

Our approach



We developed Cambridge Early Years in line with international best practice and research, and in collaboration with pioneers of early education in India.

The programme builds on these key principles:

1. **Experience**
Learning should complement the social and cultural factors (like experiences of home and community) that shape a child's learning and development.
2. **Active**
Children should be involved in their own learning through well-planned experiences that help them develop competence, agency, emotional attachment and self-worth.
3. **Balance**
Learning should encourage an appropriate balance of physical, cognitive, language and communications, and social and emotional development.
4. **Play**
Learning should be age appropriate, play-based and child centred. It should include both child- and adult-led activities.
5. **Transition**
Early years education should help children transition successfully to primary school, moving from informal, play-based learning to teaching that is more formal.

These key principles are central to our approach, and we recommend that you use them in all Cambridge Early Years settings to get the most out of the programme.

Curriculum



The Cambridge Early Years curriculum offers a holistic approach that focuses on the whole child and connects their development with the world and people around them.

The curriculum provides a comprehensive set of learning statements that gives a structure for teaching and learning in three stages: EY1 (for ages 3-4), EY2 (for ages 4-5) and EY3 (for ages 5-6).

The learning statements reflect well-established developmental milestones for children's learning from ages 3 to 6. Milestones can never be an accurate indicator of what every child can do. Each child has their own developmental pathway which is shaped by many factors, including their home background and experiences. A child's current level of knowledge, understanding and skills always needs to be considered when planning their next steps.

The Cambridge Early Years Curriculum is a planning tool and the learning statements within it are designed to promote progression in learning from EY 1 to EY 3 and onwards into primary education. It enables development of knowledge, understanding and skills through a spiral approach: by revisiting and engaging with topics and skills at deeper levels and in different contexts across the stages.

The curriculum content is split into six subject areas:

Communication, language & literacy

Speaking, listening, reading and writing are crucial to children's early development. Showing children the importance of language through fun activities and encouraging them to engage with a wide range of texts helps to ignite a lifelong curiosity for learning.

While the Cambridge Early Years curriculum is designed for teaching and learning in English, celebrating the home language(s) of learners is also very important.

The speaking and listening learning statements below illustrate progression across the three stages:

Stage	
EY 1	Listen and respond appropriately in everyday situations, although not necessarily immediately.
EY 2	Listen to and take into account what others have to say.
EY3	Listen and respond appropriately to familiar and less familiar adults and peers.

Creative expression

Creative expression allows children to communicate their ideas and develop their imagination through art and design, music, dance and drama. This important curriculum area brings together skills and cognitive processes from across the whole curriculum. The art and design learning statements below illustrate progression across the three stages.

Stage	
EY 1	Explore visual and tactile qualities in the natural and made world, for example, help to make a 'feely wall' with surfaces that have different textures (e.g. rough, smooth, soft).
EY 2	Respond to natural, made and imaginary worlds through play and by making art and design, for example, visit a forest and then collaborate to paint or construct their own miniature forest.
EY3	Gather, record and respond to experiences and visual information from natural and made sources, for example, make a collection of textures from outside surfaces using plasticine impressions and printing.

Mathematics

At an early age, it's important to help children recognise how mathematics impacts everyday life. Through games and activities, we can introduce children to mathematical language, thinking and concepts that they will need when they start their primary education. The learning statements from shape, space and measure below illustrate progression across the three stages.

Stage	
EY 1	Recognise and talk about patterns in the environment.
EY 2	Copy and create simple repeating patterns of repeating units (e.g. [red, blue]; [red, blue yellow]; [red, blue, blue]; [red, blue, blue, yellow]) and say what would come next in the pattern.
EY3	Use familiar language to describe sequences of items, including identifying errors in patterns of colour, shape or size, for example, 'It goes square, circle, triangle, square, circle, circle ... the last one is wrong, it should be a triangle.'

Personal, social & emotional development

This area underpins children's wellbeing and attainment in all other areas of their learning. It helps them to develop social learning and friendships, regulate their emotional responses and respond to the needs of others, and develop self-esteem and confidence. The learning statements below illustrate progression across the three stages.

Stage	
EY 1	Reflect on their activities and experiences, saying what they liked and disliked.
EY 2	Reflect on their activities and experiences, saying why they like some activities more than others, and talking about their achievements and challenges.
EY3	Join in with group discussion and debate about their activities and experiences, contributing relevant ideas and offering some explanation for their thinking.

Physical development

Our curriculum encourages children to develop movement skills through play, promoting positive attitudes towards exercise and laying the foundations for healthy, active lives. The learning statements below illustrate progression across the three stages.

Stage	
EY 1	Respond appropriately to movement instructions, including in imaginative contents, for example, 'Stomp like an elephant.', 'Leap from rock to rock.', 'Twist to see if the pirate is chasing you.'
EY 2	Follow basic rules and sequences of simple movement instructions, including instructions containing simple directional language, for example, 'Stretch up.', 'Crouch down.'
EY3	Follow movement instructions and basic rules, including instructions that include left and right, for example 'Jump left.', 'Side-step right.'

Understanding the world

Children's natural curiosity must be encouraged, so that they are equipped to reflect, question, explore and interact, and guided in their understanding of the world. This area of the curriculum lays foundations for a range of different subjects in primary education and beyond, including science, digital literacy, history, geography and religious education. The learning statements from scientific thinking below illustrate progression across the stages.

Stage	
EY 1	Follow instructions to grow plants from seeds and talk about their observations as the plants grow.
EY 2	Grow and care for different plants, knowing that they need light and water to survive.
EY 3	Grow and care for different plants, exploring what makes a difference to how well a plant grows (e.g. not giving too much water, some plants only grow well in the sunniest spots in the garden).