

Early Years Foundation Stage Getting started



A guide for registered childminders in England



Early Years Foundation Stage

Getting started



Dear colleague,

From 1 September 2008, all schools and early years providers in Ofsted-registered settings will be required to deliver the new Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

I'm a registered childminder too, and I think this is a good opportunity for us to demonstrate that we provide professional care in a home-based setting. I find it reassuring that we are required to deliver the EYFS – it is great to know that we are recognised as being on a level playing field with other early years providers.

There has been a lot of information circulating in the media about the EYFS, and much of it has been unhelpful for registered childminders as it doesn't give the complete picture. It is important to remember that the EYFS is not all new. It is based on the existing National Standards and Birth to Three Matters framework. In fact, much of it will be familiar from the great work you already do every day.

The National Childminding Association (NCMA) has waited until it had all the facts from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and Ofsted before providing this guide to EYFS, particularly with regard to information on inspection and self-evaluation processes. NCMA has sent this to all registered childminders in England so everyone has the information they need. NCMA members also get ongoing support via Who Minds?, their membership magazine.

Although this booklet is not intended to replace your copy of the EYFS pack, which sets out the statutory framework and practice guidance, I hope that it will help to reassure you about what will be required of you from 1 September 2008.

Best wishes,

Susanna Dawson, NCMA Chair and registered childminder

On pages 4 and 5 you'll find an overview of what the EYFS pack contains, and how you can use it.



Take a look at how one childminder uses EYFS in her everyday practice on pages 6 and 7.



Find out about the paperwork requirements of the EYFS, including some practical guidance on making observations, on pages 8 and 9.



Finally, on pages 10 and 11 we look at Ofsted's new self-evaluation process, and how this should help to make the inspection process simpler and more effective.





What is the EYFS?

The EYFS framework sets the standards for the learning, development and care of children from birth to the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage – the 31 August after their 5th birthday.

The main aim of the EYFS is to help each child achieve the five Every Child Matters outcomes:

- To be healthy
- To stay safe
- To enjoy and achieve
- To make a positive contribution
- To achieve economic wellbeing.

In order to achieve this aim, the EYFS brings together and replaces three separate, existing frameworks:

- National Standards for under 8s Daycare and Childminding
- Birth to Three Matters
- The Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage.

You will already be familiar with the Birth to Three Matters framework and the National Standards, so not everything in the EYFS will be new. You may not be so familiar with the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage unless you are part of a formal childminding network such as an NCMA Children Come First network.

The EYFS is based on four themes:

- **A unique child** – every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
- **Positive relationships** – children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or a key person.
- **Enabling environments** – the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development and learning.
- **Learning and development** – children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates and all areas of learning and development are equally important and inter-connected.

Meeting the individual needs of all children is at the heart of the EYFS. Childminders will find that, once they are used to the new format of the EYFS pack, many of the underlying principles are echoed in the work they do every day.

Take the training

Local authorities have a duty to provide EYFS training for childminders. If you have not yet had any EYFS training, contact your local Family Information Service (FIS). They can give you details of training in your area.

NCMA provides EYFS training at the request of individual local authorities, so not all EYFS training that is being delivered across England is run by NCMA.

Let NCMA know how the training in your area has prepared you to deliver EYFS, and what other training you may require. NCMA will do its best to work with local authorities to meet your needs.

NCMA

T: 0845 880 0044

W: www.ncma.org.uk

E: info@ncma.org.uk

So what's in the EYFS pack?

The pack of materials designed to help you to implement EYFS can look rather daunting at first glance – but you'll soon see that much of it is familiar from the frameworks you are used to working with. This simple guide explains what each part of the pack covers, with examples of how you can use it.

Statutory Framework for the EYFS

This booklet covers the things you **must** do as a registered childminder, and replaces the National Standards. It is **essential** that you get to know the contents of this booklet. It describes:

- The type of learning experiences and support you must provide
- The recording and assessment arrangements you must put in place
- The welfare requirements you must meet. You'll recognise these from the National Standards, including the steps to safeguard children's welfare, maintain safe premises and equipment, and keep appropriate plans, systems and records.

Use this to reflect on how you ensure that you meet each requirement, and to check you have the appropriate plans and policies in place – and how you would demonstrate this to an Ofsted inspector.

Practice Guidance for the EYFS

This booklet gives you good practice guidance on how you can meet the EYFS requirements. These are not statutory requirements. Much of this content is taken from Birth to Three Matters and the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage. The main feature is a table guiding you on the six areas of Learning and Development which:

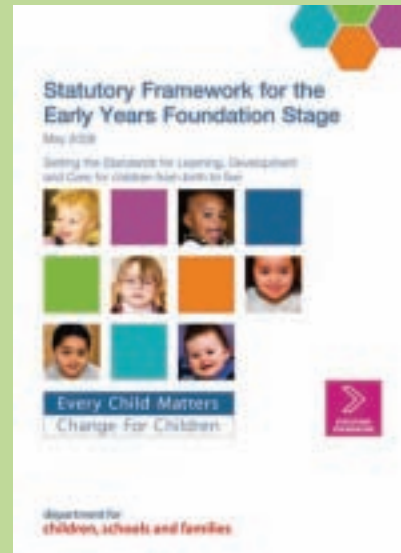
- Maps out the steps in a child's development
- Advises on the sort of progress you should be observing and recording
- Suggests ideas for play and activities, and how to plan and resource them.

Refer to this table when planning.

For example, if a child in your care is showing signs of understanding concepts of quantities and numbers, you can use this section to plan activities that develop this further.

You can use the guide on meeting the welfare requirements to ensure you are covering the appropriate issues in your safeguarding policy and premises risk assessment.

Remember – although you MUST be familiar with the Statutory Framework, you can use the other elements of the EYFS pack as your working documents – something to refer to as and when you need them.



Not got a pack yet? They can be ordered (free of charge) from DCSF publications by calling 0845 602 2260, quoting reference 00261-2008PCK-EN. You can also download a pack from www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingandlearning/eyfs or www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/eyfs



Principles into Practice Cards

The cards are designed to help you bring the EYFS principles into your work on a daily basis. There are 24 in total, arranged by the four guiding themes. They describe:

- The four commitments that accompany each of the main themes, with one side of the card explaining the importance of each commitment, and the other setting out practical suggestions and issues to think about.
- The six areas of Learning and Development – what the key aspects are, why they are so important, and what you can do to support them.

The cards are designed to be working documents for you to refer to regularly, with questions and challenges to prompt reflection and stimulate ideas on day-to-day activity and longer-term planning. For example, you may be expecting a visit from a family nervous about using childcare – the Inclusive Practice card can help you with ideas for showing just how much children are valued and welcomed into your home.



The Poster

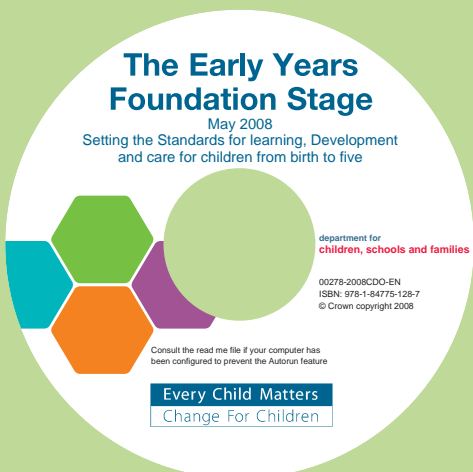
This gives you the big picture of EYFS at a glance, showing how each of the four main themes is described by a principle, and then broken down further into four commitments.

You'll find this a useful reminder to have on the wall as you're getting to grips with the EYFS, and also as a handy way to explain the framework to parents. The pack contains a large and small version.

The CD-ROM

The CD-ROM contains all the written information in the pack – but also features additional good practice material, including video footage of a childminder. The CD-ROM also has a wealth of references to other documents, research and links to useful websites. The table featured in the Practice Guidance on the six areas of Learning and Development can be searched to focus on a particular age grouping or area of learning – enabling you to print out sections most relevant to the children in your care.

Use this CD-ROM as a flexible way to explore the framework. For example, if you have limited experience of working with disabled children and get an enquiry from a parent about care for her visually impaired daughter, the CD-ROM offers you an in-depth look at inclusive practices, and links to other sources of advice.



Diary of a childminder

Many childminders will find the work they already do fits in nicely with the requirements of the EYFS.

Eula Khaffaf from Hanwell, London, has been childminding for 10 years. This diary shows as an example of Eula's childminding week. We have identified some examples of how the activities the children do already meet EYFS recommendations.

Monday

We went to the park for a picnic. Joining up with four other childminders and the children they care for really gives my two the chance to make the most of being in a large group. Many of the children are friends already and it's a lovely opportunity for some big parachute games together. There's a maze in the park, so after lunch the children led the way through. After a few dead-ends, we made it to the centre. Once out of the maze, we finished our outing with a visit to the children's farm. The children enjoy seeing the quinea pigs, rabbits, goats, peacocks, ducks, chickens and sheep.



Back home, I provide a tea tray, cornflour and water to make some "gloop". I love messy play. The children find it relaxing and really concentrate on the strange mixture and explore the textures. Jack doesn't enjoy getting his clothes dirty and asks for a spoon to help mix the flour and water together. He's happy driving his toy trucks through the gloop, however, and delights in dribbling some over me.

Health and Well-being
– growing and developing

Respecting Each Other
– friendships

The Learning Environment – the outdoor environment





Play and Exploration; Active Learning



Key

These four themes each have four underlying commitments (see page 5). We've highlighted some of the relevant commitments for each diary entry.

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

-  Personal, Social and Emotional Development
-  Communication, Language and Literacy
-  Problem-Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy
-  Knowledge and Understanding of the world
-  Physical Development
-  Creative Development

Tuesday

Jack and Ellie arrived in time for their breakfast. This morning we went to the local childminder drop-in to paint plant pots for the cress seeds we're planning to plant later this week. The weather's still lovely, so the children had lots of fun in the garden on their bikes and trikes. Some of the childminders at the drop-in organised some racing games, and the children tried walking while balancing plastic plates on their heads. I've noticed Jack's coordination is really developing and make a note to tell his mum later.



Health and Well-being
– growing and developing

Respecting Each Other
– professional relationships
Parents as Partners
– communication

Observation, Assessment and Planning – starting with the child
The Wider Context
– the community

Active Learning
– mental and physical involvement



Wednesday

Today the children found a tape measure and measured themselves and each other before measuring the rugs on the floor. Later, they made a den using cushions and took some books inside for a quiet read. After a loud and action-packed sing-song it was time for lunch. In the afternoon we popped to the shop to buy some flowers and apples. Jack joked with the shopkeeper, pretending to eat an apple in the shop.

Ellie spotted a butterfly outside the shop and we talked about its beautiful wings. Back home we got the paints out for some sponge painting to create caterpillars and butterflies. I'll put them up in the hall so the parents can see what we've been doing. We ended the afternoon with story-time and the children chose the books we read.



Health and Well-being
– growing and developing

Observation, Assessment and Planning – starting with the child
The Learning Environment – the outdoor environment; the indoor environment

Play and Exploration
– learning through experience



Thursday

Jack and I talked about yesterday's measuring games so we decided to see how much he's grown by measuring him against the height chart in my hall. He's shot up 5cm in just eight months so he stuck a photograph of himself up at his new height. Jack is learning how to spell his name and asked for pens and paper before successfully drawing a large "J". I took some photos of him doing this, added some notes and will pop this observation in my file.



Health and Well-being
– growing and developing

Supporting Learning
– listening to children

Observation, Assessment and Planning – starting with the child

Play and Exploration
– learning through experience
Creativity and Critical Thinking – making connections



Friday

The children made their own pizzas for lunch today. I put a range of toppings on the table for them to choose from, although Ellie seemed more keen on wearing the sauce than eating it. When the pizzas were cooked, Jack pulled a piece of stringy, melted cheese off the top. I pointed out the bowl of uncooked cheese in front of him and we talked about the difference between the two and how the hot oven makes the cheese melt. After pizza, the children helped to prepare a fruit salad. Jack counted blueberries and strawberries into the bowl and sliced a banana carefully. Ellie helped to chop up a banana. "Chop" is a new word for her, and she used it repeatedly while cutting the fruit.



Child Development
– a skillful communicator
Keeping safe – making choices

Key Person
– independence

Supporting Every Child
– children's needs; working together

Play and Exploration
– learning through experience
Active Learning – decision making
Creativity and Critical Thinking – making connections; transforming understanding



Keeping an eye on things

An important part of the EYFS is the need to complete observation, assessment and planning records as part of the statutory framework.



“It is not about recording every single thing a child does – it’s about building an interesting and useful snapshot of how a child is developing”

Keeping an eye on children is second nature to you as a childminder. On one level it can mean making sure the children don’t come to any harm, but keeping a watchful eye can also be a really useful tool to make your own planning process easier and more effective.

An essential part of the EYFS is effective observation, assessment and planning. Rather than a daunting list of achievements for you to check against, it’s about making sure that each child in your setting has the support they need. There’s no need to record every single thing a child does – think of it as building an interesting and useful snapshot of how a child is developing.

Why is it so important?

Children learn better when they’re motivated and interested in what they’re doing. Observation, assessment and planning helps you recognise what engages the children you care for and plan for how to develop their interest and learning. There’s no list of what a child “should” like, and you have the flexibility to take a planned approach to a child’s learning.

Observation

In the EYFS practice guidance this is called “look, listen and note”. The guidance explains how important observation is as it helps you to:

- Get to know the child better
- Plan play and activities suited to the child
- Develop your understanding of child development.

Childminders make observations all the time – often without having to think about it. For example, you may notice that a child you care for has counted to five on their own for the first time. When their parent arrives at the end of the day you might discuss the child’s new confidence in counting based on this earlier observation.

The observations that you make may well be more accurate than those by people who work in group settings. As a childminder, you work closely with a small group of children – often over a long period of time. When working in the EYFS, the challenge is to write these observations down in a way that works for you, and use them to form the basis of the assessment and planning process.

Assessment

An assessment is when you take time to reflect and think carefully about what your observations tell you of the child’s stage of development and their behaviour. This will tell you what they can already do, what they need help with, and what they are ready to move on to. Make time to note down your assessments regularly and it’s even easier to see the progress the children are making. You may wish to do this at the end of the day, or take rough notes and write them up or add to them at the end of each week. There is no official way of doing it, so find out what works for you.

Using the observations for planning

By watching and talking to the children, you’ll soon realise you know a great deal about them, what they like and dislike, where they like to be, who they prefer to be with, what their favourite toys or games are, and how confident they are in different areas of learning.

Use your observation and assessments to plan exciting and interesting activities for the children. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What is it that children need to be able to do/be confident with in order for them to move forward?
- What are you going to do to provide this?
- How are you going to record it?

Your observations, and the assessment of those observations, are really important to making a child's time with you a rich and varied personal learning experience. It's all about putting them at the centre of everything you do.

In each child's final year of EYFS, an EYFS profile will be prepared by the provider where the child spends the majority of their time between 8am and 6pm, drawing on all available records and discussions with parents and other early years professionals. Most children by now will be at school, so it's unlikely you'll be leading on this, although you may be asked to contribute to it. There is more information about this process in the EYFS pack.



10 October 2008, 10.30am

Jamie was playing with the sand box and was enjoying the feel of the sand. He went in search of some different shaped containers and he enjoyed pouring sand from one to the other, before making some differently shaped sandcastles.

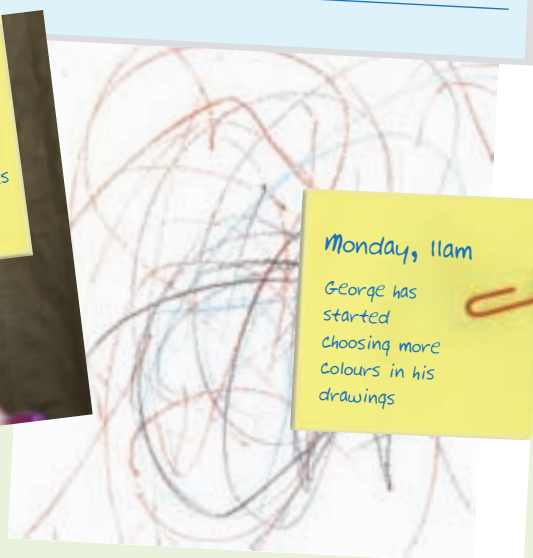
Forward planning: I'll collect some more containers and we can spend some time trying them out during sand and water play.

Other ideas: I might also try some "sand-painting" by giving Jamie a bag full of sand with a hole in it so he can "draw" with the sand over the patio.



3/10/08

Jenny loved making handprints today. Try other painting activities and make a handprint card for Mum.



Monday, 11am

George has started choosing more colours in his drawings

Making observations – some ideas

Remember – it's not necessary to keep a record of a child's every move. An observation is a snapshot of a child's development, and there are many forms of observation – written record, photographic, sound recording, or even a drawing or collage the child has created.

- Keep a pack of sticky notes or a small notebook with you at all times so that you can jot observations down. You could add more later when you have time.
- Do you have a camera? Using real snapshots of a child taking part in an activity and attaching notes is a great way to make an observation.
- Create an observation journal for each of the children in your care, containing a mix of written observation sheets, photos or drawings the children give you. Not only is this a really useful way of keeping notes of your observations, but it will give you some ideas for future planning. And, at the end of their time with you, the child can take away a memento of their earliest years. NCMA sells a journal for this purpose.

However you decide to record your observations, make sure they mean something to you when you come to use them later by noting down the time and date, what the child was doing, how this was supporting their learning and what you could plan to do next to extend this.

The observation process

- Observe children to find out about their needs, what they are interested in and what they can do.
- Note how the child responds to different situations.
- Look regularly at your observations and highlight children's achievements or their need for further support.

Some ideas for making observations. Find out what works best for you.

Preparing for your inspection

We look at how the inspection process will work after 1 September 2008.

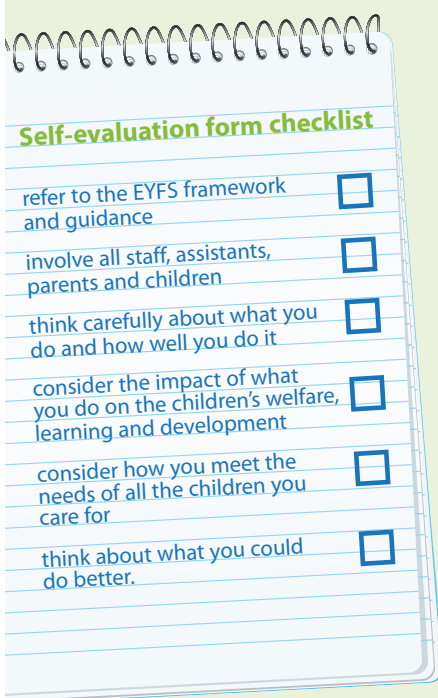


If you've had an Ofsted inspection before, you may be familiar with completing a self-evaluation form (SEF). To accompany the EYFS, Ofsted will be introducing a more comprehensive SEF. The new form is designed to help you, and the Ofsted inspector, to get the most out of the inspection process, and is designed to be submitted in advance of your inspection. You can use the SEF to:

- Help you identify your strengths so you are able to draw these to the attention of the inspector
- Help you identify any areas for improvement, so you can think about how you plan to work on these for the future
- Give the inspector the facts about your setting in advance to help the inspection go as smoothly as possible.

Even when you do not have an inspection due, Ofsted recommends that you update your SEF at least once a year. Review your practice regularly and update your SEF when you need to, ensuring that it reflects any changes to your practice.

The SEF will be available for you to complete online at www.ofsted.gov.uk from late July 2008. Completing the form online is a good way to ensure that Ofsted has the facts about your setting in advance of your inspection. If you are unable to complete the form online, you can print a paper copy from the Ofsted website, or request for one to be sent to you by calling the Ofsted publications centre on 07002 637833.



Why self-evaluate?

Thinking about the way you work and how you could improve things is an extremely important part of any profession. Self-evaluation is about reflecting on your practice as a childminder, considering how you help children to achieve their full potential by providing a quality learning environment, and thinking about ways in which you can maintain and develop your practice to provide an even better service for the children you look after.

The process

The SEF will be based on four key judgements that Ofsted will look at during the inspection process. They are:

- How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?
- How effectively are children helped to learn and develop?
- How effectively is the welfare of children developed?
- How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?

Think about how to answer these questions when completing your SEF. They incorporate the five Every Child Matters outcomes, so you may want to refer to the Principles into Practice cards in your EYFS pack to help you – at the bottom of each card there is a link to the relevant Every Child Matters outcome.

Get thinking

Here are some things to think about when you start the self-evaluation process:

- Children's activities – ask yourself why you offered the activities you did. Did the children enjoy them? How do you know? Did they support development and learning? How?
- Relationships with parents and other professionals – have you had regular meetings with each child's parents? Have you visited your local children's centre recently to see what they are offering? Do you have contact with any other settings a child attends, such as a school?

- Business paperwork – are your accounts up to date? Could you improve the way you file your paperwork? How safely are confidential items kept?
- Health and safety, including safeguarding children – do you have current safeguarding children procedures? How often do you carry out a risk assessment? Do the children know what they should do in the event of a fire?
- Resources – what resources have you bought recently? How have they helped your business? Which toys do you make available to the children? Why did you pick these?
- Your learning – are your first-aid certificates up to date? Is there any new training on offer you could take?

Ask others

A really important part of self-evaluation is getting the views of others. Think about the best way to get honest feedback from parents and children. You could give parents a questionnaire to complete; ask the children to draw a picture of what they enjoy doing (and what they don't enjoy); talk to parents about how their children feel about attending your setting and their preferred activities. If it is time to renew your contracts, that can also be a good opportunity to discuss aspects of your service with parents.

Find a way to record the way you asked for feedback, and show what you have done as a result of the comments and suggestions you've had, so that you can use it to improve your practice. People will be more willing to give honest feedback if they can see that you are listening to them.

Your inspection

The inspection process will not be changing under the EYFS. As a registered childminder you will still be inspected at least once in every three year cycle. You may be inspected more often, for example, if you move house.

You will still only receive a few days' notice of your inspection, and the inspection will normally be from two hours up to a maximum of half a day, although it is hoped that the SEF will help the inspection process to run as smoothly as possible.

If you have been inspected by Ofsted before, you will probably be familiar with thinking: "I should have said more about how I keep the children safe," or "I could have mentioned that training course". The SEF will help you to communicate to the Ofsted inspector all the great things about your setting and the service you provide. Because you can prepare it in advance, you can take more time to cover everything you want to.

Top inspection tips

- Treat the Ofsted inspector like any other visitor to your setting – remember to ask for identification, and explain the fire drill.
- Carry on interacting with the children as you would normally – it is important for the inspector to see how you care for the children in your setting.
- Try to answer the Ofsted inspector's questions in full, but if you are not sure what they are asking, don't be afraid to ask for clarification.
- The Ofsted inspector may ask the children some questions about the care they receive – this is a normal part of any inspection.
- The Ofsted inspector may need to inspect all areas of your home, even if they are not used for childminding.

Inspection checklist

- do you regularly review and update your self-evaluation form?
- are all your policies and procedures up to date?
- is the Ofsted parents poster displayed? See www.ofsted.gov.uk for more details.
- is Ofsted aware of any significant changes to your setting?
- have you addressed all of the actions and/or recommendations from your last inspection, with evidence to demonstrate this?
- are you in regular contact with your local Early Years Service for continuous advice and support?

National Childminding Association

NCMA is the leading national charity and membership organisation supporting registered childminders. NCMA members benefit from up to 50 per cent off NCMA products including business paperwork such as contracts, and Active Learning, a book designed to support you in delivering the EYFS. NCMA's support and advice is tailored to childminders. Plus, members receive Who Minds?, NCMA's quarterly magazine, direct to their door. It's full of information, tips and advice – all to help childminders run successful businesses. You can find out more about NCMA by visiting www.ncma.org.uk

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