

# **A Parent's Guide to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) at Unicorn Nursery**



**UNICORN**  
*Nursery*

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## What is the EYFS?

Like all nurseries, pre-schools, reception classes in schools and childminders in the UK, Unicorn Nursery is legally obligated to follow what is called the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Framework to ensure that your child gets the best possible start in life, and that the system that is applied is consistent throughout the country.

This is one of the most important periods, educationally speaking, of your child's life, from the age of 0 to 5 years, as it helps them get ready for school as well as preparing them for their future learning and successes; it is easy to see why successive governments have placed such an emphasis on this period in a child's life.



## **Why was the EYFS Framework set up?**

The EYFS exists to standardise the educational treatment of all 0-5 year olds, and to guide staff – like the staff here at Unicorn – in the best way to educate your child. The scheme was drawn up by Early Years educational experts and parents, and after a trial period, was revised in 2012 to make it easier to use. A decision made to be less dogmatic, and to focus on the things that mattered most in the classroom – and the nursery play room. The new EYFS framework has a greater emphasis on the role of the parent in helping the child develop; which is why we have produced this booklet.

Most important of all, the EYFS sets out the requirements that are necessary in a childminder's house, a pre-school, a reception class or a nursery to ensure the absolute safety of all of the children in their care. And not just the basic of keeping them safe of course; the welfare of all of the children under our care must be promoted in the best ways possible.

## **What does the EYFS do?**

With this in mind, the EYFS sets out precautionary measures that must be observed at all times to keep children safe. It also details the 7 areas of LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT which our staff must attend to, guiding their behaviour and preparation, in a fun and flexible way, to interact with your child's play and activities, so that they can effectively learn new knowledge and new skills. The Framework gives us at Unicorn considerable guidance on planning the learning activities that we give to the children and, just as



important, observing and assessing just what your child is learning, and how they are developing. These skills that very young children develop between 0 and 5 years are essential for them to flourish both at school and beyond, and must not be neglected. Best of all, the EYFS encourages learning through indoor and outdoor play — and we have a lot for them to do outdoors at Unicorn, much more than most nurseries — and discovery and other activities that will certainly stimulate and entertain your child.

As well as looking at the children on an informal, day-to-day basis, we will make assessments, based on the EYFS Framework, that will tell you about your child's progress through the years 0-5. The EYFS actually sets out the expected levels that your child should reach by the time they are 5; these are the **EARLY LEARNING GOALS (ELGs)**.



## The Guiding Principles of the EYFS

- 👉 Every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured;
- 👉 Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships;
- 👉 Children learn and develop well in enabling environments, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers; and
- 👉 Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates. The framework covers the education and care of all children in early years provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities.

## The Sevenfold Path

The EYFS lays out seven areas of learning and development for young children. There are three PRIME AREAS and four SPECIFIC AREAS. Your child should mostly develop the three Prime Areas first. They are the most essential for your child's healthy development and future learning.

Prime Area		What is covered
1. Communication & Language	➔	Listening & Attention, Understanding, Speaking
2. Physical Development	➔	Moving & Handling, Health & Self-Care
3. Personal, Social & Emotional Development	➔	Making Relationships Self Consciousness & Self Awareness Managing Feeling & Behaviours



As your child grows, progress in the three Prime Areas will help them develop skills in the four Specific Areas.

Specific Area	What is covered
1. Literacy	Reading, Writing
2. Mathematics	Numbers, Space & Measure
3. Understanding the World	People & Communities The World Technology
4. Expressing Arts & Design	Exploring using Media and Materials Being Imaginative

These seven areas are what we use here at Unicorn — as in all EYFS establishments all over the country — to plan your child's learning activities during their stay at the nursery. This applies whether your child is full-time, or just comes to us for fifteen hours a week. Whatever the time that your child spends with us, our professional staff tailor their activities and learning experiences to their specific, unique needs.

Every child is different, and needs to be educationally stimulated and excited in a different way. In that respect, the EYFS is a little like the curriculum that is followed in primary and secondary schools, but it is much more adaptable and flexible. That is always the case with very young children, so it can be adapted to the individual — rather than adapt the individual to the curriculum — and get the best out of the child.



## How does your child learn and develop at Unicorn?

Children in the EYFS Framework learn by playing and exploring – by child-initiated and staff-initiated play – by being active, and by developing the ability to show creative and critical thinking. And not just in the classroom. An integral part of the Framework insists that children interact with the world – and each other – outdoors as well as in the classroom or Baby Room.

## How do children do this?

The mind of a young child is a very flexible and adaptable one, which is why young children can often seem to learn two languages simultaneously in the EYFS age range, something that we, as adults, would find very difficult indeed. They are many examples of what look, to us, very simple and routine tasks which will offer a world of learning to a child in the 0-5 year age group. These experiences have been developed and can be targeted at specific age groups, when the child is most ready to receive them. For example:

Age range	Learning Process
1¼ – 2 years	Filling and emptying containers in bath
1¾ – 2½ years	Understanding of concepts such as big or little
2¼ – 3¾ years	Talking about things they have observed
2¾ – 4 years	What happens when they mix colours in painting
2¾ – 4 years	How to suggest an ending to a story they have heard
2½ – 4 years	To be confident in talking to other children in play
3¼ – 5 years	To control objects by pushing, patting, throwing



## As a parent or carer, how can I help with my child's learning?

You are with your child for the majority of its life in the 0-5 year period, even if they are with Unicorn full-time. We will maximise his or hers opportunities whilst he or she is with us, but you, the parent, have a vital role to play in their learning and development when they are away from the nursery.





Even when your child is very young, and is not yet able to talk, your talking to them helps them to get used to the idea of being able to communicate. It helps them learn and understand new words and ideas, for when they are ready to talk. If you can make the time every day to do some of the things above, it will make a real difference to their confidence as a young learner.

Here at Unicorn, we can give us help and encouragement to do these sorts of activities at home. We have a Home Bag with planned activities, which you can take away with you. We would like you to share your child's 'at-home' experiences and achievements. You can do this with your child's Key Person, when you drop them off or pick them off, or in more detail in written notes. All this information helps us develop a Care Plan for your child to help him or her on their learning journey.

This is a two-way process. If you find out what your child has been doing here at Unicorn, you can reinforce that learning activity with relevant activities at home in the following days.



## How can I find out how my child is progressing?

It is very important to keep up with how your child is doing. Your child's Key Person will be observing and assessing your child and recording feedback as part of their Learning Journey. You can chat to the Key Person whenever you have the time, picking up or dropping off your child, or ask to have an informal chat at any time that is convenient for the two of you. You can also ask to see the observational feedback itself whenever you like.

### **Remember. The Key Person is the person at Unicorn who:**

- Is your main point of contact within Unicorn Nursery
- Helps your child to become settled, happy and safe at all times whilst with us at Unicorn
- Is responsible for your child's care, development and learning
- Takes a careful note of your child's progress, sharing this with you and giving you ideas as to how to help your child at home.

As well as this informal system, there are two formal assessments within the EYFS structure.

The first formal check — Progress Check at Age 2 — takes place at a point between the second and third birthday. This checks your child's progress against the three Prime Areas mentioned above, and can also be used to get an early identification of any developmental issues your child might have.



Hopefully, then, this check will highlight areas where your child is progressing well, and where they might need help or support. That support could well come us, from yourselves, other family members and carers, or, indeed, other professionals such as health visitors.

The second check will come at the end of the EYFS, in the summer term of the reception year, when teachers will complete an assessment — the EYFS Profile – which is produced by the reception teacher and based on what they and their colleagues have observed over a period of time. This time your child's development will be checked against the 7 areas of learning and development (as above) and the 17 Early Learning Goals. The school will give you a report of your child's progress, including information from their EYFS Profile.

### **Where can I get further information?**

Come and speak to us here at Unicorn Nursery. We really want to speak to you about your child's Learning Journey. You can find out more about the EYFS at [www/foundationyears.org.uk](http://www/foundationyears.org.uk), which includes a range of resources and contacts.

**My child's Key Person at Unicorn Nursery is:**



