

Project case study - Conwy (2006-7)

Partners

School: Ysgol Maelgwn, Llandudno Junction (reception / nursery groups)

Gallery: Royal Cambrian Academy, Conwy (exhibiting large, colourful paintings by Ivor Davies)

Artist: Eleri Jones (painter - also education officer at the gallery)

Project aims

- To develop the creative and visual art skills of young children
- To explore how involvement in creative art activities with artists and galleries could improve attitudes to learning
- To develop the creative skills of early years staff and explore how creativity could be integrated within cross-curricular projects
- To enable artists and galleries to develop confidence in working with young children
- To document good practice to disseminate to other settings
- To identify strategies for making effective links between schools, young children, galleries and artists
- To identify practical approaches for collecting evidence of young children's development

Project summary

Inspired by a visit to the exhibition and focusing on colour, texture and scale, activity ideas developed through a creative dialogue between the artist's and children's ideas. Over the course of several sessions in school, creative areas were set up so children could select resources freely and choose when to join in. All activities emphasised children exploring their own ideas, with new materials and techniques gradually introduced each week. The artist recorded the children's responses as well as leading activities. Teachers also made observations and the local authority videoed many of the sessions. As well showing what children had learned, this created valuable training material.





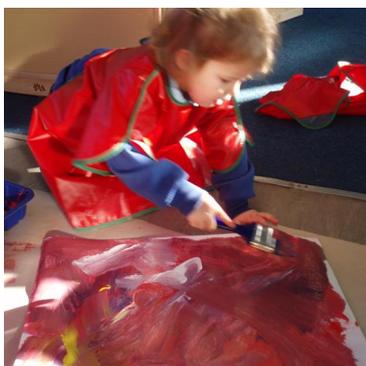
Outcomes

Staff noticed that activities particularly motivated children who sometimes found it hard to concentrate. The gallery visit clearly inspired all children, as memories of the experience continued to inform their own work throughout the project.



'<>described moving sand around 'like the artist did'.

The children had diverse opportunities to develop creative skills; experiencing new methods and materials while confidence in solving problems and making informed choices.



'How can we make it go back to red?'

Looking at paintings and making their own work had inspired children's descriptive language.



'It's like its raining mud all over him.'



'These are long, thin, bendy lines.'

Staff became very enthusiastic about the value of galleries in the foundation phase and the project gave them confidence in how creative activities could be offered in school.

'What is going on is actually quite simple, it feels like we can do it, it's having the confidence in this way of working that's the key thing.'

The project artist had developed new skills in how to work effectively with very young children.

'This was a different way of working for me. Listening, making notes, thinking about what children understand, what's captivating them and how to extend that further; these are important parts of the artists' role.'

Her understanding of how to use language to develop children's thinking and creative processes had been refined.

'Can you draw me some straight lines? What do they make you think of?'
'Which red do you like best? Why?'

These new ideas would also be applied in her work as gallery education officer.

Learning from the project

A wealth of ideas about working successfully with young children around gallery visits and art works was generated by the project. Findings from across the projects are collated in the *engage in the foundation phase toolkit*.