



Framework Overview

The Archetype Approach – Framework Overview

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The Current Challenge in Early Years

Early years settings across the country are navigating increasing behavioural complexity. Practitioners are encountering more children who appear overwhelmed, withdrawn, highly reactive, or resistant to adult guidance. At the same time, there is growing pressure to identify needs early, support children within mainstream provision, and prevent unnecessary escalation to specialist services.

Many practitioners report that while they recognise behaviour as communication, they lack a shared developmental framework to help them interpret patterns of behaviour clearly. Without this shared lens, responses can become reactive rather than preventative. Behaviour may be labelled too quickly, or adults may focus on managing incidents rather than understanding what the child is communicating through their actions.

National reform direction increasingly emphasises strengthening mainstream provision so that more children can be supported effectively within everyday early years environments. To achieve this, practitioners need practical tools that help them understand behaviour developmentally, identify emerging difficulties early, and respond through thoughtful adjustments to environment, relationships, and daily practice.

What the Framework Provides

The Archetype Approach is a structured, observation-based developmental framework designed to support practitioners in understanding children's behaviour patterns and responding in ways that restore balance and participation.

Rather than focusing solely on behaviour management, the framework helps practitioners recognise when a child's range of behaviour has narrowed or become rigid. This narrowing may appear as withdrawal, intense control, impulsivity, or over-compliance. The framework supports adults to widen the child's range of experience through relational and environmental adjustments, allowing behaviour to reorganise naturally.

The approach does not replace existing statutory processes. Instead, it strengthens them by providing clearer observation, planning, and review structures that align with the Graduated Response within the SEND Code of Practice.

The framework has been developed alongside everyday early years practice and is designed to sit comfortably alongside the EYFS statutory framework and inclusive mainstream provision.

Core Components of the Model

The Archetype Approach includes several practical elements that support practitioners in day-to-day practice.

Structured observation tools help staff identify patterns in children's engagement, participation, regulation, and play. These observations allow practitioners to notice when behavioural flexibility has reduced and when a child may need support to widen their experience.

Next steps planning sheets translate observation into practical support strategies. These plans focus on relational approaches, environmental adjustments, and opportunities for the child to experience balance in daily activities.

Review summaries allow staff and families to reflect on the impact of these strategies over time. Reviews focus on whether behavioural flexibility has increased, whether participation in play has widened, and whether the child is accessing learning more comfortably.

The framework also introduces the concept of behavioural balance through paired developmental patterns. These patterns help practitioners recognise how children move between connection and independence, exploration and structure, imagination and completion, movement and reflection, energy and calm, autonomy and responsibility.

Understanding these developmental tensions allows adults to support children more effectively without over-pathologising normal developmental differences.

Intended Outcomes for Children and Settings

The Archetype Approach aims to strengthen inclusive mainstream practice by helping practitioners respond to behaviour developmentally and relationally.

For children, the intended outcome is increased flexibility in behaviour, stronger emotional regulation, improved relationships with peers and adults, and greater access to learning opportunities within the environment.

For practitioners, the framework provides a shared language and clearer observation structure, increasing confidence when interpreting behaviour and planning support.

For settings, the approach strengthens quality-first teaching and inclusive practice by supporting early identification, thoughtful environmental adjustments, and effective collaboration with families and SENCOs.

By improving clarity and confidence in early intervention, the framework supports the wider aim of reducing unnecessary escalation while ensuring that children who require additional support are identified and supported appropriately.

The Archetype Approach therefore contributes to stronger mainstream provision, improved practitioner confidence, and better outcomes for children within early years environments.