

Primary

National Strategy

Creating the picture

Guidance

Curriculum and
Standards

**Local authorities,
practitioners, heads
of children's centres,
managers of early
years settings**

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Creating the picture

Part one

Assessment and record-keeping (ARK)

Part two

Including all children

Creating the picture

Introduction

There are four key themes in the EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) Framework for improving the outcomes for children from birth to five:

- A Unique Child;
- Positive Relationships;
- Enabling Environments;
- Learning and Development.

These themes have important implications for assessment and record-keeping and consequent planning for each child's needs. They inform the principles that underpin effective assessment practice.

They require practitioners to:

- recognise children as competent and influential individuals who need to be involved in their own assessment;
- work with other adults who are 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.

The EYFS states that practitioners should:

- 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.

This means that practitioners must implement clear, principled approaches and a seamless continuum of assessment from the child's first days in a setting to the end of the EYFS. These approaches should take into account the transitions that children make from setting to setting.

In 2008, the EYFSP (Early Years Foundation Stage Profile) will become statutory as part of the EYFS. The EYFSP is identical to the Foundation Stage Profile (FSP)¹. Existing publications such as *The Foundation Stage Profile Handbook*, *Observing children – building the Profile* and *Continuing the learning journey* will continue to provide relevant guidance for the EYFSP.

¹ NAA plans to make minor alterations to the LSL scale. These will come into force from September 2007.

Background

The FSP was introduced in the academic year 2002/03. Its implementation has been supported by further publication of guidance and support materials. This guidance clarifies the use of these publications by defining the principles, process and purpose of assessment in the early years. Observational assessment is a key component of effective practice and is the means by which the next steps in a child's learning are identified. It enables practitioners to ensure that their provision meets the developmental and learning needs of the children in their setting. Additionally, this document addresses issues of evidencing judgements, developing approaches to manageable record-keeping, appropriate use of data and demonstrating progress that have emerged as key challenges for practitioners, headteachers, managers and LAs.

Many LAs and practitioners use ICT effectively in the range of contexts available in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Detailed information on effective approaches can be found in *Learning and Teaching Using ICT* (DfES 0315-2004G) and in the case studies available on http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/casestudies/foundation_stage/ict_foundation_stage. This publication assumes that practitioners will be using ICT in all its forms at a level appropriate to their individual knowledge, understanding and experience. Aspects of how ICT may be used imaginatively and effectively are explored in the section on record-keeping.

The Key Elements of Effective Practice (KEEP) Principles are already well known to practitioners in the EYFS and are threaded throughout the EYFS – as shown on the Principles into Practice cards. They are important for developing effective practice that meets all children's needs, and useful in the context of documenting and assessing children's progress.

KEEP Principles

Effective practice in the early years depends upon committed, enthusiastic and reflective practitioners with a breadth and depth of knowledge, skills and understanding.

Effective practitioners use their own learning to improve their work with young children and their families in ways that are sensitive, positive and non-judgemental. Therefore, through initial and ongoing training and development, practitioners need to develop, demonstrate and continually improve their:

- relationships with both children and adults;
- understanding of the individual and diverse ways that children develop and learn;
- knowledge and understanding to actively support and extend children's learning in and across all areas and aspects of learning;
- practice in meeting all children's needs, learning styles and interests;
- work with parents and the wider community;
- work with other professionals within and beyond the setting.

For further information, please refer to *KEEP Key Elements of Effective Practice* and *Medway LA KEEP* which is available to download in the attached zip.

Part one

Assessment and record-keeping (ARK)

Assessment and record-keeping (ARK) is divided into five sections:

1. An overview of observational assessment in the context of the EYFS;
2. A description of the principles for observational assessment and record-keeping;
3. A description of the eight principles of early childhood observational assessment;
4. A description of the six principles for record-keeping;
5. A description of the four principles for demonstrating progress.

Section 1

An overview of observational assessment in the context of the EYFS

This overview aims to provide simple guidance on what to do to make sure the practice in the setting is underpinned by the principles of assessment and the four key themes of the EYFS:

- A Unique Child;
- Positive Relationships;
- Enabling Environments;
- Learning and Development.

These themes must be approached in a holistic manner; it is not possible to 'chop them up' and meet their requirements with a tick list. The following summaries aim to give a flavour of the links between EYFS Principles and the assessment approaches discussed in this document.

Theme 1: A Unique Child

Babies and young children are individuals first, with unique profiles of abilities. Schedules and routines flow with the child's needs. All planning starts with observing children in order to understand and consider their current interests, development and learning.

EYFS Observation, Assessment and Planning card: Introduction

- Observe children to find out about their needs, what they are interested in and what they can do.
- Note children's responses in different situations.
- Analyse your observations and highlight children's achievements or their need for further support.
- Involve parents as part of the ongoing observation and assessment process.

EYFS Observation, Assessment and Planning card: Starting with the child

- Planning can be for the long- or medium-term, showing how the Principles of the EYFS will be put into practice.
- Some planning will be for a week or a day and will show how you will support each child's learning and development.
- This planning always follows the same pattern – observe, analyse and use what you have found out about the child to plan for your group.

EYFS Observation, Assessment and Planning card: Planning

Theme 2: Positive Relationships

Be aware that adults bring their own perspectives to an observation. Family circumstances and cultural contexts need to be considered in making assessments, particularly in Personal, Social and Emotional Development.

- Assessments are the decisions you make, using what you have observed about a child's development and/or learning.
- One type of assessment, often referred to as assessment for learning or formative assessment, is what you do every day when you observe children and note their interests or abilities.
- Another type of assessment is used to give a summary of a child's achievements at a particular point in time so that their progress can be tracked. This is known as summative assessment. The EYFSP is a summative assessment of each child's achievement at the end of the EYFS.
- You may be involved in contributing to the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) for a child who has additional needs. This is a standardised assessment that gives a full picture of a child's additional needs at any stage. It includes information from the child and their parents and covers all aspects of a child's development, including health, education and social development.

EYFS Observation, Assessment and Planning card: Assessment

It is important to consider all the factors that affect children's development and learning.

- Are the views of parents and practitioners reflected in children's records?
- Do you review the environment and the resources after each session?
- Do you think about which children were involved in different activities and use this information to plan further?

EYFS Observation, Assessment and Planning card: Reflecting on practice

Theme 3: Enabling Environments

Consider whether the learning environment suits each child: can they see themselves reflected here? Do they feel a sense of belonging?

When you are planning, remember that children learn from everything, even things not planned for – such as a fall of snow.

- Plan to observe as part of the daily routine.
- Analyse your observations to help you plan 'what next' for individuals and groups of children.
- Develop records of learning and development.
- Ensure that parents have regular opportunities to add to records.

EYFS Observation, Assessment and Planning card: Effective practice

Theme 4: Learning and Development

This covers all the themes of EYFS: A Unique Child, Positive Relationships, Enabling Environments, Learning and Development. If children do not communicate freely with adults you may need to 'think outside the box' rather than make assumptions. Be aware that communication with children learning English as an additional language (EAL) must build on their skills and achievements in their home language. Learn to read and respond to their body language and gesture as well as to their spoken language. Be aware of environments where children are most likely to communicate freely, for example, many children are more comfortable in an outdoor space.

Challenges and dilemmas facing the practitioner include:

- Ensuring flexibility in planning for the group, while keeping a focus on children's individual and present learning needs, or interests and achievements.
- Planning time for regular observations of children who attend the setting on an irregular basis.
- Involving parents in contributing to the observation, assessment and planning cycle when they are already busy.
- Creating records that are clear and accessible to everybody who needs to refer to them.

EYFS Observation, Assessment and Planning card: Challenges and dilemmas

Section 2

A description of the principles for observational assessment and record-keeping

Observational assessment and record-keeping involve building up a manageable picture of what a child knows, understands, feels and can do in order to:

- plan the next steps in development and learning;
- plan the provision to enable these next steps to be successful (formative assessment);
- help children as they are learning (assessment for learning);
- mark staging posts in a child's and groups of children's development and learning (summative assessment);
- evaluate the impact of the quality of provision, environment and the level of practitioner training on development and learning (assessment of the conditions for learning).

The impact of observational assessment is not measurable by its weight. It is the use to which the practitioner puts their observations that is important.

Ongoing observation, carried out in a range of contexts and across the areas of Learning and Development, will be the key way of assessing children's needs in EYFS. The approaches used for young children should align with what is required by the EYFSP (formative assessment during the final year of the EYFS, often a reception class). The systems and approaches used must grow from the needs of the very youngest children; they should not be watered-down versions of approaches appropriate for older children.

The principles are divided into three sub-sections:

- eight principles for observational assessment;
- six principles for record-keeping;
- four principles for demonstrating progress.

Through these web pages, the Primary National Strategy is extending the work begun in December 2006 with the NAA by:

- developing the links to EYFS and the EYFSP;
- adding references to other supporting materials that will continue to be relevant to observational assessment²;
- adding information relevant to the inclusion agenda.

² *The Foundation Stage Profile Handbook, Continuing the learning journey, Observing children – building the Profile*

Section 3

A description of the eight principles for early childhood observational assessment

There has been much debate about how LA colleagues and expert practitioners should approach assessment in the context of the EYFS. In December 2006, interested colleagues from 50 LAs worked together with NAA (the assessment arm of the Qualifications and Assessment Authority) and the National Strategies (NS) to develop principles for assessment, based on existing guidance in *Birth to Three Matters*, *The Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage* and *The Foundation Stage Profile Handbook*. The rationale is that these principles, described in sections 3 to 5, are drawn from, and are evident in, good and effective practice in early years settings.

1. **Assessment must have a purpose.** It will enable practitioners to intervene, support and extend a child's learning as it is happening. It will inform planning for the next steps in learning for each child, deepening and extending the child's learning. Assessment captures the impact of provision on a child's development and learning and so helps practitioners review and evaluate their provision.
2. **Ongoing observation of children participating in everyday activities is the most reliable way of building up an accurate picture of what children know, understand, feel, are interested in and can do.** These individual pictures will be built up over time and in a range of contexts. This is the approach required by the EYFSP in the final year of EYFS (often the reception class.)
3. **Practitioners should both plan observations and be ready to capture the spontaneous but important moments.** Everyday experiences and activities will provide an almost complete picture of the child's learning, but particular planning is needed to capture important aspects of learning that may not arise every day. Other opportunities may occur that are unplanned but nevertheless should not be missed.
4. **Judgements of children's development and learning must be based on skills, knowledge, understanding and behaviour that are demonstrated consistently and independently.** Assessments cannot be reliable or accurate if they are based on one-off instances or information gleaned solely from adult-directed activities. Observational assessment should be a balance between child-initiated and adult-led activities.
5. **Effective assessment takes equal account of all aspects of the child's development and learning.** A holistic approach to assessment is necessary in order to reflect accurately the nature of children's development and to acknowledge the interrelationship between different aspects of learning.
6. **Accurate assessments are reliant upon taking account of contributions from a range of perspectives.** These will include all adults who have contact with the child in a range of contexts: the home, health professionals and so on.
7. **Assessments must actively engage parents in developing an accurate picture of the child's development.** Effective partnership, working with parents, will ensure that their vital perspective contributes to the overall description of children's development and learning.

- 8. Children must be fully involved in their own assessment.** Children should be involved in discussing their activities and how they feel about them from the beginning of their time in a setting and from whatever age they start. Encouraging children to respond (using the communication method with which they are most comfortable, including where appropriate their non-verbal response), ask questions, make comments and share their own judgements about what they are learning enables them to take true ownership of their development. It also gives practitioners an invaluable insight into the patterns and process of their learning.

Putting these observational assessment principles into practice

The following section sets out the common features of good practice that will result from these principles and weaves in straightforward guidance on how to achieve this. It gives examples, some of which draw on familiar national guidance.

- 1. Assessment must have a purpose.** Assessment for its own sake has no intrinsic value.

What it looks like

This principle is evident when these criteria may be observed:

- Practitioners listen to and note children's reactions to and involvement in their learning and respond in ways which support that learning there and then.
- Assessment provides an insight into how best to help a child develop and learn. What practitioners look at, listen to and note is fully considered to plan the next steps in learning.
- The effect of provision on children's development and learning is examined carefully. Practitioners use this information to investigate whether what they are doing is having a positive impact.

Case study: childminder

Alicia is a childminder who currently looks after two children: Darnell, who is two years old, and Tyler, who is one year old. Along with the obviously vital daily conversations with the parents about how their child has been during the day, Alicia also keeps a record book about each of the children, which she shares with the parents at regular intervals.

Alicia:

"I keep daily, weekly diaries in these books, each child has a different-coloured book. And what I do at the end of the day or the week or after a significant event is... I just make a note, a set of things that they've done, or they're doing or... we're even planning, so that children, the parents know as well as me what the child has achieved that week, that day, during that particular hour, how that particular child was."

The parents really appreciate these records. Here is one parent's response:

"Oh she's brilliant, she has a little record book but it's like a story book and at the end of each term... (the children are with Alicia all year but they tend to have holiday times in school holidays so that is a good opportunity for the books to go home and be read by the wider family) ...she will pass it over and then I can read what Darnell's been up to. When I come to pick him up she lets me know what they'd been up to..., the funny stories... but I get to read it all again in the book ...it's good to know what's going on from day to day."

Alicia describes why she does this:

"...so that we can get a little pattern... and see how that is building on..."

She talks about how she uses photographs, which she also puts in the record books. She takes photographs of:

"What they're seeing, what they're playing with, what they're doing, so even if I don't have a written record, the picture is there, you know, and that captures it all and they (parents) can see exactly what's going on while their children are here."

She also describes how she links it to the guidance (at the time of this case study interview Alicia was using *Birth to Three Matters*). She describes how she tracks to see if she feels that the child is developing well:

"All those things I can now put down [in his record book], he's doing what he should be doing for his age, I can see he's developing fine. Everything is working as it should be."

And that I get from looking at the Birth to Three Matters and I can now find it under that heading... this is how Tyler is doing and how he's meeting that particular skill."

But communication with parents is vital:

"... communication is ongoing morning and night... meeting the parents. I encourage them to tell me as much as possible... as well as the books... we communicate verbally as well as much as possible, so we both know we're working on the same page."

EYFS materials

- 2. Ongoing observation of children participating in everyday activities is the most reliable way of building up an accurate picture of what children know, understand, feel, are interested in and can do.** These individual pictures will be built up over time and in a range of contexts. This is the approach required by the EYFSP in the final year of EYFS (often the reception class).

What it looks like

This is demonstrated when these criteria may be observed:

- Practitioners make systematic observations and reflect upon their interactions with children to understand each child's achievement, interests and learning styles.
- Observations and reflections capture the broad picture of children's development and learning, rather than narrow aspects.
- Observations are made in a range of contexts, for example, when children are applying their knowledge, when they are playing, eating together, going on outings, when they are engaged on their own and with others.

The only accurate – and therefore acceptable – way of assessing young children's learning is through gathering evidence from observations and information from parents, the child's own views and those of other professionals involved with the child.

Case study: practitioners

See CD-ROM *Observing children – building the Profile*: What do practitioners think?

These practitioners, talking about building up the EYFSP, explain how they use observation as a key way of understanding children's learning.

- 3. Practitioners should both plan observations and be ready to capture the spontaneous but important moments.** Everyday experiences and activities will provide an almost complete picture of the child's learning, but particular planning is needed to capture important aspects of learning that may not arise every day. Other opportunities may occur that are unplanned but nevertheless should not be missed.

What it looks like

This is demonstrated when these criteria may be observed.

- Practitioners organise resources and their time so they can capture the planned and the spontaneous.
- Staff, especially the key person, are deployed to carry out good-quality observations.
- Staff realise every interaction with children is an opportunity to learn about them and to influence the quality of their learning at that moment.
- Practitioners are well trained and recognise important moments in children's development and learning.

Case study: reception class

See: CD-ROM *Observing children – building the Profile: Investigating cars*

This reception class is looking carefully at cars and this provides a good insight into children's understanding of how things work. The practitioners note and reflect on what they have seen and heard.

- 4. Judgements of children's development and learning must be based on skills, knowledge, understanding and behaviour that are demonstrated consistently and independently.** Assessments cannot be reliable or accurate if they are based on one-off instances or information gleaned solely from adult-directed activities.

What it looks like

This principle is demonstrated when these criteria may be observed:

- Practitioners make judgements about children's learning and plan for their next steps after considering a range of evidence displayed in different contexts and across areas of Learning and Development.
- Children are observed in adult-directed activities and in those they have initiated themselves.

"For each [EYFSP] scale point, the judgement made should represent your assessment of the child's typical attainment, in the sense that while a child's behaviour may vary from day to day and from context to context, the assessment made is the best description of the child's achievement".

The Foundation Stage Profile Handbook page 2

Case study: reception class

Following inputs on counting from one to five, using songs, rhymes and practical situations, the practitioner observed Charlotte going into the role-play area and counting the plates out loud as she put them on the table. In subsequent observations, Charlotte was also noticed counting the spadefuls needed to fill a bucket in the sand, the chalked circles outside and the other children sitting with her for snack time. The practitioner recorded that Charlotte was confident in counting from one to five and planned to develop her understanding of number by enriching the opportunities for mathematical exploration in the role-play area.

5. Effective assessment takes equal account of all aspects of the child’s development and learning. A holistic approach to assessment is necessary in order to reflect accurately the nature of children’s development and acknowledge the interrelationship between different aspects of learning.

What it looks like

This principle is demonstrated when these criteria may be observed:

- Practitioners tune into the different skills children are developing. These can be linguistic, interpersonal, physical, creative, mathematical and so on.
- Assessment opportunities are exploited where these skills overlap, for example, physical, interpersonal, creative and linguistic in role-play.
- Practitioners do not set up assessments that dissect individual skills but instead reflect on all the dimensions revealed by the normal activities in the setting.

Case study: Birth to Three Matters: A strong child – Me, Myself and I

Through regular observations of Lamumba, who is two, practitioners in his playgroup notice that he mainly plays with the small-world toys such as trains, dinosaurs and people. While the adults recognise his need to be involved in this safe and repetitious play, after a while they help him to explore new things. By planning activities in which his favourite playthings are integrated into other areas, for example, putting the dinosaurs into the sand and the trains with large construction bricks, Lamumba is enabled to explore and enjoy a wider range of experiences.

6. Accurate assessments are reliant upon taking account of contributions from a range of perspectives. As judgements are based on observational evidence and knowledge of the child, all adults who interact with the child, in the setting, will contribute to the process.

What it looks like

This is demonstrated when practitioners and other adults adopt these strategies.

- Understand that all their interactions with children influence their development and learning.
- Respect the range of perspectives that adults in different roles will gain about children.
- Allocate time to discuss what they know about individual children and consider the implications for the children’s development and learning.

Case study: children's stories, Bailey

Bailey has a physical disability and attends a children's centre in London. Partnership with parents is at the core of the work of this inclusive centre. The Head of Centre, his key person and his mother are interviewed and talk about him and their roles in working together to support his development.

This partnership begins early, as the Head of Centre said:

"From the minute the child's allocated a place, we'll do a home visit. The home visit is done by the key worker and either myself or my deputy. And we really get to know the family from day one. Those home visits are really crucial because they give us a lot of information about the child, the child's interests, the child's needs, and at home the parent often feels so comfortable to share that information with us, and it really begins a wonderful relationship for the way forward."

Parents, key people and other staff all contribute and share in the assessments and record keeping for each child at the centre.

His key person noted:

"He (Bailey) has his certain needs which are identified in his individual education plan...which a lot of it's his therapy... and obviously we try to do a lot of his therapy through play. So we do plan in certain play activities, which again all the children can access and sometimes it is directed more for his needs."

His mother said:

"Bailey is a really outgoing kid. He's a social kid and he's happy. I really like the nursery. The children, when like the physio or OT comes in to work with Bailey, all the kids get involved. It's really a nice atmosphere."

The Head of Centre felt that: *"For his mother, what was important was friends, that's what she loves to hear most... more than anything she'll love to hear who he's been playing with and she'll love to see that he's got real friends here."*

His mother also told the nursery:

"He likes his bike and he likes playing with balls. If you've got a ball and you give it to him, he's well happy. And he likes his bike really a lot. (Bailey has a special tricycle which his mother got for him to use at home and at the nursery) I went for a charity to buy it, like really expensive. It's an excellent bike, brilliant. It makes him be a part of what all the other children are doing instead of just sitting in his chair."

His key person said:

"Bailey loves playing football or playing with balls of any description. He's got a big ball that he brings into nursery quite a lot to play with. He's now got a new bike which comes to nursery and once he's on there, there's no stopping him, he's off round the playground with the other children. He likes, he's getting into construction toys now, fitting things together, and when he's doing some of his therapy, we play games with bubbles and balloons which he enjoys playing with."

Working with Bailey

The Child Development Team – Who are we?

The Child Development Team (CDT) is a group of health care professionals who specialise in assessing, diagnosing, treating and advising on children aged birth to five with severe and complex developmental difficulties. These difficulties can be physical, mental, social, emotional, behavioural, sensory or related to learning ability.

The team consists of:

- Paediatricians/ medical staff
- Specialist health visiting
- Administrative staff
- Speech and language therapy
- Occupational therapy
- Clinical psychology
- Physiotherapy
- Family counselling
- Dietetics
- Therapy assistant

The team's function is:

- To provide an interdisciplinary service that is coordinated, accessible and consistent.
- To offer assessment and diagnosis of children with delayed or disordered development or disabilities.
- Where appropriate to arrange a programme of treatment and care in partnership with parents to reflect the child and family's needs. It may include individual or group therapy both at home, at nurseries and in the community.
- The other teams working with children and who we work closely with are:
 - Early Years Inclusion Team
 - Educational psychologists
 - Hospital services
 - Voluntary services
 - Wheelchair service
 - Disabled Children's Team
- To ensure a smooth operation between all the people who work with children, each child with SEN has a nursery key person and a CDT key person, who talk regularly to make sure that the child's needs are being met.

The CDT and the setting working together

The CDT occupational therapist and physiotherapist work very closely with the education staff at the children's centre. We are all working together to maximise children's potential. Therapists work with nursery staff and parents to set joint targets for each child to work towards. These are some of the things that our team might work on:

1. Using the toilet with support.
2. Learning to undress his upper body.
3. Learning to go forward in his powered wheelchair.
4. Learning to go forward in his tricycle.
5. Learning to hold his body up against gravity and reach for a toy.
6. Learning to move from sit to stand with support.
7. Learning to draw.

- 7. Assessments must actively engage parents in developing an accurate picture of the child's development.** Effective partnership, working with parents, will ensure that their vital perspective contributes to the overall description of children's development and learning.

What it looks like

This principle is demonstrated when practitioners adopt these strategies:

- Acknowledge parents to be the prime and first educators of children.
- Engage in a two-way flow of information between family and setting, in order to meet children's needs effectively and agree next steps in learning.
- Support parents in describing their children's individual attainment.
- Talk with parents and involve them in reviews of their children's achievements, including those demonstrated at home.

Case study: children's centre, Erik

Erik started in nursery school at the age of three-and-a-half and is Swedish-speaking. His mother said she was anxious about leaving him as he had not attended a group setting without her before. She asked staff to be aware that he had very good physical skills and enjoyed physical activity. Staff noticed these very good physical skills, for example, in construction and other creations made with adult support, during the first few weeks. However he was very apprehensive about new experiences, unsure of expectations or how to explain his needs and sometimes tearful. His key person spent time each session playing alongside Erik, introducing unfamiliar activities and having a quick chat to his mother at the end of the day about what he had been doing. Regular, focused support for language development, through games in a small group, gave Erik the words to ask for a turn and to make choices. All staff used his interest in building things to encourage working on group projects inside and outside on a large scale. His confidence grew.

8. Children must be fully involved in their own assessment. Encouraging children to respond, ask questions, make comments and share their own judgements about what they are learning enables them to take true ownership of their development. It also gives practitioners an invaluable insight into the patterns and processes of their learning.

What it looks like

This principle is demonstrated when these criteria are observed:

- Practitioners and children are involved in conversations about learning, which help children when they are involved in an activity, as well as when they review outcomes together.
- Adults model ways of working and discuss with children what they are trying to do in order to explore the learning.
- Children ask their own questions, talk about their thoughts and how they want to tackle a problem.
- Practitioners ask questions that encourage children to consider quality and processes of work and what to do next.

Case study: children's centre, Michael

Children's significant work is collected in portfolios to demonstrate their attainment and progress. The children are involved in this process as they develop the portfolios with their key people. Michael had gone out on a walk, collected autumn leaves and twigs, made bark rubbings and assembled them in a collage. Very pleased with his efforts, he took what he had made over to his key person, saying: *"I think I want to put this in my portfolio because it is really good. I like the colour."* She talked with him about what he had made and how he had made it, as well as the interesting shades of colours. She offered to photograph it, explaining that it would be hard to keep in the portfolio. When the photograph was taken, they downloaded and printed it together. She watched as he got his portfolio and helped him to stick it into the folder. He took his collage home after showing the photograph in his portfolio to his father.

Section 4

A description of the six principles for record-keeping

Record-keeping is simply a tool to help practitioners, the children and their parents reflect on children's attainment and progress. It involves noting the most important elements of practitioners', children's and parents' growing knowledge of what children know, understand, are interested in, feel and can do.

The activity of record-keeping must be selective so that it remains manageable and to ensure that important information is not obscured. This selection will depend on practitioners having a good understanding of children's development and learning. It will be informed by decisions made by headteachers and managers, and in the context of the setting as a whole. It will also involve parents.

Principles for record-keeping

These principles are drawn from, and are evident in, good and effective practice in early years settings. They come from the discussions and feedback from the NAA conference, from existing documents³ and are based on the EYFS materials.

- 9. Record-keeping must be meaningful and have a purpose.** ‘Records are about getting to know the child and what the child needs.’⁴ They should be shared and used to support the growth and development of the child. They must be understandable to partners in the child’s development including parents and other practitioners.
- 10. The task of keeping records must be manageable and sustainable.** Practitioners should be realistic about the amount of information they collect and the systems they create. These need to be manageable as part of day-to-day practice.
- 11. Records must capture the range of children’s attainment, achievement and progress.** They will show the starting points and development points across the areas of learning.
- 12. Records will reflect the individuality of every child and the diversity of their backgrounds.** Children have different capacities, interests and competencies and it is necessary to reflect this diversity in the type of records kept. Greater detail will be evident for one child in a particular aspect that is not necessary for another.
- 13. All significant participants in children’s development and learning should contribute to the information-gathering.** This will involve a wide range of people, including parents and children.
- 14. Records should be shared with the child.** This is a statutory requirement of the FSP and will continue to be so for the EYFSP.

Putting the principles into practice for record-keeping

The following section sets out the common features of good practice that will result from these principles and weaves in straightforward guidance on how to achieve this. It gives examples, some of which draw on familiar national guidance.

As part of the DfES (Department for Education and Skills) Schools Primary ICT programme, the *Using ICT in the Early Years* project was launched in 2006. The main thrust of the project was to support the raising of children’s achievements in ICT capability within the early years. To achieve this, the enquiry based project focused upon the embedding of observational assessment across the early years, and sought to involve children and their parents/carers in that process.

How LAs would use ICT to embed Early Years Foundation Stage practice across all sectors in relation to the following three points was of particular interest -

³ *The Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage, The Foundation Stage Profile Handbook, Continuing the learning journey, Observing children – building the Profile and so on.*

⁴ From Bartholomew, L. and Bruce, T (1993) *Getting to Know You: A guide to record-keeping in early childhood education and care*, Hodder and Stoughton p.100

- How would ICT be used to develop observational assessment practices?
- How would ICT be used to support the documentation of learning?
- How would ICT be used to support working with parents/carers?

For further information, please refer to *Using ICT in the Early Years* which is available to download in the attached zip file.

9. Record-keeping must be meaningful and have a purpose. 'Records are about getting to know the child and what the child needs.' They should be shared and used to support the growth and development of the child. They should be understandable to partners in the child's development including parents and other practitioners.

What it looks like

This is demonstrated when records:

- Are shared with all concerned parties and are referred to in order to plan next steps in a child's development and learning;
- Hold information that supports children's emotional, physical and academic welfare when they transfer to other settings;
- Can be analysed to evaluate the impact of the provision on children's development and learning.

Case study: early childhood centre

Two kinds of records are kept at this early childhood centre: records of children's progress as well as records of each session. This enables the practitioners to evaluate their teaching and plan for the next session appropriately. It also provides a record of a whole year's work that is shared with new staff and is therefore useful for induction training or when staff are absent.

Case study: primary school

At the end of the summer term the reception teacher, Year 1 teacher and headteacher meet to review each child's FSP results. They discuss each child's personal circumstances and a 'cocktail of results', giving emphasis to dispositions and attitudes, especially their interest, excitement and motivation to learn, but also other key skills such as writing and linking sounds and letters. They agree expectations for the standards each child could reasonably reach in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 1. In the spring term they review the progress and attainment of individuals and groups of children. After such reflection they found that all groups of children were on track except boys who had attained well at the end of reception but on further investigation were found to be no longer enthused by their experiences in Year 1. They were now not learning from first-hand experience, did not have self-chosen activities and had fewer opportunities to be outside. They found the emphasis on written work carried out at tables particularly difficult. It was arranged that the Year 1 teacher would spend some time in the reception class to see how the provision could be developed to rekindle these children's motivation to learn.

10. The task of keeping records must be manageable and sustainable. Practitioners should be realistic about the amount of information they collect and the systems they create. These need to be manageable as part of day-to-day practice.

What it looks like

This is demonstrated when practitioners adopt these strategies:

- Abandon recording practices that are now obsolete in meeting current requirements for assessing and capturing children's achievements, for example, those that rely on one-off assessments or tick lists.
- Confine themselves to recording those things that are helpful in supporting children's development and learning.

Case study: primary school

This school had previously used a commercial test-based system of stand-alone assessments with children entering reception, as they felt it gave a statistical measure of each child's starting point. They repeated the assessment at the end of the year to give a 'value added' measure. Staff in reception convinced the headteacher of the value of observation to inform assessment. Strong links were developed with the local playgroup, where children are visited by the teacher and taken by the playgroup leader to visit the reception class. The playgroup record provides observational evidence of each child's achievements during the pre-school year. This is supported by the Leuven Well-being and Involvement scales⁵ to provide a statistical value to the child's participation in areas of learning throughout the year.

They discuss each child's personal circumstances and a 'cocktail of results' giving emphasis to dispositions and attitudes especially their interest, excitement and motivation to learn, but also other key skills such as writing and linking sounds and letters and physical development.

The school begins the year by continuing to add to the record, eventually building up a profile of the child through their own observations.

11. Records must capture the range of children's attainment, achievement and progress.**What it looks like**

This is demonstrated when records have these functions:

- Show children's starting points and progress across the areas of Learning and Development.
- Include information on all areas of learning, as well as literacy and numeracy, and take account of well-being, involvement and a range of different achievements.

Case study: nursery school

This nursery school devised a transfer record for use when children leave. They use three observations selected from the year to show typical examples of the child's play. For each area of learning they make dated notes of where the child is in relation to development and learning. They note what the receiving school needs to attend to next, and any significant events in the child's life, such as moving house or a new baby in the family as well as the child's favourite experiences and interests during their time in the nursery. They include parents' comments as well to form a useful booklet to help the child make a smooth transition to the next setting.

⁵ Laevers, F. (1994) *The Leuven Involvement Scale for Young Children*, Centre for Experiential Education, Leuven, Belgium. A brief description is included as a pdf download.

12. Records will reflect the individuality of children and the diversity of their

backgrounds. Children have different capacities, interests and competencies, different cultural and religious backgrounds and different levels of a sense of identity. It is necessary to reflect this diversity in the profile of records. Greater detail will be evident for one child in a particular aspect that is not necessary for another.

What it looks like

This is demonstrated by records that have these features:

- Although they may have the same format, the content and the balance of commentary on different areas of development vary to reflect the different priorities for development and learning of each child.
- A child's achievements may not be typical of the same age band in every area of learning.

Case study: children's centre

Marie had attended a small sessional playgroup before starting in nursery school at 3 years 4 months. Staff noted that she had very good mark-making skills and enjoyed all creative activities, either alone or alongside an adult, but spoke very quietly, avoided interaction with other children and excluded herself from busy areas of the provision. She was selected for small-group work on skills for learning: playing turn-taking games and using song, signing, pictures and gestures to help communication. Staff are encouraging friendships by offering Marie paired learning opportunities in the creative activities she enjoys, and developing her conversation skills through story re-enactment with puppets and other props. They noted that at the Christmas sing-along for children and parents Marie happily joined in with all the actions and her mother said that she sings the words to her brother at home.

13. All significant participants in children's development and learning should contribute to the information-gathering. This will involve a wide range of people, including parents and children, contributing perspectives in order to plan appropriate next steps in development and learning.

What it looks like

This is demonstrated by records that have these features:

- They are accessible to all concerned adults including parents.
- They are in a form that allows all concerned adults, including parents, to make their contributions.

Other contributors

It is likely that children will meet and interact with a number of adults working in or visiting the setting during the year. Learning support, additional language support or special needs support assistants should all take a full part in observing, discussing and contributing to the recording of children's progress. Those who work regularly with the children are likely to be directly involved in observing activities and recording assessments. The views of other adults may also contribute to the assessment process.

For example, lunchtime supervisors may observe some aspects of children's development, or an individual child may form a close bond with a student or voluntary helper. In addition, support staff from outside agencies, for example, visiting teachers and speech therapists, may provide useful information about progress in a particular area of learning. Other adults who are involved in children's lives, including after-school care staff, childminders and relatives, may make important contributions.

To summarise, when finalising assessments towards the end of the year, practitioners should take account of the views of all those who have contributed during the year, as well as their own accumulated knowledge and any relevant evidence, including written notes, tapes/videos and examples of children's work.

The Foundation Stage Profile Handbook (page 104)

Case study: CD-ROM Observing children – Building the Profile: What do practitioners think?

In this example parents are looking through the Profile and one parent is translating for the other what is written there. Practitioners in this setting include parents' comments about their children's interests and activities in their assessment records and parents are welcome to add to the records.

14. Records should be shared with the child. This is a statutory requirement of the FSP and will continue to be so for the EYFSP.

What it looks like

This is described fully in the *Foundation Stage Profile Handbook* and supporting materials.

Children

There are many ways in which children should be involved in the assessment process, including discussions about likes, dislikes and achievements, selecting work or photographs for an end of Foundation Stage booklet, writing or drawing comments (e.g. a 'smiley face' to indicate enjoyment of a story or activity) in their home-school diaries, or recording views on tape or video. The views which children express at this stage are influenced by a variety of factors. For example, children's likes and dislikes may appear to change in different situations, when they are affected by the responses of others. The important practice of involving children in the assessment process is to enable them to develop their ability to express preferences and make choices, begin to understand that their views are respected and develop as autonomous learners.

Talking with children about their learning

A useful way of assimilating and giving value to children's knowledge and views about their interests and progress is to arrange a discussion between individual children and practitioners, recording the outcome on tape, video, or in writing. A possible starting point could be to ask the child to draw, talk about or select a photograph of their favourite activity (see page 111 for an example of prompts that could be used).

The Foundation Stage Profile Handbook (page 103)

Section 5

A description of the four principles for demonstrating progress

Demonstrating progress during the EYFS involves analysing a broad range of information, which is captured by ongoing assessment of children, in a range of contexts, to illustrate their progress over time and across the areas of Learning and Development. Contributions from a range of other contributors, children and their parents as well as health professionals, for example, should also be part of the information considered.

Some statistical information from, for example, the Office of National Statistics (ONS) website <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/> may also be pertinent to illustrate local barriers and disadvantages⁶. From May 2007, an EYFS section will be available on the Evaluating School Performance website on <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/esp/>. The information on this site is for practitioners working in the final year of the EYFS in maintained schools. It is not appropriate for use in the EYFS in general or for all settings.

Principles for demonstrating progress

These principles are drawn from, and are evident in, good and effective practice in early years settings. LAs attending the 2006 NAA conference have given feedback on these principles and are in general agreement with them.

⁶ More information on this is given in *Including All Children*

15. Effective practitioners will be able to identify how individuals and groups of children in their setting have developed and progressed in their learning. It is self-evident that progress must be identifiable and that the information must be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the provision for individuals and groups of learners.

16. Effective approaches to assessment will generate information or data that can be used for a range of purposes. Children should not be tested to generate data. Good assessment processes will provide the information by which progress can be ascertained.

17. Children's progress must be identified and analysed through a range of appropriate evidence, the majority of this will be drawn from observation of child-initiated activity. There is a wide range of information, both qualitative and quantitative, available in the EYFS. It is important that practitioners consider what is significant educationally for the child's learning journey. Items that appear to have statistical significance may be influenced by other variables: birth date, length of attendance, regularity of attendance, maternal health, living conditions and so on. Without the use of observational assessment, as described in these web pages, numerical formulae alone will not provide sufficient information to meet the statutory requirements for EYFS and the EYFSP.

18. The complexity of young children's development requires practitioners and managers to be able to understand a range of information in order to draw conclusions about children's progress and the effectiveness of their provision. In the final year of the EYFS part of this information may be numeric. Knowing which scale points a child has achieved and which have yet to be mastered are crucially important pieces of information, needed for planning both in the EYFS and in Year 1. The child's records will also include rich observational information that covers the full year.

Putting the principles for demonstrating progress into practice

The following section sets out the common features of good practice that will result from these principles, weaving in straightforward guidance on how to achieve this. It gives examples, some of which draw on familiar national guidance.

15. Effective practitioners will be able to identify how individuals and groups of children in their setting have developed and progressed in their learning.

What it looks like

This requires practitioners to have a systematic, reflective and manageable approach to recording assessments in a form that allows them to track the progress and developments children have made.

This is demonstrated when practitioners adopt these strategies:

- Identify and record a child's starting points in the areas of Learning and Development, provided by observations and information shared by parents and other settings at times of transfer, or settings that also currently support the child.
- Continue to build up individual pictures of each child's learning and development primarily through observational assessment.
- Review records regularly with the interested parties, including parents, to examine whether each child and group of children has made desirable progress.

- Summarise records at times of transfer to describe attainment and to support appropriate planning for a child's needs in the next setting.

In order to do this, practitioners may adopt these strategies:

- Use tools such as *eProfile* in the final year of the EYFS (reception), where this is appropriate to a child's achievements, to draw, for example, radar graphs on a termly basis to identify progress made during the reception year and to compare the rates of progress made in each area of learning and development.
- Use data from the ONS website that illustrate local barriers to learning, for example, deprivation.

Case study: *Observing children – building the Profile*; practitioner discussion with parents from 'Being a vet'

The practitioner and parents discuss developments that the child has made. The practitioner uses examples of work, observations and her knowledge of the child to demonstrate the progress the child has made in her use of phonic knowledge. The practitioner relates this to the early learning goals found in the FSP.

16. Effective approaches to assessment will generate information or data that can be used for a range of purposes. Ongoing assessments that inform next steps in children's learning will provide appropriate information that can be used by practitioners and managers to demonstrate how practice and provision have impacted on their development.

Assessment, record-keeping and demonstrating progress in EYFS are not about assessing, recording and creating data sets designed to depress or enhance outcomes for ends such as improving added value.

What it looks like

This is demonstrated when practitioners and managers adopt these strategies:

- Reflect on assessments in order to support individual learning journeys.
- Analyse their assessments to identify the needs of specific groups of learners.
- Reflect on their assessment data to evaluate the effectiveness of their setting.

Case study: primary school

Each year a school interrogates its FSP data gained from observational assessment by comparing its pattern of results with the national pattern, using the following questionnaire.

FSP questionnaire for practitioners

Compare the school FSP data with national data by raising queries in order to explore the quality of children's achievements:

Data for all children:

How do our school's data compare with national data 0–3 points, 4–7, 8–9 and 6+ for each scale point?

- Is there a similar picture for 0–3 points (broadly lower attainers)?
- Is there a similar picture for 6+ points (broadly middle attainers)?
- Is there a similar picture for 8–9 points (broadly higher attainers)?

What does this tell us about the attainment of the school's cohort compared with the national attainment found at the end of the reception year?

Do any differences relate to particular scale points but not to others?

Do these differences raise questions about particular attainment groups or about attainment of particular assessment scales?

Does the lack of attainment of particular points within an assessment scale indicate how to cross the threshold from lower to middle, or middle to higher attainment?

Data for girls and boys:

How do our school's data compare with national data 0–3 points, 4–7, 8–9 and 6+ for each scale point?

- Is there a similar picture for 0–3 points (lower attainers)?
- Is there a similar picture for 6+ points (middle attainers)?
- Is there a similar picture for 8–9 points (higher attainers)?

Do any differences with the national data for girls or boys affect one gender more than the other?

Do any differences with the national data affect particular gender attainment groups?

Do any differences with the national data affect gender groups only in particular assessment scales?

Comparing girls' attainment with boys' attainment:

Is the pattern of difference in attainment of girls compared with boys for each assessment scale similar to the pattern of difference found in the national data?

Do any different patterns in the attainment of boys compared with girls affect only particular attainment groups or assessment scales?

Does the pattern of attainment of individual points within each assessment scale explain where the differences are located in the comparative attainment of boys and girls, and where appropriate other inclusion groups?

This school found that in 2006, nationally, 39% of boys and girls gained 8–9 points in Knowledge and Understanding of the World (KUW). The school's own results showed 70% of boys achieved this but only 57% of girls did: this was highlighted as an area worthy of deeper investigation as it raised questions about the achievement of girls and the school's provision for KUW.

Each school will of course use the inclusion groups appropriate for its catchment and will use the information about this provided by the local authority to all schools. This is typically benchmarked data against local deprivation criteria and about ethnic and cultural groups.

17. Children's progress must be identified and analysed through a range of appropriate evidence; the majority of this will be drawn from observation of child-initiated activity. Many commercial schemes use numerical formulae alone. Without the use of observational assessment, as described in these web pages, numerical formulae alone will not provide sufficient information to meet the statutory requirements for EYFS and the EYFSP. A commercial scheme that does not include advice on observational assessment aligned with EYFS is neither an adequate nor an appropriate demonstration of progress. There is a wide range of information, both qualitative and quantitative, available in the EYFS and it is important that practitioners consider what is significant educationally for the child's learning journey. Items that appear to have statistical significance may be influenced by other variables: birth date, length of attendance, regularity of attendance, maternal health, living conditions and so on.

For further information, please refer to *Analysis of FSP to KS1 matched data: A discussion paper* which is available to download in the attached zip file.

Introduction (page 2)

This paper has been produced by the Fischer Family Trust (FFT) and is published jointly with the National Consortium for Examination Results (NCER). It summarises an initial investigation into the relationship between Key Stage 1 (KS1) outcomes in 2006 and FSP assessments for the same pupils. The analysis was undertaken following discussion between NCER and FFT. One of the reasons for undertaking the investigation was that both organisations had received enquiries from LAs asking whether any analysis of FSP to KS1 could be developed. The data for this analysis were provided by 19 of the LAs represented on the NCER steering group.

Summary (page 4)

A simple analysis using FSP_TOT gave overall correlations of below 0.71 in all cases. This means that less than 50% of the variation in pupil KS1 outcomes is 'explained' by their FSP total score.

Developing more sophisticated models improved correlations, with overall APS being above 0.71 using PA model and all but science being above 0.71 using the SX model.

Differences associated with pupils' SEN status to look to be significant – and much more so than for other key stages.

NCER Recommendations (page 6)

We would suggest four courses of action:

1. Agree that analyses using current FSP to KS1 data will not be provided in the short-term and generate a short summary which LAs may wish to provide to schools.
2. Analyse data over a two- or three-year period to examine whether the patterns found here are consistent or whether there is any evidence of improvement as a result of training and moderation.
3. Ask LAs and others for feedback – do they find similar patterns in their own local data, particularly regarding variations found for SEN pupils? This could involve use of the current data set to identify schools where the patterns are different from the norm – discussion with such schools might reveal insights into the reasons behind the observed differences.
4. Consider whether the development of estimates for KS1 attainment, using FSP data, should be developed using data for non-SEN pupils.

18. The complexity of young children’s development requires practitioners and managers to be able to understand a range of information in order to draw conclusions about children’s progress and the effectiveness of their provision.

In the final year of the EYFS part of this information may be numeric. It will also include rich observational information that covers the full year.

What it looks like

This is demonstrated when practitioners adopt these strategies:

- Collate a range of qualitative and quantitative data to demonstrate progress, including, where appropriate, children’s work, observational notes on their developing skills, attitudes, knowledge and understanding, including contributions from parents and children themselves. This may include practitioners’ plans where these build on observational assessment and are tailored to children’s needs.
- Avoid tick lists and one-off tests as reliable demonstrations of progress.
- Review and record changes in children’s attainment from starting points that capture the breadth of children’s involvement.

Case study: DVD Continuing the Learning Journey: Section 4

In this example, a headteacher and a reception teacher review the data that come from the FSP assessments. They realise that the children have not been helped sufficiently well to understand the nature and use of non-fiction books. To address this weakness they have ordered more non-fiction books for the children to use.

Summary

Assessment, record-keeping and demonstrating progress are inextricably linked: each is dependent on the effectiveness of the others. Recurrent themes of good practice across all settings and sectors collected by the participating LAs relate to ensuring that processes of assessment, record-keeping and demonstrating progress are effective. This is evident when the processes:

- are focused on enhancing the learning of individual and groups of children;
- involve all concerned parties, including parents and children;
- are undertaken by contributors informed about early childhood learning and development;
- create a well-rounded picture of a child's attainment;
- provide judgements based on observation-led evidence;
- recognise the individuality of each child and the diversity of children.

Work in this field should be underpinned by the values of honesty and integrity. It concerns itself with the welfare of children and is focused on helping them develop and learn as effectively as possible.

Next steps

The Primary National Strategy will be delighted to receive comments and suggestions for these web pages. Please send your comments to foundationstage@capita.co.uk. These materials will be developed in the light of response from LAs between June 2007 and August 2007. Printed materials will be produced in autumn 2007.

Part two

Including all children

Introduction

Through the *Every Child Matters* agenda and the Childcare Act 2006, LAs are charged with ensuring that there is equitable and inclusive provision for all children from birth to five years, for those whose parents choose it. They are further charged with ensuring that, through this provision, outcomes at the end of the EYFS are improved for all children.

Through careful scrutiny of a range of data, LAs are able to identify children for whom outcomes, as measured by the EYFSP, are at risk of being below age-related expectations. Having identified those children, the LA will need to question what the risk factors are and how they can be addressed. This process is an opportunity for LAs to make a significant difference in improving provision and practice, which will have a positive impact on the lives of those young children and their families who are not currently benefiting as they should from early years provision. This will be particularly relevant to the LAs' EYOD action plan, as discussed with the Foundation Stage Regional Advisers. It may be helpful to develop assessment questions relevant to different inclusion groups such as those listed below.

For further information, please refer to *Promoting inclusion – guidance on assessment* which is available to download in the attached zip file.

The EYFS outlines the statutory requirements for all settings offering provision for this non-compulsory phase. The EYFS Framework requires all settings to ensure there is equitable and inclusive provision for all children. To enable practitioners to meet this requirement, LAs will need carefully and thoroughly to plan, deliver, and monitor the impact of all training and support.

Before children and families can benefit from the high-quality provision being developed within each LA, they have to be accessing that provision. It is for LAs to ensure not only that there are sufficient places but also that accessible information reaches those most in need of support. For those families who have previously found access difficult, and have therefore been in some way excluded, it is vital that potential barriers are recognised at every level so that they can be overcome.

In the *Sure Start Children's Centre Practice Guidance* (November 2006), LAs are reminded of the services that they should offer all families with children under five, and that:

'there should be additional support available for families who are experiencing particular challenges that mean that their children may be at risk of poor outcomes'.

The guidance identifies those who may be at risk:

'teenage parents; lone parents; families living in poverty; workless households; families living in temporary accommodation; parents with mental health, drug or alcohol problems; families with a parent in prison or known to be engaged in criminal activity; families from minority ethnic communities; families of asylum seekers; parents with disabled children and disabled parents with children'.

Where practitioners are concerned that additional support is needed, they should use the CAF to undertake a risk assessment; see <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/caf/>. Practitioners should also reflect on their own attitudes to ensure that they do not respond to children or families as either negative or positive stereotypes belonging to a particular group but see each as an individual child or family with their own needs. This should always be the starting point when working with children and families.

Through local authority strategic management, leadership and management in settings and individual practitioner actions, there is a responsibility to ensure the inclusion of all families and children at risk of under-achievement. At each level there is a need to know the composition of the community, to understand the potential needs, and to recognise what barriers there may be to access in order to provide effective solutions to overcoming them.

For further information, please refer to Sections 3 and 14 of *Sure Start Children's Centres: Practice Guidance*.

The *Sure Start Children's Centres: Practice Guidance* and the complementary *Toolkit for Reaching Priority and Excluded Families*, produced by Together for Children in January 2007, contain helpful information, resources, planning documents and links to support LAs and individual children's centres. (<http://www.togetherforchildren.co.uk/>) Leaders and managers of settings and individual practitioners will find it useful to reflect on this when considering how their own practice and the ethos of their setting provide an inclusive context for supporting all children and families.

For further information, please refer to *Toolkit for Reaching Priority and Excluded Families*.

The local context

EYFS practitioners work in settings that are at the hearts of their communities. They are among the front-line deliverers of services to young children and their families and must have an understanding of the needs within the local communities they serve. Often many practitioners will live near by and have a good understanding of local needs; this in itself can be problematic where individual families have complex and difficult needs. However well any individual or setting knows the local context the saying 'You don't know what you don't know' is true. It takes time, effort and commitment to ensure that the needs of individual children and families are met and that they receive the high-quality provision that enriches lives. Too often it is the more confident individuals within a community who are adept at ensuring that their voices are heard and their needs are met, while those with the most deep-rooted difficulties go unnoticed.

The Sure Start promise to deliver services in ways that suited the recipient rather than the server caused many providers of early childhood and family services to develop innovative and creative ways to engage individuals; this had previously not been an option. Many such services have since been mainstreamed. At setting-level practitioners may have developed successful outreach services, which have led to eventual participation by families previously reluctant to access pre-school provision.

Practitioners need constantly to reassess provision in the light of both families who do attend and those who do not. To meet the needs of all children and to ensure their inclusion, well-being, belonging and achievement, practitioners need to understand them within the context of their

families. This takes sensitivity, empathy and an anti-discriminatory approach, which will allow for effective two-way exchange of information, and a trusting understanding that the developing needs of the child are of common interest. This can be particularly difficult where the families are very needy and find supporting their children burdensome because of particular circumstances. It is therefore essential that practitioners are able to signpost and guide families to appropriate support that may be beyond their remit or outside their professional range.

Building trust within diverse communities takes a skilful, sensitive and reflective approach, which must be instigated and supported by leadership and management. Practitioners working in the EYFS need an array of professional skills and understanding too often not acknowledged outside the sector. The development of a well-trained and professional workforce was part of the vision of the ten-year strategy; this is supported by the transformation fund and the development of the EYFS Framework.

Using EYFS to support inclusive practice

Inclusive and anti-discriminatory practice is a commitment to identifying and breaking down barriers to participation, belonging and achievement. The EYFS is a framework that promotes inclusion from Principles into practice. There are four key themes:

- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Learning and Development

Each theme has an overarching Principle supported by four Commitments, which describe how the Principle can be put into practice. They are all explained and explored in more depth on the 'Principles into Practice' cards and the CD-ROM.

The overarching principle of 'A Unique Child' is that *"Every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured"*. The commitments supporting this first principle are Child Development; Inclusive Practice; Keeping Safe and Health and Well-being.

The Commitment to 'Inclusive Practice' is explored under headings: Children's entitlements, Equality and diversity, Early support, Effective practice, Challenges and dilemmas and Reflecting on practice. There is further in-depth guidance to support practitioners' deeper understanding of a range of issues that will guide and influence good practice. This can be found on the CD-ROM by clicking on the 'in-depth' icon of Commitment 1.2.

EYFS Effective Practice: inclusion

Through this in-depth guidance, practitioners are informed that the EYFS represents a child-centred and family-centred, egalitarian, anti-discriminatory and inclusive approach to meeting children's needs and interests and promoting their learning and development. It also promotes community cohesion and integration through understanding of and respect for others.

Inclusion relates to attitudes as well as to behaviour and practices. The attitudes of young children towards diversity are affected by the behaviour of adults around them and by whether all children and families using the setting are valued and welcomed. Inclusive settings recognise and celebrate diversity.

Inclusive practice is crucial to the aim of delivering improved outcomes for all children and closing the achievement gap between disadvantaged children and others. It is 'non-negotiable' in the sense that it respects and responds to children's entitlements as defined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and a range of legislation in the UK.

All practitioners must promote equality of opportunity and a positive attitude to diversity, whether or not there is a diverse population locally. Practitioners are reminded that providers have obligations under legislation, including the amended Race Relations Act and the Disability Discrimination Act; providers should ensure that practitioners are aware of the implications of these obligations. They are further reminded that the principles of good practice outlined in *The Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage* should be continued as understanding deepens and develops. They should plan to meet the needs of both boys and girls, children with special educational needs, children who are more able, children with disabilities, children with complex health needs, children from all social, family, cultural and religious backgrounds, looked-after children, children of all ethnic groups including travellers, refugees and asylum seekers, and children from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

The EYFS encourages practitioners to challenge and sometimes change attitudes in order to ensure that all families and children know they are welcome and valued in a setting. Inclusive practice requires the adults working with young children to consider their own attitudes and practice: this can be challenging for everyone involved. Effective training and discussion can only take place when open discussion of discriminatory language or behaviour is encouraged and individuals working in a setting do not feel themselves to be blamed or under attack.

Part of the process of challenging and changing attitudes involves finding out more about different populations of families and children that are known to be 'at risk' of discrimination or exclusion. It is important for practitioners to understand what it is that they might need to change and why people might feel excluded by the way their setting is organised. When they understand this they can then begin to think about changing practice, so that every family experiences the setting as inclusive. Practitioners should understand that everyday practices, attitudes, environments, structures and policies all need attention to ensure that they do not put particular children at a disadvantage.

It is important to ensure familiarity with specialist information that illuminates good practice. For example, the Save the Children information on play and learning activities appropriate to Gipsy/Roma traveller culture.

For further information, please refer to *Working Towards Inclusive Practice – Play and Learning Activities* and *Working Towards Inclusive Practice – Training*.

Practitioners will also be familiar with the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* (KEEP); this too is linked to the EYFS and remains an important guide to reflective practice, which directly links to inclusive and anti-discriminatory practice by stating that:

'Effective practice in the early years requires committed, enthusiastic and reflective practitioners with a breadth and depth of knowledge, skills and understanding. Effective practitioners use their own learning to improve their work with young children and their families in ways which are sensitive, positive and non-judgemental.'

Observation and assessment for inclusion

Effective inclusive practice requires good observational assessment skills to ensure that the emotional, social, cognitive and physical needs of children are met. Practitioners who know children well will know when there is cause for concern as well as celebration. The systems and processes appropriate for inclusion groups are the same as those described in Part one of *Creating the picture*.

Observing child-to-child and child-to-adult interactions in a range of contexts will help the practitioner understand if needs are being met and if the child is able to participate, has a sense of belonging and is achieving within age-related expectations. Where there are specific concerns, practitioners will use the CAF to undertake a needs analysis where appropriate.

The way children interact with the environment, the time they spend in different areas of the setting, both indoors and outdoors, can indicate where the deepest or most challenging learning is taking place. If there are aspects of provision that children seldom or never access practitioners need to discover why this might be. Often close observation and listening to children and families will reveal that a reluctance to be involved in an activity or a relationship that is potentially beneficial is caused through misunderstanding or difficulties that may not have been considered.

It is likely that specific references to support for different groups will develop as a result of using the approaches to collecting qualitative and quantitative information outlined elsewhere in *Creating the picture*. An example of the types of question that might be appropriate to ask in relation to Gypsy Roma Traveller children, African-Caribbean children and children learning English as an additional language were included earlier.

These questions need to be asked and answered both at setting and LA level if the EYOD targets for the LA are to be met. In each locality it may be necessary to develop specific additional lists, which could relate to links to other agencies and community organisations or churches, with the aim of picking up other at-risk groups who do not necessarily, but may, come in to the Education Maintenance Allowance groups.

Throughout *Creating the picture* the need to stress the individual needs approach further and not see families as necessarily belonging to a particular group – and certainly not 'hard to reach' – has been explained. Instead, consider whether the LA services are 'hard to reach'. It is generally a straightforward matter to identify inclusion groups; LAs need to:

- know where different ethnic and cultural groups are;
- ensure that settings have effective and sufficient reach;

- review provision to ensure that it is of high quality and offers effective provision for inclusion once the children are in the settings.

These are different aspects of the same challenge: we need to get both right.

Listening to young children and to their parents is one of the most powerful ways to assess how inclusive a setting is. Children can be listened to in many ways, through observation of their movements and body language as well as through conversation. Further information about listening to children can be found on the following website: <http://www.coram.org.uk/listening.htm>.

Information about *Communicating Matters* can be found on the following websites:

<http://www.surestart.gov.uk/research/keyresearch/earlylanguagedevelopment/>

http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/talktoyourbaby/Initiativesnational_communicating.html

Working with a range of professionals as well as with parents will support inclusive practice and deepen practitioner knowledge to ensure high-quality provision that is appropriate for every child in all settings at all times.

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Bartholomew, L. and Bruce, T. (1993) *Getting to know you: a guide to record-keeping in early childhood education and culture*, Hodder & Stoughton, London

Web-based materials

EPPE project

http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/features/foundation_stage/fsp_data/eppe

Early Years Foundation Stage materials

http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/foundation_stage/eyfs/

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications>

<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/>

FSP data information

http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/features/foundation_stage/fsp_data/

KEEP self evaluation website

http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/foundation_stage/keep

QCA materials

<http://www.qca.org.uk>

NCER materials

<http://www.ncer.org.uk>

NAA materials

<http://www.naa.org.uk>

Save the Children materials

<http://www.savethechildren.org.uk>

Sure Start materials

<http://www.surestart.gov.uk>

Together for Children materials

<http://www.childrens-centres.org/>

Additional Materials

Professor Christine Pascal delivered the slide presentation in the attached zip file to the NAA Creating the Picture conference in December 2006.

A brief description of the Leuven Scales; A process-oriented child-monitoring system for young children. This document is available to download in the attached zip file.

LAs invited to attend the NAA conference

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