



Department
for Education

Early years foundation stage profile

2021 handbook

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Section 1. Introduction

This publication provides guidance to local authorities and early years providers from the Standards and Testing Agency (STA), an executive agency of the Department for Education (DfE), which is responsible for ensuring early years foundation stage (EYFS) profile outcomes are reliable as a result of moderation.

The handbook does not apply to schools participating in the EYFS profile early adopter year in 2020/21. These schools should follow the [Early adopter schools: EYFS profile handbook](#)¹ instead. Children in schools taking part in the EYFS profile early adopter year are exempt from the arrangements set out in this handbook. The [EYFS reforms](#)² will become statutory for all early years providers from September 2021. The 2022 EYFS profile handbook will be modified substantially to reflect the new approach to moderation.

It has been produced to help practitioners make accurate judgements about each child's attainment at the end of the EYFS and for local authorities (LAs) when exercising their function under the EYFS (Learning and Development Requirements) Order 2007, Article 4(2).

This guidance is for:

- early years and key stage 1 (KS1) practitioners
- headteachers and managers
- local authorities

1.1 Overview

The EYFS profile summarises and describes children's learning and development at the end of the EYFS. It gives:

- the child's outcomes in relation to the 17 early learning goal (ELG) descriptors
- a short narrative describing the child's 3 characteristics of effective learning

Practitioners' assessments are primarily based on observing a child's daily activities and events. In particular, practitioners should note the learning that a child demonstrates spontaneously, independently and consistently in a range of contexts.

¹ www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-adopter-schools-eyfs-profile-handbook

² www.gov.uk/government/consultations/early-years-foundation-stage-reforms

Accurate assessment takes into account a range of perspectives. This should include those of the child, parents and other adults who have significant interactions with the child. The term 'parent' is defined in section 12.

The government does not prescribe how ongoing assessment should be undertaken. The EYFS profile is not intended to be used for ongoing assessment or for entry-level assessment for early years settings or reception classes. Ongoing assessment (also known as formative assessment) is an integral part of the learning and development process. It involves practitioners observing children to understand their level of attainment, interests and learning styles, and to then shape learning experiences for each child reflecting those observations.

Practitioners

This handbook is to support practitioners in making accurate judgements about each child's development at the end of the EYFS. The handbook may be used alongside the EYFS profile [exemplification materials](#)³.

Together, the handbook and exemplification can help practitioners make effective moderation judgements so that EYFS profile outcomes are accurate and consistent across all settings (as defined in section 12).

Local authorities

All English LAs must refer to this handbook, and any other guidance we produce, when exercising their function under the EYFS (Learning and Development Requirements) Order 2007, Article 4 (2). The learning and development requirements are given legal force by an Order made under Section 39(1) (a) of the Childcare Act 2006. This can be viewed on the government's [legislation archive](#)⁴.

1.2 Statutory information

Practitioners and LAs involved in delivering the EYFS should be aware of, and refer to, the following information:

The Childcare Act Section 39(1) (a) 2006

This stipulates that early years providers must ensure that their provision meets the learning and development requirements as specified in the EYFS (Learning and

³ www.gov.uk/government/publications/eyfs-profile-exemplification-materials

⁴ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukSI/2007/1772/article/3/made

Development Requirements) Order 2007 (amended in 2012). The act states that this order can specify the arrangements required for assessing children for the purpose of ascertaining what they have achieved in relation to the ELGs.

Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage

The [EYFS framework](#)⁵ sets the statutory standards for the development, learning and care of children from birth to age 5. The EYFS statutory framework sets the standards that all early years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. It promotes teaching and learning to ensure children’s ‘school readiness’ and gives children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life.

Assessment and reporting arrangements

The [2021 early years foundation stage: assessment and reporting arrangements \(ARA\)](#)⁶ gives statutory guidance on making and moderating EYFS profile assessments.

Funding for statutory moderation

Each LA receives funding from DfE in the form of a non-ring-fenced amount via the LA grants. LAs are responsible for dividing grants appropriately. STA does not hold information in relation to how much each LA is funded for their EYFS profile moderation activities.

1.3 Important dates for 2020/21

Date	Activity
Friday 18 December 2020	Deadline for LAs to confirm they have completed an internal plan detailing how they intend to meet statutory assessment duties
By the end of the spring term 2021	Settings informed by the LA if they are going to receive an external moderation visit.
1 – 25 June 2021	LA undertake moderation visits.
Friday 25 June 2021	The EYFS profile must be completed for each child and submitted to the LA no later than Friday 25 June.
30 July 2021	Deadline for LAs to return data to DfE.

⁵ www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2021-early-years-foundation-stage-assessment-and-reporting-arrangements-ara>

Section 2. EYFS profile: purposes, principles and processes

2.1 Purposes and main uses

The statutory EYFS framework requires the EYFS profile assessment to be carried out in the final term of the year in which a child reaches age 5, and no later than 25 June in that term.

The main purpose of the EYFS profile is to provide a reliable, valid and accurate assessment of individual children at the end of the EYFS.

The EYFS profile data is used to:

- inform parents about their child's development against the ELGs and the characteristics of their learning
- support a smooth transition to KS1 by informing the professional dialogue between EYFS and KS1 teachers
- help year 1 teachers plan an effective, responsive and appropriate curriculum that will meet the needs of all children

In addition, the EYFS profile provides an accurate national data set relating to levels of child development at the end of the EYFS. DfE uses this to monitor changes in levels of children's development and their readiness for the next phase of their education, both nationally and locally. DfE will not publish school level results in the published performance tables.

Settings should develop their own approach to assessment that meets the needs of their children, parents, staff and curriculum. Statutory practitioner assessment at the end of the EYFS is just one part of the broader assessments that practitioners make. There are 3 main forms of assessment in settings:

1. Day-to-day formative assessment – to inform teaching on an ongoing basis
2. In-setting summative assessment – to understand a child's performance at the end of a period of teaching
3. National statutory summative assessment – to understand a child's performance in relation to national expectations and comparisons

In the context of statutory teacher assessment (TA), it is a setting's own assessment policy that forms the basis of a practitioner's judgements about what children know and can do. This will provide the evidence upon which practitioners make a judgement against the ELGs as set out in the EYFS profile, which is designed to report an outcome at the end of the EYFS. Statutory TA, as one measure of child development, helps

teachers, practitioners and parents to understand broadly what a child can do in relation to national expectations.

2.2 Principles of EYFS profile assessments

Reliable and accurate assessment at the end of the EYFS is underpinned by the following principles:

- assessment is based primarily on the practitioner’s knowledge of the child – knowledge is gained predominantly from observation and interaction in a range of daily activities and events
- responsible pedagogy must be in place so that the provision enables each child to demonstrate their learning and development fully
- embedded learning is identified by assessing what a child can do consistently and independently in a range of everyday situations
- an effective assessment presents a holistic view of a child’s learning and development
- accurate assessments take account of contributions from a range of perspectives including the child, their parents and other relevant adults

Observational assessment

Practitioners can use observational assessment to understand children’s learning. Practitioners watch, listen and interact as children engage in everyday activities, events and experiences, and demonstrate their specific knowledge, skills and understanding.

Observational assessment is the most reliable way of building up an accurate picture of children’s development and learning. This is especially true where the attainment demonstrated is not dependent on overt adult support. Observational assessment is central to understanding what children really know and can do.

Some observations will be planned but some may be a spontaneous capture of an important moment. It is likely that observations of everyday activities will provide evidence of children’s development in more than one area of learning.

Observational assessment doesn’t need prolonged breaks from interaction with children, or excessive written recording. It is likely to be interwoven with high quality interactions or conversations in words or sign language with children about their activities and current interests.

Responsible pedagogy

Responsible pedagogy is evident when practitioners have a good understanding of how children develop and because of that can accurately assess the child when they demonstrate their learning and development. Responsible pedagogy enables each child

to demonstrate learning in the fullest sense. It depends on the use of assessment information to plan relevant and motivating learning experiences for each child. Effective assessment can only take place when children have the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding, learning and development in a range of contexts.

Children must have access to a rich learning environment where opportunities and conditions allow them to flourish in all aspects of their development. The learning environment should provide balance across the areas of learning. Integral to this is an ethos that:

- respects each child as an individual
- values children's efforts, interests and purposes as instrumental to successful learning

When practitioners are evaluating the effectiveness of their assessment processes they should consider:

- child development, both the biological and cultural aspects, and its impact on how learning may best be supported
- planning that ensures a relevant, motivating, flexible and interesting curriculum
- provision of an environment that truly enables successful learning by all children in their care
- the need for detailed understanding of the EYFS framework for assessment in order to gather accurate, reliable and meaningful information
- the importance of high quality adult interaction, which is sensitive and adaptive to the needs of individual children and capable of promoting learning
- organisational aspects of provision, resources, curriculum and people

Successful implementation of these aspects of pedagogy and provision will enable practitioners to make an accurate, reliable and consistent assessment of children's learning. This will inform planning for year 1.

Child-initiated activity

Children with effective learning characteristics:

- are willing to have a go
- are involved and concentrating
- have their own ideas
- choose ways to do things
- find new ways of doing things
- enjoy achieving what they set out to do

To accurately assess these characteristics, practitioners need to observe learning that children have initiated rather than only focusing on what children do when prompted.

Children need rich opportunities to initiate ideas and activities so that they can develop the learning characteristics that are assessed by the EYFS profile. These characteristics also support lifelong learning.

Embedded learning and secure development

Children can demonstrate embedded learning and secure development without the need for overt adult support. Where learning is secure it is likely that children often initiate the use of that learning. Practitioners will make judgements by observing behaviour that a child demonstrates consistently and independently in a range of situations. Attainment in this context will assure practitioners of the child's confidence and ownership of the specific knowledge, skill or concept being assessed. Skilful interactions with adults and learning, which is supported by them, are necessary on the journey to embedding skills and knowledge.

Links in the area of learning

Areas of learning, and therefore the ELGs, are often interlinked. These may also be related to the characteristics of effective learning. If practitioners can see these links it will join up the assessment process. Practitioners will be able to capture each child's learning more effectively and genuinely.

Practitioners can also reflect on these links when they quality assure their assessment judgements. They must consider where the different aspects and levels of attainment make sense when they are put together.

Practitioner knowledge

Most evidence for EYFS profile judgements will come from practitioners observing a child's self-initiated activities. Adult-led activities can offer insight into children's attainment by making sure the child has the opportunity to demonstrate what they know, understand and can do.

Much practitioner knowledge of what children know and can do will be gathered from day-to-day interactions. This is not often formally recorded, however it:

- provides the basis for making judgements
- provides a focus for moderation dialogue
- informs future practice and provision

Contributions to the assessments

Accurate assessment will depend on contributions from a range of perspectives, including the child's. Practitioners should involve children fully in their own assessment by encouraging them to communicate about and review their own learning. Assessment

should build on the insights of all adults who have significant interactions with the child. Adults with different roles will be able to make different contributions.

Accurate assessment requires a two-way flow of information between settings and home. A review of a child's achievements should include those demonstrated at home. Assessments that do not include the parents' contribution give an incomplete picture of a child's learning and development. See section 12 for the definition of parent.

2.3 EYFS profile assessment processes

During the final year of the EYFS, practitioners must carry out ongoing (formative) assessment to support each child's learning and development. There is no requirement for how this is recorded or specifically when assessments take place. Practitioners should be mindful of their professional responsibility for the learning and development of children in their care and plan the provision needed to enable children to take the next steps in their learning.

When compiling the profile, practitioners must review the evidence gathered in order to make a judgement for each child and for each ELG. The judgement must say whether the child's learning and development is:

- best described by the level of development expected at the end of the EYFS ('expected')
- not yet at the level of development expected at the end of the EYFS ('emerging')
- beyond the level of development expected at the end of the EYFS ('exceeding')

Practitioners may refer to the exemplification materials. These illustrate the standard expected for each ELG at the end of the EYFS. If practitioners are confident in their judgements, there is no requirement to refer to the exemplification materials.

Practitioners must consider the whole of each ELG when making their decision. They must avoid splitting the descriptor into sections and 'ticking them off'. The most accurate picture of the child's overall embedded learning will come from a holistic view of the descriptor.

Judging whether to use the 'expected' category

If the ELG description best fits a practitioner's professional knowledge of the child, then their learning and development can be judged as 'expected'.

However, children do not necessarily achieve uniformly. Practitioners should judge whether the child's learning and development is the best fit for the ELG, taking into account their relative strengths and weaknesses. 'Best fit' doesn't mean that the child has equal mastery of all aspects of the ELG. Practitioners should look at the whole of each ELG description when making this summative judgement.

Practitioners should use the best-fit model to judge whether a child's learning and development is 'exceeding'. Practitioners will need to be confident that they have moved beyond the 'expected' level. When finalising judgements practitioners should:

- refer to the area of learning 'exceeding' descriptors, which form part of this handbook
- discuss with year 1 teachers whether a child is 'exceeding' in any ELG

2.4 Evidence and documentation of the EYFS profile

Over the course of the year, practitioners should build their knowledge of what each child knows and can do. This will help them to make an accurate end of year judgement. They are not required or expected to carry out other assessments in addition to the EYFS profile. Settings can record children's learning in any way that helps practitioners to support their learning and development and make accurate summative assessments.

Practitioners must make their final EYFS profile assessments based on all their evidence. 'Evidence' means any material, knowledge of the child, anecdotal incident or result of observation, or information from additional sources that supports the overall picture of a child's development.

Evidence should come from day-to-day activity in the classroom and can be drawn from a variety of sources. The type of evidence will vary from setting to setting, class to class, and even child to child. The form of evidence supporting a practitioner judgement is entirely up to the practitioner. Practitioners should avoid excessive evidence gathering.

There is no requirement that evidence should be formally recorded or documented. Practitioners should keep paperwork to the minimum needed to illustrate, support and recall their knowledge of the child's attainment.

A setting's assessment policy should outline when it is necessary to record evidence. In developing their policies, settings should consider how to minimise practitioner workload so they can focus their efforts on teaching.

When evidence does need to be recorded, this should follow the principles and recommendations outlined in the independent report: [Eliminating unnecessary workload associated with data management](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/511258/Eliminating-unnecessary-workload-associated-with-data-management.pdf)⁷.

⁷ www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/511258/Eliminating-unnecessary-workload-associated-with-data-management.pdf

Practitioners may include the following to support their judgements:

- knowledge of the child
- materials, which illustrate the child's learning journey, such as photographs
- observations of day-to-day interactions
- video, tape, audio or electronic recordings
- the child's view of his or her own learning
- information from parents or other relevant adults

An EYFS profile completed by a practitioner alone only offers a partial picture of a child's attainment. Practitioners must actively engage children, their parents and other adults who have significant interaction with the child in the assessment process.

Practitioners should use their professional knowledge, and the statutory EYFS framework, to judge whether a child's learning:

- meets the level expected at the end of the EYFS
- exceeds that level
- is best described as 'emerging'

Practitioners should also use the information in this handbook to help describe each child's characteristics of effective learning. Their judgements will be subject to moderation in order to ensure national consistency and accuracy.

2.5 Transition to year 1

Practitioners and year 1 teachers should work together to ensure that a child's transition between the EYFS and year 1 is seamless. Early years practitioners should make sure children's experiences in the final year of the EYFS are valuable in themselves, and prepare the ground for year 1. It is important that year 1 builds on the successful principles and approach encapsulated in the EYFS.

It is crucial that EYFS practitioners and year 1 teachers are given time to discuss and expand on the information presented in the EYFS profile. In particular, the characteristics of effective learning narratives will give teachers significant details about each child's learning and development. The narratives must feature in conversations between practitioners and teachers.

Practitioners may provide additional information about each child's attainment to help teachers plan an effective curriculum and make provision for all children. Decisions about this additional information should be made by each setting and reflect the characteristics and requirements of that setting. This will enable the year 1 teacher to have a fully rounded picture of the attainment of each child in order to plan the curriculum. Year 1 teachers should be involved in EYFS profile moderation so that they understand the judgements made by early years practitioners.

Section 3. Inclusion and the EYFS profile

3.1 Overview

The EYFS profile is an inclusive assessment, capable of capturing a wide range of children's learning and development outcomes. It may be challenging for practitioners to observe and assess some children. This challenge applies both to:

- understanding how some children might demonstrate attainment at the level expected at the end of the EYFS
- how to capture the attainment of children whose development is judged to be at the 'emerging' level

Practitioners must address this challenge in order for children's attainment to be accurately judged and recorded.

3.2 Taking account of the needs of individual children

Reaching accurate assessments using the EYFS profile requires practitioners to enable all children to reach their full potential. Consequently, practitioners must be alert to the general diversity of children's interests, needs and inclinations.

For instance, there may be children who are at an earlier stage of development than others in the cohort; some may have summer birthdays. These children may be highly active and more likely to demonstrate what they know, understand and can do in situations that are sympathetic to this inclination. This will often be outdoors.

Practitioners should reflect on their observations and ensure that the provision enables all children to demonstrate attainment in ways that are motivating to them. This should be regardless of their stage of development or interests, needs and inclinations.

3.3 Children with special educational needs and disability

Special educational needs and disability (SEND) includes physical, emotional, sensory and learning needs.

Settings will develop additional relationships with other professionals when working with children with SEND. It is vital that communication between all professionals and the child's parent (see section 12) is strong so that practitioners can get a clear picture of the child's learning and development.

Observational assessment (see section 2) is the most effective way of making judgements about all children's learning and development. P scales (1 - 4) and the pre-key stage standards should not be used for children in the EYFS. They are an

assessment tool designed for pupils at the end of KS1 and KS2 who are working below the overall standard of national curriculum assessments.

Depending on their special educational need, children will demonstrate learning and development in different ways. Practitioners observing a child involved in day-to-day activities must be alert to their demonstrating attainment in a variety of ways, including eye pointing, the use of symbols or signs. With the exception of ELG 03 Speaking, where the EYFS profile contains the word 'talks' or 'speaks', children can use their established or preferred mode of communication.

Children should use the adaptations they normally use to carry out their activities so that practitioners come to know all children at their most capable. Adaptations include:

- mobility aids
- magnification
- adapted ICT and equipment

If a child's learning and development doesn't yet meet the description of the level expected at the end of the EYFS for an individual ELG, practitioners should record the outcome as 'emerging'. They should also record details of any specific assessment and provision in place for the child.

This will be used in discussions with parents so that they have a clear understanding of their child's development and any additional support that will be offered. Settings should also use the details to support planning for future learning.

3.4 Children for whom English is not their home language

The EYFS profile assessment is underpinned by an understanding that language is central to our sense of identity and belonging to a community. The profile recognises and values linguistic diversity.

The communication skills of children for whom English is not their home language will vary. However, learning English as an additional language (EAL) is not a special educational need.

Children will be at different stages of learning English and one or more other languages. Practitioners need to find out as much as they can about a child's prior language experience and any education they have received elsewhere. Parents as the first educators are an important source of information.

Practitioners may need to help parents understand that a child's home language development will help them learn English. Parents also need to know that it is perfectly acceptable, even desirable, for the child's home language to be used in the setting.

Practitioners will need to observe the child over time and raise questions with the parents, and/or bilingual support assistants, to be confident about what the child knows and understands.

The 3 aspects specific to the assessment of children for whom English is not their home language are:

- development in their home language
- development across areas of learning, assessed through their home language
- development of English

Within the EYFS profile, the ELGs for communication and language, and for literacy, must be assessed in relation to the child's competency in English. The remaining ELGs may be assessed in the context of any language – including their home language and English.

This has implications for provision. The principles of good practice for children learning English are the principles of good practice for all children. Children must have opportunities to engage in activities and first-hand experiences that do not depend solely on English for success. They must be able to participate in ways that reveal what they know and can do in the security of their home language. For children to grow in confidence, and hence demonstrate their embedded learning:

- their environment must reflect their cultural and linguistic heritage
- their learning must be supported by a wide range of stimuli and experiences

3.5 Children from minority groups

The ethnicities of children within a setting can be diverse, particularly in urban settings. They may be refugees or asylum seekers, their families may have histories of persecution and trauma. Children may come from settled communities or travel frequently. They may have had a positive experience but their cultural conventions, for example governing behaviours or gender roles, may be different. Cultural background may also determine how early education is perceived. It may affect how much experience a child has had of school or other early years settings before their EYFS profile assessment.

Practitioners must take particular care to make sure the learning environment echoes children's positive experiences. They will be able to demonstrate their attainment best when opportunities such as role play, cookery, celebrations, visits to special places or events are linked to their cultural experience.

This will also be captured in the narrative relating to the 'Playing and exploring: using what they know in their play' characteristic of effective learning. This is where the child's ability to begin their play and exploration with things that are familiar to them is expressly

considered. The narrative also considers how well the child builds new knowledge and learning from this starting point.

A practitioner's relationship with parents is crucial to developing knowledge of the child and the practitioner's ability to make an accurate assessment. Parents can help practitioners understand the values that explain their child's responses to the environment and social situations. A child will find it easier to express their feelings and feel confident in their learning if practitioners listen and respond in ways that show understanding.

3.6 Transition conversations for children with an outcome at the 'emerging' level

Where children have an outcome of 'emerging' for an ELG, it is likely that this will not provide full information about their learning and development at the end of the EYFS. Additional information should be considered alongside EYFS profile outcomes. This will ensure conversations between EYFS and year 1 staff are meaningful so that the child makes a successful transition.

An outcome of 'emerging' may mask a wide range of levels of learning and development. The detail behind this outcome is built up over a period of time through observation, interaction with the child and ongoing assessment. There are many sources of information about how children learn and develop, how this may be demonstrated, and how further learning and development might be supported. Practitioners do not need to use any specific source of information in this context.

Specialist professional guidance is available for many specific special educational needs and disabilities. Children with SEND may have records from professionals within and outside of the setting. These records should inform assessment and transition processes. Wherever possible, other professionals working with the child should be invited to contribute to transition conversations.

Settings should consider providing information in addition to the child's EYFS profile, to support their successful transition and ensure a smooth learning journey. Practitioners should think about what information could be useful for the child's new year 1 teacher before the summer term. This will allow processes to be built on a shared understanding and planned and implemented in good time. Decisions about what guidance might be used and what information might be shared should be made at a setting level. They should reflect local needs and circumstances.

Section 4. Completing the EYFS profile

NB: Arrangements for schools participating in the EYFS profile early adopter year are included in the [Early adopter schools: EYFS profile handbook](#)⁸.

4.1 Overview

Practitioners must complete an EYFS profile for each child. This assessment takes place in the summer term of the academic year when a child reaches 5 years old.

In accordance with the statutory EYFS framework, each child must be assessed against:

- the 17 ELGs
- the 3 characteristics of effective learning

The completed EYFS profile includes a short commentary on the child's skills and abilities in relation to the characteristics of effective learning.

4.2 Exceptions and exemptions

The EYFS profile should be completed during the summer term of the academic year in which a child reaches age 5 unless:

- the Secretary of State for Education has [granted an exemption](#)⁹ from the profile for the setting or an individual child
- the child is continuing in EYFS provision beyond the year in which they turn 5
- the child has attended the provision for an insufficient amount of time for the teacher to make an adequate assessment before the profile submission deadline
- the child has spent a lengthy period of time away from the setting, for example due to illness or medical treatment

Practitioners should refer to the EYFS ARA for information about what is required in these circumstances.

⁸ www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-adopter-schools-eyfs-profile-handbook

⁹ www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-early-years-foundation-stage-eyfs-learning-and-development-requirements-guidance-on-exemptions-for-early-years-providers

4.3 Making EYFS profile assessments

When assessing a child, practitioners will make judgements about his or her attainment and the nature of their learning characteristics by:

- taking into account evidence from a range of sources
- matching their view of a child's attainment to the national standard, and the guidance on characteristics of effective learning (see section 4.5)

For each ELG, practitioners must judge whether a child is:

- meeting the level of development expected at the end of the reception year (expected)
- exceeding this level (exceeding)
- not yet reaching this level (emerging)

Some children may have attended a range of settings during the final year of the EYFS. In these cases, the EYFS profile must be completed by the provider where the child spends the majority of their time between 8am and 6pm.

4.4 Recording children's attainment

Practitioners should record each child's level of development against the 17 ELGs as 'emerging', 'expected' or 'exceeding'. They must complete the profile with a brief commentary on the child's skills and abilities in relation to the 3 characteristics of effective learning outlined in section 4.5.

4.5 Characteristics of effective learning

The characteristics of effective learning describe factors that play a central role in a child's learning and in becoming an effective learner. They are vital elements of support for the transition process from EYFS to year 1. The characteristics of effective learning run through and underpin all 7 areas of learning and development. They represent processes rather than outcomes.

Information about the child's characteristics of effective learning gives year 1 teachers vital background and context about their next stage of development and future learning needs.

The EYFS profile commentary should consist of a brief paragraph explaining how the child demonstrates:

- playing and exploring
- active learning
- creating and thinking critically

Commentaries must reflect the practitioner's ongoing observation of the child within formative assessment processes. They should take account of all relevant records held by the setting and include information from the child, their parents (see section 12) and other relevant adults.

The characteristics of effective learning are described below. This handbook includes some possible lines of enquiry, which can be used when completing the commentary for each characteristic.

Playing and exploring – engagement

'Finding out and exploring' is concerned with the child's open-ended hands-on experiences, which result from innate curiosity. These experiences provide raw sensory material from which the child builds concepts, tests ideas and finds out.

'Using what they know in their play' describes how children use play to bring together their current understandings, combining, refining and exploring their ideas in imaginative ways. Representing experiences through imaginative play supports the development of narrative thought, the ability to see from other perspectives, and symbolic thinking.

'Being willing to have a go' refers to the child:

- finding an interest
- initiating activities
- seeking challenge
- having a 'can do' attitude
- being willing to take a risk in new experiences
- developing the view that failures are opportunities to learn

Active learning - motivation

'Being involved and concentrating' describes the intensity of attention that arises from children engaged in following a line of interest in their activities.

'Keeping on trying' refers to:

- the importance of persistence even in the face of challenge or difficulties
- an element of purposeful control which supports resilience

'Enjoying achieving what they set out to do' builds on the intrinsic motivation that supports long-term success. It refers to the reward of meeting one's own goals, rather than relying on the approval of others.

Creating and thinking critically

'Having their own ideas' covers the critical area of creativity – generating new ideas and approaches in all areas of endeavour. Being inventive allows children to find new problems as they seek challenge, and to explore ways of solving these.

'Using what they already know to learn new things' refers to the way children use narrative and scientific modes of thought to:

- develop and link concepts
- find meaning in sequence, cause and effect
- find meaning in the intentions of others

'Choosing ways to do things and finding new ways' involves children in:

- approaching goal-directed activity in organised ways
- making choices and decisions about how to approach tasks
- planning and monitoring what to do and being able to change strategies

4.6 Reporting the EYFS profile assessment

EYFS providers must give parents:

- a written summary of their child's attainment against the 17 ELGs
- a short commentary on how their child demonstrates the 3 characteristics of effective learning

Providers must give year 1 teachers:

- a copy of the child's EYFS profile
- a short commentary on how the child demonstrates the 3 characteristics of effective learning

Providers must report EYFS profile data (the 17 ELGs) to their LA for each child, upon request. The narrative on how a child demonstrates the 3 characteristics of effective learning should not be submitted.

If a child starts a new school or provider on the first day of the second half of the summer term (or any time after that) then the previous school should submit the data. If a child moves school or provider any time before the half term, then the new school should submit the data. Where half term dates differ between LA areas, it is the school or provider where a child attends (or will attend) for the longest period of time that submits the data. Providers should consider all available records of any formal or informal discussions with parents and others involved with the child during the previous year.

Reports should be specific to the child, concise and informative. They may include details from ongoing assessment and details from any other assessments appropriate to the individual child in order to help to identify the appropriate next steps in learning.

The EYFS ARA and the EYFS framework detail requirements around completion of the profile, and reporting and informing parents about their child's progress.

Section 5. Exemplification of EYFS profile

5.1 Exemplification materials

The exemplification materials may be referred to if guidance is required for the level of learning and development expected at the end of the EYFS. There are materials for each of the 17 ELGs of the EYFS profile.

The exemplification materials provide a point of reference for:

- practitioners to make accurate judgements for each child's attainment
- moderators to assess the accuracy of practitioner judgements
- year 1 teachers to use EYFS profile outcomes to plan effective provision
- other stakeholders who wish to evaluate children's learning and development

There is no prescribed method of gathering evidence as a foundation for EYFS profile judgements. The exemplification materials include a variety of evidence and forms of presentation to demonstrate some of the ways in which information may be gathered.

The materials include:

- 'one off' observations
- samples of children's work
- photographs
- contributions from parents

Practitioners will also build up a significant professional knowledge of each child. This will not be recorded but it must be considered when EYFS profile judgements are made.

5.2 Using the exemplification materials

Practitioners may use the exemplification materials to ensure their judgements are accurate and consistent by considering each child's learning and development in the light of:

- the area of learning
- the level of development expected at the end of EYFS for each ELG

It is important to understand that each set as a whole illustrates the 'expected' descriptor. The information illustrates the pitch and breadth of a particular 'expected' level of learning and development. No one piece of evidence meets the ELG as a standalone item.

Practitioners should always view exemplification materials in the context of a specific aspect of learning in order to retain an accurate focus. However, they should remember

that a child's learning and development are not compartmentalised; focusing on one aspect of learning will shed light on several other related areas.

LAs may refer to the exemplification materials if guidance is required when undertaking an external moderation visit.

Section 6. Early learning goals

The ELGs are listed below. A child can use their established or preferred mode of communication for all the ELGs except ELG 03 Speaking. In this case, practitioners should give additional detail about the child's understanding and preferred means of communication in their EYFS profile record.

6.1 Prime areas of learning and their associated ELGs

Communication and language development

This involves giving children opportunities to speak and listen in a range of situations and to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves.

ELG 01 Listening and attention:

- Children listen attentively in a range of situations
- They listen to stories, accurately anticipating key events and respond to what they hear with relevant comments, questions or actions
- They give their attention to what others say and respond appropriately, while engaged in another activity

ELG 02 Understanding:

- Children follow instructions involving several ideas or actions
- They answer 'how' and 'why' questions about their experiences and in response to stories or events

ELG 03 Speaking:

- Children express themselves effectively, showing awareness of listeners' needs
- They use past, present and future forms accurately when talking about events that have happened or are to happen in the future
- They develop their own narratives and explanations by connecting ideas or events

Physical development

This involves providing opportunities for children to be active and interactive, and to develop their co-ordination, control, and movement. Children must also be helped to understand the importance of physical activity, and to make healthy choices in relation to food.

ELG 04 Moving and handling:

- Children show good control and co-ordination in large and small movements
- They move confidently in a range of ways, safely negotiating space
- They handle equipment and tools effectively, including pencils for writing

ELG 05 Health and self-care:

- Children know the importance for good health of physical exercise and a healthy diet, and talk about ways to keep healthy and safe
- They manage their own basic hygiene and personal needs successfully, including dressing and going to the toilet independently

Personal, social and emotional development

This involves helping children to:

- develop a positive sense of themselves and others
- form positive relationships and develop respect for others
- develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings
- understand appropriate behaviour in groups
- have confidence in their own abilities

ELG 06 Self-confidence and self-awareness:

- Children are confident about trying new activities, and say why they like some activities more than others
- They are confident speaking in a familiar group, will talk about their ideas, and will choose the resources they need for their chosen activities
- They say when they do or do not need help

ELG 07 Managing feelings and behaviour:

- Children talk about how they and others show feelings, talk about their own and others' behaviour and its consequences, and know that some behaviour is unacceptable
- They work as part of a group or class, and understand and follow the rules
- They adjust their behaviour to different situations, and take changes of routine in their stride

ELG 08 Making relationships:

- Children play co-operatively, taking turns with others
- They take account of one another's ideas about how to organise their activity
- They show sensitivity to others' needs and feelings, and form positive relationships with adults and other children

6.2 Specific areas of learning and their associated ELGs

Literacy

This involves encouraging children to read and write, both through listening to others reading, and being encouraged to begin to read and write themselves. Children must be given access to a wide range of reading materials such as books, poems, and other written materials to ignite their interest.

ELG 09 Reading:

- Children read and understand simple sentences
- They use phonic knowledge to decode regular words and read them aloud accurately
- They also read some common irregular words
- They demonstrate understanding when talking with others about what they have read

ELG 10 Writing:

- Children use their phonic knowledge to write words in ways which match their spoken sounds
- They also write some irregular common words
- They write simple sentences which can be read by themselves and others. Some words are spelt correctly and others are phonetically plausible

Mathematics

This involves providing children with opportunities to:

- practise and improve their skills in counting numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems
- describe shapes, spaces, and measures

ELG 11 Numbers:

- Children count reliably with numbers from 1 to 20, place them in order and say which number is one more or one less than a given number
- Using quantities and objects, they add and subtract 2 single-digit numbers and count on or back to find the answer
- They solve problems, including doubling, halving and sharing

ELG 12 Shape, space and measures:

- Children use everyday language to talk about size, weight, capacity, position, distance, time and money to compare quantities and objects and to solve problems
- They recognise, create and describe patterns
- They explore characteristics of everyday objects and shapes and use mathematical language to describe them

Understanding of the world

This involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment.

ELG 13 People and communities:

- Children talk about past and present events in their own lives and in the lives of family members
- They know that other children do not always enjoy the same things, and are sensitive to this
- They know about similarities and differences between themselves and others, and among families, communities and traditions

ELG 14 The world:

- Children know about similarities and differences in relation to places, objects, materials and living things
- They talk about the features of their own immediate environment and how environments might vary from one another
- They make observations of animals and plants and explain why some things occur, and talk about changes

ELG 15 Technology:

- Children recognise that a range of technology is used in places such as homes and schools
- They select and use technology for particular purposes

Expressive arts and design

This involves supporting children to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials. It involves providing children with opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play, and design and technology.

ELG 16 Exploring and using media and materials:

- Children sing songs, make music and dance, and experiment with ways of changing them
- They safely use and explore a variety of materials, tools and techniques, experimenting with colour, design, texture, form and function

ELG 17 Being imaginative:

- Children use what they have learnt about media and materials in original ways, thinking about uses and purposes
- They represent their own ideas, thoughts and feelings through design and technology, art, music, dance, role-play and stories

Section 7. Specific EYFS profile training

STA expects LAs to offer training to all their early years providers completing the EYFS profile. The format and structure of this training can be agreed and arranged locally by each LA.

It is recommended that practitioners responsible for the completion of the EYFS profile attend LA training. Exemplification materials can be used to support this training with regard to the principles and processes of EYFS profile assessment and the accuracy of judgements.

Specific training, which includes agreement trialling, should be provided to ensure that EYFS profile assessments are in line with the requirements set out in the EYFS statutory framework.

STA expects LAs to have systems in place to follow up concerns raised by moderators during training, monitor attendance at training events and follow up non-attendance where appropriate.

Section 8. Moderation of the EYFS profile

Guidance on moderation of schools participating in the EYFS profile early adopter year is included in section 3.8 of the [Early adopter schools: EYFS profile handbook](#)¹⁰.

8.1 Purpose of moderation

Moderation allows teachers to benchmark judgements supporting consistency in the profile assessment process. There are various ways moderation can be approached and it is important to ensure this complements and does not undermine professional judgment of teachers. Moderation should not generate or require lots of evidence collection or excessive paperwork.

LAs are responsible for providing a robust moderation process so that practitioners' judgements are evaluated in line with statutory requirements.

Moderation of the EYFS profile helps:

- secure the consistency and accuracy of judgements made by different practitioners
- reassure practitioners that their judgements are accurate, valid and consistent with the national standards as set out in the EYFS framework
- assure moderators that an acceptable level of accuracy and validity has been achieved for assessments recorded and reported by the settings for which they have responsibility

LA moderation of the EYFS profile is a sampling process and unlike testing, it is not a method for checking each child's attainment. LA moderation visits consider practitioners' assessments and help support consistency.

Moderation involves both internal moderation activities and professional dialogue between moderators and practitioners. This ensures that:

- practitioners' judgements are comparable and consistent with national standards, as set out in the EYFS framework
- the assessment process is reliable, accurate and secure

¹⁰ www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-adopter-schools-eyfs-profile-handbook

8.2 Internal moderation

Moderation of EYFS profile assessments begins within each individual setting. It is supported by LAs or LA-approved agencies through a programme of visits and meetings.

Moderation should be a collaborative process with colleagues and undertaken throughout the year. This supports the quality assurance of TA judgements and provides a valuable opportunity for professional development.

Within each setting, practitioners can informally agree assessment judgements with others, for example discussing an observation about a child's development with a year 1 teacher.

Staff meetings or training days can be an opportunity for more formal agreement processes. For example, practitioners could discuss planned observations or the development of a group of children in relation to one of the ELGs. The focus for planned work should be clear and manageable. LA external moderators may support this work during visits or meetings.

8.3 Inter-school moderation

It is important for practitioners to build a shared understanding of the ELGs and the EYFS statutory framework. They should have opportunities to discuss their assessment of children's attainment with colleagues against the EYFS framework.

Settings should work together so that practitioners can share experiences and develop their assessment skills. Outcomes of discussions could be recorded and referenced during moderation visits.

8.4 Local authority moderation

LA moderation moderation is a collaborative process between LA moderators and the setting. Practitioners should consider moderation processes a positive part of their professional development. It offers the opportunity to discuss judgements on children's development against the requirements of the EYFS profile.

Statutory LA moderation helps settings quality assure their judgements. It is used to confirm that EYFS profile judgements are accurate and consistent with national standards, as stated in [The Early Years Foundation Stage \(Learning and Development Requirements\) Order 2007](#)¹¹.

¹¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2007/1772/contents/made

Anyone responsible for EYFS profile assessments in a setting or LA must comply with the following guidance to ensure that the LA moderation process results in valid and accurate judgements. It should be used alongside the EYFS Assessment and Reporting Arrangements (ARA).

In 2020/21, LAs should aim to moderate at least 25% of the providers not taking part in the EYFS reforms early adopter year. To avoid placing unnecessary burdens on providers by moderating them in consecutive years, LAs should consider when the provider's EYFS profile assessment was last moderated and whether there are any concerns that should prompt another moderation visit. This may mean that there are fewer providers for the LA to select from, potentially resulting in a ratio of less than 25%.

Local agreements

External moderation arrangements that are communicated to settings by LAs and that lie outside the statutory arrangements are by local agreement only and must be clearly stated as non-statutory. Local agreements are in addition to, and do not replace, statutory guidance.

Local agreements should be drawn up in consultation with, and with the agreement of, all stakeholders and revised annually. A local agreement should be signed by both LA and setting. Settings do not have to sign a local agreement and can instead ask the LA to follow the statutory moderation arrangements. All settings with a local agreement should have a written copy. Local moderation agreements should be collaborative, support professional judgement of practitioners and teachers and not create undue burdens such as excessive evidence collection.

8.5 Process

Carrying out moderation activity

LAs must inform settings by the end of the spring term that they are to receive an EYFS profile moderation visit. These settings will need to complete interim judgements against all the ELGs at the beginning of May for children in the final year of the EYFS. Individual settings can be added to the LA sample after this date, if particular issues arise.

LAs should not ask settings for children's data in advance of an external moderation visit.

In the majority of cases, STA would expect only one LA external moderator per visit. However, if the setting has a large cohort, or the LA external moderator is being quality assured, or if the visit forms part of moderator induction, there may be additional LA external moderators conducting the visit. The setting must be made aware of this in advance of the visit. LAs must give at least 2 working days' notice of an external moderation visit and let the school know who will be attending. No visit should involve any teachers or staff working outside of normal hours.

The moderation sample

Moderators must review a sample of completed EYFS profiles. In single-form entry schools, LAs will moderate 17 ELGs from one practitioner. The moderator selects 5 complete profiles across the range of attainment. These will form the basis of the moderation dialogue. They should ask to see profiles for 5 children whose development outcomes have been assessed as being in different bands of 'emerging', 'expected' and 'exceeding'

In a multi-form entry school, LAs should ensure that all 17 ELGs are moderated. They should consider at least one judgement at each of the 3 outcome levels from each practitioner within the sample, if each practitioner has judgements in each of the 3 levels.

They must establish whether practitioners have made an accurate judgement based on correct understanding of:

- what constitutes an appropriate outcome
- the thresholds between the outcomes

To confirm that a practitioner's judgement about a child's outcome is accurate, LA external moderators must hold a professional discussion with each EYFS practitioner and consider supporting information available.

LAs may refer to the EYFS exemplification materials if guidance is required when undertaking an external moderation visit.

There may be some overlap to confirm accuracy of judgements, for example ELG 02: Understanding may be scrutinised at 'expected' in one class and 'exceeding' in another.

Where some practitioners are released for only parts of the moderation visit, it may be helpful for one member of staff to be present for the whole of the visit.

If the LA moderator is not confident in a practitioner's judgements, they may increase the sample of completed profiles they look at. LA moderators must make sure they see enough profiles to be confident about the practitioner's accuracy. Following this, if the lack of evidence to support practitioner judgements is systemic, LA moderators must report this to STA as maladministration by contacting the national curriculum assessments helpline on 0300 303 3013.

8.6 In advance of a moderation visit

The best way for a setting to prepare for an external moderation visit is to have robust internal assessment processes, based on practitioners' knowledge of the children, understanding of the EYFS profile and collaboration with other settings.

Evidence of child development should be derived from normal classroom practice across the curriculum, meaning that evidence does not need to be created specifically for the purpose of moderation. LAs must not dictate what settings' evidence should look like or how it is presented for an external moderation visit.

LAs must:

- confirm arrangements to settings regarding the process, timings and location (if held at a venue other than the setting)
- ensure visits take place during school hours
- ensure that where external moderation takes place at a venue other than the setting, all statutory requirements for a setting visit are in place
- choose how many LA external moderators are appropriate for each visit, depending on the size of cohort, quality assurance, training processes and resources available and in line with the guidance in this document
- clearly communicate with the setting the number of LA external moderators that will be attending, who they are, and their role in the external moderation process (the setting must be aware of this at least 2 school days in advance of the meeting)
- ensure that any additional LA arrangements are communicated as non-statutory, in the form of a written local agreement
- ensure that the setting is aware of the LA appeals process

Settings must ensure that:

- EYFS profile judgements are available at external moderation, and that these have been subjected to internal moderation prior to an LA external moderation visit
- practitioners are able to discuss their judgements with moderators
- proportionate evidence drawn from learning activities, not created for moderation, is available to demonstrate children's development across the ELGs

8.7 The professional discussion

External moderation focuses on a professional dialogue between moderators and practitioners. It involves a suitably experienced and trained moderator, who is external and independent to the setting, quality assuring practitioners' judgements.

Professional discussion between the EYFS practitioner and external moderator allows the practitioner to articulate their understanding of the EYFS profile and talk through their judgements using proportionate evidence to support their decision. It should provide a shared understanding of how judgements have been reached. Information concerning the characteristics of effective learning is an integral part of the moderation dialogue.

LA external moderators will seek to confirm that:

- practitioners' judgements are consistent with national standards
- practitioners' assessments of children's attainment are reliable, accurate and secure

LA external moderators may judge that assessments are not in line with the exemplified standards. If so, they can require the provider to:

- arrange for the practitioner to take part in further training or moderation activities
- reconsider their assessments as advised by the LA external moderator

The EYFS ARA gives specific guidance about moderation measurements, including requirements for academies.

8.8 During a moderation visit

LA external moderators must:

- ensure that all individuals present at the external moderation visit are aware of each other's roles and responsibilities, especially when more than one LA external moderator is present
- ensure visits take place at an agreed time within the setting day, with practitioners released for parts of the duration of the visit as appropriate
- ensure that practitioners are familiar with STA guidance materials and moderators reference these where relevant during the moderation visit
- select 5 complete profiles across the range of attainment ('emerging', 'expected' and 'exceeding', where available) from the list of the EYFS profile interim outcomes provided by the practitioner to form the basis of the moderation dialogue
- ensure that the judgements moderated cover all 17 ELGs including judgements from all 3 attainment bands for each class, adjusting the size of the sample as appropriate to ensure that this can be achieved (for a single-form entry setting, the initial sample size is 5 pupils)
- ensure that within the constraints of the range of outcomes available, practitioner judgements for all 17 ELGs are moderated (the moderator is unlikely to scrutinise all 17 ELGs for all children in the sample, but will ensure that judgements are moderated from each of the 3 outcome bands – 'emerging', 'expected' and 'exceeding')
- hold a professional discussion with each EYFS practitioner to understand how the judgements have been reached
- establish whether practitioners' judgements are in line with national standards for each ELG
- ensure contributions from parents and the child are actively sought by practitioners and are used to inform the judgements made for the EYFS profile
- establish the accuracy and consistency of practitioner judgements by scrutinising evidence, the majority of which will come from the practitioner's knowledge of the

child and observations of the child's self-initiated activities (moderators must not scrutinise recorded evidence without the practitioner present)

- ensure that all practitioners in multi-form entry schools participate in the moderation dialogue
- consider outcomes of internal and cross-setting moderation within the moderation dialogue
- establish how settings develop and use internal moderation processes
- consider expanding the sample if there is concern about the accuracy of a judgement and evidence is not available to provide reassurance (in certain cases, the sample may be expanded to include the whole cohort)
- ensure that they directly refer to the LA's appeals process if any judgements have been amended

LAs may refer to the EYFS exemplification materials if guidance is required when reviewing evidence.

Settings must:

- ensure that the LA external moderators have a quiet area to conduct the external moderation visit
- ensure that EYFS practitioners are released for all, or part of, the visit for a professional discussion on the judgements
- ensure practitioners are able to engage in professional discussion with moderators and are able to cover each of the ELGs
- meet requests from the LA external moderators for samples of children's day-to-day classwork or any other evidence reasonably required if that evidence is available

Moderating children in the 'emerging' band

Where a practitioner's judgements are that the child is at an 'emerging' level of development, the moderation dialogue must reference both the description of the expected level of development (the ELG) and the child's previous development continuum. This is so the moderator can evaluate the practitioner's understanding and application of the threshold between an 'emerging' and 'expected' outcome. Evaluation must be applied on an individual ELG basis.

An outcome of 'emerging' may be clear-cut so that only a limited moderation dialogue is needed to establish the accuracy of a best-fit judgement. Alternatively, a child's specific circumstances may mean their development doesn't follow a linear path. Making a best-fit judgement about the child's level of learning and development may be both difficult and of limited meaning.

In these situations, discussion between a moderator and practitioner may be especially helpful. The moderation process should ensure that the characteristics of effective

learning narrative highlights aspects of the child's learning and development, which may be masked by the 17 ELG outcomes.

Children with special educational needs and disability

These children will be at the 'expected' or 'exceeding' level of development for some ELGs. However, they will be at an 'emerging' level for ELGs where their specific condition has an impact on their learning and development. Practitioners should provide additional detail to support the child's successful transition to year 1 and enable the year 1 teacher to plan an effective, responsive and appropriate curriculum.

If moderators consider this information within a moderation dialogue, it will strengthen the outcome of moderation. The dialogue should focus on the holistic picture of the child and the professional knowledge of the practitioner. This should also help develop a shared understanding of how the EYFS profile can be used to support successful transition for children with SEND.

Children whose outcomes are all 'emerging'

There will be children whose outcomes at the end of the EYFS are at the 'emerging' level for all ELGs. It is important that moderation of this pattern of outcomes is also a meaningful process.

Moderating children in the 'exceeding' band

Where a practitioner's judgements are that the child is at an 'exceeding' level of development, the moderation dialogue must reference the:

- description of the expected level of development (the ELG)
- area of learning 'exceeding' descriptors included in this handbook

The moderation process must be applied on an individual ELG basis, as children may be at an 'exceeding' level for some ELGs but at 'expected' for others.

8.9 End of a moderation visit

LA external moderators must:

- provide formal feedback to the headteacher, manager or a representative of the senior leadership team
- ensure that the setting is aware of the LA appeals process

They must provide the setting with the LA's completed record of the visit, which includes:

- the agreed, validated judgements for all moderated children

- any concerns that require further action by the setting or LA

The record of the visit must be signed by the headteacher or manager (or representative) and the LA external moderator.

At the end of the moderation visit, settings must:

- ensure that the headteacher, manager or representative is available to meet with the LA external moderator to receive formal feedback and to sign the written record of the visit
- ensure that any changes to practitioner judgements as a result of an external moderation visit are accurately reflected in their submitted data

8.10 Local authority responsibilities

LAs should aim to moderate at least 25% of the providers not taking part in the EYFS profile early adopter year (see section 8.4).

Article 4 (1) of The Early Years Foundation Stage (Learning and Development Requirements) Order 2007 requires local authorities to make provision to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the assessments and under 4 (2) have regard to any guidance given by the Secretary of State. The LA's role is to:

- recruit and train moderators with appropriate experience of the EYFS and the ELGs to secure consistent standards in assessment judgements
- regularly visit all providers as part of a cycle of moderation visits
- moderate EYFS profile assessment judgements
- notify providers about whether they are carrying out the EYFS profile assessment in accordance with requirements

LAs must:

- be accountable to STA (on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education) for delivery of their statutory duties in relation to external moderation of the EYFS profile
- have a named accountable LA officer who is strategically responsible for planning, implementing and quality assuring external moderation of the EYFS profile
- provide STA with the contact details for the accountable officer and external moderation manager and make sure STA is updated with any changes (if the roles are held by the same individual, details of a senior LA manager or director must be provided to STA)
- have a full internal plan that details how the LA will deliver its statutory duties for external moderation of the EYFS profile (the plan must address any concerns that arose from the 2019 external moderation process –
- base their sample of settings for external moderation on their local intelligence

- communicate details of the moderation process to all relevant stakeholders
- have a specific appeals procedure in relation to the moderation of EYFS profile judgements
- maintain an accurate record of external moderation visits, including the reasons for each visit

The LA should plan an annual programme to ensure that its statutory duty in relation to the moderation of the EYFS profile judgements is met.

If LA moderators choose to use a moderation model that is not reliant on moderation visits, they must be able to demonstrate that all the statutory elements of the moderation visit are protected. Any deviation, which does not have regard to our guidance, will be deemed as not meeting statutory requirements.

All 17 ELGs are moderated annually. Moderation should not focus on a specific area of learning or set of ELGs at the expense of others. By the end of the spring term, LAs must inform the providers selected that they will receive a visit, giving settings at least 2 schools days' notice of an external moderation visit, and letting the setting know who will be attending. Providers must be notified of whether the EYFS profile assessment is being carried out in accordance with requirements. Visits will take place in the summer term 2021.

All practitioners responsible for the completion of the EYFS profile who are not receiving a moderation visit should take part in training.

In addition to planned visits to all settings on a 4-year cycle, moderation visits or support may be triggered by:

- the presence of newly qualified teachers and practitioners new to the EYFS
- requests from the headteacher or manager
- a new senior leadership team
- Ofsted concern
- settings with an EYFS cohort for the first time
- concerns identified by the school improvement partner or LA personnel
- data anomalies
- unusual patterns of attainment
- the date and/or outcome of last external moderation visit
- non-attendance at training events
- concern relating to the 2018/19 assessment cycle, including maladministration

8.11 Recruitment of local authority moderators

In order to carry out its statutory role the LA external moderation team must have a thorough understanding and experience of the principles and practice of the EYFS profile and appropriate experience of the EYFS.

LAs must recruit an external moderation team with appropriate and recent experience of early years. They must also train and quality assure LA external moderators so that external moderation is delivered consistently and accurately against the EYFS profile, throughout the external moderation window.

LAs must ensure:

- the moderation team includes personnel with appropriate and recent EYFS experience
- moderators are recruited who have the appropriate skills and capabilities to carry out their role
- moderators are trained and participate regularly in LA moderation activities, using the EYFS framework to ensure consistency of national standards, which may include STA's exemplification materials
- there is an effective process for the recruitment of new moderators as appropriate
- moderators new to the role undertake a suitable induction process
- as part of their induction, newly appointed moderators have access to a mentor and opportunities to shadow a more experienced colleague
- their external moderators do not visit settings where they have a potential or perceived conflict of interest

All LA external moderators must be able to:

- systematically review evidence against the EYFS profile and adhere to STA guidance
- manage a professional discussion with teachers about children's development, and profile judgements
- where appropriate, discuss and explain why a setting's judgements cannot be validated
- provide accurate written and verbal feedback to practitioners and the headteacher or setting manager

LA moderators must have regard for moderation guidance produced by STA and exercise their powers and duties according to the guidance. This can be found in the 'Moderation' section of the EYFS ARA.

8.12 Appeals

LAs must have a specific appeals procedure in relation to the moderation of EYFS profile judgements, which after escalation within the LA includes a second external moderation visit or review by a different LA.

LAs must:

- make schools aware of the LA's appeals process prior to, and at the end of the visit
- ensure that LA external moderators directly refer to the LA's appeals process during the external moderation visit, if any judgements have been amended
- include details of an independent review by the LA and arrangements for a different LA to conduct either a second external moderation visit, or a review of evidence in their appeals process

Settings must provide evidence, which can include a practitioner describing their knowledge of the child, to the LA to support any appeal claim before it is processed. The evidence can only be based on that seen by the external moderator during the LA external moderation visit.

Section 9. Quality assurance of EYFS profile data

9.1 Overview

Settings and LAs must have quality assurance processes in place to ensure that the data submitted for each child is an accurate reflection of their development.

The EYFS profile is a statutory data collection. Each child's records are combined at setting, LA, and national level to produce a dataset that has national statistics status and informs a range of processes.

Practitioners, school managers, setting leaders and LAs are responsible for ensuring the quality, accuracy and reliability of data arising from EYFS profile assessment. They must ensure that data accurately reflects the development of each individual child.

EYFS profile data must be sufficiently reliable and accurate to meet the purposes described in this handbook. Quality assurance activities are in place to check this is the case.

These include:

- teachers and practitioners meeting within a school and between schools or settings, to develop a consistent understanding of ELGs
- external moderation visits organised by an LA
- LAs carrying out a quality assurance review of settings' data after it has been submitted

Quality assurance of EYFS profile data ensures that:

- the pattern of outcomes for an individual child makes sense in relation to wider knowledge of children's learning and development
- the resulting data is an accurate record of practitioner judgements

9.2 Pattern of outcomes for an individual child

LAs are responsible for providing a robust moderation process, which evaluates practitioners' judgements in line with statutory requirements. This process includes LA moderators considering the pattern of attainment for a sample of children during a moderation visit.

It is important that settings carry out a 'sense check' of outcomes for all children for whom they have made EYFS profile judgements. This helps to make sure parents and year 1 teachers are given an accurate picture of children's learning and development.

Consideration of any EYFS profile outcome must include:

- the judgements made against the ELG statement of the level of development expected at the end of the EYFS
- the narrative record of the child's characteristics of effective learning

Practitioners should use the information in the narrative to put patterns of EYFS profile outcomes into context and evaluate the accuracy of outcomes.

Any exploration of patterns of outcomes should take into account the contextual information for individual children that underpins accurate assessment. For example, practitioners should remember that children with specific educational needs and development may be assessed in relation to their ability to communicate without the need for speech.

LAs can use the statements set out in section 9.6 to support level-setting quality assurance processes.

9.3 Schools' and settings' responsibilities

Headteachers and managers

Headteachers or managers are responsible for submitting accurate, reliable and high quality EYFS profile data to their LA. To achieve this, headteachers or managers need to make sure that:

- staff understand their setting's systems for recording children's profile outcomes and submitting data to their LA
- practitioners clearly record EYFS profile information
- staff responsible for data collection and submission understand the nature of EYFS profile data
- data is transcribed from their setting's records to electronic records accurately
- entered data is checked against what was originally provided by the practitioner
- information that accompanies EYFS profile data is accurate, for example postcode and unique pupil number
- headteachers or managers themselves check and sign off data before it is submitted to their LA

Headteachers or managers should also be involved in quality assurance processes before data is submitted to their LA. They should make sure their staff have enough time for resolving queries.

Headteachers or managers should only sign off item level data, and permit onward transmission to their LA, once they have checked that the data is:

- free of errors
- an accurate reflection of the attainment of the cohort

Headteachers or managers are also responsible for resolving any queries their LA may have as a result of their processes.

Practitioners and year 1 teachers

Practitioners have a central role in ensuring judgements are reliable and accurate. They need to be familiar with the ELGs and the statutory EYFS framework in order to apply them consistently.

Practitioners and year 1 teachers should work together to build a consistent, shared understanding of what the ELGs mean via internal moderation activities. Practitioners in groups of schools may also wish to work together in this way.

It is particularly important that year 1 teachers understand the EYFS profile, so they can make effective use of it to inform their teaching. Year 1 teachers should be encouraged to be moderators.

9.4 Local authority responsibilities

Data collection

The data collection, entry and submission processes should be planned in advance. LAs should give clear information to settings so that they understand how data should be formatted.

Quality assurance of data

LAs should implement an effective process to scrutinise the validity and accuracy of EYFS profile data prior to submission to DfE. The dataset should be checked by the moderation manager and LA data professionals at a level of detail that enables anomalies to be identified and highlighted to settings for review and amendment (where necessary). Each team's focus may be different, but best practice involves combined processes with shared responsibility.

Effective quality assurance rests on LAs' knowledge both of EYFS profile assessment and of the schools and settings that are returning data. LA quality assurance activity could include a 'first cut' data analysis followed by feedback to the setting. This can help a setting's internal evaluation and transition processes.

LAs should explain their quality assurance processes to settings early in the data collection cycle. This will ensure timescales and expectations are well established, and appropriate activity planned at setting and LA level. Timelines should allow time for:

- scrutiny of data by LA data and moderation teams
- queries to be raised with settings and resolved
- settings to amend submitted data, if required

If LAs find potential inconsistencies in a setting's dataset, they must ensure headteachers or managers have enough time to discuss this with their staff and provide an appropriate response. If settings need to change their data this must be completed before the end of the summer term. Moderation managers must co-ordinate with their data teams so that the final submission to DfE only contains correctly amended data.

LAs can use the following questions to check the accuracy of their EYFS profile dataset before they submit it to DfE. These questions are designed to prompt conversation, rather than rules that data must obey.

- Does the setting's data reflect the LA's knowledge of the cohort or outcomes of moderation?
- Is there a difference in data between classes where there is multi-form entry?
- Is the setting's data significantly or unexpectedly adrift from LA data?
- Are there patterns of outcomes that are unexpected in terms of what is known about children's learning and development in general?
- Are trends from year to year unexpected?

LAs should submit data to DfE using the COLLECT data collection system. DfE will give instructions on how to do this before the national data collection takes place. Data must pass a range of validation checks in order to be accepted by DfE.

After data validation has taken place, LA moderation managers should check that their local dataset presents an accurate picture of children's learning and development at the end of the EYFS. LAs could do this by looking at a further sample of outcomes, or cross checking outcomes against those anticipated as a result of moderation. The nature of any sampling should be shared with settings prior to data collection.

9.5 Data submission

LAs are required to collect EYFS profile data. This collection (and subsequent return to DfE where required) should be carried out in line with the assessment and reporting arrangements.

All EYFS providers must have an appropriate system to record and submit EYFS profile data.

Systems for the collection, submission and analysis of EYFS profile data should be evaluated and developed each year. The LA moderation manager should have an effective working relationship with both the LA and settings' IT and data analysis teams.

LAs must:

- have a defined data validation process, using local intelligence to investigate any unexpected pattern of attainment for any setting
- not shorten the moderation window by requesting data prior to midday on Monday 21 June 2021
- escalate any concerns about the integrity of the assessment to STA's maladministration team via the national curriculum assessments helpline on 0300 303 3013

9.6 Statements to support level setting

Each child's pattern of ELG outcomes will reflect their learning and development, so an unexpected pattern doesn't necessarily mean that their EYFS profile is inaccurate. These prompts may provide a starting point for a conversation with the practitioner who made the judgement, if a pattern doesn't match what was anticipated.

Statement 1

A child's outcomes consistently exceed the ELGs but the characteristics of effective learning describe a child who lacks interest and excitement to learn. This scenario is possible, however high outcomes are often associated with interest in learning. It is essential that the commentary within the characteristics of effective learning is linked to the ELG outcomes.

Statement 2

A child's ability to communicate effectively threads through many of the ELGs. A child whose outcome for 'Speaking' is at the 'emerging' level may also show at the emerging level for those ELGs with a significant communication element.

These include:

- self-confidence and self-awareness
- managing feelings and behaviour
- understanding
- shape, space and measures
- people and communities
- knowledge of the world

Statement 3

A child meets the level of development expected at the end of EYFS for 'Reading' but not for 'Listening and attention'. This is despite the 'Reading' ELG including elements which rely on a child using significant skills relating to 'Listening and attention'.

Statement 4

A child meets the level of development expected at the end of the EYFS for 'Writing' but not physical development ('Moving and handling'). The ability to hold and manipulate a pencil effectively is only part of the physical ELG. Therefore a child whose physical development in relation to fine motor movements is at the 'emerging' level may not be a confident and independent writer as expressed by the 'Writing' ELG.

Statement 5

Some elements of the expressive arts ELGs depend on a child's physical ability to explore and manipulate media with confidence, including construction materials. A child with 'emerging' physical ('Moving and handling') skills may not attain the level of development expected at the end of the EYFS in relation to these creative ELGs.

Statement 6

A child who is at the 'expected' level for 'Shape, space and measures' and 'Knowledge of the world' is likely to be using the skills and attributes that would contribute towards attainment of the 'expected' level for 'Understanding'.

Section 10. Areas of learning: ‘exceeding’ descriptors

Practitioners should use these descriptors when making judgements about whether a child’s level of learning and development is in the ‘exceeding’ category. These descriptors are sourced from the [Tickell review](#)¹⁴ of the EYFS.

10.1 Prime areas of learning

Communication and language

Early learning goal	Description of ‘exceeding’
1. Listening and attention	Children listen to instructions and follow them accurately, asking for clarification if necessary. They listen attentively with sustained concentration to follow a story without pictures or props. They can listen in a larger group, for example, at assembly.
2. Understanding	After listening to stories, children can express views about events or characters in the story and answer questions about why things happened. They can carry out instructions, which contain several parts in a sequence.
3. Speaking	Children show some awareness of the listener by making changes to language and non-verbal features. They recount experiences and imagine possibilities, often connecting ideas. They use a range of vocabulary in imaginative ways to add information, express ideas or to explain or justify actions or events.

Physical development

Early learning goal	Description of 'exceeding'
4. Moving and handling	Children can hop confidently and skip in time to music. They hold paper in position and use their preferred hand for writing, using a correct pencil grip. They are beginning to be able to write on lines and control letter size.
5. Health and self-care	Children know about, and can make healthy choices in relation to, healthy eating and exercise. They can dress and undress independently, successfully managing fastening buttons or laces.

Personal, social and emotional development

Early learning goal	Description of 'exceeding'
6. Self-confidence and self-awareness	Children are confident speaking to a class group. They can talk about the things they enjoy, and are good at, and about the things they do not find easy. They are resourceful in finding support when they need help or information. They can talk about the plans they have made to carry out activities and what they might change if they were to repeat them.
7. Managing feelings and behaviour	Children know some ways to manage their feelings and are beginning to use these to maintain control. They can listen to each other's suggestions and plan how to achieve an outcome without adult help. They know when and how to stand up for themselves appropriately. They can stop and think before acting and they can wait for things they want.
8. Making relationships	Children play group games with rules. They understand someone else's point of view can be different from theirs. They resolve minor disagreements through listening to each other to come up with a fair solution. They understand what bullying is and that this is unacceptable behaviour.

10.2 Specific areas of learning

Literacy

Early learning goal	Description of 'exceeding'
9. Reading	Children can read phonically regular words of more than one syllable as well as many irregular but high frequency words. They use phonic, semantic and syntactic knowledge to understand unfamiliar vocabulary. They can describe the main events in the simple stories they have read.
10. Writing	Children can spell phonically regular words of more than one syllable as well as many irregular but high frequency words. They use key features of narrative in their own writing.

Mathematics

Early learning goal	Description of 'exceeding'
11. Numbers	Children estimate a number of objects and check quantities by counting up to 20. They solve practical problems that involve combining groups of 2, 5 or 10, or sharing into equal groups.
12. Shape, space and measures	Children estimate, measure, weigh and compare and order objects and talk about properties, position and time.

Understanding the world

Early learning goal	Description of 'exceeding'
13. People and communities	Children know the difference between past and present events in their own lives and some reasons why people's lives were different in the past. They know that other children have different likes and dislikes and that they may be good at different things. They understand that different people have different beliefs, attitudes, customs and traditions and why it is important to treat them with respect.
14. The world	Children know that the environment and living things are influenced by human activity. They can describe some actions, which people in their own community do, that help to maintain the area they live in. They know the properties of some materials and can suggest some of the purposes they are used for. They are familiar with basic scientific concepts such as floating, sinking, experimentation.
15. Technology	Children find out about and use a range of everyday technology. They select appropriate applications that support an identified need, for example in deciding how best to make a record of a special event in their lives, such as a journey on a steam train.

Expressive arts and design

Early learning goal	Description of 'exceeding'
16. Exploring and using media and materials	Children develop their own ideas through selecting and using materials and working on processes that interest them. Through their explorations, they find out and make decisions about how media and materials can be combined and changed.
17. Being imaginative	Children talk about the ideas and processes, which have led them to make music, designs, images or products. They can talk about features of their own and others' work, recognising the differences between them and the strengths of others.

Section 11. Completing commentaries for the characteristics of effective learning

11.1 Example lines of enquiry

Playing and exploring – engagement

‘Finding out and exploring’ is concerned with children’s open-ended hands-on experiences. These result from innate curiosity and provide the raw sensory material from which the child builds concepts, tests ideas and finds things out.

Possible lines of enquiry:

- Does the child respond to first hand experiences in an exploratory way?
- How does the child demonstrate natural curiosity?
- Does the child notice patterns, changes, similarities and differences when exploring across the curriculum?

‘Using what they know in their play’ describes how children use play to bring together their current understandings, combining, refining and exploring their ideas in imaginative ways. Representing experiences through imaginative play supports the development of narrative thought, the ability to see from other perspectives, and symbolic thinking.

Possible lines of enquiry:

- In what ways does the child use what he or she discovers in play and link it to existing knowledge?
- Can the child combine, refine and explore ideas in imaginative ways?
- Can the child see things from other perspectives?

‘Being willing to have a go’ refers to the child finding an interest, initiating activities, seeking challenge, having a ‘can do’ orientation, being willing to take a risk in new experiences, and developing the view of failures as opportunities to learn.

Possible lines of enquiry:

- Does the child initiate activities around own interests?
- Does the child seek challenges and take risks in new experiences?
- Does the child learn from mistakes without becoming disheartened?

Active learning – motivation

‘Being involved and concentrating’ describes the intensity of attention that arises from children concentrating on following a line of interest in their activities.

Possible lines of enquiry:

- To what extent does the child become completely focused in activities and experiences and not easily distracted?
- To what extent does the child show intensity of attention for example by being concerned about details in activities, experiences and ideas?

‘Keeping on trying’ refers to the importance of persistence even in the face of challenge or difficulties, an element of purposeful control, which supports resilience.

Possible lines of enquiry:

- Does the child pursue a particular line of interest in an activity?
- Does the child demonstrate persistence in the face of difficulty or a challenge?
- Can the child refocus and replan to overcome difficulties, setbacks and disappointments?
- Does the child know how to seek appropriate help in terms of materials, tools and other people?

‘Enjoying achieving what they set out to do’ refers to the reward of meeting one’s own goals, building on the intrinsic motivation that supports long-term success, rather than relying on the approval of others.

Possible lines of enquiry:

- Does the child become involved in activities and experiences, which arise out of personal interest, curiosity and enquiry?
- Does the child demonstrate satisfaction when engaged in and completing personal endeavours?

Creating and thinking critically

'Having their own ideas' covers the critical area of creativity – generating new ideas and approaches in all areas of endeavour. Being inventive allows children to find new problems as they seek challenge, and to explore ways of solving these.

Possible lines of enquiry:

- Does the child generate new ideas during activities?
- Does the child adapt, refine or make changes when previous ideas were unsuccessful or could be developed?
- Is the child inventive in solving problems, using and synthesising knowledge and skills across areas of learning?

'Using what they know to learn new things' refers to the way in which children develop and link concepts, find meaning in sequence, cause and effect and in the intentions of others through both narrative and scientific modes of thought.

Possible lines of enquiry:

- Does the child talk about or explore the idea of cause and effect through actions?
- Does the child use acquired knowledge and skills to explore new learning across and within areas of learning?
- Does the child offer ideas of why things happen and how things work or show this in exploratory play?

'Choosing ways to do things and finding new ways' involves approaching goal-directed activity in organised ways, making choices and decisions about how to approach tasks, planning and monitoring what to do and being able to change strategies.

Possible lines of enquiry:

- Does the child explore ways of solving new problems including trial and error?
- Is the child able to plan and monitor what has been done?
- Can the child change strategies when appropriate?

Section 12. Definitions

12.1 Settings

All references to EYFS settings include any out-of-home provider of early years provision for children from birth to 5 years, for example:

- all providers registered with a childminder agency
- all providers on the early years register (for example nurseries and childminders)
- maintained schools, non-maintained schools and independent schools with early years provision

12.2 Parent

The term 'parent' is used here as defined in section 576 of the Education Act 1996 as:

- parents of a child
- any person who is not a parent of a child but who has parental responsibility for the child
- any person who has care of the child

12.3 Good level of development (GLD)

Children are defined as having reached a good level of development at the end of the EYFS in the reception year if they have achieved at least the expected level for the ELGs in:

- the prime areas of learning – personal, social and emotional development, physical development, and communication and language
- the specific areas of mathematics and literacy

12.4 Average total point score

The average total point score is a supporting measure taking into account children's performance across all 17 ELGs. 1 point is awarded for a child whose profile shows he or she is 'emerging', 2 points are awarded for 'expected' and 3 points are awarded for 'exceeding'.

Annex 1. EYFS profile moderator: role specification for local authorities

This template is for LAs to use when recruiting moderators for the EYFS profile.

Role specification

Post holders need to demonstrate the following knowledge, skills and experience in order to perform the moderator's role successfully:

- professional dialogue with the practitioner on a moderation visit
- the ability to establish and validate the accuracy of practitioner judgements in line with the EYFS profile
- the ability to give effective verbal and written feedback to practitioners, including recommending further training
- an understanding of the EYFS profile moderation process

Knowledge and experience

Criteria	Essential (E) or desirable (D)?
B.Ed., Cert. Education or other degree and PGCE	E
Current knowledge of EYFS and recent experience of teaching in an early years setting	E
Current knowledge of the principles and purpose of the EYFS profile	E
Understanding of STA exemplification materials	E
Knowledge of EYFS profile moderation process	E
Experience of management and implementation of the EYFS profile moderation	D
Evidence of further professional development (such as advanced skills teacher or lead teacher)	D
Experience of working with children with special educational needs or for whom English is not their home language	D

Capabilities and skills

Criteria	Essential (E) or desirable (D)?
To communicate effectively and be receptive to new information	E
To question and challenge practitioner judgements appropriately	E
To scrutinise, distil and interpret evidence and make decisions confidently	E
To provide feedback and remain objective in a range of circumstances	E
To build professional relationships with individuals and a group	E



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