

Expressive Arts and Design Curriculum Overview for 2 Year Olds

EYFS Educational Programme:

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.

Intent Statement:

At Sir James Knott Nursery School, our intent for Expressive Arts and Design in our 2-year-old provision is done through:

Exploring Materials and Media

- Provide rich opportunities for children to explore textures, colours, and materials through sensory play.
- Encourage children to make marks using hands, fingers, and simple tools.
- Value exploration and process, allowing children to experiment freely without expectation of an outcome.

Being Imaginative and Expressive

- Support children to sing, move, clap, and respond to music with enjoyment.
- Encourage early pretend play using familiar objects and everyday experiences.
- Enable children to express feelings and ideas through movement, sounds, and actions.

Shared Experiences and Communication

- Develop early vocabulary by talking with children about what they are doing and creating.
- Encourage children to watch, copy, and join in with adults and peers.
- Build confidence by celebrating children's creations and encouraging them to share and show their work.

We recognise that every child is unique and will develop at their own paces. Our practitioners are sensitive to developmental needs, including those related to communication, sensory regulation, and SEND, ensuring that all children feel respected and included.

Knowledge	
<p>Creating with Materials I know....</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can explore different textures like sand, water, playdough, or paint. • I can use my hands and fingers to make marks, shapes, or patterns. • I can enjoy mixing colours and seeing how they change. • I can experiment with materials like paper, card, glue, and tape. • I can use tools like brushes, rollers, or stamps to make marks. • I can explore materials safely and enjoy the process, not just the end result. • I can join in with adults or friends when making or creating things. • I can show others what I have made and talk about it. 	<p>Being Imaginative and Expressive I know....</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can use my body, voice, and actions to copy sounds, songs, or movements. • I can enjoy singing, clapping, or moving to music. • I can pretend with toys or objects, like making a cup of tea or driving a car. • I can watch and copy what adults or friends do in play. • I can explore different ways to make sounds, gestures, or faces to express myself. • I can show my feelings and ideas through movement, music, or pretend play. • I can enjoy joining in with role play and simple imaginative games. • I can use everyday objects in new ways in my play and stories.
Skills	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am learning to explore different materials to see how they look, feel, and change. Example: Playing with sand, water, or paint and noticing how they feel. • I am learning to use tools and materials with lots of control. Example: Holding a paintbrush, using glue, or stacking blocks carefully. • I am learning to choose which materials I want to use for my ideas. Example: Picking between crayons, clay, or paper for a craft. • I am learning to join and stick different materials to make something new. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am learning to use my own to make up stories or pretend play. Example: Pretending a box is a car or a castle. • I am learning to show my feelings, ideas, or thoughts through actions, sounds, or gestures. Example: Using facial expressions, gestures, or sounds to show excitement or surprise. • I am learning to use paint, collage, or other materials to share my ideas Example: Painting a picture of a family or creating a collage from different materials. • I am learning to act out my life in play. Example: Pretending to cook, shop, or care for a baby doll.

<p>Example: Sticking buttons on paper or layering paper and fabric.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am learning to notice what happens when I change materials by mixing, tearing, or shaping them. Example: Mixing sand and water to make mud or tearing paper to make shapes. • I am learning to use words or gestures to describe what I am doing with materials. Example: Saying “soft,” “sticky,” or “wet” while playing with dough or paint. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am learning to choose colours, tools, or props to help me. Example: Picking a favourite colour to paint a picture or selecting costumes for a role-play. • I am learning to play imaginatively with other children, sharing ideas and roles. Example: Playing “house” together or pretending to go on a journey. • I am learning to use my voice, instruments, or objects to make sounds and rhythms. Example: Singing, drumming, or tapping to a rhythm.
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Implementation Statement:

At Sir James Knott Nursery School, we implement high-quality provision for Expressive Arts and Design in our 2-year-old setting through the following approaches:

Sensory Exploration and Materials

- Children explore a wide range of textures, colours, and materials through hands-on sensory experiences.
- Adults provide opportunities for mark-making using hands, fingers, and simple tools.
- Exploration is valued over outcomes, allowing children to repeat and experiment freely.

Music, Movement and Sound


- Children engage in songs, rhymes, and musical play, responding with movement and actions.
- Simple instruments are introduced to explore sound and rhythm.
- Adults model enjoyment and encourage children to join in and respond.

Imaginative Play and Expression

- Children are supported to engage in early pretend play using familiar objects and experiences.
- Adults encourage children to express feelings and ideas through movement, sounds, and actions.
- Children observe, copy, and begin to play alongside peers.

Adult Interaction and Language

- Adults narrate children's play and talk about what they are creating.
- Children's efforts are acknowledged and celebrated to build confidence.
- Adults follow children's interests and extend play through shared attention.

 **Overall Implementation:** For our 2-year-olds, Expressive Arts and Design is implemented through sensory-rich, play-based experiences supported by secure relationships and responsive adult interactions. Learning focuses on exploration, enjoyment, and developing confidence rather than finished outcomes. Adults model creativity, provide language, and create enabling environments that allow children to experiment, repeat, and express themselves freely. Through consistent routines and inclusive practice, children develop early creative skills and positive attitudes that lay strong foundations for future expressive learning.

<p>First milestone: 🖐️ 🎨 Exploring Materials and Media</p> <p>Begins to explore different materials, textures, and tools with curiosity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a variety of safe materials (paint, clay, sand, water, paper, fabrics). • Encourage hands-on exploration without pressure to produce a “perfect” outcome. • Model how to use tools and materials, e.g., showing how to mix colours or flatten clay. • Ask open-ended questions: <i>“I wonder what happens if we mix these colours?”</i>.
<p>Second milestone: 🚗 🧸 Using Imagination and Role Play</p> <p>Engages in simple pretend play and begins to act out roles or stories.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide props and everyday items that inspire pretend play (boxes, scarves, dolls, toy food). • Join in the play and extend children’s ideas gently without taking over. • Encourage story-making by asking questions: <i>“Who is your character? What will happen next?”</i>. • Offer opportunities for both individual and group pretend play.
<p>Third milestone: 🖍️ 🎭 Making Choices in Creative Activities</p> <p>Starts to select materials, colours, or props to express ideas or feelings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer a range of materials and allow children to choose what they want to use. • Give time and space for children to explore their ideas without rushing. • Comment positively on children’s choices: <i>“I like how you chose that colour for your picture”</i>. • Encourage problem-solving: <i>“What could we use to make your picture even bigger?”</i>.

<p>Forth milestone: 🧡 ✨ Expressing Feelings and Ideas</p> <p>Begins to communicate thoughts, emotions, or experiences through art, movement, or music.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for music, movement, and drawing to express emotions. • Label emotions and ideas as children create: <i>"It looks like your painting is very happy"</i>. • Encourage sharing with others, e.g. displaying artwork or performing simple songs. • Join in expressive activities, modelling different ways to communicate ideas.
<p>Final milestone: 🎨 🖐️ I Explore and Express Myself Creatively</p> <p>I will begin to combine materials, tools, movements, sounds, or marks to represent ideas, experiences, or stories I have heard and enjoyed.</p>	
<p>Vocabulary: Paint, draw, stick, glue, find, choose, colour, fluffy, hard, soft, spikey, rough, box, paper, card, song, sing, rhyme, dance, house, play, baby, shop, mam, dad, story, make, sound, music, bang, crash, high, low, picture, model</p>	

Impact Statement:

Confidence and Enjoyment

By the end of being two I can...

- Children show enjoyment and curiosity when exploring creative materials and experiences.
- They approach creative play with increasing confidence and willingness to try.
- Children repeat favourite activities, showing growing familiarity and comfort.

Exploration of Materials and Media

By the end of being two I can...

- Children explore a range of textures, colours, and materials through hands-on play.
- They make marks using hands, fingers, and simple tools with enjoyment.
- Children experiment freely, focusing on process rather than outcome.

Music, Movement and Sound

By the end of being two I can...

- Children respond to music through movement, clapping, and actions.
- They explore sounds using their voices and simple instruments.
- Children show pleasure when joining in with songs and rhymes.

Imaginative Expression

By the end of being two I can...

- Children engage in simple pretend play based on familiar experiences.
- They copy actions and sounds they see and hear from adults.
- Children express feelings and ideas through movement, sound, and play.

Foundations for Future Creativity

By the end of being two I can...

- Children develop positive creative dispositions, including curiosity and confidence.
- They are ready to build on these experiences as their imagination and control develop.
- Secure foundations are laid for future expressive learning.

✅ **Overall Impact:** For our 2-year-olds, Expressive Arts and Design is implemented through sensory-rich, play-based experiences supported by secure relationships and responsive adult interactions. Adults prioritise exploration, enjoyment, and confidence-building rather than finished outcomes, modelling creativity and language through shared attention and play. Environments are carefully organised to invite exploration and repetition, enabling children to express themselves freely and develop early creative skills that form strong foundations for future learning.

Expressive Arts and Design Curriculum Overview for 3 and 4 year olds

EYFS Educational Programme:

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.

Intent Statement:

At Sir James Knott Nursery School, our intent for Expressive Arts and Design in our 3-4-year-old-provision is to:



Creating with Purpose and Choice

- Support children to select, combine, and use materials intentionally to represent ideas.
- Encourage children to explore how materials change when mixed, shaped, torn, or joined.
- Enable children to plan and talk about their creations, developing control and confidence.



Imagination, Storytelling and Role Play

- Encourage children to invent stories, characters, and scenarios through imaginative play.
- Provide opportunities for collaborative role play, sharing ideas, roles, and narratives.
- Support children to express thoughts and feelings through drama, movement, and pretend play.



Music, Movement and Expression

- Offer regular opportunities to explore sounds, rhythms, and musical instruments.
- Encourage children to respond to music through movement and dance.
- Support children to reflect on and talk about their own and others' creative work.

We recognise that every child is unique and will develop at their own paces. Our practitioners are sensitive to developmental needs, including those related to

communication, sensory regulation, and SEND, ensuring that all children feel respected and included.

Knowledge	
Creating with Materials I know.... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that materials can feel, look, and behave in different ways. • how to use tools and materials to make simple marks or shapes. • I can combine different materials to create something new. • that materials can change when I mix, squash, tear, or fold them. • that I can choose materials and decide how to use them to show my ideas. • that I can talk about what I am doing with materials and why. 	Being Imaginative and Expressive I know.... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that I can use my imagination to make up stories, characters and pretend. • that I can use materials, marks, sounds, and movements to show my ideas and feelings. • that I can combine different materials and tools to show my ideas. • that I can join in with other children. • that I can explore and enjoy different sounds, rhythms, and musical instruments. • that my creations and ideas can be shared, celebrated, and valued by others.
Skills	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am learning to explore different materials to see how they feel, look, and change. • I am learning to use tools and materials with increasing control. • I am learning to use different materials to make something new. • I am learning to notice how materials change when I squash, tear, fold, or mix them. • I am learning to make choices about which materials and tools to use. • I am learning to talk about what I am doing with materials and why. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am learning to use my talk about and use stories in my play. • I am learning to use materials, marks, sounds, and movements to show my ideas and feelings. • I am learning to join different materials and tools to show my ideas. • I am learning to play imaginatively with other children, sharing ideas, roles, and stories. • I am learning to explore different sounds, rhythms, and musical instruments. • I am learning to share my creations and explain my ideas to others.

Implementation Statement:

At Sir James Knott Nursery School, we implement high-quality provision for Expressive Arts and Design for our 3-4-year-olds through the following approaches:

Creating with Materials and Techniques

- Children are taught how to use and combine materials and tools safely and purposefully.
- Adults introduce techniques such as cutting, joining, mixing, and shaping.
- Children are encouraged to select resources independently to represent their ideas.

Imaginative Play, Storytelling and Drama


- Children engage in role play and storytelling, developing characters and narratives.
- Adults support collaborative play by helping children negotiate roles and ideas.
- Drama and small-world play are used to retell and invent stories.

Music, Rhythm and Movement

- Children explore sound, rhythm, and tempo using instruments and their bodies.
- Movement and dance are used to respond to different types of music.
- Children are encouraged to create and perform simple musical patterns.

Reflection, Language and Evaluation

- Children talk about what they have made and how they made it.
- Adults model respectful listening and value children's creative choices.
- Children begin to evaluate and adapt their work.

 **Overall Implementation:** For children aged 3–4, Expressive Arts and Design is implemented through a balance of adult-led teaching, guided exploration, and rich continuous provision. Adults introduce techniques, model creative processes, and support sustained shared thinking to deepen understanding. Children are encouraged to make choices, develop ideas, and reflect on their work. Through well-resourced environments and inclusive practice, children develop creativity, imagination, and confidence, preparing them to express ideas and feelings effectively as they move into Reception.

<p>First milestone: 🌈 🧴 Creating with Purpose</p> <p>Children begin to plan and create their own imaginative representations.</p> <p>They use different materials and techniques deliberately to achieve effects.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a wide range of materials (paint, clay, collage, recycled items). • Encourage children to make choices and plan their creations. • Ask open-ended questions: “<i>What are you making?</i>”, “<i>How will you do that?</i>”. • Celebrate effort and ideas rather than only the finished product.
<p>Second milestone: ✂️ 🖍️ Exploring and Using Media and Materials</p> <p>Children experiment with different textures, tools, and instruments.</p> <p>They combine media in inventive ways and begin to show personal preferences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer opportunities to experiment with textures, colours, and tools. • Introduce new materials and techniques gradually. • Encourage mixing media (paint with collage, clay with natural objects). • Model techniques but leave room for children’s innovation.
<p>Third milestone: 🎭 📖 Being Imaginative</p> <p>Children invent stories and scenarios, often drawing on experiences from home, books, or the environment.</p> <p>They act out roles and narratives using props and costumes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up role-play areas with props and costumes linked to children’s interests. • Participate in imaginative play, extending children’s ideas rather than directing them. • Encourage storytelling, drama, and puppet play. • Celebrate unique ideas and alternative interpretations
<p>Forth milestone: 🎨 🎵 Responding to Art and Music</p> <p>Children show increasing appreciation and interpretation of visual arts, music, and dance.</p> <p>They express likes/dislikes and begin to comment on their own and others’ creations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide regular access to music, dance, and visual arts. • Discuss artworks, music, or performances with children, asking for their thoughts. • Encourage children to create responses to what they see, hear, or feel.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display children's creations to show value and spark discussion.
Final milestone: 🌟 🎭 I Use Creativity and Imagination to Express My Ideas I will use art, music, movement, and role play to express their thoughts, feelings, and experiences.	
Vocabulary: Paint, draw, stick, glue, find, choose, colour, fluffy, hard, soft, spikey, rough, box, paper, card, song, sing, rhyme, dance, house, play, baby, shop, mam, dad, story, make, sound, music, bang, crash, high, low, picture, model, mix, tools, scissors, invent, ideas, roles, costumes, play, act, imagination, create, see, hear, touch, feel, clay, recycled, material, puppet	

Impact Statement:

🎨 Creative Confidence & Independence

By the end of being in Nursery I can...

- Children show confidence in choosing materials and initiating creative ideas.
- They work with increasing independence and persistence.
- Children take pride in their creations and creative efforts.

✂️ Using Materials with Purpose

By the end of being in Nursery I can...

- Children use a range of tools and materials with increasing control.
- They combine materials to represent ideas, thoughts, and experiences.
- Children make intentional choices about how to create and adapt their work.

🎭 Imagination, Role Play and Storytelling

By the end of being in Nursery I can...

- Children create and act out stories and scenarios through role play.
- They collaborate with others, sharing ideas and roles.
- Children use imagination to extend and develop narratives.

🎵 Music, Rhythm and Movement

By the end of Nursery I can...

- Children explore rhythm, tempo, and sound using instruments and their bodies.
- They respond creatively to music through movement and dance.
- Children create and repeat simple musical patterns.

Reflection and Expression


By the end of Nursery I can...

- Children talk about what they have made and how they made it.
- They listen to and value the ideas of others.
- Children refine and adapt their work with support.

Preparation for Future Learning

By the end of Nursery I can...

- Children demonstrate confidence, imagination, and creative thinking.
- They are well prepared to express ideas and feelings in Reception.
- Creativity is embedded as a strength across learning.

 **Overall Impact:** For children aged 3–4, Expressive Arts and Design is implemented through a balance of adult-led teaching, guided exploration, and rich continuous provision. Adults introduce techniques, model creative processes, and use sustained shared thinking to deepen understanding. Well-resourced environments support independence, choice, and collaboration. Through inclusive practice and high-quality interactions, children develop creativity, imagination, and confidence, preparing them to express ideas and emotions effectively as they transition into Reception.