# The Early Years Foundation Stage

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Section 1: Introduction

1.1 About the Early Years Foundation Stage

The Government’s 10-year strategy for childcare, *Choice for parents, the best start for children*, promised to establish a single coherent development and learning framework for all young children from birth to the age of five. The [Childcare Act 2006] converted that commitment into law, and orders and regulations made under section 39 of the [Childcare Act] will bring it into force from September 2008.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is that framework. It has been designed to deliver improved outcomes for all children, across every area of Learning and Development, and to help close the achievement gap between disadvantaged children and others. EYFS provides a flexible framework, fostering all children’s development from birth, and ensuring that practitioners use observational assessment systematically to plan for individual children’s progression at a pace that is right for them.

This document sets out a clear and universal set of requirements for all early years providers who must register with Ofsted, and for independent, maintained, non-maintained and special schools with provision for children from birth to the end of the August after their fifth birthday. It also contains guidance and good practice, seeking out how providers might implement the requirements. All early years providers will have a key role to play in delivering the framework, supporting individual children’s development and enabling most children to achieve the Early Learning Goals at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

EYFS has an important role to play in helping children achieve all five of the *Every Child Matters* outcomes. If the requirements set out in this framework are followed, settings will make a substantial contribution to enabling the youngest children to stay safe, be healthy, enjoy, achieve, and make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being in the future.

The framework draws from and builds on the success of *Birth to Three Matters*, the *Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage* and the *National Standards for Under 8’s Day Care and Childminding*, to specify in one framework both the requirements for learning and development and those for children’s welfare from birth to five.

This document is intended principally for those engaged in managing and delivering early years provision directly. It will also be helpful to those engaged in planning for, inspecting and monitoring the effectiveness of early years provision. There will be a separate pack for parents, available through settings.

1.2 Principles underpinning EYFS

EYFS is a natural progression from *Birth to Three Matters*, the *Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage* and the *National Standards for Under 8s Day Care and Childminding*. The bulk of the content will be familiar to practitioners previously using these frameworks. Many of the principles which underpin the requirements and guidance remain the same, including:

- the central importance of parents and families for each child’s well-being and as their first educator;
- the importance of a key person for each child in each setting, to ensure their well-being, so that they develop independence by having someone they can depend upon;
- the recognition that babies and young children are competent learners from birth, and the importance to their development of relationships both with other children and with adults;
the need to plan for the individual child using sensitive observations and assessments – schedules, routines and teaching must flow with the child’s needs;

the central role of play both indoors and outdoors in supporting learning – very young children learn by doing, rather than through being told, and when they are given appropriate responsibility, allowed to make errors, decisions and choices;

the recognition that learning through play and the development of imagination and creativity is a shared endeavour, some of it led by the child and some by an effective practitioner;

the importance of involving key partners, like health visitors and social workers, in children’s successful development and learning;

the value to be placed on diversity, welcoming and genuinely including all children;

what children can already do (rather than what they cannot do) as the starting point of a child’s development and learning;

the central importance of competent, committed practitioners to children’s outcomes.

In other areas, the requirements and guidance have been strengthened to reflect feedback on what makes a real difference in improving the quality of care and education we provide for our youngest children. New sections are based on the additional principles:

that only when high-quality care, development and learning work together will early years provision have the maximum impact on children’s development;

that settings should develop effective partnerships not only with parents, but with other carers, settings and practitioners important to the child. The experience of the child must be coherent and joined-up;

of the importance of joined-up planning and delivery to provide continuity for children who attend more than one setting – those, for example, who are cared for by a childminder but also attend a play group or nursery class;

of the importance of planning for children who attend for different parts of the day, including the need for rest and relaxation for children attending for long periods, and

of the need to support effective practice for all children, including those following atypical development patterns.

The most obvious difference overall is that, for the first time, there will be a single, clear framework that applies across the sector. Parents will be able to feel confident in the quality of all settings, and make real choices about what setting will work best for their individual child and family circumstances, secure in the knowledge that whether in a nursery or reception class, a play group or with a childminder (or in a combination of these), their children will be cared for and supported by appropriately qualified practitioners in a safe and stimulating environment. It will also support progression and continuity for children as they grow, develop and learn, and move between different settings.

1.3 Using EYFS

The framework itself contains two main elements: the statutory EYFS document and a CD-ROM [to be developed].

The statutory EYFS document

The statutory EYFS document covers what providers must do in order to deliver early years provision, and practical guidance about how they should fulfil their obligations. Covering both learning and development and welfare requirements, it describes how practitioners are expected to plan for effective care and education of children in the diverse early years sector.
The learning and development requirements are set out in Section 3.1 and the welfare requirements in Section 4. Elsewhere, where these requirements are referred to, they will be indicated by the use of ‘providers must’ or as a requirement. If something is expressed as ‘providers should’ then there is a strong presumption that providers should act in that way, though it is open to them to take different action which will achieve the same result. In other cases, it will be clear that the document is describing good practice, but not a statutory requirement.

The EYFS document is arranged in five sections, including this introduction.

Section 2: EYFS Overview

This section sets out the headline requirements of EYFS, drawing from the material in Section 3.1 and 4, and showing how the welfare and learning and development requirements support one another. It includes guidance on flexible delivery of EYFS, setting out the importance of partnership working, and of building on the wide and diverse range of providers in the sector.

Section 3: Progression through the Areas of Learning and Development

This section covers both the learning and development requirements which must be followed by all settings (Section 3.1), and also more-detailed guidance (Section 3.2–3.8) about how they should be delivered, culminating in the early learning goals which most children are able to reach by the end of EYFS. The guidance sets out practical ways for practitioners to enable all children to participate, enjoy and achieve in a rich, play-based curriculum, indoors and outdoors, with a planned balance of adult-led and child-initiated activity.

The section is arranged around four areas:

- **Development matters**, which identifies the relevant skills, understanding, attitudes, characteristics and knowledge which children will have and develop during EYFS in order to reach the early learning goals at the end of the stage.
- **Look, listen and note**, which alerts practitioners to important things to look for in observational assessment, and in using that systematic observation to plan for individual children's next steps.
- **Effective practice**, which identifies the steps that practitioners should be taking in each Area of Learning and Development to consolidate and develop children's development and learning.
- **Planning and resourcing**, which highlights good practice to support practitioners' planning, and organisation of the learning environment.

Using these headings, learning and development materials describe children’s progression from birth to the age of five across each of six Areas of Learning and Development. These materials are not intended to be prescriptive or exhaustive – different children will do different things – nor should they be used as checklists. All six Areas are an interdependent part of each child’s development as a healthy child, a strong child, a skilful communicator and a competent learner, and should be used together to provide appropriate provision for each child. They are:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development;
- Communication, Language and Literacy;
- Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy;
- Knowledge and Understanding of the World;
- Physical Development, and
- Creative Development.

This section also outlines the legal framework through which individual children may, in exceptional circumstances, be exempted from EYFS.
Section 4: Meeting the welfare requirements

The welfare requirement grids set out in Section 4 cover the requirements that providers must meet in order to ensure that the setting is organised to meet the needs of children. The areas covered by the welfare requirements are:

- Safeguarding and promoting children’s welfare;
- Suitable people;
- Suitable premises, environment and equipment;
- Organisation.

For each of these areas, the EYFS welfare grids set out the requirements that providers must meet, and additional good practice which providers should have regard to.

Section 5: Registration, inspection and quality improvement

This section does not contain any statutory requirements. It sets out the role of Ofsted as the regulator and inspector, and what this means for providers of early years provision. It also gives guidance on how providers can use self-reflection and ongoing improvement mechanisms to extend the quality of their provision and the experience they provide for children.

The CD-ROM

In addition to the statutory EYFS document, further support and guidance for practitioners will be set out on an accompanying CD-ROM. This will include examples of how a range of settings have implemented the EYFS guidance and sets out common features of good practice which result from the requirements, and which all practitioners should consider when evaluating their own practice and that of their setting.

The CD-ROM will provide supporting resources, provided in the form of video material of effective practice, useful documents and resources, relevant research reports and websites. The CD-ROM will include the following:

- Planning for individual children – comprehensive links between the different developmental stages from birth to the age of five. These will be accessible either by following an interest in a particular stage or in an area of learning and development.

- Information on key themes, such as:
  - observation and assessment;
  - inclusive practice;
  - parents as partners;
  - outdoor learning;
  - effective transitions;
  - creativity/critical thinking;
  - key workers and secure attachment;
  - child development;
  - multi-agency working.
Section 2: EYFS overview

2.1 EYFS and Every Child Matters

EYFS takes as its starting point the five outcomes set out in *Every Child Matters* and the Children Act 2004: be healthy; stay safe; enjoy and achieve; make a positive contribution; and achieve economic well-being.

The welfare requirements in EYFS are key to keeping children healthy and safe within settings, as well as helping to create an environment where they are best able to enjoy and achieve. The learning and development requirements are key to teaching children how to be healthy and safe more widely, as well as enabling them to learn, and achieve and laying the foundations for them to make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being. The personalised approach to learning and development set out in this document, delivered within a secure and healthy environment, will maximise individual children’s progression through well-planned play based on the interests, and developmental needs of each child.

2.2 Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the provider to ensure that the setting adheres to the EYFS requirements, in order to create a space where children are able to reach their potential and achieve the best outcomes they can. Some of the requirements set out specifically what providers must do to comply with EYFS; others set out what practitioners must do. However, in law, responsibility and accountability for ensuring that all requirements are met rests with the early years provider not with individual practitioners. The ‘provider’ should be taken to mean the registered person, in the case of settings which are required to be registered; the governing body, in the case of provision in maintained schools that are not required to be registered; and the proprietor, in the case of provision in independent schools that are not required to be registered.

It is for providers to be sure they have systems and management arrangements in place to ensure that their practitioners comply with the requirements of EYFS.

Providers must also, of course, comply with the full range of legislation in force, and will want to be familiar, in particular, with the requirements of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005, the Special Educational Needs Code Of Practice, the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, and relevant building, health and safety and employment legislation.

2.3 Progression through the Areas of Learning and Development (Section 3)

The EYFS welfare requirements help providers to create a setting which is positive and welcoming, providing confidence to parents. The learning and development requirements (Section 3.1) and associated guidance set out for practitioners the approaches within settings which will best enable children to learn and develop.

It is a key principle of EYFS that care and learning work together to deliver the best outcomes for children. Children learn best when their environment is safe, comfortable, inclusive, and they have positive interaction with good numbers of well-qualified adults. Aspects of provision which are generally associated with care can also offer opportunities for learning, for example mealtimes, quiet periods, cuddles and ensuring that children understand the dangers in their immediate environment.
The early learning goals establish expectations for most children to reach by the end of EYFS. They are organised into six Areas of Learning and Development and provide for planning throughout the EYFS, as well as laying a secure foundation for future learning. By the time they reach the end of the EYFS, the majority of children will have achieved the early learning goals in all six Areas.

EYFS requires those who plan and deliver early years provision to put children first; to listen to them and their parents; to observe what they can do; and to make them the most important influence on planning, observational assessment, routines and staffing.

It is important that practitioners ensure that they observe closely what children can do, and use those observations as the basis of assessments and planning of the next stages of children’s development (there must be no tests for children at any stage of EYFS).

The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile uses observational assessment to identify and record children’s progress towards the early learning goals at the end of EYFS. It provides a key basis for taking forward children’s development into Key Stage 1. Effective early years provision is a key contributor to enjoyment and achievement in Key Stage 1, leading to lasting cognitive and social gains.

Play underpins delivery of all of EYFS and must be planned for children in both indoor and outdoor space. Practitioners should enable all children to participate, enjoy and achieve in a rich, play-based curriculum which fosters their physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development.

Schedules and routines must be responsive to the children’s needs, to allow all children to have time to become engrossed and think deeply about what they are doing. Although children need a predictable environment, this does not equate to rigid routines.

It is essential that providers and practitioners actively promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice. This includes ensuring that all children and families feel included, safe and valued; that all children and adults are treated as individuals and not discriminated against; and that all children are listened to and respected. The provider must consult with parents about the need for any special services and equipment for the children in their care. Practitioners must plan for the needs of any black and minority ethnic children, including those learning English as an additional language, and for the needs of any disabled children and any children with special educational needs.

Providers must actively avoid gender stereotyping and challenge the expression of prejudice or discrimination, by children or adults.

2.4 Safeguarding and promoting children’s welfare (Section 4.1)

Safeguarding the welfare of the children in their care is the first responsibility of every provider. They must take the necessary steps to safeguard and promote that welfare, ensuring that their practitioners all have an up-to-date understanding of child protection issues and know how to act on that knowledge appropriately.

Providers must also promote the good health of the children in their care, taking appropriate action when they are ill and any necessary steps to prevent infection. A healthy, balanced diet must be provided, taking account of any special dietary needs, feeding regimes and food allergies. Fresh drinking water should be available at all times. There must be no smoking in the presence of children.

Children’s behaviour must be managed positively and in a manner appropriate to their stage of development. There must be no physical punishment and no threat of physical punishment. Children must be given opportunities to be responsible, make decisions, errors and choices.
2.5 Suitable people (Section 4.2)

The people who are in direct contact with children in settings, their suitability, skills and experience, will be key to both the welfare of children and their learning and development.

Any adults looking after children or having unsupervised access to them must meet the suitability requirements in Section 4, and providers must ensure that the required adult to child ratios are met at all times.

Providers must ensure that practitioners have the required qualifications and knowledge, skills and understanding of child development, to enable them to care for and teach children effectively. Each child in a group setting should have a key practitioner who is special to them and their family, and who understands the individual and diverse ways in which children learn and develop. The key practitioner should implement a personalised approach, observing and monitoring progress and (in consultation with other agencies, as appropriate) assessing that child’s needs in order to provide a particular focus on interventions to address particular developmental requirements.

Effective practitioners use their own learning to improve their work with young children and their families, in ways which are sensitive, positive and non-judgemental.

They are expected to develop, demonstrate and continuously improve their:
- relationships with both children and adults;
- understanding of the individual and the diverse ways in which children learn and develop;
- knowledge and understanding in order to actively support and extend children’s learning in and across all areas and aspects of learning;
- practice in meeting all children’s needs, learning styles and interests;
- work with parents, carers and the wider community;
- work with other professionals within and beyond the setting.

2.6 Suitable premises, environment and equipment (Section 4.3)

An appropriate environment is key both to safety and to effective learning and development. The environment, indoors and out, along with furniture, equipment and toys must be safe, secure, appropriate for the children involved and well-planned and organised to support children’s development and learning. Premises and equipment must, so far as is reasonable, be suitable for children with disabilities and reflect the ethnic, cultural and social diversity in society.

2.7 Organisation (Section 4.4)

The way that settings are organised needs to support and promote all the EYFS requirements. Providers need to ensure that there is effective leadership in settings which promotes quality in teaching and learning. This includes ensuring that the effective records, policies and procedures required for the safe and efficient management of the settings are in place.

All settings required to register with Ofsted, including day nurseries, pre-schools, playgroups, childminders and provision for under 3s in schools, will need to have done so prior to delivering early years provision. The registration requirements remain in force throughout the time that the provider delivers early years provision, and settings must continue to comply with them. These requirements, along with those on inspection, are set out in more detail in Section 5.

EYFS consultation
2.8 Partnership working

Practitioners must work closely with parents, both to identify any issues which might impact on a child’s well-being in the setting, and also to best support children’s learning and development. They should make sure that parents and carers help to identify their children’s strengths and areas for development, and that they are involved in the experiences provided in settings, valued as co-educators and supported in understanding their children’s education and care.

Providers must also be proactive in working with other early years providers and professionals more widely, to provide the best development and learning opportunities for individual children. Other key professionals might include speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists, nurses, health visitors, midwives, portage workers, dietitians, and specialist teachers working with children with visual or hearing impairments.

Some minority ethnic groups are less likely than others to use early years services. Working with other agencies, as appropriate, it is important that steps are taken to encourage families in these groups to use services, because their children will enter school at a disadvantage if they have had no early years group experience. Having a staff group that reflects the diversity of the local area can be an important step in removing barriers to service use.

2.9 Managing flexible provision

Both the way in which children will access EYFS, and the types of providers delivering it, are very diverse. Managing that diversity so that it draws on the strengths of particular types of provider and gives the child a coherent experience with the minimum of unhelpful disruption is one of the keys to successful delivery of EYFS.

Many children attend more than one setting. Some are part-time, while others may be full-time and use extended services such as breakfast and after school clubs as well. Patterns of attendance should therefore influence planning. The needs of the child come first and providers must ensure that each child has a ‘key person’ within the setting. Changes of key person must be kept to a minimum, in order to avoid excessive disruption to the child. For children who attend more than one setting, practitioners must ensure effective continuity and progression by sharing relevant information and, where possible, planning together.

In some settings, children will be there all day, possibly from early in the morning until late in the evening. Whether this long day is spent in a childminder’s home or another setting, these children need time to relax as well as to be involved in stimulating activities. The rest and relaxation times provided are just as important to successful child outcomes as other EYFS activities.

Some children may start school when they are only just four, and may find the long school day very tiring. They should be able to rest and be quiet if they need to. Practitioners should model being quiet and value children’s quiet times as well as their speech.

Providers should be aware of the differing needs of individual children within the setting. For instance, some children with disabilities may find it very tiring concentrating for long periods and need frequent pauses and rests, while others may not. In order to maximise outcomes for all children, providers should provide an approach tailored to each child’s needs.

Because of this diversity, it is not necessarily expected that each setting a child attends will cover the whole of EYFS. However, providers must collaborate to ensure that, between them, they provide children with a broad range of experiences which, taken together, deliver the whole of EYFS. The work of each setting should be complementary to the child’s other experiences, drawing on the strengths of each type of provision, the rhythm of the day, and any other relevant factors, to maximise the impact on their development.

For example, some children may start the day with a childminder and go back to the childminder’s house after playgroup, nursery or school. Childminders, nurseries and parents should work together to plan children’s experiences across the whole day, continuing ‘themes’, where appropriate, in
which children have become interested and involved. The hours spent at the childminder’s house will complement the children’s experiences at the other setting but may, for instance, involve breakfast, stories and cuddles, lying on the sofa, having snacks, feeding the rabbit and many other worthwhile activities. These activities and approaches can all contribute significantly to children’s learning and development, and are an important part of the EYFS approach.

(More details on the role of childminders in developing EYFS will be found in the booklet *Thinking about childminding* [a draft version to be provided in summer 2006] and on the CD-ROM.)
Section 3: Progression through the Areas of Learning and Development

This section sets out the learning and development requirements which EYFS places on settings, and the practical ways in which practitioners can meet those requirements and enable all children to participate, enjoy and achieve in rich-play based activities which foster their physical, social, emotional and intellectual development.

3.1 Learning and development requirements

The requirements – which underpin the Areas of Learning and Development and which all settings must follow – are as follows:

- Practitioners must ensure that the individual needs of all children are met, including additional or different provision required to meet particular individual needs.

- Parents and families are central to the well-being of the child. Practitioners must therefore build positive relationships with parents in order to work effectively with them and their children. Young children are vulnerable, they learn to be independent by having someone they can depend upon. Providers must ensure that each child has a key person within the setting.

- No child should be excluded or disadvantaged because of ethnicity, culture or religion, home language, family background, special educational needs, disability, gender or ability. Providers must actively plan to meet their needs, and to promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice.

- Schedules, routines and activities must flow with the child’s needs, with practitioners planning for individual children using sensitive observational assessment. There must be no tests for children at any stage within EYFS.

- Children learn by doing, rather than by being told. Learning is a shared process and children learn best when, with the support of a knowledgeable and trusted adult, they are actively involved and interested. Practitioners must therefore ensure a balance of adult-led and freely chosen or child-initiated activities, to be delivered through indoor and outdoor play. In order to deliver the maximum impact on children’s development, high-quality care, development and learning must work together.

- Providers must be proactive in developing effective partnerships not only with parents, but with other carers, settings and practitioners important to the child. The experience of the child must be coherent and joined-up. This is particularly important for children who attend more than one setting.

- Practitioners must plan activities, on the basis of children’s developmental progress and interests so that they work towards the Early Learning Goals (identified in each Area of Learning and Development in section 3.9). In the final year of EYFS, practitioners must record progress towards the goals and complete the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (see page 20).

- Practitioners must report children’s achievements at the end of the stage to their parents or carers.

In addition, each of the Areas of Learning and Development has specific requirements which practitioners must implement in order to help children progress towards the early learning goals. The Areas of Learning and Development and their requirements are:

**Personal, Social and Emotional Development**

Practitioners must provide experiences and support to enable children to develop a positive sense of themselves and of others. They must support children’s emotional well-being, helping them to know themselves and what they can do. They must also help children to develop respect for others, social skills and a positive disposition to learn.
Communication, Language and Literacy

Practitioners must support children's learning and competence in communicating, speaking and listening, being read to and beginning to read and write. They must also work to give them the confidence, opportunity, encouragement, support and disposition to use their skills in a range of situations and for a range of purposes.

Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy

Practitioners must support children in developing their understanding of problem solving, reasoning and numeracy in a broad range of contexts in which they can explore, enjoy, learn, practise and talk about their developing understanding. Practitioners must offer opportunities for these skills to be practised, in order to give children confidence and competence in their use.

Knowledge and Understanding of the World

Practitioners must support children's development of the crucial knowledge, skills and understanding that help them to make sense of the world. Practitioners must support children's learning through offering opportunities for them to: learn to use a range of tools safely; encounter creatures, people, plants and objects in their natural environments and in real-life situations; undertake practical 'experiments'; and work with a range of materials.

Physical Development

Practitioners must encourage the physical development of babies and young children through offering opportunities for them to learn through being active and interactive, improving their skills of coordination, control, manipulation and movement. Practitioners must support children in using all of their senses to learn about the world around them and to make connections between new information and what they already know. Practitioners must support children in developing an understanding of the importance of making healthy choices in relation to food.

Creative Development

Practitioners should extend children's creativity by supporting their curiosity, exploration and play. Practitioners must provide children with opportunities to explore and share their thoughts, ideas and feelings, for example through a variety of art, music, movement, dance, imaginative and role-play activities, mathematics, and design and technology.

3.2 Children's developmental stages

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<td>birth–11 months</td>
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<td>8–20 months</td>
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<td>16–26 months</td>
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<td>22–36 months</td>
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<td>30–50 months</td>
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<td>40–60+ months</td>
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The broad stages of development overlap because children develop at different speeds in different areas and some children need more support, or more challenge, than others.

Children are competent learners from birth and develop and learn in all sorts of ways. Even young babies will usually have had a wide range of different experiences and therefore have their own skills and interests when they join a setting. Some babies love to look at trees moving in the wind as they lie in the pram; others dislike lying down and like to watch the world from a bouncy chair. Some babies like to spend time lying awake on their stomachs; and research shows that this has a positive impact on later development, including coordinated eye tracking when crawling and reading.

All practitioners should, therefore, look carefully at the young children in their care, think about what their needs are, their interests, their stage of development and use all of this information to help plan a challenging and enjoyable curriculum across all six Areas of Learning and Development.

None of the six Areas can be delivered in isolation from the others. They are equally important and depend on each other. One activity or experience can help to develop skills and understanding across several Areas of Learning and Development. For example, children building with blocks may cooperate in carrying the heavy and large blocks, negotiate the best place to put them, compare the weight and dimensions of different blocks and act out an imaginary scene. Therefore, they may be developing language, numeracy, physical, personal and social competencies through this one activity. All six Areas must be delivered through planned, purposeful play, with a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities.

The on-going cycle of thinking about development and assessing children’s progress (Development matters), observation and assessment (Look, listen and note), planning and resourcing and learning and teaching (Effective practice) enables practitioners to provide opportunities for all children to play, learn and succeed in an atmosphere of care and of feeling valued.
Learning and development guidance

The following sections provide detailed guidance on what practitioners should do to be most effective at each stage in the process described above, and the Areas of Learning and Development set out over the following pages provide practical examples of the process in action from birth to the age of five. Each Area of Learning and Development offers some examples of the types of things which children do, and which practitioners could look out for to help their planning. These sections are not intended to be prescriptive or exhaustive – different children will do different things – and they should not be used as checklists.

3.3 Development matters

EYFS supports practitioners in tracking children's progress across six Areas of Learning and Development, in ways which are appropriate for them as individuals at different points of development.

From birth to the early learning goals

The ‘Development matters’ section within each of the Areas of Learning and Development identifies the developing knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes that children will need if they are to achieve the early learning goals by the end of the stage. It is important to note that children will not necessarily progress sequentially through the stages, which do not represent age-related goals. Although they are presented in a hierarchical order where possible, not all children conform neatly to this sequence of development and learning. Some will have attained confidence in some of the later elements but not in some of the earlier ones. Some elements will appear to have been achieved very quickly, others will take much longer. As children move from one element to another, they take with them what they have already achieved and continue to practise, refine and use their previous development and learning, which becomes consolidated.

The early learning goals establish expectations for most children to reach by the end of EYFS. They are organised into six Areas of Learning and Development and provide the basis for planning activity throughout EYFS, so laying a secure foundation for future learning.

By the time they reach the end of EYFS, the majority of children will have achieved the early learning goals in all six areas, and some children will have exceeded the goals. Other children will be working towards some or all of the goals, particularly younger children, those children who have not had high-quality early years experience, those with special educational needs, and those learning English as an additional language. Almost every child has the potential to achieve the goals, although each child's journey towards them will be different.

Play

Play underpins all development and learning for young children.

Most children play spontaneously, although some may need adult support, and it is through play that they develop intellectually, creatively, physically, socially and emotionally. Babies and older children play differently. It is through adults valuing their solitary or parallel play and joining in with it that babies begin to learn about playing with others.

Well-planned play, both indoors and outdoors, is a key way in which practitioners support young children to learn with enjoyment and challenge. In playing, they behave in different ways: sometimes their play will be responsive or boisterous, sometimes they may describe and discuss what they are doing, sometimes they will be quiet and reflective as they play.

The role of the practitioner is crucial in:

- planning and resourcing a challenging environment;
- supporting children's learning through planned play activity;
supporting and extending children's spontaneous play;

extending and developing children's language and communication in their play.

Through play, in a secure environment with effective adult support, children can:

- explore, develop and represent learning experiences that help them to make sense of the world;
- practise and build up ideas, concepts and skills;
- learn how to control impulses and understand the need for rules;
- be alone, be alongside others or cooperate as they talk or rehearse their feelings;
- take risks and make mistakes;
- think creatively and imaginatively;
- communicate with others as they investigate or solve problems;
- express fears or relive anxious experiences in controlled and safe situations.

Meeting the diverse needs of children

Practitioners must provide relevant, developmentally appropriate learning opportunities and set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the diverse needs of babies and young children, so that most achieve the early learning goals and some, where appropriate, go beyond them by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Practitioners must promote positive attitudes to diversity and difference within all children, helping all children to learn to value different aspects of people's lives. All practitioners must promote equality of opportunity and a positive attitude to diversity, whether or not there is a diverse population locally, and even if the school or setting caters for a particular religious community. Independent faith schools and settings must consider how to encourage children to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony with other cultures and traditions, in accordance with the Education Regulations for Independent Schools1.

Practitioners should be aware that all children have different experiences, interests, skills and knowledge which affect their ability to develop and learn.

Providers have obligations under other legislation, including the amended Race Relations Act and the Disability Discrimination Act, and should ensure that practitioners are aware of the implications of these obligations.

Practitioners should plan to meet the needs of both boys and girls, children with special educational needs, children who are more able, children with disabilities, children with complex health needs, children from all social, family, cultural and religious backgrounds, looked after children, children of all ethnic groups including Travellers, refugees and asylum seekers, and children from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

In order to meet children's diverse needs, and help all children make the best possible progress, practitioners should:

- plan opportunities that build on and extend children's knowledge, experiences, interests and skills and develop their self-esteem and confidence in their ability to learn;
- use a wide range of teaching strategies, based on children's learning needs;
- provide a wide range of opportunities to motivate, support and develop children and help them to be involved, concentrate and learn effectively;
- provide a safe and supportive learning environment, free from harassment, in which the contribution of all children is valued and where racial, religious, disability and gender stereotypes and expressions of discrimination or prejudice are challenged.

Children from minority ethnic groups

There are significant numbers of children from minority ethnic groups in settings across England. They have diverse needs, and may experience discrimination and barriers to learning. Settings should target support to minority ethnic children, particularly those who are underachieving; children for whom English is a new or additional language; or who are experiencing mobility or learning difficulties and disabilities.

■ Practitioners must plan for each child's individual care and learning requirements, including the additional or different provision required to meet particular individual needs.

■ The focus should be on removing barriers for children where these already exist and on preventing learning difficulties from developing.

■ Early years practitioners have a key role to play in working with parents to identify learning needs and respond quickly to any area of particular difficulty, and to develop an effective strategy to meet these needs, making good use of individual education plans, so that later difficulties can be avoided.

Wherever appropriate, practitioners should work together with professionals from other agencies, such as local and community health services, to provide the best learning opportunities for individual children.

Children learning English as an additional language

Many children in early years settings will have a home language other than English. Practitioners should value this linguistic diversity and provide opportunities for children to develop and use their home language in their play and learning. These children will be at many stages of learning English as an additional language.

■ Some children are bilingual from birth, because their families have talked to them in more than one language.

■ Some children will be acquiring English as an additional language. As with their first language, this needs to be learnt in context, through practical, meaningful experiences and interaction with others. These children may spend a long time listening before they speak English, and will often be able to understand much of what they hear, particularly where communication through gesture, sign, facial expression and using visual support is encouraged.

Learning opportunities should be planned to help children to develop their English, and support should be provided to help them to take part in other activities by, for example:

■ building on children's experiences of language at home and in the wider community by providing a range of opportunities to use their home language(s), so that their developing use of English and other languages support one another;

■ providing a range of opportunities for children to engage in speaking and listening activities in English with peers and adults;

■ ensuring that all children have opportunities to recognise and show respect for each child's home language;

■ providing bilingual support, in particular to extend vocabulary and support children's developing understanding;

■ providing a variety of writing in the children's home languages as well as in English, including books, notices and labels;

■ providing opportunities for children to hear their home languages as well as English, for example through use of audio and video materials.
Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities

Practitioners have obligations under other legislation including Part 4 of the Education Act 1996 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. They also have obligations including a requirement to have regard to the SEN Code of Practice. Proprietors of Independent Schools have obligations under Part 8 of the Education Act 2003, amended 2005, and Statutory Instruction 1910, as it applies to pupils with special educational needs.

Providers and practitioners should take specific action to help children with special educational needs and/or disabilities to make the best possible progress by:

■ providing additional or different strategies and approaches for those children who need help;
■ planning, where necessary, to develop understanding through:
  – using materials and resources that children can access through sight, touch, sound and smell;
  – using alternative and augmentative communication, including signs and symbols;
  – using visual and written materials in different formats, including large print and symbol text, using information and communication technology (ICT), other technological aids and taped materials;
  – increasing children’s knowledge of the wider world by using word descriptions and other stimuli, including trips beyond the setting, to extend their experiences and imagination.
■ planning for full participation in learning and in all physical and practical activity through, for example:
  – providing additional support from adults, when needed;
  – adapting activities or environments, providing alternative activities, and using specialist aids and equipment, where appropriate.
■ helping children who have particular difficulties with behaviour to take part in learning effectively through, for example:
  – setting reasonable expectations that have been discussed with the child and with parents and carers, establishing clear boundaries and appreciating and praising children’s efforts;
  – encouraging and promoting positive behaviour, giving children every chance and encouragement to develop the skills they need to work well with another child or children;
  – helping children to manage their behaviour and to value and respect their own contribution and that of others.

3.4 Look, listen and note: examples to aid assessment

Practitioners’ observations of children’s play help them to assess the progress which children are making and take as a starting point a ‘strong child’, ‘healthy child’, ‘skilful communicator’ and ‘competent learner’. Observations are analysed to decide where children are in their learning and development and to plan what comes next. This is an essential part of daily practice in any setting, regardless of the age of the baby or child.

In an early years context, assessment for learning means:

■ assessment based on observations of the children and their responses in a variety of situations;
■ sharing observations with the child. Photographs of the children in action, or looking together at some of their work, can help discussion here;
■ talking with children and their parents about what the children enjoy doing and what they find difficult;
planning, which includes the children's own views and responses and those of their parents.

The involvement of parents and carers in this process is central and needs to be seen as a two-way process where parents and practitioners both contribute. Parents and carers know their children best and have views about what is right for them, which must be respected. Their own observations of what their child is doing at home are an important part of the complete picture of the child's development and achievements, which practitioners need to build upon.

**Why is looking, listening and noting so important?**

It helps practitioners to:
- get to know a child better;
- develop a positive relationship with a child;
- talk with the parents about their child;
- plan appropriate play and learning experiences;
- pick up any concerns about a child's development;
- review what they do and whether it is right for a child;
- further develop their understanding of a child's development;
- develop a systematic and routine approach to using observational assessment to plan the next steps in a child's developmental progress.

**Documenting children's progress and the EYFS profile**

All children from birth should have a development and learning record to which parents and practitioners contribute, and which will go with them from setting to setting.

Information about what children have done and said can be gathered through observations of children that are sometimes recorded by the practitioner, for example in writing, photographs on video or audio tape. Talking to children, assessing outcomes such as responses, movement, models, paintings, designs, drawings, mark making or writing, and observing them individually and in groups in different activities give an insight into what children know, understand and can do, and where they need support. Logging children's use of, and response to, a particular activity or a play scenario helps practitioners to monitor how children use their time, their particular interests and any gaps in their experiences, so that practitioners can assess their progress and plan a balanced curriculum that takes note of children's strengths, interests and needs.

At the end of EYFS, practitioners should consider the information gathered about children's learning and development over time and summarise their knowledge in the EYFS Profile. The profile forms the basis of reports to parents on children's general progress and achievements at the end of the stage, as well as providing information to be passed on to the child's next teacher. The EYFS Profile handbook, as well as further training material, will be included on the CD-ROM.

This statutory assessment involves a report to parents on their children's general progress and achievements in all six Areas of Learning and Development of the EYFS.

**The Common Assessment Framework (CAF)**

Some children may have additional needs and, therefore, might benefit from an additional assessment so that practitioners can support their development and learning better. The Common Assessment Framework helps professionals from all agencies to work together on this.

The CAF is for children and young people who have 'low level' additional needs. The CAF enables settings to identify any factors outside the setting that may be affecting a child's learning and development, and which would benefit from discussions with professionals from other services.
Where a CAF indicates that the child might require further (specialist) assessment, for example under statutory SEN procedures, the core data from the common assessment can be used to feed into that process.

The CAF has been designed so that, with the appropriate training, practitioners of all professional backgrounds will be able to complete it, although it is not statutory.

### 3.5 Planning and resourcing

Good planning is the key to making children’s learning effective, exciting, varied and progressive. It enables practitioners to build up knowledge about how individual children learn and make progress. It also provides opportunities for practitioners to think and talk about how to sustain a successful learning environment. This process works best when all practitioners working in the setting are involved. Practitioners who work alone would benefit from opportunities to discuss their plans with others working in similar settings.

In order to make sure that planning is effective and works for the benefit of children, practitioners must develop both long-term and short-term plans. These plans must, however, be flexible and practitioners must be able to adapt them in response to children’s actions and to events.

A **long-term plan** provides an overview of what practitioners intend children to learn. It should be a guide, not something to be stuck to rigidly. It may use the Areas of Learning and Development, the five outcomes, or other aspects of development and learning as headings, but it is very important to think of these as related and contributing to a picture of the whole child. Children do not compartmentalise their learning.

**Short-term plans** are informed by ongoing observations and informal assessments, and by discussion with colleagues, parents and – as appropriate – external agency colleagues and providers at other settings attended by the child. They can be for individuals and groups and may be for a week or the next day. They should be based on previous observation and assessment and should indicate possible next steps for individuals and/or groups.

**Issues to bear in mind when planning**

- Babies and young children live in the moment – they are interested in and curious about the world around them, but their interests do not always match those of adults.
- Children’s interests can only be discovered by observing them in open-ended activities.
- Even very young children can concentrate and became absorbed in activities that catch their interest and are rewarding in themselves.
- As well as leading activities, adults support and extend all children’s development and learning by being active listeners and joining in and intervening when appropriate.
- Adults also support and extend children’s development and learning by watching closely and ‘tuning in’ to individual children. Planning should include observation time for practitioners.
- Planning should include all children, including those with additional needs.
- No adult plan written weeks before can include a group’s interest in a spider’s web on a frosty morning or a particular child’s interest in transporting small objects in a favourite blue bucket, yet it is these interests which may lead to some powerful learning. Plans should therefore be flexible enough to adapt to circumstances.

### 3.6 Effective practice

Knowledge of Development matters, Looking, listening and noting, and Planning and resourcing all combine to give practitioners a view of where the children are in their learning, where they need to go, and the most effective practice to support them in getting there.
Effective practice is based on the principles for personalised care and learning on page 3. Examples are given in each Area of Learning and Development.

Effective practice involves learning and teaching, which are both complex processes.

Young children do not come into a setting in a neat package of social, emotional, physical and intellectual development. During EYFS, physical and social development will vary enormously from child to child. The strategies used in learning and teaching should vary and should be adapted to suit the interests and needs of the child.

Effective learning for young children involves the following:

- **Children feeling safe and secure, which helps them to become confident learners.** Children, their parents and practitioners need to develop positive relationships based on trust. Children flourish with attentive adult interaction and often want immediate responses. They grow in confidence when they receive relevant attention during activities. The parallel growth of confidence and trust enables children to take risks in their learning, to try to solve problems, and to view practitioners as helpful teachers.

- **Children initiating activities which promote learning and enable them to learn from each other.** If there is a stimulating environment, young children’s learning will be enhanced. Children should be able to access available resources to explore at their own pace. Well-organised resources that are easily accessible encourage children to make choices and explore. This also allows practitioners to work alongside children, to value what they are doing and to interact appropriately to support development and learning, rather than simply managing resources. One child’s interest can encourage other children to become involved in activities. For example, a child with speech difficulties loves music and knows all the actions to a song tape. Other children then join in by watching him and following his movements.

- **Children learning through movement and all their senses.** Young children are active learners who use all their available senses to build concepts and ideas from their experiences. For example, children listening to music may clap their hands, bounce up and down or sway to its rhythm; children looking at ‘larger’ and ‘smaller’ clothes may try them on; exploring items in the mouth, ‘mouthing’, is the beginning of understanding the physical world; sensory impaired children rely heavily on tactile and visual stimuli to make sense of their environment.

- **Children having time to explore ideas and interests in depth.** The process of learning, as well as the content or outcomes, is important for young children. They need time to explore if they are to be satisfied with a piece of learning. Sometimes this may mean that the practitioner needs to be flexible in what they had planned for the session. Often it may mean finding ways for children to return to activities at a later time.

- **Children learning in different ways and at different rates.** Practitioners need to understand that children learn the same thing in different ways, and that progression in their learning happens at different times and at different rates. At an early developmental stage, children may show their involvement through facial expression and body language, for example wonder at a snowstorm, or through stance, for example crouching to peer at an insect. They may spend considerable time examining objects or books on display, or be engaged in repeating experiences or in play. Some will learn more readily outdoors or through music and dance.

- **Children making links in their learning.** Certain ideas captivate many children and steer their learning. Observations of children show that what appears to be random play can often be linked to the development of concepts such as position, connection or order, for example, a baby playing with his feet or a child constantly assembling wooden blocks. Making links in learning is the basis of creativity and becoming an effective learner.

- **Creative and imaginative play activities that promote the development and use of language.** All children need encouragement to learn about ‘conversation’. This requires practitioners to listen and respond, paying attention to all the signals that babies give. Older children engaged in ‘small world’ play and role-play of various types, will enact scenarios for long
periods using the ‘scripts’ they know from home or television experience. Most children are quick to learn and use relevant new vocabulary, however difficult it may seem to adults. In order to include all children, practitioners should plan for the specific needs of children who are bilingual or who sign or use other forms of communication, by, for example, playing alongside them to help them join in, or by ensuring that other children in the group have learnt to sign.

Teaching means systematically helping children to learn so that they are helped to make connections in their learning and are actively led forward, as well as helped to reflect on what they have already learnt.

Teaching has many aspects, including:

- planning and creating a learning environment;
- organising time and material resources;
- interacting, questioning, responding to questions;
- working with and observing children;
- assessing and recording children’s progress and sharing knowledge gained with other practitioners and parents.

The quality of each of these aspects of teaching is informed by the practitioners’ knowledge and understanding of the child’s developmental stage, what is to be taught and how young children learn.

Effective teaching varies but it includes the following:

- **Working in partnership with parents, because parents have a prime teaching role with their children.** Practitioners should share with and receive from parents information about children’s achievements. Parents have important information which supports practitioners’ planning for, and work with, children. Such information may include particular likes and dislikes, children’s competence in their language and communication at home, whether or not it is English. This sharing of information between the setting and the home helps to ensure that appropriate and challenging targets are set for children, and that both practitioners and parents work together to teach and support the children in the setting and at home.

- **Promoting children’s learning through planned experiences and activities that are challenging but achievable.**

- **Practitioners who model a range of positive behaviour.** For example, practitioners can model being a learner as they work with children. Practitioners’ behaviour towards each other and parents should be a model of courtesy and respect. Practitioners can model active listening when they listen attentively to children, when they support a child who is being called names or being harassed, when they show they are willing to take turns in the conversation and when they show respect for what the child has to say. Practitioners can demonstrate appropriate social and emotional skills, show sensitivity to individual need, help children care for resources, and exemplify and teach the skills of empathy, consideration, negotiation and mutual respect.

- **Using language that is rich and using correct grammar.** Recognising that what is said and how the practitioner speaks is the main way of teaching new vocabulary and helping babies and children to develop linguistic structures for thinking. A major role in teaching involves extending children’s language sensitively, while acknowledging and showing respect for home language, local dialect and any other forms of communication that children may be using. Practitioners teach children key words by using them in response to a child’s ‘have-a-go’ words, rather than by telling children they are wrong. In this non-judgemental and unthreatening way, they help children to develop speech using appropriate words and speech patterns. In settings where children have a home language other than English, or sign or use symbols to communicate, the use of these by practitioners and other children can enhance communication for everyone significantly.
Using conversation and carefully framed questions because this is crucial in developing children's knowledge. Conversation, open-ended questions and thinking out loud are important tools in developing vocabulary and in challenging thinking. Practitioners can use discussion times well by demonstrating questions such as “How can we ...?”, “Can you find a way to ...?”, “How does this work?” and “What other words can we use?” Encouraging children to reflect on and tell others what they have been doing, “I wonder if …?”, helps them to give voice to what they know and to practise thinking and new vocabulary.

Direct teaching of skills and knowledge. Practitioners who know the children they teach are able to judge when those who are ready can be taught skills such as how to hold and use tools such as a magnifier or a pencil correctly. They can judge when children are able to distinguish between sounds sufficiently to do some direct teaching of letter/sound correspondence (phonics).

Children teaching each other. More-experienced children in the setting can help those who are less experienced by showing them where to find resources and by demonstrating and talking to them about, for example, where to begin when reading a book, what will happen next within the routine, or how to negotiate for a turn on the computer. They will practise their own skills and language and become more secure in their knowledge and understanding as they show and explain what they have done to other children.

Interacting with and supporting children in a way that positively affects the attitudes to learning that children develop. Motivating children to concentrate, to persevere and to try several ways to make something work, rather than giving up, requires practitioners to use encouraging, friendly, optimistic and lively approaches to support children. Enabling children to learn should be based on knowing what children can do, identifying the next, sometimes very small, steps in learning and knowing when it is timely to intervene and when to hold back.

Planning the indoor and outdoor environment carefully to provide a positive context for learning and teaching. Children can be helped to develop independence, self-control and self-reliance if practitioners plan the environment carefully by making full use of available space, indoors and outdoors. High-quality resources, including recycled items, should be made accessible in an attractive and stimulating way for all children, for example by placing the sand tray on the floor for children who are unable to stand. Having routines and a rhythm to the day helps children to gain confidence and independence. For example, by knowing that there will be time to come back to activities, children can choose to join a group which is going to cook or listen to a story.

Using assessment to evaluate the quality of provision and practitioners' training needs. Practitioners can identify areas for improvement in terms of organisation, management, extending resources or training to improve provision and their own knowledge, skills and understanding and the effectiveness of their teaching.

3.7 Continuity into Key Stage 1

Good early years experience provides the firm foundation on which to build future academic as well as social and emotional success. Key to this is ensuring continuity between all settings. A key role for the Primary National Strategy is to ensure continuity of learning and teaching between the EYFS and Key Stage 1.

This transition is made easier for children when practitioners share information about children’s learning in order to plan for continuity of learning in KS1.

The Primary National Strategy key aspects of learning provide a framework for continuing the broad and balanced approach of the EYFS. All these aspects are developed through the EYFS areas of learning and development and are the building blocks for the National Curriculum and the literacy and mathematics frameworks. Further guidance will be available on the CD-ROM.
The literacy and mathematics frameworks

The Primary National Strategy literacy and mathematics frameworks have recently been renewed. They provide guidance for children from the Foundation Stage to Year 6 and into Year 7. In order to plan for transition and continuity, it is important that Year 1 teachers are familiar with EYFS and that EYFS teachers are familiar with the literacy and mathematics frameworks.

The frameworks were developed alongside each other, with relevant sections of each mirroring the other. Practitioners will find that the guidance provided in the literacy and mathematics frameworks for children aged from three to five is an overview of what is in EYFS. The ‘end of stage expectations’ for the Early Years Foundation Stage are the early learning goals for Communication, Language and Literacy and Problem solving, Reasoning and Numeracy. These early learning goals are also listed under the ‘learning strands’ of both literacy and mathematics frameworks, so that practitioners can see how EYFS feeds into literacy and mathematics teaching in Key Stage 1.

When practitioners access the literacy and mathematics ‘electronic framework’ they will find all six EYFS Areas of Learning and Development.

3.8 Exempting individual children

It is important that EYFS is compatible with parents’ rights under the European Convention on Human Rights that their children are educated in accordance with the parents’ own philosophies and beliefs. It is intended that EYFS will be fully inclusive of all children, regardless of their ethnicity, culture, religion or belief, home language, family background, special educational needs, disability, gender or ability. Its primary focus is to meet the individual needs of children, and there is significant flexibility to deliver the six areas of learning and development in a way that reflects the needs and circumstances of every child. In most cases, therefore, it will be possible to deliver EYFS in a way which is compatible with parents’ philosophies and beliefs. However, it is not possible to predict every circumstance that may arise.

Therefore, the [Childcare Act 2006] provides for regulations to enable an early years provider, in prescribed circumstances, to disapply the learning and development requirements, or to apply them with specified modifications, in respect of a particular child.
This draft poster shows how the four aspects of *Birth to Three Matters* and the six EYFS Areas of Learning and Development interlink within the context of the *Every Child Matters* outcomes.