



NEWTON BLUECOAT CE PRIMARY SCHOOL



Art & Design and Expressive Arts Progression of Key Learning

Nursery to Year 6 • 2026–27

EXPLORE • EXPERIMENT • CREATE • REFLECT

“Shine from the inside out”

Purpose

This document makes the progression from EYFS Expressive Arts and Design into the school's Art & Design curriculum explicit. It identifies the key learning that should become increasingly secure as children move from exploratory, sensory and imaginative experiences towards deliberate artistic choices, technical control, independent refinement and informed evaluation.

Progression at a glance

EYFS foundation. Children explore materials, colour, texture, shape, pattern, construction, drawing, painting, modelling, imaginative play and response to music. Adults model safe and effective use of tools while enabling children to make choices and develop their own ideas.

Key Stage 1 foundations. Pupils begin to use sketchbooks, learn core artistic vocabulary, develop control of tools and materials, notice similarities and differences, explain preferences and understand that artists work in different ways.

Lower Key Stage 2 development. Pupils experiment more deliberately, combine techniques, develop ideas in sketchbooks and make increasingly controlled choices about colour, tone, texture and composition.

Upper Key Stage 2 depth. Pupils select techniques more independently, manipulate materials for intended effects, use more complex visual language, critically review and refine work, and make informed connections to artists, craftspeople and designers.

The creative process

OBSERVE	EXPLORE	DEVELOP	CREATE	REFLECT
Look closely; gather ideas and inspiration	Experiment with media, techniques and possibilities	Practise, record, adapt and refine	Make purposeful artistic choices	Evaluate, discuss and identify next steps

Exploring, developing ideas & sketchbooks

Stage	Key learning
Nursery	Explore the art area freely; choose accessible resources; begin to develop own ideas through self-portraits, collage, printing, small-world and junk modelling. Talk about what has been made.
Reception	Select materials for a purpose and develop ideas through self-portraiture, nature art, printing, clay, wax resist, charcoal, lifecycle art and observational work. Make choices from a growing range of media.
Year 1	Begin to use a sketchbook to collect ideas, explore starting points and record simple observations. Try alternatives and say what is liked about own work.
Year 2	Use sketchbooks routinely to collect information, practise techniques and annotate simple ideas. Make changes after discussion or feedback.
Year 3	Use sketchbooks to gather visual information, practise techniques, combine ideas and respond to feedback. Begin to explain how an idea has developed.
Year 4	Review and revisit ideas in sketchbooks; experiment with materials and techniques; make predictions and refine work with increasing independence.
Year 5	Investigate starting points independently; compare possible media and techniques; record design decisions and refine ideas in response to purpose and feedback.
Year 6	Use sketchbooks as a personal creative workspace for research, experimentation, critical thinking, design decisions and purposeful refinement. Justify choices and evaluate outcomes.

Drawing

Stage	Key learning
Nursery	Make marks indoors and outdoors using crayons, paint, chalk and other tools; create self-portraits; make observational drawings of spring flowers; use drawing to record growth and feelings.
Reception	Develop control with biro, chalk, charcoal, oil pastel and pencil; make self-portraits and observational sunflower drawings; use a viewfinder to notice smaller details.
Year 1	Explore line, shape, pattern and detail using a range of drawing materials. Draw from observation and imagination and begin to control marks for a purpose.
Year 2	Vary line, shape and pattern; explore texture and simple tone. Add detail with increasing control and compare effects made by different drawing tools.
Year 3	Use tone, shadow and texture more deliberately. Consider foreground, middle ground and background and use drawing to record and develop ideas.
Year 4	Develop tonal control and texture; use line and mark-making to communicate mood or form. Refine observational drawing and experiment with scale and composition.
Year 5	Use perspective and reflection with increasing accuracy; explore hatching and cross-hatching and select drawing techniques to create intended effects.
Year 6	Control perspective, movement, proportion, tone, light and shadow. Combine hatching, cross-hatching and varied marks purposefully and refine drawings through critical review.

Painting & colour

Stage	Key learning
Nursery	Use a self-service paint station; begin with larger then thinner brushes; mix colours including autumn shades; explore watercolour, ice painting and different paint effects.
Reception	Mix colours; select colours for a purpose; use red, yellow and blue to explore concentric circles; use watercolours and small brushes with increasing control.
Year 1	Know primary colours and mix secondary colours. Explore brush control and use colour to represent ideas, observations and feelings.
Year 2	Mix secondary colours reliably; create tints and shades; choose brushes for different effects and begin to use colour purposefully.
Year 3	Use colour mixing with greater accuracy; explore tone, mood and texture in paint. Layer and combine paint techniques to achieve an intended effect.
Year 4	Develop purposeful palettes; use tints, shades and contrasting colours; control paint for texture, form and atmosphere and explain choices.

Stage	Key learning
Year 5	Blend and layer colour; select a palette to communicate mood or meaning; make increasingly sophisticated choices about paint consistency, brushwork and surface.
Year 6	Manipulate colour, tone, texture and palette independently for intended effects. Combine painting with other media where appropriate and refine work in response to evaluation.

Sculpture, construction & 3D form

Stage	Key learning
Nursery	Manipulate playdough and malleable materials; build bridges and winter homes; explore junk modelling and join cardboard, plastic and scrap materials with tape and glue.
Reception	Shape clay and decorate with loose parts; build villages, towns and cities with construction materials; create 3D story maps and junk-model lifecycle forms.
Year 1	Manipulate, roll, shape and join simple natural, recycled and manufactured materials. Explore 3D form and create simple models.
Year 2	Plan and construct more securely; join materials in different ways and add surface detail or texture to communicate an idea.
Year 3	Build more complex forms; consider structure, stability and surface texture. Select joining and shaping methods with greater control.
Year 4	Plan, shape, carve or construct forms with increasing precision. Consider form, space, texture and viewpoint when developing a 3D outcome.
Year 5	Design and construct purposeful 3D forms; select materials for structural and visual qualities and adapt construction when problems arise.
Year 6	Plan and realise complex 3D forms with control, combining shaping, carving, joining, texturing and construction techniques. Evaluate structure and visual impact.

Collage, textiles & mixed media

Stage	Key learning
Nursery	Tear, cut, stick and arrange materials; create spring and flower collages; decorate using different media; explore simple weaving and collaborative art.
Reception	Choose and combine media for Little Red artwork, nature self-portraits and lifecycle pieces; explore layering, loose parts, sand art and mixed materials.

Stage	Key learning
Year 1	Cut, tear, sort and arrange papers and materials. Explore simple collage, fabric and weaving and notice differences in texture.
Year 2	Overlap and layer materials; explore simple mosaic and repeated arrangements. Develop basic weaving, dyeing or fabric decoration.
Year 3	Use collage more deliberately, including mosaic or montage approaches. Begin simple stitching/thread work and combine materials for texture and effect.
Year 4	Plan compositions using overlapping, tessellation, mosaic or montage. Join, layer and stitch textiles with increasing control and combine media purposefully.
Year 5	Use mixed media and textiles to achieve a planned effect; select, layer, join and stitch materials with greater precision and consider composition.
Year 6	Integrate collage, textiles and mixed media independently. Control layering, composition, texture and joining methods and refine choices to communicate meaning.

Printing & pattern

Stage	Key learning
Nursery	Explore leaf rubbing, repeated pattern printing, snowflake printing and fruit printing; press and stamp with familiar objects and materials.
Reception	Create circle prints using bottle tops, stampers and bubble wrap; explore repeated marks and large-scale collaborative pattern.
Year 1	Explore rolling, pressing, stamping and rubbing. Make simple repeated patterns and talk about shapes, colours and textures created.
Year 2	Develop repeated patterns and simple print blocks; control placement and explore more than one colour.
Year 3	Use handmade blocks and repeated motifs; explore block or relief printing and consider positive/negative shapes.
Year 4	Layer colour and pattern with greater control; develop block/relief printing and plan repeats or motifs.
Year 5	Explore mono printing, collograph or layered print processes; combine colour and texture and select a process for an intended outcome.
Year 6	Use mono, block, relief or collograph techniques confidently; register/layer prints where appropriate and refine pattern, composition and colour.

Artists, craft makers, designers & visual culture

Stage	Key learning
Nursery	Encounter art through making, stories, seasonal/cultural experiences and classroom displays; begin to notice colours, patterns and different ways people make things.
Reception	Study and respond to Andy Goldsworthy, Yayoi Kusama, Kandinsky and Vincent van Gogh; notice features of their work and use these as a stimulus for own choices.
Year 1	Know and respond to Monet and Van Gogh. Describe what is noticed and express a simple opinion about works of art.
Year 2	Encounter Picasso, Paul Klee and Maasai art/culture. Compare artworks and identify some similarities/differences in colour, line, pattern or technique.
Year 3	Encounter Cezanne, Laura Carlin, Robert Hooke and Roman art. Discuss how artists/illustrators use materials and visual elements for different purposes.
Year 4	Encounter Mexican art/culture, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Matisse, Cezanne, Monet, glass craftspeople and Aboriginal art. Compare techniques and explain effects.
Year 5	Encounter historical craftspeople, graphic design/book illustration, NASA photography, Monica Aiello, traditional craftspeople and Ancient Greek art. Make informed links between creative influences and own choices.
Year 6	Encounter Picasso, Viking art/culture, modern collage artists, scientific illustration and photography. Analyse choices, compare approaches across contexts and use artists' work as informed inspiration rather than copying.

Thinking, talking, evaluating & vocabulary

Stage	Key learning
Nursery	Talk about colours, marks, shapes and textures; say what was made and begin to express likes/dislikes. Learn through exploration and adult modelling.
Reception	Describe materials and effects; explain simple choices; notice details and talk about artists and own work. Begin to revisit and improve an idea.
Year 1	Use vocabulary such as work of art, observe, idea, portrait, line, detail, pattern, texture, primary, secondary, sculpture, collage and printmaking. Say what worked and what could improve.
Year 2	Use KS1 vocabulary with growing confidence; compare own work and others' work, explain preferences and make simple improvements.
Year 3	Use vocabulary including sketchbook, refine, tone, shadow, foreground, middle ground, background, form, mosaic, montage, stitch, block printing and relief. Explain effects and next steps.
Year 4	Use lower-KS2 vocabulary precisely; discuss composition, emotion, pattern and texture; evaluate choices and refine work with increasing independence.

Stage	Key learning
Year 5	Use vocabulary including perspective, reflection, hatching, cross-hatching, blend, palette, structure, mixed media, layering and composition. Justify artistic decisions.
Year 6	Use precise artistic vocabulary including refine and evaluate. Critically review process and outcome, explain intended meaning/effect and identify purposeful next steps.

End-of-phase expectations

By the end of Nursery: Children confidently access familiar creative resources, make marks and representations, explore colour and texture, manipulate and join materials, take part in printing/collage/construction and use imaginative play to develop ideas.

By the end of Reception: Children select from a wider range of materials and techniques, use drawing and painting with increasing control, create in 2D and 3D, respond to named artists, explain simple choices and revisit work to improve or extend an idea.

By the end of Key Stage 1: Pupils use sketchbooks to record ideas, control a growing range of tools and techniques, understand core visual vocabulary, create across drawing, painting, sculpture, collage, textiles and printing, and discuss artists and their own choices.

By the end of Lower Key Stage 2: Pupils experiment deliberately, combine techniques, use sketchbooks to develop and refine ideas, control colour/tone/texture/composition with increasing confidence, compare creative approaches and evaluate effects.

By the end of Key Stage 2: Pupils independently research, experiment, select, combine and refine techniques; use sophisticated visual language including perspective, movement, complex colour and mixed media; make informed connections to artists, craftspeople and designers; and critically evaluate their creative process.

Thinking like an artist

- What do I notice? What draws my attention and why?
- What happens if I change the material, tool, scale, colour, line or texture?
- What am I trying to communicate or make the viewer feel?
- Which techniques or artists might help me develop this idea?
- What is working well? What could I alter, practise or refine?
- Can I explain and justify my artistic choices using appropriate vocabulary?