Data and Information Analysis - Good Practice in the Early Years in Schools

**‘When used well, data can have a profound and positive impact.’**

(Eliminating unnecessary workload associated with data management - Report of the Independent Teacher Workload Review Group March 2016)

Data, whether statistical/ numerical or other information gathered, should tell the story behind what is happening for a cohort, groups of children or an individual child. It can also support self-evaluation of practice. In the context of early years it should make a difference to what happens next to help children reach their full potential. Section 2 of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework for group and school-based providers sets out the assessment requirements.

**Assessment: checking what children have learnt**

The following points are taken from page 10 of the DfE Development Matters non-statutory curriculum guidance - key features of effective practice:

• Assessment is about noticing what children can do and what they know. It is not about lots of data and evidence.

• Effective assessment requires practitioners to understand child development. Practitioners also need to be clear about what they want children to know and be able to do.

• Accurate assessment can highlight whether a child has a special educational need and needs extra help.

• Before assessing children, it’s a good idea to think about whether the assessments will be useful.

• Assessment should not take practitioners away from the children for long periods of time.

Gathering data

**Observation, Assessment and Planning** lies at the heart of effective early years practice. The cycle of assessment begins with on-entry assessment when children join nursery/reception, followed by on-going formative observational assessment that informs curriculum planning and the next steps for the child.

**On entry assessment**

Accurate on entry assessment means support can be put in place as soon as possible to meet individual children’s needs. Early identification of specific needs supports the early help agenda. On entry assessments should be based on professional and parental knowledge of the child. Therefore children need time to settle in and build relationships with their Key Person. Transition discussions and assessment data from a previous setting the child has attended should be considered. Input from parents should be included in these initial assessments such as information gathered from home visits, informal discussions, All About Me documents.

**Statutory Reception Baseline Assessment** (RBA) in place since 2021, is a school progress measure. Raw scores will be recorded in the national pupil database and used to create a cohort-level progress measure for schools at the end of key stage 2. Scores will not be made available to schools.

**Progress Check at age two**

If the school takes two-year-olds the school must also complete the statutory two-year-old Progress Check or find out if this has been completed by another setting the child may attend/have attended.

**On-going assessment**

Formative assessments based on regular observations of child led and adult led activities, and other information, enable best fit judgements to be made at assessment points throughout the year, depending on school policy.

The EYFS Statutory Framework makes it clear “Assessment should not involve long breaks from interaction with children or require excessive paperwork”.The Ofsted School inspection handbook states: Leaders understand the limitations of assessment and avoid unnecessary burdens on staff or children.

Therefore any observation and assessment methods or tools used should take this into account.

Assessing young children should not be a ‘tick box’ exercise.

The statutory EYFS Profile Handbook 2023 states:

“Day-to-day informal checking of what children have learnt will inform teaching and learning on an ongoing basis throughout the final year of the EYFS. This will include identifying areas where children may be at risk of falling behind, so that teachers can provide effective support where needed. **Summative data should be analysed** and used to inform future learning and curriculum planning. It can also be used to reflect on effective teaching and any changes which may need to be made to the learning environment. Teachers most likely will collect some evidence through their day-to-day monitoring of the children’s attainment, achievements and progress, however there is no statutory requirement to collect lots of evidence. Professional discussion between staff who know the child well and with parents and carers will also contribute to on-going assessment of where the child is in terms of learning and development and what needs to happen next for the child in order for them to reach their full potential”.

**Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP)**

Children will have differing levels of knowledge, skills and abilities across the Profile (the assessment at the end of the reception year). It is important that there is a full assessment of all areas of their development. This should be used to inform a discussion between reception and Y1 teachers to assist with planning of teaching and learning in year 1 and to identify any additional support needs.

Analysing data

**Identifying and addressing additional support needs**

Children who are not making sufficient progress can be identified through analysis of observations and/or assessment data, staff discussion, consultation with parents and other professionals working with the child.

Particular attention should be paid to the attainment and progress of children with SEND, children in receipt of Early Years Pupil Premium funding (EYPP) or Pupil Premium funding (PP), Children We Care For, children from forces families and Gypsy, Romany, Traveller children.

**Questions to consider when analysing data:**

* Who are the children below developmental expectations?
* Why are they below (find out, tell the story) and where are they below? (e.g. which area(s) of learning; stage of child development)
* How many of these children were boys, girls, autumn/spring/summer born?
* What does the data tell us about the attainment and the needs of individual children especially those with SEND, English as an Additional Language, those who are in receipt of EYPP/PP/FSM, or those working beyond developmental expectations?
* Does your intersectionality data inform planning and support for individual children?
* Is data used effectively to engage other professionals or specialist support?
* What does your data tell you about the quality of Early Years practice and provision?
* Are there differences in data between classes/rooms (if applicable)? Why might this be?
* Does your data analysis support ongoing development of an ambitious curriculum?
* Does assessment data identify areas of provision or curriculum that need further work?
* How are Nursery/ Reception colleagues using the data to inform planning?
* Is ongoing assessment of pupils’ phonics progress sufficiently frequent and detailed to identify any pupil who is falling behind the programme’s pace? If they do fall behind, is targeted support given immediately?
* What does the data tell you about the effectiveness of any other programmes you are using? (e.g. for maths/PSED)
* Are there any trends over the years? Are you seeing the same patterns?
* What changes could be made to improve outcomes next term/year?
* What actions will be taken?
* Who will transfer the actions onto the EYFS Action plan/ school development plan?
* What CPD /staff training is needed?

**Accuracy and consistency - Questions to consider:**

For assessments to be useful and effective, it is important that they accurately reflect the stage of development of each child.

* Are staff well trained in child development and do they have the knowledge and skills to accurately assess?
* Have you sense checked anomalies in the data?
* Are Early Years staff involved in moderation activities within school including with subject leads, and at the ‘hub’ or ‘cluster’ level across schools to ensure consistency and accuracy?