Best Practice and Activity Ideas for the EYFS
Understanding the World

The suggestions for this area of learning should be read alongside the following:
- Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE 2014)
- 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.

Understanding the World is one of the specific areas of learning in the EYFS. The specific areas include essential skills and knowledge. They grow out of the prime areas and provide important contexts for learning.

Understanding the World
Understanding the World involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment.
- EYFS 2012

This area of learning is divided into the following three aspects:
1. People and communities
2. The world
3. Technology

1. **Early Learning Goals for People and Communities**

Children:

- talk about past and present events in their own lives and in the lives of family members
- know that other children don't always enjoy the same things, and are sensitive to this
- know about similarities and differences between themselves and others, and among families, communities and traditions

Positive Relationships : The Role of the Adult

To support children's learning, adults should:

- create a welcoming ethos by pronouncing children's names accurately and develop an understanding of the languages spoken and cultural and religious backgrounds of the families at the setting
- encourage children to talk about their own home and community life
- consider the needs of children learning English as an additional language and opportunities provided to express themselves in their home language
- encourage children to develop positive relationships with community members
- provide opportunities for children to share their feelings and talk about why they respond to experiences in particular ways
- strengthen the positive awareness children have of their own cultures and faiths, and those of others in their community, by sharing and celebrating a range of practices and special events

Possible Activities

- ask parents and children to bring in photographs of their family, friends and pets. Create a photo wall for children and adults to talk about
- introduce a 'going home teddy' or other toy. Children are invited to use this as a prompt to talk about everyday experiences and celebrations that happen as part of family life
- find out about children's favourite songs/rhymes they sing at home and share these at the setting
- introduce a range of artefacts from homes to children to handle

- cook and eat different foods, always being sensitive to allergies, cultural and religious requirements
- share favourite recipes from home and collate a book of these
- visit different parts of the local community. Display images of the journey and of the diverse range of people who work within it eg. At the the local market or local place of worship
- share stories that reflect the diversity of children's experience and which avoid negative stereotypes
- use everyday situations to talk about fairness and unfairness and support children's understanding of difference and empathy by using props eg. using persona dolls
- share stories and books showing diverse non-stereotyped and inclusive images, such as families with same sex parents, black heroes, female fire fighters, male nurses
- introduce pattern-making activities using cultural resources as a stimulus, for example, looking at patterns on buildings, artefacts and fabrics from around the world

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.

- display images of children and adults with different needs, views, cultures and beliefs throughout the learning environment, for example photos, posters, puzzles, books, small world figures, dolls, role play equipment
- make a display with the children, showing all the people who make up the community of the setting
- include modern photographs of parts of the world that are commonly stereotyped and misrepresented
- include a variety of real resources reflecting diversity in role–play areas
- display a variety of meaningful languages and scripts in the environment

2. Early Learning Goals for The World

Children
- know about similarities and differences in relation to places, objects, materials and living things
- talk about the features of their own immediate environment and how environments might vary from one another
- make observations of animals plants and explain why some things occur, and talk about changes

Positive Relationships: The Role of the Adult
To support children's learning, adults should
- role-model curiosity and ask open-ended questions such as, "how can we…? "I don't know, what do you think…?"Listen to and observe children's responses
- provide plenty of opportunities to explore the world outdoors.
- talk to children about what they are experiencing. Introduce new vocabulary eg the names of plants, mini beasts and appropriate words such as 'temple', or 'synagogue'
- encourage children to express opinions on the natural and built environments and give opportunities to hear different points of view

Possible Activities
- make use of the outdoor areas to give opportunities for investigations of the natural world for example, use planters for herbs and flowers which will attract wildlife and mini beasts
- tell stories about places and journeys
- encourage children to notice and discuss patterns around them e.g. rubbings from tree trunks, paving, fences, bricks
- role play experiences and activities: visits to the local area, e.g. the bakers, post office. Before setting up the role play area, children to be involved in setting it up by collecting/making resources
- local environment walks: use photographs of post box, zebra crossing, telephone box, etc. for children to find these on the walk; make simple maps after the walk; reconstruct with small world resources
- support children with sensory impairments by providing supplementary experience and information to enhance their learning

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
- clearly defined learning areas
- well labelled areas and resources
- magnifiers and photographs to observe things closely
- planting and digging areas for children to take care of and explore
- role play areas linked to a sense of place, for example, the local shop
- small world resources
- construction play where children can create landscapes
- resources with play mats/builders trays for children to create their own environments and simple maps
- small world equipment, for example, dolls house
- information and story books and poems which make links to different environment
- posters and photographs
- simple maps, globe, atlas
- weather charts

The Early Learning Goals for Technology

- Children recognise that a range of technology is used in places such as homes and schools
- They select and use technology for particular purposes

Positive Relationships: The Role of the Adult
To support children's learning, adults should
- model using ICT by following up questions and finding out new information for example; support children to coordinate their actions and encourage them to speculate when using a remote control
- plan for equal access by ensuring that all children use a range of ICT and that children with additional needs are provided with appropriate resources
- support and extend the skills children develop by encouraging them to repeat and consolidate their ideas through using a range of equipment
- plan for children to use a range of technology that they are likely to encounter every day such as simple cooking equipment

Possible activities

- Sound detective game: match sounds to objects, for example, doorbell, washing machine, cooker timer, telephone, alarm clock and printer. Does the sound tell you anything? What does the technology help us to do?
- Use a camera to record what the weather is like in a particular week or take photographs of the local environment
- Support children when using the photocopier to copy their work or mark making
- When walking in the local environment, ask children to help press the buttons at crossings, or speak into the intercom to tell someone you have come back. Look for technology in the environment eg; traffic lights, train stations
- Use a range of wind-up and battery operated torches and glow balls to explore with inside a darkened tent
- Create areas for children to use karaoke machines and headphones for listening to stories and songs

The Learning Environment
Provide

- ICT in the role play area, which may include toy, homemade or safely modified real artefacts such as a TV, washing machine, dishwasher, microwave, alarm clock, cash register with scanner, electronic scales, camera, phone, hair dryer.
- portable electronic devices such as tablets and cameras. Consider also a computer area with a printer and facility to display children's work
- a listening area with CD and headphones
- programmable toys and sufficient space to use them in
- a sound area, which may include electronic musical instruments
- safe battery-operated equipment to play with such as torches and glow balls
- programmable toys such as BeeBots

Useful links

www.brighton-hove.gov.uk Faith and Belief in Educational Settings Guidance by the city council. This provides background information on a range of faith and beliefs as well as how best to support children, young people and families from faith backgrounds. It has been designed for use within a school setting but can easily be used in early years settings.

www.kidsinbrighton.co.uk a resource of activities indoors and outdoors in venues across Brighton and Hove

www.mosaicbrighton.org.uk Black and Mixed Parentage family group listing events and latest news

www.amazebrighton.org.uk Advice and support to parents of children with special needs and disabilities. Empowers parents to help their children live fully socially included lives

www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies Interactive fun ideas and games to share at home and in the community with young children