Self-evaluation: Strong foundations in the first years of school

*The purpose of this self-evaluation is to help school leaders audit the curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and personal development, behaviour and attitudes in early years and key stage 1. This document will help leaders consider the strengths and areas of development in the first years of school.*

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| Please read the statements, indicate in the boxes to what extent you believe school fulfils each of the questions -these considerations for school leaders are taken from the Ofsted report [Strong foundations in the first years of school](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strong-foundations-in-the-first-years-of-school/strong-foundations-in-the-first-years-of-school) published October 2024 | |
| Curriculum considerations | Questions: Does the curriculum prioritise children’s communication and language? How do you make sure that the curriculum gives enough emphasis to other foundational knowledge and skills, such as addition facts, handwriting and how to write simple sentences? Do whole-school approaches get in the way of children learning important foundational knowledge in the early years and KS1? Do these approaches expect children to do too much too soon? When activities are designed, to what extent is the focus on what children should learn and practise and how all children will benefit? To what extent does the curriculum reflect children’s starting points? Does it sufficiently emphasise the knowledge and skills that children need to learn so that they are not held back later? |
| Pedagogical considerations | Questions: How do you make sure that all children get enough practice to become fluent in using important foundational knowledge? How are tasks broken down to focus on small steps of learning and to prepare children for what comes next? What routines help children to maintain attention without overloading their working memory? How are distractions kept to a minimum to help children focus? Does instruction involve all children, including those who find learning more difficult? How do you make sure that children with lower starting points have enough opportunities to interact with adults? To what extent have you considered what children are thinking during play-based learning? Do all staff understand how play can develop children’s language and executive functioning and help them to learn important knowledge? Do staff know how to address children’s speech, language and communication difficulties? |
| Assessment considerations | Questions: Does training make sure that staff can anticipate and deal with misconceptions during instruction and practice? Do gaps in knowledge for the lowest-attaining children persist? If so, why? To what extent do current reading and writing tasks replicate end of key stage tests? Can tasks be introduced that provide practice (and opportunities for assessment) in foundational knowledge? How do you assess foundational knowledge and skills such as handwriting and number facts? How might information about any gaps in children’s knowledge be shared most effectively with the children’s next teacher? |
| Personal development, behaviour and attitudes considerations | Questions: How do you help children to get on with others and learn well? How do you help children who have less previous experience of this than others? How do you make sure that activities enable children to learn and to be able to do what you expect? How do you make sure that activities are not too complicated? |

**Recommendations - schools should:**

* make sure that the curriculum clearly identifies the foundational knowledge and skills, as outlined in the EYFS and national curriculum, that children will need for later learning;
* give children sufficient high-quality opportunities to practise using foundational knowledge and skills so that they become fluent;
* choose teaching methods that are suited to what is being taught and what children already know;
* make sure that assessment picks up children’s misunderstandings quickly and gives teachers early opportunities to help children who need extra teaching and practice; and
* make sure that end of KS1 assessments do not disproportionately influence decisions about curriculum and teaching methods.