

Guidance for Observation and Target Setting in Personal, Social and Emotional Development (EYFS)

Ofsted Definition of Teaching in the Early Years:

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

6 Key Questions to ask when observing PSED:

	Question (no more than 6)	<i>Additional Information</i>
1	How does the teacher model and support children to build positive relationships with peers and adults?	For example, how does the teacher: • show children they are kept "in mind", e.g. referring to things noticed in their play? • model empathy, negotiation, compromise and positive assertion in play and everyday interactions? • help children build and maintain relationships and resolve conflict?
2	How are the environment and activities planned to support children playing alone, alongside and with others, and to build cooperation?	For example, how does the teacher: • create spaces for children to choose to play alone, alongside, or with others? • provide time, space and open-ended materials for collaboration, e.g. in block play? • plan activities that encourage cooperation, such as parachute games or ring games? • help children explore friendship and talk about feelings?
3	How does the teacher support children's sense of self, identity and independence?	For example, how does the teacher: • reflect children's socio-cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and those of the wider community, in the environment and resources?

	Question (no more than 6)	<i>Additional Information</i>
		• give children uninterrupted time to pursue and return to self-chosen activities? • provide experiences that are challenging but achievable? • involve children in recording favourite activities (e.g. drawing, photographs) to help them express preferences and opinions?
4	How does the teacher help children recognise, name and manage their emotions?	For example, how does the teacher: • create a calm, caring, listening culture where children feel able to express emotions? • model caring, comforting or helping behaviours in interactions with all children? • name and talk about a wide range of feelings? • model managing their own feelings aloud? • help children recognise when their actions affect others?
5	How does the teacher provide boundaries and emotional availability to help children feel safe and secure?	For example, how does the teacher: • remain emotionally available so children can "emotionally refuel" when coping with difficult situations or feelings? • set, explain and consistently maintain clear, reasonable boundaries?
6	How are resources and environments used to help children explore and make sense of their feelings?	For example, how does the teacher provide: • a range of music, stories, open-ended materials and play props to support children in exploring feelings such as fear, anxiety and anger? • environments that offer both stimulating, challenging spaces and calm, comfortable spaces?

Potential **PSED** Specific Targets on Lesson Analysis Forms.

Lesson design and delivery, including sequencing and choice of teaching methods Next Steps:

Plan specific opportunities for cooperative and collaborative play (e.g. parachute games, ring games, block play) alongside space for children to play alone or alongside others.

Prepare resources such as Persona Dolls, social stories or puppets in advance to support planned discussion of feelings, friendship or conflict.

Build in uninterrupted time within the session for children to complete self-chosen activities (e.g. role play, construction, painting) without rushing transitions.

Ensure role-play and small-world resources reflect children's own family lives and communities, as well as broader diverse experiences.

Plan how you will model naming and managing emotions during the session, e.g. narrating your own feelings or a character's feelings in a story.

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

Plan additional emotional support strategies (e.g. visual emotion cards, 1:1 check-ins) for children who find self-regulation difficult.

Consider how you will adapt relationship-building activities for children who are less confident in social situations, e.g. smaller groups or additional adult support.

Identify how you will extend opportunities for children who show strong empathy or leadership skills to support their peers.

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

Use observations of children's play to note how they are building relationships (e.g. showing empathy, negotiating, resolving conflict) against Development Matters expectations.

Consider how you assess children's growing independence and sense of self, e.g. through their ability to complete self-chosen tasks or express preferences.

Note which children may need additional support with emotional regulation and plan how you will follow this up, e.g. through 1:1 emotional check-ins.

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

Develop secure knowledge of typical progression across the three PSED strands (Making Relationships, Sense of Self, Understanding Emotions) using Development Matters/Birth to 5 Matters.

Extend your understanding of anti-bias practice and how this can be reflected in resources, planning and everyday interactions.

Reflect on your own language and strategies for supporting emotional regulation, to ensure you are modelling calm, consistent approaches.

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

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

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

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

- Grimmer, T. and Geens, W. (2023), *Nurturing Self-Regulation in Early Childhood*, Abingdon: Routledge
- Robson, S. and Zachariou, S. (2022), *Self-Regulation in the Early Years*, London: Sage