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Early Years Bulletin

Dear Colleagues,

With a long weekend to kickstart May, the year is racing by but hopefully the return to normality is getting ever closer. Despite being a busy time of the year, many of you will already be thinking ahead.

In recent weeks, there has been much discussion about the impact of the pandemic on children's learning, and with the fast-approaching changes to the EYFS, now is a good time to evaluate your assessment systems and tools, and ask:

- Are they centred around child development, valuing where children are and what they need to do next, however diverse their recent experiences have been?
- Will they be fit for purpose with the new EYFS framework from September 2021?

With this in mind, today's bulletin offers guidance on the key elements of effective assessment.

With best wishes.

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EYFS Training - Important Notice

The Early Years team have decided to make alternative arrangements for the forthcoming new EYFS/ Development Matters training.

The decision has been taken given the overwhelming demand for the sessions that has resulted in many settings, practitioners and childminders being left disappointed and our frustration as a team at not being able to provide any further sessions. We also felt that the increased numbers in each session would have impacted negatively on interactivity.

Instead, the Early Years team are going to record the session, so you can use the training in a more bespoke manner to meet the needs of your setting. The recording will be made available by the end of the month and will be free of charge.

Following on in June the Early Year Team will provide a Managers Network meeting offering a Q&A session on the recorded training.

We hope you understand the reasons for our decision and that you will find the recorded session of great benefit. Thank you for your support.

Revised Early Years Foundation Stage – Development Matters / Early Support Tracking Consultation Group

As you are all aware the reviewed EYFS will be launched in September 2021.

One focus of the changes is to reduce the amount of paperwork collected, so as practitioners you can focus on your direct interactions with children.

The revised EYFS refers to record keeping for children with SEND, and the SEND Code of Practice continues to require early years practitioners to gather evidence towards the Graduated Response Cycle of support within your settings. The evidence of children's secure level of development also feeds into:

- The allocation of SEND funding via the Local Inclusion Fund
- Prioritising pre-school forum children for places at nursery assessment classes and specialist language units
- The allocation of support and funding on entry into school

The Early Years and Inclusion team would like to take this opportunity to review the SEND paperwork that we currently use for the support and evidence put in place for children who require additional and different interventions in order to meet their needs.

We would welcome the participation of Early Years SENCo's in this exercise, with a view of releasing any updated SEND paperwork in time for the September 2021 launch of the reviewed EYFS.

In order to promote a consistent approach, we will be extending the invite to a range of specialist agencies including:

- Nursery Assessment Units/Batchley Nursery Plus
- Special School Outreach Services
- Speech and Language Therapy Services
- SEND services (Pre-school Forum and Integrated Needs Assessment)
- Specialist Language Units

We would welcome attendance by managers, practitioners but specifically SENCO's who use the current paperwork and have a good insight into the SEND evidence and paperwork that is currently utilised within Worcestershire Early Years settings.

Consultation Group: SEND Evidence Requirements and the Revised EYFS

7-9pm, Wednesday 26th May via Microsoft Teams

If you would like to participate in the consultation group, please email rwhite@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk to receive the invite.

Summer Holiday Provision and Ready Steady Worcestershire

In last week's bulletin 146 we shared information about the Department for Education funding a national programme of holiday food and activities to be delivered Summer and Christmas holidays 2021, and funding that is being coordinated via Ready, Steady, Worcestershire for Worcestershire.

Helen Hey is hosting a Ready Steady Worcestershire meeting on 20th May @ 10.30am to inform interested parties of the availability of funding for summer 2021 and the objectives of the fund. Helen would like to extend the invitation to existing holiday club providers, invitations to the meeting will be sent out in due course.

If you wish to discuss this further please call or email Sam Barrett 01905 846343 or email SBarrett@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk

Early Years Weekly Attendance Data

Thank you for your ongoing data returns.

The form for the week commencing Monday 3rd May is now live:

<https://forms.office.com/r/DAdNBhDdSY>

Please be aware that you need to use the new link every week – you will **not be able to access the Form** via last week's link.

The form should be submitted by **9am on Tuesday 11th May**. Schools with nursery provision should also submit a return for the **nursery/pre-school children** only.

Ofsted has resumed graded inspections of some registered early years providers from 4 May

Ofsted has piloted some limited changes to inspection methods to take account of the challenges raised by Covid-19. An updated set of inspection handbooks with full details of these changes was published after the Easter break. In early years settings, Ofsted said it would also continue to carry out urgent inspections where there are significant concerns about a provider.

Any graded inspections carried out in the summer term will maintain the four key Education Inspection Framework (EIF) judgements, but with extra flexibility in recognition of current contexts.

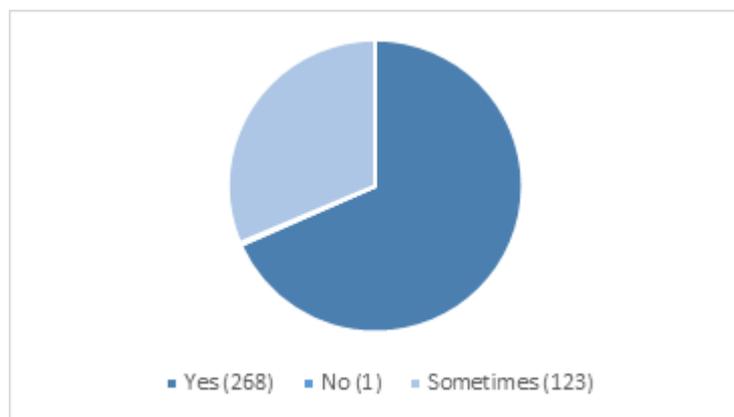
All inspection activity will typically be on-site. Before the inspection, providers and inspectors will agree safety measures to ensure the inspection is Covid-19 secure. Inspectors will also take a lateral flow test before arriving at the setting.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/education-inspection-framework>

Early Years Bulletin – Consultation Feedback

Thank you for completing the Early Years Bulletin consultation questions as part of your weekly Attendance Data return; the information provided will be used to guide the team over the coming months. As summary of the responses can be found below.

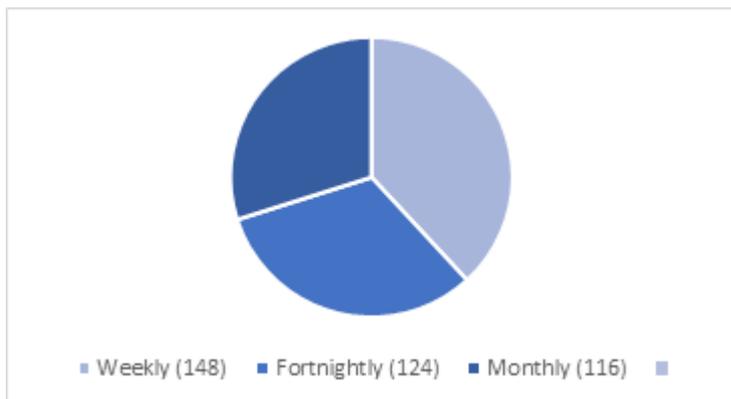
1. Do you find the Early Years Bulletin useful?



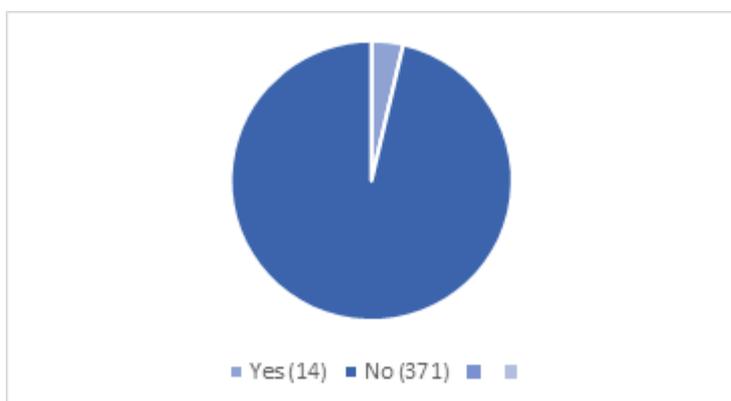
2. What would make the Early Years Bulletin more useful for you?

There were 47 suggestions to make the Bulletin more useful; these will be considered for the future. A common suggestion was for a Childminder specific Bulletin to be developed; if there are any childminders who would like to volunteer to take the lead on this, please email EYCC@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk and let us know.

3. How frequently would you prefer to receive the Early Years Bulletin?



4. Are there any particular subject areas that you would like to see articles on, that are not currently included within the Early Years Bulletins?



The settings that stated 'yes' suggested articles on the following subjects, which will be used to guide us in the coming months:

- Ofsted guidance
- New EYFS
- Early Help guidance
- Number of EY's Covid closures within Worcestershire
- Sufficiency information
- The purpose of the weekly attendance data collection
- Information about training; how to access training, who to contact, what is available
- Contact details for the Early Years Team
- Contact details for the Inclusion Team and any SEND specialists available to support within Early Years.

Thank you again for taking the time to complete the questions and providing valuable feedback for the Early Years Team. Please remember that we always value contributions from settings. If you would like to contribute an article that you feel would be valuable for the Early Years sector, please email it to EYCC@worschildrenfirst.org.uk.

Practice

Exploring the Key Principles of Effective Assessment

The new EYFS has highlighted the importance of reducing the amount of evidence we collect for assessment purposes so that more time can be spent in meaningful engagement with children.

Assessment processes within the EYFS can, if we're not careful, be a bit of a minefield. As with many things, the extremes are to be avoided. At one end of the spectrum, too many recorded observations can leave us swamped by information that may not be useful, at the other, a simple tick sheet won't enable us to convey the complexities and subtle nuances of child development. So, where do we start? Well, if you are looking to improve the processes for effective assessment within your setting, there are some key questions to consider.

What Information Is Useful?

For assessment processes to be effective, all staff will need to have a clear understanding of what information is useful. First, we need to consider what underpins the effectiveness of the learning process. Staff teams will need to observe children's levels of wellbeing, involvement and the characteristics of effective learning as part of building a holistic picture of each child. It will be crucial here, to gain an in depth understanding of each child as a learner- what motivates and drives their learning, what patterns emerge in their play and in what context do they learn best? Building effective relationships with parents in order that they may contribute to this holistic picture is always valuable.

Next, adults will need to build a clear idea of what significant learning looks like for each child in relation to both the prime and specific areas of learning. A shared understanding of this across the team will be crucial in ensuring effective adult interactions and responses to learning. In terms of assessment processes, consistent staff knowledge about individual children will also prevent time consuming duplication of information.

How will we find out this information?

The EYFS team will need to develop their knowledge of the children in the setting through careful observation and skilful interaction. The focus here needs to be on engaging with the children in a variety of contexts, supporting their learning as appropriate and building strong relationships. It is important to be clear that observational assessment does not mean that all information needs to be recorded.

An over reliance on recording and photographing will often distract staff from focussing on the learning that is taking place and how best to support each child. Staff who engage with children, rather than focussing on gathering written observations, tend to develop a more detailed picture of each child as a learner.

Working in this way requires highly skilled, knowledgeable staff with a clear understanding of key developmental milestones. Staff training and moderation across the EYFS team will be required to support all staff in making accurate and consistent judgements.

How will we use this information?

It is crucial that observational assessment is seen as the beginning, not the end of the assessment process. For assessment to be effective, it needs to be seen as part of a cycle which links it to the planning process. This cycle begins with observation and interaction. Staff will then need to discuss and analyse what has been observed. These discussions should then inform what is needed next, such as the planning of enhancements, adult interactions and further support.

To support children's progress and development effectively, the staff team will need a clear understanding, not just of the developmental stages shown in Development Matters but of each incremental step towards these milestones and what they might look like in practice. Building the team's understanding of child development to achieve this is crucial. As Cathy Nutbrown puts it: "It is easy to only observe what we want to see and assess only what we understand"

Does the information that we gain help us to shape our practice, clearly show progress and identify needs?

As we build this picture of children's development within the setting, it is crucial that we collate this information in order that we can see the bigger picture. Senior leaders will need to be able to strategically view and analyse the progress of groups of children, identifying patterns and trends.

For example, if, on entry, children are generally thought to be below age-related expectations in the development of language, then do we have systems in place to show the progress that they have made in this area?

Does the information that we gain enable us to make informed judgements about the impact of our practice, what has worked and what needs to be developed further?

As we do look strategically at the information relating to each of the children, it is vital that we are able to pinpoint where the specific needs of our children lie. To be able to do this, we need to be able to consider the importance of age-related information.

Children born within the same year, or starting nursery or school at the same time, will still be at very different stages relating to their different ages. Whilst the younger children within any year group will generally be at an earlier stage of development, this does not necessarily mean that they are below where we might expect for their age. Identifying which children, according to their age in months, are at an expected point of development and which children need further support will be key if we are to tailor our practice effectively according to their needs.

So, lots to consider here, not just about observational assessment but how we analyse and use the knowledge our teachers and practitioners develop through building relationships with their children.

Best regards,



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Early Years Team

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Early Years Inclusion Team

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