



Longvernal Primary School

EYFS Curriculum 25/26

Expressive Arts and Design

Early years foundation stage statutory framework

The development of children's artistic and cultural awareness supports their imagination and creativity. It is important that children have regular opportunities to engage with the arts, enabling them to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials. The quality and variety of what children see, hear and participate in is crucial for developing their understanding, self-expression, vocabulary and ability to communicate through the arts. The frequency, repetition and depth of their experiences are fundamental to their progress in interpreting and appreciating what they hear, respond to and observe.

What is Expressive Arts and Design?

Expressive Arts and Design is a key area of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage that focuses on encouraging children to explore and express their creativity and imagination. It includes activities such as painting, drawing, collage, model-making, singing, dancing, role play, and experimenting with different materials and textures. Through these experiences, children learn to communicate their ideas, feelings, and thoughts in a variety of ways beyond just words.

This area supports children's development by helping them build confidence, develop fine motor skills, and improve their ability to concentrate and focus. It also encourages children to make choices, take risks, and solve problems as they create their own unique work. Expressive Arts and Design helps foster a sense of curiosity and wonder, as children explore colours, shapes, sounds, and movements.

By engaging in creative play, children develop important skills such as collaboration, communication, and self-expression, which lay the foundation for their future learning in arts, language, and social skills. Overall, Expressive Arts and Design nurtures children's individuality and imagination while supporting their all-round development.

What does the evidence say?

Research and evidence highlight that Expressive Arts and Design in early childhood has significant benefits for children's development. Here's what the evidence says:

1. **Supports Cognitive Development:** Creative activities like drawing, music, and role play encourage children to think critically, solve problems, and develop their imagination. This kind of play helps build neural connections in the brain, supporting learning across other areas like language and maths.
2. **Enhances Communication and Language Skills:** Through storytelling, singing, and dramatic play, children practise using new vocabulary and learn to express themselves more clearly, which boosts their communication skills.
3. **Improves Social and Emotional Development:** Engaging in arts allows children to express their feelings and experiences safely. It fosters self-confidence, emotional regulation, and empathy, especially when children work together or share their creations.
4. **Develops Fine Motor Skills:** Activities like painting, cutting, and manipulating materials improve children's hand-eye coordination and fine motor control, which are important for writing and daily tasks.
5. **Encourages Risk-Taking and Resilience:** Trying new creative activities encourages children to take risks, experiment, and learn from mistakes, which builds resilience and a growth mindset.
6. **Supports Wellbeing:** Creative expression has been linked to positive mental health, helping children reduce stress and feel happier and more engaged.

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) highlights the importance of Expressive Arts and Design in early years education but notes that evidence on its direct impact on academic outcomes is limited and mixed. However, the EEF acknowledges that creative activities can support broader development areas, such as:

- Improving communication and language skills through storytelling, role play, and music.
- Enhancing social and emotional development, helping children build confidence and self-expression.
- Supporting fine motor skills development through activities like drawing and manipulating materials, which in turn can aid writing skills.

The EEF recommends integrating expressive arts with other learning areas, using well-planned, purposeful activities that engage children actively. They emphasize the value of creative play in fostering motivation, engagement, and holistic development, even if direct academic gains are harder to measure.

Intent

We aim to provide children with rich, varied, and high-quality experiences in art, music, and performance to help them develop their artistic and cultural awareness. Children will have frequent opportunities to engage deeply with the arts. Adults will support them in expressing their thoughts and feelings about what they see, hear, and experience.

Our approach includes offering chances to learn and practice skills and techniques within Expressive Arts and Design (EAD), encouraging children to apply their knowledge creatively and imaginatively. We will also help develop children's understanding, self-expression, and vocabulary, enabling them to communicate effectively through the arts.

Our focus will be on three main areas of expressive arts:

1. Visual Arts (painting, printing, drawing, sculpture)
2. Music (singing)
3. Performing Arts (including dramatic role-play and dance)

We believe that progression lies not in the materials used but in the development of skills, tools, and techniques within expressive arts and design.

Implementation

- Use art as a tool to spark discussion and build children's vocabulary.
- By engaging in conversations and observing how children respond, we can gain insights into their artistic choices and how they express ideas. This helps us understand what children know and think about art and other learning areas, such as the world around them, mathematics, and personal, social, and emotional development.
- Support children in developing skills across different artistic disciplines, including sculpture, painting, printing, and drawing.
- Adapt art activities to suit individual needs and experiences, fostering shared interactions and inclusion.
- Offer a variety of two-dimensional (2D) experiences, such as mark-making, drawing, painting, printing, and collage.
- Provide three-dimensional (3D) opportunities through sculpture, clay work, and model-making.

- Encourage combining 2D and 3D techniques to create mixed-media or multi-media works.
- Use a four-step process of creative development, as outlined by Duffy (2006), to nurture children's creativity:
 1. Curiosity – What is this?
 2. Exploration – What can it do?
 3. Play – What can I do with it?
 4. Creativity – What can I make or invent?
- Introduce children to artists, makers, and designers from diverse cultural backgrounds, including local creatives.
- Incorporate a wide variety of art, craft, and design practices into the learning environment.
- Use digital technology to facilitate virtual visits to galleries, museums, and performances.
- Consider how children's artwork is displayed and shared with families, focusing on the value of the process rather than the final appearance.
- Acknowledge that display is not solely about aesthetics, but about representation and celebration of children's work.
- Involve staff, families, and the wider community in supporting art and design projects, drawing on their skills and experiences.

Visual Arts

- Provide a wide variety of materials and encourage children to explore mark making in diverse and creative ways. For example, use sensory materials like cornflour, baby lotion, and shaving foam, or explore natural media such as mud, hand and foot painting, and digital tools like tablets and computers.
- Encourage children to notice and talk about the marks they make.
- Model and promote intentional mark making (e.g., drawing circles, lines, or squiggles).
- Support children in ascribing meaning to their creations by asking open-ended questions such as, "Can you tell me about your painting?"
- Introduce and teach colour names through discussion and exploration.
- Facilitate colour mixing using ready-mixed or powder paints. Try playful outdoor methods like mixing powder paints in puddles or with hands and tools.
- Highlight children's discoveries during colour mixing, e.g., "Look! You've made orange by mixing red and yellow."
- Explore different types of brushes (e.g., thick, thin, long, short) and their uses.
- Model how to use watercolour blocks and tins effectively.
- Demonstrate the use of rollers and large brushes for painting on different surfaces like walls or large canvases.
- Begin introducing the idea of using colour with intent, e.g., "I'm painting the sun, so I'll use yellow."
- Offer printing experiences using every day, found, or natural objects like potato mashers, food items, or pinecones.
- Present painting and printing at various heights, angles, and surfaces—on the floor, table, easel, wall, tuff trays, and more—offering both small- and large-scale opportunities.
- Teach children to select and use paints independently, including how to mix and use paints.

- Use visual supports like a colour wheel to reinforce colour mixing concepts.
- Demonstrate the use of different brushes for specific purposes, explaining your choices aloud (e.g., “I want to add detail here, so I’ll use a thinner brush.”)
- Teach how to care for and clean painting tools after use.
- Offer vertical surfaces for painting to support wrist positioning and early writing skills.
- Introduce colour theory concepts such as:
 - **Shade** – adding black to darken colours
 - **Tint** – adding white to lighten colours
- Explore texture and pattern through rubbings on a variety of surfaces, such as bark, coins, or paving.
- Arrange visits to art galleries—either in person or virtually—to deepen children’s exposure to art.

Drawing

- Offer children a variety of mark-making tools such as wax crayons, coloured pencils, chalks, felt-tip pens, drawing pencils, pens, oil pastels, charcoal, graphite, erasers, and sharpeners. Provide materials in a range of thicknesses to support different grips and techniques.
- Ensure adults model the safe and appropriate use of drawing tools, supporting children in developing fine motor skills and confidence.
- Supply a range of paper types, such as sugar paper, tracing paper, and cartridge paper, as well as whiteboards and other drawing surfaces across all areas of the learning environment, including outdoors.
- Embed mark-making opportunities in all areas of provision—floor, table, wall, easel, tuff trays—offering both small- and large-scale experiences at varying heights and angles.
- Adults should look for natural opportunities to model drawing alongside children throughout the year. They can narrate their actions (“I’m adding lines to show the grass”) and encourage children to talk about and reflect on their own work.
- Encourage children to draw from their own experiences—such as their family, home, or pets—using photographs, real objects, or images as prompts.
- Offer simple, intriguing objects (e.g., an orange pepper) for observational drawing. Adults can guide attention to specific features like texture, colour, or shape.
- Provide regular opportunities for children to draw from imagination, supporting their creative expression.
- Introduce children to drawing in response to music, encouraging abstract mark making that expresses feeling or rhythm.
- Model how to use each drawing material effectively—demonstrating grip, motion, and technique for different tools—and explain how to use them for different purposes (e.g., “I want to add fine detail, so I’ll use a sharp pencil”).
- Support children in understanding and selecting appropriate materials for their creative intent—for example, choosing the right paper size or type for a card or drawing of a tree.

- Invite children to draw self-portraits using mirrors. By age 3–4, they may begin to include facial features within a circular outline.
- Encourage drawing in response to stories—children can represent story elements through marks, loose parts, or projected images.
- Demonstrate observational drawing of animals and plants using real objects or artefacts (e.g., borrowed from museums or collections).
- Explore how perspective influences observational drawings. Discuss how where we sit affects what we see and draw.

Textiles and College

- Encourage children to explore and describe tactile textures by commenting on the feel, appearance, and consistency of various materials such as sand, foam, fabric, and natural objects.
- Provide opportunities for threading using a variety of materials and tools to develop fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination.
- Demonstrate simple weaving techniques using ribbons or fabric strips on large-scale structures such as fences, willow frames, or netting to create temporary outdoor art.
- Offer a wide selection of collage materials, including magazines, newspapers, fabric scraps, tissue paper, natural items (e.g., leaves, sticks), cotton wool, cotton buds, and decorative elements like gems and buttons.
- Support children in exploring scale by providing both large and small materials, such as long strips of wallpaper or lining paper, large boxes and containers they can climb into, as well as small-scale containers and surfaces.
- Create opportunities for children to engage in both large- and small-scale collage projects, using a variety of surfaces and materials.
- Demonstrate threading activities such as lacing around cardboard shapes or templates.
- Encourage collaborative creativity by inviting children to work together on a large outdoor collage using found natural materials. Model how to embellish their work with additional textures and details.

Sculpture

- First experiences with malleable materials can include playdough, clay and kinetic sand. Introduce plasticine and putty as fine motor strength develops.
- Make and use salt dough.
- Allow children to explore texture and consistency as well learning to manipulate.

- Demonstrate how to use small tools for malleable materials such as, rolling pins, knives, wire, scissors, garlic press, masher etc.
- Teach how to use clay, take care of clay and use clay tools. Model how to join using slip, score and mould. Teach and explain new vocabulary.
- Show children how to engrave.
- Enhance the malleable area with sticks and other loose parts.
- Show how to safely use equipment such as, staplers, glue sticks, PVA glue, cello tape (including the use of dispensers), blue tack, split pins, paper clips, masking tape, double sided tape, string, hole punches, or treasury tags (consider age appropriateness and safety around using equipment).
- Provide a range of sustainable and recyclable materials to construct with.
- Model how to effectively join recyclable materials using the above equipment and techniques such as, flange, slots and tabs through folding, cutting, and assembling. Teach and explain new vocabulary.
- Provide large scale opportunities such as using crates, tyres, planks (refer to physical curriculum).
- Refer to spatial reasoning within the mathematics planning. Honegger's Stages of Block Play. Vary scale (large and small) when modelling and building.
- Expose children to a sculptor. For example, Eva Ross Child, Barbara Hepworth, Henry Moore, Richard Long or Andy Goldsworthy.
- Invite in a member of the school or wider community who is a sculptor.

Music

- Encourage children to enjoy and actively participate in rhymes and action songs such as "*Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star.*"
- Offer a diverse selection of music and singing from various cultures, including both live and recorded performances.
- Provide a variety of musical instruments and encourage children to explore different ways of playing them.
- Include everyday objects for children to use in exploring rhythm and creating sound.
- Adults model language that helps children express their emotional responses to music, supporting emotional literacy.
- Use a limited pitch range when singing to help children develop their singing voices. Encourage them to sing rather than shout, especially when prompted to sing loudly.

- Introduce songs with and without lyrics to help children experiment with pitch and begin to match different pitches ("pitch-matching").
- Clap or tap along to the beat (pulse) of a song and encourage children to join in, helping them internalize rhythm.
- Sing and highlight the melodic shape of familiar songs, demonstrating how melodies move up and down in pitch.
- *Melodic shape* refers to the contour of a melody. Instead of staying on a single note, a melody becomes more engaging as it rises or falls, either gradually or suddenly. Children can learn to recognize and reproduce these movements.
- Explore the elements of music—including rhythm, tempo (speed), pitch (high or low), timbre (tone quality), and dynamics (volume/intensity)—through a variety of songs, chants, and musical activities.

Performing Arts

- We will nurture children's early drama as their play progresses from pretend to symbolic by including opportunities for real-life experiences providing role-play in the nursery.
- We will enhance children's imagination and imaginative play through:
 - exploring home experiences
 - meeting and chatting with visitors who have particular jobs or skills
 - a good selection of high-quality storybooks and poetry
 - open-ended resources such as cardboard boxes, blocks, fabric lengths, hats, scarves, belts, bags, pots and pans
 - small objects like shells, clothes pegs and conkers, which will encourage children to develop their ideas further
- Watch and talk about art performances (adults performing nursery rhymes, rhymes, poems).
- For Dancing: See Gross Motor Skills Planning.
- Adults will support children to take part in simple pretend play through explicit modelling e.g. how to make a cup of tea, feeding and talking to the babies, chopping veg etc. Adults will sensitively join in and help them to elaborate their play.
- Adults will adapt their scaffolding and language to support different complexities of pretend play.
- Use open-ended resources and real objects to reinforce play and develop imagination.
- Provide children with a space to perform such as a stage area or puppet theatre.
- Support children to develop their own stories through playing with small world resources, blocks and open-ended loose parts, construction and real objects.

- Children will have the opportunity to perform the stories they have written through 'Helicopter Stories' in front of their peers and alongside their peers.

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