

## Assessment and Record Keeping (ARK) Information for Schools and Settings

*'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 Lincolnshire 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. The Early Years Foundation Stage Principles are the starting point for the document. The 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.

**Early Years settings do not have to use the Lincolnshire Assessment and Record Keeping document but they must be able to provide a document for the child which shows a summary of his or her learning and development.**

### Lincolnshire ARK Document

The ARK statements are arranged on a double sided A3 sheet, covering all six areas of learning and the aspects within them. The statements are highlighted or dated as they are achieved.

### Special Book or Learning Journey

The ARK document must be supported by a child's special book, box, learning journey or folder showing the child's unique learning and development pathway. This will consist of a range of evidence. For example;

- Focussed child observations within child-initiated provision
- Observations from adult- led and adult -initiated activities
- Spontaneous observations
- Photographic evidence
- Samples of children's creations
- Special items and moments
- Significant items from home e.g. family photographs and parent and carer contributions.

This collection of evidence, alongside practitioner's knowledge of the child, enables assessment judgements to be made regarding children's learning and development.

The special books/ learning journeys should be regularly shared with parents, carers and children.

**The purpose of a Special Book/Learning Journey is to provide a story of each individual child's achievement for parents, carers and practitioners and need to be treasured and valued.**

## Using the Assessment and Record Keeping Document and Special Book/Learning Journey to support effective Transition

*'Settings should communicate information which will secure continuity of experience for the child between settings.*

*Transition should be seen as a process not an event and should be planned for and discussed with children, parents and colleagues.'*

EYFS 2008

**Private, Voluntary and Independent settings in Lincolnshire must send documentation to schools which summarises children's achievement and progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage. This is a condition of the Local Authority Early Years Entitlement Provider Agreement.**

### Parental Consent

It is good practice for pre-schools and day nurseries to inform parents that information will be shared about their child's learning and development when their child leaves the setting either to attend another pre-school provision, or when starting school. Many settings include a clause relating to transfer of information in their admissions statement and ask parents to sign up to this as a part of a parent/setting contract or agreement. Settings may also ask parents to sign a specific transfer of records letter at the time when a child moves on. A sample transfer of records letter is available on the Birth to Five Service website [www.birthtofive.org.uk](http://www.birthtofive.org.uk).

### Children with Additional Needs

A recent Local Authority scrutiny document highlighted a number of cases where pre-school records for children with additional needs had not been shared with staff in schools. For a child at Early Years Action or Early Years Action Plus, copies of Individual Education/Play Plans and a 'Gold Sheet' should be passed onto a new setting or school.

Under the Data Protection Act, sensitive personal data such as information about a child's mental or physical condition or ethnicity should not be shared with another setting/school without explicit parental consent. Therefore, the Birth to Five Service strongly advise that settings obtain explicit signed parental consent prior to sharing any information from other professionals (e.g. Community Paediatrician, Speech & Language Therapist, Educational Psychologist) or Health Care Plans.

### Special Books and Learning Journeys

Special Books/Learning Journeys are a powerful resource to support smooth transition between pre-school to school. They will allow the reception teacher into the world of the child at a time when they are just getting to know each other.

It may be possible for the reception teacher to view the special books on his or her visits to pre-school settings in the summer term and to use them as a basis for his or her discussion with the child's key person. This will allow the teacher to prepare for the child's particular interests and needs once he or she starts school. Schools may also choose to refer to the special books and the assessment and record keeping information at induction meetings for reception parents and carers, in order to demonstrate how the school will be using and valuing children's achievement and previous experiences.

Teachers need to return the special book/ learning journey back to the parent and child once it has been used to supplement the teacher's initial assessment of the child's learning and development and ease his or her transition into school. Effective practice would be for parents and teachers to sign a 'contract' to ensure the safe return of the books to the family.

### The ARK Document

The ARK document, highlighting the achievements of the child, will create evidence towards the EYFS Profile in the Autumn Term. The ARK guidance materials (which can be found on the Birth To Five website [www.birthtofive.org.uk](http://www.birthtofive.org.uk)) show the links between the ARK statements and the EYFS Profile scale points. Ensuring special books/ learning journeys and the ARK document are shared and transferred to school, will allow teachers to view the assessment evidence and inform the judgements and assessments made during the child's first term at school.

