DT Policy

Reviewed September 2025

The Stour Academy Trust

Vision Statement

The Cornerstones vision for Design Technology education nurtures innovation and creativity, empowering pupils to explore their individuality through hands-on projects and problem-solving activities. By promoting experimentation with materials and techniques, we help pupils develop their unique design identities.

Our curriculum emphasises interdisciplinary connections, integrating Design Technology with subjects like science, mathematics, and art, enriching the learning experience and highlighting the relevance of design in everyday life. We enhance cultural awareness by exposing pupils to diverse design traditions and practises, allowing them to appreciate design's role in shaping cultural identity.

Critical thinking is integral to our approach, as pupils evaluate their designs and the work of others, gaining a deeper understanding of the design process. Studying significant designers and their historical contexts further enriches this understanding.

Skill development is a cornerstone of our curriculum, focusing on techniques in product design, engineering, and digital technologies. Pupils maintain design journals or portfolios to document their design journeys and showcase their work.

We are committed to inclusive learning, recognising the diverse needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Our curriculum celebrates diversity in design, encouraging pupils to explore and express their cultural heritage through their creative endeavours.

Intent

Fostering Creativity and Innovation:

1. Encourage pupils to think outside the box and develop their unique design voice through various mediums and techniques.
2. Provide opportunities for experimentation with different materials and processes, allowing pupils to discover their preferences and strengths.

Building Technical Skills:

3. Equip pupils with a solid foundation in essential design skills, including product design, engineering principles, and digital technologies.
4. Introduce pupils to various design techniques and styles, ensuring they understand the historical and contemporary context of the designs they create.

Enhancing Critical Thinking and Reflection:

5. Promote critical evaluation of both their own designs and the work of others, enabling pupils to articulate their thoughts and feelings about design.
6. Encourage reflective practises through discussion, self-assessment, and peer feedback, fostering a growth mindset.

Promoting Collaboration and Communication:

7. Design projects that require teamwork and collaboration, allowing pupils to learn from one another and share ideas.

8. Encourage open dialogue about design processes and outcomes, enhancing pupils' ability to communicate their thoughts and interpretations effectively.

Supporting Personal and Social Development:

9. Recognise the role of design in promoting well-being and emotional expression, providing a safe space for pupils to explore their feelings and experiences.
10. Encourage pupils to engage with their community through design exhibitions, projects, and collaborations, fostering a sense of belonging and responsibility.

Implementation

Curriculum Design

1. **Rationale and Objectives**
    - **Clear Rationale:** Our Design Technology curriculum will be developed with a clear rationale that reflects the school's vision and values, emphasising creativity, critical thinking, and personal expression. It will align with national curriculum requirements while also considering the specific needs and interests of our pupils.
    - **Curricular Objectives:** Each unit of study will have specific objectives that focus on essential concepts, skills, and knowledge that pupils are expected to master by the end of the term.
2. **Curriculum Structure**
    - **Thematic Units:** The Design Technology curriculum will be organised into thematic units that integrate various design techniques, historical contexts, and cultural influences. Each unit will be carefully sequenced to build on prior knowledge and scaffold learning effectively.
    - **Key Concepts:** Each unit will focus on key concepts that underpin design practice, such as functionality, aesthetics, and sustainability. These concepts will be revisited throughout the curriculum to reinforce understanding and facilitate the development of complex mental models.
3. **Implementation Strategies**
    - **Sequencing of Learning:** Lessons will be sequenced to ensure continuity and progression, allowing pupils to build on their foundational knowledge before moving onto more complex ideas and techniques. This approach will help pupils connect new learning to existing knowledge, as emphasised in the Cornerstones framework.
    - **Cross-Curricular Links:** Where appropriate, we will make cross-curricular links with other subjects to enhance pupils' understanding and application of design concepts. For instance, integrating elements of science or mathematics into design projects will foster a deeper appreciation for the context of design innovations.

Cornerstones Lesson Resources

Using teaching resources from Cornerstones effectively involves strategic planning and implementation to enhance pupil engagement and learning outcomes. Here's a structured approach to maximise the impact of these resources:

1. **Align Resources with Learning Objectives**
    - **Identify Goals:** Before selecting resources, clarify the specific learning objectives for the lesson or unit. Ensure that the resources directly support these goals.
    - **Curriculum Mapping:** Utilise the Cornerstones curriculum maps to identify resources that are relevant to the current topic, ensuring coherence in teaching.
2. **Adaptation**
    - **Tailored Tasks:** Select resources that cater to the diverse learning needs of the children. Cornerstones often provides multiple versions of resources, allowing you to choose those that best meet the needs of all pupils, including those with SEND.
    - **Flexible Grouping:** Implement resources in small groups or pairs, enabling pupils to collaborate and support each other.
3. **Integrate Resources into Lesson Planning**
    - **Structured Activities:** Plan how and when to incorporate resources into your lessons. For example, use them as guided practice following direct instruction or as independent practice to reinforce learning.
    - **Contextual Relevance:** Introduce resources by connecting them to real-world applications or previous lessons. This helps pupils see the relevance of what they are learning.
4. **Encourage Active Engagement**
    - **Interactive Elements:** Motivate pupils to actively engage with the resources. This could involve annotating, highlighting key points, or discussing answers with peers.
    - **Hands-On Activities:** Pair resources with hands-on activities that allow pupils to apply what they've learned in a practical context.
5. **Use Resources for Assessment**
    - **Formative Assessment:** Utilise resources as tools for formative assessment. Review completed resources to gauge pupils' understanding and identify areas needing further support.
    - **Feedback Opportunities:** Provide timely feedback on resource tasks, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement.
6. **Promote Reflection and Discussion**
    - **Class Discussion:** After completing resources, facilitate a class discussion to review answers and clarify misconceptions.
    - **Reflection Activities:** Encourage pupils to reflect on their learning process after completing resources.
7. **Monitor Progress and Adapt**
    - **Track Performance:** Keep records of pupils' performance on resources to monitor progress over time.

- **Adapt Resources:** Be flexible in your approach. If a particular resource isn't resonating with pupils, consider adapting it or selecting a different resource that might be more effective.

Lesson Structure - Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

1. Theme-Based Learning

- **Cornerstones Themes:** Design Technology lessons will be integrated into the Cornerstones themes, ensuring that design concepts are explored within a broader context. Each theme will provide opportunities for pupils to investigate and learn about different design forms, materials, and creative expression.
- **Example Themes:** "The Enchanted Woodland," "The Magic Toymaker," and "Why Do We Love to be Rude?" will serve as contexts for design exploration.

2. Learning Objectives

- **Clear Objectives:** Each lesson will have specific, measurable learning objectives that focus on key design concepts such as understanding materials, tools, and processes.
- **Alignment with EYFS Framework:** Objectives will align with the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework, particularly the "Expressive Arts and Design" area of learning.

3. Engagement Activities

- **Hands-On Exploration:** Lessons will begin with engaging, hands-on activities that stimulate creativity. This may include outdoor design exploration, sensory play with different materials, and interactive demonstrations related to the theme.
- **Use of Resources:** Incorporate a variety of resources such as natural materials, design tools (e.g., cardboard, fabric, and construction materials), and digital media to enhance learning experiences.

4. Vocabulary Development

- **Focus on Vocabulary:** Each lesson will introduce new design vocabulary relevant to the theme. Teachers will model language through storytelling, songs, and discussions, reinforcing understanding through repetition.
- **Visual Aids:** Use visual aids, such as word walls and picture cards, to support vocabulary acquisition and retention.

5. Investigative Learning

- **Enquiry-Based Approach:** Encourage pupils to ask questions and make predictions related to their design creations. Provide opportunities for them to experiment with different materials and techniques, record observations, and share their design processes.
- **Structured Investigations:** Use structured activities that guide pupils through the design process, including planning, creating, and reflecting on their designs.

6. Reflection and Assessment

- **Reflective Practises:** At the end of each lesson, pupils will engage in reflection activities, such as sharing what they created or discussing their design choices.

- **Informal Assessment:** Teachers will assess understanding through observation and discussions, ensuring that misconceptions are addressed and that all pupils are making progress in their design skills.

7. Inclusive Practises

- **Differentiated Activities:** Lessons will be tailored to meet the diverse needs of all pupils, including those with SEND. Differentiated tasks and support will be provided to ensure every pupil can engage meaningfully with the design curriculum.
- **Collaborative Learning:** Foster a collaborative learning environment where pupils can work together, share ideas, and support each other in their design explorations.

Lesson Structure - Year 1 to Year 6

Learning Objectives (5 minutes)

- **Clear Goals:** Begin the lesson by presenting specific learning objectives that outline what pupils should know and be able to do by the end of the lesson. Communicate these objectives clearly to set expectations and motivate pupils.

Introduction (Engage) (10 minutes)

- **Hook Activity:** Start with an engaging question, artefact, or demonstration that captures pupils' interest. This could involve showcasing a design project, a thought-provoking theme related to both Design Technology and Art.
- **Activate Prior Knowledge:** Encourage pupils to share what they already know about the topic or techniques. This helps to connect new learning to existing knowledge and prepares them for deeper exploration.

Direct Instruction (Explain) (15 minutes)

- **Clear Explanations:** Provide concise and clear explanations about the specific techniques or concepts being taught. Use visual aids, exemplars, or demonstrations to illustrate key points and ensure pupils understand the expected outcomes.
- **Model Techniques:** Demonstrate design techniques or processes, making abstract ideas concrete and accessible. For example, show how to construct a simple structure or the steps involved in a design process.

Main Activity (Explore & Create) (20 minutes)

- **Hands-on Creation:** Allow pupils to engage in hands-on exploration and creation of their own design projects. Encourage them to apply the techniques demonstrated during direct instruction.
- **Guided Practice:** Circulate around the classroom, providing support and guidance as pupils work. Use formative assessment to monitor progress and offer constructive feedback.
- **Pupil Choice:** As pupils gain confidence, provide opportunities for them to make choices about their themes, materials, and methods, fostering a sense of ownership in their learning.

Reflection (Evaluate) (5 minutes)

- **Class Discussion:** Facilitate a reflective discussion where pupils share their creations and the processes they used. Encourage them to articulate their thoughts about what worked well and what they found challenging.
- **Peer Feedback:** Promote a culture of respect and constructive criticism by allowing pupils to give and receive feedback on each other's work.

Assessment & Closing (5 minutes)

- **Constructive Feedback:** Provide individual feedback, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement. Set targets for future work to encourage continuous development.
- **Wrap-up:** Reinforce the learning objectives and connect the lesson to upcoming topics or projects. Encourage pupils to think about how they can apply what they learned in future lessons.

Impact

The implementation of this structured framework for teaching Design Technology at The Stour Academy Trust is designed to have a profound impact on pupils' learning experiences and outcomes. By clearly defining learning objectives, engaging pupils with thought-provoking activities, and providing direct instruction in design techniques, we aim to foster a deep understanding of Design Technology.

Impact:

- **Enhanced Design Skills:** Pupils will demonstrate improved proficiency in various design techniques and mediums, leading to higher quality design projects.
- **Increased Engagement:** A structured and engaging curriculum will motivate pupils to participate actively in lessons, fostering a love for design and creativity.
- **Critical Thinking Development:** Through reflection and peer feedback, pupils will enhance their ability to think critically about their work and the work of others, leading to deeper design insights.
- **Stronger Communication Skills:** Pupils will develop the ability to articulate their design ideas and evaluations effectively, facilitating meaningful discussions about their work and the work of their peers.
- **Greater Inclusivity:** The inclusive nature of the curriculum will ensure that all pupils, regardless of background or ability, feel valued and capable of expressing their creativity.
- **Cultural Awareness:** Exposure to diverse designers and design movements will broaden pupils' perspectives, fostering empathy and appreciation for different cultures and viewpoints.

Conclusion

In conclusion, our Design Technology Policy reflects the principles of the Cornerstones curriculum, ensuring a comprehensive approach to design education that meets the diverse needs of our pupils. We foster an environment that values creativity and personal expression, aligning with our commitment to providing a 21st-century education.

This policy emphasises both technical proficiency and innovative thinking, nurturing critical skills while encouraging individuality in design expression. By integrating technology and contemporary practises, we engage pupils in meaningful learning experiences.

We recognise the importance of enhanced provision activities to cater to various learning styles, promoting an inclusive environment where every pupil can thrive. Our commitment to ongoing reflection and adaptation ensures that our practises remain relevant and effective.

Through this Design Technology Policy, we aim to inspire a lifelong appreciation for design, equipping pupils with the confidence to express themselves and engage with the world. Together, we will cultivate a vibrant design community that celebrates diversity, creativity, and collaboration, fully embracing the ethos of the Cornerstones curriculum.