

Top drawer!

Most children like to draw. *Nicole Weinstein* finds out how practitioners can best support young children's early development of drawing – and looks at some of the best resources on offer



tual and emotional development and supports their understanding of the world. But I think we can sometimes struggle to feel confident and skilled in how best to interact, encourage and support them.'

IN PRACTICE

In order for children to initiate their own drawings and represent their ideas, feelings and thinking, they must be provided with the following: space, time, resources, tools and materials.

Ms McTavish explains, 'I think there is sometimes more understanding about how to support spontaneous drawing outside – for example, on large whiteboards or on big chalks on the ground or within dens, which invite conversation and drawing if the right materials are provided.'

'Inside, drawing experiences need to be supported too, and if we take the time to tune in to the children's interests, these drawings can often tell us a lot about their thinking and their fascinations.'

Here are some tips on how to support children's drawing indoors:

- Make drawing resources and tools easily accessible for children to make choices about what they draw with and on. Occasionally add exciting, new drawing tools or media; for example, chunky felt-tips attached to cars, oil pastels and charcoal or biros. ➤

Drawing is one of the many languages that children use to 'talk' about their world. Long before a child can hold a pencil, they will discover that they can use their fingers to make marks in the sand – or a spoon to make marks with their food. Through drawing, children can represent their emotions, actions, ideas and experiences.

Practitioners can help support children through this creative process by providing them with a range of stimulating experiences and by engaging in meaningful interactions with the child.

Practitioners are often under a lot of pressure to develop children's writing and mark-making before the children are developmentally ready,

which is 'to the detriment of spontaneous drawing', points out early years and creative arts consultant Anni McTavish.

She says, 'There can be misunderstandings about how best to support child-initiated drawing, both on a practical level and also in terms of what to do and say.'

'This type of spontaneous, enthusiastic and energetic drawing that comes from the child, him or herself, is an important part of their intellec-



Clockwise from above: using charcoal at Pembury House Nursery; Cosy's Multi Surface Writing Den; and Chubbi Crayon Eggs from Hope

Through drawing, children can represent their emotions and experiences



- Toolboxes, caddies and belts allow children to take drawing implements wherever they go and allow 'pop-up' drawing spaces.
- Provide a variety of drawing implements for different age groups – pencils, pens, chalks, crayons. Younger children especially enjoy temporary mark-making and drawing opportunities such as with whiteboard pens and chalk that they can wipe away easily and try again with.
- Encourage children to work at different levels, such as flat tables at different heights and trays and vertical surfaces such as easels and chalkboards. Provide large rolls of paper and big clipboards for working on the floor and on the go, as well as dens and enclosed spaces with writing surfaces.
- Give children permission and encouragement to draw spontaneously indoors and out.
- Take interest in and value children's drawings by listening and asking appropriate questions. Try not to lead the child into drawing in a particular way.
- Share children's drawings with parents and families and celebrate their drawings from home.

CASE STUDY

A three-year-old at Pembury House Nursery and Children's Centre in Tottenham, north London, loves to dress up and tell stories.

Practitioner Maxine Mills says, 'When sitting with her in the creative area one day, she began to tell me a story about what she did at the weekend. As she told me, she reached for the crayons and some paper and drew some characters to represent her auntie and Mr Andrew.

'She told me that she went to the

shops to buy some crisps and they all went to watch the movie, *Inside Out*. She drew a picture of Joy, the main character in the movie, and her friend, and a picture of the sky. She then cut out all the characters and placed them in order on a piece of card and put the sky at the top.

'Her use of description was very precise and I was so happy to capture this moment with her. It was obvious that this day out was very meaningful for her and she was not only able to express her emotions through her drawing, but she was also trying to make sense of the movie.'

Pembury House Nursery has been developing its provision for drawing indoors and out over the past year. This has included reviewing the space and providing a larger area for drawing, with well-organised, labelled resources in both the nursery class and under-threes unit.

Head teacher Sue Moss explains, 'Alongside these practical changes, staff ensure that they do not impose their own ideas, draw their own pictures, or cut round children's work, and we never use colouring-in sheets.

'We encourage and support the children by modelling and helping them to visualise their drawing. We may, for example, suggest they "draw in the air" and create large physical movements of the shapes they want to represent, or remind them that we can look at images on an iPad or in books.

'We've also looked at ways to support drawing at home. Two recent

Children should be encouraged to draw at different levels. Below: Mini Mark Maker's Floor Easel from TTS



MORE INFORMATION

- www.nurseryworld.co.uk/art-in-the-early-years
- Anni McTavish (2016) *Expressive Arts and Design in the Early Years: Supporting young children's creativity through art, design, music, dance and imaginative play*. Routledge



events involved a Wow Wednesday session, where parents were invited into the setting to enjoy play and learning together with their children. On this occasion we used music and drawing together, working on large sheets of paper on the floor, and we also took part in the national initiative The Big Draw? (www.thebigdraw.org)

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT DRAWING

Drawing surfaces

Tuff Spot White Tray, £14.99; Multi Surface Writing Den, £195; Blackboard Cable Drum, £32.50; Blackboard Small World Play Table, £99.95; Blackboard Cupboard, £59; Bulk Lining Paper, £22.50 for 20 rolls; Mobile Art Unit, £499; Fence whiteboard, £45; Supreme quality blackboard, £59.95; Easy Easel bars, £19.99 – all available from www.cosydirect.com

Mini Mark Maker's Floor Easel, £139.99; Clear Mark Making Panel, £37.95; Mini Mark Maker's Double Sided Easel, £199.95; Large Wooden Writing Boards, £29.95; Double Sided Busy Bench, £499.95 – all available from www.tts-group.co.uk

Tabletop Easel, £99; Magic Blackboard, £30 – both available from www.earlyyearsdirect.com

Drawing tools

Chubbi Crayon Eggs, £4.99; Crayola My First Crayons, £3.29; Stabilo EASYgraph Pencils – Pack of 48, £35.69; Staedtler Noris Triplus Jumbo Triangular Learner Pencils, £19.99; Stabilo Woody 3 in 1 Colouring Pencils, £8.39 – all available from www.hope-education.co.uk

Playground chalk jumbo, £3.59; Egg chalks, £1.99; Wooden pencil bucket, £49.99 – all available from www.cosydirect.com

Edding Funtastic Window Fun Pens, £4.95 – available from www.earlyyearsresources.co.uk

Storage

Writing belts, £11.49; Toddler Mark Making Shed, £295.00; Writing tools boxes, £8.29; Writing packs, £9.49 – all at www.cosydirect.com

Kneel Up Store & Draw Table, £174.95 – available from www.earlyyearsresources.co.uk ■