

LIFE TO FEEL

GUIDELINES AND CHARACTERISTICS

AN OVERVIEW OF ART AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT FROM BIRTH TO 11 YEARS

Learning about art, craft and design are important childhood experiences. They contribute to perceptual, creative, cognitive and emotional development. Through art activities children learn about themselves, others and the world around them. They develop the skills they need to share their experiences with others through making images and objects which are emotionally, aesthetically and intellectually satisfying.

Art communicates through the visual 'language' of line, shape, form, structure, colour, pattern, texture, proportion, scale and space. Art emphasises self-expression but equally calls for an appreciation and understanding of the work of others including those from different times and different cultures.

Because children begin to develop as soon as they are born, the Overview begins with these earliest years. The Overview is presented in five age-related sections:

- **Birth to 3 years**
- **3 to 5 years**
- **5 to 7 years**
- **7 to 9 years**
- **9 to 11 years**

Today there is an understanding that art by children has its own value. It is also recognised that work by a five-year old is radically different to work by a nine-year old. There is a sequence of development that can be identified, particularly in children's drawings. It is helpful to have a picture of the progression from one stage to the next and to value the special character of each age group. There will be an overlap between the age groups depending on the experiences, environment and abilities of the individual child.

THE VALUE OF PLAY AND 'PLAY-LIKE' ACTIVITIES

Art activities have an affinity with play. Both involve the imagination, both are active, both involve learning about oneself and the surrounding world.

Children's readiness to be involved in play-like activities offers teachers many ways into new experiences, particularly in the expressive arts of music, drama, creative writing and visual art. It can also lead into an enquiring, experimental, problem solving approach in other subject areas such as science, design and technology, mathematics. For the youngest children it is the key to learning. Jean Piaget, the Swiss pioneer of child development work, said that 'play teaches children to master the world'.

Play is very diverse but it is possible to identify some types of play that are particularly valuable in relation to learning:

- **Sensory play.** Learning through the senses and developing sensory awareness
- **Exploratory play.** Using the senses to find out about the world
- **Manipulative play.** Experimenting with tools, media and materials. Gaining a degree of 'mastery' in certain making techniques
- **Designerly play.** Making objects or 'props' to use in other types of play
- **Emotional play.** Using play as a kind of theatre for acting out emotions, experiences and situations
- **Identification play.** Playing roles and becoming a character
- **Social play.** Before the age of three children tend to play alongside each other rather than together. Later playing together can lead to the exploration of social worlds that are partly separate from adult society. Children develop their own rules, codes of conduct and understanding of fairness and sharing

OVERVIEW

BIRTH

TO 3 YEARS

As soon as they are born, children begin to engage with the world around them. They are actively trying to make sense of it through vision, taste, touch, smell and hearing. Experiences in these early years help to decide the quality of later intellectual, emotional, social and aesthetic development.

Each baby born carries with it a unique genetic inheritance. How this inheritance plays out depends on the opportunities (or obstacles) presented by parents, friends, school, society, the environment and mass media. The exact weight carried by inheritance as opposed to environment (nature vs nurture) is a matter for debate. What is clear is that the relationship between the two is dynamic, with the child's experiences serving as a catalyst for their genetic inheritance.

Children begin to enjoy making marks at a very early stage. At around a year old infants can hold a crayon and create 'drawings'. This scribbling is a valuable element in the intense effort they are making to learn about themselves and their surroundings. Children's early learning is essentially sensual, sucking, holding, tasting and looking intently. Soon children learn to control their movements, to grasp and manipulate, to control their eye movements and to get their own way!

Being able to crawl and even more so to walk, are extraordinary steps forward. Toddlers can get about, they can go and handle something that takes their eye in the distance. They are beginning to co-ordinate the inputs from their different senses and to develop preferences and opinions. They want their own way but need the security and approval of adults.

Playing with physical materials, making marks and making things aid this growing confidence. It is at this stage that 'child art' begins to emerge. Two- and three-year olds old draw in characteristic ways that continue to develop until they are between five and seven. Their drawing conventions, known as 'schema' provide them with a versatile way of expressing ideas and feelings.

These first steps in visual expression and communication go alongside - and interact with - three important cognitive developments:

- The 'object concept' is formed. The child ceases to believe that when an object cannot be seen or touched it no longer exists. This is an important understanding for art and science
- The child grasps what is known as the 'theory of mind'. This is the recognition that other people have their own thoughts, emotions and intentions
- There is a realisation that marks and sounds can have meanings. This is vital for understanding art but it is also the entry point for writing and number and the extraordinarily rich human use of signs and symbols

Taken together, these form a watershed in development. Subsequently they will provide the basis for human relations, the arts, science and design. They are the starting points for the child's awareness of past, present and future.

OVERVIEW

3 TO 5 YEARS

3 YEARS

Between 3 and 5 years old, the world revolves around the child. They are interested in themselves and familiar situations, such as home, friends, pets, stories and media. Co-operating with other children is a challenge but gradually they will develop more social skills and be willing to work and compromise with others.

As well as structured learning, play of all types; dressing up, practical activities, using a variety of materials, handling natural and made things, looking at pictures and listening to stories and music are some of the bases of early learning. They are part of a general educational process which contributes to many different kinds of knowledge and awareness. Visual and verbal communications begin to develop alongside each other. The manipulative skills involved in mark-making and drawing are the same as those needed to form letters and numbers.

Young children like being active and will spontaneously become involved in making activities. They use art as a means of exploration and communication, focusing on whatever interests them at that moment. They are 'doers', making for the sake of making and using materials for manipulative pleasure and experience. Concentration spans vary with the individual, the activity, external factors such as the weather or time of day.

The main aims of art are to encourage individuality, imagination, creativity, confidence and enjoyment through the use of a wide range of tools, materials and media. It will also introduce the basic skills, techniques and visual language which underpin the activities involved in drawing, painting, print-making and making with materials.

OVERVIEW

5 TO 7 YEARS

As with 3 to 5 year olds, the child is deeply embedded in home life and the familiar world of friends, family, the neighbourhood and school. This intimate world can be richly supportive but equally it can be restrictive. This is a time when they will respond positively to wider social and cultural experiences.

At this stage children's thought processes are intuitive and depend on direct observation and experience. For example, it is hard for them to imagine the consequences of an action unless they have actually experienced them. The connection between cause and effect is not always easy to grasp. An understanding of past, present and future is far from clear; historical time seems little different from 'a week ago' and the future is a fantastic story that might come true tomorrow.

Children are now more able to work together and have a keener appreciation of the ideas and needs of others. There is a strong feeling of empathy with humans and other living creatures.

Learning still depends on direct experience. Handling natural and made things, observing them closely and asking questions about them contributes to learning in both art and science. They can begin to name, identify and make deliberate use of the visual language of line, shape, texture, pattern and colour. They delight in the sheer excitement of making bold marks on paper, handling materials or creating large and dramatic areas of colour. At the same time taking satisfaction in mastering the effective use of tools and materials. They want to know how to do it. Knowledge, understanding, ability and skills are interactive. They grow through activities such as drawing and modelling.

Confidence and mastery of skills grow through repeated practice. Skills gradually become more developed, controlled and available for use in different situations and it will be the role of the teacher to teach and encourage their development.

Imagination is abundant! Fantasy stories, imaginary places, invented animals, super heroes, talking toys all find a place in their art. This ability to give expression to imaginary worlds needs to be valued.

This is a time of rapid development and, as a result, there will be widely different levels of ability in the same class. They are just beginning to make comparisons between their work and the work of others, including artists. However, they usually remain satisfied with the use of typical child-like 'schema' to depict such subjects as people, buildings, plants, animals, the sun and moon. The schema develop into a rich resource for picture-making and modelling. Art can support language development by encouraging work in the form of a picture story where the tale unfolds in a series of panels combining words and pictures.

Children will enjoy being introduced to the work of artists, craftspeople and designers. They can begin to understand that people in other places and at other times made pictures, objects, clothes and lived in buildings that were different from their own.

OVERVIEW

7 TO 9 YEARS

After the age of seven children's view of the world and their role in it begins to change. They feel more 'grown up'. They are more outward looking. They want to feel they understand and can take part. They are curious about how things work, people, machines, plants and animals. They can perform a greater variety of mental operations and this is particularly important for science, mathematics, design and technology. One aspect of this, very characteristic of eight and nine year-olds, is a strong desire to analyse and take things apart and (sometimes) put them together again. An understanding of historical time sequences emerges more clearly. Fantasy and play remain powerful areas for imagination and creativity but there is a growing interest in solving real world problems. They can quickly switch from pretend to real and have a good grasp of the difference.

The new attitude is very evident in children's approach to making things. Dressing up costumes have to be convincing. A printed Christmas card has to stand some comparison with what can be bought on the High Street. Taking photographs and using social media involve exposing personal ideas and images to others and their approval is much sought after. The pressure of competition is now keenly felt.

Children who share interests can strike up lasting friendships and doing things together is a very satisfying experience. Peer group pressure leads towards conformity and individuals with unusual talents or interests may well want to keep quiet about them. Gender differences, underscored by mass media and advertising tend to push boys and girls apart while there is a tendency for all the members of a peer group to look and dress alike.

In relation to art, children are becoming more aware of adult standards and are therefore critical of not being able to 'draw properly'. They will see realism as 'good art' and will ask for the skills and knowledge needed to achieve this. Fortunately, the demand for skills coincides with a natural growth in manual dexterity. Whereas six-year olds are limited as much by hand-size and muscle co-ordination as intelligence, nine-year olds are able to handle a pencil or brush skilfully and make materials such as clay take a shape they have previously imagined. They can work towards a desired goal with confidence.

Children will now benefit from being taught specific art techniques. For example simple perspective, how to analyse the proportions of a head, how to use a sketchbook as a means of study. They will also welcome being introduced to new tools, media and materials, particularly in print-making and making with materials. Using photography and reprographic techniques will open up the possibility of making convincing posters, books or web pages.

They understand making art is the result of a sequence of related ideas and activities. For example, sketching outdoors and experimenting with colours before beginning a painting on the theme of autumn. Children are now willing to go through a number of stages to reach their goal and plan their work efficiently. They begin to be able to make their own choice of tools, media and materials, relating the choice to what they want to achieve. As a result, groups find it easier to work together which means that more ambitious projects can be undertaken.

Children's appreciation of art broadens in these years. They begin to be very aware of their own tastes and may be interested in making personal collections of those things which attract them. At the same time, they can broaden their appreciation of the experiences of other people and will understand the sadness, courage or happiness of others.

This is a good time to introduce the work of contemporary artists and artists from the past, suggesting they can provide a source of inspiration.

OVERVIEW

9 TO 11 YEARS

This is a time when children are moving towards puberty. Being at the senior end of primary school gives a sense of achievement and confidence but the combined pressures of curriculum, consumerism and coming physical change can lead to self-doubt and anxiety. They are more aware than ever before of peer group pressures and find it important to conform and fit in.

Children discover that a gulf is opening up between their awareness of the wider world of social media, advertising, fashion and world events and their limited physical, intellectual and emotional resources. This is a time in art when they are very conscious of their own capabilities and can easily become dissatisfied with their productions. It is important that the teacher intervenes to offer guidance and tuition in art techniques and skills.

At the same time, they have abundant energy and enthusiasm and are able to tackle a wide range of intellectual, practical and physical activities. They are likely to enjoy humour and have a robust sense of the ridiculous. Art, as a form of self-expression, can play a particularly valuable role in giving difficult emotions an acceptable form.

However, art is equally valuable in supporting children's new-found intellectual abilities. Visual forms of representation are used right across the curriculum. Maps, diagrams and technical illustrations are essential means of conveying information. Using photography or drawing in association with digital media is a key way of recording and sharing observations in particularly science and geography. But the contribution of art goes deeper. Many people think and solve problems visually. They 'see in the mind's eye'. Children can be encouraged to be aware of their ability to think visually and to use it widely in their studies.

Many children can now engage with abstract reasoning. They recognise cause and effect at work in the natural world and in human relations. There is a new willingness to look critically at ideas, information and evidence and to engage in moral and ethical arguments. Work on religious or cultural themes can extend into political issues. Some children will become fascinated by art which is satirical or challenging and want to express their perceptions of the world's cruelty or injustice.

By this stage children have developed considerable manual skills and are able to engage in sustained project work. They can take decisions for themselves and plan ahead. They are becoming more aware of the way a project develops over a period of time and can make appropriate use of sketching, modelling, roughs and specific art techniques.

They can use their imagination and realise that it is possible to 'see in the mind's eye' as well as on paper. They can use different art forms in combination and make deliberate, well considered use of the visual language. Children now have well-defined likes and dislikes and are able to discuss their own and other people's art. When working in groups, there will be a tendency for children to take on roles which reflect their abilities and personality.

The arts play a valuable role in helping children to express difficult emotions and issues in an acceptable form, but most of all they can give meaning and pleasure throughout life.



IN LOVING MEMORY OF PROFESSOR KEN BAYNES

Ken and his partner Krysia have worked with the Harley Gallery for many years, developing exhibitions and art activities for children of all ages. Their input has been invaluable and, they have worked tirelessly to help us offer our visitors the highest quality educational experiences, through educational resources for schools and curated exhibitions designed with children in mind. Ken was fun loving and a true inspiration. His belief in the importance of creativity in children's education and development has shaped and determined our Educational Programme.

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Please visit our website www.harleygallery.co.uk to find out more about our education programme and learning resources.

**Dayle Green, Education and Outreach Manager,
Harley Foundation, December 2020**

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THE HARLEY GALLERY

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