



Kesh Primary School and Community Nursery Assessment, Observation and Record Keeping Policy

Ratified by Board of Governors in:

November 2024

Signed:

Chairperson of Board of Governors

Next Review:

November 2027

Signed:

Principal

‘To truly promote learning, practitioners need not only to observe children at play, but to understand what they are seeing and use it to extend opportunities.’

Helen Bromley, early years consultant and literacy specialist (2009)

You cannot make people learn. You can only provide the right conditions for learning to happen.”

Vince Gowmon

‘Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.’

William Butler Yeats

“It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge.”

Albert Einstein

At Kesh Community Nursery we plan to meet the wide range of needs of our children and to support their development and learning. This policy outlines the principles upon which we base our observations and assessment of children, and the procedures used to put these principles into practice.

Observation, assessment and record keeping form an integral part of our nursery provision and the delivery of the Northern Ireland Curricular Guidance for Pre-School Education.

The curricular document 2018 pages 8 and 9 states:

‘Assessment of children’s learning is based on day-to-day observations and interactions with the children in a range of situations. Observations allow staff to gain a better insight into the children’s needs, experiences, interests, thinking, strengths and areas for development. This information is essential when deciding how to support and enhance the children’s learning, both individually and collectively.’

We view observing, assessing and recording as tools that allow us to reflect on the planned curriculum and children’s interests, map our children’s progress/difficulties and enable us to judge how effectively we are building learning over time.

Experience in the early years should build on what children already know and can already do. Observation, assessment and record keeping are an important part of the educational process which begins as soon as the child starts at Kesh Community Nursery.

At Kesh Community Nursery, we value working closely with parents, as they are the child's first and most enduring educators. The information which parents share with us during the induction process (from our ‘Getting to Know You’ questionnaires in late May prior to entry, August Open day and weeks of the settling in period) is crucial in forming a basis for further learning, assessment and observation.

Objectives

For staff to:

- To develop good relationships between a child’s parents/carers and staff in the setting in order to ensure that information about the child is shared effectively.
- To ensure that learning is a shared process – children learn most effectively when, with the support of a knowledgeable and trusted adult, they are actively involved and interested.
- To ensure that the day to day running of the nursery and routines flow with the child’s needs.
- To ensure that all children feel included, secure and valued.
- To make sure that we build on what children already know and can do and encourage them to share their personal experiences with their peers.

- To identify children who require extra support because they have a special need or require extra challenge because they are gifted and talented and plan accordingly.
- To facilitate children in accessing a differentiated/adapted curriculum which supports and extends their individual needs and interests and make progress and achieve their full potential.
- To plan a differentiated curriculum.
- To allow opportunities for reflective practice in order to address gaps in learning and ensure progress.
- To identify children's specific needs including those of special educational needs as defined in the Code of Practice, English as an additional language, the needs of our more able children, and the needs of children with low well-being, by providing activities specific to that child
- Listen to and respect parents /carers' knowledge of their child as the child's first and continuing educators
- To continue to develop the expertise of all staff in nursery so that they know how to respond effectively to the observations they make.

Our Procedures

By means of our pre entry questionnaire information is gathered from parents before their child's entry – it is sent out with a welcome letter in late April/Early May with an invitation to come to our Open afternoon. We encourage the parents to complete the questionnaire online or to print and bring it with them to the Open Day where they are given an opportunity to speak with staff and to organize further one-to-one meetings or visits with the child either in the setting or in their homes if they choose to do so.

The questionnaire collects information regarding:

- the child's health,
- family details,
- all contact details including those with permission to collect the child from nursery,
- telephone numbers of those to contact in the case of an emergency (in order of preference),
- email addresses,
- child's likes and dislikes,
- links with outside agencies for example:
 - Speech and Language therapy,
 - Occupational therapy,
 - Educational Psychology
 - If they have had their hearing and eyesight checked
 - Any additional needs or parental concerns.
- From April 2025 this will include a question in relation to prematurity – weeks of gestation when born – this is in line with our Tiny Lives training. (2024-25)

This information supports us in ensuring a smooth transition into the Kesh Community Nursery for every child and helps s/he to feel that s/he is known to those caring for her/him and their parents feel that we are approachable and that we work as a team. (Please refer to the Transition Policy for further details.)

The mechanisms used to facilitate two-way sharing of information with parents are listed below:

- Initial parental liaison as detailed above
- Each child is given a 'Welcome to Kesh Community Nursery' booklet with photos of the key areas, staff and some of the activities and routines they will encounter in September to include their name and symbol
- Each parent is invited to join our Seesaw Journal app 'Home Class' from mid-May and encouraged to share photographs or information with staff/other families through this platform.
- Parents will be invited to a parent teacher meeting in late October to talk to Mrs. Read to discuss their child's progress, talk about key concerns, if any, and to celebrate their achievements. At this meeting the parents will be invited to look at the child's learning journey through our Seesaw App, discuss their progress, and are invited to make their own comments to add to the records beyond what we have been doing to date at the bottom of our interview notes.
- Parents are free to make appointments at any point during the year to discuss their child's progress at length either in person or over the telephone, or daily at collection times for shorter consultations or sharing of information – all such communications are added to the children's records
- Parental Stay and Play sessions are facilitated through our Big Bedtime Read, Ages and Stages and Happy Healthy Kids themes with Getting Ready to Learn Initiative.
- Home link activities - whenever activities are sent home eg GRtL, parents will be invited to comment on how their child enjoyed the activity and how they feel that their learning is developing to include baseline and end of programme questionnaires. They are also encouraged to send in photographs on Seesaw of the children carrying out their home learning packs.

Implementation of Policy

The Nursery will adopt the following strategies to observe/assess each of the children;

1. Observation – notes made and recorded in each child's progress profile on Seesaw.
As per curricular guidance: ***'record this information regularly and systematically, including details on each child's strengths, interests and areas for development;'*** from these observations we will then create a bank of actions for specific children and incorporate these into our planning.
2. The NI Pre-school Curricular guidance states: staff are to:
 - ***'adopt a flexible approach to observations that allows for the unpredictable reactions of children to the activities offered (this provides some of the most detailed insights into each child as an individual);'***
 - ***record both planned and spontaneous observations;'***

- Questioning and Discussions – Members of staff will use appropriate techniques in discussion and questioning (using Elkan ‘4 statements to one question’ technique where possible) to ascertain and evaluate each child’s learning and progress)

The Pre-School Curricular guidance states: ‘observe the children’s play and use of language so that a holistic and accurate picture emerges of each child’s progress across each of the six Areas of Learning’

3. Video and Photos – Images will be recorded of children’s work and achievements as well as their play and recorded descriptions and filed in their Seesaw profile.

What to Observe (as stated in Preschool Guidance document):

‘Planned observations should be a part of short-term planning. The six Areas of Learning or planned activities may be the starting point. However, children’s levels of well-being and involvement are highest when they are engaged in activities they have chosen themselves, so including observations of these will lead to a more accurate picture of the child.

For example, child-centred observations may focus on their:

- ***levels of well-being and involvement;***
- ***ability to recognise and begin to manage emotions and feelings;***
- ***natural interests or current passions;***
- ***ability to play indoors and outdoors;***
- ***interaction with peers and other adults;***
- ***verbal and non-verbal communication with peers and adults;***
- ***potential for development;***
- ***ability to concentrate, persevere, use initiative and reflect; and***
- ***use of resources and care for equipment.***

Ongoing Observations

This will be the most productive form of information gathering.

All staff are responsible for recording, in an ongoing way, the significant steps forward taken by children in their learning and development as highlighted above – staff will have 2 key children to observe daily but other observations noted should also be recorded.

These observations will be recorded as soon after they are made as possible and, where appropriate either electronically ie videos/photos of them at work/their creations/interactions or on post-its, which are then uploaded onto Seesaw, so that they can be used effectively to inform planning for the next steps in learning; if a child is aware that information about her/him is being recorded, it is shared with the child and where practical they can add their own audio recording to describe what they have been doing/have learned.

Confidentiality and Safeguarding Information

- Staff must ensure that confidential and safeguarding information must be stored safely, confidentially and appropriately. This includes records and reports kept in our locked cupboard in the staff office and PLPs are saved on c2k system. Any general reports that are used in daily teaching and planning can be saved on Seesaw AFTER HAVING ALL CONFIDENTIAL ELEMENTS REDACTED (see also e-safety policy)
- Staff must ensure that sensitive information, whether face to face or by phone call, is discussed in a private space

The Nursery will retain a separate 'Staff Only' Class wherein we record our daily observations. We will share children's assessment records and observations with parents at parent teacher interview or upon request.

As part of our transition policy the Pre-School Transition report and any SEN/health/external agencies records if appropriate, with parental consent, will be sent to the child's new school and shared with the child's new teacher to ensure a smooth transition at the end of the nursery year.

Equal Opportunity

- We will actively promote a celebration and respect of the diversity of our families.
- Staff will differentiate observations, assessment and record keeping through resources, paperwork, support or expectation to meet the needs of the individual children.
- Our Learning Support Co-ordinator Mrs. E Gamble will liaise with Nursery staff to support us in seeking additional support where deemed necessary e.g. RISE, Speech and Language, Educational Psychology etc supporting us in completing referrals and Personal Learning Plans.
- Each morning staff discuss how best to implement interventions to support targeted children to reach their learning potential.

Resources

- Seesaw Learning Journal Class App on both staff ipads and nursery laptop – all only accessible by code for confidentiality
- Policies are kept centrally in the Policy Folder in the Staff office, on the Nursery laptop in the staff work area and backed up on the c2k system remotely.
- Observation, planning, assessment and record keeping profiles are kept in the staff office area either in a locked cupboard for confidential paper records in line with GDPR or staff iPads which also return to the staff office for charging and uploading at the end of each day's session.

- Staff avail of as many professional development courses/opportunities as is practicable to include planning meetings, Baker and SDD days
- We want to ensure that staff feel confident and comfortable to observe, assess, keep records including profiles of children's learning indoors and outdoors. We will do this by providing guidance and support to any new staff members re our processes and standards, keeping abreast of the latest thinking re this area.

Responsibilities, management and coordination

- The overall responsibility for planning and progress lies with the nursery teacher, Mrs. Read.
- All staff are responsible for ensuring observations, assessment and record keeping are kept to a high standard in their class with ultimate responsibility lying with Mrs Read (Class Teacher) and the SLT.
- Annually, the teacher, Mrs. Read, evaluates the class' progress and provides feedback to the Principal, Mr. Stewart, the BoG and SLT.
- The LSC is responsible for ensuring all staff are aware of how to differentiate for the needs of children with SEN particularly in light of the ongoing changes to the Code of Practice.