

Curriculum in the context of the EYFS reforms

Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage, 2021

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97490/7/EYFS_framework_-_March_2021.pdf

“1.1 Early years providers must guide the development of children’s capabilities with a view to ensuring that children in their care complete the EYFS ready to benefit fully from the opportunities ahead of them.

1.2 ... it is up to providers to decide how they approach the curriculum.”
(page 7)

“1.11 Practitioners must consider the individual needs, interests, and development of each child in their care, and must use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience for each child in all areas of learning and development. Practitioners working with the youngest children are expected to ensure a strong foundation for children’s development in the three prime areas. The specific areas of learning provide children with a broad curriculum and with opportunities to strengthen and apply the prime areas of learning. This is particularly important in developing language and extending vocabulary.”
(page 15)

See the **Educational Programmes** on pages 8-10.

Help for early years providers (online resource), 2021, DfE Curriculum planning

<https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/get-help-to-improve-your-practice/curriculum-planning>

“What is a curriculum?”

A curriculum is what you want the children to learn in the time they are with you.

It must be based on the statutory [early years foundation stage \(EYFS\)](#), which gives you a framework that you can build on, through the 7 areas of learning.

You can decide how best to deliver those areas by creating a curriculum unique to your setting, providing activities and experiences that deliver those areas of learning.

Planning your curriculum

You should always start with the [early years foundation stage \(EYFS\) framework](#). It contains educational programmes that sit under 7 areas of learning. These are high-level curriculum summaries that you must follow and work into a rich curriculum that meets the needs of the children.

From there, break down those high-level curriculum summaries into smaller steps. Decide what you want children to learn, the activities you want to do with them and how your setting can support their learning.

Childminders or nursery leaders (working with their staff) should decide how to implement these activities and experiences, so the children can progress in all the areas of learning. You should evaluate how well the curriculum works, checking what children know and can do as they move through the EYFS.

You should consider using [‘Development Matters’](#) the non-statutory curriculum guidance for the early years foundation stage to support you in planning your curriculum.

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Your curriculum should be unique to your setting. Watch your children, studying how they lead their own play. Talk to parents and carers to find out their interests. Listening to what children say also provides clues about their curiosities and interests.

Use this knowledge to decide how best to engage children in the curriculum, choosing the right activity or environment. It should not be overly complicated and should meet the needs of the majority of children. Some children, such as those with SEND, may need additional support.

It's important not to use the early learning goals (ELGs) from the EYFS as the basis for your curriculum. They should only be used as an assessment during the summer term of the reception year.

Summary

- Consider what you want children to learn then plan the activity.
- Base your curriculum on your children, covering the 7 areas of learning in the EYFS, using the statutory educational programmes (high-level curriculum summaries) as a starting point.
- The new EYFS framework is more specific, and better suited to be used as a basis for curriculum planning.
- Consider using Development Matters to help you plan your curriculum.
- Do not use the ELGs as a curriculum starting point. They should only be used as an assessment during the summer term at the end of the reception year."

Development Matters – Non-statutory curriculum guidance for the early years foundation stage, 2021, DfE

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1004234/Development_Matters_Non-statutory_Curriculum_Guidance_Revised_July_2021.pdf

"3. The curriculum: what we want children to learn

- The curriculum is a top-level plan of everything the early years setting wants the children to learn.
- Planning to help every child to develop their language is vital.
- The curriculum needs to be ambitious. Careful sequencing will help children to build their learning over time.
- Young children's learning is often driven by their interests. Plans need to be flexible.
- Babies and young children do not develop in a fixed way. Their development is like a spider's web with many strands, not a straight line.
- Depth in early learning is much more important than covering lots of things in a superficial way." (page 9)

"Working with the revised Early Years Foundation Stage: Principles into Practice", Julian Grenier, 2020

"Key questions – what is a high-quality curriculum?"

The big picture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the overall aims, values and approach of the setting or school?• How will the curriculum be suitable for the children, their families, and the local community?• How will the curriculum be ambitious for every child?
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Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do we want the children to learn? • Is this consistent with the educational programmes set out in the EYFS Statutory Framework?
Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will we help all children to learn (pedagogy)? • How will we ensure all children are healthy and developing personally, socially and emotionally? • What routines will provide the right type of care, reassurance and atmosphere for learning? • How will we arrange resources and manage the learning environment to ensure that all children can access and benefit from what we offer? • How will we make best use of the Early Years Pupil Premium to support the learning of disadvantaged children? • How will we make sure any plans we make are flexible and open to individual children's interests? Will we be able to make the most of unexpected opportunities which may arise?
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will we check that children are learning what we want them to? • How will we make sure we notice learning that we were not necessarily expecting? • How will we prioritise assessment in the here-and-now (formative assessment)? • How will we make sure we act on formative assessment, to help children's learning? • How will we manage assessments at key points (summative assessment)? This includes two statutory assessments. They are the 2-year-development check and the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile. • How will we ensure that assessment procedures don't take practitioners away from the children for extended periods of time? How will we avoid unnecessary workload?
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will you check that the curriculum is working, and prioritise what needs improvement?" • How will we check that the curriculum is effective in preparing children for the next phase of their learning? • How will we gather and consider feedback from children, practitioners, parents and others?

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“Working with the revised Early Years Foundation Stage: Principles into Practice”, Julian Grenier, 2020
(continued)

“Leaders also need to support curriculum development with cycles of professional development. Some practitioners may also have gaps in their knowledge from their earlier training. They may need to know more about:

- How children develop and learn
- The best ways for adults to help them
- The key skills, concepts, communication skills and vocabulary that children need to learn at different ages

It is important to avoid overloading the curriculum in the early years with too much content, especially for older children.” (page 28)

“Curricular plans will benefit from being flexible enough to allow for changes in direction. Practitioners need to respond quickly to children’s sudden new interests.

Young children benefit from a balanced curriculum which includes teaching that’s been planned ahead, and also makes time for their spontaneous learning.” (page 32)

Birth to 5 Matters: Non-statutory guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage, Early Education, 2021

<https://www.birthto5matters.org.uk/download-or-buy-a-copy/>

“Children bring funds of knowledge-based interests to the setting, and they are motivated to learn through connecting new experiences to what they already know and can do. Practitioners can support these interests while also keeping in mind that they need to introduce children to new ideas and knowledge and sensitively support and guide their learning in all areas, including the Characteristics of Effective Learning

The curriculum will include attention to the Areas of Learning and Development which summarise some of what children learn.

The curriculum must, however, be more than a list of skills and knowledge to be achieved. The EYFS principle says every unique child is “constantly learning”. Children learn from all their experiences, not just those that have been planned or intended.

The curriculum needs to take account of children’s learning not just in the Areas of Learning and Development, but also in how they see themselves as learners and how they are building the strong foundations for lifelong learning described in the Characteristics of Effective Learning.”
(page 39)

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“Settings will have some big goals for children ... It’s important to break down a large curricular goal... What are all of the essential things which a child must know and be able to do first?”

“Working with the revised Early Years Foundation Stage: Principles into Practice”, Julian Grenier, 2020

In Leicestershire we have identified (in consultation with Leicestershire Children and Families Partnership, early years providers, schools and 0-5 services) these key indicators for school readiness:

- I am curious and want to play and learn
- I feel good about myself and like it when you praise me
- I am starting to know when I am happy, sad or cross
- I can let you know what I need and tell you about what is important to me
- I can settle when you leave me knowing you will be back soon
- I can play with other children and I am learning to take turns
- I can make simple choices
- I am willing to have a go and keep on trying
- I can use lots of different words about things that interest me and use them when I play
- I can listen and take turns in conversation with grown-ups and children
- I can follow simple instructions
- I can join in with favourite songs/rhymes/stories
- I can go to the toilet and dress myself most of the time
- I am an active and confident mover both indoors and outdoors

These key indicators could form part of your curriculum. As they are big goals, you may wish to break them down into smaller steps.

“Your curriculum should be unique to your setting. Watch your children, studying how they lead their own play. Talk to parents and carers to find out their interests. Listening to what children say also provides clues about their curiosities and interests.”

Help for early years providers (online resource), 2021, DfE

You should talk together as a whole setting and decide what you want children to know and understand and how you want children to be.

What do you want them to experience, to be familiar with, to have opportunities to be involved in?

How will you sequence their learning over time to ensure progression?

Remember that everyone in your setting should be familiar with the curriculum and what you want the children to learn.

You should make sure your plans are flexible and open to individual children’s interests and fascinations.

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Guidance - Registered early years providers, Ofsted, 22 July 2021

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-eif-inspections-and-the-eyfs/registered-early-years-providers>

“How will Ofsted inspect the curriculum? Do providers need to produce a curriculum map?”

We are keen to bust this myth! We don't know where the idea of a 'curriculum map' has come from, but we are clear that what children learn in the early years is incredibly important for their future success.

Inspectors will want to know how leaders design an ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum that prepares children well for the next stage of their education. Providers will be asked what they want children to learn and why, how they are helping children know more and remember more, and how they measure this success.

Our inspection handbooks for both registered early years providers and schools make it clear that curriculum planning does not need to be in any specific format. There is no need to produce a 'curriculum map'. It is up to providers to determine the format of their planning, and it is up to leaders to justify these plans based on what they want children to encounter, explore and learn in the setting.”

Guidance - The EYFS in schools, Ofsted, 22 July 2021

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-eif-inspections-and-the-eyfs/the-eyfs-in-schools>

“Early years foundation stage (EYFS) reforms

Will Ofsted expect to see curriculum maps for every area of learning in the early years?

We are keen to bust this myth! We don't know where the idea of a 'curriculum map' has come from, but we are clear that what children learn in the early years is incredibly important for their future success.

Inspectors will want to understand how schools design the curriculum in early years to give children the foundational knowledge and understanding they will need for key stage 1 and for the rest of their schooling. Our inspection handbooks for both registered early years providers and schools make it clear that curriculum planning does not need to be in any specific format. It is up to providers to determine the format of their planning, and it is up to leaders to justify these plans based on what they want children to encounter, explore and learn in school.

Does Ofsted expect the national curriculum in a primary school to start when children first join in the early years?

Even though the 7 areas of learning do not map precisely to the national curriculum subject areas, inspectors will want to understand how the curriculum in the early years is built on in key stage 1. They will also want to understand how knowledge builds from the moment children join the school to the time that they leave.”