

A Summary of the Ofsted Art & Design Research Review



The Nature of Art and Design

Art and design education should be 'intellectually challenging and creatively demanding'. It is both a practical and theoretical subject which is informed by studio practices and academic disciplines.

EYFS to KS5

High-quality practice in the early years develops children's interest and imagination. These foundations are necessary to be successful in the future. It is compulsory for pupils to be taught Art in KS1, KS2 and KS3. This means the content they are taught during this time might be the only art education some children experience unless they study the subject at GCSE and beyond. KS4 and KS5 qualifications can be the only route into future training and work opportunities within the creative industry.



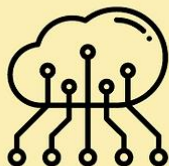
Recent Declines

There have been recent declines in the number of specialist art teachers training in England. There have also been declines in the quantity of art education provided to pupils in terms of taught hours, in both primary and secondary. Limited time for art is unlikely to benefit pupils.

What is an art 'curriculum'?

The curriculum should set out what it means for pupils to **get better at art**. It involves identifying three types of knowledge: **practical knowledge, theoretical knowledge and disciplinary knowledge**.

The school art curriculum should add the specificity and detail to fulfil the broad aims outlined in the National Curriculum. Schools also need to decide on the sequencing of this content as well as ensuring that the amount of content is sufficient to meet the goals of the curriculum.



Domains of Knowledge

Ofsted have conceptualised knowledge in art as three domains: practical knowledge, theoretical knowledge and disciplinary knowledge. They do not expect schools to use these terms, but art curricula should include content for all three because they link to the aims of the National Curriculum and the wider traditions within art education. The connections between these bodies of knowledge should also be taught.

Productive and Receptive Knowledge

Within each domain, knowledge can be categorised as either **productive** or **receptive**. Productive knowledge relates to becoming proficient in the aspects of art or producing art. Receptive knowledge relates to pupils learning about the aspects of art, such as being able to recognise subject-specific vocabulary.



Practical Knowledge

This domain of knowledge relates to pupils' ability to make and create art. The National Curriculum states that pupils need to be taught how to draw, paint and sculpt as well as use other techniques. Such techniques include printmaking, ceramics, creative craft, collage, textiles, photography, installation, digital and new media, and design and graphic design. School leaders need to decide which of these areas they will include in the curriculum and have a sound rationale for this decision. They also need to ensure the curriculum does not include these areas in a superficial way.



Theoretical Knowledge

This domain includes content about meaning and interpretations, materials and processes, and journeys and connections through time. It enables pupils to put the practical knowledge into context. It is important for pupils to learn about the cultural, societal and historical contexts in which art is made. The sources of theoretical knowledge can come from a diverse base. Indeed, an art curriculum should be designed to draw on traditions from across the globe including the established, contested and neglected stories of art.



Disciplinary Knowledge

This domain contains content about the way in which art conceives of itself as a discipline. There is a wide range of content which enables pupils to understand how art is discussed, evaluated and judged. The content is not bound to specific artworks, media or areas of making. Disciplinary knowledge refers to the norms, products and purposes of art and helps pupils interpret artwork. It can be a useful planning tool in that it can enable teachers to ground curriculum content in the types of questions asked by artists, critics and scholars.



Progression

Ofsted define progression as being able to **know more, remember more and do more**. This should come from the content and sequencing of the curriculum. Knowledge between different curriculum components should be connected so that pupils develop a nuanced understanding of the content. The curriculum should be designed so that pupils can progress to become proficient in what they have been taught. At each stage of the curriculum, pupils should learn content which builds on previous learning and prepares them to learn the content of later stages.



Convergence and Divergence

Art and design involves creating original outcomes. This means that end-points in art can be understood as either '**convergent**' or '**divergent**'. Convergent outcomes are ones which are more prescribed, such as being able to mix colours. Divergent outcomes are ones where pupils have more choice and are likely to differ greatly between pupils. Subject leaders should be clear about the type of goals the curriculum is focused on.



Practice

A vital component of any art and design curriculum, opportunities for practice need to be built in to the curriculum. This means that not only should pupils have sufficient practice in the moment of learning content, but that the content should be sequenced in a way that enables pupils to practise and revisit previously taught content. This prevents forgetting and supports long term memorisation. Leaders should consider how pupils can re-encounter curriculum components so that they have sufficient time and instruction to practise and master content.



Creativity

A casual definition of creativity is not very useful when discussing the art and design curriculum. Instead, a useful definition refers to the central idea that pupils can make creative contributions in art **if** their knowledge and skills in a particular area are sufficiently developed. This requires a breadth and depth of understanding in each of the areas of art which are taught.



Pedagogy

As curriculum is the 'what' of curriculum design, pedagogy is the 'how'. It includes the teaching methods, approaches and means of teaching art and design. These should go beyond just engaging or interesting pupils and should offer real educative value. Pedagogical decisions should flow logically from the curriculum objects - the components of the curriculum - which teachers want pupils to learn.



Pedagogy: Practical Knowledge

Sufficient amounts of practice both 'in the moment' and across sequences of learning are required to build practical knowledge. Purposeful, deliberate practice is useful in the early stages of learning to develop the levels of motor automaticity which are required to be successful. Considering cognitive load is important: the amount that children need to think about can affect how they learn. Different types of practice, such as increasing variation, can become necessary as pupils become more proficient.



Pedagogy: Theoretical Knowledge

It is important for teachers to be clear about what they pupils to learn as this domain has a vast, abstract and nuanced knowledge base. Teachers should use approaches where pupils' attention can be directed towards the exact ideas, concepts and principles that are intended to be learned.



Pedagogy: Disciplinary Knowledge

Again, pedagogical choices should flow from what is desired to be learned. Disciplinary knowledge is often abstract and so by considering and specifying the concrete examples which enable pupils to understand these abstract concepts, teachers can support pupils to be able to make sense of the disciplinary knowledge. This knowledge is important for pupils to make sense of visits to art galleries, exhibitions and visits to/from artists.

SEND

It is not appropriate to use a single approach for teaching children with SEND. It is also important that the art curriculum is ambitious for all pupils. However, some pupils with **complex** needs may need some goals to be adapted for them. Pupils with SEND generally **do not benefit from differentiated teaching**, activities or resources in order to achieve the same curriculum goal as their peers. Teachers may however decide to target teaching to break down or reinforce aspects of the curriculum. It can be helpful to consider cognitive load when making pedagogical decisions. **Expectations of pupils should not be unnecessarily lowered.**



Assessment & Art

The nature of art poses unique challenges for assessment. It is important for teachers to design assessments which reflect the subjective nature of the subject but also remain valid and reliable. This is supported by teachers' clarity about what they are assessing and why they are assessing it.

Formative and Summative Assessment

Formative assessment provides in the moment feedback to both pupils and teachers. It supports improvements in the immediate task and enables teachers to check component knowledge has been learned. The ways in which this is done depend on the type of content being assessed. Summative assessment should take place at sufficiently lengthy periods so that it can be determined how well pupils have learned what teachers have planned for them to learn



School Systems

Art education can suffer if leaders do not take its subject specific aspects into account. Whole-school teaching and assessment strategies are likely to be too generic to fully capture the forms of knowledge in the art curriculum. Leaders should ensure that policies are adapted to specific subjects. They should also ensure that teachers are supported to develop their subject content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge: this can limit their ability to provide a rich curriculum and is a particular need within the primary sector as many trainees report a lack of confidence in teaching art.

Time

Art require sufficient and adequate time in the curriculum. Lengthier blocks within timetables can help reduce the impact of housekeeping activities such as 'cleaning' and 'organising'. Curriculum sequencing in other subjects, such as maths and history, can also support the development of contextual knowledge needed to understand the art being studied.



This is a very condensed summary of the research review conducted by Ofsted into high-quality art and design curriculums. I have provided a more detailed summary and notes on my website which explores these themes in more detail. I would definitely recommend reading the entire review (see link below) and accessing some of the materials on Ofsted's YouTube channel (link on my website).

www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-review-series-art-and-design

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