

Amanda Spielman speaking at the Royal Opera House

Good afternoon. I'm delighted to be with you today. I don't get to come here nearly enough – but I did manage two operas and a ballet last year.

Thank you for inviting me and, more importantly, thank you for all that you do for children.

I'm going to talk about our new inspection framework and how we are now looking at the substance of education – the curriculum – and what that means for arts education. And I'll also touch on teacher training, and the consultation we've published today on Initial Teacher Education (ITE). But I'll begin with what I think's been happening with arts subjects in recent years.

What's been happening with arts subjects: music

Given where we are, I have to start with music.

Let me take you back to around 2004. I'm sure some of you will remember this. BTECs and other vocational qualifications were given equivalence to GCSEs in performance tables. This led to dramatic shifts in the mix of subjects taken at KS4 and, to some extent, sucked time and effort away from the arts. The main winners in this realignment were vocational qualifications like ICT, and, oddly, Religious Studies short course GCSE – though there have been continuing swings depending on what value has been attributed in performance tables.

If we look at music, the numbers taking music GCSE have decreased steadily: by around a quarter since 2003. But there has been a big increase in music BTECs and similar qualifications so it's not all doom and gloom. Schools are pointing children towards different types of music.

Back in 2013, we published a report: [Music in schools: what hubs must do](#). This mentioned that the low take-up of GCSE music had prompted some schools in our sample to offer other level 2 qualifications in performing arts, or BTECs in music or music technology. In 2014 over 8,000 pupils took these, and they seem to be maintaining their popularity.

In the secondary schools we surveyed for our 2013 report, heads gave us different perspectives. Some said the introduction of the EBacc had made it harder for them to recommend that students take GCSE arts subjects, and certainly more than one arts subject. Music GCSE has always been seen as something to opt in to if you have a particular interest. But we did find low expectations at the end of key stage 3 meant few children were well prepared to take it.

Our report found much to celebrate about music education, but its quality

varied considerably. In some schools, music education was weak and poorly led. Heads told us they wanted pupils to enjoy music with the opportunity to perform. But few spoke of music as a rigorous, academic subject for all. I'd like to think we're moving on from there.

Let's look at primary schools. Some have excellent music. Learning to sing is key for young children – singing is the most natural thing in the world. The voice is the first musical instrument we all learn and mastering singing sets children up well for a musical future. But it's not just the musical and emotional benefits that singing together bring. Songs include vocabulary that stretches children. And singing also helps with articulation in terms of speech and language difficulties.

At an Essex primary we visited recently, singing was a strength and gave pupils not just a good musical repertoire but built a sense of community and well-being among pupils and staff.

We mustn't lower our expectations. We need to give all children the experience of singing and when they're ready, learning an instrument. For most children, taking part in music and performing is very satisfying. But there is also a need to teach the basics of music theory and build up children's musical repertoires. Schools need to think about what's in a core music curriculum. Not every child will go on to become a composer, but there really are some important things that every child should experience, know and be able to do.

Drama, art and design

Let's look at a few other arts subjects: drama looks a bit different. Since 2003, GCSE entries have also decreased here, actually rather more than music – a drop of nearly 40%.

Art and design – much closer to static. In 2019, entries were just below their 2008 level.

So pupils are still interested in the arts – as shown by the number of GCSEs and other qualifications taken across a range of subjects. But there have been movements up, down and across into the vocational, practical and performance-related. DfE data shows only a very small drop in pupils taking at least one arts subject in recent years. Their data says it's around 45% of pupils now and was around 47% in 2010.

The GCSE subjects that have actually seen the biggest drops have been Design and Technology (where GCSE entries dropped by two-thirds between 2003 and 2017) and modern foreign languages. I see a lot of people attributing these falls to EBacc and Progress 8. These measures certainly haven't stemmed the decline in music, drama and design and technology. But it's not the whole story, given that in all of these, much of the decline actually happened before 2010.

You as heads have a lot of freedom and autonomy to choose the subjects you offer and structure them into pathways that suit your children and influence

what they take. You'll choose for all sorts of reasons. Pupils have some choice as well, and at KS4, are weighing up arts subjects against others. And arts subjects that need specialist facilities are often among the most expensive to teach. I know some of you will have difficult choices to make to balance your budgets. No easy answers here.

Curriculum research and our framework

I'd like to move on now to our new inspection framework. Soon after I joined Ofsted, we began two years of research into the curriculum, the real substance of education.

In primary schools, we found that a focus on literacy and numeracy was sometimes at the expense of creative, artistic and practical education. Literacy and reading are vital in the early years, and indeed the fastest way for children to build their vocabulary is lots of stories, rhymes and songs. We mustn't allow creative and practical subjects to get squeezed out, and that has been happening. It's not just these subjects that have been squeezed in primary, actually. Science has as well.

In secondary schools again, we saw a narrowing of the curriculum, and it was often the arts and PE that suffered. What was being taught was sometimes affected by very early GCSE choices, often made when pupils had hardly had the time to get a taste of something.

Our new framework has rebalanced inspection to look more closely at the curriculum. Central to this is a 'quality of education' judgement that looks at what is taught and how it's taught. It rewards schools for doing the right thing – providing that breadth and balance for all their pupils.

Please don't fall for the idea that it's all about the length of KS3. There is no 'preferred length' of KS3 and it's for you to decide your own curriculum and how it's enacted across school. The length of KS3 is certainly not a limiting judgement in our handbook and we don't automatically mark schools down if their KS3 is less than 3 years.

Our judgement of quality of education is based on whether schools are offering pupils an ambitious curriculum across their whole time in secondary education – not on the length of each stage. But our handbook is clear that we'll look at how the school is making sure pupils can study a broad range of subjects. The default expectation is that that should be in line with the national curriculum.

It's also about standards, because they matter. So, the quality of education judgement does consider how well pupils are doing in national assessments and qualifications. But these are only ever a partial reflection of what children have learned, not the totality. When inspectors make that judgement, they're drawing on a broad range of evidence, not just performance data.

Part of the evidence is those 'deep dives' into several individual subjects, a give a more intense look at what's going on. This isn't just lesson visits or looking at books. It starts with a conversation with curriculum leaders.

We look at students' work, alongside curriculum leaders, and we think:

- how does that fit with where the school intends pupils to be in that sequence of learning?
- are pupils doing that work and do they understand it?

A deep dive is about airing these questions. That then forms part of the evidence for the overall quality of education judgement. So far, around one in ten of our new inspections have had a deep dive into music or performing arts.

The framework is allowing us to recognise the value of a good music and drama education and we hope that it is encouraging you to think deeply about the purpose and design of your arts, drama, music and performing arts curricula and the essentials they should involve.

We don't have a set curriculum in mind and there isn't a preferred Ofsted curriculum. The national curriculum should be the starting point for most, and do much of the heavy lifting. And it's fine to import or buy in a curriculum – nobody has to develop one from scratch. Not every school has the capacity to do that in every subject.

So I really do applaud those of you who provide a decent music and arts curriculum despite the obstacles. I hope that those who are reluctant can have the confidence and find the wherewithal to go for it. Music is a specialist area, but it's perfectly possible at primary to give non-specialists enough knowledge to teach a well-planned curriculum. You have to make the commitment and provide the right training.

What we've been finding on recent inspections

While it's early days, and we've only been inspecting under the new framework since September, people have said to me that schools' willingness to encourage children into music and drama has increased.

Inspectors are looking at music and the performing arts more often. They have been looking at curriculum and teaching in both primary and secondary schools. And they're applying the same rigour to evaluating music and performing arts as to other subjects, such as English and maths.

We're trying to tease out what schools are contributing to pupils' music education, not just pick up what comes from private instrumental lessons that some can afford but are out of reach to many.

Knowledge & creativity (Durham Commission)

So why does this matter so much? I'm sure that some of you will have read the Durham Commission report that highlights the positive impact of creativity and creative thinking in our lives. They help with personal growth, our sense of well-being, our confidence.

That report notes that 'the development of creativity in any subject requires

deep subject knowledge and understanding as well as the development of skills that enable the application of this knowledge and understanding.'

That's a really useful insight. It also recognises that creativity and creative thinking span the arts and sciences. Engineering is indeed a creative discipline.

And the Durham report calls for subjects such as art and design, dance, drama and music to be a significant part of what's taught to all children. This reflects the emphasis that we're putting on that broad and balanced curriculum that the Education Act has long required.

Cultural capital

I'm very glad you've been talking about cultural capital today. Because it really matters that children learn and enjoy things that they won't necessarily experience at home or with their peer group. It's really important that we have this debate.

A great curriculum gives children the essential knowledge and also builds the cultural capital they need to become well-rounded and informed citizens.

If you go back 100 years or so, we all had a great deal of the same cultural background: we sang the same nursery rhymes and we read the same children's books. That isn't the case any longer.

Any child arriving at an English school will be taught a core of subjects – English, maths, science – that is valuable. These are the subjects that we have decided children should know well. But beyond that, there is a great deal more that can equip children to make the most of adult life and to find the right path for them, not just academically.

No single piece of this knowledge is categorised as essential, yet we all know that the more of this you have, the better equipped you are. This isn't about prioritising one culture over others or about being the arbiters of taste. It's about making sure that all children have lots of opportunities to add to what they're likely to learn at home or from their peer group.

And it's certainly not about elitism. My observation of schools is that they're mostly trying to lean in the opposite direction. Teachers aren't entrenching a narrow middle-class culture. I see a lot of activity in schools that celebrates diversity and brings in wider perspectives. That is providing an education for children who are going to experience the full complexity and richness of modern Britain.

I'm sure that many of you are familiar with the Bourdieu definition of the term, cultural capital. In our EIF handbook, what we say about cultural capital is taken from the national curriculum, the government's policy instrument: it is "the essential knowledge that pupils need to be educated citizens, introducing them to the best that has been thought and said and helping to engender an appreciation of human creativity and achievement".

The Bourdieu legacy tends to lead some people to think that cultural capital is therefore bad. In fact, he recognised its value, but he was pessimistic in thinking that education can't make a difference. Where we depart from Bourdieu today is that we believe education is transformative and contributes to pupils' ability to flourish in society and to be socially mobile: what's wrong with believing in the power of education?

I think you as school leaders believe this too, as, for example, when you take children on trips or invite interesting speakers to your school.

This is not a new expectation of schools, I must stress that, but our quality of education judgement is trying to capture this dimension of your work. When we talk to parents, they tell us they want a broad curriculum. They don't want children educated narrowly.

And narrow education models are probably self-defeating in any case; the child who has less to draw upon probably doesn't do better in the test at the end of the day. I don't see a terrible tension here. It's about pupils getting the benefit of education and doing well in tests. I think our framework empowers teachers to have confidence in the value of education as a longer-term endeavour.

Again, to be clear, we aren't inspecting cultural capital as a thing, but we are looking at the extent to which a school provides a broad and rich curriculum, and how well that curriculum is taught.

Recruiting for subject specialists

And in line with our new framework, we're also revising how we look at individual subjects. We are in the middle of recruiting for our revamped. For music, art and design, get your applications in by tomorrow, if you're interested. Design and technology will have to wait a little bit longer.

Teacher training

I mentioned earlier that I wanted to talk today about how teachers are trained. We're also thinking about the curriculum for trainee teachers and how we should inspect under our new Initial Teacher Education framework.

We want to make sure that trainees are well prepared and our inspection judgements are providing the best measures of who is genuinely well prepared.

We've done some research that we published earlier this month and we've designed a draft new framework in the light of that. Today we've [published that draft framework](#) and if you are interested in this area, I would encourage you to respond.

Pilots

Just as we did with the education framework, we've also been doing some pilot inspections of teacher training, and interesting things have come up about

music and art.

Some partnerships really do make sure primary teachers get a solid grounding in the teaching of art and music. Where this is combined with practical application (alongside subject-specific feedback about teaching music and art), trainees really build their confidence in teaching the arts.

While no new teacher is completely ready when they first step into a classroom, high-quality training does help to give a solid grounding so that teachers can begin inspiring the next generation of artists and musicians.

Our pilots found partnerships that understood the part that music and art play in giving children a broad and balanced curriculum, as well as cultural capital. In the best partnerships, leaders make sure that the art programme for trainee teachers is highly inclusive. The training programme develops trainees' knowledge of how art can be used to engage pupils with SEND or with English as an additional language.

Overall, we've had good feedback so far from partnerships who have said it's refreshing to talk about the curriculum and teaching and learning, rather than having conversations being driven mainly by data and outcomes.

What is clear to us, and this came out in the research, is the importance of high-quality mentoring of trainee teachers by their placement provider. It really is the responsibility of schools, as well as nurseries and colleges to make sure new entrants get the best possible start. And the centre-based training and learning from placements do need to blend as seamlessly as possible.

Draft framework

The DFE has recently published its [core content standards for ITE](#) as well as the early career framework. We've designed what we hope is a clear and user-friendly ITE framework that lines up well with these and with the new inspection framework. Our ITE framework is well tailored to the different phases of trainee education – including early years and further education. We're looking less at outcomes data and more at how well trainees are prepared to teach a well-sequenced curriculum.

We'll be looking at whether primary teachers get the subject knowledge they need to teach a full range of subjects, and we'll look at the foundation curriculum. We're also considering trainee workload.

We're consulting on a one-stage model of inspection and whether to cut back to just two key judgements. The methodology will have focus reviews – which are not too far removed from deep dives. Some of these will be mandatory. For example, focus reviews for primary training will always look at phonics and early reading. If all schools have to teach early reading well, then it's only right that all primary teachers should be well-equipped to do this.

We hope to start using our new framework from September 2020, with inspections beginning in January 2021.

Thank you.