



Blending British and Chinese Early Years Education Guidelines in Bilingual China-Based Kindergarten and Day Care Settings

Prepared by Anglo Academic, April 2020

Background

This report provides a brief introduction to the British and Chinese regulatory requirements covering Early Years Education (EYE). All British 0-5 years nurseries and day care centres are regulated by the British Government's Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and are required to apply the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework to the management and operation of these settings. In China, the Ministry of Education has provided educators with a comprehensive set of learning and development guidelines for children aged 3-6 and the 0-3 years market in China is far less regulated in terms of curriculum requirements. It should be noted that there are far more similarities than differences between the British and Chinese systems and the task of blending them into an integrated and modular bilingual curriculum for children aged 0-6 in China is a relatively straight-forward matter.

For more information on creating a fully-blended Early Year bilingual learning and assessment environment for the kindergarten and day care market in China, please contact info@angloacademic.org.uk to speak to one of our curriculum development specialists.

An Introduction to the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework

The UK Government's EYFS document is not just an academic curriculum. It is actually the complete development framework, assessment guide and operations manual for every British 0-5 EYE setting that is regulated by Ofsted. It also describes in great detail how the setting should be staffed and managed to ensure that children are happy, healthy and protected during their Early Years learning journey. The EYFS framework is divided into 3 main sections:

- **Learning and Development Requirements:** This section of the EYFS framework document outlines the 7 main areas of learning and development for children aged 0-5. For China-based practitioners, these 7 areas can be easily redesigned to match the 5 domains of learning and development requirement by the Chinese Ministry of Education for 3-6 year olds.
- **Assessment:** This section highlights how practitioners are required under UK law to produce assessment profiles of each child under their care. These profiles should provide parents and carers, practitioners and teachers with a well-rounded picture of a child's knowledge, understanding and abilities, their progress against expected levels, and their readiness for British primary school. The assessment criteria required under the EYFS system can also be blended with the Chinese Ministry of Education guidelines to provide a complete 0-6 year old assessment regime.
- **Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements:** This is perhaps the most important section of the EYFS because it details the legal requirements for British kindergartens in areas such as Child Safety, Staff Training and Development, Safety and Suitability of Premises and Managing Behaviour. On request, we are able to provide a complete Safeguarding manual for China-based practitioners with guidelines on how to interpret the EYFS safeguarding and welfare requirements as well as the documentation to help manage and monitor health and safety standards at any EYE site.



This report explains how the Chinese Ministry of Education's *Learning and Development Requirements for Children Aged 0-6* guidelines can be blended and integrated with the UK's EYFS and the Key Stage 1 Year 1 national curriculum to create a totally integrated 0-6 years learning experience in a Chinese setting. It also discusses an assessment regime that fits wells with the Chinese guidelines for 3-6 years and also offers regular EYFS-based assessments from 0-3 years.

Understanding the Key Differences Between the British and Chinese Guidelines

The Table 1 below provides a comparison of the main differences in how the British and Chinese government's organize their respective schooling systems. In terms of Early Years provision, what is referred to as Nursery and the first grade of Key Stage 1 at Infant School would cover the total 0-6 years age group. In China, this is covered by Day Care provision for 0-3 years and then Kindergarten for 3-6 years.

Table 1 Comparison of British and Chinese Education Systems

United Kingdom		Age	People's Republic of China
Nursery		Under 3	Day care encouraged, but not compulsory, totally private
		3-4	Level 1
		4-5	Level 2 Kindergarten
Key Stage 1, Infant School	Pre-Prep, Grade 1	5-6	Level 3
	Prep, Grade 2	6-7	Grade 1
Key Stage 2, Junior School	Grade 3	7-8	Grade 2
	Grade 4	8-9	Grade 3
	Grade 5	9-10	Grade 4
	Grade 6	10-11	Grade 5
	Grade 7	11-12	Grade 6
Key Stage 3, Senior School	Grade 8	12-13	Junior 1
	Grade 9	13-14	Junior 2
	Grade 10	14-15	Junior 3
Key Stage 4, Senior School GCSEs	Grade 11	15-16	Senior 1
	Grade 12	16-17	Senior 2
A-Level / IB	Grade 13	17-18	Senior 3
			High School

Source: British Government's Department of International Trade

The 0-3 years Day Care market in China is relatively free of site and curriculum-related regulation. There are far more site-related regulations and approvals involved with issuing a Kindergarten license in China, but the curriculum restrictions that have most impact on teaching content affect the 9 years of compulsory education between 6 years old and 15 years old in China.

An EYFS-based curriculum is designed to cover the 0-6 age range to address both the 0-3 Chinese Day Care market and the 3-6 Chinese Kindergarten age group. This has been achieved by initially combining the key elements of the 0-5 EYFS guidelines with Key Stage 1 Year 1 of the British National Curriculum which covers ages 5-6.

Any Chinese children that are progressing at an accelerated rate compared with what British children are studying at aged 6 can easily be upgraded to Key Stage 1 Year 2 which is designed for British children aged 6-7.



Analysis of the Chinese and British Guidelines For Early Years / Kindergarten Learning

It is instructive to take a look at the respective guidelines from the British and Chinese governments on Early Years / Kindergarten learning to see both the similarities and differences in each system.

The Chinese approach to kindergarten learning is encapsulated in the Learning and Development Guidelines for Children Aged 3 to 6 Years prepared by the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China in September 2012. According to the document:

The Guidelines aim to build a solid foundation for young children's subsequent learning and lifelong development. The focus is to promote well-rounded development of young children, including their physical well-being, cognitive growth, moral strength, and aesthetic sensibility. To achieve this goal, the Guidelines articulate expectations and corresponding educational suggestions for children's learning and development between 3 to 6 years of age. The Guidelines help kindergarten teachers and parents set learning and development goals based on understanding characteristics of young children and help them provide young children with scientifically informed care and education. The desired outcome is to ensure that all young children experience a happy and meaningful childhood.

In the UK, the EYFS Guidelines originally introduced by the British Government's Department of Education in 2006, but have undergone several revisions since then. It is encouraging to note the similarities that exist in its aims and objectives versus those of the Chinese system:

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) sets standards for the learning, development and care of children from birth to 5 years old. All schools and Ofsted-registered early years providers must follow the EYFS, including childminders, preschools, nurseries and school reception classes. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework supports an integrated approach to early learning and care. It gives all professionals a set of common principles and commitments to deliver quality early education and childcare experiences to all children. As well as being the core document for all professionals working in the foundation years, the EYFS framework gives mums and dads confidence that regardless of where they choose for their child's early education, they can be assured that the same statutory commitments and principles will underpin their child's learning and development experience.

The Chinese approach divides children's learning and development into 5 main areas: 1) Health, 2) Language, 3) Social Development, 4) Science and 5) The Arts. Each of these 5 main areas is then sub-divided into 12 different content areas based on the fundamental and key content of the learning and development of young children. Each content area describes very specific learning and development benchmarks as well as recommended educational practices that should be followed.

The benchmark section states general expectations regarding what children ought to know and be able to do at the end of each age period of 3 to 4, 4 to 5 and 5 to 6 years old. As such, it highlights specific directions of young children's learning and development. The recommendation section details educational practices and strategies designed to effectively facilitate and promote children's learning and development.



Some of the benchmarks required are very specific, quantitative and results-driven in nature. For example, when it comes to a child's strength and endurance, the Chinese Guidelines state that children should be able to hang on a horizontal bar for 10 seconds when they are 3-4 years old, 15 seconds when they are 4-5 years old and 20 seconds when they 5-6 years old.

In contrast, the British approach is to divide the child's Early Years education into 7 areas of learning and development. These are sub-divided into 3 Prime Areas, 1) Communication and Language 2) Physical Development and 3) Personal, Social and Emotional Development, and 4 Specific Areas, 4) Literacy 5) Mathematics 6) Understanding the World and 7) Expressive Arts and Design.

While there are specific benchmarks in place in the EYFS in terms of Literacy and Mathematics, the benchmarks for the 3 Prime Areas are far less quantitative in nature than the Chinese approach. However, the ultimate goal of both systems is to prepare pre-school children for a smooth entry into their respective primary/elementary school systems. The EYFS has 4 guiding principles which should shape the practice of Early Years education.

These are:

- *Every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.*
- *Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships.*
- *Children learn and develop well in enabling environments, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.*
- *Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.*

The framework covers the education and care of all children in early years provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities.

The Chinese guidelines also have 4 principles regarding implementation and have very similar goals in terms of the child's learning experience should be. They are:

1. *Pay attention to the learning and development of the whole child. Child development is a holistic process. It is of critical importance to balance different learning goals and integrate different areas of learning for the well-rounded development of a child instead of giving priority to only one or a few areas.*
2. *Respect individual difference in young children's development. Child development is a continuous and evolving process with distinct characteristics at varied stages. All children proceed with a similar developmental trajectory. However, the pace of development and therefore the age they reach particular milestones varies from individual to individual. It is important to understand and fully respect this individual difference and allow the child to proceed with the development "ladder" stated in the Guidelines at her/his own pace with her/his preferred approach. One size does not fit all.*
3. *Understand young children's approaches and characteristics in learning processes. Based on direct experiences, children learn through play and in their daily lives. It is important to recognize the unique value of play and life experience in children's learning. Teachers and parents should create rich educational environments and set appropriate daily schedule to maximally fulfil children's needs for knowledge acquisition by direct perception, hands-on operation and personal experience. Avoid premature education and intensive skill training.*

4. *Emphasise young children’s learning quality. Positive attitudes and good study habits are invaluable assets for children’s lifelong learning and development. Teachers and parents should fully respect and protect children’s curiosity and interests in learning. They should encourage the development of young children’s good qualities in learning, such as taking initiative, focusing attention, being not afraid of difficulties, exploring, experimenting, imagining, and creating. Focusing on teaching knowledge and skills without attending to the development of learning qualities is short-sighted and harmful.*

Both systems emphasize the individuality of the child, the need to teach lifelong learning in a holistic manner and the value of play-based education and creativity.

It has therefore been a relatively straightforward to produce a truly blended curriculum that incorporates the best of both systems, adds a strong element of international exposure and Chinese-English bilingual learning while still preparing children to be physically, socially, mentally and academically ready for Chinese Primary School.

The table below provides a brief outline of the key curriculum elements contained within the UK and Chinese systems. It is important to note that when reading the UK EYFS, the UK national curriculum Key Stage 1 and the Chinese kindergarten guidelines, the number

Table 2 Blending the EFYS and the Chinese Guidelines

UK Early Years Foundation Stage:	UK National Curriculum Key Stage 1:	Chinese Ministry of Education Guidelines :
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designed for British children aged 0-5. • 7 areas of learning and development that must shape educational programmes in early years settings. • 3 prime areas that are crucial for igniting children’s curiosity and enthusiasm for learning: 1) Communication and Language; 2) Physical Development and 3) Personal Social and Emotional Development. • 4 additional specific areas: 4) Literacy; 5) Mathematics; 6) Understanding the World and 7) Expressive Arts and Design. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designed for British primary school children aged 5-6. • Subjects for Key Stage 1 are: English; Mathematics; Science; Geography; History; Music; Physical Education; Art & Design and Design and Technology. • Provides recommendations on subjects to be taught and non-statutory recommendations on how these should be approached in the classroom setting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designed for Chinese kindergarten children aged 3-6. • 5 key domains of learning: 1) Health; 2) Language; 3) Social Development; 4) Science and 5) The Arts. • 12 sub-domains: 1) Physical & Mental Health; 2) Motor Development; 3) Habits of Living and Self Help Skills; 4) Listening and Speaking; 5) Preparation for Reading and Writing; 6) Interpersonal Relationships; 7) Get Along with Peers; 8) Social Adaptability; 9) Scientific Exploration; 10) Mathematical Recognition; 11) Experience and Appreciate and 12) Show and Create. • Extremely detailed annual assessment criteria for each age group and each sub-section.

The complete breakdown of the assessment criteria for the EYFS, Key Stage 1 and the Chinese Ministry of Education’s 3-6 year kindergarten guidelines are all shown in detail in the appendices of this manual. As highlighted above, the Chinese guidelines are divided into 5 main domains of learning, which are in turn sub-divided into a total of 12 sub-domains. This compares with 7 key areas of learning and development in the EYFS and 8 subjects that are studied in the UK at Key Stage Year 1.

Chart 1 below provides a high-level summary of the key elements within the UK and Chinese guidelines.



Other International Early Years Systems in China

Finally, it should be noted that there are many types of international early years teaching systems currently being used in China. Montessori is the most well-established of these and was introduced into China in 1992. However, systems such as High Scope and PYP are also becoming increasingly popular in the Chinese market. The chart below provides some details on the various different types of Early Years education systems that are being used in the Chinese market.

Table 3 Comparison of International Early Years Teaching Systems

System	Founder	Country of Origin	Date of Establishment
Montessori	Dr. Maria Montessori	Italy	1907
Waldorf	Rudolph Steiner	Germany	1919
PYP	International Baccalaureate Organization	Switzerland	1997
High Scope	David Weikart	United States	1962
Reggio	Emilia Reggio	Italy	1950
Early Years Foundation Stage	Department For Education, UK	United Kingdom	2006

System	Chinese Authorization Body	Entry Into China
Montessori	The American Montessori Society (AMS)	1992
Waldorf	None	2004
PYP	IBO Authorization	2002
High Scope	High Scope Education Research Foundation	2012
Reggio	Reggio China Centre	1999
Early Years Foundation Stage	None	2016

Source: British Government's Department of International Trade

About Anglo Academic

Anglo Academic is a specialist educational advisory firm with a presence in both the UK and Hong Kong. The firm was established in April 2017 by Bruce Kirk, a former Goldman Sachs portfolio manager who returned to the UK after a 25 year career in the Asian Asset Management industry based in Japan, Hong Kong and Mainland China. Our firm specializes in helping British and Asian education providers structure robust, mutually-beneficial win-win international partnerships. Bruce is also currently completing his MSc in Applied Linguistics for Language Learning at the University of Oxford's Department of Education specializing in effective bilingual learning in Early Years Chinese settings.