

It was an ordinary nursery day and a staff member was taking observational photographs of a child. Then a child asked, 'Can I take a picture?' After some trepidation (will the camera break?), we gave in.

This inspired us to allow all the children to take their own photographs with the digital camera. We sought approval to buy a digital camera solely for the children's use. The effect was inspirational. We were astonished at how we had underestimated the children's skills and creativity.

One child's interest in using a camera snowballed into a photography project, called 'Click, Click look at me!' that culminated in a portrait exhibition for parents.

Snap happy

Staff modelled the use of the camera and the children quickly picked up the sequence of taking a photo with a digital camera - deciding what they wanted in the picture, looking in the screen and confirming they were happy with it and then holding the button down until the photo was taken.

Purchasing the digital camera coincided with a theme we were exploring on lights, mirrors and shadows, so we decided to develop the children's photos in black and white to emphasise the detail and shadowing.

They liked taking pictures of their own work, but the main ones that interested them were of each other, sometimes at play but mainly posed. The children have always loved to look at themselves in different mirrors around the nursery classroom and they were excited to see themselves in the printed photos too.

We encouraged the child who was the subject of the photograph to make different facial expressions. These included happy, shocked, growling, funny and sad. They were interested in how slight changes in facial expression can convey a different impression of how a person is feeling.

The child taking the photo decided how many children they wanted in the picture and the positioning of the child. It was great to see that the shy children became more confident in the spotlight!

When the children were taking the photos a lot of language developed, including 'You sit there', 'Smile please', 'Can I have a happy face?', 'I am making a growling face'.



What a picture!

Children showed a surprising knack for photography when Tanglewood Nursery School bought a digital camera, say **Sarah Stride** and **Carole Gibbons**

Photo: Tanglewood Nursery School, Joel Chant



Tanglewood children display their delight in posing in different positions and making funny faces, and learned from the detail highlighted in black and white

Some children really thought about the position of their body, and this led to there being arms and legs all over the place. Friends worked together to create exciting, funny poses, with tongues sticking out, wrinkled noses and hair in disarray. They also wanted to introduce props such as different hats and sunglasses to disguise themselves and make funny faces.

In print

Through discussions with the children, while looking at the photographs of each other and at their reflections in the mirrors, staff developed the children's thinking about the differences between each other such as hair colour and style, skin tone and eye colour. We emphasised the impor-

tance of differences in appearance and cultures within our group and that everyone is special. This built up their self-esteem and awareness of differences between them.

Many of the children reported back to their parents on the project. One boy had been featured in the local newspaper and he brought in the photograph to show us. We also looked at pictures in newspapers and magazines and discussed how they were used to illustrate a story or news item.

We noticed that children in the role-play area would also continue the photographic theme and they enjoyed using the toy cameras. The children's enthusiasm and excitement drove us forward in our planning.

The project coincided with a visit by

Key learning intentions

- Have a positive self image. Show confidence in linking with others for support and guidance. Demonstrate a sense of pride in their own achievements.

- Use a widening range of words to express feelings. Initiate communications with others, displaying greater confidence in more informal contexts.

- Use and observe positional language.

- Perform simple functions on ICT apparatus. Identify obvious similarities and differences when exploring and observing. Talk about what is seen and what is happening.

- Use body language, gestures, facial expression or words to indicate personal satisfaction or frustration.

- ✗ Engage in activities requiring hand/eye co-ordination. Use one handed tools and equipment. Manage body to create an intended movement.

Key vocabulary

- Light
- Dark
- Digital
- Camera
- Image
- Photographer
- Feelings
- Photograph
- Artist
- Black, white, grey
- Shadow

the school photographer who came to take a group picture. The children enjoyed the experience of watching a professional photographer in action. They were excited to see his equipment and he showed them his big cameras, the different lenses and lights. He also spoke to them about how he positions groups and sets up a group photograph. He kindly printed a class photo in black and white for us to extend our theme further.

We decided to follow up the children's learning by finding an artist whose work the children could explore. The photographer David Bailey is famous for taking black and white pictures, so we found books explaining how he takes them.

We discussed how the black and white emphasised the people's features and made the pictures more dramatic. We looked at the range of portraits he had taken and discussed the subjects.

This, in turn, inspired the children to bring in black and white photographs from home.

Showing off

The grand finale of the project was transforming an area of the nursery into a gallery. We carefully mounted and displayed the children's photographs to form an exhibition for the children and their parents to see.

The children's reactions to their own work were fantastic. Their use of language to explain the photos to their parents was great. They could recall the mood of their facial expression and who took their photo.

Many of the parents commented that they had never seen their children act so confidently in front of a camera before. They were also amazed by the clever composition and quality of the children's pictures.

Although the main project is now finished, the children's enthusiasm for taking photographs has not waned. They continue to have free access to their digital camera in the nursery so that they can take photos whenever they wish. Some children continue to take photos of their friends at play; others take photos of their work, demonstrating a sense of pride in their achievements. **NW**

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