

The Primary Arts Education Specification - FAQs

1. What is the Arts Education specification?

The *Arts Education* specification is part of the redeveloped Primary School Curriculum, that seeks to provide children with a holistic primary education. It incorporates Art, Music and Drama to equip children with the knowledge, skills, concepts, dispositions, attitudes and values needed to be active and agentic arts-makers.

2. What are the Arts Education subjects?

The *Arts Education* specification brings together three separate subjects from the 1999 curriculum - Visual Arts, Drama and Music. Each of these subjects has its own essential learning, knowledge and concepts that can be explored and developed. As well as incorporating three subject areas, the *Arts Education* specification also makes space for other artforms such as dance and media arts.

3. How much time is allocated for Arts Education?

Here is the suggested minimum time for *Arts Education* as provided in the *Primary Curriculum Framework (2023)*:

Stages 1 (Junior and Senior Infants)

9 hours per month

Stage 2 (1st and 2nd Class)

9 hours per month

Stages 3 and 4 (3rd – 6th Class)

8 hours per month

In addition to these suggested minimum time allocations, schools may also draw on flexible time to further support Arts Education - up to 5 hours per month at Stage 1, 6 hours per month at Stage 2, and up to 7 hours per month at Stages 3 and 4.

4. What will children learn in Arts Education?

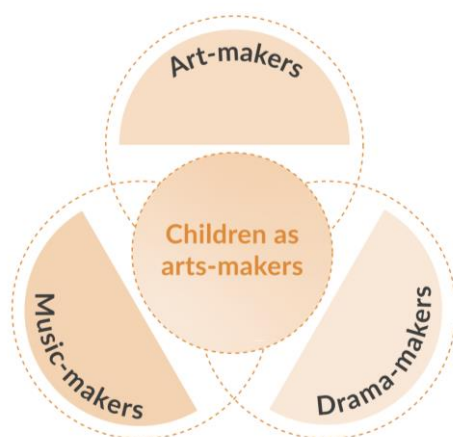
In *Arts Education*, children learn to express themselves creatively and confidently through Art, Drama, and Music, as well as other artforms like dance and media arts. They engage in rich, playful, and sensory learning experiences that ignite their imaginations and help them make sense of the world around them. Through exploring, creating, performing, presenting, responding, and connecting, children develop a wide range of knowledge, skills, concepts, and dispositions that support them as active, reflective, and agentic arts-makers.

In Art, children experiment with different materials, tools, and techniques to explore and communicate their unique ideas, feelings, and observations through 2D, 3D, mixed media, and digital works. They learn about visual concepts such as line, shape, colour, texture, pattern, and space, and they are encouraged to appreciate artworks from historical, local, and contemporary contexts.

In Drama, children learn to take on roles, enact characters, and co-create stories that can explore and portray themes, relationships, and dilemmas. They develop confidence in improvising, devising, and performing using their bodies, voices, movement, and space. They learn to reflect on their own dramatic work and that of others, deepening their understanding of plot, character, tension, and meaning.

In Music, children make music using their voices, bodies, instruments, and digital tools. They explore rhythms, melodies, and structures, and develop skills in listening, composing, interpreting, and performing music from diverse cultures and traditions. They learn about musical concepts like pulse, pitch, dynamics, and timbre.

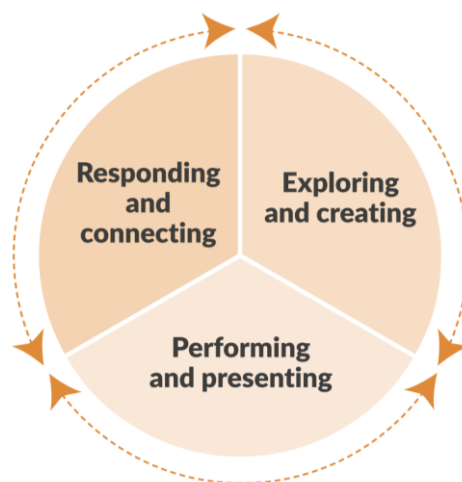
Across all artforms, children learn to value the arts for their own sake and to see how the arts connect with their lives, communities, cultures, and the wider world, laying the foundation for a lifelong enjoyment and appreciation of the arts.



5. What are some of the key changes in this area since 1999?

- The subjects of *Arts Education* (Art, Drama, Music) all appear alongside each other in one specification.
- Children are described as 'arts-makers' and as 'Art-makers', 'Drama-makers' and 'Music-makers'. They work meaningfully with their senses, minds and bodies to generate ideas, make artistic choices and express themselves imaginatively. As arts-makers, children learn by doing. They draw on a variety of materials, techniques and experiences and connect their arts-making to their lives and the wider world. Active, sensory and embodied engagement enriches and enhances their ability to engage as arts-makers who understand and appreciate the relevance, impact, beauty and value of the arts.

- There is a common strand structure for all *Arts Education* subjects. They are: *Exploring and Creating*, *Responding and Connecting*, *Performing and Presenting*. The strands are interdependent, ensuring that children receive a broad and balanced learning experience.



- The specification contains Learning Outcomes that describe what children will work towards over a two-year stage.
- Learning Outcomes that support integrated approaches to *Arts Education* have been included.
- The lists of concepts for each *Arts Education* subject have been updated.
- There is guidance on pedagogical approaches that support playful, sensory, embodied, experiential and culturally responsive learning experiences.
- Embedded within the Learning Outcomes are opportunities to develop the overarching key competencies as outlined in the *Primary Curriculum Framework (2023)*.
- The specification provides links for exploration of 'other artforms' such as media arts, dance and integrated artforms.

6. What is meant by 'other artforms'?

The curriculum recognises the value of a broad and balanced approach that includes integrated arts experiences and learning in multiple artforms. In *Arts Education*, alongside Art, Drama and Music, children may also engage with 'other artforms' such as dance and media arts, allowing them to explore and connect strands and Learning Outcomes in varied ways. As dance is an activity area in Physical Education, teachers can explore connectivity with this subject also. Similarly, engagement with media arts could explore connectivity between learning in *Arts Education* and learning in *STEM Education* or languages. This supports children to experience, create and respond to a wide range of arts experiences and reflects the interconnected nature of artistic expression.

7. How will children learn in *Arts Education*?

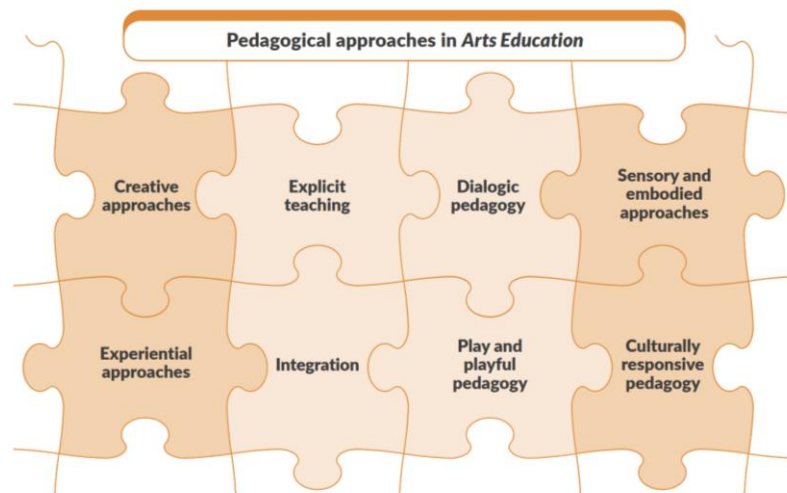
Each specification promotes the following pedagogical approaches:

- Dialogic pedagogy

- Explicit teaching
- Integration
- Play and playful pedagogies

In addition to these, the *Arts Education* specification promotes the following pedagogical approaches to provide broad and rounded learning experiences for children:

- Creative approaches
- Culturally responsive pedagogy
- Experiential approaches
- Sensory and embodied approaches



8. What is the role of integration in *Arts Education*?

The *Arts Education* specification recognises the need for subject-specific learning and also promotes opportunities for integrated learning across *Arts Education* subjects. The common strand structure across subjects and the addition of integrated Learning Outcomes at each stage is designed to help teachers more easily recognise connectivity between *Arts Education* subjects and opportunities for holistic and meaningful integration across the curriculum.

9. Is there a possibility for schools to collaborate with external partner/s to facilitate some aspects of *Arts Education*?

Connections between schools and the broader arts community can enrich and extend children's learning. At times, schools may choose to work in collaboration with a partner (be that a colleague in the school/neighbouring school, artist, external facilitator or digital resource) to facilitate learning in the arts. Where external inputs, programmes, and facilitators are featured, the classroom teacher retains a central and active role in the teaching and learning. This can include supporting children, team teaching and ensuring meaningful connections with prior and future learning through broad and balanced learning experiences.