



# Early Childhood Curriculum, Teaching and Learning



# EMAT Early Childhood Curriculum, Teaching and learning

## Our vision

We believe that young children are innately curious, constantly seeking to make sense of the world around them. They are competent, capable learners and problem solvers who are often fearless, willing to take risks, be creative and to challenge themselves. They are open minded and enthusiastic when their interest is engaged and have multiple ways of communicating effectively (Malaguzzi)<sup>1</sup>. Children are caring individuals who are valued and respected as active citizens in our learning community. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) enshrined the child's right to give their opinions freely on issues that affect them and that adults should listen and take children seriously. Our curriculum provides a broad, rich experience which supports their deepening understandings and extends their skills and knowledge. It allows them to participate in decision making and develop a sense of agency<sup>2</sup> in the world. This is achieved through access to high quality play-based provision and involvement in a range of group activities supported by responsive adults, who have high aspirations for all children, work to meet their diverse needs and enable them to be the best that they can be.

Kathy Sylva (1994) summarised curriculum as “the concepts, knowledge, understanding, attitudes and skills that we wish children to develop’. Birth to 5 Matters (2021) states:

“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<sup>3</sup>, 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.<sup>4</sup> **How** children learn, and how they learn about their own learning, should also be an integral part of the curriculum.”

We recognise that during their early years, children are establishing and developing attitudes and dispositions that can stay with them throughout their school career and beyond. We want them to develop their capacities as active citizens, participating in decision making and being actively involved in shaping their world. We aim to nurture children’s kindness and respect for both their surroundings and other people and to take responsibility for their actions. In order to do this, we support their developing capacity for self-regulation – their ability to recognize, label and manage their emotions, to be patient, to persevere and bounce back when things get difficult. We encourage them to focus their attention, to plan what they are going to do, adapt where necessary and see problems from different perspectives. We support them to be confident, resilient, and resourceful, so that they have the courage to try new things, to take the initiative and challenge themselves.

We also want our children to remain inquisitive, be full of awe and wonder, keen to ask questions and become innovative, creative, critical thinkers. We aim for them to be successful, independent learners as well as being able to work collaboratively with others to achieve their goals. Throughout their time in the Foundation Stage these attitudes and dispositions become more robust, children learn to apply them in an

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<sup>1</sup> Loris Malaguzzi referred to children having 100 languages to communicate their understanding, they include drawing, painting, clay, dance, music

<sup>2</sup> children have a ‘sense of agency’ when they feel they have control over their choices and the impact of their actions.

<sup>3</sup> The Statutory Guidance for the Foundation Stage outlines 7 areas of learning: Physical Development; Communication and Language; Personal Social and Emotional Development ( the three prime areas); Literacy; Mathematical Development; Understanding the World and Expressive Arts and Design, ( the four specific areas)

<sup>4</sup> Characteristics of Effective Learning in the Statutory Guidance for the Foundation Stage include: Playing and Exploring; Active Learning; Creating and Thinking critically

ever-widening range of situations and use an increasing range of strategies to sustain them (Carr and Claxton, 2004).

## Areas of learning

The Early Years Foundation Stage 2020 can be found here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/896810/EYFS\\_Early\\_Adopter\\_Framework.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/896810/EYFS_Early_Adopter_Framework.pdf)

It sets out seven areas of learning which form the basis of the curriculum in nursery and Reception classes. We build on these to provide a broad, rich and engaging curriculum appropriate to the children in the classes at any one time. There are three prime areas: communication and language, physical development and personal, social and emotional development which are particularly important for our youngest children but also permeate the four specific areas: literacy, mathematics, understanding the world and expressive arts and design. The EYFS document outlines the programmes of study for each of these areas and the Early Learning Goals that children are expected to reach by the end of the Foundation Stage. The EYFS document states that

“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.”

Whilst the programmes of study form the basis of the curriculum, it is broadened and made relevant to the children by harnessing the power of children’s interests. Helen Hedges (2019, 2020) tells us that:

“Interests do not happen just because children engage in play but because significant people (including teachers), places and things come together to inspire interests and become influences on life trajectories. Interests may develop children’s outcomes and identities as learners, communicators, friends and contributing citizens.”

Hedges (2020) categorised children’s interests as

- (i) Activity based interests<sup>5</sup> generated by the resources accessed in their play,
- (ii) Continuing interests<sup>6</sup> that develop over time such as an interest in the natural world - dinosaurs, whales, minibeasts, worms, or how the world works – vehicles, engines, computers, bridges and buildings etc. Through deeper investigation of these topics, children broaden their understanding of the world, build their vocabulary, deepen positive learning dispositions<sup>7</sup> and develop a sense of their own capabilities as learners.
- (iii) Hedges (2020) also maintains that “children have deep and sometimes existential interests and questions that lead to inquiries<sup>8</sup> and working theories<sup>9</sup>.” These are bigger ideas, about their place in the world, about life and death, friendship and belonging, power and fear and many other aspects of their lives. Such questions challenge their thinking, and often develop creative and critical thinking skills as well as developing skills and knowledge in a range of areas.

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<sup>5</sup> Activity based interests are related to those activities that a child or children choose in the classroom.

<sup>6</sup> Continuing interests are those that children return to often exploring many different aspects of the focus

<sup>7</sup> Positive learning dispositions are the ways that children respond to situations such as perseverance, problem solving, resilience, flexibility, curiosity, enthusiasm etc.

<sup>8</sup> Children become involved in on-going inquiries as they seek to make sense of the world, generate ideas, find out more information through research and investigation before coming to conclusions.

<sup>9</sup> Hedges (2014) defined children’s working theories as “the way children connect, edit, extend, and deal with new or discrepant pieces of knowledge in endeavours to build their understanding.”

## How we expect children to learn

“Young children learn from everything that happens to them and is around them; they do not separate their learning into different subjects or disciplines” (Ball 1994, RSA Start Right report). Their learning is interconnected and holistic<sup>10</sup>, significantly impacted by how they are engaged in the process and the context for learning that is provided by the school. For instance, Cuffaro (1995) states that:

*“The materials we choose to bring into the space of our classrooms reveal the choices we have made about knowledge and what we think it is important to know. How children are invited to use the materials indicates the role they shall have in their own learning”*

How children are engaged in learning, the role that adults play and the strategies they use influence not only the knowledge and understandings that children gain, but also their attitudes and dispositions to learning and their understanding of themselves as learners (Carr and Lee, 2013). We believe that young children learn through engagement with others, through the exchange of ideas and sharing experiences. They reflect on and change their understandings in the light of new experiences and new perspectives and develop their skills through purposeful engagement in meaningful activities and by being given time and space to practice and hone them.

- **The importance of play**

Much has been written about the significance of play in children’s learning (Bruce, (2020); Moyles (1989), (2014)) and play is one of the key characteristics of effective learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage document. We know that the quality of resources for freely chosen play-based activities is important in defining what might be learned so wherever possible the resources we provide are open-ended, offering multiple possibilities for learning. Given such resources and materials young children challenge themselves during play-based activities, they practice skills, explore ideas and build their knowledge in relationship with others as they enter into exchanges, modifying and clarifying their own ideas. Play offers children the chance to use and apply what they have learned whilst role play and fantasy play<sup>12</sup> provide opportunities to use their imagination, explore their understanding of different roles, and see the world from different perspectives. There is also evidence that during play children use and develop the executive functions of working memory, impulse inhibition and cognitive flexibility (Morris, K., 2019) Children build their social skills, learn to share, take turns, listen to others and manage their emotions and behaviour as they play. It gives them space and time to process their understandings and a context for conversations that develop their vocabulary, ask questions and reflect on learning.

- **Short term individual or group enquiries and more sustained investigations**

Children’s constant desire to make sense of the world around them means that, in addition to self-chosen play-based activities, children will also enjoy being involved in a range of explorations and enquiries as individuals or groups, supported by an adult. These will both enrich and deepen children’s understanding, skills and knowledge in all areas of learning and are often based on their interests and fascinations as described above. Educators observe children’s interests and develop the learning potential they hold through dialogue with the children. For instance, an adult observing a child building bridges with blocks held a conversation about different kinds of bridges, then provided pictures and books in the block area to encourage more ideas for further exploration of building techniques and structures whilst introducing a range of associated vocabulary. Adults may also provide provocations or invitations which fire children’s imagination and motivate their learning in specific areas. These might include short term interests fired by a particular event, a visit or an object brought from home by a child or brought in by an adult. For example, when children were given amaryllis bulbs, they wanted two rather than one so that they could see if they

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<sup>10</sup> Holistic: all aspects of learning are intimately connected and explicable only with reference to their whole experience.

<sup>12</sup> Role play when children play at different real-world roles e.g. being a doctor, a firefighter; fantasy play when children play at imagined roles such as superheros, princesses etc

would grow at the same speed. They noticed and questioned why one bulb only produced one flower whilst the other produced two and why the flowers were different colours. Adults took the opportunity to introduce many key skills and understandings such as measuring the flowers using a range of non-standard and standard units of measure.

In cases such as this, adults and children engage in what is referred to as sustained shared thinking (Brodie, K., 2014). Siraj-Blatchford et al., (2002) described this as an exchange 'in which two or more individuals work together in an intellectual way to solve a problem, clarify a concept, evaluate activities, extend a narrative etc. Both parties...contribute to the thinking and it must develop and extend'

Sometimes these become longer, on-going enquiries developed over time (Hedges's continuing interests). They might be related to observed phenomena, such as seasonal change, or minibeasts, dinosaurs or things that fly. In each of these scenarios, enquiries are driven by children's questions and wonderings and extended by joint engagement in hypothesizing, investigating, researching, creating and imagining and constructing understanding together.

- **Specific teaching opportunities relating to particular key skills and knowledge**

These opportunities include those moments when an adult observes a child and responds to a need by teaching a specific skill or offering appropriate information to support children's learning. Examples of this might include woodwork skills needed to complete a task, vocabulary extension during conversations or explaining how to write a letter. They also include more structured, planned sessions such as phonics, or focused teaching around a mathematical concept, as well as whole group opportunities to listen to stories and rhymes.

A systematic, synthetic phonics programme is followed in all the schools in EMAT. In nursery classes this involves working on children's auditory discrimination (the ability to distinguish between different sounds) so that they are able to identify different sounds in the environment or the sound of musical instruments. They have a wide range of experiences using rhythm and rhyme and recognize the use of alliteration when they listen to stories and poems. Their vocabulary is enriched to include words that describe sounds, and they learn to discriminate between loud and soft, high and low sounds. Children also begin to blend and segment words (building words from sounds to read and breaking them down to spell as in d-a-d), and recognize the sound of the initial letter in their name. In Reception this is continued and followed by recognition of a range of phoneme/grapheme correspondences (the corresponding letters and sounds in our language) and the developing ability to decode words phonetically and spell simple, phonetically plausible words. 'Read write Inc' is a systematic, synthetic phonic programme used in the schools to teach phonics. Teachers may choose to use other specific programmes to support learning as they feel appropriate for their children. For instance, Chatterway may be used to develop early speaking, listening and understanding skills, Charanga to support music development or Jigsaw to support their personal, social and emotional development. In mathematics, informal learning opportunities in number, shape, space and measures during play and individual/group inquiries are also supplemented through the use of particular programmes and resources where appropriate.

### **English as an Additional Language**

Many of our children have English as an additional language and join our settings with varied levels of understanding and the ability to express themselves through English. They may come from families who do not use English at home. Some children will have been spoken to in both their first language and English and some will have had experience of multiple languages. We value this linguistic diversity and wherever possible provide opportunities for children to develop and use their home language in their play and learning. Adults seek to gain a good understanding of each child's home language achievements in order to provide appropriate experiences and build on the child's linguistic capacity as they move into English, this also helps them build a sense of security and belonging when they begin to learn English.

We recognize that the ease with which a child moves into a new language environment will differ depending on their experience, confidence and abilities and that they will take different pathways in becoming proficient in understanding and speaking English. They may go through silent periods, sometimes initially watching and listening, or being silent later as they digest and assimilate what they have learned and find the courage and confidence to attempt more conversations in English. Some children will use strategies such as imitation or echoing as a way of trying out their understanding and will often understand more than they can speak. They begin to combine words into simple but effective short phrases, developing these into increasingly complex combinations, linking together words and phrases as they extend their vocabulary.

Adults provide a rich language environment to support all children’s communication and language capabilities. They model language, provide narratives to activities, support verbal language with signs and gestures, provide bi-lingual books where possible for sharing at home, read familiar stories and rhymes, sing songs and engage children wherever possible, respecting their learning pathways and supporting them as appropriate.

- **Recurring themes throughout the year**

There are some themes that recur throughout the school year as children engage with the world around them. Throughout the year children return to concepts such as seasonal change or growth and they are constantly fascinated by their own place in the world and how they can engage with the world around them. We promote a sense of belonging and an understanding of their community by celebrating different cultural festivals, sharing a range of foods, welcoming visitors and visiting local places of interest all of which nurture children’s understanding of diversity. It supports them in recognizing and valuing the many different ways of living and being in the world. We also recognize that children will face many issues in their lives and that there is an increasing pressure on available resources so broad issues of inclusivity, change, and sustainability are included in our common themes. The specific focus of these themes may vary from school to school within the EMAT.

	Autumn 1	Autumn2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Nursery	All about me	Belonging/ making friends	Growth and change		Where I live	Recycling
Reception	Me and my school	Working together	Growth and change		Is it like this everywhere?	Sustainability
Cultural celebrations		Christmas Festivals of Light from around the world	Chinese New Year	Easter; Buddha’s birthday; Passover; Ramadan	Eid	
Seasonal	Autumn Harvest	Bulb planting	Winter	Spring: seeds Seed planting		Summer

## **The role of adults**

All the adults in our settings provide a warm, welcoming environment and are proactive in building meaningful relationships with children and their families. They respect the different backgrounds, cultures and experiences that children bring with them and build on these when creating contexts for learning within the classroom. They are committed to challenging stereotypes and celebrating diversity in order to develop not only an ethos of equality but recognising equity may require treating people differently dependent on need. They are accepting, patient, kind, considerate and flexible, creating a calm and encouraging atmosphere in which children's confidence is nurtured so that they are able to make choices, drive their own learning and contribute to classroom life. Adults are good communicators, understanding the importance of positive relationships with children, parents, carers and colleagues.

Staff create environments for learning which are well organised, support children's independence and challenge their thinking. They tune in to the children's interests, needs and motivations through careful observation and active listening then use the information they collect to reflect on the learning taking place and consider possibilities for moving this forward. Decisions are made about appropriate changes to the classroom provision to support learning and adults involve children in making these decisions so that they can take ownership and have a feeling of belonging to the classroom community.

Staff are sensitive and knowledgeable. They understand that there are times when they should intervene and be actively engaged in children's play and exploration and other times when they should stand back, allowing the child time to investigate and work things out for themselves. At times they work beside the children, interacting with them providing positive role models and engaging in productive conversations. They show a genuine interest in children's capacity to wonder and hypothesise about the world around them and encourage them to reflect on their theories and ideas. Adults also use these opportunities to extend children's verbal capabilities through modelling different forms of language and extending vocabulary. Adults use a range of strategies to support learning, sometimes explaining, demonstrating or directly teaching specific skills or using open-ended questioning to promote creativity and help children think critically. They are skilled in assessing children's achievements and celebrating their learning processes.

All adults are expected to have a good understanding of children's development and have high expectations and aspirations for them. They understand the characteristics of effective learning in the early years and provide contexts and resources that promote these. They are interested and open-minded about new initiatives, ideas and ways of working, constantly seeking to improve their own practice through research and dialogue with others and building an effective team within the setting and across the MAT. They embrace change and development, seeing this as a significant part of the process of continuous improvement.

Our staff recognise the important role that parents play in their children's education. They welcome parents' perspectives and are always willing to listen and discuss issues if they arise. The planned curriculum is shared regularly so that parents are able to contribute and extend learning and staff celebrate the learning that takes place at home.

## **Our environments for learning**








The environment in the classroom has been referred to as the third teacher (Malaguzzi) and, as stated earlier in the quote from Cuffaro (1995) has a major impact on what children learn. We are mindful of the effective characteristics of learning as set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory document which include playing and exploring, active learning creating and thinking critically. In creating our environment for learning these characteristics are supported and extended.








Our classroom environments provide rich, inviting and motivating provision which forms the backdrop to a host of activities, explorations and investigations. Each of our classrooms is set up to provide a range of opportunities that children can engage in independently, offering them the capacity to make choices and drive their own learning through play-based activity. We recognise that children come to school, whether to nursery or into Reception with differing levels of experience and educators constantly make judgements about children’s level of skill and understanding. As a result, the choice of areas within the classroom and the resources provided are changed/reorganised to meet the needs of the particular children in the class and as such change over the course of the year. Children have access to outdoor areas that provide experiences that cannot be provided indoors, such as ride-on toys. Outdoor areas also provide first-hand experience of the weather and, where possible for planting and growing flowers and vegetables to prepare and eat.

Challenging materials are organised so that children can access them freely, developing their sense of agency and autonomy as learners. Each area offers its own affordances and children will often need to explore these initially before deciding how they want to use them for different purposes, for instance as props for imaginative play or to represent their ideas. Children may also transport equipment, resources or materials from one area to another in order to engage in more complex play activities, explorations or investigations.

Access to ‘loose parts’ (Daly et al, 2014) - open ended materials that can be used in creative and interesting ways can be found in many areas. These can be sorted, grouped, arranged for aesthetic composition or used to represent objects or ideas.

The following table shows some of the areas that are commonly found as part of our provision along with the kind of skills and knowledge that they support. Language development opportunities and questions are suggestions and are not exclusive. Neither are skills and knowledge exclusively developed in specific areas. Children learn through making connections. Skills and knowledge from one area may be linked to another. For instance, understanding of pattern in mathematics may be rooted in an investigation of plants, animals such as snails suggest spirals, or the patterns in buildings. Skills and knowledge may be applied in different situations throughout the classroom, often occurring as part of children’s enquiries or investigations relating to things that are of interest to them. Teachers orchestrate the provision in the classroom to respond to children’s needs, to provide challenge and a range of contexts for learning. Whilst maintaining an overall structure that children can be confident within and take ownership of, fluidity and responsiveness are key aspects of the environment.

Construction and block play areas	
Role play, fantasy play and/or small world play	
Creative area/ studio space	
Outdoor Learning	
Book area	
Mark-making area	
Investigation area	

Mathematics area	
Dough or other malleable material	
Sand play	
Water play	
Woodwork	
Music and performance area	
Computing	





## Construction and block play areas



Key skills	Supporting vocabulary	Questions and prompts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2D and 3D shapes;</li> <li>• Spatial awareness</li> <li>• Language relating to measurement; Comparative sizes; sorting, matching, grouping</li> <li>• Communication: Explaining; Negotiating; Describing</li> <li>• Counting, 1-1 correspondence; concepts of more, less</li> <li>• PSE skills: collaboration, cooperation</li> <li>• Physical dexterity, fine motor skills, co-ordination</li> <li>• Understanding the world</li> </ul>	<p>Naming shapes: Cube, cuboid, sides, corners, sphere, cone, cylinder, surface, curved, straight, thin, thick, basic 2D shape names</p> <p>Above, under, below, in, on, beside, near, next to...</p> <p>large, larger, largest big, bigger, biggest small, smaller, smallest, tall, taller, tallest huge, tiny,</p> <p>Number names More, less, one more; a few, many</p> <p>Different buildings: churches, houses, skyscrapers; bridges, structures generally etc</p>	<p>Tell me about what you've built. Did you have a plan, what were you intending? Did you need to change your plan? What else could you use? Is there another way of doing that? Which parts worked best? What made you think of that? What would happen if.... I wonder whether.... Maybe if..... Does anyone else have an idea? Can you remember how you did that last time? What are you most pleased with?</p>
<p>Attitudes and dispositions/thinking skills/self-regulation and executive function skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• perseverance, focus, reflection, cooperation and collaboration</li> <li>• planning, designing, problem solving</li> <li>• concentration</li> <li>• determination, confidence, self-belief</li> <li>• Pro-social skills of self-regulation – understanding different perspectives, collaboration, putting others before self, empathy</li> <li>• Managing emotions such as disappointment, frustration etc., empathy for others</li> </ul>		



## Role play, fantasy play and/or small world play



Key skills	Supporting vocabulary	Questions and prompts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding the world and the different roles to be played</li> <li>• Re-enacting everyday situations</li> <li>• PSE: relationships, sharing, taking turns, self-regulation skills</li> <li>• Communication skills: negotiating, explaining, describing</li> <li>• Generating creative/Imaginative play scripts, storytelling and retelling</li> </ul>	<p>Language relating to the home/character/context etc which might include:</p> <p>home, shops, hairdressers, garden centres, garage workshops, estate agents, doctors, vets, superheroes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ There are huge numbers of possible questions that might sustain play in this area.</li> <li>→ Remember interacting can become interfering/interrupting.</li> <li>→ Tell me about.....</li> <li>→ What shall I do/who shall I be?</li> <li>→ What can we use this for?</li> </ul>
<p>Attitudes and dispositions/thinking skills/self-regulation and executive function skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remembering, revisiting, reflecting</li> <li>• Pro-social skills: empathy for others; seeing the world from different perspectives</li> <li>• Managing emotions in social context</li> <li>• Making decisions, organising</li> <li>• Patience</li> <li>• Confidence in different situations</li> </ul>		



## Creative area/ studio space



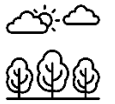
Key skills	Supporting vocabulary	Questions and prompts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognition of the affordances of different media, exploring their uses, developing control, making choices, using them as a means of expression.</li> <li>• Drawing/graphics: developing increasing control using a range of pencil thicknesses and types of crayons to create different effects</li> <li>• Using different types of paper and understanding their affordances</li> <li>• Paint: exploration developing an understanding of the qualities of different kinds of paint: blocks, water colours; mixing colours; increasing control over the medium; medium used for expression;</li> <li>• Developing dexterity with a range of tools for painting and the affordances these offer, including different brushes, spatulas, sponges etc</li> <li>• Inks</li> <li>• Pastels</li> <li>• Clay: understanding the affordances of the material; learning to manipulate it; using tools to create effects;</li> <li>• Collage: the affordances of different resources, using natural resources,</li> <li>• Printing</li> <li>• Developing observation skills, composition skills.</li> <li>• aesthetics</li> </ul>	<p>shading, lines, curves, shapes, loops.</p> <p>Thick, thin, different shapes, transparent, opaque, stretchy. Words associated with techniques: bend, fold, scrunch, tear...</p> <p>Consistencies: thick, thin, runny, hard,</p> <p>colour names, shades, tones</p> <p>Labelling tools such as roller, spatula, Descriptive words such as soft, stiff, bristly, spongy, fine, thick, pointed, blunt, sharp, blunt, pointed, flat</p> <p>Watery, blending</p> <p>Words relating to textures: soft, hard, squashy; cold</p> <p>Sparkly, stiff, shiny, dull, patterned, bright,</p> <p>Pattern, spirals, repeating, alternating</p>	<p>→ How does it feel? What does it do? What can I do with it? How can I use it?</p> <p>→ Tell me about your drawing.</p> <p>→ What are these lines for?</p> <p>→ What were you trying to show?</p> <p>→ How might you change it?</p> <p>→ What effect does that have?</p> <p>→ How does it feel?</p> <p>→ What can you do with it?</p> <p>→ Which might be best for...?</p> <p>→ Why do you think it's.....?</p> <p>→ How can you change it?</p> <p>→ What happens if....?</p> <p>→ What does this one do?</p> <p>→ Which one would be best for....?</p> <p>→ What can you try?</p>

Attitudes and dispositions/thinking skills/self-regulation and executive function skills:

- Curiosity,
- Designing, planning, reflecting
- Creativity, critical thinking, thinking about alternatives, making choices
- Exchanging ideas, adapting, rethinking, making improvements
- Concentration
- Appreciating different perspectives/opinions/likes/dislikes



## Outdoor Learning



Key skills	Supporting vocabulary	Questions and prompts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical development – balance, flexibility, hand eye co-ordination, strength</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hopping, skipping, jumping, climbing, throwing and catching</li> </ul>	Underarm, overarm, labelling movements	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PSE skills: co-operation, collaboration, sharing, taking turns.</li> </ul>		→ Can you manage that together? Who could help?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Materials and their properties:</li> </ul>	Natural, man-made, hard, soft, light, heavy, bendy	→ What does it feel like? → What do you think it's from? → What do you think these do? → Why do you think it looks like that? → What has changed? → Who/what has caused that?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding of the natural world – how things grow, parts of plants, seasonal changes, weather</li> <li>• Forest skills</li> <li>• Imagination</li> </ul>	Parts of a plant: roots, stem, leaves, flowers, petals, rhizomes, bulbs, seeds. Trees: trunk, bark, branches, evergreen, deciduous, berries, hips Names of seasons, weather words: stormy, floods, freezing, wind	
Attitudes and dispositions/thinking skills/self-regulation and executive function skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problem solving</li> <li>• Perseverance, resilience</li> <li>• Creative thinking,</li> <li>• Planning, reflecting</li> <li>• Confidence, courage, risk taking, self-belief</li> <li>• Being flexible, waiting to take turns, planning ahead</li> <li>• Conflict resolution</li> </ul>		



## Book area



Key skills	Supporting vocabulary	Questions and prompts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Children learn to handle books; understand back, front, that text carries meaning and is organised from left to right.</li><li>• They enjoy books, stories, poems and rhymes and talk about these.</li></ul>	Front, back, cover, pictures, text, illustrations/illustrator, author, glossary,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>→ Where do we start?</li><li>→ What do you think is happening in this picture?</li> <li>→ Which is your favourite?</li><li>→ What do you like about the story?</li><li>→ What does the cover tell you about the story?</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• They understand character, plot and setting</li><li>• They develop skills of prediction and deduction</li><li>• They can make changes to rhymes/stories</li><li>• They understand the difference between fiction and non-fiction and engage with a range of genres</li><li>• Communication skills: Being able to formulate their thoughts and explain their interpretations</li></ul>	Character, plot, setting, Hero, heroine, start, middle, ending	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>→ Who is your favourite character? Why?</li> <li>→ What do you think will happen next?</li><li>→ What do you think he/she is thinking?</li><li>→ Why do you think they did That?</li></ul>
<p>Attitudes and dispositions/thinking skills/self-regulation and executive function skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Being inventive</li><li>• Engagement and love of books</li><li>• Curious</li><li>• Reflecting, considering, hypothesising,</li></ul>		



## Mark-making area



Key skills	Supporting vocabulary	Questions and prompts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fine motor skills</li> <li>• Developing an appropriate grip</li> <li>• Moving from random scribbles; producing purposeful shapes; distinguishing between drawing and marks representing writing; use of letters in own name; using single/groups of letters to represent words;</li> <li>• Drawings become increasingly complex and detailed</li> <li>• Communication skills: describing, explaining, persuading,</li> <li>• Creating and representing real life and imaginary narratives</li> </ul>	<p>Drawing, writing, straight lines, curved shapes,</p> <p>Names of letters, vowels, consonants, words relating to phonics as appropriate</p>	<p>Tell me about your picture</p> <p>How do you think it looks? How can you make it better?</p> <p>Is there another colour/pencil/pen that you could use?</p> <p>How are you going to show....?</p> <p>Is that....?</p> <p>What does it start with?</p>
<p>Attitudes and dispositions/thinking skills/self-regulation and executive function skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploration</li> <li>• Expression, creativity</li> <li>• Confidence</li> <li>• Communication and collaboration</li> </ul>		



## Investigation area



Key skills	Supporting vocabulary	Questions and prompts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing science skills of observation, exploring, hypothesising,</li> </ul>	<p>Process language – investigate, finding out,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ What do you think this is?</li> <li>→ What do you think it does?</li> <li>→ How does it work?</li> <li>→ What is it for?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigating a range of phenomena/objects etc which might include magnets, seasonal natural objects such as seeds, bulbs etc, mechanical objects with gears/levers or other resources relating to their interests and fascinations</li> </ul>	<p>Language related to different phenomena</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ What could you use it for?</li> <li>→ What does it look like?</li> <li>→ How does it feel?</li> <li>→ Are there any others that are the same?</li> <li>→ How are they different?</li> </ul>
<p>Attitudes and dispositions/thinking skills/self-regulation and executive function skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curiosity, developing ideas</li> <li>• Experimentation, investigation skills, invention</li> <li>• Hypothesising, trialling, testing, reflecting on outcomes, re-thinking - adjusting ideas</li> <li>• Care, kindness, collaboration and co-operation</li> <li>• Awe and wonder,</li> <li>• Cognitive flexibility – ability to switch between ways of thinking, seeing from different perspectives</li> </ul>		



## Mathematics area



Key skills	Supporting vocabulary	Questions and prompts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploration of a range of manipulatives that provide experiences in: sorting, grouping, making patterns ( Ab, ABA etc)</li> </ul>	Alternate, spirals, same, different, colour names,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Can you find ones that go together?</li> <li>→ Which ones do you think are the same/different?</li> <li>→ How can we sort these?</li> <li>→ Which ones go together?</li> <li>→ Can you see a pattern?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counting; 1 to 1 correspondence, sorting, grouping, subitising, recognising last number represents total counted, partitioning, estimating</li> </ul>	Cardinal number names, more, less, a few, lots Ordinal number names	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Do you have more/less?</li> <li>→ How many do you have?</li> <li>→ How do you know?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balancing and weighing</li> </ul>	Heavy, light, comparative language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ How do you know which one is heavier/lighter (longest/shortest etc)?</li> <li>→ Can you guess which is the heaviest/lightest?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measuring – using nonstandard and standard units</li> </ul>	long, short, tall, small, thick, thin high, low and comparative language, stand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Do you think mine is heavier/lighter than yours?</li> <li>→ What can we use to measure it?</li> <li>→ How can we find out how long/tall/....?</li> <li>→ Is there a longer/shorter...one?</li> <li>→ What happens if we change how we measure it?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time, ordering and sequencing events</li> </ul>	Morning, afternoon, night, day, today, tomorrow, yesterday, soon, later, patterns in daily/weekly routines, days of the week, months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ When did you....?</li> <li>→ When are you going to....?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shape, space, tessellation</li> </ul>	2D, 3D shapes, edges, curved, straight, points Inside, outside, in front, behind, beside, near, far	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Does that fit together? Can you put them together to make a different shape?</li> </ul>

Attitudes and dispositions/thinking skills/self-regulation and executive function skills:

- Self-belief, confidence
- Problem solving, organising, hypothesising, analysing
- Explaining
- Seeing patterns
- Cognitive flexibility – seeing from different perspectives; finding alternative ways of doing things





## Dough or other malleable material



Key skills	Supporting vocabulary	Questions and prompts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manual dexterity</li> </ul>	Roll, bend, shape, pinch, press, print, Firm, soft	→ How does it feel? → What shape can you make? → Can you roll it flat?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of small tools</li> </ul>	Names of tools	
Attitudes and dispositions/thinking skills/self-regulation and executive function skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perseverance</li> <li>• Creativity</li> <li>• Inventiveness</li> <li>• Having ideas and being imaginative</li> </ul>		



## Sand play



Key skills	Supporting vocabulary	Questions and prompts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Properties of wet sand</li> </ul>	Cold, sticky, wet, firm	→ What happens if...? → Can you make it...? → Will it hold together? → What can you do to change it?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Properties of dry sand Volume</li> </ul>	Dry, gritty, soft,	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Matching, counting, sorting</li> <li>• equipment, developing one-to-one correspondence</li> <li>• Social skills: sharing, waiting turns,</li> </ul>	(see below in water) (see mathematics area)	
Attitudes and dispositions/thinking skills/self-regulation and executive function skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experimentation, investigation</li> <li>• Perseverance, resilience, patience</li> <li>• Co-operation, collaboration, sharing ideas,</li> <li>• problem solving</li> <li>• Remembering, relating, recreating experiences</li> </ul>		



## Water play



Key skills	Supporting vocabulary	Questions and prompts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Properties of water</li> </ul>	Wet, flow, watertight, evaporate, freeze, Sounds related to water: dripping, splashing, etc	→ I wonder what would happen if...? → What happens when you...?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where we find water</li> </ul>	Ice, rivers, sea, lakes, ponds, puddles, drains	→ Do you think it will...? → What else could you use?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity; conservation in different containers</li> </ul>	Full, empty, half full, half empty, the same, more, less	→ How can we make it...? → Can you find a better container?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language development around a range of imaginative play resources</li> </ul>	May be related to sea creatures, storylines,	→ How many do you think it will take to fill this? → How do you think that happens?
Attitudes and dispositions/thinking skills/self-regulation and executive function skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical thinking</li> <li>• Making choices</li> <li>• Experimenting, hypothesising,</li> <li>• Observing, noticing,</li> <li>• Remembering, relating, recreating experiences</li> </ul>		



## Woodwork



Key skills	Supporting vocabulary	Questions and prompts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hand eye coordination,</li> <li>• Fine and gross motor skills</li> <li>• Developing specific techniques and using these appropriately.</li> <li>• Creating plans</li> <li>• Measuring: the need for accuracy, non-standard and standard units where to start and finish measuring</li> <li>• Safe practices: need for goggles etc</li> </ul>	Names of equipment, resources such as hammer, nails, screws, pliers, drill, plane, sander, spirit level, vice  Sawing, screwing, sanding, hammering, nailing, planning,  End, beginning Centimetres, metres,	→ What are you hoping to make? → How did you do that? → What else might work? → Did it turn out as you'd planned? → What did you change? → Why did you need to do that? → How will you make sure they are the same length? → Can you find another tool that would do that?
Attitudes and dispositions/thinking skills/self-regulation and executive function skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generating ideas, innovating</li> <li>• Designing, planning, reviewing</li> <li>• Perseverance, resilience, patience</li> <li>• Creative and critical thinking</li> <li>• Problem solving</li> <li>• Courage, self-belief, confidence,</li> </ul>		



## Music and performance area



Key skills	Supporting vocabulary	Questions and prompts
Using different materials to make sound	Soft, hard, loud, quiet, high, low sounds	→ What do you think it sounds like? → What does it make you think of? → What kind of sound does it make? Can you make a different sound with that?
Affordances of different musical instruments and equipment for example, tambourines, drums, beaters, bells, shakers	Names of instruments	→ Which ones will make a soft/loud sound?
An ability to respond to music through movement and dance Performance skills – individual or group	Fast, slow, stretching, bending, jumping, twirling, spinning, balancing,	→ How does the music make you feel? → How can we show that?
Children are familiar with a range of songs and rhymes		→ Do you know the song about? Can you make up your own song?
Attitudes and dispositions/thinking skills/self-regulation and executive function skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Creativity</li><li>• Co-operation and collaboration</li><li>• Confidence</li><li>• Adaptability, flexibility, listening to others, working together</li><li>• Enthusiasm</li></ul>		



# Computing



Key skills	Supporting vocabulary	Questions and prompts
Making images and videos of learning – school cameras and tuff cams (for use in the classroom)	Press, click, picture, photo, video, stop, on off, play, pause	→ What happens if we press this button? → How can we view the pictures? → How can we share the pictures with other people?
Programable toys	Up, down, left, right  Ok, delete, go, forwards, backwards	→ What happens if we press this button? → How do we make it change direction? → How far does it go? → How are we going to get it e.g. to the door? → Explain how it works → I wonder if you could have done it a different way?
Metal detectors, torches, digital microscope	On, off, detection, light, zoom in, zoom out, closer, charging, blurred	→ What happens if we put a different colour on the torch? → What patterns can we see through the microscope? → What does it look like? →
Interactive white board	Turn on, turn off, open the program, choose colour/ brush stroke/ effect, drag, drop, left, right, open, close, red cross, ok, delete, save, print, press, click, view, enlarge, larger, bigger, smaller, double tap, curser, mouse, keyboard, new page	→ What do you need to do? → How can we change the colour/ size/ effect? → How do you make it . . . ? → Which program do you like?
Attitudes and dispositions/thinking skills/self-regulation and executive function skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inquisitive</li> <li>• General ideas, designing and planning</li> <li>• Creativity</li> <li>• Seeking challenge</li> <li>• Showing a 'can do' attitude</li> <li>• Engaging in new experiences</li> <li>• Strategies</li> <li>• Making choices</li> <li>• Problem solving</li> </ul>		

## Assessment and evaluation

Assessment is a crucial part of teaching and learning. What and how we assess reflects many different purposes but it also influences what children learn and how they see themselves as learners (Carr and Lee, 2013). We strive for an ethical approach (Pascal and Bertram 2016) which recognizes children as competent, capable people and takes a holistic view of their achievements. At its core is the need to understand children's learning and make decisions about what we do next. As Mary Jane Drummond (2003) says:

“In assessment we can appreciate and understand what children learn; we can recognize their achievements, and their individuality, the differences between them. We can use our assessments to shape and enrich our curriculum, our interactions, our provision as a whole; we can use our assessments as a way of identifying what children will be able to learn next, so that we can support and understand learning. Assessment is part of our daily practice in striving for quality...The acts of the teacher in assessment [include] the responsibility to see, to understand and to put this understanding to good use.”

Much of our assessment practice takes place as teachers work beside children and observation is a key element of this assessment process. Teachers observe children, reflect and make decisions about what they believe the children are learning and how they can support this as described by Drummond (2003). Through these everyday interactions, teachers build a picture of each child and groups of children, attending to the progress they are making and meeting their needs in order to enhance their skills and understandings. The professional knowledge that teachers build is not necessarily recorded every day, but often significant learning outcomes are captured and reported through various forms of recording including narratives, pictures and videos often in the form of learning stories<sup>13</sup>. (Carr, M., (2001)) On entry to nursery the teachers' observations in the first weeks indicate where children are in terms of skills and understanding. In line with government requirements children on entry to Reception complete Baseline Assessments, and the Foundation Stage Profile is completed at the end of Reception. Judgements relating to progress are made using a range of documents which include Development Matters (DfE 2020), Birth to 5 Matters (Early Education 2021), Early Years Typical progression Charts (National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics).

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<sup>13</sup> Learning stories are a record of what the adult has seen a child or group of children doing and their interpretation of the learning taking place. It may include pictures, pieces of conversation which illustrate what the child can do and the nature of their attitudes and dispositions towards learning.

Malaguzzi

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### Early Learning Goals

The level of development children should be expected to have attained by the end of the EYFS is defined by the early learning goals (ELGs) as set out below.

#### Communication and Language

**ELG: Listening, Attention and Understanding** Children at the expected level of development will:

- - Listen attentively and respond to what they hear with relevant questions, comments and actions when being read to and during whole class discussions and small group interactions;
- - Make comments about what they have heard and ask questions to clarify their understanding;
- - Hold conversation when engaged in back-and-forth exchanges with their teacher and peers.

#### ELG: Speaking

Children at the expected level of development will:

- - Participate in small group, class and one-to-one discussions, offering their own ideas, using recently introduced vocabulary;
- - Offer explanations for why things might happen, making use of recently introduced vocabulary from stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems when appropriate;
- - Express their ideas and feelings about their experiences using full sentences, including use of past, present and future tenses and making use of conjunctions, with modelling and support from their teacher.

#### Personal, Social and Emotional Development

##### ELG: Self-Regulation

Children at the expected level of development will:

- - Show an understanding of their own feelings and those of others, and begin to regulate their behaviour accordingly;
- - Set and work towards simple goals, being able to wait for what they want and control their immediate impulses when appropriate;
- - Give focused attention to what the teacher says, responding appropriately even when engaged in activity, and show an ability to follow instructions involving several ideas or actions.

##### ELG: Managing Self

Children at the expected level of development will:

- - Be confident to try new activities and show independence, resilience and perseverance in the face of challenge;
- - Explain the reasons for rules, know right from wrong and try to behave accordingly;
- - Manage their own basic hygiene and personal needs, including dressing, going to the toilet and understanding the importance of healthy food choices.

## **ELG: Building Relationships**

Children at the expected level of development will:

- - Work and play cooperatively and take turns with others;
- - Form positive attachments to adults and friendships with peers;
- - Show sensitivity to their own and to others' needs.

## **Physical Development**

### **ELG: Gross Motor Skills**

Children at the expected level of development will:

- - Negotiate space and obstacles safely, with consideration for themselves and others;
- - Demonstrate strength, balance and coordination when playing;

Move energetically, such as running, jumping, dancing, hopping, skipping and climbing.

### **ELG: Fine Motor Skills**

Children at the expected level of development will:

- - Hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing – using the tripod grip in almost all cases;
- - Use a range of small tools, including scissors, paint brushes and cutlery;
- - Begin to show accuracy and care when drawing.

## **Literacy**

### **ELG: Comprehension**

Children at the expected level of development will:

- - Demonstrate understanding of what has been read to them by retelling stories and narratives using their own words and recently introduced vocabulary;
- - Anticipate – where appropriate – key events in stories;
- - Use and understand recently introduced vocabulary during discussions about stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems and during role-play.

### **ELG: Word Reading**

Children at the expected level of development will:

- - Say a sound for each letter in the alphabet and at least 10 digraphs;
- - Read words consistent with their phonic knowledge by sound-blending;
- - Read aloud simple sentences and books that are consistent with their phonic knowledge, including some common exception words.

### **ELG: Writing**

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed;



- Spell words by identifying sounds in them and representing the sounds with a letter or letters;
  - Write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others.

## **Mathematics**

### **ELG: Number**

Children at the expected level of development will:

- - Have a deep understanding of number to 10, including the composition of each number;
- - Subitise (recognise quantities without counting) up to 5;
- - Automatically recall (without reference to rhymes, counting or other aids) number bonds up to 5 (including subtraction facts) and some number bonds to 10, including double facts.

### **ELG: Numerical Patterns**

Children at the expected level of development will:

- - Verbally count beyond 20, recognising the pattern of the counting system;
- - Compare quantities up to 10 in different contexts, recognising when one quantity is greater than, less than or the same as the other quantity;
- - Explore and represent patterns within numbers up to 10, including evens and odds, double facts and how quantities can be distributed equally.

## **Understanding the World**

### **ELG: Past and Present**

Children at the expected level of development will:

- - Talk about the lives of the people around them and their roles in society;
- - Know some similarities and differences between things in the past and now, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class;
- - Understand the past through settings, characters and events encountered in books read in class and storytelling.

### **ELG: People, Culture and Communities**

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Describe their immediate environment using knowledge from observation, discussion, stories, non-fiction texts and maps;
- Know some similarities and differences between different religious and cultural communities in this country, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class;
- Explain some similarities and differences between life in this country and life in other countries, drawing on knowledge from stories, non-fiction texts and – when appropriate – maps.

### **ELG: The Natural World**

Children at the expected level of development will:

- - Explore the natural world around them, making observations and drawing pictures of animals and plants;
- - Know some similarities and differences between the natural world around them and contrasting environments, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class;
- - Understand some important processes and changes in the natural world around them, including the seasons and changing states of matter.

## **Expressive Arts and Design**

### **ELG: Creating with Materials**

Children at the expected level of development will:

- - Safely use and explore a variety of materials, tools and techniques, experimenting with colour, design, texture, form and function;
- - Share their creations, explaining the process they have used;
- - Make use of props and materials when role playing characters in narratives and stories.

### **ELG: Being Imaginative and Expressive**

Children at the expected level of development will:

- - Invent, adapt and recount narratives and stories with peers and their teacher;
- - Sing a range of well-known nursery rhymes and songs;
- Perform songs, rhymes, poems and stories with others, and -when appropriate – try to move in time with music.