

Next steps

A lot of childminders are getting Ofsted inspection actions related to next steps planning, so I thought I might have a look at them in a little more detail.

Next steps = individual planning - plods (possible lines of development). They are the steps a child might take to move their learning and development on.

A lot of next steps happen automatically as the child gets older - they go from lying to rolling to crawling or shuffling to standing to walking OR they go from nappies to recognising when they have done a wee to the potty to the toilet.

Other next steps might take a bit of practice - doing a jigsaw, sharing a toy, using scissors carefully, holding a pencil using a tripod grip etc.

Next steps usually follow on from observations of something the child is doing or saying at home, in the provision with you, in other settings, with granny etc.

For example...

- Observation - child A is sitting on his bike
- Assessment - links to physical development and suggests the child might be ready to learn to pedal
- Next steps - give lots of opportunities to use the bike, plenty of time and space and encourage pedalling

This is a long term next steps planning - it will not happen overnight.

Another example...

- Observation - child B does a painting of straight lines. The child likes straight lines - you know that from other observations
- Assessment - the child might well be learning using a trajectory (straight line) schema. This links to the characteristics of their learning and to physical development because trajectory schema children are normally very physical and climb, jump, run etc
- Next steps - provide other resources to promote the schema such as things to throw, bikes to ride up and down the path etc

This is a short term 'next steps' - you are quickly responding to a child's interest. Why not write some of the things the child is doing on a sheet to share his schema with parents?

Another example...

Observation - mum says the child C has been to the zoo at the weekend. He arrives clutching a toy lion from the zoo shop

Assessment - the child is really into zoo animals after his weekend adventure. Link it to understanding the world probably... maybe communication and language if he is making animal noises

Next steps - out comes the farmyard or zoo, read 'Dear Zoo', make some animal masks etc. All the things you will plan to follow the child's interests.

You do these things every day - yet a lot of childminders over-think them trying to put them down on paper. It is important to remember that they are not meant to be complicated...

The child does / says something - what might the child enjoy doing next?

Use your knowledge of the child's learning characteristics to support them where possible... and don't forget to come back to the next steps planning in a little while and add some evidence that the child has achieved as a result of your planning.

For example...

Child A - come back to your next steps planning in a few weeks or months, maybe with a photo of the child pedalling or some notes from home to say he has just ridden his bike by himself.

Child B - add the sheet of trajectory schema ideas and some photos you shared with parents

Child C - help the child to make a little photo diary of his visit to the zoo and pop a photo of it in his file before he takes it home.

Ofsted want to see clear individual planning for each child, re-visited regularly to show that you are helping the child to make good progress. They want to know that parents are involved in providing you with and supporting their child's next steps.

Individual planning is the most important planning you can do. If you don't write it down, you must be prepared to explain it in depth to an Ofsted inspector on the day of your inspection.

If you would like help with any areas of provision - if you have been given an inspection action you do not understand - if you are unsure about how to use a piece of paper your Local Authority has given you - don't sit and worry about it!

Please ask! ☺