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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Assessment arrangements for funded non-maintained nursery settings



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Introduction

These assessment arrangements have been developed through co-construction by practitioners, for practitioners. They are expressed from the viewpoint of the practitioner, drawing on expertise from across the non-maintained sector, and on the views of experts in the field of child development and early education. They are designed to be used in conjunction with the [curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings](#).

These arrangements have been developed to take the needs of all learners into account and recognise that their identity, language, ability, background and prior learning, as well as the support they may need, will differ according to their particular circumstances.

These arrangements recognise that every child is unique and that their development can be rapid between birth and age 5. They support holistic development by keeping the needs of all children at the forefront of pedagogical practice. These arrangements support the assessment of children's progress at the very beginning of the 3 to 16 learning continuum, to ensure they have the best possible start to their learning journey.

These arrangements outline the key principles and purposes of assessment and are designed to support progression for the individual child. They provide a clear direction for future assessment arrangements, including key processes such as:

- developing a shared understanding of progression
- transition along the 3 to 16 continuum
- communicating and engaging with parents and carers





We should use these arrangements, along with our knowledge and experience, to reflect and respond to the individual needs of the children in our setting. We should work with relevant professional networks to support continuing professional learning and development. We should look for opportunities to share knowledge, skills and expertise with our partners in both the maintained and non-maintained sectors.

We should work with all our relevant partners to use these arrangements to support planning within our setting. Effective planning allows us to make the best use of our setting's environment and the experiences we offer. This supports us in developing appropriate learning environments that respond to children's interests and engages them further in their learning and development.

It is essential that we use this document in its entirety, alongside the curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings, to support our planning for children's progress.

The purpose of assessment

Assessment plays a fundamental role in enabling us to support children to make progress at a pace that is appropriate to them, ensuring they are supported and challenged accordingly. It should contribute to developing a holistic picture of the child – their strengths, the ways in which they learn and their areas for development – to inform next steps in learning and teaching. Assessment should not be used to make a one-off judgement on overall achievement at a set age or point in time against descriptors or criteria on a best-fit basis.

Assessment has 3 main roles in the process of enabling children's progression. It provides us with information so that we can:

- support individual children on an ongoing, day-to-day basis
- identify, capture and reflect on individual children's progress over time
- understand the progress of **different groups of children** in order to reflect on practice



Making progress

Supporting children to make progress is at the heart of the curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings. We should use the five developmental pathways – belonging, communication, exploration, physical development and well-being – to inform our planning of learning experiences that support children’s progress. We should provide opportunities for children to develop and apply emerging [cross-curricular skills](#) (literacy, numeracy and digital competence) in contexts meaningful to them. When we plan for and assess children’s progress, we should also keep in mind the characteristics of the [four purposes of Curriculum for Wales](#) and use them in a way that is appropriate to children’s development. We should ensure that our assessments are purposeful and that they support children’s well-being and progress.

Progression in learning refers to the process by which children’s skills and knowledge develop and improve over time. We know that progress is unique to every child and is often linked to high levels of well-being, involvement and positive **dispositions to learning**. As each child develops at their own pace, we should allow for a variety of diversions, stops and spurts in their learning journey. Understanding how children make progress should inform our assessment arrangements as part of our planning and practice. Our approach to planning should allow time, space and freedom for the developing child to consolidate learning with opportunities to revisit and refine emerging knowledge and skills within and across the five developmental pathways. This unhurried approach should ensure that children have firm foundations for present and future learning, as they master skills and connect knowledge across their learning experiences.

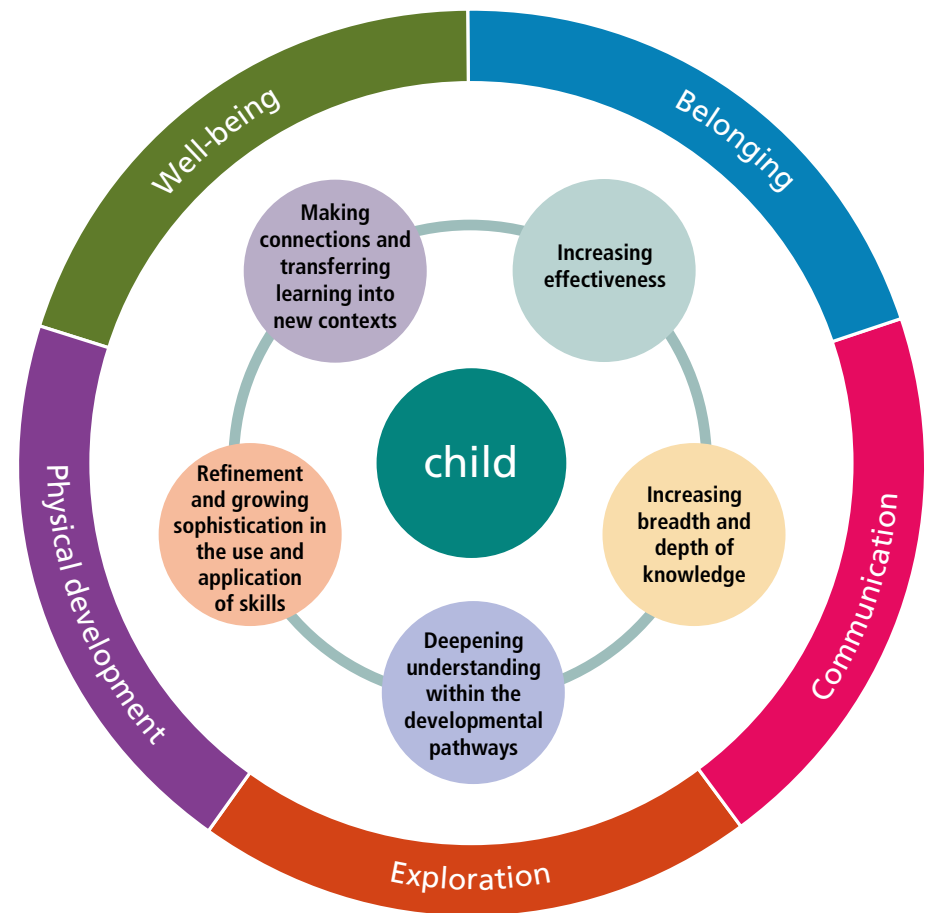


Recognising children's progress: the principles of progression

The five mandatory [principles of progression](#) describe the learning journey for all 3 to 16-year-olds. These principles of progression are interconnected; they allow us to understand where children are and how we can support them to make progress. We can observe children's progress when we notice that they demonstrate an increase in the breadth and depth of their knowledge, understanding, skills and **capabilities**, as they become more confident and independent. As children make progress, they begin to make links in their learning and development in familiar and new contexts, enabling them to realise the four purposes of the curriculum across the five developmental pathways.

The curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings is underpinned by five principles of progression:

- Increasing effectiveness
- Increasing breadth and depth of knowledge
- Deepening understanding within the developmental pathways
- Refinement and growing sophistication in the use and application of skills
- Making connections and transferring learning into new contexts





Children's progress is supported when [enabling adults plan for engaging experiences and effective environments](#). When observing children, we should use the principles of progression alongside the curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings. This will help us to:

- understand what progression looks like within and across the five developmental pathways
- plan developmentally and culturally appropriate learning experiences to support each child to make progress
- inform our understanding of children's well-being and learning
- support us to create a shared understanding of progression

Applying the principles of progression for children aged 3 and 4

The text below shows how we should apply the principles of progression in developmentally appropriate ways to support our assessment of the learning and progress of children aged 3 and 4. We can also use this exemplification with younger children and those with additional learning needs (ALN).

What increasing effectiveness might look like for children aged 3 and 4

Children become increasingly confident, capable and independent learners. They display a curious approach to their play with increasing levels of involvement and engagement. They communicate more effectively and develop their attention and listening skills in a variety of contexts. Given time and support, they build emotional resilience and develop relationships to express and recognise their own and others' feelings.

What increasing breadth and depth of knowledge might look like for children aged 3 and 4

Children begin to explore a range of concepts. They develop their emerging understanding through trial and error. They begin to make connections across their learning, and to think and act more efficiently. They follow their own interests, thinking and schema to make sense of the world around them and consolidate and extend their understanding.

What deepening understanding within the developmental pathways might look like for children aged 3 and 4

Children develop a depth and breadth of knowledge and skills within and across the five developmental pathways. They show increasing levels of engagement and involvement across a wide range of appropriate, authentic experiences. They begin to demonstrate some of the characteristics of the four purposes of Curriculum for Wales in their play and exploration.

What refinement and growing sophistication in the use and application of skills might look like for children aged 3 and 4

Children take the time and opportunity to explore, refine and consolidate their problem-solving, communication, physical and social skills in authentic play-based learning. Children demonstrate their understanding of concepts in a variety of familiar and new contexts. They communicate their thinking through actions, gestures and words.

What making connections and transferring learning into new contexts might look like for children aged 3 and 4

Children begin to make connections through their exploration of the immediate world around them. They develop their **emergent thinking** by following their **fascinations** and curiosity. They begin to make choices and decisions within their familiar play. As their confidence and independence grows, they begin to apply their skills and knowledge to unfamiliar contexts. Over time and with support they make necessary adjustments to meet the challenges and opportunities of new situations.

Developing a shared understanding of progression

Any discussion between practitioners that allows them to share and reflect on experiences for the purpose of developing and maintaining a shared understanding of progression is known as **professional dialogue**. Those involved in such discussion contribute on an equal basis.

Developing and maintaining a shared understanding of progression means we collectively explore, discuss and understand how well children are learning and developing. We use these opportunities to draw on the five principles of progression, the five developmental pathways and initial assessment arrangements.

The outcomes of professional dialogue must inform our learning and teaching practices. We should be clear on the progress children make during their time with us. Discussions with parents and carers support our deeper understanding of a child's holistic development. These discussions help us to evaluate whether our expectations for children are realistic and sufficiently challenging, and whether any external advice and support may be required. When we notice something that is interesting or noteworthy about a child, we may choose to share this with other practitioners or parents and carers to support our thinking about the progress the child is making. These valuable conversations help us to learn more about how children are developing and what we can do to support them.





We recognise that discussion is a powerful professional learning tool that helps us make decisions about what we do in our own setting. Depending on the size of our setting, this may be peer support, whole staff or team meetings, and/or meetings with any relevant partners. Discussions with other settings and schools should support consistency of understanding and expectations across the sector. This could be through existing relationships, attending networking sessions and/or establishing new connections. Embedding professional dialogue should be a continuous process and of equal value to all parties.

Shared understanding across settings and schools can support smooth [transition](#) which is important to ensure continuity of progression. When we engage in meaningful conversations with parents, carers and other schools and settings, we should be better placed to provide a positive transition experience for all children.

What are the benefits of professional dialogue to support our shared understanding of progression?

- We gain a deeper understanding of a child's holistic development.
- We develop our own understanding of child development and how children learn.
- We value how children learn and their need to revisit experiences.
- We have realistic expectations of children and can ensure they are sufficiently challenged.
- We can identify whether external advice and support is needed.
- Our understanding of how children are progressing supports us to plan effectively to meet their needs.
- We can use our reflections to inform our interactions and our planning for engaging experiences and effective environments.
- Our reflections can inform the self-evaluation process and lead to improvements in practice.
- Our understanding of progression will support successful and smooth transitions between settings and schools.
- By working with others, we have an opportunity to compare and develop practice across settings and schools, which will ensure equity of provision to ensure all children make progress.
- Our expectations of children's progress develop through discussions with other settings and schools.

Reflective questions

- How do we ensure good partnerships are fostered with schools and other settings to support a shared understanding of progression?
- How do our observational assessments impact on our pedagogy and on children's progress?





Involving parents, carers and children in supporting progress

We should work together to support children's learning, development and progress, within and outside our setting, by nurturing positive relationships with parents and carers and having meaningful conversations with them. We can share information about:

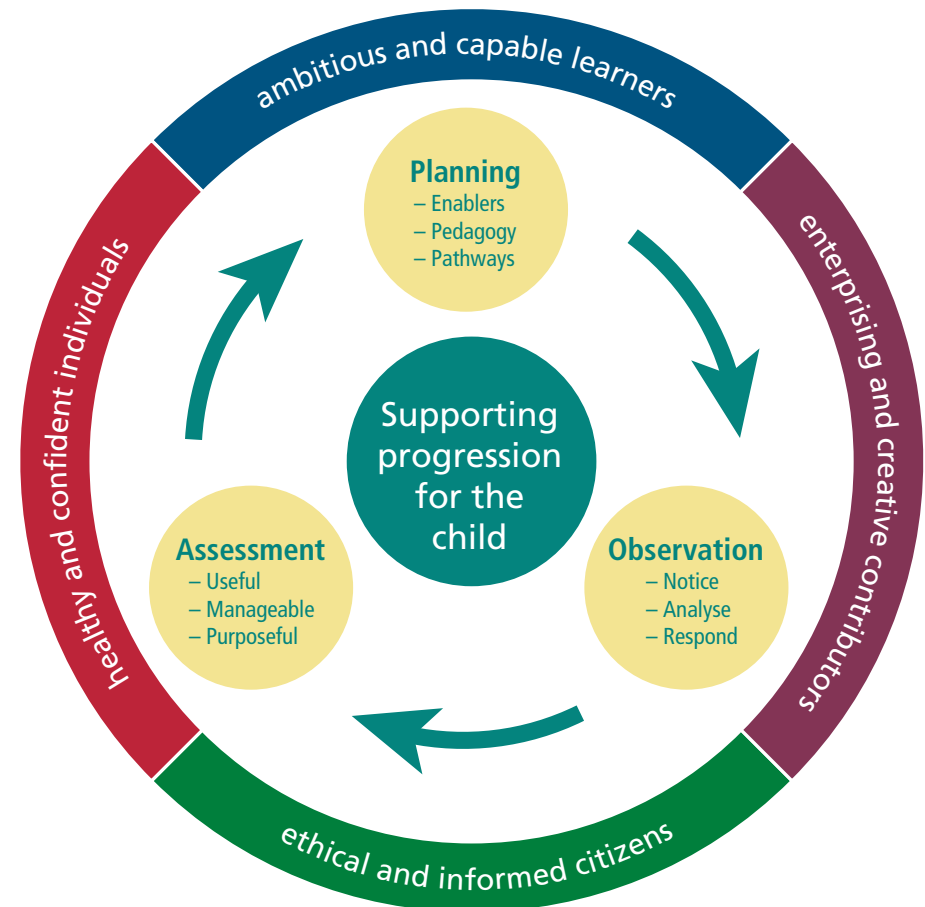
- their child's well-being
- the progress their child is making
- how we will support progress
- how progress can be supported at home

We should do this frequently to maximise engagement opportunities with parents and carers. It is important that the information we share is easily understood and is concise and jargon-free. This information may be shared verbally, via digital platforms, face-to-face and/or in written format.

Assessment

The curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings prompts us to take account of children learning at their own pace and in their preferred learning environment. We should assess children's emotional, social, cognitive and physical development within and across the five developmental pathways. This curriculum reminds us that assessment should not be a tick list or a one-off event and should be indistinguishable from learning and teaching. Effective assessment should support us to identify children who may need either extra support or challenge. The temptation for us to rush through skills, knowledge and experiences can have an adverse effect on learning and development. We should use the principles of progression to reflect on children's individual progress and allow time for them to consolidate and extend their understanding and learning. We should remain focused on the present needs of the child and not on those of the coming years.

The reliability of our assessment is dependent upon the quality of our interactions with children and of the learning experiences and environments we create for them. Assessments should be purposeful, manageable and proportionate to individual children's needs. Assessment arrangements should be flexible, allowing for the varied and unique progress of each individual child. We should use our ongoing assessments to document how children develop and learn.





Assessment of children aged 3 and 4 should be routinely made through observation; it may happen in an instant or over a longer period as part of our day-to-day practice and should inform our planning for children's progress.

Assessment provides valuable information that should be used to:

- celebrate children's learning
- provide information for supporting children's progress, which may include revisiting, consolidating or challenging learning
- inform planning for learning and teaching, including any extra support or challenge required for every child to reach their potential
- involve parents and carers in their child's learning and development
- communicate with key partners

The role of observation in initial and ongoing assessment

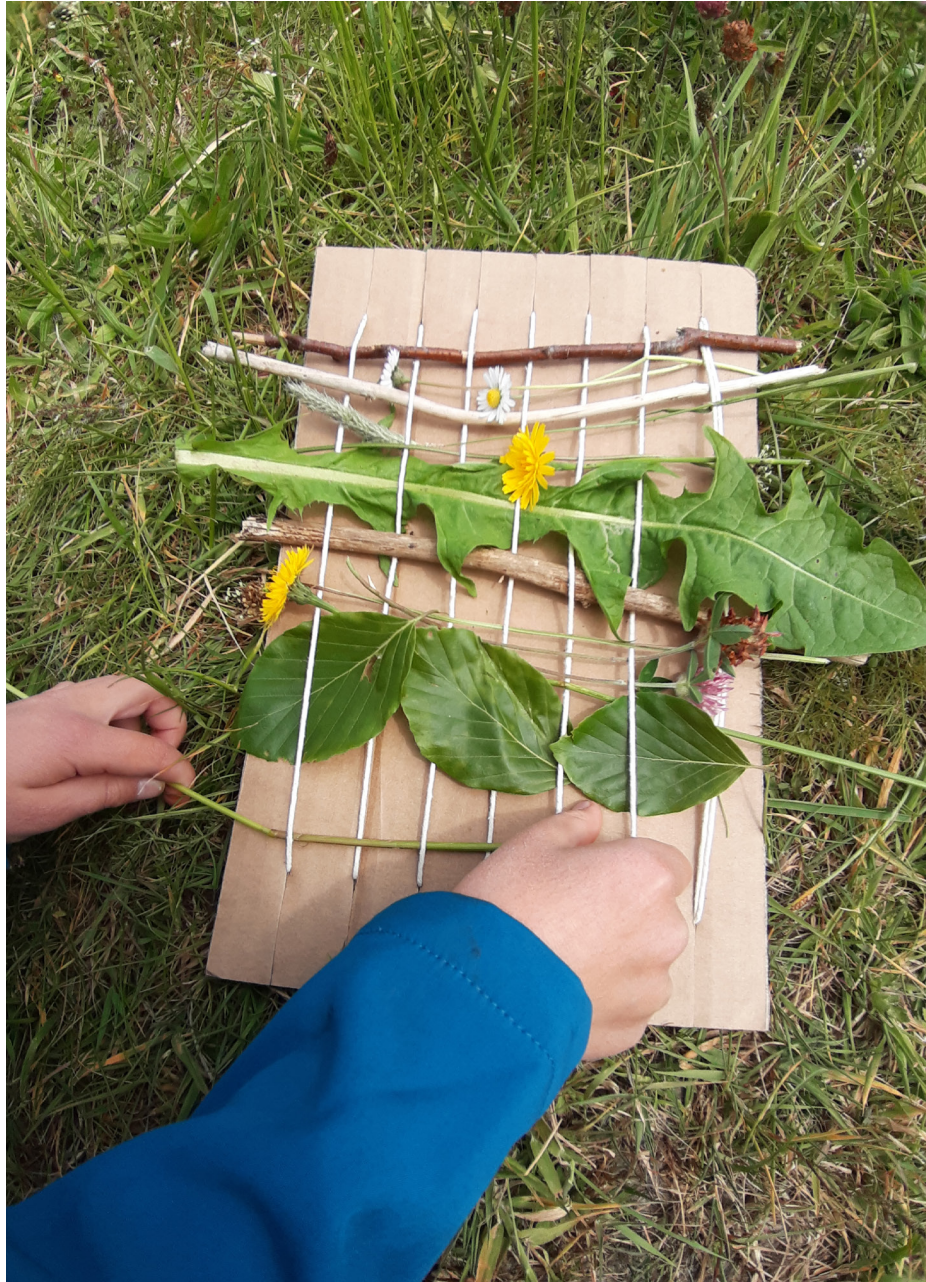
The purpose of observational assessment is to determine where children are on their learning journey. Observation helps us to find out what motivates, interests and engages young children. It helps us to recognise their levels of involvement, their emotional states, their friendships, knowledge, skills and **competencies**. We should use observation to assess children's knowledge, skills and dispositions through a combination of child-led and practitioner-supported experiences. Observation should help us to identify children's current strengths, where they need to go next and what needs to be done to get them there, taking account of any barriers to their learning.

We should observe children throughout the day, indoors and outdoors, in solitary and collaborative play, and as part of familiar daily routines such as mealtimes and interactions with parents and carers. These contexts help us to build a holistic picture of the child and how they respond in a range of situations and with different people. Our observations should record children's progress over time against the curriculum on offer, including, but not limited to, children's well-being (to include **social and emotional development**, and **physical development**), and their skills, knowledge and capabilities in **literacy** and **numeracy**.

There are a number of ways we can use observation to inform our planning and support our understanding of children's learning and progress over time. These include:

- spontaneous observations of something significant
- observations for a specific length of time and over a period of time
- observations that assess developmental progress
- planned observations on identified aspects of learning and development





Written observations

As part of our assessment arrangements, written observations should be purposeful and manageable and not used solely to gather evidence. We should always keep the individual child in mind when considering what is significant and noteworthy to record. This should not be an overly time-consuming process.

We can choose from a broad range of formats to help us capture and assess a child's learning and development, including, but not limited to:

- learning stories
- short narratives
- one-page profiles
- learning journals
- short annotations
- digital apps, platforms or software

There will be occasions where we need to share information and seek additional professional advice based on our analysis of what we have observed over a period of time. Our observations can be used to support these discussions and/or referral processes for children with any additional needs. In these instances, we may collate our observations into a required report format from external agencies.

Using video recordings

Video recording is a useful way of supporting us to assess and evaluate individual children's learning and progress, and it can be used effectively to gain a shared understanding of learning and progress within our setting. If we choose to record, we should ensure that it is done sensitively so that it does not become a distraction to children's play.

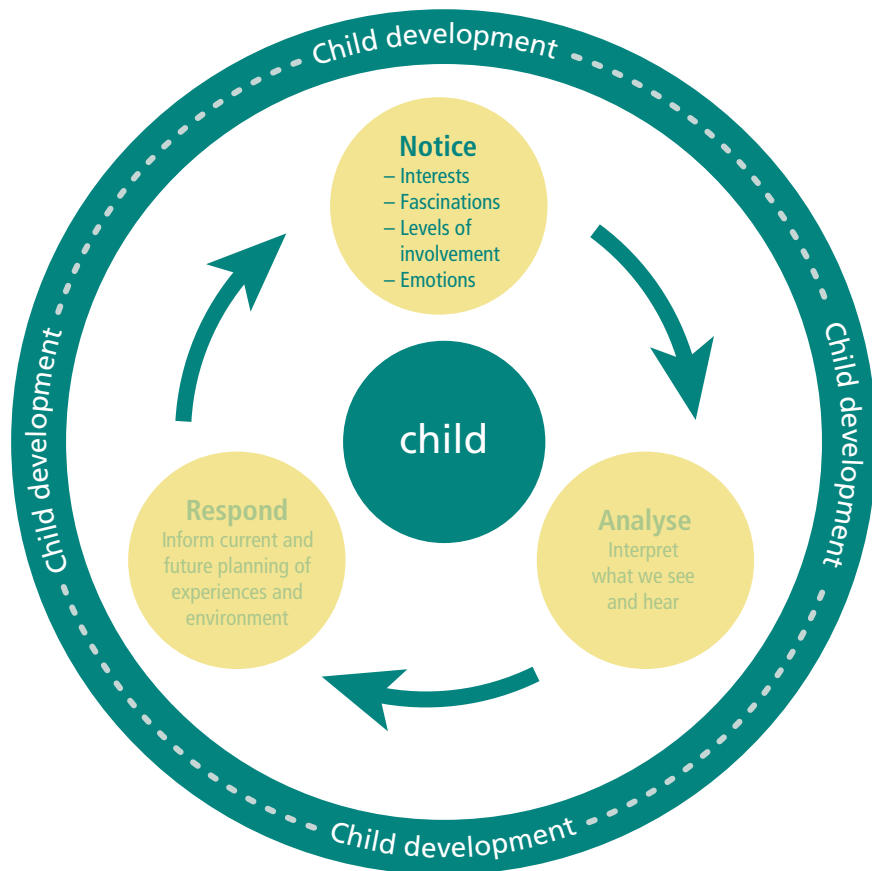
We may share the recordings with parents, carers and other professionals when and where appropriate and with relevant permissions. We may also share the recordings with children to support their self-reflection and celebrate their learning.

Enabling adults

As enabling adults, we should be intrigued by and support children's thinking during play. Our observations should help us to assess learning effectively and plan engaging experiences and effective environments that will support all children to make progress. There will be times when we choose to stand back, to observe and listen, allowing play to develop. We do this because we recognise that our involvement or intervention might be unwelcome and/or inhibit play. Sharing our observations with colleagues within a safe and supportive environment will help us to learn from each other, drawing on each other's strengths and raising awareness of, and challenging, any **unconscious bias** we may hold.

The curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings explains the process of effective observation and how it can support assessment. The cyclical process of 'notice, analyse and respond' should be part of our day-to-day decision-making when considering whether, when and how to respond to children's learning. As enabling adults, we should notice, analyse and respond to children's learning in ways that inform our assessment of the progress they are making.



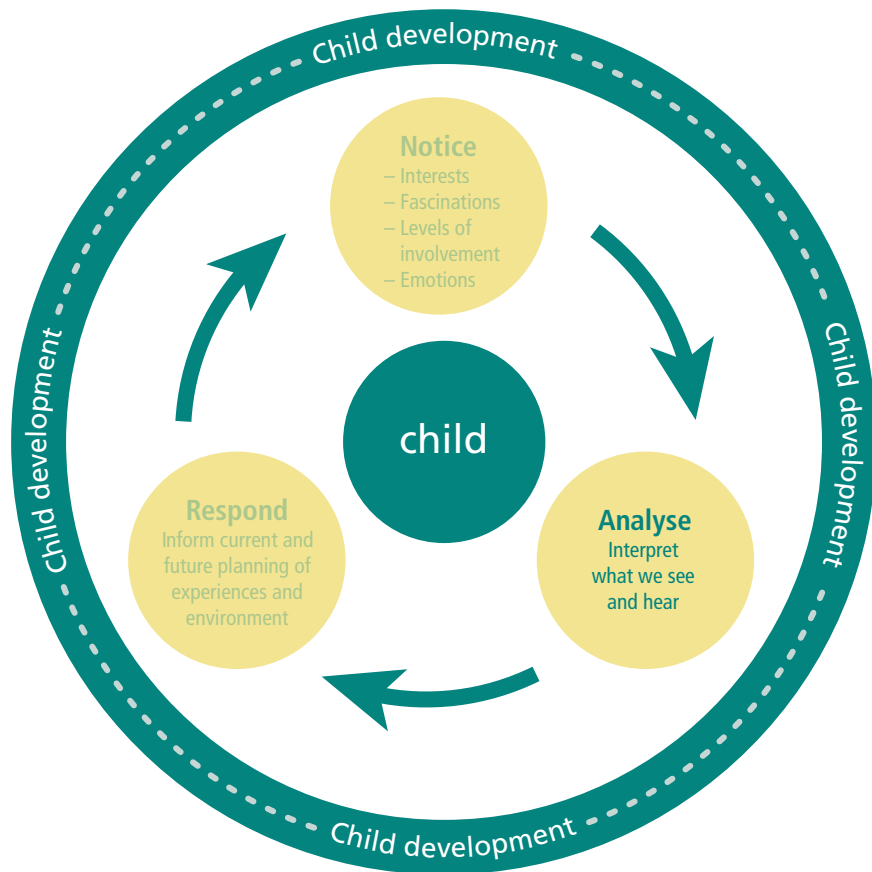


Notice

Fundamental to our observations is the belief that we undertake observations to gain rich knowledge of children's holistic development. We should be mindful that observation shouldn't be a barrier to interaction and that interactions should not be barriers to noticing. Observations can be spontaneous or planned. We should take notice of:

- what children are interested in or curious about
- how they approach resources and spaces
- how they communicate and interact with others

We should take note of children's levels of confidence, resilience, independence and competence and any significant changes to these. Children may respond differently to some practitioners and in different situations. We should ensure that we approach our observations with an open mind and that we are willing to share observations with others to discuss what we see and hear objectively. These professional discussions should provide comprehensive observations of individual children.



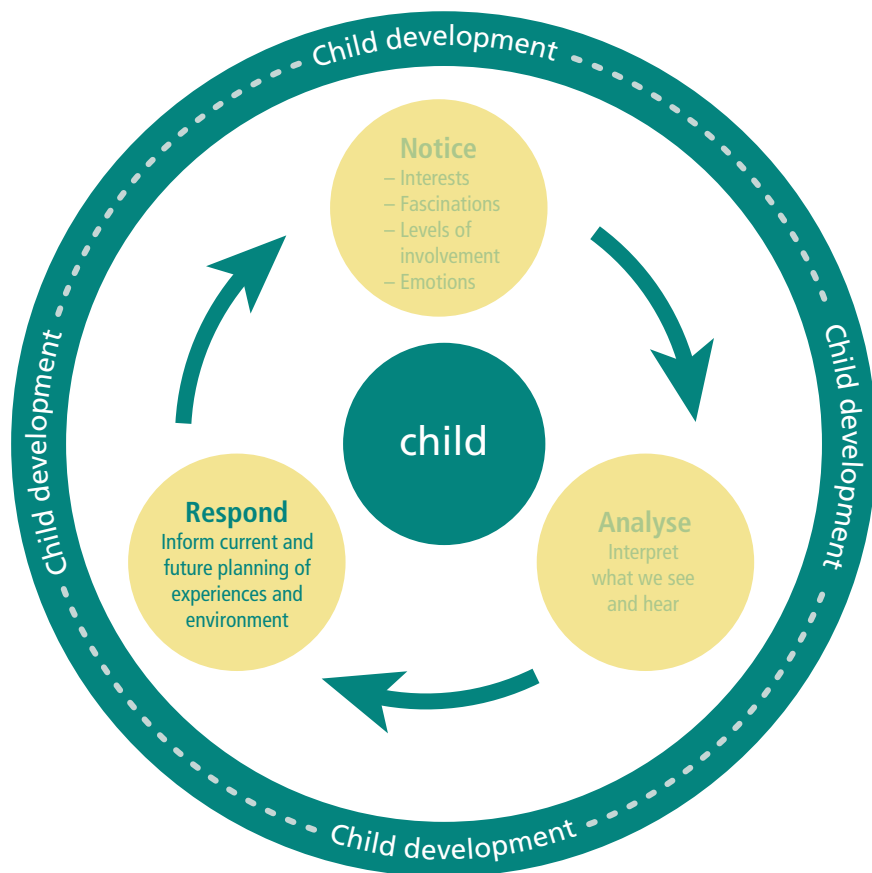
Analyse

As we observe, we should interpret what we see and hear, and decide whether the observation is significant and therefore noteworthy. We should consider whether we have learned something new about the child or whether it has reinforced something we already know.

As we interpret what we have seen and heard, we should consider what it could mean for a particular child, in relation to their:

- increasing knowledge
- skill development
- concept development
- preferred schemas or schematic learning
- dispositions to learning in different situations
- progress or any difficulties they may be experiencing

When we reflect on this analysis, it should be rooted in our knowledge of child development, the child's linguistic and cultural background, and the curriculum on offer. There will be times when we act on our observations instantaneously as we notice **teachable moments**. In this instance, we may use a narrative to describe to the child the learning that has taken place.



Respond

Based on our analysis of our observations, we can make decisions about what to do next to support children's progress. This may include decisions about whether and/or how to interact; whether to make adaptations to the learning environment and how to enrich experiences further.

We should recognise that when children are fully engaged in their play, we can interrupt their thinking and problem-solving if we join in or interact without an invitation. If we decide to, or are invited to join in or support play, it should enhance and extend learning through teachable moments. We may choose to model a skill, offer a resource, introduce vocabulary, use open questions to support thinking, or engage in **sustained shared thinking** on something of interest to the child.

When considering skills and concept development, we should plan opportunities for children to refine, consolidate or master skills and concepts, and remind ourselves that 'next steps' need not be linear. Allowing children time to **wallow** in their learning during periods of uninterrupted play will support them to consolidate and refine their thinking and understanding. We should make the most of children's interests and fascinations within the environment and experiences to engage them authentically in their learning.

Summary

Observational assessment should:

- capture what children can do and how they learn
- contribute to building a holistic picture of the child and understanding the progress made over time
- form part of day-to-day practice
- be unobtrusive
- include analysis of our observations
- inform learning and teaching
- be meaningful and useful
- be a shared responsibility
- include the perspective of the child and their parents or carers

Observational assessment shouldn't:

- focus on perceived gaps in learning
- categorise or label children
- be a one-off event or a series of tasks
- interrupt authentic learning and play
- be used solely as an accountability measure
- be separate from learning and teaching
- be onerous and time-consuming
- be the responsibility of one adult alone
- be completed in isolation

Arrangements for initial assessment

Arrangements for initial assessment are an important part of the assessment process. The initial assessments must take place within 6 weeks of a child receiving funded nursery education. We know that joining a new setting can be a big change and possibly a big challenge for young children. We should not rush to make initial assessments but allow children the time they need to settle and provide us with time to nurture strong relationships.

Our initial assessment arrangements should value and incorporate the views of parents and carers to help build a picture of each child's unique set of skills and knowledge, alongside their culture and background. We should use this valuable information to inform our assessments. Ideally, children should be observed by more than one practitioner, and we should share observations and collaborate to ensure accurate and holistic assessments. These arrangements, which assess children's well-being, skills and capabilities, must include the four mandatory areas of assessment: well-being to include **social and emotional development** and **physical development**; skills and capabilities in both **literacy** and **numeracy**.

Assessments that are child-centred should help us to find out what children know and can do. These arrangements should not prevent us from interacting with children or from making the most of teachable moments. We should ensure we record our observations in a concise and manageable way that works well for our setting. Some children may attend more than one setting and we should try to work closely with the other settings to share relevant information. Professional discussions contribute to our shared understanding of individual children's strengths, needs and interests. They should support us to make decisions about how best to help children to make progress. Effective initial assessments can support us to identify children who may need extra support through early intervention or challenge. We may need to seek support and advice from external agencies.





Reflective questions

- How well have we considered the reflective questions on child-centred practice on page 43 of [A curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings?](#)
- Have we taken the whole 6 weeks to make observations and gather a wide range of information for assessment for each child?
- How well do we collate and summarise assessment information for each child?
- Have we included assessments of children's skills and capabilities in well-being, to include physical, social and emotional development, and literacy and numeracy?

At the end of the first 6 weeks, we should collate and summarise the assessment information and share it with parents and carers.

The mandatory assessment areas are presented on page 26 as a series of questions for us to consider as we observe children in our setting during the first 6 weeks. On pages 27 to 41, these questions are further supported by examples of what we may observe and record in terms of children's development, learning and progress during play and daily routines. The descriptions are not exhaustive. We should use them to support our collective observations when making assessments of children's progress.

<p>Assessing well-being: Social and emotional development</p>	<p>How does the child show that they are happy, settled and content?</p>	<p>How does the child respond to co-regulation strategies?</p>	<p>How does the child form relationships with others in the setting?</p>			
<p>Assessing well-being: Physical development</p>	<p>How does the child engage in physical activities?</p>	<p>How confident is the child in their physical play?</p>	<p>How does the child show body awareness in their movements?</p>	<p>How coordinated are the child's gross motor skills?</p>	<p>How coordinated are the child's fine motor skills?</p>	
<p>Assessing children's skills and capabilities in literacy</p>	<p>How does the child show that they attend and listen?</p>	<p>How does the child show they understand language?</p>	<p>How does the child join in with stories, songs and rhymes?</p>	<p>How does the child interact with others?</p>	<p>How does the child show their understanding of concepts and vocabulary?</p>	
	<p>How does the child make themselves understood?</p>	<p>How is the child building their vocabulary?</p>	<p>How does the child show an interest in books and other reading materials?</p>	<p>How does the child notice symbols in the environment?</p>	<p>How does the child use marks to communicate?</p>	
<p>Assessing children's skills and capabilities in numeracy</p>	<p>How does the child show they notice similarities and differences?</p>	<p>How does the child notice symbols in the environment and begin to recognise that they carry meaning?</p>	<p>How does the child communicate their numeracy thinking through mark-making?</p>	<p>How does the child show their understanding of simple concepts in numeracy?</p>	<p>How does the child show an understanding of quantity?</p>	<p>How does the child show an understanding of pattern?</p>

Assessing well-being: social and emotional development

Feeling connected, secure and safe are key elements of positive well-being and can promote a strong sense of belonging. As enabling adults, we have a key role to play in creating emotionally safe environments that support children to begin to recognise and manage their feelings and behaviour in positive ways. We should ensure children feel safe and secure within the setting environment. To build a firm sense of belonging for all children we should show genuine care, provide emotional support and respect their cultural background. These secure attachments and relationships can support children to feel confident in themselves, ensuring they are better able to make choices, show greater resilience and independence, and participate positively in everyday activities.

It is essential we take time to get to know the child and understand their unique background, including their linguistic background and culture as well as previous experiences, to build a holistic picture of each child to ensure we can meet their social and emotional needs.

How does the child show that they are happy, settled and content?

The child may separate from their parent or carer sometimes with the support of an adult or **transitional object**.

The child may cope with transitions throughout the session and follows the daily routine.

The child may be curious to explore the setting and participate in a wide range of experiences.

The child may show interest in helping with simple tasks such as setting the table for snack time.

The child may show concern and affection in their day-to-day interactions.

How does the child respond to co-regulation strategies?

The child may make their emotional needs known, using words, gestures or actions.

With support from an adult, the child may regulate their responses to their feelings and emotions.

The child may look to a trusted adult for reassurance and support to regulate their response to big feelings.

The child may show an awareness of the feelings of others and respond to them, for example consoling others if they are upset.

The child may be aware of and express their own feelings in an appropriate way.

How does the child form relationships with others in the setting?

The child may form close relationships with their key worker and other adults who work in the setting.

The child may play alongside or with others who enjoy the same activities, sometimes with support from an adult.

The child may share experiences from home, their culture and community, for example by bringing items from home to share with friends.

The child may seek or provide warm connections with others.

The child may show that they can cooperate and come to a resolution, sometimes with support.

Assessing well-being: physical development

A child's physical skills are an important part of their holistic development and affect all areas of their growth and learning. We should be confident in our knowledge of progress within physical development so that we can accurately assess children's physical skills. It is especially important when observing and assessing a child's physical development that we consider the impact it has on their emotional, social and cognitive development. Young children need time, space and freedom to explore and develop their skills in a range of indoor and outdoor contexts. By offering a wide range of physical development opportunities, we support children to develop their resilience, confidence and independence.

How does the child engage in physical activities?

The child may show an interest in movement, which may include moving themselves, being moved and/or moving things.

The child may develop their physical play using additional resources, and/or by experimenting with different movements.

The child may spend extended periods of time engaged in specific aspects of physical play, for example riding a bike, digging or kicking a ball.

The child may choose physical activity to test themselves and take risks.

How confident is the child in their physical play?

The child may take time to look at the environment and watch others before having a go, either independently or with support.

The child may use trial and error through repeating actions to develop and refine their physical play.

The child may be capable of managing risks by choosing to participate or not and whether to seek help or not.

The child may become increasingly motivated to take risks and rely less on the encouragement of others.

The child may show determination to challenge themselves physically by embracing a wider range of physical experiences.

How does the child show body awareness in their movements?

The child may begin to explore and experiment with movement and position in the space around them.

The child may move their body in and around spaces with co-ordination.

The child may show they can manoeuvre themselves in relation to their physical ability and to the space and resources in the environment.

The child may show self-help skills, for example undressing and dressing themselves or preparing and eating a snack.

How coordinated are the child's gross motor skills?

The child may maintain their balance and coordination in a range of contexts.

The child may **cross the midline** and use both sides of their body at the same time.

The child may engage in a diverse range of movements, for example climbing, kicking and throwing.

The child may coordinate both sides of the body at the same time, for example crawling through a tunnel.

The child may sequence movements, for example climbing a ladder and then sliding down, or kicking a moving ball.

How coordinated are the child's fine motor skills?

The child may coordinate their eyes, hands and fingers with dexterity and strength, for example pushing a switch, grasping small objects, and using tools and equipment.

The child may use both hands together, for example holding a book with one hand and turning the pages with another or catching a ball.

The child may coordinate their eyes, hands and fingers to explore and manipulate a range of materials, for example rolling, cutting, pinching and squashing.

The child may use a range of mark-making tools purposefully and effectively.

The child may coordinate their movements with intention, for example to prepare and eat snacks.

Assessing children's skills and capabilities in literacy

Children's early literacy skills are underpinned by their speech, language and communication development. Effective assessment should identify a child's competence in speech, language and communication. Children learning more than one language may interchange between them and we should notice and build upon this. We should be confident in our knowledge of how children's literacy skills develop so that we can accurately assess and support progress. There are a number of risk factors that may impact a child's long-term speech, language and communication needs. These include **physiological factors**, **family and environmental factors** and **communication factors**. We should consider these risk factors to support a holistic view of the child's literacy skills, so that we make an informed decision about the next steps for each individual child.

How does the child show that they attend and listen?

The child may need a physical or verbal cue to gain their attention.

The child may be able to focus on one experience at a time and may need adult support to shift their attention.

The child may listen with increasing attention.

The child may be able to turn their attention independently to listen to others.

The child may be able to do two things at once, for example playing with blocks and joining in with songs.

How does the child show they understand language?

The child may respond to and follow simple instructions or suggestions, either verbally or nonverbally.

The child may respond appropriately to simple questions.

The child may begin to ask questions to clarify their understanding.

The child may respond to greetings verbally or nonverbally.

How does the child join in with stories, songs and rhymes?

The child may show interest in a story, song or rhyme, for example by moving closer to be able to listen.

The child may sing or perform familiar songs and rhymes during play.

The child may join in with actions, sounds or simple words, or show enjoyment.

The child may join in with familiar parts of predictable stories, songs and rhymes.

How does the child interact with others?

The child may interact with others either verbally or nonverbally, responding to cues, using body language, eye gaze or gestures such as pointing.

The child may show an interest in the play of others and join in.

The child may begin to communicate with others to sustain play.

The child may talk to others about things that interest them.

The child may begin to develop their understanding of the rules of conversation, for example taking turns when communicating with adults and other children.

How does the child show their understanding of concepts and vocabulary?

The child may show understanding of concepts through their play, for example exploring 'heavy' and 'light' in sand play.

The child may use appropriate vocabulary during daily routines, in their play and when listening and responding to others.

The child may use a range of vocabulary and apply it in different contexts.

How does the child make themselves understood?

The child may use a range of ways to communicate with others, for example facial expressions, gestures, vocalisations, signing or mark-making.

The child may engage in **serve and return** interactions.

The child may use language to express their thoughts, feelings and needs.

The child may persevere and use a range of strategies to make themselves understood.

The child may initiate and engage in conversation using single words or short phrases to make themselves understood.

How is the child building their vocabulary?

The child may use newly learned vocabulary, including nouns, verbs and describing words, in their play and exploration.

The child may use words and phrases from stories, songs and rhymes in different play contexts.

The child may use more than one word for a concept, for example 'small', 'little', 'tiny'.

The child may use connecting words to join ideas together, for example 'because', 'and', 'or', 'if'.

The child may use words to describe where things are in their play, for example 'in', 'on', 'over', 'under', 'behind', 'in front'.

How does the child show an interest in books and other reading materials?

The child may choose books and other reading materials, sometimes with the support of an adult.

The child may be able to explore and handle books and reading materials appropriately.

The child may make connections between books and their own experiences.

The child may retell key events in familiar stories.

The child may use props to retell familiar stories and rhymes.

How does the child notice symbols in the environment?

The child may show awareness of familiar symbols and make connections to their own experiences.

The child may notice symbols and be guided by them in their daily routines, for example following visual prompts to wash their hands.

The child may recognise their own name, for example on coat pegs and during self-registration.

The child may notice familiar symbols that have meaning to them.

The child may notice their friends' names and that some names start with the same letter.

**How does
the child use
marks to
communicate?**

The child may make marks in their play, using a range of tools, resources and materials.

The child may use emergent marks to represent things of interest, for example 'potatoes' in the garden, or use them to instruct, for example 'keep out' in the block area.

The child may begin to use marks to represent their own name, which may include letter-like shapes.

The child may use drawings and marks to retell their experiences.

The child may use drawings and symbols to represent their thinking and learning.

Assessing children's skills and capabilities in numeracy

Children develop an understanding of mathematical language, concepts and skills through multi-sensory play and authentic experiences. We should recognise that mathematics is everywhere and is much more than just number. We should take a holistic approach to mathematical development and recognise that there are elements of mathematics and numeracy within all five developmental pathways.

We should observe children during their play as they engage with open-ended, authentic resources to support their understanding of mathematical concepts in everyday life and routines. We should use our observations to inform teachable moments, which may include modelling appropriate mathematical language and skills throughout the day, in real-life contexts, to help children develop their **conceptual understanding** and **strategic competence**. We should observe children working through the process of problem-solving and allow them the time to observe, explore, investigate and experiment. This problem-solving process should be valued as an end in itself and may not always result in an outcome or answer.

How does the child show they notice similarities and differences?

The child may match objects and sort them, for example when putting things back where they belong.

The child may make collections of the same objects during play. They may **generalise** and make collections of things that are similar, for example collecting all of the vehicles, vegetables or animals.

The child may recognise that some things are the same, for example at snack time they may notice that another child has the same type of fruit.

The child may notice when something is different or the odd one out and may be able to describe some similarities and differences between things.

How does the child notice symbols in the environment and begin to recognise that they carry meaning?

The child may notice symbols, for example labels that show how many scoops of flour are needed when making playdough.

The child may show that they understand there is a difference between letters and numerals.

The child may notice that photographs, drawings and **environmental print** carry meaning.

How does the child communicate their numeracy thinking through mark-making?

The child may assign meaning to symbols and marks, for example to make records of their collections.

The child may draw and/or make marks to represent a sequence of events.

The child may make marks that correspond to amounts, for example 3 circles for the 3 pigs in the story 'The Three Little Pigs'.

The child may make marks that have meaning to them, for example to show how old they are.

How does the child show their understanding of simple concepts in numeracy?

The child may show understanding of mathematical concepts to solve everyday problems, for example finding a longer plank to bridge a gap or pushing crates closer together to make the gap smaller.

The child may show understanding of mathematical concepts through their play, for example the concept of 'full' by filling containers.

The child may show awareness of concepts of time, for example 'before and after' or 'yesterday'.

The child may show an understanding of the concept 'more' in daily routines and in their play.

The child may show their understanding of size, shape, position and measures, for example by adding more blocks to make a tower taller.

How does the child show an understanding of quantity?

The child may start to recognise when there is not enough, too much or too many of something. They may start to compare quantities, for example noticing when someone has more strawberries than they have or that they have fewer cars than their friend.

The child may be developing their understanding of **one-to-one correspondence**, for example giving a plate to every child at snack time.

The child may attribute numbers to quantities, for example choosing 4 chalks for themselves and 3 friends.

The child may show they understand that anything can be counted during their play, for example steps, claps and cups.

The child may show an understanding of the **conservation of number**, for example if they have counted 3 pinecones then they know that there are 3 and there is no need to count them again.

How does the child show an understanding of pattern?

The child may recognise that patterns and sequences can grow, for example they stack the cups in order from the biggest to the smallest or know that after they are collected, they will go home, have lunch and then go to the park.

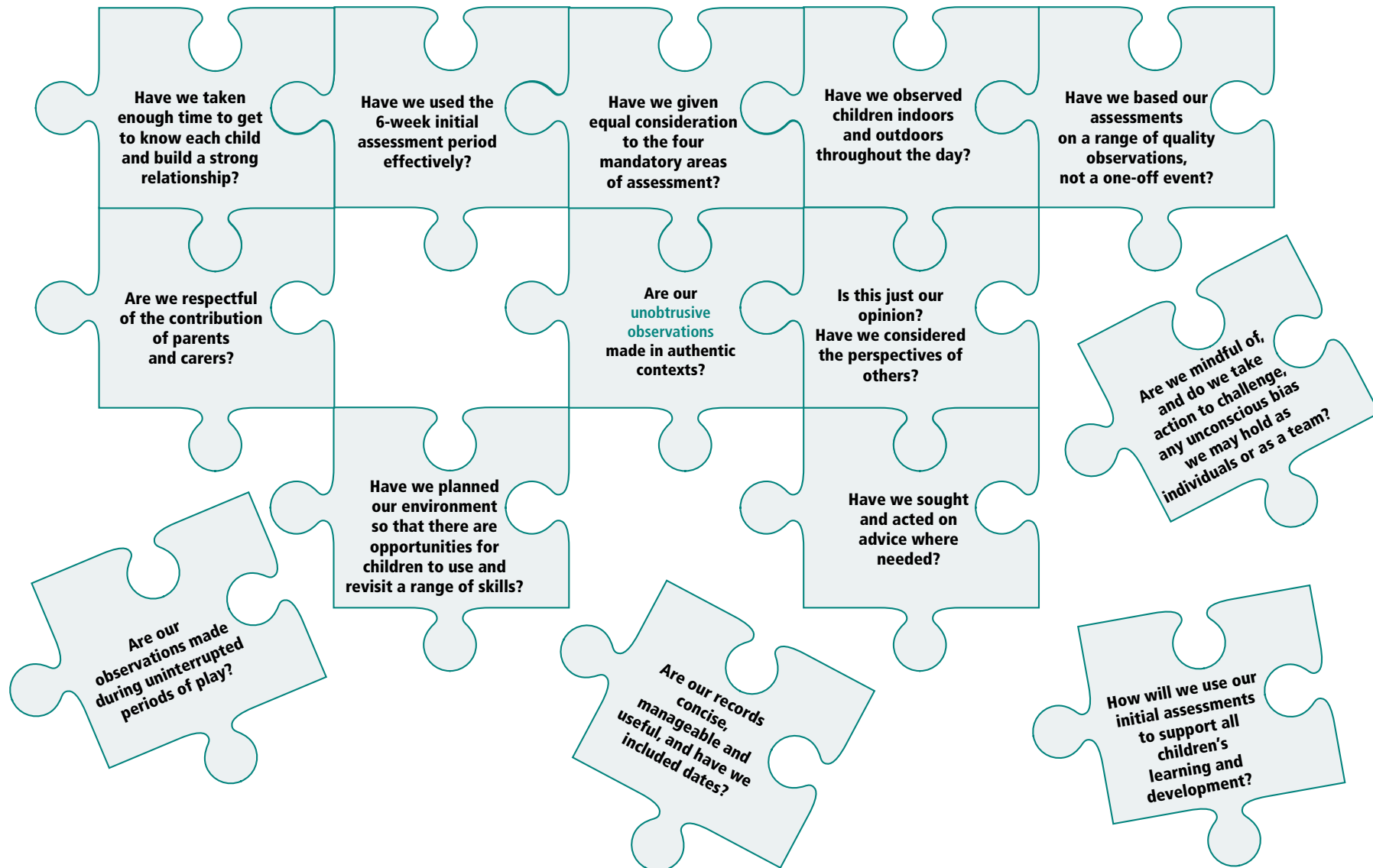
The child may sequence events in a logical order, for example putting socks on before shoes or knowing that they are collected after the 'Hwyl Fawr' song.

The child may recognise patterns in the environment, for example stripes on a zebra in a picture book or spots on a ladybird in the garden.

The child may respond to auditory patterns, for example by dancing along to a beat or drumming with a spoon on a saucepan.

The child may recognise repeating patterns and sequences, for example they put leaves and flowers in a repeating pattern onto a skewer in the mud kitchen.

Key points to consider when undertaking initial assessments



Glossary

English	Welsh	Definition
Capabilities	Galluedd	The power or ability to do something.
Communication factors	Ffactorau cyfathrebu	Features and examples of communication, such as babbles, gestures and vocabulary.
Competencies	Cymwyseddau	Capabilities that enable children to apply or use a set of related knowledge, skills, and abilities.
Conceptual understanding	Dealltwriaeth gysyniadol	The integrated and functional understanding of ideas and their importance. This often includes mathematical or scientific ideas or ideas about how the world works.
Conservation of number	Cadwraeth rhif	The recognition that the number of objects remains the same even if those objects have been rearranged.
Co-regulation	Cydreoli	This term is often used in psychology. It refers to when caregivers use strategies to support or soothe a child so that they can begin to develop self-regulation skills.
Cross the midline	Croesi'r llinell ganol	Movement in which a body part is able to spontaneously move over to the other side of the body to work there, for example placing the right hand on the left shoulder.
Different groups of children	Grwpiau gwahanol o blant	This term can refer to children with additional learning needs (ALN); children from minority ethnic groups who have English or Welsh as an additional language (EAL/WAL); care-experienced children, including looked after children; children of refugees and asylum seekers; Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children; children at risk of harm, abuse or neglect.
Dispositions to learning	Agweddau at ddysgu	The way in which children engage in and relate to the learning process, for example with curiosity, with persistence, with playfulness.

English	Welsh	Definition
Emergent thinking	Ffyrdd newydd o feddwl	The process through which children develop and test theories and ideas through exploration.
Environmental print	Print amgylcheddol	Print which can be seen in everyday life, for example on signs, logos and labels. This term also extends to print that is familiar to children within a setting, for example children's names on coat pegs.
Family and environmental factors	Ffactorau teuluol ac amgylcheddol	Factors such as family history of speech, language and communication needs, socio-economic status and the quality of interactions within the family.
Fascinations	Diddordebau arbennig	Things that ignite great interest or delight within a child.
Fine motor skills	Sgiliau motor manwl	The ability to control movements using the small muscles of the hands and wrists.
Generalise	Cyffredinoli	The ability to use skills in new and different environments.
Gross motor skills	Sgiliau motor bras	The ability to control whole-body movements and postures.
Physiological factors	Ffactorau ffisiolegol	Factors such as hearing, birth gender and temperament.
Professional dialogue	Deialog broffesiynol	Discussions between practitioners that allow them to share and reflect on their experiences for the purpose of developing and maintaining a shared understanding of progression. Those involved in discussions contribute on an equal basis.
One-to-one correspondence	Gohebiaeth un i un	An understanding that when objects are counted each number corresponds to an object. It is also when children know that a number corresponds to specific quantities.
Serve and return	Yn ôl ac ymlaen	When a child gestures and an adult responds appropriately. More information about this can be found online .

English	Welsh	Definition
Strategic competence	Cymhwysedd strategol	The ability of a child to apply strategies to formulate and solve mathematical and other (such as scientific) problems, for example how to make the car go faster down the pipe.
Sustained shared thinking	Cyd-feddwl parhaus	A process that involves two or more people (adults and children) working together to think about different problems and to analyse different concepts.
Teachable moments	Cyfleoedd dysgu digymell	Unexpected or unplanned events or experiences that offer opportunity for learning. They provide meaningful contexts for adults to introduce or expand on something that arouses the curiosity of the child.
Transitional object	Gwrthrych pontio	Something that provides comfort and reassurance to a child as they transition from one place to another, for example a doll, teddy bear or blanket.
Unconscious bias	Rhagfarn ddiarwybod	Non-deliberate prejudice or unsupported judgements in favour of or against one thing, person or group as compared to another, in a way that is usually considered unfair.
Unobtrusive observations	Arsylwadau anymwthiol	A way of the practitioner observing children who are engaged in their play. The practitioner would not interfere in the play and it would not be obvious to the child that they are being observed.
Wallow	Ymgolli	A point at which children become so deeply involved in their play and learning that they may become difficult to distract. This term was popularised by Professor Tina Bruce in <i>Learning Through Play, 2nd Edition for Babies, Toddlers and Young Children</i> (2011).

