

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**. In order to reach their full potential, children need a stimulating environment which inspires them to engage in meaningful challenges and which provides motivating opportunities to investigate and take risks.

Each area of learning and development must be implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activity. **Play** is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, to think about problems, and relate to others. Practitioners should use assessment information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience for all children, guiding their development through warm, positive interaction.

Children must have access to a **rich learning environment** where opportunities and conditions allow them to **flourish** in all aspects of their development. The learning environment should provide balance across the areas of learning. Integral to this is an ethos which respects each child as an individual and values children's efforts, interests and purposes as instrumental to successful learning.

Reference:

2014 EYFS Statutory Framework

2015 EYFS Profile Handbook

Time to talk: look out for opportunities to talk about past and present events as part of the continuous provision (not just at circle time).



Make effective use of the local neighbourhood. Invite **visitors** in from the **local community**, and go out on trips to visit local places of interest.

Encourage children to talk about what's happening in their lives through a stimulating environment, for example, interesting small world play.

Sensitively explore different **family traditions** on a child's **birthday** – what is the same and what is different?

Use IT as a tool to support children's learning, e.g. the CBeebies website 'Let's Celebrate' resources www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/shows/lets-celebrate

Support children to understand that being different is okay:

- Look at bedtime routines - what is the same and what is different?
- Taste a variety of fruits / vegetables and discuss which we like best
- What does your front door look like? Take a class camera home and use the photos to support conversation or as inspiration for painting.

Involve parents in making a class book 'This is me on my birthday'.

Provision opportunities to support People and Communities

What were you like as a baby? Bring in **baby photos**—invite **younger siblings** in to observe and talk about change. Make a class book "when I was a baby I crawled... now I can walk."

Use **real artefacts** in play based contexts to explore and experience communities and traditions which are different to their own.

Families have much to offer. Have you considered:

- inviting family members to share their cultures, e.g. cooking, special clothes;
- asking parents to talk about their job;
- welcoming grandparents to share their favourite toys when they were younger.

Use snack time to give children opportunity to taste foods from other cultures around the world.

"It takes a village to raise a child"
African proverb

Take a look at the Celebrating Cultural and Linguistic Toolkit www.leics.gov.uk/celebrating-cultural-diversity-toolkit

Use a travelling teddy to help children talk about events in their own lives.

Observing **differences** between children (hair colour, eye colour, glasses). Try creating a height chart outdoors.

Around the world: find out about children's experience of going to school in different countries. What do they wear? How do they get to school? What do they learn? What do they eat? What does the classroom look like?

Life cycles can provide meaningful opportunities to notice and talk about changes, bringing learning to life. Have you thought about: caterpillars, frogspawn, eggs...

Gardeners World: maintaining an outdoor garden can support children to notice seasonal changes. Give children responsibility for taking care of the plot. Try growing flowers, vegetables, trees...



Ask parents to bring **pets** into the classroom. Use this as an opportunity to discuss similarities / differences in what they need.

Adults **modelling vocabulary** is a crucial aspect. Commentary is a strategy which will enrich learning experiences www.leics.gov.uk/ecat

"The best classroom and the richest cupboard are roofed only by the sky"
Margaret McMillan

Set up a discovery zone for children to explore scientific concepts e.g. floating / sinking in water / oil.

Provision opportunities to support The World

Meaningful intervention from adults can extend children's critical thinking, "what happens if...?" Use sustained shared thinking techniques to support children to investigate.



Be nature detectives: explore with magnifying glasses and capture with ICT: icicles, spiders webs in the morning dew, raindrops in puddles, frosty leaves...

Grow a variety of plants and taste the results: cress, tomatoes, beans, potatoes...

Take an Autumn walk to notice the difference ever-green and deciduous trees. Maximise opportunities to discuss the difference between different sizes and shapes of leaves. Repeat the walk in Spring and support children to notice the differences.

Smell and touch: herb gardens provide a rich multi-sensory experience.



In all seasons: take time to explore the wonder of nature—frosty mornings, blustery days, springtime buds...

In this area of learning, children are developing the crucial knowledge, skills and understanding that help them to make sense of the world.

Ask families to send in holiday **postcards** as a visual spring board to encourage children to talk about their experiences.



Find out about places which are special to each family e.g. Grandma lives in Australia, big brother lives at the beach. Mark these on a map for each child, create a class map.

Don't be too busy: ensure there is time and space during the school day for daily conversations.

Links in learning

The ability to communicate effectively threads throughout Understanding the World. Children also need to be able to apply a secure level of understanding.

Active listening to children ensures they know they are valued and means they are more likely to open up.

Sensitivity to the uniqueness of each family will support engagement and encourage children to share their experiences.

The **Core British values** are embedded in effective EYFS practice:

- Democracy
- The rule of law
- Individual liberty
- Mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs

Other areas to consider



Make sure your eyes and ears are open to gathering the evidence.

Do you get useful information from **home**?

- Children's out of school clubs (Beavers, swimming...)
- Family events
- Cultural celebrations

Gather information about dates which are special to each family using a blank calendar. This will give insight into cultures and what each family celebrates.

Keep a **class diary** to promote talk about events throughout the year.

Reflect on the range of resources offered which support UW. Consider: jigsaws, books (fiction / non-fiction), small world, puppets, dressing up, creative...

Use **open ended questions** to support children's **creativity and critical thinking**.

Children deepen their understanding by playing, talking, observing, planning, questioning, experimenting, testing, repeating, reflecting and responding to adults and to each other.

Advice and support available online at:

www.leics.gov.uk/earlylearning

0 - 5 Learning Service, Leicestershire County Council