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Principles into Practice

The four Themes of the EYFS are:

A Unique Child

These four **Themes** express important **Principles** underpinning effective practice in the care, development and learning of young children.



Positive Relationships

Each **Principle** is supported by four **Commitments** which describe how the Principle can be put into practice.



Enabling Environments



Learning and Development



The four Principles of the EYFS are:

Every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.

Children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or a key person.

The environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development and learning.

Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates and all areas of Learning and Development are equally important and inter-connected.

A Unique Child

1.1 Child Development

Babies and children develop in individual ways and at varying rates. Every area of development – physical, cognitive, linguistic, spiritual, social and emotional – is equally important.

1.2 Inclusive Practice

The diversity of individuals and communities is valued and respected. No child or family is discriminated against.

1.3 Keeping Safe

Young children are vulnerable. They develop resilience when their physical and psychological well-being is protected by adults.

1.4 Health and Well-being

Children's health is an integral part of their emotional, mental, social, environmental and spiritual well-being and is supported by attention to these aspects.

Positive Relationships

2.1 Respecting Each Other

Every interaction is based on caring professional relationships and respectful acknowledgement of the feelings of children and their families.

2.2 Parents as Partners

Parents are children's first and most enduring educators. When parents and practitioners work together in early years settings, the results have a positive impact on children's development and learning.

2.3 Supporting Learning

Warm, trusting relationships with knowledgeable adults support children's learning more effectively than any amount of resources.

2.4 Key Person

A key person has special responsibilities for working with a small number of children, giving them the reassurance to feel safe and cared for and building relationships with their parents.

Enabling Environments

3.1 Observation, Assessment and Planning

Babies and young children are individuals first, each with a unique profile of abilities. Schedules and routines should flow with the child's needs. All planning starts with observing children in order to understand and consider their current interests, development and learning.

3.2 Supporting Every Child

The environment supports every child's learning through planned experiences and activities that are challenging but achievable.

3.3 The Learning Environment

A rich and varied environment supports children's learning and development. It gives them the confidence to explore and learn in secure and safe, yet challenging, indoor and outdoor spaces.

3.4 The Wider Context

Working in partnership with other settings, other professionals and with individuals and groups in the community supports children's development and progress towards the outcomes of *Every Child Matters*: being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and economic well-being.

Learning and Development

4.1 Play and Exploration

Children's play reflects their wide ranging and varied interests and preoccupations. In their play children learn at their highest level. Play with peers is important for children's development.

4.2 Active Learning

Children learn best through physical and mental challenges. Active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve children for sustained periods.

4.3 Creativity and Critical Thinking

When children have opportunities to play with ideas in different situations and with a variety of resources, they discover connections and come to new and better understandings and ways of doing things. Adult support in this process enhances their ability to think critically and ask questions.

4.4 Areas of Learning and Development

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is made up of six areas of Learning and Development. All areas of Learning and Development are connected to one another and are equally important. All areas of Learning and Development are underpinned by the Principles of the EYFS.

These summaries highlight the more important aspects of child development in each of the **six stages of the EYFS**. Further information can be found in the **Principles into Practice cards**, in the Learning and Development sections **on the CD-ROM** and in the linked **Early Support materials** which give more detail on the areas of Learning and Development.

Birth–11 months

During this period, young children's physical development is very rapid and they gain increasing control of their muscles. They also develop skills in moving their hands, feet, limbs and head, quickly becoming mobile and able to handle and manipulate objects. They are learning from the moment of birth. Even before their first words they find out a lot about language by hearing people talking, and are especially interested when it involves themselves and their daily lives. Sensitive caregiving, which responds to children's growing understanding and emotional needs, helps to build secure attachments to special people such as parents, family members or carers. Regular, though flexible, routines help young children to gain a sense of order in the world and to anticipate events. A wide variety of experience, which involves all the senses, encourages learning and an interest in the environment.



Broad phases of development

All children are different and to reflect this age ranges have been overlapped in the EYFS to create broad developmental phases. This emphasises that each child's progress is individual to them and that different children develop at different rates. A child does not suddenly move from one phase to another, and they do not make progress in all areas at the same time. However, there are some important 'steps' for each child to take along their own developmental pathway. These are shown on the areas of Learning and Development in the sections Look, listen and note and Development matters. There are six broad developmental phases.

8–20 months

As children become mobile new opportunities for exploration and exercise open up. A safe and interesting environment, with age-appropriate resources, helps children to develop curiosity, coordination and physical abilities. This is a time when children can start to learn the beginnings of self-control and how to relate to other people. In this period children can be encouraged to develop their social and mental skills by people to whom they have a positive attachment. Building on their communication skills, children now begin to develop a sense of self and are more able to express their needs and feelings. Alongside non-verbal communication children learn a few simple words for everyday things and people. With encouragement and plenty of interaction with carers, children's communication skills grow and their vocabulary expands very rapidly during this period.



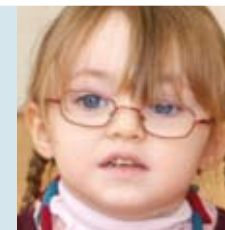
16–26 months

Children in this phase are usually full of energy and need careful support to use it well. Growing physical strengths and skills mean that children need active times for exercise, and quiet times for calmer activities. Playing with other children is an important new area for learning. This helps children to better understand other people's thoughts and feelings, and to learn how to cooperate with others. Exploration and simple self-help builds a sense of self-confidence. Children are also learning about boundaries and how to handle frustration. Play with toys that come apart and fit together encourages problem solving and simple planning. Pretend play helps children to learn about a range of possibilities. Adults are an important source of security and comfort.



22–36 months

Children's fine motor skills continue to develop and they enjoy making marks, using a variety of materials, looking at picture books and listening to stories, important steps in literacy. Self-help and independence soon emerge if adults support and encourage children in areas such as eating, dressing and toileting. Praise for new achievements helps to build their self-esteem. In this phase, children's language is developing rapidly and many are beginning to put sentences together. Joining in conversations with children is an important way for children to learn new things and to begin to think about past, present and future. Developing physical skills mean that children can now usually walk, climb and run, and join in active play with other children. This is an important time for learning about dangers and safe limits.



30–50 months

An increased interest in joint play such as make-believe, construction and games helps children to learn the important social skills of sharing and cooperating. Children also learn more about helping adults in everyday activities and finding a balance between independence and complying with the wishes of others. Children still need the comfort and security of special people. Close, warm relationships with carers form the basis for much learning, such as encouraging children to make healthy choices in food and exercise. At this stage children are becoming more aware of their place in a community. Literacy and numeracy can develop rapidly with the support of a wide range of interesting materials and activities. Children's language is now much more complex, as many become adept at using longer sentences. Conversations with adults become a more important source of information, guidance and reassurance.



40–60+ months

During this period children are now building a stronger sense of their own identity and their place in a wider world. Children are learning to recognise the importance of social rules and customs, to show understanding and tolerance of others, and to learn how to be more controlled in their own behaviour. Learning and playing in small groups helps to foster the development of social skills. Children now become better able to plan and undertake more challenging activities with a wider range of materials for making and doing. In this phase children learn effectively in shared activities with more able peers and adults. Literacy and problem solving, reasoning and numeracy skills continue to develop. Children's developing understanding of cause and effect is encouraged by the introduction of a wider variety of equipment, media and technologies.



1.1 **Child Development**

Babies and children develop in **individual ways** and at **varying rates**. **Every area of development** – physical, cognitive, linguistic, spiritual, social and emotional, **is equally important**.

**Child development**

- Every child is a unique individual with their own characteristics and temperament.
- Development is a continuous, complex interaction of environmental and genetic factors in which the body, brain and behaviour become more complex.
- Babies and children mature at different rates and at different times in their lives.
- Babies and children are vulnerable and become resilient and confident if they have support from others.
- Early relationships strongly influence how children develop and having close relationships with carers is very important.

A skilful communicator

- Babies are especially interested in other people and in communicating with them using eye contact, crying, cooing and gurgling to have 'conversations'.
- Babies and children are sociable and curious, and they explore the world through relationships with others and through all their senses.
- Babies and children develop their competence in communicating through having frequent, enjoyable interactions with other people, in contexts that they understand.
- Children learn to communicate in many ways, not just by talking, but also in non-verbal ways such as gestures, facial expressions and gaze direction, in drawing, writing and singing, and through dance, music and drama.

A competent learner

- Babies come into the world ready to learn and are especially tuned to learn from other people and the cultural and material environment.
- Play and other imaginative and creative activities help children to make sense of their experience and 'transform' their knowledge, fostering cognitive development.
- Language, thinking and learning are interlinked; they depend on and promote each other's development.
- What children *can* do is the starting point for learning.
- Children learn better by doing, and by doing things with other people who are more competent, rather than just by being told.



Effective practice

- Understand the processes involved in babies' and children's growth, development and learning.
- Support babies and children to develop a positive sense of their own identity and culture, this helps them to develop a positive self-image.
- Encourage, listen and respond to babies' and children's communications, both non-verbal and verbal.
- Acknowledge the different ways in which babies and children learn, and be aware that learning is a process that cannot be rushed.
- Recognise that babies' and children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others.



Challenges and dilemmas

- How to meet the differing and competing needs of every child, while being 'fair' about time spent with individual children.
- Listening carefully and waiting for a child who gets excited or pauses a lot when they are trying to communicate, so that they can complete what they wanted to say.
- Recognising and praising effort as well as achievement so that all children develop positive attitudes to themselves as learners.



Reflecting on practice

Think about each child in the group. Consider their:

- unique development;
- individual interests;
- communication style;
- learning style.

How is each child's individual development supported through all the experiences in the setting?

What do I do next?

- **Welfare requirements** are explained in full in the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* booklet.
- **Areas of Learning and Development** including effective practice, planning and resourcing at different stages are detailed in the *Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage* booklet and on the CD-ROM.
- **Early Support** information is available on the CD-ROM under areas of Learning and Development.
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1.2 Inclusive Practice

The **diversity** of individuals and communities is **valued and respected**. No child or family is discriminated against.



Equality and diversity

- All children have a need to develop, which is helped by exploring and discovering the people and things around them.
- Some children's development may be at risk, for example:
 - children who are disabled and those with special educational needs;
 - those from socially excluded families, such as the homeless or those who live with a parent who is disabled or has a mental illness;
 - children from traveller communities, refugees or asylum seekers and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.
- All children are entitled to enjoy a full life in conditions which will help them take part in society and develop as an individual, with their own cultural and spiritual beliefs.
- Practitioners ensure that their own knowledge about different cultural groups is up-to-date and consider their own attitudes to people who are different from themselves.

Children's entitlements

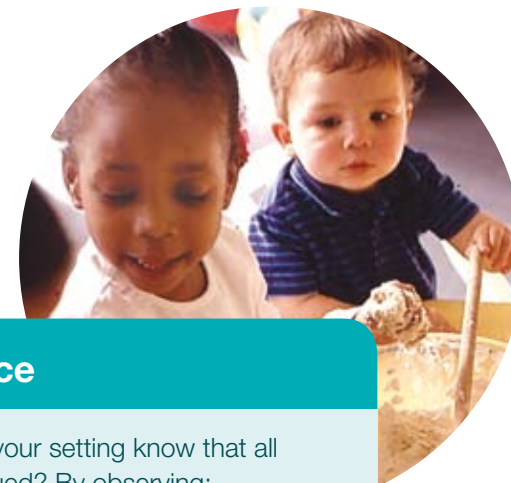
- All children are citizens and have rights and entitlements.
- Children should be treated fairly regardless of race, religion or abilities. This applies no matter what they think or say; what type of family they come from; what language(s) they speak; what their parents do; whether they are girls or boys; whether they have a disability or whether they are rich or poor.
- All children have an equal right to be listened to and valued in the setting.

Early support

- It is important to identify the need for additional support as early as possible. Without it children will not get the help they need at the right time, in the way that is right for them.
- Early support for children includes listening to families and taking part in a sensitive two-way exchange of information.
- For children with the most severe and complex additional support needs you need to plan jointly with everyone who is in contact with the child. This will coordinate support and promote learning as effectively as possible.
- Knowing when and how to call in specialist help is one important element of inclusive practice.

Effective practice

- Encourage children to recognise their own unique qualities and the characteristics they share with other children.
- Make sure that you actively promote equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that all children and families feel included, safe and valued.
- Ask parents whether there is a need for any special services and equipment for children who may require additional support.
- Support children to make friends and help them to think about what makes a good friend.



Reflecting on practice

How would a family arriving at your setting know that all children are welcomed and valued? By observing:

- information in pictures, words and signs indicating how to get attention?
- a warm smile and greeting from the receptionist?
- photographs showing the names of staff?
- a welcome board showing children and families from a variety of cultures, saying “Welcome” in different languages?
- signs, symbols, photographs or objects relating to the lives of families who use the setting, for example, a charity event in a nearby park attended by children and families from the setting?
- displays showing documentation of children’s play, development and learning?
- somewhere comfortable to sit?

Challenges and dilemmas

- Ensuring the needs of every child are fully met, even when temporarily you need to spend more time with a child who is new to the setting or whose behaviour is giving rise to concern.
- Keeping a focus on the child’s needs when a parent also has significant needs.
- Maintaining records suitable for sharing with colleagues in an inter-agency team while acting as a point of contact for a child and their family.



What do I do next?

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1.3 **Keeping Safe**

Young children are **vulnerable**.
They develop **resilience**
when their **physical** and
psychological well-being
is **protected** by adults.

**Being safe and protected**

- Babies and children are vulnerable as they have little sense of danger and only learn to assess risks with help from adults.
- Reading stories and poems about everyday events is a good way of helping children to focus on who they can trust and how to keep safe.
- However, being overprotected can prevent children from learning about possible dangers and about how to protect themselves from harm.
- Learning when to say “No” and anticipating when others will do so is part of learning to keep safe.

Discovering boundaries

- Explaining boundaries, rules and limits to children helps them to understand why rules exist.
- When children are clear about the limits on what they may and may not do they learn to distinguish right from wrong.
- Having consistent boundaries for behaviour at home and in the setting helps children feel confident because they know what is and is not acceptable in either place.
- When children receive warm, responsive care they are more likely to feel secure and valued and to want to contribute to making the rules which make things ‘fair’ for everybody.

Making choices

- Giving children choices helps them to learn that while there are several different options they can only choose one at a time.
- Children who are supported to make choices learn that sometimes they can have, or do, something now, while at other times they may have to wait longer for a particular choice.
- Making choices about things such as what they will do or what they will wear helps children feel some sense of control over their day.
- Remember that choices sometimes include choosing not to do something, such as choosing not to join in when everybody else is moving to music!



Effective practice

- Allow babies and children to do the things they can, help them with the things they cannot quite manage and do things for them they cannot do for themselves.
- Demonstrate clear and consistent boundaries and be reasonable with expectations.
- Talk with parents about taking a consistent approach to challenging behaviour such as biting or scratching.
- Listen to what children tell you, and act on non-verbal signals from them, especially from children who are unable to voice their anxieties. Always take action to follow up any concerns, even if these prove to be groundless.



Challenges and dilemmas

- Maintaining a respectful dialogue with parents or other professionals whose views about behaviour or child rearing differ radically from your own.
- Providing sufficient opportunities and experiences for babies and children to interest and involve them without compromising their safety at any time.
- Giving children time to think about what they want and to express their wishes, rather than stepping in to help by making decisions for them.
- Being flexible about applying important rules while remaining consistent so that children do not become confused.



Reflecting on practice

What activities or experiences in the setting help children to think about:

- the things that make them feel good about themselves?
- the people who help them?
- how to keep themselves safe?
- how to recognise and avoid possible danger?
- reasons for making particular choices?
- the reason they are allowed to do or to have some things and not other things?

What do I do next?

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1.4 **Health and Well-being**

Children's **health** is an integral part of their **emotional, mental, social, environmental and spiritual well-being** and is supported by attention to these aspects.

**Physical well-being**

- Physical well-being includes the growth and physical development of babies and children. They have a biological drive to use their physical skills and benefit from physical activity.
- Being physically healthy is not simply about having nutritious food. It also includes having a clean and safe environment; appropriate clothes; healthcare; mental stimulation; access to the outdoors and loving relationships.
- For babies and children rest and sleep are as important as good food.
- Remember that children gain control of their whole bodies gradually.

Growing and developing

- Although newborn babies vary in size their growth rates are very similar.
- Children's health and well-being are affected by both the genes they inherit and the environment in which they live.
- Development is very rapid in the first three years.
- Children really do thrive when their physical and emotional needs are met.

Emotional well-being

- Babies and children have emotional well-being when their needs are met and their feelings are accepted. They enjoy relationships that are close, warm and supportive.
- Making friends and getting on with others helps children to feel positive about themselves and others.
- Children gain a sense of well-being when they are encouraged to take responsibility and to join in by helping with manageable tasks that interest them.
- Children feel a sense of belonging in the setting when their parents are also involved in it.

Effective practice

- Find the best ways to offer care, nurture and learning that match the needs and interests of the individual baby or child.
- Recognise that parents and grandparents may have a huge amount of knowledge about their children which they may be happy to share.
- Provide opportunities for children to explore, play and learn in a safe and secure environment, remembering that children's mobility and movement are important for their development.
- Have reasonable rules that fit with children's rhythms and give a pattern to daily life.
- Recognise child abuse and neglect and know who to consult if there is a cause for concern.



Reflecting on practice

Think about the food that your setting encourages children to enjoy.

- How do you encourage children to know about and choose healthy snacks?
- How are foods from different cultures presented to children – as a novelty or as something for which they may develop a taste?
- How do you help children to learn about the food chain and planting, growing, gathering, preparing and using different foods?

Think about the opportunities children have for activity and rest.

- Is there a balance of activities so that babies and children can be involved in activity some of the time and relax or rest for some of the time?
- How does the environment support children's choices to be active or to rest? Are there quiet places or dens where children can relax and interesting, large spaces for vigorous free movement?

Challenges and dilemmas

- Ensuring safety without stopping reasonable risk-taking.
- Recognising the extra requirements of babies and children with special needs, and planning how to ensure these children have access to similar opportunities as their peers.
- Fostering the physical, mental and emotional well-being of every child individually while recognising and meeting children's needs to belong and be part of a group.
- Maintaining children's healthy interest in their own bodies, their own well-being and food preferences, while helping them to understand why some choices are healthier than others.



What do I do next?

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2.1 Respecting Each Other

Every interaction is **based on caring professional relationships** and respectful acknowledgement of the **feelings** of children and their families.



Understanding feelings

- At times we all experience strong emotions as we deal with difficult or stressful events.
- Adults and children experience a wide range of feelings. Children gradually learn to understand and manage their feelings with support from the adults around them.
- Recognising their own feelings helps everyone to understand other people's feelings and to become more caring towards others.
- When each person is valued for who they are and differences are appreciated, everyone feels included and understood, whatever their personality, abilities, ethnic background or culture.

Friendships

- Friendships and relationships are an important part of children's development from birth.
- As children develop socially they begin to choose best friends and show preferences for the children they wish to play with.
- While friendships and relationships are a source of fun, they also offer children the chance to give and receive practical help and emotional support.
- Remember that making friends is not easy for all children, particularly those who are shy or who find it difficult to cooperate with others.

Professional relationships

- If you value and respect yourself, you will do the same to others.
- Professional relationships focus on respecting and valuing the strengths, skills and knowledge of the people you work with and recognising the contribution made by everyone in your setting.
- There should be open communication to ensure that everyone's views are listened to and considered fairly, always keeping the needs of the children firmly in mind.
- Professional relationships are based on friendliness towards parents, but not necessarily friendship with parents.



Effective practice

- Make time to listen to parents to learn about their feelings and identify any concerns.
- Be aware that many factors will influence children's and families' sociability. They may be tired, stressed or trying to communicate in more than one language.
- Help children who find it difficult to get on with others by showing them how to play and be friendly with other children.
- Recognise the strengths of professional relationships in creating an approach that best meets the needs of individual children.



Challenges and dilemmas

- Having strong feelings about an issue which may be a barrier to supporting a child or their family if they encounter a similar event or experience.
- Having strong relationships in the team which make other team members feel excluded or inadequate so they stop speaking up.
- Maintaining a professional distance from parents while working closely in partnership with them.



Reflecting on practice

How does the setting support mutual respect between the following:

- individual staff members or teams;
- staff members and parents;
- staff members and children;
- parents and children;
- children and children;
- diverse groups?

What do I do next?

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2.2 Parents as Partners

Parents are children's first and most enduring educators. When **parents and practitioners work together** in early years settings, the results have a **positive impact on children's development** and learning.



Respecting diversity

- All families are important and should be welcomed and valued in all settings.
- Families are all different. Children may live with one or both parents, with other relatives or carers, with same sex parents or in an extended family.
- Families may speak more than one language at home; they may be travellers, refugees or asylum seekers.
- All practitioners will benefit from professional development in diversity, equality and anti-discriminatory practice whatever the ethnic, cultural or social make-up of the setting.

Communication

- A welcoming atmosphere with approachable staff helps to create effective communication.
- Effective communication means there is a two-way flow of information, knowledge and expertise between parents and practitioners.
- All communication is important, including gesture, signing and body language. Actions can speak louder than words.
- Posters, pictures and other resources on display will show the setting's positive attitudes to disability, and to ethnic, cultural and social diversity. They will help children and families to recognise that they are valued.

Learning together

- Parents and practitioners have a lot to learn from each other. This can help them to support and extend children's learning and development.
- Parents should review their children's progress regularly and contribute to their child's learning and development record.
- Parents can be helped to understand more about learning and teaching through workshops on important areas such as play, outdoor learning or early reading. Some parents may go on to access further education at their own level.
- In true partnership, parents understand and contribute to the policies in the setting.

Effective practice

- Display lists of words from home languages used by children in the setting and invite parents and practitioners to contribute to them. Seeing their languages reflected in this way will encourage parents to feel involved and valued.
- Find out from parents the greetings they use either in English or in other languages. Encourage staff, parents and children to use the greetings.
- Make sure that everyone who enters the setting receives a friendly welcome.
- Talk with parents about their children's progress and development, providing appropriate support for those who do not speak or understand English.
- Ask parents for their views on the care and education you provide.



Reflecting on practice

- How do you open up opportunities for informal talk with parents?
- How do you know parents understand the setting's policies on important areas such as learning and teaching, inclusion and behaviour? Have they been involved in drawing them up?
- Do parents contribute to children's profiles?
- Do they regularly review their children's progress with you?
- Do you really listen to and value what parents say?
- Do you provide workshops and other sessions?
- Do you run family learning courses or other opportunities for parents to access learning and continue to college and elsewhere if appropriate?
- Does the documentation provided for parents in your setting explicitly recognise and value the hard job in which they are engaged and their role in children's learning and development?

Challenges and dilemmas

- How to get fathers involved. Think about planning events that are just for men. Some men may feel more comfortable knowing that other men will be there.
- How to communicate with parents who are working or simply very busy. Ask them to let you know their preferred time and method of contact, and be flexible! This might mean getting in touch by letter, telephone, email, or by a message sent through a friend, relation or childminder.



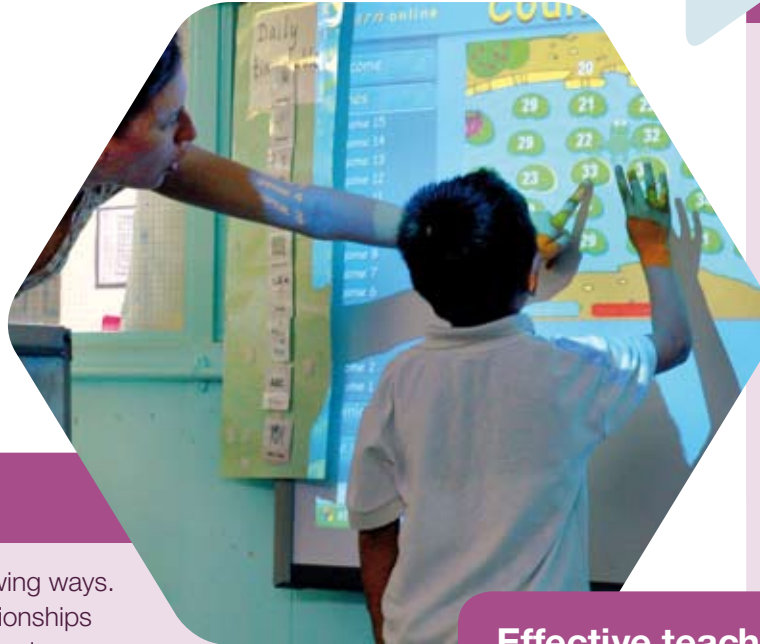
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2.3 Supporting Learning

Warm, trusting relationships with knowledgeable adults support children's learning **more effectively than any amount of resources.**



Positive interactions

Effective practitioners work in the following ways.

- They build respectful and caring relationships with all children and families while focusing on learning and achievement.
- They observe children sensitively and respond appropriately to encourage and extend curiosity and learning.
- By observing and listening they discover what children like to do, and when they feel confident, scared or frustrated.
- They are able to tune in to, rather than talk at, children, taking their lead and direction from what the children say or do.

Listening to children

- Babies, very young children and those with speech or other developmental delay or disability may not say anything verbally, though they may communicate a great deal in other ways.
- Photographs of activities or a picture exchange system help children to record their likes and dislikes.
- Talking with children may take place in English or in their home language, in signing or through body language and gesture.
- Whatever form of communication is used, children need space and time to respond and to know that the practitioner is giving full attention and encouragement to their thinking.

Effective teaching

- Teaching means systematically helping children to learn so that they make connections in their learning, are actively led forward, and can reflect on their learning.
- The more practitioners know about each child, the better they are able to support and extend each child's learning.
- Children need and will respond positively to challenges if they have a good relationship with the practitioner and feel confident to try things out. They shouldn't fear failure or ridicule.
- Practitioners who really know the children are able to judge when they are ready to be taught new skills.



Effective practice

- Motivate children to concentrate and to try several ways to make something work rather than giving up. Use encouraging, friendly and lively approaches to support children and increase their motivation.
- Model active listening when listening to children; when supporting a child who is being called names or harassed; when taking turns in the conversation; and when showing respect for what a child has to say.
- Help children build on prior learning by pitching activities, such as a play or a story, at a level that is demanding but still within the children's reach.
- Model being a learner as you work with children. For example, "I am going to have to think hard about how to help my son get into our house because he has forgotten his key and nobody will be there to let him in the door. Can anyone help me think what I can do?"



Reflecting on practice

Think about the children with whom you work.

- Do they know that you are genuinely pleased to see them all each day?
- Are there some children it is harder to get to know and build positive relationships with? What could you do to ensure that you get to know them better?

Set up a tape recorder when you are involved in a small group activity.

- Who does the most talking and what sort of talk is it?
- What messages does this give the children? What are the messages for your practice?

Challenges and dilemmas

- Making time to really listen to children's views and to act on them even when they do not match adults' views!
- Putting into practice a written policy of listening to children who are non-verbal, or who use alternative communication systems or are learning English as an additional language, when time and resources are under pressure.
- Identifying just the right moment to intervene and move children's learning on, by perhaps joining in or asking a question.



What do I do next?

- **Welfare requirements** are explained in full in the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* booklet.
- **Areas of Learning and Development** including practice planning and resourcing at different stages are detailed in the *Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage* booklet and on the CD-ROM.
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Key Person

A key person has **special responsibilities** for working with a small number of children, giving them the reassurance to feel **safe** and cared for and building relationships with their parents.



Secure attachment

- A key person helps the baby or child to become familiar with the setting and to feel confident and safe within it.
- A key person develops a genuine bond with children and offers a settled, close relationship.
- When children feel happy and secure in this way they are confident to explore and to try out new things.
- Even when children are older and can hold special people in mind for longer there is still a need for them to have a key person to depend on in the setting, such as their teacher or a teaching assistant.

Shared care

- A key person meets the needs of each child in their care and responds sensitively to their feelings, ideas and behaviour.
- A key person talks to parents to make sure that the child is being cared for appropriately for each family.
- A close emotional relationship with a key person in the setting does not undermine children's ties with their own parents.
- Careful records of the child's development and progress are created and shared by parents, the child, the key person and other professionals as necessary.

Independence

- Babies and children become independent by being able to depend upon adults for reassurance and comfort.
- Children's independence is most obvious when they feel confident and self-assured, such as when they are in their own home with family, or with friends and familiar carers such as a key person.
- Babies and children are likely to be much less independent when they are in new situations, such as a new group or when they feel unwell or anxious.



Effective practice

- Ensure that rotas are based on when a key person is available for each child.
- Provide a second key person for children so that when the main key person is away there is a familiar and trusted person who knows the child well.
- Plan time for each key person to work with parents so that they really know and understand the children in their key group.
- As children move groups or settings, help them to become familiar with their new key person.



Challenges and dilemmas

- Reassuring others that children will not become too dependent on a key person or find it difficult to adjust to being a member of a group.
- Meeting children's needs for a key person while being concerned for staff who may feel over-attached to a child.
- Reassuring parents who may be concerned that children may be more attached to staff than to them.
- Supporting children's transitions within and beyond a setting, particularly as children reach four or five years of age.



Reflecting on practice

Imagine what your setting seems like to a parent and their child when they first arrive. It may seem busy, friendly, noisy, lively, exciting and fun to you.

- How might it seem to an anxious parent and their young child of 18 months who has just experienced a violent family break-up?
- How might it seem to a five-year-old who has been living in one room with a parent who is depressed and makes little conversation?

What do I do next?

- **Welfare requirements** are explained in full in the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* booklet.
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3.1 Observation, Assessment and Planning

Babies and young children are **individuals first, each with a unique profile of abilities**. Schedules and routines should flow with the child's needs. All planning starts with observing children in order to understand and consider their current interests, development and learning.



Planning

- Planning can be for the long-/medium-term and can show how the Principles of the EYFS will be put into practice.
- Some planning will be short-term – for a week or a day and will show how you will support each child's learning and development.
- This planning always follows the same pattern – observe, analyse, and use what you have found out about the children in your group so that you plan for the next steps in their learning.

Starting with the child

- Observe children to find out about their needs, what they are interested in and what they can do.
- Note children's responses in different situations.
- Analyse your observations and highlight children's achievements or their need for further support.
- Involve parents as part of the ongoing observation and assessment process.

Assessment

- Assessments are the decisions you make using what you have observed about a child's development and/or learning.
- One type of assessment, often referred to as assessment for learning or formative assessment, is what you do every day when you observe children and note their interests or abilities.
- Another type of assessment is used to give a summary of a child's achievements at a particular point in time so that their progress can be tracked. This is known as summative assessment. The EYFS Profile is a summative assessment of each child's achievement at the end of the EYFS.
- You may be involved in contributing to the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) for a child who has additional needs. The CAF is a standardised assessment which gives a full picture of a child's additional needs at any stage. It includes information from the child and their parents and covers all aspects of a child's development including health, education and social development.

Effective practice

- When you are planning remember that children learn from everything, even things you haven't planned for – such as a fall of snow.
- Plan to observe as part of the daily routine.
- Analyse your observations to help you plan 'what next' for individuals and groups of children.
- Develop records of learning and development.
- Ensure that parents have regular opportunities to add to records.



Reflecting on practice

It is important to consider all the factors that affect children's development and learning.

- Are the views of parents and practitioners reflected in children's records?
- Do you review the environment and the resources after each session?
- Do you think about which children were involved in different activities and use this information to plan further?

Challenges and dilemmas

- Ensuring flexibility in planning for the group, while keeping a focus on children's individual and present learning needs, or interests and achievements.
- Planning time for regular observations of children who attend the setting on an irregular basis.
- Involving parents in contributing to the observation, assessment and planning cycle when they are already busy.
- Creating records that are clear and accessible to everybody who needs to see them.



What do I do next?

- **Welfare requirements** are explained in full in the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* booklet.
- **Areas of Learning and Development** including effective practice, planning and resourcing at different stages are detailed in the *Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage* booklet and on the CD-ROM.
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3.2 Supporting Every Child

The environment **supports every child's learning** through planned experiences and activities that are challenging but achievable.



Children's needs

- Children need sensitive, knowledgeable adults who know when and how to engage their interests and how to offer support at different times.
- Children benefit from a range of experiences, including those that are predictable, comforting and challenging.
- When children's physical and emotional needs are met they are more ready to take advantage of the play and learning opportunities on offer.

The learning journey

- Learning is a continuous journey through which children build on all the things they have already experienced and come across new and interesting challenges.
- Every child's learning journey takes a personal path based on their own individual interests, experiences and the curriculum on offer.
- All areas of Learning and Development are connected and all are equally important.
- The support children receive as they learn is personalised to meet their individual needs and to extend their talents.

Working together

- A setting which recognises the needs of every child plans learning journeys which are suitable for groups but flexible enough to cater for individual pathways along the way.
- When children's needs are central to the learning process children are listened to.
- Parents and professionals work together to identify what is necessary for each child at any particular time.
- Settings communicate and work together for the benefit of children, so there can be continuity in their learning.



Effective practice

- Understand the complex relationship between child development and how children learn. Plan to provide appropriate, realistic experiences that build on children's interests.
- Use the experiences children bring from home such as their family, the shops or the park as the starting point for their learning.
- Maintain a clear view of the learning journey for all children but provide different learning opportunities for individual children or groups who may need extra support or more challenge.
- Involve people from the wider community to familiarise children with those who work together to support their learning.



Challenges and dilemmas

- Recognising that while a setting may have very good written policies, in practice there is a gap between the things that are written down and the reality of the day-to-day experience.
- Keeping individualised planning realistic while maintaining a focus on broader learning outcomes.
- Combining the knowledge, skills and expertise of parents, staff members and of the multi-disciplinary team to support children's learning and progress.



Reflecting on practice

Even the most ordinary events can be made more exciting and interesting when you give some thought to it. Think about:

- going to the toilet – guessing how many strides it will take for the practitioner and the child to get there;
- setting the table – making up a song about 'jumping beans';
- getting ready to go home – making up a story which has 'and then' after each 'event' until the ending: "and *then* we will be back at home".

What do I do next?

- **Welfare requirements** are explained in full in the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* booklet.
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3.3 The Learning Environment

A rich and varied **environment** supports children's learning and development. It gives them the confidence to explore and learn in **secure and safe, yet challenging**, indoor and outdoor spaces.



The emotional environment

- The emotional environment is created by all the people in the setting, but adults have to ensure that it is warm and accepting of everyone.
- Adults need to empathise with children and support their emotions.
- When children feel confident in the environment they are willing to try things out, knowing that effort is valued.
- When children know that their feelings are accepted they learn to express them, confident that adults will help them with how they are feeling.

The outdoor environment

- Being outdoors has a positive impact on children's sense of well-being and helps all aspects of children's development.
- Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors.
- It gives children first-hand contact with weather, seasons and the natural world.
- Outdoor environments offer children freedom to explore, use their senses, and be physically active and exuberant.

The indoor environment

- The indoor environment provides a safe, secure yet challenging space for children.
- For some children, the indoor environment is like a second 'home', providing a place for activity, rest, eating and sleeping.
- The indoor environment contains resources which are appropriate, well maintained and accessible for all children.
- Indoor spaces are planned so that they can be used flexibly and an appropriate range of activities is provided.



Effective practice

- Understand that some children may need extra support to express their feelings and come to terms with them.
- Encourage children to help to plan the layout of the environment and to contribute to keeping it tidy.
- Ensure that children have opportunities to be outside on a daily basis all year round.
- Help children to understand how to behave outdoors and inside by talking about personal safety, risks and the safety of others.
- Create an indoor environment that is reassuring and comforting for all children, while providing interest through novelty from time to time.
- Where possible link the indoor and outdoor environments so that children can move freely between them.

Challenges and dilemmas

- Finding ways to promote the importance and value of the outdoor environment to all those involved in the setting, for example, the senior management team, other professionals, staff and parents.
- Meeting the needs of children of different ages in a shared outdoor space.
- Overcoming problems in accessing and using the outdoor environment because of the design or organisation of the building.
- Ensuring the indoor environment is 'homely' enough to feel comfortable while providing an environment suitable for learning.



Reflecting on practice

- What support is available to practitioners who may feel 'drained' emotionally when a child requires extensive support for their feelings of sadness, anger or frustration?
- How well do you reflect examples of outdoor learning in your observations and assessments of children?
- Does indoor provision meet the needs of all the children as both a place to feel 'at home' and a place to learn?
- How do you ensure that the deployment of staff is flexible enough to respond to the flow and movement of children between indoors and outdoors?

What do I do next?

- **Welfare requirements** are explained in full in the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* booklet.
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- **Research and resources** are available on the CD-ROM.



3.4 The Wider Context

Working in partnership with other settings, other professionals and with individuals and groups in the community supports children's development and progress towards the outcomes of *Every Child Matters*: **being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution and economic well-being.**



Multi-agency working

- In order to achieve the *Every Child Matters* outcomes for children – being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being – practitioners need to work together across services.
- This may involve, for example, working with home visitors, outreach workers, health or social care professionals, ethnic minority achievement service staff, librarians or local artists.
- To best support children and their families all these groups need to communicate well, listen carefully to all concerned and to put the children's needs first.

Transitions and continuity

- Children may move between several different settings in the course of a day, a week, a month or a year.
- Children's social, emotional and educational needs are central to any transition between one setting and another or within one setting.
- Some children and their parents will find transition times stressful while others will enjoy the experience.
- Effective communication between settings is key to ensuring that children's needs are met and there is continuity in their learning.

The community

- Every setting is part of its community even though not all the children may live in the surrounding neighbourhood.
- The local community may contain many different racial, cultural or religious groups. Even if it doesn't, there will be children and adults of various ages with different views, beliefs and backgrounds using the setting.
- When the setting values the local community it can encourage the different community groups to work together for the benefit of all.



Effective practice

- Ensure that parents are kept informed in advance about what will happen at transition times, such as when children join the setting.
- Involve parents at transition times, valuing what they say and encouraging them to stay with their children while they settle in.
- When children attend several settings ensure that practitioners from each setting regularly share the children's development and learning records and any other relevant information.
- Take time to listen to colleagues from other professional backgrounds and be open about differences of language and approach.
- Involve children in learning which takes them into the local community, such as walking to the shops.
- Invite members of the local community into the setting to share their expertise, for example, digging a new flower bed or talking about their own childhood.



Challenges and dilemmas

- Finding time to record children's progress and development in ways which can be easily shared across agencies.
- Finding sufficient time to really involve parents fully in decisions made about their children.
- Maintaining good relationships with professionals whom you only see once in a while.



Reflecting on practice

- Do you have a policy for transition and continuity which is shared with everyone involved both in and beyond the setting?
- How do you help children and families who are new to the area or your setting to settle in and get to know people? What is the role of the key person in this?
- How well do staff know the local area and use this knowledge in planning for children's learning?

What do I do next?

- **Welfare requirements** are explained in full in the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* booklet.
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- **Research and resources** are available on the CD-ROM.



4.1 Play and Exploration

Children's play reflects their wide ranging and varied interests and preoccupations. **In their play children learn at their highest level.** Play with peers is important for children's development.



Learning through experience

- Children have to experience play physically and emotionally.
- Children may play alone or with others.
- In their play children use the experiences they have and extend them to build up ideas, concepts and skills.
- While playing children can express fears and re-live anxious experiences. They can try things out, solve problems and be creative and can take risks and use trial and error to find things out.

Adult involvement

- Play comes naturally and spontaneously to most children, though some need adult support.
- Practitioners plan and resource a challenging environment where children's play can be supported and extended.
- Practitioners can extend and develop children's language and communication in their play through sensitive observation and appropriate intervention.
- Practitioners always intervene in play if it is racist, sexist or in any way offensive, unsafe, violent or bullying.

Contexts for learning

- Children need plenty of space and time to play, both outdoors and indoors.
- Children who are allowed to play with resources and equipment before using them to solve a problem are more likely to solve the problem successfully.
- Making dens and dressing-up are an integral part of children's play and they don't require expensive resources.
- Role-play areas allow children to take on and rehearse new and familiar roles.



Effective practice

- Provide flexible resources that can be used in many different ways to facilitate children's play and exploration. These might include lengths of plastic guttering, tubing and watering cans near the sand and water play areas; lengths of fabric and clothes pegs in a box; large paintbrushes and buckets near the outside tap; boxes, clothes horses, old blankets and tablecloths to make dens and shelters.
- Observe children's play and help children to join in if they find it hard to be included, but watch and listen carefully before intervening.
- Find out how children play at home and value different cultural approaches to play.
- Value play which is based on people such as superheroes who may mean a lot to children, even if you do not appreciate them yourself!
- Tell and read stories and encourage children to act them out.



Reflecting on practice

- Imagine that it's a lovely sunny day. You are sitting outside under a tree reading a story to a group of attentive girls when suddenly the peace is shattered by a group of boys running around the tree, shouting loudly and waving sticks. You gather that they are superheroes on a mission and they run off to another tree to do the same thing there. After a few minutes they run back to their den, disappear inside for a few seconds and then come out again to run around shouting.
- How would you react? Why? Does your reaction have anything to do with whether you are male or female?

Challenges and dilemmas

- Valuing the play of all the children, even those who tend to play noisily or often base their play on themes with which you are unfamiliar.
- Knowing when to get involved and when to allow children to carry on playing.



What do I do next?

- **Welfare requirements** are explained in full in the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* booklet.
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4.2 Active Learning

Children learn best through **physical and mental challenges**. Active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that **engage and involve children for sustained periods**.



Decision making

- Active learners need to have some independence and control over their learning to keep their interest and to develop their creativity.
- As children become absorbed in finding out about the world through their explorations, investigations and questions they feel a sense of achievement and their self-esteem and confidence increase.
- As children grow in confidence they learn to make decisions based on thinking things through in a logical way.

Mental and physical involvement

- To be mentally or physically engaged in learning, children need to feel at ease, secure and confident.
- Active learning occurs when children are keen to learn and are interested in finding things out for themselves.
- When children are actively involved in learning they gain a sense of satisfaction from their explorations and investigations.
- When children engage with people, materials, objects, ideas or events they test things out and solve problems. They need adults to challenge and extend their thinking.

Personalised learning

- Personalised learning involves planning for each child, rather than the whole group. It should also involve parents in their child's development and learning.
- Begin to plan for personalised learning by knowing about each child's well-being.
- Look at children's involvement in their learning as well as at the nature and quality of adult interactions in children's learning.



Challenges and dilemmas

- Making sufficient time for busy staff to reflect on what has been observed about individual children and to reach conclusions about what has been learned.
- How to make the principle of active learning a foundation for learning while maintaining a focus on planning for the group.
- Gradually giving children greater independence in their learning while retaining control over the curriculum.
- Giving children time to follow a particular line of enquiry given the constraints of your routines and access to areas such as outdoor spaces.

Effective practice

- Ensure children's well-being and involvement in learning by making each child feel secure and confident, and allowing them some control over their learning.
- Have realistic expectations of every child based on information from parents, what children themselves 'tell' you and from observation.
- Review your environment to ensure that it is interesting, attractive and accessible to every child so they can learn independently.
- Make learning plans for each child based on information gained from talking to them, their parents and your colleagues and by observing the child.
- Recognise that every child's learning journey is unique to them.



Reflecting on practice

Children develop and learn in many different ways. How does your setting take this into account in planning for:

- an individual session;
- a week;
- six weeks;
- a year?

Is every child's learning journey reflected on and celebrated with the child, parents and peers? How do you do this?

What do I do next?

- **Welfare requirements** are explained in full in the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* booklet.
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4.3 Creativity and Critical Thinking

When children have opportunities to play with ideas in different situations and with a variety of resources, they **discover connections** and come to new and better understandings and ways of doing things. Adult support in this process enhances their ability to **think critically and ask questions**.



Making connections

- Being creative involves the whole curriculum, not just the arts. It is not necessarily about making an end-product such as a picture, song or play.
- Children will more easily make connections between things they've learned if the environment encourages them to do so. For example, they need to be able to fetch materials easily and to be able to move them from one place to another.
- Effective practitioners value each child's culture and help them to make connections between experiences at home, the setting and the wider community.
- It is difficult for children to make creative connections in learning when colouring in a worksheet or making a Diwali card just like everyone else's.

Transforming understanding

- New connections help to transform our understanding but this can often be a long process.
- For example, children may need to run, jump and walk through puddles many times to check out what happens. In this way they begin to understand more about the effect of force on water (KUW). They learn how to stay steady on their feet on a slippery surface (PD). They might create a little dance about splashing (CD) or say a rhyme such as 'Doctor Foster' (CLL).
- Effective practitioners record the processes that children go through. This will help everyone to see how the children's thinking is developing. Both children and adults can then talk about the learning that has taken place.

Sustained shared thinking

- In the most effective settings practitioners support and challenge children's thinking by getting involved in the thinking process with them.
- Sustained shared thinking involves the adult being aware of the children's interests and understandings and the adult and children working together to develop an idea or skill.
- Sustained shared thinking can only happen when there are responsive trusting relationships between adults and children.
- The adult shows genuine interest, offers encouragement, clarifies ideas and asks open questions. This supports and extends the children's thinking and helps children to make connections in learning.



Effective practice

- Value what parents tell you about the way in which children behave and learn at home.
- Allow children to move equipment around your setting, indoors and outside, to extend their own play and learning.
- Ensure that there is a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities.
- Document children's learning through photos and words. Use these to talk to children and parents about the learning that has taken place.
- Model being creative, for example, "I wasn't quite sure how to join this wheel on the car but then I thought about what we did last week. Can you remember what Kanisha did with her bus?".



Challenges and dilemmas

- Ensuring freedom for children to access resources while ensuring that they develop their understanding of the importance of tidying up and putting things back where they belong.
- Giving very young children opportunities to express their ideas in all sorts of different ways – valuing movement and dance as highly as drawing and writing.



Reflecting on practice

- What open-ended activities do you provide for children in your setting?
- Do you give children the experience of playing with paint and glue before expecting them to use them to make a product such as a Christmas card?
- Have you ever taped your interactions with children to see how you support the development of creativity and critical thinking?

What do I do next?

- **Welfare requirements** are explained in full in the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* booklet.
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4.4 Areas of Learning and Development

The EYFS is made up of **six areas of Learning and Development**. All areas of Learning and Development are connected to one another and are **equally important**. All areas of Learning and Development are underpinned by the Principles of the EYFS.

The areas of Learning and Development are:



The aspects of Learning and Development

Each area of Learning and Development is divided into aspects. The aspects for each area are:

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- Dispositions and Attitudes
- Self-confidence and Self-esteem
- Making Relationships
- Behaviour and Self-control
- Self-care
- Sense of Community

Communication, Language and Literacy

- Language for Communication
- Language for Thinking
- Linking Sounds and Letters
- Reading
- Writing
- Handwriting

Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy

- Numbers as Labels and for Counting
- Calculating
- Shape, Space and Measures

Knowledge and Understanding of the World

- Exploration and Investigation
- Designing and Making
- ICT
- Time
- Place
- Communities

Physical Development

- Movement and Space
- Health and Bodily Awareness
- Using Equipment and Materials

Creative Development

- Being Creative – Responding to Experiences, Expressing and Communicating Ideas
- Exploring Media and Materials
- Creating Music and Dance
- Developing Imagination and Imaginative Play



Effective practice

Each area of Learning and Development card shows how settings can effectively implement that particular area by ensuring that children have appropriate experiences and are supported by:

- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments.



Learning and Development

- The six areas of Learning and Development together make up the skills, knowledge and experiences appropriate for babies and children as they grow, learn and develop.
- Although these are presented as separate areas, it is important to remember that for children everything links and nothing is compartmentalised.
- The challenge for practitioners is to ensure that children's learning and development occur as an outcome of their individual interests and abilities and that planning for learning and development takes account of these.



Requirements

There are separate requirements for each area of Learning and Development shown in 'Requirements' on each of the areas of Learning and Development cards. The requirements set out what practitioners must provide in order to support babies' and children's development and learning in each aspect and area of Learning and Development of the EYFS.

What do I do next?

- **Welfare requirements** are explained in full in the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* booklet.
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