



'Atelier'

"workshop" or "studio,"

Expressive Arts & Design

Used in the context of early years describes a space where children can;

Explore, create, & express themselves through various artistic mediums & materials. It promotes hands-on learning, creativity, & collaboration among young children.

Why the atelier matters to a child's wellbeing

Young children feel far more than they can yet say. Paint, clay, charcoal, movement & music give them a second language — a way to show anger, excitement, worry or joy long before they have the words for any of it. An atelier is not an art club; it is somewhere a child's inner world is taken seriously.

This is why the atelier sits alongside our whole setting ethos; Emotion Coaching, Rest & Reset areas, Yoga & other wellbeing support strategies; that **give a child a safe way to say how they feel & an adult who is genuinely interested in the answer.**

This is the **Expressive Arts & Design** strand of our curriculum, & it is embedded in our practice in the following ways:

- 1. Creative Space Design:** Create a dedicated space in the rooms, filled with diverse materials; as paints, clay, natural objects, & recycled items. This encourages exploration & experimentation.
- 2. Open-Ended Activities:** Activities that allow children to use materials in various ways. For example, **instead of following strict instructions for a craft activity; the children are encouraged to create their own interpretations.** If we are exploring nature; children will be given real flowers or leaves, bark then provided with resources to allow them to make their own creation, an adult may work alongside the children with their own materials — creating beside them, never a model to copy, so that the child's own idea stays their own.
- 3. Collaboration & Communication:** Promote group projects where children work together to create larger pieces of art or installations, fostering teamwork & communication skills. **Rolls of old wallpaper taped to the floor are perfect to encourage social & creative collaborations between the children**
- 4. Floor books, gallery walls & Reflection:** Encourage children to reflect on their artistic processes. By seeing their work framed or an adult taking the time to ask about their creation, we gain valuable insight to the thought & creative process the child has experienced. What might look to be a 'Scribble', could be "a picture of their family", by adding **labels or the child's voice to the creation gives it absolute value as the child articulates their thoughts & feelings about their creations.**
- 5. Integration with our Curriculum, "What we want the children to learn"-** Incorporating artistic activities into other areas of learning, such as storytelling, mathematics, or science, allowing children to express their understanding through art.
- 6. Encouraging Agency:** Give children choices about what materials to use and what projects to pursue, empowering them to take ownership of their learning.

By integrating the atelier approach within the EYFS framework, we foster a rich, engaging, & child-centred learning environment that nurtures creativity & holistic development



How this integrates within our curriculum

The atelier is how Expressive Arts & Design is taught in both our Toddler Curriculum (2–3 Years) & our Pre-School Curriculum (3–5 Years).

It also carries a good deal of Communication & Language — the child's voice recorded beside their work, the talk that happens around a shared piece — & of Personal, Social & Emotional Development, through agency, collaboration & the expression of feeling.

Process over outcome is our rule.

What matters is **not** what is taken home, but what the child thought, tried, changed & said along the way.

Helping Hands • Happy Hearts • Healthy Minds



Mel & the entire Play Days Pre-School

Reviewed September 2026 • Imelda Rylatt

