

Planning, Observations and Assessment Policy

Statement of intent

At Playhouse Pre-School, we recognise that high-quality observation and assessment are important parts of understanding each child's development, interests, needs and learning.

Our approach is based on the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework for Group and School-Based Providers, effective from 1 September 2026.

We use observation and assessment to:

- understand what each child knows, understands and can do;
- recognise children's interests, strengths and achievements;
- identify individual needs and areas where additional support may be required;
- inform our curriculum and future planning;
- provide appropriate challenge and support;
- support children's individual learning and development;
- share meaningful information with parents and carers;
- identify possible developmental concerns at an early stage;
- support effective transitions between rooms and to school or other settings.

We recognise that babies, toddlers and young children develop at different rates and that development is not linear. Our assessment approach therefore takes account of each child's individual development, experiences, interests, communication and circumstances.

We do not use assessment as a checklist or expect children to demonstrate skills simply because they have reached a particular age.

Aim

Our aim is to ensure that planning, observation and assessment are:

- purposeful;
- proportionate;
- child-centred;
- inclusive;
- informed by knowledge of child development;
- based on professional judgement;
- closely linked to the experiences we provide;
- used to identify and respond to children's individual needs;
- shared appropriately with parents and carers.

Assessment will not take practitioners away from children for unnecessary periods of time.

Planning

Our curriculum provides children with a broad range of experiences across all seven areas of learning:

- Communication and Language
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Physical Development
- Literacy

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- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

Planning will take account of:

- children's interests;
- children's developmental needs;
- previous learning;
- observations and professional knowledge;
- children's individual characteristics;
- children's home experiences and family backgrounds;
- the needs of children with SEND;
- the needs of children learning English as an additional language;
- opportunities to develop communication and language;
- opportunities for children to develop independence;
- opportunities for children to learn through play and exploration;
- the Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning.

Planning will be flexible and responsive. Staff will adapt activities and experiences according to children's interests, responses and emerging needs.

Planning for babies and younger children

For children from 9 months, planning will recognise that learning takes place through responsive relationships, everyday routines, sensory experiences, movement, exploration, play and interactions with adults and other children.

Staff will provide opportunities for babies and toddlers to:

- explore safely;
- develop physical skills;
- communicate through sounds, gestures, facial expressions and emerging language;
- develop secure relationships;
- develop independence;
- make simple choices;
- develop curiosity;
- explore objects and materials;
- develop early mathematical and language concepts through everyday experiences;
- engage in songs, rhymes, stories and conversations;
- experience a rich and varied environment.

The key person will use information from parents and carers about the child's interests, routines, development and experiences at home to inform planning.

Observation

Observation is an important part of understanding children and informing our practice.

Staff will observe children naturally during:

- child-initiated play;
- adult-guided activities;
- interactions with other children;
- interactions with adults;

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- outdoor play;
- routines;
- mealtimes;
- creative activities;
- stories and songs;
- physical activities;
- exploration and investigation;
- care routines.

Observations may be written, photographic or recorded in another appropriate form through eyLog, where appropriate.

Not every observation needs to be formally recorded.

Staff will use their professional judgement to decide when an observation should be recorded because it provides useful information about the child's learning, development, interests, achievements or needs.

We will avoid unnecessary observation and paperwork and will prioritise high-quality interaction with children.

Assessment

Assessment is an ongoing process of noticing what children know, understand and can do and using this information to decide how best to support their continued learning and development.

Assessment may involve:

- observing children;
- talking with children;
- listening to children;
- reviewing children's play;
- discussing children with colleagues;
- speaking with parents and carers;
- reviewing previous learning;
- considering children's interests and experiences;
- identifying emerging strengths or areas where additional support may be required.

Assessment will be used to inform teaching and interactions rather than to generate unnecessary records.

We recognise that children develop at different rates and that Development Matters is non-statutory guidance which supports professional judgement rather than a checklist against which children should be assessed.

Baseline and starting points

When a child starts at Playhouse Pre-School, staff will gather information about the child's development, interests, communication, experiences and individual needs.

Information will be obtained through:

- registration information;
- information provided by parents/carers;

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- settling-in sessions;
- conversations with parents/carers;
- observations of the child;
- information from previous settings or professionals where appropriate.

The child's key person will use this information to establish an understanding of the child's starting points.

For babies and younger children, particular attention will be given to information about:

- communication;
- feeding and weaning;
- sleep and rest;
- physical development;
- personal care;
- comfort and settling;
- interests and preferences;
- routines at home;
- medical or dietary needs.

Settling-in observations

The key person will observe and monitor the child's well-being and development during the settling-in period.

The information gathered will help staff to:

- understand how the child responds to the new environment;
- identify the child's interests;
- identify how the child communicates;
- understand what helps the child feel secure;
- identify any additional support required;
- develop appropriate relationships with the child and family.

The settling-in process will be individual to each child and will not be used as a formal assessment period.

See the Settling-In Policy for further information.

Progress check at age two

A progress check will be completed for every child between the ages of 2 and 3, in accordance with the EYFS requirements.

The check will focus on the three prime areas of learning:

- Communication and Language;
- Physical Development;
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development.

The progress check will:

- review the child's progress;
- identify the child's strengths;
- identify any areas where additional support may be required;
- take account of information from parents/carers;

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- include the views and knowledge of other practitioners where appropriate;
- identify any concerns about development;
- consider whether further assessment or support may be beneficial.

The progress check will be discussed with parents/carers and shared with them.

Where appropriate, we will work with parents/carers and relevant professionals to identify and provide additional support.

The DfE's Progress Check at Age 2 guidance will be used to support this process.

Planning from assessment

Assessment information will be used to inform our curriculum and interactions with children.

Staff will consider:

- what the child already knows and can do;
- what the child is interested in;
- what the child may be ready to learn next;
- what experiences will deepen their learning;
- what support or scaffolding may be helpful;
- whether the child requires additional support;
- how the environment can be adapted to support the child.

We do not expect every observation to result in a written "next step".

Children may develop their learning through repeated experiences, exploration and opportunities to practise existing skills.

We recognise that depth of learning is more important than moving children through developmental age bands.

Adult-guided and planned activities

Staff will provide planned adult-guided experiences where appropriate.

These may include:

- stories;
- songs and rhymes;
- creative activities;
- cooking;
- physical activities;
- mathematical experiences;
- communication and language activities;
- exploration of the natural world;
- group activities;
- activities linked to children's interests.

Adult-guided activities will be adapted according to children's age, stage of development and individual needs.

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For babies and younger children, activities will focus on responsive interaction, sensory exploration, movement, communication and opportunities to explore and investigate.

Planning will not prevent children from following their own interests or engaging in sustained child-initiated play.

Learning journals

Children's learning records are maintained through eyLog.

Records may include:

- significant observations;
- photographs;
- examples of children's work;
- achievements;
- information about interests;
- developmental information;
- parent contributions;
- significant experiences;
- relevant assessments and progress information.

The amount of recorded information will be proportionate to the child's needs and will provide a meaningful picture of the child's development and experiences.

We will not expect staff to produce large quantities of written evidence solely for assessment purposes.

Parental involvement

We recognise parents and carers as their child's first and most important educators and value their knowledge of their child.

Parents and carers are encouraged to contribute to their child's learning record through eyLog and through conversations with the key person.

Parents may share:

- achievements from home;
- interests;
- new skills;
- changes in development;
- family experiences;
- information about the child's home language;
- information about routines and preferences;
- concerns about development;
- significant events or changes at home.

We recognise that not all parents will wish or be able to contribute in writing.

Parents will always have opportunities to speak with their child's key person, and relevant information can be recorded by staff where appropriate.

Parents and carers will have access to their child's learning records through their eyLog account, subject to our confidentiality and data protection procedures.

Home languages and communication

We value the languages and cultures that children and families bring to Playhouse Pre-School.

Where a child uses a language other than English at home, staff will work with parents/carers to understand the child's communication and language experiences.

We recognise the importance of supporting children to develop their home language alongside English.

Staff will use appropriate strategies, resources and professional support where necessary to help children communicate and participate fully in the setting.

A child's use of another language will not be regarded as a developmental difficulty in itself.

Children with SEND

Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities will be assessed according to their individual development and needs.

We will work with:

- parents/carers;
- the setting SENCO;
- relevant practitioners;
- health professionals;
- other agencies where appropriate.

Assessment will be used to identify appropriate support and adaptations rather than to compare children with other children.

We recognise that children may demonstrate their learning and development in different ways.

Transitions

Internal transitions

When a child moves from the Caterpillar Room (9 months-2 years) to the Butterfly Room (2-4 years), relevant information will be shared with the receiving practitioners.

This may include:

- registration information;
- developmental information;
- interests;
- learning information;
- individual care needs;
- dietary requirements;
- sleep information where relevant;
- medical information;
- SEND information;
- information about the child's relationships and communication.

Parents/carers will be involved in the transition process.

External transitions

Where a child is moving to another setting or school, appropriate information will be shared with parental consent or where there is another lawful basis for sharing.

Transition information will support continuity of care and learning.

Where possible, Playhouse Pre-School will work with the receiving setting to support a smooth transition.

Confidentiality and data protection

Children's records are confidential and will be stored securely.

Information will only be shared with those who have a legitimate need to know and in accordance with our confidentiality, safeguarding and data protection procedures.

Safeguarding information will be handled in accordance with the Safeguarding Children Policy.

This policy was agreed by the staff of Playhouse Pre-School Broadwater.

Adopted on 26th March 2015 and will be reviewed annually.

Reviewed on 29th September 2026 by Z. Munford