

# BEST PRACTICE AND ACTIVITY IDEAS FOR PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

## Introduction

The suggestions for this area of learning should be read alongside the following:

- **Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage** (DfE 2017)
- **Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage** (Early Education 2012)
- **Teaching and Play in the Early Years - a balancing act?** (Ofsted 2015)

The ideas are intended to support learning and development for children in receipt of funding for the Early Years Free Entitlement for three and four year olds.

## How children learn: the Characteristics of Effective Learning

Teaching and learning in the EYFS must be informed by these characteristics:

**playing and exploring** - children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'

**active learning** - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements

**creating and thinking critically** - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things

The suggested ideas should be integrated into a cycle of observation, assessment and planning where children's needs and interests are central to planning and provision.

Please note that the Early Learning Goals define the level of progress expected for children at the end of the EYFS, at the end of the Reception year.



Physical Development is one of the prime areas of the EYFS. The prime areas begin to develop quickly in response to relationships and experiences, and run through and support learning in all other areas. The prime areas continue to be fundamental throughout the EYFS.

Physical Development involves providing opportunities for young children to be active and interactive; and to develop their co-ordination, control and movement. Children must also be helped to understand the importance of physical activity and to make healthy choices in relation to food.

- Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework 2012

Being physical underpins mental health through the joy of movement and through building self-confidence and self-esteem. Movement actually makes you feel good through the production of mood-enhancing chemicals in the brain and the feeling of 'life in every limb'. It develops physical health through developing muscles, tendons, bones, nerve connections, co-ordination and the vast array of movement skills needed for life. More, it supports personal and social health through being able to join in the things other children do, forming relationships through moving and acting together.

- Jan White, Early Years Trainer



Physical Development is divided into two aspects

1. Moving and handling
2. Health and self-care

## **1. Early Learning Goals for Moving and handling**

Children show good control and co-ordination in large and small movements.

They move confidently in a range of ways, safely negotiating space.

They handle equipment and tools effectively, including pencils for writing.

### **Positive Relationships: The Role of the Adult**

- reflect on what you provide: check you are enabling all children to be physically active often enough to support their health and learning
- create movement-rich environments full of suitable stimuli and challenge
- provide the necessary support and accessibility for children with disabilities so that they can participate in physical activities
- join in with the children, encourage the less confident children to 'have a go' and be a positive role model
- provide encouragement and support for children to extend their abilities at their own pace
- value and enjoy young children's pleasure in movement, action and in mastering new skills
- model activities and teach specific skills e.g. throwing and catching
- give children time and space to try things out. Encourage children to persevere to improve their skill level
- talk with children about why they need to take care when moving freely
- introduce 'movement language' such as skip, gallop, slide, slither
- talk with parents about why physical activity is important, about what you provide and how you develop gross and fine motor skills
- ensure children wear the right clothing for physical activity
- provide bean bags, small balls, ribbon sticks, scarves to support the development of arm muscles
- teach children how to use tools safely, such as scissors, mark making equipment, malleable tools

### Possible activities

- play a range of music to inspire movement
- provide scarves and ribbons to move / dance with
- encourage children to move in response to balloons and bubbles
- play traditional ring games, such as the Hokey Cokey and Here we go round the Mulberry Bush
- play other traditional games such as Follow my leader, What's the time Mr Wolf, Hop Little Bunnies
- play parachute and lycra games
- say action rhymes
- set up obstacle courses and add signs and arrows to guide children round
- use stories for movement such as 'We're going on a Bear Hunt' 'The Three Little Pigs' 'The Enormous Turnip' 'The Billy Goat's Gruff'
- use hoops or buckets as targets for balls or bean bags. Provide resources to score
- provide malleable activities with clay, play dough, gloop, with and without tools.
- provide activities picking up pasta, rice, beads with tweezers or plastic pipettes
- make tracks with cars/ fingers/ brushes in shaving foam, paint



- say finger rhymes to encourage dexterity
- provide cooking activities, with equipment requiring manipulative skills
- provide large sheets of paper on the floor. Play lively music and invite the children to mark make using a variety of tools

### The Learning Environment

The learning environment includes indoor and outdoor provision. Child initiated play will be enhanced by adult support **when appropriate** to support and extend children's learning.

Provide

- a range of surfaces and levels to explore
- large 'clutter-free' areas for children to move freely in. The Jabadao organisation has useful, practical guidance for indoor developmental movement

areas

- large play equipment, e.g. boxes, ladders, A-frames, climbing frames, milk crates, tyres
- resources for children to create pathways, e.g. road layouts,
- a CD player with scarves, ribbons, streamers for children to move spontaneously to music
- a wide range of mark making equipment /tools



- mark making 'tool boxes' for children to transport according to their interests
- small games equipment for throwing, catching, rolling, including bean bags, bats, balls, cones, hoops
- equipment and tools for cooking, for painting, for mark making, for clay and for playdough, including left handed tools
- small world sets
- construction kits
- a range of puzzles and manipulative toys
- sand and water equipment

- threading, lacing and weaving resources
- plastic jars, bottles and containers with lids to screw on
- large scale painting activities, water painting, activities in builders trays, large sheets of paper and brushes



## **2. Early Learning Goal for Health and self - care**

Children know the importance for good health of physical exercise, and a healthy diet, and talk about ways to keep healthy and safe. They manage their own basic hygiene and personal needs successfully, including dressing and going to the toilet independently.

### **Positive Relationships: The Role of the Adult**

- encourage and support children to manage their personal needs
- encourage children to select and return resources independently and provide an environment that supports this e.g. clear labelling with pictures and text, resources stored at child height
- talk with children about their bodies and the changes that take place, how they feel hot and their heart beats faster when exercising, how they feel when they are hungry and thirsty
- provide healthy snacks and drinks (check the internet for latest guidance)



- encourage children to pour their own drinks and serve their own food
- talk to parents about healthy foods
- make a cosy place with soft cushions and lighting where children can rest if they need to
- organise lively outdoor games so that children can be active

#### **Possible activities**

- plan cooking activities with healthy recipes
- send home recipe cards of the children's favourite healthy recipes so parents can make at home
- make a recipe book of the above, ask parents for contributions
- grow vegetables in your outside area
- invite health care professionals such as a dentist to talk with children
- make a book with the children 'how to look after myself'
- share books about keeping healthy

#### **The Learning Environment**

##### **Provide**

- visual prompts of activities such as hand washing / cleaning teeth/ flushing toilets help to reinforce understanding.
- access to fresh drinking water at all times
- potties, trainer seats and steps to offer children choices according to their individual toileting needs
- fiction and non-fiction texts that promote healthy eating and self-care
- a cosy corner where children can relax, rest
- suitable clothing so that children can access outdoors in all weathers e.g. sun hats, waterproofs, wellies