# Clover Hill Primary School

**Early Years Assessment Policy**

What does assessment look like in Reception at Clover Hill?

**Intent**

We would like to:

* to ensure that our assessment systems begin with the child and their experiences prior to starting our school.
* take every opportunity to build a complete picture of each child: their strengths, needs, interests and development.
* to build informal assessment opportunities into all aspects of the school day.
* to ensure that our curriculum has detailed steps of progression and clear end goals so that all members of the Early Years Team are aware of where we are heading and why.
* to include regular checkpoints for progress and ensure that support is given quickly to ensure that all children keep up rather than catch-up
* to work closely with parents to share information regarding their child’s development and progress

**Implementation**

**Pre-September**

As we take children from a number of pre-school settings, we really value the effective working relationship with we have with our main feeder nurseries and playgroups. At the end of the summer time prior to children joining us, we arrange a hand-over meeting with each setting in which we learn valuable information about each child: the interests, strengths, challenges and progress to date.

A child’s family is their first teacher and, at Clover Hill, we firmly believe that the most effective early education happens when there is real partnership between home and school. For this reason, we undertake home visits before the children start school as we believe that this helps us to build a good working relationship with parents and carers and gain their insight into their child’s development and pre-school experience.

During the last few weeks of the summer term, we invite our new Reception class into school for three visits: two in the classroom to meet their classmates and familiarise them with the setting and one as an invitation to a performance by our current Reception class that welcomes them to school and tells them what they have in store. We feel that these visits also help to develop good relationships with families.

**Reception Baseline Assessment**

Each child in Reception Class works alongside one of the class teachers during their first six weeks of school in order to complete the Reception Baseline Assessment. The RBA is an age-appropriate assessment of early mathematics and literacy, communication and language. The assessment has two components, each consisting of practical tasks using physical resources. (These resources are then stored securely in a locked cabinet.) There is an online scoring system for the class teacher to use as the pupil engages with the tasks. The RBA is then used to create school-level progress measures which will show the progress pupils make from Reception until the end of Key Stage Two.

**Clover Hill Baseline Assessment**

During the first few weeks in September, the Early Years Team spend time settling the children in, engaging in their play and getting to know them. This provides us with a good first picture of their interests and their experiences before coming to us. Our observations during these interactions are shared amongst the team, enabling all members of EY staff to have as much information as possible.

When we feel it is appropriate, we work individually with each child to gain an insight into their maths and reading experience to date. From these game-based activities, we are able to complete the initial aspects of our Clover Hill Maths Assessment Book and Phonics Assessment Book and therefore gain useful information to inform our planning and provision.

Through careful, planned observations of children as they engage in self-chosen activities, Early Years staff record children’s chosen pencil grip and plot this on a developmental tracker. This gives us an overview of children’s developing fine motor control and grip and enables us to plan our provision as necessary.

**Snapshot Assessment Grid**

The Early Years Team has designed a one-page assessment grid for each child which details all the developmental steps through which we would like our children to move as they work through their Reception year. It covers all of the seven Areas of Learning and breaks them down into development milestones. These milestones are colour coded according to when we expect children to achieve them, therefore giving us at-a-glance information regarding children who are and are not on track.

**Engagement in Play**

In response to the new Foundation Stage Curriculum 2021, we made the decision, as a team, to make significant changes to the way that we assess children during continuous provision. We believe that it is through play that children are able to demonstrate their developing confidence and strengths and that we, as practitioners, need to use children’s play to make judgements on their progress and to inform our future provision. We endorse the view that a photograph does not often give reliable information regarding a child’s development and that time spent writing out observation slips could be better spent engaging in children’s play, extending, support and challenging their thoughts and interactions. With this in mind, and after trialling a number of observation formats, we created a concise weekly record sheet in which staff make a judgement regarding whether a child is ‘on track’ in Range 5 or Range 6 of the Birth to Five document. This judgement is reached through spending some time engaging in a child’s play and then sharing reflections with other members of the team to come to a shared and moderated judgement.

We enhance our continuous provision by including ‘Busy Job’ challenges in the classroom environment each day (changed weekly, bi-weekly or daily as appropriate) which aim to extend and support concepts being taught and refined in adult led activities. Joining the children whilst they engage in these challenges gives us valuable information regarding their developing abilities and understanding. This forms the basis of our judgements in all areas of learning with the exception of Phonics & Early Reading and Writing – see below

**Assessment in Phonics and Reading**

We firmly believe that regular and robust assessment in phonics is crucial in order to identify and provide intervention for children not meeting the expected standard swiftly and effectively. For this reason, weekly checks are made on children’s developing GPC (grapheme-phoneme correspondence) and their aural and written blending. Individual, detailed records regarding this are kept in our Reading Record File which we use to inform our decision regarding when children should start reading books with words and also on a class overview which we use to identify children in need of intervention.

**Assessment in Writing**

We gather evidence from a wide range of sources when making judgements about a child’s writing development and we feel that this gives us a firm evidence base and valuable information regarding children’s next steps.

* Pencil grip / Fine Motor skills

During their first week at school, we ask children to draw a picture of themselves for the front of the Literacy book and while they are engaged in this activity, we make notes regarding their pencil grip, finger strength and fine motor control. The information from this is recorded in their book and also on a Development Tracker which quickly highlights children not at age related expectation. These children are given daily fine motor intervention. Updates to this tracker at then made at the end of each term and children not making progress through the phases are identified and targeted for further support.

* Mark-making / Independent Writing

Each child in the class has their own ‘Special Square’ on the classroom wall which displays their name and photograph. On this square, we display all pieces of mark-making that the child does in school. We date each piece and as the year goes on, we expect these pieces of work to include a progression such as mark-making, emergent writing, transitional writing, fluent writing. These are used to make a judgement of a child’s developing independent writing.

* Letter formation

As soon as we begin our phonics curriculum, we teach children how to form graphemes correctly and give them weekly small group opportunities to practise and refine this important skill. The teacher annotates this work with information regarding the level of support needed, developments to pencil grip (as well as their developing GPC knowledge) which also helps to inform judgements made.

* Literacy Book

Once children have been taught the correct formation of the graphemes, they take part in weekly sessions to improve their segmenting to spell simple words. Again, staff annotate this work with comments regarding their developing PGC, auditory segmenting etc and these annotations are used when making judgements regarding writing progress.

**Working with Parents**

We work closely with parents throughout the Reception year to keep them well informed about their child’s progress and also to ensure that we gain insight from their experiences and observations of their child. We do this in a number of ways:

**Seesaw** – We use this app to share children’s Wow milestone moments and encourage children to do the same, whether it be earning a badge at swimming, learning to ride their bike etc.

**Home Links –** We use this book to share information regarding children’s phonics and reading. We see it as another valuable communication tool.

**Parents Evening** – At our parents’ evening consultation, we share the information gathered from our assessments and offer guidance and advice regarding how children could be supported at home.

**Impact**

Our robust and effective assessment systems in Reception enable the Early Years Team to have a clear picture of the development and progress of all children in our setting.

**Parents** – Parents have praised the excellent communication regarding their child’s progress and say that they feel included and involved in their early learning journey.

**Cluster Moderation** – We are part of a local moderation cluster to ensure that our judgements are sound and that we are in keeping with other local schools.

**LEA Moderation** – Our moderation visits over the years have referred to our strong evidence base and excellent knowledge of the children in our setting.

**Progress** – Our robust assessment systems enable us to quickly identify children at risk of not meeting the expected started and provide rapid and effective intervention to ensure that they keep up.