Art and Design at Our Lady and St. Thomas Catholic Primary School

Part of the Bishop Hogarth Catholic Academy Trust

**Intent**

A Our Lady and St Thomas Primary School, we believe every child has the right to share and express their individual creativity, independence, resilience, and self-reflection. Our goal is to provide all children with the essential skills, techniques, and knowledge to independently create their own unique drawings, paintings, sculptures, and crafts. We aim to foster a natural sense of wonder and curiosity in children as they expand their knowledge of various artists through valuable educational, social, and cultural experiences. As pupils progress, they should be able to think critically and develop a more rigorous understanding of art and design. They should also understand how art and design reflect and shape our history, and contribute to the culture, creativity, and wealth of our nation.

**Implementation**

At Our Lady and St Thomas Primary School, we primarily use Access Art to support our staff in delivering high-quality teaching, with learning carefully sequenced to deepen understanding of key concepts and enable all pupils to achieve their full potential. However, staff have the freedom to deviate from the scheme, provided they are confident in maintaining the same quality of teaching that Access Art offers. This flexibility is particularly valuable when there is an opportunity to create cross-curricular artwork.

Art is taught in half-termly blocks (alternating with Design Technology units) and during each unit, two artists are studied – a local artist and a non-local artist. Each year consists of three art units based on the following areas of focus: Drawing and Sketchbooks, Paint, Surface, Texture, and Working in Three Dimensions. From Year 1, children complete their artwork in sketchbooks, which they continue to use as they progress through school, receiving a new one only when the current one is full. This approach allows both children and staff to reflect on the child's artistic journey and monitor their progression, while always keeping in mind that progression in art is not always linear. To help with this process of reflection and monitoring, all artwork is dated – however unlike other subjects, children are not required to have a Learning Intention for their artwork. Sketchbooks offer children a space to practise and master techniques, document ideas, make mistakes, and develop a sense of ownership. Teachers encourage children to freely record all their artwork, take creative risks, and experiment, emphasising that there is no right or wrong way to do this. Therefore, we believe it is important that sketchbooks are not marked. Sketchbooks are used by both teachers and children. Teachers have their own sketchbooks to model techniques and ideas, record the focus of each lesson, note discussions, and document anything else they find necessary. This practice has proven useful when discussing art lessons with subject leadership, as it provides clarity on techniques, focus, and lesson content that may not be evident in children's sketchbooks alone.

In EYFS the subject of Art is covered through the 'Expressive Arts and Design' and 'Physical Development' parts of the curriculum outlined in the EYFS Statutory Framework. Art is covered in different ways in EYFS for example taught lessons when learning about an artist and their techniques and also art through continuous provision both inside and outdoors. The activities on offer can be topic based, stand alone or based on the children's interests. Children have opportunities to access art activities independently and creatively and also to complete art projects in a more focused way with an adult. Evidence of skills taught is kept in a project book. The children's artwork is also on the classroom walls and walls around school.

As well as this, art is promoted throughout our school through a variety of platforms:

* Each year, we celebrate art and design through Art Week, a dedicated week for all forms of art and design. Typically, we invite an artist to work with the children. Each Art Week has a specific theme; for example, in 2024, the theme was 'Disney,' and in 2025, it was 'Pilgrims of Hope,' coinciding with the Jubilee of the Catholic Church.
* A unique aspect of our art and design curriculum is that at the start of each academic year, all children draw a self-portrait. These portraits are collected by the subject lead and compiled into a series, which is then given to each child at the end of their journey at Our Lady and St Thomas. This practice not only serves as an excellent way to demonstrate progression, comparison, and feedback, but it also provides a touching reminder of their time here at Our Lady and St Thomas, showcasing how they have grown both physically and in their abilities throughout their time here.
* We hold art competitions each term for children of all ages to participate in. The themes for these competitions are suggested by our art ambassadors, who also vote to determine the winner. These competitions provide a platform for children to showcase their talents, explore different artistic styles, and gain confidence in their abilities.
* The art shed in our school yard significantly promotes art within the school by providing a dedicated space where children can practice their art skills during lunchtime. This accessibility encourages regular engagement with art, fostering a love for creativity and self-expression.

**Impact**

We measure the impact of our art curriculum through various formative assessment methods, including self and peer assessments. Children evaluate and suggest constructive improvements for their own work and that of their peers. Evidence of their work can be found in their ongoing sketchbooks and in displays throughout the school's art corridor. Teachers do not mark children's sketchbooks; instead, they provide verbal feedback when it is deemed valuable, keeping in mind that creativity can be fragile. To help monitor progression and understand what is expected in children's artwork, teachers use the "Art End Progression" document provided by Our Trust.