

Eurythmy

Intent of the Eurythmy curriculum

Eurythmy is a physical performance art that combines choreographed movement with music, poetry and grammar. It is non-competitive, and relies on co-operation, teamwork, social awareness and non-verbal communication. Eurythmy develops children's proprioceptive skills and core strength, supporting them to learn to move with poise and grace. It includes a physical representation of poetry, creating cultural capital in movement and providing a concrete relationship to language. Children connect in a joyful and active way with the technical inner nature of poetry and music, allowing them to retain this understanding in their long-term memory and apply it in other areas of their education.

Eurythmy can also be seen as a form of meditation through mindful movement. Children have to find an inner quietness in order to listen deeply to the poetry and music, but also to the body language of others, interpreting their unspoken intentions. Eurythmy supports self-regulation – physically, emotionally and mentally. Children learn to manage their bodies, their feelings and their thoughts, culminating in the older classes with the confidence to choreograph a performance that shows something of themselves to the world.

Accessibility and Transitions

For children with SEND, Eurythmy offers an alternative way to access areas of the curriculum, especially ambitious language, vocabulary and poetry. It is an excellent resource for children with dyslexia, developing their phonological awareness and sense of rhythm. The use of movements that cross the midline support children with a variety of learning differences, including dyslexia, dyspraxia, retained reflexes and ADHD, developing processing abilities and neurological organisation.

Eurythmy is also highly effective for EAL learners. The gestures and movements are accessible in any language, and children with EAL are able to imitate and join in the work of the group, even if they do not yet understand the finer detail of what is being asked.

When children join a Waldorf school with no previous experience in Eurythmy, teachers will put in place a programme of introduction to the subject. This begins with asking the child to observe the class, and then carefully tailored scaffolding so that the child can join in. This might include pairing the child with the teacher or a more experienced peer, and the opportunity to observe more complex forms before attempting them. The teacher will be

consciously aware of the new child and their needs, reassuring them that it is ok to make mistakes and watching carefully to see where they need support.

Challenge and support

Challenge is provided in a developmentally appropriate way. Children who master elements of the lesson more quickly may be asked to demonstrate exercises, lead choreography or support children who are struggling with particular aspects.

Where participants in an exercise perform different roles, the more difficult parts will be assigned to challenge the more able pupils. These children might also be asked to give constructive feedback to others in their group, or a group of high attaining children might be challenged to create elements of choreography from scratch.

Support for children who are struggling might be provided in similar ways to those outlined above for children new to the subject: observations, pairing with a more knowledgeable other, individualised support from the teacher.

Sequencing and Planning

The planning and sequencing of the Eurythmy curriculum is multi-dimensional. As the child moves through the school, the exercises and forms that they are asked to attempt become increasingly complex, as do the requirements of musicality and grammatical understanding.

Simultaneously, each choreographed piece is developed from its introduction to its performance (although this may not be public); items within the choreography become more complex: teaching through repetition and practice lead to refinement, sophistication and finesse.

Children's physical skills develop from the kindergarten, where they are beginning to become aware of their own bodies and to imitate simple shapes. Children start by controlling their own movements, and as they move through the school begin to work with partners and larger groups and with equipment such as rods. They develop their agility, spatial awareness and flexibility, alongside their concentration and persistence. Children's musicality and understanding of rhythm and timing develops alongside their sense of artistry. Eventually, in the older classes, children are expected to move from imitation to independence and the creation of a performance of a work entirely of their own choreography.

Vitally important is children's development of trusting relationships with both the teacher and their peers. As trust is built, children grow to feel safe enough to be truly creative, despite a sense of exposure in both practice and performance. With their understanding of the needs of the class and individuals within the group, the teacher continually and consciously adapts the curriculum to provide appropriate support and challenge.

Cross-curricular impact

As with other techniques and art forms that use music, movement and mindfulness techniques, Eurythmy has a positive impact on children's wellbeing. The structured movement and physical and emotional self-regulation gives children a strong sense of health. The balance of movement and stillness, freedom and focus, allows children to assimilate their academic learning and enables them to be ready to learn.

In the lower classes, the tracing of forms across the floor develops children's ability to visualise symbolic representations. Children's cores are strengthened, as well as large muscles vital for writing: shoulder rotator cuffs, pectorals, trapezius' and rhomboids. Emerging musical and linguistic literacy supports highly attuned phonological awareness. For the older children, their developing knowledge and understanding of grammar and syntax is expanded as they explore poetry in physical form, with particular movements being assigned to parts of speech and expressed through the choreography. Their drama and performance skills are also enhanced.

Children's maths understanding is supported through the subdivision of the beat in increasingly complex ways, for example stepping two beats to the bar whilst clapping three beats to the bar. The geometrical nature of the Eurythmy forms challenges children to translate shapes from two dimensions to three, and they gain a conceptual understanding of the nature of shape, for example the differences between 5, 6 and 7 pointed stars.

Often curriculum content from the main lesson is echoed in the themes chosen for Eurythmy. Verses or music might be chosen around fairy tales in Class 1, fables and saints' stories in Class 2, creation or farming in Class 3, Norse myths or Man and Animal in Class 4 and ancient epochs or botany in Class 5.