

Expressive Art and Design in the Early Years at St Columba's

EYFS Coverage

Expressive **arts** and **design** is one of the seven areas of the **EYFS** and is used to develop a child's imagination, creativity and their ability to use media and materials. Children do this in range of ways including playing with colours, textures and design. The Statutory Framework for the EYFS states: 'Expressive arts and design involves enabling children to explore and play with a range of media and materials, as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings

Guidance for the EYFS stated: 'Children's creativity must be extended by the provision of support for their curiosity, exploration and play. They must be provided with opportunities to explore and share their thoughts, ideas and feelings.

Expressive arts and design involves enabling children to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials, as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through art and design.

How will we provide this?

Opportunities

Providing opportunities also means following children's interests and taking them as the starting point for learning, rather than always planning an adult-directed activity. Expressive Arts and Design is an area of learning where children's imaginations, ideas and fascinations can come to life and they are able to recreate them in all kinds of ways with adult support and encouragement. This also links with the statement in the EYFS Statutory Framework on ensuring that there is a balance between child-initiated play and learning and adult -directed activities. 2012, 1.9 page 6)

- Safely use and explore a variety of materials, tools and techniques, experimenting with colour, design, texture, form and function.
- Be imaginative: children use what they have learnt about media and materials in original ways, thinking about uses and purposes. They represent their own ideas, thoughts and feelings through design and technology and art.

When planning and guiding children's activities, staff must reflect on the different ways that children learn and reflect these in their practice.

- The three characteristics of effective teaching and learning are: playing and exploring - children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'
- Active learning - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements
- Creating and thinking critically - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

Exploring and using media and materials

'Exploring and using media and materials' focuses on how young children engage with the many materials and creative experiences presented to them. For children within the EYFS, this will be through their senses and whole-body movements, as they discover the properties of materials and colour.

It is through this variety of experiences that children recreate their world and interpret their own ideas. This lies at the heart of creativity and expression and has many links to the other areas of learning.

The Creative Process

In expressive art and design, the creative process unfolds as children work out ways, either collaboratively or individually, to put their ideas into action. As children become involved in executing their ideas they will learn the skills and techniques they need to use, for example cutting with scissors, mixing colours and deciding on the right length of string.

However, it is important to remember that this is about the child expressing their creative ideas, not what the adult thinks they should express. So, Christmas or Easter cards that all look the same are not an expression of the child's creativity, neither is colouring in a pre-drawn outline or painting along the lines. These are all activities that require little or no expression or imagination by the child and are completely adult directed.

Good Practise Points

To support children's creativity effectively, we need to give real thought to the time, space, materials and opportunities provided.

Time

All children need lots of time to explore experiment and play with the resources around them. Understanding what you can do with a piece of shiny paper and Sellotape may require lots of trial and error before children feel satisfied with their efforts. Only then can young children become truly involved, absorbed and inspired.

Space

An example, creating something on a small scale with junk materials inside and then recreating it on a large scale outside with natural materials such as stones, conkers, fir cones, canes, tent pegs and ropes can be exciting for children. It also enables the children to work collaboratively, exchanging ideas and helping each other.

Likewise, having the space to paint on an easel as well as on a flat surface (floor, table or outside) provides the scope for children to work alone or collaboratively, express themselves on a small or large scale, explore 'big' ideas and experiment with more delicate techniques.

Pushing back the furniture to make space or ridding the room of some tables can often lead to inspirational, creative experiences, including dancing and singing. And always make the most of the outdoors.

Materials

The kind of resources offered to young children greatly affects the development of their imagination and the opportunities they have to explore, be inquisitive and learn about the properties of materials and how to use them to express their ideas.

To be imaginative, a child needs to use and develop their imagination and the best way to achieve this is through offering children open-ended and inspiring materials (in Reggio Emilia they call them 'intelligent materials').

Open-ended materials offer many possibilities and can be used in all sorts of inventive ways. For example, a basket of silk scarves can become flags, fairy ribbons, a secret path to the magic cave and a magic potion in a big pot; a collection of stones, shells and leaves can be turned into patterns or used to recreate and personalise the story 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt.'

The materials we provide need to be of a high quality - for example, a range of paints that are well mixed (children can help with this), includes sharp colours and a variety of shades, doesn't drip and run everywhere and is presented in clean pots alongside good-quality brushes and paper in varying sizes and shapes.

Language and talking

The final point to remember, but definitely not the least, is that creative experiences are full of opportunities to talk, chat and develop language. They enable children to communicate their ideas in many ways, from painting , modelling and exploring materials

Resources /Links

<https://mymodernmet.com/10-childrens-art-books/>

<https://earlyarts.co.uk/7-benefits-of-arts-in-the-early-years>

<https://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/features/article/eyfs-best-practice-all-about-transient-art>

https://www.pinterest.co.uk/vicki_auty/creative-ideas-for-early-years/