

An overview of the EYFS (2012) requirements for observations, assessments and planning...

Observations and ages of children - an overview

Observations can be broken into 3 main areas...

Ages 0 - 3

Observations should focus on the 3 prime areas of learning and development -

1. Personal, social and emotional development
2. Physical development
3. Communication and language

Children will still be reading books, looking at the natural world, doing paintings, singing and dancing... but observations should focus on how these activities support their learning and development in the prime areas.

Ages 2 - 3

There will be a progress check to complete when children are aged between 2 and 3. The progress check will focus on the child's learning and development in the prime areas, with a nod towards the specific areas if you choose to include information about them.

It should include little stories about the child's learning and development in the provision (in the house, garden and on outings) taken from our formative assessments, comments from parents about what their child is doing and saying at home and input from other settings if appropriate.

Ages 3 - 5

Ongoing observations will support children's learning through all 7 of the Development Matters areas including the 3 prime areas and the 4 specific areas -

4. Literacy
5. Mathematics
6. Understanding the world
7. Art and design

If there are any concerns about children's learning in the prime areas these must remain the focus of observations, assessments and planning because these have been recognised as the main skills children need to be ready for school.

Assessment and the revised EYFS - an overview

There are 3 statutory assessments -

Formative assessments

Assessment should always be done for a reason - so when you write observations about children, think about why you are writing them and what they tell you about...

- What the child already knows, likes, dislikes, is interested in and is learning
- How the child learns - focussing on their learning styles, any schemas they might be using to learn etc.

All observations should be assessed using the Development Matters document as a guide. The guidance must not be used as a tick list.

The Development Matters guidance (unique child) gives lots of ideas for how to extend children's learning and development linked to the other themes and principles of the EYFS...

- Positive relationships - how can relationships be improved to better meet the child's needs?
- Enabling environments - does the learning environment help the child to enhance their learning journey? The environment includes inside, outside, outings, your resources etc.
- Characteristics of learning - what does the observation tell you about how the child learns and how can you use that knowledge to improve the child's learning in the future?

Progress check - ages 2 - 3

The progress check should be timed to coincide with the child's health visitor check which will happen between the ages of 2 and 3 years.

The progress check needs to talk about what the child can do... and where the child is struggling. This is important so that further observations can be made and early interventions can be put in place to support the child.

The progress check must be shared with and discussed with the child's parents who should be encouraged to show it to the health visitor.

Early Learning Goals

These are the goals for the end of reception and will be observed by the child's class teacher. There is a new section in the requirements (requirement 1.3) which talks about wrap around and holiday providers (including childminders) and states that we do not need to deliver the full EYFS for these children.

Individual planning and the revised EYFS - an overview

Planning must start with observation... you cannot possibly know what a child will enjoy doing until you have observed them during their play... you cannot extend their learning and development until you know what experiences they have already had.

So, once you have your observations in place you will use the details in the Development Matters guidance of the EYFS to assess...

- What the child can do
- What the child's individual needs are - related to his age, stage of development, ability, disability, language use (including if he uses English as a second or additional language) etc
- What the child cannot do yet - this will give you ideas for writing next steps planning
- What the child enjoys doing - this will help you to plan activities the child will enjoy
- How the child learns - including how children use learning styles, schemas etc to learn new things
- How the environment might be changed to meet the child's needs
- How relationships, with parents / practitioners / other children etc might need building on so that the child can learn more effectively

With all this information securely in place you can start to plan for the child's future learning and development.

There are no rules about planning - you can write it however it makes sense to you. It must support the child's learning and you should come back to previous planning regularly check how the child has learned and developed since it was written.

Planning focus for different ages

As with observations, the focus for little ones will be on individual planning which covers the prime areas of learning, with the specific areas used to support the prime areas. Planning for little ones will also focus on their individual care routines which include meal and sleep patterns. Parents should be involved at every stage, updating you with information about the child's needs so you can plan their days effectively.

Older children's planning will be spread more across the 7 areas of learning with a focus on the prime areas if there are any concerns. Planning for older children is leading towards them being ready for school.

Using the themes and commitments of the EYFS - an overview

The 4 themes and commitments of the EYFS have taken on even more importance in the revised EYFS because they are the focus on the Development Matters guidance document.

This is how the themes and commitments work together -

- Unique child - this has become the ages and stages information, focussing on what children might be doing by a certain age. The ages and stages overlap as before.
- Positive relationships - these are now the second column of the Development Matters guidance, showing the importance of relationships in children's lives
- Enabling environments - these are the 3rd Development Matters column, helping us to make sure the environments we plan for children meet their individual needs
- Characteristics of learning - there are 3 characteristics of learning which have been renamed from the theme 'Learning and Development' in the old EYFS. They help us to focus on how children learn, rather than just what they learn and will help us to make sure our planning meets children's individual needs.

Documenting learning - an overview

There is no requirement to write a 'Learning Journey' document for EYFS aged children. However, there is a requirement to record observations and assessments and individual planning, work with parents, note information from other settings etc.

You need to consider where you will put all this information if you do not have a file for each child... and what better name can you think of than a Learning Journey because, after all, that is what you are writing!

We document children's learning for main reasons -

- To keep parents updated on children's achievements and where they might be struggling;
- To help us plan exciting and challenging activities for every child;
- To prepare children for school - the prime areas of learning are especially important for school readiness and the specific areas are used to teach children about lots of different things in the world around them which prepare them for learning in a school environment.

A well written Learning Journey booklet which is regularly updated and filled with photos and exciting moments from the child's life will be an important part of the documentation process.

References etc

- EYFS (2012) and related documents

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