

# SATIPS

Support and training in Prep, Primary and Senior Schools



## Preparing students for tomorrow

Recent government-led changes to how overall school performance is set and measured, have resulted in a dramatic shift in emphasis and delivery by schools across the UK. Politicians have grouped a number of subjects together (EBacc) and in doing so, have prioritised the study of these subjects ahead of others in schools across the UK. From this year, schools will have an average points score published for how well their students performed across Ebacc subjects.

While I would fully support the concept that every able student should study EBacc subjects (English, Mathematics, Science (including Computer Science), Geography, History, and a 2nd language), this invariably leaves little curriculum space for subjects not included within the Ebacc categorisation.

As a direct result of the above, many schools have marginalised and in extreme cases even dropped the arts and 'creative' subjects from their school curriculum offer. The irony is, that while the UK continues to undervalue design & technology education (D&T), China, South Korea and other South East Asian countries have recognised the importance of creativity in their curriculum, and are visiting the UK in large numbers to learn how D&T is taught in schools here.

As an ex-headteacher, I believe that one should always first look at the needs of the students when designing a school curriculum, and not concentrate exclusively on any accountability measures that may be utilised to make an overall judgement on the school's performance.

Design & technology was introduced to the UK curriculum twenty-seven years ago. At the time, the UK became the first country in the world to realise the importance of providing a technological and design education to all students and make its study compulsory. The subject has long suffered from its association with its predecessor components of woodwork, metalwork, technical drawing, needlework and cookery. D&T originated from these beginnings, but since this time, it has evolved and matured into a very different subject today.

Students studying at schools today will grow, live and work within a fast-changing technological

world. Experts predict that the very nature of work is likely to change dramatically, with increasing numbers working freelance, adaptability being critical as workers are asked to take on a number of different roles within their working lives and technology being integrated fully into how they function and operate both in the workplace and within wider society.

If we are truly placing the needs of the student before any other consideration, it is hard to see why D&T is not a part of the core curriculum offer. I firmly believe that D&T is the flux that brings the other STEM subjects together and provides a context for the application of skills and knowledge acquired elsewhere on the curriculum.

As robots, automation and artificial intelligence perform more tasks, current patterns of employment will continue to be disrupted and a workforce that can respond to industry's changing needs will have to evolve.

I would argue that educators have a moral imperative to prepare students for the changes that lie ahead, and I can think of no other subject better placed to put these challenges into context and allow young people to combine the technological subject knowledge that they will need, with the key skills of communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity.

So, what will students learn within a taught programme of D&T and how might this assist them personally and professionally?

- D&T when well planned and delivered, should capture each student's imagination and allow them to make more sense of the world around them.

- Within the latest programmes of study and examination specifications, students are presented with contexts for problems (E.g. Improving living and working spaces) and are encouraged to respond to the challenge set with freedom and creativity.

- Once a design solution starts to take shape, students are encouraged to research and use their knowledge of modern materials to select a solution that is genuinely 'fit for purpose'.

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This is one of the subject Broadsheets published termly by The Society of Assistants Teaching in Preparatory Schools limited by guarantee and not having a share capital.

Reg. no. 890301 England.

Registered Charity  
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- Students are given opportunities to explore digital technologies in order to solve problems. New and emerging technologies, many of them disruptive (E.g. robotics and 3D printing) will stretch students learning and lead to new solutions to old problems.

- Students will explore the topic in depth, transitioning with maturity from drawings and models of superficial solutions to real-life prototypes and feedback, in the process developing higher order thinking skills.

- Students will at times work alone to explore the context of a problem, but will also be required to work collaboratively, sharing their knowledge and learning with their peers.

As the newly appointed Chief Executive of The Design & Technology Association, I will be working with colleagues, to promote a subject that I believe to be a prerequisite for all students, as our post-Brexit economy and society emerges. We will continue to offer support, advice and training for our 11,000 members nationally, will work to bring business and industry closer to the world of education and will seek to reach parents and other stakeholders through articles such as this.

Through these actions, we will work to promote and support the next generation of creatives, engineers, designers, entrepreneurs and innovators.

**Tony Ryan**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**The Design & Technology Association**