



For smaller settings, being innovative can be a challenge. Bright Eyes Day Nursery in Cheltenham manages to keep things vibrant and creative on a small budget.

Katherine Barber, Nursery Manager, explains: "We make a lot of our own resources. A light box we created using a standard plastic lidded box, tracing paper and some fairy lights has been a real success. It provides an abundance of artistic opportunity.

"By covering the top of the light box with a thin layer of sand or glitter, the older children explore mark making, using their fingers and small sticks to create patterns and write names and numbers. These all look great as the light shines through.

"The younger ones have particularly enjoyed scattering coloured feathers on top of the light box, moving them to create patterns and sorting them into colour groups. This is a great activity for their fine motor skills, helping them to practise their pincer grip when picking up and moving the feathers around."

Busy Bees Blaenavon Day Nursery and Kids Club, South Wales, also uses mark making activities to encourage children to be creative and inventive.

Manager Sue Driscoll advocates powder paint as a magic ingredient for fun and learning.

She says: "We mix powder paint with glitter, oats, sand and essences such as peppermint to paint stones, shells, twigs, ourselves, boxes, and all manner of recycled items!

"We put the paint into spray bottles to use on a large paper on the wall, cover bubble wrap with it, mix in cooked spaghetti and even throw it at targets!

"The focus is the fun and sensory outcomes achieved. We don't highlight the need to make an end product, just the need to wash their hands afterwards!"

Nursery Manager, Charlie Wardill, of Heriot Hill Nursery in Edinburgh, explains the key to their early years art is taking pride in work.

"Children love to be creative and mark making activities are a great way to encourage this, especially when it's interesting and diverse and in a range of media.

"We find that vertical drawing activities – on a wall rather than a table or the floor – are something a bit unusual and the children get a different perspective on what they are doing which sparks their interest, inquisitiveness and enthusiasm."

Many people think that to be able to teach children to be artistic you have to be good at art. But the right attitude and enthusiasm is far more important.

Jo Baranek says: "You don't have to think of yourself as a 'creative' person to be able to support children's skills and knowledge – it's all about the process, not the end product!

"The one key secret of success in this area, to really capture children's artistic curiosity and encourage creativity, is allowing the children to choose the activity they want to get stuck in to and lead the way in doing it."

The Art of Expression and Creativity costs £17 for NDNA members and £22 for non-members, from www.ndna.org.uk/shop



OUR FRIEND THE DENTIST

Daisy Chain Children's Nursery in Leicester made friends with its local dentist – with smiles all round.

In the July / August 2016 edition of Nursery News we had a feature on dental health and nursery children, mentioning the idea of forging a partnership with a dentist.

Daisy Chain has done just that, borrowing resources from its local community dental services including a tooth-friendly crocodile called Smiley – and welcoming a dentist, Dr Adarsh Bhatt, of Blaby Dental Practice, in a visit to the nursery.

Dr Bhatt then invited the children to the practice to see what going to the dentist is all about and that it's not scary at all.

Manager Natalie Allen said: "Our village is one of the worst in Leicestershire for under 5s dental health so this work is especially important.

"Smiley came with a CD so the children got to learn a song about tooth brushing. Then when we went to the dentist, the children sat in the chair and looked at the instruments. We've also had free toothbrushes and the children brush for two minutes a day here."

The nursery also has a bear, Sparkles, from the Oral Health Foundation's online shop, Educating Smiles, which regularly pops home overnight with children to check their tooth brushing.

