

# **What does Art look like in Early Years?**

Guidance for subject leaders

It is important that subject leaders understand what their specialist subject looks like in early years; how key knowledge and skills are taught and what progression through these may look like. There is no requirement for schools to adopt a particular teaching style or method and the school curriculum as a whole needs to be considered, so it meets the needs of your children, families and community. The Early Learning Goals should not be seen as your curriculum as this very narrow, merely a checkpoint for the end of the reception year. The EYFS has seven areas of learning, rather than the individual subjects used within the National Curriculum but this document will highlight the main links between the two. Communication and Language development is key and is a 'golden thread' which runs through and underpins all other areas of learning, as does Personal, Social and Emotional Development. The statutory framework is supported by two non-statutory documents which schools can choose to use ('Development Matters' and 'Birth to 5 Matters'). The table below shows where learning in early years links to the NC programme of study in Art. These statements are basics upon which to build your full curriculum.

Development Matters		Birth to 5 Matters	
Birth to Three - Babies and young toddlers will be learning to:	<p><b>Expressive arts and design</b> Notice patterns with strong contrast and be attracted by patterns resembling the human face.</p> <p>Start to make marks intentionally. Explore paint, using fingers and other parts of their bodies as well as brushes and other tools. Express ideas and feelings through making marks, and sometimes give a meaning to the marks they make.</p>	Range 1	<p><b>Expressive arts and design</b></p> <p>Babies explore media and materials as part of their exploration of the world around them (See Characteristics of Effective Learning).</p>
	<p><b>Physical development</b> Develop manipulation and control. Explore different materials and tools.</p> <p><b>Literacy</b> Enjoy drawing freely. Add some marks to their drawings, which they give meaning to. For example: "That says mummy."</p> <p><b>Mathematics</b> Notice patterns and arrange things in patterns. Talk about and identifies the patterns around them. For example: stripes on clothes, designs on rugs and wallpaper. Use informal language like 'pointy', 'spotty', 'blobs' etc.</p>	Range 2	<p><b>Expressive arts and design</b></p> <p>Babies explore media and materials as part of their exploration of the world around them (See Characteristics of Effective Learning).</p> <p><b>Physical Development</b></p> <p>Enjoys the sensory experience of making marks in food, damp sand, water, mud, paste or paint.</p>

Development Matters		Birth to 5 Matters	
	<p>Extend and create ABAB patterns - stick, leaf, stick, leaf.</p> <p><b>Understanding the world</b></p> <p>Explore materials with different properties. Explore natural materials, indoors and outside.</p>		
3 and 4 year olds will be learning to:	<p><b>Expressive arts and design</b></p> <p>Explore different materials freely, in order to develop their ideas about how to use them and what to make.</p> <p>Develop their own ideas and then decide which materials to use to express them. Join different materials and explore different textures.</p> <p>Create closed shapes with continuous lines, and begin to use these shapes to represent objects.</p> <p>Draw with increasing complexity and detail, such as representing a face with a circle and including details.</p> <p>Use drawing to represent ideas like movement or loud noises. Show different emotions in their drawings and paintings, like happiness, sadness, fear etc.</p> <p>Explore colour and colour-mixing.</p>	Range 3	<p><b>Expressive arts and design</b></p> <p>Explores and experiments with a range of media (tools and materials including sound) and whole body movement, through multi-sensorial exploration.</p> <p>Notices and becomes interested in the transformative effect of their action on materials and resources.</p> <p><b>Physical Development</b></p> <p>When holding crayons, chalks etc., makes connections between their movement and the marks they make.</p> <p><b>Writing</b></p> <p>Begins to understand the cause and effect of their actions in mark making.</p> <p>Knows that the marks they make are of value.</p> <p>Enjoys the sensory experience of making marks.</p>

Development Matters		Birth to 5 Matters	
	<p><b>Physical Development</b></p> <p>Use large-muscle movements to wave flags and streamers, paint and make marks. Use one-handed tools and equipment, for example, making snips in paper with scissors. Use a comfortable grip with good control when holding pens and pencils. Show a preference for a dominant hand.</p> <p><b>Mathematics</b></p> <p>Notice and correct an error in a repeating pattern.</p> <p><b>Understanding the world</b></p> <p>Use all their senses in hands-on exploration of natural materials.</p> <p>Talk about what they see, using a wide vocabulary.</p> <p><b>Personal, Social and Emotional Development</b></p> <p>Select and use activities and resources, with help when needed. This helps them to achieve a goal they have chosen, or one which is suggested to them.</p>	Range 4	<p><b>Expressive arts and design</b></p> <p>Experiments with ways to enclose a space, create shapes and represent actions, sounds and objects. Enjoys and responds to playing with colour in a variety of ways, for example combining colours. Uses 3D and 2D structures to explore materials and/or to express ideas.</p> <p><b>Physical Development</b></p> <p>Shows increasing control in holding, using and manipulating a range of tools and objects such as tambourines, jugs, hammers, and mark making tools.</p> <p>Holds a writing tool with thumb and all fingers and may begin to use a three fingered (tripod) grip.</p> <p><b>Writing</b></p> <p>Distinguishes between the different marks they make. Enjoys drawing and writing on paper, on screen and on different textures, such as in sand or playdough and through using touch-screen technology.</p> <p><b>Personal, Social and Emotional Development</b></p> <p>Shows a sense of autonomy through asserting their ideas and preferences and making choices and decisions.</p>

Development Matters		Birth to 5 Matters	
Children in reception will be learning to:	<p><b>Expressive arts and design</b></p> <p>Explore, use and refine a variety of artistic effects to express their ideas and feelings. Return to and build on their previous learning, refining ideas and developing their ability to represent them.</p> <p>Create collaboratively sharing ideas, resources and skills.</p> <p><b>Physical Development</b></p> <p>Develop their small motor skills so that they can use a range of tools competently, safely and confidently. Suggested tools: pencils for drawing and writing, paintbrushes, scissors, knives, forks and spoons.</p> <p><b>Mathematics</b></p> <p>Continue, copy and create repeating patterns.</p>	Range 5	<p><b>Expressive arts and design</b></p> <p>Continues to explore colour and how colours can be changed. Develops an understanding of using lines to enclose a space, and begins to use drawing to represent actions and objects based on imagination, observation and experience.</p> <p>Uses tools for a purpose.</p> <p><b>Physical Development</b></p> <p>Manipulates a range of tools and equipment in one hand, tools include paintbrushes, scissors, hairbrushes, toothbrush, scarves or ribbons.</p> <p><b>Writing</b></p> <p>Sometimes gives meaning to their drawings and paintings.</p> <p><b>Mathematics</b></p> <p>Creates their own spatial patterns showing some organisation or regularity.</p> <p>Adds to simple linear patterns of two or three repeating items (AB or ABC).</p>

Development Matters		Birth to 5 Matters	
		Range 6	<p><b>Expressive arts and design</b></p> <p>Uses their increasing knowledge and understanding of tools and materials to explore their interests and enquiries and develop their thinking.</p> <p>Develops their own ideas through experimentation with diverse materials, e.g. light, projected image, loose parts, watercolours, powder paint, to express and communicate their discoveries and understanding.</p> <p>Expresses and communicates working theories, feelings and understandings using a range of art forms, e.g. movement, dance, drama, music and the visual arts. Creates representations of both imaginary and real-life ideas, events, people and objects.</p> <p>Chooses particular movements, instruments/ sounds, colours and materials for their own imaginative purposes. Uses combinations of art forms, e.g. moving and singing, making and dramatic play, drawing and talking, constructing and mapping.</p> <p>Responds imaginatively to art works and objects, e.g. "this music sounds like dinosaurs", "that sculpture is squishy like this [child physically demonstrates]", "that peg looks like a mouth".</p> <p><b>Physical Development</b></p> <p>Uses simple tools to effect changes to materials. Handles tools, objects, construction and malleable materials safely and with increasing control and intention. Shows a preference for a dominant hand.</p>

Development Matters		Birth to 5 Matters	
			<p><b>Writing</b></p> <p>Gives meaning to the marks they make as they draw, write, paint and type using a keyboard or touch-screen technology.</p> <p><b>Mathematics</b></p> <p>Uses familiar objects to create and recreate repeating patterns beyond AB to ABC and perhaps ABB and ABBC. Makes border patterns where the repeating pattern continues around an object or frame.</p> <p><b>Personal, Social and Emotional Development</b></p> <p>Shows confidence in choosing resources and perseverance in carrying out a chosen activity.</p>
<p><b>Early Learning Goal – Creating with Materials</b></p> <p>Children at the expected level of development will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safely use and explore a variety of materials, tools and techniques, experimenting with colour, design, texture, form and function;</li> <li>• Share their creations, explaining the process they have used.</li> </ul> <p><b>Early Learning Goal - Fine Motor Skills</b></p> <p>Children at the expected level of development will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a range of small tools, including scissors, paint brushes and cutlery;</li> <li>• Begin to show accuracy and care when drawing.</li> </ul>			

## Characteristics of Effective Learning

In planning and guiding what children learn, practitioners must reflect on the different rates at which children are developing and adjust their practice appropriately. Three characteristics of effective teaching and learning are:

- Playing and exploring - children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'.
- Active learning - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements.
- Creating and thinking critically - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

Characteristics children may display which will support future learning in Art		
Playing and Exploring	Active Learning	Creating and thinking critically
<p><b>Development Matters</b>            Reach for and accept objects.            Make choices and explore different resources and materials.            Plan and think ahead about how they will explore or play with objects.            Do things independently that they have been previously taught.            Respond to new experiences that you bring to their attention.</p> <p><b>Birth to 5 Matters</b>            Engaging in open-ended activity.            Showing particular interests.            Initiating activities.            Seeking challenge.            Showing a 'can do' attitude.            Taking a risk, engaging in new experiences, and learning by trial and error.</p>	<p><b>Development Matters</b>            Use a range of strategies to reach a goal they have set themselves.            Keep on trying when things are difficult.</p> <p><b>Birth to 5 Matters</b>            Maintaining focus on their activity for a period of time.            Showing high levels of involvement, energy, fascination.            Paying attention to details. Persisting with an activity or toward their goal when challenges occur.            Showing a belief that more effort or a different approach will pay off, and that their skills can grow and develop (growth mindset).            Bouncing back after difficulties.            Showing satisfaction in meeting their own goals (I can!).            Being proud of how they accomplished something – not just the end result.            Enjoying meeting challenges for their own sake rather than external rewards or praise (intrinsic motivation).</p>	<p><b>Development Matters</b>            Review their progress as they try to achieve a goal.            Check how well they are doing.            Know more, so feel confident about coming up with their own ideas.            Make more links between those ideas.            Concentrate on achieving something that's important to them. They are increasingly able to control their attention and ignore distractions.</p> <p><b>Birth to 5 Matters</b>            Thinking of ideas that are new and meaningful to the child.            Playing with possibilities (what if? what else?).            Visualising and imagining options.            Finding new ways to do things.            Testing their ideas.            Planning, making decisions about how to approach a task, solve a problem and reach a goal.            Checking how well their activities are going.            Reviewing how well the approach worked.</p>

## What does Art look like in Early Years?

'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' Development Matters

'...Expressive Arts and Design fosters imagination, curiosity, creativity, cognition, critical thinking and experimentation; provides opportunities to improvise, collaborate, interact and engage in sustained shared thinking; and requires time, space and opportunities to re-visit and reflect on experiences...' Birth to Five Matters

What Art might look like in Early Years, including in Indoor and Outdoor Provision	
What you might see children doing	What you should see practitioners doing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Working collaboratively and independently both inside and outdoors.</li><li>• Being actively involved in creative projects linked to their interests.</li><li>• Exploring/developing skills which have previously been taught by an adult.</li><li>• Talking about what themselves and others have created.</li><li>• Working on a small and large scale (especially outdoors).</li><li>• Exploring a wide range of age appropriate resources which they can select themselves.</li><li>• Responding creatively to what they see, hear, feel and experience.</li><li>• Having opportunities to work alongside adults to learn new skills and consolidate learning.</li><li>• Having time to return to unfinished projects.</li><li>• Developing independence in preparing and clearing away resources.</li><li>• Using both specific art resources and found objects/natural materials to create art.</li><li>• Creating both permanent and temporary creations.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Considering prior learning when planning opportunities.</li><li>• Thinking about a logical sequence of skills development (not expecting children to use a skill they haven't been taught).</li><li>• Considering children's interests.</li><li>• Supporting children to solve problems and think critically.</li><li>• Modelling different ways of being expressive through art, but not expecting children to 'copy' what they have produced.</li><li>• Providing opportunities for children to be inspired by and to respond to the work of others, including artists.</li><li>• Instigating opportunities to consolidate and develop skills.</li><li>• Valuing the process rather than just the product and not focusing on a pre-determined outcome.</li><li>• Supporting children to develop their fine and gross motor skills to improve creative outcomes.</li><li>• Challenging children who show well-developed skills and interest.</li><li>• Providing a wide range of high quality, well organised resources linked to children's levels of development and prior learning.</li><li>• Providing space and time for children to experiment and create with self-chosen resources.</li></ul>

What you might see children doing	What you should see practitioners doing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating artworks linked to/inspired by other areas of learning or combining them.</li> <li>• Requesting (or accepting) additional resources from an adult in order to develop their ideas.</li> <li>• Having opportunity to display their creations for others to see.</li> <li>• Making choices about which materials and techniques to use to achieve their end goal.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Valuing all children's creations and giving specific feedback.</li> <li>• Modelling observational skills and the language to describe what they see.</li> <li>• Creating alongside children, following their lead and engaging in age appropriate conversations about the creative process.</li> <li>• Enhancing provision and providing provocation to stimulate interest in creative opportunities.</li> <li>• Teaching children how to prepare, transport and clear away resources.</li> </ul>







## The Curriculum – What we want children to learn

(Taken from Development Matters)

The curriculum is a top-level plan of everything the early years setting wants the children to learn.

- Planning to help every child to develop their language is vital.
- The curriculum needs to be ambitious. Careful sequencing will help children to build their learning over time.
- Young children's learning is often driven by their interests. Plans need to be flexible.
- Babies and young children do not develop in a fixed way. Their development is like a spider's web with many strands, not a straight line.
- Depth in early learning is much more important than covering lots of things in a superficial way.

## Progression

		Mark-making utensils	Resources	Medium	Marks	Communication	Collaboration
2-year room		Large utensils (e.g. paintbrushes, pencils and chalks which can be held in a palmer grip. Exploration using hands.	Materials provided which are ready to use e.g. ready mixed paint. Adults provide limited range of resources.	One medium used at a time e.g. paint. Limited changes made to raw material e.g. clay manipulated but not modelled.	Circular or linear marks. Simple representations of self.	Gesture or simple verbal reply given in response to a simple question or comment about creations.	Focused on own task with lots of adult input.
Nursery/ Pre-school							
Reception Class		Wide range of utensils for mark-making including thin paintbrushes used in a tripod grip. Greater control over utensils.	Greater independence in selecting and preparing resources e.g. mixing powder paint.	Different medium combined and materials joined and shaped using a variety of techniques.	Representations of self, others, events and places with increasing detail added.	Own and others' creations discussed and evaluated using linked vocabulary.	Collaboration with peers on shared projects in addition to individual creations. Limited adult input needed.

## Assessment in Early Years

As in the previous version of the EYFS the ELGS are not to be used or envisaged as a curriculum. The EYFS clearly states 'The ELGS are there to support teachers to make a holistic, best-fit judgement about a child's development and their readiness for Year One'. Observation checkpoints are included in Development Matters to support practitioners when considering whether children are on track or if additional support is needed.

'Assessment should not entail prolonged breaks from interaction with children, nor require excessive paperwork. When assessing whether an individual child is at the expected level of development, practitioners should draw on their knowledge of the child and their own expert professional judgement and should not be required to prove this through collection of physical evidence- Statutory Framework for EYFS 2.2' (See document for more information about assessment, including the three statutory assessments in EY).

## Useful links:

Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage

**Early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))**

Development Matters

**Development Matters - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))**

Birth to Five Matters

**<https://www.birthto5matters.org.uk/#:~:text=%20Birth%20to%205%20Matters%3A%20non-statutory%20guidance%20for%20the%20years%20coalition%20composed%20of%20the%20following...%20more%20>**

**Please note:** This document is not to be used as a tick list for assessment or planning purposes. Its aim is to support with understanding the revised Statutory Framework and accompanying non-statutory guidance documents. These documents may also be useful for mixed age teachers, new to EY teachers, senior leaders and governors – Cumberland Council Early Years Team.