

**CAMBRIDGE EARLY
YEARS'
PROGRAMME
OVERVIEW**

CURRICULUM AREAS

These six curriculum areas provide a comprehensive framework for nurturing children's development in the early years across various domains.

By addressing these curriculum areas holistically, we support children's development in a well-rounded manner, ensuring they are equipped with the skills and knowledge needed for future success.

1. **COMMUNICATION AND LITERACY:** This area focuses on developing language skills such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing. By engaging children in activities that emphasize the importance of language and exposing them to a wide range of texts, we encourage a lifelong curiosity for learning.
2. **CREATIVE EXPRESSION:** Creative expression allows children to communicate their ideas and nurture their imagination through various mediums such as art, music, dance, and drama. It integrates skills and cognitive processes from multiple disciplines, fostering holistic development.
3. **MATHEMATICS:** Early exposure to mathematical concepts is crucial for children to understand its relevance in daily life. Through games and activities, children can become familiar with mathematical language, thinking, and concepts, preparing them for primary education and beyond.
4. **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT:** This area promotes the development of movement skills through play, instilling positive attitudes towards physical activity and laying the groundwork for healthy, active lifestyles.
5. **PERSONAL, SOCIAL, AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT:** Central to children's overall well-being and success, this area focuses on fostering social relationships, emotional regulation, empathy, and self-esteem. It forms the foundation for learning in all other areas.
6. **UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD:** Encouraging children's natural curiosity, this area encompasses exploration of their surroundings and lays the groundwork for subjects like science, digital literacy, computing, and humanities. It nurtures a sense of wonder and inquiry about the world.

OUR APPROACH TO TEACHING & LEARNING

At The Learning Tree, we firmly believe in the power of play-based learning as a foundation of education. Guided by our skilled practitioners, children actively participate in play to acquire knowledge and skills, making learning a meaningful and enjoyable experience.

BENEFITS OF PLAY-BASED LEARNING

- **Play-based learning strengthens development, especially in the early years.** Play is essential when implementing a holistic curriculum and supporting all aspects of child development. For example, play-based learning often involves social interaction, which is vital for language development and also helps children to develop friendships, which are an essential part of social and emotional development. Play-based learning also supports cognitive and physical development by allowing children to build their working memory and make connections through actively taking part. For example, mark-making supports children's fine motor skills (physical development) as well as their understanding that writing conveys meaning.

- **Play-based learning helps children to develop their social and cultural identities and positive relationships.** Play-based learning, especially when it is child-initiated, gives children greater freedom to experiment with different identities. For example, during a role-playing game, a child might pretend to be a mischievous character by deliberately making a mess and refusing to clean up. Opportunities like these help children to test which behaviours get the most favourable responses, helping them to see what is most appropriate in their wider social context. Similarly, children may mimic cultural customs in their play (for example, marching when pretending to be a soldier or bowing to show respect to a child wearing a crown). Sensitive and appropriately timed interactions from skilled practitioners help children to reflect on these experiences and begin to form a deeper understanding of their social and cultural identities. Play-based learning also provides children with countless opportunities to rehearse interpersonal skills such as co-operating and working with others, and this in turn helps children to build positive relationships.
- **A play-based approach encourages positive behaviours for learning.** Child-directed, play-based learning requires children to make decisions about how they spend their time and the amount of effort they put into activities. This supports perseverance, resilience and intrinsic motivation (that is, the desire to do something which is driven by a child's own goals or ambitions and does not depend on reward or praise from others). These positive behaviours for learning are all related to good [self-regulation](#).
- **Play-based learning encourages self-expression and creativity.** A play-based approach gives children the time and space to interact with open-ended, multi-sensory resources, resulting in plenty of opportunities for self-expression and creativity. For example, when provided with spoons, containers and teabags of different flavours, some children might brew, smell and taste the tea they've created, while others may use these resources to create tuned percussion instruments by filling the containers to different levels and noticing the different sounds they make when tapped with spoons.
- **Play-based learning in a familiar environment helps children to become more comfortable with risk-taking and problem-solving.** Children feel a sense of security and belonging in a familiar environment. When this environment has resources which capture children's interests, they will explore and investigate. As they play, children develop the confidence to direct their own learning, try different ways of achieving a task or solving a problem, and take risks without fear of failure.

SETTLING YOUR CHILD INTO SCHOOL

Taking the time to settle your child into their new school environment is crucial. While some children adapt quickly, others may need more time. Regardless, having a familiar presence during this transition is essential for all children.

We recommend that you plan to accompany your child for the first few days and gradually increase the time apart each day until they are comfortable staying for the entire session. During the initial weeks of the school term, our focus is on helping children adjust to the school routine.

NAVIGATING GOODBYES:

UNDERSTANDING SEPARATION IN THE SCHOOL SETTING

Separation is an inevitable and challenging aspect of life. From small losses like a favourite jacket to more significant ones like the passing of a loved one, we all encounter separation throughout our lives. How we handle separation is often shaped by our early experiences.

Attentive caregivers acknowledge the importance of separation for young children. Rather than rushing through goodbyes, they recognize that children need to experience and manage the process of separation. It's common for young children to express fear and helplessness when separated from familiar family members, often manifesting as frustration, anger, or withdrawal. Guiding a child through these emotions towards a sense of trust is both challenging and rewarding for parents and educators alike. Trust, in oneself and others, is a fundamental aspect of growing up. Sensitivity between parents and teachers is crucial in supporting children through this process.

STRATEGIES FOR PARENTS TO EASE SEPARATION

PREPARE YOUR CHILD: Familiarize your child with the school environment by visiting together and discussing what to expect in simple terms they can understand. Spend 1-2 hours at the school following the provided orientation agenda before your child starts.

BRIDGE THE GAP: Share your child's routines, preferences, and dislikes with the teacher. Involve your child in selecting comforting items to bring to their "new place."

MAKE THE TIME REAL: Help your child understand when you'll return by narrating the sequence of activities. For example, "First, Mommy goes home or to work, then you play with your friends, and after snack-time, I'll come to take you home."

TALK POSITIVELY: While it's normal for parents to feel ambivalent about leaving, express confidence in the chosen situation. Children may interpret parental hesitation as the new environment being unsafe.

ACCEPT YOUR CHILD'S FEELINGS: Acknowledge your child's emotions if they resist going to school. Verbalize their fears, such as "I know it feels scary to go to a new place," or "you seem really upset when I leave."

GIVE SOME AREAS OF CONTROL: Allow your child to make small decisions, like choosing what to wear or bring to share, to empower them in a situation where they lack control.

TELL STORIES: Share personal anecdotes about feeling nervous in new situations to normalize your child's emotions. Knowing that adults also experience these feelings can be reassuring for children.

DEVELOP A ROUTINE: Establish a consistent goodbye routine, whether it's holding hands up to the door, singing a song in the car, or sharing a hug and kiss. Predictability helps ease anxiety and allows children to engage more fully in the school program.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF: Recognize that separation can be harder on parents than on children. Don't hesitate to reach out to the school or teacher for updates on your child's adjustment. Share your feelings with your partner or a friend, and remember to take moments for self-care, including a deep breath or a quiet moment away from your child's view. Pat yourself on the back for supporting your child through one of life's significant emotional milestones—loving and saying goodbye.