

Post-16 Curriculum - Childhood Development

Subject Curriculum Overview

Subject	Childhood Development
Qualification / Specification	AAQ (Pearson BTEC National Extended Certificate in Early Childhood Development)
Awarding Body	Pearson
Level	3
Curriculum Lead	Sarah Cox
Teaching Staff	CAG
Guided Learning Hours	360
Year(s) Delivered	12 & 13
Last Review Date	June 2026
Next Review Date	June 2027

1. Curriculum Intent

The primary purpose of Level 3 Childhood Development is to provide post-16 learners with a comprehensive, rigorous, and applied understanding of the early years and care sector (covering ages 0–8 years). It bridges the gap between academic theory and vocational practice, cultivating deep knowledge of holistic child development, safeguarding imperatives, pedagogical theories of play, and reflective professional practice. The curriculum is intentionally designed to instill a child-centred ethos, fostering empathy, critical evaluation, and a commitment to high-quality early years provision.

Equivalent in size and demand to one A Level, this qualification seamlessly integrates into a student's wider post-16 study programme alongside complementary disciplines such as Psychology, Sociology, Biology, or English. It provides a direct pathway to Higher Education (undergraduate degrees) and advanced training routes. Typical destination pathways include BSc (Hons) in Paediatric Nursing, BA (Hons) in Primary Education, Social Work, Childhood and Early Years Studies, Speech and Language Therapy, or graduate-level apprenticeships as an Early Years Educator.

Developed in conjunction with early years practitioners, employers, and Higher Education institutions, the curriculum addresses key skills deficits within the education and care sectors. Universities benefit from receiving undergraduates equipped with advanced research,

analytical, and academic report-writing skills. Employers are provided with an incoming workforce that understands the statutory requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), up-to-date safeguarding practices, and emergency protocols, backed by a minimum of 50 hours of work placement experience.

Success means learners achieve exceptional academic outcomes (Pass, Merit, Distinction, or Distinction*) while evolving into reflective, autonomous practitioners. They demonstrate mastery over complex developmental theories, exhibit the ability to confidently evaluate the impact of environmental and biological factors on early childhood, and display exemplary professional behaviours, communication skills, and ethical conduct during vocational placement settings.

2. Foundational Knowledge

Area	Essential Knowledge / Skills	Why It Matters
Developmental Milestones (0–8 Years)	Knowledge of physical, cognitive, linguistic, social, and emotional milestones across age bands.	Ensures practitioners can identify typical vs. atypical development and implement timely, targeted interventions.
Statutory Safeguarding Legislation	Understanding of the Children Act, Working Together to Safeguard Children, and early years setting procedures.	Establishes the legal and ethical framework required to protect vulnerable children and report welfare concerns safely.
Health, Safety & Infection Control	Knowledge of risk assessments, hazard identification, and emergency/first-aid practices.	Minimises transmission of infectious diseases and guarantees a safe, secure environment for children to explore.
Core Typologies of Play	Understanding different types of play (e.g., solitary, parallel, cooperative, sensory, imaginative).	Formulates the basic building blocks used to plan age-appropriate and engaging learning environments.

3. Powerful Knowledge

Powerful Knowledge Area	Why It Matters	Evidence of Understanding
-------------------------	----------------	---------------------------

Theoretical Perspectives & Models of Development	Critique of seminal theorists (e.g., Piaget, Vygotsky, Bowlby, Montessori, Bandura) and how they frame modern pedagogy.	Written essays and exam responses that contrast nature vs. nurture arguments and evaluate the validity of stage theories in modern contexts.
Contemporary Policy Analysis via Research	Evaluating how current legislative reviews, reports, and academic research filter down into local early years provision and practice.	Production of a structured 15-hour research project/report analysing the alignment between government policy and real-world setting execution.
Reflective Practice Models	Application of reflective frameworks (e.g., Gibbs, Schön) to continuously audit personal professional practice and minimize bias.	A comprehensive reflective log within an internal portfolio, critiquing personal performance and professional behaviours during work experience.
Curriculum Design Through Play	Synthesis of theories to engineer complex, purposeful play activities (e.g., sensory safari, salt dough cooking) targeting holistic milestones.	Creation of rigorous, highly structured activity plans within an internal portfolio, complete with explicit justifications of developmental goals.

4. Curriculum Implementation

Term / Unit	Key Content	Foundational Knowledge	Powerful Knowledge	Assessment Opportunities
Year 12, Autumn Term: Unit 1 (Part 1)	Children's Development: Physical, cognitive, and language growth profiles from birth to 8 years.	Milestone sequences; terminology of growth lines.	Critiquing Piagetian and Vygotskian theories of cognitive processing.	Past exam paper questions; diagnostic baseline testing; formative essay writing.

Year 12, Spring Term: Unit 1 (Part 2)	Factors Affecting Development: Biological, environmental, and socio-economic influences on children.	Identifying risk factors (e.g., poverty, genetic conditions).	Assessing the cumulative impact of environmental deprivation on language acquisition.	Formative timed mock examinations (Unit 1 external exam preparation).
Year 12, Summer Term: Unit 3	Play and Learning: Types of play, resource provision, and early years approaches.	Definitions of play types; safety of physical play materials.	Evaluation of Montessori vs. traditional teacher-led learning strategies.	Assignment 1 Release: Internal portfolio task focusing on play strategies for milestones.
Year 13, Autumn Term: Unit 2	Keeping Children Safe: Legislation, safeguarding, disclosure, and emergency responses.	Signs of abuse; reporting lines; risk assessment models.	Analytical deconstruction of serious case reviews to pinpoint systemic failures in multi-agency working.	Formative case studies; timed mock exam for Unit 2 external paper.
Year 13, Spring & Summer: Unit 4	Research and Reflective Practice: Current research methodologies, policy analysis, and placement reflection.	Principles of empirical observation; standard placement codes of conduct.	Evaluating the validity of research findings and synthesizing reflective frameworks to self-correct behaviour.	Submission of Unit 4 Synoptic Assignment (15-hour supervised task/portfolio item).

5. Assessment Strategy

Assessment Type	Purpose	Frequency
Diagnostic	Used to assess baseline literacy, understanding of basic human biology, and core misconceptions around early years care before introducing Level 3 content.	Completed at the start of Year 12 (induction week) and at the launch of each new unit.

Formative	Monitored to provide feedback on exam technique, structured extended writing, referencing, and the accurate deployment of theoretical frameworks.	Bi-weekly short tasks, regular retrieval quizzes, and formal end-of-topic timed practice questions.
Summative	Measures final student attainment against national Pearson standards. Comprises 50% external assessment (two written exams) and 50% internal portfolio assignments.	Unit 1 Exam (Y12 Summer), Unit 3 PSA (Y12 Summer), Unit 2 Exam (Y13 Jan), Unit 4 PSA (Y13 Spring).
Synoptic	Evaluates students' ability to holistically draw together knowledge from across all four mandatory units, applying it to an unfamiliar real-world scenario.	Occurs during Year 13 through Unit 4 (Pearson Set Assignment Task – 15 hours controlled time).