This document is accompanied by a set of tools and templates.

Purpose of this guidance:

- to help you monitor the quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage in your school
- to support your understanding of the statutory requirements for the Early Years Foundation Stage
- to support improvements in progress and outcomes for all children in the Foundation Stage through effective action planning

Contents:

- Introduction
- Factors for effective leadership to support high quality practice and provision in the early years
- Essential key documents
- EYFS pedagogy and implications for monitoring teaching and learning
- The monitoring process
- Overview of steps for Foundation Stage action planning in Primary Schools
- EYFS action planning
- Methods and tools for monitoring quality in Foundation Years
- Books / websites

Introduction

This document can be used to guide strategic, structured monitoring of the Foundation Stage by Headteachers and Early Years Governors. It is intended as an initial guide in those circumstances where leadership and management have yet to create a thorough, systematic structure for such monitoring.
To explore this area more deeply you can refer to ‘Achieving excellence in the early years: a guide for headteachers’ published by Early Education.

The Ofsted School inspection (section 5) handbook – Leadership and Management section states:

“[The leadership and management judgement] focuses on the areas where inspection and research indicate that leaders and managers can have the strongest effect on the quality of the education provided by the school…including the extent to which leaders focus their attention on the education provided by the school. There are many demands on leaders, but a greater focus on this area is associated with better outcomes for pupils”

Thus, an intentional and structured focus on the quality of education provided in the Foundation Stage will lead to better outcomes for pupils and provide a strong basis for learning through subsequent key stages.

Factors for effective leadership to support high quality practice and provision in the early years:

- The Headteacher and EY Governor are knowledgeable and confident about Foundation Stage pedagogy and the statutory requirements of the EYFS
- The Headteacher and EY Governor work with the Early Years Foundation Stage Coordinator in shared leadership
- The Headteacher and EY Governor have appropriate and effective monitoring systems for the EYFS and work with the EYFS Coordinator to ensure high quality practice and provision
- The Headteacher and EY Governor encourage and support the ongoing professional development of the Foundation Stage staff
- School Subject Leads are knowledgeable and confident about Foundation Stage pedagogy in their area of specialism

Essential key documents:

Ensure all relevant personnel (including EY Governor) have the essential key documents.

- Current Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage (published March 2017) (there will be a new EYFS from Sept 21)
- Current Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage (non-statutory guidance) (there will be new non-statutory guidance from Sept 21)
- Ofsted School inspection handbook (Section 5) (see ‘quality of the early years’ section)
EYFS Pedagogy and implications for monitoring teaching

The EYFS has 4 themes (see the Statutory Framework and the non-statutory guidance for more detail about the principles that inform these themes):

- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Learning and Development

Monitoring of quality should consider all 4 themes.

There is a distinct pedagogy in this key stage which is based on learning through play and exploration: this includes a balance of **adult-led** and **child-led learning**. This must be understood in order to observe and reflect on the teaching and learning, and to make a judgement about strengths and aspects for improvement. For more information refer to ‘Achieving excellence in the early years: a guide for headteachers’ and the essential key documents, and OCC Bitesize CPD. The following is a simplified explanation.

**Child-led** learning is as important as **adult-led** since this is where children are given the chance to have their own goals in mind, to have autonomy over where they take an activity and to develop essential skills for being a learner – creativity, problem solving, persistence etc (see The Characteristics of Effective Learning in the EYFS).

In these two types of learning the leader of the learning switches, but adult and child have a role to play in both.

In **adult-led** (or adult-focused) the practitioner has decided the activity or the session, has a learning objective in mind, leads the child (teaches) to that objective and assesses the learning outcome.

In **child-led** (or child-initiated) the child can access resources and learning spaces (continuous provision), takes the lead themselves, chooses where they take the experience and it is now the adult who is led by the child. In being led by the child, the adult may provide support in the form of new vocabulary, additional resources, offer ideas if required, but does not steer or hijack the play with their own learning objective in mind.

In addition, **adult-initiated** learning occurs when an activity is set-up by the adult, and often modelled. This may be related to a topic, story or interest, for instance, and can help children to make links with their previous learning. Children choose whether to engage in the activity. They may work independently although specific children can be directed to the activity.
Therefore, the ‘teaching’ in Foundation Stage is not always apparent as traditional ‘lessons’.

The ‘teachers’ in Foundation Stage will include all staff in the Early Years Team.

The teaching takes place both indoors and outdoors therefore the quality of teaching in both environments should be monitored.

Looking for **quality teaching** includes looking for **quality interactions** particularly in child-led and adult-initiated learning. Observations of teaching shouldn’t be limited to only adult-led ‘lessons’ – plan times to observe teaching across all three types of teaching and learning.

Ofsted provide a definition of Early Years teaching as follows (see Ofsted School inspection handbook (Section 5)):

**Teaching should not be taken to imply a ‘top down’ or formal way of working.**

*It is a broad term that covers the many different ways in which adults help young children learn.*

*It includes their interactions with children during planned and child-initiated play and activities, communicating and modelling language, showing, explaining, demonstrating, exploring ideas, encouraging, questioning, recalling, providing a narrative for what they are doing, facilitating and setting challenges.*

*It takes account of the equipment that adults provide, and the attention given to the physical environment, as well as the structure and routines of the day that establish expectations.*

*Integral to teaching is how practitioners assess what children know, understand and can do, as well as taking account of their interests and dispositions to learn (characteristics of effective learning), and how practitioners use this information to plan children’s next steps in learning and to monitor their progress.*
There are tools to help you capture these elements of Early Years teaching when monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in your Foundation Stage (see table of monitoring methods and tools below)

**The action planning and monitoring process**

See ‘Guidance for developing EYFS Action Plans’ which includes templates.

The flow chart on the next page supports a process of auditing and action planning for Foundation Stage to help you:

1. audit and gather information about your Foundation Stage practice and provision
2. build an EYFS Action Plan linked to your SEF and School Development Plan
Overview of steps for Foundation Stage action planning in Primary Schools

**Steps**

1. **Use the OCC EYFS audit (known as Musts audit) to assess and record how you meet the statutory requirements of the EYFS in your school** *(audit)*

2. **Place actions created from the audit onto an EYFS Action Plan** *(or section within the whole school development plan)* *(see action plan templates)*

3. **Use the Ofsted Inspection Framework Handbook**, especially the outcome grade descriptors for early years, to capture what is in place and what additional actions need to be added to the action plan *(see grade descriptor grid)*

**Notes**

- Head Teacher should always be involved
- Depending on your context, the audit may be completed by HT/EYFSCo.
- In time, all FS staff should feed into this audit
- Repeat/review audit annually, ideally before the start of each academic year

- The EYFS is a distinct key stage with separate Statutory Requirements – therefore EYFS specific action planning supports the development and maintenance of high-quality practice and provision

- The [School inspection handbook](#) should be used, and leaders should be familiar with the early years sections
Methods and tools for monitoring quality in Foundation Years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of monitoring</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Possible tools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statutory delivery of the EYFS</td>
<td>EYFS Audit</td>
<td>OCC EYFS Audit (‘Musts’ audit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching and Learning</td>
<td>Observations of practice / teaching (adult led, adult initiated, and child led)</td>
<td>Adult-led staff practice observation template, Child-led staff practice observation template</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 7 Areas of Learning and Development (the educational programmes)</td>
<td>The Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning</td>
<td>Data Assessment (formative and summative) Tracking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Data analysis (including specific groups) • Pupil progress meetings • Year 1 Phonics screening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Working with EY Governors to monitor and support Foundation Stage**

In order to support the Head Teacher in the monitoring of quality in the Foundation Stage the EY Governor should:

- be knowledgeable about the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (see essential documents above)
- be aware of the quality of teaching and learning in the early years (see tools above)
- gain an overview of the EY cohort and their progress through discussions with the EYFS coordinator
- be familiar with the Early Years Action plan and key priorities
- work with the Headteacher in using the monitoring tools linked in this document

**Books / websites:**

- See Oxfordshire early years website for short [bitesize Early Years CPD](#)
- See [OCC EY free toolkit](#)
- For further support see the [Early Years Support Packages](#)
- Interacting or Interfering? Improving interactions in the Early Years by Julie Fisher (2016)
- Learning, Playing and Interacting - Good practice in the Early Years Foundation Stage
  Department for Children, Schools and Families 2009 (Archived National Strategy Document)

- Challenging practice to further improve learning, playing and interacting in the Early Years
  Foundation Stage Department for Children, Schools and Families 2010 (Archived National
  Strategy Document)

- A balancing act - teaching and play, no one way - A short video from Ofsted

The value of this document

We would be very grateful if you could let us know which elements of this document have been
useful to you and the impact of taking action based on this document. Please use the table
below and send to us at Early.Years@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

| Feedback for ‘OCC Early Years Foundation Stage Strategic Leadership Guidance for
  Head Teachers’ |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>School:</strong> Head Teacher: Date:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Element of the document</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why was it useful?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What difference has it made?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>