Netherton Park Nursery School

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Expressive Arts and Design Policy

Reviewed: September 2026	**Next review date:** September 2029

Related policies/documents:

- Birth To 5 Matters
- Curriculum overview
- Learning Aspirations
- Physical Development Policy
- Literacy Policy

All children have a creative spark, it is up to us as practitioners to help them to nurture whichever area of creativity they choose to express themselves through and ensure that they have the resources, confidence and skills to enable them to achieve their potential. Through celebration and praise they will gain a sense of achievement and immense pride, hopefully leading to them being highly motivated to want to strive towards even greater things.

Expressive Arts and Design Curriculum Lead*:* Alison Ward

Intent

Expressive Arts and Design is highly valued at Netherton Park Nursery School, as creativity is entwinned throughout our early years curriculum. Creativity enables our young children to take part and learn inclusively. Expressive Arts and Design is beneficial in enabling children to explore and play with a range of media and materials. This area of the curriculum provides opportunities and encouragement for children to use their imagination and to share their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of creative activities including art and design, singing, dancing, making music and roleplay.

Through our planned activities and delivery of this curriculum area we aim to:

- Support and encourage children to express their voice, thoughts, feelings and emotions. Thereby giving them a sense of who they are and what they enjoy.
- Help children to develop the Characteristics of Effective Learning and in turn to build inner confidence in their skills and abilities.
- Support children to make sense of different materials, textures, forms and the world around them.
- Provide opportunities to learn how to use tools and different techniques to help them change materials e.g scissors to cut with, rolling pins to roll dough, sponges to print with, tape and glue to join pieces together.
- Promote independence and choice making as our young learners become familiar with a wider range of materials that they are able to use.
- Encourage independent exploration and curiosity.
- Support cooperative play opportunities.
- Broaden their experiences and vocabulary through a range of new experiences.

Implementation

At Netherton Park Nursery School we provide many opportunities for children to explore different media and materials through planned, directed activities as well independently through our well-resourced learning environments.

Role of the adult

The staff appreciate the effort an individual child has made and the journey and way in which they are creative. Pressure is not placed on the end product but more in sharing the process which helps encourage perseverance and risk taking. Through the use of careful questioning skills, reflections and appropriate challenge, problem solving and independent selection and decision-making, staff aim to extend children's creative development further through the expressive arts.

Accessing and using resources

Staff understand how important it is to enable our young learners to gain further independence and confidence in using recourses, tools and materials by providing these within our learning environments. Children access creative resources and activities during their child-initiated learning.

Through a wide range of creative exploration and opportunity we aim to maintain every child's freedom to be individual and to allow them to express themselves creatively in an uninhibited way that allows them to nurture and develop their own creativity through whichever medium they choose. Children will have the opportunity to explore a wide range of 2 dimensional and 3-dimensional materials, both manmade and natural. This wide selection aims to promote curiosity, exploration and discovery so that they begin to develop knowledge and skills through explorative use and then begin to develop an awareness for the properties these materials have so they can make personal choices about how they can be used to support their learning. The children are encouraged to develop various techniques that make their interactions with certain materials more skilful, such as how to make slip to secure different parts of the 3D clay model that they may be making. Through developing their knowledge of materials and specific techniques, the children will begin to consider and reflect upon colour, shape, texture, form, line and space and we will support their observational skills through discussion and appropriate questioning to help them to begin to identify and recognise these aspects as they explore and develop. Through their exploration of materials and investigations amongst their environment, we will encourage their developing awareness for colour and how it changes, both through their mixing and experimentation and the observation of colours that surround them as they learn. It may be introduced through a famous artwork, a picture, a piece of fabric or a photograph that inspires discussion or simply influences the colours that they choose to place within their own creative expression. It may be simply observing their environment and being inspired to use the colours and resources around them to create something spontaneous and quite special.

Children can develop their creative responses in a way that inspires them, motivates and challenges them to be creative on a small and large scale. These creative opportunities develop their ability to problem solve and reason as well as helping to extend their sequencing and thinking skills. Their individual approach towards such experiences allows them to develop their imaginative and creative thinking, which they then develop alone or share and extend with friends around them, promoting great communication skills and teamwork.

Children are inspired to have similar creative responses through the opportunity to den build and construct on a larger scale using large crates and boxes within our outdoor environments. Opportunities during Nature Play sessions encourage the use of natural resources allowing children to extend these skills and be creative in a different environment offering them new challenges and creative experiences.

Through praise and recognition for their achievements we foster a sense of personal value and pride for their creativity. We encourage the children to create as a response to their imaginations, perceptions and experiences and use them as a means for communicating to others around them. As they interact and observe what others around them are creating, we support and encourage their ability to give a positive creative response to what they

see and experience. We also support their ability to receive comments from others in response to their own creativity. The children are taught to be respectful and this developing awareness of respect for others around them as well as understanding that they too deserve respect from their peers leads to a more positive and mutual learning environment in which they can explore, experiment, create, discover and learn. They are taught to respect the space in which they are learning, the resources they are using and the environment in which they are creating as well as to be respectful of others that may choose to join them in their play and their creative space.

By providing the children with the time to explore, experiment, practise, repeat, and consolidate their ideas and skills we hope to give the children the confidence to develop their own creativity leading to independence, individuality and their ability to make personal choices and decisions through their creative process.

Access to sand, water, playdough, clay, sensory resources

All staff are aware of the many benefits of sand, water play, playdough, clay and sensory play resources for developing gross and fine motor skills, hand to eye coordination and imaginative play and sensory stimulation. Opportunities are available on a daily basis. Children are encouraged to use all their senses as they explore and have lots of opportunities to interact with a wide range of textural and sensory materials and objects that promote and develop their knowledge of how they feel, smell, look and taste, where appropriate. Time to explore with their senses is given so they can explore on an individual level, or with friends. Practitioner input is also provided to ensure there are opportunities to further enhance their observations as well as offer times to talk and discuss and maybe investigate changes that may have occurred as their interactions have progressed. Introducing and extending children's language vocabulary is also vitally important and is modelled through interactions both with their peers and with Practitioner engagement. The exploration of sensory materials, particularly those that promote interaction using their hands, is vital in developing their dexterity and the control they have over their muscles. These experiences provide opportunities for them to squeeze, press, mould, roll, pound and shape through motivating tactile explorations, providing opportunities for moving their hands in many different ways.

Children engage in 'Dough Disco' sessions which enhance and develop their physical dexterity and control of movements further. Dough Disco also promotes brain connections that lead to better control and coordination of their fine motor movements. Playdough is always available in the creative space as a permanent resource for the importance of developing this further.

Imaginative play

Providing opportunities for children to play imaginatively, within a home corner or with familiar props and small world figures allows them to express their own thoughts, feeling and act out scenarios that they have experienced. This all helps the child to make more sense of the world around them. The outside areas provide lots of space and a natural backdrop for children's spontaneous imaginative play and further resources are provided to enhance and

develop their play if required. Through these enriching experiences children have the opportunity to play out imaginary situations based on real life experiences, imaginative experiences, and storytelling experiences and develop their abilities to negotiate, cooperate and sustain their imaginative play, whilst developing simple and key narrative skills.

Mark making opportunities are also encouraged to help children to explore their emergent writing skills as children develop their ability to be purposeful writers and communicators. They are encouraged to emergently create signs, menus, lists, timetables, tickets and any forms of communication that may be needed to support their play. Resources to promote, extend and encourage these skills further, such as telephones, diaries, appointment books, and note pads, are also provided to support their play. Mark making is encouraged both inside and outside and the children are encouraged at all levels of development to want to make marks with whatever media they choose to use.

Storytelling

Children have the opportunity to develop their storytelling and character role skills further through our core texts. Books, puppets, props and costumes support the core texts. This is introduced to the children by practitioners who support children's familiarity of the story, its content, the characters and the language patterns amongst it. The children are encouraged to re-enact and engage in the storytelling process to encourage interaction and drama from a constant developing theme. The story is reflected upon in different curriculum areas, creating opportunities throughout the nursery that help the children to make connections, develop their familiarity and have lots of opportunities to make sense of the story as they continuously apply their knowledge. Children are encouraged to develop their narrative skills as well as their ability to sequence stories, as they perform their storytelling. They are encouraged to use expression in both their voices and their body/facial expression as their confidence within their performance allows them to do this. These skills are a vital part of developing the narrative that they need and their ability to sequence their talk. Developing narrative is a hugely important skill needed for their later writing development as they progress through their schooling. These skills are also developed more incidentally through their own engagement through role play and imaginative play in the various environments that they choose to do this.

Helicopter Stories /Tales Toolkit (See Literacy Policy). As well as supporting the children's early literacy and storytelling skills, this technique provides an actual stage area in which each child can imaginatively become a character in their peer's stories. The children are not given any direction on how to act their part and therefore gain confidence in their own imaginative ideas and early acting skills.

Songs, music, movement and dance

Children have many opportunities to develop an enthusiasm and enjoyment for music in all its forms. They have opportunities to develop their musical expression both inside and outdoors through a wide range of activities that are constantly available to them to encourage individual exploration as well as nurturing their confidence to engage in group activities such as dancing, singing or making lots of noise in the orchestral pots and pans band in the garden. These experiences enrich the children's creative expression allowing them to individually respond through song, rhythm, percussion, movement, dance or drama nurturing a love of music and a spontaneous need to interact and express themselves freely to what they hear and experience around them. Children are exposed to many different genres of music to create diversity in their exposure to music in all its forms.

Children's listening skills are supported and developed through practitioner engagement, helping them to fine tune their hearing, and develop their ability to differentiate between sounds; to be selective in listening for specific aspects of music, loud and quiet, fast and slow, this supports them being able to reflect on this in their musical responses and explorations. Children are encouraged to describe how music makes them feel, developing their vocabulary and opportunities to be reflective in their listening.

As part of these experiences, children are encouraged to be respectful of others around them, developing their awareness for the importance of listening to others as well as expecting others to listen when it's their turn to contribute to the group activity.

The children have daily opportunities to sing through a range of musical opportunities, from independent access to the music area, daily exposure to the poem/rhyme of the week, and daily singing sessions. Practitioners are encouraged to spontaneously sing amongst their teaching as often as the opportunity arises for them to do so, this often encourages reluctant communicators to join in, so is an important aspect of their teaching. Singing is so important, it gives so many children a voice and supports and encourages their confidence as talkers, and this is why they should have as many opportunities to sing and experience rhyme as possible.

The children have the opportunity to learn nursery rhymes and traditional songs from both their own culture and those of others, experience poetry and have a specific weekly poem/rhyme to ensure that they all have the opportunity to learn a wide range of poems and rhymes. Different nursery rhymes are focused on each week. The weekly poem/ rhyme is added to Tapestry so families can help their children enjoy it at home too. Children are offered a wide range of music to listen and respond to through classical music, traditional music, children's rhymes and songs, multicultural music, pop music, and relaxation music. Through the exposure of a variety of music the children are being provided with experiences that are leading to them developing an appreciation for a wide range of music in all its different styles and cultures. This helps them to develop their confidence as their appreciation for music progresses, eventually leading to a developing ability to be able to express how they feel about it through a verbal response, an individual movement, engaging in group dance, drama or expressing themselves through art.

Children are given lots of opportunities to develop their bigger physical muscles through creative opportunities, to give them the control that they will need for their posture. This is vitally important to allow them to be successful through more skilled creative experiences in their future. These are in addition to the creative opportunities

they have to build and create on a larger scale. These creative experiences encourage them to be creative on different levels such as stretching out their core as they lie on their tummies to draw, or balance on their knees and stretch up as they paint. This is as a result of recognising that these muscles aren't forming properly in all children due them being restricted in car seats and baby carriers, buggies etc for long periods of time whilst babies and being denied the freedom and space that they need to move, and stretch and develop these muscles appropriately as they grow. These muscles will be further enhanced through opportunities through dance and movement. The impact on children's later writing development through school, when these core muscles are not strengthened, has been observed and identified as having a huge impact on poor writing skills. Children also have the opportunity to explore big movements through the 'Squiggle Early Writing programme' this promotes movement and dance through using different writing pattern movements that is then refined and becomes more focused on their smaller emergent marks.

Sets of musical instruments

The Nursery School has invested heavily in group sets of a range of musical instruments; these include djembe drums, claves, triangles, tambourines and maracas. These sets of instruments enable children to learn how to use them correctly, handle them with respect and care whilst exploring the different sounds they make. Instruments are used in group sessions to develop and explore rhythm, tempo, volume and speed. Instruments from a range of cultures are also available for the children to hear and explore being played.

Impact

Having had access to many creative activities and resources throughout their time in our Nursery School our three and four year olds leave with confidence in many creative skills, from art and design to singing and acting. They are able to choose the materials they want to use and are confident to experiment with new media in order to express their own ideas.