



Castle Tower School

Creative and Expressive Policy

Date Ratified by Board of Governors	
Review Date	

Castle Tower welcomes pupils aged 3-19 who face a wide range of barriers to learning. Educational opportunities are provided within our Nursery, Primary, Secondary and Post 16 departments.

Our Vision

Vision:

To be a leading light in special education through educating, nurturing, and inspiring all our school community.

Mission:

Castle Tower School is committed to creating a community which:

- Ensures everyone is safe and included.
- Always learns.
- Promotes independence and resilience.
- Celebrates achievements.
- Looks forward with hope to the future.

Everything we do is driven by our core values:

- Child-centred
- Nurturing
- Fun
- Teamwork
- Inclusive
- Independence

Our Ethos

Castle Tower strives to create a caring community in which every member feels valued, supported and happy. All staff work to maintain an ethos in which fairness, tolerance, compassion and forgiveness permeate all relationships within the school community. High standards of respect, self-discipline, commitment and sensitivity are sought, and everyone is encouraged to set and achieve the highest personal, academic and social goals. The safety, welfare and development of everyone in our school community is of paramount importance to all staff and Governors.

At Castle Tower, there is continued development of the quality of the teaching and learning environment. Resources are used efficiently. Opportunities are created for learning in co-operative and interactive settings. Pupils are presented with challenging as well as stimulating teaching and learning opportunities. Staff at Castle Tower seek close working relationships with other providers and services throughout each stage of our pupil's education and through the transition stage to further education and life after school.

Rationale for the Arts

The Primary teachers in Castle Tower School are committed to providing opportunities for children to be creative, expressive, and enhance physical development, which is closely tied with all aspects of their learning. They should have opportunities to explore and express themselves through various activities like art and design, music, movement, dance, and role-play. These activities help develop fine and gross motor skills, boost confidence, and enhance self-esteem, as well as enhancing imagination and curiosity. (CCEA)

The staff at Castle Tower acknowledge the diverse needs and abilities of our students and aim to support all pupils in developing their creativity across all areas of The Arts. The focus should be on the process, enjoyment, and learning, rather than the final product. It is essential for the school to offer opportunities for children to express creativity both verbally and non-verbally. Teachers should observe students' progress and use this information to plan future learning experiences.

Aims for Purposeful Areas within the Arts

The aim of purposeful Art is to:

- Observe and respond to things seen, handled, remembered and imagined.
- Engage in creative play.
- Investigate and respond to sensory experiences such as visual and tactile responses.
- Experiment with a range of materials, tools and processes.
- Experiment with mark-making.

The aim of purposeful Music is to:

- Work creatively with sound.
- Vocalise, sing and perform with simple instruments.
- Listen to and respond to their own and others' music making.
- Investigate, experiment and explore methods of sound making.
- Listen to and join in with a range of familiar songs.

The aim of purposeful Drama is to:

- Express their thoughts, ideas and feelings.
- Respond to familiar stories.
- Develop creativity through imaginative play.
- Engage in dramatic play and role-play.
- Explore movement, voice and gesture through role play.
- Be present and take part in familiar games.

Breakdown of the use of each area

Each creative area has been broken down into 6 themes which can be utilised as standalone lessons or incorporated into cross curricular lessons. These areas will create a focus to

ensure the children are gaining tailored experiences and opportunities to express themselves and their learning in a creative way.

Art:

- Printmaking
- Sculpture
- Painting
- Drawing
- Textile
- Collage

Music:

- Following a rhythm
- Copy and repeat
- Beat and tempo
- Loud and quiet
- High and low
- Topic themed music lessons

Drama:

- Understanding real vs. imaginary
- Copying movements and sounds
- Using facial expressions and gesture
- Engaging with role play
- Using Props
- Recalling a story

Links with other subjects

The Arts have a distinct role in developing children's talents and abilities as well as being present in other areas of learning which are integral to children's development.

Language & Literacy –	encouragement to talk and write about their Art and Music as well as responding to other's work.
The World Around Us –	encouragement to observe and interpret their environment, exploring and visually representing their learning through Art, Music and Drama.
PDMU –	developing social skills through group work and conversation as well as encouraging the use of Art, Music and Drama to express and communicate feelings.
Physical Education –	using The Arts as a stimulus for developing movement skills.

The Learning Environment

When planning for children to explore creatively, we will consider each pupil's individual needs, abilities, and interests by providing a secure, stimulating, and safe environment that encourages exploration, observation, and learning. This approach ensures a wide range of learning experiences that cater to all needs and abilities. During planning, we will also consider the use of space in the classroom, particularly for students with physical disabilities who may require specialized aids to assist with mobility.

The classroom is just one learning space; we will also offer opportunities for children to engage with all areas of the Arts within other areas of the school. The other learning areas can include outdoor and garden spaces, the local community, and Shared Education opportunities.

The Role of the Adult

At Castle Tower, practitioners play a vital role in providing children with a platform to express their creativity through The Arts. Our staff in Castle Tower are encouraging, supportive, and creative, always striving to offer children with a variety of experiences to explore different artistic areas.

The adult's role is to foster an enjoyment for music and creativity by actively participating, listening, and observing. It is essential for adults to be mindful of their own use of voice during creative sessions, creating an environment that encourages children to contribute and to show them that their contribution is valued. By valuing their contributions, whether it is displayed by the adults' body language or imitating the child's creations, it will help promote different levels of engagement and response.

Castle Tower Staff will work collaboratively and holistically with all Allied Health Professionals. Their advice and guidance will be sought, and this will be reflected within PLPs and individual target setting.

All adults have four important roles to play within the classroom:

The Provider

Create an environment that is safe, stimulating and secure, allowing space for creative activities to flourish. Provide a range of equipment and materials that cater to different abilities and individual needs of pupils. Practitioners recognise the value of process-based learning, prioritising exploration and creativity over focusing solely on the final outcome.

The Participant

Introduce a variety of roles within The Arts, allowing pupils to take on the roles of composer, creator and actor. This will help them develop skills in imagination and social interaction as well as developing fine motor skills. Pupils will be encouraged to share their experiences,

interact with each other and extend their performances and creations across other learning areas.

The Observer

Provide children with a platform to explore their creativity, promoting sequential learning, memory retention and self-awareness.

The key role of the adult is to:

- Observe pupils' interactions.
- Assess their needs, interests, understanding and skills.
- Plan relevant experiences that support, extend and challenge their learning.
- Record their progress.

The Planner

Plan a diverse range of activities that use The Arts to explore wider soft skills such as creativity, expression, collaboration, self-improvement, reflection, analysis, and awareness of both their own and other's identity. This will be achieved by supporting, extending and challenging their learning. Pupils will have ownership of their learning and will be encouraged to actively participate in activities, with their opinions being valued. Planning will align with the Northern Ireland Curriculum, incorporating all learning areas, and will reflect the needs and abilities of the pupils through adaptation of activities, PLPs and collaborative practice with other professionals.

Organisation

Creative opportunities should be integrated across all areas of the curriculum. Daily lessons and projects should involve some areas of The Arts. Children should have access to one music lesson, one art and one drama lesson per week. They should also have opportunities to engage in creative activities individually, in groups and as a whole class, including during playtime. Teachers will offer activities that are adult directed and pupil initiated.

Planning, observation, record keeping and assessment

The Arts are intertwined throughout our daily timetable. We create opportunities for children to progress and develop their skills in music, art and drama daily.

Music is present in our welcome time, circle time, Attention Autism, Speech Therapy sessions, Wizefloor, hydro pool sessions, rebound Therapy as well as sensory sacks, and the variety of sensory rooms around the school. Music plays a large role in our play-based learning. Children can develop an understanding of turn taking as well as other interdependent skills.

Art and Drama are developed through our wider curriculum as a school as well as our targeted lessons. Opportunities are present for pupils to explore art through our Forest schools project, sensory play, sensory gardens as well as TacPac.

Play-Based learning plays a vital role in the development of the pupils' performance and drama skills as well as Physical Education.

The Arts have been planned around topics which have been agreed by all staff members within FS/ KS1 and KS2. We have planned these topics to ensure progression and to provide a balanced and challenging curriculum. Teachers are also aware however, of the many opportunities for music, art and drama, which arise spontaneously throughout the day and which are often child driven and will therefore be flexible in their approach.

Teachers plan their Topics on a half-term basis using an agreed planning format which illustrates how play is cross curricular and connects all areas of learning. Teachers acknowledge that children learn best when learning is connected, interactive, practical and enjoyable. Planners are reviewed and evaluated every six weeks in order to ensure progression and continuity of learning. Planners are very much a working document and will be displayed within each classroom. Planners are stored on the internal system.

“A very important element of The Arts is allowing children to observe, make choices and decisions, investigate, problem solve and explore.” (CEEA)

Through our observation and record-keeping, we will aim to build a picture of each child’s progress throughout The Arts using a variety of observation methods (see Appendix 1 for examples).

Staff will use their observations, assessments and record-keeping to shape and review future planning. We will consider the resources available, teaching approaches, organisation and children’s responses to the tasks. Staff will observe children working in groups and as individuals. A variety of methods of recording will be used. (see Appendix 2)

This will provide us with information about the child’s current level within The Arts, so making staff aware of children who have individual needs and children who are experiencing difficulties. This will help teachers adapt their future planning to ensure the needs and ability levels of all children in the class are being met to help them continue progressing at their own level. This information will also be used to inform parents/carers and other staff and professionals.

It may be useful to record observations about:

- the child’s confidence, self-esteem
- responsiveness
- focused Attention
- participation and involvement
- creativity
- verbal and non-verbal language/communication development
- social and emotional development
- interdependent skills

Resources

Each class has a range of resources that can be used for The Arts, both within their classroom, online and in stores within the primary department.

Art:

- A range of resources for art projects in each classroom
- Art store, stocked with resources needed for various art projects and topics
- Resources for use outside of the classroom, such as in the playground

Music:

- A range of musical instruments in each classroom
- Access to online resources of music lessons and schemes of work
- Additional music lessons with experienced staff

Drama:

- Role Play costumes/scene set ups
- Small world play
- Story Sacks

Resources will be kept clean and examined regularly by designated staff to ensure the health and safety of pupils. Resources will also remain well stocked where possible by designated staff to ensure there are sufficient resources for the benefit of all pupils engaging with The Arts.

Equal Opportunities

Within The Arts, staff will be mindful of addressing the specific needs of all children, regardless of physical or cognitive ability, gender, socio-economic background, race, culture, medical needs, or religion. The staff will foster a culture of respect for differences, ensuring that all children are included and valued.

Review and Evaluation

Development and discussion about effective teaching and learning are essential for all staff. We will collaborate to ensure that all staff have ample opportunities to build a shared understanding of all aspects of The Arts. Music, Art, and Drama provision will be evaluated within the context of half-term planning, and the policy will be reviewed annually.

Appendix 1

Name:

Class:

Teacher:

Curricular Area:

Q Skill:

Date	Activity	Comment

Appendix 2

Observation

Name of Pupil: _____ Date: _____

Teacher: _____

Observation:	Further Thoughts: