

Curriculum overview for young children

Note: *this curriculum has been written to support young children aged approximately 2 – 3 years.*

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 young children, the focus is on active listening, playing with language, vocabulary acquisition and giving children time to process. Note how the child sustains attention and whether they need support, through positive relationships and enabling environments, to help them concentrate for longer.
- **PSED:** emotions; sense of self; relationships.
For this age range, the focus is on learning about emotions, developing an understanding of themselves as an individual, becoming more independent and starting to play with other children.
- **Physical development:** core strength and coordination; gross motor skills; fine motor skills.
For young children, the focus is on developing core strength so the child can balance, move in lots of different ways and strengthen from inside out so they can, for example, sit on a chair without wobbling. This happens when young children are given opportunities to move in lots of different ways, paint and draw on different surfaces and join in with fun music and movement sessions.
- **Literacy:** comprehension; pre-reading; pre-writing.
Listening is not the same as understanding – early years providers need to check the child understands what is being said to them. This happens when they are engaged in activities such as story time and songs and rhymes every day. Early writing includes mark making with different resources on a range of surfaces to build core and upper body strength and develop hand-eye coordination.
- **Mathematics:** numbers; spatial reasoning; patterns and connections.
Young children will start to notice numbers and use counting words in play. They will explore other maths during exploration of the resources and invitations to play, alongside engaged practitioners, who will provide some direct instruction so they learn new maths vocabulary and experiment with ideas.
- **Understanding the world:** personal experiences; diverse world; widening vocabulary.
As young children start to take notice of the environment during outings, they will engage with nature and the natural world, using all their senses. They will develop a deeper understanding as they role play in the setting. Reading books and talking to children will build their vocabulary.
- **Expressive art & design:** imagination & creativity; self-expression; communicating through the arts.
Young children explore the world using their senses – given opportunities to engage with different types of arts and crafts, they will build core strength and coordination, express themselves creatively and learn new skills which will help them to explore art, crafts, music, musical instruments, dance, drama, role play, small world play etc.

Communication and language – young child

Interactions – activity ideas:

- Model active listening – sit quietly, give eye contact and use an interested facial expression.
- Think about what new words and phrases you are going to introduce during play and when reading.
- Ask parents about home interests and link to them in conversation.
- Look at pictures from outings and talk about where you did and what happened.

Exploring language – activity ideas:

- Role play with props to develop language – add silly voices and lots of movement.
- Explore nature together – teach new words and phrases as you investigate.
- Set up play trays to explore – describe what you are doing and use sensory vocabulary.
- Encourage creativity – talk about what techniques you are using and describe the processes.

Listening and understanding – activity ideas:

- Allow plenty of time for children to process questions and instructions – don't rush them.
 - Play listening games together when you go out on walks.
 - Read books that are a little longer – use puppets and silly voices to sustain attention.
 - Young children can shift attention with support – help them practice by asking them to listen and do.
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Personal, social and emotional development – young child

Emotions – activity ideas:

- Read books about emotions – point out the facial features that mean someone is cross or happy.
- Think about how you will respond when the child pushes boundaries – be respectful and consistent.
- Discuss people we love and like – read books to help the child understand stranger danger.
- Play games that encourage risk taking – jumping, climbing onto a surface, moving fast at the park.

Sense of self – activity ideas:

- Display a picture gallery including every child and their 'mini me' blocks.
- Use puzzles, jigsaws and tricky games together – encourage persistence.
- Help the child to make good choices – food, drinks, clothes for the weather, helping to tidy up.
- Practice independence – don't do anything for a child that they can do for themselves.

Relationships – activity ideas:

- Show you keep the child in mind – talk to them about what they did when they weren't in the setting.
 - Sit together at meal times – chat about the food and promote healthy food, keeping themselves healthy.
 - Role play using dressing up clothes and props – be a playful partner and encourage others to join in.
 - Resource calm and restful spaces for reading, singing and storytelling.
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Physical development – young child

Core strength – activity ideas:

- Walk on a line and stand on one foot to develop balance.
- Climb stairs and on equipment in the setting / at the park – the child might enjoy obstacle courses.
- Dance to different types of music – fast, slow, high, low etc.
- Engage the child in gardening, planting flowers, digging up weeds and watching food grow.

Gross motor skills – activity ideas:

- Sing songs with the parachute – walk round it, pick it up and move it around.
- When painting and drawing, model how to make lines, dabs and curves in different directions.
- Play games with balls, balloons and bean bags – catch, roll and throw.
- Encourage risk assessment and risk taking in different situations – talk about safety and offer choices.

Fine motor skills – activity ideas:

- Resource heuristic / small parts play when the child no longer puts things in his mouth.
 - Plan daily arts and crafts, sometimes practicing and other times building on previous skills.
 - Resource messy play – sand, water, gloop, playdough; show the child how to squash and squeeze.
 - Use clothes pegs in play and when den building – they are great for colour recognition games as well.
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Literacy – young child

Comprehension – activity ideas:

- Plan storytelling sessions – make your own props to help the child tell the story.
- Link books to the child's new interests and change the display so they find books they want to read.
- Make home and family books with photos from parents and read them together.
- Link non-fiction books to group themed activities as the child starts to engage in group learning.

Pre-reading – activity ideas:

- Make your own books together on different subjects linked to the child's interests and new learning.
- Explore environmental print on outings – take photos and talk about them when you get back.
- Look things up online and in non-fiction books so the child recognises that they can learn from books.
- Encourage parents to read at home – ask what books they read so you can complement them.

Pre-writing – activity ideas:

- Plan daily fiddly fingers games and colour pictures – link to activities the child enjoys.
 - Resource for standing play – take the chairs away and encourage the child to stretch along surfaces.
 - Play games that cross the midline – painting the walls, stretching sideways, ball games.
 - Encourage daily small-scale mark making – provide paper and lots of resources inside and outside.
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Mathematics – young child

Number – activity ideas:

- Notice numbers when you go on walks in the local area – what numbers do you see and where?
- Line up and count heads at lunch and tea time – help the child get to a total.
- Role play shops – explore money, price, buying and selling, pound signs, taking turns.
- Play games with comparisons and changes in number – adding one and taking one away.

Spatial reasoning – activity ideas:

- Explore capacity - fill and empty differently sized containers in water play.
- Experiment with size and weight in the messy tray – big and small spoons, jugs for pouring.
- Line up toys, make towers and lines with blocks – model how to line up by height, size or shape.
- Cook with the child – pretend and real – to develop maths through real life.

Patterns and connections – activity ideas:

- Sequence the day with songs and visual displays / cards – talk about the passing of time.
 - Read books with repeating refrains – ‘We’re going on a bear hunt’, ‘Gruffalo’, ‘Jack and the beanstalk’.
 - Play clapping and stamping games – make 2 claps, 4 stamps and encourage the child to copy.
 - Make patterns using tinker trays and loose parts – provide simple stick frames to display the picture.
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Understanding the world – young child

Personal experiences – activity ideas:

- Take photos of the local community when you are out on walks – talk about them when you return.
- Tell stories about the child and what they enjoy doing in the setting or at home.
- Remember past events and mark special occasions in the child’s life and their community.
- Talk about how the child has grown – ask parents for baby photos to compare and display.

Diverse world – activity ideas:

- Go on listening and spotter walks in the local area: what can you hear – what can you see?
- Look closely at nature through the seasons - notice and talk about similarities and differences.
- Use technology for a purpose – cooking, crossing the road, finding out information, making pictures.
- Teach the child about ecology – reuse, recycle, repurpose, remember a shopping bag etc.

Widening vocabulary – activity ideas:

- Role play different scenarios – shopping, visiting a café etc and introduce new words and phrases.
 - Encourage the child to dress up and be someone else – not what language they use and extend.
 - Make scientific discoveries together – introduce new words to describe what you are doing and seeing.
 - Look closely at gardening and nature – name what you can see in the garden; plant flowers and food.
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Expressive arts and design – young child

Imagination and creativity – activity ideas:

- Plan different role play scenarios – go on outings or watch tv to learn about them first.
- Audit your home corner to ensure it links to the child's home and family life experiences.
- Provide dressing up cloaks and hats so the child can be anyone they want to be.
- Resource for superhero / fantasy play – the child might need rules to follow if they become rough.

Self-expression – activity ideas:

- Name and explore a range of different colours through arts and crafts – mixing, blending.
- Listen and dance to music from around the world – use it for inspiration when drawing or painting.
- Tell stories with music – add percussion instruments to the child's favourite books.
- Set up for large scale messy play in the garden – support small groups of children to play together.

Communicating through the arts – activity ideas:

- Provide access to resources for small world play – little people, animals, dolls house etc.
- Resource for junk modelling – boxes and tubes with tape and glue.
- Explore colour play – make collages using scraps of coloured material or paper.
- Make your own musical instruments from boxes, elastic bands and scraps.
- Paint outside on a rainy or stormy day – paint inside listening to classical music – notice the differences.

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Think about the individual child:

**What are they doing and saying at home – how can you weave their home and family learning and experiences into the curriculum?

**What personal interests can you develop through the activities you offer?

**How do they learn? Recognising any schemas (repeated patterns of play) they are currently using to support their learning can help you to better understand their play.

**Do you need support to manage behaviour? Young children sometimes struggle with strong emotions.

**Do they use all their senses during play – how can you support sensory exploration?

**Are they engaged in what you are doing – do they flourish in your daily routines – or do you need to make changes to your environment to better involve them?

**Can they concentrate – or do you need to change the environment to help them focus?

**Are they enthusiastic – motivated – to learn? If not, why not? What needs to change?

**Are they ready to join in with small group activities, so they learn more about the world around them?

**Are they becoming independent and self-aware – or do you need to work with parents to encourage this?

**Do they have any barriers to their learning – what can you do to support them?

Note: see '**Quick Assessment Checks**' guide if further tracking or assessment is needed for the child.