

EYFS Three and Four-Year-Olds: Play-Based Long-Term Curriculum Plan

Academic Year: 2026 – 2027

1. Academic Year Structure & Term Dates

This long-term play-based plan is structured across three terms, mapping out the EYFS Prime and Specific areas of learning from the Development Matters statements

Term / Period	Date Range	Key Focus Areas & Context
Autumn Term 1 ‘All About Me’	W/B Sep 1st, 2026 – Oct 23rd, 2026	Settling in, settling environment, establishing routines, basic Personal, Social & Emotional foundations, and initial Communication & Language milestones.
Half Term 1	Oct 26th, 2026 – Oct 30th, 2026	<i>School Closed / Nursery Half Term Break</i>

Term / Period	Date Range	Key Focus Areas & Context
Autumn Term 2 ‘Seasons & Celebrations’	Nov 2nd, 2026 – Dec 15th, 2026	Deepening relationships, physical coordination, autumn/winter sensory explorations, early literacy concepts of print, and number recognition up to 3-5.
Christmas Break	Dec 16th, 2026 – Jan 1st, 2027	<i>Two weeks off starting December 16th</i>
Spring Term 1 ‘Deep in the Jungle’	Jan 4th, 2027 – Feb 12th, 2027	Winter transformations, gross motor challenges, expressive arts and design (music, role-play), and building independence in self-care.
Half Term 2	Feb 15th, 2027 – Feb 19th,	<i>School Closed / Nursery</i>

Term / Period	Date Range	Key Focus Areas & Context
	2027	<i>Half Term Break</i>
Spring Term 2 ‘Under the Sea’	Feb 22nd, 2027 – Mar 26th, 2027	Early mathematical patterns, plant growth and life cycles, collaborative play, storytelling, and resolving peer conflicts.
Easter Break	Mar 29th, 2027 – Apr 9th, 2027	<i>Two weeks off for Easter</i>
Summer Term 1 ‘Traditional Tales’	Apr 12th, 2027 – May 28th, 2027	Outdoor exploration, forces, physical balancing and ball skills, mapping familiar routes, and expanding vocabulary through rich shared experiences.
Half Term 3	May 31st, 2027 – Jun 4th,	<i>School Closed / Nursery</i>

Term / Period	Date Range	Key Focus Areas & Context
	2027	<i>Half Term Break</i>
Summer Term 2 ‘Rocket to Space’	Jun 7th, 2027 – Jun 30th, 2027	Transition preparation, consolidating literacy and math concepts, complex small world play, and celebratory performances or art showcases.

2. Detailed Half-Termly Breakdown of Statements

Autumn Term 1 (W/B Sept 1 – Oct 16, 2026): Settling, Communication & Personal Foundations

Area of Learning	Play-Based Delivery & Environmental Provocations
Communication & Language	• Enjoy listening to longer stories in cozy book corners and recall key plot points. • Pay attention to multi-step instructions during tidy-up time ("Get your coat and wait at the door"). • Sing a large repertoire of songs and rhymes during mat times; talk about familiar books.
Personal, Social & Emotional	• Select and use activities and resources independently with support, achieving self-chosen goals. • Develop a sense of responsibility and membership in the nursery community. • Become more outgoing with unfamiliar people; show confidence in new social situations. • Practice independent self-care: washing

Area of Learning	Play-Based Delivery & Environmental Provocations
	and drying hands thoroughly, using the toilet.
Physical Development	• Continue developing movement, balancing, riding scooters/trikes, and ball skills outdoors. • Use large-muscle movements to wave flags and streamers or make big chalk marks. • Show a preference for a dominant hand and use a comfortable grip with good control for early pens.
Literacy	• Explore print has meaning and purpose in home-corner environments (labels, lists, signs). • Recognise English text runs from left to right and top to bottom; learn parts of a book. • Spot and suggest rhymes during circle games; clap syllables in children's names.

Area of Learning	Play-Based Delivery & Environmental Provocations
Mathematics	• Develop fast recognition of up to 3 objects without counting (subitising) via dice and dot games. • Recite numbers past 5 and say one number for each item in order (1,2,3,4,5).
Understanding the World	• Use all senses in hands-on exploration of natural materials (autumn leaves, conkers, soil). • Begin to make sense of their own life-story and family history through sharing family photos.
Expressive Arts & Design	• Take part in simple pretend play using an object to represent something else. • Explore different materials freely to discover how to use them and what to make; explore colour mixing.

Autumn Term 2 (Oct 26 – Dec 15, 2026): Building Communities, Numbers & Winter Magic

Area of Learning	Play-Based Delivery & Environmental Provocations
Communication & Language	• Use a wider range of vocabulary; ask 'why' questions ("Why do you think the caterpillar got so fat?"). • Develop pronunciation of multi-syllabic words and use longer sentences of four to six words.
Personal, Social & Emotional	• Play with one or more children, extending and elaborating play ideas together. • Find solutions to conflicts and rivalries (e.g., sharing roles in superhero or house play). • Understand and follow rules without constant adult reminders; talk about feelings (happy, sad, angry).
Physical Development	• Go up steps and stairs or climb up apparatus using alternate feet. • Use one-handed tools and equipment, making snips in paper with safety

Area of Learning	Play-Based Delivery & Environmental Provocations
	scissors. • Collaborate with others to move large items safely, carrying large hollow blocks.
Literacy	• Engage in extended conversations about stories, learning new vocabulary. • Use print and letter knowledge in early writing (pretend shopping lists starting at the top). • Write some or all of their name and write some letters accurately.
Mathematics	• Know that the last number reached tells how many are total (cardinal principle); show 'finger numbers' up to 5. • Link numerals and amounts (matching objects to numerals up to 5); solve real-world problems with numbers up to 5. • Talk about 2D and 3D shapes (circles, rectangles, triangles, cuboids) using informal language ('flat', 'round').

Area of Learning	Play-Based Delivery & Environmental Provocations
Understanding the World	• Explore collections of materials with similar/different properties; show interest in different occupations. • Explore how things work through simple mechanical toys and gears.
Expressive Arts & Design	• Begin to develop complex stories using small world equipment (animal sets, dolls houses). • Remember and sing entire songs; match pitch and melodic shapes of familiar songs.

Spring Term 1 (Jan 4 – Feb 12, 2027): Physical Challenges, Forces & Expressive Arts

Area of Learning	Play-Based Delivery & Environmental Provocations
Communication & Language	• Express a point of view and debate when disagreeing using words and actions. • Start a conversation with an adult or friend and continue for many turns. • Use talk to organise themselves and their play ("Let's go on a bus...").
Personal, Social & Emotional	• Develop appropriate ways of being assertive; talk with others to solve conflicts. • Understand gradually how others might be feeling; make healthy choices about food, drink, and toothbrushing.
Physical Development	• Skip, hop, stand on one leg, and hold a pose for musical statues. • Start taking part in group activities made up by themselves or in teams. • Match developing physical skills to tasks (deciding whether to crawl, walk, or run across a plank).

Area of Learning	Play-Based Delivery & Environmental Provocations
Literacy	• Develop phonological awareness: recognise words with the same initial sound (e.g., money and mother). • Page sequencing and understanding different parts of a book.
Mathematics	• Compare quantities using language: 'more than', 'fewer than'. • Understand position through words alone ("The bag is under the table" – without pointing). • Describe a familiar route and discuss routes using 'in front of' and 'behind'.
Understanding the World	• Explore and talk about different forces they can feel (pushing, pulling, magnets, rolling down ramps). • Talk about differences between materials and changes they notice (melting ice, freezing water).
Expressive Arts & Design	• Make imaginative and complex 'small worlds' with blocks, construction kits,

Area of Learning	Play-Based Delivery & Environmental Provocations
	buildings, and parks. • Draw with increasing complexity and detail (representing a face with a circle and including details). • Play instruments with increasing control to express feelings and ideas.

Area of Learning	Play-Based Delivery & Environmental Provocations		
Communication & Language		Develop communication, overcoming occasional problems with irregular tenses/plurals ('runned', 'swam').	Develop pronunciation of specific sounds (r, j, th, ch, sh) through engaging game play.
Personal, Social & Emotional	• Make healthy choices about activity and hygiene; show empathy and support for peers in distress. • Demonstrate independence in managing personal belongings and dressing/undressing (coats, zips).		
Physical Development	• Increase ability to use and remember sequences and patterns of movements related to music and rhythm. • Choose the right resources to carry out plans (choosing a spade to		

Area of Learning	Play-Based Delivery & Environmental Provocations
	enlarge a hole dug with a trowel). • Be increasingly independent getting dressed and undressed (putting coats on and doing up zips).
Literacy	• Spot and suggest rhyming strings; clap syllables in multisyllabic words. • Practice writing names and simple words with correct letter formation.
Mathematics	• Make comparisons between objects relating to size, length, weight, and capacity. • Select shapes appropriately (flat surfaces for building, triangular prism for a roof). • Talk about and identify patterns around them (stripes, spots, blobs; extend and create ABAB patterns).
Understanding the World	• Plant seeds and care for growing plants; understand key features of the life cycle of a plant and an

Area of Learning	Play-Based Delivery & Environmental Provocations
	animal. • Begin to understand the need to respect and care for the natural environment and all living things.
Expressive Arts & Design	• Join different materials and explore different textures in collage and sculpture. • Create closed shapes with continuous lines, and begin to use shapes to represent objects. • Create their own songs or improvise a song around one they know.

Summer Term 1 (Apr 12 – May 28, 2027): Outdoor Exploration, Mapping & Forces

Area of Learning	Play-Based Delivery & Environmental Provocations
Communication & Language	• Retell familiar stories with puppets and props; remember and discuss complex narrative arcs. • Use longer, descriptive sentences of 6+ words during outdoor investigations.
Personal, Social & Emotional	• Sustain collaborative group play over extended periods, negotiating roles and rules together. • Show resilience when challenges arise in construction or outdoor obstacle courses.
Physical Development	• Master complex ball skills (catching, throwing at targets, dribbling). • Navigate uneven terrain and climbing frames with high confidence and spatial awareness. • Use pencils and tools with refined precision for detailed observational drawings.

Area of Learning	Play-Based Delivery & Environmental Provocations
Literacy	• Write simple phrases and labels independently during role-play scenarios (e.g., veterinary clinic, post office). • Read simple words and captions matched to phonics knowledge.
Mathematics	• Combine shapes to make new ones (an arch, a bigger triangle). • Notice and correct an error in a repeating pattern. • Begin to describe a sequence of events, real or fictional, using words like 'first', 'then'...
Understanding the World	• Continue developing positive attitudes about the differences between people. • Know that there are different countries in the world and talk about differences seen in photos/stories.
Expressive Arts & Design	• Explore different materials freely, developing ideas about how to use them and what to make.

Area of Learning	Play-Based Delivery & Environmental Provocations
	• Develop their own ideas and then decide which materials to use to express them. • Use drawing to represent ideas like movement or loud noises; show emotions in paintings.

Summer Term 2 (June 7 – June 30, 2027): Consolidation & Transition

Area of Learning	Play-Based Delivery & Environmental Provocations
Communication & Language	• Confidently debate viewpoints, present ideas to larger groups, and engage in sustained shared thinking.
Personal, Social & Emotional	• Transition readiness: show confidence in adapting to new routines, environments, and visiting teachers. • Demonstrate emotional maturity in self-regulation, peer conflict resolution, and independence.
Physical Development	• Refine all gross and fine motor skills in preparation for school transition (scissor control, sports day events).
Literacy	• Consolidate all writing, phonics, and reading skills through self-directed publishing of storybooks.
Mathematics	• Apply mathematical knowledge fluently across all play areas (measuring water in

Area of Learning	Play-Based Delivery & Environmental Provocations
	mud kitchens, partitioning sets).
Understanding the World	• Reflect on seasonal changes, plant growth maturity, and animals growing in the nursery garden.
Expressive Arts & Design	• Collaborative end-of-year art exhibition and musical performance celebrating their creative journey.

3. Play-Based Implementation Strategies

- ---

Child-Led Provocations: Setting up continuous provision areas (water, sand, construction, role-play) that naturally elicit mathematical, scientific, and literacy inquiries.
- **Adult Scaffolding:** High-quality interactions where practitioners model vocabulary, open-ended questioning, and conflict resolution during child-initiated play.
- **Outdoor Learning:** Maximising the outdoor environment for physical development, gross-motor mark-making, life cycle observations, and spatial awareness.