

## Curriculum and Assessment review: Headlines for art and design

### Art and design is popular, but it is complacent to say it is thriving – children are getting *less* art and design:

- Teacher numbers and teacher hours for art and design have dropped dramatically compared to other subjects: Essentially, the rate of decline for art and design is more than all other subjects combined – 18% v 3% decline at KS4 since 2012. (see table 1, 2 and 3)
- GCSE art and design entries are **not** reliable indicators. The ‘stable’ figures conceal a big migration to art and design endorsements from D&T, we believe they are being taught as part of the D&T curriculum. (see tables 4 and 5)
- ‘A’ level is declining at an accelerating rate, the D&T migration has not translated to increased take up for art and design ‘A’ level, or vocational qualifications.
- The adoption of art and design GCSE titles by D&T limits choice for students who would like to do both subjects as discount codes; schools do not allow this because it won’t show in Progress 8 tables.
- The review has confirmed that many schools are running a compressed KS3, and the primary offer is squeezed by an overstuffed curriculum leaving little time for art and design.

### Budgets and reduced curriculum time are impacting on breadth, depth and creativity: The *School Art, Where is It?* (2024, NSEAD) research shows that:

- The curriculum has gone flat - There has been a huge reduction in exposure to three-dimensional materials, techniques, processes and ways of thinking: from 56% in 2004 to just 15% in 2024.
- There is a creativity gap - Only 14% of curriculum modules described by the 2024 ‘School Art’ interviewees were concerned with teaching creative thinking skills.
- Where has craft and design gone? – learning activity ‘did not seek to systematically solve a problem, nor purposefully connect to a local industry or functional tradition. Pupils’ outcomes were assessed on their aesthetic or conceptual qualities.’

### The curriculum does not represent and include all learners or speak to their interests and aspirations:

- The narrowing of practice (including craft) excludes the cultural heritage and interests of many learners.
- Green skills, design, AI and digital technologies are emerging priorities for learners and the creative industries but are not being addressed in the curriculum.
- Entries for GCSE and A Level art and design by girls outnumber boys three to one.

## Curriculum and Assessment Review – NSEAD response

NSEAD recognise the limitations of a review that has been undertaken at speed, tasked with making incremental not radical change. Whilst we believe that the education and assessment need system wide reform, we also understand that the workforce is not necessarily equipped to deliver ‘revolution’.

The interim report is wide ranging covering all curriculum subjects and needs of learners from 5-19. It does not dwell on individual subjects at length, and the action points cover all subjects. However, we were pleased to see that many of the key actions that NSEAD have called for, in our manifesto, our submission to the CAR, and our communications with the DFE have been included. This is positive.

Issues around workforce, funding and pedagogical approaches have always been beyond the scope of the review, but the report recognises that they must be addressed if curriculum reform is to have any impact, particularly for arts subjects. This is positive.

The art and design curriculum is not working for everyone – and a reformed national curriculum alone will not solve the problem – we must address funding, resource and workforce issues too.

Art is **not** thriving, budgets and reduced curriculum time are impacting on breadth, depth and creativity. There is a growing divide between the state and independent sector. The curriculum does not represent the lives and aspirations of all children. Knowledge is poorly defined, as are craft and design competencies.

### **Priorities and action points from the CAR interim report include:**

- *Considering questions that have been raised across different subjects about the specificity, relevance, volume and diversity of content;*
- *Conducting deeper analysis to diagnose the specific issues affecting each subject and explore and test a range of solutions;*
- *Continuing to consider the impact of current performance measures on young people’s choices and outcomes, and their impact on institutional behaviours;*
- *Continuing to consider how best to equip children and young people with the essential knowledge and skills which will enable them to adapt and thrive in a rapidly changing and AI-enabled world;*

**NSEAD were asked to give specific feedback and concrete actions to the CAR panel by the Department for Education (DfE) for the next stage of the review. We presented four areas of focus and how the curriculum could be greatly improved if the following four key areas are addressed:**

1. The need to clearly **define the knowledge domains for art and design** and to make core knowledge expectations explicit
2. **Missing content needs to be included** with specific design and craft competencies.
3. A clear expectation of the need to develop **imagination, expression and creative thinking** through a plurality of disciplines and approaches that support personal and divergent learning goals.
4. Ensure **meaningful representation and diversity of practice and references** to support learners' exploration of the world around them historically or through contemporary art and culture.

### **Points from the Interim report:**

**Evolution not revolution.** Difficult. NSEAD believe that the high stakes assessment system does need a radical shift away from assessment led system that this review is unlikely to produce, but this needs time, and teachers need support. Many teachers do not want to see radical reform due to workload concerns.

**'Art and Design is thriving'**. It isn't thriving, steady fall, increase since 2019 – correlation with new D&T spec, fall in D&T entries, rise in art and design (AD) specs that may be used as an alternative to D&T. (no written exam). However, these specs have AOs that emphasise exploration, experimentation, expressive intention with technical investigation lower priority than in D&T. Issues for student choice. The fall in Art A Level shows that 'real' art and design entries have actually fallen. Discount codes mean that pupils entered for AD endorsement as an alternative for DT will not be able to do another AD option. Those DT pathways that use AD endorsements close the path for studying both DT and AD.

### **Ebacc and accountability measures**

*'In 2022/23, three quarters of state-funded pupils were studying more than eight qualifications at key stage 4, with the most common number being nine. Our polling also suggests that three quarters of key stage 4 pupils were able to study all the subjects they wanted to. 18'* This ignores the impact of reduced time and value for the subject at KS2-3. We don't know how many pupils who would otherwise have opted for the subject have been deterred by earlier experiences.

And:

*'advocates for the arts and some other subjects maintain that some subjects have been squeezed, either in relation to curriculum time, take-up by students, or both.'*

*'However, EBacc entry rates plateaued at around 40% between 2017 to 2024, and fewer than 15% of state-funded schools are meeting the 75% ambition.'*

*'We will continue to assess the place of the EBacc performance measures within the wider accountability framework, paying close attention to the evidence of the impact of performance measures on young people's choices and outcomes, and their impact on institutional behaviours'*

Buckets reduce choice. Ebacc informs value culture. This is a fairness issue. Our concern is that pupil choice is being restricted – the apparent stability of GCSE entries does not tell us anything.

### **Entitlement**

'Due to the volume of content to be covered at key stage 4, many schools begin preparing pupils for GCSE in year 9 (ordinarily the final year of key stage 3), which narrows the curriculum offer and may curtail learning in curriculum subjects not selected for further study. Findings from the NFER's Teacher Voice omnibus survey in 2019 show that 56% of schools begin teaching GCSEs in year 9 for all or most subjects, and some even begin doing this as early as year 8. This reduces the time available to study art and design in key stage 3.'

### **Mastery**

*'There is strong evidence that securing mastery in a subject is vital for raising standards and enabling future expertise.'* NSEAD does not reject the CAR position, but Mastery learning is different in art and design, it is not about achieving a fixed point and moving on, it is a continuous process of practice, reflection and engagement. We need to make that clear, but this is as much about pedagogy and how the curriculum is organised as it is about what is in the curriculum.

### **Knowledge**

*'The present national curriculum is a knowledge-rich offer, and international comparisons suggest that the present arrangements have had a positive impact on attainment.'* Ofsted define three domains for art and design– disciplinary, theoretical and practical. NSEAD define four domains, tacit (know how), explicit (know what), conceptual (know about), affective (know self). How knowledge is defined, how it is encountered and secured is particular to our subject.

### **Breadth and depth**

*'The causes of this apparent imbalance between breadth and depth of content are not always clear.'* A reduction in content in other subjects would allow for a better balance of breadth and depth in art and design. Insufficient curriculum time can result in depth sacrificed for breadth 'a superficial tour' or a narrow curriculum with depth in a very limited range of study. Both short change students.

*School Art: Where is it?* sets out the narrowing of the curriculum.

### **Relevance**

'attention is needed to address opportunities and challenges created by our fast-changing world. The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) and trends in digital information demand heightened media literacy and critical thinking, as well as digital skills. Likewise, global social

and environmental challenges require attention to scientific and cultural knowledge and skills that can equip young people to meet the challenges of the future.’

### **Representation**

*‘We will also ensure that the curriculum (and related material) is inclusive so that all young people can see themselves represented in their learning, as well as seeing others’ perspectives and broadening their horizons.’*

And:

*‘The national curriculum should empower teachers to foster a love of learning by enabling learning to be situated in a range of local, national and global contexts, to widen horizons, and to ensure that young people see meaningful representations of themselves in what they learn, as well as encountering and recognising the perspectives of others.’*

This is a key issue for art and design. Oak curriculum is centred on addressing this – The NSEAD’s curriculum rubric sets our standard.

### **Socio-economic gap**

*‘The socio-economic gap for educational attainment remains stubbornly large, and young people with SEND make less progress than their peers.’*

And:

*‘The national curriculum should enable students to master high-quality and aspirational learning, no matter what their individual needs or backgrounds. It should also support teachers to use their professional expertise in designing or selecting an engaging and stretching programme of learning that best suits their students’ needs.’*

There is a lack of data at subject level, this needs to be collected as part of the next stage of the review. Teachers struggle to use their professional expertise in a system that has undermined that and focused on limited progress measures (ie we only value what we can measure, so we stop doing what we can’t measure).

### **Gender gap**

Three to one, not closing.

### **SEND**

Art and design has been shown to have numerous benefits for SEND students, but there's no definitive data indicating that SEND students universally excel in art and design compared to other subjects. More research is needed.

### **Inclusion and diversity**

*‘we have heard compelling arguments that the curriculum needs to do more in ensuring that all young people feel represented, and that it successfully delivers the equalities duties to support equality of opportunity and challenge discrimination. Some of this has come from pupils themselves in our roundtables with young people. Pupils told us that not being able to*

*see themselves in the content they learn, or encountering negative portrayals, can be disempowering and demotivating, a point supported by wider evidence.'*

NSEAD made strong representation in the call for evidence on this issue, drawing on our own research and that of the Runnymede trust, in the Visualise report. The current national curriculum looks to the past, encourages privileging a white western, male canon and does not recognise the importance of contemporary practice. It is a positive note in the report that the CAR panel have heard directly from young people the negative impact.

### **Resources**

Budget for art materials, visits, artists are undoubtedly squeezed, and teachers would always like to have more. What we don't know is whether budget has fallen and since when, nor do we know how art budgets compare to other departments and whether the correlation has changed over time. We do know that school funding covers more, with less. Pension changes and teacher pay increases that are not fully funded are a factor.

**Wednesday 2 April 2025**

## Appendices

Table 1: Cultural Learning Alliance Report Card 2024

[culturallearningalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/CLA-2024-Annual-Report-Card.pdf](http://culturallearningalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/CLA-2024-Annual-Report-Card.pdf)

CLA (page 24, 2023): 'Falls in Art & Design for the same time period, amount to 19% fewer taught hours at Key Stage 4'

<b>Number of Arts teachers in secondary schools in England in 2011/12 and 2022/23</b>			
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Number of teachers in 2011/12</b>	<b>Number of teachers in 2022/23</b>	<b>Percentage difference</b>
Art & Design	13,913	12,589	-9%
Design & Technology	14,800	7,143	-52%
Drama	11,648	9,042	-22%
Media Studies	6,624	4,040	-39%
Music	8,043	7,184	-10%
<b>Total Arts subjects</b>	<b>55,028</b>	<b>39,998</b>	<b>-27%</b>

Table 2: Teachers and teaching hours for art and design – comparing 2022-12 and 2023-24 to all subjects in England

<b>Year</b>	<b>2011-2012</b>	<b>2023-2024</b>	(Percentage decrease for all subjects in brackets) <b>Percentage decrease for art and design in bold</b>
( <b>Teachers</b> in all subjects in brackets) <b>Art and design teachers, all years</b>	(Total 241,493) <b>13,913</b>	(Total 232,765) <b>12,680</b>	(3.6% decrease for all subjects) <b>8.9% decrease art and design</b>
(Total teaching <b>hours</b> for all subjects in brackets) <b>Number of teaching hours for art and design</b>	(Total 3,890,654) <b>157,652</b>	(Total 3,768,681) <b>138,074</b>	(3.1% decrease for all subjects) <b>12.4% decrease art and design</b>

**Table 3: Teachers and teaching hours for art and design, comparing 2022-12 and 2023-24 for years 7-9 and 10-11 compared to all subjects in England**

	2011-2012	2023-2024	(Percentage decrease for all subjects in brackets) <b>Percentage decrease for art and design in bold</b>
( <b>Teachers</b> in all subjects, years 7-9 in brackets) <b>Art and design teachers, year 7-9</b>	(213,284) <b>12,188</b>	(207,285) <b>11,576</b>	(2.8% decrease) <b>5.0% decrease art and design teachers</b>
( <b>Teachers</b> in all subjects, years 10-11 in brackets) <b>Art and design teachers, year 10-11</b>	(211,147) <b>9,476</b>	(205,642) <b>8,262</b>	(2.6% decrease) <b>12.8% decrease</b>
(Total teaching <b>hours</b> for years 7-9 all subjects, in brackets) <b>Number of teaching hours for art and design, year 7-9</b>	(Total 1,807,597) <b>76,999</b>	(Total 1,829,282) <b>74,865</b>	(1.2% decrease for all subjects) <b>2.8% decrease art and design teaching hours</b>
(Total teaching <b>hours</b> for years 10-11 all subjects, in brackets) <b>Number of teaching hours for art and design, year 10-11</b>	(1,425,800) <b>49,432</b>	(1,382,032) <b>40,511</b>	(3.1% decrease) <b>18.1% decrease</b>

Hours for years 10-11 in art and design have fallen by **18.1% over the 12-year period** - this compares to a decrease in **3.1% for all subjects** (same year groups). This is reflected in the numbers of year 10-11 art and design teachers: **12.8% drop compared to 2.6%** for all subjects.

Ref: [explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/school-workforce-in-england/2023?subjectId=d93c2f36-bfd9-4998-f919-08dc6f42a43e](https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/school-workforce-in-england/2023?subjectId=d93c2f36-bfd9-4998-f919-08dc6f42a43e)



**Table 4: Comparison of GCSE candidate numbers for art and design specifications 2018 and 2023:**

Specification	2018	2023	Difference 2018-2023	Percentage change (%)
<b>Textiles</b>	6700	11,515	4,815 increase	71.86% +
<b>Art, graphics</b>	7,160	8,830	1,670 increase	23.32% +
<b>Art: Fine art</b>	64,415	63,900	515 decrease	0.8% decrease
<b>Art: 3D studies</b>	No data for 2018 as too small but in 2019 4,070	8,595	4,525 increase	111.18% +
<b>Art; Photography</b>	26,910	39,525	12,615 increase	46.88% +
<b>Art (art, craft and design)</b>	58,875	52,115	6,760 decrease	11.48% decrease

Table 5: Comparison of GCSE candidate numbers for art and design specifications 2018 and 2024

Spec	2018	2024	Difference 2018-2024	Percentage change 2024 (%)
<b>Textiles</b>	6700	13,345	6,645 increase	99% +
<b>Art, graphics</b>	7,160	9,445	2,285 increase	32% +
<b>Art: Fine art</b>	64,415	67,225	2,810 increase	4% +
<b>Art: 3D studies</b>	No data for 2018 as too small but in 2019 4,070	10,065	5,995 increase	147% +
<b>Art; Photography</b>	26,910	40,430	12,615 increase	33% +
<b>Art (art, craft and design)</b>	58,875	53,345	5,530 decrease	9% decrease

Ref: <https://analytics.ofqual.gov.uk>