

Handout 6

Guidance on assessing the attainment of young children with Special Educational Needs in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

Meeting the individual needs of all children lies at the heart of the EYFS and those with special educational needs, like all children, are entitled to high quality early years provision based on the EYFS framework, its principles and commitments. Practitioners must plan for every child to make progress towards the early learning goals and assess their attainment at the end using the EYFS Profile. However, for a small number of children with severe and complex special educational needs, their attainment may not be reflected in the Profile scale points. In these cases, alternative assessments will be required. This guidance sets out how such assessment should be approached and what those alternative assessments might include.

The statutory nature of the EYFS profile

The EYFS Profile sums up each child's attainment at the end of the EYFS. It is based on practitioners' on-going observation and assessments in all six areas of learning and development. At the end of the EYFS each child's level of development must be recorded against the 13 assessment scales derived from the early learning goals. The data must then be provided to the relevant local authority. For children with SEN, this same requirement applies. Where a child is not yet attaining any of the scale points and an alternative assessment is used, then this should be recorded as 'A' in that scale for that child's profile. This 'A' then appears in the data set as data code zero ('0').

Children with special educational needs

The EYFS profile has been developed to be inclusive. The range of special educational needs is diverse and includes physical, emotional, sensory and learning needs. For those with special educational needs, the key person must ensure the relationships are such that children are resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. It is vital that the communication between all professionals and parents is strong so a clear picture is gained of children's achievements. Depending on their special educational need, some children will demonstrate their development and learning in different ways. Practitioners observing children involved in their everyday activities must take account of this:

- Where any item in the EYFS profile scales contains the word 'talks', children can use their established or preferred mode of communication
- Practitioners will be alert to children demonstrating their attainment in a variety of ways, including eye pointing, use of symbols or signs
- Any adaptations children use to carry out their activities, such as mobility aids, magnification, adapted ICT and equipment, should be employed so that practitioners come to know children at their most capable

Where there are scale points that children cannot attain because of their special educational needs, for example in physical development, practitioners should code these as not applicable. Where alternative assessments to the EYFS profile apply, practitioners should record these to discuss with parents and support planning for future learning.

EYFSP Handbook p16

What is the purpose of the EYFS profile?

The primary purpose of the EYFS profile is to provide Year 1 teachers with reliable and accurate information about each child's level of development as they reach the end of the EYFS, enabling the teacher to plan an effective, responsive and appropriate curriculum that will meet all children's needs.

EYFSP Handbook p2

It is equally important that Y1 teachers are well informed about the individual progress and particular needs of those children with SEN. Whilst the Profile outcomes will still be shared alongside those of their classmates, there is little value or purpose in a data entry of 'A' without the accompanying dialogue and information. In effective schools and settings, the transition arrangements for children with SEN include all the professionals involved with the child, such as therapists and support staff, as well as mothers, fathers and carers, to ensure that the progress made in the EYFS is sustained and that children's personalities, interests and ways of communicating are well understood.

Practitioners have a responsibility to ensure that the provision, environment and links with family and other professionals are all included to enable a rounded picture to emerge of each child's attainment. Observational assessment is the most effective way of making judgements about all children's development and learning. It enables practitioners to build up a truthful and accurate picture of each child's attainment so that teachers in year 1 are well informed to plan for each child's development and learning. There are some groups of children for whom this challenge needs particular consideration so that their attainment is not underestimated.

EYFSP Handbook p14

James is a five-year-old with barriers to learning and physical independence. He has cerebral palsy which affects all his limbs and his spoken communication. He uses a wheelchair and a communication aid.

James attends a Primary school Foundation Stage Unit of 25 children. His parents, Teacher, Nursery Nurse, Portage worker, School SENCO, Physiotherapist and Speech Therapist all contribute to monitoring his progress, documenting his achievements and planning the next steps in learning and development. Their observations, whether at home, in the setting, or during therapy sessions all contribute to his portfolio of progress and attainment and together they agree how to manage his transition to Y1 over six months, focusing on maximising his independence and socialisation through the transition.

Making judgements for children with severe and complex needs using the EYFSP

Many children with severe and complex needs are able to attain some scale points on the EYFSP, given the right support, equipment and resources. Practitioners who observe carefully and use all their skills to listen and respond to children, find that they are able to record children's attainment against particular scale points. The following case study illustrates how this can be achieved in practice.

This is Ollie. Ollie has a rare metabolic disease which results in developmental delay and significant health problems. He has profound disabilities, epilepsy and a gradual scoliosis. He requires 1:1 support for all his self care and to access all areas of the play and learning environment. Ollie's communication passport hangs on the back of his wheelchair with a cover painted by him. It is intended to give people, new to Ollie, an idea of the many different activities he likes, as well as what might make him unhappy and the messages he can convey by his actions or sounds.

Ollie is happy to separate from his parents in the morning but every day he is very aware when he knows they have returned to pick him up. (PSED Emotional Development scale point 1)

Lots of things attract Ollie's interests. He particularly likes to handle and explore shiny toys, vibrating and musical toys. He presses the musical mat to make it play a tune and he can play it himself. He also likes to compose his own music on the small electric organ. (PSED Dispositions and Attitudes scale point 1)

Ollie enjoys people and his friends, such as Jack, when they communicate with him. He responds by touch, sharing a laugh or by attending to someone when they talk to him and these are best documented by photographic evidence. He is getting good at turn taking through this way. (PSED Social Development scale point 2 and LCT scale point 1)

Ollie has a favourite switch which he can turn on, feel it and listen to. When it finishes he chooses

to turn it on again. He can also operate the Kaleidoscope and other cause and effect toys by using an attached jellybean switch. When sensory opportunities are presented to him he will explore natural materials by squeezing, holding and bringing them close to his face to gain greater sensations. (KUW scale point 1)

When he is in his walking frame he can move in the outside free flow area. The area offers lots of different sensations of sound, sight and touch. He will carefully explore interesting toys in the water tray. He will reach out and touch the leaves and the wind chimes when he hears them. (Creative development scale point 1)

The 4- 8 lock

The eProfile lock, introduced in September 2008, means that a child cannot be recorded on eProfile as attaining any of scale points 4–8 (early learning goals) without first having attained all scale points 1–3. This ensures that eProfile is consistent with guidance in the EYFS profile handbook, namely:

Scale points 1–3: Describe the attainment of a child who is still progressing towards the early learning goals in that scale. Practitioners should only describe children's attainment in these terms if no early learning goals have been attained in that scale.

EYFS profile handbook, p5

Children attaining early learning goals (scale points 4-8) do so as the result of a developmental sequence which includes the steps described in scale points 1–3. It is only in very exceptional circumstances that this process is suspended.

EYFS profile moderation managers are able to request access to 'unlock' the eProfile from QCDA if they considered an exceptional case merited attainment of one or more of the early learning goals (scale points 4-8) without all of scale points 1–3 having been attained. Such requests are often made and approved for children with complex SEN in recognition of the fact that they may not follow the typical pattern of development.

Using Alternative Assessments

In circumstances where the EYFS profile data has been entered as 'A' practitioners must then use their principled, professional judgement to decide what alternative assessment(s) would be most suitable to best reflect the progress and attainment of a child with a SEN, and which will inform the next steps in learning. Any such assessment is unlikely to be standardised and there is no requirement to submit the outcomes at a national level. However, whatever alternative assessment is used, it must adhere to the principles of the EYFS and the EYFS Profile in that it should be based on observations and be informed by the contributions of parents and other professionals. It may be that the Local Authority provides an alternative assessment that has been tailored to local needs and which also suits the needs of the individual. The examples of assessments below describe some alternative assessments which are compatible with the EYFS and are considered to be valuable and appropriate alternatives.

Individual Play Plan or Individual Provision Plan (IPP)

For children with severe and complex needs, an individual plan will outline the progress made over specified periods of time towards specific learning outcomes. Such outcomes may incorporate one or more area of learning of the EYFS and should draw on the appropriate age band of the Development Matters statements. They may also include targets provided by other professionals working with the child, such as therapists and other health professionals, and should all be reached in agreement with parents. The plan will describe what the next steps in learning are for the child and how they will be supported to achieve them through a play-based approach. These next steps should be based upon the EYFS Practice Guidance for each area of learning and development.

Using Learning Diaries

Many practitioners find that learning diaries provide a very valuable means of documenting the progress of children with SEN. Learning diaries have the potential to capture the unique child, demonstrate their developing competence and bring their learning journey to life. The following example describes how a practitioner used a learning diary to provide a cumulative picture of Jessica which, in her case, led to attainment in some EYFS Profile scale points.

Jessica started in Reception aged 4 years, 2 months. She is diagnosed with a language and learning disorder, and started school with a vocabulary of no more than 20 words at best. At pre-school Jessica was very reluctant to be parted from her mother. At school we worked hard to build positive relationships with both Jessica and her mother. We did this through visits from the class teacher and TA to her Nursery, pre-school visits with Jessica and her mum into school, having a pre-school entry meeting with multi-agency professionals and family to discuss strengths and address her needs, and a phased induction period in September. A huge achievement in her Reception year was that Jessica was indeed distressed to be separated from her mother! However, her distress did not last much more than a few minutes, and once Jessica attended school full time (from the end of September), she had overcome her separation anxiety. Jessica's SEN funding allowed for additional adult support for 6½ (out of 10) sessions per week. We supported her by having:

- A home-school message book
- Individual visual timetable (using photographs taken with either her in them, or taken with her present at the time of being taken)
- Prompts with regards to toileting and appropriate behaviours
- Adult support to develop play skills and facilitate changes
- Buddying with a friend who was a more able child

We also tried signing alongside our verbal interactions with Jessica – she did not respond to this - and she was not at all interested in signing to either her peers or the adults within our early years unit. In addition, Jessica did not like a choice board of activities, even when faced with 2 choices, and seemed to respond to the real-life situations rather than pictures.

In order to assess Jessica's progress and attainment I constantly referred to her Learning Diary (a book containing both planned and unplanned observations, photographs, comments from her family, and examples of her work collected continuously throughout the year). Jessica's Learning Diary was slightly different to her peers as hers contained every statement from Development Matters from birth onwards for all areas of learning. I highlighted in a different colour every half term (to show progress) the statements that Jessica was achieving. These observations and judgements were used to feed into my planning, and so the cycle continued.

The key to showing Jessica's progress was the detailed and accurate observations of her behaviours and achievements, as well as photographic and video evidence. We also used "voice boxes" to record her vocalisations which again showed her progression. Keeping Jessica's Learning Diary was labour intensive but I found it to be the most accurate, reliable and detailed record of development, and an invaluable Assessment for Learning tool. It showed what Jessica was capable of doing independently and consistently, or in adult-led tasks, working with a small group, or with 1:1 adult support. Jessica's Learning Dairy provided concrete evidence that, through the course of the year, she was achieving elements within the EYFSP statements, even though, in some instances she was not achieving enough to gain a whole statement level. By the end of the year, Jessica's EYS Profile scores were:

PSED D&A	PSED SD	PSED ED	CLL LFT	CLL LSL	CLL R	CLL W	PSRN NLC	PSRN C	PSRN SSM	KUW	PD	CD	Total
4	3	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	20

Early Support

The Early Support *Developmental Journal* is a tool to help parents track changes and understand progress over time in their child's development. It is a useful tool to help everyone involved with the child to share what they know and discuss how best to work together to support learning and development. Items in the journal read directly across to items in the EYFS areas of learning and development materials. As it is very closely linked to the EYFS, it serves as a valuable alternative assessment. There is the generic Development Journal which can be used for children who have additional needs or undiagnosed conditions, and there is also for those who have developed specific childhood conditions such as visual impairment, Downs' syndrome and hearing impairment. Further information on these Journals is available at:

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/healthandwellbeing/ahdc/earlysupport/resources/developmentaljournals/developmentaljournals/>

The EYFS CD-ROM includes all the steps in the Developmental Journal and these can be found under each of the relevant areas of learning. The journal steps broadly map across to the Development Matters sections of the EYFS as follows.

A comparison between steps and EYFS Development Matters

Journal Step	Development Matters
1	0 -11 mths
2	
3	
4	8-14 mths
5	8-20 mths
6	
7	16-20 mths
8	16-26 mths
9	22-28 mths
10	22-36 mths
11	30-40 mths
12	30-50 mths
13	35-55 mths
14	40-60+ mths

Portage

Portage is a home-visiting educational service for pre-school children with special educational needs and their families. They generally work with individual children and families at home and also support children in settings. The success of Portage is largely based on the fact that it recognises the role of parents as the key figures in a child's development. Home visitors help parents to become more effective teachers of their own children by sharing with them a precision teaching system which is both flexible to individual needs and carefully structured. Portage home visitors also use the Early Support development journal in their assessment, therefore it is entirely appropriate for the assessments and records that are developed for an individual child's Portage programme contribute to the summative picture at the end of the EYFS. For further information on Portage <http://www.portage.org.uk/index.html>

What not to use.....

Many practitioners and teachers have asked whether they should use P scales in the EYFS in order to monitor progress for children with SEN. P scales do not relate to the EYFS framework which is the entitlement of all children and the P scales and the EYFS are therefore not compatible. P scales are not an appropriate assessment or monitoring tool for young children since they relate to the National Curriculum and should only be considered as an assessment and tracking mechanism when a child's learning is developed within the context of the National Curriculum and

before a child is operating within Level 1. For children with SEN whose attainment is not reflected by the EYFS profile scale points, it may be appropriate to continue with the EYFS framework as they transfer into KS1. Teachers will need to use their informed professional judgement as to when it would be appropriate to record these children's progress against the P scales in KS1.