



The Seven Areas of Learning in the Early Years

The Early Years Foundation Stage is made up of seven areas of learning.

The prime areas:

- Communication and Language
- Physical Development
- Personal, Social and Emotional

The specific areas:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design

None of these areas can be delivered in isolation from the others. They are equally important and depend on each other. All areas are delivered through a balance of adult led and child initiated activities. In each area there are Early Learning Goals that define the expectations for most children to reach by the end of the Foundation Stage.

The curriculum is also set around the following learning characteristics:

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

Playing and Exploring

‘Children’s play reflects their wide ranging and varied interests and preoccupations. In their play children learn at their highest level. Play with peers is important for children’s development.’ EYFS 2008

Through play our children explore and develop learning experiences which help them make sense of the world. They practise and build up ideas, and learn how to



control themselves and understand the need for rules. They have the opportunity to think creatively alongside other children as well as on their own. They communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems. They express fears and re-live anxious experiences in controlled and safe situations.

Active Learning

'Children learn best through physical and mental challenges. Active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve children for sustained periods.' EYFS 2008

Active learning occurs when children are motivated and interested. Children need to have some independence and control over their learning. As children develop their confidence, they learn to make decisions. This provides children with a sense of satisfaction as they take ownership of their learning.

Creativity and Thinking Critically

'When children have opportunities to play with ideas in different situations and with a variety of resources they discover connections and come to new and better understandings and ways of doing things. Adult support in this process enhances their ability to think critically and ask questions.' EYFS 2008

Children should be given opportunities to be creative through all areas of learning, not just through arts. Adults can support children's thinking and help them to make connections by showing genuine interest, offering encouragement, clarifying ideas and asking open questions. Children can access resources freely and are allowed to move them around in the classroom to extend their learning.