learning stories in southampton

Observing and assessing the learning and development of babies and young children in the early years foundation stage

Guidance notes for practitioners

...assessment is:
"the ways in which, in our everyday practice, we observe children's learning, strive to understand it, and then put our understanding to good use."

Mary Jane Drummond (1993) Assessing Children's Learning
From Assessment in Early Childhood Settings - Learning Stories, Margaret Carr

introduction to learning stories in Southampton

'Learning Stories' is Southampton's response to the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage which became statutory for all early years settings in September 2008.

It embodies and embeds the principles and practice of good observational assessment and record keeping which is vital to the health, wellbeing and development of all our children.

The child, supported by their family, is at the heart of the stories and their stories inform provision made by the early years setting they are attending and the support given to the setting by the Local Authority.

'The Big Picture' shows how careful analysis, using the documents in this guidance, informs planning in the setting for children's learning and development and how, through support for the setting, the Local Authority will accomplish it's duty to raise outcomes for children in Southampton.

Creating the Stories

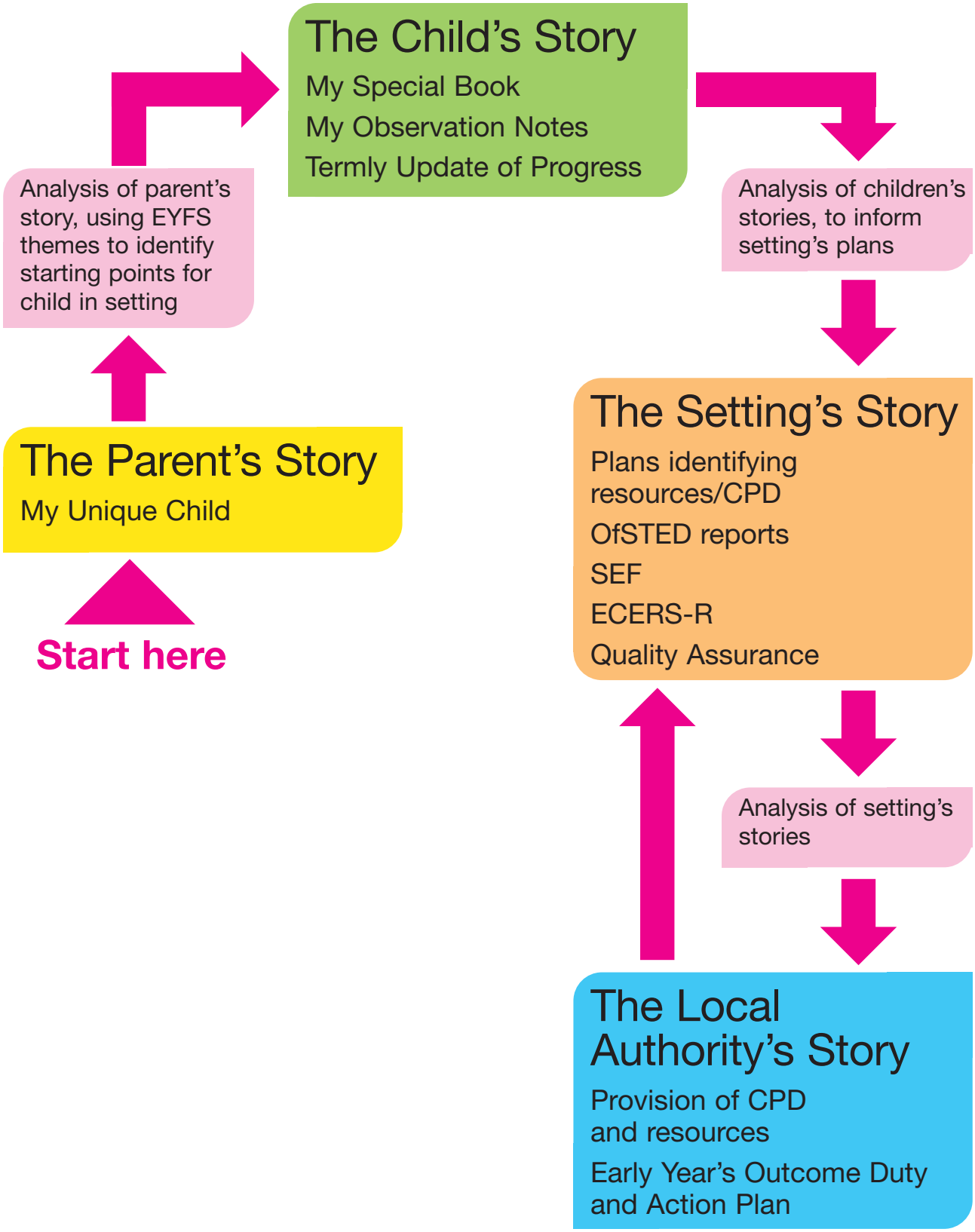
These Guidance Notes for practitioners outline the processes involved in creating effective Learning Stories. Each section is introduced with an overview statement and then gives guidance on how to complete the associated part of the stories.

Assessment **must** be based on observations of children engaged in appropriate activities or provision for their age/stage of development. It is also **vital** that practitioners are fully aware of the stages of development of their children in order to plan and provide appropriate activities and experiences that will meet their needs.

The processes and skills involved in producing Learning Stories are supported by both targeted and continuous training and professional development from the Early Years Support Team including setting based support from Early Years Support Teachers and Development Workers.

The Early Years Support Team
September 2008

the big picture



the parent's story

'Parents know their children intimately. For practitioners, therefore, building a close, trusting and reciprocal relationship with parents needs to begin before a child starts in a setting. Parents need to be involved as part of the ongoing assessment process, sharing their views and observations about their child's development with practitioners and being involved in planning what opportunities and experiences to offer the child next.'

Good Practice Guidance, EYFS

Card

the parent's story

My Unique Child

This booklet is designed to enable the practitioner to gain an overview of the child's learning and development so far, as seen by their parent/carer, by using a selection of information gathering questions. It can be used when a child starts at a setting whatever their age.

Some information may already be gathered on a settings' admission form, in which case this can be filled in by the practitioner before talking with the parent.

My Unique Child is an important first step in the building of relationships with families, and practitioners should work alongside parents. Parents will probably want to see the booklet beforehand so that they know the sort of information that is needed in order to get a picture of their child.

The following pages are taken from 'My Unique Child' and provide notes and prompts in *red* to assist practitioners. They are **not to be read or used as a checklist with which to question parents**. Questioning needs to be sensitive and must take into account the age and stage of development of the child.

my unique child

Please attach a photo
either one supplied by the parent
or one you take on entry

Photo

This book is all about

Child's name

.....

"Every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self assured."

Early Years Foundation Stage – A Unique Child

This book is all about ..... *Child's name* .....

Date of birth ..... *Child's date of birth* .....

It has been completed by ..... *Parent/Carer's name and Practitioner's name, if applicable* .....

to help ..... *Name of Early Years Setting* .....
care for my child and provide for their future learning

I understand that this book will be the start of my child's Learning Story and I am happy for this information to be shared with other people involved in their care and education.

Signature/s .....

Date ..... *When majority of information was gathered and booklet completed* .....

This book…

- Celebrates your child's learning journey so far.
- Values you as your child's prime educator.
- Indicates the starting point for the setting and where early years practitioners can begin to make a contribution to your child's learning.

Please feel free to add any photos, especially of your child growing up.

all about my child

Our family

Please let us know about the important people in your child's life.
This could include brothers and sisters, grandparents, childminder or your friends.

What is your child's position in the family?

Is he/she first, second, third child? This could be recorded 1st of 3 children… or 2nd of 4… or only child. Or Parents/Carers may wish to list the children in the family with names & ages

Please let us know about any pets, favourite toys, games or activities or interests.

There are more detailed questions later on regarding games activities and interests

Important events in your family life, including your child's birth.

The Parents/Carers may want to share information about their family that might be useful

Are there any important celebrations, festivals or events that you share as a family?

Photos of my child and family

Encourage the family to attach any photos they might like to include of their child, family members, their child growing up etc.

My child's physical development

Please let us know about your child's physical development so far.

Some questions you may like to ask could include:
At what age approximately did they start to sit? crawl? climb? walk? run? jump?
Start eating solid foods? feed themselves? use a beaker or open top cup?
(Add your own questions - you will think of other information you will need too)

Remember: IT IS UP TO YOU TO CONSIDER WHICH QUESTIONS ARE APPROPRIATE BASED ON THE AGE/STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD. What might be an appropriate question at 12 months of age such as 'I see that he is walking already, when did he first get on his feet?' would not be appropriate for a three year old!

My child's health and habits

Please let us know whether your child sleeps well, has a good appetite and is in generally good health.

Some questions you might like to ask could include:
When does their child sleep?, for how long?
What are their favourite foods and drinks?
How established are toileting routines?
Have they had any significant illnesses?

Other things my child can do for themselves:

This may include dressing/undressing, toileting, hand washing, choosing toys to play with etc.

My child's moods and feelings

Please let us know how your child shows their emotions such as happiness, sadness, anger, excitement, frustration, love and affection.

E.g. cuddles? smiles? throws things?

Is there anything that worries your child or that they are sensitive about?

This could include things such as loud noises, bright lights, unfamiliar people/places, animals or anything that may upset their child.

My child's speech and language

Please let us know things like whether your child talks a lot.
Do you understand what they say?
Do they use any special words we need to know?
Do they communicate using signs?

Remember to ask the parent/carer if their child understands what is said to them and is able to follow simple instructions as appropriate to their age/stage of development.

If your child is learning English as an additional language, would you describe him/her as:
(please circle)

New to English

Becoming familiar with English

Becoming a confident user of English

A fluent user of English?

What is/are the language(s) your family speak and that your child uses/understands?

It is important to know what language a child uses/is used to at home. Some children may speak or understand more than one language other than English. You should ensure the name of the language(s) is recorded here.

E.g. Punjabi……Polish……Urdu……Farsi……Schona

NOT THE NAME OF THE COUNTRY THE CHILD OR THEIR FAMILY ORIGINATE FROM OR THE NAME OF THEIR RELIGION!

Playing and learning

Please let us know what your child enjoys most
Playing alone, with other children or playing alongside others – this will depend on the age and stage of development of your child.

What are their favourite games or activities which keep them absorbed for a long time
(not videos or TV programmes!)

What are their favourite books, songs or rhymes?

What do they like to explore and investigate?
Do they sometimes get into "mischief"?

Have you and your child attended, or are you currently attending any groups, such as SureStart, Stay and Play, Parent and Toddlers etc?
Please tell us which ones.

My child's behaviour

At different ages and stages all children have times when they can be difficult or get frustrated or angry because they cannot make you understand what they want. Apart from these times is there anything that worries you or we need to know about your child's behaviour?

Are they developing an awareness of danger?

E.g. Holding hands to cross the road

Do they understand simple rules for safety?

Is there anything else you would like us to know about your child and/or family?

Thank you for completing this book.
This important information will be used to continue all the learning your child has done at home whilst they are in an early years setting.
We look forward to working with you!

Please talk to us and tell us if any information changes at any time. This may include things about family/home circumstances as well as talking to us about things that your child can do or is interested in.

What does 'My Unique Child' tell us about this child to help us plan as they start at our setting?

(To be completed by the Early Years Setting)

IN THE FOLLOWING EYFS THEME SECTIONS, YOU NOW NEED TO SUMMARISE THE INFORMATION THE PARENT/CARER HAS GIVEN YOU IN THE BOOKLET.

A Unique Child

1.1 Child Development 1.2 Inclusive Practice
1.3 Keeping Safe 1.4 Health & Wellbeing

Refer back to the information provided against the blue highlighted sections in the booklet and use this to draw out any relevant points under this section. Make key notes about the child.

Positive Relationships

2.1 Respecting Each Other 2.2 Parents as Partners
2.3 Supporting Learning 2.4 Key Person

Refer back to the information provided against the purple highlighted sections in this booklet and use this to draw out any relevant points under this section. Make key notes about the child.

This information should now be used to inform your planning

Enabling Environments

3.1 Observation, Assessment & Planning 3.2 Supporting Every Child
3.3 The Learning Environment 3.4 The Wider Context

Refer back to the information provided against the green highlighted sections in this booklet and use this to draw out any relevant points under this section. Make key notes about the child.

Learning and Development

4.1 Play & Exploration 4.2 Active Learning
4.3 Creativity & Critical Thinking 4.4 Areas of Learning & Development

Refer back to the information provided against the orange highlighted sections in this booklet and use this to draw out any relevant points under this section.

This information should now be used to inform your planning

Additional notes/ideas

This information should now be used to inform your planning

Southampton Early Years Development & Childcare Partnership

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the child's story

My Special Book

My Observation Notes

Card

the child's story

'From the earliest age, the children should be involved and this is part of the assessment for learning process. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 12 states the right of the child to express an opinion and to have that opinion taken into account, in any matter or procedure affecting the child. Sharing the child's record together provides an ideal opportunity for celebrating achievements and discussing future plans. Even with babies it is a valuable chance to delight together in their achievements.'

Good Practice Guidance, EYFS

My Special Book

'My Special Book' is a collection of photos and/or things the child does, selected by the child and/or practitioner and annotated to give context. The child and practitioner create the book together and the child is encouraged to take an active part in selecting things for the book and the practitioner shares the process with the child.

The practitioner also selects contributions for the book that show **significant learning/development**. The child has opportunities to look through and talk about the book with the practitioner and their parent /carer. The parent/carer has access to the child's 'Special Book' on a regular basis and can add contributions to the book if they want to.

When working with babies and very young children, the process will obviously be more practitioner and parent led. As children are more able to become involved, then the practitioner needs to involve them at the appropriate level. It is important however to involve the child as much as possible, whatever the age.

'My Special Book' has no specific format and could be contained in a file or scrapbook etc. Many early years settings already have successful formats which they can continue to use.

However, the page inserts which will need to be included are at the end of this section. These should be photocopied and inserted into your setting's 'My Special Book' format.

The following pages are the inserts for 'My Special Book' but have been annotated to provide notes and prompts for practitioners in *red*.

NB – Appendix 1 - Gathering Evidence of Children's Learning throughout each child's time in the Foundation Stage, may be useful to practitioners when thinking about issues related to My Special Book and My Observation Notes.

my special book

Add a current photo of the child

A photo of me

A book about ..... *Child's name* .....

This book was made between

..... *Date book started* .....and..... *Date book finished* .....

*THIS SHEET **MUST** BE THE FIRST PAGE OF ANY SPECIAL BOOK AS IT SETS THE TONE FOR THE BOOK*

My name is ..... *Child's name*

This is my special book.

It's all about me.

It's about things I do and things I say.

I can help make this book.

I can help put things in it like photos or special things I do that I think are good or interesting.

Sometimes adults will put things in My Special Book.

They might write about the things I do or say.

Sometimes my family and friends might share My Special Book and see all the great things I've been doing and learning about.

*But best of all, this is My Special Book, and it's all about **ME**!*

*THESE ARE SUMMARY SHEETS THAT MUST BE COMPLETED AND ADDED TO THE CHILD'S SPECIAL BOOK AT LEAST THREE TIMES A YEAR. PRACTITIONERS WILL COMPLETE THIS **WITH THE CHILD** (OR, IN THE CASE OF VERY YOUNG CHILDREN/BABIES, BASED ON THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF THE CHILD AND IN DISCUSSION WITH PARENTS/CARERS).*

Things I like/am interested in at the moment:

This is where you write what the child tells you about the things they like at the moment

Who I like to play/be with:

This is where you write what the child tells you about who they like to play with or be with at the moment

This is what I think about My Special Book:

Write here what the child says or how they react to their special book when you share it with them. Sharing the special book with the child should happen regularly as they should be involved in selecting things for it on an on-going basis.

This section - 'This is what I think about My Special Book' - can have notes added as part of the ongoing sharing process if desired, but should definitely be completed three times a year (at the end of a term, if appropriate to your setting) with the child (if appropriate to age) in a one to one sharing time.

If a child expresses a desire to write something themselves, then this should be encouraged and then annotated to aid meaning.

This is what.....
Parent/Carer's name
thinks about My Special Book:

e.g. mummy, daddy, nanny - whichever family member has looked at the book

This is where the parent/carer writes a message to their child to say what they think about the book. Some parents/carers may prefer the Key Person to scribe for them.

Encourage the parent/carer to write the comment as a message to the child e.g. 'I think your special book is really fantastic. I like the photo of you in the puddles. You are having a great time at nursery! You are so clever at making paintings too'.

This is what.....
Key Person's name
thinks about My Special Book:

This is where the Key Person writes a message to the child to say what they think about the book.

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my special book

A photo of me

A book about .....

This book was made between
.....and.....

My name is .....

This is my special book.

It's all about me.

It's about things I do and things I say.

I can help make this book.

I can help put things in it like photos or special things I do that I think are good or interesting.

Sometimes adults will put things in
My Special Book.

They might write about the things I do or say.

Sometimes my family and friends might share My Special Book and see all the great things I've been doing and learning about.

But best of all, this is My Special Book,
*and it's all about **ME**!*

Things I like/am interested in at the moment:

Who I like to play/be with:

This is what I think about My Special Book:

This is what.....
thinks about My Special Book:

This is what.....
thinks about My Special Book:

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the child's story

'If educators observe children carefully and thoughtfully with wide eyes and open minds they will be showing children the respect they deserve, both as people and as learners.

Children approach their learning with wide eyes and open minds, so their educators too need wide eyes and open minds to see clearly and to understand what they see... it is first crucial to ***see*** *what is* ***really happening*** *and not what adults sometimes suppose is happening. Children and the things they do need to be seen in the whole context and adults working with them must be open to seeing what* ***exists*** *not what their professional mind tells them they* ***should*** *see. Educators need wide eyes too, to guard against stereotypes and to combat prejudices about capabilities of children based on such factors as their gender, race, language, culture or disability. Watching children thinking is one of the greatest privileges of any educator, and there is wide agreement that close observation is an essential process of working with young children.'*

Respectful Educators and Capable Learners – Cathy Nutbrown 1996

the child's story

My Observation Notes

'My Observation Notes' are the Key Person's observation notes, collected over a period of time, three times a year, based on significant things that the child does and says.

These comprise of ongoing, informal observations collected and ordered chronologically and annotated to show Areas of Learning & Development by the Key Person and at least two focussed Learning Story observations. You may need to make many more for children about whom you have any concerns.

These notes may also include an Individual Education Plan for a child with Additional Needs and dated notes to refer to information from any other professionals involved with supporting the child.

Parents/carers should be encouraged to contribute by providing observations and information about changes to the child's interests and developing skills.

NB. Observations and assessments need to be used on a day to day/week to week basis, to inform and influence what you provide and plan for your children. See APPENDIX 1 for information to support you with using observations and assessments to feed into Short Term planning.

The following pages are from 'My Observation Notes' – guidance notes for practitioners are written in *red*.

my observation notes

summer

Child's name .....

Date of birth .....

Notes collected from ..... *Date notes started* ..... to ..... *Date notes ended* .....

Setting name ..... *The name of your setting* .....

Key person(s) ..... *The name(s) of the Key Person(s)* .....

Attendance Pattern *Indicate usual/agreed attendance pattern, with times*

	am	pm	Actual Attendance	Attending any other settings?
Mon			Out of	Setting name(s)/ Contact number(s)
Tue			*	*If attending another setting(s) record setting(s) here & the contact numbers*
Wed			possible attendances	
Thur			**	Key person(s) *Record names of child's Key Person(s) at other setting(s) here*
Fri			were attended	

Generally arrives on time? Always Mostly Rarely

circle one based on broad average of punctuality

*For attendance, total up the number of attendances the child could have attended for the time period of the observation notes at *, then total up the number of attendances the child actually made at ***

Ongoing significant observations

- *Place sticker/post it observations here in chronological order i.e. the date order in which the observations were made.*
- *Examples given here are for various ages and not for one child.*

E.g. *5/3/08 – Scott - outdoor play. 'Look! I found a beetle under this stone' went & found magnifier to look closely. It looks big now. You can see its legs!'*

E.g. *5/4/08 – Simran - treasure basket. Reaching forwards to pull ribbons from the basket. Grasping wooden spoon and putting into mouth.*

- *This is also where you may add information that the parent/carer tells you about something the child has done/can do at home or that they tell you their child is interested in.*

E.g. *14/5/08 – Josh - Mum reports that he is really into digging as they have been planting seeds this weekend.*

E.g. *19/6/08 – Gurpreet - Dad says he keeps singing five currant buns at home.*

E.g. *21/6/08 – Mina - Mum says she is pulling herself up onto her feet using the sofa as support*

- *If the child has any other outside agencies involved, and you receive information, reports or strategies from them, you should add the name of the agency and the date information was shared and reference this to any written information/guidance held on the child's file.*

E.g. *22/06/08 – Katie - Portage report received. Refer to SEN file.*

E.g. *4/07/08 – Harry - Area Senco visit – refer to SEN file for suggested strategies*

Links to areas of learning and development/notes

Write abbreviations for most relevant area(s) of learning and development here, to correspond with each observation made – PSED, CLL, PSRN, KUW, PD, CD + any additional notes you feel relevant

KUW CLL PSRN

PD KUW PSRN

learning journey - focussed observation 1

(5 minutes max) *AT LEAST 2 OF THESE ARE MADE THREE TIMES A YEAR*

Date ..... *Date observation made* ..... **Observer** ..... *Name of adult making the observation* .....

Context for learning

Where the learning took place

E.g. Lunchtime, visit to the park, sand tray during free play, adult led ring game outside, exploring treasure baskets etc… as applicable to the activity/experience

1. What did they do/say

(PTO to continue writing if required)

Write your observations here and overleaf as required

This is where you note exactly what children say or do as you observe them, ***not*** *the learning that is taking place*

2. Links to EYFS

PSED CLL PSRN KUW PD CD

- *Identify the area(s) of learning & development that are applicable to what was observed.*
- *Refer to the aspects of learning & development matters as applicable*
- *This is where you note the* ***learning*** *that has taken place.*

Next steps in provision

Based on 1 & 2, what might you provide to take the learning forward at a future date?
E.g. Provide adult support to extend language, extend child's interests into another area/activity, provide more opportunities to….

- **Further examples similar to these types of observations are available on the EYFS CD Rom:**
- **From the main screen click on 'Enabling Environments'.**
- **Click on '3.1, Observation, Assessment & Planning'.**
- **Look in the right hand, green column under 'Resources'.**
- **Click on the selection of 'Learning Stories' available as examples.**

my observation notes

'So Listen to Me...

Children are constantly making maps, not geographical maps, but maps of their ever changing understanding. Every time children encounter a fresh experience they include it in their map, matching it with previous experience so that it makes sense.

With so many experiences available to them, rich, diverse, confusing, contradictory, exhilarating, troubling and puzzling as many of them are, children are eager to share their perceptions and their growing understanding. They can do this in many ways: through their talk, questions, drawing, modelling, writing, when they make stories and play. But they need an audience to listen to their voices: a loving, observant, listening, responsive audience, otherwise there will be no one to hear them, no-one to value their developing world maps.'

Learning: what matters to children Rich, Drummond and Myer 2008

my observation notes

Update of Progress

'Update of Progress' provides a summary of the child's progress at least three times a year using all the evidence contained in 'My Special Book' and 'My Observation Notes' and the practitioner's knowledge of the child.

The practitioner uses the summary to suggest 'Next Steps' in planning provision for the child to encourage continued learning and development.

This process/update is shared with the parent/carer at a planned 'parent/carer chat' held three times a year. This will help to further develop the 'positive relationships' with them and enable the practitioner to put learning and development in context for the family. It is up to settings to organise how they will achieve these meetings.

When families become more used to learning stories, practitioners may find that the families may wish to look at 'My Special Book' and 'My Observation Notes' more often and informally too, as part of their general practice e.g. When dropping off or picking up their child they may spend a few moments looking at things in the book/notes by themselves.

The following pages are from 'My Observation Notes - Update of Progress' – guidance notes for practitioners are written in *red*.

update of progress

Significant progress within the Areas of Learning and Development

(With reference to EYFS Development Matters & Look, Listen & Note as applicable to this child)

Date ..... *Date that you complete the information on these pages*

Based on *My Special Book, My Observation Notes*, discussions with parents/carers, other agencies and practitioner's professional judgement, our observations show that: *Name of child*

Personal, Social & Emotional Development

The following six areas of learning and development boxes are where you write simple summary statements about the child, based on the information gathered from My Special Book, My Observation notes, discussions with parents/carers and/or other agencies(where applicable) and from your own professional judgements of the child.

You should use the Development Matters and Look Listen and Note columns in the EYFS Practice Guidance to help you write these simple statements.

Dispositions & attitudes
p.24-26
Self confidence/self-esteem
p.27-29
Making relationships
p.30-32
Behaviour & self-control
p.33-34
Self care
p.35-36
Sense of community
p.37-38

Communication, Language & Literacy

You do not need to copy out Development Matters statements. However, if a statement fits as a descriptor of the child's achievement then it may be useful to use it.

As each child is unique, you will find that you have less observations/information for some areas of learning and development than others. You will be able to address this when thinking about 'next steps'.

Language for communication
p.41-46
Language for thinking
p.47-49
Linking sounds & letters
p.50-52
Reading
p.53-56
Writing
p.57-58
Handwriting
p.59-60

Problem Solving, Reasoning & Numeracy

Numbers as labels for counting
p.63-66
Calculating
p.67-69
Shape, space & measures
p.70-74

THESE ARE THE ASPECTS FOR LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT TO HELP YOU REFERENCE PAGES IN THE EYFS GUIDANCE

Knowledge & Understanding of the World	Exploration & investigation p.77-78 Designing & making skills p.79-80 ICT p.81-82 Time p.83-84 Place p.85-86 Communities p.87-89
Physical Development	Movement & space p.92-96 Health & bodily awareness p.97-100 Using equipment & materials p.101-103
Creative Development	Being creative p.106-107 Exploring media & materials p.108-110 Creating music & dance p.111-112 Developing imagination p.113-114

Next Steps....Future Opportunities....

Based on what you know about the child, what do you, as a practitioner; need to do to help the child make future progress?

- *Are there areas of learning that need to be developed by providing more opportunities or by building on interests/skills in other areas?*
- *Are additional resources required? Do you need better or more focussed observations? Does the child have a particular skill?*
- *Is more adult/child interaction needed? Do you need to focus on a part of the daily routine?*
- *Do you need to improve any elements of 'A Unique Child', 'Positive Relationships', 'Enabling Environments' or 'Learning and Development'?*

Parent/Carer comment:

This is where the parent/carer can make their comment/give their opinion about their child's progress and how they feel the setting is meeting the needs of their child. Some parents/carers may prefer the Key Person to scribe for them.

Signed - Parent/Carer ..... **Date** *Date shared* .....

Signed - Key Person ..... **Date** *Date shared* .....

the setting's story

'…through the regular practice of systemic observation, educators learn to value the learning that they see going on before their eyes…..They will be able to use their observations to plan their next steps, taking into account of children's growing understanding and expanding horizons, and matching their plans to children's interests and concerns.'

First Hand Experience: what matters to children
Rich et al 2005

Card

Next Steps in Provision

The focus now moves to using the information from the children's stories to inform next steps in provision for the setting or individual age group room/unit within a day nursery, where these groups are separate (e.g. baby room, toddler room, pre school room).

The planning needs to link into the four themes of the EYFS. Settings should highlight actions required to develop their practice/provision based on the knowledge of the needs of the children gained from their Learning Stories.

This should include implications for:

- **environment**
- **activities/experiences**
- **adult deployment**
- **adult/child interaction**
- **additional resources**
- **and staff training needs**

Information related to OfSTED reports, Self Evaluation, ECERS-R/ITERS and Quality Assurance, where applicable, will also help inform planning for next steps in provision.

The leader(s)/manager(s) of each setting need to lead and manage this task. This will include leaders of different age groups/units within a day nursery (e.g. baby leader, toddler leader, pre-school leader).

The process should involve the whole team feeding information from their key children's Learning Stories into the planning needs for the whole setting/individual age groups/units.

the local authority's story

Early Years Outcomes Duty

The Childcare Act 2006 places a duty on Local Authorities to improve outcomes for young children and reduce inequalities between those with the poorest outcomes and their peers.

Closing the gap

'The improvements of the past decade have not delivered equal chances of success for all children and young people. So we must do much more to ensure that under-achieving groups…, who are most often left behind, make better progress.'

Guidance for Local Authorities on Setting Education Performance Targets

Card

the local authority's story

To support settings in developing their practice of using Learning Stories to assess children's learning and development, the Local Authority will:

- Provide materials, guidance and training.
- Use Early Years Support Teachers and Development Workers to assist settings with all aspects of the Learning Stories process.
- Monitor settings' practice of observation, assessment and planning through Learning Stories.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the Learning Stories approach and review/adapt elements of the process in the light of the evaluations.

Through analysis of the setting's plans the Local Authority will be able to:

- Plan for Continued Professional Development, support and training.
- Focus and plan the work of the Early Years Support Team in supporting and advising settings.
- Inform progress towards Southampton's Early Years Outcomes Duty.
- Develop strategies for the Local Authority Action Plan.

The Local Authority working alongside settings, which in turn, are working in partnership with families and their children, will provide the best possible opportunity for children to achieve an excellent foundation in their early years for their future learning and development.

appendices

1. Gathering Evidence of Children's Learning

2. Linking observation and assessment to Short Term Planning

3. Liaison between settings and transitions

4. Sample transition to school letter

5. Underpinning information that supports observation and assessment, taken from Creating the Picture

6. Parent permission form

7. Parent's Leaflet

appendix 1

Gathering Evidence of Children's Learning throughout each child's time in the Foundation Stage

Observations:

- Participant observations when practitioner is involved in play with children
- Participant observations when practitioner is involved in planned adult led activities
- Incidental observations when practitioner notices something significant he or she is not involved in
- Planned 'focussed observations when practitioner stands back to observe children in independent child initiated activities

Conversations with the children

- Informal conversations and discussions
- Talking one to one with children about their learning
- Information from parents

Samples

- Drawings, mark making
- Photos of models, paintings etc
- Photos of children carrying out a particular activity, showing the learning process

Evidence of learning and achievement collected by others involved with the child e g therapists

Evidence of learning and achievement collected in other settings that the child attends eg childminder, day nursery

Adapted from
'Observing and Assessing for the Foundation Stage Profile'
V. Hutchin 2003

appendix 2

How do my observations and assessments influence my SHORT TERM planning?

Use these statements/questions to assist you…

In order to meet the needs of my group of children are there any changes, extensions or improvements that I need to plan for….

- **environment or routine?**
- **organisation/deployment of adults?**
- **activities/experiences?**
- **adult/child interactions?**
- **training and/resources?**

IMPORTANT NOTE

It is vital when planning that you are fully aware of the stages of development of your children in order to provide appropriate activities and experiences that will meet their needs.

'The challenge for practitioners is to ensure that children's learning and development occur as an outcome of their individual interests and abilities and that planning for learning and development takes account of these.'

EYFS Card 4.4

You must be able to use the information in Development Matters, Look, Listen & Note, Effective Practice and Planning & Resourcing ,to guide what you are providing and ensure it is suited to the stages and needs of your children.

appendix 3

Liaison Between Settings and Transitions

3.4 Enabling Environments – The Wider Context - Transitions and Continuity

- Children may move between several different settings in the course of a day, a week, a month or a year.
- Children's social, emotional and educational needs are central to any transition between one setting and another or within one setting.
- Some children and their parents will find transition times stressful while others will enjoy the experience.
- Effective communication between settings is key to ensuring that children's needs are met and there is continuity in their learning.

EYFS

What are the implications for our practice and Learning Stories?

Liaison between Settings

Children may attend one or more settings. It is important to know which settings these are and to have a record of them, with contact numbers and names. My Observation Notes has a box on the front cover to record this information each term.

You must ensure that where children attend another setting you regularly discuss the children's development and learning records and any other relevant information.

If a child transfers from one setting to another then all of their Learning Stories information needs to transfer with them. In best practice, the setting sending on the information would arrange to talk through the child's records and share information face to face with the new setting, to ensure the best continuity.

appendix 3

Transitions within Settings

Children in Day Nurseries may transfer between different age groups e.g. babies to toddlers, toddlers to pre-school. It is vital that practitioners share information and discuss the child using Learning Stories as part of this process. When a child moves to a new age group, the most recent Learning Stories for the child should transfer with them. This will assist in planning for their needs as they move on. At such points of transition the setting should consider whether previous Learning Story materials like My Special Book and My Observation Notes should be retained by the setting or passed on to the child's parents/carers.

Transition to School

In September, settings should remind parents/carers to apply for school places. The poster from the Local Authority should be displayed and brought to the attention of parents/carers.

In March settings should ask parents/carers where children have been allocated a school place. The setting should then inform the school – see example letter Appendix 3.

In the Summer Term, settings must attend Liaison Groups where transitions will be discussed further with the receiving schools.

By mid July, settings should ensure that the following information is passed on to the school:

My Unique Child	If completed within the past twelve months, pass this on to school.
My Observation Notes	Pass on the last 2 copies of these notes i.e. Spring & Summer
My Special Book	This should go to parents/carers. Ask them to share this with the school as their child starts at school.
SEN Information	If a child has an IEP or support strategy notes, pass copies of these on to the school.

appendix 4

Example letter for transitions to school

A Southampton Early Years Setting
10 A Street
Southampton
Tel – 023 8033 3333

20 March 2008

Dear Headteacher,
We have been informed by parents/carers that the following children will be starting at your school in September:

Add children's names and dates of birth here

We would be very pleased for your staff to visit them here at our setting as part of the transition process. We would also like to find out about your school's plan for induction.

During July, we will send information about the children to you in order to assist with planning for their needs as they start at school. This consists of Observation Notes and an Update of Progress. Additionally, we will give a record called 'My Special Book' which contains photos and pieces of 'work', to the parents/carers. We will ask them to show this to you as their child starts in their new class. This is a more visual record of children's progress which should be read as part of their observation notes.

Please do not hesitate to contact us should you require any further information. We look forward to hearing from you and working with you as the children move on to school.

Yours faithfully,

Mrs A Practitioner
Leader of a Southampton Early Years Setting

appendix 5

The 'Big Ideas' Underpinning Effective Observation and Assessment in the EYFS

Taken from **'Creating the picture'** - Primary National Strategy
Produced by the Department for Education and Skills
www.dfes.gov.uk

There are four key themes in the EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) Framework for improving the outcomes for children from birth to five:

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

These themes have important implications for assessment and record-keeping and consequent planning for each child's needs. They inform the principles that underpin effective assessment practice.

They require practitioners to:

- recognise children as competent and influential individuals who need to be involved in their own assessment;
- work with other adults who are important to the child;
- recognise each child's individual route to learning;
- build a broad picture of the child which ranges widely, incorporating and interconnecting all the areas of Learning and Development.

The EYFS states that practitioners should:

- make systematic observations and assessments of each child's achievements, interests and learning styles;
- use these observations and assessments to identify learning priorities and plan relevant and motivating learning experiences for each child;
- match their observations to the expectations of the early learning goals.

This means that practitioners must implement clear, principled approaches and a seamless continuum of assessment from the child's first days in a setting to the end of the EYFS. These approaches should take into account the transitions that children make from setting to setting.

A description of the principles for observational assessment and record-keeping

Observational assessment and record-keeping involve building up a manageable picture of what a child knows, understands, feels and can do in order to:

- plan the next steps in development and learning;
- plan the provision to enable these next steps to be successful (formative assessment);
- help children as they are learning (assessment for learning);
- mark staging posts in a child's and groups of children's development and learning (summative assessment);
- evaluate the impact of the quality of provision, environment and the level of practitioner training on development and learning (assessment of the conditions for learning).

The impact of observational assessment is not measurable by its weight. It is the use to which the practitioner puts their observations that is important. Ongoing observation, carried out in a range of contexts and across the areas of Learning and Development, will be the key way of assessing children's needs in EYFS. The approaches used for young children should align with what is required by the EYFSP (formative assessment during the final year of the EYFS, often a reception class). The systems and approaches used must grow from the needs of the very youngest children; they should not be watered-down versions of approaches appropriate for older children.

- The principles are divided into three sub-sections:
- eight principles for observational assessment;
- six principles for record-keeping;
- four principles for demonstrating progress.

A description of the eight principles for early childhood observational assessment

1. **Assessment must have a purpose**. It will enable practitioners to intervene, support and extend a child's learning as it is happening. It will inform planning for the next steps in learning for each child, deepening and extending the child's learning. Assessment captures the impact of provision on a child's development and learning and so helps practitioners review and evaluate their provision.

2. **Ongoing observation of children participating in everyday activities is the most reliable way of building up an accurate picture of what children know, understand, feel, are interested in and can do.** These individual pictures will be built up over time and in a range of contexts.

3. **Practitioners should both plan observations and be ready to capture the spontaneous but important moments.** Everyday experiences and activities will provide an almost complete picture of the child's learning, but particular planning is needed to capture important aspects of learning that may not arise every day. Other opportunities may occur that are unplanned but nevertheless should not be missed.

4. **Judgements of children's development and learning must be based on skills, knowledge, understanding and behaviour that are demonstrated consistently and independently.** Assessments cannot be reliable or accurate if they are based on one-off instances or information gleaned solely from adult-directed activities. Observational assessment should be a balance between child-initiated and adult-led activities.

5. **Effective assessment takes equal account of all aspects of the child's development and learning.** A holistic approach to assessment is necessary in order to reflect accurately the nature of children's development and to acknowledge the interrelationship between different aspects of learning.

6. **Accurate assessments are reliant upon taking account of contributions from a range of perspectives.** These will include all adults who have contact with the child in a range of contexts: the home, health professionals and so on.

7. **Assessments must actively engage parents in developing an accurate picture of the child's development.** Effective partnership, working with parents, will ensure that their vital perspective contributes to the overall description of children's development and learning.

8. **Children must be fully involved in their own assessment.** Children should be involved in discussing their activities and how they feel about them from the beginning of their time in a setting and from whatever age they start. Encouraging children to respond (using the communication method with which they are most comfortable, including where appropriate their non-verbal response), ask questions, make comments and share their own judgements about what they are learning enables them to take true ownership of their development. It also gives practitioners an invaluable insight into the patterns and process of their learning.

Putting these observational assessment principles into practice

The following section sets out the common features of good practice that will result from these principles and weaves in straightforward guidance on how to achieve this.

1. **Assessment must have a purpose.** Assessment for its own sake has no intrinsic value.

What it looks like

This principle is evident when these criteria may be observed:

- Practitioners listen to and note children's reactions to and involvement in their learning and respond in ways which support that learning there and then.
- Assessment provides an insight into how best to help a child develop and learn. What practitioners look at, listen to and note is fully considered to plan the next steps in learning.
- The effect of provision on children's development and learning is examined carefully. Practitioners use this information to investigate whether what they are doing is having a positive impact.

2. **Ongoing observation of children participating in everyday activities is the most reliable way of building up an accurate picture of what children know, understand, feel, are interested in and can do.** These individual pictures will be built up over time and in a range of contexts.

What it looks like

This is demonstrated when these criteria may be observed:

- Practitioners make systematic observations and reflect upon their interactions with children to understand each child's achievement, interests and learning styles.
- Observations and reflections capture the broad picture of children's development and learning, rather than narrow aspects.
- Observations are made in a range of contexts, for example, when children are applying their knowledge, when they are playing, eating together, going on outings, when they are engaged on their own and with others.

The only accurate – and therefore acceptable – way of assessing young children's learning is through gathering evidence from observations and information from parents, the child's own views and those of other professionals involved with the child.

3. **Practitioners should both plan observations and be ready to capture the spontaneous but important moments.** Everyday experiences and activities will provide an almost complete picture of the child's learning, but particular planning is needed to capture important aspects of learning that may not arise every day. Other opportunities may occur that are unplanned but nevertheless should not be missed.

What it looks like

This is demonstrated when these criteria may be observed:

- Practitioners organise resources and their time so they can capture the planned and the spontaneous.
- Staff, especially the Key person, are deployed to carry out good-quality observations.
- Staff realise every interaction with children is an opportunity to learn about them and to influence the quality of their learning at that moment.
- Practitioners are well trained and recognise important moments in children's development and learning.

4. **Judgements of children's development and learning must be based on skills, knowledge, understanding and behaviour that are demonstrated consistently and independently.** Assessments cannot be reliable or accurate if they are based on one-off instances or information gleaned solely from adult-directed activities.

What it looks like

This principle is demonstrated when these criteria may be observed:

- Practitioners make judgements about children's learning and plan for their next steps after considering a range of evidence displayed in different contexts and across areas of Learning and Development.
- Children are observed in adult-directed activities and in those they have initiated themselves.

5. **Effective assessment takes equal account of all aspects of the child's development and learning.** A holistic approach to assessment is necessary in order to reflect accurately the nature of children's development and acknowledge the interrelationship between different aspects of learning.

What it looks like

This principle is demonstrated when these criteria may be observed:

- Practitioners tune into the different skills children are developing. These can be linguistic, interpersonal, physical, creative, mathematical and so on.
- Assessment opportunities are exploited where these skills overlap, for example, physical, interpersonal, creative and linguistic in role-play.
- Practitioners do not set up assessments that dissect individual skills but instead reflect on all the dimensions revealed by the normal activities in the setting.

6. **Accurate assessments are reliant upon taking account of contributions from a range of perspectives.** As judgements are based on observational evidence and knowledge of the child, all adults who interact with the child, in the setting, will contribute to the process.

What it looks like

This is demonstrated when practitioners and other adults adopt these strategies:

- Understand that all their interactions with children influence their development and learning.
- Respect the range of perspectives that adults in different roles will gain about children.
- Allocate time to discuss what they know about individual children and consider the implications for the children's development and learning.

7. **Assessments must actively engage parents in developing an accurate picture of the child's development.** Effective partnership, working with parents, will ensure that their vital perspective contributes to the overall description of children's development and learning.

What it looks like

This principle is demonstrated when practitioners adopt these strategies:

- Acknowledge parents to be the prime and first educators of children.
- Engage in a two-way flow of information between family and setting, in order to meet children's needs effectively and agree next steps in learning.
- Support parents in describing their children's individual attainment.
- Talk with parents and involve them in reviews of their children's achievements, including those demonstrated at home.

8. **Children must be fully involved in their own assessment.** Encouraging children to respond, ask questions, make comments and share their own judgements about what they are learning enables them to take true ownership of their development. It also gives practitioners an invaluable insight into the patterns and processes of their learning.

What it looks like

This principle is demonstrated when these criteria are observed:

- Practitioners and children are involved in conversations about learning, which help children when they are involved in an activity, as well as when they review outcomes together.
- Adults model ways of working and discuss with children what they are trying to do in order to explore the learning.
- Children ask their own questions, talk about their thoughts and how they want to tackle a problem.
- Practitioners ask questions that encourage children to consider quality and processes of work and what to do next.

Principles for record-keeping

These principles are drawn from, and are evident in, good and effective practice in early years settings.

Record-keeping must be meaningful and have a purpose. 'Records are about getting to know the child and what the child needs.' They should be shared and used to support the growth and development of the child. They must be understandable to partners in the child's development including parents and other practitioners.

The task of keeping records must be manageable and sustainable. Practitioners should be realistic about the amount of information they collect and the systems they create. These need to be manageable as part of day-to-day practice.

Records must capture the range of children's attainment, achievement and progress. They will show the starting points and development points across the areas of learning.

Records will reflect the individuality of every child and the diversity of their backgrounds. Children have different capacities, interests and competencies and it is necessary to reflect this diversity in the type of records kept. Greater detail will be evident for one child in a particular aspect that is not necessary for another.

All significant participants in children's development and learning should contribute to the information-gathering. This will involve a wide range of people, including parents and children.

Records should be shared with the child. This is a statutory requirement of the FSP and will continue to be so for the EYFSP.

Principles for demonstrating progress

Demonstrating progress during the EYFS involves analysing a broad range of information, which is captured by ongoing assessment of children, in a range of contexts, to illustrate their progress over time and across the areas of Learning and Development. Contributions from a range of other contributors, children and their parents as well as health professionals, for example, should also be part of the information considered.

These principles are drawn from, and are evident in, good and effective practice in early years settings.

Effective practitioners will be able to identify how individuals and groups of children in their setting have developed and progressed in their learning.

Effective approaches to assessment will generate information or data that can be used for a range of purposes.

Children's progress must be identified and analysed through a range of appropriate evidence, the majority of this will be drawn from observation of child-initiated activity.

The complexity of young children's development requires practitioners and managers to be able to understand a range of information in order to draw conclusions about children's progress and the effectiveness of their provision.

Summary

Assessment, record-keeping and demonstrating progress are inextricably linked: each is dependent on the effectiveness of the others. Recurrent themes of good practice across all settings and sectors collected by the participating LAs relate to ensuring that processes of assessment, record-keeping and demonstrating progress are effective.

This is evident when the processes:

- are focused on enhancing the learning of individual and groups of children;
- involve all concerned parties, including parents and children;
- are undertaken by contributors informed about early childhood learning and development;
- create a well-rounded picture of a child's attainment;
- provide judgements based on observation-led evidence;
- recognise the individuality of each child and the diversity of children.

Work in this field should be underpinned by the values of honesty and integrity. It concerns itself with the welfare of children and is focused on helping them develop and learn as effectively as possible.

Southampton learning stories

Parent/Carer Consent

To be completed when a child starts in an early years setting

I/We understand that this setting will collect observations about my/our child and use them to help support their learning and development.

I/We understand that their Learning Story will be regularly shared with me/us and I/we will be able to contribute to it.

I/We consent to these records being kept:

Parent/Carer Name/s

Signature.....Date .....

Signature.....Date .....

To be completed before transfer to Infant/Primary School

I/We understand that their Learning Story and relevant information will be passed on to school in order to help plan for them as they start.

I/We consent to these records being passed on to school:

Parent/Carer Name/s .....

Signature.....Date .....

Signature.....Date .....

Receiving School .....

learning stories

supporting your child's learning and development

Information for Parents and Carers

The Early Years Foundation Stage sets out requirements for working with children aged 0-5 to help them develop and learn.

At this setting we use Southampton City Council's 'Learning Stories' to help us support the care, learning and development of your child.

What are 'Learning Stories'?

'Learning Stories' are a way of collecting observation notes and information about every child. The information is then used to help us understand their needs and provide for them.

What do I need to know about this?

Learning Stories is a joint process between early years' settings and families.
On the back of this leaflet you will see how **'Learning Stories'** work.

Do you want me to be involved?

Yes! We really need you to be involved by talking to us about your child, telling us about things they like and are interested in and keeping us updated about anything related to your child's needs. We also need you to meet with us from time to time to celebrate your child's progress and development.

how do learning stories work?

My Unique Child

When starting at our setting, parents/carers will be asked to complete a booklet with us called *'My Unique Child'*. This is an outline of your child, giving us your view of them and other important information as they start with us.

We will then use this valuable information to help us plan for their unique needs.

My Special Book and My Observation Notes

During the time they are here, we gather photos, pictures etc of the things your child does in *'My Special Book'*. We collect written observations of significant things we see your child doing or things that they say, in *'My Observation Notes'*.

These things help us understand what your child can do and show us what they are interested in.

Both *'My Special Book'* and *'My Observation Notes'* help us plan on a day to day/week to week basis for your child. We will also encourage you to contribute to these books and talk to us about your child regularly to help us with this.

Update of Progress

Three times a year, we will review all these observations and talk with you about your child's learning and development.
You will be able to see how your child is progressing and talk about how we are going to support them to continue with this progress.

As we will know all about the needs of the children in our group, this will help us plan for what we need to provide in our setting over the coming term to meet everyone's needs.

We hope this leaflet has been useful.
Please feel free to ask us more!

We look forward to caring for your child and working with you as they learn and develop.

Southampton
Early Years Development
& Childcare Partnership

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