EYFS@RMS – Progression of Skills for the Creation Station

The Creation Station provides children with opportunities to explore materials, experiment with tools and techniques, express ideas and develop their own creative designs. It supports the development of fine-motor control, imagination, independence, problem-solving and confidence through open-ended art and design experiences.



1. Explorers – discovering materials

Babies / younger toddlers, as appropriate

- Explore a variety of textures, colours and materials using their senses.
- Make marks through scribbling, dabbing, patting and finger painting.
- Explore the effects of pressing, rubbing, squeezing and spreading materials.
- Experiment with large brushes, chunky crayons and age-appropriate tools.
- Notice the changes made when materials are moved, mixed or combined.
- Express enjoyment, curiosity and preferences through actions, sounds and gestures.



2. Developing creators

Typically 2–3 years

- Make marks with increasing control using crayons, chalk, paint and brushes.
- Explore colour, shape, line, texture and different materials.
- Begin to use simple tools such as glue sticks, stampers and rollers.
- Tear, scrunch, fold and stick paper and other suitable materials.
- Combine materials to create simple pictures, models and collages.
- Begin to talk about their creations and express preferences.
- Develop hand strength, coordination and confidence when accessing resources.



3. Purposeful designers

Typically 3–4 years

- Select materials and tools to explore a particular idea.
- Draw lines, circles and simple forms with increasing control.
- Experiment with mixing colours and creating different effects.
- Use scissors with appropriate supervision to make snips and begin cutting along simple lines.
- Join materials using glue, tape and other suitable joining methods.
- Explore printing, painting, drawing, collage and simple construction.
- Create pictures and models that represent people, objects, experiences and ideas.
- Talk about what they have made, the materials used and choices they have made.



4. Confident artists and designers

Typically 4–5 years

- Independently select and combine materials, tools and techniques for a purpose.
- Use drawing, painting, printing, collage and modelling to communicate ideas.
- Develop greater control when drawing shapes, adding details and using tools.
- Cut along lines and shapes with increasing accuracy.
- Explore joining, balancing, layering and constructing three-dimensional models.
- Experiment with colour mixing, pattern, texture, line and form.
- Plan, adapt and improve creations as ideas develop.
- Explain choices, describe techniques and reflect on their own and others' artwork.
- Draw inspiration from artists, illustrators, nature, stories and the surrounding environment.

Progression of key skills

Skill	Emerging	Developing	Secure / extending
Mark-making	Makes spontaneous marks and explores tools	Creates lines, circles and simple forms	Uses controlled marks and details to represent ideas
Painting	Dabs, spreads and explores paint	Uses brushes and explores different effects	Controls brushstrokes and combines techniques purposefully
Colour	Notices and explores different colours	Names familiar colours and experiments with mixing	Selects and mixes colours intentionally
Cutting	Explores safe tools with adult support	Makes snips and begins cutting along lines	Cuts shapes and follows outlines with increasing accuracy
Joining and collage	Places and sticks materials	Combines materials using glue or tape	Selects suitable joining methods and layers materials purposefully
Modelling and construction	Explores and manipulates materials	Creates simple models and joins pieces	Plans, constructs and adapts more complex models
Design and choice	Explores materials freely	Chooses materials for an idea	Selects and combines techniques to achieve an intended effect
Creative expression	Responds through sensory exploration	Creates simple representations and talks about them	Develops, explains and refines ideas independently

Adult role and provision

- Provide open-ended resources: Offer paper, card, paint, crayons, chalk, collage materials, clay or dough, natural materials, recycled materials and suitable construction resources.
- Model techniques: Demonstrate how to use brushes, scissors, glue, printing tools and joining materials safely without prescribing a finished outcome.
- Introduce vocabulary: Use words such as line, shape, texture, pattern, smooth, rough, blend, print, tear, fold, attach, construct and design.
- Encourage experimentation: Ask "What happens if you mix these colours?", "How could you attach those pieces?" or "What else could you try?"
- Value process as well as product: Celebrate children's exploration, decisions, persistence and individual expression rather than expecting identical finished work.
- Develop independence: Encourage children to select resources, organise their workspace, look after tools and tidy away.
- Make meaningful links: Provide inspiration from stories, Drawing Club, nature, seasonal changes, artists, buildings and children's interests.
- Support inclusion: Adapt tools, grips, materials, seating and access to resources to meet individual needs, including those of children with SEND.
- Observe and respond: Notice children's developing control, creativity, choices and problem-solving to identify appropriate next steps.

Links to EYFS areas of learning

- Expressive Arts and Design: exploring materials, developing artistic techniques, creating models, expressing ideas and using imagination.
- Physical Development: fine-motor control, hand strength, coordination and safe tool use.
- Communication and Language: describing materials, explaining choices, learning new vocabulary and sharing ideas.
- Mathematics: exploring shape, pattern, size, position, space and comparison.

- Understanding the World: investigating natural and manufactured materials, artists, environments and different ways of creating.
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development: independence, confidence, persistence, decision-making and pride in achievements.

Assessment reminder

Age bands are indicative rather than fixed expectations. Children may demonstrate skills across several stages, and progression should reflect individual development, interests and next steps.

The Creation Station should prioritise child-led exploration, experimentation and creative decision-making. Adults can introduce new techniques and extend learning while allowing children the freedom to develop their own ideas. Ensure materials and tools are age-appropriate, non-toxic where relevant, and safely managed, with close supervision around scissors, small parts and other potential hazards.