

Guidance for Observation and Target Setting in Physical Development (EYFS)

Ofsted Definition of Teaching in the Early Years:

Teaching is a broad term that covers the many different ways in which adults help young children learn. It includes their interactions with children during planned and child-initiated play and activities, communicating and modelling language, showing, explaining, demonstrating, exploring ideas, encouraging, questioning, recalling, providing a narrative for what they are doing, facilitating and setting challenges. It takes account of the equipment that adults provide, and the attention given to the physical environment, as well as the structure and routines of the day that establish expectations. Integral to teaching is how practitioners assess what children know, understand and can do, as well as taking account of their interests and dispositions to learn (characteristics of effective learning), and how practitioners use this information to plan children's next steps in learning and to monitor their progress.

6 Key Questions to ask when observing Physical Development:

	Question (no more than 6)	<i>Additional Information</i>
1	How does the teacher provide daily opportunities for energetic outdoor play and cooperative construction with large equipment?	For example, does the teacher: • provide time and space for energetic play outdoors every day? • provide large portable equipment (e.g. milk crates, tyres, cardboard tubes) that children can move safely and cooperatively to build their own structures? • provide materials to create enclosed spaces and dens, e.g. fabric, poles and pegs? • provide opportunity for children to work together to design, build, problem-solve, communicate ideas, and negotiate roles, supporting both physical development and collaborative learning?
2	How does the teacher plan for children to practise and develop a range of fundamental movement skills in a variety of physical activities?	For example, does the teacher: • provide opportunity to build physical skills progressively, allowing children to practise and refine their movements through creative, practical, and play-based experiences? • provide physical activities that are carefully structured to support gross and fine motor development?

	Question (no more than 6)	<i>Additional Information</i>
		- plan games with beanbags, cones, balls and hoops to practise movement skills? (e.g. throw, roll, kick and catch) - plan other physical activities that develop strength, stability, balance, spatial awareness, co-ordination and agility? - provide sufficient equipment so waiting for turns does not spoil enjoyment?
3	How does the teacher provide opportunities and motivation to develop children's manipulative and tool-use skills?	For example, does the teacher: - provide activities such as cooking, painting, clay and playing instruments that motivate children to practise manipulative skills? - provide resources such as small-world toys, construction sets, threading and posting toys, dolls' clothes and collage materials? - teach children how to use tools and materials effectively and safely, and give them opportunities to practise?
4	How does the teacher manage risk, access and inclusion so all children can move safely and independently?	For example, does the teacher: - agree acceptable levels of risk and challenge, identifying hazards and actions needed to maximise opportunities indoors and outdoors? - teach children safety rules and how to show consideration for others during physical activities? - teach children how to access, use and store resources safely to build independence and autonomy? - adapt or create spaces so children with limited physical mobility can move safely and with confidence? - provided opportunities for children to develop resilience, confidence, and decision-making skills through managed risk and physical challenge? - provide access to waterproofs, wellington boots and a changing area where children can dress/undress independently?

	Question (no more than 6)	Additional Information
5	How does the teacher help children understand health, self-care and the changes in their own bodies?	For example, does the teacher: • talk with children about why they encourage rest when tired, or the need for wellingtons in muddy conditions? • encourage children to notice changes in their bodies after exercise, such as their heart beating faster? • talk with children about the importance of hand-washing and infection control?
6	How does the teacher support children's growing independence in self-care routines?	For example, does the teacher: • use visual support (e.g. a visual timetable) to sequence routines? • establish regular routines for eating, drinking, washing and toileting so children become familiar with the rhythm of the day? • remain sensitive to varying family expectations and life patterns when encouraging thinking about health? • organise the resources and the environment to promote independence and accessibility for all children? • support children to take greater responsibility for their own physical developmental needs?

Potential Physical Development Specific Targets on Lesson Analysis Forms.

Lesson design and delivery, including sequencing and choice of teaching methods Next Steps:
Plan daily opportunities for energetic outdoor play alongside portable equipment (e.g. crates, tyres, tubes) that children can move and build with cooperatively.
Plan a sequence of movement to develop fundamental movement skills and strength, stability, balance, spatial awareness, co-ordination and agility. Build in complexity across the session, marking out boundaries where needed to support self-regulation.
Include manipulative/fine motor activities (e.g. cooking, painting, clay, threading) that motivate children to practise tool use and teach safe and effective techniques.

Adapt spaces and resources to ensure children with limited physical mobility can access activities safely and with confidence.

Build in visual supports (e.g. a visual timetable or step-by-step sequence) for self-care routines such as toileting, handwashing or dressing.

Adapting planning and teaching to ensure that individual needs are met Next Steps:

Plan how you will adapt activities and equipment so children with physical disabilities or limited mobility can participate fully and safely.

Consider additional support (e.g. hand-over-hand guidance, adapted tools) for children who need more help with fine or gross motor skills.

Identify how you will extend physical challenge for children who are confident and competent movers.

Pupil progress in this lesson and use of assessment (including questioning) Next Steps:

Observe and note children's developing physical skills against Development Matters expectations.

Assess children's growing independence in self-care (e.g. dressing, handwashing) and identify the next small step for those needing support.

Use questioning during physical play to help children notice and talk about changes in their bodies (e.g. heart rate, breathing, temperature) after exercise.

Comments about student teacher's developing Subject Knowledge and Pedagogy Next Steps

Develop secure knowledge of the two Physical Development strands (Moving and Handling; Health and Self-care) and typical progression within each, using Development Matters/Birth to 5 Matters.

Extend understanding of managing risk and challenge, including how to agree acceptable levels of risk with colleagues and identify and mitigate hazards indoors and outdoors.

Reflect on how you are sensitive to varying family expectations and life patterns when talking with children about health and self-care.

<https://birthto5matters.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/Birth-to-5-Matters-Doc-LINKS.pdf>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/best-start-in-life-a-research-review-for-early-years>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/development-matters--2>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>

- Goddard Blythe, S., (2005), *The Well Balanced Child. Movement and Early Learning*. Hawthorn Press.
- Maude, P. (2015), "'How do I do this better?'" From movement development into physical literacy', in Whitebread, D. & Coltman, P. (2015), *Teaching and Learning in the Early Years*. Routledge, pp.209-228.