

Kenilworth & Whitnash Nursery Schools & Early Years Hubs



Observation & Assessment Policy 2021

Policy Originally Written	September 2010		
Reviewed and adapted	June 2021	Headteacher	Chair of Governors

OUR APPROACH TO MEANINGFUL OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT

We have worked within a national group of Maintained Nursery Schools to consider what effective observation and assessment looks like in the most successful Nursery Environments. We have based our work on values and principles inspired by the work of Loris Malaguzzi:

“Stand aside for a while and leave room for learning, observe carefully what children do, and then if you have understood well, teaching will be different from before” (Loris Malaguzzi).

Our intention is to develop a system which honours children and childhood in which we plan time to observe children without fixed agendas to better understand them. We build in time for quality reflection about children’s learning. At KNS and WNS we have drawn upon the work of Barnett Early Years Alliance (BEYA) and have adapted and enhanced their system of Observing Play And Learning (OPAL)

The focus on telling the story of the children and observing to understand them links strongly to our ethos in which **‘each child’s uniqueness is recognised and valued’**. Alongside the clear recognition that **“if we are recording the moment we cannot be part of it”**. Our aim is for Practitioners to have the maximum amount of time to be involved with and co-construct learning and experiences with our young children.

We also know and value the importance and benefits of parent partnership in the early years. We understand that parents **know their child best**. Our system ensures that parents are part of the process throughout, working in close collaboration through conversations about their child’s learning.

To successfully develop this system we must also assess our own practice and ensure what we offer is appropriate and effectively for all of the children who access our Schools. Building in reflection time and professional development experiences for our team so they may offer the very best opportunities for learning for the young children who come to our Schools.

THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF ASSESSMENT

Integral to teaching is how practitioners assess what children know, understand and can do, as well as taking account of their interests and dispositions to learn (characteristics of effective learning), and how practitioners use this information to plan children's next steps in learning and monitor their progress.

Ofsted Early Years Inspection Handbook 2021

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OBSERVATION, ASSESSMENT AND LEARNING:

Formative and Summative:

Formative assessment is an integral part of teaching young children. Practice begins with knowing and understanding the child and grows in co-responsibly with Parents. Responsive pedagogy is needed to recognise what children know, understand and can do. Children and adults can then construct the curriculum together.

Formative assessment is ongoing as adults adapt and respond to the child when working beside them. **Summative assessment** requires the adult to step back and observe to understand more deeply so that an overview of the child at that point may be gained and within that development and progress can be identified. Reliable summative assessment is based on ongoing formative assessment to ensure professional knowledge of the child is based on a holistic view of their development. Summative assessment serves several purposes that can enhance development and learning opportunities for children, including making changes in the environmental offer and the approach of adults working beside the child. (based on supportive materials from Birth to 5 Matters 2021)

OBSERVING TO UNDERSTAND:

OUR PRACTICE at KNS & WNS

Spotlight Observations and Starting points:

At least 3 times during the year we complete a summative assessment alongside the ongoing formative assessments that occur all the time. For this to be possible and effective we spend a short but intense period observing an individual child.

We are observing to understand as we dedicate a short block of time to watching and noticing the child, trying to understand their intentions, their skills and interests, their communication and social skills. Staff watch carefully for at least 15 minutes and sometimes this extends to 30 minutes without taking pictures or writing notes. They are noticing and reflecting intently. They will then sit down and reflect all they have seen to a 'Lead' practitioner who listens and then reflects back the understanding that has been gained during observation. They will then work together to think about what the next steps might be to support, motivate and deepen learning for that individual child incorporating their formative knowledge and the contributions they have already gathered from Parents.

From this work the short spotlight summaries are developed and then these are shared with Parents so that a dialogue about the child current interests, intentions and skills can take place that also determines the next steps for learning for that child.

We observe to understand

- what the child knows, can do and understands
- the child's intentions and interests
- the child's interactions with the environment and others around them
- the child's communication strategies and skills
- the child's preferred learning style e.g. supported, independent, in a peer group;
- attitudes to new learning e.g. anxious, wary, excited, confident;

- emotional responses
- what future learning needs might be.

We can then evaluate:

- what specifically may support or deepen learning for that individual child
- how the learning environment and planned provision may change to respond to that child;
- teaching styles and the approach of the adults and management of time;
- whether we are supporting all children effectively and making it easy for them to learn or are there possible barriers to learning that need to be addressed?

Observation and Assessment is an on-going process that takes place all the time, starting on the day we home visit the child and family. Much information about the child is gathered from the parent/carer on the home visit, whilst playing with, and getting to know the child offers opportunities to perhaps share books, talk with, gather drawings, play with toys etc. that will provide a baseline for record keeping, and planning.

Assessment allows the children to demonstrate achievement across the curriculum, and it is this achievement highlighting where the child is at, that is recorded.

When we observe, we:

- watch children's actions;
- listen to children talking;
- focus on their interactions with other children and adults;
- are aware of children's body language and non verbal expressions of their social and emotional development;

- value their efforts and achievements.
- Recognise their involvement and participation levels
- Note their interest and specialisms

We focus upon:

- conceptual development;
- self esteem, attitudes to learning new skills and concentration;
- social skills and relationships with others;
- preferences for particular activities/materials;
- communication skills for different purposes and audiences;
- physical skills;
- skills of enquiry and investigation.

Assessments based on observation help us to:

- gather information about how a child is settling in to the nursery;
- monitor how a child is using their time;
- look closely at inter relationships;
- monitor provision in an area of the nursery;
- evaluate a special focus for learning;
- compare a child's responses when involved in a directed activity and one which is self initiated.

In each learning area, adults have access to 'post-it' notes/digital cameras and video cameras (including our Outdoor Classroom) for recording our observations. See Appendix I.

The observations are collected, given to the child's Family Group Leader each week and added to their individual records.

Monitoring

Progress is carefully monitored at weekly 'children's meetings' and more formally each term by the Teacher and Head teacher. A moderation meeting follows data entry onto the assessment tool Making Children's Learning Visible (MCLV), where the Nursery team identify next steps for planning as well as individual next steps for each child. Monitoring is shared with Governors who track and analyse performance and standards termly, focussing particularly on three yearly targets set for each cohort. Monitoring systems now allow for tracking in the Nurture Nursery and Main Nursery using one continuous system. Trend reports are produced to allow Governors to look at the impact of the school work over a period of three years or more.

Individual Children's Assessment Profiles

We use a pro forma based upon the EYFS development matters bands to record and track the progress each individual makes during their time in nursery. These assessments are based upon information gathered from classroom observations, children's work, home visits, parents, etc. (Appendix 2a and 2b).

Learning Stories

Are direct observations of a child's learning in a self initiated play scenario. They record accurately skills the child demonstrates and identify next steps for learning. Learning stories are collected for each child in the Autumn and Summer terms.

Making Learning Visible

We aim to Make Learning Visible by tracking children each term from entry to Nurture Nursery until they make the transition to their Reception classes. Our recording system allows groups of children to be tracked and also clearly demonstrate each individuals progress, capabilities and strengths.

All pre school settings are now required to complete a Learning Journal for each child to be given to the child's receiving school to ensure

continuity and progress. We believe the “Learning Journey’ belongs to the child but we provide electronic copies of learning stories and end of years reports to our primary schools so they can continue the records with parental permission.

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Children with Special Educational Needs are identified by the school as early as possible, to support their learning and development. Information and records are sought from agencies prior to admission for children who have already been identified.

Our assessments for these children, as with all others, result in a positive statement of progress and achievement. A document entitled **Teaching Talking** is completed to highlight areas for development and ensure progress is being made. From this Individual Plans are written and regularly reviewed. Support staff keep records of observations.

Parental Involvement:

Parents are invited to complete a “Parents Contribution” sheet both at the very beginning and end of the year as a positive record of the child and their achievements and characteristics on entering and leaving the school. Parents are also encouraged to contribute as significant events occur throughout the year. This is kept as part of the child’s Learning Journey. Parental comments and questions from the February consultation meetings also become part of the Learning Journey record.

Children’s records kept by staff are openly available for parents to share upon request of an appointment with their child’s Family Group Leader.

Observations and achievements are informally offered to parents by staff at the end of sessions, as much as possible, to keep parents informed and up to date. This also offers parents the opportunity to share the child’s progress outside school, with us.

Formal parent interviews are offered to all parents over a series of evenings in March and to the January intake in June, to recall where the

child started from in September and celebrate their progress and achievements. It is also an opportunity to share concerns and suggest ways in which parents could positively support their child's learning development.

At these meetings, the child's 'Learning Journey' is shared and parents can again complete a comments section.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Learning Journey Policy.