



# Creativity and the arts in the curriculum – update

## Introduction

Creativity and the arts are a vital part of a broad and balanced school curriculum. However, evidence suggests that creative and arts subjects are being squeezed out of the curriculum. In 2017, the NASUWT published a major report examining trends and developments in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. *Creativity and the arts in the curriculum: A report of policies and practices in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales* found evidence of positive developments in all four nations, but also highlighted evidence of loss of curriculum access and entitlement for pupils.

This update builds on the 2017 report and examines the latest evidence about policies and practice relating to creativity and the arts in schools.

## England

Published data has revealed a decline in the number of teachers teaching creative and arts subjects in secondary schools and a decline in the number of hours of teaching creative subjects in secondary schools. Recent analysis of national data indicates that this trend is continuing.

Evidence published by the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for music education finds that total teaching hours for music continued to decline in all phases at secondary school: in KS3 (years 7, 8 and 9) total teaching hours were down from 54,900 in 2015 to 53,200 in 2017; in KS4 (years 10 and 11) they were down from 18,300 in 2015 to 17,100 in 2017; and in KS5 (years 12 and 13) they were down from 12,400 in 2015 to 9,900 in 2017.<sup>1</sup> Data for other creative arts subjects reveals a similar picture. In 2017, the total hours taught were as follows: Art and Design = 135,000 hours (down from 139,000 in 2015); Media = 29,000 (down from 33,300 in 2015); Drama = 80,800 (down from 85,100 in 2015); and Design and Technology (D&T) = 76,300 (down from 89,500 in 2015).<sup>2</sup>

Research finds that more than 50% of primary schools do not meet their music curriculum obligations in year 6.<sup>3</sup> Further, there are significant disparities between the percentages of pupils from deprived backgrounds taking music compared with other pupils: in 2017 only 5.4% of pupils from groups that experience high deprivation took GCSE music, compared with 8.3% of pupils from low deprivation groups.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> APPG for Music Education, University of Sussex and ISM (January 2019), *Music Education: State of the Nation – Report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Music Education, the Incorporated Society of Musicians and the University of Sussex*.

<sup>2</sup> DfE, *School Workforce in England*, November 2017, Table 13.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, page 10.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, page 16.

Data on the number of trainee teachers entering postgraduate initial teacher training (ITT) courses in 2018 reveals that all of the creative subjects fell short of the teacher supply model (TSM) target: only 83% of the TSM target number were recruited to drama courses; the figure for art and design was 73%; for music it was 72%; and for D&T it was just 25%.<sup>5</sup>

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) has expressed concerns about the narrowing of the curriculum in some primary and secondary schools, identifying testing and school accountability, including inspection, as driving some of this practice.<sup>6</sup> Ofsted's research into the curriculum picks up these concerns and explores how schools invest in curriculum design.<sup>7</sup> The findings have informed proposed changes to the education inspection framework.

At the time of writing, Ofsted has signalled that it intends to look more closely at issues of breadth and balance of the curriculum in schools. This will include an expectation that the curriculum should remain broad for all pupils for as long as possible.<sup>8</sup> Maintained secondary schools are expected to teach the national curriculum, and academies are expected to demonstrate that they offer a curriculum that is similar in ambition and breadth to the national curriculum.<sup>9</sup> Maintained schools and academies are required to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. Provision for cultural development includes encouraging pupils to participate in and respond positively to artistic, musical, sporting and cultural opportunities.<sup>10</sup> However, schools may offer such opportunities as part of extracurricular activities rather than through the main curriculum, raising questions as to whether inspection reforms will actually result in improvements to the creative curriculum offer in schools.

Funding for Music Education Hubs comes in the form of a combination of grants and awards. There are concerns about the short-term nature of funding and the variability and availability of support.<sup>11</sup> There are particular concerns about the failure of hubs to address issues relating to equality of access and inclusion, and the increasing casualisation of the music teaching workforce.<sup>12</sup>

The NASUWT remains deeply concerned about the future of creativity and the arts in the curriculum in England. While changes to the Ofsted inspection framework may offer an opportunity for increased coverage of arts and creative subjects in the curriculum, wider education reforms, combined with cuts to local authority and school budgets, limit the space for this to happen.

## Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland Assembly has been suspended since January 2017, meaning that no new legislation has been passed since the NASUWT last reported on creativity and the arts in 2017.

The total number of full-time and part-time teachers working in grant-aided schools in Northern Ireland remains stable. In 2017/18, there were 19,867 teachers compared with 19,778 in 2016/17 and 19,835 in 2015/16.<sup>13</sup> However, the Department of Education (DE) does not collect data on teacher numbers by subject taught, meaning that it is not possible to establish whether teacher numbers in creative subjects remain stable.

New inspection arrangements came into force in December 2017. However, due to a number of developments, the Chief Inspector has been unable to comment on the quality of creativity and arts provision in many schools, or to compare it with previous years.<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless, reports indicate that 'high quality outdoor learning experiences remain underdeveloped due in part to insufficient breadth and creativity in planned learning'.<sup>15</sup> There is evidence of a narrow curriculum offer at KS4 and post-16 in many schools.<sup>16</sup> An examination of GCSE entries in subjects such as D&T, performing arts, art, music, and drama reveals that the number of entries has dropped in all subjects over

<sup>5</sup> DfE (29 November 2018), *Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Census for the academic year 2018 to 2019, England*.

<sup>6</sup> Amanda Spielman (11 October 2017), *HMCI's commentary: recent primary and secondary curriculum research*.

<sup>7</sup> Ofsted (December 2018), *An investigation into how to assess the quality of education through curriculum intent, implementation and impact*.

<sup>8</sup> Ofsted (January 2019), *School Inspection Handbook*, paragraphs 157, 5th bullet and 161.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, paragraph 159.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, paragraph 207, fifth bullet.

<sup>11</sup> APPG (January 2019), *op. cit.*

<sup>12</sup> APPG (January 2019), *op. cit.*, page 21.

<sup>13</sup> Department of Education (14 June 2018), *Teacher workforce statistics in grant-aided schools in Northern Ireland 2017/18*. Statistical Workforce Bulletin 5/2018.

<sup>14</sup> Education and Training Inspectorate (2018), *Chief Inspector's Report 2016-2018*.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, page 63.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, page 74.

the five-year period 2012/13 to 2016/17.<sup>17</sup> While the post-primary pupil population also declined over this period,<sup>18</sup> the drop in the number of entries in these subjects was greater than this, with drama (71% of the 2012/13 total), art (78%) and music (79%) experiencing the biggest declines.<sup>19</sup>

The Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Qualifications (CCEA) has established GCSE, GCE A level and AS level qualifications in Moving Image Arts (MIA). The qualifications seek to recognise the growing importance of the creative industries in Northern Ireland, including the film industry. CCEA is keen to promote MIA and showcases the best work of students who have studied for MIA qualifications.<sup>20</sup> However, the number of students taking these qualifications is small, with only around 1,500 students taking the MIA GCSE or A level qualification.<sup>21</sup>

The evidence highlights the very significant barriers to embedding creativity and the arts in the curriculum in schools in Northern Ireland. The absence of the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive remains a barrier to progress on this issue.

## Scotland

Data on teacher numbers by subject indicates that teacher numbers in arts and creative subjects remains stable. In the cases of Art and Technical Education, teacher numbers increased very slightly in 2017 (art teaching their main subject = 1,071, up from 1,053 in 2016; and technical education teaching their main subject = 1,045, up from 1,237 in 2016).<sup>22</sup>

Education Scotland continues to undertake work related to the Creativity Across Learning 3-18 report, a ten-year plan which runs until 2024. However, it is unclear what is being done to support teachers and school leaders to ensure that creativity is embedded into school curricula. For example, it is unclear what is being done to help school leaders to build creative learning into curriculum design, or to support teachers and leaders to assess specific creativity skills and evaluate how well they are being developed.

Scottish Government's youth music initiative seeks to support school-based music-making and enable every pupil in Scotland to be offered a year of free music tuition by the time they leave primary school. The initiative also targets pupils from disadvantaged groups. However, the annual survey of Instrumental Music Services in Scotland reveals that 21 of the 32 local authorities charge for music tuition, with four local authorities introducing fees in 2018-19 and eight authorities increasing their fees.<sup>23</sup> One authority, Midlothian, has axed all musical instrument tuition in its schools with the exception of pupils studying for Higher or National 5 qualifications. Twelve full-time equivalent posts have been lost.<sup>24</sup>

A number of studies that have examined how Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) is being implemented highlight concerns about fragmentation and narrowing of the curriculum. The Education and Skills Committee has also raised concerns about what is happening in practice.<sup>25</sup> In September 2018, evidence to the Committee on the curriculum and attainment trends found that the curriculum remains fragmented along former curricula lines, with a 3-12 curriculum, a broad general education curriculum in S1-3 and a senior curriculum shaped by qualifications studied in S4-6.<sup>26</sup> The evidence also found a clear narrowing of choices in the senior phase (S4-6), with most schools offering a maximum subject choice of 6 (57% of schools surveyed) or 7 (30% of schools surveyed).<sup>27</sup> The report raises concerns that the 6 subject model is restricting pupil choice and progression beyond core subjects and is undermining the viability of other subjects. It also reports that some local authorities are pressurising schools to adopt the 6 subject model.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> CCEA (2018), Annual Qualifications Insight 2017.

<sup>18</sup> Analysis of school enrolment statistical bulletins <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/school-enrolments-overview> (accessed 13 February 2019).

<sup>19</sup> CCEA Op. Cit. Analysis of data in table 3.51.

<sup>20</sup> <http://ccea.org.uk/>.

<sup>21</sup> CCEA news release, November 2017.

<http://ccea.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/news/2017/Dec/2017%20Moving%20Image%20Arts%20Press%20Release.pdf> (accessed 13 February 2019).

<sup>22</sup> Supplementary data for the Teacher Census 2017, Table 3.5. Published December 2018.

<sup>23</sup> Improvement Service, Instrumental Music Services: Results from the IMS Survey May to July 2018.

<sup>24</sup> *Edinburgh Evening News* article, Friday 1 February 2019. <https://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/news/midlothian-council-set-to-be-first-in-scotland-to-axe-school-music-tuition-1-4865789> (accessed 12 February 2019).

<sup>25</sup> Scottish Parliament Education and Skills Committee, 22nd meeting, 2018 (Session 5) Wednesday 19 September 2018: [http://www.parliament.scot/S5\\_Education/Meeting%20Papers/20180919ES\\_Meeting\\_Papers.pdf](http://www.parliament.scot/S5_Education/Meeting%20Papers/20180919ES_Meeting_Papers.pdf) (Accessed 12 February 2019).

<sup>26</sup> Professor Jim Scott, *Unintended or Unexpected? The Impact of the Curriculum for Excellence on Secondary School Curriculum and Attainment*. In Education and Skills Committee meeting papers for 19 September 2018.

<sup>27</sup> Committee Survey on the Senior Phase, 2017. In Education and Skills Committee meeting papers for 19 September 2018.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*



Evidence provided to the Education and Skills Committee considers the impact of narrowing policies at S4 on specific subject choices. Professor Jim Scott reports that the 'standard offer' in many schools is English, maths and four other subjects, with many parents appearing to opt for '2 sciences and a social' or '2 socials and a science'.<sup>29</sup> Creative subjects are then competing with languages and technology for the final subject slot. Professor Scott reports that modern languages and technology, and to a lesser extent the creative subjects and the social sciences, have experienced sustained declines since the appearance of CfE.<sup>30</sup>

The evidence cited above suggests that most schools and local authorities have undertaken limited work to reform the school curriculum from the former three-tier model. Current education policy developments raise significant concerns about the role that creative subjects will play in the curriculum for younger pupils. The 2019 National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan emphasises improving attainment in literacy and numeracy as a key priority. Scottish National Standardised Assessments (SNSAs), which focus on reading, writing and numeracy, are designed to support this priority.<sup>31</sup> The tests which are conducted in P1, P4, P7 and S3 are intended to help teachers to identify a pupil's strengths and weaknesses and so support planning for next steps in learning. However, schools and local authorities are also expected to use the results of assessments for school improvement purposes. While the tests themselves may not be high stakes, there is a significant risk that local authorities in particular will use test results to impose improvement practices that narrow the curriculum offer and increase the focus on English and maths.

The evidence indicates that few schools have embedded creativity and the arts into the curriculum. It also reveals that many schools have failed to adopt a broad and coherent curriculum offer along the lines intended in CfE. Wider education policy reforms and continuing cuts to public services pose further threats to a broad and balanced curriculum offer that includes creativity and the arts.

## Wales

School workforce data reveals that the number of teachers teaching arts and creative subjects continues to decline. In 2017, there were fewer teachers registered with the Education Workforce Council (EWC) teaching Art (531 down from 532), D&T (848 down from 888), Drama (372 down from 375), Media (153 down from 159) and Music (408 down from 424) than in 2016.<sup>32</sup>

The new Wales curriculum is built around six Areas of Learning (AoL), one of which is Expressive Arts. The original timetable for implementing the new curriculum has been revised. The new curriculum and assessment arrangements are due to be available for April 2019, finalised by January 2020 and used by all maintained schools by September 2022.<sup>33</sup>

While the reforms offer an opportunity to raise the profile of expressive and creative arts, there are significant concerns about the way in which the curriculum is being developed and how it will be implemented. Feedback to the NASUWT from teachers indicates that in many Pioneer Schools, 'co-construction of the curriculum' is being undertaken by a small, select group of senior staff and external 'experts'. There is also evidence which suggests that some senior staff leading the curriculum development process have little or no expertise in the area of the curriculum in which they are engaged. The majority of teachers are not engaged in the design process and are being given very little information about the work being undertaken. This challenges Welsh Government rhetoric that the curriculum is being co-constructed with the profession.

There is a significant risk that schools and local authorities will use the reforms to reduce costs and cut specialist subject teaching posts in creative and expressive arts subjects. There is some evidence which suggests that this is already happening. For example, some schools are restructuring their staffing structures and Teaching and Learning Responsibility (TLR) payments to align with the new curriculum AoLs and remove middle leader posts.

The five-year action plan, *Creative Learning through the Arts – an action plan for Wales*, is funded until 2020. Operating through regions that match regional consortia areas, creative networks have been

---

<sup>29</sup> Professor Jim Scott, op. cit. page 16.

<sup>30</sup> Professor Jim Scott, *Ibid*, pages 16-17.

<sup>31</sup> Scottish Government (December 2018), *2019 National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan*.

<sup>32</sup> Education Workforce Council Statistics Digest March 2017, figure 1.11.

<sup>33</sup> New curriculum overview: <https://beta.gov.wales/new-school-curriculum-overview>. (accessed 11 February 2019).

established to help schools share information, ideas and resources. 'Nearly 300' schools across Wales are involved in creative learning networks.<sup>34</sup> However, it is unclear whether specific work is being undertaken to help schools prepare to embed the creative arts through the reformed curriculum.

Curriculum, assessment and wider education reforms in Wales provide an opportunity to ensure that creativity and the arts are embedded into the curriculum. However, evidence from Scotland cited above reveals the many challenges involved in securing curriculum reforms that are coherent and achieve the desired outcomes. Emerging evidence in Wales raises profound concerns about whether creativity and the arts will be embedded into school curricula.

## **Conclusion and next steps**

This report on creativity and the arts in school curricula continues to present a worrying picture across all UK administrations.

**The NASUWT will continue to raise concerns about the breadth and balance of the curriculum, and the place of creativity and the arts within the curriculum, with ministers, departments and other relevant national bodies. This will include raising specific concerns about curriculum design.**

It is essential that governments in the UK administrations ensure that schools have the resources to enable school leaders and teachers to review, design and plan the curriculum. This includes ensuring that teachers and school leaders have the time to undertake reviews and design and plan the curriculum. It also includes ensuring that teachers and school leaders have access to relevant training and development opportunities, and that they are able to draw on support and expertise.

**The NASUWT will continue to press UK governments and administrations to fund schools adequately and ensure that schools make effective use of their resources. This includes continuing to raise concerns about the need for governments to resource teachers' professional development and for schools to enable teachers to access professional development and support.**

**The NASUWT is also pressing governments and administrations to provide resources to enable teachers and school leaders to access support relating to curriculum design, including a broad and balanced curriculum that incorporates creativity and the arts. The Union will also seek to ensure that schools are held accountable for supporting all teachers and school leaders to develop their curriculum knowledge and skills, including those relating to curriculum design.**

**The NASUWT is encouraging members to raise questions about curriculum design and implementation in their schools and support members to secure a broad and balanced curriculum that incorporates creativity and the arts.**

Many school leaders do not have expertise in the creative arts. It is vital that those who lead curriculum design and planning in schools draw on the knowledge and expertise of teachers and others who possess this knowledge and expertise. Curriculum design and planning should be a collaborative process that is done with teachers and others across and beyond a school. Governments in the UK administrations should identify and establish how schools can best be supported to ensure that this happens.

**The NASUWT is working with schools to encourage them to adopt a collegial approach to curriculum design and implementation that recognises and draws on the expertise of creative and arts specialist teachers. The Union is also supporting teachers to challenge practices that ignore the contribution and expertise of teachers, including creative-arts subject specialists.**

Linked to these points, governments in the UK administrations should identify, collect and promote examples of effective curriculum design and planning in schools. The examples should demonstrate how creativity and the arts have been embedded into the curriculum.

**The NASUWT will continue to press governments, government departments and other relevant bodies (e.g. Ofsted, Estyn, CCEA, GTCS) to collect and disseminate examples of effective curriculum design, planning and implementation in schools. This will include ensuring that all examples recognise the professionalism of teachers, and avoid unnecessary bureaucracy and workload burdens. It will also include ensuring that other education guidance documents that make reference to the curriculum recognise the importance of both curriculum design and a broad and balanced curriculum that includes creativity and the arts.**

---

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.arts.wales/arts-in-wales/creative-learning/the-lead-creative-schools-scheme/schools> (accessed 11 February 2019).

## Further reading

NASUWT (April 2017). *Creativity and the arts in the curriculum: A report of policies and practices in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales*. [www.nasuwt.org.uk/uploads/assets/uploaded/3535be2c-801c-46cb-b4410810472b52a3.pdf](http://www.nasuwt.org.uk/uploads/assets/uploaded/3535be2c-801c-46cb-b4410810472b52a3.pdf).

APPG for Music Education, University of Sussex and ISM (January 2019). *Music Education: State of the Nation – Report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Music Education, the Incorporated Society of Musicians and the University of Sussex*. [www.ism.org/images/images/State-of-the-Nation-Music-Education-WEB.pdf](http://www.ism.org/images/images/State-of-the-Nation-Music-Education-WEB.pdf).

Ofsted (December 2018). *An investigation into how to assess the quality of education through curriculum intent, implementation and impact*. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/766252/How\\_to\\_assess\\_intent\\_and\\_implementation\\_of\\_curriculum\\_191218.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/766252/How_to_assess_intent_and_implementation_of_curriculum_191218.pdf).

Scottish Parliament Education and Skills Committee (2017). *Committee Survey on the Senior Phase, 2017*. In Education and Skills Committee meeting papers for 19 September 2018. [www.parliament.scot/S5\\_Education/Meeting%20Papers/20180919ES\\_Meeting\\_Papers.pdf](http://www.parliament.scot/S5_Education/Meeting%20Papers/20180919ES_Meeting_Papers.pdf).

Scott, Jim. *Unintended or Unexpected? The Impact of the Curriculum for Excellence on Secondary School Curriculum and Attainment*. In Education and Skills Committee meeting papers for 19 September 2018 [www.parliament.scot/S5\\_Education/Meeting%20Papers/20180919ES\\_Meeting\\_Papers.pdf](http://www.parliament.scot/S5_Education/Meeting%20Papers/20180919ES_Meeting_Papers.pdf).

**NASUWT**  
The Teachers' Union

**talk  
to us**

03330 145550  
[advice@mail.nasuwt.org.uk](mailto:advice@mail.nasuwt.org.uk)