1550540 Alex Harrendence
ECAD7003/6009 Assessment Component 2

'How a School Develops One Aspect of its School Development Plan: a report that Critically Reflects on the Actions, Impact and Evidence Base'

The following report is a critical reflection of School Xs ADT (Art, Design and Technology) Developmental Plan that includes the following subjects; Engineering, Product Design, Graphic Design, Food Technology, Textile Design and Art and Design. The report will critically analyse the actions, impact and evidence base for the specific aspect of developing Literacy skills in extended, critical writing for the GCSE Art and Design coursework specification. As per the WJEC Guidance for Teaching Art and Design set out in 2016, the 'Reflective Recording' Assessment Objective requires entered students to '*involve the use of extended writing to record ideas, observations and insights through an analytic and critical lens*' (WJEC, 2016). Pearson's Principle Moderator's feedback in Summer 2022 noted a '*lack of annotations and weaknesses in explanations and clarifications of the development process'* and a national inability to match their practical skills to a problem solving and critical skillset (Pearson, 2022).

The focus of this report is to critically investigate why this pattern may be appearing in GCSE Art and Design coursework in line with national literacy levels, what interventions the school is implementing and whether they successfully raising pupil attainment levels or if new measures need to be implemented by WJEC itself in the way the qualification assesses pupil's literacy and critical thinking skills in 2024 compared to when the specification was introduced in 2016.

For school context, the Art and Design GCSE classes are mixed ability and are structured in this way since KS3 Year 7 classes. Varying levels of literacy skills are supported through scaffolding and differentiation for mainstream and ALN learners from KS3 to KS4 should they choose to pursue the qualification.

The Welsh government set out a new framework for planning and implementing school improvement plans in 2021 that is aligned with the focuses and aspects of Curriculum for Wales (Hwb,

2021). It remains a legal requirement for school in Wales to produce a school development plan, however, it is the choice of the individual schools on the content and implementation details of the plan. This means that school have the responsibility of prioritising their own areas of need and developing strategies on how to target their chosen aspects of focus. Wales's Nation Mission for Education states that one of its amin objectives is to '*develop high quality teaching and leadership*' that '*supports national improvement across the curriculum*' (GOV.WALES, 2023). Guaranteed career-long professional learning set out in the Mission statement aims to help support students in raising attainments in the particular areas of literacy and numeracy following the 2022 PISA results where Wales scored significantly lower than the OECD average in both of those areas (Ingram et al., 2023). Literacy and numeracy are also universally acknowledged to be the 'essential foundations for education according to the Department of Education's '11 International trends in curriculum design', 2015 (Richter, 2015). There is a contradiction in the Government's mission statement here and the qualification changes to ITE programmes in Wales. In order to raise standards in attainment, you must have quality teaching and learning levels enhanced by Continued Professional Development, however, in 2022 it was confirmed that a GCSE grade of C in English and Mathematics will replace the previous requirement of a B grade for PGCE students (GOV.WALES, 2022). In particular context to the Department Development Plan, it is detrimental to the raising of literacy standards if the future workforce of teachers have lower levels of literacy themselves. As a result of this, the Welsh Government should ensure they follow through on the continued training and professional development set out in the 'Eduction for Wales: Nation Mission' to '*develop high quality teachers*' as part of their 3 enabling objectives (GOV.WALES, 2023).

With the introduction of Curriculum for Wales in 2022, Graham Donaldson set out an innovative approach to assessing and monitoring progress with progression steps that look at a learner's whole learning journey rather than quantitative levels that are reflective of an end product (Addysg Cymru / Education Wales, 2019). Whilst this is a positive step towards ensuring the holistic progress of a child's learning in relation to the Curriculum for Wales' Four Purposes (Welsh Government, 2022), it does not provide the clarity required for progression and development in literacy to assist teaching and learning to raise attainment levels in this specific skill area. According to Education Wales' National Mission, another of their enabling objectives is to provide '*robust assessment and accountability, with clarity of how we measure progression*' (GOV.WALES, 2023). This clearly demonstrates a downfall when designing the Curriculum for Wales Progression steps with the clear indication from PISA tests results and school SMID data used to develop this report's Department Improvement Plan aspect that pupils are lacking the critical and extended, reflective literacy skills to perform well at KS4 and GCSE level.

It is important to consider the school-specific contexts that contribute to the weakness in critical, reflective writing at GCSE Art level, one of which being the mixed ability grouping introduced at KS3 right through to GCSE. Through ADT Head of Department led discussion in School X, ADT subjects remain mixed ability from KS3 to enable equal opportunities and positive peer influence on learning within the classroom without restricting the variety of ability groups' access to the wider curriculum (*Emilie Prast et al., 2023)*. All pupils must be exposed to the same content and experience in preparation for the one-tier qualifications at the end of KS4. There is evidence to suggest that mixed ability grouping has negative impacts on learning progression that may be contributing to the weaknesses found in critical literacy for Art at GCSE level (Pearson, 2022). The Education Endowment Foundation conducted research into the impact of mixed ability grouping on pupil progression in literacy and found that it had very little evidence of positive impacts long term (UCL Institute of Education, 2018). It removed the opportunity to provide pupils with the appropriate levels of challenge in order to push and raise

attainment levels. This is further established using Vygotsky's concept of the 'Zone of Proximal Development', where the relationship between learning and development is supported through scaffolding (Eun, 2019*)* as they learn to perform independently and is therefore '*promoting cognitive growth*' (Main, 2021).

When looking at WJEC'S Art and Design GCSE Assessment Objectives and their Success Criteria, it is worth considering if the qualification should be adjusted in line with renewed policies in Education for Wales and current national literacy levels that follow the Curriculum for Wales' holistic progression approach (WJEC, 2016). It could be argued that the Art and Design specification already lends itself to the Curriculum for Wales assessment of the learning journey through a 2-year long coursework only qualification. It encompasses the idea that Graham Donaldson set out in his 'Successful Futures' framework that literacy skills are part of a wider education (Donaldson, 2016) and that summative assessments can not be the most accurate indicator of abilities of personal progression and individual development (Didau, 2011). Looking closer into Pearson's Principle moderator feedback, the 'disproportionate written evidence to practical skills' could be shifted to an analytical submission of visual language to embrace the practical skills demonstrated by pupils (Pearson, 2022). Despite Pearson's findings, educational theorist and psychologist David Kolb suggests that pupils who specialise in the arts are often divergent thinkers who are able to 'focus on reflection observation and have the ability to view concrete situations for many perspectives' (Kolb, 1980, pp. 237 – 238). This research suggests that the specific learning styles of particular creative students would perform best using innovative, creative approaches to literacy such as communicating ideas visually and through object based learning and outcomes (Appleton, Grandal Montero and Jones, 2017). The downfall of this theory-based approach is that it dismisses School X's ADT Department as well the Education for Wales' National Mission's focus of raising attainment levels in literacy by removing the opportunity to demonstrate ability and progress in this area of learning, possibly further reducing Wales's performance in the global PISA rankings (*Evans, 2023)*.

The development of the Department Improvement Plan must start with an unbiased and critical self-evaluation that that has the same points of focus as the Whole-School Development Plan. The school will make informed priorities on what to develop following the most recent Estyn Report and observations made during internal self-evaluations. The Estyn report recommendations are as follows:

R1 Strengthen processes to evaluate and improve the quality of teaching, learning and leadership at all levels

R2 Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils of all ages and abilities make consistent progress in their learning

R3 Strengthen the provision for the progressive development of pupils' skills

R4 Ensure that assessment, including feedback, informs teachers' planning and supports pupil progress

(A Report on School X. Date of inspection: October 2022 by Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales, 2022)

The ADT Department have used these whole school priorities to develop focused targets for improved teaching and learning to support pupil progress and attainment, particularly in literacy where weaknesses were identified both internally and externally (Pearson, 2022). The internal self-evaluation process is a collaborative approach throughout the ADT department, with the Head of Department, Subject Heads and subject teachers taking both informal and formal approaches to identifying solutions (See Appendix 1). Recognised patterns in areas of teaching and learning are discussed during weekly department meeting to help identify targets for consistency and improvement. However, a formal process is also needed for validity and a reliable, evidence-based process, so the department uses SMID data analysis to solidify identifications in areas for improvement. The comparative data tool allows the Head of Department to see where pupils sit compared to other schools in all ADT subjects nationally to inform the target areas for positive impacts on learning outcomes (Howse, 2023). As identified previously, the downfall of tracking quantitative pupil performance is summative and narrow, and does not allow observation or accurate indicators of individual successes and personal growth (Didau, 2011) in line with the reformed Curriculum for Wales method (Donaldson, 2016). The ADT department provides rigorous internal self-evaluations to overcome this possible oversight, and uses learning walks, parent/carer communication and randomised sample book looks to look deeper into individual pupil progression on an holistic as well as academic level to identify solutions. The department ensures that they are prioritising the correct targets by referring to the national eduction priorities, which are to raise the standards of education in relation to literacy and numeracy, and to reduce the impact of poverty on educational attainment to achieve 'high standards and aspiration for all' (Miles, 2023). It is clearly visible the role the National Mission for Education has played in informing School Xs target of improving teaching and learning to raise attainment in literacy when combined with their various methods of self-evaluation that consider various perspectives of the learner's individual progression.

As well as Heads of Faculty, subject teachers, SLT and Heads of AOLE, the main stakeholders when making decisions in supporting pupil progression are the pupils themselves. In order to start providing pupils with the literacy skills they need for GCSE at KS3, they must already have the skills needed to perform at the appropriate level by the end of KS2 (Broadhead, Cuckle, Hodgson, 1999). However, the 2022 Ofsted reports raised concerns in pupils not meeting the expected standard of reading. It found that a quarter of all Year 7 pupils had a reading age of below 11 (Speilman, 2022). This indicates that teachers at KS3 and KS4 have the responsibility of raising pupil attainment levels in literacy to the appropriate level before they can begin to build relevant skills and knowledge required for GCSE qualifications. Research into the preparation for GCSE English literature identifies that the formulaic

approaches such as PEE (point, evidence, explanation) can have negative impacts on literacy progression by limiting their responses and therefore their ability to be reflective (Kneen, 2022). This is evident in the Pearson's 2022 Moderator feedback and thus the basis of Art and Design's action point. This gap in education is further solidified by Graham Donaldson's speech at the EWC conference in 2016, where he states the importance of introducing content at KS3 that has its own legitimacy and validity as the period before qualifications in order to develop a broader, wider reaching set of integral skills (Donaldson, 2016).

Solutions developed at School X for improving reflective, extended literacy at GCSE level combine elements of assessment for learning, quality feedback, differentiation, intervention and embedding oracy into KS3 Schemes of work. In a 2023, a peer reviewed study of the effects in which oracy supports student success had significantly positive findings. The study reported confidence in oracy skills had a direct correlation to raised attainment in vocabulary, and the ability to justify and support ideas through asking questions (Baker and Heron, 2023). By embedding oracy in pedagogical practices, it

is proven to be an important subdomain of academic skills that can positively influence reflective and critical writing skills that need improving in this report's action point. In order to develop oracy skills throughout KS3, School X have introduced a number of strategies to improve pupil's reflection and analytical skills through oracy, including the Think, Pair, Share approach (Teaching WalkThrus, 2023). This pedagogical approach gives every student the opportunity to build confidence in their reflective oracy skills by engaging with talk partners and rehearsing the skill of explaining topics using productive talk and relevant key vocabulary (Sherringdon, 2022). These skill mirror those found in the study of the importance of oracy in correlation to higher order thinking and literacy skills (Baker and Heron, 2023), so therefore should have a positive impact on learning outcomes.

The impact of this strategy has not yet been measured using quantitative data because formal assessment structures for KS3 Art and Design are not currently in place. This would be a practical suggestion based off this report's research in order to provide well informed solutions from summative performance data in terms of critical, reflective writing at KS3 for preparation for success in GCSE specifications and success criteria. However, the ADT department consistently collects qualitative data in terms of exit tickets, classroom observation of individuals and quality feedback with dedicated DIRT (directed improvement and reflection time) to improve their writing. There are conflicted opinions on the positive impacts of this strategy within the classroom. Although developed as time for pupil's to engage with feedback and respond productively to make those improvements, teacher and education researcher Mark Enser states that it does not influence the continuum of improved standards, and instead acts as a stand alone improvement task (Enser, 2023). Contrary to this statement, the Education Endowment Foundation's research into the impacts of feedback are significantly positive and long lasting, especially formative forms of assessment where pupils are given time to address and recognise their areas for improvement whilst improving their self-regulation and metacognition (Education Endowment Foundation, 2021). To balance these two apposing findings, it is important that feedback is used meaningfully as a solution, where it is revisited frequently and used as a formative tool to build upon skills and knowledge in literacy as pupils progress.

Analysing the sample of strategies being implemented by School X's ADT department to improve critical, extended literacy for GCSE Art and Design, there are evidence-based informed choices I would make for professional development. The first would be to introduce a summative assessment of pupil's extended writing skills throughout KS3. This is to ensure teaching and learning is appropriate for the progression level of each child in preparation for GCSE qualifications. Despite Graham Donaldson's comments regarding the wider picture of personal development skills in preparation for qualifications, it is apparent through research that literacy remains a national priority with evident weaknesses and must be

monitored through quantitative data to legitimately inform and improve teaching practices. Proving summative assessments would also contribute towards evidence of the positive Curriculum for Wales. Currently, there is no definitive way of evaluating how success the new framework really is with the replacement of levels for progression steps that are formative rather than summative for an evidence-informed teaching practice.

Considerations must also be made into the setting of ability in ADT subjects in KS3; makin it easier to identify a pupil's prior knowledge and potential barriers to learning. Research in this reports demonstrates negative impacts of mixed ability grouping, and in order to close the disadvantage gap, pupils of all levels must experience a quality education that provides the appropriate level of support as well as challenge to advance pupil attainment levels. On the other hand, negative impacts on engagement and motivation in lower ability groups should be monitored if this approach is introduced, where positive peer influence of higher ability learning would not be present.

Further research into embedding oracy skills into KS3 schemes of work would be beneficial to improving literacy skills based off research findings in this report. Positive impacts have been observed within the classroom of the Think, Pair Share strategy so far this academic year across a variety of abilities, and therefore developing my teaching repertoire with a broad range of pedagogical strategies to develop discussion and critical skills is imperative in providing pupils with quality teaching and learning to raise attainment in literacy within Art and Design.

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Appendices

Appendix 1:

Progress towards Department Improvement Plan 2023-24

Priority Area 1: Achieve Excellent Standards

Objective	RAG Rating 2022 - 23	
Raise standards across ADT and increase Average Standardised Point Score. Raise PD 43pts to 46pts ASPS Raise Art 43pts to 46pts ASPS Raise Textiles from 33Pts to 40pts ASPS Raise Graphics from 42.35pts to 46pts ASPS Raise Food 35.14pts to 46pts ASPS Raise Hosp and Catering to 60% L2P Engineering to maintain 100% L2 98Pts	Progress Review 1	Progress Review 2
Objective		
To improve individual grades especially to ensure that they meet or exceed TG's.	Progress Review 1	Progress Review 2
Objective		
Continue to develop Curriculum for Wales.	Progress Review 1	Progress Review 2

*clearly show all objectives and what you have picked.

*new Art GCSE spec - *positive teaching.

nothing assessment.

Priority Area 2: Develop high quality provision

Objective	RAG Rating 2022-23	
1. Continue to deliver high quality teaching and learning to meet the needs of our learners as well as engaging and inspiring them.	Progress Review 1	Progress Review 2
Objective		
2. Continue to put support into place to improve pupil progress.	Progress Review 1	Progress Review 2
Objective		
3. Extend cross curricular themes.	Progress Review 1	Progress Review 2

Priority Area 3: Developing Leadership

Objective	RAG Rating 2022-23	
1. To give opportunities for members of the department to plan new SoW and implement them whilst working towards delivering the nCFW and new GCSE specifications.	Progress Review 1	Progress Review 2
Objective		
	Progress Review 1	Progress Review 2
Objective		
	Progress Review 1	Progress Review 2

Key Priority 1: Achieve excellent standards

Objective 1: Raise standards across ADT and increase Average Standardised Point Score.

Target for Improvement (Where do we want to go?)	Actions/Tasks/Strategies (How will we make it happen?)	Led by	Resources inc Costs (£)	Milestones & Monitoring Timeline	How will we know if we have been successful?	
Effective teaching	Use Think-Pair-Share.Improve questioning strategies. Encourage independent learning. Use pupil voice to address areas to improve/change/adapt/differentiate.				Raised performance. Good classroom participation. Extended answering of questions. Stronger understanding from pupils.	
High quality assessment and feedback	Link feedback to assessment criteria – provide targets for improvement.				Pupils using feedback to improve their own work.	

Objective 2: To improve individual grades especially to ensure that they meet or exceed TG's

Target for Improvement (Where do we want to go?)	Actions/Tasks/Strategies (How will we make it happen?)	Led by	Resources inc Costs (£)	Milestones & Monitoring Timeline	How will we know if we have been successful?	
Improve performance	High quality examples of work. Action feedback from moderators' reports. High quality feedback. Clear deadlines.				Improved marks and performance	
Use of SMID data.	Use data to compare performance to other subjects. Identify underperformance.				Identify pupils who are underperforming and put strategies in place to help them improve.	
Communication with parents/carers	Contact home for pupils that are consistently underachieving. Utilise Classcharts.				More parental support at home to encourage pupils to work to their full potential in the subject.	

Objective 3: Continue to develop Curriculum for Wales

Target for Improvement (Where do we want to go?)	Actions/Tasks/Strategies (How will we make it happen?)	Led by	Resources inc Costs (£)	Milestones & Monitoring Timeline	How will we know if we have been successful?	
Develop SOW and units at KS3.	Ensure that all KS3 work encompasses the 4 purposes and SOW include What Matters Statements linked clearly. Pupil voice to reflect and inform modules after trials this term.				Engaged, independent and motivated learners.	
Literacy and Numeracy	Vipers tasks in modules. Continue to embed Oracy tasks in SOW.				Improved literacy/oracy which help enhance pupils' reflection and analytical skills.	

Key Priority 2: Provide outstanding care, support, provision and guidance

Objective 1: Continue to deliver high quality teaching and learning which meets the needs of our learners and inspires them.

Target for Improvement (Where do we want to go?)	Actions/Tasks/Strategies (How will we make it happen?)	Led by	Resources inc Costs (£)	Milestones & Monitoring Timeline	How will we know if we have been successful?	
Meet nCFW	Develop group work activities and more class discussion				Meeting core purposes.	

Objective 2: Continue to put support into place to improve pupil progress.

Target for Improvement (Where do we want to go?)	Actions/Tasks/Strategies (How will we make it happen?)	Led by	Resources inc Costs (£)	Milestones & Monitoring Timeline	How will we know if we have been successful?	
Support and Intervention	Provide interventions and support as and when needed. Work with subject leads and HOY/Parents.				Improved performance.	

Objective 3: Extend cross curricular themes.

Target for Improvement (Where do we want to go?)	Actions/Tasks/Strategies (How will we make it happen?)	Led by	Resources inc Costs (£)	Milestones & Monitoring Timeline	How will we know if we have been successful?	
Working with other departments.	Developing opportunities for cross curricular links in SOW. Embed skills and knowledge.				Sharing of expertise. Pupils completing work with cross-cutting themes.	

Objective 1: To give opportunities for members of the department to plan new SoW and implement them whilst working towards delivering the nCFW

Target for Improvement (Where do we want to go?)	Actions/Tasks/Strategies (How will we make it happen?)	Led by	Resources inc Costs (£)	Milestones & Monitoring Timeline	How will we know if we have been successful?	
Prepare for new curriculum and continue to develop nCFW.	To attend courses and training on new curriculum and new GCSE specifications and start planning out new SoW and skills year for Year 9 in 23/24.				Meeting specifications and providing a positive learning experience.	

Objective 2: