

Assessment and Record-keeping in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

Islington guidance for heads, managers and practitioners

Revised July 08

The Early Years Foundation Stage is based on 4 key themes: A Unique Child; Positive Relationships; Enabling Environments and Learning and Development.

The four key themes of the EYFS have implications for the way in which schools, settings and individuals working with young children approach assessment and record-keeping. Practitioners need to:

- Recognise children as competent and influential individuals who need to be involved in their own assessment
- Work with other adults important to the child
- Recognise each child's individual route to learning
- Build a broad picture of the child which ranges widely, incorporating and interconnecting all the areas of Learning and Development

Within this framework, practitioners are required to

- Make systematic observations and assessments of each child's achievements, interests and learning styles
- Use these observations and assessments to identify learning priorities and plan relevant and motivating learning experiences for each child
- Match their observations to the expectations of the early learning goals

(Creating the Picture, DfES, 2007)

Look, listen and note – observation prompts

(Look, listen and note Practice Guidance p.11; Enabling Environments: Observation, Assessment and Planning, practice card 3.1)

Observation is the primary means of gathering evidence about a child's developmental and learning needs and interests. Some observations will be written, others will be "held in mind" and form part of your ongoing knowledge of the child.

It is therefore crucial that practitioners have an understanding of what to look for in terms of the child's attitudes, motivations, skills, knowledge, achievements and interests across all six areas.

Practitioners should observe what young children can do and assess their development and learning on a regular basis throughout the early years within the EYFS. When the child is deeply involved in self-initiated play, the observational evidence is particularly rich and informative about what the child really can do and is motivated by.

Development Matters

(Practice Guidance.p.11, Child Development Overview card, A Unique Child: Child Development practice card 1.1)

The Development Matters statements are a developmental guide to the range of knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes that children may acquire throughout the EYFS.

While they are a guide for each age and stage of development, it is important to note that children will not necessarily progress sequentially through the stages or achieve every single Development Matters' statement. Neither are they an exhaustive list of what children learn in the first five years of life.

They therefore should not be used as a tick list. Nor is it appropriate to use them as either assessment criteria or learning intentions.

However, the importance of understanding child development cannot be overlooked in making appropriate assessments for each child. Knowledge of child development is one of the commitments in the EYFS and all practitioners working with children from birth to five should have good knowledge of development for the whole phase. As well as information in the EYFS, training on child development is available through the Islington Early Years CPD programme.

It is important that practitioners are aware that the most important aspects of development for babies and the younger age group are personal, social and emotional development, communication and language and physical development. Children's records will therefore probably contain more information within these areas than in others.

Carrying out observations and gathering information

Children should be observed:

- On a regular basis – we recommend a "focus child" system where between three to five individual children are observed each week on a rolling basis
- In a variety of contexts – outside, inside, in all areas of the setting, in child-initiated play, in adult-guided activities, alone, in groups etc.

Practitioners will:

- be planning in time during the day to observe children
- be making short, spontaneous, "significant achievement" observations of children all the time
- be making at least one longer "narrative" observation of each child every half term when the child is a "focus child"
- regularly talk with parents and carers about children's interests, needs and achievements
- regularly engage children in conversations about their interests and learning
- gather other annotated evidence, such as photos of children engaged in play and learning, video or audio material, samples of children's drawings, writing, paintings etc

Making assessments

Practitioners will

- need time for reflection in order to analyse their observations of children in terms of their interests and motivations, achievements, likes and dislikes, needs, dispositions, abilities, skills and knowledge
- meet together to discuss and reach a shared understanding of the child, using all the information available to them and identify next steps
- plan meaningful and motivating experiences in order to support the child's further development and learning
- reflect on how their own practice and provision supports the child's next steps and make changes accordingly

On entry assessment

Practitioners need to make meaningful assessments of babies and young children during the first few weeks of the child's entry to a school or setting in order to plan appropriately for them and to be able to engage in discussion about the progress a child has made.

Time needs to be left for babies and young children to settle in to a new setting. Young children will not show their full range of abilities when they are still unsure or anxious about new routines, environments and people. With good appropriate provision and staff, most young children will settle within the first six weeks of starting somewhere new. Some young children will settle more quickly; a few will take considerably longer.

Good summative records should be passed on from the previous setting, if the child has attended one. It is also useful to ask to see the child's Profile Book from the previous setting, if one was done.

We recommend that the following contributes towards the on entry evidence for each child:

- Information gathered at the initial home visit (see *Supporting Transition in the Early Years*, CD-ROM, Islington Early Years Foundation Stage Team)
- At least 1 narrative observation of the child
- A few spontaneous "significant achievement" observations of the child
- Further information from parents and carers exchanged at a settling-in review meeting some weeks after the child has started at the setting
- Any evidence the child gives you (notes from conversations with the child, "work" samples, photos etc.)
- Other data such as EAL, SEN & FSM etc.

Following or at the settling-in review with parents, you can highlight the Development Matters' statements that you feel the child is securely demonstrating. (If subsequent achievements are highlighted in a different colour, "on-entry" information can be seen at a glance.) It is not appropriate to quantify the Development Matters numerically.

Continuing to track progress

The Observation Record should be used to document progress throughout the child's period in the EYFS.

Practitioners should review the progress a child is making at least a termly, preferably half-termly. You may do this more frequently with babies and younger children, as their developmental progress is so rapid.

If you use a "focus child" system, this is an ideal opportunity to review the child's achievements, seeking comments from parents as well as from other colleagues to inform your view and mapping against the Development Matters.

It is inappropriate to highlight the Development Matters statements every time an observation is carried out, but it can be helpful to note beside it the Development Matters emerging from the observation. One observation usually provides evidence for a number of Development Matters across several areas of learning.

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile

Practitioners working in reception classes are advised to map achievements on a termly basis onto the EYFSP. In making judgements, children need to demonstrate the EYFSP scale point consistently, independently and across a range of contexts.

Furthermore, 80% of evidence needs to stem from knowledge of the child and observational evidence of child-initiated activity. Only 20% of evidence can be gathered from adult-directed or focussed assessments (EYFSP handbook, NAA, 2008).

Concerns about progress

If there are gaps in progress or uneven progress across the areas of learning and development *, practitioners should question why that might be. There could be many reasons: for example, lack of observational evidence, inadequate provision, inappropriate experiences or particular difficulties that the individual child might be experiencing.

Child development is such that over a short period of time a child may make swift progress in one or two areas which then has a counter-effect in other areas of development. This normally corrects itself with time, but it is important that practitioners remain aware of the nature of the child's development and are alert to any delays in development.

References:

Creating the Picture, DfES, 2007 (www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk)

Early years foundation stage Profile handbook, NAA, 2008, (www.naa.org.uk/eyfsp)

The Early Years Foundation Stage, DCSF, 2008 (www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk)

Early Years Foundation Stage Team

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