



Primary

National Strategy

Guidance

Curriculum and
Standards

KEEP

Key Elements of Effective Practice

**For use by Local
Authorities in
their work with
settings providing
government-funded
early education**

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Key Elements of Effective Practice (KEEP)

Effective practice in the early years requires committed, enthusiastic and reflective practitioners with a breadth and depth of knowledge, skills and understanding.

Effective practitioners use their own learning to improve their work with young children and their families in ways which are sensitive, positive and non-judgemental.

Therefore, through initial and on-going training and development, practitioners need to develop, demonstrate and continuously improve their:

- relationships with both children and adults;
- understanding of the individual and diverse ways that children develop and learn;
- knowledge and understanding in order to actively support and extend children's learning in and across all areas and aspects of learning;
- practice in meeting all children's needs, learning styles and interests;
- work with parents, carers and the wider community;
- work with other professionals within and beyond the setting.

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Introduction

The Key Elements of Effective Practice (KEEP) emphasise that effective learning is dependent on secure relationships, an appropriate learning environment and high-quality teaching¹. Each of the six areas below is 'key' to effective practice and each is an 'element' in its own right. Each is dependent on all the others and each contributes to the whole.

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KEEP – the key elements of effective practice

Effective practice in the early years requires committed, enthusiastic and reflective practitioners with a breadth and depth of knowledge, skills and understanding. Effective practitioners use their own learning to improve their work with young children and their families in ways which are sensitive, positive and non-judgemental. Therefore through initial and on-going training and development, practitioners need to develop, demonstrate and continuously improve their:

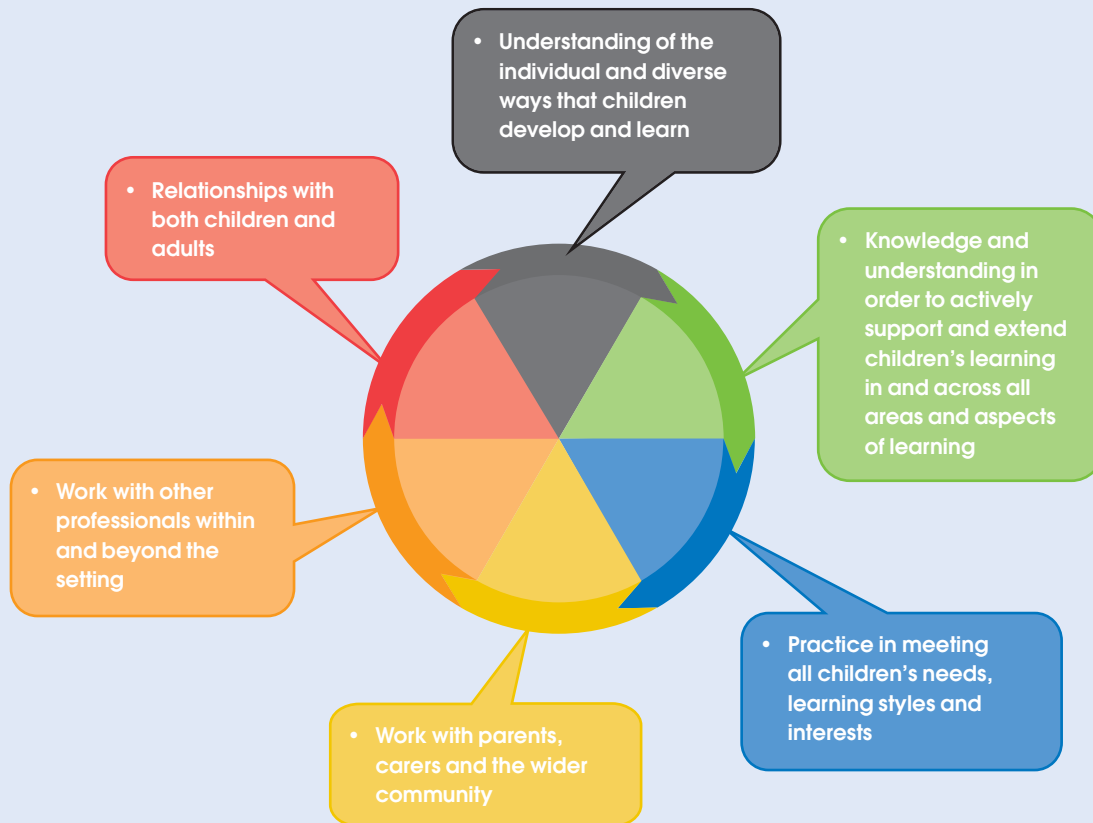


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What is KEEP?

KEEP is drawn from the Principles for Early Education². There is a cross reference between KEEP and the Principles on page 11. The elements reflect the key findings of recent research³ into what helps early-years staff reflect on their work and what effective practice looks like. Good relationships between children and staff, parents and carers and staff, and among the staff themselves ensure children feel secure and valued and parents are respected as partners⁴ in supporting their children's learning.

Building on these good relationships, practitioners need to:

- understand how children develop and learn;
- know about the curriculum – the 'subject knowledge' that is as important in the Foundation Stage as in later stages;
- know about and be able to use the range of teaching strategies appropriate to this distinct stage;
- understand how to promote and support child-initiated learning.

To be truly successful practitioners and settings need to develop the ability to do all of these things within the context of close partnership with parents and the community, working alongside a range of professional colleagues coming together to deliver the truly integrated approach to services for young children and their families that is at the heart of the Sure Start agenda. KEEP provides a framework for this.

Why is KEEP necessary?

It is important that there is an agreed view within and across the sector about the knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes practitioners need to effectively support young children's learning. A shared view will help children make progress towards the early learning goals through a play-based curriculum which builds on their diverse needs, interests and preferred ways of learning. KEEP represents that agreed view and provides a benchmark against which local authorities can evaluate the training and professional development opportunities they plan and deliver.

The purpose of defining effective practice for early-years practitioners is to set out the attitudes, knowledge, understanding and skills needed to put the Principles for Early Years Education into practice. KEEP provides a framework for developing, extending, agreeing and reviewing practitioners' priorities for training and professional development.

What is KEEP for?

KEEP is an evaluation tool for local authorities. KEEP provides a way of evaluating and then strengthening the impact of training. It should be used at a strategic level to develop programmes of continuing professional development, to inform job descriptions and service level agreements and to strengthen evaluation processes. It illustrates the key elements of early-years' expertise required to implement the Principles for Early-Years' Education.

Who is KEEP for?

KEEP is for use by local authority staff in their work with all government-funded settings providing government-funded early education. KEEP is about working inclusively with all children.

KEEP should be used by practitioners to consider their development needs. It provides a framework that practitioners can use to:

- outline their expertise;
- log their qualifications;
- provide a basis for their self-development plan;
- allow managers to understand:
 - staff experience
 - staff qualifications
 - how training needs to support the development of their setting
 - how to plan the development of the setting and its staff for mutual support.

It will support self-appraisal, appraisal, quality assurance, self-evaluation and performance management because it links the needs of the setting, the child and the parents and carers, as well as expressing practitioners' own aspirations.

KEEP is based on improving practice through reflection and self-evaluation. Although it has been developed to evaluate and improve local authority training and support, it needs to be used by practitioners and settings to identify their development needs. Further exemplification is being developed and will be published on www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/wholeschool/foundation_stage/.

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Practitioners should ensure that all children feel included, secure and valued. No child should be excluded or disadvantaged because of ethnicity, culture or religion, home language, family background, special educational needs, disability, gender or ability.⁵

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How should KEEP be used strategically by a local authority?

The KEEP framework should be used to:

- catalogue the elements of training offered;
- define areas that are well-met;
- identify areas for extending training;
- analyse the range of training provided to ensure that it covers all the areas needed to put the Principles for Early Education into practice. This should cover the full range of training, tailored to the individual, the setting, the sector, or at local authority level;
- inform the performance management of individual workers to identify CPD needs;
- link training with setting and practitioner reflection through existing self-evaluation approaches (for example, Ofsted inspections, quality assurance schemes);
- focus the work of local authority employed QTS and Area SENCOs;
- inform the work of local authority inspectors and Foundation Stage reviews in maintained schools (nursery and Reception classes);
- inform setting development plans;
- review existing training programmes and their developments;
- inform course descriptions;
- provide a management tool within a setting, or a local authority, to build capacity, develop job descriptions, and for self-review by individuals.

How does KEEP link with existing standards and qualifications?

KEEP should be used alongside the standards that underpin the range of qualifications that early years practitioners have or are working towards, for example QTS standards, and National Occupational Standards. However, as these are reviewed it is important that they are reviewed to ensure they reflect KEEP.

How does KEEP relate to the Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for the Children’s Workforce being developed for all those who work with children and young people?

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KEEP has been developed alongside and is consistent with the Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for the Children’s Workforce Framework. This framework describes the underpinning knowledge and skills needed by all of those who work with children and young people and which need to be included in training and qualifications for specific and specialist roles, for example teacher, health visitor, youth worker. KEEP incorporates those Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for the Children’s Workforce Framework and also references the specialist knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes needed to be an early years practitioner.

How KEEP relates to the Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for the Children’s Workforce

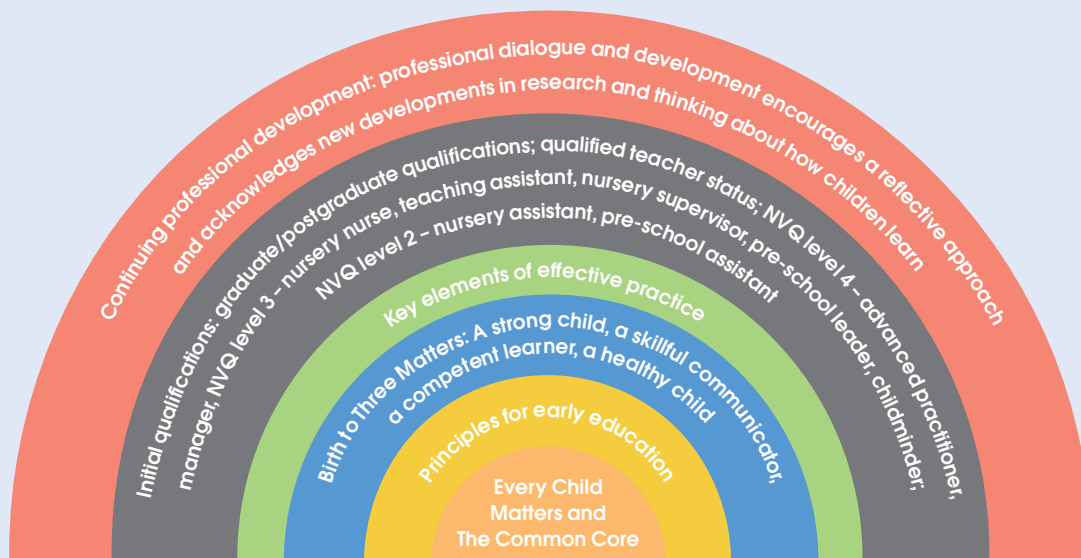


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How does KEEP reflect current research?

KEEP draws on two major pieces of DfES funded research on effective early years pedagogy.

REPEY (Research into Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years) **EPPE (Effective Provision of Pre-school Education)**

REPEY draws on and extends the EPPE research to identify the characteristics of effective practice in settings with good outcomes for children. The effective provision of pre-school education⁶ is the first major study in the UK to focus specifically on the effectiveness of early years' education. It is a large-scale longitudinal study of the progress and development of 3,000 children in a range of government-funded settings. The study has explored the characteristics of different kinds of provision and examined children's development in early years settings from age three and their progress in school to the end of Key Stage 1. The study has recently been extended to the end of Key Stage 2. REPEY/EPPE has been able to identify the aspects of early years provision which have a positive impact on children's attainment, progress and development and so provides guidance on good practice. Significant points to consider from this research are the importance of the practitioner's role in balancing adult-led and child-initiated activities, the need to engage in 'sustained shared thinking' and the kinds of interactions that will guide but not dominate children's thinking⁷.

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SPEEL (Study of Pedagogical Effectiveness in Early Learning)

Like EPPE, *The study of pedagogical effectiveness in early learning*⁸ has direct relevance to KEEP. The work of the team involved in the project identified 129 key statements which they explicitly refer to as core competences in an effective practitioner's role. These are categorised under headings of Practice, Principles and Professional Dimensions. SPEEL highlights that effective practitioners are reflective, self-evaluative and able to analyse their practice. Effective practitioners are able to help children develop strategies for the identification and resolution of conflict and the practitioners that engage parents are the most effective.

SPEEL puts forward some very helpful suggestions for training⁹.

References

- ¹ *The Hundred Languages of Children – Advanced Reflections*
- ² *Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage* pp. 11–25
- ³ REPEY, EPPE and SPEEL www.surestart.gov.uk/ensuringquality/research/earlyyears/eppe/ and www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/RRP/u013617/index.shtml
- ⁴ DfES 2004, *Parents: Partners in learning*
- ⁵ Extract from the *Principles for Early Years Education*, p. 11 CGFS
- ⁶ www.surestart.gov.uk/ensuringquality/research/earlyyears/eppe/
- ⁷ DfES Research Brief RB356 ISBN 1841853580 Phone 0845 60 222 60 or www.dfes.gov/research/
- ⁸ www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/RRP/u013617/index.shtml
- ⁹ DfES Research Brief RB363 ISBN 1841857653 Phone 0845 60 222 60 or www.dfes.gov/research/

Principles for Early-Years' Education	Key Elements of Effective Practice
<p>These principles are drawn from, and are evident in, good and effective practice in early-years' settings.</p>	<p>These key elements are drawn from, and are evident in, good and effective practice in early years settings.</p>
<p>Effective education requires both a relevant curriculum and practitioners who understand and are able to implement the curriculum requirements.</p>	<p>Effective practice in the early years requires committed, enthusiastic and reflective practitioners with a breadth and depth of knowledge, skills and understanding.</p>
<p>Effective education requires practitioners who understand that children develop rapidly during the early years – physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially. Children are entitled to provision that supports and extends knowledge, skills, understanding and confidence and helps them to overcome any disadvantage.</p>	<p>Therefore, through initial and on-going training and development, practitioners need to develop, demonstrate and continuously improve their understanding of the individual and diverse ways that children develop and learn.</p>
<p>Practitioners should ensure that all children feel included, secure and valued. They must build positive relationships with parents in order to work effectively with them and their children.</p> <p>Early years experience should build on what children already know and can do. It should also encourage a positive attitude and disposition to learn and aim to prevent early failure. No child should be excluded or disadvantaged because of ethnicity, culture or religion, home language, family background, special educational needs, disability, gender or ability.</p>	<p>Therefore, through initial and on-going training and development, practitioners need to develop, demonstrate and continuously improve their practice in meeting all children's needs, learning styles and interests.</p>
<p>Parents and practitioners should work together in an atmosphere of mutual respect within which children can have security and confidence.</p>	<p>Therefore, through initial and on-going training and development, practitioners need to develop, demonstrate and continuously improve their work with parents, carers and the wider community.</p>
<p>To be effective, an early-years' curriculum should be carefully structured. In that structure, there should be three strands: provision for the different starting points from which children develop their learning, building on what they can already do; relevant and appropriate content that matches the different levels of young children's needs; planned and purposeful activity that provides opportunities for teaching and learning, both indoors and outdoors.</p> <p>There should be opportunities for children to engage in activities planned by adults and also those that they plan or initiate themselves. Children do not make a distinction between 'play' and 'work' and neither should practitioners. Children need time to become engrossed, work in depth and complete activities.</p>	<p>Therefore, through initial and on-going training and development, practitioners need to develop, demonstrate and continuously improve their knowledge and understanding in order to support actively and extend children's learning in and across all areas and aspects of learning.</p>
<p>Practitioners must be able to observe and respond appropriately to children, informed by a knowledge of how children develop and learn and a clear understanding of possible next steps in their development and learning.</p>	<p>Therefore, through initial and on-going training and development, practitioners need to develop, demonstrate and continuously improve their work with other professionals within and beyond the setting.</p>
<p>Well-planned, purposeful activity and appropriate intervention by practitioners will engage children in the learning process and help them make progress in their learning.</p>	<p>Therefore, through initial and on-going training and development, practitioners need to develop, demonstrate and continuously improve their relationships with both children and adults.</p>
<p>For children to have rich and stimulating experiences, the learning environment should be well-planned and well-organised. It provides the structure for teaching within which children explore, experiment, plan and make decisions for themselves, thus enabling them to learn, develop and make good progress.</p>	<p>Effective practitioners use their own learning to improve their work with young children and their families in ways which are sensitive, positive and non-judgemental.</p>
<p>Above all, effective learning and development for young children requires high-quality care and education by practitioners. These principles are the basis on which every part of <i>Birth to Three Matters</i> and <i>The Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage</i> have been developed, and are reflected throughout.</p>	

Appendix

Reference publications

- DfES, 2004, *Excellence and enjoyment: Learning and Teaching in the Primary Years*
- DfES, 2004, *Parents: Partners in learning*
- DfES Research Brief (EPPE) RB356 ISBN 1841853580 Phone 0845 60 222 60
- DfES Research Brief (SPEEL) RB363 ISBN 1841857653 Phone 0845 60 222 60
- DfES, 2003, *Removing Barriers to Achievement*
- DfES, 2002, *Special Educational Needs Code of Practice*
- Edwards, C., Gandini, L., and Forman, G., 1998, *The Hundred Languages of Children; the Reggio Emilia Approach – Advanced Reflections*, 2nd edition, Ablex Publishing, Westport Connecticut and London
- QCA, 2000, *The Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage*
- QCA, 2002, *The Foundation Stage Profile Handbook*
- QCA, 2004, *Observing children – building the Profile*
- TTA, 2004, *Foundation Stage Audit Materials* TEA0312/1p/20k/fmp/mar04

Web based materials

- Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage*
www.qca.org.uk/ages3-14/foundation/223.html
- EPPE: Effective Provision of Pre-school Education*
www.surestart.gov.uk/ensuringquality/research/earlyyears/eppe/
- Excellence and enjoyment: Learning and teaching in the Primary Years*
www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/literacy/63553/
- Foundation Stage Profile Handbook*
www.qca.org.uk/ages3-14/foundation/163.html
- Parents: Partners in learning*
www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/literacy/1092095/
- Removing Barriers to Achievement*
www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/inclusion/883963/
- Special Educational Needs Code of Practice*
<http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DfES+0581+2001>
- SPEEL: Study of Pedagogical Effectiveness in Early Learning*
www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/RRP/u013617/index.shtml
- Transition: www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/innovation-unit/communication/innovationinpractice/forgottentransition/
- Teacher Training Agency: contacts details for publications
www.teach.gov.uk/php/read.php?sectionid=155&articleid=979
- Information about 'The hundred languages of children' 2004 exhibitions available from Refocus: Sightlines Initiative. These exhibitions were funded by LEAs, arts organisations and the private and voluntary sector, with additional support from Sure Start.
www.sightlines-initiative.com

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