

# **Implementation and moderation of the foundation stage profile 2007**

*Annual monitoring report*

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November 2007

QCA/07/3426

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## 1 Introduction

This is the National Assessment Agency's (NAA) third monitoring report on the national implementation and moderation of the foundation stage profile (FSP). It provides a picture of how the profile has been interpreted, delivered and supported during the academic year 2006/7 and identifies a series of key issues. It also provides recommendations to target support for moderation, secure its implementation and continue its development. It examines the approach to implementation and moderation taken by local authorities (LAs) and agencies as well as practitioners' implementation of the FSP and their understanding of its role and purpose. Examples of effective practice are detailed and the key issues and challenges that have emerged from the monitoring process are described. The basic operational principles of the FSP are available in Appendix 1.

## 2 Progress/action in response to recommendations from 2006 report

| 2006 recommendation   | Progress 2006/7 and action 2007/8   |
|---|---|
| a. Practitioner understanding of observation-based formative assessment and the FSP needs to be further supported by the publication of sophisticated exemplification and guidance on the process of assessment in the foundation stage.  | Published in May 2007, <i>Additional guidance on completing foundation stage profile assessments</i> (see Appendix 5) clarifies the terminology of observation-based formative assessment and NAA expectations for the FSP.   |
| b. In consultation with all stakeholders, a clear positional statement needs to be produced that reasserts the purpose of the FSP and the inappropriateness of either equating scale points or totals with national curriculum levels or using them as a numeric predictor of attainment at the end of key stage 1. | The positional statements within the 2006 report regarding the relationship between FSP and national curriculum attainment have been widely disseminated. Research is underway to explore the possible links between the attainment of specific scale points and outcomes in key stage 1. |
| c. The development of a national system that records children's level of development/attainment on entry needs to be seriously considered by all stakeholders. Such   | The Association for Achievement and Improvement through Assessment (AAIA) has produced guidance on assessing children's attainment in the foundation  |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>a system would need to be compatible with the FSP and support its principles, process and purpose in order to establish usable, understandable and universal data that would address the issues of tracking progress in the foundation stage.</p>  | <p>stage (see Appendix 4).</p>  |
| <p>d. LA approaches to models of training, moderation and support need to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. an effective system of identifying practitioners who are new to the FSP is established</li> <li>II. all strata of management, and especially literacy and mathematics subject leaders, are trained in the principles, process and purpose of the FSP in order to fully understand its use within a wider school context</li> <li>III. practitioners from private, voluntary and independent settings are included in all training and moderation</li> <li>IV. moderators are fully trained and regularly participate in evidence trialling</li> <li>V. inter-LA moderation and evidence trialling is an integral part of the model</li> <li>VI. discussion with practitioners regarding the evidence for making judgements is an essential component of external moderation visits.</li> </ul> | <p>Evidence from NAA external moderation visits and completed evaluation and planning forms suggests that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. the majority of LAs have developed effective systems for identifying newly qualified teachers and practitioners new to the foundation stage</li> <li>II. there has been a slight increase in the number of non-foundation stage practitioners trained</li> <li>III. there is a wide inclusion of all private, voluntary and independent settings in training and moderation</li> <li>IV. the amount of moderator training and participation in evidence trialling has remained static</li> <li>V. there has been a small increase in the number of LAs participating in inter-LA moderation</li> <li>VI. discussion with practitioners has become an essential component of the moderation visit for the majority of LAs.</li> </ul> |
| <p>e. In consultation with all stakeholders, clear guidance and exemplification need to be developed to ensure that FSP assessments of children learning English as an additional language are appropriate and accurate.</p>  | <p>NAA guidance on making judgements for children learning English as an additional language has been published on the NAA website (see Appendix 6).</p>  |

### **3 Action plan to improve foundation stage profile assessment and data quality**

Following a meeting with DfES (now the Department for Children, Schools and Families – DCSF) officials in March 2007, a detailed action plan (see Appendix 2) was agreed to further strengthen and refine the processes for monitoring FSP moderation. The intention was to ensure the accuracy and reliability of data at national and LA level.

The DCSF has remitted the NAA to improve the quality and consistency of FSP implementation, support and moderation to ensure that there is a high level of confidence in the accuracy and reliability of outcomes to improve children's progression.

### **4 Key findings**

1. The findings from this year's monitoring process indicate that there has been a substantial increase in practitioners' understanding of the FSP. More significantly, this appears to be a reflection of a wider consensus on the principles, process, purpose and use of assessment in the foundation stage and the critical role it plays in effective early years pedagogy. Issues raised at an operational level tended to be about the technicalities of interpretation and specific aspects of the FSP's scale point criteria rather than the existence of the FSP itself, which had appeared to be an issue in the past. In some cases practitioners displayed a tendency to 'over-complicate' the rationale for their judgements rather than relying on their professional knowledge and understanding of children's attainment. The impact of the NAA's letter to LAs in 2006,<sup>1</sup> which outlined the nature and ratio of evidence from child- and adult-initiated activities, and the more recent *Additional guidance on completing foundation stage profile assessments* (see Appendix 5) has been strongly felt by practitioners and LAs. It may be this that has contributed to the current level of LA confidence in the security of FSP judgements.
2. Local authorities must have sufficient knowledge and understanding of, as well as support for, the FSP at strategic level for it to be successful. This support has a significant effect on the general LA-wide perception of the FSP and more specifically on the status and development of the moderation team, their access to funding and

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<sup>1</sup> This document can be found on the QCA website at [www.qca.org.uk/qca\\_15013.aspx](http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_15013.aspx)

issues of capacity and coverage. This support has a major impact on the accuracy of and confidence in FSP data.

3. The recent requirement for LAs to set targets to improve outcomes for children, known as the Early Years Outcomes Duty (see Appendix 4), has focused attention on FSP outcomes within all strata of LAs. This makes it even more important for LAs to ensure that they have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the FSP's process and purpose. Without the necessary knowledge and understanding of the FSP's process and purpose there is a risk that some LAs may misinterpret the rationale of the FSP, seeing it as an exercise in statistical management rather than a means of supporting children's development and learning.
4. The Early Years Outcomes Duty has also accelerated the necessity for greater accuracy and consistency in FSP judgements and for improved confidence among LAs in the resulting data. In principle, this is fully consistent with the rationale behind and the purpose of the FSP. However, there is evidence that some LAs have interpreted this as an escalation of the FSP to a 'high stakes' assessment that has generated unnecessary anxiety and the pursuit of narrow and inappropriate outcomes. Where this is the case there is the possibility that it will have a negative impact on the FSP's accuracy and validity.
5. Issues remain regarding the use of FSP data as a numerical description to support the demonstration of progress and predicted outcomes at the end of key stage 1. The FSP provides qualitative rather than quantitative data, to which it is not possible to apply conventional statistical models for measuring progress and making predictions. The NAA reasserts its position that any equation of FSP scales or scale point scores to national curriculum levels or invented sub-levels is a spurious exercise and that there is currently no reliable numerical correlation between attainment in FSP and national curriculum key stage 1 assessments. However, this does not mean that the FSP is any less valuable in judging where support is needed to help children achieve at key stage 1.
6. The introduction of the early years foundation stage, which will take place from September 2008, has further focused attention on the development of approaches to assessment and recording progress from birth to the end of the early years foundation stage. There is also increased interest in the relationship of such approaches to what will become the early years foundation stage profile.

7. Given that the FSP's primary purpose is to enable transition from the foundation stage to year 1 and the provision of an appropriately challenging curriculum, as well as endeavours to ensure that data accurately reflects children's attainment, the lack of use of the FSP data by year 1 teachers remains an issue. The FSP provides rich, manageable information that clearly identifies the next steps in learning for individuals and groups of children in all aspects of their development. Key stage 1 teachers are urged to make full use of this information to support a seamless transition for all children.
8. The last year has seen the use of established approaches to moderation as well as the development of new models of increasing sophistication. Critical to the effectiveness of moderation has been the selection of appropriately experienced moderators, and extensive induction and professional development. There is also greater confidence in judgements when LAs participate in moderation and evidence trialling with other LAs.
9. The continuing high incidence of formal assessments being undertaken in addition to the FSP needs to be monitored by moderation teams and LAs. Where additional assessments are taking place there should be a thorough investigation of their purpose and audience, and whether or not they are duplicating any FSP data. The NAA reasserts the consistent national position that there is no expectation or requirement that any formal assessments or completion of records takes place in addition to the FSP.
10. The changes to 'Communication language and literacy: linking sounds and letters' scale points 5 and 6 will come into effect in 2007/8. Relevant materials have been modified and it is not envisaged that these changes will have a dramatic impact on the implementation of the FSP or on any resulting data. LAs and practitioners are reminded that the FSP is a statutory assessment of all 13 scales, which will continue to have an equal weight and status for judgements, moderation and outcomes.

## 5 National overview of the most effective practice

The following table indicates the national percentage of LAs that are demonstrating the most effective practice in FSP implementation and moderation against the key features identified. The percentages refer to LAs that were judged to be meeting all aspects of the criteria consistently and to a high standard. The evidence in this table was drawn from analysis of evaluation and planning forms.

| <b>Feature of effective moderation and implementation</b>                                      | <b>Criteria for demonstrating the most effective practice</b>  | <b>National % of LAs demonstrating the most effective practice</b> |
|--|--|--|
| Training, development and support of and for foundation stage staff                            | A clear system is in place for training and supporting practitioners. Practitioners have access to training that focuses on the principles of effective assessment and the aims, principles, purpose and uses of the FSP. Practitioners are supported through briefings, meetings, updates, visits and/or drop-in, surgery and telephone support as appropriate. | <b>42%</b>   |
| Targeting and tracking staff new to the foundation stage for monitoring and additional support | Staff new to the FSP are identified by the LA and their attendance at training and meetings is monitored. Additional support is offered and their settings are visited as an integral part of the annual moderation cycle.   | <b>46%</b>   |
| Training, development and support of and for school and LA leadership                          | Training, briefings and updates are regularly provided for all levels of school and LA management.   | <b>16%</b>   |



|  |   |            |
|--|---|------------|
| Understanding and use of FSP data  | FSP data is used effectively and appropriately by all stakeholders as the result of ongoing training and support, particularly by year 1 teachers, school management, assessment coordinators and subject leaders.  | <b>32%</b> |
| Selection and targeting of schools and settings for moderation visits/support. | Schools and settings are identified for moderation visits through a range of triggers. They may be identified on a cyclical basis (where 50 per cent of schools and settings are visited annually). Other times when settings may be identified are when staff are new to the FSP, when concerns have been identified by the school improvement partners or headteacher, or when there are anomalies in data, concerns during previous moderation visits, or non-attendance at training and/or moderation meetings. | <b>36%</b> |
| Provision, timing, organisation and frequency of moderation meetings           | All practitioners have the opportunity to attend at least one moderation / evidence trialling meeting annually. Meetings are organised to take place throughout the year and provide practitioners with the opportunity to participate in evidence trialling and to review approaches to assessment, recording and making judgements.   | <b>40%</b> |
| Selection of the moderation sample during visits                               | The moderation model focuses on evidence of children's attainment within three bands of the FSP: scale points 1–3, scale points 4–8, and scale point 9.   | <b>34%</b> |
| Content of the moderation visit model  | The moderation visit focuses on a professional dialogue with the practitioner to explore their understanding of the FSP scale points in relation to the attainment of the children in the moderation sample. Moderators also explore the ratio of adult-directed and child-initiated evidence that is used to secure a judgement.   | <b>56%</b> |

|   |  |            |
|---|--|------------|
|   | Where appropriate a joint observation between practitioner and moderator may take place to further examine the approach to making judgements.  |            |
| Development of the moderation plan in consultation with stakeholders        | The moderation plan is reviewed and developed in conjunction with representatives from all stakeholder groups, including private, voluntary and independent settings.  | <b>24%</b> |
| Selection, training, and continuing professional development of moderators  | The moderation team reflects a balance of serving practitioners and LA 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. | <b>38%</b> |
| Participation in inter-LA moderation and evidence trialling                 | The moderation manager participates regularly in moderation activities with other LAs, discussing approaches to moderation and evidence trialling for specific FSP scale points.   | <b>67%</b> |
| Quality assurance of FSP data prior to submission to DCSF                   | FSP data from schools and settings is scrutinised by the moderation manager and the LA data team. Apparent anomalies and inconsistencies are identified and highlighted to schools and settings for review.  | <b>30%</b> |
| Provision of FSP data analysis by the LA at local level and at school level | The LA provides summary data for the school/setting compared with the local and national averages. Data is analysed to indicate trends and highlight areas for development.  | <b>36%</b> |

## 6 Recommendations

1. To address misunderstanding and misuse of the FSP at all levels, LAs need to ensure that training and development on the principles, process, purpose and appropriate use of the FSP is provided for all stakeholders and that attendance at training events is monitored and pursued. In particular, LAs need to ensure that this is extended to senior managers within the LA, assessment coordinators, headteachers, all subject leaders and year 1 staff.
2. Following on from the provision of training, it is critical that all year 1 staff engage effectively and confidently with FSP data and make full use of its potential to inform decisions on appropriate and challenging provision for children as they enter year 1.
3. Although LAs now have greater confidence in practitioner judgements for the FSP, the important roles played by other contributors are still undervalued. In particular, practitioners, LAs and national stakeholders need to explore ways of fully including contributions by parents/carers and children to assessment in the foundation stage / early years foundation stage and in the foundation stage profile / early years foundation stage profile.
4. The consistency of FSP judgements at a national level needs to be secured. All LAs need to ensure that they actively participate in regular inter-LA moderation and evidence trialling to ensure that any variance on FSP scale points between LAs is minimised.
5. As the necessity for accurate and reliable FSP data becomes more and more significant, there is a need for LAs to strengthen and refine the processes for quality assuring data at all levels. As a minimum requirement all headteachers and moderation managers need to screen data from practitioners for obvious anomalies before submission to the LA, and LAs need to do the same before submission to the DCSF. Moderation managers should review training and moderation plans to address issues identified through data anomalies.

## **7 Evidence base**

This report has been compiled using information from:

- external consultants' moderation monitoring report following visits to a 25 per cent sample of LAs
- scrutiny of evaluation and planning forms completed by FSP moderation managers in LAs
- manager and practitioner responses to the FSP and key stage 1 evaluation questionnaire.

## **8 Outline of the external monitoring processes**

Local authorities and audit agencies were asked to provide the NAA with the evaluation of their FSP moderation for 2006/7 and their planning for 2007/8. Completed forms were sent to the NAA by 31 July 2007. These evaluation and planning forms were scrutinised by the NAA and individual responses, identifying key strengths and areas for development, were sent to LAs.

Scrutiny of the evaluation and planning forms and other sources of evidence took place between August and 15 September 2007. Responses were collated at both national and regional levels.

On behalf of the NAA, consultants visited a sample of 25 per cent of LAs and agencies to discuss their approach to implementation and, where possible, to observe the moderation process in action (see Appendix 2).

## **9 Findings from the external moderation of local authorities**

Visits by NAA moderators to LAs took place in the 2007 summer term. Visits consisted of discussions with key personnel, FSP managers and, where possible, moderators working on behalf of LAs. There were also visits to observe the external moderation of a setting. In some cases visits were retrospective as moderation had already taken place.

The NAA moderators identified support for the FSP at strategic level within LAs as a critical factor in the development of effective models that were more likely to deliver accurate data. In particular, where the strategic leadership for the FSP was either unclear

or not wholly early years based, there was a greater incidence of inappropriate or ineffective models of moderation, and data was more likely to be insecure as a result. This also had an implication for the funding of FSP moderation and the incorporation, support and moderation of the private, voluntary and independent settings where FSP implementation is a statutory requirement. Where support for the FSP at strategic level was well established and evident there was a greater emphasis on the briefing and training of LA personnel, headteachers and senior school managers. The LAs identified this as a crucial means of ensuring that the principles and purpose of the FSP were fully understood, and its moderation and implementation fully supported. In cases where support was evident, judgements were more likely to be consistent and the resulting data was considered by LAs to be more accurate and reliable.

The recruitment, selection and training of LA moderators and the composition of the moderation team were also identified as critical and reflective of an LA's wider understanding of the FSP. Ineffective approaches were often characterised by moderation teams that did not include colleagues with sufficient direct early years experience, that were top heavy with LA personnel and that did not include 'serving' foundation stage practitioners. Furthermore, there was evidence that some moderators did not participate in regular training and evidence trialling and were not involved in inter-LA moderation. Effective models were more likely to consist of a range of moderators as outlined in the *Foundation stage profile handbook*, Annex 1, p127, and to ensure that there was the opportunity to reflect on, refine and adapt the process as a moderation team.

The external moderators undertook detailed scrutiny of the models and approaches developed by LAs. Broadly, this covered FSP training, moderation visits, moderation meetings and support for ongoing internal moderation (moderation within settings).

Training for practitioners was most effective where it was incorporated into approaches to foundation stage assessment. Effective models clearly identified practitioners new to the foundation stage who required training and support, and made a distinction between newly qualified teachers and practitioners with experience in other key stages.

The moderation visits carried out by LAs varied considerably in their content and delivery and a diverse range of visits were considered to be effective. Key features of effective models were visits during the spring and summer terms, paired or joint visits by moderators, joint observations with a practitioner and a strong emphasis on discussion with the practitioner of evidence towards the attainment of moderated FSP scale points.

Visits that took place too early in the academic year were generally considered to be less effective, as were models that relied on external moderators visiting settings alone.

The content and structure of moderation meetings also varied, though less so than the content and structure of visits, and there was a broad consensus among LAs on what constitutes effective practice. The external moderators noted that the majority of LAs ensured that practitioner access to meetings fulfilled the requirements outlined in the *Foundation stage profile handbook*, Annex 1, p124, and followed up practitioners and settings that did not attend. Meetings tended to focus on the moderation of specific scales and scale points, and to make effective use of a range of nationally and locally produced material to develop a consensus on judgements.

A characteristic of moderation models that are robust and are more likely to produce consistent and accurate data is that internal moderation is facilitated and supported by LAs as an ongoing aspect of practice within a setting. A model is particularly effective if it ensures the inclusion of all foundation stage practitioners and year 1 teachers to develop a solid consensus on judgements, evidence and attainment.

The response of LAs to their own moderation process and the use of the information generated also emerged as a critical factor. This strongly reflected a LA's understanding and recognition of the importance of the FSP. The most effective LAs used the results of the moderation to target schools for additional support and to analyse the accuracy of their data. For these LAs, informing year 1 staff and the school management of the detail of moderation findings was often an integral part of the process and helped schools to support transition and inform whole-school approaches.

The role of the FSP as a lever for change was another important aspect acknowledged by LAs. Many still identify it as a powerful means with which to promote and ensure effective practice in foundation stage settings. The impact of the guidance sent to LAs in July 2006 has been widely felt, especially with regard to the 80:20 ratio of child-initiated / adult-directed evidence required for judgements to be considered secure. Coupled with NAA guidance published in May 2007 (see Appendix 5) which defines key terminology, LAs felt that this had supported the embedding of the practice of observational assessment throughout all early years provision. This will be further consolidated by the implementation of the early years foundation stage, which will be statutory from September 2008. Some LAs with a well-developed and embedded approach to the FSP identified the role of parents/carers and children in contributing to FSP assessments as a key area for development. This was considered to be especially important for ensuring

that assessments for children learning English as an additional language were accurate and reliable.

A key feature of the most effective models of moderation was the practice of quality assuring FSP data as it arrived from schools prior to its submission to the DCSF. Where possible this data was examined at the level of individual scale points rather than scale scores, to identify anomalies and inconsistencies. Where such anomalies occurred schools' data was challenged and refined and was therefore more likely to be accurate and reliable. Moderators noted that, despite there being no correlation between FSP scores and outcomes at key stage 1, the use of FSP data to make judgements about specific outcomes often led to inappropriate analysis of FSP data to make it correlate with key stage 1 outcomes, and to the inadvertent 'depressing' of scores by school management to achieve a particular ratio or formula. Such activity challenges the accuracy and validity of the data and critically undermines its fitness for purpose.

## **10 Findings from the scrutiny of local authority evaluation and planning forms**

Scrutiny of LAs' completed evaluation and planning forms indicated that LAs are still operating at varying stages of development.

The use of nationally produced exemplification for training and development purposes was characteristic of the approaches used by LAs. Training was targeted to meet the needs of practitioners new to the foundation stage and other stakeholders, especially headteachers. Effective tracking systems enabled LAs to identify non-attendees of training sessions and to offer additional support. There was a consistent emphasis on the need to support and develop practitioners' understanding and use of child-initiated activity to secure their FSP judgements. This understanding is predominantly gained through observation.

In the most effective models LAs provided drop-in support surgeries for practitioners and promoted the use of *Creating the picture* (see Appendix 4) during training, meetings and visits. Deputy headteachers, mathematics subject leaders, literacy and assessment coordinators as well as school governors were also provided with specific training. They also rigorously evaluated all training programmes in the light of national messages and consulted widely on modifications and developments to meet the changing needs of practitioners and stakeholders. Briefing school improvement partners to enable them to utilise FSP data during support visits was also a strong feature of effective models.

Training for non-foundation stage practitioners was as follows; 60 per cent had delivered training for headteachers and managers, 34 per cent for deputy headteachers and managers, 28 per cent for literacy coordinators, 22 per cent for mathematics subject leaders and 9 per cent for assessment coordinators.

The majority of LAs provided practitioners with access to moderation meetings annually, in line with national guidance. Typically, these tended to be a mixture of LA-organised events and locally organised cluster meetings in which FSP moderation took place.

Sixty-seven per cent of LAs participated in inter-LA moderation and evidence trialling to establish consistent moderation for scale points. Again, there was a mixed approach with informally organised local networks such as Counties that Used to Be Avon and regional meetings and events held by national organisations such as AAIA. In the most effective models, this was extended to include the practice of reciprocal moderation visits between LAs and joint LA moderation visits to settings.

The majority of LAs are consulting widely to ensure that the moderation plan is modified to reflect the needs and views of all stakeholders. In the most effective models this includes practitioners and managers from both maintained and private, voluntary and independent settings. The best LAs evaluate their models and use the results to guide the development of best practice.

The vast majority of LAs implemented a moderation cycle that was in line with national guidance. Many LAs exceeded this and continued to visit 50 per cent of settings annually. A range of triggers may bring about a moderation visit. Most typical were the presence of newly qualified teachers and practitioners new to the foundation stage, inconsistencies and anomalies in the previous year's data and concerns regarding the quality of practice and provision. In some instances the headteacher requested a moderation visit. Moderation visits brought about by such triggers occurred in addition to the annual cycle.

All LAs must ensure that all settings receive a moderation visit at least once every four years. In the most effective models LAs employed additional triggers such as targeting the bottom 20 per cent of schools and settings where they are not in areas of deprivation and making an additional visit after data has been submitted to verify very low or very high outcomes. Moderation and evidence trialling meetings generally followed a consistent structure. In the least effective models these meetings took place as twilight sessions and consequently had a diminished status among practitioners and managers.



The moderation team generally consisted of a mixture of LA personnel, headteachers and foundation stage practitioners. In a significant number of cases it was unclear if all members of the team always had significant and appropriate early years experience. A range of approaches to inducting new moderators were in place, often including the shadowing of experienced moderators and paired moderation visits. In the most effective models new moderators were appointed annually and moderator training, updating and evidence trialling was considered a priority and took place termly. In the least effective models moderators did not attend inter-LA moderation or receive additional training after their induction.

The moderation models used by LAs overwhelmingly focused on the discussion of evidence with the practitioner and the relationship between this and the attainment of specific scale points. Moderators were often keen to establish that the 80:20 ratio in favour of child-initiated activities was in place and often provided support to enable practitioners to achieve this where necessary. The practice of 'shared observation' between the moderator and practitioner during visits has increased and is seen to be an effective way of supporting and developing practitioner knowledge and observational skills. In the most effective models headteachers and managers were fully involved in all aspects of the process, including the discussion of evidence and joint observations. A moderator dedicated to special schools, leading meetings and undertaking visits was also a feature of the most effective models. The use of locally or individually produced portfolios of exemplars for scale points proved to be an effective and popular means of establishing consistency in FSP judgements during meetings. In a very small number of cases LAs prescribed a task, which moderators were to undertake with a group of selected children. This is a wholly inappropriate and invalid means of establishing or verifying FSP judgements as it disregards the key strands of evidence required to ensure accuracy. The strands are as follows: the practitioners' knowledge of the child; information from a range of contributors' observations; and anecdotal significant moments.<sup>2</sup>

The majority of LAs provided the school or setting with their FSP data after its submission. In the most effective models written feedback and analysis was included, as were comparison graphs for local and national outcomes. Although some LAs stated that their FSP data was quality assured prior to its submission to the DCSF, the rigour and effectiveness of this process remains unclear, particularly when data is viewed at point score rather than individual scale point level.

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<sup>2</sup> Details of the strands of evidence can be found in the NAA's letter of advice to local authorities (summer 2006) at [www.qca.org.uk/qca\\_15013.aspx](http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_15013.aspx)

Only 32 per cent of LAs were confident that the data was understood and used by year 1 teachers. This remains a disturbingly low number. The fact that only 18 per cent of LAs were confident that the *Continuing the learning journey* training materials (see Appendix 4) had been delivered in a majority of schools and settings is a clear indicator of the amount of development that is still needed in this area.

Fifty-six per cent of LAs stated that commercial assessment products were being used. However, the numbers using them varied considerably from LA to LA, with use more prevalent where a moderation model was at an early stage of development.

Fifty per cent of LAs stated that they were aware of additional assessments being undertaken by practitioners, despite national and local advice and guidance discouraging this practice. Such additional assessments were generally used in the areas of phonic knowledge and/or reading attainment, despite the provision of 18 scale points within the FSP that describe specific outcomes in these areas of learning.

This year, for the first time, LAs were requested to indicate their levels of confidence in the accuracy of FSP data by recording the percentage of schools/settings identified by guidance criteria as either 'secure' or 'insecure'. FSP data show 82 per cent of schools are secure (the national aggregate figure). This figure indicates the developing level of confidence that the majority of LAs have in the effectiveness of their approaches to moderation.

## **11 Findings from foundation stage profile evaluation questionnaires**

The FSP evaluation questionnaire was completed and returned during the summer term. Respondents were exclusively foundation stage practitioners. The conclusions from the questionnaire were as follows:

- Of those involved in the FSP assessments, 37 per cent claimed there were 'FSP scale points that were difficult to make a judgement on'. This was a similar level to that found in 2006 (31 per cent).
- The majority of respondents (86 per cent) involved in FSP assessments discussed the assessments with other colleagues 'at least' weekly and 39 per cent discussed them on a daily basis.
- Teaching assistants (88 per cent), other teachers (69 per cent) and special educational needs staff (61 per cent) were the top three groups that regularly contributed to decisions on FSP judgements.
- Over two-thirds of schools (67 per cent) in 2007 claimed to have undertaken assessments in addition to gathering evidence for FSP judgements. Among these schools, phonic assessments (26 per cent) and reading assessments (12 per cent) were the most common additional assessments.

## **Appendix 1: Operational principles of the foundation stage profile**

The FSP was introduced in the academic year 2002/3 as a statutory assessment for the end of the foundation stage. It replaced the requirement for practitioners to undertake a baseline assessment on entry to school.

It is a unique assessment tool in that it contains no tasks or tests, being based on teacher assessment instead. When implemented as advised in the *Foundation stage profile handbook*, it draws on assessments that practitioners carry out as part of the process of learning and teaching as outlined in *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage* (QCA/00/587).

The FSP consists of 13 scales covering the six areas of learning as identified in *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*. Each scale has nine points: scale points 1–3 represent attainment within the yellow, blue and green stepping stones; scale points 4–8 represent attainment within the early learning goals; and scale point 9 represents attainment beyond the early learning goals.

Practitioners are required to make judgements for each child on each of the 13 scales. The results are submitted to the DCSF through the LA.

Local authorities are required to conduct a cycle of moderation visits to all settings that are implementing the FSP to ensure that practitioners have the opportunity to attend moderation sessions and to provide appropriate training and support.

## Appendix 2: Action plan to improve FSP assessment and data quality

### 2007 action to improve the quality of assessment outcomes

| Activity  | Benefit and success criteria  | Target audience  | When and how issued   |
|---|---|--|---|
| Additional exemplification of 'tricky scale points' | <p>Increased practitioner confidence in making judgements due to clear national guidance.</p> <p>Increased confidence in accuracy and consistency of resulting data.</p>                    | <p>LA FSP moderators</p> <p>LA school improvement personnel</p> <p>Headteachers</p> <p>Practitioners</p> | <p>Distributed to LAs with instructions to disseminate to practitioners via NAA website</p> <p>May 2007</p> |
| LAs to give confidence levels for FSP data          | <p>Establishment of national confidence picture – dependent on NAA confidence in LA judgement.</p> <p>Increased confidence in accuracy of national data as LAs establish local picture.</p> | <p>LA FSP moderation managers</p> <p>LA FSP moderators</p>   | <p>To be returned with completed evaluation and planning forms</p> <p>July 2007</p>                         |

**2008 action to improve the quality of assessment outcomes**

| <b>Activity</b>  | <b>Benefit and success criteria</b>   | <b>Target audience</b>  | <b>When and how issued</b>   |
|--|---|---|--|
| Development of national English as an additional language guidance | More accurate assessment of children learning English as an additional language.<br><br>Increased confidence in FSP data due to accuracy of assessment for children with English as an additional language.                       | LA FSP moderators<br>LA school improvement personnel<br>Headteachers<br>Practitioners       | Distributed to LAs with instructions to disseminate to practitioners via NAA website<br><br>May 2007 |
| Strengthening of evaluation and planning form                      | More comprehensive and detailed picture of LAs' approach to FSP implementation and moderation will enable more authoritative picture and more effective targeting of LAs requiring support.                                       | LA FSP moderation managers<br>LA FSP moderators   | To be returned with completed evaluation and planning forms<br><br>July 2007                         |
| Establishment of LAs' approach to quality assuring FSP data        | Establishment of national picture of confidence in FSP data by each LA.<br><br>Increased confidence in accuracy of data as LAs develop processes and approaches to identify inaccuracies and anomalies before submission to DCSF. | LA FSP moderation managers  | To be returned with completed evaluation and planning forms<br><br>July 2007                         |
| Research FSP / national curriculum relationship through the        | Establishment of meaningful and accurate model of progression and outcome.<br><br>LAs, schools, practitioners and stakeholders are more   | LA FSP moderators<br>LA school improvement personnel<br>Ofsted<br>Primary National Strategy | Published on NAA website and disseminated to LAs, practitioners and stakeholders                     |

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| identification of possible 'super scale points'                | confident in appropriate and effective use of scale points as possible indicators of subsequent attainment.  | foundation stage regional advisers (PNS FSRAs)<br>Headteachers<br>Practitioners | November 2007  |
| National accreditation for FSP moderators                      | National approach to the consistency of FSP moderator role and accreditation of appropriate personnel.<br><br>Increased confidence in data due to robust and consistent national approach to moderator recruitment and the practice of FSP moderation.   | LA FSP moderators   | FSP moderators to be accredited as ongoing process         |
| Regional NAA inter-LA moderation conferences                   | Increased consistency of judgements between LAs.<br><br>Increased confidence in FSP data consistency through nationally moderated judgements of scale point attainment.  | LA FSP moderation managers<br>LA FSP moderators                                 | Regional conferences to take place during spring term 2008 |
| Formal written feedback to LA on evaluation and planning forms | Clearer picture for LAs on developments required.<br><br>Increased confidence in the accuracy of FSP data through identifying areas for development of LAs' approach to implementation and moderation of the FSP.<br><br>An analysis of this information will inform DCSF priorities meeting and LAs on necessary areas for development. It will also provide the NAA with a clearer picture of national | LA FSP moderation managers<br>LA FSP moderators                                 | Formal feedback submitted to LAs<br><br>September 2007     |

|  |  |   |   |
|--|--|---|---|
|  | development of the FSP and guide advice and support.   |   |   |
| Dissemination of annual report key findings to LAs | Clarification of national picture.   | LA FSP moderation managers  | Key findings sent to sent to FSP managers<br>September 2007                                       |
| Intensive LA monitoring and support                | <p>Focused and targeted support and monitoring will elevate quality of implementation and moderation of FSP to a consistent national standard.</p> <p>Increased confidence in accuracy of FSP data to support progression.</p> | <p>LA FSP moderation managers</p> <p>LA FSP moderators</p> <p>LA strategic managers</p> | <p>Support process to be initiated in autumn term 2007</p> <p>September 2007 – September 2008</p> |

### Post-2008 action to improve the quality of assessment outcomes

| Activity  | Benefit and success criteria  | Target audience   | When and how issued |
|---|---|---|---------------------|
| Review the structure, use and development of the eProfile | Establishment of an effective electronic assessment tool for practitioners. | <p>LA FSP moderators</p> <p>LA school improvement personnel</p> <p>Ofsted</p> <p>PNS FSRAs</p> <p>Headteachers</p> <p>Practitioners</p> | TBA                 |
| Enhance electronic  | Increased practitioner confidence in making judgements,                     | LA FSP moderators   | TBA                 |



|  |  |   |  |
|--|--|---|--|
| exemplification of<br>FSP scale points | enabling increased confidence in resulting data. | LA school improvement personnel<br>Ofsted<br>PNS FSRAs<br>Headteachers<br>Practitioners |  |
|--|--|---|--|

### **Appendix 3: Local authorities visited during external moderation of the foundation stage profile in 2007**

Bedfordshire  
Birmingham  
Buckinghamshire  
Calderdale  
Camden  
Cheshire  
Cornwall  
Croydon  
Dudley  
Gateshead  
Haringey  
Hillingdon  
Kensington and Chelsea  
Kent  
Lancashire  
Leicester City  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
Norfolk  
North East Lincolnshire  
North Somerset  
Peterborough  
Portsmouth  
Redcar and Cleveland  
Rotherham  
Sefton  
Solihull  
South Gloucestershire  
Surrey  
Sutton  
Thurrock  
Wakefield  
Walsall  
Wigan  
Wokingham  
York

## Appendix 4: Support materials

Since the introduction of the FSP a range of materials has been produced to support practitioners, managers and advisory staff in their approach to assessment, recording and the use of the FSP.

- *Foundation stage profile handbook* (QCA/03/1006), documentation and CD-ROM
- *Foundation stage profile* (QCA/03/1007), optional scales booklet  
[http://www.qca.org.uk/qca\\_13878.aspx](http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_13878.aspx)
- *Building the foundation stage profile* (QCA/04/1271), video and documentation
- *Foundation stage profile: Additional advice for practitioners* (QCA/04/1268) Advice sheet.
- *Observing children – building the profile* (QCA/05/1569), training materials booklet and accompanying CD-ROM (QCA/04/1304)
- *Seeing steps in children’s learning* (QCA/05/1546), documentation and DVD
- *Continuing the learning journey* (QCA/05/1590), training materials and DVD
- *Foundation stage, years 1 and 2 assessment and reporting arrangements* (QCA/DCSF ISBN: 1-85838-844-9), advice and guidance on the statutory requirements of the FSP, published annually.  
[http://www.qca.org.uk/eara/documents/KS1\\_ARA.pdf](http://www.qca.org.uk/eara/documents/KS1_ARA.pdf)
- *Creating the Picture* (DfES 00283/2007), published in June 2007 this document establishes principles and guidance for assessment and record-keeping for children from birth to age five.  
[www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/foundation\\_stage/creating\\_picture/](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/foundation_stage/creating_picture/)
- *Recording and tracking pupils’ attainment and progress – the use of assessment evidence at the time of inspections* (AAIA, 2007), advice document from AAIA.  
[www.aaia.org.uk/PDF/FAQs%20-%20attainment%20and%20progress%20final.pdf](http://www.aaia.org.uk/PDF/FAQs%20-%20attainment%20and%20progress%20final.pdf)
- *Improving outcomes for children in the Foundation Stage in maintained schools* (DfES ref: 03960-2006 BKT-EN), a document detailing the Early Years Outcomes Duty  
[www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/foundation\\_stage/improving\\_outcomes/](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/foundation_stage/improving_outcomes/)

## **Appendix 5: Additional guidance on completing the foundation stage profile assessments (NAA, May 2007)**

*Additional guidance on completing foundation stage profile assessments* (QCA, May 2007), factsheet

[www.naa.org.uk/downloads/FSP\\_factsheet-  
\\_2007\\_Guidance\\_LA\\_Completing\\_Foundation\\_v042.pdf](http://www.naa.org.uk/downloads/FSP_factsheet-2007_Guidance_LA_Completing_Foundation_v042.pdf)

## **Appendix 6: Foundation stage profile guidance: Assessing children who are learning English as an additional language (NAA, November 2007)**

*Foundation stage profile guidance: Assessing children who are learning English as an additional language* (QCA/07/3382), a guidance document for teachers, local authorities and monitors.

[http://www.qca.org.uk/qca\\_15015.aspx](http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_15015.aspx)