

## Improving the Art Curriculum

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The curriculum working group began with a session focused on 'Intent, Implementation and Impact, which reflects the role that curriculum takes within the new Ofsted framework. It provided us with an opportunity to further our understanding of a 'Deep Dive' and what it would demand from each of our departments. We were then capable of recognising any existing weaknesses and strengths of our own curriculum planning.

We now specify every concept that pupils will learn and master in each unit, term and year. We do this using the curriculum map pro forma, which is now being used school wide providing consistency across the academy. As a team, we decide and organise every piece of knowledge in advance of every unit we teach. This gives us sufficient time to plan for misconceptions, effective questioning and assessment. However, it is vital to highlight that as a department we are also encouraged to differentiate and therefore also adapt our curriculum for low and high prior attaining pupils.

Our aim as a department is to collectively and regularly review and sequence knowledge from previous units in order to guarantee a logical and reasonable content progression. We believe it is crucial to check and test pupils' knowledge, even after a unit has ended. We do this by using questioning based on Bloom's six cognitive levels: Knowledge ("Describe ..."), Comprehension (Summarise...), Application ("Why is ... significant?"), Analysis ("How does ... compare/contrast with ...?"), Synthesis ("How would you create/design a new ...?") and Evaluation ("What is the most important ...?"). These questions are particularly useful when going back to content that could be considered basic, but fundamental. For example, the Formal Elements in Art, which include elements such as texture, line and form. This is how we are able to check whether pupils have remembered this Year 7 content, even a year or more later. Assessing pupils' work either verbally or formally, gives us a clear indication of to what extent pupils have remembered or forgotten the precise definitions of those significant concepts.

We began our curriculum development journey by exploring what type of content and knowledge year 7 pupils are expected to acquire in the autumn term and deciding what content would be most valuable. Unit 1 is based on the aforementioned Formal Elements, which are often considered to be the building blocks or the main ingredients in Art. Having this knowledge will enable pupils to produce justified responses and appreciate a collection of Artworks in a well-informed way. This then gives us the possibility to build upon it in Term 2, when pupils are required to look at more advanced concepts. At the beginning of Year 7, we also ask pupils to complete a questionnaire that informs us on what processes and techniques they have or have not learned at Key Stage 2. This allows us to become more informed and enables us to adapt accordingly. Whilst most teachers are aware that new learning refines prior knowledge and adds complexity to current understanding, a science of learning perspective positions prior knowledge as central to organising and reassembling new information in order to make it meaningful. This process occurs in the prefrontal region, an area of the brain that does not fully develop until early adolescence. Therefore, it is important we spend an appropriate amount of time questioning how to include it not only in the curriculum plan, but also make it a part of our daily teaching routine and practice.

We then moved onto revising the curriculum content of every other project and year group. We reviewed how we include prior learning and adapted lessons in order for them to enable pupils to effectively access the next stage in their learning, but also be challenged on a consistent and regular basis. We filled any existing gaps and content-linked the projects in a way that is logical and encourages understanding and progression.

In order to further support the learning of our pupils, we introduced project specific knowledge organisers with keywords, important concepts and facts to remember, as well as visual examples of a variety of processes and techniques. In order to support and develop literacy skills, we also included a reading list to further develop pupils' understanding of each topic studied.

Through adapting our old curriculum, creating new resources and being open to new approaches, we have correspondingly established our cultural capital in a way that makes it beneficial, giving every pupil an equal opportunity to progress and develop.

