

# West Sussex Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) assessment guidance, including the Learning Journal

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## Introduction

These materials have been developed as a tool which early years and childcare providers may wish to use to record a child's learning and development during their time spent in an early years setting. The resources are designed to enable you to implement the overarching principles of the EYFS Statutory Framework introduced in September 2021.

## Overarching principles

Four guiding principles should shape practice in early years settings. These are:

- every child is a **unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured
- children learn to be strong and independent through **positive relationships**
- children learn and develop well in **enabling environments with teaching and support from adults**, who respond to their individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time. Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.
- importance of **learning and development**. Children develop and learn at different rates. (See "the characteristics of effective teaching and learning" at paragraph 1.15). The framework covers the education and care of all children in early years provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

These materials provide an:

- overview of the principles of record keeping within the EYFS
- explanation of the purpose of each section
- outline of how each section can be used to support the progress of each child

## The underpinning principles of these materials

- Children and parents must be active partners in the observation, assessment and planning cycle and will have ongoing access to these records.
- Paperwork should be kept to a minimum. Records should only be made where it is purposeful and will support children to make progress. Most observations and assessments will be made "in the moment" and will not need to be written down.
- Observation-based assessment should not take practitioners away from children for excessive periods. Children make greater progress from high quality interaction with adults who engage in their play and learning experiences.
- Information on children's progress should be analysed and used to inform children's next steps in learning as well as practice and provision within the setting.

- Information should be shared between all practitioners who supports the child to provide continuity of experience and effective transitions.
- Early identification of need supports improved outcomes for children.

The EYFS Statutory Framework reinforces the importance of play based, child-led experiences. The role of practitioners spending time with children as effective play partners is highlighted as a key element to support children's progress.

1.14 This framework does not prescribe a particular teaching approach. Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, relate to others, set their own goals and solve problems. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults. Practitioners need to decide what they want children in their setting to learn, and the most effective ways to teach it. Practitioners must stimulate children's interests, responding to each child's emerging needs and guiding their development through warm, positive interactions coupled with secure routines for play and learning.

1.15 In planning and guiding what children learn, practitioners must reflect on the different rates at which children are developing and adjust their practice appropriately. Three characteristics of effective teaching and learning are:

- playing and exploring - children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'
- active learning - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements
- creating and thinking critically - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things

It is essential that parents' deep knowledge of their child's development is an integral part of the learning and development cycle; and is used to support children to make progress through their early years. This process will begin with gathering information about the child's experiences and what they can already do before starting in the setting so that the practitioners can build on the skills, experiences and interests that a child comes to the setting with and use this as a starting point.

Ongoing observations and discussions between Key Person, parents, other practitioners and professionals are essential as these underpin the cycle of ongoing (formative) assessment, leading to effective interactions and planning. This forms the basis for accurate summative assessment at key points.

The West Sussex Learning Journal meets the assessment requirements of the EYFS (See Section 2 of the *Statutory Framework for the EYFS*)

2.1 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. Ongoing assessment (also known as

formative assessment) is an integral part of the learning and development process. It involves practitioners knowing children's level of achievement and interests, and then shaping teaching and learning experiences for each child reflecting that knowledge. In their interactions with children, practitioners should respond to their own day-to-day observations about children's progress and observations that parents and carers share.

- 2.2. Assessment should not entail prolonged breaks from interaction with children, nor require excessive paperwork. When assessing whether an individual child is at the expected level of development, practitioners should draw on their knowledge of the child and their own expert professional judgement and should not be required to prove this through collection of physical evidence.
- 2.3. Parents and/or carers should be kept up-to-date with their child's progress and development. Practitioners should address any learning and development needs in partnership with parents and/or carers, and any relevant professionals. Assessment should inform an ongoing dialogue between practitioners and year 1 teachers about each child's learning and development, to support a successful transition to key stage 1.

## About these materials

The materials include:

- All About Me - a format for recording information about a child before they start at an early years setting and at transition points in their journey through early years.
- 2 Year Old Progress Check – a template for completing the statutory check for all children in early years provision at the age of 2.
- Individual Progress Review and Planning– a template for gathering information about the progress of an individual child to use with parents to support engagement in their child's learning and development. These tools could also be shared with other professionals if appropriate.

## Using a Learning Journal

Learning Journals can be a successful way of celebrating children's progress and of engaging children and parents. There is no requirement to create specific records, neither are there any specific formats that you must use. The Learning Journal materials have been designed as a tool that you may wish to use or may be a starting point for you to develop your own templates. Formats might include 'scrapbook' style records, communication diaries, use of online recording systems, other record books or folders.

Records should only include information that gives insight into the child's development and learning journey and it should not become costly or a burden to staff which deflects from their engagement with children and ability to support them in their learning.

If you are using a learning journal, you may wish to record observations, examples of work and photos of children engaged in learning experiences or photos of children's creations. Records could be organised chronologically, under areas of learning, or a mixture of the two.

Records that you keep should tell the story of the child's learning and development, their experiences within the setting and at home. The most useful records will be evidence a partnership between the child's family and the setting as a resource to inspire and motivate the ongoing learning and development of the child and as a tool to support the transition process when a child moves to a new setting.

You do not need to keep detailed evidence and observations of children's progress. Most children, given access to well planned, stimulating learning experiences will make good progress in their learning. It is important to support them to have depth to their learning and access to skilled adult interaction and support. However, some children may not make expected levels of progress for a variety of reasons. For these children, it is important to identify the delay quickly, to identify what the barriers might be and put in place appropriate support to narrow the learning gap as quickly as possible.

Where a setting identifies a child who appears to be delayed in their learning and development, they may need to refer to other tools to understand more about the child's individual needs. Using an appropriate assessment tool can enable them to understand more about the delay and to identify the child's specific needs. This will then help them to plan support that will enable the child to make progress in their learning.

Practitioners will be observing, assessing and planning as part of their everyday interactions with children and most of this process will not be written down. Practitioners should keep purposeful observation records that inform planning and next steps for children and build a picture of the child's learning journey. The Learning Journal will show evidence of children's progress over time. This evidence creates a holistic picture of the child's interests and their ongoing development. It is essential that both children and parents can share and contribute to this process as part of their ongoing reflection, celebrating their engagement and achievement. The Learning Journal can be a tool to engage parents as partners in their child's learning. It can also be used to evidence the additional assessment and support provided to children who are not reaching expected milestones and show the impact of additional support provided.

Settings will need to decide on the appropriate tools to support their assessment of children's progress. There is no specific requirement to keep detailed records of children's progress, but practitioners need to be confident that they can identify children who need additional support. The non-statutory Development Matters provides additional guidance to support practitioners in their observation, assessment and planning.

## All About Me

This is a tool to gather information to support the transition from home to the setting and should be reviewed to inform further transitions, between rooms/age groups and any other transition points or where there has been a significant change for the child.

This section captures information about the child including their personality, likes/dislikes, familiar people and objects, other professionals working with the child and any specific needs of the child or family prior to entry to an early years setting. This information supports the Key Person to create an effective and smooth transition into the setting for the child.

The most effective way of using this tool is to discuss and complete it with parents during home visits or on a child's introductory settling sessions at the setting. This provides an opportunity for a focussed conversation about the child and helps to establish a positive relationship between the Key Person and parents/carers. Information gathered should also be shared with other practitioners to support continuity for the child where appropriate.

## 2 Year Old Progress Check

This is a suggested format for the statutory progress report for children accessing early years provision at the age of two. The information collected in this report should be based on your ongoing observations and professional knowledge of the child. The purpose of this report is to identify, and ensure parents are aware of, areas where a child is progressing well and any areas where progress is less than expected. The report identifies the child's level of development, and highlights any additional needs, enabling targeted support to be accessed.

The completed review can be shared with parents to take to their 2-year check with a Healthy Child Programme (HCP) practitioner or it can be used as part of an integrated review with HCP, if applicable.

For more information about the EYFS progress check at age two, please see the [Know How Guide](#) and the [guidance on the West Sussex website](#).

## Individual Progress Review and Planning

The Individual Progress Review provides a template for practitioners to summarise and review the strengths and needs of the child within the EYFS Educational Programmes. This should be completed in partnership with parents, drawing on their knowledge of their child and building on the child's strengths and interests as well as drawing on the Key Person's professional view of the child's stage of learning and development and their next steps in learning.

When completing the *Child's Voice* section of the *Next Steps in Learning* you should draw on your observations of the child, how they express their interests, in verbal and non-verbal ways, and from ongoing daily conversations and observations during their play.

The template provides an opportunity to gather views from the child, parents and practitioners and to clearly identify the child's strengths and any worries. This information should be used to inform the strengths and next steps under each area of learning. Next steps should include what the setting will do and some ideas for the family for things that they can incorporate into their home routines to support the child's learning and development.

A child's review and planning should be shared with all relevant practitioners as this ensures that the child receives continuity of support and makes optimum progress.

## **Supporting Children Who Are Not Reaching Expected Milestones**

Children's learning and development is not a linear process and there will be times when children make rapid progress and times when their progress is slower. This often happens when children are consolidating their learning but can also be due to other circumstances impacting on their ability to engage in learning opportunities. Practitioners should be alert to changes and respond to these by offering support. Where children continue to make less progress than you would expect, practitioners should talk to the parents and gather information to support them to understand why this might be and how they can enable the child to overcome any barriers to their learning.

Some children, including those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, may make smaller steps in some areas of learning and practitioners may find other assessment tools supportive in monitoring this. For example, if a child is showing delay in their communication and language development, The West Sussex Speech and Language Monitoring Tool will support a practitioner to identify the specific areas in which they are delayed and use this to identify the support they might need to make progress.

In addition, one-page profiles, individual plans and action plans for inclusion should be used to illustrate the specific plans and tools to be used to support a child's individual needs.

## **Tools to support assessments**

There are a range of tools that settings may wish to use to support practitioners' assessments of children's learning and development when this is needed.

### Communication and Interaction

- [West Sussex Speech and Language Monitoring Tool](#)
- [Universally Speaking](#)
- [Early Support Developmental Journal](#) – page 108-144, Can Do cards for Communication
- [The Communication Trust Progression Tools](#)

## Cognition and Learning

- [Early Support Developmental Journal](#) page 190-232, Can Do cards for thinking

## Social, Emotional and Mental Health

- [Well-being and Involvement in Care Settings. A Process-oriented Self-evaluation Instrument \(aka the Leuven Scale\)](#)
- [Early Support Developmental Journal](#) – page 69-107, Can Do cards for Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- [Solihull Approach - Developmental and Emotional Milestones](#)

## Physical and Sensory

- [Early Support Developmental Journal](#) – page 145-189, Can Do cards for Physical Development. For sensory needs you should select appropriate Can Do cards from other sections.

All WSCC advisory services involved in supporting children with additional and complex needs have agreed that whilst additional monitoring tools are available no separate data collection processes should be produced. It is the evidence contained within the child's Learning Journal and their Individual Plans or other professionals' reports that will show their individual progress.

For more information and further support, please refer to the [Tools for schools and settings website](#).

## Cohort Monitoring

Settings may wish to monitor the progress of cohorts of children within the setting. This can be a helpful tool for settings to evaluate the effectiveness of their provision in supporting children's learning and to identify specific groups of children who are not making as much progress as others in the setting. This will support the setting to reflect on and adapt the learning environment to ensure that it meets the needs of all children attending.

A separate document is available on the [West Sussex County Council website](#) which settings may like to use or adapt to support them in collating information on the progress of cohorts of children.