Evaluating Achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

January 2015 Updated Guidance for Schools

Herts for Learning Early Years and Assessment Teams

To be read in conjunction with:

- Ofsted School Inspection Handbook, January 2015 (ref. no. 120101)
- Statutory Framework for the EYFS, September 2014
- DfE Early Years Outcomes, September 2013 (EY Outcomes)
- Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage (Early Education, 2012)
- EYFSP Handbook 2015, STA

(All of the above documents can be found online.)

As with other key stages, the evaluation of the achievement of an individual child or a cohort in EYFS is based on consideration of their attainment and progress.

Attainment can be evaluated in relation to ‘typical development age bands’ as described in the DfE Early Years Outcomes. This document supports ongoing assessment of pupils in the EYFS. The Early Years Outcomes document includes age-band descriptors for 0-11 months, 8-20 months, 16-26 months, 22-36 months, 30-50 months and 40-60+ months. (The descriptors are the same as the unique child statements in Development Matters. This document provides non-statutory practice guidance which is still valid.)

At the end of the Reception year summative judgements must be made using the statutory EYFS Profile (EYFSP). These attainment outcomes are submitted to the DfE via the local authority (LA) to compile the national data against which schools are benchmarked.

Assessing Pupils’ Attainment in the EYFS

When describing attainment it is helpful to consider three steps within each of the Early Years Outcomes typical development age-bands. In Hertfordshire we describe these steps as entering into the band, developing within the band, and securing the band.

We advise practitioners to consider:

- Is the child demonstrating a few / some of the elements of an age-band (having shown competence in the previous age-band)? If so, this child is entering that age-band.

- Is the child demonstrating many of the elements of an age-band? If so, this child is developing within that age-band.

- Is the child demonstrating most of the elements of an age-band? If so, this child is securing that age-band.

It must be remembered that the statements within the age-bands are not hierarchical. There is no set order or pattern in which children attain the outcomes. Children might sometimes be showing elements across different age-bands. ‘Best fit’ principles should be applied to make the judgement about whether a child is showing typical development for their age, may be at risk of delay or is ahead for her/his age (Ref: Early Years Outcomes, p3).
Attainment on Entry in the EYFS

At the time of writing, there is no national data set for attainment on entry to nursery or reception classes and no single prescribed method of assessing children when they start school. A child’s starting point should be benchmarked against the Early Years Outcomes which describe the ‘typical development’ for children at each age. Reception baseline testing will be introduced in September 2016 (and piloted in September 2015 in some local authorities). The DfE will issue a list of approved tests in due course.

School leaders must be able to explain how they measure children’s starting points and the proportions of children that demonstrate development that is typical for their age on entry.

The ‘typical’ EY Outcomes age-band on entry for:

- **Nursery** will be *30-50 months*
- **Reception** will be *40-60 months*

It is essential to capture an accurate baseline of individual children’s attainment as early as possible to inform planning to maximise learning. In Hertfordshire we advise that, during the first two to three weeks from the child’s point of entry, practitioners should immerse themselves in working, playing and interacting with the children so that they recognise their learning and development. Using this professional understanding of the child and taking into account information from the home and/or previous providers, practitioners will be well placed to make initial judgements of the child’s attainment on entry (AoE) in relation to the bands and steps explained above.

Schools should have clear systems to:

- Make an assessment of children’s starting points (baseline)
- Plan next steps (individual targets) that challenge children sufficiently
- Track the progress of individuals, groups of children and cohorts across the EYFS and into KS1
- Identify how much progress is made by individuals as well as groups of children and the cohort

Assessing Individual Pupil Progress in the EYFS

Progress is measured from the child’s individual starting points across the seven areas of learning.

The typical expected journey for most children will be:

- **Entry to Nursery** - 30-50 entering
- **Exit Nursery** (June-July) - 30-50 securing / 40-60 entering (taking into account age and time in school)
- **Entry to Reception** (September) - 40-60 entering
- **Exit Reception** - EYFSP Early Learning Goals at Expected level (reference Ofsted School Inspection Handbook page 67, paragraph 198)

It is expected that most children at the end of EYFS will attain a good level of development (GLD) which means they will have attained at least the expected level in all the early learning goals in Communication and Language, Physical Development, Personal Social Emotional Development, Mathematics and Literacy. They will have developed the key skills needed to make a good start in the next stage of their education.

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Individual progress must always be measured from the child’s starting point.

- It is possible that a child with high attainment may not have made the expected amount of progress. For example a child who starts at a higher level of development and meets all the ELGs but exceeds none of them is unlikely to have made enough progress.

- A child may have made good progress whilst their development is still typical of a lower band than expected for their age.

- A child starting at a lower level of development and meeting all the ELGs may be said to have made rapid progress.

(Ref: Ofsted School Inspection Handbook page 67, paragraph 198)

Progress can be quantified in steps. Progress from ‘entering’ to ‘developing’ is one ‘step’, and similarly, progress from ‘developing’ to ‘securing’ and from ‘securing’ to ‘entering’. Expected progress is one step per term and typical progress is three steps across three terms. For children who have had only two terms in a Nursery class, two steps would be considered typical. Across Reception, it is expected that children make three steps of progress over three terms.

Where attainment on entry is below age related expectation, practitioners must aim for accelerated progress from the child’s starting point to close the gap between their learning and development and that of the rest.

**Assessing Cohort Progress in the EYFS**

School leaders must:

- consider the proportions that have made typical or better progress taking account of point of entry and the length of time children have been at the school

- consider the achievement of different groups especially those who are vulnerable to underachievement, including those for whom the school receives additional funding

**Progress measures from the end of Reception**

The judgements about children’s attainment at the end of Reception will form the baseline against which progress across Key Stage 1 is measured. ‘Expected progress’ across Key Stage 1 is as follows:

- Children who achieved the Early Learning Goal (at the ‘Expected’ level) would be expected to reach the age-related expectation at the end of Key Stage 1. (The DfE will be producing finalised KS1 Performance Descriptors for KS1 in due course, which will set out the age-related expectation standard. For schools using the HfL assessment system, A5 represents the age-related expectation at the end of Year 2. In the HfL system, progress from ELG to A5 is 6 steps.)

- Children who exceeded the Early Learning Goal would be expected to be working beyond the age-related expectation at the end of Key Stage 1. (Again, DfE Performance Descriptors will set out these expectations. In the HfL system, we would advise that attainment exceeding the ELG should be recorded in AM7 as A0 at the
end of Reception. Attainment that exceeds the age-related expectation at the end of Year 2 is recorded as A6. Progress from A0 to A6 is 6 steps.)

- For children who did not achieve the ELG, we would advise practitioners to agree an Early Years Outcomes ‘step’ (e.g. 40-60D) to best represent their level of attainment. Progress across KS1 will then be measured from that step. Using the HfL system, expected progress would be 6 steps from that starting point – although teachers would be encouraged to try to accelerate the progress of children who were below the ELG at the end of Reception so that they can achieve the age-related expectation by the end of year 2 if possible.

Overall judgements about progress across Key Stage 1 depend upon the proportions of children making or exceeding the expected rate of progress, backed up by the qualitative evidence of children’s written work.

**On what basis might you evaluate EYFS cohort achievement as ‘Good’ or ‘Outstanding’?**

The Ofsted School Inspection Handbook provides the following descriptors:

**Outstanding** (effectiveness of EY provision: quality and standards):

- Children make consistently high rates of progress in relation to their starting points and are extremely well prepared academically, socially and emotionally for the next stage of their education. As a result, almost all pupils in the early years provision, including disabled children, those who have special educational needs, those for whom the school receives additional funding and the most able, are making sustained progress that leads to outstanding achievement.
- Gaps between the attainment of groups of children and all children nationally, including those for whom the school receives additional funding, have closed or are closing rapidly. Any gaps between areas of learning are closing.

**Good** (effectiveness of EY provision: quality and standards):

- Children make at least typical progress and most children make good progress from their starting points. This includes disabled children, those who have special educational needs, those for whom the school receives additional funding and the most able, who make good progress relative to their starting points. They develop the key skills needed to make a good start in the next stage of their education.
- Children who join the school at a level below what is typical for their age, but not significantly so, catch up quickly. Any gaps between the attainment of groups, including those for whom the school receives additional funding, and all children nationally are closing.

_NB: These judgements cannot be made purely from the data – they need to be backed up with what can be seen in the classroom. If a school claims that achievement is good, but classroom observations and scrutiny of assessment and evidence of learning reveal that progress made by children in the classroom requires improvement, the judgement based on the data is unlikely to be upheld._

This guidance will be continually reviewed in response to national guidance (DfE / STA) and feedback from Ofsted.