



EYFS (Preschool & Reception) Festivals and Celebrations Progression Document

Intent

In the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), festivals and celebrations are included to help children develop a strong sense of identity, belonging, and respect for others. By exploring a wide range of cultural, religious, and family celebrations, children are supported to understand similarities and differences between themselves and others in a positive and age-appropriate way.

Celebrations provide meaningful, real-life contexts for learning that promote curiosity, language development, and social skills. Through stories, music, food, role-play, and shared experiences, children learn to express their own experiences while valuing those of others. This supports the EYFS principles of inclusive practice, promoting British values, and fostering mutual respect and tolerance.

By engaging with festivals and celebrations, children build early cultural awareness, emotional understanding, and confidence in a diverse society, laying foundations for lifelong learning and positive relationships.

Nursery: Awareness, exposure, and personal experience

Reception: Understanding, comparison, and respectful awareness of diversity

Sensory Stimulation: Festivals and celebrations offer rich sensory experiences through sights, sounds, textures, tastes, and smells such as music, decorations, clothing, food, and artefacts. These experiences support children's sensory exploration and help develop their sensory processing skills in meaningful, real-life contexts.

- **Cognitive Development:** Learning about different festivals encourages children to make connections, recognise similarities and differences, and understand simple concepts such as time, routines, and traditions. This supports early thinking skills, including memory, comparison, and problem-solving.
- **Language Acquisition:** Discussing festivals and celebrations introduces new vocabulary linked to events, traditions, emotions, and beliefs. Sharing stories, songs, and conversations around celebrations supports children's communication and language development and encourages them to express their own experiences.
- **Emotional Well-Being:** Celebrating festivals together helps children feel a sense of belonging and inclusion. Shared experiences promote joy, confidence, and positive self-esteem, while helping children understand and respect their own feelings and those of others.
- **Adaptability and Resilience:** Being introduced to a range of celebrations helps children understand that people may celebrate in different ways. This supports flexibility, openness, and resilience as children learn to adapt to new experiences and unfamiliar traditions.
- **Cultural Understanding:** Exploring a variety of festivals and celebrations supports children's understanding of different cultures, religions, and family traditions. This helps to promote respect, tolerance, and appreciation of diversity in line with EYFS and British Values.
- **Curiosity and Inquiry Skills:** Festivals naturally spark curiosity as children ask questions about why and how people celebrate. Encouraging exploration through stories, role-play, and discussions develops inquiry skills and fosters a positive attitude towards learning.

Importance of Celebrating Local Festivals and Celebrations First

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children learn best through experiences that are familiar, meaningful, and closely linked to their own lives. Introducing local and widely experienced celebrations first, such as birthdays, seasonal events, and community celebrations, helps children develop a secure understanding of what a celebration is before being introduced to more abstract concepts.

Local celebrations provide children with shared experiences they can easily recognise and talk about, supporting early language development, emotional security, and a sense of belonging. These experiences create a strong foundation for understanding routines, traditions, and changes in daily life in a way that is concrete and accessible for young children.

Once children have developed this understanding, religious and cultural festivals can be introduced in a respectful and inclusive way. This gradual approach supports children to make meaningful connections, recognise similarities and differences, and develop respect for diversity,

in line with EYFS principles and British Values. By building from the familiar to the less familiar, children are better equipped to engage positively with a wide range of celebrations and traditions.

Nursery Expectations	Reception Expectations
<p>Key Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● People celebrate special events and festivals in different ways. ● Celebrations often include familiar features such as food, music, decorations, stories, and special clothing. ● They and their families may celebrate special events that are important to them. ● Some festivals happen at certain times of the year. ● Celebrations can be shared with others and enjoyed together. 	<p>Key Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Different festivals and celebrations are linked to cultures, religions, and family traditions. ● People may celebrate the same festival in different ways. ● Festivals have names, key symbols, and simple meanings. ● Celebrations often mark important times, events, or beliefs. ● Everyone's celebrations are important and should be respected.
<p>Understanding Celebration Types</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Know that people celebrate special events. ● Recognise that different people may celebrate different events. ● Begin to talk about celebrations they experience with their family. <p>Clothing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Notice that people may wear special clothes for celebrations. ● Enjoy exploring dressing-up clothes linked to celebrations. ● Talk about colours, patterns, or textures in celebration clothing. 	<p>Understanding Celebration Types</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Know that celebrations can be cultural, religious, or family-based. ● Recognise that celebrations happen for different reasons and at different times. ● Understand that not everyone celebrates the same events or in the same way. <p>Clothing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Know that special clothing can be linked to particular festivals or traditions.

<p>Food</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know that food can be part of a celebration. • Experience different foods linked to celebrations. • Talk about likes and dislikes related to celebration food. <p>Daily Life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know that celebrations may change the normal daily routine. • Notice simple differences between everyday life and celebration times. • Join in with celebration activities as part of the day. <p>Traditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Join in with simple traditions such as songs, stories, or repeated actions. • Recognise familiar routines linked to celebrations. • Begin to understand that celebrations include shared activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe simple features of celebration clothing, such as colour, pattern, or purpose. • Recognise that some clothing has cultural or religious meaning. <p>Food</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know that certain foods are traditionally eaten during specific celebrations. • Understand that food plays an important role in bringing people together. • Recognise that people may eat different foods based on culture, belief, or tradition. <p>Daily Life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand that celebrations may change daily routines or activities. • Talk about how celebrations bring families and communities together. • Recognise that celebrations can be part of home, school, or community life. <p>Traditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know that traditions are activities people repeat during celebrations. • Describe simple traditions linked to different festivals. 		
<p>Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • celebration • party • special day • birthday 	<p>Suggested festivals and celebrations - (Familiar, sensory, and experience-based)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birthdays • Harvest • Weddings 	<p>Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • celebration • festival • tradition • culture 	<p>Suggested festivals and celebrations - (Builds on Nursery with more understanding and comparison)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christmas • Diwali

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● festival ● family ● friends ● happy ● fun ● music ● song ● dance ● food ● cake ● lights ● decorations ● clothes ● dress up ● gift / present ● together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bonfire night ● Christmas ● Diwali ● Chinese / Lunar New Year ● Easter ● Bonfire Night ● Mother's Day / Father's Day / Special Person Day ● Seasonal celebrations (Autumn, Winter, Spring, Summer) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● religion ● community ● belief ● special occasion ● symbol ● tradition ● ceremony ● respect ● different ● same ● costume / traditional clothing ● special food ● gathering ● routine ● compare ● celebrate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Chinese / Lunar New Year ● Eid (Eid al-Fitr or Eid al-Adha) ● Hanukkah ● Easter ● Bonfire Night ● Harvest ● Vaisakhi ● Holi ● Remembrance Day ● St George's Day / national celebrations ● Seasonal celebrations and changes
<p>Simple Knowledge Statements</p> <p>Children will begin to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Talk about their own experiences of celebrations. ● Show curiosity about celebrations that are new or unfamiliar. ● Join in with simple activities linked to festivals, such as songs, role-play, or crafts. ● Recognise that not everyone celebrates the same events. 		<p>Simple Knowledge Statements</p> <p>Children will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Talk about similarities and differences between different festivals and celebrations. ● Describe some key features of celebrations they have learned about. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use appropriate vocabulary related to festivals and celebrations. ● Show respect and interest in traditions that are different from their own. ● Explain why some celebrations are special to people. ●
<p>Skills & Experiences/ provision enhancements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Role-play area set up as a party, celebration, or family gathering. ● Dressing-up clothes and fabrics linked to celebrations. ● Sensory trays with celebration-themed items (lights, fabrics, confetti, rice, lentils). ● Books and visual prompts showing a range of celebrations and families. ● Music from different cultures used during group times and free play. ● Creative resources to make cards, decorations, or simple gifts. ● Home-setting links such as photos, stories, or parent contributions. 	<p>Skills & Experiences/ provision enhancements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Role-play area enhanced to reflect a range of celebrations (e.g. family home, celebration space, festival shop). ● Dressing-up clothes and artefacts linked to specific festivals and cultures. ● Visual prompts, photographs, and simple information cards explaining celebrations. ● Books that explore festivals, traditions, and diversity in more detail. ● Creative areas with resources to design decorations, symbols, or cards independently. ● Music, dance, and movement opportunities from different cultures. ● Opportunities for children to contribute ideas and resources to provision.