AifL Early Years

Self-Assessment Toolkit

AifL ASSESSMENT IS FOR LEARNING

SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

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Learning +Teaching Scotland

Contents

Introduction

What is an AifL Early Years Establishment?

Adapting principles to one's own context

The ideas in this toolkit represent a set of principles. They are widely endorsed in consultation with teachers and other staff and have been implemented in many schools and early years' centres involved in the Assessment is for Learning (AifL) programme.

However, the principles are only effective when practitioners consider how they can be adapted and given meaningful use in their day-to-day work.

An AifL establishment is a place where everyone is learning. It is a place where assessment is part of learning and teaching without dominating. In an AifL establishment:

- staff members are skilled in using assessment to support learning and in planning next steps in consultation with children and their parents
- children and staff are fully involved in planning, reflecting on and evaluating their own learning
- there are sound procedures in place for quality assuring assessment judgements, and for using them as evidence to plan for improvement.

In an AifL establishment therefore, learning and teaching need to be really well planned. By using formative assessment, reflective self-assessment and summative assessment – that is, assessment FOR learning, assessment AS learning and assessment OF learning – as part of learning and teaching, practitioners can help children to achieve aims and to develop their learning and thinking skills.

It is also very important for establishments to make sure that, within the broad structure of the curriculum, learning activities and assessment are entirely appropriate for the children's needs.

Only staff members involved in the day-to-day work and culture of an early years establishment are able to make the decisions to ensure that learners and learning are the clear focus of their work.

The AifL Programme

Substantial progress within the AifL programme has been made through using action research principles at school and establishment level. Staff members have been developing their own approaches to formative assessment, personal learning planning and local moderation.

Adapting principles to one's own context

Assessment FOR Learning (Formative Assessment)

Assessment FOR learning links everyday assessment practices with learning and teaching. It is the process of interaction that occurs between staff, children and the parent as they all promote learning by:

- discussing what is to be learned
- recognising when learning has taken place
- providing useful and timely feedback that supports next steps in learning.

Assessment AS Learning (Personal Learning Planning)

Assessment AS learning links the curriculum with learning and teaching. The benefits of personal learning planning come from its basis in formative assessment and involve:

- gathering and interpreting evidence to review current learning
- planning learning accordingly, knowing what is to be learned and what evidence will show success
- evaluating and deciding what should be done next
- noting progress and next steps.

These processes – involving learners, staff, those at home and in the community – are essentially about learning how to learn.
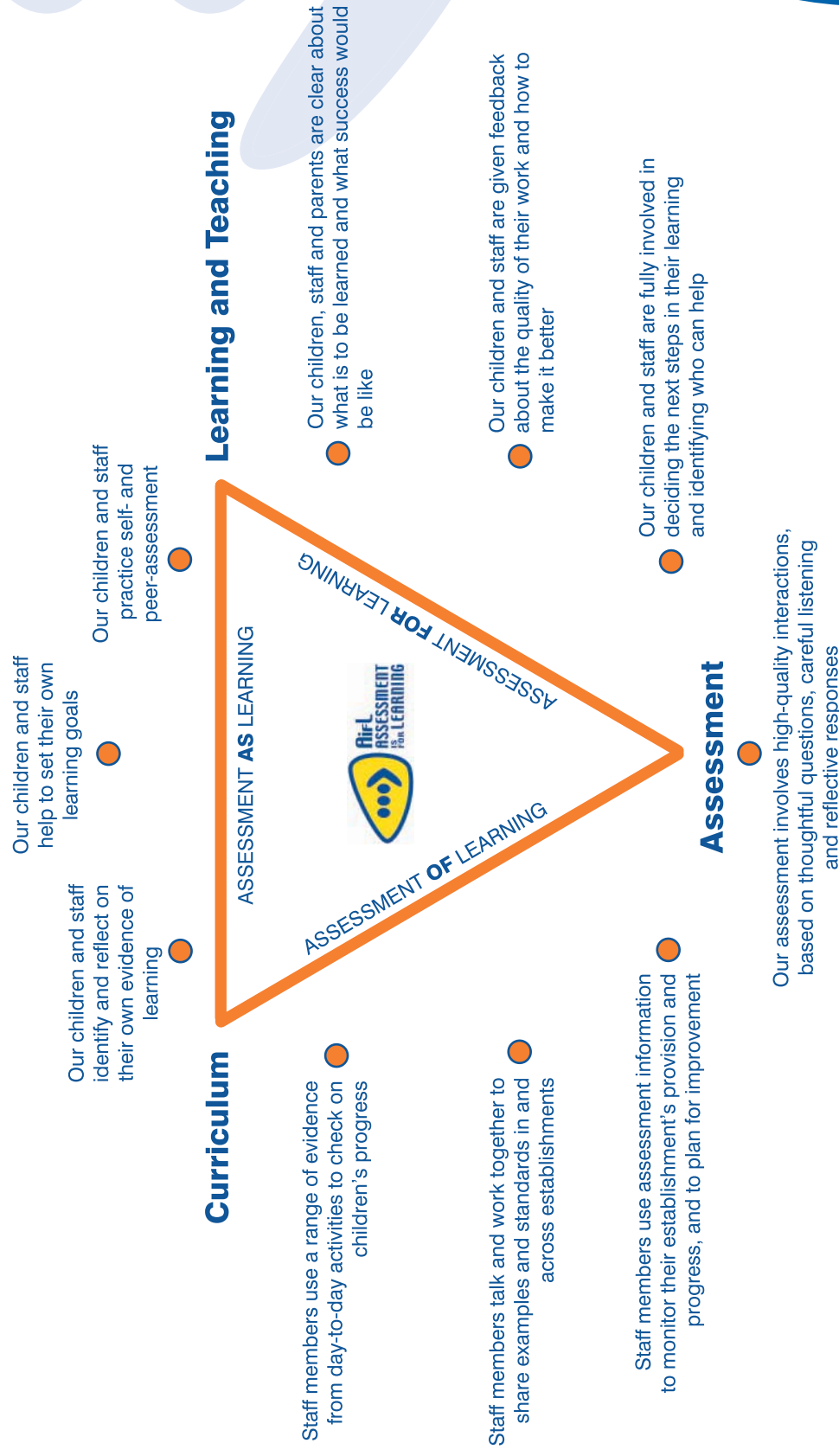
Assessment OF Learning (Local Moderation)

Assessment OF learning links everyday assessment and the curriculum. This process goes beyond traditional summative assessment, which provides a 'snapshot' of progress at any particular time. Local moderation gives us the opportunity to talk about children's learning and to agree about their progress. By sharing standards within and across establishments, we can increase our confidence to exercise our professional judgement. Thus evidence from everyday activities can be used to report on progress.

The AifL Triangle

What is an AifL Early Years Establishment?

A Place Where Everyone is Learning Together

Learning and Teaching

- Our children, staff and parents are clear about what is to be learned and what success would be like
- Our children and staff are given feedback about the quality of their work and how to make it better
- Our children and staff are fully involved in deciding the next steps in their learning and identifying who can help

Curriculum

- Our children and staff help to set their own learning goals
- Our children and staff practice self- and peer-assessment
- Our children and staff identify and reflect on their own evidence of learning
- Staff members use a range of evidence from day-to-day activities to check on children's progress
- Staff members talk and work together to share examples and standards in and across establishments

Assessment

- Staff members use assessment information to monitor their establishment's provision and progress, and to plan for improvement
- Our assessment involves high-quality interactions, based on thoughtful questions, careful listening and reflective responses

ASSESSMENT **AS** LEARNING

ASSESSMENT **FOR** LEARNING

ASSESSMENT **OF** LEARNING

AifL ASSESSMENT IS FOR LEARNING

What is an AifL Early Years Establishment?

A Place Where Everyone Is Learning Together

AifL and Performance Indicators

Our approaches to assessment can be evaluated by using relevant performance indicators from *The Child at the Centre – Self evaluation in the Early Years* (SOEID, 2000) and the National Care Standards, which you will already have been using. We can carry out an audit of good practice within the three strands of the Assessment is for Learning programme using these indicators. This document is intended to help you to make the links with *The Child at the Centre* and it is hoped that you find the ideas in this guidance pack useful.

This document has been divided into four sections. The first three sections are:

- Assessment FOR Learning
- Assessment AS Learning
- Assessment OF Learning

Within each of these sections:

1 the appropriate key questions are listed and considered individually
2 these questions are then linked to performance indicators, themes and the National Care Standards
3 there are examples of interesting practice illustrated in the form of case studies
4 each key question has accompanying audit sheets to allow staff in pre-school centres to identify areas of strength and areas for development.

The fourth section of the document includes the bibliography, indicates materials for possible CPD use, itemises selected journal articles and papers, and lists useful websites.

Assessment FOR Learning

Key questions

To what extent do our assessment practices involve high-quality interactions, based on thoughtful questions, careful listening and reflective responses?

To what extent are our children, staff and parents clear about what is to be learned and what success would be like?

To what extent are our children and staff given feedback about the quality of their work and how to make it better?

To what extent are our children and staff fully involved in deciding next steps in their learning and identifying who can help?

Assessment FOR Learning

To what extent do our assessment practices involve high-quality interactions, based on thoughtful questions, careful listening and reflective responses?

Performance Indicator	Theme	Care Standard
3.2 Staff/child interaction	• The quality of staff/child interaction • Staff understanding and reasons for timing of interaction	Standard 4: Engaging with children Standard 7: A Caring environment

Things to think about

- *Our questioning is skilled and children's responses are listened to and used effectively.*
- *Our questions identify what children understand, partly understand and do not understand.*
- *Our questioning is used to encourage thinking, for example by using wait time and producing dialogue.*

Questions to ask

- *To what extent do we use questions to stimulate thinking and learning?*
- *To what extent do we use children's responses effectively:*
    - *to identify what children understand*
    - *to plan for future learning and development?*

Voices

Early Years Case Study: Lochrin Nursery School, Edinburgh

For some time we have liaised with our local primary and secondary schools and been part of cluster in-service training. During session 2004–5 the nursery began to explore the AifL programme and discussions took place regarding what this meant for our existing practice. This discussion influenced the self evaluation process. We agreed to prioritise learning and teaching in our school development plan and focused on exploring formative assessment and personal learning planning. Staff members attended a cluster in-service day on formative assessment and found this helpful in developing their understanding of the issues covered.

We looked at formative assessment scenarios from a pre-school setting and these generated interesting discussion that covered the processes of learning and what children gain or perceive from adult interaction. We introduced WALT (We Are Learning To) and staff focused on sharing learning intentions at the beginning of adult-led planned activities that took place in a variety of group sizes and across all curricular areas. We introduced an assessment column to our planning sheets and this became a regular feature in our planning meetings and daily team briefs at the beginning of each session. Each child has a folder in which they can put examples of their work. Photographs in their folders generate a great deal of discussion between children and their experience of WALT is clearly evident as they look through their folder, for example 'That's when I was learning to ride the two-wheel bike!'

In time, evaluations and written observations demonstrated that the staff was developing a better understanding of what was relevant/significant in terms of children's learning and identifying next steps. We began to consider our formative assessment focus, sharing learning intentions, as less of a separate issue to the personal learning planning process. The children had a greater role in their own learning and through sharing learning intentions they recognised the link between what they were doing and their folders. The next steps that they identified are being followed up and they are involved in recording these into their folder.

A big part of our success in this development has been down to the commitment of the staff involved. We will continue to build on our work on 'Assessment is for Learning' next session.

To what extent do our assessment practices involve high-quality interactions, based on thoughtful questions, careful listening and reflective responses?

Performance Indicator	Theme	Care Standard
3.2 Staff/child interaction	• The quality of staff/child interaction • Staff understanding and reasons for timing of interaction	Standard 4: Engaging with children Standard 7: A Caring environment

Questions to be asked	Evidence of good practice	Areas to be developed
To what extent do we use questions to stimulate thinking and learning? To what extent do we use children's responses effectively: • to identify what children understand • to plan for future learning and development?		

Assessment FOR Learning

To what extent are our children, staff and parents clear about what is to be learned and what success would be like?

Performance Indicator	Theme	Care Standard
1.3 Quality of planning	• Planning of programmes and day-to-day activities • Effective use of assessment information	Standard 1: Being welcomed and valued Standard 4: Engaging with children Standard 6: Support and development
3.3 Meeting children's needs	• Choice of activities and resources • Pace of learning • Relevance of approaches for promoting development and learning	
3.4 Assessment, keeping records and reporting	• Assessment methods and arrangements for keeping records and reporting • Use of assessment information	
5.3 Partnership with parents	• Involvement of parents • Communication with parents	

Things to think about

- *We indicate clearly what children are expected to learn and how they will know if they are successful, for example:*
  - *we specify learning intentions and success criteria as part of our plan*
  - *we plan a process of helping children to identify success criteria through modelling and discussion.*
- *We plan activities in a way that makes effective use of dialogue about learning, for example, opportunities are included to share and describe examples of work.*

Questions to ask

- *To what extent do our teaching plans indicate what children are expected to learn and how they will know if they are successful?*
- *To what extent do we share learning intentions and success criteria using clear language and display them in a way that helps children to focus on their learning?*
- *To what extent do we encourage parents to support their child's learning by sharing learning intentions and success criteria with them?*

Voices

Early Years Case Studies: Early Years' ASG

Argyll and Bute

The aims of this project centred on the identification and implementation of formative assessment strategies in pre-school settings. To start the discussion about formative assessment we took the statements from the AifL triangle diagram and tried to establish what these meant to pre-school staff and what we already did that was good practice. We identified aspects that needed further development and discussed practical methods we could use to promote and embed these principles within daily practice.

The main aspects we felt needed to be further developed were:
- the sharing of learning intentions and success criteria with children
- encouraging children to self-assess and reflect on their own learning
- enabling children to be more involved in the planning and direction of their learning and setting goals or targets for learning.

We discussed a range of practical strategies that could be used to develop the above aspects of assessment and decided as a group to adapt and put on trial our own form of High Scope's Plan-Do-Review process.
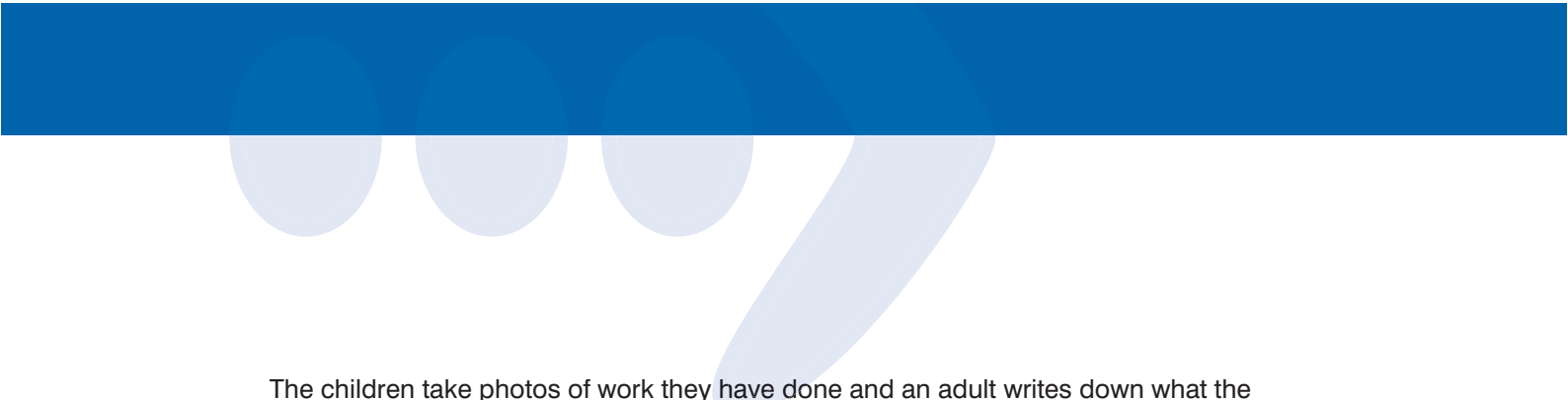
The main impact of the project has been to allow time to engage in a worthwhile and intense debate about all forms of assessment in the pre-school setting. The children are now more involved in their learning and planning their learning. They are beginning to make suggestions about what to do or learn next. There has been some debate as to why this is happening, is it because the staff is actively listening more to children's ideas giving the children more confidence to open up more and make suggestions and decisions about their learning? Is it the staff that is changing or the children?

All the groups feel the children are becoming more independent and self-aware.

East Ayrshire

Staff members working in this ASG have found a number of innovative ways to help staff, parents and children to be clear about what is to be learned and what success would be like.

Projects have included a 'Parents' Lunch' to talk to parents about what happens in the nursery and also to explain 'WALT' and give parents the opportunity to ask questions. The staff has also issued weekly information sheets to inform parents of planned learning intentions and suggesting ways they could help at home. A WALT display board on the display table belongs to the children who decide on the materials to be displayed. This display also informs and reminds parents of the learning focus for the week. WALT is a large soft toy that is popular with the children. The toy sits beside the focus of the activity for the day. The children enjoy finding WALT and this has encouraged all children to visit an activity that some of the children might otherwise have avoided.

The children take photos of work they have done and an adult writes down what the children say. These are kept in a 'profile book' which the children regularly browse through and keep up to date. Comments from parents about how much they like the children's 'profile book' include: 'What a great way of recording what children can do!' and 'Don't stop the profile books!'.

Inverclyde

Timmy the teaching tiger tells the children each morning one thing that they are going to be learning that day. This is displayed pictorially for the children in the playroom and staff members refer to this throughout the day. The same learning intention is displayed in the cloakroom area for the parents. Children can be given a 'Timmy' sticker that also lets parents know what their child has been learning.

To what extent are our children, staff and parents clear about what is to be learned and what success would be like?

Performance Indicator	Theme	Care Standard
1.3 Quality of planning	• Planning of programmes and day-to-day activities • Effective use of assessment information • Responsiveness of planning procedures	Standard 1: Being welcomed and valued Standard 4: Engaging with children
3.3 Meeting children's needs	• Choice of activities and resources • Pace of learning • Relevance of approaches for promoting development and learning	Standard 6: Support and development
3.4 Assessment, keeping records and reporting	• Assessment methods and arrangements for keeping records and reporting • Use of assessment information	
5.3 Partnership with parents	• Involvement of parents • Communication with parents	

Questions to be asked	Evidence of good practice	Areas to be developed
To what extent does our planning indicate what children are expected to learn and how they will know if they are successful?		
To what extent do we share the learning intentions and success criteria using clear language and display them in a way that helps children to focus on their learning?		
To what extent do we encourage parents to support their child's learning by sharing learning intentions and success criteria with them?		

Assessment FOR Learning

To what extent are our children and staff given feedback about the quality of their work and how to make it better?

Performance Indicator	Theme	Care Standard
2.1 Children's progress in their development and learning	Children's progress in the key aspects of their development and learning	Standard 4: Engaging with children
3.1 Quality of children's development and learning through play	The motivation of the children and their engagement in learning activities	Standard 6: Support and development
3.3 Meeting children's needs	Relevance of approaches for promoting development and learning	
3.4 Assessment, keeping records and reporting	Use of assessment information	

Things to think about

- *We ensure that any feedback we provide is positive and encouraging and often points towards a specific action for improvement.*
- *Children take responsibility for, and are active in, their own learning. Children recognise they are responsible for acting on feedback given. We have strategies in place to give clear feedback to help children understand what they need to do to improve.*
- *The pace of learning enables children to make good progress. Every child can make progress from where they are, based on assessment and feedback of their work/activities.*

Questions to ask

- *To what extent do we know about our children's progress, including their successes and difficulties?*
- *To what extent does our feedback give children a very clear sense of what they need to do to improve?*
- *To what extent do we identify our children's learning needs in a systematic way?*
- *To what extent do we give children information about their progress in a way that values individual achievement and identifies next steps in learning?*

Voices

Group's learning intention

- To involve staff, parents and children in identifying, recording and reflecting on evidence of children's learning.
- To give opportunities for self- and peer assessment.

How was the project taken forward?

A conference led by Professor Tina Bruce initiated the project. It focused on observation and documenting children's learning, then planning next steps. There was time for each establishment to audit their own practice, discuss and agree their next steps. It was an inspirational day.

Visits to other nurseries began in late November. A feedback form was devised to record information to share and reflect on. Common themes emerged – how are next steps planned; who has ownership of the personal learning folios; who writes in the folio and when does the folio go home?

Impact on learners and teachers

The children are proud of their achievements and keen to share their folios. They are definitely personal. Children are beginning to self-evaluate and notice changes in themselves. Children identify what they would like to learn next.

The impact on staff of seeing how others do it on visits was very effective. It initiated discussion in the nurseries and resulted in each nursery devising a process with documentation that suited their context.

Each nursery involved in the project started from a different point. In each nursery, photographic and written evidence was collected and presented in different ways. In all nurseries the documentation supports discussion; staff members are confident about sharing planning and can make informed decisions about developing practice and children's next steps.

To what extent are our children and staff given feedback about the quality of their work and how to make it better?

Performance Indicator	Theme	Care Standard
2.1 Children's progress in their development and learning	Children's progress in the key aspects of their development and learning	Standard 4: Engaging with children
3.1 Quality of children's development and learning through play	The motivation of the children and their engagement in learning activities	Standard 6: Support and development
3.3 Meeting children's needs	Relevance of approaches for promoting development and learning	
3.4 Assessment, keeping records and reporting	Use of assessment information	
5.1 Ethos	Expectations and use of praise	

Questions to be asked	Evidence of good practice	Areas to be developed
To what extent do we know about our children's progress, including their successes and difficulties?		
To what extent does our feedback give children a very clear sense of what they need to do to improve?		
To what extent do we identify our children's learning needs in a systematic way?		
To what extent do we give children information about their progress in a way that values individual achievement and identifies next steps in learning?		

Assessment FOR Learning

To what extent are our children and staff fully involved in deciding next steps in their learning and identifying who can help?

Performance Indicator	Theme	Care Standard
1.3 Quality of planning	Effective use of assessment information	Standard 6: Support and development
3.3 Meeting children's needs	Relevance of approaches for promoting development and learning	
3.4 Assessment, keeping records and reporting	Use of assessment information	

Things to think about

- *Our children have opportunities to develop the skills and dispositions they need to become more effective in evaluating and directing their own learning.*
- *Our children participate in a dialogue about their learning, for example they are involved in self- and peer assessment, identifying strengths and identifying next steps in their learning and discussing their progress across the curriculum.*

Questions to ask

- *To what extent do our children have opportunities to develop the skills they need to become more effective in evaluating and directing their own learning?*
- *To what extent does our staff support children in setting their own learning goals?*
- *To what extent do our children have opportunities to participate in a dialogue about their learning that allows them to identify their next steps?*

Voices

Early Years Case Study: Angus

This is achieved through fostering open and trusting partnerships. It is acknowledged that parents are the child's first and main educator and their views are sought, valued and used to inform next steps in learning. Seeking parents' views gives a better understanding of family culture and leads to more purposeful and meaningful learning opportunities.

A number of strategies have been very successfully implemented to ensure children, their parents and, where appropriate, the wider community are involved in deciding next steps in learning.

Mind mapping

Mind maps are used very effectively to support planning next steps in learning by making learning more 'visible'. Children and parents are fully involved in this process, giving staff a clearer picture of where children's needs and interests lie and how they can be best approached and addressed.

Children's diaries

Children's diaries are very well used to document and share children's learning with parents and staff. (Parents, staff and children are all involved in recording information.) Interests, strengths and areas for development are documented sensitively and used effectively to identify and address next steps in learning.

Wall panels

Children have their own personal wall space where they display their own work. This provides very good opportunities for children both to reflect on and to revisit learning. Parents are invited to look at and contribute to the displays. Additionally these panels provide very good opportunities for self- and peer assessment. This gives children very good opportunities to discuss their strengths, identify next steps and chart progress.

To what extent are our children and staff fully involved in deciding next steps in their learning and identifying who can help?

Performance Indicator	Theme	Care Standard
1.3 Quality of planning	Effective use of assessment information	Standard 6: Support and development
3.3 Meeting children's needs	Relevance of approaches for promoting development and learning	
3.4 Assessment, keeping records and reporting	Use of assessment information	

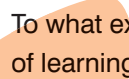| Questions to be asked	Evidence of good practice	Areas to be developed
To what extent do our children have opportunities to develop the skills they need to become more effective in evaluating and directing their own learning?		
To what extent do we support children in setting their own learning goals?		
To what extent do our children have opportunities to participate in a dialogue about their learning that allows them to identify their next steps?		

Assessment AS Learning

Key questions

To what extent do our children and staff practise self- and peer assessment?

To what extent do our children and staff help to set their own learning goals?

To what extent do our children and staff identify and reflect on their own evidence of learning?

Assessment AS Learning

To what extent do our children and staff practise self- and peer assessment?

Performance Indicator	Theme	Care Standard
1.3 Quality of planning	Effective use of assessment information	Standard 4: Engaging with children
3.2 Staff/child interaction	The quality of staff–child interaction	
3.3 Meeting children's needs	Relevance of approaches for promoting development and learning	Standard 6: Support and development
3.4 Assessment, keeping records and reporting	Use of assessment information	Standard 13: Improving the service
7.1 Self-evaluation	Staff involvement in self-evaluation of the centre	

Things to think about

- *We engage in dialogue with children about their progress and in identifying next steps for learning.*
- *We incorporate strategies in day-to-day activities to promote self- and peer assessment, for example, through the use of learning logs, diaries, concept maps, traffic lighting, response partners, 'two stars and a wish', rubrics.*

Questions to ask

- *To what extent do day-to-day activities incorporate strategies to promote self- and peer assessment?*
- *To what extent do we use self- and peer assessment to provide feedback to inform improvement?*
- *To what extent do we negotiate realistic learning targets with children?*
- *To what extent do our children self-assess their abilities and interests as preparation for choice at key stages?*
- *To what extent does staff self-evaluation generate reliable evidence that can be used to identify priority areas for action?*

Voices

Early Years Case Studies: Early Years' ASG

Moray

The centres involved were all part of a small working group in Moray looking at taking forward personal learning planning. Each establishment developed something that suited their own individual centre. All projects involved children and parents and identified next steps. Although all developed something slightly different there were key similarities, and benefits included:

- child-centred/child-led
- parents have opportunity to realise how much their child has learnt and can contribute to the discussion
- child/parents/staff can see progress
- opportunity to develop talking, listening and negotiating skills
- provide a focus for discussion at any time but also at parents meetings
- flexibility to meet the needs of individuals
- children beginning to self-assess/self-evaluate
- folders available to the children at all times – children interested and motivated.

Renfrewshire

The aims of this project included raising awareness of 'Assessment is for Learning' in the pre-school sector and promoting the key ideas of self-evaluation, collaboration and reflection.

Awareness-raising is an ongoing process as new aspects of the AifL programme are developed. All staff members initially made themselves familiar with Black and Wiliam (*Inside the Black Box*, 1998) and discussed the implications for the nursery. Nursery staff members were also involved in attending some of the school's AifL programme of in-service training and visits and discussions were held with primary staff regarding the use of WALT targets. WALT banners (the same format as the school to encourage consistency) were made for the nursery areas. Networking has been an invaluable part of the project as it has allowed all staff members to discuss other projects and to provide an overall perspective of AifL.

Staff members discussed the children's profiles and designed new layouts to include target setting and self-assessment by pupils. Parents have been involved in 'Sharing the Standard' and have been invited to share their children's work with them and provide verbal and written comments about the work their children have been doing.

The introduction of these strategies has proved to be one of the most successful parts of the project. Staff members have reflected on the use of questioning and are now implementing effective questioning using techniques such as 'Traffic lights', 'Thumbs/no hands' and 'Extended wait time'.

High-quality feedback techniques are used to encourage the children to self-assess orally or in written form using coloured pens. The children then discuss their own and other children's work. A 'Children's Display Wall' is used for children to choose, assess and display a particular piece of their work. The work on this wall is reviewed weekly by the children.

The introduction of personal learning plans has been a major outcome of the self-assessment programme. The children are involved in target setting and reviewing of their plans on a weekly basis using their profile and previous targets set, as a starting point for the next steps in their plan.

Staff members are enthusiastic and keen to continue to develop their existing practice in AifL as many advantages have been noted. These include an increase in the children's confidence in being able to make choices, self-assess and plan next steps in their learning. Staff members report a notable enhancement of their skills in self-evaluation, reflection and collaborative planning with the children and there has been recognition by parents of their part in the understanding of the development of their children's learning. Staff members were surprised how quickly the children learned to make valued and reasoned judgements about their work.

To what extent do our children and staff practise self- and peer assessment?

Performance Indicator	Theme	Care Standard
1.3 Quality of planning	Effective use of assessment information	Standard 4: Engaging with children
3.2 Staff/child interaction	The quality of staff–child interaction	
3.3 Meeting children's needs	Relevance of approaches for promoting development and learning	Standard 6: Support and development
3.4 Assessment, keeping records and reporting	Use of assessment information	Standard 13: Improving the service
7.1 Self-evaluation	Staff involvement in self-evaluation of the centre	

Questions to be asked	Evidence of good practice	Areas to be developed
To what extent do day-to-day activities incorporate strategies to promote self- and peer assessment?		
To what extent do we use self- and peer assessment to provide feedback to inform improvement?		
To what extent do we negotiate realistic learning targets with children?		
To what extent do our children self-assess their abilities and interests as preparation for choice?		
To what extent does staff self-evaluation generate reliable evidence that can be used to identify priority areas for action?		

Assessment AS Learning

To what extent do our children and staff help to set their own learning goals?

Performance Indicator	Theme	Care Standard
1.3 Quality of planning	Effective use of assessment information	Standard 6: Support and development
3.1 Quality of children's development and learning through play	Opportunities for choice	
3.3 Meeting children's needs	Relevance of approaches for promoting development and learning	
3.4 Assessment, keeping records and reporting	Use of assessment information	

Things to think about

- We provide opportunities to help children develop the habit of thinking about their own learning.
- Our children contribute to identifying next steps and learning goals through dialogue based on feedback and evidence of learning.
- We encourage children to plan and record next steps in learning through the personal learning planning process, for example future goals are agreed with children and recorded in appropriate ways such as diaries, profiles, learning logs, comment record, progress file, etc.

Questions to ask

- To what extent have we provided opportunities for our children to reflect on their own learning?
- To what extent do we help children to think about and identify their learning needs?
- To what extent do we help our children to set next steps or learning goals through a dialogue based on feedback and evidence of learning?

Voices

Early Years Case Study: Early Years' ASG, Argyll and Bute

The aims for this project centred on the identification and implementation of formative assessment strategies in a pre-school setting and to develop staff interaction with children to support formative assessment and personal learning planning.

The main element of this strategy was the development of a daily routine that allowed time to include aspects of assessment that we wanted to embed in daily practice. The day was split into approximately four sections, the welcome, planning/small group time, doing time and review time.

- The 'planning time' of the day was to give the staff time to share the learning intentions and success criteria for the day or specific activities and involve the children in making their own 'visual plan' for the day.
- The 'doing time' was child-initiated play with adult support and scaffolding of learning.
- The 'review time' was time for the children to come together as a group and reflect on the day's events and learning and plan for future activities.

Alongside this group activity, the ASG used TEDEY (Tracking Educational Development in the Early Years) to develop more individual one-to-one interaction and conversations with children to support the personal learning planning process. The staff members highlight individual, significant achievements and encourage the children to reflect on learning and set goals or next steps. The children can interact with the computer to select smiley faces relevant to their feelings about the resources or activity.

There has been overwhelming agreement that there has been a huge impact on daily practice and the skills of the staff involved in the project. The staff is beginning to 'let go' and let the children take the lead. The whole process is more of a shared learning experience and the curriculum is more responsive.

Quotations from staff

It focuses the children's play, allows them to make and express choices and decisions. It also gives them the opportunity to reflect on what they have done and talk about it with others, which supports good language development.

The children are confident at planning their learning experiences. They know what they want to do. They are recalling the language being used at the planning session.

To what extent do our children and staff help to set their own learning goals?

Performance Indicator	Theme	Care Standard
1.3 Quality of planning	Effective use of assessment information	Standard 6: Support and development
3.1 Quality of children's development and learning through play	Opportunities for choice	
3.3 Meeting children's needs	Relevance of approaches for promoting development and learning	
3.4 Assessment, keeping records and reporting	Use of assessment information	

Questions to be asked	Evidence of good practice	Areas to be developed
To what extent have we provided opportunities for our children to reflect on their own learning?		
To what extent do we help children to think about and identify their learning needs?		
To what extent do we help our children to set next steps or learning goals through a dialogue based on feedback and evidence of learning?		

Assessment AS Learning

To what extent do our children and staff identify and reflect on their own evidence of learning?

Performance Indicator	Theme	Care Standard
1.3 Quality of planning	Effective use of assessment information	Standard 1: Being welcomed and valued
3.2 Staff–child interaction	The quality of staff–child interaction	
3.3 Meeting children's needs	Relevance of approaches for promoting development and learning	Standard 4: Engaging with children
3.4 Assessment, keeping records and reporting	Use of assessment information	Standard 6: Support and development
7.1 Self-evaluation	Staff involvement in self-evaluation of the centre	Standard 13: Improving the service

Things to think about

- *Both staff and children are involved in dialogue about their progress and their views on learning.*
- *Both staff and children gather evidence of learning to support effective self- and peer assessment.*
- *Next steps for children and our Early Years Centre's improvement are based on the effective collection and consideration of evidence.*

Questions to ask

- *To what extent are our staff and children involved in dialogue about their progress and their views on learning?*
- *To what extent do we record progress and next steps in learning?*
- *To what extent do we use evidence collected to evaluate the effectiveness of learning and teaching and inform future provision?*
- *To what extent do we use outcomes from our staff self-evaluation to improve the quality of children's experiences and standards of attainment?*

Voices

Early Years Case Studies: Early Years' ASG

Clackmannanshire

Assessment has always been an integral part of planning next steps in children's learning. Adults, however, have traditionally always done the assessments. Although children contributed to their profiles by discussing with their key workers what they had enjoyed at nursery they were rarely asked to think about how they could progress in for example, sharing resources or developing confidence and independence.

As part of a wider authority project this group piloted a new assessment method. A pictorial range of children's achievements across the five key areas of the pre-school curriculum was produced, thus addressing the issue of children planning for their next steps in learning. They were actively going to evaluate their own progress through consultation with their key workers.

Staff members feel that some of the strengths of this project include high-quality dialogue between child and member of staff: children being given the opportunity to have a conversation about their development and discuss and plan their next steps in learning – building on reflection. The children can visually monitor and track their own progress and this is very much an 'I can do' record that the children can discuss with peers and parents.

Inverclyde

When the children believe they have achieved the learning intention they can glue a picture into their 'I can' book. They then tell the teacher how they know they can do this and the teacher writes for them. The 'I can' book can also be taken home to record learning outwith the nursery setting.

Learning stories are being used in the nursery to record and track learning and progress. A member of staff writes a 'story' about what the child has been doing in nursery. This is either written with the child or shared with the child later. At planning time staff members reflect on what has been learned and identify next steps. These 'stories' can be shared with the parents so that they can also add their comments.

To what extent do our children and staff identify and reflect on their own evidence of learning?

Performance Indicator	Theme	Care Standard
1.3 Quality of planning	Effective use of assessment information	Standard 1: Being welcomed and valued
3.2 Staff–child interaction	The quality of staff–child interaction	
3.3 Meeting children's needs	Relevance of approaches for promoting development and learning	Standard 4: Engaging with children
3.4 Assessment, keeping records and reporting	Use of assessment information	Standard 6: Support and development
7.1 Self-evaluation	Staff involvement in self-evaluation of the centre	Standard 13: Improving the service

Questions to be asked	Evidence of good practice	Areas to be developed
To what extent are our staff and children involved in dialogue about their progress and their views on learning?		
To what extent do we record progress and next steps in learning?		
To what extent do we use evidence collected to evaluate the effectiveness of learning and teaching and inform future provision?		
To what extent do we use outcomes from our staff self-evaluation to improve the quality of children's experiences and standards of attainment?		

Assessment OF Learning

Key questions

To what extent do we use a range of evidence from day-to-day activities to check on children's progress?

To what extent do we talk and work together to share standards in and across establishments?

To what extent do we use assessment information to monitor our establishment's provision and progress, and to plan for improvement?

Assessment OF Learning

To what extent do we use a range of evidence from day-to-day activities to check on children's progress?

Performance Indicator	Theme	Care Standard
1.3 Quality of planning	Effective use of assessment information	Standard 4: Engaging with children
2.1 Children's progress in their development and learning	Children's progress in their development and learning	Standard 6: Support and development
3.4 Assessment, keeping records and reporting	Assessment methods and arrangements for keeping records and reporting	

Things to think about

- We use assessment information from a range of day-to-day activities to evaluate teaching and monitor children's progress through for example, observations, dialogue, digital imaging and audio recording.
- Performance in terms of children's attainment is based on our professional judgement and local moderation of standards.

Questions to ask

- To what extent do we use a range of assessment approaches, both formal and informal, to monitor children's progress and attainment?
- To what extent does our recording of evidence give a comprehensive and useful profile of children's aptitudes, progress and attainment?

Voices

Early Years Case Study: Early Years Cluster Group

East Lothian

Our group was given the task of developing a transition document for nursery to P1. At first glance, this would appear to fit into the assessment part of the triangle however, as the work has progressed it has become clear that we cover all the other points.

The aim of our group was to produce a document that bridged the 'gap' between the 3–5 and the 5–14 curricula, provided information that was relevant and real for both parents and receiving teachers and which would not be too onerous for the staff to complete.

The group held discussions around how to achieve these aims and it was decided that the document would be based on neither the outcomes of the 3–5 curriculum nor the expectations of those working on the 5–14 curriculum but rather on the four capacities of the Curriculum for Excellence.

Our next step was to complete a matching exercise between the 3–5 curriculum and the Curriculum for Excellence. This was done in order to give nursery staff a 'starter for ten' when completing the new document and to show that a nursery experience provides a child with a great number of opportunities to achieve the capacities.

We then decided on the format of the document. It was agreed that whilst trying to keep this as simple as possible, it would need to show the links between what children had been learning and the expectations of the Curriculum for Excellence. A first draft was produced and put on trial by staff. A further meeting has led to changes being made and this is now being put on trial by staff and given out to parents.

The document, as it stands, is much more user-friendly and positive in nature than previous documents and gives parents an indication of what their child can do and what their next steps are. For nursery staff there is a direct link between planning, observation and reporting and this can be picked up by receiving Primary 1 teachers. It addresses the three sides of the AifL triangle – Assessment FOR Learning, Assessment OF Learning and Assessment AS Learning.

Early Years Case Studies: Early Years' ASG

Falkirk

Parents are the first and most significant educators of their child. Information from parents about their child is gathered and included in every child's 'Early Years Learning Profile' (EYLP). This information contributes to the evidence of learning that we gather for each child. Asking parents for information about their child's learning at home is an ongoing process throughout the year as we share the children's profiles with them. Parents have access to the children's profiles at all times.

Staff members use digital cameras to record children's significant achievements. The photographs (and videos) are an important visual aid in helping children to reflect on their evidence of learning and engage in conversation about what they have learned and what they want to learn next. Children can also choose examples of their work to put into their profiles and the staff can write down what children have said about their work.

Observations are now more clearly focused to record what is significant. Staff members record any leap in development or something that they have not noticed before. Observations are carefully recorded in the child's EYLP and point towards next steps in learning that are personal for each child.

All key workers maintain a 'learning grid' where they record what evidence they have of a child's progress in learning – ensuring that they have gathered examples of learning for each of the key aspects from the 3–5 curriculum. In this way they can ensure that they have recorded the breadth of the child's learning but also that they have provided opportunities for all children to engage in activities across all aspects of development.

To what extent do we use a range of evidence from day-to-day activities to check on children's progress?

Performance Indicator	Theme	Care Standard
1.3 Quality of planning	Effective use of assessment information	Standard 4: Engaging with children
2.1 Children's progress in their development and learning	Children's progress in their development and learning	Standard 6: Support and development
3.4 Assessment, keeping records and reporting	Assessment methods and arrangements for keeping records and reporting	

Questions to be asked	Evidence of good practice	Areas to be developed
To what extent do we use a range of assessment approaches, both formal and informal, to monitor children's progress and attainment?		
To what extent does our recording of evidence give a comprehensive and useful profile of children's aptitudes, progress and attainment?		

Assessment OF Learning

To what extent do we talk and work together to share standards in and across establishments?

Performance Indicator	Theme	Care Standard
1.2 Quality of the programmes	Support and guidance for staff	Standard 7: A Caring environment
5.4 Links with other centres, schools, agencies and the community	Range and effectiveness of contacts	Standard 9: Involving the community
5.5 Staff teamwork	The quality of working relationships among staff	Standard 10: Involving other services
7.1 Self-evaluation	Staff involvement in self-evaluation of the centre	Standard 13: Improving the service
7.4 Effectiveness of leadership	The development of teamwork	Standard 14: Well-managed service

Things to think about

We are fully involved in reflective self evaluation through staff development activities that promote shared understanding of standards: for example:

- *staff meetings are used effectively to focus on improving learning*
- *Associated School Groups (ASGs) work together to share standards*
- *assessment practices are reviewed and evaluated in terms of their impact on both learning and teaching.*

Questions to ask

- *To what extent do we have arrangements in place to moderate our judgements?*
- *To what extent do we have arrangements in place for communicating attainment evidence among staff?*
- *To what extent do we have arrangements in place to discuss judgements made about evidence of attainment?*

Voices

Early Years Case Study: Early Years' ASG

Glasgow

Our project allowed us some time to get into dialogue with each other but a great deal of time was spent engaging in dialogue with other colleagues, awareness raising and supporting.

We had an excellent PowerPoint presentation that people can use for staff development and a checklist to support people in clapping themselves on the back or helping them to plan their next steps. We have also identified people who are doing different things to support points around the triangle and we hope to have this information printed off to help colleagues.

South Lanarkshire

Our project involved headteachers, depute heads, development officers and practitioners from early years' establishments coming together to work on a project in which we aimed to improve the quality of adult–child dialogue within our nurseries by reflecting on current practice and researching ways in which this could be improved.

We set out to create a recipe to take forward formative assessment in the nursery. It was that very thought that became our first hurdle. Did the principles of formative assessment support the values on which the blocks of an early years education are founded? The group debated this dynamically and the meaning of words such as 'lesson' and 'play' and the difference between 'doing' and 'learning' promoted professional discourse that any team leader would be challenged mediating. At this point we had not even begun to discuss questioning, ultimately concluding that before thinking about improving our questioning, we as practitioners must know in which direction our questions should lead the learning. What were our learning intentions and could we interlink these with responsive planning? We were certain we could.

Reflecting on progress we now have in place a strategy to allow us to focus on the learning, but how do we as practitioners move our learning forward. We plan to use digital cameras to observe our interactions and then with peer support decide on the next steps in developing quality questioning strategies. We are presently researching this method and plan to compare it with planned peer observations at each other's nurseries.

Not only has this project led to improvement in daily practice for our children, but it has tested the very principles of formative assessment against early years philosophy.

To what extent do we talk and work together to share standards in and across establishments?

Performance Indicator	Theme	Care Standard
1.2 Quality of the programmes	Support and guidance for staff	Standard 7: A caring environment
5.4 Links with other centres, schools, agencies and the community	Range and effectiveness of contacts	Standard 9: Involving the community
5.5 Staff teamwork	The quality of working relationships among staff	Standard 10: Involving other services
7.1 Self-evaluation	Staff involvement in self-evaluation of the centre	Standard 13: Improving the service
7.4 Effectiveness of leadership	The development of teamwork	Standard 14: Well-managed service

Questions to be asked	Evidence of good practice	Areas to be developed
To what extent do we have arrangements in place to moderate our judgements?		
To what extent do we have arrangements in place for communicating attainment evidence between staff?		
To what extent do we have arrangements in place to discuss judgements made about evidence of attainment?		

Assessment OF Learning

To what extent do we use assessment information to monitor our establishment's provision and progress, and to plan for improvement?

Performance Indicator	Theme	Care Standard
3.4 Assessment, keeping records and reporting	Use of assessment information	Standard 13: Improving the service
7.1 Self-evaluation	Staff involvement in self-evaluation of the centre Monitoring and evaluation by managers and promoted staff	Standard 14: Well-managed service

Things to think about

- *We track progress using both formative and summative approaches.*
- *We use assessment information from other sources to plan for improvement, for example the Scottish Survey of Achievement (SSA) information, international studies, HMIE school inspection reports.*
- *We seek children's views on how assessment helps learning and use information gathered to improve teaching and learning.*

Questions to ask

- *To what extent do we make use of assessment information to evaluate the effectiveness of learning and teaching and to plan for improvement?*
- *To what extent do we communicate information about children's achievements to other staff and parents?*
- *To what extent do we use self-evaluation, which identifies strengths and areas for improvement, to provide accurate evidence of our performance?*

Voices

East Ayrshire

The group consists of four nursery teachers from nursery classes within schools in the Doon Valley and is chaired by the head of the community nursery.

All of the nurseries were using formative assessment strategies before the assessment project started, but we felt that the children should be included more. We felt it was important to allow the children time to think about their learning and achievements and to be more involved in assessing their work.

Examples of formative assessment were shared. These included folios and scrapbooks with evidence collated over time. The group looked at ways in which the children could be more involved in assessing what goes into these books and what the next steps should be. The group felt that the children could be more involved in taking and selecting photographs for their folios and displays. In the future the group plans to gather and collate successful strategies to help support the implementation of formative assessment. Each establishment will consider its own best use of this material.

Midlothian

One of the most exciting research projects taking place this year in Midlothian involves all six of the authority's nursery schools. Each had been working on various projects related to assessment and it was felt there was enough common ground to share good practice and possibly produce an exemplar that fitted with AifL and A Curriculum for Excellence. An action plan was formed with three main strands:

- to improve the quality of interaction with children – by improving the quality of observations, questioning techniques and range of interaction strategies
- to use assessment information to determine learning intentions/next steps in children's learning – by linking assessment more closely to planning, targeting individuals and groups and developing the learning environment
- to share assessment information with children, parents, staff and other professionals – by taking a holistic approach to personal learning planning through children's folios to support self- and peer assessment, reporting and transition.

The development of the use of 'learning stories' has been a significant feature of the work.

As part of the action plan, the group ran a very successful half-day in-service session to showcase and share the developments so far. We are already confident that, in the pre-school sector, assessment is FOR, OF and AS learning and as such should be included in any whole-school approach.

To what extent do we use assessment information to monitor our establishment's provision and progress, and to plan for improvement?

Performance Indicator	Theme	Care Standard
3.4 Assessment, keeping records and reporting	Use of assessment information	Standard 13: Improving the service
7.1 Self-evaluation	Staff involvement in self-evaluation of the centre	Standard 14: Well-managed service
	Monitoring and evaluation by managers and promoted staff	

Questions to be asked	Evidence of good practice	Areas to be developed
To what extent do we make use of assessment information to evaluate the effectiveness of learning and teaching and to plan for improvement?		
To what extent do we communicate information about pupils' achievements to staff and parents?		
To what extent do we use self-evaluation, which identifies strengths and areas for improvement, to provide accurate evidence of our performance?		

Further Information

Further reading

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Useful websites

Assessment Reform Group

Further information can be found at *http://arg.educ.cam.ac.uk/*

Assessment for Learning: 10 Principles, Cambridge, Assessment Reform Group, 1999, 2002
Further reading and resources can be found at
http://arg.educ.cam.ac.uk/publications.html

The Association for Achievement and Improvement through Assessment

Further information can be found at *www.aaia.org.uk*

Managing Assessment for Learning, Whitstable: AAIA, 2002. Further publications information can be found at *www.aaia.org.uk/pubs.htm*. Further reading and resources can be found at *www.aaia.org.uk/resource.htm*

Department of Education and Skills

This UK government site offers access to essential research findings for teaching staff. Further information can be found at *www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/research/*

General Teaching Council for England

This organisation has a 'Research of the Month' page where current and sponsored research is summarised. Further information can be found at *www.gtce.org.uk/Policy* and *www.gtce.org.uk/research*

General Teaching Council for Scotland

The GTC Scotland undertakes and supports a number research projects. It has online access to completed research papers. Further information can be found at *www.gtcs.org.uk/*

Learning and Teaching Scotland

Assessment is for Learning website: further information can be found at *www.ltscotland.org.uk/assess/* and *http://ltscotland.org.uk/earlyyears*

AifL newsletters, 1–6, *www.ltscotland.org.uk/assess/about/newsletter/index.asp*

Key documents, links and information on general and specific aspects of the AifL programme can be found at
www.ltscotland.org.uk/assess/about/keydocuments/index.asp

Scottish Executive Education Department

Further information can be found at www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education

Selected publications:

Evaluation of Project 1 of the Assessment is for Learning Development Programme: Support for Professional Practice in Formative Assessment, 2004. This document can be found at
www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/education/ep1aldps-00.asp

Assessment is for Learning: Development Programme, Personal Learning Plan: 2002–2004, evaluation report can be found at
www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/education/plpp02-00.asp

Review of Assessment in Pre-School and 5–14: Summary. This document can be found at
www.scotland.gov.uk/3-14assessment/raps-01.htm

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority

Assessment for Learning: Guidance designed to support staff members who wish to integrate the principles of Assessment for Learning into their classroom practice. Further information can be found at **www.qca.org.uk/afl**

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Contact details

We welcome your comments on the areas of the AifL programme referred to in this document and/or the Assessment is for Learning programme in general.

Mail: Development Officer
        Assessment is for Learning
        Learning and Teaching Scotland
        The Optima
        58 Robertson Street
        Glasgow
        G2 8DU

        Customer Services
        Tel: 08700 100 297

        enquiries@LTScotland.org.uk
        AssessmentContentEditor@LTScotland.org.uk

Local authority contacts**:**

Each authority has an assessment coordinator and/or development officer(s) who will be able to help in your local area. Further information can be found at **www.ltscotland.org.uk/assess/contact_us/coordinators.asp**

This self-assessment toolkit is designed to help Early Years establishments and individual members of staff to determine how far they have incorporated the principles of Assessment is for Learning into their practice.

The toolkit links the 10 statements on the AifL triangle to identified Quality Indicators in *The Child at the Centre – Self-evaluation in the Early Years*. Together, they provide a framework for auditing practice within the three strands of AifL – Assessment is for Learning, namely Assessment FOR Learning; Assessment AS Learning; Assessment OF Learning.

It also provides extracts from and additional references to relevant case studies that give examples of interesting practice in establishments. The bibliography lists materials that might be useful for continuing professional development purposes, including selected journal articles, research papers and related websites.

This toolkit is available online on the AifL website:
www.LTScotland.org.uk/assess