



EYFS assessment guidance for all settings 2025

Assessment is at the heart of effective early years practice. This guidance has been produced to support all early years settings to collect and use assessment information in order to demonstrate progress in individual children and groups of children in the EYFS.

This guidance has been written in line with the statutory framework for the EYFS (2025).

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Please note that the term setting is used to refer to all early years settings including childminders, private, voluntary and independent providers and school settings

Section 1 – Starting points

On entry information

There is no prescribed way to gather on entry information when children start at a new setting. The following guidance is offered as an option to ensure settings feel confident in their knowledge and ability to share information about children's level of development and their progress throughout the EYFS.

Progress must always be measured from the child's individual starting point. To be able to judge progress across the year, it is good practice to capture starting point information about children's attainment soon after they join you.

Once this information has been considered, it should be related to typical child development expectations and a setting's start of phase expectations for the cohort. This helps settings to identify:

- those showing a typical level of development for their age
- those working at a level above that which is typical for their age (indicating that they are likely to require deeper learning experiences)
- those that are working at a level below that typical for their age but not significantly so (this may reflect a lack of pre-school experience)
- those working at a level significantly below that which is typical for their age. Such children that may be at risk of delay or may have a particular difficulty or special educational need.

The information will indicate the proportion (or number) of children working at a typical level of development for their age as they enter the setting.

Identifying children's starting points

There are two key ways of gathering information about children prior to joining a new setting: parents and carers, and the previous setting (where applicable).

Building a relationship with the child's family and then continuing the dialogue is paramount and will provide invaluable information about the child's current developmental milestones, their interests and their next steps.

Settings have developed their own ways of gathering initial information as part of their settling-in and transition procedures such as:

- opportunities for practitioners to share records such as Learning Journey with the child's next setting
- opportunities for practitioners to have meetings with the child's next setting

- visits to the next settings
- home visits, telephone conversations or virtual meetings
- individual new parent meetings and questionnaires
- initial information sheets and 'all about me', One Page profile, child-led booklets
- open days, parent sessions
- Stay and Play or Learning Together sessions
- observing and communicating with the child through day-to-day interactions
- equal opportunities form to identify child's background i.e. languages spoken at home, family structure, disability, ethnic origin, culture, religion and belief

Once a child has joined a new setting, it is the practitioners' role to get to know the children they are working with. As children settle into the setting, practitioners will be observing and interacting with each child during everyday activities. Through observing children carefully, finding out about their needs, what they are interested in and what they can do, practitioners start to build up their own understanding of the child's unique achievements.

Initially, practitioners need to focus on the Prime Areas of Learning, observing how children communicate, how they interact with others and how they move. Practitioners can also assess their self-care needs and what they need to change to support them.

As well as gathering information about children's attainment in the seven areas of learning and development, it is vital to note how children demonstrate the characteristics of effective teaching and learning. All this information should be used to plan accordingly and meet the children's needs.

All the information gathered is important in helping to build an initial picture of each child's achievements and experiences to date along with their interests and fascinations.

Action Point

Complete starting point assessments, usually within the first 8 weeks of attendance.

Ensure that you are clear about children who enter the setting at a level that is typical for their age and those that enter above or below.

Using initial assessment information for planning

Once on entry information has been established, this informs provision and planning to ensure all children are appropriately supported and challenged. Settings should consider the effectiveness of the environment, resources, pedagogy, opportunities for active learning alongside adult-led and child-initiated activities for children to reach their full potential. Consideration of how children learn and the characteristics of effective teaching and learning as defined within the EYFS, (active learning, playing and exploring, creating and thinking critically) are crucial in supporting children to remain effective and motivated learners.

Action Point

Use on entry information to help you plan and make changes to your curriculum if it doesn't meet the needs of your cohort of children.

If you have developed your curriculum based on your community, then it should meet the needs of your children.

Formative assessment

Robust observation, assessment and planning is crucial to support children's development and learning. Babies and young children are individuals first, each with a unique profile of abilities so all planning must start with observing children to understand and consider their current interests, development and learning. Each practitioner's observations of children help them to assess the progress which children are making and help them to decide where children are in their learning and development. This is an essential part of daily practice in any setting, regardless of the age of the baby or child.

"Ongoing assessment (also known as formative assessment) is an integral part of the learning and development process. It involves practitioners understanding children's interests and what they know and can do and then shaping teaching and learning experiences for each child reflecting that knowledge. In their interactions with children, practitioners should make and act on their own day-to-day observations about children's progress and observations that parents and carers share. However, there is no requirement to keep written records in relation to this."

Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2025) paragraph 2.5.

Section 2 – Assessing individual pupil progress in the EYFS

Demonstrating progress

It is important to remember that progress within the EYFS will be at the rate determined by the responses of the individual child within well planned and stimulating provision. This varies according to interest, age and maturity, home circumstances and other variables. Progress should not be viewed as a 'race to the goals' as it constitutes 'doing better than one's previous best' for each child and this will, of course, vary according to the different starting points children display.

Practitioners should continue to consider and reflect on the appropriateness of the environment, resources, pedagogy child-initiated activities and adult-led opportunities and the characteristics of effective learning to support children to reach their full potential.

It is vital that an effective partnership with parents is developed to fully support each child's learning and development and that observations and information about children's current interests and their learning and development is shared regularly on a two-way basis.

Action Point

Continue to reflect on your observations by interacting with the children in a range of contexts.

Most children develop typically with age and are able to access a well-considered, ambitious and progressive curriculum if it has been based on the needs of the community of children.

For some children, you may need to consider specific next steps and record and monitor individual progress for them.

Section 3 – Cohort progress

Assessing cohort progress in the EYFS

Headteachers, leaders and managers need to step back from the detailed day-to-day focus on individual observation and assessment and undertake periodic, systematic reviews to see how well children are learning and developing across all areas of the EYFS.

To understand children's progress, settings should consider a system for channelling the wealth of information gathered about individual children into a manageable summary. A cohort summary can be used to evaluate the percentage of children that are 'on track' or are 'working towards' being on track and to consider the progress made by identified groups, e.g. the difference in achievement between disadvantaged children and the non-disadvantaged children. The summary information can be organised into the seven areas of learning.

At each summative assessment point, consider the percentage, number or proportion of children who are accessing and progressing through the setting's curriculum and meeting child development milestones and those who are not. For children or cohorts who are achieving beyond the expected level, consider opportunities for deeper and secure learning that includes application rather than learning more information.

Cohort progress can be described as the increase in percentage of children working at a typical level of development for their age and beyond across the year. This must also be considered for specific groups e.g. children who are eligible for a Pupil Premium grant, (2YO funding, EYPP, PPG) gender, White British, ethnic minorities, EAL, SEND, more able and talented children, summer born children, service families, Looked After Children, children from Gypsy and Roma heritage etc. The cohort groups that you use in your monitoring depends on the community of families who attend your setting.

It is vital to be able to articulate the progress of the cohort at points during the year. Children who are making less than typical progress must be identified, particularly those in vulnerable groups, and provision must be reviewed to support these groups in order to close the gap in attainment.

Action Point

Monitor the progress of cohort groups at regular intervals throughout the year to ensure all groups of children are making progress in all areas of learning.

Section 4 – Analysing assessment information

Effective analysis of progress data will enable leaders to:

- spot trends and patterns
- reflect on assessments to support individual learners
- understand what is working well in terms of practice
- identify and close gaps in learning and provision
- recognise any groups of children whose needs are not being met
- pose questions that will improve practice and provision.

To support your understanding of cohort progress, consider the following:

Attainment on entry

- What percentage/proportion start Nursery/Reception at below typical level?
- What percentage/proportion start Nursery/Reception at above typical level?
- Percentage/proportion of children with SEND, EAL, disadvantaged children, other identified groups?
- Is provision adapted to meet the needs of the cohort?

Attainment, progress and achievement

- Have all the children made progress from their starting points in all seven areas of learning and development? If not, why not? What are we doing about it?
- What progress is made by children in different cohort groups, e.g. disadvantaged children, children who speak English as an additional language, children with SEND, Looked After Children, children eligible for pupil premium funding etc?
- What is being done to close the gap in attainment between disadvantaged children and the non-disadvantaged children?
- Which children are at risk of delay? How can we support these children to progress?
- Do some children need more challenge? How will we do this?
- Are there any areas of learning where many children are not reaching age-related expectations? What can we do about this? For example, what changes can be made to interactions, activities, resources, routines or the environment?
- What percentage/proportion of children achieve at least the expected level in each area of learning based on your curriculum?
- Are there any significant differences between boys and girls achievement, disadvantaged children or any other groups?
- What percentage/proportion of children achieve at least the expected level in the prime areas, literacy and mathematics?
- What percentage/proportion achieve a good level of development (see page 12 of this document for the definition of a good level of development)?

- What is the attainment gap between disadvantaged children and the rest? Does this compare favourably with county, national, other similar settings? What are the trends over the past 3 years (where available)?

By considering these questions, settings can:

- reflect on assessments to support individual learning
- analyse assessments to identify the needs of specific groups of learners (and plan what to do next)
- reflect on assessment data to evaluate the effectiveness of their provision, identify gaps and make appropriate changes.

Action Point

Analyse headline data and produce a summary of attainment and progress for your Senior Management Team, Governing Body or Committee.

Section 5 – Progress check for children aged 2

Settings working with children aged 24 – 36 months have a statutory requirement to carry out a progress check unless this has already been completed at a previous setting.

“When a child is aged between two and three, practitioners must review their progress and provide parents and/or carers with a short-written summary of their child’s development in the prime areas.”

Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2025) paragraph 2.6.

The DfE have produced non-statutory [Progress check at age two – Non-statutory guidance for the early years foundation stage](#)

Further resources, including the checkpoints in *Development Matters 2023*, may support practitioners in carrying out the check and understanding what the next steps are for their children. Additional child development resources can be found on our [website](#).

Since September 2015, local authorities, health visiting services and early years providers have been working together to complete health and early education reviews for young children at the age of two to two and a half.

It is important that early years providers and health teams are working in an integrated way with parents. Further resources are available on our [website](#).

Section 6 – Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA)

The Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) has been statutory for schools since September 2021.

All Reception pupils must take it if they attend a state-funded maintained school, an academy, a free school, a special school or a Ministry of Defence school.

The results of the RBA are compared with pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 2 to measure the progress that children make throughout their time in primary school. The first results of this progress measure will be published in 2028.

What is the Reception Baseline Assessment?

The RBA is designed to evaluate children's early mathematics, literacy and communication and language skills.

It is administered within the first 6 weeks of a child starting reception, allowing school to measure progress more accurately from the beginning of formal schooling. The assessment captures a cohort's starting point, helping educators understand the wide range of attainment among children.

The assessment is linked to the learning and development requirements of the early years foundation stage (EYFS) and is delivered one-to-one with pupils in English.

Action Point

Complete Reception Baseline Assessment within the first 6 weeks of a child starting Reception.

Section 7 – EYFS Profile Assessment at the end of the EYFS

In the final term of the year in which the child reaches age 5, and no later than the end of June, the EYFS Profile summative assessment must be completed for each child.

The EYFS Profile is a quick, precise end point measure of children’s developmental milestones across the seven areas of learning. It is not to be used as an accountability measure for teachers, leaders or schools. The Profile is a ‘low stakes’ assessment tool that is designed to identify trends in the Early Years across England.

Each child’s level of development must be assessed against the early learning goals (ELGs). Practitioners must indicate, using a ‘best fit’ judgement, whether children are meeting expected levels of development (expected) or have not yet reached the expected levels (emerging). Practitioners can refer to the [EYFS Profile Handbook](#) and the national [EYFS Profile Exemplification materials](#) for further clarification.

Because children do not necessarily achieve uniformly, practitioners should judge whether the description within the ELG best fits the child’s learning and development, taking into account their relative strengths and weaknesses. ‘Best fit’ does not mean that the child has equal mastery of all aspects of the ELG. Practitioners should look to the whole of each ELG description when making this summative judgement. Practitioners must avoid splitting the descriptor into sections and ticking them off when making the decision. To create the most accurate picture of the child’s overall embedded learning a holistic view of the descriptor should be taken.

The Profile must be completed for all children, including those with special educational needs or disabilities.

The Profile provides parents and carers, practitioners and teachers with a well-rounded picture of a child’s knowledge, understanding and abilities, their progress against expected levels, and their readiness for Year 1. The Profile must reflect what has been observed in practice, relevant records held by the school and from discussions with parents and carers.

Year 1 teachers must be given a copy of the Profile report together with an optional short commentary on each child’s skills and abilities in relation to the three key characteristics of effective teaching and learning. The report should inform a dialogue between reception and Year 1 teachers about each child’s stage of development and learning needs and assist with the planning of activities in Year 1.

Schools must share the results of the Profile with parents and carers and explain to them when and how they can discuss the Profile with the teacher who completed it.

Good Level of Development

Children are defined as having reached a good level of development (GLD) at the end of the EYFS if they achieve at least the expected level in:

- the early learning goals in the prime areas of learning (communication and language, personal, social and emotional development, physical development) and;
- the early learning goals in the specific areas of literacy and mathematics.

Section 8 – Supporting documents

Available to download from the [Department for Education](#)

- Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, Department for Education 2025
- EYFS Profile Handbook
- EYFS Profile exemplifications

Available to download from [Ofsted](#)

- [Early years inspection: toolkit, operating guide and information - GOV.UK](#)
- [School inspection: toolkit, operating guides and information - GOV.UK](#)