

Guidance for
**Primary Schools
and Nursery Schools**
to review or further develop an
effective curriculum
linked to the EYFS Statutory Framework.



This toolkit includes:

- What do we mean by curriculum?
- A framework to support reflective planning for your unique EYs curriculum
- that links to the 3 Ofsted I's: Intention, Implementation and Impact
- An Ofsted audit tool linked to the Education Inspection Framework for EY's in Primary schools and Nursery Schools
- Links to further useful information and case studies of good practice

This curriculum toolkit can be used to:

- Empower EYs leaders and practitioners to confidently articulate their EYs curriculum
- Help frame conversations with whole school teams and subject leaders to gain a shared understanding and vision for a holistic curriculum that supports children's learning and development journey from the earliest days
- Support planning decisions about your EYs curriculum and transitions to next stage of learning

Getting it right in the early years

Your Early Years curriculum will be unique to your setting and will unfold and change as staff get to know children, and learning needs progress. It should be responsive and reflect the unique families and community you work with. Your professional knowledge will guide decisions about what a child needs to learn based on what they already know and their developing interests. The practitioner's role is to widen experiences and prepare children for what comes next in their learning and development journey. An effective curriculum will be motivating, exciting, creative, meaningful and support children to make sense of the world. It will also be inclusive and provide all children the skills and knowledge they need to improve outcomes, tackle inequality and help close the disadvantage gap.

What do we mean by Curriculum?

Curriculum

The curriculum consists of everything you want children to experience, learn and be able to do. Development matters, 2021

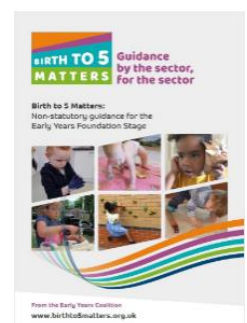
A plan for children's development and learning experiences, both formal and informal Birth to 5 Matters, 2021



It **must** meet the requirements of the educational programmes in the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).



These Guidance documents are **Non- statutory** (you don't have to use them but they could be really helpful to support child development knowledge)



Creating a Curriculum with Children

The Living Curriculum

(From [Creating a curriculum with young children](#), Liz Chesworth and Elizabeth Wood. Univ. of Sheffield, Jan 2022)

- values learning experiences that have relevance for all children in a diverse and changing society
- engages with the many ways in which children express their ideas and make sense of their worlds, and with things that matter to them
- recognises that even the most routine experiences of everyday life can become springboards for shared thinking, exploration and enquiry
- is built on respect for children's capabilities and membership of diverse families and communities

“early years educators can build a curriculum in partnership with children... and can develop a vibrant and responsive curriculum that is attuned to children's ideas and interests”



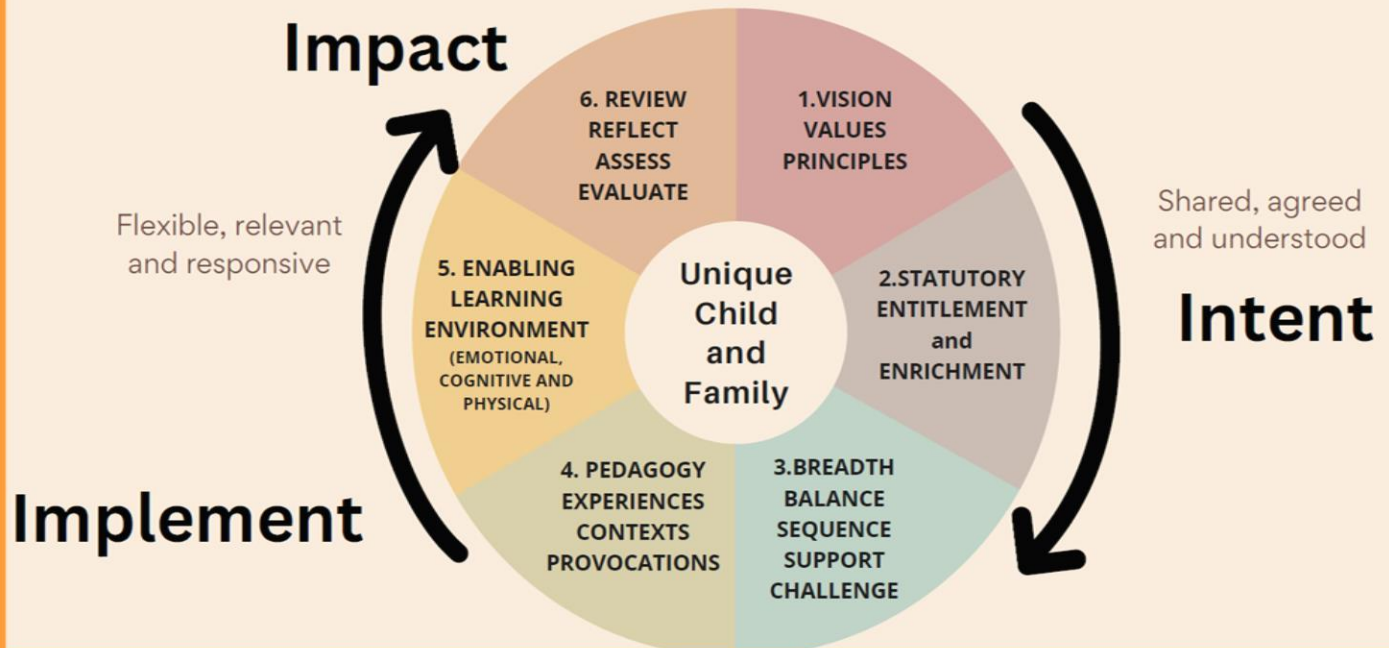
What do Ofsted say? For more detail refer to [EIF, 2022](#)

Intention- What do we want our children to learn? **Implementation-** How will we make this happen?

Impact- How do we know it is working?

- **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.
- Your curriculum should be coherently planned and sequenced. It builds on what children know and can do, towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge and skills for their future learning.
- Practitioners and leaders should create an environment that supports the intent of an ambitious and coherently planned and sequenced curriculum.
- Practitioners and leaders must use assessment well to check what children know and can do to inform teaching. This includes planning suitably challenging activities and responding to specific needs.
- The provider's curriculum intent and implementation are embedded securely and consistently across the provision
- Although the EYFS framework enables practitioners to decide on the detail of the curriculum they teach, it is important that they plan and sequence what they intend all children to learn, rather than it happening by chance or for some children and not others.

Designing an Early Years Curriculum



This is the starting point for your curriculum planning.

- What do children and their families bring to your school?
- What do you know already?
- What might you need to find out more about by being alongside a child and their family as you get to know each other as partners in learning?

Consider every child in the context of:

Funds of Knowledge- how young children's interests develop in the context of their relationships with the people, places and experiences they encounter in their daily lives eg. Religious and community experiences, household practices like food preparation, popular culture interests like technology/games, shared family stories and memories

<https://birthto5matters.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Observing-recognising-and-responding-to-Childrens-funds-of-knowledge-and-intrests.pdf>

Development and learning are enhanced when there are connections and relationships between early childhood settings, home and other places and spaces in children's lives. Connections across environments support children to bring their interests and "funds of knowledge" that may provide an anchor for them and an impetus for their learning. Children and families need to feel secure, accepted and that they belong – both within and beyond a setting. Diversity of communities must be respected and celebrated, widening each child's sense of belonging and sense of place in the community, while the uniqueness of each family, regardless of differences, is acknowledged and honoured. (from Birth to 5 matters, 2021)

Cultural capital- *what children bring with them, and develop from their experiences and opportunities (Birth to 5 Matters definition, 2021)*

Once we know children and their families well we are able to include, celebrate, acknowledge, and build on children's knowledge, experiences, and interests. We can also then open up the world further to provide new opportunities and experiences. This allows our teaching to motivate, challenge, expand, and increase children's knowledge, understanding, and skills.

Knowing the unique children and families that you work with, means that you can be confident to start working your way around the curriculum wheel to review or further develop your EYs curriculum. Leading a team through the questions on the wheel will support your decision making for the children's learning and development needs.

Intention- What do we want our children to learn?

1. Vision and Values- What is important to us and do we agree?

What are your school values and how does your curriculum relate to these?

Perhaps you have key words in a vision statement
eg. empower, respect, inspire?

How are these reflected in your everyday curriculum?

How do the EYFS principles link to ensure whole school curriculum coherence? [Link to The Bristol Standard website](#)



The Principles of the EYFS are a great starting point for reflection

2. Statutory Entitlement and Enrichment- What is statutory (educational programmes) and what is personalised to the needs of the setting/children?

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.

The educational programmes will never be enough. What are the unique experiences that are offered at your school to enrich learning and development further? (DFE, 2021)

3. Breadth, balance, support and challenge- How do we ensure that it is ambitious, accessible, sequenced and relevant?

Usha Goswami, professor of cognitive developmental neuroscience at the University of Cambridge, argues, ***'children think and reason largely in the same way as adults. However, they lack experience, and they are still developing important metacognitive and executive function skills'*** (Goswami, 2015, p. 25).

How do you ensure that the curriculum is accessible to all learners? Children with SEND can make good progress if there is an inclusive approach. All children including those who are from disadvantaged backgrounds deserve an ambitious curriculum that meets their needs.

Depth in learning is better than covering lots of things in a superficial way (Development Matters 2021)

How does the curriculum match the needs of the learners and continue to be meaningful, relevant, motivating and developmentally appropriate?

When working with children who may not be meeting developmental milestones it is essential that teams make time to reflect on the inclusivity of their environment, their curriculum, their interactions, and the resources available as well as drawing upon more precise assessment tools such as DEYO



Differentiated Early Years Outcomes (DEYO)
Aligned to Birth to 5 Matters

Copyright
Date of publication 2015
Developed by: Representatives from Early Years Specialist Settings and the Local Authority Early Years Team.
Updated September 2021

[Differentiated EYs Outcomes](#)



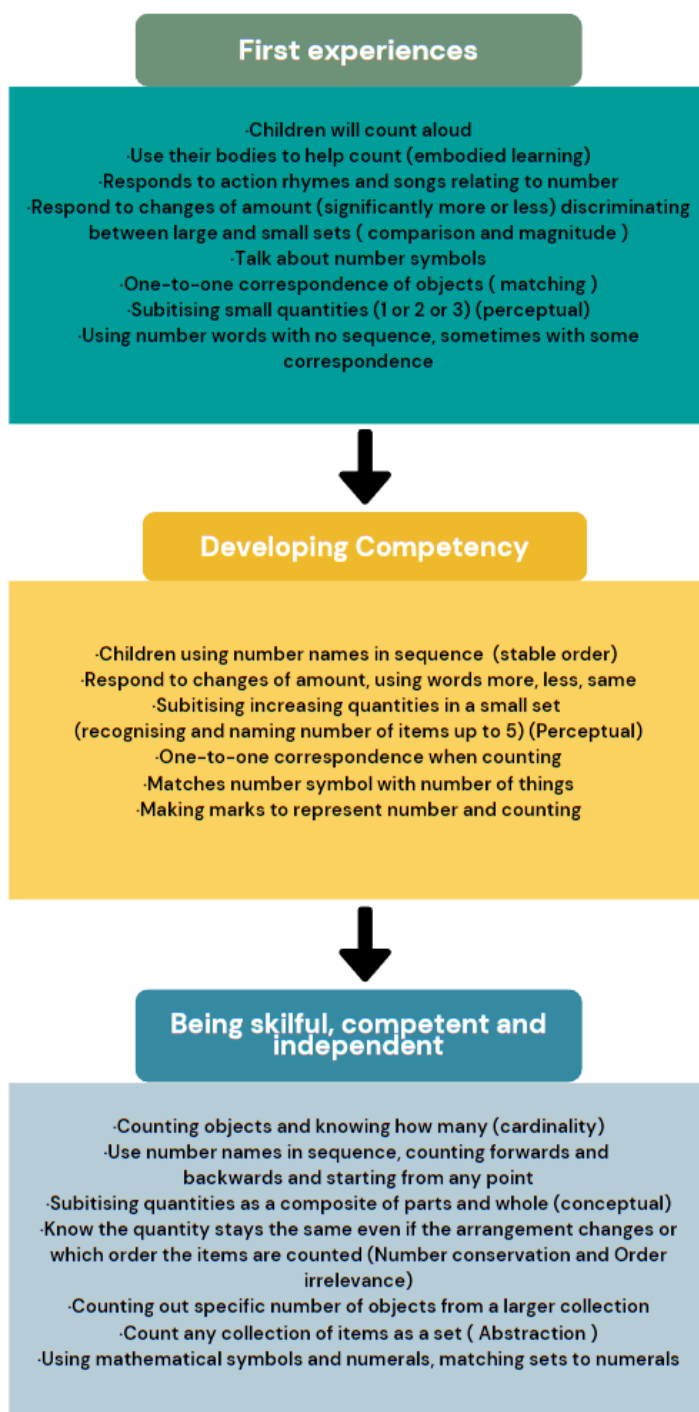
Once we know children well through spending time together and observing, we are in a strong position to make professional judgements about curriculum planning. We will know more about what children already know, understand and can do. We can then offer experiences that are well matched, expand vocabulary and build on existing skills and knowledge. **Ofsted considers the curriculum as a progression model.** “By progress, we mean that children know more, remember more and can do more of what was intended in the curriculum”. (Guidance for EYs registered providers, 2023)

Sequenced Learning

Teaching and learning needs to be sequenced logically for children so that they can make sense of it eg. learning how to speak in sentences so that you can explain something well to someone else or learning when and how to wash your hands as part of a routine.

An example of sequential learning

Curriculum Goal: I can count and find out how many

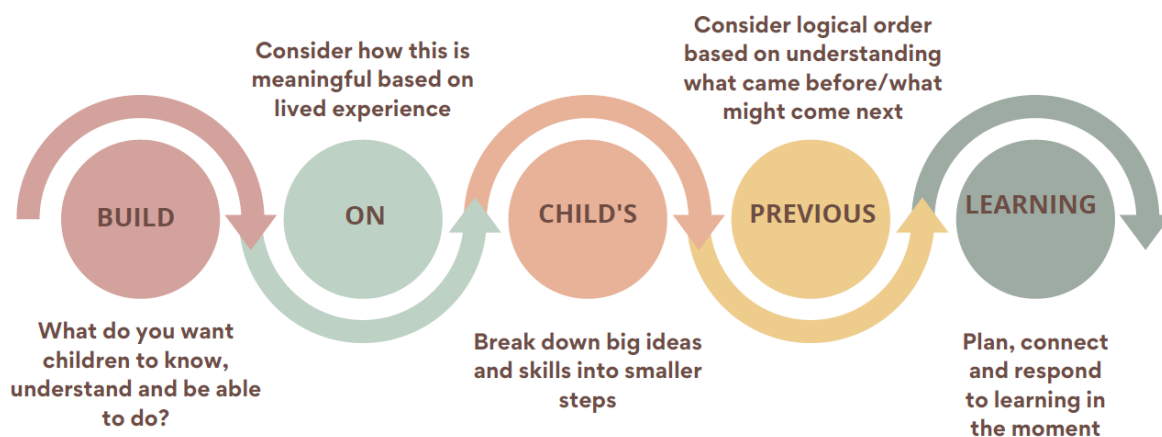


(Adapted from St Pauls Nursery School Curriculum- Maths)

Ofsted will ask what you want the children to learn and why, as well as **how you are helping children know more and remember more.**

A Sequenced Curriculum coherent, logical, introduced and revisited

Why this?
Why now?



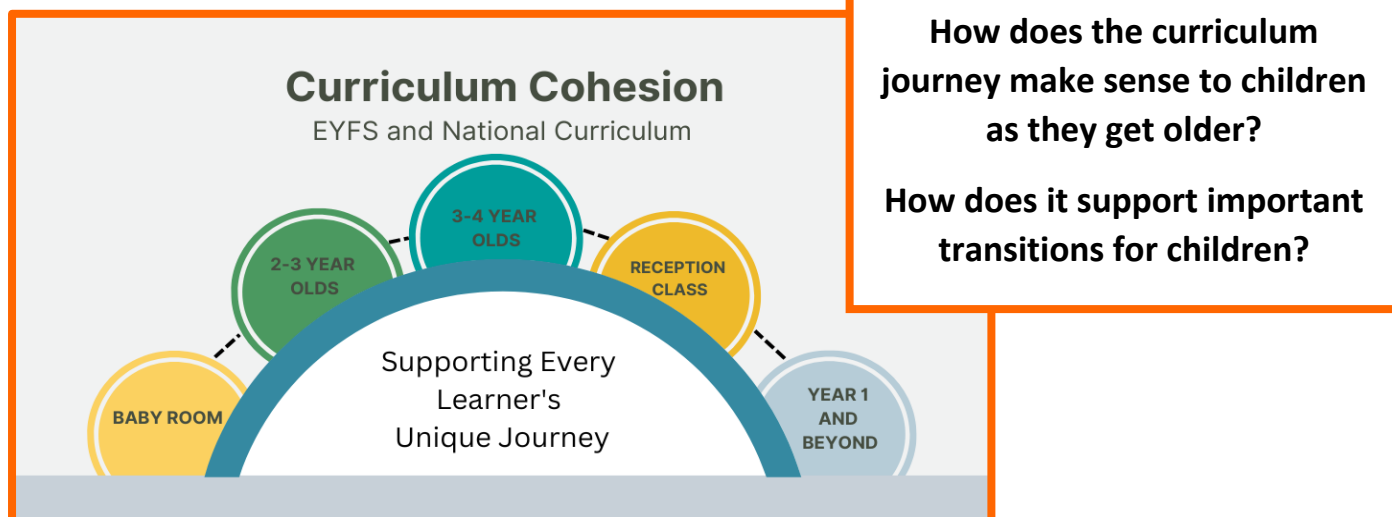
Unique Child + Positive Relationships + Enabling Environments = Learning and Development



Knowing the child well helps in understanding what might be in the child's mind – the links they are making, and whether they are exploring new ideas or gaining more information about existing thinking. (Birth to 5 Matters, 2021)

The provider's curriculum is coherently planned and sequenced. It builds on what children know and can do, towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge and skills for their future learning. Children benefit from meaningful learning across the EYFS curriculum. (Ofsted, 2021)

Whole School Curriculum Cohesion- EYFS and National Curriculum



Use the following prompts to frame a Subject Leader/EYFS Leader conversation about curriculum. The link to a helpful format that supports this further is [here](#)

How the Early Years Foundation Stage provides the foundations for (geography/history/science etc)

- Which EYFS areas of learning provide the foundations and background for National Curriculum in this subject?
- What is the foundational knowledge that supports the curriculum intent in this subject?
- How does this link across other areas of learning in EYFS both specific and prime, e.g. CLL, PSED, PD?
- How is the learning sequenced so that it is meaningful to young learners?
- How is it linked to children's current and ongoing experience and understanding of the world?
- How does the environment support the learning and development, e.g. adult/child interactions, small world resources, books, outdoor learning environment, experiences out and about?
- What are the play/ exploration experiences that support the Foundational Knowledge and skills for the subject?
- How will this be monitored in partnership with EYFS leader by subject leaders?

Implementation- How will we make this happen?

4. Pedagogy, experiences, contexts and provocations- What does it look like in everyday practice and routines?

Pedagogy- the understanding of how children learn and develop and the practices through which adults can enhance that process, rooted in values and beliefs about what we want for children and supported by knowledge, theory and experience, **Birth to 5 Matters, 2021**

Effective pedagogy is a mix of different approaches. Children learn through play, by adults modelling, by observing each other, and through guided learning and direct teaching. **Development Matters, 2021**

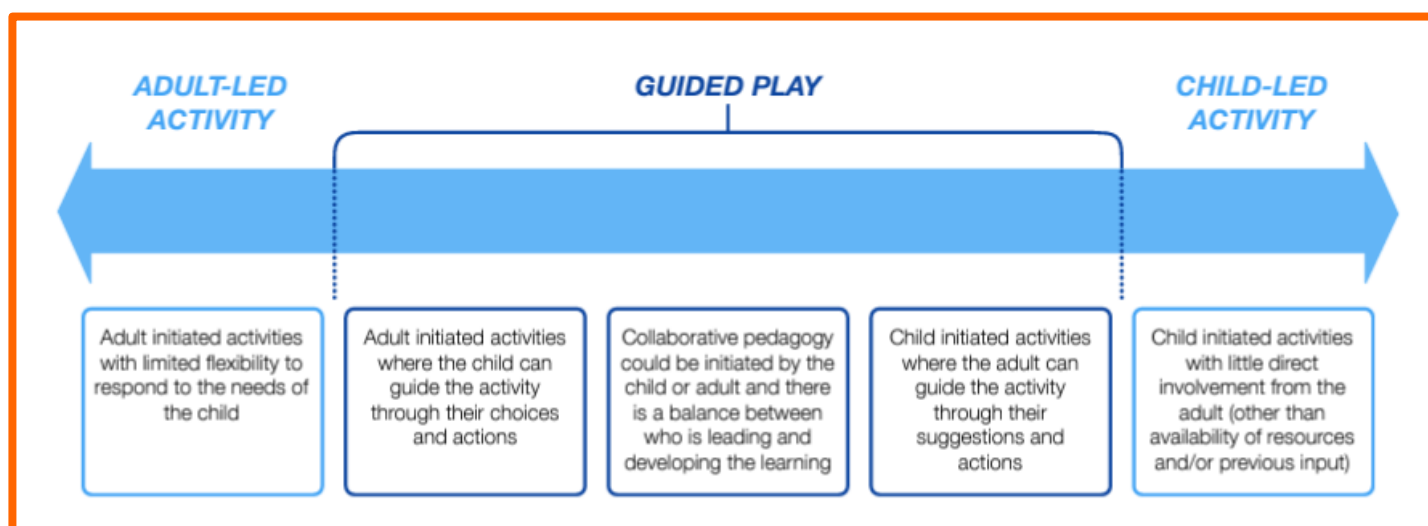
Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, relate to others, set their own goals and solve problems. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults. EYFS Statutory Framework, 2021

Use the following questions to reflect on how you put your curriculum into practice every day:

- How does your daily plan for children link to your curriculum?
- How do you ensure that the flow of the day matches children's learning needs and sense of well-being?
- How does the environment inside and out tune into and support children's learning needs?
- How are the adults used to support your curriculum intent and implementation?

Considering the contexts for teaching and learning-The Early Years Pedagogical Continuum

Building on the work of others (Miller & Almon, 2009; National Strategies, 2009) the Education Endowment Foundation *has put together this continuum which illustrates the range of ways educators support children's learning and development and that this spans adult-led and child-led learning opportunities.* **EEF, 2023**



A common misconception about opportunities for learning in the early years is that there are two distinct contexts it can take place, either through adult initiated activities (such as group sessions) or through independent free play as children access the continuous provision the adult has provided. However, these contexts are in fact the opposite ends of a broad spectrum of many different and subtle contexts teaching and learning can take place. **EEF EYs Evidence Store, 2023**

What about the Characteristics of Effective Learning?

The Characteristics of Effective Learning and the Prime and Specific Areas of Learning and Development are all interconnected. The Characteristics focus on how children learn rather than what they learn. This distinction is important as it highlights the process of learning for young children.

Bristol's C of EL Guidance, June 2020

[Bristol's C of EL Guidance 2020](#)



Review your pedagogy using Birth to 5 Matters, 2021

Effective early years provision pays as much attention to children's care as it does to play and learning as these are intertwined and impact equally on children's development and overall well-being.

Attachment and the role of the Key Person

- helps the child to feel known, understood, cared about and safe
- involves a triangle of trust with the child and family
- an effective Key Person approach needs strong leadership and committed practice
- children benefit most when their Key Person has special qualities and dispositions

B to 5 Matters, 2021

A pedagogy which includes co-regulation strategies will help children develop self-regulatory skills.

Researchers have identified three basic strategies for co-regulation:

- **Positive Relationships** – Provide a warm, responsive relationship where children feel respected, comforted and supported in times of stress, and confident that they are cared for at all times.
- **Enabling Environments** – Create an environment that makes self-regulation manageable, structured in a predictable way that is physically and emotionally safe for children to explore and take risks without unnecessary stressors.
- **Learning and Development** – Teach self-regulation skills through modelling, suggesting strategies, providing frequent opportunities to practice, and scaffolding to support children to use self-regulation skills.

5. Enabling environment (physical, emotional and cognitive)

How does the learning environment and interactions support, inspire and challenge thinking?

Children are unique and holistic learners, thriving within environments that support their individual and diverse motivations, interests and needs. Birth to 5 Matters, 2021

- How does the environment support your curriculum goals eg. are there non-fiction books/other resources available to support a line of enquiry or developing interest?
- Are links in learning made visible to children?
- How does your environment support, inspire, challenge thinking?
- How does your environment support children's emotional well-being, choice making and developing independence?
- How do conversations support curriculum goals?
- How do adults encourage creativity and critical thinking?
- How are children supported with learning new words and using them in meaningful contexts?
- How are children supported to access the wider world and outdoor environment?



The new Outdoor Play and Learning Reflective Framework is now available to support developments in your outdoor practice and provision.

[Bristol Standard Outdoor Learning Audit](#)

Impact- How do we know it is working?

6. Review, reflect, assess, evaluate- How do we know that the curriculum is working to ensure effective learning and development?

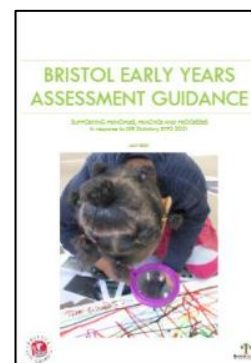
Some reflective questions to support thinking:

- How and when do we reflect on our curriculum as a team? What do we need to think about?
- What are we noticing about children's learning? What is going well? What do they need next?
- What are my children and families telling me?
- What does our ongoing assessment tell us?
- Are children making progress in their learning and development?
- What might we need to change, develop further?
- How might we support, extend and deepen play, interactions and learning in partnership with children?
- Have we noticed the things that are important for our quality improvement journey? What training or professional development might further support?
- How does our approach to curriculum, support transitions for children in their learning journey?

Useful Links



(For more information talk to your Lead Teacher)



[Positive Transitions Guidance](#)

[Bristol Standard Outdoor Play & Learning Reflective Framework](#)

What might your curriculum look like? What does Ofsted say?

- The EYFS's educational programmes provide the framework for the curriculum. It is up to schools to decide how to expand, extend and broaden these.
- Ofsted does not have a preferred view on how schools design their curriculum in early years.
- Inspectors will want to understand how schools design the early years curriculum 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 registered early years providers and for 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.
- The curriculum in a primary school starts when children first join in the early years, be that the nursery or Reception class. Inspectors will want to understand how the curriculum in early years is the foundation for key stage 1, as well as to understand how knowledge builds in a sequence from nursery to year 6.
- Inspectors will want to understand how learning in key stage 1 and beyond builds on the curriculum in the early years.

Your curriculum will be unique to your school context, children, families and community

This toolkit does not, therefore include an example proforma for an EYs curriculum. However, in Bristol we are busy gathering some examples of what an EYs curriculum could look like and will be collecting these case studies on the curriculum page of the [Bristol Early Years Website](#) to support further thinking.