

# Teaching and Learning in the EYFS – Part 2

## From Why to How - Teaching Without Taking Over

Facilitating play through intentional adult practice - For educators and leadership teams

### 1. What does teaching look like in a play-based EYFS?

Teaching in the EYFS is not about delivering activities. It is about noticing, responding and extending learning through relationships, interaction and the environment.

Teaching happens in play, routines, and moments of curiosity, challenge and connection.

**Key idea: teaching is defined by adult action, not adult control.**

### 2. The adult role in play

*For educators*

- Observe long enough to understand what the child is trying to do
- Join play sensitively, without taking over
- Use language to narrate thinking, not judge outcomes
- Offer one small nudge, then step back

**Reflect: Am I mostly directing, or mostly responding?**

*For leaders*

- Ensure staff have permission to stay in play, not rush to outcomes
- Protect time and staffing so adults can observe and respond
- Model what joining without taking over looks like
- Challenge over-direction and worksheet dependency

**Reflect: What messages does our timetable and monitoring send about teaching?**

### 3. Process over product

#### *For educators*

- Learning is visible in talk, effort, problem-solving and persistence
- Finished products do not equal depth of learning
- Focus on how learning is happening

#### *For leaders*

- Avoid judging practice by displays or books alone
- Ask staff about learning processes, not just outcomes
- Align monitoring with EYFS intent

### 4. What to notice

Notice three layers:

1. Interests – what the child returns to
2. Schemas or patterns – how they explore
3. Characteristics of effective learning – how they engage

#### *For educators*

- These help decide how to respond
- They guide whether to narrate, nudge or step back

#### *For leaders*

- These support coaching conversations
- They highlight training needs
- They move focus from activities to interactions

### 5. The 5 N's – the educator's thinking cycle

Notice – Narrate – Nudge – Note – Next

These are educator moves that happen fluidly, in play, all day.

#### *For educators*

- You do not need to do all five every time
- One well-timed interaction can change learning
- Notes should be brief and useful

### *For leaders*

- Systems should support this cycle, not interrupt it
- Recording should not require leaving the room
- Expectations must match real practice and ratios

## **6. Making learning visible**

### *For educators*

- A short note, photo or comment is enough
- Capture thinking, effort, language or strategy
- Use it to inform your next interaction

### *For leaders*

- Use overviews to spot patterns, not micromanage
- Support consistency, not excess paperwork
- Keep accountability proportionate and purposeful

## **7. Reflection and commitment**

### *Educators*

- One child I will observe more closely
- One routine where I will join play differently
- One interaction I will slow down and notice

### *Leaders*

- One system that interrupts good practice
- One expectation that needs clarifying
- One way to protect time for quality interaction

**You do not need to change everything.**

**One better interaction a day changes practice.**