Non-Statutory Guidance

Learning, Teaching and Assessment in the Foundation Stage
Supporting Foundation Stage Teachers in Assessment and Reporting
Learning, Teaching and Assessment in the Foundation Stage

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Introduction

This non-statutory assessment guidance for the Foundation Stage facilitates a whole-school approach to assessment and builds on existing effective practices in schools.

This booklet complements the non-statutory Developmental Stages in Learning for Foundation Stage in the Cross-Curricular Skills:

- Communication;
- Using Mathematics; and
- Using ICT (available from September 2013).

The Developmental Stages in Learning grids align with the statutory curriculum for the Foundation Stage. They also show the progression or steps that pupils may take to reach Level 1 of the statutory Levels of Progression. An online course on how to use the grids is available to all teachers in Northern Ireland at www.nicurriculum.org.uk

Assessment in the Foundation Stage should:

- complement and support the key aims of the Northern Ireland Curriculum;
- be fit for purpose;
- be manageable; and
- be supported by teacher professional judgements that are consistent and reliable.

Assessment plays a key role in helping schools to improve outcomes. When you know how each pupil is performing, you can implement strategies to help individuals improve. This in turn promotes improvement at class level, then at school level, and allows your school to set meaningful and challenging targets in the School Development Plan.
Statutory Requirements At-a-Glance: Foundation Stage to Key Stage 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statutory Assessment and Reporting</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assess pupil progress in each of the Areas of Learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assess pupil progress in the Cross-Curricular Skills of Communication, Using Mathematics and Using ICT.</td>
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<td>Assess pupil progress in the Cross-Curricular Skills of Communication, Using Mathematics and Using ICT with reference to the Levels of Progression.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assess pupil progress with reference to the Levels of Progression and report(^1) the numerical outcomes achieved in the Cross-Curricular Skills of Communication(^2), Using Mathematics and Using ICT.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assess pupil progress in the Other Skills (Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities).</td>
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<td>Administer the statutory computer-based assessments in the autumn term.</td>
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<td><strong>Reporting to Parents</strong></td>
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<td>Report, in writing, the outcomes from the statutory, computer-based assessments and offer to meet parents to discuss these outcomes by the end of the autumn term.</td>
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<td>Offer to meet parents to discuss their child’s progress.</td>
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<td>Provide an Annual Report to parents by 30 June.</td>
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<td>State the Level of Progression achieved by each pupil in Communication(^3), Using Mathematics and Using ICT in the Annual Report.</td>
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<td>The Annual Report for pupils in Years 4, 7 and 10, must also include a statement of the percentage of pupils in Years 4, Year 7 and Year 10 in the school who have:</td>
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<td>• attained each level in that Cross-Curricular Skill;</td>
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<td>• attained the expected level or above in that Cross-Curricular Skill;</td>
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<td>• worked towards the level expected for a pupil at the end of Years 4, 7 and 10, but who have not yet attained that level in that Cross-Curricular Skill; and</td>
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<tr>
<td>• been exempted from assessment in that Cross-Curricular Skill.</td>
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\(^1\) Levels of Progression for Communication, Using Mathematics and Using ICT must be reported to parents, CCEA and also at the end of Key Stage 2 to the receiving post-primary school.

\(^2\) In Irish Medium schools and units, pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 will be assigned levels in Communication in Irish only. Pupils at the end of Key Stages 2 and 3 will be assigned levels in Communication in both Irish and English.

\(^3\) In Irish Medium schools and units, at the end of Key Stage 1, levels should be reported for Communication in Irish only. At the end of Key Stages 2 and 3, levels should be reported for Communication in both Irish and English.
### Statutory Assessment and Reporting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foundation Stage</th>
<th>Key Stage 1</th>
<th>Key Stage 2</th>
<th>Key Stage 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Y1</td>
<td>Y2</td>
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**Assessment**

- Assess pupil progress in each of the Areas of Learning.
- Assess pupil progress in the Cross-Curricular Skills of Communication, Using Mathematics and Using ICT.
- Assess pupil progress in the Cross-Curricular Skills of Communication, Using Mathematics and Using ICT with reference to the Levels of Progression.
- Assess pupil progress with reference to the Levels of Progression and report the numerical outcomes achieved in the Cross-Curricular Skills of Communication, Using Mathematics and Using ICT.
- Assess pupil progress in the Other Skills (Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities).

**Administer the statutory computer-based assessments in the autumn term.**

**Reporting to Parents**

- Report, in writing, the outcomes from the statutory, computer-based assessments and offer to meet parents to discuss these outcomes by the end of the autumn term.
- Offer to meet parents to discuss their child's progress.
- Provide an Annual Report to parents by 30 June.
- State the Level of Progression achieved by each pupil in Communication, Using Mathematics and Using ICT in the Annual Report.
- The Annual Report for pupils in Years 4, 7 and 10, must also include a statement of the percentage of pupils in Years 4, Year 7 and Year 10 in the school who have:
  - attained each level in that Cross-Curricular Skill;
  - attained the expected level or above in that Cross-Curricular Skill;
  - worked towards the level expected for a pupil at the end of Years 4, 7 and 10, but who have not yet attained that level in that Cross-Curricular Skill; and
  - been exempted from assessment in that Cross-Curricular Skill.
The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Cycle

In the Foundation Stage, you have flexibility to interpret the Areas of Learning to suit the needs, interests and abilities of your pupils. Effective assessment during this stage will ensure that:

- teaching builds on your pupils’ current stages of development, their needs and interests, and previous experiences;
- your pupils are active participants in the assessment process;
- they are motivated and their learning is challenged;
- you have, and share, realistically high expectations of your pupils as learners;
- they can receive appropriate support; and
- there is a two-way flow of information with parents/carers.

The Foundation Stage classroom should reflect a culture of open communication, positive relationships and risk taking. It is important to view learning, teaching and assessment as a continuous cycle; assessment is not an end point but an integral part of the learning process.
Planning in the Foundation Stage

The information that you obtain from assessment should inform your planning, in the context of the Northern Ireland Curriculum. It can also help you determine ways to provide interesting and varied experiences and adapt your pupils’ environment to meet their needs and support their learning.

As you develop long, medium and short term plans, ensure that your pupils and other adults have appropriate opportunities to participate in the planning process. **Regard planning documents as flexible; you may find it appropriate to amend them as a result of ongoing assessment.**

**Long term planning**

Long term plans set out, in broad terms, the learning for a whole group of pupils, usually over the period of a year. This level of planning should take place at a whole-school level to ensure continuity and progression in Years 1–7.

Long term planning should:
- ensure that your pupils experience a broad and balanced curriculum;
- include seasonal, festive and other planned events, such as links with the community; and
- inform medium term planning.

**Medium and short term planning**

Medium term plans generally refer to monthly or half termly periods. They bridge the gap between the long term plan and the day-to-day detail of the short term plan. Short term plans should take account of pupils’ individual needs. They should include enough detail to inform and guide teachers and classroom assistants on a daily basis. It might sometimes be appropriate to combine medium and short term planning.

Your planning should:
- identify learning intentions that detail knowledge, skills, understanding and connectedness across the Areas of Learning;
- be based on evidence from observation, assessment and evaluation;
- identify the teaching approaches that you will use;
- outline planned experiences and the resources you will need;
- make differentiation explicit;
- involve your pupils and reflect their varying needs and interests;
- be flexible to allow for spontaneous responses;
- indicate opportunities for challenging and open-ended experiences; and
- be evaluated regularly to inform future planning.
Assessment in the Foundation Stage

Young children come to school from a variety of backgrounds and diverse learning experiences. It is therefore essential to take into account information shared by pre-school providers, parents/carers and other professionals to meet the needs of each child as effectively as possible.

Assessment of Learning (summative assessment) takes place after the learning and shows what has been achieved. It is usually adult directed, and its core purpose is to prove or measure the learning that has taken place.

Assessment for Learning (formative assessment, often referred to as AFL) takes place when learning is happening and 'is a process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how to get there.' (Assessment Reform Group, 2001)

These two types of assessment are not contradictory but complementary. In Unlocking Formative Assessment (2001), Shirley Clarke illustrates this through a gardening analogy: 'if we think of our pupils as plants ... summative assessment of the plants is the process of simply measuring them. The measurements might be interesting to compare and analyse, but in themselves, they do not affect the growth of the plants. Formative assessment on the other hand, is the garden equivalent of feeding and watering plants – directly affecting their growth.'

The key elements of Assessment for Learning are:

- Focus on learning
- Effective questioning
- Formative feedback
- Scaffolding reflection.

You may find the following resources, available at www.nicurriculum.org.uk, helpful:

- **Assessment for Learning** - A Practical Guide
- **Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities for Key Stages 1 & 2** (see, for example, Effective Questioning on page 29).

Assessment for Learning in the context of the Foundation Stage

AFL is a complex process that will take time to develop. During the Foundation Stage the emphasis should be on establishing a supportive climate of sensitive interaction, openness and risk-taking in which adults engage in dialogue with pupils about their learning. Classroom strategies should include planning with the pupils, modelling, effective use of questioning, plenary sessions and conversations with individuals and groups.

Focus on learning

Learning intentions describe what pupils will know, understand or be able to do and can be shared with the whole class, groups or individuals. Sharing learning intentions is appropriate when introducing **new learning**, but it is not necessary in every lesson. When you are working with groups or individuals, and particularly in play, learning intentions may evolve from your pupils’ responses. Consider how best to share learning intentions; in the Foundation Stage, this might be orally, through pictures or in writing.

Success criteria are the steps required to achieve a learning intention and give clear guidance on how to be successful. They summarise the main teaching points or processes, always relating directly to the learning intention. It takes time to develop an understanding of success criteria, and modelling by adults is important to help pupils in the Foundation Stage understand their value and purpose. Success criteria do not necessarily have to be written; you may choose to use photographs or images to illustrate a process.

Effective questioning

Effective questioning is an integral part of assessment practice. It has two main purposes: to assist with assessment and to improve understanding. A learning climate that promotes sensitive interaction and encourages risk-taking can influence how successful questioning is and how beneficial it is to pupils’ learning. Modelling how to think aloud and how to frame questions is essential to enable pupils to develop appropriate vocabulary for questioning.
Formative feedback

Formative feedback focuses on how pupils have met the success criteria relating to a learning intention, and it offers advice on the next steps in the learning process. Pupils then need to have time to make any necessary improvements. In the Foundation Stage, feedback should be mainly oral and take place throughout the learning process.

Scaffolding reflection

Scaffolding reflection is about building in time for pupils to recognise what and how they are learning and to make changes as they go along. It can be developed through peer and self assessment and evaluation, which will most often be oral in the Foundation Stage. The focus should be on building an open, reflective climate in which adults model appropriate language and behaviour. Pupils need to have opportunities to discuss their learning, to share their understanding and to see mistakes as learning opportunities.
Assessment Techniques and Strategies

A variety of assessment techniques should be used as part of the learning and teaching process, not just at the end of a lesson or topic. Select the strategies that best suit the nature of the work you are assessing and the specific purpose of your assessment. For example, you might gain evidence from planned and spontaneous observation of:

- independent or group tasks;
- discussion and interaction; and
- oral, written or visual presentations, or physical demonstrations.

Observation

Observation is a natural and essential part of effective assessment practice. Observations should take place throughout the day and in a range of contexts. Regular observations and written records of each pupil’s development provide a comprehensive picture that will inform your planning and enable you to take account of individual needs. You may use your observations in both formative and summative assessment.

Observations also allow you to evaluate practice. You can reflect on any aspects of provision where pupils have experienced difficulties, need more time or need additional resources/opportunities. Information from the same observation can be useful for both assessment and evaluative purposes.

Planning for observations

As observations are the key to effective planning and assessment, it is essential to take time to plan for them. However, because some of the most detailed insights into pupils’ learning tend to come from their unpredictable reactions to their learning experiences, you need to take a flexible approach that allows for both planned and spontaneous observations.

When you plan, you may decide to observe a specific pupil or group on particular days. You can then ensure that your observations over a period of time will include all pupils in a range of contexts.

What to observe

Regular observations will enable you to consider all aspects of your pupils’ development. Observations may include evidence of:

- progress in relation to specific aspects of the Northern Ireland Curriculum;
- use of language and communication in a range of situations, including dialogue with adults and peers;
- interaction during all aspects of play (indoors and outdoors), whole class or group sessions;
- levels of well-being, including the ability to manage emotions and feelings;
- a positive attitude or level of motivation and enjoyment;
- levels of involvement and concentration during activities;
- ability to work alone, in pairs or in groups;
- ability to problem-solve and make decisions or demonstrate thinking skills;
- ability to plan their own activities;
- willingness to investigate and be creative;
- levels of self-awareness and self-confidence;
- individual characteristics, interests, friendship patterns and behaviours;
- the response to adults visiting the school or on educational visits; and
- use of the resources available.

Observations may also provide evaluative information which will assist you in:

- identifying pupils who may require additional or specialist attention;
- developing strategies for those pupils who confine their play to a limited number of areas;
- ensuring effective use of space and location, as well as the suitability, presentation and safety of equipment and materials; and
- considering which additional experiences or resources to provide and why.
Recording observations

As part of its assessment policy and practice, your school should agree a flexible system for recording observations. This should reflect the principles and pedagogy of the Foundation Stage and each Key Stage. For example, you might record observations using pro formas, notes (post-its, sticky labels or notebooks), samples of pupils’ work, photographs, DVD evidence and audio recordings. Features of best practice include:

- teacher and classroom assistant involvement;
- making planned and spontaneous observations;
- using positive language, focusing on what the pupil can do or does know;
- including the date and information that identifies the when, where and who, for example during play in the sand area John and Amy ...
- describing what the pupil(s) did and, when appropriate, including quotes to document the pupil’s language;
- using agreed abbreviations for the areas of the room, pupils’ names etc. (if you find these helpful);
- keeping information factual, specific and brief; and
- including any follow-up action required.

Assessment and future planning

Observations provide you with evidence about your pupils’ progress in learning. They enable you to assess each pupil’s learning and development, which leads to appropriate planning and provision for the next stages in learning.
### Purpose of Assessment

**To facilitate the monitoring of standards over time in order to inform the development of policy and practice leading to better pupil outcomes**

### Principles of Assessment

1. Be complementary to, and supportive of, the key aims of the NI Curriculum
2. Be fit for purpose
3. Be manageable
4. Be supported by teacher professional judgements that are consistent and reliable
5. Be appropriate at all levels for system-wide accountability

### Purposes of Assessment

**Diagnostic**
- To identify strengths and areas for improvement and to inform next steps

**Formative**
- To use assessment information to make specific improvements in learning

**Summative**
- To acknowledge, record and report pupils’ overall performance and achievement at a point in time

**Evaluative**
- To inform curriculum planning and to provide information for monitoring and accountability

### What is Assessed?

**Pupil performance and achievement in:**
- **CROSS-CURRICULAR SKILLS (CCS)**: Assessment: a robust model of moderated teacher judgement
- **OTHER SKILLS (Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities: TSPC)**: Assessment: delegated to schools
- **AREAS OF LEARNING (AoL)**: Assessment: delegated to schools

### Foundation Stage

**Assessment**
- Assess pupil progress in each CCS
- Assess pupil progress in each of the Other Skills (TSPC)
- Assess pupil progress in each AoL

**Reporting**
- Annual Report
- Parent Meetings
- Annual Review*

### Key Stage 1 & Key Stage 2

**Assessment**
- Assess pupil progress in each CCS
- Use of CCEA designed tasks Years 4 & 7
- Assess pupil progress in each of the Other Skills (TSPC)
- Assess pupil progress in each AoL

**Reporting**
- Annual Report
- Years 4 & 7 numerical outcomes for CCS and additional school/system information to parents
- Years 4 - 7 computer-based assessments, autumn term
- Parent Meetings
- Annual Review*

### Key Stage 3

**Assessment**
- Assess pupil progress in each CCS
- Use of CCEA approved tasks Year 10
- Assess pupil progress in each of the Other Skills (TSPC)
- Assess pupil progress in each AoL

**Reporting**
- Annual Report
- Year 10 numerical outcomes for CCS and additional school/system information to parents
- Parent Meetings
- Annual Review/Transition Plans*

### Using Assessment Outcomes to Inform Next Steps Planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At Classroom Level</th>
<th>What level are my pupils now?</th>
<th>Where do they need to be next (with an appropriate level of challenge)?</th>
<th>What are the best strategies to help pupils reach the ‘next steps’ in their learning?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At Co-Ordinator Level</td>
<td>How is my area of responsibility performing, compared with recent 3 year trends?</td>
<td>How is my area of responsibility performing compared with other curriculum areas?</td>
<td>What are the priorities for improving provision within my area of responsibility?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At Whole School Level</td>
<td>How is our school performing, compared with recent 3 year trends?</td>
<td>How is our school performing compared with other schools in similar circumstances?</td>
<td>What are our whole school priorities for improving pupil outcomes, especially in Literacy and Numeracy?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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