Expressive Arts and Design (EAD)



An Early Years Curriculum Document

The Lilycroft and St Edmund's Nursery Schools' Federation, Bradford

How we provide opportunities to be creative and imaginative in our Nursery School

Within our Nursery schools we provide a stimulating environment in which creativity and imagination are celebrated. This includes resources from a variety of cultures to stimulate new ideas and different ways of thinking.

We offer a wide range of resources and activities that children can respond to by using their many senses. This includes a range of tactile and sensory materials that children can use to develop their creativity.

We allow sufficient time for children to explore and develop ideas. Children have opportunities to revisit activities which will embed their learning and their creativity and imagination.

We provide opportunities for children to express their creativity through dance, movement, music, rhymes, wet and dry mark making, mixing colours, joining things together, combining materials and much more.

A wide range of media and materials are provided for children to experience and explore. Imaginative play helps children make sense of things that they have seen or experienced and supports both creative and intellectual development.

It gives children opportunities to practise decisionmaking and social skills such as sharing and collaborating. Expressive Arts and Design Children and adults have the right to participate in arts and culture.

Expression conveys both thinking (ideas) and feeling (emotion). Children use a variety of ways to express and communicate, through music, movement and a wide range of materials.

Creative thinking involves original responses, not just copying or imitating existing artworks. Expressive Arts and Design fosters imagination, curiosity, creativity, cognition, critical thinking and experimentation and provides opportunities to improvise, collaborate, interact and engage in sustained shared thinking.

It requires time, space and opportunities to re-visit and reflect on experiences. Multi-sensory, first-hand experiences help children to connect and enquire about the world.

Appreciating diversity and multiple perspectives enriches ways of thinking, being, and understanding.



Expressive Arts and Design in the Early Years Foundation stage (EYFS)

What is the EYFS?

The Early years foundation stage (EYFS) sets standards for the learning, development and care of your child from birth to 5 years old. All schools and Ofsted-registered early years' providers must follow the EYFS, including childminders, preschools, nurseries and school reception classes.

What does the EYFS say about Expressive arts and Design?

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. Expressive arts and Design is sectioned in to two key areas within the EYFS; Creating with materials and Being imaginative and expressive.

How children learn: The Characteristics of Effective Learning. Playing and Exploring:

A wide range of media and materials are provided for children to experience and explore. Children use their senses to develop their understanding of the world. They show their interests by representing their experiences. This offers children the opportunity to practise social skills such as sharing and collaborating.

Active Learning:

Open-ended resources provide opportunities for children to fully use their creativity. We provide activities which allow children to use resources in their own creative manner without worrying for example, about there being a right or wrong way to do things. This builds their confidence as they explore new ideas, concepts and resources.

Creating and Thinking Critically:

Creativity supports decision-making, problem-solving and critical thinking. Children express their feelings and find new ways of looking at things. A child may have a purpose in mind when creating and will problem solve through making predictions and also though trial and error. Adults support children in thinking about and planning what they want to create, the processes that may be involved and materials and resources they may need.



0-2 Room

Creating with with materials

Children will use their whole bodies and all their available senses to explore a range of media and materials. We provide a rich and well-ordered environment consisting of varied natural and man made objects and materials which help to provoke children's natural curiosity.

We provide 'treasure baskets' of objects that babies and young children like to feel and touch. These could include brushes, metal, textured, or wooden objects for children to experience and explore.

Babies are ready to enjoy and make music from birth. We aim to stimulate our youngest children's enjoyment of music through listening, singing and playing musical games. Experienced early years educators 'tune in' to every babies' needs, interests and stimuli, creating bespoke shared musical experiences at just the right level for each individual.

We provide babies and toddlers with a range of experiences; singing, instruments, sounds and music from diverse cultures. Sometimes, we enjoy live performances! Babies and toddlers have the opportunity to play and perform music with different:

- dynamics (loud/quiet)
- tempo (fast/slow)
- pitch (high/low)
- rhythms (pattern of sound)

We are aware of the impact that lullabies and music can have on babies feelings and emotions. Therefore, we use them as a tool to support babies to self-regulate or feel calm/soothed at a time where they might be feeling anxious.



Being imaginative and expressive

Babies and very young children will engage in the world around them responding to sounds, movement, objects, sensations and emotions.

The environment we aim to provide is stimulating and offers opportunities for babies to use all their available senses.

Babies express themselves through physical actions and sounds. Early years educators provide a range of experiences to enable babies and very young children to develop their imaginative potential.

We show genuine interest when young children are starting to develop imaginative play modelling and joining in where appropriate.

There are many opportunities for young children to move, create sounds and music, and express themselves through painting and other media. Babies will naturally start to pretend that one object represents another, especially when they have things that are in common.

2-3 Room

Creating with materials

At this age children will begin to actively explore and use everyday materials to understand and represent their world, ideas and interests.

Skilled early years educators will observe children in order to gain an understanding of their interests. This will deepen our knowledge of the experiences children bring from home and how to further support them in developing creative skills by expanding on current experiences and facilitating new ones.

We aim to stimulate children's early interest in making marks by offering a wide range of different materials and encourage children to make marks in different ways.

For example:

• invite them to submerge their fingers in cornflour
• play with a stick in the mud
• place hands and feet in paint
• use tablets or computers
• use water to 'paint' the fence or paving stones outside

Staff model and encourage children to move their bodies whilst singing/vocalising or when they are listening to music. Children have the opportunity to make their own music with musical instruments and sound makers being a part of our continuous provision.

We create opportunities to encounter and revisit key materials, resources and tools to enable children to further explore their properties including form, colour, texture and composition.



Some children with additional needs find it difficult to engage in creative play with materials, especially those who are adverse to textures.

For these children we encourage the use of tools instead of hands, or cover things with cling film. This way, all children can enjoy the experience without the unwanted pressure of feeling the texture. Some children have specialist equipment that may hinder access. In this case, experiences are adapted to enable every child to take part.

Inclusive practice is essential and our experienced team employ a range of strategies, catering to the needs of individuals, focusing on supporting all children to develop their creativity in ways that suit them.



We introduce children to a broad selection of action songs from different cultures, sung in different languages. We sing regularly so that children learn the words, melody and actions confidently.

We also encourage children to join in in a range of their own ways; with movements and sounds made with their bodies and voices, or by playing instruments.

We provide a range of sound making resources for children to explore and experiment with, simple percussion instruments, instruments that are ready made, home made and improvised, that children can shake, tap, strike or blow.

We encourage the use of ''found objects'. i.e. tapping a bottle onto the table or running a twig along a fence and experimenting with different ways of playing instruments/making music.

Our environment (role play areas, small world, home corners) will reflect the backgrounds and cultures of all our children and families as this supports children to enact experiences from their own family lives. We will engage parents to contribute by sharing their own home customs, music, dance or art.

We ensure that the physical environment includes objects and materials with different patterns, colours, tones and textures for young children to explore.

Adults join in with children's role play in attempt to extend their learning as well as showing their genuine investment and respect in regards to the child's play decisions; validating the child's efforts.

Naturally at this age, children will pretend that one object represents another - especially if they have similar characteristics. Children will also make believe by pretending and use everyday materials to represent their world.







Creating with materials
3-4 Room

We understand that children can express their ideas through working with different media, music and materials. We encourage this by providing open-ended resources in all areas of the provision so that children can continue to develop their creativity in their own ways.

For example, sticks in the play dough area can represent a candle on a birthday cake or be used as a tool to create patterns.

Children are provided with a wide range of wet and dry mark making resources that they can access independently. At this stage they may begin to draw with intention, using drawings to represent real life experiences or objects as well as drawing from their imagination. Where possible, children are encouraged to talk about their drawings, further informing adults of their ideas and inspirations.



Children are supported to develop their colour-mixing techniques (with step-by-step guidance as appropriate) to enable them to make the colours they see and want to represent.

We match and compare colours and consider how to change them – for example: “How does blue become green?” "How could we make a lighter pink?" We introduce 'artists' vocabulary such as shade, tint or hue which supports discovery learning and expression even further.



Children are also encouraged to notice changes in the properties of other media as they are transformed i.e. through becoming wet, dry, flaky or fixed.

They use tools for a purpose; again to change or fix things together, learning specific techniques and skills and the words to describe them.

We provide opportunities for children to work collaboratively to develop and realise creative ideas. Children have the opportunity to engage with a range of materials with which to build, join and construct and we encourage them to think about, discuss and plan what they want to make; identifying problems and how they might be solved, as they arise.

We encourage children to document their work using drawing, writing, photographs and video and try to make the time and space to enable children to revisit their ideas and add to creative projects over time and a number of sessions.

Our children are encouraged to reflect on how they have achieved their aims. This helps to support independence as well as enabling children to carry forward skills which can be applied to different concepts.

We continue to consider and adapt experiences to suit and include all our children. The environment is adapted so children with specialist equipment can have a more holistic experience and we aim for multi sensory experiences to extend learning and involvement that can be accessed in a range of ways. An example of this is, a child is using a standing frame to support their physical needs, an adaption to support inclusivity could include an adult providing messy play in a titchy tub at the child's level which would otherwise be at a low bearing table i.e. inaccessible for a child using a standing frame. This enables a child to participate in the activity alongside their peers.











3-4 Room

Being imaginative and expressive

At this age children will continue to act out what they have observed at home or in the nursery. For example, some children will use play dough to make ‘roti’ or they will pretend to be a teacher. Children will engage in imaginative play and role play based on their own first-hand experiences. This may be done by using blocks to build a bus, using pieces of paper to represent tickets and a lid from a chocolate box to be the steering wheel.

Children generally start to develop pretend play with ‘rules' when they are 3 or 4 years old. Some rules are self-created (the pole is now a horse, or the pine cones are now pasta in the pot). Other rules are group-created (to play in the home corner, you must accept the rule that one of your friends is pretending to be a baby).

We provide lots of flexible and open-ended resources to support children’s imaginative play. We support children to negotiate roles in play and sort out conflicts. We aim to notice children who are not
taking part in pretend play, and help them to join in.

Adults will sensitively join in child led play and extend it through language and offering motivational ideas. We offer materials that represent different cultures in the hope that this will allow children to act out their own experiences as well as learning from what they have observed others doing.

Children also learn from each other. They will notice what other children are doing, mirroring their play and adding their own ideas.

Therefore, staff will encourage children to play alongside or in cooperation with other children engaged in the same theme.

More often now, children will make or find props to support their imaginative and expressive play.

Children will experiment with arange of objects and materials and incorporate them into their play in different ways.

Adults may support by thinking through ideas with children or providing suitable props to stimulate play - for example, retelling a core story or dancing and moving to a new song.

Adults join in sensitively, allowing the children to lead, extending ideas, boosting confidences and teaching skills as appropriate to individuals.

Singing is a key form of expression for many children at this age. We support children to build up a repertoire of familiar songs and they can often be heard singing to themselves. Some will even begin to enjoy making up songs of their own!

Children’s singing voices and their ability to control them is constantly being developed. We do this by encouraging them to use their ‘singing’ voice: when asked to sing or use their 'quiet' voice when being asked to whisper.

When learning new songs, we sing slowly, so that children can clearly hear the words and follow the melody of the song.

We clap or tap to the beat of songs or music and encourage children to do this too which supports them to understand the concept of beat.

We have the support of an expert musician who leads music sessions with children and families and supports the staff with their musical skills, increasing their confidence to pass these skills on to the children in effective and enjoyable ways.

Parental Involvement

Our ethos is strongly supportive of involving parents in their children's learning. We believe all parents want the best for their children and they know their child best.

Any information given by parents to the practitioners is likely to be primary, first hand and reliable. We believe there are many benefits in involving parents in their child's learning as well as improving practice from a practitioner/setting point of view. Some of these benefits are: -

- Builds relationships between practitioners, parents and children – helps to build trust and a sense of security.
- Allows parents to share development and experiences of their child and encourages on-going engagement from both parties
- Helps parents understand the practitioner's role and vice versa, i.e. to share what the practitioner does with the child at nursery and what the parents do with the child at home; creating a two- way partnership



We know that involving parents in their children's learning helps support positive outcomes for the child and family in all areas of learning. The following are some examples of how we encourage parents to get involved with their child's expressive, creative and imaginative learning:

- Share lots of books and making up your own stories
- Sing together
- Draw and make things together
- Talk lots, about everything! Talk about what you see, hear, smell and feel and notice details, patterns and textures, similarities and differences. Use lots of interesting words to describe your experiences.
- Look at your child's Records of Achievement file together and ask them about their work.
- Celebrate your child's work by putting it on display in your home.
- Attend performances and events that take place in the nursery.
- Pursue 50 things to do before you're 5.
- Get out and about - walking together is a great way to experience your surroundings, the natural world and the seasons.

Links to . . .

Imaginative ideas and activities to do at home.



#13 Shout and Shhh

#15 Dressing Up

#22 My Secret Treasures

#27 Park Keeper

#31 Boing!

#32 Where have I gone

#34 Woodland Wandering

#44 Fountains of fun

#47 Great Bradford Baking

#4 Make your mark.

#5 Squidgy Sand

#6 Rhyme Time

#7 Making Music

#11 making Connections

#17 Hocus Pocus Potions

#18 Dance

#20 Mini Artists

#25 Creative Junk

#26 Splish Splash Splosh

#37 Show and Tell

#42 The Rough and The Smooth

#46 Fantastic Folding

#48 Natural Art

#50 Sand and Sea

Ofsted Outstanding Provider

Ofsted

Read our report

WEBSITE

REVIEWS ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Absolute fantastic nursery school! Teachers and staff are very supportive, friendly and always their for parents and children. They provide fun activities indoors and outdoors. My son really enjoyed it here and it has build his confidence. Cant wait to put my daughter in nusery next Sept.
Thankyou for everything x

This place is amazing, so inviting from the moment you walk down the street. Staff are lovely and friendly. The children are happy and smiling. The provision and activities are well thought through and educational. The children are learning all the time. Outdoor activity is ongoing in all weathers and staff never complain!
So many opportunities for parents to join in various activities. I love this place. And so does my son! 😊

50 things to do before you're five™

Scan the QR code below to view all activities

Last Reviewed: 27th Maj 2026
Approved By: Sian Hudson - Executive Headteacher
Next Review Due: 28th May 2029