



Arts Education in Schools

Importance of art and design in education

Art and design is a rich and varied field which inspires personal expression, creative and practical responses. It promotes imaginative risk taking, providing solutions to questions and issues within our material, social and virtual worlds. A world-class art and design education will engage, inspire and challenge children and young people, equipping them with the knowledge and skills to participate in, experiment with, invent and create their own works of art, craft and design.

National curriculum

Art and design education is in the National Curriculum for maintained schools and should be taught from the Early Years Foundation Stage through Key Stage 1 and 2 and up to Key Stage 3. It is an entitlement at Key Stage 4 (14+), requiring that all pupils who wish to opt for art and design may do so. Academies are not subject to the National Curriculum but they must teach a broad and balanced curriculum which should include art and design.

Teachers

A review by the NASUWT (teacher unions) in 2017 revealed that, in England, the number of teachers teaching creative or expressive arts subjects had been declining over the previous few years. There was also evidence for fewer teachers with specialist training in arts subjects. The report suggested that the emphasis on school accountability and the nature of inspection tended to drive priorities. Across the UK, there was an increasing focus on using pupils' performance and progress in literacy and numeracy to judge school performance.

Inspection

It is the role of Ofsted inspectors to consider whether schools offer a broad and balanced curriculum to their pupils. Art and design education is viewed as making an important contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural values of the school. In the past, there has been some concern that Ofsted's focus on attainments in core curriculum areas undermines the broader aims of arts education in schools. The new Ofsted framework came into operation in September 2019. Inspectors now focus on 'deep diving' a small number of curriculum areas and take into account teacher CPD and 'quality of education' rather than relying on outcomes data to make their judgements.

The Artsmark award is an effective way to show that schools provide a well planned arts education that supports the cultural development of all of its pupils and can be good evidence to provide at an Ofsted inspection.

Benefits of art education

Improving attainment

Cultural education has positive impacts on outcomes for children: Participation in structured arts activities can increase cognitive abilities by 17%. Learning through arts and culture can improve attainment in Maths and English. Children who take part in arts activities in the home during their early years are ahead in reading and maths at age nine. Learning through arts and culture develops skills and behaviour that lead children to do better in school.

Supporting health and wellbeing

The mental health and wellbeing of children and young people in the UK was in decline prior to the Covid-19 pandemic and the situation has since worsened. Good health and wellbeing supports learning and pupil progress and many schools now identify mental health as a key priority. Cultural education can play an important part in supporting good mental health and wellbeing and in helping specific challenges such as depression and anxiety. Through arts and creativity, we can build confidence and resilience and enrich our emotional world. Arts participation enables self-expression and provides a chance to take stock of life... People who take part in the arts are 38% more likely to report good health; and after engaging in participatory arts activities, 82% report greater wellbeing. (All-Party Parliamentary Group 2017)

Creativity

Children and young people are empowered to think creatively and critically through the arts. They should investigate and evaluate a wide range of creative outcomes from the past and present to develop a rigorous understanding of the many disciplines within art, craft and design and how they shape our history and future. Numerous studies confirm that learning through creativity builds young people's life skills – helping them to be more inquisitive, persistent, imaginative, disciplined and collaborative. These are skills that employers demand from young people entering today's competitive job market.

Culture and heritage

Through arts and craft, children and young people learn to value and appreciate artifacts and images across cultures and times. Experience in design, art, and crafts enable them to reflect critically on their own work and those by others. They learn to act and think like designers and artists, working intelligently and creatively. They also learn about the preservation of heritage through art. Much of the information we have now about people that lived thousands of years ago came solely from art.

Summary of National Curriculum in England: Art and Design Programmes of Study

from DfE/gov.uk website:

Purpose of study

Art, craft and design embody some of the highest forms of human creativity. A high-quality art and design education should engage, inspire and challenge pupils, equipping them with the knowledge and skills to experiment, invent and create their own works of art, craft and design. As pupils progress, they should be able to think critically and develop a more rigorous understanding of art and design. They should also know how art and design both reflect and shape our history, and contribute to the culture, creativity and wealth of our nation.

Aims

The national curriculum for art and design aims to ensure that all pupils:

- produce creative work, exploring their ideas and recording their experiences
- become proficient in drawing, painting, sculpture and other art, craft and design techniques
- evaluate and analyse creative works using the language of art, craft and design
- know about great artists, craft makers and designers, and understand the historical and cultural development of their art forms

Art and Design by age Subject content

Key stage 1 (5-7 years)

Pupils should be taught:

- to use a range of materials creatively to design and make products
- to use drawing, painting and sculpture to develop and share their ideas, experiences and imagination
- to develop a wide range of art and design techniques in using colour, pattern, texture, line, shape, form and space
- about the work of a range of artists, craft makers and designers, describing the differences and similarities between different practices and disciplines, and making links to their own work

Key stage 2 (7-11 years)

Pupils should be taught to develop their techniques, including their control and their use of materials, with creativity, experimentation and an increasing awareness of different kinds of art, craft and design

Pupils should be taught:

- to create sketch books to record their observations and use them to review and revisit ideas
- to improve their mastery of art and design techniques, including drawing, painting and sculpture
- with a range of materials [for example, pencil, charcoal, paint, clay]
- about great artists, architects and designers in history

Key stage 3 (11-14 years)

Pupils should be taught to develop their creativity and ideas, and increase proficiency in their

execution. They should develop a critical understanding of artists, architects and designers, expressing reasoned judgements that can inform their own work.

Pupils should be taught:

- to use a range of techniques to record their observations in sketchbooks, journals and other media as a basis for exploring their ideas
- to use a range of techniques and media, including painting
- to increase their proficiency in the handling of different materials
- to analyse and evaluate their own work, and that of others, in order to strengthen the visual impact or applications of their work
- about the history of art, craft, design and architecture, including periods, styles and major movements from ancient times up to the present day

For Early Years, (under 5) see guidance on Development Matters - Expressive Arts and Design

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/development-matters--2>

For Key stage 4 (14-16) see guidance on GCSE art and design

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-art-and-design>

