



Assessment

Welcome to the next edition of the 'Getting ready for the EYFS reforms' newsletter in preparation for introducing the revised EYFS in September 2021 which will focus on assessment.

Introduction

'Assessment plays an important part in helping parents, carers and practitioners to recognise children's progress, understand their needs, and to plan activities and support.' (Statutory framework March 2021 pg 18).

The day to day formative assessment process has not changed, *'It involves practitioners knowing children's level of achievement and interests, and then shaping teaching and learning experiences for each child reflecting that knowledge.'* (Statutory Framework; Pg 18)

What remains the same?

Skilled practitioners will continue to observe children in their play and make professional judgments about what children know and can do and how best to support and extend their learning.

Assessment will continue to play a vital role as part of the Observation, Assessment and Planning cycle (OAP)

The two statutory assessments points within the EYFS remain the same, these are the 2 year progress check and the EYFS Profile completed at the end of the reception year.

What are the key changes?

There is a significant change to the content of the Early Learning Goals, which are assessed against in the final term of the year in which the child reaches age 5.

From September 2021 the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) becomes statutory. This is completed within the first 6 weeks of a child starting their reception year.

Important key messages

One of the key messages regarding assessment within the EYFS Reforms is that it should not require excessive paperwork and an overarching aim is to reduce workload so that practitioners can spend more time with children, supporting their learning.

Key features of effective practice (Development Matters 2020)

Assessment: checking what children have learnt

- Assessment is about noticing what children can do and what they know. It is not about lots of data and evidence.
- Effective assessment requires practitioners to understand child development. Practitioners also need to be clear about what they want children to know and be able to do.
- Accurate assessment can highlight whether a child has a special educational need and needs extra help.
- Before assessing children, it's a good idea to think about whether the assessments will be useful.
- Assessment should not take practitioners away from the children for long periods of time.

Formative assessment

'On-going formative assessment is at the heart of effective early years practice' (Birth to five matters: Page 38)

As practitioners we make observations about what children know and can do minute by minute throughout the day. These are usually not recorded but are integral to meeting the child's needs. We use these to identify what the child needs to learn next and how this is best supported through the adult role and resources. This is known as formative assessment.

Summative assessment

Summative assessment is a summary of the child's level of achievement and progress at a given point in time. Practitioners will draw on their in depth knowledge of a child gained through ongoing formative assessment and interactions. Two statutory summative assessment points are the two year progress check and the EYFSP. It is up to individual settings and schools to decide on further summative points. This may take the form of an entry assessment or transition assessment.

What you need to consider

High quality assessment is essential for all children. Accurate assessment of children's starting points will inform decisions around curriculum and routines.

'Babies and young children do not develop in a fixed way. Their development is like a spider's web with many strands, not in a straight line.' (Working with the revised early Years Foundation Stage: Principles into Practice: page 27)

Some children may need more time to develop particular skills and may require additional time and attention from skilled practitioners to scaffold their learning.

For these children more detailed assessment and records may be required to pinpoint any difficulties. These careful assessments can help children to overcome short term barriers to learning

To do this practitioners will need to draw on their own knowledge of child development and make use of a range of assessment tools to support all children's needs and ensure early identification and inclusive access to the curriculum.

Settings that wish to continue to use learning journals, including online systems, may do so, as long as it is not to the detriment of the children in their care, there is always a clear purpose for this collation and they are completed appropriately, in line with the aims of the revised EYFS.

Sensible assessment

Consider if what you are recording is useful and how you will use it. Does it support the care and learning of the child? Does it support your partnership with parents/carers?

It is vital that practitioners have a thorough knowledge of their key children and can confidently talk about what they want children to learn next. Much of this information will be using their professional judgement and may not be presented as recorded information.

Ofsted inspectors should not ask to see any written proof of progress or other documentation that is not a requirement. Instead they will expect practitioners to know their children well and talk about their interests, development and progress.

What you need to do next

- Work through the stepped approach to the EYFS reforms document
- Look out for our webinar on assessment this month
- Look out for specific statutory assessment information (2 year progress checks and EYFSP)
- Attend a virtual support session in June

The new framework has prompted discussions between our FS team and senior leaders to revise our existing assessment process. Our biggest focus is now on curriculum not tracking.

J. Banks (Early Adopter School)



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