

The curriculum

The **curriculum** is the overall plan of what children should learn, experience, and develop during their early years.

It's usually *holistic*, focusing not only on academic skills but also on social, emotional, physical, and creative development.

- **Play-based learning:** Children learn through play, exploration, and interaction.
- **Developmentally appropriate:** Activities match children's stages of growth and individual needs.
- **Integrated learning:** Subjects like language, math, art, and science are often woven together through themes or projects.
- **Focus areas**
 - Communication and language
 - Physical development
 - Personal, social, and emotional development
 - Literacy
 - Mathematics
 - Understanding the world
 - Expressive arts and design

Teaching

in early years this doesn't always look like traditional instruction. It blends *guided play, modelling, interaction, and intentional teaching*.

Effective teaching practices include:

- **Scaffolding learning:** Supporting children's play and thinking by asking questions, extending ideas, or introducing new vocabulary.
- **Observation and responsiveness:** Teachers watch and listen to children to understand their interests and needs, then plan activities accordingly.
- **Creating rich environments:** Classrooms are designed to stimulate curiosity and independence.
- **Balancing approaches:** A mix of child-initiated and adult-led activities ensures both freedom and structure.

Assessment

is the process of understanding what children know, can do, and how they are developing. It's usually **formative** — ongoing and used to guide teaching rather than judge performance.

Methods include:

- **Observation:** Watching children play and interact.
- **Learning journals:** Collecting photos, samples of work, and notes.
- **Conversations with children and families:** Gaining insight into learning at home and in school.
- **Developmental milestones or frameworks:** Comparing progress with age-appropriate expectations (e.g., EYFS Early Learning Goals).

Purpose:

- To support each child's learning journey.
- To plan next steps in teaching.
- To communicate progress with families.

