



CASE STUDY

Elements: Supporting creativity in Early Years settings across Somerset

Setting: Milverton Community Pre-School, Taunton TA4 1JP

Type: Nursery

Lead EYP name: Carol Morris

Artist name: Lucy Lean

Artform: Visual

Term date: Spring 2017

Average number of children and age: 15 children aged 2-4 years old

Average number of adults and type: 5 Early Years Practitioners

Research question: *How to use an artist to meet the childrens needs to express themselves creatively in a continuous provision model*

Context:

Milverton Pre School is in a rural, village setting, on the school grounds of Milverton CP School. The majority of children live in small local villages and towns, frequently with some from a farming background. The building is a purpose built Elliott Hut with an enclosed outdoor play space. We have an outdoor area at ground level, incorporating undercover area and all weather astro turf/ tiger mulch. It is fenced in with a gate.

We operate during school term time, Monday to Friday 9am till 3pm which is split into two sessions 9- 12.30 and 12.30 to 3pm.

We have 5 permanent members of staff. We are committee run and have a supportive committee. We have 34 children on role, with no more than 20 attending every day, 15 attend on a Friday.

On Fridays we have one child with SEN, one in receipt of EYPP, one funded two year old and 3 further children with speech and language needs.

Activity:

The focus of our six project sessions was an exploration of woollen fibre and some of its associated processes.

An introduction to this sensory material aimed to stimulate the childrens own senses and imagination and as a result encourage them to express their own individual creativity.

Children had the opportunity to conduct their own explorations, playfully discovering some of the properties of wool fibres.

Over the six weeks other materials were introduced alongside the wool in order to extend sensory and imaginative experiences.

Children were also introduced to tools such as carding paddles, stone spindles, pegs and improvised needles.

Several children showed an active interest in spinning. This introduced the concept of yarn. Winding, wrapping and weaving activities developed and processes evolved such as winding giant pom-poms, den weaving and large scale weaving with natural found objects from collections made on a nursery walk.

Activities progressed according to the levels of interest and engagement shown by the children. Some such as mixing their own paint recipes and mark making with fleecy sticks encouraged the participation of younger children and those who had been less engaged in other activities.

In the final session the children explored the process of creating a large piece of felt. This involved spreading layers of springy woollen fibres in a tuff tray, making it wet by spraying with water, then rubbing in soap using their hands and feet. To aid the felting process further we wrapped the felting fibres around a long hollow tube, and all had fun hauling it up and down the playground with the aid of a rope to pull it along.

How did the children and staff respond to the sessions?

The children were enthusiastic, whilst some were reticent at first they soon joined in with adult support. When the children encountered the wool for the first time they described it as "soft, furry, fluffy and scrunchy". There were mixed reactions to some of the more sensory activities, e.g. washing wool, felting wool with our feet but staff were able to encourage these children to participate.

Some of the children responded with imaginative thinking to the process, when he was washing the wool one child said "Im making carrot soup I have to mix it , its got lots of ingredients _its got carrots, onions more carrots more onions and more potatoes"



Another child shared her knowledge of sheep "my daddy shears only white sheep" what happens to the wool we asked? "Put in the sack and goes to the sheep place"

A child with poor core strength was encouraged to stamp on the wet wool with an adult supporting her. It was an interesting experience for her!

One child said "we trod on it and it made bubbles in our feet"



One child who has difficulties listening and paying attention enjoyed exploring the wool, and listening to Lucy's instructions on how to spin the wool.

Another child with SL&C needs loved the weaving and spent time discussing her design with Lucy. She was always keen to engage in the art activities. We have

noticed that her speech has become clearer and she chats more to adults and peers now.



As well developing creatively our children were encouraged to engage in activities which benefited them in other areas, for example pegging the wool onto a washing line helped them develop strong finger muscles - a pre cursor to writing.



As a setting we have begun to push our creative boundaries allowing the children to express themselves, mix different media, build dens, build with crates and planks, and tyres and cones and experience the sensory side of things buy getting their hands into paint and exploring the feeling of paintbrush on skin.



We have joined Scrapstore and are using our new resources. E.g we bought lots of cones (from a fabric loom) and have used them with pipe cleaners to develop the children's fine motor skills. We also purchased resources with which to make Mothers day cards, and fabric bags that the children decorated with fabric crayons. In this way we have used the creative element to extend their learning into other areas of the EYFS such as Physical Development (fine motor skills), Communication and Language (talking about creations and listening to others ideas) Personal social and Emotional Development (working in a group and sharing resources), and developing skills for writing.

Research findings:

With each activity children had the freedom to invent their own games and ideas. This allowed them to focus on any element of the activity that caught their interest, which lead to a deeper sense of involvement. For example during a very busy weaving and threading session one little girl found great satisfaction quietly finding all the small pieces of similar wooden shapes with holes and threaded them onto a stick. Another

day when several children and adults were engaged in winding processes three children worked and chatted together cooperatively in a different space, winding wool around a small table frame.

On a separate occasion one younger boy had difficulty threading his leaf to attach to a large net outside. He searched and found one of the pegs we had used in a previous activity the week before and successfully used that.

During each session children invented their own imaginative games with the materials provided. Some of these included making a sail boat with an anchor, fishing games, cleaning and washing games and making hot chocolate and soup.

Conclusion:**Artist:**

Sharing creative approaches with staff meant broadening ideas of what creativity can mean. That art is not confined to paper and paint or gluing activities. That children are by nature creative beings and by providing them with interesting provocations and collaborating and supporting adults, children can express themselves freely and in a way that meets their own individual needs. All areas of the curriculum can be covered and goals achieved more easily.

Milverton Pre-School:

Parents liked hearing about Art Fridays and we shared the children's creations with them by displaying them on the entrance to the pre school. In our yearly parents' questionnaire one parent commented:
"More Art Fridays!"

We shall continue to visit Scrapstore , restock our resources and incorporate our finds into our creative sessions and across all areas of learning.

We shall continue to encourage children to extend their creative processes by observing areas of interest and providing materials to help them. We will allow them to extend the process and 'bend' the rules if it is safe to do so e.g. engaging in risky building by standing on top of things to attach the roof (once they have considered the risks involved).

We will make more use of our outside area (the secret garden) and plan to create another willow/hazel den in situ. Using resources from scrapstore and following the children's design.



We will continue to use the creative process to encourage children to talk and share their ideas and creations and to listen to other's ideas.