

Introduction

The theme is a special birthday - Jesus' birthday - and how Jesus' birth is remembered and celebrated at Christmas. The key concepts here are those of remembering and celebrating. The intended learning outcomes would be:

- to identify birthdays as a time when a birth is remembered.
- to recognise and talk about some features of birthday celebrations.
- to recognise that Christmas is a time when Jesus' birth is remembered and celebrated.
- to talk about ways in which Christmas is celebrated.

The assessment opportunities here are:

- to talk about what birthdays and their celebrations mean.
- to contribute to a display about the celebration that remembers Jesus' birth

Development

1: Why are birthdays special?

Talk about a birthday celebration - what special things happen? Introduce a teddy or doll, which will be 5 next week. What things would it expect on its birthday? For example: cards, decorations, cakes, party games. Make a card, decorations and cake for a pretend party to be held the next week / day?

Talk about the idea of a celebration for a birthday. We usually have songs, games, presents and food to share. All these things make the person feel special.

Have a pretend birthday party including all the appropriate things, focusing attention on a birthday being a time to remember someone's birth.

Create a display to reinforce the celebrations, cards, gifts, food, decorations, cake and candles for a birthday boy or girl.

2. What do birthdays celebrate?

Ask children to bring in baby pictures. Display and label these with names and birthdays. Clarify the link between birthdays and the birth.

Invite a new mother and baby to the classroom. The mother shows the children the baby and tells them about how the baby's arrival was celebrated through cards, presents, and flowers. How did they feel about the newborn baby? Where was it born? What is the baby's name? Who came to visit it?

Children could make cards for the baby. What would they want to say to welcome the baby? Encourage them to consider why it is important to celebrate the baby's arrival.

3. What is the story of Jesus' birth?

- Show the children lots of pictures of baby Jesus in the stable (use images from Christmas cards, religious art or the web). Explain that Jesus was born many years ago, but the day of his birth is remembered and celebrated by many people all over the world.
- Who is visiting in the picture?
- Where has the baby been born?
- What is the baby's name?
- Why are there lots of different drawings?
- Explain that Christians believe he was very special (Son of God).
- Tell a simple version of the story of the birth of Jesus (see the Barnabas books recommended above).
- Role-play or produce a class frieze to reinforce the story.

4. How is Jesus' birth celebrated?

Jesus' birthday is celebrated on a special day - Christmas day. What things do Christians do to celebrate Christmas?

Ask the children to identify the different ways in which people celebrate Christmas (e.g. eating food, singing songs, having visitors, giving presents and cards, decorating the room).

Hold a birthday party to celebrate Jesus' birthday - include songs and a crib scene.