



Cumberland
Council

What does PE look like in Early Years?

Guidance for subject leaders

It is important that subject leaders understand what their specialist subject looks like in early years; how key knowledge and skills are taught and what progression through these may look like. There is no requirement for schools to adopt a particular teaching style or method and the school curriculum as a whole, needs to be considered, so it meets the needs of your children, families and community. The Early Learning Goals should not be seen as your curriculum as this is very narrow and meant merely as a checkpoint for the end of the reception year. The EYFS has seven areas of learning, rather than the individual subjects used within the National Curriculum but this document will highlight the main links between the two. Communication and Language development is key and is a 'golden thread' which runs through and underpins all other areas of learning, as does Personal, Social and Emotional Development. The statutory framework is supported by two non-statutory documents which schools can choose to use ('Development Matters' and 'Birth to 5 Matters'). The table below shows where learning in early years links to the NC programme of study in PE. These statements are basics upon which to build your full curriculum.

| Development Matters | | Birth to 5 Matters | |
|--|---|--------------------|---|
| Birth to Three - Babies and young toddlers will be learning to: | <p>Personal, Social and Emotional Development Express preferences and decisions. They also try new things and start establishing their autonomy. Use that engagement to achieve a goal.</p> <p>Physical Development Lift their head while lying on their front. Push their chest up with straight arms. Roll over: from front to back, then back to front. Enjoy moving when outdoors and inside. Sit without support. Begin to crawl in different ways and directions. Pull themselves upright and bouncing in preparation for walking. Gradually gain control of their whole body through continual practice of large movements, such as waving, kicking, rolling, crawling and walking. Fit themselves into spaces, like tunnels, dens and large boxes, and move around in them.</p> | Range 1 | <p>Personal, Social and Emotional Development Learns about their physical self through exploratory play with their hands and feet and movement.</p> <p>Physical Development Gradually develops ability to hold up own head. Makes movements with arms and legs which gradually become more controlled - moves hands together/ legs together. Follows and tracks a sound or moving object, moving head and eyes. When lying on back, plays with hands and grasps feet, alternating mouthing hands/feet with focusing gaze on them, and vocalising. Rolls over from back to side, gradually spending longer on side waving upper leg before returning to back. Develops roll from back right through to front, gradually becoming happy to spend longer on tummy as able to lift head for longer.</p> |

| Development Matters | | Birth to 5 Matters | |
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| | <p>Enjoy starting to kick, throw and catch balls. Build independently with a range of appropriate resources.</p> <p>Begin to walk independently – choosing appropriate props to support at first.</p> <p>Walk, run, jump and climb – and start to use the stairs independently.</p> <p>Spin, roll and independently use ropes and swings (for example, tyre swings).</p> <p>Sit on a push-along wheeled toy, use a scooter or ride a tricycle.</p> <p>Use large and small motor skills to do things independently, for example manage buttons and zips, and pour drinks.</p> <p>Show an increasing desire to be independent, such as wanting to feed themselves and dress or undress.</p> | | <p>When lying on tummy becomes able to lift first head and then chest, supporting self with forearms and then straight arms.</p> <p>Starts to creep (belly crawl commando-style) from prone (on tummy) position on the floor, often moving backwards before going forwards.</p> |
| | | Range 2 | <p>Personal, Social and Emotional Development</p> <p>Shows growing self-confidence through playing freely and with involvement.</p> <p>Physical Development</p> <p>Belly crawling moves into crawling up on hands and knees. Becomes adept at changing position from crawling to sitting in order to stop, pick up, handle and investigate objects.</p> <p>Sits unsupported on the floor, leaving hands free to manipulate objects with both hands.</p> <p>Pulls to standing from crawling, holding on to furniture or person for support.</p> <p>Walks around furniture lifting one foot and stepping sideways (cruising).</p> <p>Starts walking independently on firm surfaces and later on uneven surfaces.</p> <p>Pulls, lifts and carries objects, moving them around and placing with intent.</p> <p>Climbs inside, underneath, into corners and between objects.</p> <p>Shows rapid changes in energy levels, from highly active to a sudden need for adult support in order to restore.</p> |

| Development Matters | | Birth to 5 Matters | |
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| 3 and 4 year olds will be learning to: | <p>Personal, Social and Emotional Development</p> <p>Select and use activities and resources, with help when needed. This helps them to achieve a goal they have chosen or one which is suggested to them.</p> <p>Increasingly follow rules, understanding why they are important.</p> <p>Do not always need an adult to remind them of a rule.</p> <p>Physical Development</p> <p>Continue to develop their movement, balancing, riding (scooters, trikes and bikes) and ball skills.</p> <p>Go up steps and stairs, or climb up apparatus, using alternate feet.</p> <p>Skip, hop, stand on one leg and hold a pose for a game like musical statues.</p> <p>Use large-muscle movements to wave flags and streamers, paint and make marks.</p> <p>Start taking part in some group activities which they make up for themselves, or in teams.</p> <p>Are increasingly able to use and remember sequences and patterns of music that are related to music and rhythm.</p> <p>Match their developing physical skills to tasks and activities in the setting. For example, they decide whether to crawl, walk or run across a plank, depending on its length and width.</p> <p>Choose the right resources to carry out their own plan. For example, choosing a spade to enlarge a small hole they dug with a trowel.</p> | Range 3 | <p>Personal, Social and Emotional Development</p> <p>Experiments with what their bodies can do through setting themselves physical challenges, i.e. pulling a large truck upstairs.</p> <p>Will often watch, follow and imitate each other in their play and will experiment with influencing others, co-operating together and also resisting coercion in their interactions.</p> <p>Physical Development</p> <p>Develops security in walking upright walking using feet alternately and can also run short distances.</p> <p>Walks upstairs facing forwards holding rail or hand of adult, with both feet onto a single step at a time.</p> <p>Changes position from standing to squatting and sitting with little effort.</p> <p>Participates in finger and action rhymes, songs and games, imitating the movements and anticipating actions.</p> <p>Hands start to operate independently during a task that uses both, with each hand doing something different at the same time (e.g. holding a block in one hand and steadying the other block with the other hand).</p> <p>Shows interest, dances and sings to music rhymes and songs, imitating movements of others.</p> <p>Can walk considerable distance with purpose, stopping, starting and changing direction.</p> <p>Highly active in short bursts, with frequent and sudden need for rest or withdrawal.</p> |

| Development Matters | | Birth to 5 Matters | |
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| | <p>Collaborate with others to manage large items, such as moving a long plank safely, carrying large hollow blocks.</p> <p>Show a preference for a dominant hand.</p> <p>Be increasingly independent as they get dressed and undressed. For example, putting coats on and doing up zips.</p> <p>Expressive Arts and Design</p> <p>Respond to what they have heard, expressing their thoughts and feelings.</p> | | <p>Intentionally makes sounds with objects and actively responds to music and singing with whole-body dancing.</p> <p>Expressive arts and Design</p> <p>Expresses self through physical actions and sound.</p> |
| Children in reception will be learning to: | <p>Expressive arts and design</p> <p>Listen attentively, move to and talk about music, expressing their feelings and responses.</p> <p>Sing in a group or on their own, increasingly matching the pitch and following the melody.</p> <p>Explore and engage in music making and dance, performing solo or in groups.</p> <p>Communication and language</p> <p>Listen carefully to rhymes and songs, paying attention to how they sound.</p> <p>Learn rhymes, poems and songs.</p> | Range 4 | <p>Personal, Social and Emotional Development</p> <p>Seeks out others to share experiences with and may choose to play with a familiar friend or a child who has similar interest.</p> <p>Physical Development</p> <p>Sits up from lying, stands up from sitting and squats with steadiness to rest or play with object on the ground, and rises to feet without using hands.</p> <p>Sits comfortably on a chair with both feet on the ground and a straight back.</p> <p>Runs safely on whole foot.</p> <p>Moves in response to music or rhythms heard played on instruments such as drums or shakers.</p> <p>Jumps up into the air with both feet leaving the floor and can jump forward a small distance.</p> <p>Begins to walk, run and climb on different levels and surfaces.</p> |

| Development Matters | | Birth to 5 Matters | |
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| | | | <p>Begins to understand and choose different ways of moving.</p> <p>Kicks a stationary ball with either foot throws a ball with increasing force and accuracy and starts to catch a large ball by using two hands and their chest to trap it.</p> <p>Climbs up and down stairs by placing both feet on each step while holding a handrail for support.</p> <p>Uses wheeled toys with increasing skill such as pedalling, balancing, holding handlebars and sitting astride.</p> <p>May be beginning to show preference for dominant hand. and /or leg/foot.</p> <p>Expressive arts and Design</p> <p>Creates rhythmic sounds and movements.</p> |
| Children in reception will be learning to: | <p>Personal, Social and Emotional Development</p> <p>Manage their own needs.</p> <p>Physical Development</p> <p>Revise and refine the fundamental movement skills they have already acquired:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rolling • Running • Crawling • Hopping • Walking • Skipping • Jumping • Climbing | Range 5 | <p>Personal, Social and Emotional Development</p> <p>Enjoys playing alone, alongside and with others, inviting others to play and attempting to join others' play.</p> <p>Physical Development</p> <p>Can tell adults when hungry, full up or tired or when they want to rest, sleep or play.</p> <p>Observes and can describe in words or actions the effects of physical activity on their bodies.</p> <p>Very energetic in short bursts and needs time for rest and calm with around 180 minutes a day of exercise including moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity, spread throughout the day.</p> |

| Development Matters | | Birth to 5 Matters | |
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| | <p>Progress towards a more fluent style of moving, with developing control and grace.</p> <p>Develop overall body-strength, balance, coordination and agility needed to engage successfully with future physical education sessions and other physical disciplines, including dance, gymnastics, sport and swimming.</p> <p>Use their core muscle strength to achieve a good posture when sitting at a table or sitting on the floor.</p> <p>Combine different movements with ease and fluency.</p> <p>Confidently and safely use a range of large and small apparatus indoors and outdoors, alone and in a group.</p> <p>Develop overall body strength, balance, coordination and agility.</p> <p>Further develop and refine a range of ball skills including: throwing, catching, kicking, passing, batting, and aiming.</p> <p>Develop confidence, competence, precision and accuracy when engaging in activities that involve a ball.</p> <p>Know and talk about the different factors that support overall health and wellbeing: regular physical activity.</p> <p>Expressive Arts and Design</p> <p>Explore, use and refine a variety of artistic effects to express their ideas and feelings.</p> <p>Return to and build on their previous learning, refining ideas and developing their ability to represent them.</p> | | <p>Expressive arts and Design</p> <p>Uses movement and sounds to express experiences, expertise, ideas and feelings Experiments and creates movement in response to music, stories and ideas.</p> |
| | Range 6 | <p>Personal, Social and Emotional Development</p> <p>Can describe their competencies, what they can do well and are getting better at; describing themselves in positive but realistic terms.</p> <p>Has a clear idea about what they want to do in their play and how they want to go about it.</p> <p>Shows confidence in choosing resources and perseverance in carrying out a chosen activity.</p> <p>Physical Development</p> <p>Chooses to move in a range of ways, moving freely and with confidence making changes to body shape, position and pace of movement such as slithering, shuffling, rolling, crawling, walking, running, jumping, skipping, sliding and hopping.</p> <p>Experiments with different ways of moving, testing out ideas and adapting movements to reduce risk.</p> <p>Jumps off an object and lands appropriately using hands, arms and body to stabilise and balance.</p> <p>Jumps off an object and lands appropriately.</p> <p>Negotiates space successfully when playing racing and chasing games with other children, adjusting speed or changing direction to avoid obstacles.</p> <p>Travels with confidence and skill around, under, over and through balancing and climbing equipment.</p> <p>Shows increasing control over an object in pushing, patting, throwing, catching or kicking it.</p> | |

| Development Matters | Birth to 5 Matters |
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| <p>Create collaboratively, sharing ideas, resources and skills.</p> <p>Listen attentively, move to and talk about music, expressing their feelings and responses.</p> <p>Watch and talk about dance and performance art, expressing their feelings and responses.</p> <p>Explore and engage in music making and dance, performing solo or in groups.</p> | <p>Shows a preference for a dominant hand.</p> <p>Shows some understanding that good practices with regard to exercise, eating, drinking water, sleeping and hygiene can contribute to good health.</p> <p>Shows understanding of the need for safety when tackling new challenges, and considers and manages some risks by taking independent action or by giving a verbal warning to others.</p> <p>Eats a healthy range of foodstuffs and understands need for variety in food.</p> <p>Shows understanding of how to transport and store equipment safely.</p> <p>Practices some appropriate safety measures without direct supervision, considering both benefits and risk of a physical experience.</p> <p>Can initiate and describe playful actions or movements for other children to mirror and follow.</p> <p>Has established a consistent, daily pattern in relation to eating, toileting and sleeping routines and can explain why this is important.</p> <p>Expressive arts and Design</p> <p>Initiates new combinations of movements and gestures in order to express and respond to feelings, ideas and experiences.</p> <p>Chooses particular movements for their own imaginative purposes.</p> |

Early Learning Goal

Personal, Social and Emotional Development: Managing Self

Be confident to try new activities and show independence, resilience and perseverance in the face of a challenge.

Explain the reasons for rules, know right from wrong and try to behave accordingly.

Manage their own basic hygiene and personal needs, including dressing.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development: Building Relationships

Work and play cooperatively and take turns with others.

Physical Development: Gross Motor Skills

Negotiate space and obstacles safely, with consideration for themselves and others.

Demonstrate strength, balance and coordination when playing.

Move energetically, such as running, jumping, dancing, hopping, skipping and climbing.

Expressive Arts and Design: Being Imaginative and Expressive

Perform songs, rhymes, poems and stories with others, and (when appropriate) try to move in time with music.

Characteristics of Effective Learning

In planning and guiding what children learn, practitioners must reflect on the different rates at which children are developing and adjust their practice appropriately. Three characteristics of effective teaching and learning are:

- 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.

| Characteristics children may display which will support future learning in PE | | |
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| Playing and Exploring | Active Learning | Creating and thinking critically |
| <p>Development Matters</p> <p>Reach for and accept objects. Make choices and explore different resources and materials. Plan and think ahead about how they will explore or play with objects. Do things independently that they have been previously taught. Respond to new experiences that you bring to their attention. Bring their own interests and fascinations into early years settings. This helps them to develop their learning.</p> <p>Birth to 5 Matters</p> <p>Engaging in open-ended activity. Showing particular interests. Initiating activities. Seeking challenge. Showing a 'can do' attitude. Taking a risk, engaging in new experiences, and learning by trial and error.</p> | <p>Development Matters</p> <p>Use a range of strategies to reach a goal they have set themselves. Keep on trying when things are difficult.</p> <p>Birth to 5 Matters</p> <p>Maintaining focus on their activity for a period of time. Showing high levels of involvement, energy, fascination. Paying attention to details. Persisting with an activity or toward their goal when challenges occur. Showing a belief that more effort or a different approach will pay off, and that their skills can grow and develop (growth mindset). Bouncing back after difficulties. Showing satisfaction in meeting their own goals (I can!). Being proud of how they accomplished something – not just the end result. Enjoying meeting challenges for their own sake rather than external rewards or praise (intrinsic motivation).</p> | <p>Development Matters</p> <p>Review their progress as they try to achieve a goal. Check how well they are doing. Make more links between those ideas. Concentrate on achieving something that's important to them.</p> <p>Birth to 5 Matters</p> <p>Finding new ways to do things. Testing their ideas. Planning, making decisions about how to approach a task, solve a problem and reach a goal. Checking how well their activities are going. Reviewing how well the approach worked. Flexibly, changing strategy as needed.</p> |

What does PE look like in Early Years?

'Physical activity is vital in children's all-round development, enabling them to pursue happy, healthy and active lives. Gross and fine motor experiences develop incrementally throughout early childhood, starting with sensory explorations and the development of a child's strength, co-ordination and positional awareness through tummy time, crawling and play movement with both objects and adults. By creating games and providing opportunities for play both indoors and outdoors, adults can support children to develop their core strength, stability, balance, spatial awareness, co-ordination and agility. Gross motor skills provide the foundation for developing healthy bodies and social and emotional well-being.' Development Matters

"Intricately interwoven with emotional, social, cognitive and language development, physical development underpins all other areas of a child's learning and development. Extensive physical experience in early childhood puts in place the neurological sensory and motor foundations necessary for feeling good in your body and comfortable in the world." Birth to 5 Matters

| What PE might look like in Early Years, including in Indoor and Outdoor Provision | |
|---|---|
| What you might see children doing | What you should see practitioners doing |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being involved in active games that involve big movements through space, such as spinning, swooping, rolling and swinging. • Playing with a range of open-ended materials to play that allow for extended, repeated and regular practising of lifting, carrying, pushing, pulling, constructing, stacking and climbing. • Gardening, digging, manoeuvring a wheelbarrow. • Engaging in activities using age appropriate, bikes, trikes and scooters. • Engaging in den building activities. Collecting, carrying objects for their den. Stretching to place fabric or other materials over the top. • Crawling into the den. • Exploring and engaging with a variety of apparatus such as hoops, bean bags, different sized balls. • Experimenting to move in different ways. • Engaging in obstacles courses and developing their own. • Climbing, swinging balancing • Running, jumping and learning to avoid obstacles in their way. • Moving and responding to different types of music. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing time and space to enjoy energetic play outdoors daily. • Providing large portable equipment that children can move about safely and cooperatively to create their own structures, such as milk crates, planks, tyres. • Providing a range of age appropriate wheeled toys. • Providing opportunities for digging, sweeping, washing and pouring. • Use different types of music to stimulate exploration with rhythmic movements. • Value the ways children choose to move. • Talk to children about their movements and help them to explore new ways of moving. • Encourage body tension activities such as stretching, reaching, climbing and jumping. • Provide safe spaces where children can explore, challenge themselves and solve problems like how to balance on beams or climb ladders. • Providing movement opportunities indoors and outdoors. • Give opportunities to access a wide range of resources such as different sized balls, age appropriate bikes and trikes. |

| What you might see children doing | What you should see practitioners doing |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging in loose parts play with planks, crates etc. Engaging in action rhymes and songs with large movements. Engaging in baking and cooking activities with lots of mixing, stirring, kneading. Engaging in parachute type games. Constructing with large bricks outdoors. Engaging in early mark making activities, using a variety of different tools. Working collaboratively and independently. Learning how to manage risks safely. Getting dressed- putting in and taking off their coat. Getting ready for outdoor play e.g. putting wellingtons on. Dressing up in the role play area, having a go at fastenings. Talking about what makes a healthy lifestyle, the food we may choose to eat and why it is important to exercise and get enough sleep. Talk about how exercise makes them feel. Begin to put a sequence of movements together. Making up their own games. Observe simple rules in the games that they make up and play. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk to children about safety and allow children to take appropriate risks. Opportunities to develop core strength and balance and upper body strength. Talk about being healthy and what contributes to this at an age appropriate level. Talk about the importance of exercise for our bodies. Give opportunities to carry objects up slopes, hills and steps. Provide a range of surfaces to balance on, such as grass, earth, bark chippings or carpet. Motivate children to join in group games and action songs. Provide a wide range of activities to support a broad range of abilities. Giving time for children to experiment with equipment and to practise movements they choose. Encouraging children to use the vocabulary of movement. Support children's own risk of judgement, encouraging them to think about what to be aware of and how to stay safe. Supporting children to understand their sense of space. |

The Curriculum – What we want children to learn

(Taken from Development Matters)

The curriculum is a top-level plan of everything the early years setting wants the children to learn.

- Planning to help every child to develop their language is vital.
- The curriculum needs to be ambitious. Careful sequencing will help children to build their learning over time.
- Young children's learning is often driven by their interests. Plans need to be flexible.
- Babies and young children do not develop in a fixed/linear way. Their development is like a spider's web with many strands, not a straight line.
- Depth in early learning is much more important than covering lots of things in a superficial way.

Progression

| | | Movement and balance | Health | Small apparatus | Large Apparatus | Dance | Risk |
|---------------------|--|---|---|--|---|---|---|
| 2-year room | | Gradually gains control of their whole body through large movements such as kicking, rolling, crawling and walking. Walk, run, jump and start to use stairs independently. | Encourage good eating habits... | Exploring a range of equipment, beans bags, balls, scarves, hoops etc Exploring kicking and throwing balls. Using other age appropriate utensils and tools. Mixing, pouring and stirring in mud kitchen. | Move around in dens and tunnels. Transporting moveable resources e.g. wooden blocks. Sit on a push along wheeled toy, use a scooter or ride a tricycle. | Explore movement to music. Clap and stamp to music. | More adult supervision needed. Allowing children to take appropriate risks. |
| Nursery/ Pre-school | |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Reception Class | | Revise and refine movements such as rolling, crawling, walking, jumping, running, hopping, skipping, climbing Use their core muscle strength to achieve good posture. Complete an obstacle course that demand a range of objects to complete. | Know and talk about different factors that support their overall health and well-being. | Further develop and refine a range of ball skills. Have increasing control of a range of small apparatus. | Engaging in obstacle courses that demand a range of movements to complete. Ride two wheeled balance bikes, pedal bikes without stabilisers. Negotiate and wheels around wheelbarrows and prams. | Begin to sequence moves and move rhythmically. | Beginning to manage their own risks safely. |

Assessment in Early Years

As in the previous version of the EYFS the ELGS are not to be used or envisaged as a curriculum. The EYFS clearly states 'The ELGS are there to support teachers to make a holistic, best-fit judgement about a child's development and their readiness for Year One'. Observation checkpoints are included in Development Matters to support practitioners when considering whether children are on track or if additional support is needed.

'Assessment should not entail prolonged breaks from interaction with children, nor require excessive paperwork. When assessing whether an individual child is at the expected level of development, practitioners should draw on their knowledge of the child and their own expert professional judgement and should not be required to prove this through collection of physical evidence- Statutory Framework for EYFS 2.2' (See document for more information about assessment, including the three statutory assessments in EY).

Useful links:

Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage

[Early years foundation stage \(EYFS\) statutory framework - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/612722/early-years-foundation-stage-eyfs-statutory-framework.pdf)

Development Matters

[Development Matters - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/612722/development-matters.pdf)

Birth to Five Matters

<https://www.birthto5matters.org.uk/#:~:text=%20Birth%20to%205%20Matters%3A%20Anon-statutory%20guidance%20for%20the,Years%20Coalition%2C%20composed%20of%20the%20following...%20More%20>

Fantastic activities and ideas for outdoor learning

<https://muddyfaces.co.uk/>

<https://www.ltl.org.uk/>

<https://creativestarlearning.co.uk/>

Cumberland Council documents

All can be found at: **[Early years advice and guidance | Cumberland Council](#)**

Loose Parts Play

Top Tips for Outdoor Learning

Top Tips for developing gross motor skills

Please note: This document is not to be used as a tick list for assessment or planning purposes. Its aim is to support with understanding the revised Statutory Framework and accompanying non-statutory guidance documents. These documents may also be useful for mixed age teachers, new to EY teachers, senior leaders and governors – Cumberland Council Early Years Team.