

Curriculum overview for babies

Note: this curriculum has been written to support babies aged approximately 0 – 1 year.

The curriculum is your plan – Ofsted calls the curriculum your ‘intent’. It covers the things you want babies and children to experience, learn and enjoy doing through their early years. Intent is everything you do up to the point of teaching. The early years curriculum, which is statutory in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS, 2021) educational programmes, covers the 7 areas of learning including:

- **Communication & language:** interactions; exploring language; listening and understanding.
For babies, the focus is on talking, reading books and singing songs and rhymes, so they hear lots of quality words and phrases through the day. Practitioners should chat to babies during daily routines and value their non-verbal and babbling responses.
- **PSED:** emotions; sense of self; relationships.
Babies are driven by their emotions and cry when they need something from the adults around them. Support should be offered to help them settle and attach, using the key person approach. Close partnerships with parents will ensure baby’s personal care needs are met.
- **Physical development:** core strength and coordination; gross motor skills; fine motor skills.
Babies need opportunities to move and be active through the day – they should be offered outside time as well as playful movement games in the setting. Practitioners should encourage daily tummy time so babies develop bilateral coordination and upper body strength and allow babies to lie on their backs and kick and stretch out for toys. As fine motor skills move from whole hand to pincer grip, resources should be provided which allow them to pick things up and explore using all their senses.
- **Literacy:** comprehension; pre-reading; pre-writing.
For babies, the literacy curriculum focus is on reading books, singing songs and rhymes and enjoying language together. Care should be taken to ensure the environment promotes listening.
- **Mathematics:** numbers; spatial reasoning; patterns and connections.
Babies explore maths when they play with toys and treasure baskets which allow them to explore in different ways. They will hear numbers in songs and rhymes and see quantity changing as someone comes into the room or a toy disappears; they enjoy games like peepo and counting fingers and toes.
- **Understanding the world:** personal experiences; diverse world; widening vocabulary.
Babies need to be outside, exploring the world around them. Practitioners should know what experiences they have at home and build on them in the setting, promoting a sense of community belonging and awareness of nature and the natural world.
- **Expressive art & design:** imagination & creativity; self-expression; communicating through the arts.
Babies will enjoy sensory play – consider how you support them sensitively if they struggle with getting messy or new tastes and sensations. Provide opportunities for baby to explore sensory baskets, musical instruments, noisy books, toys with flaps and buttons etc to engage all the senses.

Communication and language – baby

Interactions – activity ideas:

- Make eye contact with baby and use big facial expressions to get and keep their attention.
- Respond positively to baby when he kicks, waves and makes body movements.
- Play hiding games like peepo to encourage baby to join in with games.
- Sing songs and nursery rhymes through the day – baby will join in and might sing back to you.

Exploring language – activity ideas:

- Babble and sing with baby – make time for baby to talk to you every day.
- Use lots of words and phrases during play, so baby hears you talking to them.
- Watch out for and value baby's non-verbal communication – their gestures and movements.
- Look at sensory, cardboard, sound making and material books, signs and labels with baby.

Listening and understanding – activity ideas:

- Check baby can hear you – watch for non-verbal and verbal responses to your conversations.
 - Play with toys and read books together, so baby sees you as a fun person who wants to be with them.
 - Watch for eye contact and changes to facial expression which tells you baby is interested and joining in.
 - Babies are easily distracted – reduce environmental sounds and clutter to help them focus.
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Personal, social and emotional development – baby

Emotions – activity ideas:

- Support secure attachments – ensure baby has a key person from day 1.
- Provide baby with calm, reassuring environments to explore, inside and in the garden.
- Set aside lots of time for the key person to play and cuddle with baby every day – it's important.
- Set up some cosy spaces, inside and outside, for rest and relaxation.

Sense of self – activity ideas:

- Engage baby in mirror play – open and close mouth, stick out tongue and talk about what you see.
- When you are playing with baby, use his name to get his attention.
- Encourage independence – allow baby to use a cup and self-feed.
- Point out and name baby's hands and fingers, feet and toes, nose, eyes, ears etc.

Relationships – activity ideas:

- Use routine times of the day – nappy changing, meal times etc to develop attachments.
 - Sit together and play interactive games – knee bouncing or peepo are fun.
 - Make family photo books – ask parents to send you pictures for you to include.
 - Allow babies to have comforters from home and special toys so they feel secure.
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Physical development – baby

Core strength – activity ideas:

- Ensure baby has space push up, crawl or bottom shuffle and roll.
- Provide safe surfaces for baby to hold while he stands and bounces.
- Encourage baby to walk when he is ready – research why walking babies can be harmful.
- Resource low baskets full of interesting toys ready for when baby can sit to play.

Gross motor skills – activity ideas:

- Ensure baby has space to move freely and crawl when he is ready.
- Plan time to be active every day – moving to music, playing outside.
- Put baby on his tummy – support him to look around and reach out for toys.
- Use a cushion for baby to sit against so he can sit up and explore.

Fine motor skills – activity ideas:

- Allow baby time to lie on his back and play with his bare hands and feet.
 - Provide safe toys for baby to pick up and put in his mouth.
 - Encourage baby to self-feed using his hands to pick up small pieces of food.
 - Put together sensory play trays for baby to explore – let him get messy.
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Literacy – baby

Comprehension – activity ideas:

- Have lots of fun conversations with baby through the day.
- Make time for play every day – show baby you enjoy playing with him (contingent talk).
- Allow plenty of time for baby to respond and talk back to you when you are chatting to him.
- Sing songs and rhymes baby hears with parents or family members at home.

Pre-reading – activity ideas:

- Read board and material books – use higher pitched sounds (parentese).
- Chat to baby about what they are doing or looking at as they play.
- Notice what baby spots when you go on outings and introduce new words.
- Look at signs, labels, boxes, pictures etc together and comment on what you can see.

Pre-writing – activity ideas:

- Resource toys which baby can pick up, hold and safely put in his mouth.
 - Focus on core strength and gross motor skills – see PD for more ideas.
 - Watch as baby's whole hand grip changes to pincer grip – offer small food and toys to pick up.
 - Encourage baby to explore using all their senses (see EAD).
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Mathematics – baby

Number – activity ideas:

- Play hide and seek games – baby learns that something appears and disappears again.
- Provide fun shape sorter and stacking games for baby to explore.
- Sing finger and toe rhymes together – count fingers and toes as you sing.
- Notice whether baby spots something has changed when you add or remove a toy during play.

Spatial reasoning – activity ideas:

- Allow space for baby to move, kick and stretch so they explore around them.
- Make collections of big and small things for baby to play with on the floor.
- Provide stacking cups that fit inside each other or stack to make a tower for baby to knock down.
- Put up some low-level mirrors to help baby develop a sense of where his body is in space.

Patterns and connections – activity ideas:

- Put together a book of black and white and colour patterns to read together.
 - Sing songs and rhymes with patterns and rhythm for baby to copy.
 - Stick out your tongue and blink – notice if baby copies the movement patterns you are making.
 - Provide a basket of small toys for baby to line up, arrange and sort.
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Understanding the world – baby

Personal experiences – activity ideas:

- Allow time for baby to develop strong attachments with his key person (see PSED - relationships).
- Mark special occasions in baby's home life when he comes to the setting.
- Talk to parents about what baby enjoys doing at home and complement home life in the setting.
- Spend time talking about baby's home and family life every day.

Diverse world – activity ideas:

- Ensure the key person gets to know baby's family well so they can work closely together.
- Read books with baby – include books and stories about the local community and wider world.
- Sing a 'hello' song in different languages – ensure you learn words in baby's home language.
- Audit your resources regularly to ensure they reflect the child's home life and local community.

Widening vocabulary – activity ideas:

- Talk to baby about what he is doing – add new words and phrases to extend his vocabulary.
 - Look at nature during walks – point out trees and leaves, flowers and petals, dogs and birds.
 - Talk about the clothes you need to wear for today's weather and transport as you go on outings.
 - Read lots of new books and sing new songs so baby hears lots of different words.
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Expressive arts and design – baby

Imagination and creativity – activity ideas:

- Resource new sensory experiences regularly so baby has fun exploring safe messy trays.
- Focus on the process of doing something – not the end product.
- Allow time and space in the daily routines for free exploration of the resources.
- Provide emotional security so baby feels safe and secure in the setting.

Self-expression – activity ideas:

- Resource small, low-level baskets of interesting toys and pieces of material for baby to explore.
- Set aside cosy spaces for relaxing, listening to music or chatting together.
- Respond to baby's mood changes mindfully and gently, using words and cuddles to calm him.
- Go outside every day and experience the weather together – note how baby responds to change.

Communicating through the arts – activity ideas:

- Note how baby responds to change in noise around them – keep the setting quiet so they can listen.
 - Allow time and space for lots of open-ended exploration through the session.
 - Make hand and foot prints together – enjoy smearing the paint and exploring using all the senses.
 - Put together a sensory board for baby to explore – notice what he likes to touch and what calms him.
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Think about the individual baby:

**What experiences are they having at home? Have they been home throughout their lives? Do they, for example, see grandparents or other babies?

**Can baby separate from parents / carers peacefully or do they need extra support?

**How do parents play with their baby? Do they, for example, encourage daily tummy time and get down on the floor to play games?

**What toys and books does baby have to play with at home? Do parents sing songs and rhymes to baby – how do they calm baby when he is upset or anxious?

**Does baby go on family outings? What are their home life experiences of the outside world?

**Do parents have any concerns about baby's hearing or sight? Do they attend regular appointments with their health visitor? Have they booked baby's first dental appointment yet?

**Has baby heard English spoken at home? Think about how you can support their language development in the setting, so they hear lots of quality words and phrases throughout their sessions.

**Is baby interested in what is happening around him? Does he track with his eyes and watch you as you are going about your daily routines?

**Does baby have any barriers to their learning and development – what can you do to support them?

Note: see 'Quick Assessment Checks' guide for tracking support if required for the individual child.