



Department
for Education

Early years qualification requirements and standards

**For group and school-based providers,
and awarding organisations and
training providers offering
qualifications in early years**

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Summary

About these requirements and standards

The **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework**¹ sets the standards that early years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. It promotes teaching and learning to help children thrive and to give them a broad range of knowledge and skills that provide a foundation for good future progress through school and life. It does this by setting out the requirements for early years providers delivering the EYFS, including staff:child ratios and the qualification levels practitioners must hold to be included within those delivery requirements.

This document sets out the minimum qualification and experience requirements that group and school-based providers² must ensure their staff meet to be recognised as level 2, level 3 or level 6 members of staff for the purpose of working within the **EYFS staff:child ratios**. Providers must refer to these requirements to determine at which level a member of staff can be included in the **staff:child ratios**.

This document also sets out the criteria that early years practitioner (level 2) and early years educator (level 3) and other qualifications of level 4 or higher must meet to be recognised as **full and relevant** by the Department for Education (DfE). These criteria outline the minimum skills, knowledge and understanding that a practitioner must demonstrate to deliver the **EYFS** and support the learning and development of young children. To ensure quality across early years settings in England, awarding organisations and training providers should seek DfE approval of their early years practitioner and early years educator qualifications against these criteria.

The qualification requirements and standards document and the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework for Group and School-based Providers should be read alongside each other.

This document uses the word “must” where the requirement is mandatory for group and school-based early years providers. The word ‘providers’ is used to refer to group and school-based providers unless otherwise stated.

Words and phrases written in bold throughout this document are defined in the Glossary.

Expiry or review date

This document remains in force until further notice.

¹ The EYFS statutory framework can be located here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>.

² All persons registered in England with Ofsted in the early years register, or with an early years childminder agency (CMA): to provide early years childcare on domestic premises (CoDPs); or to provide early years childcare on non-domestic premises (CoNDPs); (referred to collectively in this EYFS framework as ‘group-based early years providers’). All schools and independent educational institutions in England who provide early years provision in respect of which they are exempt from registration by section 34(2) of the Childcare Act 2006 (referred to in this EYFS framework as ‘school-based early years providers’). This EYFS framework refers to all of the above collectively as ‘providers’, unless otherwise stated.

What legislation does this guidance refer to?

The qualification requirements are given legal force by regulations³ made under section 39(1)(b) of the Childcare Act 2006.

Who is this publication for?

Section 1 of this publication covers the qualification and experience requirements that group and school-based providers must ensure their staff meet to work as level 2, 3 or 6 within the staff:child ratios within the **EYFS** in early years settings in England. It is mandatory for:

- group and school-based early years providers⁴

It may be helpful for:

- early years staff

Section 2 of this publication sets out the criteria that early years qualifications must meet to be recognised by the Department for Education as **full and relevant**⁵. It is for:

- awarding organisations
- training providers.

³ The Early Years Foundation Stage (Welfare Requirements) Regulations 2012 (S.I. 2012/938), as amended.

⁴ This includes providers of childcare on domestic premises. However, this publication is not for childminders, who must comply with the training and ratio requirements set out in the EYFS for childminders.

⁵ Qualifications delivered and awarded outside of the United Kingdom are not recognised by the Department for Education as full and relevant and are not included on the Early Years Qualifications List.

Glossary

Adaptation period – a period of supervised practice at an early years setting. This usually takes place over several months, or until the candidate has successfully demonstrated the skills and knowledge defined in the criteria that are not covered by their early years qualification gained outside of the United Kingdom.

Appropriate to early years practice – where a qualification is relevant to working in an early years setting that delivers early education and childcare for the 0 to 5 years age range.

Early years educator (level 3) criteria - the criteria that qualifications must meet to enable holders to work as level 3 members of staff for the purpose of the staff:child ratios.

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework – sets the standards that early years providers must meet to ensure that young children from 0 to 5 years learn and develop well.

Early years practitioner (level 2) criteria – the criteria that qualifications must meet to enable holders to work as level 2 members of staff for the purpose of the staff:child ratios.

Early years professional status (EYPS) – an award allowing holders to work as level 6 members of staff for the purpose of the staff:child ratios.

EYFS staff:child ratios – the minimum number of early years staff that must be available per child, depending on staff qualification and the age of the child. The ratio requirements can be found in the EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers.

Early years teacher status (EYTS) – an award allowing holders to work as teachers in early years settings, counting as level 6 members of staff for the purpose of the staff:child ratios.

Early years qualifications list (EYQL) – list of early years qualifications that are recognised by the Department of Education as full and relevant.

Experience-based route- a route allowing suitable Early Years staff who meet the criteria, but who do not hold a full and relevant level 3 qualification, to work in the staff:child ratios at level 3.

Full and relevant – qualifications that DfE have assessed as meeting all of the Early Years Practitioner (level 2) or Early Years Educator (level 3) criteria, as well as EYTS, Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and EYPS, are recognised as full and relevant⁶. Holders of a full and relevant qualification can be included in the staff:child ratios at the level appropriate to the relevant criteria.

Qualified teacher status (QTS) – an award allowing holders to work as teachers in early years settings, counting as level 6 members of staff for the purpose of the staff:child ratios.

⁶ Further information on full and relevant Early Years Qualifications can be located here:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/early-years-qualifications-finder>

Section 1: Early years qualification requirements

- 1.1. The **EYFS statutory framework** sets out the requirements for **staff:child ratios** in settings delivering the **EYFS** and the qualification levels staff must hold to be included within those requirements.
- 1.2. This document defines the qualifications that staff must hold to be included in the specified **staff:child ratios** at levels 2, 3 and 6 of the **EYFS**.
- 1.3. Providers must ensure that staff meet minimum qualification, and in some cases experience, requirements before counting them as qualified staff in the staff:child ratios. To be included in the **staff:child ratios** at level 2, level 3 or level 6, staff must either:
 - hold a qualification that is recognised by DfE as **full and relevant** at the appropriate level,
 - be a student or apprentice working at the level below their level of study (see paragraph 3.56 of the EYFS statutory framework), or
 - for level 3 ratios only, have successfully completed the **experience-based route**.
- 1.4. Any individual that does not meet these criteria can only work as an unqualified member of staff in an early years setting.
- 1.5. The **Early years qualifications list (EYQL)**⁷ includes all the qualifications recognised by DfE as **full and relevant** and therefore allowing the holder to be included within the **staff:child ratios** at level 2, level 3 or level 6.
- 1.6. This section outlines the minimum qualification and experience requirements that providers must ensure their staff meet to work within the **staff:child ratios** at level 2, level 3 or level 6. However, providers may set their own higher qualification requirements if they wish. If doing so, providers must ensure that staff holding higher-level qualifications still meet all requirements necessary to be included in the **staff:child ratios**.
- 1.7. Providers must ensure that staff also meet any additional requirements imposed by the **EYFS statutory framework** to be included in the **staff:child ratios** (for example, paediatric first aid training).

Qualifications achieved in the United Kingdom

Qualifications started before 1 September 2014

- 1.8. Qualifications started in the United Kingdom⁸ before 1 September 2014 must meet DfE's **full and relevant** criteria for early years qualifications⁹, for holders to be included in the **staff:child ratios** at level 2 or level 3.

⁷ The Early Years Qualifications List can be located here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/early-years-qualifications-finder>

⁸ This includes England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

⁹ See Annex B.

1.9. The **EYQL** contains a complete list of all pre-September 2014 qualifications that are recognised by the DfE as **full and relevant**. This includes qualifications from England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. A qualification started before 1 September 2014 does not allow the holder to be included in the **staff:child ratios** if:

- it is not listed in the **EYQL**
- it is listed in the **EYQL** but does not meet additional requirements specified in the **EYQL**
- the title of the qualification does not match exactly the title in the **EYQL** (including information contained in brackets)¹⁰

Qualifications started on or after 1 September 2014

Qualifications achieved in England

Working at level 2 within the staff:child ratios

1.10. To be included in the **staff:child ratios** at level 2, staff must hold:

- a **full and relevant** level 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8¹¹ qualification
- a qualification at level 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8 that is not **full and relevant**, provided that the qualification was started between 1 September 2014 and 31 August 2019, is related to early years (0 to 5 years) and is **appropriate to early years practice**
- In addition, where a member of staff holds a level 2 qualification obtained after 30 June 2016, they must also obtain a paediatric first aid (PFA) qualification within three months of starting work to be included in the staff:child ratios¹²

1.11. For level 2 qualifications started between 1 September 2014 and 31 August 2019 to be **full and relevant**, they must be:

- related to early years (0 to 5 years) and **appropriate to early years practice**
- included on Ofqual's list of regulated qualifications¹³

These qualifications are not listed individually on the **EYQL**

1.12. Level 2 qualifications started on or after 1 September 2019 must meet the **early years practitioner (level 2) criteria**¹⁴ to be **full and relevant**. Level 2 qualifications that are recognised by DfE as meeting these criteria are included in the **EYQL**.

Working at level 3 within the staff:child ratios

¹⁰ Bracketed information indicates the pathway or specialism necessary for a qualification to meet the early years criteria.

¹¹ See Annex A for a summary of the different types of qualification at each qualification level.

¹² See the [Early years foundation stage \(EYFS\) statutory framework](#) for full PFA requirements, as stated in paragraph 3.36 to 3.39.

¹³ See: <https://register.ofqual.gov.uk>.

¹⁴ See Annex C.

- 1.13. To be included in the **staff:child ratios** at level 3, staff must:
- hold a **full and relevant** level 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8 qualification and a suitable level 2 English qualification
 - have received approval from the provider to count in the ratios at level 3 after completing the **experience-based route** and hold a suitable level 2 English qualification
 - in addition, where a member of staff holds a level 3 qualification obtained after 30 June 2016 or has completed the **experience-based route** they must also obtain a PFA qualification within three months of starting work to be included in the staff:child ratios¹⁵
- 1.14. Suitable¹⁶ level 2 English qualifications are:
- Functional skills qualification in English at level 2
 - GCSE or International GCSE qualification in English language or literature to at least grade 4 (or grade C)
 - Key skills qualification in communication at level 2
 - A Level or AS Level qualification in English language or English literature to at least grade E
 - O Level qualification in English to at least grade C
 - CSE grade 1 English (language)
 - Basic skills certificate L2 – certificate in adult literacy
 - British Sign Language (BSL) for people who use BSL as their primary language
- 1.15. Level 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8 qualifications, and level 6 qualifications that are not degrees, must meet the **early years educator (level 3) criteria**¹⁷ to be **full and relevant**. Level 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8 qualifications, and non-degree level 6 qualifications, that are recognised by DfE as **full and relevant** are individually listed on the **EYQL**.
- 1.16. For level 6 degree qualifications started on or after 1 September 2014 to be **full and relevant**, therefore allowing holders to be included in the **staff:child ratios** at level 3, they must:
- be fully consistent with the QAA subject benchmark statement for Early Childhood Studies
 - include an element of assessed practice¹⁸ in an early years setting

¹⁵ See the [Early years foundation stage \(EYFS\) statutory framework](#) for full PFA requirements, as stated in paragraph 3.36 to 3.39.

¹⁶ Scottish, Northern Irish, Welsh and equivalents outside of the United Kingdom are also recognised as suitable. English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) qualifications and International English Language Testing System (IELTS) qualifications are not recognised as suitable.

¹⁷ See Annex D for the Early Years Educator (level 3) criteria: from 1 September 2014, and Annex E for the Early Years Educator (level 3) criteria: from 1 September 2024.

¹⁸ Suitable elements of assessed practice include: direct observation of the learner's practice in the workplace; documented accounts of the learner's practice; professional discussion, recorded oral or written questions relating to the learner's practice; work plans or work-based products created by the learner; case studies, working journals, assignments or projects recording the learner's practice in the workplace; and simulated

Level 6 degree qualifications that meet these criteria are considered full and relevant but are not individually listed on the EYQL.

Working at level 6 within the staff:child ratios

1.17. To be included in the **staff:child ratios** at level 6, staff must hold one of the following:¹⁹:

- **Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)**
- **Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS)**
- **Early Years Professional Status (EYPS)**

Qualifications achieved in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

1.18. The following categories of qualifications achieved in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland will enable the holder to be included in the **staff:child ratios** specified in the corresponding entry on the EYQL:

- Qualifications started **before** 1 September 2014 and listed individually on the pre-September 2014 tab of the EYQL.
- Qualifications started on or after September 2014 and listed individually on the post-September 2014 or post-September 2024 tabs of the EYQL, provided that the qualification contained the units specified in the corresponding EYQL entry. If an individual holds one of those qualifications but does not hold the additional units specified on the EYQL, then they can only count within the staff:child ratios at level 2.

1.19. If an individual does not hold any of the Scottish, Welsh, or Northern Irish qualifications listed on the EYQL but would like to be included in the staff:child ratios as qualified, they must either take a new full and relevant qualification listed on the EYQL, or successfully complete the **experience-based route** (if eligible). In the meantime, they are eligible to work as an unqualified member of staff.

Qualifications achieved outside the United Kingdom

1.20. Qualifications gained outside of the United Kingdom are not recognised by DfE as **full and relevant** to the **early years practitioner (level 2)** or **early years educator (level 3) criteria**. Staff holding a qualification achieved outside of the United Kingdom must gain recognition to work as a qualified member of staff, or successfully complete the **experience-based route**²⁰, in order to be included in **staff:child ratios** at level 2 or level 3 in early years

exercises demonstrating the learner's ability to cope with specific events, for example fire drills or confidential meetings.

¹⁹ QTS, EYTS and EYPS also allow holders to count as level 3 members of staff. However, staff cannot access both levels simultaneously, and must be counted as either level 3 or level 6 for the purpose of the staff:child ratios.

²⁰ Successful completion of the experience-based route only allows a member of staff to be included in the staff:child ratios at level 3.

settings in England.

- 1.21. To gain recognition to work as a qualified member of staff in England, candidates with a qualification from outside of the United Kingdom must submit details of their qualification to DfE, or a body contracted by DfE to make assessments on their behalf, for assessment against the **early years practitioner (level 2) criteria** or the **early years educator (level 3) criteria**²¹. Recognition is granted if a qualification is judged by DfE to fully meet the relevant criteria. Where a qualification is judged as not fully meeting the criteria, but as meeting at least 50% of the sub-criteria, candidates may undertake the following options to demonstrate the skills and knowledge missing from their qualification:
- completion of an **adaptation period** at an Early Years provider in England;
 - completion of standalone units with a training provider.
- 1.22. Once DfE has verified that the **adaptation period** or standalone units successfully make up the criteria which the qualification did not originally meet, candidates can be recognised as qualified members of staff and be included in the relevant **staff:child ratios**.
- 1.23. In cases where DfE judges that a qualification gained outside of the United Kingdom does not meet at least 50% of the sub-criteria, candidates must undertake a qualification that is recognised by DfE as **full and relevant**, or successfully complete **the experience-based route**²², in order to be included as qualified members of staff in the **staff:child ratios**.
- 1.24. Staff holding a teaching qualification from outside the United Kingdom must gain **QTS**²³ or **EYTS**²⁴ to be included in the **staff:child ratios** at level 6.

Level 2 English and maths

- 1.25. To be included in the **staff:child ratios** at level 3, staff who started their **full and relevant** level 3 or above qualification on or after 1 September 2014 must also hold a suitable level 2 English qualification²⁵. Staff who have completed the **experience-based route** must also hold a suitable level 2 English qualification to be included in the ratios at level 3.

²¹ For more information about overseas practitioners gaining recognition to work as a qualified member of staff in a setting in England, see: [How you make an application for recognition of overseas qualifications - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/how-you-make-an-application-for-recognition-of-overseas-qualifications)

²² Successful completion of the experience-based route only allows a member of staff to be included in the staff:child ratios at level 3.

²³ Staff holding a teaching qualification from outside of the United Kingdom should refer to the Department for Education's professional recognition service to apply for QTS in England. See: [Routes to qualified teacher status \(QTS\) for teachers and those with teaching experience outside the UK - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/routes-to-qualified-teacher-status-qts-for-teachers-and-those-with-teaching-experience-outside-the-uk)

²⁴ For more information about gaining EYTS, see: [Become an early years teacher | Get Into Teaching GOV.UK \(education.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/become-an-early-years-teacher-get-into-teaching)

²⁵ See paragraph 1.12 of this document. As with staff who gained their qualification from the United Kingdom, staff holding an overseas qualification achieved before 1 September 2014 do not need to hold a level 2 English qualification to count within the staff:child ratios at level 3 (even if granted recognition by the Department for Education as qualified after 1 September 2014).

- 1.26. Staff who started their **full and relevant** level 3 or above qualification on or after 1 September 2014 but who do not hold a suitable level 2 English qualification may only be included in the **staff:child ratios** at level 2.
- 1.27. Staff holding **QTS**, **EYTS** or **EYPS** do not need a separate level 2 English qualification to be included in the **staff:child ratios** at level 3 or level 6. This applies to staff who achieved their qualification before and after 1 September 2014.
- 1.28. Setting managers appointed on or after 4 January 2024 must hold a suitable level 2 qualification in maths or must achieve one within two years of starting in the position.
- 1.29. Suitable²⁶ level 2 maths qualifications are:
- Functional skills qualification in maths at level 2
 - GCSE or International GCSE qualification in maths to at least grade 4 (or grade C)
 - Key skills qualification in application of number at level 2
 - A Level or AS Level qualification in maths or pure maths and/or further maths to at least grade E
 - O Level qualification in maths to at least grade C
 - CSE grade 1 maths
 - Basic skills certificate L2 – certificate in adult numeracy

Experience-based route

- 1.30. Providers may include staff within the **staff:child ratios** at level 3, if, subject to meeting other requirements, the staff member has successfully completed the **experience-based route** and received approval from the provider. Providers can start the **experience-based route** process with their staff from 3 March 2025. Providers may count staff in the level 3 ratios on the basis of the **experience-based route** as stated in the staff:child ratio requirements in the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework from 1 September 2025.
- 1.31. A provider must meet the eligibility criteria for Ofsted grades at its most recent Ofsted inspection in order to offer the **experience-based route** to eligible staff, and to approve staff to count in the **staff:child ratios** at level 3 after completing the **experience-based route**.
- **Registered Providers** (including registered provision at state-funded or independent schools) most recently inspected before 10th November 2025 must have received an overall effectiveness grade of 'outstanding' or 'good'. If they were inspected on or after the 10th November 2025 they must have received a grade of 'met' for safeguarding and 'expected standard' or above for leadership and governance.
 - **State-funded schools** (including maintained schools, maintained nursery

²⁶ Scottish, Northern Irish, Welsh and non-United Kingdom equivalents are also recognised as suitable.

schools and academies) most recently inspected before 2nd September 2024, must have received an overall effectiveness grade of 'outstanding' or 'good'. If they were most recently inspected on or after 2nd September 2024, but before 10th November 2025, they must not have been judged by Ofsted to require 'significant improvement' or 'special measures'. If inspected on or after 10th November 2025, they must have received a grade of 'met' for safeguarding and 'expected standard' or above for leadership and governance.

- **Independent schools** most recently inspected by **Ofsted** before 5th January 2026, must have received an overall effectiveness grade of 'outstanding' or 'good'. If inspected on or after 1st January 2026, they must have received a grade of 'met' for safeguarding, and 'expected standard' or above for leadership and governance.
- **Independent schools** most recently inspected by an **independent inspectorate approved by the Secretary of State for Education** must be graded 'met' for safeguarding and suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- **Providers of childcare on domestic premises registered with Childminder Agencies**, the Childminder Agency they are registered with must have achieved a grade of 'effective' or better in their most recent inspection.
- **Providers that have never been inspected** may also offer the **experience-based route** to their staff and approve staff under the **experience-based route**.

- 1.32. In this section, the person seeking to be counted in the **staff:child ratios** after completing the **experience-based route** is referred to as the 'applicant'.
- 1.33. The person making the assessment on behalf of the provider of the applicant's knowledge, skills and experience is referred to as the 'assessor'. The assessor must themselves hold a **full and relevant** qualification at level 3 or above, and must have worked in an early years setting for a minimum of two years.
- 1.34. The person or persons supervising the applicant during the **experience-based route** is referred to as the 'supervisor'. The supervisor must also hold a **full and relevant** qualification at level 3 or above, and must have worked in an early years setting for a minimum of two years.

Eligibility Criteria to undertake the experience-based route

- 1.35. To be eligible to undertake the **experience-based route**, an applicant must:
- Hold a level 2 qualification that is **full and relevant**, or an equivalent achieved outside of the UK²⁷; or
 - Hold a level 3 or above qualification, or an equivalent achieved outside of the UK²⁸, that is relevant to the care or education of children, but is not **full and**

²⁷ Qualifications achieved outside of the UK are not automatically recognised as full and relevant. For qualifications achieved in countries outside of the UK, applicants must submit details of their qualification to the Department for Education, or a body contracted by the Department for Education, to determine equivalence.

²⁸ Qualifications achieved outside of the UK are not automatically recognised as equivalent to a level 3 or

relevant.

- 1.36. The applicant must have worked with early years children in an early years setting, or a related sector, for a minimum of 1 year in England.

Experience-based route process

- 1.37. The assessor must complete an initial assessment of the applicant's knowledge, skills, and experience against the **early years educator (level 3) criteria** at Annex E, to determine the applicant's suitability to undertake the **experience-based route**. If, following this initial assessment, the assessor is satisfied that the applicant meets at least 50% of the **early years educator (level 3)** sub-criteria, the applicant may undertake the **experience-based route** to gain the knowledge, skills and experience to meet the remaining criteria through a period of supervised practice.
- 1.38. An applicant undertaking the **experience-based route** must complete a minimum of 751 to 900 hours²⁹ of relevant work and supervised practice, before the assessor can undertake a final assessment and decide whether the applicant has met the criteria to work in the **staff:child ratios** at level 3. All applicants proceeding with the **experience-based route** must complete a supervised practice period, even if they are assessed as meeting 100% of the criteria at their initial assessment.³⁰ The supervised practice period consists of all hours worked in their early years setting while undertaking the **experience-based route**, overseen or guided by the supervisor(s), working towards the **early years educator (level 3) criteria**.
- 1.39. At the end of the supervised practice period the assessor must reassess the applicant's knowledge, skills, and experience against the **early years educator (level 3) criteria**, and satisfy themselves that each of the sub-criteria are met. If, after this assessment all sub-criteria have been met, and subject to the applicant meeting all other requirements (see paragraph 1.40), then the provider may include the applicant in the **staff:child ratios** at level 3.
- 1.40. An applicant who has completed the **experience-based route**, must also hold a suitable Level 2 English qualification, and suitable paediatric first aid certificate, before they can be included in the ratios at level 3.
- 1.41. The provider must keep a record of hours worked at the setting by an applicant undertaking the **experience-based route**, and provide the applicant with a copy for their own records. The provider must also keep a record of the initial and final assessments they complete in relation to an applicant, alongside their decisions and reasoning, and provide a copy to the applicant for their own records.
- 1.42. Staff who successfully complete the **experience-based route** and can work in the **staff:child ratios** at level 3 following assessment by the provider will hold '**experience-based route status**'. This status allows them to be included in the

above qualification. For qualifications achieved outside of the UK applicants must submit details of their qualification to the Department for Education, or a body contracted by the Department for Education to make assessments of their behalf.

²⁹ The supervised practice period of 751 to 900 hours is approximately 6 months of full-time equivalent work. The practice period within this range is at the discretion of the manager.

³⁰ Where a member of staff has held experience-based route status at a previous provider, there is no requirement to undertake a new period of supervised practice however this is at the discretion of the new provider.

staff:child ratios at level 3 in their current setting at the manager's discretion. This does not confer a **full and relevant** qualification on staff.

- 1.43. **Experience-based route** status is not automatically transferable should the individual move to a new provider. In this case, an individual can choose to ask their new provider for a new assessment against the **early years educator (level 3) criteria**. This may include consideration of evidence and decisions from their previous assessment and setting. The new provider would need to be satisfied that all criteria have been met, and may decide the individual should undertake a new period of supervised practice, before they can work in the **staff:child ratios** at level 3.
- 1.44. No more than 50% of staff included in the ratios at level 3 at a particular premises can be included on the basis of **experience-based route** status at any one time. The remaining 50% or more of those included in the **staff:child ratios** at level 3 must have an approved level 3 qualification or higher.

Section 2: Early years qualification criteria

- 2.1. This document defines the minimum requirements for what early years staff must know, understand and be able to do in order to be considered qualified to support young children in the **EYFS**. It does this by setting out the criteria that qualifications must meet to enable staff to demonstrate their competence.
- 2.2. The criteria included in this document are:
- **DfE full and relevant** criteria for early years qualifications started before 1 September 2014 (Annex B)
 - **Early Years Practitioner (Level 2) criteria** (Annex C)
 - **Early Years Educator (level 3) criteria**: from 1 September 2014 (Annex D)
 - **Early Years Educator (level 3) criteria**: from 1 September 2024 (Annex E)
- 2.3. Qualifications that meet the appropriate³¹ criteria are recognised by DfE as **full and relevant**. Holders of a **full and relevant** qualification can be included in the **staff:child ratios** in an early years setting at level 2 or level 3.

Approving early years qualifications

- 2.4. Awarding organisations should refer to the appropriate qualification criteria when developing any qualification that intends to qualify candidates to work in an early years setting in England and within the **staff:child ratios**. To meet the **early years practitioner (level 2)** or **early years educator (level 3)** requirements, all criteria, including sub-criteria and range³², must be covered.
- 2.5. To determine if a qualification can be approved as **full and relevant**, DfE assesses the course content against the **early years practitioner (level 2)** or **early years educator (level 3) criteria**³³. Qualifications that meet all of the relevant criteria (including sub-criteria and range) are confirmed as **full and relevant** and added to the **EYQL**³⁴. Holders of qualifications on the **EYQL** can count as qualified members of staff and be included in the relevant level **staff:child ratios**.
- 2.6. Awarding organisations can use 'early years practitioner' or 'early years educator' in the title of courses that have been recognised by DfE as **full and relevant** against the **early years practitioner (level 2)** or **early years educator (level 3) criteria**. 'early years practitioner' or 'early years educator' should be included on the certificate upon achievement of an approved level 2 or

³¹ According to the date and level of the criteria.

³² 'Range' refers to bullet points included in some sub-criteria.

³³ Applications for assessing qualifications against the criteria will only be accepted by the Department for Education if submitted by the awarding organisation or training provider. For more information on submitting an application contact the Department for Education.

³⁴ Qualifications regulated by Ofqual must also be given a qualification number by Ofqual and appear on the Register of Regulated Qualifications (RRQ) before DfE will add them to the EYQL. Ofqual uses its own criteria to approve qualifications. The RRQ can be located here: [The Register of Regulated Qualifications: Home page \(ofqual.gov.uk\)](https://www.ofqual.gov.uk/register-of-regulated-qualifications/).

level 3 qualification. Where mandatory units and optional units together make up a specified early years educator pathway, the qualification must not use 'early years educator' in the title. Instead, 'early years educator pathway' should be included in brackets on the certificate upon achievement.

- 2.7. For qualifications already on the **EYQL**, it is essential that the awarding organisation or training provider informs DfE if the qualification title changes. If significant changes are made to course content, it is essential that the awarding organisation or training provider seeks approval from DfE that the qualification can still be recognised as **full and relevant**.

Annex A: Summary of qualification levels

The following sets out the qualifications associated with each qualification level, defined by Ofqual in the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF)³⁵:

Entry Level:

- Entry level award
- Entry level certificate (ELC)
- Entry level diploma
- Entry level English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)
- Entry level essential skills
- Entry level functional skills
- Skills for Life

Level 1

- First certificate
- GCSE – grades 3, 2, 1 or grades D, E, F, G
- Level 1 award
- Level 1 certificate
- Level 1 diploma
- Level 1 ESOL
- Level 1 essential skills
- Level 1 functional skills
- Level 1 national vocational qualifications (NVQ)
- Music grades 1, 2 and 3

Level 2

- CSE – grade 1
- GCSE – grades 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4 or grades A*, A, B, C
- Level 2 award
- Level 2 certificate
- Level 2 diploma
- Level 2 ESOL
- Level 2 essential skills
- Level 2 functional skills
- Level 2 national certificate
- Level 2 national diploma
- Level 2 NVQ
- Music grades 4 and 5
- O level – grade A, B or C

³⁵ Source: [What qualification levels mean: England, Wales and Northern Ireland - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-qualification-levels-mean) (accessed 16 October 2023).

Level 3

- A level
- Access to higher education diploma
- Advanced apprenticeship
- Applied general
- AS level
- International Baccalaureate diploma
- Level 3 award
- Level 3 certificate
- Level 3 diploma
- Level 3 ESOL
- Level 3 national certificate
- Level 3 national diploma
- Level 3 NVQ
- Music grades 6, 7 and 8
- T level
- Tech level

Level 4

- Certificate of higher education (CertHE)
- Higher apprenticeship
- Higher national certificate (HNC)
- Level 4 award
- Level 4 certificate
- Level 4 diploma
- Level 4 NVQ

Level 5

- Diploma of higher education (DipHE)
- Foundation degree
- Higher national diploma (HND)
- Level 5 award
- Level 5 certificate
- Level 5 diploma
- Level 5 NVQ

Level 6

- Degree apprenticeship
- Degree with honours – for example bachelor of the arts (BA), bachelor of science (BSc) honours
- Graduate certificate
- Graduate diploma
- Level 6 award
- Level 6 certificate

- Level 6 diploma
- Level 6 NVQ
- Ordinary degree without honours

Level 7

- Integrated master's degree, for example master of engineering (MEng)
- Level 7 award
- Level 7 certificate
- Level 7 diploma
- Level 7 NVQ
- Master's degree, for example master of arts (MA), master of science (MSc)
- Postgraduate certificate
- Postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE)
- Postgraduate diploma

Level 8

- Doctorate, for example doctor of philosophy (PhD or DPhil)
- Level 8 award
- Level 8 certificate
- Level 8 diploma

Annex B: Department for Education ‘full and relevant’ criteria for early years qualifications started before 1 September 2014

These qualification criteria lay out the minimum requirements for what Early Years Practitioners (level 2) and Early Years Educators (level 3) must know, understand and be able to do to be considered qualified to support young children from 0 to 5 years in the EYFS.

Short criteria

1. Demonstrate depth and level of learning appropriate to specified outcomes of full early years, childcare or playwork qualifications.
2. Demonstrate it has valid, reliable assessment and awarding procedures.
3. Include an element of assessed performance evidence

Extended criteria

1. Demonstrate depth and level of learning appropriate to specified outcomes of full early years, childcare or playwork qualifications.

Comment/detail

Qualifications will be mapped using Skills for Health level descriptors:

- Level 2 Working knowledge of: the application of factual knowledge in a manner that takes account of widely understood principles and implications within the field of practice
 - Level 3 In-depth understanding of: a broad and detailed understanding of the theoretical underpinning of an area of practice including conflicting theories and constructs
 - Level 4 Critical understanding of: the ability to evaluate and devise approaches to situations that depend on the critical application of theories and conceptual constructs within the area of practice
2. Demonstrate it has valid, reliable assessment and awarding procedures.

Comment/detail

Qualifications will be mapped using Skills for Health level descriptors:

- Assessment by individual who is professionally competent and knowledgeable
- Process and methodology appropriate to nature and size of qualification externality

- Awarding procedures reflect achievement
3. Include an element of assessed performance evidence.

Comment/detail

This could be:

- Observed performance
- Work products
- Child observations and assessments
- Curriculum plans
- Individual learning/play plans

Annex C: Early Years Practitioner (Level 2) criteria: from 1 September 2019

These qualification criteria lay out the minimum requirements for what an Early Years Practitioner (level 2) must know, understand and be able to do to be considered qualified to support young children from 0 to 5 years in the **EYFS**. They are divided into 2 sections:

Section i: Summary of qualification content and assessment criteria

Section ii: Minimum content requirements for Early Years Practitioner (level 2) qualifications

Section i: Summary of qualification content and assessment criteria

A: Qualification content

All Early Years Practitioner (level 2) qualifications will require candidates to demonstrate skills, knowledge and understanding in the following areas:

1. Knowledge of child development
2. Safeguarding
3. Health and safety
4. Wellbeing
5. Communication
6. Support the planning and delivery of activities, purposeful play opportunities and educational programmes
7. Support children with special educational needs and disabilities
8. Own role and development
9. Working with others – parents, colleagues, other professionals

Full details of required qualification content are shown in Section ii on the following pages.

B: Accreditation

From 1 September 2019 all Early Years Practitioner (level 2) qualifications must meet the criteria set down in this document. They must also be regulated by Ofqual onto the current national qualifications framework.

Section ii: Minimum content requirements for Early Years Practitioner (level 2) qualifications

1. Knowledge of child development

- 1.1. Describe how children learn and the expected pattern of babies and children's development from 0 to 5 years and their further development from age 5 to 7. Areas of development to include:
 - cognitive
 - speech, language and communication
 - physical
 - emotional
 - social
 - brain development
 - literacy and numeracy
- 1.2. Understand the importance to children's holistic development of:
 - speech, language and communication
 - personal, social and emotional development
 - physical development
 - literacy and numeracy
- 1.3. Explain how babies' and young children's learning and development can be affected by their stage of development, wellbeing and individual circumstances.
- 1.4. Describe the significance of attachment, the key person's role and how transitions and other significant events impact children.
- 1.5. Demonstrate how to support babies and young children through a range of transitions.

2. Safeguarding

- 2.1. Know the legal requirements and guidance on safeguarding, security, confidentiality of information and promoting the welfare of children.
- 2.2. Understand safeguarding policies and procedures, including child protection and online safety.
- 2.3. Explain own role and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and security, including child protection, reporting and confidentiality of information.
- 2.4. Recognise when a child is in danger, at risk of serious harm or abuse and explain the procedures to be followed to protect them. Types of abuse including:
 - domestic
 - neglect
 - physical
 - emotional
 - sexual abuse

3. Health and safety

- 3.1. Outline the legal requirements and guidance for:
 - health and safety
 - security
- 3.2. Identify risks and hazards in the work setting and during off site visits.
- 3.3. Describe own role and responsibilities, including reporting, in the event of:
 - a baby or young child requiring urgent medical/dental attention
 - a non-medical incident or emergency
 - identifying risks and hazards
- 3.4. Demonstrate skills and understanding for the prevention and control of infection, including:
 - hand washing
 - food preparation and hygiene
 - dealing with spillages safely
 - safe disposal of waste
 - using correct personal protective equipment
- 3.5. Explain the work setting's procedures for receiving, storing, recording, administering and the safe disposal of medicines.
- 3.6. Use equipment, furniture and materials safely, following the manufacturers' instructions and setting's requirements.
- 3.7. Identify the signs and symptoms which may indicate that a child is injured, unwell (including common childhood illnesses and allergies) or in need of urgent medical/dental attention.
- 3.8. Demonstrate how to encourage children to:
 - be aware of personal safety and the safety of others
 - develop personal hygiene practices (including oral hygiene)

4. Wellbeing

- 4.1. Understand the impact of health and wellbeing on children's development.
- 4.2. Understand the current dietary guidance for early years and explain why it is important for babies and young children to have a healthy balanced diet and be

physically active.

- 4.3. Promote health and wellbeing in settings by encouraging babies and young children to:
 - consume healthy and balanced meals, snacks and drinks appropriate for their age
 - be physically active through planned and spontaneous activity throughout the day, both indoors and outdoors
- 4.4. Demonstrate how to share information with parents/carers about the importance of healthy balanced diets, looking after teeth and being physically active.
- 4.5. Carry out respectful care routines appropriate to the development, stage, dignity and needs of the child, including:
 - eating (feeding and weaning/complimentary feeding)
 - nappy changing procedures
 - potty/toilet training³⁶
 - care of skin, teeth and hair
 - rest and sleep provision

5. Communication

- 5.1. Demonstrate how to communicate with all children in ways that will be understood, including verbal and non-verbal communication.
- 5.2. Demonstrate how to extend children's development and learning through verbal and non-verbal communication.
- 5.3. Explain ways to communicate with all children appropriate for all their stages of development, including those for whom English is an additional language (EAL) or who have delayed speech.
- 5.4. Encourage babies and young children to use a range of communication methods.
- 5.5. Demonstrate a range of communication methods to exchange information with children and adults.

6. Support the planning of and deliver activities, purposeful play opportunities and educational programmes

- 6.1. Describe the statutory framework, including the learning and development requirements for babies and young children that must be implemented by your setting.

³⁶ <https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/toilet-training>

- 6.2. Demonstrate inclusive practice ensuring that every child is included and supported.
- 6.3. Explain the terms:
- Adult led activities
 - Child initiated activities
 - Spontaneous experiences
- 6.4. Work with colleagues to identify and plan enabling environments, activities (both indoors and outdoors), play opportunities and educational programmes (both adult led and child initiated) to support children's holistic development through a range of play, creativity, social development and learning.
- 6.5. Implement and review activities to support children's play, creativity, social development and learning and clear up after activities.
- 6.6. Describe the key stages in the observation, assessment and planning cycle and explain the value of observation for:
- the child
 - the parents/carers
 - the early years setting in planning the next steps
- 6.7. Observe children, assess, plan and record the outcomes, sharing results accurately and confidentially in line with expected statutory framework and setting's requirements.
- 6.8. Describe how to refer concerns you may have about a baby's or child's development.
- 6.9. Demonstrate how to use learning activities to support early language development.
- 6.10. Support children's early interest and development in mark making, writing, reading and being read to.
- 6.11. Support children's interest and development in mathematical learning including numbers, number patterns, counting, sorting and matching.

7. Support children with special educational needs and disabilities

- 7.1. Describe statutory guidance in relation to the care and education of children with special educational needs and disabilities.
- 7.2. Explain partnership working (including parents/carers) in relation to working effectively with children with special educational needs and disabilities.
- 7.3. Support the assessment, planning, implementation and reviewing (the graduated approach) of each baby's and young child's individual plan for their care and

participation.

- 7.4. Work in ways that value and respect the developmental needs and stages of babies and children.
- 7.5. Describe what specialist aids, resources and equipment are available for the children you work with and how to use these safely.

8. Own role and development

- 8.1. Explain own role and expected behaviours and the roles of colleagues and the team.
- 8.2. Explain how to access workplace policies and procedures and your own responsibilities and accountabilities relating to these.
- 8.3. Explain, with examples, how your behaviour can impact on babies and children and influence them.
- 8.4. Identify own responsibilities when following procedures in the work setting for:
 - reporting
 - whistleblowing
 - protecting and promoting the welfare of children
 - safeguarding
 - confidentiality
 - information sharing
 - use of technology
- 8.5. Explain the importance of reflective practice and continued professional development to improve own skills and early years practice.
- 8.6. Engage in continuing professional development and reflective practice to improve own skills, practice, and subject knowledge.
- 8.7. Use feedback, mentoring and/or supervision to identify and support areas for development, goals and career opportunities.

9. Working with others – parents, colleagues, other professionals

- 9.1. Understand the roles and responsibilities of other agencies and professionals that work with and support your setting, both statutory and non-statutory.
- 9.2. Explain the importance of the voice of the child, parental/carers engagement, the home learning environment and their roles in early learning.

- 9.3. Work co-operatively with colleagues, other professionals and agencies to meet the needs of babies and young children and enable them to progress.
- 9.4. Work alongside parents and/or carers and recognise their role in the baby's/child's health, well-being, learning and development.
- 9.5. Encourage parents and/or carers to take an active role in the baby's/child's care, play, learning and development.

Annex D: Early Years Educator (level 3) criteria: from 1 September 2014

These qualification criteria lay out the minimum requirements for what an Early Years Educator (level 3) must know, understand and be able to do to be considered qualified to support young children from 0 to 5 years in the **EYFS**. They are divided into 2 sections:

Section i: Summary of qualification content and assessment criteria

Section ii: Minimum qualification content requirements for Early Years Educator (level 3) qualifications

Section i: Summary of qualification content and assessment criteria for Early Years Educator (level 3) qualifications

A: Qualification content

All Early Years Educator (level 3) qualifications will require candidates to demonstrate an in-depth understanding of early years education and care, including that they can:

1. Support and promote children's early education and development
2. Plan and provide effective care, teaching and learning that enables children to progress and prepares them for school
3. Make accurate and productive use of assessment
4. Develop effective and informed practice
5. Safeguard and promote the health, safety and welfare of children
6. Work in partnership with the key person, colleagues, parents and carers or other professionals

Full details of required qualification content are shown in Section ii.

B: Accreditation

All Early Years Educator (level 3) qualifications must meet the national requirements set by Ofqual for valid, reliable assessment and awarding procedures. They must also be regulated by Ofqual onto the Qualifications and Credit Framework or National Qualifications Framework.

Section ii: Minimum qualification content requirements for Early Years Educator (level 3) qualifications

1. Support and promote children's early education and development

- 1.1. Understand the expected patterns of children's development from 0 to 5 years, and have an understanding of further development from age 5 to 7.
 - Children's development patterns to include:
 - cognitive
 - speech, language and communication development
 - literacy and numeracy
 - physical
 - emotional
 - social
 - neurological and brain development
- 1.2. Understand the significance of attachment and how to promote it effectively.
- 1.3. Understand a range of underpinning theories and philosophical approaches to how children learn and develop, and their influence on practice.
- 1.4. Analyse and explain how children's learning and development can be affected by their stage of development and individual circumstances.
- 1.5. Understand the importance of promoting diversity, equality and inclusion, fully reflecting cultural differences and family circumstances.
- 1.6. Understand the importance to children's holistic development of:
 - speech, language and communication
 - personal, social and emotional development
 - physical development
- 1.7. Understand systematic synthetic phonics in the teaching of reading, and a range of strategies for developing early literacy and mathematics.
- 1.8. Understand the potential effects of, and how to prepare and support children through, transitions and significant events in their lives.

Transitions and significant events include:

- moving to school
 - starting and moving through day care
 - birth of a sibling
 - moving home
 - living outside of the home
 - family breakdown
 - loss of significant people
 - moving between settings and carers
- 1.9. Understand the current early education curriculum requirements.

1.10. Promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice.

2. Plan and provide effective care, teaching and learning that enables children to progress and prepares them for school

2.1. Plan and lead activities, purposeful play opportunities and educational programmes which include the learning and development areas of current early education curriculum requirements.

To include:

- communication and language (extending vocabulary, language structure, and dialogue, for example)
- physical development
- personal, social and emotional development
- literacy
- mathematics
- understanding the world
- expressive arts and design

2.2. Ensure plans fully reflect the stage of development, individual needs and circumstances of children.

2.3. Provide learning experiences, environments and opportunities appropriate to the age, stage and needs of individual and groups of children.

2.4. Encourage children's participation, ensuring a balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities.

2.5. Engage in effective strategies to develop and extend children's learning and thinking, including sustained shared thinking.

2.6. Support and promote children's speech, language and communication development.

2.7. Support children's group learning and socialisation.

2.8. Model and promote positive behaviours expected of children.

2.9. Support children to manage their own behaviour in relation to others.

2.10. Understand when a child is in need of additional support.

2.11. Plan and provide activities to meet additional needs, working in partnership with parents and/or carers and other professionals, where appropriate.

3. Make accurate and productive use of assessment

- 3.1. Understand how to assess within the current early education curriculum framework using a range of assessment techniques.
- 3.2. Carry out and record observational assessment accurately.
- 3.3. Identify the needs, interests and stages of development of individual children.
- 3.4. Make use of formative and summative assessment, tracking children's progress to plan next steps and shape learning opportunities.
- 3.5. Discuss children's progress and plan the next stages in their learning with the key person, colleagues, parents and/or carers.

4. Develop effective and informed practice

- 4.1. Demonstrate a good command of the English language in spoken and written form.
- 4.2. Explain the importance of continued professional development to improve own skills and early years practice.
- 4.3. Engage in continuing professional development and reflective practice to improve own skills, practice, and subject knowledge (for example, in English, mathematics, music, history or modern foreign languages).

5. Safeguard and promote the health, safety and welfare of children

- 5.1. Know the legal requirements and guidance on health and safety, security, confidentiality of information, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
- 5.2. Identify and act upon own responsibilities in relation to health and safety, security, confidentiality of information, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
- 5.3. Plan and carry out physical care routines suitable to the age, stage and needs of the child.
- 5.4. Understand why health and well-being is important for babies and children and promote healthy lifestyles.
- 5.5. Understand how to respond to accidents and emergency situations.
- 5.6. Demonstrate skills and knowledge for the prevention and control of infection.

Prevention and control of infection including:

- hand washing
- food hygiene
- dealing with spillages safely
- safe disposal of waste
- using correct personal protective equipment
- knowledge of common childhood illnesses and immunisation
- exclusion periods for infectious diseases

- 5.7. Carry out risk assessment and risk management in line with policies and procedures.
- 5.8. Understand safeguarding policies and procedures, including child protection, recognise when a child is in danger or at risk of abuse, and know how to act to protect them.

Types of abuse including:

- domestic
- neglect
- physical
- emotional
- sexual abuse

- 5.9. Maintain accurate and coherent records and reports and share information, only when appropriate, to ensure the needs of all children are met.

Records and reports include:

- medication requirements
- special dietary needs
- planning
- observation and assessment,
- health, safety and security
- accidents
- daily registers

6. Work in partnership with the key person, colleagues, parents and/or carers or other professionals

- 6.1. Work co-operatively with colleagues and other professionals to meet the needs of babies and children and enable them to progress.
- 6.2. Work in partnership with parents and/or carers to help them recognise and value the significant contributions they make to the child's health, well-being, learning and development.

- 6.3. Encourage parents and/or carers to take an active role in the child's play, learning and development.

Annex E: Early Years Educator (level 3) criteria: from 1 September 2024

These qualification criteria lay out the minimum requirements for what an Early Years Educator (level 3) must know, understand and be able to do to be considered qualified to support young children from 0 to 5 years in the **EYFS**³⁷. They are divided into 2 sections:

- section i: Summary of qualification content and assessment criteria
- section ii: Minimum qualification content requirements for an Early Years Educator (level 3) qualification

Section i: Summary of qualification content and assessment criteria for Early Years Educator (level 3) qualifications

Qualification content

1. Plan and provide effective early years education that enables children to progress and prepares them for school
 - A: Child development: what to expect and when
 - B: Curriculum: what we want children to learn
 - C: Pedagogy: helping children to learn
 - D: Assessment: checking children's learning and development
2. Supporting children with special educational needs and disability (SEND)
3. Safeguarding
4. Health, wellbeing and safety
5. Work in partnership with the key person, colleagues, parents, carers or other professionals and agencies
6. Own role, practice and development

Accreditation

All Early Years Educator (level 3) qualifications must meet the national requirements set by Ofqual for valid, reliable assessment and awarding procedures. They must also be regulated by Ofqual onto the qualifications and credit framework or national qualifications framework.

Section ii: Minimum qualification content requirements for an Early Years Educator (level 3) qualification

³⁷ See: www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2

1. Plan and provide effective early years education that enables children to progress and prepares them for school

A: Child Development: what to expect and when

Educators will learn that:

- 1.1. All children and young people are entitled to an appropriate education, one that is appropriate to their needs, promotes high standards and the fulfilment of potential, and is provided in compliance with the Equality Act 2010³⁸.
- 1.2. An effective Early Years Educator knows the expected patterns of babies' and children's development from 0 to 5 years old, and has an understanding of further development from 5-7 years.
- 1.3. An effective Early Years Educator understands babies' and children's development patterns, including:
 - cognitive
 - speech, language, and communication development
 - physical
 - emotional
 - neurological and brain development.
- 1.4. Self-regulation changes according to a child's age and development. Children are in the early stages of learning to self-regulate and it is something that is developed throughout the early years. Co-regulation (the support we provide to children to help them understand, express and regulate their feelings) is a vital building block towards the ability to self-regulate.
- 1.5. There is a range of evidence-based theories, philosophical approaches and research that underpin early years development. Some approaches are not evidence-based and do not support childhood development.
- 1.6. Personal, social and emotional development (PSED) is crucial for babies and children to lead healthy and happy lives and is fundamental to their cognitive development. The important attachments that shape their social world underpin babies' and children's personal development.
- 1.7. The ways babies' and children's learning and development can be affected by their individual circumstances and significant events in their lives.
- 1.8. Different cultural backgrounds and family circumstances can impact babies and children's learning and development.
- 1.9. Physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing are important and can impact

³⁸ For guidance on the Equality Act 2010, see: www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance

on babies' and children's development.

Educators will learn how to:

- 1.10. Promote equality of opportunity in the education and care of all children in early years provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
- 1.11. Identify, help and work appropriately with others to provide children and babies with any additional support they may need.
- 1.12. Apply evidence-based theories and philosophical approaches in practice, and as appropriate, based on a clear understanding of cognitive science.
- 1.13. Support children to develop a positive sense of self and to recognise, understand and manage their emotions, including supporting a child's understanding of differing emotional reactions and what may or may not be appropriate.
- 1.14. Use co-regulation to support children when they are experiencing any range of emotions, by providing warm, responsive interactions to help support the development of self-regulation.
- 1.15. Support children to form positive attachments, including how to develop warm and responsive relationships with other children, with clearly established and age- appropriate boundaries.
- 1.16. Avoid stereotypes, for example those based on gender, culture, or race, and explain how they can cause damage (e.g. how they might encourage prejudice)
- 1.17. Prepare and support babies and children through transitions and significant events in their lives, such as:
 - moving school
 - starting and moving through and/or between early years settings
 - birth of a sibling
 - moving home
 - family breakdown
 - living outside of the home
 - loss of significant people / bereavement
 - social events that impact their lives, such as Covid-19
 - adoption and care; and including the significance of adverse childhood experiences and trauma
- 1.18. Analyse and explain how cultural background and family circumstances can impact on babies' and children's learning and development.
- 1.19. Interact with babies and children with confidence to positively impact their health and wellbeing.

- 1.20. Promote health and wellbeing in settings by implementing strategies to encourage babies and children to:
- consume healthy and balanced meals, snacks, and drinks appropriate for their age and that support good oral health^{39 40}
 - be physically active through planned and spontaneous activity throughout the day, both indoors and outdoors⁴¹
 - be aware of personal safety and the safety of others
 - develop personal hygiene practices, including oral hygiene⁴²

B: Curriculum: what we want children to learn

Educators will learn that:

- 1.21. The Early Years Foundation Stage sets out the early education curriculum requirements from 0 to 5 years. These are:
- communication and language
 - physical development
 - personal, social and emotional development
 - literacy
 - mathematics
 - understanding the world
 - expressive arts and design.
- 1.22. The content of the curriculum is planned for all children. The carefully planned and sequenced curriculum recognises that some forms of knowledge are important, useful and interesting. These forms of knowledge help prepare children for future learning and are not learned or discovered without explicit teaching.
- 1.23. Children are likely to have different levels of prior experience and knowledge. The curriculum should take account of this prior knowledge and be planned accordingly. Pedagogical approaches to teaching may need to be adapted because of this.
- 1.24. Communication and language is the cornerstone of an early years curriculum, which can provide all children with an equal chance of success.
- 1.25. The impact of an effective communication and language curriculum shows positive benefits for young children's development, including their spoken language skills,

³⁹ For example menus for early years settings, see: www.gov.uk/government/publications/example-menus-for-early-years-settings-in-england

⁴⁰ For guidance on healthy eating for young children, see: <http://foundationyears.org.uk/eat-better-start-better/>

⁴¹ For guidance on physical activity, see: www.gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-guidelines-uk-chief-medical-officers-report

⁴² For guidance on young children's oral hygiene, see: <https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/safeguarding-and-welfare/oral-health>

their understanding of language, and their early reading skills, including for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

- 1.26. Some children are at an earlier stage of language development and/or experience speech and language difficulties.
- 1.27. There are ways to communicate with all children, appropriate for their stages of development. This may include those who have speech or language differences, such as some SEND or neurodivergent children, and those for whom English is an additional language (EAL).

Educators will learn how to:

- 1.28. Plan an educational programme, reflecting the child's:
 - stage of development
 - individual interests, needs and circumstances
 - entitlement to new, important and interesting knowledge
- 1.29. Use appropriate curriculum and practice support, such as the non-statutory Development Matters guidance⁴³.
- 1.30. Choose, plan and sequence what all children need to learn.
- 1.31. Develop, support and promote babies' and children's speech, language, and communication through effective planned adult interactions, such as:
 - reading aloud stories and talking about them to build familiarity and understanding
 - exploring vocabulary in wider contexts once children know a story well through conversation and sensitive questioning, using a rich range of vocabulary and language structures
 - supporting awareness of sounds through rhymes and songs
- 1.32. Communicate with all children in ways that will be understood, including verbal and non-verbal communication, to extend their learning and development.
- 1.33. Help children to catch-up with language development through planned use of pronunciations, words, and phrases.
- 1.34. Identify delays in communication development and describe appropriate support services for babies and children.

C: Pedagogy: helping children to learn

Educators will learn that:

- 1.35. There are different pedagogical approaches and what these are, such as:

⁴³ See: www.gov.uk/government/publications/development-matters--2

- play
- direct teaching
- adult explanations
- adult modelling
- learning from peers
- guided learning

- 1.36. An effective Early Years Educator makes adaptations to their teaching (adaptive pedagogy): these changes promote learning for all.
- 1.37. The learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, is a resource that supports the implementation of the curriculum.

Educators will learn how to:

- 1.38. Select and combine the best pedagogical approaches, based on the curriculum and children's prior knowledge, considering an appropriate balance of adult and child-led activities, for example:
- role modelling and supporting children's group learning and socialisation
 - reading a story with expression and clarity
 - explaining new concepts with clarity and precision
 - using strategies for supporting early literacy and mathematics
- 1.39. Adapt teaching to suit babies' and children's different starting points, experience and knowledge, ensuring that it goes beyond their existing interests and gives them the best chance of success now and later.
- 1.40. Utilise and resource the learning environment to help babies and children progress against the planned curriculum.
- 1.41. Respond to the needs and interests of the child, to support intended learning, including:
- giving encouragement
 - introducing the child to new interests
 - applying strategies to develop and extend children's development, learning and thinking, including sustained shared thinking
- 1.42. Communicate with all children in ways that will be understood. Adapt teaching approaches as appropriate to ensure children with speech and language difficulties and those with whom English as an Additional Language (EAL) are supported to catch up.

D: Assessment: checking children's learning and development

Educators will learn that:

- 1.43. Assessment plays an important part in helping parents, carers and practitioners to

recognise children's progress, understand their needs, and to plan and provide activities and support.

- 1.44. Ongoing assessment (also known as formative assessment) is an integral part of the learning and development process. It involves practitioners knowing what children can and can't do, and then shaping teaching and learning so that children develop the broad range of skills, knowledge and attitudes they need as foundations for future progress.
- 1.45. An effective early years educator considers when and why to carry out accurate and proportionate assessment. Assessment is about noticing what children can do and what they know. It is not about lots of data and evidence. It should not involve taking lots of time away from teaching and supporting children or have a disproportionate impact on workload.
- 1.46. There are different assessment methods and techniques, which inform what we know about children's progress and the planning cycle. These should be based on age and stage of babies' and children's development. There are benefits and limitations of assessment.
- 1.47. The key stages in assessing children's progress, including the progress check at age 2, the reception baseline assessment, the early years foundation stage profile and the value these have for:
 - the baby or child
 - the parents or carers
 - curriculum adaptation
 - the early years setting and key stakeholders in planning the next steps

Educators will learn how to:

- 1.48. Carry out assessment effectively, plan and record the outcomes, and share results accurately and confidentially in line with the early years foundation stage statutory framework and setting's requirements.
- 1.49. Discuss children's progress and plan the next stages in their learning with the key person, colleagues, parents or carers.
- 1.50. Work with colleagues to identify efficient approaches to assessment.
- 1.51. Use information from assessment to adjust curriculum and plans so that any gaps in children's learning are addressed and support the child's development.

2. Supporting children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Educators will learn that:

- 2.1. All children and young people are entitled to a quality education, one that is appropriate to their needs, promotes high standards and the fulfilment of potential.
- 2.2. There are four general areas of need, and how to balance these against a detailed understanding of an individual baby or child's needs:
 - communication and interaction
 - cognition and learning
 - social, emotional and mental health
 - physical and/or sensory needs
- 2.3. There are appropriate strategies for supporting a baby or child with SEND.
- 2.4. A delay in a baby or a child's learning and development does not necessarily indicate a learning difficulty or disability that requires special educational provision. The delay may be due to a gap in a baby or child's knowledge and understanding.
- 2.5. Difficult or withdrawn behaviour does not necessarily mean that a baby or child has SEND.
- 2.6. There are specialist aids, resources, and equipment available to support babies and children with SEND.

Educators will learn how to:

- 2.7. Explain and apply the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework and SEND code of practice⁴⁴ in relation to the care and education of babies and children with SEND through a graduated approach.
- 2.8. Work effectively in partnership with others, including parents and/or carers, to promote and implement appropriate strategies for supporting the progress of babies and children with SEND.
- 2.9. Promote and encourage a working environment that values and respects the individual developmental needs and stages of babies and children with SEND.
- 2.10. Effectively carry out a child's care plan alongside parents and carers, including the initial assessment, implementation, and ongoing review.
- 2.11. Use specialist aids, resources and equipment available to support babies and children with SEND.

3. Safeguarding

Educators will learn that:

- 3.1. Safeguarding and security systems are an important part of keeping babies and children safe⁴⁵.

⁴⁴ See: www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25

⁴⁵ For statutory guidance on keeping children safe in education, see: www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2

- 3.2. An effective Early Years Educator understands their own role and responsibilities, including appropriate supervision of others, in relation to safeguarding and security, including child protection, duty of care, reporting, and confidentiality of information⁴⁶.
- 3.3. An effective Early Years Educator knows about employer, local and national safeguarding policies and procedures as set out in statutory and non-statutory guidance and the need to stay updated on changes to legislation⁴⁷.
- 3.4. An effective Early Years Educator knows the signs of harm and the different types of abuse and what these are, including but not limited to: neglect, physical, emotional, online, domestic and sexual abuse.

Educators will learn how to:

- 3.5. Recognise when a baby or child is in danger or at risk of abuse, including online, and know how to act to protect them.
- 3.6. Carry out own role and responsibilities, including providing appropriate supervision of others, in relation to safeguarding and security including child protection, duty of care, reporting and confidentiality of information and acting upon.
- 3.7. Find and stay updated on employer, local and national safeguarding policies and procedures as set out in statutory and non-statutory guidance.
- 3.8. Follow Ofsted's whistleblowing policy⁴⁸ to pass on information that, where it is reasonable to believe, shows wrongdoing or a cover up by an employer's organisation. This might be about activity that is illegal, risks others' health and safety, is about poor practice or fails to meet statutory requirements.

4. Health, wellbeing and safety

Educators will learn that:

- 4.1. There are legal requirements that must be adhered to, statutory guidance to take into account and other non-statutory guidance to consider on health and safety, security, and confidentiality of information
- 4.2. It is important to know what the signs and symptoms are which may indicate that a child is injured, unwell (including common childhood illnesses and allergies) or in need of urgent medical/dental attention.

⁴⁶ For Prevent duty guidance, see: www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance/revised-prevent-duty-guidance-for-england-and-wales

⁴⁷ For statutory guidance on safeguarding children and promoting their welfare, see: www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2

⁴⁸ See: www.gov.uk/government/publications/whistleblowing-about-childrens-social-care-services-to-ofsted/sharing-concerns-and-information-with-ofsted-about-childrens-social-care-services#:~:text=Whistleblowing%20is%20when%20an%20employee,about%20poor%20practice%20or%20leadership

- 4.3. It is important to prevent and control infection.
- 4.4. There are different stages of weaning and it is important to keep knowledge up-to-date, including knowledge of food allergies/anaphylaxis⁴⁹.
- 4.5. Mealtimes can be a high-risk environment for babies and young children in regard to choking, the signs of choking, that choking can be completely silent, therefore children should be supervised closely when eating^{50 51}.
- 4.6. It is important to ensure equipment, furniture, and materials are used safely and the dangers for not doing so.
- 4.7. It is important for babies and children to have a healthy, balanced and nutritious diet^{52 53}, to be physically active⁵⁴ and to have good oral health⁵⁵.

Educators will learn how to:

- 4.8. Identify and act upon own responsibilities in relation to health and safety, confidentiality of information and promoting the welfare of babies and children.
- 4.9. Carry out risk assessments and risk management in line with employer, local and national requirements, policies and procedures.
- 4.10. Respond and take appropriate action to accidents and emergency situations, including:
 - a baby or young child requiring urgent medical/dental attention
 - a non-medical incident or emergency
 - identifying risks and hazards
 - receiving, storing, recording, administering and the safe disposal of medicines
- 4.11. Implement effective strategies for preventing and controlling infection⁵⁶, including:
 - handwashing
 - food hygiene
 - dealing with spillages safely

⁴⁹ For guidance on weaning, see: www.nhs.uk/start-for-life/baby/weaning/

⁵⁰ For guidance on food safety in early years settings, see: [Food safety - Help for early years providers - GOV.UK \(education.gov.uk\)](http://gov.uk/education.gov.uk/food-safety-help-for-early-years-providers)

⁵¹ For guidance on choking hazards, see: <https://foundationyears.org.uk/2021/09/food-safety-advice-on-choking-hazards-in-settings/>

⁵² For example menus for early years settings, see: www.gov.uk/government/publications/example-menus-for-early-years-settings-in-england

⁵³ For guidance on healthy eating for young children, see: <http://foundationyears.org.uk/eat-better-start-better/>

⁵⁴ For guidance on physical activity, see: www.gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-guidelines-uk-chief-medical-officers-report

⁵⁵ For guidance on young children's oral hygiene, see: <https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/safeguarding-and-welfare/oral-health>

⁵⁶ For guidance on health protection in children and young people, see: www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-protection-in-schools-and-other-childcare-facilities

- safe disposal of waste
 - using correct personal protective equipment
 - knowledge of common childhood illnesses and immunisation
 - exclusion periods for infectious diseases
- 4.12. Maintain accurate and coherent records and reports and share information, when appropriate, to ensure the needs of all children are met. Records and reports include:
- medication requirements
 - special dietary needs
 - planning
 - observation and assessment
 - health, safety, and security
 - accidents and near misses
 - daily registers
- 4.13. Use equipment, furniture, and materials safely, following the manufacturer's instructions and setting's requirements, with regard for sleep safety. Assist others in the safe use of equipment, furniture, and materials.
- 4.14. Use current dietary guidance for early years and be able to explain why it is important for babies and children to have a healthy balanced diet and be physically active.
- 4.15. Share information with parents/carers about:
- the importance of healthy balanced diets,
 - looking after teeth and oral health,
 - and being physically active
- 4.16. Explain plan, and carry out respectful care routines appropriate to the development, stage, dignity and needs of the child, including:
- eating (feeding and weaning/complimentary feeding)
 - nappy changing procedures
 - potty/toilet training⁵⁷
 - care of skin, teeth, and hair
 - rest and sleep provision
- 4.17. Find and apply the most up-to-date advice on weaning provided by the NHS.
- 4.18. Prepare food that is suitable for the age and development of babies and children, referring to the most up to date guidance.
- 4.19. Supervise children effectively when eating.

5. Work in partnership with key person, colleague, parents

⁵⁷ <https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/toilet-training>

and/or carers or other professionals and agencies

Educators will learn that:

- 5.1. It is important to develop and maintain good relationships and partnerships in an early years setting to ensure the needs of all children are met.
- 5.2. Parent and/or carer engagement is consistently associated with ensuring their child's subsequent academic success.
- 5.3. Effective engagement with parents and/or carers is important and that working effectively with parents and/or carers may be challenging and is likely to require sustained effort and support.
- 5.4. Setting leaders need to collaborate and work with colleagues and other relevant professionals within and beyond their setting to ensure babies and children progress well in their learning.
- 5.5. It is important to be an advocate for the child's learning and development, parental and/or carer engagement, the home learning environment, and their roles in early learning.
- 5.6. There are other agencies and professionals that work with and support early years settings and children, both statutory and non-statutory, including local authorities and other relevant agencies and bodies. These all have different roles and responsibilities.
- 5.7. Ofsted is responsible for the regulation and inspection of early years provision. It carries out inspections and reports on the quality and standards of provision^{58 59}.

Educators will learn how to:

- 5.8. Work co-operatively and communicate effectively with key persons, colleagues, other professionals, and agencies to meet the needs of babies and children and enable them to progress.
- 5.9. Work in partnership with parents and/or carers to help them recognise and value the significant contributions they make to the child's health, wellbeing^{60 61}, and learning and development.
- 5.10. Encourage parents and/or carers to take an active role in their baby's/child's care, play, and learning and development.

⁵⁸ For guidance on inspection of safeguarding in early years settings, see: [Inspecting safeguarding in early years, education and skills settings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-safeguarding-in-early-years-education-and-skills-settings)

⁵⁹ For guidance on Ofsted inspections in EY settings, see: www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-eif-inspections-and-the-eyfs

⁶⁰ For statutory guidance on safeguarding children and promoting their welfare, see: www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2

⁶¹ For statutory guidance on keeping children safe in education, see: www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2

- 5.11. Explain the roles and responsibilities of other agencies and professionals that work with and support the setting and children, both statutory and non-statutory, and be familiar with statutory and non-statutory guidance to support this.
- 5.12. Make additional provisions to support babies' and children's education and development where they lack this support from parents and/or carers.
- 5.13. Work effectively and confidently with Ofsted including having confidence in using Ofsted's Early Years Inspection framework⁶².

6. Own role, practice and development

Educators will learn that:

- 6.1. There are expected behaviours in a professional and early years setting.
- 6.2. A Level 3 Early Years Educator may be expected to supervise staff or lead a setting.
- 6.3. Supervision is an opportunity for staff to discuss any issues, identify solutions to address issues as they arise and receive coaching to improve their personal effectiveness. Effective supervision provides support, coaching and training for the practitioner and promotes the interests of babies and children.
- 6.4. There are procedures that must be adhered to in the work setting and the importance of these for:
 - reporting
 - whistleblowing
 - protecting and promoting the welfare of children
 - safeguarding
 - confidentiality
 - information sharing
 - use of technology
 - referring development concerns
 - protecting practitioners, for example media and online presence
 - staff health and safety, including mental health and wellbeing support
- 6.5. Engaging in reflective practice and evidence-based, continuous professional development can improve own skills, practice, and subject knowledge, increase career opportunities and help children's academic outcomes, especially in areas of disadvantage.
- 6.6. Respecting and promoting diversity and inclusion, cultural differences and family circumstances is an important part of your role.

Educators will learn how to:

⁶² See: www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework

- 6.7. Use and model good communication skills, including a good command of the English language in spoken and written form - for example, when working with children, emails, in meetings and discussions.
- 6.8. Foster a culture of mutual support, teamwork and continuous improvement that encourages confidential discussion of sensitive issues, through effective supervision at all stages of a career.
- 6.9. Follow procedures in the work setting, including where appropriate updating and developing policies and procedures, for:
 - reporting
 - whistleblowing
 - protecting and promoting the welfare of children
 - safeguarding
 - confidentiality
 - information sharing
 - use of technology
 - referring development concerns
 - protecting practitioners, for example media and online presence
 - staff health and safety, including mental health and wellbeing support
- 6.10. Explain own role, responsibilities and expected behaviours, and the roles of colleagues in the setting and team.
- 6.11. Seek out feedback from others to identify and support career development goals, for example through mentoring and/or supervised observations.
- 6.12. Explain how our own and others' behaviour can impact on babies and children and the importance of role-modelling positive behaviours.
- 6.13. Be confident in supporting or challenging the practice of colleagues.



Department
for Education

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