



EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

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INTRODUCTION

The *Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)* statutory framework introduced in September 2021 recognises that every child deserves the best possible start in life to help them to thrive. The new Music Express units have been written to support the delivery of this revised framework and to help support dedicated practitioners to provide activities, opportunities and scaffolding to ensure children develop and make progress in their learning through the educational programmes of the EYFS.

Musical learning is an intrinsic part of the holistic EYFS provision provided in this resource. Original songs and chants and new lyrics sung to traditional melodies forge strong links with the theme of each starting point, and carefully selected pieces of recorded music develop listening skills. Children's creative responses are encouraged through singing, playing, movement and dance. (For more musical support, see page 7 of this document.)

The child's voice

The 'starting points' for each unit were selected in Early Years settings through working with and listening to children exploring their current interests, and we hope your children will enjoy both the adult-guided activities and the opportunities to engage and direct their own play and learning.

The image and short introduction in the printable resources for each starting point are intended to prompt your own discussion with children, to listen to them and establish their level of understanding of the subject area. Through effective questioning and debate, this will allow you to delve more deeply into children's knowledge and understanding, helping to guide and tailor the delivery of the curriculum to challenge and extend children's skills and knowledge to a much greater depth.

Scaffolding

We value 'continuous provision' as a key element of high-quality early years practice and have included ideas and enhancements to excite, engage and motivate children in their chosen play, both indoors and outdoors. With adult support and effective high-quality interactions, practitioners can spontaneously scaffold children's development and learning.

The activities are planned for children between the ages of three to five. However, some of the continuous provision could be slightly adapted and amended to support the learning and development of children under three.

Every child is unique

Every child will have experienced many differences in their young lives from family and community diversity, cultural and religious experience and access to the many different forms of educational, health and social care support. Some children will need a little extra help to access the curriculum, but with the right support all children will thrive and make progress.

Our aim is to be totally inclusive and some activities may need to be adapted and amended to ensure that all children wishing to take part are able to do so as independently as possible.



Balanced learning

We provide activities to support adult-guided learning covering the developmental programmes for ages 3–4 and 4–5 across all seven areas of learning and development in the EYFS (Communication and Language; Personal, Social and Emotional Development; Physical Development; Literacy; Mathematics; Understanding the World; Expressive Arts and Design). The areas of Communication and Language and Literacy are linked to phase one of 'Letters and sounds' and will, hopefully, lay a secure foundation to underpin your chosen phonics scheme at the appropriate developmental stage to help children progress.

It is important to give children the appropriate balance of adult-guided learning with opportunities for children to lead their own learning that is appropriate for their age and stage of development.

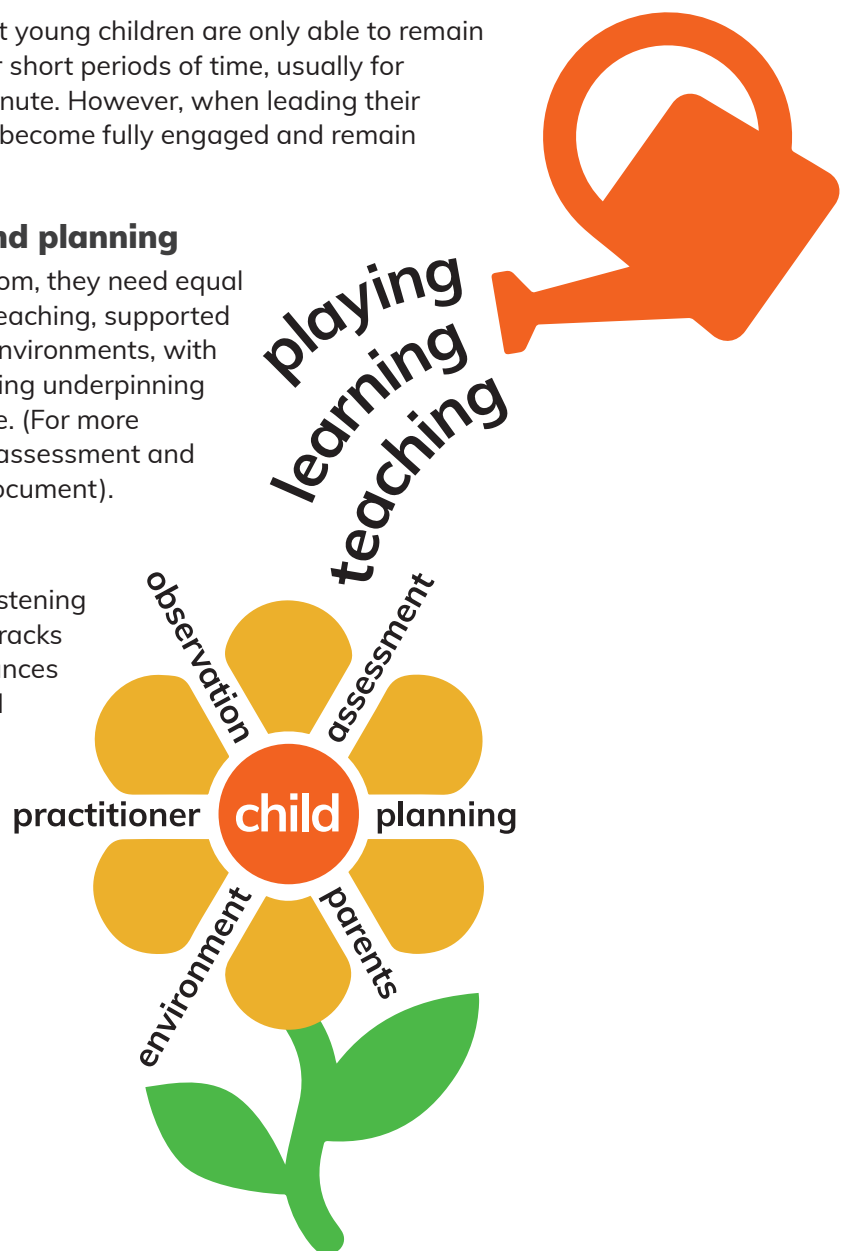
It is always worth remembering that young children are only able to remain totally focussed and concentrate for short periods of time, usually for the minutes of their age plus one minute. However, when leading their own play and learning children can become fully engaged and remain focussed for much longer periods.

Observation, assessment and planning

To enable a child to grow and blossom, they need equal measures of playing, learning and teaching, supported by parents, practitioners and their environments, with observation, assessment and planning underpinning this high-quality early years practice. (For more information about the observation, assessment and planning cycle, see page 5 of this document).

Supporting resources

The units include narrated stories, listening pieces, performances and backing tracks for the original songs, and performances of the new songs sung to traditional melodies. Displays are included where relevant and these are also provided in the printable resources, to offer flexibility as to the means and method of sharing the images.





Unit structure

With a new framework comes a new way of structuring our Early Years resources.

Progression is built in within each unit so you can pick and choose your favourite topics and work through them in any order. Every unit covers all seven areas of learning and development and all aspects of musical engagement, and they are all structured in the same way.

Unit overview and printable resources PDF

These documents include a wealth of additional content:

- Overview introduction
- Signposting to related books, songs and vocabulary
- Home learning activities
- Full transcripts of the stories
- Melody lines for all the songs
- Any further supporting imagery, templates, and other resources

Enhanced continuous provision

The first 'lesson' (blue box) in each unit is dedicated to enhancing continuous provision, with ideas under the headings of Sand, Water, Painting, Play dough, Small world and construction, Role play and Creative design.

Musical learning and audio

The second 'lesson' contains all the musical and audio resources. Each unit includes some combination of:

- Story – with audio narration
- Original song – with performance and backing track options and teaching notes
- Traditional tune (new lyrics sung to a traditional melody) – with audio demonstration and teaching notes
- Listening – a piece of listening music with ideas for how children can explore and respond

Educational programmes, age 3–4

The third 'lesson' provides activities to support adult-guided learning covering the developmental programme for ages 3–4 across all seven areas of learning and development in the EYFS (Communication and Language; Personal, Social and Emotional Development; Physical Development; Literacy; Mathematics; Understanding the World; Expressive Arts and Design).

Educational programmes, age 4–5

The fourth 'lesson' provides activities to support adult-guided learning covering the developmental programme for ages 4–5 across all seven areas of learning and development in the EYFS (Communication and Language; Personal, Social and Emotional Development; Physical Development; Literacy; Mathematics; Understanding the World; Expressive Arts and Design).



THE OBSERVATION, ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING CYCLE

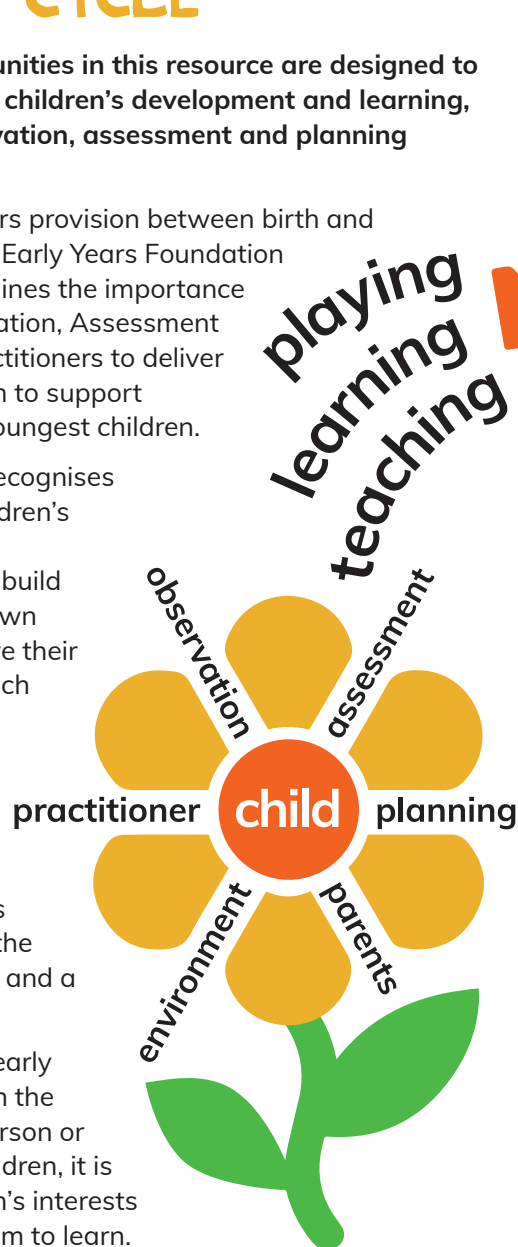
The activities and learning opportunities in this resource are designed to give practitioners ideas to support children's development and learning, underpinned by the cycle of observation, assessment and planning outlined below.

Whenever a child joins an Early Years provision between birth and five, they will be working within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework, which outlines the importance of the cycle. The process of 'Observation, Assessment and Planning' is vital in helping practitioners to deliver an exciting and engaging curriculum to support learning and development for our youngest children.

The Early Years Foundation Stage recognises that play is essential to support children's development, helping to build their confidence as they learn to explore, build relationships with others, set their own goals, follow their interests and solve their own problems. Children learn so much by leading their own play.

Sharing information between all those involved in a child's life, particularly their parents, is vitally important in helping practitioners to provide an environment, activities and learning opportunities to meet the unique needs of the individual child, and a vital part of EYFS practice.

Children develop so rapidly in their early years and changes can take place in the minute on a daily basis. As a key person or practitioner working with young children, it is so important to know about children's interests and what motivates and excites them to learn.



Observation

The cycle must always start with getting to know a child well through rich, in the minute, interactions and sensitive observation, helping practitioners to understand and consider the child's current interests and stages of development and learning. This may be carried out by the child's key person, supported by other practitioners and the sharing of information gained from adults and all the key people in the child's life.



After an initial period of getting to know the child, observing and interacting with them while they play and gathering as much information as possible, the child's key person will begin to understand their current stage across the EYFS. This knowledge will support decisions about what the child knows and can do. Making professional judgements should not be onerous or take time away from working directly with the children.

Assessment

Assessment is the next stage of the process. These are the decisions you make about a child's level of learning and development by evaluating the information gained from observing a child in their play. All children are unique and may not always fall into set developmental statements linked to their age and stage from whichever system you use. It is finding the stage that best fits the individual child that is important, helping you effectively plan their future learning.

Assessment usually takes two forms: ongoing formative assessment and summative assessment. Ongoing formative assessment helps you plan for your children. This can be by spontaneously responding to what you see in the moment, or using knowledge from your own observations along with those that parents have shared. Evaluating all of this information will help you establish current levels of development and effectively plan future opportunities to support children to further progress. Summative assessment helps you to summarise a child's level of development at a specific time.

Assessment plays an important part in helping parents and practitioners to recognise the progress children are making, understand their needs, and to plan a balance of activities and opportunities for children, some lead by them and others planned and guided by adults. The curriculum, both spontaneous and planned, must meet the individual needs of each child and provide challenging and enjoyable activities and opportunities for children to continue to progress.

The EYFS states that: "Assessment should not entail prolonged breaks from interaction with children, nor require excessive paperwork." (EYFS Reforms Early Adopter Framework) Practitioners should use their knowledge of the child and their own expert professional judgement to help them. There is no requirement to prove this through overly focussing on collecting excessive amounts of physical evidence; only record information you might not remember and that will help you make judgements to support future learning.

Planning

Many opportunities can be provided for children to support their self-initiated play through access to high quality 'continuous provision'. There are many ideas in this resource to help practitioners to enhance continuous provision to further engage and challenge learning lead by the children. However, some activities need to be planned by adults to ensure the breadth of educational programmes in the EYFS are covered in the curriculum. These activities require more direction than in spontaneous play. The resource provides ideas to support practitioners plan the delivery of a broad and balanced curriculum through a specific interest whilst meeting children's needs.



MUSICAL SUPPORT

Songs, singing and 'pitch-matching'

There are at least two themed songs or chants for every starting point: one song has new lyrics set to a familiar, traditional tune; the second is an original offering with a new melody and lyrics. (Melody lines and guitar chords are included in the printable resources for each starting point for music readers.) The song lyrics have been constructed very carefully to be age-appropriate and to incorporate the guidance found in 'Letters and Sounds' (phase 1).

Teaching notes are provided for all songs in the 'Musical learning' for each starting point. These include ideas for enriching children's singing experience, e.g. by suggesting actions or improvised accompaniments played on percussion or soundmakers. Instructions for making a range of recycled soundmakers are available in the printable resources for both the 'Let's go green!' and 'Do you see dinosaurs?' starting points. However, we encourage you to be creative and use anything you have to hand.

Original songs have backing tracks for you to sing with. We recommend that the familiar traditional tunes with new lyrics are sung unaccompanied or with classroom percussion. It is important for young children to hear your voice and have the opportunity to engage with live music and singing, which is a different experience from singing along with pre-recorded music. Demonstrations of the traditional tunes are provided to remind you of the melodies and to allow you to hear how the new words fit, although this should be quite intuitive. Each traditional tune models beginning with a short introductory phrase, e.g. 'one, two, off we go' sung on the starting note, which helps young singers to 'pitch' correctly. This vocalised introduction should be adopted when leading any singing activity because it develops aural skills enabling children to sing in tune with others – this is known as 'pitch-matching'.

Song melodies (or tunes), are constructed in different ways, which is what makes them interesting and appealing to our ears. EYFS songs are composed very carefully to make them appropriate for young and under-developed voices. Composers of EYFS material consider the note range (in other words, the highest and lowest notes), and their tunes include notes that mostly 'sit' next door to each other, like the notes in a 'scale' (think of those up and down exercises that pianists practise!). This means that young singers don't have to attempt big vocal leaps and, therefore, the best EYFS tunes are easy to sing and memorise.

One feature of EYFS songs is known as 'cuckoo' notes: a higher note followed by one a couple of 'steps' lower. Sing 'cuckoo' yourself, and you'll understand immediately. 'Cuckoo' notes are always present in young children's improvised 'sing-song' tunes, which arise naturally as they experiment playfully with their voices. This is a universal feature of vocal development found in most countries and cultures, and so composers of EYFS songs use 'cuckoo notes' in their songwriting to build on children's early vocal experimentation, and to help develop listening and accurate pitching.

Pitch-matching skills develop over time, and become embedded if children are given the opportunity to listen to well-modelled singing, whether live or recorded, and then encouraged to copy accurately. This is why it is so important to sing regularly with children and to use appropriate song material. This best practice is the bedrock of lifelong music-making: to be able to listen to, recognise and replicate different notes and melodies.



Music for listening and responding

Short pieces of recorded music in contrasting styles and genres, are incorporated into many starting points, enabling children to listen and respond informally to what they hear. Ideas for developing dance and movement are offered in the 'Musical learning' sections, but of course children's independent and untutored responses are to be encouraged and cherished.

Strong beat/pulse

The term 'strong beat' or 'pulse' is referenced in the practitioners' notes for both songs and listening pieces. 'Pulse' is the underlying, constant strong beat that is heard in most Western music – the one on which you instinctively tap your foot or clap your hands (think of soldiers marching with their steps coinciding exactly to the pulse of a brass band piece!). An ability to 'mark the pulse' is an important stage in a child's musical development. By modelling the pulse through your actions, walking patterns or by playing an instrument/soundmaker, you will help children to begin to recognise and 'feel' the pulse, independently.