

**POLICY NO.49 Observations****REV:4 DATE: 16.08.2021****Principles**

In order to plan, prepare and organise for good quality care, adults need to observe children, review and evaluate the curriculum regularly and maintain systematic records.

(Child Care (Pre-school Services) (no 2) Regulations 2006 and Child Care (Pre-school Services (No 2) (Amendment) Regulations 2006 Part II, 5 health, Welfare and Development of the Child, 9 Behaviour Management, 14 Records, 28 Facilities for Rest and Play) (Siolta Standard 8: Planning and Evaluation, Siolta Standard 12: Communication Siolta Standard 15: Legislation & regulation) (National Standard 1: Information, National Standard 3: Working in Partnership with Parents or Guardians, National Standard 4: Records, National Standard 6: Evaluation, National Standard 8: Care, Play and Learning, National Standard 10: Behaviour, National Standard 14: Sleep)

**General Overview**

Assessment is part of adults' day-to-day interactions with children. Adults continually make judgements about children's learning and development and use the information they gather to help children to progress. Children too make judgements about what they are good at, what they enjoy doing, what they can do now with a little help, and what they would like to be able to do in the future.

Assessment enables the adult to find out what children understand, how they think, what they are able to do, and what their dispositions and interests are. This information helps the adult to build rich stories of children as capable and competent learners in order to support further learning and development. In doing this, he/she uses the assessment information to give on-going feedback to children about how they are getting on in their learning, to provide challenging and enjoyable experiences for them, to choose appropriate supports for them, and to document, celebrate and plan the next steps in their learning.

Documentation provides a record of children's learning and development. This record helps to tell the story of children's journeys as capable and competent learners.

The adult documents important points about what children understand, can do, and how they approach learning. He/she also sometimes records in more detail children's involvement in particular events or activities in order to create a fuller picture of the richness and complexity of their learning and development. This storytelling approach is especially useful in early childhood.

Documentation can include written notes, stories, photographs, video footage, and samples of what children make, do and say, such as models, sculptures, pictures, paintings, projects, scribed comments, responses, or statements.

Adults and children use this evidence of learning to celebrate progress and achievement, and to plan the next steps in learning. Documentation also enables the adult and/or children to share information with parents. This can help parents to build on children's out-of-home experiences while at home, and so make learning more enjoyable and successful.

In the case of some children, documentation provides critical information in helping to identify special educational needs, in putting appropriate supports in place, and in reviewing the impact of these interventions.

On-going assessment of what children can do, say and make, and reflection on these experiences helps practitioners plan more developmentally appropriate and meaningful learning experiences for children. This also enables them to improve their practice. Assessment is about building a picture of children's individual strengths, interests, abilities and needs and using this to support and plan for their future learning and development

Síolta's Standard 7 on Curriculum also highlights the importance of documenting children's experiences and stresses the importance of systematic observation and assessment for learning. Standard 6 on Play highlights the importance of opportunities for play and exploration that mirror the child's stage of development and that challenge the child to make the transition to new learning. This requires the practitioner to know each child well in order to support his/her learning and development.

Children's learning portfolios A portfolio is a helpful way of compiling information about children's learning and development. The portfolio can take the form of a folder, a scrapbook, a shoe, cereal or pizza box, or something similar in which objects made by the children, photographs, stories, notes, records of care, checklists, and test scores (where relevant), are kept.

This collection tells the story of each child's learning journey—his/her efforts, progress and achievement over time. Portfolios can help give children a sense of pride in and ownership of their own learning and development. For example, children can select work samples and photographs for their portfolios, reflect on these, and, with the adult's help, plan ahead. This experience can make learning more enjoyable and interesting for them.

### **How do I use the information I collect and document?**

Thinking about what to do, how to do it and why, and then judging how well it went is part of any professional's work. The reflective adult uses information about children's learning and development to think about his/her practice, and to identify how to improve it. He/she may do this in partnership with colleagues and/or other professionals.

This reflection may result in the adult changing the way he/she interacts with children and their parents, re-organising the room, changing routines, planning particular activities, and providing specific materials and objects.

The adult also shares assessment information with the children and their parents and uses the information to plan for children's progress. Supporting children with special educational needs Assessment information can alert the adult to potential difficulties experienced by children.

By bringing concerns to the attention of parents and other professionals, the adult plays a critical role in helping to access appropriate supports to enable children to progress in their learning and to limit the potential impact of the disability or difficulty on future learning and development.

The supports may include putting a specific learning programme in place for a child. This might be based on an Individual Education Plan (IEP)<sup>5</sup>. The IEP is a comprehensive working document setting out prioritized learning needs, goals and strategies to support a child's learning and to map his/her progress. The plan is usually developed by the practitioner and the child's parents. Therapists and Special Educational Needs practitioners often contribute too. Detailed information on how to develop and use IEPs is provided by the National Council for Special Education at [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie).

By talking regularly to children about their learning and development, they can decide with the adult what they should do next and how. Sharing information with parents is equally important<sup>6</sup>, so that they can support their children at home.

Children, like adults, are natural assessors of their own progress and achievements. The adult can enrich and extend children's learning through assessment by identifying learning and development, feeding information back to children, celebrating their progress and achievement with them, and adapting practice and planning for further learning. In this way, assessment helps the adult create portraits which show the richness of children's learning and development. In doing this, assessment also guides the journeys children make as they go.

### **Observation**

Whenever a child takes a great interest in something or achieve something. Learning record can be done in small groups but each child will need their own specific individual learning record.

We would intend to have one observation per term for each child so at the end of the year we may have 3-5 observations/learning journals completed for each child. This can go over or under depending on the child.

If a child has no observation by the end of term 2, the staff member should reflect on this and come up with a plan of action to spend more one-on-one time with specific child –

One child's interest can provoke great interest within the group and this can lead to emerging interest – planning board come into action and the curriculum is driven by the children interests.

### **Procedure for observation**

Scamps & Scholars observe and document children's learning on a daily basis. By observing how children respond to activities, we will be able to evaluate if the activities and resources they have provided meet the needs of all the children. It helps us to plan a broad, balanced and appropriate curriculum. Staff should refer to the Childcare Curriculum Policy. Observations also enable staff to provide challenge and extend the programme so that each child is able to progress.

In assessing, the observer looks for evidence of children's progress across *Aistear's* themes:

- **Dispositions:** for example curiosity, concentration, resilience, and perseverance
- **Skills:** for example walking, cutting, writing, and problem-solving
- **Attitudes and values:** for example respect for themselves and others, care for the environment, and positive attitudes to learning and to life
- **Knowledge and understanding:** for example, classifying objects using colour and size, learning 'rules' for interacting with others, finding out about people in their community, and understanding that words have meaning.

Observation involves watching and listening to children. We will use different types of observations including conversations, watching group play, watching individual play, questioning and recording/ photographing. They can be planned or spontaneous. All staff have been trained in Aistear and its recommended basis practices for effective observations and assessments.

Observations will be:

- Based on all aspects of development and learning should be considered when assessing children.
- Assessment must be based on detailed observations of what children do and say.
- Written records should contain only factual information, not opinion.
- Carried out on a regular basis and shared parents/carer's at planned interviews and at any time of the year on request.
- Used to assist in planning and organising the curriculum to help meet the individual needs of children.
- Retained by the service in a secure place, until the child will have reached the age of 19.
- Staff should be aware of their own values and beliefs and ensure they are observing and assessing impartially.

Learning journals may be written up to compile a full picture of numerous observations. If there are concerns with a child's development a meetings with parents will be held to share information. In order to write positive and honest reports, staff should use the following points:

- Use straightforward language
- Put opinions in their rightful place

- Support your opinions
- Focus on what you have observed
- Describe rather than blame

Learning journals should be:


- Based on facts
- Reasonable
- Impartial
- Legible
- Accurate
- Confidential
- Available on request
- Dated and signed

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_




**Position:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Sample Learning record / Observation documents



## Learning record / observation - November 2019


### STOP, LOOK, LISTEN!

Special spontaneous moments, interactions etc that are not preplanned

1

- Conversations
- Experiences
- Achievements & goals
- Interactions with others/staff/children etc.


These moments in time that display learning and understanding that can occur at ANYTIME!  
Snack, lining up, putting on coats, during an activity, outside play  
Description should be factual and to the point.  
Record learning on a post it note keep it brief few words to jog memory take photo if needed before filling out.



### THINK!

2


This area is used to describe the learning that was displayed/ shown/use the WORD BANK to assist you in filling this out. Insert some detail about what the experience has shown or demonstrated to you about the child. Be Positive  
**WHAT DID THE CHILD SHOW YOU?**



### ACTION - EXTEND - WHATS NEXT?

3

What you PLAN to provide/do to encourage the child's learning/understanding:  
Could you provide - **experiences - activities** - etc. Identify if additional equipment or resources are required. Think about whether these extensions you plan to provide. Could they be incorporated into the emergent curriculum if the group are also interested. keep it simple.




### Parents as partners

4

This learning record can be a good tool to build good communication & relationships with parents.


When you have completed a learning record form it can be given to the parent to sign and it should then be returned to the child's record book for the year.



### Return & Recap

5


Follow up on what you **ACTUALLY** did to encourage the child's learning & document this few words keep it brief. This recap allows us to determine if we did or did not take the required action and provides great learning for each practitioner in how to improve in this area in the future



### Learning

6










What did the child learn from the extended learning you provided. Maybe new words /a new skill/discovered a new interest etc.




### Planning


7



Any new interests come about/more ways to extend the learning what happens next? (Could any new interest be used in the emergent curriculum?)



### Learning Record



1 Look at what I'm doing (include a date description and use of last photo of me as I learn and develop)	Child's name:	Place/home:	Date:
  <p style="font-size: x-small; margin-top: 5px;">Maybe a photo or just a note</p>			
2 What does this experience tell you about me? These are my interests, dispositions, values and skills etc. skills, knowledge and my understanding. Link to Aistear's themes, aims and learning goals.			
3 What will we do next to support my learning? Think about how you can help me to learn more in ways that excite and interest me.			
4 I want to share my family what I can do. Let me bring my learning home! Please to take what I will my family. They love to see and talk to me about what I'm learning.	Parent/Teacher's signature: _____		Date: _____
5 What did you actually do to further learning?	Comment: _____		
6 What were the learning & developmental outcomes?			
7 What are you planning to do next?			

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