

Implementation and moderation of the early years foundation stage profile 2009/10

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Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Response to 2009 report recommendations	5
3. National overview of practice	8
4. Key findings from implementation and moderation of the EYFS profile 2009-10	12
5. Conclusions	15
Appendix.....	16

1. Introduction

This report provides a summary of the national implementation and moderation of early years foundation stage (EYFS) profile assessment in the 2009/10 academic year. It describes how the EYFS profile was interpreted, delivered and supported by local authorities. In particular it:

- reports on progress made and action taken in response to recommendations in *Implementation and moderation of the early years foundation stage profile 2009* (QCDA/09/4658)
- provides an overview of national practice, indicating what comprises most effective practice and how many local authorities delivered most effective practice in 2009/10
- outlines key findings on the implementation and moderation of the EYFS profile assessment in the 2009/10 academic year
- draws conclusions about the accuracy, consistency and validity of assessment and the quality of data arising from national use of the EYFS profile.

The report has been compiled using information from the following sources:

- **External moderation monitoring reports produced by external consultants who visited 42 local authorities in 2010.** This consists of a random sample plus some local authorities that were allocated support from the Qualification and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) in 2009/10, but had not been selected as part of the random sample. The visits took place in summer term of 2010 and included discussions with key personnel, EYFS profile managers and moderators working for local authorities coupled with observation of external moderation in a setting or settings.
- **Scrutiny of completed local authority evaluation and planning forms.** Local authorities were asked to evaluate their EYFS profile moderation for 2009/10 and outline their planning for 2010/11. Completed forms were requested by 30 July 2010. Individual responses, identifying key strengths and areas for development, were sent to local authorities in October following the *Statistical First Release* of EYFS profile outcomes for 2009/10 by the Department for Education (DfE).

- **QCDA support and development officer monitoring reports.** Reports provided by support and development officers (SDOs) to those local authorities that received targeted QCDA support during 2009/10.

2. Response to 2009 report recommendations

The 2009 report made a number of recommendations to improve of the processes of implementation and moderation. The table below details progress made and/or action taken on each recommendation.

2009 report recommendation	2010 response (progress/action)
<p>Guidance for children with special educational needs (SEN)</p> <p>Issues regarding the recording of data for children with SEN need to be addressed. Local authorities and moderation managers need to be clear about the expectations for assessing and recording the attainment of children with SEN. Equally, clarity on the nature of the EYFS profile as a record of attainment, not achievement, needs to be established amongst all stakeholders. Appropriate acknowledgement of this should be reflected in both national and local analysis of data.</p>	<p>Additional SEN guidance was produced by The National Strategies early years team with some input from QCDA. It was provided for all local authority representatives who attended The National Strategies <i>Building Bridges</i> conferences in 2010.</p> <p>Discussion has also taken place at nationally organised meetings of management information software (MIS) suppliers in order to ensure that pupils with zero scores are appropriately recorded. Enquiries to the eProfile helpdesk suggest that there may still be some anomalies in reporting the attainment of children with SEN via the eProfile.</p>
<p>4–8 lock</p> <p>All moderation managers need to ensure that the purpose, principles and practice of the 4–8 lock are fully understood by themselves and practitioners. As a result of this, access to the password should only be sought in the exceptional cases which merit consideration for receipt. There needs to be national consistency for the collection of EYFS profile data; specifically with regard to the collection of scale points 1–3 and 4–8. Suppliers of collection systems other than the eProfile need to be approached so that exploration of how to establish this consistency can take place.</p>	<p>The 2009/10 inter-local authority moderation conference included a compulsory workshop investigating the attainment of scale points 1, 2 and 3. QCDA also published <i>Data submission lock for scale points 4–8</i> guidance which included examples of requests for the password to unlock scale points 4–8.</p> <p>In 2009-10, QCDA received 59 requests for the password to unlock scale points 4–8 (compared w159 in 2008/9). This represents a very significant drop since 2008/9 and suggests a further improved understanding of the EYFS profile scales. In total, the password was given out only 3 times in 2009/10 and only in cases of children with severe and complex SEN.</p>

2009 report recommendation	2010 response (progress/action)
	<p>Again, discussions have taken place with MIS suppliers in order to ensure that their data entry systems alert users appropriately.</p>
<p>Moderator recruitment and training Greater national consistency on the recruitment and training of moderators needs to be established by exploring the possibility of developing a QCDA national training programme. Additionally, all local authorities need to ensure that they have a clear policy on how moderators are selected, trained and supported in line with the most effective practice.</p>	<p>QCDA ran national training for new moderators in March 2010. Over 175 new moderators attended the training at the two events in London and Leeds.</p> <p>QCDA is developing materials for local authorities to use to train new moderators in 2010/11, and is planning to offer targeted training for those authorities receiving support from SDOs.</p> <p>The national moderator registration programme was successfully run again in 2009/10. The number of colleagues from local authorities who participated in the registration programme was 246, of whom almost 90 per cent became fully accredited.</p>
<p>Local authority moderation visits All moderation visits should be based on dialogue between the moderator and the practitioner throughout. Visits in which this is not the case cannot be considered to be effective. Moderators also need to be aware that the purpose of statutory moderation is to ensure that the judgements derived from the practitioner's evidence is consistent with national exemplification.</p>	<p>Scrutiny of local authority evaluation and planning forms and the reports of external moderators indicate that dialogue between moderators and practitioners is becoming increasingly established as the norm for moderation visits.</p> <p>Reports from external moderators and support visits suggest that the use of national exemplification materials is also a more consistent feature of local training events and moderation visits.</p>

2009 report recommendation	2010 response (progress/action)
<p>EYFS profile exemplification Additional national QCDA exemplification is required; both to supplement the existing QCDA website exemplification and to provide additional guidance for specific scales, scale points, areas of learning and targeted groups. Independently produced materials cannot be described as 'national exemplification' and should not be used by moderators or practitioners for this purpose.</p>	<p>Additional QCDA exemplification is being produced, illustrating in particular the assessment of children with SEN, children with English as an additional language and those attaining scale point 9.</p>

3. National overview of practice

The table below¹ shows the percentage of all local authorities in England demonstrating most effective practice in EYFS profile implementation and moderation. To attain this rating, the local authorities had to meet all the specified criteria detailed in the *Moderation requirements* booklet.

Key features of most effective practice	Criteria for demonstrating most effective practice	Local authorities demonstrating most effective practice (%)		
		2008	2009	2010
Details of moderation agreed in advance with settings and stakeholders.	The moderation plan is reviewed and developed with representatives from all stakeholders, including private, voluntary or independent (PVI) settings. It responds to the review of the previous year's moderation.	62	95	90
Suitably qualified / experienced members of staff are involved in the moderation process, and have opportunities to update their knowledge and understanding of the EYFS profile.	The moderation team comprises a balance of serving practitioners and local authority personnel. All members of the team have substantial and appropriate early years experience. Moderators are regularly briefed and have the opportunity to participate in evidence trialling within the team.	74	97	97

¹ The evidence in this table is drawn from analysis of the 2009-10 evaluation and planning forms, *Implementation and moderation of the early years foundation stage profile 2009* (QCDA/09/4658) and *Implementation and moderation of the early years foundation stage profile 2008* (QCA/09/4119).

Key features of most effective practice	Criteria for demonstrating most effective practice	Local authorities demonstrating most effective practice (%)		
		2008	2009	2010
Engagement in inter-local authority moderation of EYFS profile judgements.	The moderation manager regularly participates in moderation activities with other local authorities, discussing approaches to moderation, evidence trialling and specific EYFS profile scale points.	91	94	97
<p>Establish training and support for specific practitioner groups, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • experienced practitioners • practitioners new to reception settings • practitioners with sole responsibility for reception in their setting • teaching assistants/ support staff in reception classes • practitioners in PVI settings required to implement the EYFS profile. <p>Targeting and tracking of staff for monitoring and additional support</p>	<p>A clear system is in place for training and supporting practitioners.</p> <p>Practitioners have access to training that focuses on principles of effective assessment and on the aims, principles, purpose and uses of the EYFS profile. They are supported through briefings, meetings, updates, visits and/or drop in, surgery and telephone support as appropriate.</p>	82	94	89
	Staff new to EYFS assessment are identified by the local authority. Their attendance at training meetings is monitored and they are able to access additional support. Their settings are visited as an integral part of the annual moderation cycle.	92	95	97

Key features of most effective practice	Criteria for demonstrating most effective practice	Local authorities demonstrating most effective practice (%)		
		2008	2009	2010
<p>The local authority provides EYFS profile training and support for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • headteachers • year 1 teachers • subject leaders in infant/primary/special schools • appropriate local authority staff. 	<p>Training, briefings and updates are regularly provided for all levels of school and local authority management.</p>	76	66	78
<p>Identification of a range of schools and settings that will receive a visit as part of the moderation cycle.</p>	<p>Schools and settings allocated moderation visits are identified in several ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • on a cyclical basis (eg 50 per cent of schools/settings are visited annually) • where there are staff who are either newly qualified teachers (NQTs) or new to EYFS profile assessment • concerns identified by the school improvement partner or headteacher • previous anomalies in data and concerns from past moderation visits • non-attendance at EYFS profile training or moderation meetings. 	70	93	96

Key features of most effective practice	Criteria for demonstrating most effective practice	Local authorities demonstrating most effective practice (%)		
		2008	2009	2010
Each practitioner is offered an opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of scale point judgements by discussing assessments of a small number of individual children.	Moderation focuses on evidence of children's attainment within the three bands of the EYFS profile, namely scale points 1–3, scale points 4–8 and scale point 9.	81	98	98
All practitioners have the opportunity to attend at least one moderation/evidence trialling meeting annually.	Meetings are organised to take place throughout the year, giving practitioners opportunities to participate in evidence trialling and review approaches to assessment and making and recording judgements.	58	99	98
Promotion of and support for the understanding and use of EYFS profile data.	EYFS profile data is used effectively and appropriately by all stakeholders through ongoing training and support, particularly by year 1 teachers, school management, assessment coordinators and subject leaders.	66	94	98
EYFS profile data is quality-assured prior to submission to the DfE.	EYFS profile data from schools and settings is scrutinised by the local authority moderation manager and the local authority data team. Apparent anomalies and inconsistencies are identified and highlighted to schools and settings to review.	79	98	99

4. Key findings from implementation and moderation of the EYFS profile 2009-10

The 80:20 ratio of evidence from child-initiated and adult-directed activity appears to be widely embedded within schools and settings implementing the EYFS profile. In contrast to previous years it was wholly absent as an issue or area of challenge during the external moderation of local authorities.

Local authority moderation managers and moderators indicated that there appeared to be an increased level of strategic interest in and involvement with the EYFS profile from senior local authority colleagues, school improvement partners (SIPs) and headteachers. Partly this appeared to be as a result of the use and status of EYFSP data, and partly as a result of the increased status and importance of moderated teacher assessment through the growth in use of assessing pupils' progress (APP) in primary schools. The inclusion of SIPs in training appeared to be widely in place and this represents a major step forward.

Issues continued to be raised by EYFS profile moderation managers about misunderstandings of the principles, purpose and practice of assessment in the EYFS in general and the EYFS profile in particular. They also quote incidences of misuse and misinterpretation of data at school and local authority level. Moderation managers generally view the EYFS profile as fit for purpose as an authentic assessment that describes attainment at the end of the EYFS and informs practice. However, its development into a potentially 'high stakes' assessment with associated target-setting and extrapolation risks undermining this situation. The inappropriate local authority collection of termly EYFS profile data was cited as an example.

Where data was fully understood, and particularly when headteachers took responsibility to sign off data prior to submission, its ability to support learning, development and provision within the EYFS and as part of pedagogical continuity into key stage 1 was evident. There was increased evidence of productive collaboration between local authority moderation managers and data collection and analysis teams. The resulted in better quality assurance processes for data collection and the quality of analysis provided back to school was more useful and informative for year 1 teachers.

A higher incidence of parental involvement in contributing to EYFS profile judgements was reported in some local authorities, particularly following local initiatives promoting parental engagement. Overall practice in this regard remains variable.

There was more evidence of local authorities identifying colleagues who were in need of training (NQTs and practitioners new to the EYFS) and some very encouraging examples of registered moderators (those who have successfully completed the accredited programme) being used to train and mentor new moderators.

Although approaches to the moderation of the EYFS profile continue to strengthen and provide local and national consistency, there remain some areas of concern.

- The selection of the areas of learning to be moderated across the local authority is sometimes determined by immediate school improvement priorities. In order to ensure that there is accuracy and consistency across all scales, a three-year cycle needs to ensure total coverage. The purpose of moderation is to ensure that the resulting data is accurate and consistent with national exemplification.
- In schools with multiple classes across the cohorts, care was not always taken to ensure that a truly representative sample of evidence was moderated. Even if internal moderation takes place, it is important that the moderator discusses evidence from all classes as part of the visit.
- The use of joint observations of children during moderation visits continues to raise issues. Where it takes place, the moderator needs to ensure that the practitioner's wider knowledge of the child is not devalued by such an observation. It is also important to consider whether this is the most efficient use of a moderator's time.
- Some local authorities continue to 'grade' moderation practice as part of the external visit. Practitioners' judgements are either accurate and in line with national exemplification or they are not, in which case additional training and consideration should take place. There are no gradations of accuracy, and this practice can confuse the process of moderation unnecessarily.
- Moderators must be clear that the purpose of their visit is purely to ensure the accuracy of EYFS profile judgements. Where additional monitoring, support or guidance activity is involved, it should be clearly differentiated from the moderation process.

- The purpose of moderation meetings should be clear to participants. In some cases such meetings appear to fall between training events and actual moderation of participants' judgements.
- While appeals processes following external moderation are in place in almost every local authority area, some of the processes need to be clarified to ensure consistent implementation across the local authority.
- Local authority moderation managers were not always directly involved in moderation activity, and planning forms for 2010.11 suggest that, as a result of local financial constraints and reductions in staffing levels, this management function may pass to those who have a more strategic overview but who have less direct understanding and experience of the EYFS and the profile.

5. Conclusions

This report points to a further strengthening of local moderation arrangements in 2009/10 and a greater confidence in the robustness and reliability of the data emerging from use of the EYFS profile. The impact of centrally run moderator training and registration has led to much higher levels of consistency across the country in the ways that moderation visits and meetings are conducted. The increased focus on the use of EYFS profile data has led to improvements in how it is quality assured, fed back to schools and used to improve provision and planning in year 1 classes. There remain some concerns, however, about uses of the data for other purposes and how this might impact on the consistency of judgements.

There continue to be issues to tackle – more than 10 local authorities will receive targeted support in 2010/11 – but there are fewer issues than in previous years and the focus of support is often at a level of detail rather than around the process as a whole. One significant issue for 2010/11 will be the maintenance of local structures and practices in a period of considerable staff turnover within local authorities and during a period when a national review is being conducted into the EYFS and associated assessment arrangements.

Appendix

Externally moderated local authorities 2009-10

Area	Local authority	Area	Local authority
East	East Riding of Yorkshire	South East	Bedford Borough
East	North Lincolnshire	South East	Bracknell Forest
London	Bexley	South East	Bromley
London	Hammersmith & Fulham	South East	Hertfordshire
London	Harrow	South East	Luton
London	Islington	South East	Medway
London	Lambeth	South East	Oxfordshire
London	Merton	South East	RB of Windsor and Maidenhead
London	Southwark	South East	Richmond Upon Thames
London	Tower Hamlets	South East	Southampton
London	Waltham Forest	South East	Wokingham
Midlands	City of Coventry	South West	Bath & North East Somerset
Midlands	Derbyshire	South West	Bristol
Midlands	Nottingham City	South West	Gloucestershire
Midlands	Shropshire	South West	Poole
Midlands	Walsall	South West	Wiltshire
Midlands	Worcestershire		
North	Bury		
North	Doncaster		
North	Leeds		
North East	Durham		
North East	Northumberland		
North East	South Tyneside		
North East	Sunderland		
North West	Blackburn & Darwen		
North West	Cumbria		
North West	Rochdale		
North West	Salford		
North West	Sefton		
North West	Tameside		