Observational Assessment as Daily Practice

This card describes the processes involved in observation and assessment and how they fit into Progress from the Start.

What is observation?
Observation describes the process of watching children, listening to them and taking note of what is seen and heard.

Why do we observe?
All practitioners need to know their children well - the more practitioners know about each child, the more able they will be to support and extend each child’s learning.
Observation, assessment and planning help practitioners to support children's development and learning.
Observation is one of the most important skills a practitioner uses in their daily practice.

How do we observe?
Observe children during daily experiences (child-initiated and adult-led) to find out about their needs, interests and what they can do.
Plan to observe as part of the daily routine.
Only record what might be forgotten, what is significant and what needs to be clarified.
Include children, parents and carers in this process.
There should be a range of observation and recording methods used e.g. post-its, time sampling, learning stories, individual and group observations, etc.
For further information please refer to Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) – p.3

Children develop quickly in the early years, and early years practitioners aim to do all they can to help children have the best possible start in life. Children have a right, spelled out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to provision which enables them to develop their personalities, talents and abilities irrespective of ethnicity, culture or religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, disabilities or gender. This guidance helps statutory undertakings and other individuals with children’s development pathways. Other guidance is provided in the Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Early Years Outcomes documents.
Use the 3 stage process:
Notice, Recognise, Respond

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Notice</th>
<th>Recognise</th>
<th>Respond</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Watching, listening, using the senses</td>
<td>Understanding the learning</td>
<td>Acting on what we understand from the learning</td>
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<td>Observe what the child is doing and saying. Where are they? Who are they with? What resources are they using? What are their involvement and well-being levels?</td>
<td>What Development Matters statement(s)/Early Years Outcomes does this link to? Which Characteristics of Effective Learning best describe the child?</td>
<td>What are you going to do as a result of what you have seen? How do you plan to do this? Do you need to make a change to the environment? Is it an immediate response or in a few weeks time? Do children need further play opportunities? Do practitioners need to reflect on their interactions with the child?</td>
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**Leaders and Managers need to ensure that:**

- all practitioners have the training and skills to undertake sensitive observational assessment
- a programme of supervision and appraisal is in place
- practitioners have the opportunity to observe children as part of the daily practice
- there are opportunities for paired observations to allow practitioners to moderate judgements made. This builds confidence and helps ensure accurate assessment.