



Vernon Park Primary School



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Observation of Play and Learning

Opal: A precious stone whose colour changes depending on your viewpoint. A gem that comes in many shimmering colours.

This document was created adapted from the Barnet Early Years Alliance (2018)
'Observation of Play and Learning' system using Development Matters and Birth to 5 Matters.

Our Approach to Assessment

Having used the OPAL Assessment tool, we decided to personalise it to our school and our children.

We wanted our assessment to be an *effective, meaningful* and *principled* assessment of young children's learning.

- By *effective*, we mean a method of assessment that ensures that all children are supported in reaching significant milestones.
- By *meaningful*, we mean that the observations made inform our everyday practice and curriculum. By gaining an insight into children's thinking, feeling and needs we can plan our environment and actions to provide future possibilities for learning.
- By *principled*, we mean that our focus is on observing to understand children. We will not test children or seek unnecessary knowledge. Children are recognised as individuals, not as a percentage in a pie chart. We will not spend unnecessary amounts of time writing observations or gathering evidence of children's learning. We believe that if we are capturing the moment, we cannot be part of the moment. Instead, we have structures in place that enable us to regularly discuss children as a team.

Typical Development at 6 Months

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- Smiles back at an adult or cries if they hear another child cry.
- Takes everything to mouth.
- Watches faces intently.

Communication and Language

- Laughs and squeals out loud when playing.
- Responds to interactions with familiar voices.
- 'Takes turns' in babbling conversations.

Physical Development

- When offered a toy, will reach for it.
- Kicks strongly with alternate legs.
- Sits well with support, holding head up.

Typical Development at 12 Months

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- Likes to be in sight and hearing of a familiar adult.
- Enjoys peek-a-boo games.
- Responds to facial expressions and tone of voice.

Communication and Language

- Turns to own name.
- Understands simple instructions (clap hands).
- Babbles and makes different noises.
- 'Takes Turns' in babbling conversations using single words.
- Points and uses gestures to show or share interests.

Physical Development

- Can sit without support.
- Pulls up to standing position.
- Can move from lying down to sitting.
- Drinks from a cup with a lid and feeds themselves finger foods.

Typical Development at 18 Months

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- Seeks physical contact from others.
- Watches what friends are doing.
- Can use pointing to let an adult know what they want

Communication and Language

- Jabbers to themselves when playing.
- Points to own nose, hair, feet etc.
- Starting to use a variety of single words.
- Responds to known simple instructions.

Physical Development

- Walks independently.
- Will squat to pick up objects.
- Walks upstairs with a helping hand.

Typical Development at 24 Months

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- Enjoys simple make-believe play e.g. having a cup of tea.
- Likes to do things for themselves, without help.
- Displays a range of big emotions, e.g. May jump up and down when excited.

Communication and Language

- Puts two or more words together.
- Repeats words and finds objects when asked e.g. ball, shoes.
- Responds to familiar music, songs or rhymes.

Physical Development

- Climbs over obstacles.
- Uses a spoon or fork to feed themselves.
- Climbs stairs independently.
- Fist grasp when mark making.
- Can run, kick a ball and jump with both feet off the ground at the same time.

Typical Development at 30 Months

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- Watches what friends are doing and joins in with play.
- Likes to help you when you are busy, e.g. putting shopping away.
- Begins to assert independence and challenge boundaries.

Communication and Language

- Is interested in books and stories.
- Can stop what they are doing and can listen to you.
- Uses lots of new words. Beginning to use words like, me, I and you.

Physical Development

- Can run around, change direction and slow down so they don't bump into things.
- Can make lines and marks.
- Builds a tower.

Typical Development at 36 Months

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- Shows an interest in others and makes new relationships.
- Explores new environments.
- Uses the toilet with some support.
- Takes turns with adult guidance. Understands 'yours' and 'mine'.

Communication and Language

- Responds to questions and instructions.
- Asks for help if they need it.
- Speaks in simple sentences linking up to 5 words together.
- Can shift from one task to another when asked e.g. Jack, stop now, it is time to tidy up.
- Starting to use descriptive language for time (when?), space (where?), function (what?).
- Starting to use pronouns, prepositions and plurals- not always correctly.

Physical Development

- Can draw enclosed shapes e.g. circular shapes.
- Moves around their environment with awareness and control.
- Manages a range of equipment purposefully e.g. can use a spade to fill a bucket.
- Digital pronate grasp when holding tools.
- Can climb confidently.
- Can catch a large ball.
- Can pedal a tricycle.

Literacy

- Enjoys sharing books with adults.
- Uses simple marks including lines, curves and circular movements.

Maths

- Shows an awareness of number.
- Uses mathematical language in their play e.g. big, small, heavy, light

Typical Development at 42 Months

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- Shows awareness of the feelings of others.
- Knows what they want to play with and where to find it.
- Plays with others.
- Uses the toilet independently.

Communication and Language

- Sings songs and rhymes.
- Talks with other children.
- Listens and responds to things said by others.
- Able to follow an instruction with two parts e.g. Get your coat and open the door.

Physical Development

- Can put on their own coat.
- Can draw crossing perpendicular lines.
- Climbs, runs and jumps with confidence.
- Uses toys and tools safely.

Literacy

- Enjoys listening to stories and making up play scenarios.
- Makes many different marks, including closed shapes, e.g. circles.

Maths

- Knows how to solve everyday problems in their play e.g. how to get water from one place to another.
- Recognises some numbers and shows an interest in counting.

Typical Development at 48 Months

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- Can play with others, sharing what they are using with help.
- Plays imaginatively with other children.
- Confident to have a go and try new things.

Communication and Language

- Talks about what they are doing and things they remember.
- Starts conversations with familiar people and asks questions.
- Listens when they are in a group with other children.

Physical Development

- Can dress themselves with some support.
- Gives new challenges a go and is aware of their own safety.
- Uses resources with some control, e.g. can pour from a jug into a cup.
- Can draw simple shapes e.g. square.
- Four finger grasp when holding writing tools.

Literacy

- Looks at books and has some favourites.
- Makes marks to represent their name and talks about their drawings.
- Knows the difference between pictures and words.

Maths

- Beginning to count objects in their play.
- Knows a number can show how many things there are.
- Understands how different shapes fit together e.g. in their art work or block play.
- Will notice who has more or less e.g. who has more trains or pieces of fruit.

Typical Development at 54 Months

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- Stays at activities that they really like without being distracted by other things or people.
- Understands and follows some rules.
- Is able to make friends.
- Independently uses the toilet and keeps themselves clean and dry.

Communication and Language

- Listens attentively in a range of situations.
- Asks and answers questions to find out more.
- Talks in clear sentences about people they know, what they see and how they are feeling.

Physical Development

- Uses a variety of tools with accuracy, e.g. pencils, paint brushes and scissors.
- Can draw diagonal lines.
- Can move around spaces with control and coordination.
- Developing tripod grasp when holding writing tools.

Literacy

- Begins to recognise familiar letters or words e.g. letters in their name, familiar names and shop signs. and sometimes writes them.
- Knows most, if not all, single letter sounds.
- Can write letters, though not always forming them correctly.
- Will talk about stories as they are read to them.
- Knows the difference between pictures and words.

Maths

- Counts to find out how many things they have up to 10.
- Recognises numbers in their environment.
- Can model number bonds to and within 5.
- Knows the names of some shapes- 2D and 3D.
- Notices and compares size, weight and capacity in their play.

Typical Development at 60 Months

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- Can take turns when playing with others and listens to their ideas.
- Understands the feelings of others and responds thoughtfully.
- Can talk about some things they like or don't like and say why.
- Plans and carries out their own ideas.
- Copes with new routines or when plans change.
- Knows it is important to keep their bodies healthy with exercise and eating well.

Communication and Language

- Asks and answers questions about stories and events.
- Speaks in clear sentences.
- Uses language to express their imaginative ideas.
- Remember and recall detailed information e.g. the process of making a cake.
- Can talk about things that have happened, are happening or are going to happen using the correct tense.

Physical Development

- Can cut along a straight line with scissors.
- Can draw triangles and other shapes.
- Can dress and undress independently.
- Is adventurous and confident in their physical play.

Literacy

- Can recall what happened in a story.
- Uses letters or symbols to convey meaning.
- Writes name correctly consistently.
- Knows all single letter sounds and some 'special friend' sounds.
- Starting to write CVC words independently.
- Recognises some red words.
- Recognises similarities in words e.g. words that rhyme or start with the same letter.

Maths

- Can accurately count to find out how many things they have, up to and beyond 10.
- Beginning to recognise different numbers and put them in order.
- Knows number bonds to and within 5 and some within 10.
- Shows an interest in adding and taking away.
- Recognises small quantities without counting.
- Finds ways to measure in their play e.g. how many children will fit in a cardboard box.

Typical Development at 66 Months

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- Perseveres when things are hard.
- Cares about the feelings of others and knows when to help them.
- Knows that rules are important when playing in a group.
- Demonstrates patience in different situations.

Communication and Language

- Listens in a group and talks about what they have heard.
- Begins to use humour and simple jokes.
- Shares their ideas with others expressing themselves clearly.

Physical Development

- Balances well e.g. hops forward on one leg.
- Throws at a target and catches.
- Manages zips and buttons on their clothes.
- Can cut out simple shapes accurately.

Literacy

- Writes simple phrases/ sentences (no punctuation needed).
- Uses phonic knowledge to sound out new words.
- Uses writing and drawing in their play.
- Reads words and simple sentences (including those they have written)
- Discusses the content and messages of different texts.
- Can adapt the events in a story to create their own tale.

Maths

- Counts accurately and recognises numbers to 20.
- Can form numerals correctly.
- Can recognise simple patterns in number.
- Adds and subtracts objects to find the total.
- Measures and records numbers in play.

How we use V'OPAL'

Getting to know you – 'Starting points' within the first 4 weeks, the child's development will be assessed against the OPAL age band they have most recently passed. This will inform us if the child has met developmental milestones. A conversation with families at the children's induction meetings will inform us about their child's interests and needs.

Each month there will be a group of 'Focus children' approaching their next spotlight milestone. Staff will spend time observing these "focus children" in play and learning. A V'OPAL' Spotlight assessment will be completed. Actions will be planned with the team to promote thinking and learning to support the child's development. Teachers will meet with families to discuss current knowledge from the Spotlight and plan next steps so that families can support these plans at home. Observations of the child at play will be shared.

2 months later. Review of Spotlight. The teacher returns to the Spotlight assessment to evaluate progress in the last two months. Plans set for the child are evaluated.