Parenta
Working together for our children

Level 3 Early Years Educator Course Guide

Following the new Early Years Educator standard

From 1 November 2026



Achieving your Level 3 Early Years Educator

LEVEL 3

If you're looking to take your career in early years education to the next level, then read on!



If you do regular child observations and create activities, this course is perfect for you! You'll delve into child development and learn how to nurture children's physical, emotional and social well-being.

Achieving your Level 3 opens doors to higher-paying roles and makes you a professionally recognised Early Years Educator who can count in ratios.

**** Level 3 qualified educators are highly sought after for their skills and knowledge, making you a top choice for employers! ****

The Level 3 EYE at a glance...

DURATION
8 to 15 months
The more off-the-job hours you put in each week, the sooner you'll qualify!

LEVEL
3 EYE

LOCATION
Your workplace

PAY
Earn while you learn

RATIOS
Count in ratios

FRAMEWORK
Follows the EYFS



Already have some early years experience?

Depending on your prior learning, the length of your apprenticeship may be reduced. We'll talk this through with you on your enrolment call.

What's more, apprentices aged 16 to 24 are fully funded by the government! For apprentices aged 25 and over, non-levy employers only pay 5%. Levy-paying employers fund apprenticeships through their apprenticeship levy.

What's new for November 2026?

The heart of the apprenticeship stays the same, with a fresher, more flexible approach to assessment.

The Early Years Educator standard for Level 3 apprentices is changing. If you start your apprenticeship on or after 1 November 2026, you'll follow the revised version of the standard.

We're proud that Parenta was one of the sector organisations involved in shaping the revised standard, alongside employers, assessment organisations and professional bodies. We've been preparing for this change for some time.

What's changing?

Apprenticeship assessment

End-point assessment becomes apprenticeship assessment, which can take place during your programme, not just at the end.

Gateway to completion

Gateway becomes gateway to completion, the final checks before you achieve your apprenticeship.

Behaviours

Your employer verifies your behaviours.

Training providers

Training providers may play a bigger part in delivering and marking some assessment, with the assessment organisation assuring quality.

What stays the same?

You still learn everything in the standard and still have protected time for off-the-job training.

You still finish as a professionally recognised Early Years Educator who can count in ratios.

Regular progress reviews with your employer and your tutor carry on too.

What about classes?

One of the huge benefits of doing an apprenticeship with Parenta is that there are no physical classrooms to attend, just virtual classrooms! We provide online teaching sessions to suit all needs, which might be individual, in-person or in a group.



Why choose Parenta?

Doing an apprenticeship with Parenta means you get so much more! You get...

- Your own **skills and development coach** to support you every step of the way
- **FREE** access to maths and English teachers to support you (if required)
- **FREE** resources to support you in your role!
- **FREE** ongoing CPD training
- **FREE** monthly webinars
- **FREE** access to over 1,000 blogs written by early years experts



Ready to become a childcare superhero?

Your Level 3 EYE journey starts here.

YOUR TRAINING PLAN

Your learning journey

The duration of the course is between 8 and 15 months. The more off-the-job hours you put in each week, the sooner you'll qualify!

Five themes and five checkpoints, with a knowledge check along the way.

8–15 months · 5 themes · 5 checkpoints · 2 assessments

START HERE — Onboarding

Month 1

Your course starts here with the onboarding team. You will cover:

- Personal development
- Reflective practice
- Prevent
- Healthy relationships

Your reflective journal and PDP travel with you all the way to the finish line.

THEME 1 — Safe Practitioner

Months 1 to 4

- Safeguarding
- Legislation
- Health and safety
- Risk assessment
- Wellbeing and emotional regulation
- ✓ Knowledge check 1

Checkpoint 1 · Month 4

Direct observation of practice, discussion and first journal review, observed by your Parenta development coach.

THEME 2 · THE DEVELOPING CHILD — Learning and Development 1

Months 5 to 8

- Child development
- Brain development
- Pedagogy
- The key person role
- EYFS and the OAP cycle
- ✓ Knowledge check 2

Checkpoint 2 · Months 6 to 8

VTCT observation window opens. Your coach checks with your employer that you're ready before you book.

THEME 3 · RELATIONSHIPS AND PLAY — Learning and Development 2

Months 9 to 10

- Attachment
- Transitions
- Play theory
- Adult-led and child-led learning

Checkpoint 3 · Month 9

Your coach introduces your case study.

THEME 4 — Inclusive Practice

Months 11 to 12

- SEND
- EAL
- Equality and diversity
- Inclusion
- Children's rights
- ✓ Knowledge check 3

Checkpoint 4 · Months 10 to 11

Case study submitted and assessed by Parenta. Your VTCT observation window closes.

THEME 5 — Professional Practice

Months 13 to 14

- Reflection
- Professional behaviours
- CPD
- Supervision
- ✓ Knowledge check 4

Checkpoint 5 · Month 14

Gateway readiness review. Bring your journal and PDP to a close.

FINISH LINE — Gateway sign off

Month 15

READY WHEN YOU HAVE

- ✓ Employer confirms you are competent
- ✓ English and maths in place
- ✓ Both assessments complete
- ✓ Behaviours signed off by employer
- ✓ Paediatric first aid
- ✓ Journal and PDP closed

★ You did it!

Apprenticeship achieved at Pass or Distinction.

A Distinction in both assessments gives you a Distinction overall.

Direct observations of practice and knowledge checks are run by your Parenta development coach. Your case study is assessed by Parenta. Your assessed observation is with VTCT. Partnerships and Environments are woven through Themes 2, 3 and 4.

We'll go through your monthly learning training plan in more detail at your induction. Your course content includes tasks, quizzes, assignments and online workshops to support your learning throughout your apprenticeship.

How will I be supported during my course?

We'll work with you and your employer to make sure you meet all the knowledge, skills and behaviours set out in the standard, so you're ready for each assessment checkpoint.

Your tutor will also visit you at your setting for in-person observations, helping you prepare for your apprenticeship assessment. Every 8 to 10 weeks, you, your tutor and your employer will meet to review your training plan, what's worked well and which areas need more focus.

Apprenticeship Assessment

Replacing End-Point Assessment from 1 November 2026

Your apprenticeship journey includes key checkpoints. Checkpoints help make sure you're well prepared before each assessment takes place. Your skills and development coach and your employer will support you in the lead-up to each checkpoint.

Your apprenticeship assessment can take place during your programme, not just at the end. Our assessment organisation is **VTCT**.

How you'll be assessed

1. **Direct observation of practice with questions and answers**
   Carried out in person in your setting by our assessment organisation, VTCT.

2. **A professional discussion or a case study built into your learning journey**
   You gather evidence for your case study whilst you're on programme, and Parenta's Quality Assurance team marks it.



Your journey to qualified

1. **Enrol and induction**
2. **Learn and build your case study**
3. **Apprenticeship assessment**
4. **Gateway to completion**
5. **Qualified Level 3 EYE!**

Gateway to completion

Gateway to completion is the final set of checks before you achieve your apprenticeship. Your employer signs it off once you have:

- Passed all your assessment components
- A Paediatric First Aid or Emergency Paediatric First Aid qualification, organised through your place of work
- Shown the behaviours in the standard
- Your Functional Skills English and maths, where part of your apprenticeship

Please note: to count in staff:child ratios at Level 3, you'll need a full Paediatric First Aid qualification.

Top tips for employers

1. Build Paediatric First Aid into your apprentice's plan from day one.
2. Use regular reviews to talk about behaviours, so sign-off feels natural.
3. Keep observations, reflections and child study notes organised.

Functional Skills – English and maths

If you don't already hold Level 2 English and maths, such as a GCSE at grade 4 (C) or above, we strongly recommend taking Functional Skills during your apprenticeship. It's fully funded.

Aged 16 to 18 when you start?
Functional Skills English and maths are a required part of your apprenticeship.

Aged 19 or over when you start?
Functional Skills are optional. You and your employer decide together whether you take them.

The risks of opting out

Counting in ratios
To count in staff: child ratios at Level 3, you need a suitable Level 2 English qualification. Without one, you can only count in ratios at Level 2.

Becoming a manager
Setting managers appointed on or after 4 January 2024 must hold a Level 2 maths qualification or achieve one within two years of starting the role.

Your career
Many employers and industry bodies look for these core skills, so opting out may hold back your progression.

Your setting
Your employer is responsible for meeting all regulatory requirements, and gaps in qualifications can create staffing challenges.

Suitable Level 2 English qualifications include Functional Skills English at Level 2 and GCSE English language or literature at grade 4 (C) or above.

FREE

Support from our Maths and English teachers!

With Parenta, you get FREE access to our maths and English teachers to support you, if required.

Maths

English

We're with you every step of the way

If you want to boost your skills, broaden your knowledge and have a greater impact on children's lives, this course opens the door to a brighter career in early years education.



How do I achieve professional recognition?

You're awarded a **full and relevant Level 3 Early Years Educator qualification** once you've passed your apprenticeship assessment and completed gateway to completion.

The future

Achieving your Level 3 EYE opens a whole world of opportunities within the early years sector! You'll have the skills and confidence to succeed in your current role, and you'll be ready to take on higher-level positions. As an Early Years Educator, you'll gain professional recognition, and roles like Key Worker, Room Leader, Supervisor, Deputy Manager or even Manager will be within your grasp.

Key Worker ▸ Room Leader ▸ Supervisor ▸ Deputy Manager ▸ ★ Manager

Next steps

But that's not all – your journey doesn't need to end there! You'll have the potential to reach further and increase your earnings even more.

How about progressing to a Level 5 Early Years Lead Practitioner, or even a Foundation Degree? The sky's the limit when you've got the passion, the dedication and now the credentials to match.

LEVEL 5
Early Years Lead Practitioner

OR EVEN A
Foundation Degree

0800 002 9242 | hello@parenta.com | parenta.com/courses/level-3-childcare

Parenta - The Home of Early Years

Growing a setting and a great childcare team shouldn't be hard - Parenta makes it simple. We're the UK's leading specialist apprenticeship training provider for the early years sector - helping nurseries recruit, train, and retain brilliant practitioners.

And it doesn't stop there. From nursery management software, business support that actually makes a difference, and expert free sector resources, Parenta is the partner your setting didn't know it needed.

EARLY YEARS TRAINING

Boost your team's motivation and keep staff for longer by offering them childcare training – the ideal tool for you to develop and retain your staff.

TRAINING COURSES:

Government Funded:

- Level 2 Early Years Practitioner
- Level 3 Early Years Educator – **now with the option to complete in 8 months!** *
- Level 5 Early Years Lead Practitioner

* Course duration between 8 and 15 months, depending on the number of off-the-job hours completed weekly

Qualification only courses:

- L3 SEND Coordinator
- L5 Diploma for Senior Early Years Practitioners

FREE RECRUITMENT

Our team of dedicated recruitment experts will help you find a suitable apprentice - **for free**. Once found, we will sign them up and get them started on their childcare course - providing one-to-one support throughout their training.

Book a call with us today and discover how we can grow your setting

NURSERY MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE – ABACUS ADVANTAGE

- **Abacus Advantage** helps nursery managers and owners understand their money simply and clearly
- It combines **easy-to-use software**, covering all aspects of your nursery business
- Practical guidance and hands-on support to show you exactly where your income comes from, where the pressure builds, and what to do about it

Book a free clarity call today

MARKETING SOLUTIONS

Parenta designs and builds childcare websites that attract parents, impress Ofsted, and turn visitors into enquiries.

- **Websites that work** - built by a team that knows childcare inside out.
- **Branding that means business** - from logos and prospectuses to newsletters and business cards, we create a look that makes your setting stand out and stick in people's minds.
- **Social media made simple** - we'll get you set up, show you what works, and help you build a visible, trusted presence that keeps your setting front of mind for local families.

Contact our marketing solutions team

FREE RESOURCES FOR ALL THOSE WHO WORK IN CHILDCARE

How To Guides

Covering the common challenges you face whilst working in childcare, both for childcare practitioners and business owners.

Free Webinars

Early years experts share their insights, best practices, and valuable experiences

Parenta Blog

Over 1000 articles covering all things early years, written by sector experts

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