Starting Points and Progress Tracking in the EYFS
GUIDANCE

Why track children’s learning and development?

The statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) seeks to provide quality and consistency in all early years settings, so that every child makes good progress and no child is left behind (EYFS, 2014, p.5).

Ofsted inspectors will examine the information the provision gathers about what children know, can do and enjoy when they start to attend. They will evaluate how well children progress from their different starting points and achieve or exceed standards expected for their age (Ofsted Common Inspection Framework, 2015).

How to track individual children’s learning and development?

1. Establish individual children’s starting points:
In good provision, practitioners gain information through discussion with parents/carers in relation to their child’s learning and development on-entry to the setting. This could be information gathered during home visits, in ‘All About Me’ documents and during settling-in sessions. This is the time to set up a child’s ‘My Learning Journey’ record, and begin observing the child and planning for their individual interests and development needs. This would also be a good time to tell parents that there will be regular opportunities throughout the year to share children’s learning at home and in your setting, for example parents afternoons/evenings, as well the daily opportunities to share children’s experiences.

2. Complete the ‘on-entry/initial’ assessment of the Individual Progress Tracker:
The key person should complete the Individual Tracker within the first few weeks of the settling in period, taking into account contributions from parents/carers. The key person should make one judgement per aspect to identify which age/stage band the child is working within and whether they are Beginning, Developing or Secure. This is the ‘on-entry’ or ‘initial’ assessment and should be recorded as ‘OE’ or ‘I’.

Children’s stage of learning and development can be identified through making a ‘best fit’ judgement whether the child is Beginning, Developing or Secure in the appropriate age/stage band. Children working securely would be demonstrating attainment of the development statements consistently and independently in a range of contexts.

3. Update the Individual Progress Tracker:
The progress tracker should then be reviewed periodically throughout the year to monitor progress and individual settings should consider and agree their own timings. For example, complete individual trackers in September (on-entry) and then review children’s progress in December, March and June. These reviews should be numbered as 1, 2, 3, 4 and so on. One progress tracker per child should be used to
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track their progress throughout the EYFS in each setting they attend and at the end of the reception year it can be used to record whether they Achieve or Exceed the Early Learning Goals (ELGs).

What next?

It is not enough just to gather information about children. It is important for the key person to use that information to ‘ensure that every child’s learning and care is tailored to meet their individual needs’ (EYFS 2014, p10).

Individual trackers should be analysed to identify children’s strengths and areas for development. ‘If a child’s progress in any prime area gives cause for concern, practitioners must discuss with the child’s parents and/or carers and agree how to support the child (EYFS 2014, p.9).

Key persons should use this analysis to ensure children’s next steps and areas for development are incorporated into the planning. Changes to the practice and provision may be needed to meet individual children’s emerging needs, for instance resources, experiences, routines or the learning environment.

Cohort/Group Tracker

It is not enough just to gather information about individual children. It is important for the leader/manager to collate information about groups of children and use this to raise questions about practice, provision and children’s learning needs. Completing a cohort/group tracker may highlight patterns, trends, specific children and/or vulnerable groups that require monitoring and/or appropriate interventions to support all children to make good progress and fulfil their potential.

Ofsted will make a judgement on the ‘effectiveness of the monitoring of children’s progress, and interventions where needed, to ensure that gaps are narrowing for groups of children or individual children identified as being in need of support …. and how effectively leaders use additional funding, including the early years pupil premium, and measure its impact on narrowing gaps in children’s outcomes’ (Ofsted Early Years Handbook 2015).

The cohort/group tracker can be used in a number of different ways and at different times of the year. In order to maximise the benefits of cohort/group trackers it is important to consider how best to collate the information from individual trackers to enable purposeful analysis:
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1. You may decide to track small groups of children over time on a single document, for instance the two year olds; children learning English as an Additional Language (EAL); children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND); children from minority ethnic groups; children for whom you receive Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP); or summer born children.

2. Alternatively you may decide to track a cohort or larger group of children, for instance children who are due to start in Reception the following September (or any cohort of children born between 1st September and 31st August the following year) using a series of documents which can be compared against each other.

3. From the data collected one of the initial questions you may want to ask is ‘how many children within the cohort/group identified are working within or above the appropriate age-related development band for each prime area?’ For example, if your data shows that 7 children out of a group of 12 (7/12) are working within or above the appropriate age related development band for Communication and Language you might want to identify the 5 children who are not and consider the reasons why they are not. You may prefer to keep this information as proportions (7/12) or you may prefer to calculate the percentages of children in each category (7/12 x 100 = 58.33%).

4. The next step might be to plan specific activities or interventions to meet their individual needs. You would also want to identify children who are progressing well and need further challenge.

5. Further questions might be:
   - Are there areas of learning, for instance Understanding the World or Expressive Arts and Design which show up as particular strengths or weaknesses, and why might that be?
   - Can you identify links in progress, or lack of progress, between any of the Specific areas of learning and any of the Prime areas, for example between Understanding the World and Communication and Language?
   - Are there any patterns in progress for your more vulnerable groups, for example children with:
     - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
     - English as an Additional Language (EAL)
     - Black Minority Ethnic (BME)
     - Summer-born
     - Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP)
   - Is there a difference in the attainment of boys and girls?

6. You may identify additional questions relevant to your own setting.
Using the data – leaders and managers

- How are you able to demonstrate that assessment is precise, accurate and focused?
- How are you able to demonstrate that assessment is monitored and used to secure interventions?
- What priorities have you identified?

- How are you using the data you have collected to inform planning for all children?
- Have you identified, and implemented, specific interventions to address individual needs?
- What changes, for example to practice, routines, resources or provision, will you implement?
- What staff professional development needs have you identified and how will you address these?
- Are there any patterns or trends between different groups you have monitored? For example are there year-on-year trends of cohorts or groups of children not achieving as expected in one area of the EYFS?