

Rathmore Primary School and Nursery Unit



Observation and Assessment Policy

Date Ratified:	May 2025
Date of Review:	May 2026

This policy has been written following a consultation process, ratified by the Board of Governors and communicated to the school community as required. It will be monitored and reviewed as part of the school's policy review schedule.

Observation and Assessment Policy

Article 29

Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full.

Article 3

The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all actions concerning children.

'Each time we interact with a child, we are observing, assessing, planning for and responding to that individual child. Such interactions are the most important and powerful teaching moments.' (A. Ephgrave)

Introduction

In Rathmore Nursery, observation, assessment and record keeping is integral to the process of teaching and learning. Observations enable staff to gain a better insight into the children's needs, experiences, interests, thinking, strengths, and areas for development. This information is essential when deciding how to support and enhance the children's learning. Nursery staff work closely with parents, valuing them as children's first educators, enabling them to build on what the children already know.

Observation

Observation involves watching children closely and writing down what is seen and heard to:

- Gain a detailed understanding of the child.
- Plan for children's needs and interests, including specialist advice and support when required.
- Plan for progression and differentiation.
- Inform curricular planning.
- Share the child's development with parents/carers.
- Provide information on transfer to the next stage of education.
- Give staff a greater insight into how children learn.

Observations are made by:

- Nursery staff
- Students
- Parents and carers
- Other professionals e.g., health visitor, educational psychologist, speech therapist
- The children themselves

Nursery staff will:

- Observe children over a period of time and in a variety of contexts.
- Adopt a flexible approach to observations that allows for the unpredictable reactions of children to activities offered.
- Record both planned and spontaneous observations.
- Observe children's play and use of language so that a holistic picture emerges of each child's progress across the six areas of learning.
- Record information regularly and systematically, including details on each child's strengths, interests, and areas for development.
- Reflect as a staff team on observations to inform future planning.
- Share information with parents/guardians so they have a clear understanding of their child's progress.
- Include observations of activities children have chosen themselves.

What we observe

The six areas of learning in the pre-school curriculum guidance:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Language Development
- Physical Development
- Early Mathematical Experiences
- World Around Us
- The Arts

Nursery staff recognise that children's levels of well-being and involvement are highest when they are engaged in activities they have chosen themselves, and will therefore strive to include child-centered observations which may focus on their:

- Levels of well-being and involvement
- Ability to recognise and begin to manage emotions and feelings
- Natural interests and current passions
- Ability to play indoors and outdoors
- Interaction with peers and other adults
- Verbal and non-verbal communication with peers and adults
- Potential for development
- Ability to concentrate, persevere, use initiative, and reflect
- Use of resources and care for equipment

Types of Observations

When making observations we use OWL: Observe

Wait

Listen

Focus Child Observations

During the year staff plan to complete focus observations for each child. In preparation for this staff record each child's interests, strengths, and areas for development on their focus observation page. During the week any staff member who has a productive interaction with a focus child records the event and adds it to the observation page. Entries are often accompanied by a photo. Over the week the observation page fills up and becomes an individual record. At the end of the week staff explore the observations, discussing each child's learning and, if appropriate, next steps. Any next steps are recorded onto the child's page.

Teachable Moments

Staff observe children at play, waiting for a moment in which they feel they can make a difference. The member of staff then interacts to 'teach' the next step as appropriate for that individual child at that precise moment. Staff are constantly observing, assessing, planning for, and responding to individual children in the moment.

The whole cycle is recorded: Initial observation

Teaching

Outcome

Skills

Skills are recorded throughout the year for:

- Fine motor skills: pencil grip, scissors, hand preference
- Gross Motor Skills: Fundamental Movement Skills, using wheeled vehicles
- Early Mathematics: rote counting, 1:1 counting, colour recognition, sorting
- Jigsaws

The skills observation page is used daily to support or extend children's learning.

Planned Observations

There is a timetable for observations, providing a guide for which area of the curriculum/skill is being focused on.

Recording Observations

Learning Journal: Observations are added to each child's learning journal, building a record of development, and learning over time. This includes written observations (both spontaneous and planned) and the Focus Observations. These records are ongoing and inform planning for the next steps in learning.

Seesaw: Photos and videos are added to Seesaw, enabling learning to be shared with parents on a regular basis.

Scrapbook: Some photos and samples of children's artwork and mark-making are kept in a scrapbook which is sent home at the end of the year.

Parents: Forms completed by parents about their child's development and interests at the beginning of the school year form the start of the journal/scrapbook. Parents/guardians are encouraged to contribute photos, drawings or anecdotes that celebrate their child's interests and achievements at home.

Leuven Involvement Scale: The Leuven Involvement Scale is used during the year to assess levels of well-being and involvement. If a child presents with low levels, measures are put in place to support the child.

Skill Sheets: Skill sheets record specific learning such as counting ability, mathematical language and pencil control. Staff will go to the child and engage with them in their play to ascertain these skills. A system is in place to track children's development throughout the year and to highlight children who may require extra support.

Learning Wall: A learning wall shows current interests and learning taking place. The children will be involved in contributing to the wall and in discussing their learning.

Children's Boards: Each child has a board on the wall to display their own work. Staff and children photograph the children's achievements and interests and put these on the boards along with appropriate captions. Work from here is then transferred into the scrapbooks.

Tracking Play: This is a more detailed observation which may be used if there are concerns about a child. This type of observation involves tracking a child over a period of time, it states who children are playing with, what they are saying, doing, their level of play, their level of involvement and well-being, any prominent schemas or learning styles.

Sharing information

Informal reporting may take place on a day-to-day basis, other more formal opportunities are available throughout the year.

Admission Arrangements: In June parents receive All About Me booklets and Nursery data forms to complete. Once completed these provide an insight into their child's interests and needs. All About Me books are added to the children's learning journals/scrapbooks. In August there is a one-to-one meeting with each family, parents are encouraged to share information about their child to help Nursery staff get to know them better.

Individual Meetings: End of October/start of November parents are provided with a form to share their views on how their child has settled. Nursery staff complete a settling in record for each child, this will also identify any areas where a child might need further support. This is shared with parents during the parent teacher consultation. In March, parent teacher consultations take place to discuss children's progress and development. It may also identify any areas where children might need further support.

Nursery Report: At the end of the year a Nursery Report is completed for each child and a copy is given to parents/guardians. This is also shared with Year 1 teachers so they can begin to plan appropriately for each child, building on and taking account of previous learning.