

Employer Checklist

Off-the-Job Training (OTJT) – Early Years Settings

This checklist is to help early years employers meet apprenticeship funding rules and give apprentices the learning time they are entitled to.

Before the Apprenticeship Starts

Understand the OTJT requirement

- OTJT means learning, not working.
- It must happen during paid working hours. If OTJT must, by exception, take place outside of paid working hours, the apprentice must agree and be compensated for this arrangement (time off in lieu or an additional payment).
- The minimum OTJT requirement depends on the start year:
 - 2023–24 and 2024–25: at least 20% of paid hours
 - 2025–26: at least the [Off-the-job training minimum requirement for the apprenticeship standard](#).

Things that count as OTJT

- The teaching of theory.
- Practical training.
- Learning support.
- Time spent writing assignments.
- Revision.

Things that do not count as off-the-job training

- Initial assessment and onboarding activities.
- English and maths standalone qualifications (where required, these must be delivered in addition to the minimum off-the-job training requirement).
- Training to acquire knowledge, skills and behaviours that are not required by the apprenticeship standard.
- Progress reviews.
- Examinations and other on-programme testing – for example, the End Point Assessment.

Myth	What the Funding Rules Say	What This Means in an Early Years Setting
OTJT only happens at college	OTJT can take place in the workplace, online or off-site, if it is planned learning and not normal duties	Learning can happen in the nursery, but the apprentice must be released from ratios and supported to learn
Being supernumerary always counts as OTJT	Supernumerary time only counts if it involves planned, structured learning	If supernumerary but performing normal daily duties it does not count – need to be actively learning new skills
Routine paperwork counts as training	Routine tasks do not count unless they are part of a planned learning activity and teach new knowledge, skills or behaviours	For example, writing learning journals only counts if the apprentice is being taught how and why, not just completing them
Ratio time can count if learning happens	OTJT must be outside normal working duties; ratio time can never be included	If the apprentice is counted in ratio, the time does not count
Mandatory training counts	Mandatory or statutory training does not count unless it is new and required by the apprenticeship standard	Most safeguarding or first aid refreshers will not count
OTJT matters less from 2025–26	From 2025–26, minimum OTJT hours are set per standard and must still be met and evidenced	Early years standards still require protected learning time

Check the training plan

- Off-the-job training hours are clearly shown.
- Activities match the Early Years Practitioner or Early Years Educator standard.
- The plan shows how learning will happen, not just when.

Confirm staffing and cover

- Plan room cover so apprentices can attend training.
- Make sure room leaders understand this is protected learning time.

Make sure managers know what counts

- Normal ratio time does not count as off-the-job training.
- Learning must be new, planned and supported.

During the Apprenticeship

Release the apprentice as agreed

- Try not to cancel learning time to cover staff shortages - learning time should still happen, even in busy periods.

Check learning is happening

- Ask apprentices what they are learning.
- Make sure sessions are more than “watching and helping”.

Support different ways of learning

- Training may happen away from the setting, online or in the setting, away from normal duties.

Take part in progress reviews

- Share any concerns early.
- Tell the provider if learning is being missed.

End-of-Programme Check

- The apprentice has received the full minimum off-the-job training
- Learning delivered was appropriate for early years practice
- You are confident learning time was not confused with working time

Employer confidence check

- You should be able to say “our apprentice was released from ratios to learn, and their training was planned and supported.”

For further information, please check the [apprenticeship funding rules guidance](#) for the year your apprentice started.