

Department of Education

Together Towards Improvement

A Process for Self-Evaluation

Pre-School

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TERMS USED IN THIS DOCUMENT

Throughout this document, the following terms are used:

‘Pre-school centre’	an inclusive term for nursery schools, nursery units, playgroups, day nurseries or other preschools in the statutory, voluntary, private or independent sectors which provide education for children in their pre-school year.
‘Staff’	the adults who work with the children in pre-school centres, whatever their qualifications.
‘Teaching’	the skill of the staff in promoting the children’s learning and all-round development, and all of the tasks and activities in which they engage as part of this process.
‘Leader’	the person with overall responsibility for leading the staff in the pre-school centre; this may be the principal of a nursery school; the principal of a primary school with a nursery unit or the teacher in charge of the nursery unit; or the leader, supervisor or person in charge of a playgroup or day nursery.
‘Parents’	includes parents, those with parental responsibility, or other carers.
‘Management group’	the management committee, or proprietor, or Board of Governors responsible for the organisation.
‘Employing authority’	the organisation (or person) that employs the staff and is responsible for all aspects of employment.

1. INTRODUCTION

This document has been designed to help all those involved with the provision of pre-school education to improve their current practice through a process of self-evaluation. The materials may be used on their own, or with other resources.

The core aim is to improve the quality of the children's learning and development so that their pre-school education is of the highest possible standard and provides them with a firm foundation for future success in education and throughout life.

¹Three basic questions lie at the heart of self-evaluation:

- ★ How are we doing?
- ★ How do we know?
- ★ What action do we need to take to bring about improvement?

It is recognised that the staff in many centres work with success to develop their provision. It is hoped that these materials will build further on the expertise and commitment of staff, and those who provide them with support and advice, in the processes of self-evaluation leading to self-improvement.

The materials provide guidance on:

- ★ the points to be considered by a pre-school centre that is planning to use the process of self-evaluation;
- ★ the key features of self-evaluation;
- ★ identifying the focus for self-evaluation;
- ★ indicators of quality;
- ★ carrying out the process; and
- ★ planning for action.

¹ The Child at the Centre - Self-evaluation in the early years, Scottish Executive 2000.

It is recognised that many pre-school centres already:

- ★ review and evaluate their work;
- ★ are becoming constructively self-critical;
- ★ recognise where improvements are needed; and
- ★ implement programmes and processes which aim to improve their practice and raise standards.

Documents which have already been published, including 'Evaluating Preschool Education', 'Evaluating Pastoral Care' and 'Standards for Pre-school Settings', may be helpful to centres and staff who engage in self-evaluation work. The DVD, 'Improvement Through Self-evaluation – Pre-school Education', is designed to help practitioners to reflect on, and improve, the quality of the provision they make for young children. Other organisations have published valuable self-assessment and quality assurance materials, or provide accreditation schemes. Self-evaluation need not be linked exclusively to the quality indicators within this document. The process can utilise a range of quality standards, accreditation schemes and other approaches.

Increasingly within the pre-school sector, there is the realisation that sustained improvement in educational provision requires a culture of self-evaluation to develop within pre-school centres. As a result, self-evaluation should become an integral part of a centre's way of working.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) is committed to developing the place of self-evaluation in inspections. Pre-school centres that recognise their own strengths and areas for improvement are in a better position to gain most benefit from inspection and to continue to develop their provision after the inspection.

2. WHAT IS SELF-EVALUATION?

Self-evaluation is a process which helps the members of staff, and the management group to:

- ★ clarify what the centre is aiming to achieve;
- ★ focus on the quality of the learning and teaching;
- ★ reflect on the current practice;
- ★ identify and celebrate areas where the provision is good and needs to be maintained;
- ★ identify and prioritise areas which need to be improved;
- ★ plan for development;
- ★ engage in personal and shared professional development; and
- ★ raise the standards of the educational provision.

Self-evaluation is a systematic process involving all the staff, the management group, and other members of the centre's community, including parents and children.

The process requires the staff to:

- ★ review their work openly and honestly;
- ★ reflect on the extent to which aims and expectations are being realised; and
- ★ establish a clear vision and future direction for the pre-school centre.

Where it is particularly successful, self-evaluation:

- ★ is ongoing and sharply-focused;
- ★ involves monitoring the effectiveness of the provision;
- ★ informs, and influences positively, the staff's practice and the quality of learning; and
- ★ promotes further development and improvement.

3. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF SELF-EVALUATION?

The purpose of self-evaluation is to help the staff of pre-school centres to ensure that the children are provided with the best possible start to their education. In order for children to thrive and develop, a high priority needs to be placed on their sense of security and belonging, and on their all-round wellbeing.

Self-evaluation should:

- ★ promote effectiveness in pre-school education;
- ★ improve the quality of learning and teaching;
- ★ improve the experiences for the children; and
- ★ raise standards.

Self-evaluation should also:

- ★ help the staff to recognise their own skills and expertise;
- ★ increase the staff's confidence and motivation;
- ★ provide opportunities for personal development and leadership;
- ★ promote teamwork; and
- ★ raise awareness among parents of the centre's aims and the service provided.

It is important that self-evaluation is not regarded as a form of assessment or as a tool for staff appraisal. It should not be introduced to the staff without establishing the essential culture of openness and participation.

These materials provide a framework which may be useful to:

- ★ support individual pre-school centres in the development of their own self-evaluation processes;
- ★ assist the leader, staff, and the management group to draw up and implement effective development plans;
- ★ support the centre in responding to an inspection;
- ★ increase the effectiveness of teamwork;
- ★ assist the staff in addressing change in, for example, the staffing, the enrolment or the curriculum; and
- ★ support action planning to bring about improvement.

4. IS YOUR PRE-SCHOOL CENTRE READY TO ENGAGE IN THE PROCESS OF SELF-EVALUATION?

The process of self-evaluation requires commitment from all who are involved in the life and work of the centre. Staff, parents and the management group need to evaluate, openly and honestly, the centre's work and their own particular contribution to what is being achieved.

The most important step is to establish a climate where all involved are encouraged to be open about their work. The staff should be able to work together effectively as a team and to take ownership of the self-evaluation process. Everyone, from leaders and managers to the most recently appointed members of staff, should be willing to reflect on the current practice, accept praise and constructive criticism, and make changes where necessary. The recognition of past achievements and of the existing good practice is essential as a foundation for self-evaluation.

Those providing support, advice and guidance to pre-school centres have an important role to play. They may need to help the staff to create a positive climate for self-evaluation and guide them about their readiness to begin the process.

Whatever the circumstances:

- ★ the procedures used should be straightforward and manageable, but also thorough and comprehensive;
- ★ all those involved should be aware of the methods to be used and of their part in the process;
- ★ evidence is needed to support the evaluations made; and
- ★ the outcomes of the self-evaluation should lead to action that improves the children's educational experiences and their learning.

Observations of the children at play and of the staff's involvement are key sources of evidence for self-evaluation. Other evidence will include the centre's policies, planning documents, assessment records and development plans. The views of the children, parents, staff and the members of the management group should be taken into consideration.

Feedback from primary schools about the children's progress in year 1 may also provide useful information as part of the self-evaluation process.

BEFORE BEGINNING THE PROCESS OF SELF-EVALUATION, THESE POINTS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AND DISCUSSED

These points should not be regarded as a checklist. They are designed as prompts for discussion. It is not always necessary to have a complete answer to all of these questions before making a start.

- ★ How does the centre intend to build self-evaluation into its normal way of working so that all the staff are involved continuously in improving the quality of the provision?
- ★ Has the leader planned carefully to ensure that self-evaluation can be managed within the centre's existing work schedule and the time available?
- ★ How is good practice shared and spread throughout the centre?
- ★ Is there sufficient openness and commitment to improvement among the staff and management to enable them to take part successfully in self-evaluation?
- ★ What is the centre doing already to evaluate the quality of its own provision?
- ★ What guidance and support will the centre need to help it develop the process of self-evaluation?
- ★ What steps has the centre taken to ensure that all the staff, and the management group, understand the process of self-evaluation?

THE STAFF SHOULD REFLECT ON THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS DESCRIBE THE CENTRE'S WORK

These statements are also designed as prompts for discussion and should not be used simply as a checklist. It is not always necessary for all of these features to be in place before making a start.

Within the centre there is:

- ★ a shared view of what constitutes quality and effectiveness in learning and teaching;
- ★ effective management which provides appropriate time and resources to complete the developmental work;
- ★ a positive ethos of promoting the children's all-round development and ensuring they make good progress in learning;
- ★ a recognition of past achievements and of existing good practice as foundations on which to build;
- ★ identification of priorities, and the setting of suitable, achievable and, where appropriate, measurable targets;
- ★ an analysis of available, relevant information and assessment records which is used effectively to help identify strengths and areas for improvement;
- ★ a shared team approach where all members of staff, and others involved in the life of the centre, believe they are valued;
- ★ a self-evaluative way of working which is open and transparent, and promotes a reflective culture;
- ★ thoughtful and informed leadership to guide the staff's understanding of the processes of learning and teaching;
- ★ planned staff development/in-service training (INSET) to raise confidence, and to help the staff to gain a shared understanding of the process of self-evaluation;
- ★ an understanding that self-evaluation and improvement form an ongoing process and not a one-off event in the life of the centre.

5. IDENTIFYING THE FOCUS FOR SELF-EVALUATION

Once the essential culture for self-evaluation has been established, the processes and ways of working developed during the early stages should enable the staff to apply similar methods to any aspect of the centre's provision.

The choice of theme for self-evaluation is very important and should match the stage of development of the staff and the centre.

Some pre-school centres have a tradition of self-evaluation, and the procedures are well embedded in their ethos and ways of working. Many of these centres have identified clearly their priorities for self-evaluation and have built up the necessary skills and confidence to undertake wide-ranging reviews of their work.

In pre-school centres which are at a very early stage in developing the process of self-evaluation. There may be situations, such as a relatively new staff or a recently appointed leader, where confidence and openness are just beginning to be established. Such centres may find it helpful to choose a narrowly focused area for their first self-evaluative activity, such as the quality of the learning environment. Initially, small achievable targets should be selected. Centres can then build on the experience gained to examine the findings, to improve their methods of evaluation and to broaden the scope of their evaluation work.

Self-evaluation is a cyclical process as illustrated on page 15. The lessons learned from engaging in the process, even in a limited way, should help all staff to gain the confidence and skills to address more complex or sensitive areas in the future.

Other factors may influence the choice of focus for self-evaluation, including, for example:

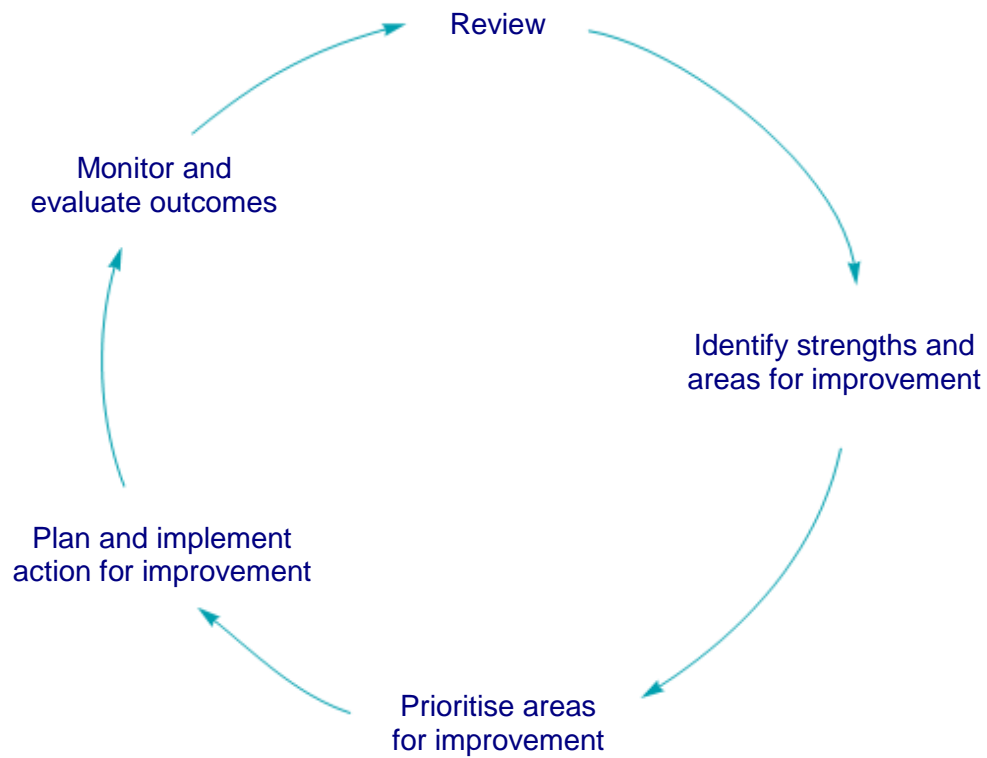
- ★ issues raised by viewing the DVD 'Improvement through Self-Evaluation';
- ★ the outcomes of an inspection;
- ★ the use of 'Evaluating Pre-School Education';
- ★ comments from parents or children;
- ★ guidance from advisory/support officers or early years specialists;
- ★ discussion in cluster group meetings; or
- ★ involvement in accreditation schemes or other self-improvement projects.

In addition to discussions among the staff, information and feedback from others may help the centre to identify its priorities and the areas which require improvement, particularly in relation to ethos, learning, and teaching.

Although pre-school centres vary in size, all are relatively small communities. It is important, however, that the staff use the time and resources available to them in order to ensure that self-evaluation becomes part of the centre's ethos and of the everyday life and work of the staff.

6. THE PROCESS OF SELF-EVALUATION

In order for a centre to examine the quality and effectiveness of its work, a systematic process of self-evaluation should be designed and adopted as illustrated below.



Detailed guidance on carrying out self-evaluation is set out in pages 39 to 45.

The Quality Indicators

THE QUALITY INDICATORS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this section is to provide schools with an understanding of the criteria used by the Inspectorate when making judgments about the quality of provision. The quality indicators, guidance and questions should help the management of schools implement a rigorous and effective self-evaluation process as part of their quality assurance arrangements.

The key question which inspection sets out to answer is:

‘How effective and efficient is the provision of education and training in responding to local and regional circumstances in meeting the needs of all learners?’

OVERVIEW: KEY QUESTIONS AND QUALITY INDICATORS

Inspection will assess the quality of provision under three broad headings, five key questions and a range of quality indicators:

Section A: Leadership and Management

Key Question 1: How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting learners?

Quality Indicators:

- Strategic Leadership.
- Action to Promote Improvement.
- Staffing.
- Accommodation and Physical Resources.
- Links and Partnerships.
- Equality of Opportunity, Diversity and Good Relations.
- Public Value.

Section B: Quality of Provision for Learning

Key Question 2: How effective are teaching, training and learning, and assessment?

Quality Indicators:

- Planning.
- Teaching, Training and Learning.
- Assessment.

Key Question 3: How well do the learning experiences, programmes, and activities meet the needs of the learners and the wider community?

Quality Indicators:

- Curriculum Provision.
- Learning Experiences.

Key Question 4: How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?

Quality Indicators:

- Pastoral Care.
- Safeguarding (Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults).
- Additional Learning Support.

Section C: Quality of Achievements and Standards

Key Question 5: How well do learners develop and achieve?

Quality Indicators:

- Achievement.
- Standards.
- Progression.
- Fulfilling Potential.

Section A: Leadership and Management

Q. How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting learners?

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strategic Leadership: How effective are the senior management team/leadership including the governing body/management committee in providing strategic leadership and clear direction in achieving high quality education and/or training?	<p>Indicators:</p> <p><i>Evaluate the extent to which the person-in-charge in conjunction with management committee:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• provides clear and realistic strategic direction based on a sound knowledge of, and vision for, the centre within its local community;• inspires confidence and respect among the staff and children and promotes in them a sense of their own worth and a respect for others;• provides a good role model for the staff, promotes high standards and sets a positive tone for the work of the centre;• has a sound understanding of children's development and the expectations of them as learners;• establishes clear and open channels of communication between all staff, children, parents and management group and takes account of relevant policy documents. <p><i>Other Indicators:</i></p>
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Evidence

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Q. How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting learners?

Action to Promote Improvement:
How effective are the leaders and managers, at all levels in the use of self-evaluation leading to improvement in the quality of provision?

Indicators:

Evaluate the extent to which management at all levels(including early years specialist):

- ensure that self-evaluation is embedded across the work of the organisation as part of improvement process;
- identifies strengths and areas for improvement and the action required to bring about improvement, supported by relevant evidence;
- ensure that all staff are involved in the self-evaluation processes;
- systematically seeks the views of the parents and other stakeholders, listens to the children (where appropriate) and takes these into account as part of the self-evaluation process; and
- promote effective and innovative strategies to raise standards and improve the quality of learning.

Other Indicators:

Evidence

Q. How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting learners?

- **Staffing:** How effective are the leaders and managers in recruiting, deploying, supporting and developing staff, at all levels, to provide high quality education/training?

Indicators:

Evaluate the extent to which leaders and managers:

- take responsibility for their own professional development;
- ensure staff are appropriately qualified, experienced and have the necessary expertise to meet curricular and pastoral needs and management responsibilities;
- provide opportunities for staff to develop their skills and capabilities, in order to build capacity within the centre to meet present and future needs;
- ensure the support provided by the centre's early years specialist is well focused and matches effectively the needs of the centre;
- deploy and monitor all staff and the early years specialist utilising their expertise, interests and specialist knowledge in the best interests of the children;
- consult with individual members of staff to identify and meet their development needs; and
- promote and support the health and well-being of the staff.

Other Indicators:

Evidence

Q. How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting learners?

- **Accommodation and Physical Resources:** How effective are leaders and managers in the deployment of all resources to provide high quality education/training?

Indicators:

Evaluate the extent to which leaders and managers:

- manage effectively the time, human (staffing) and other resources in order to meet the centre's identified priorities and the children's ages and stages of development;
- ensure an appropriate adult/child ratio;
- ensure that the most effective use is made of the accommodation and facilities, both indoors and outdoors, provide a safe, secure pleasant and stimulating environment which is well-suited to supporting the needs and interests of the children and the work of the staff;
- ensure that there is a comprehensive and clearly understood policy on safety and security, including fire procedures; and
- ensure that access to the centre is suitable to the needs of all users.

Other Indicators:

Evidence

Q. How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting learners?

- **Links and Partnerships:** How effective are the links and partnerships with parents other providers (including schools), other agencies and employers and the wider community, to identify and to meet the current and future needs of learners?

Indicators:

Evaluate the extent to which:

- the systematic exchange of relevant information about children's learning needs helps to ensure that they transfer smoothly from and to other centres or schools;
- the centre works collaboratively with other schools or pre-school centres to share best practice and resources;
- the centre maintains effective links with voluntary and statutory organisations, including educational psychologists, medical services, social work, early years organisations, SureStart and other agencies;
- parents valued as the child's first educator and are actively encouraged to become involved in promoting their children's learning;
- parents are provided with regular information on their child's progress and are encouraged to contribute to the process of assessment;
- parents receive clear information about policies, the curriculum and the operation of the centre; and
- parents' views are sought and acted upon.

Other Indicators:

Evidence

Q. How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting learners?

• **Equality of opportunity, diversity and good relations:** How effectively do leaders and managers plan strategically to ensure equality of access, to foster good relations and to meet the diverse needs of learners and staff in the pursuit of good provision for learning?

Indicators:

Evaluate the extent to which management at all levels:

- displays a commitment to inclusion with an ethos that is welcoming to all, whatever their identify or background;
- has in place appropriate policies and procedures that meet legislative requirements and actively promote equality of opportunity and good relations for the children, parents and staff;
- manages change effectively in a manner that is sensitive to the needs of the whole pre-school community including those from a diverse background or identify;
- promotes tolerance, mutual understanding, respect and integration;
- provides or accesses training in equality and diversity issues for staff and volunteers;
- provides children and parents with access (or signposts) to the full range of learning and support services within a diverse society; and
- ensures inclusive values and practices (SENDO).

Other Indicators:

Evidence

Q. How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting learners?

• **Public Value:** To what extent is the school one which is operationally feasible, provides value for money, meets the expectations of all its stakeholders, fulfils government's expectations and is effective?

Indicators:

Evaluate the extent to which management at all levels:

- makes effective and efficient use of resources available to support the delivery of high quality provision and good outcomes for all the children;
- manages resources effectively to ensure that the provision is both high quality and cost effective and the centre remains viable;
- makes appropriate use of the funding allocated for SEN, including the deployment of support staff;
- monitors, evaluates and reviews the provision regularly to ensure it benefits the local community and avoids unnecessary duplication of provision in the wider area; and
- ensures that when an organisation decides to diversify in order to generate additional income, or to provide additional services, that the quality of pre-school (funded) provision is not compromised.

Other Indicators:

Evidence

Section B: Quality of Provision for Learning

Q. How effective are teaching, training and learning, and assessment?

- **Planning:** How effective is planning to support and promote successful learning?

Indicators:

Evaluate the extent to which:

- the curriculum is planned to ensure that the learning experience for each child is broad and balanced, and promotes continuity and steady progression in the child's overall development and learning;
- the centre has clear, coherent planning for all areas of the curriculum which identifies clearly the learning experiences and intended learning outcomes. and guides effectively the work of each adult and the staff as a whole; and
- the centre has sought and used information from the children's prior experiences to ensure a smooth transition and to plan and deliver an appropriate programme for all the children.

Other Indicators:

Evidence

Q. How effective are teaching, training and learning, and assessment?

- **Teaching, Training and Learning:**
How effective are teaching and/or training in promoting successful learning?

Indicators:

Evaluate the extent to which the staff:

- create a caring, purposeful, stimulating, supportive, enjoyable and clean environment for learning;
- exploit skilfully the learning potential within the activities and the environment;
- encourage all the children to become involved in sustained, purposeful play; value their contributions and efforts and effectively manage group situations;
- make use of the daily routines to maximise learning and establish good behaviour;
- are skilled in promoting the children's language and thinking;
- develop the children's independence, confidence and decision making skills; and
- set realistically high expectations for all of the children in line with the Curricular Guidance for Pre-school Education.

Other Indicators:

Evidence

Q. How effective are teaching, training and learning, and assessment?

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assessment: How effective is assessment in promoting learning?	<p>Indicators:</p> <p><i>Evaluate the extent to which:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the centre's assessment policy is agreed and understood by all the staff and emphasises the needs of individual children;• the assessment policy provides clear guidance about the purposes of assessment, the methods to be used, the range and types of evidence to be retained, and the uses to be made of assessment information;• the staff observe and evaluate the progress of individual children and use the information collated to inform future learning and teaching;• the centre communicates to parents, both orally and in written form, a clear picture of their children's progress and achievement;• the parents are invited to contribute to the children's records and respond to the reports through regular consultations with the staff, and• appropriate assessment information, which has been shared with the parents, is passed to the primary schools to which the children transfer. <p><i>Other Indicators:</i></p>
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<p>Evidence</p>

Q. How well do the learning experiences, programmes and activities meet the needs of the learners and the wider community?

- **Curriculum Provision:** Does the curriculum offer coherent broadly balanced programmes of learning which provide learners with clear progression opportunities?

Indicators:

To evaluate this, consider the extent to which the centre:

- provides a sufficiently broad and balanced play-based pre-school curriculum which is tailored to meet the needs of individual children;
- caters well for the range of children's interests, strengths and needs and provides for their growing independence;
- ensures that all children have equal access to the full range of the curriculum and that all aspects of the pre-school curriculum are given appropriate attention;
- ensures that all children regardless of social, educational, ethnic or linguistic background meet their full potential; and
- ensures that the organisation of the session enables the curriculum to be delivered efficiently and that all time available is used effectively to promote language and learning.

Other Indicators:

Evidence

Q. How well do the learning experiences, programmes and activities meet the needs of the learners and the wider community?

• **Learning Experiences:** How well do the learning programmes and activities match the needs and aspirations of all the learners and enable them to fulfil their potential?

Indicators:

To evaluate this, consider the extent to which:

- the learning experiences are of high quality and are matched to the individual needs and interests of the children;
- the centre provides progressively more complex, varied and challenging experiences which extend the children's learning and development; and
- the centre ensures there is careful evaluation of the children's responses to the curriculum which is used to inform future planning.

Other Indicators:

Evidence

Q. How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?

<ul style="list-style-type: none">Pastoral Care: How effectively do the care, advice and guidance and other support processes provided for learners safeguard their welfare, promote personal development and ensure achievement?	Indicators:
	<p><i>To evaluate this, consider the extent to which:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">the centre has a caring ethos and all the staff show a strong commitment to the care and welfare of the children;the children develop relevant personal and social skills and understanding which help them to respond appropriately to different situations;the children feel secure and free from emotional and physical harm; they turn confidently to the staff and receive appropriate support and reassurance; andthere is appropriate evaluation of individual needs to promote effective pastoral support;the centre implements fully a child protection policy which is in line with the requirements of the relevant DE Circulars, with the guidance issued by the Child Protection Support Service and with the guidance issued by the relevant Area Child Protection Committee; andthe centre is able to complete the ETI document 'Guidance for the evaluation of Child Protection/Safeguarding'. <p><i>Other Indicators:</i></p>

Evidence

Q. How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Safeguarding (protection of children and vulnerable adults): How effective is the school in making arrangements to safeguard and promote health, well-being welfare and protection of learners?	Indicators:
	<p><i>To evaluate this, consider the extent to which the centre:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• promotes and supports the health (including the mental health) and well-being of the child;• encourages the children to develop healthy eating habits and life styles through the delivery of the centre's programme;• informs parents of the health and wellbeing policies ,procedures and any related programmes;• provides an appropriate and effective range of energetic, physical activities for the children;• the centre has comprehensive policies on appropriate welfare issues including child protection, anti-bullying, health education and behaviour management which are in line with relevant DE guidance and/or guidance issued by the relevant health and social services agencies;• the staff adopt practices which ensure that all policies and procedures are implemented fully; and• uses the Understanding the Needs of Children In Northern Ireland (UNOCINI) and Gateway referral systems. <p><i>Other Indicators:</i></p>

Evidence

Q. How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Additional Learning Support: How effective is the school in providing additional learning support for those who have cognitive, physical, emotional or linguistic barriers to learning.	Indicators:
	<p><i>To evaluate this, consider the extent to which:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the centre identifies, and with support, determines accurately, the additional educational and pastoral needs of individual children and their family;• the staff's expectations of the children are realistically high and based on a recognition of their strengths as well as their weaknesses;• there are regular reviews to ensure that the children are benefiting from the programme of support and are making discernible progress, and to identify further provision needed;• the staff know who to turn to for external support and advice;• parents are consulted appropriately, are encouraged to support the work of the centre and are informed frequently and regularly of their child's progress; and• all staff have a good understanding of the requirements of the Code of Practice and have established appropriate structures and procedures to ensure that the Code is implemented effectively. <p><i>Other Indicators:</i></p>

Evidence

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Section C: Quality of Achievement and Standards

Q. How well do learners develop and achieve?

<ul style="list-style-type: none">Achievement: How far do learners achieve the highest possible standards of work and learning?	<p>Indicators:</p> <p><i>Evaluate the extent to which the children:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• respond well to the adults, take a pride in their work, listen to and to consider the ideas and wishes of others;• are well motivated and enthusiastic about their learning;• can make choices and can express and develop their own ideas;• are inquisitive and confident in exploring new experiences and situations;• can share materials and resources and are developing the ability to co-operate in groups; and• are achieving in line with the progress in learning in the six areas of the curriculum as specified in the document 'Curricular Guidance for Pre-school Education'. <p><i>Other Indicators:</i></p>
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<p>Evidence</p>

Q. How well do learners develop and achieve?

- **Standards:** How far do learners acquire and develop the dispositions, skills and capabilities for life-long learning, and contribute to (or lay the foundations for their eventual contribution to) the community and the economy?

Indicators:

To evaluate this, consider the extent to which:

- the staff have high but realistic expectations of what all the pre-school children can achieve;
- the children are developing appropriate levels of confidence and self-esteem, respect one another, the staff, and the centre's environment;
- the children play in a settled and productive manner and in an atmosphere of mutual respect; and
- the children understand and co-operate with necessary rules and routines through the consistent application of the centre's well-judged and positive approaches to behaviour.

Other Indicators:

Evidence

Q. How well do learners develop and achieve?

- **Progression:** How far do learners demonstrate progression within the school, building on their prior achievements, and preparing appropriately for the next phase of their learning?

Indicators:

To evaluate this, consider the extent to which:

- the centre's records demonstrate that the children are making good progress in line with their age, ability and stage of development;
- the children show enjoyment in their learning and achievements; and
- the children increasingly display the characteristics, skills and concepts described in the document 'Curricular Guidance for Pre-School Education'.

Other Indicators:

Evidence

Q. How well do learners develop and achieve?

- **Fulfilling Potential:** How well do individual learners, at all levels of ability, surmount the barriers they may have to learning and achieve their full potential?

Indicators:

To evaluate this, evaluate the extent to which:

- the children are confident, suitably challenged and motivated; and
- suitably detailed records are maintained for individual children, identifying the gains being made.

Other Indicators:

Evidence

Guidance on Conducting Self-evaluation

Using the Quality Indicators

The indicators provide statements describing practice of a high quality. These statements are not designed to be used as a checklist. They should help the staff to come to a shared understanding of what constitutes effective preschool provision and to consider their own practice. The statements are not exhaustive; staff may want to add to them.

The quality indicators play a key role in the self-evaluation process.

They can help the staff to:

- ★ evaluate the centre's performance against a set of criteria;
- ★ highlight the areas of their work that are going well;
- ★ identify areas which require more detailed consideration; and
- ★ decide on the areas for improvement.

Centres need to select the indicator/s which best match their priorities for self-evaluation. They may wish to consider all of the features within the indicator/s selected or to have a narrower focus on just some of the features. The statements describing good practice can then be used to help the staff to ask key questions about their own work.

Centres using these materials will be at differing stages in undertaking self-evaluation and in developing the quality of their provision. Centres who are at more advanced stages may want to use the quality indicators in different ways to those who are taking the first steps in the process.

The indicators can be used for different purposes, including:

- ★ monitoring, evaluating and highlighting a centre's achievements;
- ★ evaluating, in depth, a specific aspect of provision;
- ★ carrying out a full review of the whole centre;
- ★ strengthening the centre's development planning; or
- ★ helping the staff to evaluate the success of the action taken to bring about improvement.

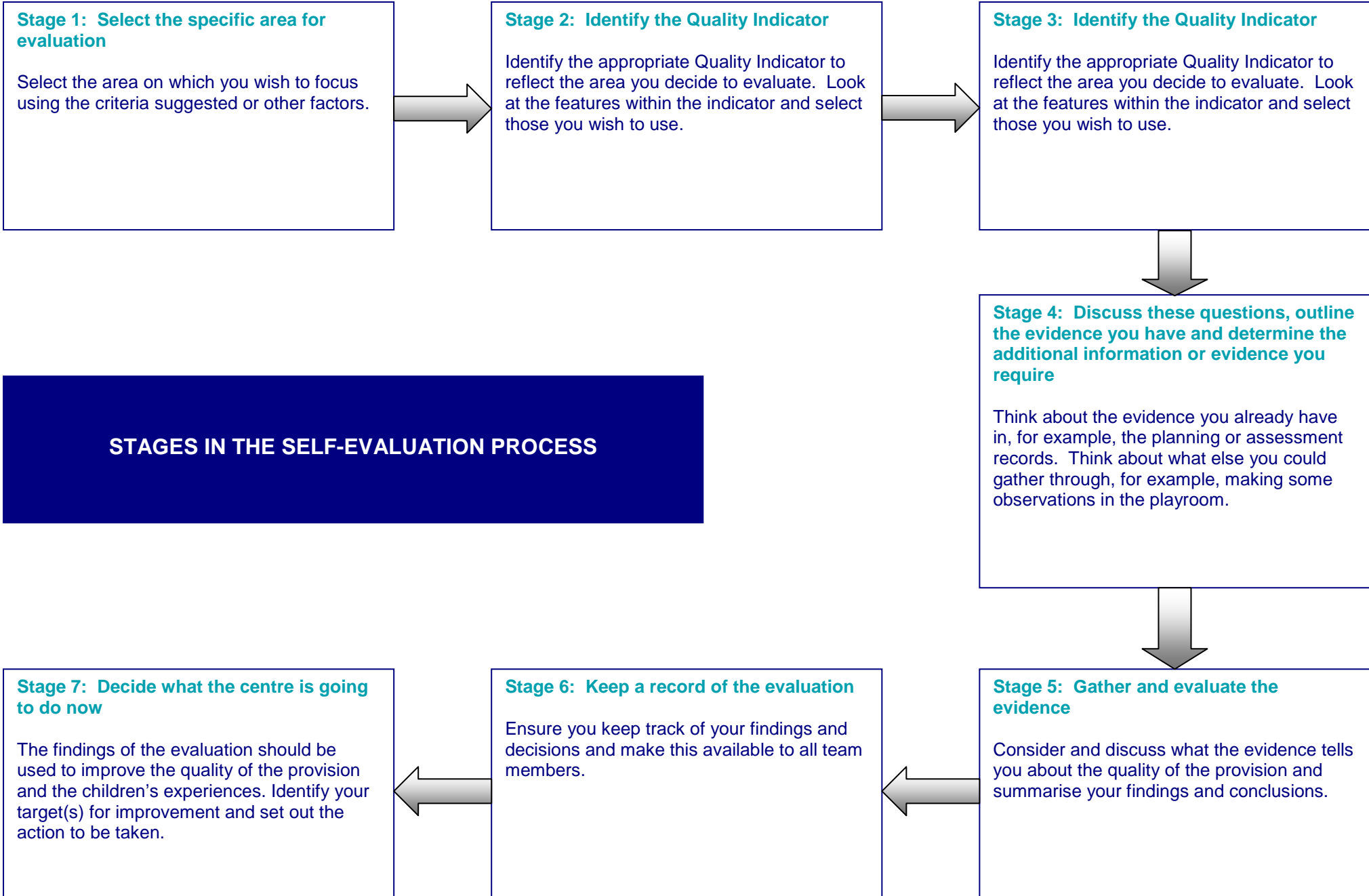
MAKING A START

When considering a specific aspect of the provision, the staff need to select the quality indicator/s which best match the aspect they wish to review. It is important that the staff do not attempt to undertake work on too many issues at the same time. The time available, and the period over which the review is to take place, need to be considered from the outset. It is usually more effective for centres to make firm decisions about the time scale and to work towards a deadline.

When selecting the aspect to evaluate, the staff may wish to consider the following criteria:

- ★ previously identified strengths or areas for improvement;
- ★ aspects of the provision identified from a centre-wide review;
- ★ areas for improvement identified during an inspection;
- ★ areas of the provision not covered so far within the regular review process;
- ★ factors relating to national or local initiatives; or
- ★ an aspect of particular interest to parents, such as pastoral care.

The stages in the self-evaluation process are outlined in the following diagram.



ACTION FOR IMPROVEMENT

Action planning is a valuable process in taking forward the areas for development and is addressed more fully in the booklets, 'School Development Planning', and 'Action Plans, Guidance for Pre-school Centres' (see Appendix 4).

The action a centre is going to take needs to be agreed by all involved, and should set out clearly the:

- ★ improvement intended in the children's learning and experiences;
- ★ action to be taken to bring about the improvement;
- ★ strategies for monitoring and evaluating how the actions are being implemented;
- ★ criteria to be used to recognise when the action has been successful;
- ★ staff who will be involved;
- ★ time the process will take; and
- ★ resources needed, including staff development and training.

CONCLUSION

Self-evaluation should increase the staff's confidence and expertise and enable them to celebrate their strengths and successes.

The process should also bring about improvements in the children's experiences and in the quality of the learning and teaching.

The Inspectorate has long recognised that the greatest chance for improvement, likely to be sustained over time, occurs when an organisation has established a positive culture and commitment to professional growth, and takes stock of the quality of its provision.

The Inspectorate report, 'Begin With Quality'³, concludes with this statement.

'It is for those who work directly with the children to make improvements in their educational experiences and their progress in learning and development. A clear and well-informed view of their own strengths and shortcomings, reached through self-evaluation, and suitable strategies for making improvements, would enable centres to participate more fully in the inspection process and to ensure that they are making steady progress in raising their own standards'.

The aim of this document is to help and encourage all those involved in preschool education to begin, or continue, the journey towards effective self-evaluation.

² A Common Framework for Inspection: The Education and Training Inspectorate, Department of Education (2003).

³ Begin With Quality, The Pre-school Expansion Programme: The Education and Training Inspectorate, Department of Education (2002).

SCHOOL

Focus/Issue:

What is the focus?	Where are we now?	What improvement in learning do we want to achieve?	What do we need to do to effect the improvement?	How shall we monitor and evaluate the implementation?	What success criteria are to be used to evaluate improvement?	Who is involved?	How long will it take?	What resources do we need?

Appendices

EVALUATION RECORDING SHEET

Indicator:

Features	Characteristics of good practice
Evidence	
Strengths	
Areas for improvement	

Descriptor

ACTION PLANNING – AN INTRODUCTION

1. The inspection of your pre-school centre, carried out by the Department of Education's (DE) inspectors, has identified areas of the educational provision which require improvement. At the time of the report-back, the Reporting Inspector advised the staff that they should draw up an action plan and send this plan to the DE within a given time.
2. This section aims to provide some guidance for staff in drawing up an action plan. The plan needs to be useful to the staff in developing the work of the centre and to show clearly to others how the necessary improvements will be brought about.
3. The implementation of an action plan should lead to an improvement in the quality of the children's educational experiences.
4. The inspection report will help identify the strengths of your centre and those areas where there are shortcomings. The action plan should help you focus on how to improve the provision and on how to develop your strengths.

WHAT SHOULD THE ACTION PLAN CONTAIN?

5. The action plan shows what you will do to build on the inspection report and improve the provision you are making.
6. For each key area requiring action, your action plan should explain:
 - ★ what you intend to do as a staff;
 - ★ how you intend to do it;
 - ★ who will carry out the necessary tasks;
 - ★ when the work will be done; and
 - ★ how you will monitor progress and measure your success.
7. The action plan should cover a period of no more than 12 months; often the plans will be completed in a shorter period. Some areas for action will take longer than 12 months to address fully; if this is the case you should plan what you can achieve within a year and then, if necessary, draw up a further action plan to take the development into a second year.

8. For each key area for action identified in the inspection report, information about the following should be included in the action plan:
- ★ Targets: your main aims for the area showing the improvements you are trying to bring about. Targets need to be specific, manageable and achievable.
 - ★ Action: a note of the specific tasks to be undertaken in order to achieve the targets.
 - ★ Responsibilities: the responsibilities given to named members of staff for carrying out the tasks you have identified.
 - ★ Resources: the materials, equipment, training, or time needed to complete the action plan.
 - ★ Time Scale: the dates when you intend to begin the tasks and when you intend the action to be completed.
 - ★ Monitoring: details of who will check that the tasks have been carried out and of the methods which they will use.
 - ★ Evidence of Success: details of how the staff will know that the changes made are successful in achieving the target.

WHAT ARE THE FEATURES OF A GOOD ACTION PLAN?

9. An action plan should be a useful working document; it does not need to be long or complicated. You should set out the document in a manner which is easily read and presents the information in a systematic fashion.
10. A good action plan:
- ★ is brief and clear: it gives notes of the essential information under each heading using language which is easily understood.
 - ★ contains specific details: it describes exactly how you intend to achieve your targets.
 - ★ is realistic and manageable: it sets targets, identifies tasks and sets time scales which will be within your capacity to achieve.
 - ★ involves all the staff: it involves all the staff in drawing up the plan and in carrying it out. It helps to make the staff aware they all have a part to play and contributes to a sense of team spirit.
 - ★ identifies methods for checking success: it includes a means of recognising that the action you are taking is being successful in improving the work of the centre and is leading to a higher quality in the children's learning experiences.
 - ★ has the support of the management committee or proprietor.

USING YOUR ACTION PLAN

11. Once the plan is drawn up and agreed, it is important that you use it as a working document and do not set it aside or keep it in a file to be looked at now and again. It should be displayed prominently and referred to frequently, especially when you are planning the programme and observing the children's play and progress.
12. The plan may be used to record work completed by marking off tasks; it should be changed, developed, and modified as needed.
13. You should discuss and review your action plan regularly at staff meetings.

EXAMPLES OF FORMATS FOR RECORDING AN ACTION PLAN

These examples are suggestions only; they are included to provide helpful illustration. There are many appropriate ways to record action plans.

ACTION PLAN 1

KEY ISSUE: The need to provide a wider range of energetic physical play opportunities.

Target	To develop the children's confidence and physical skills by providing a wider range of indoor and outdoor physical play activities.
Action	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Staff meeting to look at possibilities for a wider range of safe physical play indoors and outdoors and identify the extra resources needed. 2. Re-arrange playroom to give bigger space for physical play. Change timetable to give more time for physical play in each session. Change staff duty rota to include getting outdoor equipment ready for use every day. 3. Sort out equipment in store; draw up plan for change of physical activities twice a week. 4. Talk to committee about funding for new resources. 5. Two staff to visit other playgroups and nursery schools to get ideas and ask for advice on equipment. Draw up list of ideas for developing physical play. 6. Purchase new equipment. 7. Work on the planning for physical play to widen the range of activity and identify the skills which children should develop. 8. Explore the cost of new fencing for the outdoor area.

Responsibilities

1. Helen to lead staff meetings, talk to Committee and draw up staff rota.
2. Tracey and Nuala to make suggestions about changing timetable and arrangement of playroom, and sort out store. All staff to agree changes.
3. Helen and Tracey to visit other playgroups, draw up list of ideas and make list of equipment needed.
4. Helen to lead meetings to work on planning; Helen and Tracey to write up notes and plans.
5. Tracey to find out about new fencing.

Resources

1. Extra time for staff meetings, for re-arranging playroom, for drawing up plans and for sorting out store.
2. Time for staff to make visits.
3. Funds for purchase of new equipment and for fencing outdoor area

Time Scale

6 months - work to be completed by Feb.

Monitoring

1. Helen to monitor progress and report to Management Committee.
2. All staff to evaluate sessions at staff meetings.
3. All staff to record children's use of the equipment and observe development of physical skills.

Evidence of Success

1. Increased use of the outdoor area all year.
2. Staff noting children using equipment well and spending longer time in physical play.
3. Observations of improvement in children's confidence and physical skills.
4. All physical play equipment being used regularly throughout the year.

ACTION PLAN 2

KEY ISSUE: Staff need to agree and implement more effective strategies for promoting settled play and acceptable behaviour.

Targets	Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Evidence of Success
Make the settling-in procedures more effective.	Review organisation to give more time for settling children who have difficulty.	Jane and Ann to reorganise.	Observations of settling-in period.	Fewer children with unsettled behaviour.
Staff to share similar expectations for children's behaviour and agree suitable action to encourage good behaviour.	Whole staff meeting to define acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Draw up list of ways to encourage good behaviour and handle inappropriate behaviour. Change behaviour management policy to include detail of decisions made.	Jane to write up changes in policy and bring to Committee for approval. All staff to implement actions agreed.	Daily log of incidents and action taken. Staff to evaluate behaviour at end of each session.	Decrease in number of incidents. Fewer children having difficulty in playing amicably.
Improve the organisation of the sessions to encourage settled play and concentration.	Change organisation of snack routine and end of sessions. Introduce story reading for small groups; make large group story time optional for children.	Jane and Ann to reorganise routines. All staff to implement changes.	Staff to evaluate at end of sessions.	Children show more interest in stories. No queues for washing hands; no waiting for parents.
	Increase length of free play period. Draw up rota for changing materials.	Jane to make timetable changes and rota.	Staff to evaluate at end of sessions.	Children show better concentration.

Targets	Action	Responsibility	Monitoring	Evidence of Success
	Introduce keyworker system with help from Early Years Specialist.	Ann to arrange training session. All staff to implement system.	Staff evaluation.	Staff have better Understanding of individual children.
	Change observation notes to extend monitoring of personal, social and emotional development.	Ann to design new sheets.	Observation notes.	Notes show more settled play and better social skills.
Tell parents about new procedures and how they can support staff in encouraging good behaviour.	Hold meeting to explain changes and policy and how parents can help support staff.	Jane to work with Committee, organise meetings.	Parents attending meeting.	Good turn-out for parents' meeting. Good response to changes.
	Use survey to find out parents' views.	Jane to draw up questions and organise.	Answers to survey.	Most parents happy with new policy and willing to support staff.

Resources:

1. Time for additional staff meetings and meetings with parents.
2. More books and floor cushions for story sessions.
3. Time for staff training on key worker system with advice from Early Years Specialist.
4. Photocopying information booklets for parents and parents' survey forms.

Time Scale: Start date: 1 September

- ★ Agree and implement changes to organisation of sessions and behaviour management policy by end of September.
- ★ Introduce key worker system and modified records by 1 November.
- ★ Hold parents' meetings in November.
- ★ Run survey by end November.
- ★ Complete all action tasks by 1 December; monitor success during period December-June.
- ★ Review the evidence of success at end of June.

Sample of an action plan

ACTION PLAN - PRE-SCHOOL CENTRE

Focus/Key Issue:

Where are we now?

What are the targets?	What action needs to be taken?	How will we monitor and evaluate?	How will we know if we are being successful?	Who will be involved?	How long will it take?	What resources do we need?

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