



Curriculum and Guidance for the Early Childhood Development Curriculum

South Sudan



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Pre-school education lays the foundation for life-long learning. To develop children as life-long learners, we need to nurture their self-confidence, encourage them to explore the world around them, help them to develop the language to express themselves and provide a secure, stimulating and exciting environment in which they can learn practically.

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Section 1: Introduction

The purpose of this Guidance

South Sudan has developed a new Early Childhood Development (ECD) Curriculum. The new curriculum is based on an active approach to learning in which young children are involved in a rich range of learning activities – with the emphasis on “activity” and on play.

The new curriculum sets out this approach in some detail, and will help teachers plan and ensure progression. However, these are only words on a page. This booklet of Guidance is designed to help teachers turn those words into exciting, practical learning experiences.

Because ECD provision is being offered in a variety of settings: nurseries, (nursery schools, classes attached to schools etc) the term “settings” will be used throughout this guidance.

Early childhood should be a time of joy, of fascination, of stimulation, of excitement and of rich learning.



Early Childhood Development (ECD)

The ECD Curriculum covers the period from 3 to 5 years old. It is a key phase of development when children develop very rapidly intellectually, physically, socially and emotionally. It is a time when they are exploring the world and finding their place within it. They learn through play. They need a rich range of practical activities and the time and independence to investigate and find out what things do. This will give them the practical knowledge and experience on which theoretical learning can be built later.

They need to be encouraged to grow socially and emotionally: to be given opportunities to work and play by themselves and with others, to take some responsibilities and develop some independence. Above all, they need to be encouraged to talk about what they are doing, to ask questions, to suggest answers and take part in conversations. Talk is the basis of language development and the key to future learning.

A stimulating environment enables the children to initiate their own learning, making choices and decisions. To enable children to realize their full potential the teacher needs to ensure that they feel secure and free to learn new things. This will be achieved through the active way that young children learn, through the independence they are given at this critical stage of their development, and through the way they are valued and supported by their teachers.

The ECD stage is not just a matter of preparing children for primary school. It is a distinct phase by itself.

At this stage, learning needs to be first-hand and practical, and based on play and exploration. This is the basis of the new Early Childhood Development Curriculum.

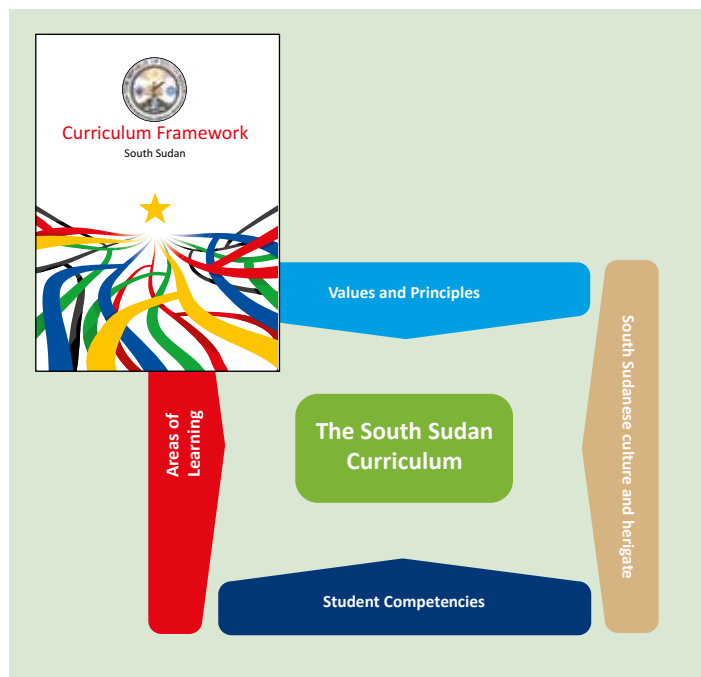
Before we look at the detail of the new ECD Curriculum, we need to think about the very special way in which young children learn.

The new curriculum has been designed to meet these needs of young children.

Section 2: The New ECD Curriculum

The Curriculum Framework

There is a new Curriculum Framework that puts subjects into a wider context. It sets overall aims for education along with values and principles. It also introduces a set of 'student competencies' that apply to ECD as well as primary and secondary schools. All of this takes place within the context of the South Sudan heritage and culture. This is illustrated in the diagram in the Framework:



These are all built into the curriculum, but teachers also need to be aware of the Framework and take account of them in their planning. You should refer to the Curriculum Framework as well as this booklet of guidance.

The Aims

The Curriculum Framework sets out aims for all schools from ECD to Secondary 4. These are that young people should become:

- Good citizens of South Sudan
- Successful life long learners
- Creative and patriotic individuals
- Environmentally responsible members of society

Achieving the four aims must start with the youngest children.

The student competencies

There are four **student competencies** set out in the Curriculum Framework:

- Communication
- Critical and creative thinking
- Co-operation
- Culture and identity

These are developed across all the subjects and learning areas. Developing these competencies starts in the ECD phase. The learning activities appropriate for young children lend themselves to the development of all four competencies. Although the children are young, they can still think, communicate, co-operate and appreciate their culture and identity, but they will do so at a simpler level.

Communication

Learning to communicate is fundamental to young children's development, and to do so they must be given as many opportunities to do so. Talk – with adults and to each other – is central to this development, and must come before reading and writing. Children need to be encouraged to ask questions and to suggest their own ideas, and they need to have these ideas valued by their teachers. Reading and writing will come later, but the basis for this will be laid in the ECD phase through talk, and though a whole range of activities in which they learn to recognise, draw and sort shapes.

Critical and creative thinking

Critical and creative thinking are at the heart of learning for young children as they explore the world around them and try to make sense of it.

Co-operation

This is a period when young children move from the individual to the social, and learning to co-operate and to work and play with other is a crucial part of their development.

Culture and Identity

All learning at this stage is part of the induction of young children into their culture. From behaviour and beliefs to the songs, rhymes and stories, all learning contributes to their cultural development.

The new ECD Curriculum

The ECD Curriculum takes account of the early stage of development of children of this age when it is not appropriate to study the same subject as older children in school. The ECD Area of Learning are seen as 'Activities', and they cover all the key elements of early childhood development and prepare young children to start school in Primary 1.

The seven areas are:

- Language Activities
- Mathematic Activities
- Environmental Activities
- Personal and Social Activities
- Outdoor and Physical Activities
- Artistic and Creative Activities
- Religious Education

Although there are set out a separate areas of learning, children will almost inevitably be learning in more than one area when they engage in practical activities.

The new curriculum format

The new curriculum is set out in terms of 'Learning Objectives' and 'Range' for PP1 and PP2 in each of the seven Areas of Learning.

The **"Learning Outcomes"** sections set out the learning that is expected by the end of the year in PP1 and PP2.

The **"Range"** sections set out the extent of the learning experiences or activities in which young children are expected to engage. The activities in the range set out a minimum rather than a maximum. Teachers are encouraged to do much more.

Although the Learning Outcomes are shown separately to help assessment, the learning activities that lead to these outcomes will be integrated. Young children learn best from rich and varied practical activities where they are actively engaged. These sorts of activities inevitably lead to more than one learning Outcome (see Principle 1 below).

These syllabuses will guide the learning, but it is up to the teacher to turn the words on the page into exciting practical learning experiences that will help develop the competencies and achieve the desired Learning Outcomes. This booklet will help you do so.



Section 2: The New ECD Curriculum

LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES

Language is vital for learning and for communication. Children learn by doing things practically and by talking about what they do. Language gives young children the means by which to understand the world, and it forms the basis for reading and writing. It is through language that children access all the other subjects.

Language gives young children the ability to express themselves, and the tools for relating to others, so it supports their social and emotional development. To develop good language skills children need an environment that is rich in talk, stories and books.

Children's efforts at early writing need to be valued and they need to be listened to. Most of all they need lots of time to talk both to adults and to each other.

PP1	Learning Outcomes	Speaking and Listening	L1a Express themselves orally and begin to ask questions (talk about what they are doing and what they have seen, ask about things that puzzle them) L1b Listen with increasing attention and follow instructions (follow stories, join in games which involve giving and carrying out instructions) L1c Join in repeated refrains (eg in rhymes, poems, riddles,)
		Pre-Reading and Pre-Writing	L1d Look at books with some interest and handle them with care. L1e Understand that print carries meaning (realise that signs convey information, and that the teacher uses the print to read the story) L1f Draw with increasing control, and begin to ascribe meaning to their drawings and communications (as a prelude to writing)
	Range	Stories, rhymes, poems, news, riddles, books, drawing, painting, role-play, speaking, asking, replying and listening to other people (To include text and pictures on screen where possible)	
PP2	Learning Outcomes	Speaking and Listening	L2a Express themselves effectively, joining events and ideas. ("I like this because ...") L2b Talk about their interests and their learning (discuss their activities with their teacher and other children) L2c Listen attentively in a range of situations, and respond appropriately to stories with some anticipation, relevant comments and questions
		Pre-Reading and Pre-Writing	L2d Follow stories and begin to recount a sequence of events L2e Recognise some simple words (their own names, familiar labels etc) L2f Begin to use writing as a form of communication (real and in role-play) with some letters properly formed and some simple words spelled correctly (eg their names and labels on drawings)
	Range	Stories, rhymes, poems, news, riddles news telling books, drawing, painting, role-play, speaking, asking, replying and listening to other people. (To include other media and keyboards where possible)	

MATHEMATICS ACTIVITIES

Young children learn mathematics by exploring the world around them, and by talking about what they do and observe. They need to handle shapes and materials, to count, sort, match and order them. Above all they need to use mathematics and the language of mathematics in practical everyday situations.

Mathematics is about much more than numbers, and young children need to be encouraged to think about shapes, patterns, size, position and comparisons in a wide range of situations. For young children, mathematics should always be practical.

They need an environment in which opportunities to talk about and explore number and shape, time and position are rich, and one in which mathematics is fun.

PP1	Learning Outcomes	The language of Mathematics	M1a Use language of quantity (such as more or less than, many etc) M1b Use language of size (large, small, thin etc) M1c Use language of time (before, after, later etc) M1d Use language of position (up, down, behind etc)
		Size and shape	M1e Describe the shape of everyday objects (round, flat etc) M1f Sort objects by shape, size and colour M1g Recognise patterns in a range of situations M1h Identify common shapes (circle, square, triangle, rectangle)
		Number	M1i Know number names in sequence (at least to 10) M1j Match objects to numbers (up to 10). M1h Count objects to 10
	Range	Count, compare, match, identify, describe and use the language of mathematics across all the areas of learning and on all possible occasions using every day objects and situations. (Use ICT where available.)	
PP2	Learning Outcomes	The language of Mathematics	M2a Use everyday language to talk about size, weight, capacity, position, distance, time and money M2b Use mathematical language to describe everyday objects and common shapes (number of sides, angles, regularity etc)
		Size and shape	M2c Sort shapes by their mathematical properties (number of sides, angles, curved lines, size etc) M2d Compare groups of objects (by number, shape, colour or size etc) M2e Order and sequence familiar events (events through the day, getting up, cleaning teeth etc; events from stories)
		Number	M2f Count reliably to 20, saying what is one more or less than a given number M2g Add and subtract simple numbers, using objects M2h Explore number patterns and sequences
	Range	Count, compare, identify, describe and use the language of mathematics across all the areas of learning and on all possible occasions using every day objects and situations, including outdoors and use of role-play (eg pretend shops etc) (Use ICT where available)	

Section 2: The New ECD Curriculum

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITIES

Children are naturally curious, and the environment around them is endlessly fascinating. Through observing, handling and exploring materials and objects around them they lay the foundations for scientific and technological understanding.

By exploring the natural world around them they learn to care for the environment and begin to realise how human activity can impact on nature.

By finding out about the people around them, what they do and where they come from, children develop a sense of history and of geography.

Children's horizons are extended and they begin to have a sense of themselves and their place in the world.

PP1	Learning Outcomes	Physical World	E1a Observe living things and physical features in the environment. (plants and animals, hills, water, weather etc) E1b Sort objects and comment on patterns that occur naturally (eg on flowers, leaves, bark etc) E1c Talk about things they have observed in the environment.
		Material World	E1d Examine objects and mechanisms carefully to find out more about them E1e Join materials together and begin to try out a range of tools (eg make models from found materials)
		Social World	O1e Participate in simple games involving movement
	Range	Found objects and materials, observe and collect from nature and grow plants, talk to people in the community. (Use ICT resources where available)	
PP2	Learning Outcomes	Physical World	E2a Find out about their environment and talk about the things they like and dislike E2b Find out about, identify and care for some living things from the local environment E2c Understand the need to care for the environment. E2d Know how to stay safe in the outdoor environment
		Material World	E2e Begin to investigate objects and materials in a systematic way E2f Ask questions and make suggestions about why things happen and how things work E2g Select tools and materials to construct simple objects from everyday materials
		Social World	E2h Talk about past and present events in their own and their family's lives E2i Talk about the jobs people do in the immediate locality
	Range	Found objects and materials from the environment, simple tools, observe and collect from nature, talking to people in the community. (ICT resources where available.)	

ARTISTIC AND CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

Young children are naturally creative. Their responses and reactions to what they see, hear, and experience are expressed in individual and unique ways: visually through drawing, painting, models and collage; in sound through music and song; in movement through dance; in sound and movement through drama and role-play.

Being creative enables young children to explore a wide range of processes and materials to express their ideas. It is therefore important for the teacher of young children to provide them with many opportunities to explore their surroundings, and a wide range of materials, especially the locally available resources.

Music is a particularly powerful medium and young children love to sing and to make music. The rhythms and sounds of music contribute to their understanding of language.

PP1	Learning Outcomes	Art & crafts	A1a Observe, handle and discuss artworks (paintings, drawings, photographs, objects etc). Ask questions about how things are made. A1b Explore a range of techniques, materials, colours and textures to find out what effects they can make. Talk about what they have found.
		Music & dance	A1c Listen to simple rhythms and make their own rhythms. A1d Sing some simple, songs and listen to a range of music (traditional and new). A1e Create movements in response to music. Talk about the movements
		Drama	A1f Use words and movement to play a role
		All Arts	A1g Express their ideas and feelings using a range of materials and effects that they have chosen themselves. Talk about their ideas.
	Range	Drawing, colouring, painting, printing, modeling, collage, construction & modeling with hard and soft materials. Found materials, paints, crayons, paste, glue, cardboard, wood, construction kits, clay, plasticene. A variety of music and songs, musical instruments and objects that make sounds.	
PP2	Learning Outcomes	Art & crafts	A2a Observe and discuss a range of artworks. Talk about similarities and differences. A2b Explore a range of techniques, materials, colours and textures to find out what effects they can make. Discuss the effects they can make A2c Express their ideas and feelings using a range of materials and effects that they have chosen themselves. Talk about how they could improve their work.
		Music & dance	A2d Create and refine movements in response to music. Talk about the refinements. A2e Express themselves through song, dance and music, stories and role play, individually and as part of a group A2f Choose their own resources to make music
		Drama	A2g Combine with others in role-play
		All Arts	A2h Select appropriate methods and resources to express their ideas visually or in music (eg in pictures, paintings, song, dance etc)
	Range	Drawing, colouring, painting, printing, modeling, collage, construction & modeling with hard and soft material. Found materials, paints, crayons, paste, glue, paper, cardboard, scissors, wood, construction kits. A variety of music and songs, musical instruments and objects that make sounds.	

Section 2: The New ECD Curriculum

OUTDOOR AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES			
<p>The outdoors is the best place for young children explore their physical capabilities. It is where they develop control over their movements and use this increasing control to develop skills and to relish physical activity. They need the space and the freedom to try out new things and to practise newly acquired skills.</p> <p>Teachers need to encourage their efforts so that children gain in confidence and enjoy what they do.</p> <p>Children also need to develop their fine motor and manipulative skills that will lead to proficiency in writing.</p>			
PP1	Learning Outcomes	Movement	O1a Explore the immediate outdoor environment O1b Move with increasing control of their body, (eg, running, skipping or jumping, dancing, adjusting speed and direction to avoid obstacles.)
		Skills	O1c Manipulate simple objects (eg, kicking, throwing and catching bean bags, rings and large balls etc) O1d Develop gross and fine motors skills using large and small tools, implements and apparatus with increasing control. (eg gardening tools, bats, etc
		Games	O1e Participate in simple games involving movement
	Range	Large and small spaces, open and confined, with and without obstacles and apparatus to allow children to experience a full range of movements. A range of large and small apparatus or tools and a range of fixed and moveable equipment.	
PP2	Learning Outcomes	Movement	O2a Understand the importance of caring for the outdoor environment O2b Move confidently and with control and co-ordination in both large and small movements, adapting movements to the environment
		Skills	O2c Handle toys, equipment and tools effectively (paint brushes, pencils, scissors etc) O2d Refine gross and fine motor skills (throwing, catching, kicking balls; drawing shapes and forming some letters) O2e Build and construct with a wide range of objects, selecting the tools and materials they need (make models from found materials)
		Games	O2e Participate in co-operative games
	Range	Large and small spaces, open and confined, with and without obstacles and apparatus to allow children to experience a full range of movements. A range of large and small apparatus or tools and a range of fixed and moveable equipment. Keep a garden, grow plants from seeds	

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

The ECD phase is a critical period for children’s personal development. It is during this time that they establish their own identities and learn to co-operate with others.

They learn through the examples set by their teachers and other adults. They need a supportive and loving environment in which they can grow and develop with confidence, be also become aware of how to stay safe.

Through learning to care for others and the natural world they begin to realise that they have responsibilities that go beyond themselves and their families. This provides a framework for respecting and valuing others.

PP1	Learning Outcomes	P1a Co-operate with others and begin to take account of other children in their group or class P1b Know that classroom rules are important, and show regard for them. P1c Understand that personal hygiene and nutrition are important, and begin to develop good personal habits P1d Discuss things they like and do not like P1e Begin to know how to stay safe in familiar situations
	Range	Role-play, stories, songs, books, talking to people in the community, observe and collect from nature and grow plants. (ICT resources where available)
PP2	Learning Outcomes	P2a Co-operate with others, line up, take turns and share. P2b Know how to behave well, understand the importance of rules and follow classroom rules. P2c Understand that people have differing needs and feelings and take account of this when dealing with others. P2d Understand the importance of personal hygiene and nutrition, and understand the need for good personal habits. P2e Understand and value the similarities and differences between themselves and others, and amongst communities and traditions P2f Explain, using simple language, what they can do, enjoy and find difficult. P2g Understand how to stay safe inside and outside the home
	Range	Role-play, stories, songs, books, talking to people in the community, observe and collect from nature. (ICT resources where available.)

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Religious education provides a way of looking at the world and of making sense of that world in a spiritual way. It encourages children to look beyond themselves and to think about others. It provides a strong moral compass.

These outcomes apply to both Christian and Islamic religious education, and can be interpreted within the contexts of each religion.

PP1	Learning Outcomes	R1a Be aware of their creator God/Allah. R1b Appreciate the creation of God/Allah and his generosity. R1c Develop values and virtues to enhance spiritual development R1d Know who Jesus Christ and Mohamed are and their goodness. R1e Appreciate own beliefs and that of others. R1f Say or recite verses and prayers.
	Range	Drawing, colouring, painting, printing, modeling, collage, construction modeling with found materials, paints, crayons, paste, glue, cardboard, wood, construction kits. Storytelling, role-play poems, songs, question and answers.
PP2	Learning Outcomes	R2a Appreciate the significance of God’s creation. R2b Identify importance of religious practices, values and virtues. R2c Begin to understand the importance of prayers R2d Demonstrate appreciation of God’s creation.
	Range	Drawing, colouring, painting, printing, modeling, collage, construction & modeling with found materials, paints, crayons, paste, glue, cardboard, wood, construction kits. Storytelling, role-play poems, songs, question and answers, Dramatizing, Discussions.

Section 3: Planning from the new curriculum

The new curriculum sets out clear "Learning Outcomes" for children, and it also sets a minimum range of experience that they need.

It is the role of the teacher and the school to devise learning activities within the range of experiences that will enable the children to achieve the learning Outcomes. This section of the Guidance will help with this.

The learning activities need to match the particular way in which young children learn, so we need to consider this first. In particular, we need to think about the key aspect of language development.

How young children learn

Young children learn through doing things rather than by sitting and listening, and they learn through play, so activity and play must be the basis of teaching and learning. Teachers need to be facilitators of learning, arranging stimulating activities and resources, and engaging children in rich learning experiences. For effective learning to take place, these activities must be accompanied by talk. Teachers need to stimulate this talk, and must 'model' (by example) good speaking and good listening. Children need to be encouraged to reflect upon their learning and to talk to others about what they are doing. This helps them make sense of new information.

Young children need to be helped to explore the world around them and develop the early understandings and skills that will enable them to take their learning forward as they get older. They need help developing their own emotional stability and learning to adapt to social situations. They need help to develop their language abilities through speaking, singing and listening. They also need the space and the time to develop these skills and understandings.

Young children learn from those around them, so as teachers we must be careful to model the sorts of behaviour we expect from the children.

Language development is a key aspect of the ECD phase. The ability to communicate clearly and with confidence through speaking and listening provides the basis for later reading and writing and all future learning. Young children need constant opportunities to speak and to listen to others. The ECD phase should be a time of talk.

Language Development

In accordance with the national "Implementation Guidelines for National and Foreign Languages" the language of education will be a National Language to be selected by the school. Children learn to read and write best in their own language, and then can transfer these skills to English. All the international evidence suggests that this is more successful than trying to learn English and to read and write at the same time.

The evidence also suggests that children find it easiest to learn to read and write if they have a good grounding in spoken language and a wide experience of drawing and manipulating shapes and other objects. There is a danger in trying to teach formal reading and writing before these fundamental "pre-reading skills" have been developed. This is why spoken language and practical activities are so important at the ECD stage. The two are not separate: children should be encouraged to talk about their practical activities.

Pre-Reading and Pre-Writing

Children should not be introduced formally to reading and writing at the ECD phase. The new curriculum makes this clear. It is much more important that children develop their "pre-reading and pre-writing skills" and these are developed through the range of learning activities in which they engage.

This means:

- Spoken language (in terms of vocabulary and the way they speak in sentences) through a wide range of opportunities to talk to adults and other children
- Listening skills through listening and responding to talk and to stories, and also listening to music and discriminating sounds
- Ability to recognise rhymes and rhythms through songs and repeated refrains in poems and stories
- Manipulative skills through drawing, painting, making models etc, so that they will be able to form letters and words at a later stage
- Shape recognition skills through sorting, matching, drawing and puzzles to help the recognition of letters and words.

Letter sounds are important, but young children often find it easiest to recognise whole words first though names and labels and later in some key words in simple story-books being read to them.

All the evidence suggests that if the "pre-reading skills" are well developed and children have a wide range of experience and a confidence in learning, then learning to read and write will come quickly.



Key differences between ECD and Primary School

The way in which young children learn impacts on the way ECD settings need to be run. This is reflected in the new ECD curriculum.

Learning in ECD settings needs to be:

- Child-centred rather than teacher-centred
- Active and play-based
- Based on talk rather than writing

It should give children:

- Time to explore and find out things for themselves
- Opportunities for independence and generating their own learning
- A wide range of experiences across the Areas of Learning
- Opportunities to talk about what they are doing
- Opportunities to work in pairs and small groups as well as individually

Much of this also applies to the earlier classes in a primary school, but learning in ECD settings is always informal and based on activity and talk.

There are often “on-going” activities in ECD settings, such as a role-play area, reading corner or construction area where different groups of children are engaged in different activities – often of their own volition. There is more about this later in this booklet.

The ECD physical environment is usually much less formal than a primary school, with opportunities for children to move between different activities and resources.

ECD settings need have an even closer relationship with parents than schools do. Parents play a key role in the education of young children and must be made part of the process.

A Rich Learning Environment

The learning environment is an important and powerful teaching tool in itself. Much of the early childhood teacher’s work is done before the children ever arrive – by arranging for a rich learning environment. If the environment is set up with the knowledge of how children learn and develop, it can positively support both learning and teaching.

The ECD setting or classroom is usually much less formal than a primary school. Young children do not learn well by sitting in rows and listening to a teacher. They need to be active and engage in practical learning activities, so the environment needs to reflect this.

The Physical Environment

The physical environment should be stimulating and provide the range of materials for the children to explore and use. This does not mean that there has to be expensive equipment or facilities. Local and ‘found’ materials can be stimulating and can provide a variety of learning opportunities. But it does mean that the physical space should not be set out formally with rows of seats or desks.

Ideally the physical environment will provide a range of resources and potential activities that will provide some degree of independence and choice for the children.

For example:

- A role-play area set up as a shop or a house or something that is familiar to the children
- An art area with materials for drawing, painting or collage
- A maths area with things to count, sort, weigh or measure
- A construction or modeling area with things to make or join or shape (clay, card, wood etc)
- A “reading” area with picture books
- A “writing” area where children can pretend to write (often with a set purpose linked to role play – such as a shopping list etc)
- A play area with jig-saw puzzles or other games and puzzles

It is recognised that many settings and schools will lack many resources. However, the above list shows the sorts of things that can be done, and often local or ‘found’ materials can be used inventively.

In some ECD settings, children are given a choice of activities for at least some of the day, and will move from one area to another. Many of these are the “ongoing” activities that are a feature of ECD settings.

The physical environment can valuably include words and labels, especially at PP2. If children get used to seeing simple words attached to objects (door, window, reading corner etc) then reading comes much easier at a later stage.

Section 3: Planning from the new curriculum

The Social Environment

The ECD phase is an important time for children to develop socially and learn to cooperate, mix and be part of a larger group. This is also important to their language development. This is helped in a social environment where children are provided with opportunities and encouraged to work in pairs and small groups. It is also important that they are encouraged to talk to others, and not be expected to be silent.

The Emotional Environment

The key to a successful learning environment is that children need to feel secure and valued. They need a network of strong relationships so that they gain the confidence to explore and try things out. Above all, they must not fear failure. Children learn from experience, and there is often more to learn when things go wrong. Teachers need to help children to understand this and to have the confidence to go on. In this way, children will become 'life-long learners'.

A major cause of children dropping out of school is fear of failure and being reprimanded for getting things wrong. Teachers should be encouraging and help children to be successful.

For all these reasons, the emotional environment is in many ways even more important than the physical one.

Best Practices in Creating a Rich Learning Environment

In creating a positive early childhood environment, the following practices should be observed:

- The classroom should be organised to foster exploration with learning materials.
- Learning materials should be relevant to a child's own life experiences (open-ended but purposeful).
- The classroom environment should be set up for choices.
- Learning experiences should be planned so that there are teacher-initiated and child-initiated learning opportunities in small group contexts.
- Schedules should reflect active and quiet learning activities; large group, small group and individual learning time; teacher-directed and child-initiated activities; and, where possible, indoor and outdoor activities.

The role of the teacher is to facilitate learning by creating a rich physical, social and emotional environment.

Inclusion and Special Education Needs

It is essential that all children are enabled to access education. They must all be included. This includes those with disabilities, those from minorities and those with particular learning difficulties. The ECD curriculum applies to all schools and learners, but the way in which it is interpreted and taught will need to be adapted to ensure that all learners are included. Schools should aim to give every student the opportunity to experience success in learning and to achieve as high a standard as possible. To do this, schools will need to consider:

- Creating effective learning environments
- Providing appropriate support to learners with special educational needs
- Providing specialist equipment or materials where appropriate
- Varying teaching approaches where necessary to ensure that all learners are learning

Gender Equity

The curriculum applies equally to boys and girls. There is no subject that applies to only one gender.

Schools need to ensure that all learners have equal access to the curriculum, regardless of gender. To this they need to consider:

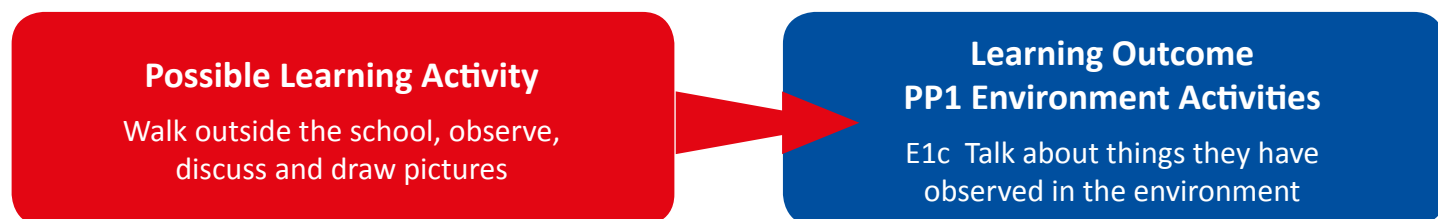
- Giving equal support and encouragement to girls as well as boys
- Ensuring that gender stereotypes are avoided and challenged
- Making sure that the school is welcoming to both genders
- Ensuring that girls as well as boys are listened to with respect and given full opportunity to contribute to lessons
- Encouraging girls to attend and supporting them to achieve

Every encouragement needs to be given to girls to help them complete their schooling successfully.

The ECD phase is an crucial period for developing attitudes, so it is essential that positive attitudes to gender equity are developed at this stage.

Taking account of the way in which young children learn, teachers need to plan Learning Activities that will lead to the Learning Outcomes that are set out in the new curriculum.

For example, a PP1 Environment Learning Outcome E1c is: “Talk about things they have observed in the environment”. To help children achieve this Learning Outcome, a teacher might plan to take them for a walk outside of the school, asking them to look carefully at the things around them. When they come back, the children could talk about what they have seen, explain where things were and draw pictures. This would be one possible “Learning Activity”.



But there is not a simple one-to-one relationship in which there is only one Learning Activity for every Learning Outcome. Educating young children is much more complex than that!

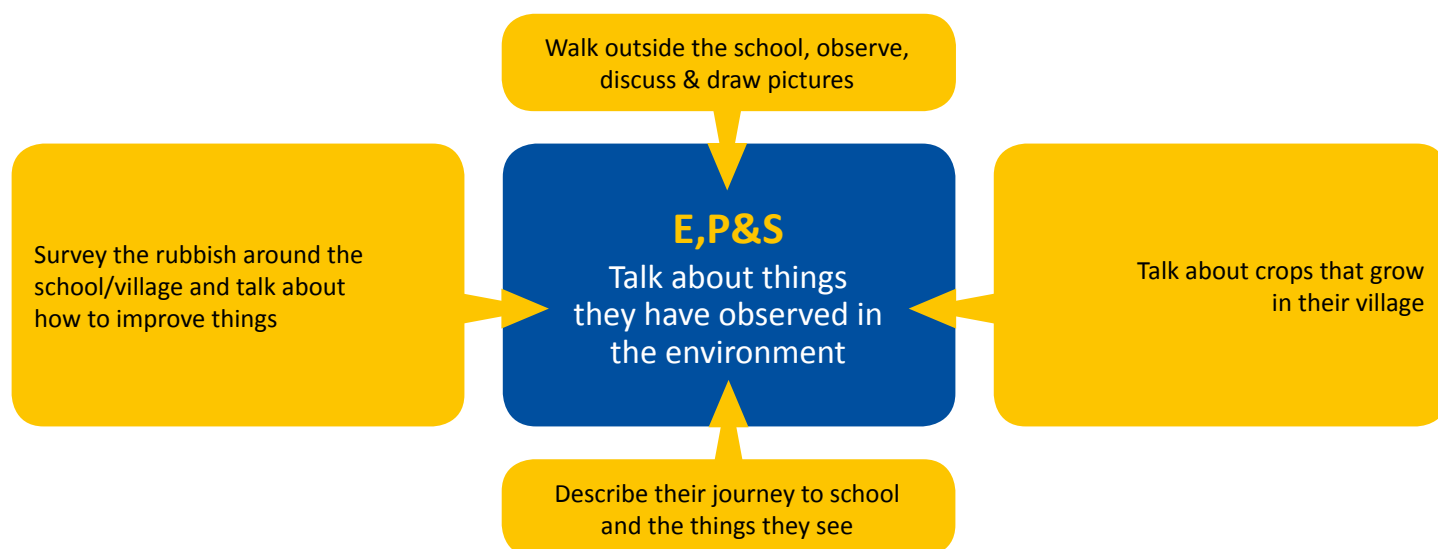
More than one Learning Activity is needed to help children achieve each Learning Outcome

Taking children on a walk to observe things then come back to the class to talk about what they have seen is not the only way of developing the ability to “talk about things they have observed in the environment”.

You can design lots of other Learning Activities that could lead to this same Learning Outcome. For example, you could ask your children to:

- Talk about the crops that grow around the village
- Describe their journey to school and the things they see
- Survey the rubbish around the school or village and talk about how to improve things

We show this on the diagram below:



All of these Learning Activities lead to the same Learning Outcome: “Talk about things they have seen in the environment”.

Of course, learning is **much better** if we use more than one Learning Activity in order to meet each Learning Outcome. This will make learning deeper and more secure. We can think of the Learning Activities as different “Contexts for Learning”.

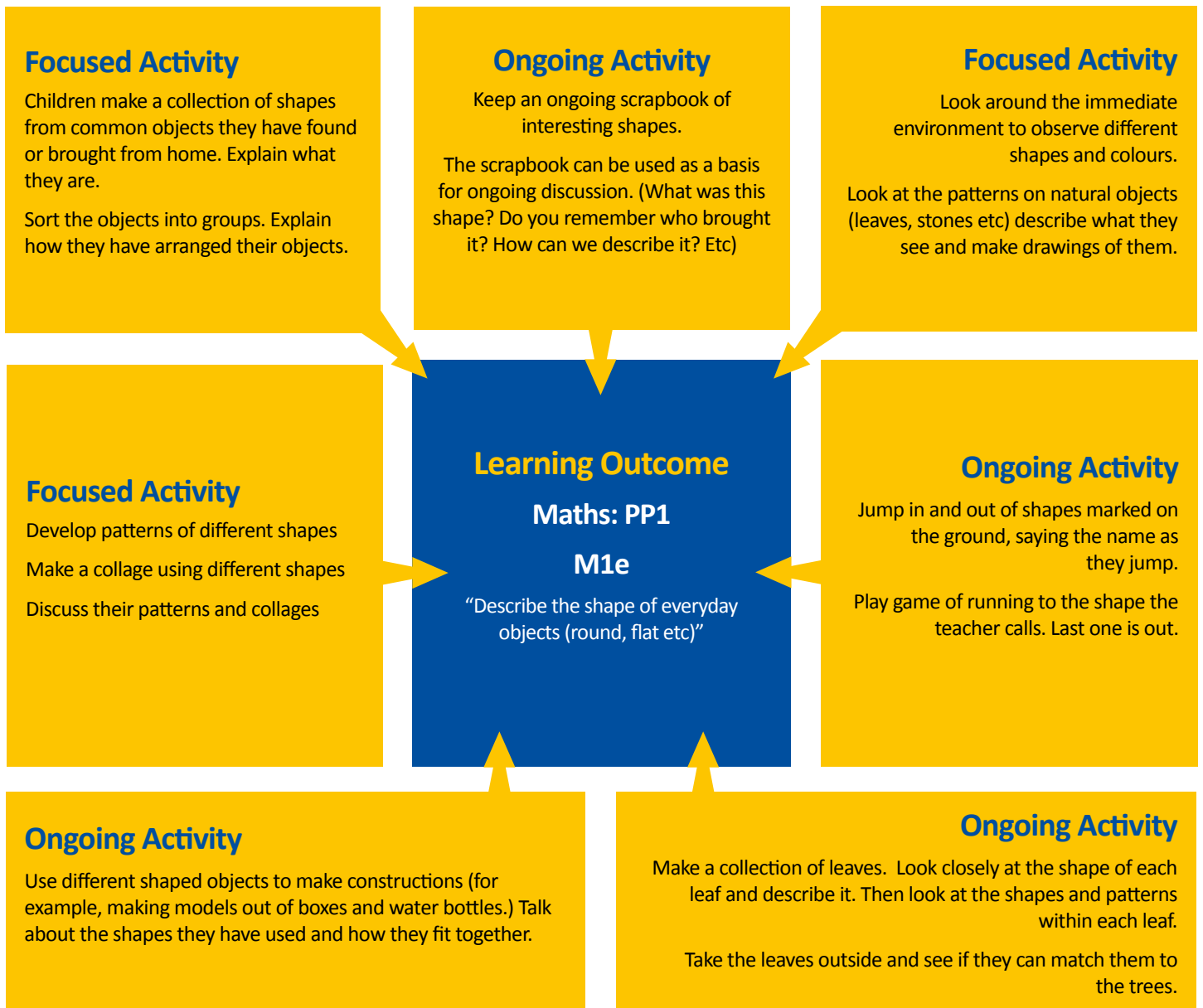
The more contexts we provide for achieving each Learning Outcome, the better the learning will be. So we do not just design one Learning Activity for each Learning Outcome – we design a whole range of them. Here are some examples of this.

Section 3: Planning from the new syllabuses

Many Learning Activities can lead to the same Learning Outcome



Many Learning Activities can lead to the same Learning Outcome



Section 3: Planning from the new syllabuses

Many Learning Activities can lead to the same Learning Outcome



This PP2 Learning Outcome is very similar to the previous one for PP1. The key difference is that in PP2 children are expected to sort shapes by their mathematical properties (number of sides, angles, curved lines, size etc) – not just everyday language.
Do you see how this changes the focus of the activities?

Many Learning Activities can lead to the same Learning Outcome



Section 3: Planning from the new syllabuses



One Learning Activity can lead to many Learning Outcomes

For young children, learning is interlinked and seldom falls within one Learning Area only.

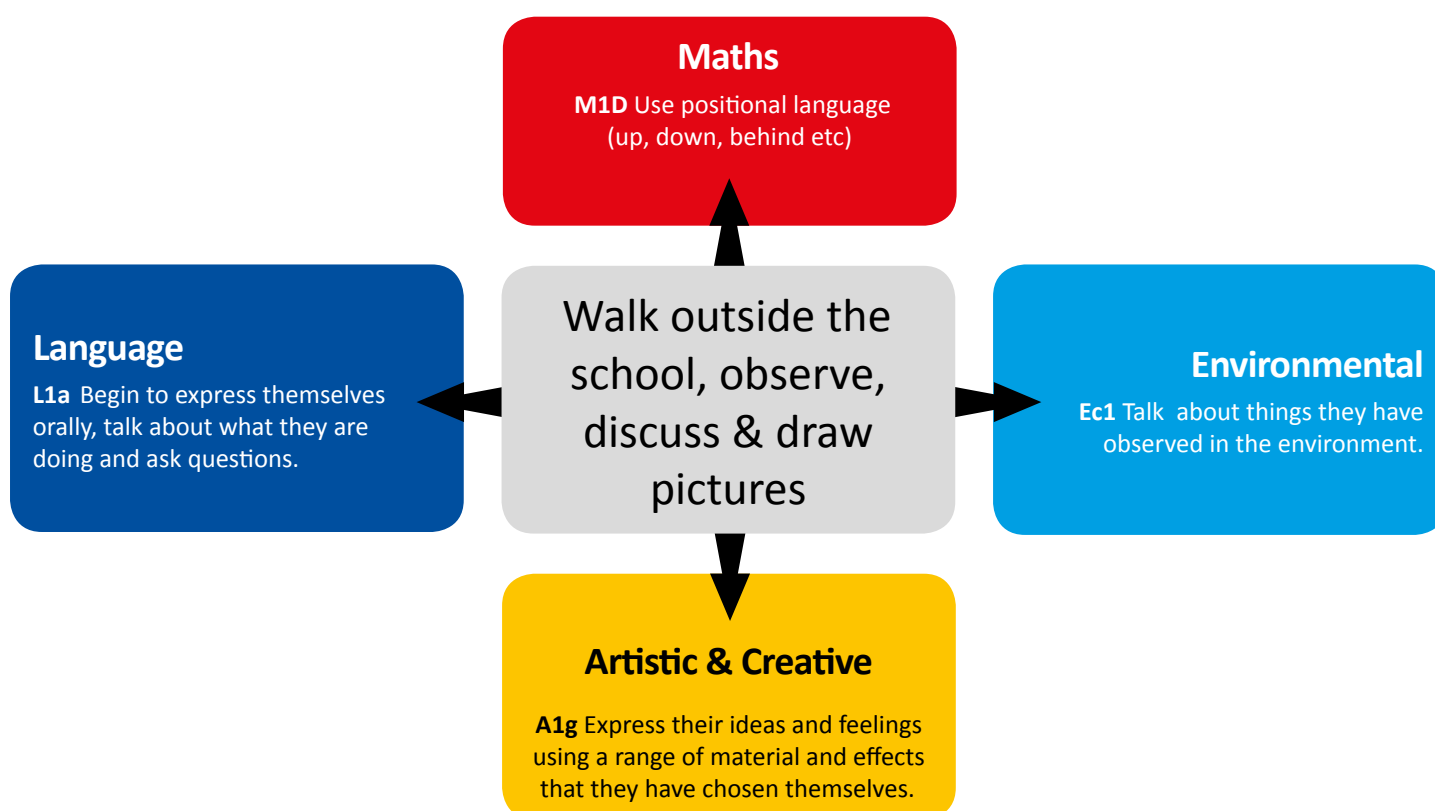
Look again at the Learning Activity in the previous example in which children “Go for a walk around the school to observe, discuss and draw what they see”. The activity was designed to help children achieve the Environmental Learning Outcome “Talk about things they have observed in the environment.”

However, this activity will inevitably lead to other Learning Outcomes as well. For example, **discussion** will lead to some Language Learning Outcomes; **drawing** will lead to Artistic and Creative Learning Outcomes.

If you look specifically at the PP1 Learning Outcomes for other Learning Areas, you will see the range of Learning Outcomes that this same Learning Activity would also help meet. For example:

Language Activities	L1a Begin to express themselves orally, talk about what they are doing and ask questions
Mathematics Activities	M1d Use positional language (up, down, behind etc)
Creative and Music Activities	A1g Express their ideas and feelings using a range of materials and effects that they have chosen themselves

We can show this in the diagram below:



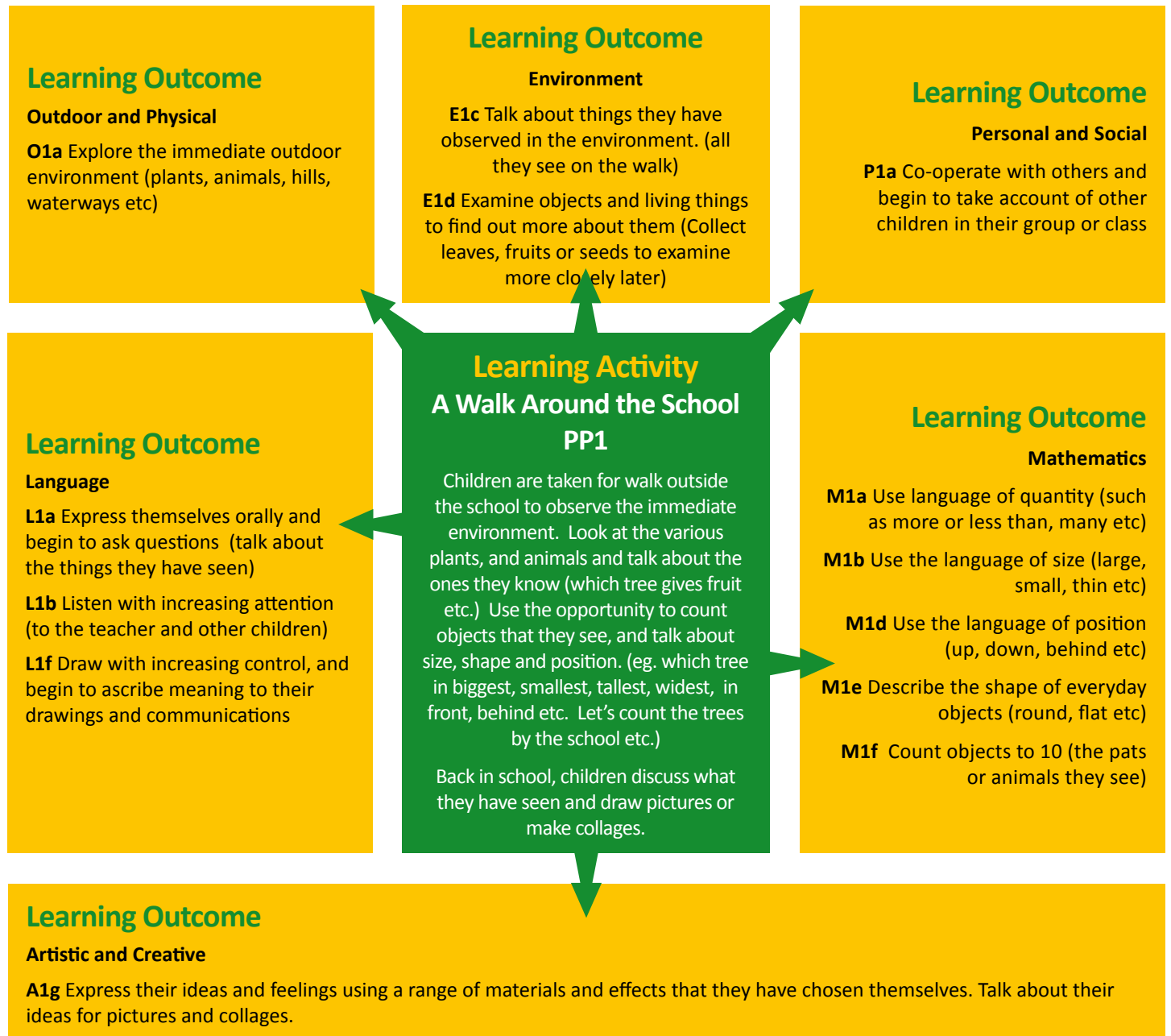
We need to take account of this in our planning – **One Learning Activity can lead to more than one Learning Outcome.**

The more practical and interesting the Learning Activity is, the more likely it is to lead to more than one Learning Outcome. These sorts of Learning Activities are called “Rich Learning Experiences”. These are the sorts of activities that we need to design.

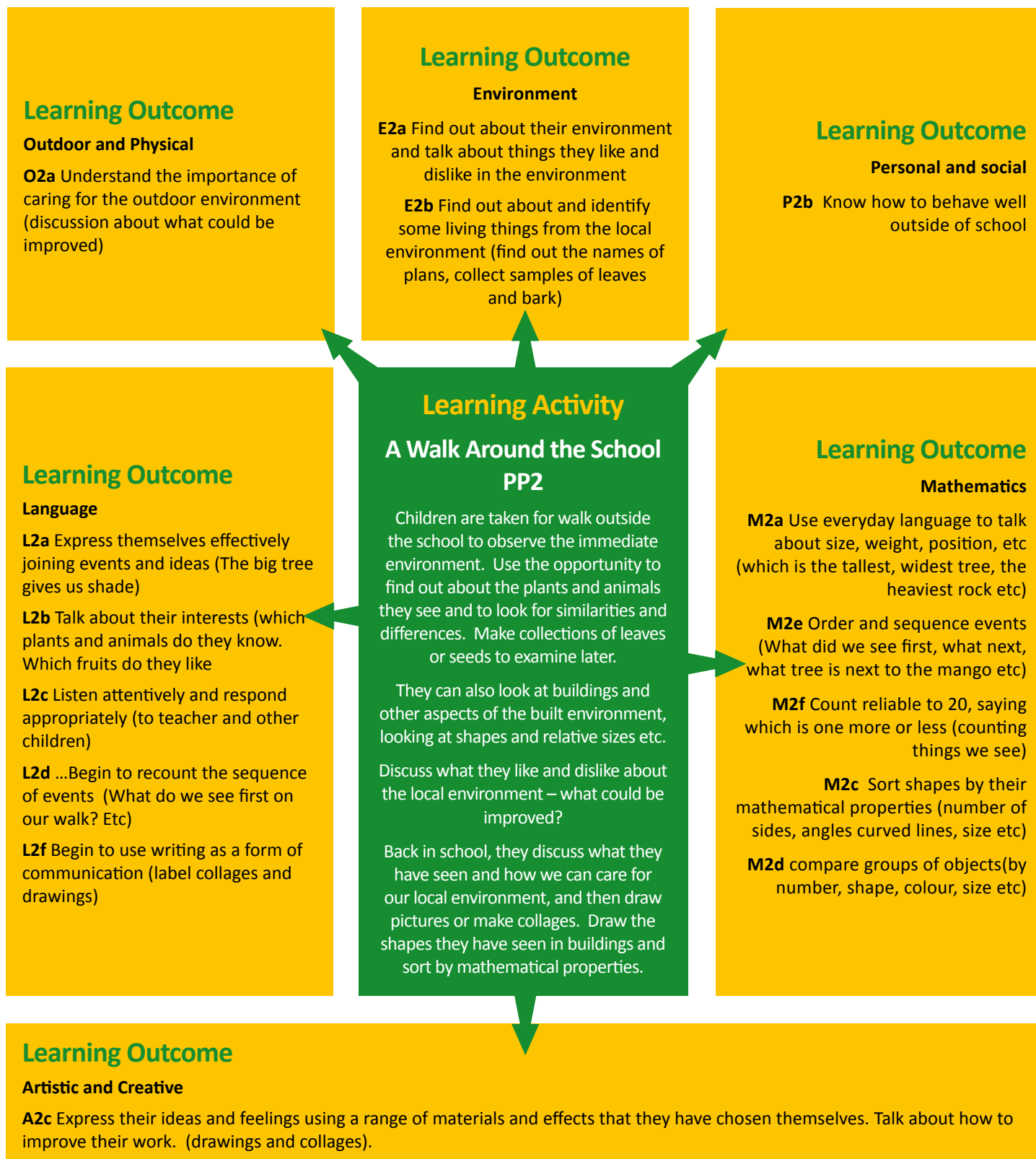
These are illustrated in the following examples. The examples have been chosen to illustrate that similar activities can lead to Learning Outcomes in PP1 or PP2, depending on the focus the teacher chooses, the tasks they set and the questions they ask.

Section 3: Planning from the new syllabuses

One Learning Activity can lead to many Learning Outcomes (PP1)



A similar Learning Activity can lead to many Learning Outcomes in PP2



The same activity (a walk around the school) is here leading to PP2 Learning Outcomes. To do this, the teacher needs to be aware of the different expectations of PP2 and to focus the activities and questions accordingly.

Section 3: Planning from the new syllabuses

One Learning Activity can lead to many Learning Outcomes (PP1)



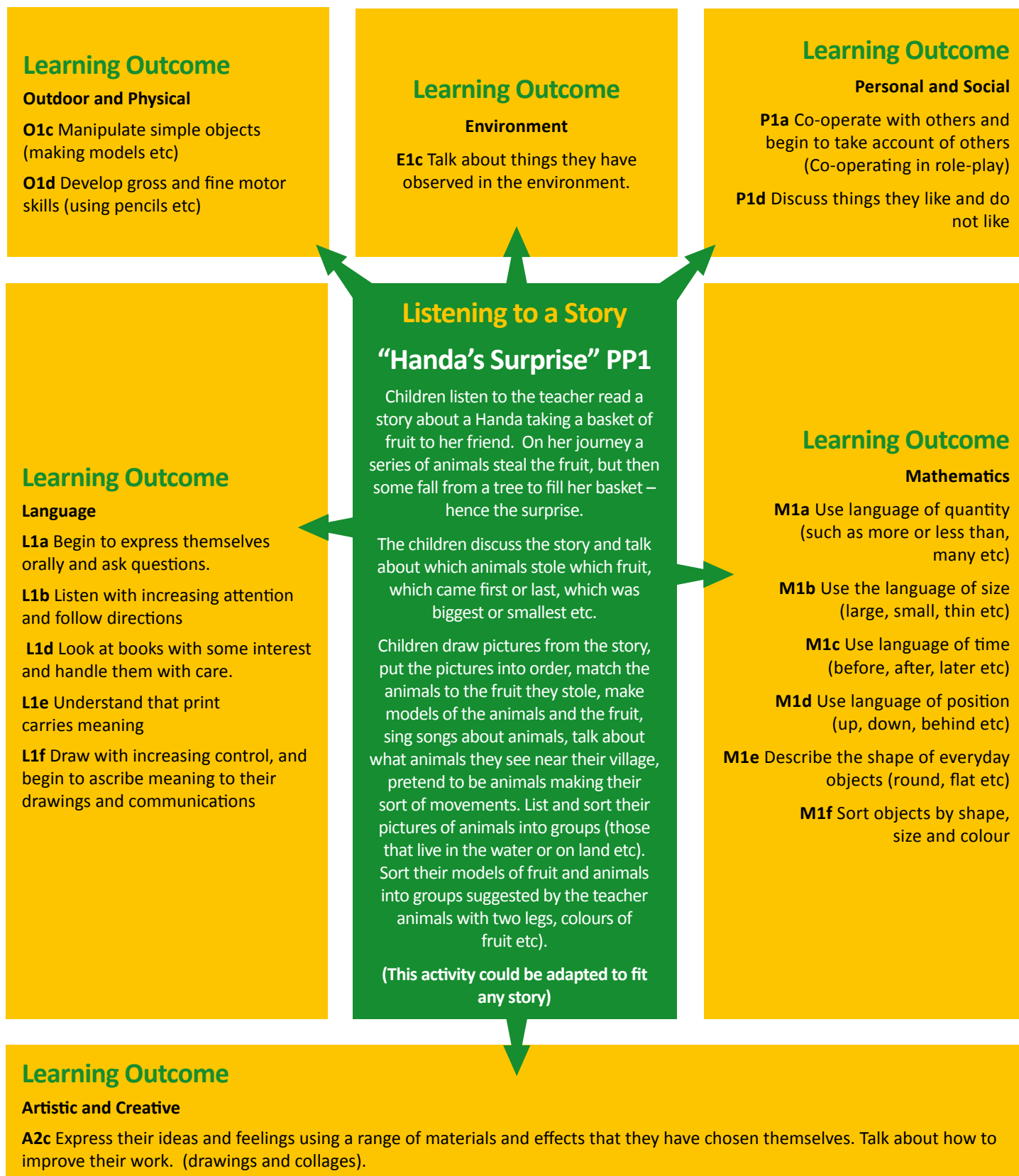
A similar Learning Activity can lead to many Learning Outcomes in PP2



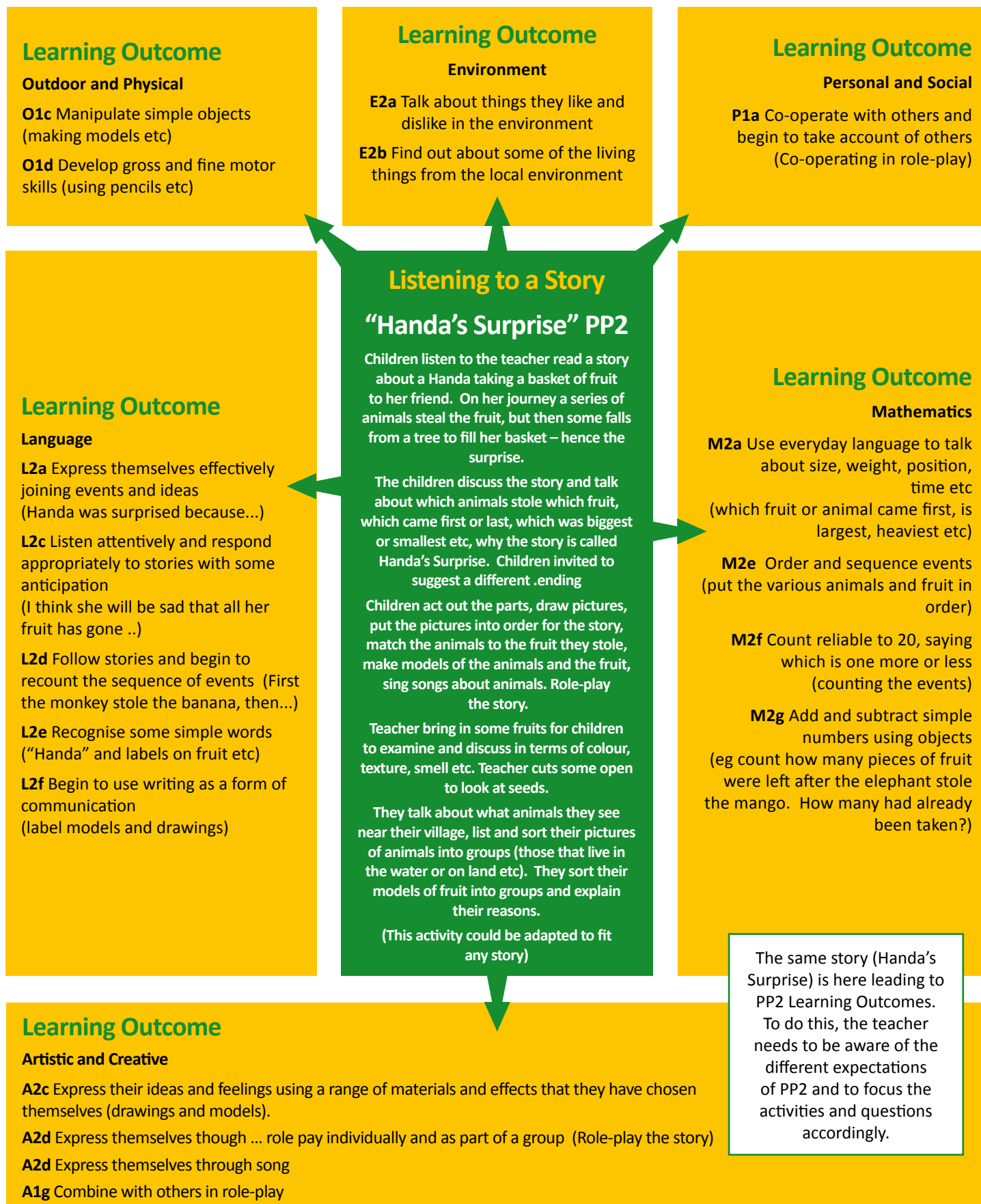
The same activity (growing tomatoes) is here leading to PP2 Learning Outcomes. To do this, the teacher needs to be aware of the different expectations of PP2 and to focus the activities and questions accordingly.

Section 3: Planning from the new syllabuses

One Learning Activity can lead to many Learning Outcomes (PP1)



A similar Learning Activity can lead to many Learning Outcomes in PP2



Section 4: Stepping Stones

The examples in the previous section showed how children progress from PP1 to PP2 in terms of their learning. This progression can be seen as Stepping Stones of learning from the beginning of PP1 to the end of PP2 and so on to Primary 1.

Progression is not just between PP1 and PP2, but also within each year. This can be seen most clearly in the Language and Mathematics Learning Areas where learning is more sequential and linear, but is also present in other Learning Areas. The Learning Outcomes are usually set out in sequential order within each strand.

For example in the 'Music and Dance' strand of the Artistic and Creative Learning Area, we find:

PP1	A1c Create movements in response to music. Talk about their movements A1d Sing some simple, songs and listen to a range of music (traditional and new). A1e Listen to simple rhythms and make their own rhythms with simple instruments
PP2	A2d Create and refine movements in response to music. Talk about the refinements. A2e Express themselves through song, dance and music, stories and role play, individually and as part of a group, using instruments where appropriate A2f Choose their own resources to make music

These Learning Outcomes are progressive on the sense than a child needs to “sing some simple songs” before being able to “express themselves through song, dance and music”. These are the **Stepping Stones**.

It is important for us to be aware of these Stepping Stones when we are planning Learning Activities. The activities must support the progression of the Stepping Stones.

The examples below show how the Learning Outcomes for a particular strand (such as 'Number' or 'Size and Shape' in Mathematics, or 'Pre-reading' in Language) form a line of progression, or **Stepping Stones** to Primary 1. Learning Activities are suggested for each of the steps. Look at how these activities form **Stepping Stones** that help promote progression across PP1 and PP2.



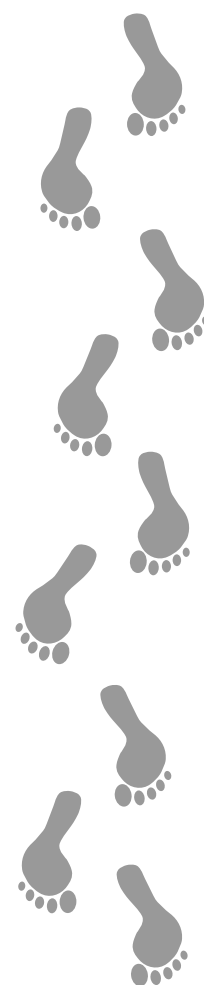
Stepping Stones

This gives a way of planning across the year, or across the two years.

Stepping Stones Maths (Number)

Young children need a wide variety of experiences in which to explore number. Experiences should always be practical and give children the opportunity to count, match and sort in everyday situations. Teachers should take every opportunity to ask questions such as: How many?, "How many more?" etc

Learning Outcomes	Possible Learning Activities
PP1 Know number names in sequence (at least to 10)	Use number language (one, two three etc; ask how many) in all opportunities during the day Stories, songs and rhymes with numbers Encourage children to use numbers (eg in role play in shops) Provide numerals for children to handle Maths table with objects to count and sort
PP1 Match objects to numbers	Touch objects whilst counting Match articles to people (How many chairs do we need?) Share objects in group (eg One for you, one for her etc)
Count objects to 10	Teacher models counting of objects Number labels for classroom objects Count objects in variety of situations Count things that cannot be touched (eg steps or jumps) Teacher models mathematical language (eg Have you got enough to give me three?) Play "missing number" games Teacher models estimating how many in a group
PP2 Count reliably to 20, saying what is one more or less than a given number	As above, but to 20 Use rhymes and songs that involve counting on and back Relate songs and rhymes to a number line to 20 Group objects in equal amounts and arrange in rows etc. Take one object away and count Play "one less than" games
PP2 Add and subtract simple numbers, using quantities and objects	Practical activities, adding a number of objects to a group and counting the increased number; removing a number of objects and counting those left Lining up and counting those left when some sit down Play game of getting in groups of five etc then reducing or increasing Sorting objects in to two groups and counting



Section 4: Stepping Stones

Stepping Stones Maths (Size and Shape)

Children need many opportunities to handle different shapes. They also need the teacher to help them look carefully and describe the features that they see. By PP2 teachers can be using mathematical language. These are not one-off activities but need to be repeated many times throughout the year in as many contexts as possible.

Learning Outcomes	Possible Learning Activities
Learning Outcomes PP1 Describe the shape of everyday objects	Provide lots of shapes (regular, irregular and found) for children to handle and discuss. Hold up objects for children to describe Model good descriptions to draw children's attention to key features Play game where teacher or child describes a shape and other guess what it is Children draw shapes they have seen Children use shapes to make collage pictures
PP1 Sort objects by shape, size and colour	Discuss different ways of sorting (big/small; straight/curved etc) Ongoing maths table Provide a selection of shapes to be sorted. Change the selection each day to focus on different features (shape, size colour etc). Children collect their own shapes to sort. Children explain how they have sorted (there is not necessarily a right and wrong way here – we need the children's ideas) Make pictures of their groups of shapes
PP2 Compare groups of objects (by number shape size and colour)	Show children two groups of objects and ask them to work out how the groups have been formed (straight lines and curved lines; red and blue etc). Repeat with more challenging criteria for groups. Children play game in which they sort objects into groups and then ask others to explain the criteria they have used.
PP2 Sort shapes by their mathematical properties	This is similar to PP1 Learning Outcome above (Sort objects by shape, size and colour) – but focuses on mathematical features and language (triangles/rectangles; curved/straight/ regular/irregular etc.) The activities will be the same as for the PPI Learning Outcome, but with the added focus.

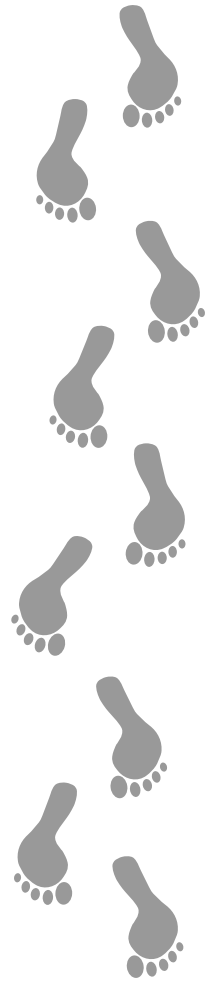


Stepping Stones Language (Pre-Reading)

It is important that young children are not rushed into formal reading. The best basis for future reading is for young children to learn about books and learn to enjoy them. They also need to gain experience of recognising and discriminating between large shapes to prepare them for recognizing the small shapes of letters.

These are not one-off activities but must be repeated day by day and week by week.

Learning Outcomes	Possible Learning Activities
PP1 Look at books with some interest	Teachers show books to children as they read them stories Children look at books and other written materials provided that are to do with a focus activity Children talk about books or pictures that have interested them
PP1 Understand that print carries meaning	Teachers refer to the print as they read to the children Teacher draw attention to large-print words in books (Have you seen this word before?) Objects in the classroom are labeled (door, window etc) Ongoing activities such as weather charts and timetables are shared with children
PP2 Follow stories and begin to recount a sequence of events	Teachers discuss stories with children asking them to recount certain sequences (And what happened next? Where did he go next?) Children draw 'sequence stories' of events from stories Children sort pictures from a story into the right order A group takes turns to tell a story each telling one event
PP2 Recognise some simple words (their own names, familiar labels etc)	Teachers frequently refer to the labels around the room Teachers refer to the words on the weather charts etc Children have name tags for their seats and possessions Teachers draw attention to key words in books they read to children (especially where these are in large print)



Section 4: Stepping Stones

Stepping Stones with a year

Children also make progress within each year (PP1 and PP2). For each Learning Outcome, there will be some 'Prior Learning' that is necessary to achieve the Learning Outcome, and then some follow-on activities to build on this Outcome. These can be seen as Stepping Stones within each year.

The examples below show how Learning Activities can be planned as a series of Stepping Stones to promote progression.

Stepping Stones within PP1	
Prior learning	Listen to the teacher reading stories
	Notice labels on objects around the school (door, window ect)
	Be shown signs around the school or Payam (open, closed, keep out etc)
	Follow text as the teacher reads to them
Learning Outcome	Learning Outcome Language PP1 L1e Understand that print carries meaning.
Follow on activities	Begin to recognize simple words in signs and labels (Teacher puts labels around room and writes simple captions on children's drawings etc)
	Recognise their own name (Teacher writes name on drawings and holds up names asking "Whose it this? etc)
	Begin to form some letters correctly (copying or tracing over teacher's writing at first)



Stepping Stones within PP1	
Prior learning	Play with a range of materials (paper, card, fabric, clay etc)
	Investigate ways of joining things together (glue, scotch tape, etc)
	Use boxes and other found materials to make simple models.
	Be introduced to a range of simple tools (scissors, glue brushes, clay scrapers etc)
Learning Outcome	Learning Outcome Environment PP1 E1e Join materials together and begin to try out a range of tools
Follow on activities	Use tools appropriately to shape materials for their models (instead of just using materials as they are)
	Make more complex models, joining materials appropriate
	Select appropriate tools, materials and joining methods for their work



Stepping Stones within PP2	
Prior learning	Have experience of using a range of tools and understand what they are for and what they can do
	Develop skills in using these tools
	Use everyday objects to construct simple objects
	Understand which tools are needed for different materials
Learning Outcome	Learning Outcome Environmental PP2 E2g Select tools and materials to construct simple objects from everyday materials
Follow on activities	Talk about how the object was made, and why it was made that way
	Construct more complex objects involving a range of materials
	Construct objects that fit a given purpose



Stepping Stones within PP2	
Prior learning	Know what constitutes good personal hygiene (hand washing, general cleanliness etc)
	Understand the connection between good personal hygiene and health (spread of diseases etc)
	Carry out personal hygiene in school
	Know that nutrition affects health
Learning Outcome	Learning Outcome Personal and Social PP2 P2d Understand the importance of personal hygiene and nutrition, and the need for good personal habits.
Follow on activities	Make lists of food that are good for us
	Measure heartbeat before and after exercise
	Build up a menu of nutritious meals throughout a week



Section 5: Planning a day

The nature of active learning for young children means that it is not necessary or appropriate to plan individual lessons. It is much better to think of the Learning Activities that will take place during a whole day or week.

It is up to teachers how they plan each day and week. What is important is that the curriculum should be covered over the year, the children should be engaged in a rich range of learning activities, and that these activities should build one on another to ensure progression.

There is a wide variety of ways in which learning can be organized, and there should be a balance of these across a day and week.

Focused Activities

Most days, teachers will plan some special activities that focus particularly on one of the Learning Outcomes of the ECD Curriculum. These focused activities can excite young children with their novelty and, if planned well, can act as a valuable stimulus to learning.

On-going Learning Activities

ECD settings often have activities that happen every day, such as recording the weather, tending plants, telling news, drawing, singing etc. Other learning activities need to be built around these.

There are other “on-going” activities that also might be happening every day. These centre around the physical provision mentioned in Section 3 about a rich learning environment: areas or facilities for role-play, art, reading, maths, construction etc. Where these have been set up, children need to be given time to engage in these activities. This could be part of free choice or child-initiated activities.

These are the key source of learning in an ECD setting. Young children will learn much by listening to their teacher and by engaging in teacher-directed activities, but they will learn even more if they are given the independence, time and space to engage in exciting and challenging practical activities.

Free-choice or Child-initiated Activities

Children should have some opportunity each day for activities that they have selected themselves. This depends upon there being plenty of equipment and activities to choose from and on children understanding what they are doing.

Whole class activities

There will be times when the teacher will want to bring the whole class together. However, these times should be kept to a minimum and such sessions should be short because young children have a short attention span. They learn best when they are actively involved in practical activity, rather than by listening to a teacher.

Individual Activities

There are many activities that are best done individually, but wherever possible children should be encouraged to co-operate and communicate (these are key Student Competencies) so working individually is not always the best way of learning and should be kept to a minimum.

Group Activities

These should be the basis of much learning in the ECD phase. Working in a group encourages communication and co-operation. Children learn well from other children and so group work help stimulate learning. Group work also enables scarce resources to be shared.

When planning a day, all of these should be taken into account. There should be a balance of activities across the day.

An example of how a day could be planned is given below. The times given are not rigid nor are they to be followed in every lesson. They are there to give an indication of the length of learning activities.

PP1 FOCUS FOR DAY: A WALK OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL

Time	Focused Learning Activity	Ongoing Activities	Learning Outcomes
09.00 Whole class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greetings and registration Outline of the day 	Provide a series of pictures to illustrate the activities planned for the day Talk about the weather and record observations on the class chart, or talk about a topical local event	Language: L1a Express themselves orally. L1b Listen with increasing attention Personal: P1a Co-operate with others Show regard for class rules
09.10	Intro to Focus Learning Activity – What will we see? What will we look for? How do we behave? What will we do when we come back to class?		Environmental: E1a Observe physical features (weather + outdoor environment) Maths: M1a,b,c,d The language of maths – quantity, size, position) M1g Recognise patterns in a range of situations Artistic & Creative: A1g use a range of materials they have chosen themselves (collage) A1f Use words and movements to play a role A1d Sing simple songs
09.20	Walk around the school, observing things in the environment (Teacher asks about number, size, position etc.)		
09.45	Class discussion of what we have seen		
10.00	Group activities (children in different groups engaged on different activities) Collages of found materials Drawing of route and what has been seen (in order)	Maths table: sorting leaves Reading table: books about plants & animals Construction table: model village Role play: village jobs Outdoor: tending plants	
10.45	Class Singing Songs about animals and birds		
11.00	Break		
11.30 Whole class	Welcome back Review of work so far – discuss collages and maps		Outdoor & Physical: O1a Explore the outdoor environment O1c Manipulate simple objects (kicking, throwing, catching etc)
11.40	Outdoor activities Ball games	Throwing, catching, target practice	
12.00	Group activities (children in different groups engaged on different activities) Collages of found materials Drawing of route and what has been seen (in order)	Maths table: sorting leaves Reading table: books about plants & animals Construction table: model village Role play: village jobs Outdoor: tending plants	(as above)
12.40	Free choice activities	From above	
13.00	Class story		Language: L1e Understand that print carries meaning L1d Look at books with some interest
13.20	Round up of day – home time		

Assessment

The Curriculum Framework states that “formal testing is inappropriate for children in the ECD phase and the early grades”.

Assessment should be carried out as part of the normal everyday teaching and learning process. And should be made in terms of the “Learning Outcomes” set out in each Learning Area. No other criteria should be introduced.

Ongoing, formative assessment is an important part of the teaching and learning process – and does not require any special assessment procedures. Teachers who talk to their children, watch them in their activities and take an interest in the things the children do and produce, will have a very good idea of whether or not the children have achieved the Learning Outcomes. The “Assessment Guidance” booklet sets these out more formally as”

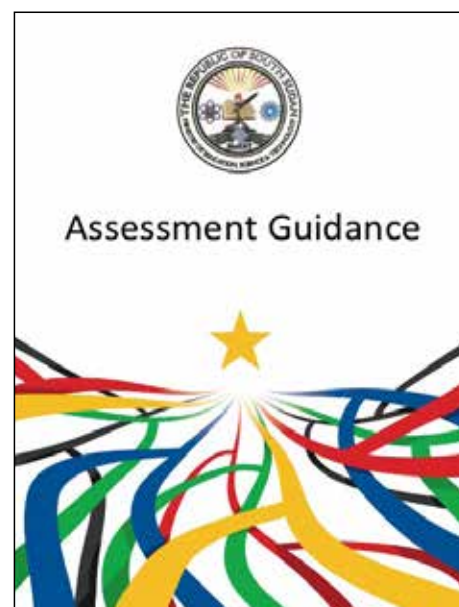
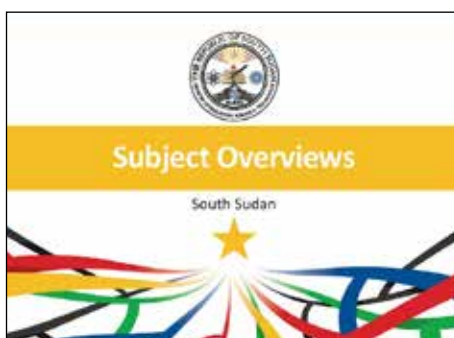
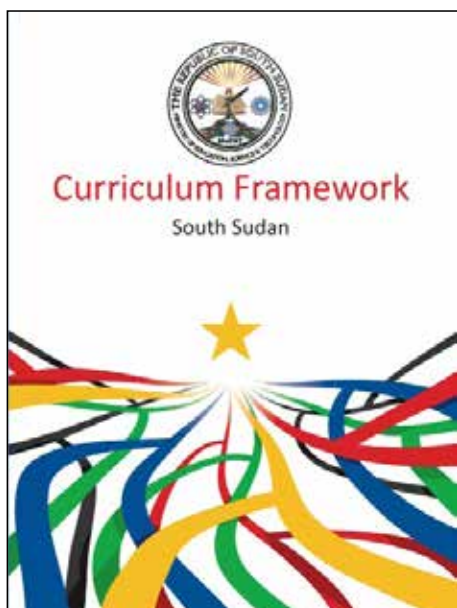
- **Observation** – watching students engaging in activities (good for assessing skills)
- **Conversation** – asking questions and talking to children (good for assessing knowledge and understanding)
- **Product** – looking at what a child produces (drawing, pictures, models, sorting of objects etc)

These are all ways of finding out whether a child has achieved one of the Learning Outcomes. The Learning Outcomes are goals for the end of each year (PP1 and PP2), but teachers should always be thinking about how well the children are progressing towards these Learning Outcomes. The Stepping Stones will help here.

Detailed guidance on how to make these assessments is set out in the “Assessment Guidance” booklet. This applies to schools as well as ECD settings.

Other sources of information

In addition to this guidance booklet, you should also refer to:



Pre-school education lays the foundation for life-long learning. To develop children as life-long learners, we need to nurture their self-confidence, encourage them to explore the world around them, help them to develop the language to express themselves and provide a secure, stimulating and exciting environment in which they can learn practically.





