



The expressive arts

Links to direct references to art (including painting, drawing and making), drama, music, dance, design, and creativity throughout the EYFS Profile and the National Curriculum are provided below. These cover both the general introduction to the National Curriculum and content within individual subjects and schemes of work. Only links directly connected to creativity within the expressive arts have been included, although additional references may be found in other learning outcomes and wider pedagogical approaches.

Relevant links have also been collated from the DfE's final report of its curriculum and assessment review to highlight national-level perspectives. These are likely to influence the focus of the new curriculum expected in 2027. The review acknowledges the decline of the expressive arts over the past ten years and recognises the role of these subjects in responding to emerging challenges, such as AI and sustainability, as well as their importance in promoting inclusion. While much of the detail relates to older pupils (KS3+), the focus here is on points most relevant to primary education.

Area of curriculum	Documentary support	What the document says
The Curriculum and Assessment Review	Curriculum and Assessment Review final report: Building a world-class curriculum for all	<p>Drama</p> <p>'We heard in drama and dance work is needed to broaden the range of creators, performers, styles and genres covered.' (p. 51)</p> <p>'Respondents called for more specificity in oracy and drama, recognising these as beneficial for life and work.' (p. 75)</p> <p>'We recommend that the government ensure that the English curriculum sets out a clearer purpose... This should include more clearly drawing out curriculum requirements for speaking and listening, as well as drama.' (p. 78)</p> <p>'Drama has strong links to oracy and presenting skills and provides an important introduction to the performing arts. It is a valuable part of a broad and balanced curriculum that builds students' confidence and prepares them for later life.' (p. 79)</p> <p>'The current English curriculum content was last updated in 2013, which significantly reduced the amount of drama content...responses to our call for evidence argued that the resulting lack of clarity</p>



		<p>and specificity in the requirement for Drama means that it is not clear how the subject should be taught, what essential knowledge and skills pupils should acquire or what outcomes are expected.' (p. 79)</p> <p>'We heard in primary schools, drama and performance tend to be strongly valued and prioritised.' (p. 80)</p> <p>'We recommend that great specificity about drama should be added to Key Stage 1 and 2 English Programmes of Study, aiming to build solid foundations and support transition to KS3.' (pp. 80–81, 184)</p> <p>Music</p> <p>'In music, stakeholders noted that terminology and assessment criteria can limit the inclusion of diverse genres and styles.' (p. 51)</p> <p>'Evidence of inequitable access to and success in music is substantial. A 2020 Education and Policy Institute report identifies music as having the highest disadvantage gap.' (p. 97)</p> <p>'Nearly three times as many children from high-income households take part in music lessons compared to the lowest income.' (p. 91)</p> <p>'We therefore recommend that the government explore ways to better optimise investment in music education to support the teaching and learning of musical instruments and the reading of music to ensure equitable access and progress in music education.' (pp. 98, 100, 187)</p> <p>'Ofsted subject report echoed this. It found a lack of specificity in music programmes of study about the fundamentals of musical understanding and reported that the curriculum is often interpreted by a list of disconnected genres and composers. This encourages the breadth but not the depth of study.' (p. 98)</p> <p>'The Cultural Learning Alliance has also noted that musicians need to build a subject-specific knowledge of theory, notation and instrumental techniques.' (p. 98)</p> <p>'We recommend specifying the core knowledge and skills that should be taught in music from KS1-3...this should ensure that all students have a more solid foundation in music... This should also</p>
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		<p>provide clarity for teachers, specifically non-specialists, on how to build musical understanding, rather than taking an isolated, topic-by-topic approach.' (pp. 99, 100, 187)</p> <p>Art & Design</p> <p>'In reflections on preparing learners for a changing world, the report highlights the arts as crucial in preparing young people for the challenges and opportunities ahead.' (p. 34)</p> <p>'In Art and Design, research shows that works by minority ethnic artists are rarely used, despite the subject's potential to reflect Britain's cultural diversity and contributions to the discipline.' (p. 51)</p> <p>'Art and Design remains a popular subject in the National Curriculum. We have heard from many teachers that they enjoy teaching art and that they relish the flexibility of the present curriculum across all key stages.' (p. 55)</p> <p>'We therefore recommend limited revisions are made to the Art and Design curriculum so that this popular subject continues to deliver the knowledge and skills young people require to thrive creatively.' (p. 55)</p> <p>'Non-specialist teachers, particularly at primary, lack the confidence and training to teach the curriculum effectively, citing the lack of details in the programmes of study as a barrier.' (p. 56)</p> <p>'Respondents to the call for evidence told us that the current curriculum could do more to articulate how students' practical knowledge and skills should progress throughout their study.' (p. 56)</p> <p>'We recommend that the government makes limited revisions to KS1-3 Art and Design programmes of study to clarify and exemplify the knowledge and skills pupils should develop, including their own creative practice, reflection and critical engagement.' (pp. 54, 181)</p>
<p>The Government's response to the Curriculum and Assessment review</p>	<p>Government response to the Curriculum and Assessment Review</p>	<p>Drama</p> <p>'We will ensure there is a greater clarity and specificity throughout the English curriculum, particularly for speaking, listening and drama, alongside the oracy framework we will introduce.' (p. 30)</p> <p>'We agree with the review that drama plays an important role in a broad curriculum, and that it supports the development of a range of knowledge and skills including creativity and oracy.' (p. 31)</p> <p>'We will consider whether further detail and clarity primarily enable a stronger drama offer within English and create a discrete drama section within KS3 Programme of Study.' (p. 31)</p>



		<p>Music</p> <p>'We are committing to revitalise arts education as part of the reformed national curriculum and through high-quality support for teachers of these subjects. In addition to our continued investment in music hubs, we are launching a new National Centre for Arts and Music.' (p. 15)</p> <p>'A goal of quality music education is a powerful tool for connection and expression. It should be creative and challenging and equip pupils with the knowledge and tools to appreciate, understand and make music, bringing school communities together.' (p. 34)</p> <p>'We welcome the Review's focus on equity in Music education. Equitable access starts with a clear effective curriculum that delivers a rigorous foundation for all, and, for music, the current programme of study is not achieving that...We will reform the programme of study to clarify and exemplify its purpose, aims and content to ensure that pupils develop a strong foundation in the three pillars of musical understanding- technical, constructive and expressive- including how to read music....We recognise the Review's concerns around access to music and that some schools require support to deliver music well.' (p. 34)</p> <p>*It should be noted the government also discussed the introduction to an enrichment entitlement. They said 'children who attended clubs for hobbies, arts and music were significantly more likely to progress to higher education than those who do not.' (p. 38)</p> <p>Dance</p> <p>'We heard that in drama and dance, work is needed to broaden the range of creators, performers, styles and genres studied.' (p.51)</p> <p>'Ofsted found that in many schools inspectors visited, the PE curriculum did not match the ambition of the National Curriculum because some activities, such as dance, were not being taught well or not being taught at all.' (p. 101)</p> <p>'We heard particular concerns about dance, which form part of the PE curriculum... but which is reportedly not taught to all as part of PE, or where it is taught, it is not well organised.' (p. 102)</p> <p>'We recommend that the government introduce a concise, scaffolded approach to the attainment targets and key stage content within the Programmes of Study. As part of this, the government should</p>
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		<p>review how the Programmes of Study refer to individual activities such as dance.' (p. 105)</p> <p>'We have heard how dance is a popular activity with children and young people. However... both dance and PE stakeholders called for the curriculum to better support teachers to teach dance through a clearer PE programme.' (p. 105)</p> <p>'There is also some evidence that non-specialist and generalist PE teachers are not confident teaching dance. A quarter of primary teachers did not feel confident in teaching the 'performance of simple dances' at KS1, while more than a third did not feel confident teaching 'dances using a range of movement patterns' at KS2.' (p. 105)</p> <p>Art and Design</p> <p>'We will improve arts education as part of the reformed national curriculum and through high-quality support for teachers of these subjects.' (p. 10)</p> <p>'The arts subjects are an entitlement rather than an optional extra and are disciplines in their own rights, with unique pedagogies that the best schools teach with expertise and rigour.' (p. 14)</p> <p>'We will exemplify the knowledge and skills that pupils should develop including their creative practice.' (p. 60)</p> <p>**The enrichment benchmarks and enrichment entitlement also highlights a focus on art and design.</p>
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework, GOV.UK	<p>ELG: Creating with Materials</p> <p>Children at the expected level of development will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safely use and explore a variety of materials, tools and techniques, experimenting with colour, design, texture, form and function. • Share their creations, explaining the process they have used. • Make use of props and materials when role playing characters in narratives and stories. (p. 15) <p>ELG: Being Imaginative and Expressive</p> <p>Children at the expected level of development will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invent, adapt and recount narratives and stories with peers and their teacher. • Sing a range of well-known nursery rhymes and songs. • Perform songs, rhymes, poems and stories with others, and – when appropriate – try to move in time with music. (pp. 15–16)



		<p><u>Expressive arts and Design</u> The development of children's artistic and cultural awareness supports their imagination and creativity. It is important that children have regular opportunities to engage with the arts, enabling them to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials. The quality and variety of what children see, hear and participate in is crucial for developing their understanding, self-expression, vocabulary and ability to communicate through the arts. The frequency, repetition and depth of their experiences are fundamental to their progress in interpreting and appreciating what they hear, respond to and observe. (p. 11)</p>
		Use a range of small tools, including scissors, paint brushes and cutlery. Begin to show accuracy and care when drawing. (p. 13)
		Explore the natural world around them, making observations and drawing pictures of animals and plants. (p. 13)
Introduction	The national curriculum in England - Framework document (publishing.service.gov.uk)	Aims 3.1 The national curriculum provides pupils with an introduction to the essential knowledge that they need to be educated citizens. It introduces pupils to the best that has been thought and said; and helps engender an appreciation of human creativity and achievement. (p. 3)
		Every state-funded school must offer a curriculum which is balanced and broadly based and which promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society (p. 5)
English		<p>All pupils should be enabled to participate in and gain knowledge, skills and understanding associated with the artistic practice of drama. Pupils should be able to adopt, create and sustain a range of roles, responding appropriately to others in role. They should have opportunities to improvise, devise and script drama for one another and a range of audiences, as well as to rehearse, refine, share and respond thoughtfully to drama and theatre performances. (p. 14)</p>
		Pupils should be taught to participate in discussions, presentations, performances, role play, improvisations and debates. (p. 17)



		Role-play and other drama techniques can help pupils to identify with and explore characters. In these ways, they extend their understanding of what they read and have opportunities to try out the language they have listened to. (p. 29)
		Drama and role-play can contribute to the quality of pupils' writing by providing opportunities for pupils to develop and order their ideas through playing roles and improvising scenes in various settings. (p. 31)
		They should be developing their understanding and enjoyment of stories, poetry, plays and non-fiction, and learning to read silently. (p. 33)
		In years 3 and 4, pupils should become more familiar with and confident in using language in a greater variety of situations, for a variety of audiences and purposes, including through drama. (p. 33)
		Pupils should be taught to develop positive attitudes to reading and understanding of what they read by listening to and discussing a wide range of fiction, poetry, plays, non-fiction and reference books or textbooks. (p. 35)
		Pupils should be taught to develop positive attitudes to reading and understanding of what they read by preparing poems and play scripts to read aloud and to perform, showing understanding through intonation, tone, volume and action. (p. 36)
		Pupils should be encouraged to use drama approaches to understand how to perform plays and poems to support their understanding of the meaning. (p. 37)
Art and design		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. (p. 176)



		<p>The national curriculum for art and design aims to ensure that all pupils:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. (p. 176)
		Pupils should be taught to develop a wide range of art and design techniques in using colour, pattern, texture, line, shape, form and space. (p. 177)
		Pupils should be taught 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. (p. 177)
		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. (p. 177)
		Pupils should be taught 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] (p. 177)
		Pupils should be taught about great artists, architects and designers in history. P. 177)
Design and technology		They acquire a broad range of subject knowledge and draw on disciplines such as mathematics, science, engineering, computing and art. (p. 180)
		<p>When designing and making, pupils should be taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design design purposeful, functional, appealing products for themselves and other users based on design criteria • Generate, develop, model and communicate their ideas through talking, drawing, templates, mock-ups and, where appropriate, information and communication technology



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make select from and use a range of tools and equipment to perform practical tasks [for example, cutting, shaping, joining and finishing] • Select from and use a wide range of materials and components, including construction materials, textiles and ingredients, according to their characteristics (p. 181)
Maths		Pupils draw symmetric patterns using a variety of media to become familiar with different orientations of lines of symmetry (p. 124)
Music		<p>Music is a universal language that embodies one of the highest forms of creativity. A high quality music education should engage and inspire pupils to develop a love of music and their talent as musicians, and so increase their self-confidence, creativity and sense of achievement. As pupils progress, they should develop a critical engagement with music, allowing them to compose, and to listen with discrimination to the best in the musical canon. (p. 196)</p>
		<p>The national curriculum for music aims to ensure that all pupils:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • perform, listen to, review and evaluate music across a range of historical periods, genres, styles and traditions, including the works of the great composers and musicians • learn to sing and to use their voices, to create and compose music on their own and with others, have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument, use technology appropriately and have the opportunity to progress to the next level of musical excellence • understand and explore how music is created, produced and communicated, including through the inter-related dimensions: pitch, duration, dynamics, tempo, timbre, texture, structure and appropriate musical notations. (p. 196)
		Pupils should be taught to use their voices expressively and creatively by singing songs and speaking chants and rhymes. (p. 197)
		Pupils should be taught to play tuned and untuned instruments musically. (p197)
		Pupils should be taught to listen with concentration and understanding to a range of high-quality live and recorded music. (p. 197)



		Pupils should be taught to experiment with, create, select and combine sounds using the inter-related dimensions of music. (p. 197)
		Pupils should be taught to sing and play musically with increasing confidence and control. They should develop an understanding of musical composition, organising and manipulating ideas within musical structures and reproducing sounds from aural memory. (p. 197)
		Pupils should be taught to play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression. (p. 197)
		Pupils should be taught to improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the inter-related dimensions of music. (p. 197)
		Pupils should be taught to listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory use and understand staff and other musical notations. (p, 197)
		Pupils should be taught to appreciate and understand a wide range of high-quality live and recorded music drawn from different traditions and from great composers and musicians to develop an understanding of the history of music. (p. 197)