

# Observation Assessment and Record Keeping Guidance for Practitioners

*“Babies and young children are individuals first, with unique profiles of abilities.....  
All planning starts with observing children in order to understand and consider their current interests, development and learning.”*  
EYFS Observation, Assessment and Planning card 3.1

## Introduction and Background

The Assessment and Record Keeping (ARK) document has been developed by a working party consisting of practitioners from a range of settings and schools across Lincolnshire. This is an ongoing project and further exemplification will be added and developed in the future.

The assessment document has been designed for **all children** from birth to the end of their reception year, and supports the continuity and coherence reflected in the Early Years Foundation Stage. It is an inclusive document and is based on child development and what a child can do.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is the starting point for the document. The **I can** statements are a summary of *significant developmental stages* linked to the Look, Listen and Note and the Early Years Foundation Stage learning maps. They are divided into the six areas of learning to support practitioners in organising and developing their observations, but it must be recognised that children’s development and learning is holistic.

Underpinning the document is the clear understanding of the process of observation and assessment and how it informs planning the next steps for children. The Early Years Foundation Stage principles are integral to this process which starts with the child.



Included in this guidance:

- How to use the materials and exemplification
- Involving parents
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Glossary

## The Materials

### Child Development Record

- Single sheet of developmental *I can* statements divided into the six areas of learning.
- One record for each child which follows the child on their journey through the Early Years Foundation Stage.

### Practitioner Support Materials

- Booklet containing *I can* statements showing links to Early Years Foundation Stage Development Matters and Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scale points
- One booklet for each practitioner in the setting – not one for each child.
- Example of what you might see children doing for each *I can* statement.

### Special book / box / folder

The child development record must be supported by a special book / box, folder showing the child's learning and development. This will include a range of annotated examples from:

- Focussed child observations in child-initiated provision
- Observations from adult led, adult initiated activities
- Spontaneous observations
- Photographs
- Samples of children's drawings, creations
- Special items
- Significant things from home e.g. family photos, parent contributions

*“Assessments are the decisions you make, using what you have observed about a child's development and/or learning.”*

EYFS Observation, Assessment and Planning card: Assessment

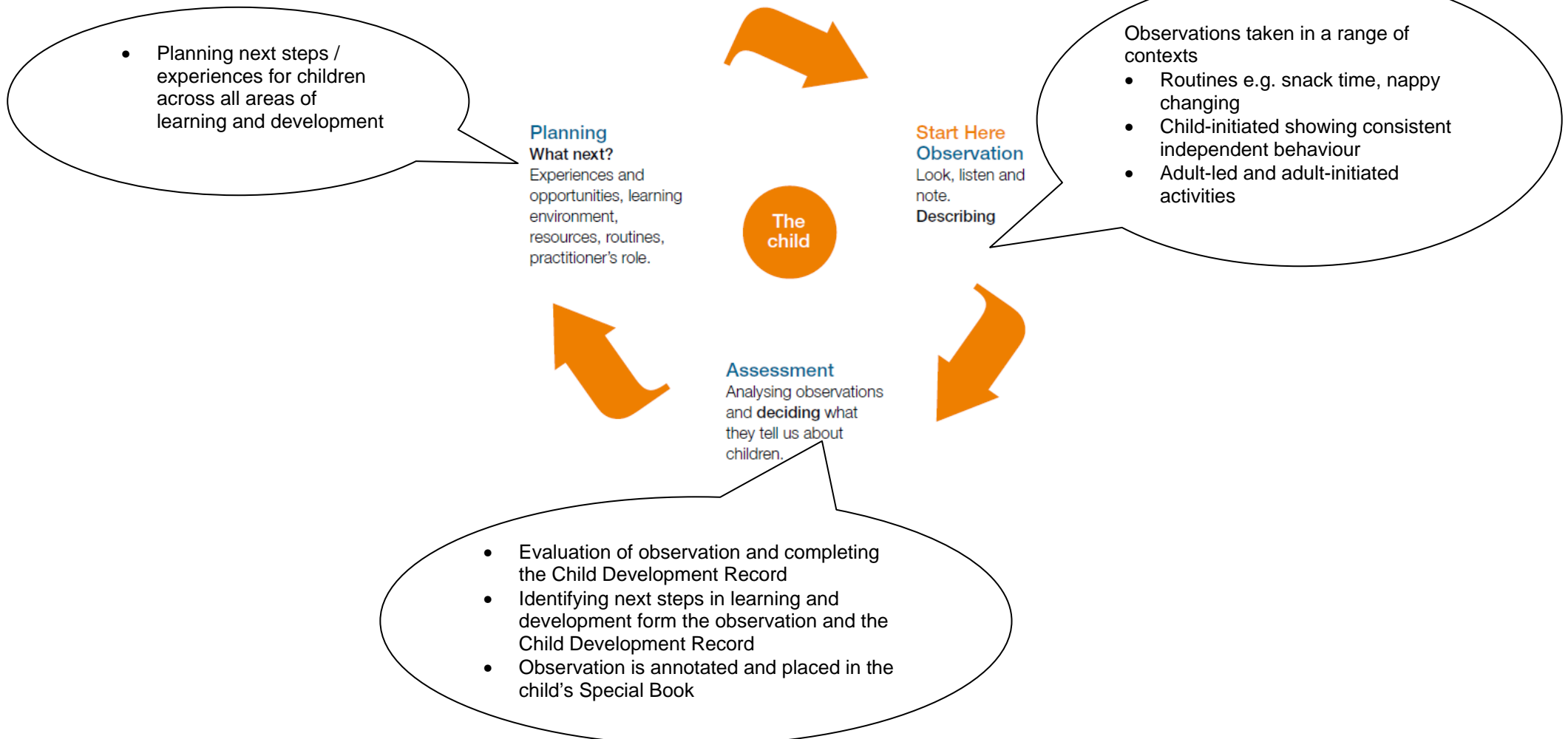


### Using the Materials

The materials should be used as an integral element of the observation, assessment and planning cycle and support everyday practice.

Regular observations of children in your care are evaluated in order to plan next steps in learning and development.

## Building a picture of what a child can do and needs to do next



Updating the Child Development Record must be manageable and will reflect the number of staff, children and organisation of provision within the setting. It is not expected that records are updated after each observation. The Child Development Records will show children's progress over time and should be used as an overview of development to identify future planning.

## Involving Parents and Carers

*“When parents and practitioners work together in early years settings, the results have a positive impact on children’s learning and development”*

EYFS 2007

It is important to remember that parents are children’s first educators and will know more about their child. The Early Years Foundation Stage principles strongly value contributions from parents and their part in their child’s learning and development.

You may consider:

- Informal discussions in the mornings and afternoon can encourage parents/carers to share significant moments and interests.
- Having stickers or a notebook when you go out to meet parents/carers to jot down any comments they want to share with you.
- Record comments at key person meetings.
- Lend out disposable cameras for parents/carers to record key experiences and achievements.
- Keep parents/carers fully informed with brochures, newsletters and displays in home languages.
- Store digital photos in individual children’s folders to be shared at key person meetings.

### Points for reflection

- How strong is your partnership with parents/carers?
- How could they be further involved in contributing observations or items from home?
- Is assessment something which is done **to or with** children and their parents/carers?



**Involve parents as part of the ongoing observation and assessment process.**

## Frequently Asked Questions

### ***How many observations do we need to do?***

There is not a finite number of observations that should be completed. It is good practice to undertake a range of observations while the child is in the setting. The observations will be undertaken when the child is involved in both child initiated and adult led/initiated activities. However in order to observe consistent independent behaviour and find out what a child can do it is important to observe the child in child initiated play.

### ***Do we need to have an observation for every I can statement?***

No. There is no requirement to have an observation or evidence for each I can statement. Effective practice requires that we should have a range of observations and practitioner's professional judgement is an important element of this. It is also important to remember that the statements are I can and should not be misinterpreted as I nearly can or can with adult support and guidance.

### ***Does every observation need to be referenced to the I can statements in the Child Development Record?***

No. If the observation has been placed in the child's Special Book and is being used to support the Child's Developmental Record then it should be referenced to the I can statements. However if the decision is made that the observation will not be placed in the child's Special Book it does not need to be referenced. The collection of observations is concerned with quality rather than quantity.

### ***Do we have to start at the beginning of the I Can statements on the Child Development Record for every child?***

No. Each record should start from where the child is. The Child Development Record is a record of children's achievements and is from Birth to Five. If a child enters a setting when they are three it is not expected to complete the statements retrospectively.

### ***What happens if the observation does not fit into the statements?***

The observation will provide information about what the child can do. This may show a whole I can statement but may be information towards that statement. It will then be necessary to return to the Early Years Foundation Stage learning maps to consider the next steps and

opportunities/experiences required to enable the child to develop. It is important to remember the I can statements are for assessment and should not be used as learning intentions or objectives. The Early Years Foundation Stage Development Matters elements are the framework for learning and development and this must be used in conjunction with the I can statements.

***Can the I can statements on the Child Development Record just be ticked?***

No. The Child Development Record is not intended to be used as a ticklist and should not be used in isolation. It is intended that the Child Development Record is supported by the Special Books and together the documentation provides practitioners with a clear picture of children's achievements and their learning journey.

***Do we need to use the Early Years Foundation Stage?***

Yes. The Child Development Record must be used in conjunction with the Early Years Foundation Stage. The Observation, Assessment and Planning process is underpinned by the Early Years Foundation Stage Principles. The process and documentation cannot be effectively undertaken if settings are not implementing the Early Years Foundation Stage principles, themes and commitments.

The Child Development Record is an assessment document. The Early Years Foundation Stage Development Matters elements are the framework for learning and development.

***Do the I can statements need to be completed in order?***

It is likely the statements will be completed in order, however as child development is not linear and all children are individuals children may complete the statements out of order. It is important that practitioners have time to discuss the statements and use the draft exemplification to ensure judgements made are consistent.

***What should we pass onto the next setting?***

The Child Development Record and Special Book should be passed on to the next setting and then this would be returned to the parent as a record of their child's achievement and learning journey through the Early Years Foundation Stage.

## Glossary

### Adult Led

This is a planned activity or experience led by an adult with a specific learning intention in mind. The activity is planned from previous knowledge of the children and helps to develop a skill or understanding.

### Adult Initiated

An activity structured by an adult with a specific learning intention in mind, for children to carry out, develop and extend independently. This is an activity which is set up by an adult and has clear boundaries. It poses a challenge to the child but is open ended and intended to extend thinking and allow children to apply skills and learning.

### Assessment

To help children progress practitioners need information about what children know, understand and can do. Through observing children and by making notes when necessary about what has been achieved, practitioners can make professional judgements about children's achievements and decide on the next steps in learning. They can also exchange information with parents about how children are progressing.

### Child-Initiated

An activity/experience wholly decided on by the child as the result of an intrinsic motivation to explore a project, or express an idea. In doing this the child may make use of a variety of resources and demonstrate a complex range of knowledge, skills and understanding.

### Development

The process by which a child acquires skills in the areas of social, emotional, intellectual, speech, language and physical development. Developmental stages refer to the expected, sequential order of acquiring skills that children typically go through. For example, most children crawl before they can walk, or use their fingers to feed themselves before they use utensils.

### Early Years Foundation Stage Profile

This provides information about each child at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It is used to report progress to parents as well as to the child's next teacher. It includes achievements in all six areas of Learning and Development.

## **Key Person**

The named member of staff with whom a child has more contact than other adults. This adult shows a special interest in the child by close personal contact day-to-day. The key person can help the young child to deal with separation anxiety.

## **Observation**

Observation describes the process of looking, listening and taking note. There are a number of different ways to carry out observations, for example:

- Practitioners involved in play with the children
- Practitioners noticing a child doing something when they are not involved
- Planned activities, with or without practitioner involvement, to watch children's play.

## **Observational Assessment**

Assessment based on evidence gathered through observations.

## **Planning**

Written records based on what has been observed about individual children's interests, learning styles and achievements, that set out what and how the practitioner will support children's learning. Planning may be short-, medium-, and long-term.