



## **Expressive Arts and Design (EYFS) – Intent, Implementation and Impact**

### **CONTEXT (Why Expressive Arts and Design matters)**

Expressive Arts and Design (EAD) develops children’s artistic and cultural awareness, supporting imagination, creativity and the ability to respond to what they see, hear and participate in. High-quality experiences are characterised by frequency, repetition and depth, enabling children to interpret, appreciate and respond with growing confidence and skill.

EAD is also a vehicle for self-expression and communication: children represent thoughts and feelings through art, music, dance, drama and design, strengthening links with communication and language, physical development, personal, social and emotional development, and early mathematical thinking (pattern, shape, rhythm).

### **What outstanding early years practice looks like**

- A calm, organised and safe enabling environment where children can self-select materials and “cannot go wrong”.
- Adults who are knowledgeable and intentional: they watch, notice and join play through sustained shared thinking to deepen learning.
- Open-ended opportunities with time and space to explore, revisit and refine skills (small- and large-scale).
- Rich exposure to high-quality artworks, music and performance, alongside opportunities to create, perform, share and appreciate others’ work.
- Inclusive practice: every child’s voice and identity are valued; materials and starting points reflect children’s interests and wider culture.

### **1) INTENT (What we want children to know and be able to do)**

Our intent is that every child becomes a confident, curious and resourceful creator who can communicate ideas and feelings through art, music, dance, role-play and design. Children will develop the skills, language and dispositions to explore materials, manipulate and transform them, and to interpret and appreciate what they observe, hear and experience.

### **End points EYFS**

- Creating with materials: children safely use and explore a variety of materials, tools and techniques; experiment with colour, design, texture, form and function; share creations and describe the process.



- Being imaginative and expressive: children invent, adapt and sustain narratives through role-play; perform songs, rhymes and dances; explore sound, rhythm and movement; and express ideas through performance and imaginative worlds.

### **Rugeley John Taylor EAD curriculum drivers**

- Self-expression and communication: children represent ideas, experiences and feelings in multiple ways (visual, movement, sound, talk).
- Imagination and creativity: children generate ideas, take different perspectives, and build imaginary worlds that help them make sense of their experiences.
- Artistic skill and technique: children develop increasing control with tools and materials (fine motor) and with whole-body movement (dance/drama).
- Cultural capital: children encounter artists, musicians and designers, and learn to value and appreciate others' work respectfully.
- Confidence and resilience: children are encouraged to "have a go", take risks, persevere, and learn from experimentation.

### **Characteristics of Effective Learning (how children learn in EAD)**

- Playing and exploring: children investigate materials, sounds and movement with curiosity—testing, mixing and transforming.
- Active learning: children concentrate, practise, repeat and refine skills (e.g., grip/pressure, cutting, joining, steady beat), taking pride in their creations and performances.
- Creating and thinking critically: children plan, review and adapt; they make links between ideas, choose resources, and evaluate what worked ("I changed it because...").

## **2) IMPLEMENTATION (How we teach Expressive Arts and Design)**

We teach EAD through a balanced blend of: (1) high-quality direct teaching of core techniques and vocabulary; (2) open-ended continuous provision that allows self-initiated exploration; and (3) enhanced provision linked to children's interests and curriculum starting points. Adults are intentional: they model skills and language, create safe and accessible environments, and use sustained shared thinking to deepen children's ideas.

### **A. Pedagogical principles (what staff consistently do)**

- Teach skills explicitly, then release to independent application: model → practise together → create independently (with coaching).



- Prioritise process over product: value exploration, experimentation and thinking; celebrate effort, creativity and revision.
- Use rich, dynamic language: describe materials (texture, form, strength), artistic choices (pattern, contrast), and performance features (beat, rhythm, tempo, pitch, dynamics).
- Provide time and space: children revisit media and techniques repeatedly, deepening competence and confidence through practice.
- Ensure inclusion and accessibility: choices at different levels of challenge; adaptive tools; sensory options; all children can participate and succeed.

## **B. Nursery (foundations: exploratory play, sensory richness, meaning-making)**

In Nursery, EAD begins with exploration: children play with a broad range of familiar and unfamiliar materials and experiences. Adults focus on building confidence, curiosity, fine motor foundations and expressive language. Children explore “what materials can do” and begin to represent their ideas and feelings through marks, movement and sound.

- Exploration of materials: paint, dough/clay, collage, natural and found materials; children notice properties (sticky, smooth, bendy, rigid) and experiment safely.
- Mark-making and early drawing: small and large-scale; developing grip, pressure, control and intention—linking to PD and future writing foundations.
- Music and movement: move to music, explore beat and rhythm through whole-body and isolated movements; instruments and body percussion.
- Role-play and imaginative worlds: open-ended props, small world and story corners; children rehearse language and feelings through play.
- Helicopter Stories begins to develop imagination and voice: children tell stories (dictated/scribed), see them acted out, and gain confidence and belonging through performance.

## **C. Reception (depth: technique, intentional choices, performance and reflection)**

In Reception, children deepen artistic skill and intentionality. They revisit and refine key techniques, make deliberate creative choices, and increasingly explain processes and ideas. They perform, respond and appreciate the work of others and use EAD to communicate in many contexts (topic learning, stories, wellbeing, STEM links).

- Core art techniques revisited and refined: drawing (line/shape), painting (colour mixing, texture), collage (layering/joining), 3D making and simple sculpture (form/structure).
- Music: steady beat, rhythm patterns, call-and-response, exploring pitch and dynamics; children compose simple patterns and perform together.
- Dance and drama: exploring space, levels, speed, and expressive movement; children create and repeat sequences; respond to music and narrative prompts.
- Role-play/narrative: sustained role-play with props and materials; children invent, adapt and perform stories (including Helicopter Stories and story-mapping approaches).



- Reflection and appreciation: children talk about what they made and why, give kind feedback, and notice the processes and choices in others' work.

#### **D. Enabling environment: Continuous provision (CP) + Enhanced provision (EP)**

##### **Continuous provision (always available – indoors and outdoors)**

- Art studio: organised, labelled and safe access to a range of media; children can self-select; open-ended outcomes (“can’t go wrong”).
- Mark-making area: varied paper sizes; pencils, crayons, chalks; large-scale surfaces; clipboards; mirrors for self-portrait/observation.
- Malleable materials: dough/clay tools; joining techniques; textures; natural add-ins (sticks, shells).
- Music area: instruments, shakers, drums; simple recording/listening; space for movement; rhythm cards/beat prompts.
- Role-play and small world: props to represent experiences; costumes; puppets; story baskets; performance space.
- Outdoor provision: large-scale painting and mark-making; den building; found materials; mud kitchen; music outdoors; performance and parade space.

##### **Enhanced provision (planned add-ons – linked to starting points)**

- Artist/musician focus: a small set of stimuli (images, artefacts, short audio) that inspires imitation → innovation → independent creation.
- Technique focus: planned mini-lessons and challenge cards (mix colours; create texture; join materials; make a stable structure).
- Performance focus: rhythm/beat games, call-and-response songs, simple dance sequences, ‘mirror and repeat’ movement prompts.
- Helicopter Stories enhancement: taped stage, story scribing station, props basket linked to children’s fascinations; opportunities to act, rehearse and perform.
- Gallery moments: display children’s work at child height with captions about process; children revisit and talk about choices.

#### **E. Adult interaction: watch, notice, join (sustained shared thinking)**

- Adults observe first, then join: “Tell me about your idea.” “What are you trying to do?” “What could you try next?”
- Adults extend vocabulary: naming tools, techniques, properties, and feelings; modelling descriptive language and oracy.
- Adults support planning and reflection: “What is your starting point?” “How will you join it?” “What worked well?”
- Adults praise effort, ingenuity and risk-taking: reinforcing resilience and confidence (“You kept trying a new way!”).



## **F. Links to other areas of learning (coherence across EYFS)**

- Communication and Language: talk for ideas; story-making; describing processes; giving feedback; developing vocabulary.
- Physical Development: fine motor control (tools, cutting, joining), gross motor movement (dance/drama), posture and strength.
- PSED and wellbeing: emotional expression, self-regulation, confidence, belonging, cooperation and empathy through shared creation and performance.
- Mathematics: pattern, symmetry, shape, spatial reasoning, rhythm/beat patterns and measurement in making.
- Understanding the World: materials, technology, culture and community; artists/musicians and the world around us.

## **G. Assessment and monitoring**

- Assessment is observation-led: adults gather evidence from provision, adult-led sessions, circle time, and performances (photos, short notes, children's talk).
- We look for depth over speed: repeated experiences build competence; children revisit media and show increasing control, choice and confidence.
- Next steps planning: staff use observations to plan enhancements and micro-teaching of technique, language and participation.
- EYFSP end points: best-fit judgement for Creating with Materials and Being Imaginative and Expressive across multiple contexts.

## **3) IMPACT (What difference this makes)**

### **A. Children become confident, expressive creators**

- Children communicate ideas and feelings through art, music, dance and role-play; they articulate what they made and why.
- Children show creativity and imagination: they invent, adapt and sustain imaginary worlds and narratives.
- Children develop resilience and independence: they self-select resources, persist, take risks and revise work.
- Children appreciate and respond to culture: they notice, interpret and talk respectfully about others' work and performances.

### **B. Skills and knowledge deepen through repetition and quality experience**

- Children demonstrate increasing control and competence with tools and media (fine motor), and with movement and performance (gross motor).



- Children make connections between ideas and materials: they manipulate, transform and choose techniques intentionally.
- Children participate more fully in collaborative creativity: they contribute, listen, mirror, repeat and build sequences together.

### **C. Wider outcomes (linked to learning behaviours and school readiness)**

- Improved attention, working memory and self-regulation through practising sequences (dance/rhythm), planning and following routines.
- Stronger oracy and vocabulary as children describe processes, explain choices, and engage in extended discussions.
- Enhanced wellbeing and belonging: children feel emotionally secure, valued and confident to “have a go”.

### **D. How we know (monitoring impact)**

- Evidence from observations, floor books, photos/video clips of performances, children’s talk and reflections.
- Progress over time in independence, stamina, technique, imaginative play/narrative, and collaborative participation.
- EYFSP outcomes for Creating with Materials and Being Imaginative and Expressive used alongside internal monitoring to identify strengths and areas for development.