ART & DESIGN

Whole-School Progression

1. Intent

At St Mary's, our Art and Design curriculum aims to develop confident, curious and creative artists. Children learn to observe closely, explore materials, experiment purposefully, make informed choices and communicate ideas through art. They encounter a broad range of artists, designers, styles and traditions, and develop the knowledge and practical skills needed to create, reflect on and evaluate their own work. Learning builds from playful exploration in Nursery and Reception to increasingly skilled, independent and purposeful artistic practice by Year 6.

A recurring visual thread across the school is the natural and built environment, including landscapes, places and the changing seasons. This offers opportunities to revisit ideas and techniques while ensuring pupils also experience varied subjects, cultures and artistic approaches.

2. Curriculum structure and key principles

- Drawing: looking carefully, recording ideas, using line, shape, tone, texture and proportion.
- Painting: exploring colour, mixing, brush control, layering, washes and expressive mark-making.
- Printmaking: creating, repeating, varying and refining printed images and patterns.
- Collage and mixed media: selecting, arranging, layering and combining materials for a purpose.
- Sculpture and 3D: shaping, joining, constructing and refining forms in a range of materials.
- Responding to art: noticing, describing, discussing and evaluating artwork, artists and creative choices.

Children should revisit processes over time with increasing independence and control. Units should include opportunities to look closely at artwork, learn and practise techniques, experiment, make, reflect and improve. In EYFS, these experiences are often integrated into continuous provision and adult-guided learning; they should remain playful, exploratory and responsive to children's interests.

3. Progression overview: Nursery to Year 6

The table describes broad expectations and progression, not a checklist for every child. EYFS learning is developmental and may not follow a fixed sequence. Teachers should use the statements alongside the EYFS framework and the school's long-term plan.

Stage	Drawing	Painting & colour	Print, collage & mixed media	Sculpture, responding & knowledge
Nursery	Explore mark-making with fingers and tools. Make lines, dots and circular movements. Begin to give meaning to marks and talk about what they represent.	Explore paint with hands, brushes and tools. Notice and name some colours. Experiment with movements and the marks different tools make.	Explore tearing, scrunching, sticking and arranging materials. Investigate textures, shapes and the marks made by everyday objects.	Explore dough, clay and construction materials by squeezing, rolling, pinching and joining. Talk about own creations, materials and preferences.
Reception	Use a range of tools to draw from observation, imagination and experience. Begin to represent people, objects and places with recognisable features and details.	Choose colours for a purpose. Explore colour mixing and notice changes. Use brushes and other tools to make different marks and effects.	Select, cut, tear and combine materials. Arrange shapes and textures before fixing them. Make simple repeated prints and patterns.	Shape and join materials to make models and structures. Explain what has been made and how. Notice features in artwork and express preferences.
Year 1	Explore different lines and marks. Draw from observation using simple shapes. Begin to add detail and talk about what is seen.	Name and use primary colours. Explore mixing to make secondary colours. Use brushes and tools with growing control; fill areas and experiment with marks.	Tear, cut and overlap paper. Arrange shapes before sticking. Explore simple printing with found objects, blocks or textured materials.	Join and shape simple materials. Talk about what has been made and name materials and tools. Respond to images using words such as line, colour and shape.
Year 2	Use line, shape and pattern to record more detail. Begin to show texture and simple proportion. Draw from memory, imagination and observation.	Mix a wider range of colours, including tints and shades with support. Use warm and cool colours. Apply paint in different ways for an intended effect.	Create repeated prints and simple patterns. Layer and combine materials deliberately; consider texture, shape and composition.	Build and join forms with increasing stability. Describe choices and identify what works well and what could change. Talk about an artist's use of materials.
Year 3	Use sketchbooks to collect and develop ideas. Explore tone through	Mix and modify colours with increasing accuracy. Explore	Plan a collage using shape, texture and overlapping. Explore printing with more	Construct forms using appropriate joining techniques. Compare artworks

	graded pencil pressure, hatching and cross-hatching. Observe shape, proportion and detail.	foreground and background and colour choices to create mood or represent a place or season.	than one layer or colour; adapt a design after testing.	and explain how materials and techniques affect the outcome, using subject vocabulary.
Year 4	Develop observational drawing with greater accuracy, scale and proportion. Use a range of media and purposeful line, tone and texture.	Control brush, water and paint more confidently. Use colour relationships, tone and layering to create depth, atmosphere and viewpoint.	Combine materials and processes to communicate an idea. Refine printing blocks or stencils and make considered choices about repeat, rotation and arrangement.	Develop more complex 3D forms and surface detail. Annotate ideas and evaluate against intentions, identifying specific refinements.
Year 5	Select drawing media to suit purpose. Use perspective cues, proportion, tone and texture to create convincing or expressive images.	Use colour mixing and layering independently. Make deliberate choices about palette, contrast, light and shade to create atmosphere and depth.	Plan and create more complex mixed-media compositions. Use printing and collage techniques with control, testing variations and refining outcomes.	Design, make and refine 3D work with attention to structure, balance and finish. Analyse artworks with reference to style, context, technique and effect.
Year 6	Draw with increasing independence and confidence, selecting techniques to communicate ideas. Use proportion, perspective, tone and detail intentionally.	Manipulate colour, tone and surface confidently. Combine techniques and make independent decisions to achieve a chosen visual effect.	Select, combine and adapt processes to produce purposeful, resolved work. Demonstrate control of layering, composition, pattern and material choices.	Create and refine ambitious 3D outcomes. Explain and justify artistic decisions, evaluate impact and identify next steps using accurate vocabulary.

4. EYFS foundations and provision

Nursery: exploring and discovering

Provide open-ended opportunities to investigate what materials can do. Offer large-scale and small-scale mark-making, painting, printing, collage, malleable materials and construction. Model useful vocabulary and actions without requiring a predetermined finished product. Value the process, children's ideas and the meanings they give to their marks.

Reception: choosing and representing

Build on exploration by encouraging children to select tools and materials for a purpose, revisit techniques and add detail to representations. Adults can model safe tool use, simple colour mixing, cutting and joining, and support children to explain their choices. Provide opportunities to look at and respond to a range of artists and visual images.

EYFS statutory and non-statutory links include Expressive Arts and Design (Creating with Materials; Being Imaginative and Expressive), Physical Development (fine motor control), and Communication and Language (describing, explaining and sharing ideas). Art also offers meaningful links to Understanding the World through observing natural materials, places, seasons and the work of artists from different times and cultures.

5. Core vocabulary progression

Nursery	mark, line, colour, paint, brush, shape, texture, rough, smooth, stick, squash, roll
Reception	draw, create, mix, print, pattern, collage, layer, cut, tear, join, model, repeat
Years 1–2	primary, secondary, mix, warm, cool, thick, thin, arrange, overlap, repeat, rough, smooth
Years 3–4	tone, shade, tint, hatching, cross-hatching, foreground, background, composition, layer, contrast, refine, proportion
Years 5–6	perspective, viewpoint, atmosphere, depth, palette, scale, balance, structure, technique, intention, evaluate, justify

6. Sketchbooks and the creative process

Sketchbooks become increasingly important as pupils move through the school. In EYFS, children's exploration may be captured through photographs, samples, floor books, displays, adult observations and children's own mark-making. From Key Stage 1 onwards, sketchbooks should be working spaces that show experimentation and development, not simply a collection of finished pieces.

- Collect images, observations, textures, colour ideas and visual references.
- Try out materials and techniques before choosing how to use them.
- Record, annotate and develop ideas through drawings, notes, samples and photographs.

- Review work in progress and make changes in response to feedback or personal evaluation.
- Reflect on finished work and identify a strength and a possible next step.

7. Artists, artwork and cultural understanding

Each unit should include meaningful engagement with artists, craftspeople, architects or designers. Select a diverse range of practitioners across periods, places and backgrounds. Pupils should learn to notice what they can see, consider how the work was made, discuss ideas or context, and use this learning to inform (rather than simply copy) their own choices. In EYFS, this may involve looking closely at images, noticing colour, shape and materials, and responding through talk and making.

Possible starting points for the landscape and seasonal thread include artists who explore changing light, colour, weather, place, buildings and the local environment. Balance these with units exploring other subjects, cultures, materials and purposes.

8. Assessment and evidence of impact

Assessment should focus on what pupils know, what they can do and how independently they can apply it.

- Before a unit: identify relevant prior knowledge and revisit key vocabulary or processes.
- During a unit: use observation, questioning, sketchbook or exploration checks, practical demonstrations and pupil explanations.
- At the end of a unit: assess the process as well as the final piece, including experimentation, refinement and evaluation.
- Over time: use sketchbooks, photographs, displays, pupil voice, observations and moderation to check that skills and knowledge build securely.

In EYFS, assessment is primarily through ongoing observation of children's engagement, choices, developing control, representations and ability to talk about their creations. Avoid expecting identical outcomes or treating developmental statements as a tick-list.

9. Inclusion and adaptation

All pupils should have access to ambitious artistic experiences. Adapt the route into learning through carefully selected tools, larger or more stable materials, pre-torn or pre-cut options where appropriate, visual examples, step-by-step modelling, additional time and adult or peer support. Avoid removing creative decision-making: pupils should still make choices about colour, mark, arrangement, material or meaning. In EYFS, ensure materials are accessible and inviting and allow children to explore at their own pace.

10. Curriculum monitoring and long-term planning

Subject monitoring should consider whether pupils build knowledge and skills over time, whether sketchbooks and EYFS evidence show experimentation and progression, whether pupils can talk about artists and their own decisions, and whether the curriculum offers breadth and appropriate challenge. Use pupil voice, learning walks, planning discussions and work scrutiny to identify strengths and next steps.

For each year group, the long-term plan should identify the unit focus, key artist or designer, principal media, core knowledge and vocabulary, intended outcome and opportunities to revisit prior learning. In EYFS, identify how planned experiences and continuous provision support the progression while remaining responsive to children's interests. This document describes cumulative expectations; the long-term plan determines when and through which projects they are taught.

Review note: Editable working framework. Align unit titles, school-specific Strong Foundations references and long-term plan links with current St Mary's documentation before formal adoption.