# The Design Process

You are about to embark upon your main project (NEA); it is the most important part of your Design Experience, and its importance is reflected in the marks given to it and the percentage it gives to the final grade.

The purpose of the project is to show your design skills. Skills that you cannot gain in any other way or be tested in any other way. You can read, write, and do maths, which will all help you in the outside world, but designing and making also gives you skills and methods to use in your daily lives on top of those already mentioned. You gain communication skills i.e. you can explain your ideas and thoughts by sketches and diagrams, but more importantly you learn ways to solve problems and answer needs using skills such as investigation, designing, making and evaluation.

But remember, design is bigger than this, every aspect of the world around you is designed, your design experience enables you to see and understanding this. For those who take Design further it enables you to have an impact upon an area that effects every aspect of our lives. It enables people to change the world, for better or for worse.

However, how do we do this? For communication, we learn drawing methods and the use of ICT, for making we learn craft and machine skills, but how do we pull all these together in a way which is going to be useful when we leave school.

We do this by using a Design Framework, there are many different types, and you may find them called many different things, like the technological process or the design process or a management strategy, but in the end they all have the following stages in common:

1. An initial problem, need or opportunity.
2. You think about it and list your thoughts down.
3. You find out about the problem.
4. You consider what this information tells you.
5. You rough out some ideas.
6. You pick the best and improve it.
7. You check it answers the problem.
8. You work out how to make it.
9. You make it.
10. You test it.

The design process is a logical and constructive way to solve problems and to create solutions; and it requires different skills to those commonly used in schools. It requires self-discipline in ordering your time and working to a set deadline, but more importantly it requires you to work for yourself and show initiative in making the moves.

The next section will give you an overview of the design process which you must use for your project but remember and understand that there is no one way or process to answer a problem, only what is appropriate at that time. You must be flexible and do what is right for you and your project. The only restriction you have is the examination board marking scheme and so long as you include what they ask of you, you will not lose marks, but probably gain more.