



Parents' Guide to the EYFS, Our Curriculum and our Pedagogy

Sept 2021 – July 2022

What is the EYFS?

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) was originally launched in 2008. It is the statutory framework for all early years providers in England and it's held in high regard worldwide. The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage sets the standards that all early years providers must meet. Early years providers in England who provide care and learning for children from birth to the end of reception class must comply with the EYFS Statutory Framework. Ofsted regulate and inspect all early years providers against the safeguarding and welfare requirements and areas of learning to determine how well children are kept safe and healthy. From time to time the EYFS is updated and refreshed, so far this has happened in 2012, 2014 and 2017.

What is changing?

From September 2021 a revised EYFS will come into force. The key messages about the reforms include:

- ✓ Reducing practitioner/teacher workload and needless paperwork to allow for more quality time and interactions with the children
- ✓ Improving the outcomes of all children and addressing/reducing the disadvantage gaps
- ✓ The importance of workforce knowledge and professional development to inform assessments. Reflect upon the need to assess every child's development against 'check lists', saving formal steps of assessment for when they are necessary
- ✓ Making early learning goals clearer and more aligned to the curriculum in Y1 of primary school.

What do the changes mean to me as a parent/carer?

The safety of your child and the quality of the education provided will not change. You may not see any changes in terms of the activities and opportunities on offer to your child/ren. However, you may notice that we are not physically recording as many observations and assessments of progress. Please be reassured that we will still be supporting your child's development and responding to their interests. We will be using our professional judgements to assess your child's development during our daily interactions and activities. The progress check at 2 years is still a mandatory assessment point and we will still share your child's development and progress with you.

Previously we used development folders to store all your child's paperwork. The folders contained observations, assessments, photos of your child busy playing and learning and also their art work. For some families, it was a system that worked and they were happy to



communicate through the notes section in the folder. For other families, it was just 'something in the school bag'.

From September 2021, every child will have two books rather than a large folder; a smaller contact book – where the family and the key person can make notes, share information, pass on messages and a larger (A4) 'My Adventures' book. This will take the form of a scrapbook where photos, drawings, postcards, etc can be kept – with space to write about the what the child was doing, playing, experiencing at the time. The aim is that not only will it provide a photographic record of the child's learning adventures, but will also provide an opportunity for the child to sit down and discuss what they've been doing. Written observations mean very little to children – but being able to show you what they've done and talk about their time at preschool will help encourage their communication and language skills even further. From preschool's point of view – we love receiving photos showing the children having adventures on their bike, sleep overs with friends etc and we always print them off and share them with the child and their friends. Please continue to send photos in or stick them in the 'My Adventures' scrapbook so we can spend time talking with your child and hearing what they've been doing.

How will we be teaching your child?

"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." (Statutory Framework for the EYFS, 2021)

To provide a challenging and enjoyable experience for each child, as practitioners we need to know 'how' we're going to provide that experience and 'what' we're trying to teach. The 'how' is our pedagogy and the 'what' is our curriculum

Our pedagogy

Every child is unique and therefore they develop and learn at their own rate and with their own interests. As practitioners, we need to have a variety of teaching methods that will enable us to help each child to build their learning over time. Our pedagogy (ped-a-gojj-ee) is our approach to teaching and are as varied as the ways different children learn, but include the following examples:

- Reggio Emilia Approach – children are strong, confident and competent and naturally creative. An inviting environment will encourage the child to be a natural learner. That invitation can then be extended by using provocations to encourage the child to have ideas, solve problems and be an active learner
- Balancing adult led play and child-initiated play – play that is led and controlled by the child enables them to control the direction and narrative of their play experience
- Scaffolding learning to move a child's abilities from what they can do now through to what they can't do yet by guiding / modelling / encouraging / observation of their peers/adults and practicing.



- Loose parts play – enabling children to design their environment through materials that can be moved around, carried, stacked, lined up etc – enhancing the child’s creativity, construct their own ideas, share resources and problem solve.
- ITMP: In The Moment Planning – facilitating the continuation of learning and development by extending the play, planning next steps and facilitating those next steps at the time so the learning is greater than just focusing on one single objective – and children are more engaged with their learning.

For every child we are constantly considering the three I’s – intention, implementation and impact. We need to know what we intend the child to learn, how we’re going to make that work for the child and how do we know if it’s worked – so either we can move on to the next step or we try again using a different approach.

Our curriculum

The EYFS guides our setting by confirming the Early Learning Goals for early education. In addition to this, we are able to consider the non-statutory guidance documents ‘Development Matters’ and ‘Birth to Five’. With these in mind, as a team of practitioners we consider what we want the children to learn – this is our curriculum. Whilst as a setting we have an overall focus on what we want the children to achieve by the time they transition to primary school, for each individual child the curriculum will depend on where their current learning and development is.

For example, by the time children transition to primary school, we want them to be independent learners with ‘have a go’ attitudes; confident children who can communicate their needs, interests and question what’s around them; to be creative and be imaginative in their play; to be tolerant of others and be able to care for their own personal needs.

Effectively this is our curriculum, but as every child starts at Wye Under Fives at their own unique point in their learning journey, every child is supported as we create their own curriculum that develops over time. For the child that’s learning to move from parallel play to playing interactively, the steps needed include being able to communicate with their peer, learning to share, learning to resolve problems when it doesn’t go their way, through to sharing their own experiences of life in their imaginative play.

Every child learns and develops at their own speed, but with adult interaction and with a stimulating environment, each child has the opportunity to learn more and to reach their very best potential. To quote the EYFS:

“Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child’s experiences between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high-quality early learning together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.”



Within the EYFS, there continue to be seven areas of learning and development - 3 prime areas and 4 specific areas. The prime areas are particularly important for building the foundation of learning and sparking children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, forming relationships and thriving.

The three prime areas are:

- Communication & language
- Physical development
- Personal, social and emotional development.

The four specific areas are:

- Mathematics
- Literacy
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts & design.

The prime areas of learning form the essential foundations for healthy development and future learning. Once a solid start has formed within the prime areas we continue to build upon these skills, opening to explore more learning opportunities within the specific areas of learning.

These 7 areas are the basis for our curriculum. Careful thought is given to inform our enabling environments (indoors and outdoors), to provide resources, activities and learning opportunities to meet each child's unique requirements. Ofsted call this our 'curriculum'. Our curriculum is very flexible and responsive to follow children's interests and those totally unplanned learning opportunities that sometimes come out of the blue, such as it unexpectedly snowing, etc!

As we know, young children learn through play – but they also learn in their own way and at their own speed, as each child is unique. The EYFS refers to the Characteristics of Effective Learning (COEL)

These are:

- Playing and exploring
- Active learning
- Creating and thinking critically

The Characteristics of Effective Learning focus on how children learn rather than what they are learning (so process over outcome). Underpinning the COEL is the understanding that during their earliest years, children form attitudes about learning that will last for their whole lifetime. The COEL are the characteristics that 'set children up' to become learners for life – having that 'can do' attitude; trying, trying and trying again when things don't go their way and considering why it wasn't the result they expected. As early years practitioners, we consider for every child, how they are learning as well as what they are learning. Children who are well supported and encouraged become learners for life – willing to engage in new, adventurous learning throughout their life.



To know 'where we are going' we have to know where we are right now. Every child is allocated a key person (KP) who is their main adult in the setting. As a small team we are all fully engaged with every child, but each child has their own KP who has responsibility for considering their development to date, looking at what their interests are and looking for ways to move their learning on – whilst considering their preferred learning style and the characteristics of effective learning. Historically this was documented with written observations and then 'measured' by tracking the development against guidance on how children learn such as Development Matters four times per year. That level of paperwork had the ability to remove a child's KP from the room for a significant amount of time – during which the child may have had a Wow moment / made an amazing leap forward in their learning and development. Rather than using the guidance Development Matters as a paper/time intensive 'tick list' exercise, we will now be using our practitioners' professional judgement and team discussion to consider how each child is developing. The guidance is still useful, but the new EYFS allows us to move away from the tick list mentality. Learning and development isn't linear – and it's unique to every child. We believe this will allow us to support children's learning better whilst also understanding where each child is and being able to support their individual needs.

The current development of your child will be assessed in the first full term (usually around November, once they've settled in fully) and again in the summer term. The outcome will be fed back to you by your key person – with the paperwork being saved in the back of your child's 'My Adventures' book. In addition to tracking development your key person and the setting manager have regular discussions on how your child is developing and we aim to be immediately on the ball if your child needs more support. When extra support is required, we work with you to focus the support to best help your child and to ensure your child is at the very centre of our efforts.

Your child's key person is available to discuss your child's development, either one to one or over the phone. Each family is also fully supported by our Manager and our Sendco (special educational needs co-ordinator) to provide extra support when a child's development isn't moving forwards as we would expect. If you would like to discuss your child's development, please either call 01233 812235 during school hours, email manager@wyeunderfives.co.uk, or make a note in your child's contact book which will be checked by your child's KP every time it's handed in (please leave it in the school bag and we'll collect it from there).

Steph Harrison

Wye Under Fives