

“He needs to eat some food!”

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Context

As a nursery school, we value the opportunities we can provide for children that foster conditions of collaborative learning which arise out of the curiosities and fascinations of the children.

We see children as capable and confident learners, who alongside each other can enquire, question and discover learning for themselves, rather than being instructed or told.

It is through this lens of active enquiry that educators generate long term projects which promote opportunities for children's creativity and critical thinking enabling children to express and develop theories about the world around them.

Project 2018/19

This year, the enquiries of each group began as an investigation of the human body as this is an area of particular fascination for many children.

We may begin with a shared starting point, however, each of the learning groups developed their projects in their own unique way based upon the children's own specific interests and motivations.

What follows is an account that aims to both describe the learning process of each of the groups experiences whilst also offering an opportunity to reflect on what we as educators have learnt about how children learn, and the ways in which best support the growth of their thinking and the expression of their ideas.

Within this presentation, you will see, through the exploration of a skeleton, how the children learn about the body, making connections not only between themselves, but people, places and objects which are important to them.

You will see how this has enabled them to develop relationships within the group, sharing experiences, resources and ideas.



Initial exploration saw the children making connections between the skeleton and themselves.



“It’s a skeleton ... mine’s got skin, this is just bones.”

“I got bones ... if you feel really hard, you can feel your bones.”







The skeleton was accidentally knocked over. The comments that followed demonstrated how the children had formed a bond with the skeleton, displaying empathy and compassion, trying to help make it better.

“Oh no!”

“He needs some medicine.”

“Nurse needs to check him.”

“He got a scratchmark ... put a plaster on, make it better.”



The children were interested in how the skeleton moved, often imitating the positions that it was put into.

As a playful way to develop the understanding of how the body moves, a dancing skeleton video was played for the children to move along to. This proved very popular. The children watched closely, imitating the movements. Children encouraged others to join in, developing collaboration and friendships.



The children were fascinated when one of their friends proudly shared the scan image of his baby sister.

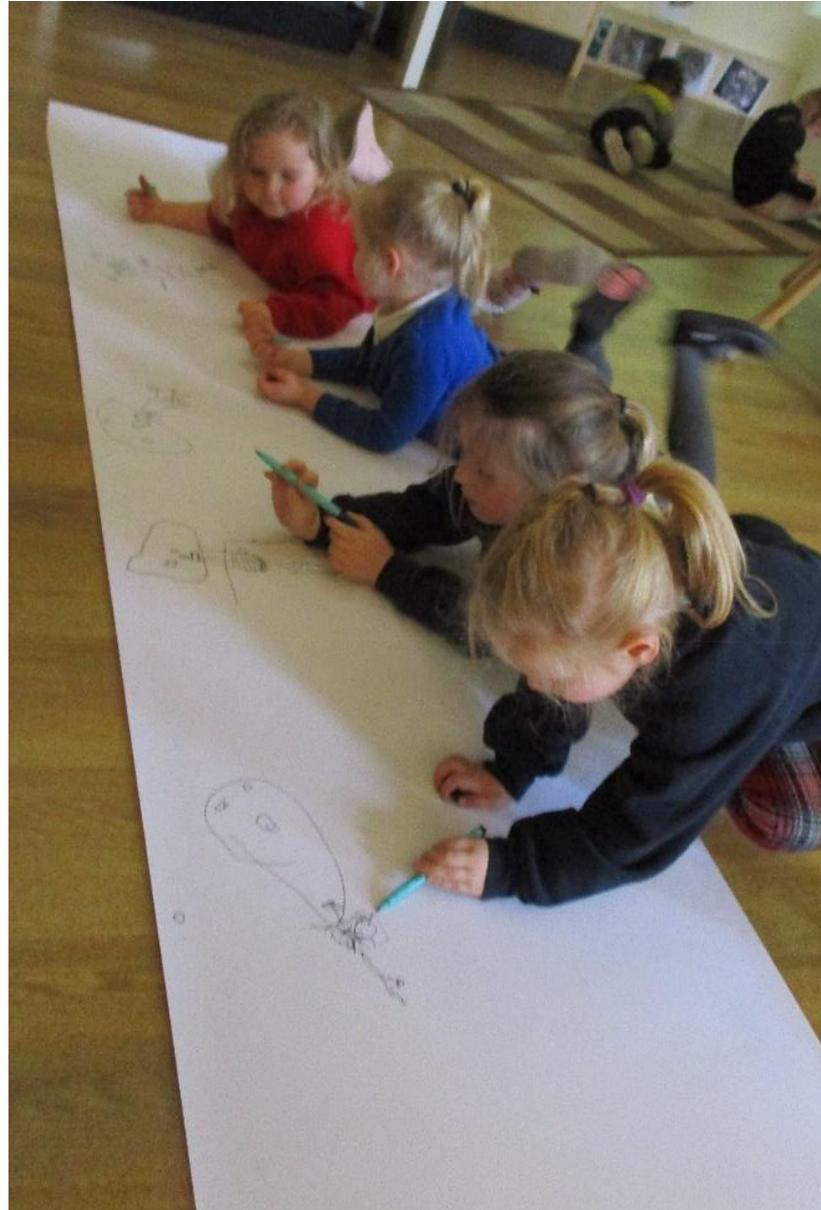
“She’s in mummy’s tummy.”

“Wow, you can see everything ... that’s a bone ... we can see the arm ... little tiny bones ... we could see it better if it was out!”



Through observation, the children have developed their representational skills by drawing and using loose parts to create skeletons.

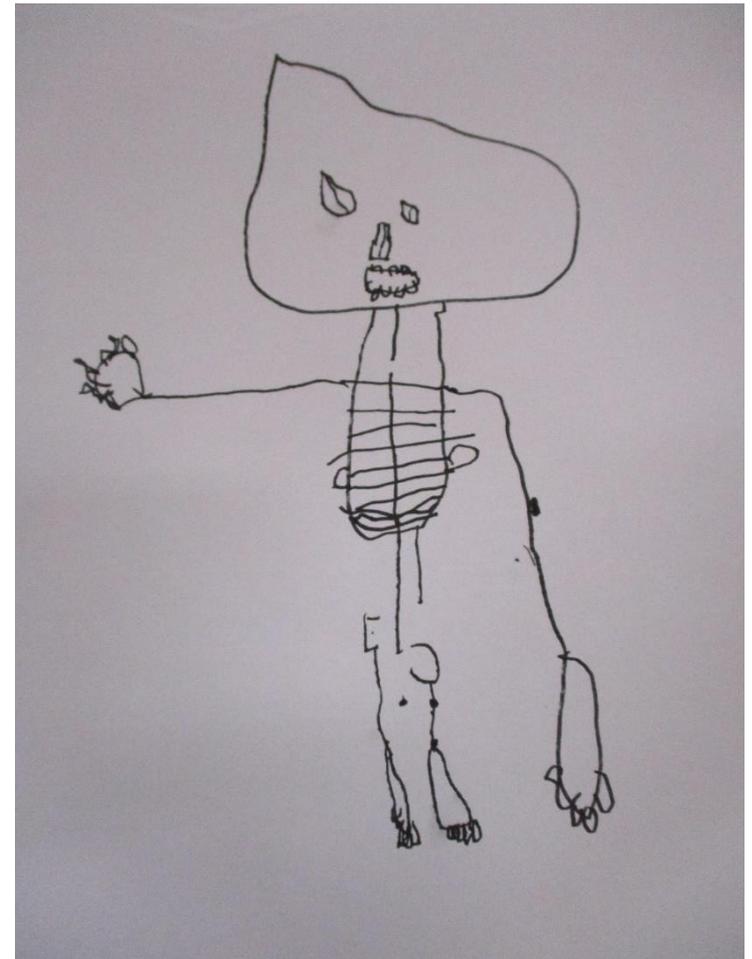
There was a lot of detail within the work and they began to develop ideas about what else is inside our bodies and why it is needed.



“That’s his head, his brain’s in there.
His body’s got a cage.”

“You can’t see your blood, you’ve got
skin on like a sausage.”

“We got a bump, bump heart ... your
heart beats in there.”





“When you laugh you get hiccups.”

“We got muscles so we can pull something up.”

“Your bladder’s in there ... your wee wee goes down.”

“That’s your spine ... it’s in your back.”

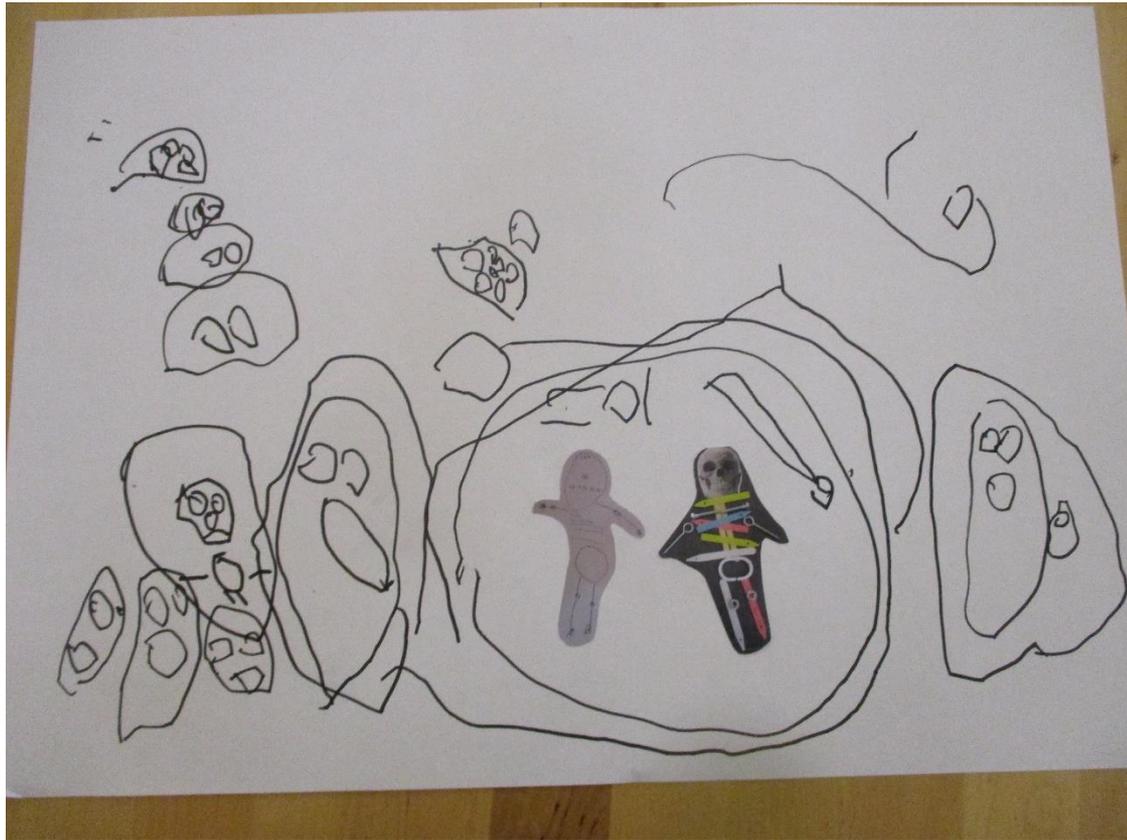


These images were offered to the children so through drawing, they could begin to give the skeletons an identity and context. As they drew, they were beginning to talk about their work reflecting home life experiences and fantasy.





“I done a boat. This is a hook so it stops when it goes on land. This is a window. That’s the front and that’s the back. This is Sid the Sailor on the boat, he’s going to walk to the window. I done him a chair so he can look out of the window. That’s the water on the bottom.”



“This is Steve and this is Sandra. They live in a house, it’s scary. I done a ghost to scare them away. What’s going to happen? I know Steve and Sandra are going to run away and the ghosts are going to chase them. They gonna go to a happy ghost and he’s going to throw snowballs at the ghost and scare him away.”

Photographs of the children's skeleton images were also inserted into a story telling app on the I-Pad.

Working together in pairs navigating their way around the app, the children began to develop rich narrative.



As a group, we regularly create stories together with everyone contributing their ideas. We decided to write a skeleton story and turn it into a 'movie' using the story telling app.

The following is our story brought to life.

MORNING STORY

Steve the Skeleton (CP) likes to dance (SP) to skeleton music (JC) played with his skeleton hands (CP). He's a happy skeleton (SP) & he likes to wave at everyone (SP) but when he waves he scares people (CP). The skeleton is crying because people think he's scary (RH). He lives in a castle (AH) a skeleton castle (JC) with a monster. No one can see him & he walks around & knocks on door so people come in & get trapped (CP). There's a bat (CP) he wants to fly (AH) & it makes the skeleton cry (RH). His wife Emma (CP) scares the bat (KG) says "naughty bat" & shoos him off (JC). The bat is very sad & goes to his home (AH).

The end.



Reflection

As the bones of the skeleton are connected together, the children have, throughout this project, begun to connect ideas and theories, sharing and developing their knowledge.

Relationships have developed as they have worked collaboratively enjoying dancing together and creating stories.

Their interest in the skeleton has enabled me as the Educator to create meaningful contexts for collaborative learning.

By offering a range of materials and languages of expressions it has given them the opportunity to bring their ideas to our group learning.