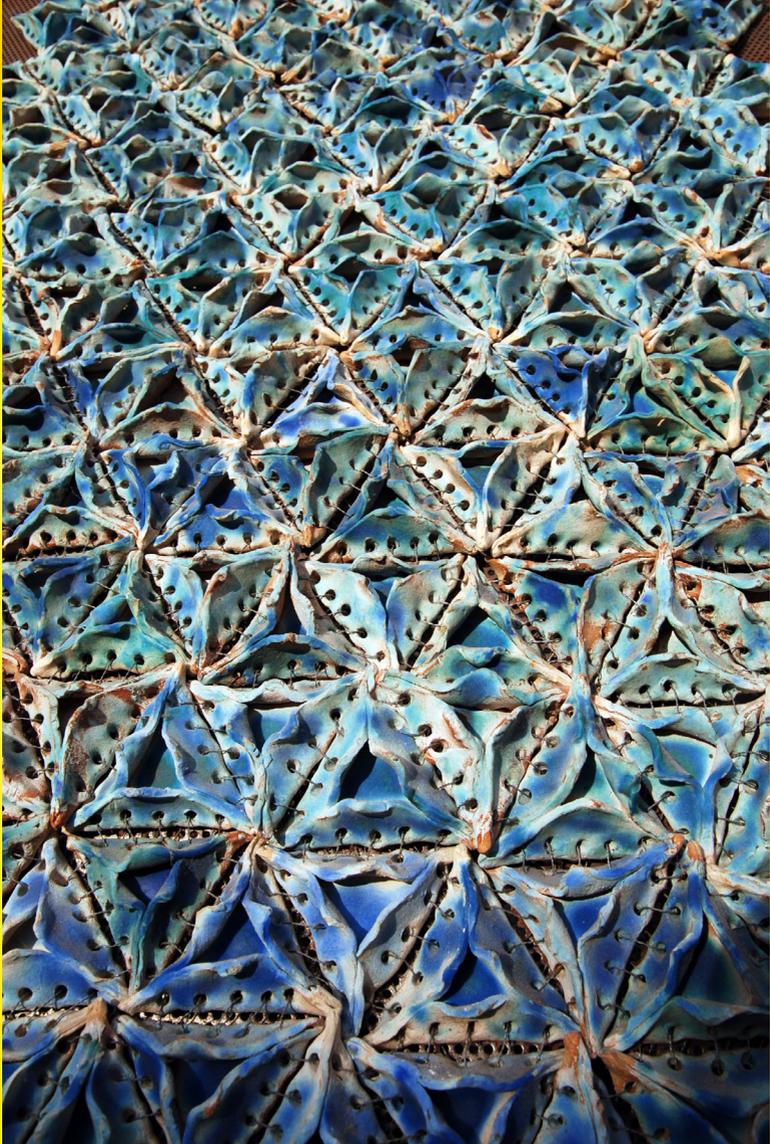


Instructions.

7. Keep making to form an optical illusion.
8. Glaze with lead free colours.
9. Fire in the kiln to temperature 1160°C or higher if you want it outside 1220°C
10. Join together with wire.



Optical Illusion.



Appendix

Suppliers

Valentine Clays Ltd.

For the Flax paper clay as well as other clays.

The Slip House,

18-20 Chell Street,

Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent

sales@valentineclays.co.uk

Potclays Ltd.

For clay glazes and equipment.

Brick Lane, Etruria, Stoke-on-Trent. ST4 7BP

Tel.No. +44(0)182 219816

sales@potclays.co.uk

Pottery Crafts Ltd

For glazes, tools, clays and equipment.

**Head Office Campbell Road, Stoke-on-Trent,
ST4 4ET**

Tel.No. +44(0)1782 745000

sales@potterycrafts.co.uk

Mercantile Met Tech

Plumpton House

Plumpton Road

Hoddesdon UK EN11 0LB

www.mercantilemettech.co.uk

Tel.No +44(0)1992 445707

Information.

The Craft Council London

44A Pentonville Road, Islington, London N1.

www.craftcouncil.org.uk

Tel.No. +44(0)207 806 2500

The Craft council are helping schools to find places to fire their work in other schools, with kilns, across the country. You can ask the local secondary school for space in their kiln.

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