

EYFS profile scale points 1-3



Who should use this guidance?

This guidance note is for practitioners working with reception-age children, headteachers and local authority early years and/or assessment advisers.

Its aim is to ensure that scale points 1-3 within the early years foundation stage (EYFS) profile assessment scales are used appropriately to describe a child's level of development at the end of the EYFS.

Introduction

The EYFS profile is designed to give an accurate picture of a child's attainment. A rigid or simplistic interpretation of EYFS profile scale points 1-3 can pose barriers to national consistency in assessment. The *EYFS profile handbook* guidance on the use of scale points 1-3 is given below¹.

"Scale points 1-3 – Describe the attainment of a child who is still progressing towards the early learning goals in that scale (which are expressed in scale points 4-8). Practitioners should only describe children's attainment in these terms if no early learning goals have been attained in that scale. Attainment of any early learning goals (scale points 4-8) must include an assessment of scale points 1-3 as these are developmental steps leading to the attainment of scale points 4-8."

EYFS profile handbook, 2008 p 5

Whilst a small number of exceptions to this typical development pattern are to be expected, misinterpretation of scale points 1-3 is leading to anomalies in patterns of children's attainment and consequently in the data sets.

Purpose of the EYFS profile and scale points 1-3

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 at the end of the EYFS. This will enable teachers to plan an effective, responsive and appropriate curriculum that will meet the needs of each child.

All EYFS profile assessment scale points ultimately derive from *Development matters*². Scale points 1-3 identify and describe the level of development of a child who has not yet attained any of the *Development matters* early learning goals (which are embodied in scale points 4-8).

As a result, they are a developmental description of a child's attainment, rather than an exact definition of specific goals. They should be interpreted as such by practitioners when making judgements about a child's attainment at the end of the EYFS.

Typical patterns of development

In typical patterns of child development, it is highly unlikely that a child would attain the early learning goals (scale points 4-8) in a scale, without first attaining scale points 1-3, since these are developmental steps towards scale points 4-8. The *EYFS profile handbook* provides detailed exemplification of the meaning of each scale point. The vast majority of children will be assessed in an accumulative developmental way, attaining scale point 1, then 2, then 3 and then scale points 4-8³.

¹ It should be noted that despite revised wording the *EYFS profile handbook* guidance on the use of scale points 1-3 is entirely consistent in terms of use and application with previous Foundation Stage guidance.

² *Development matters* can be found in *Practice guidance for the early years foundation stage* (see page 11 and Appendix 2: areas for learning and development) first published by the DCSF in 2007 and updated in May 2008. Copies of this publication can be downloaded from www.teachernet.gov.uk

³ Scale points 4-8 are non-hierarchical and can be achieved in any order.

Atypical patterns of development

In a minority of cases a child will not appear to follow the typical pattern of development as described in the principles of the EYFS profile. This would mean that, for a specific assessment scale, they are able to attain the early learning goals without certain developmental steps being in place.

Recording attainment

When practitioners record a child's attainment within the EYFS profile then this accurate description of their level of development needs to inform their final decision. In the vast majority of cases this will be the calculation described in the *EYFS profile handbook* p 6: (See below)

A score is calculated for each of the 13 individual scales in the following way:

Scale points 1-3	If a child attains scale points 1, 2 or 3, their score is recorded accordingly as 1, 2 or 3 scale points.
Scale points 4-8	A child can attain up to five scale points in this grouping. For each scale point achieved, 1 is added to the base score of 3 (carried over from scale points 1-3 above) to give a total score. For example, if a child attained scale point 4, scale point 6 and scale point 8 on a particular scale, he or she would add 3 to their base score of 3 to create a total score of 6.
Scale point 9	A child attaining scale point 9 will have attained all scale points 1-8 on a particular scale and their total score will be recorded as 9 points.

Where a child does not appear to follow a typical pattern of development, practitioners need to make a decision on how to accurately describe the child in order to present a meaningful data set to the year 1 teacher.

If one or more of scale points 1-3 are missing, but some of scale points 4-8 have been attained, the practitioner should consider whether the child's level of development is aligned with the early learning goals or with an earlier stage of development.

- If the child is still making progress towards the early learning goals and has developmental steps to make, (even if some aspects of the early learning goals appear to have been attained) the recorded score should only include those of scale points 1-3 that have been attained. This indicates the child is at an earlier stage of development.
- If the child is working *securely* within the early learning goals, even though scale points 1-3 have not been completed, this may be an exception. Therefore a child's score would include scale points 1-3 that are attained plus the scale points of 4-8 attained, indicating a child working within the early learning goals.

It is important to remember that the EYFS profile was designed as an assessment tool to describe a child's attainment at the end of the EYFS, not to measure progress or score achievement. Simply collecting scale points on a superficial level will provide inaccurate data that will not effectively support a child's learning journey into year 1.

Before making a judgement, it is essential that practitioners understand the meaning of each assessment scale as it relates to the areas of learning within *Development matters*. They should always consult the *EYFS profile handbook* for detailed exemplification of individual scale points as well.

If during an external moderation visit, when a child's attainment pattern is considered, scale points 1-3 appear to be incomplete but some of scale points 4-8 have been attained, further exploration by the moderator is required to establish the accuracy of the practitioner's picture of the child. This dialogue will identify whether the child is a genuine exception, or the data is the result of the practitioner's misinterpretation of the EYFS profile.

It is important to remember that the EYFS profile is only part of the process of sharing information. Dialogue between the reception practitioner and year 1 teacher is crucial when analysing the data so year 1 teachers can plan responsively.

In order for year 1 teachers to understand the meaning of EYFS profile data and in particular the meaning and use of scale points 1-3, they should be provided with specific EYFS profile training and be involved in the EYFS profile moderation process.

Summary

In the majority of cases, a child will achieve the developmental steps represented by scale points 1-3 before moving on to the *Development matters* early learning goals represented by scale points 4-8. It is essential that scale points 1-3 are used appropriately to provide a true and accurate reflection of a unique child.

If a child's attainment of scale points does not appear to be following this pattern, the anomaly in scale point scores should be investigated by both practitioner and moderator to establish whether it arises from misinterpretation of the meaning of the scale points, or is a rare genuine exception to usual patterns.

Scale points 1-3 should be used to describe a particular level of development in a specific scale at the end of the EYFS, namely a child who is working towards the early learning goals and therefore will need an appropriate framework planned from *Development matters* which will support them in their next steps towards the early learning goals in year 1.