



Standards
& Testing
Agency

The engagement model

**Guidance for maintained schools,
academies (including free schools) and
local authorities**

July 2020

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1 Introduction

1.1 About this guidance

This guidance sets out the statutory requirements for using the engagement model to assess pupils who are working below the standard of the national curriculum assessments and not engaged in subject-specific study at key stage 1 (KS1) and key stage 2 (KS2). It describes best practice on how to use the engagement model, to support teachers and staff involved in assessing the progress of these pupils, and can be used by schools from September 2020. Schools will be required to use the engagement model from the 2021/22 academic year.

The engagement model assessment arrangements apply to maintained schools, maintained special schools, academies (including free schools), pupil referral units, hospital schools and Ministry of Defence schools. They are not mandatory for non-maintained or independent schools.

Some of the statements within this guidance set out what schools are ‘required to’ and ‘must do’. Where these statements are used, this only applies from the 2021/22 academic year when this guidance becomes statutory.

1.2 Expiry

This guidance is statutory from the 2021/22 academic year. This guidance was published on 23 July 2020

1.3 Who is this publication for?

This guidance is for:

- teachers, school staff and all professionals involved in teaching and assessing pupils who are not engaged in subject-specific study, including subject coordinators, special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs), therapists and professionals from health and social services and the voluntary sector
- headteachers and senior leadership teams
- governors and trustees
- local authorities (LAs)
- parents and carers

1.4 Main principles

- The engagement model is an assessment tool that helps schools meet their duties in supporting pupils who are working below the level of the national curriculum and who are not engaged in subject-specific study.
- The model has 5 areas: exploration, realisation, anticipation, persistence and initiation.
- Engagement identifies and celebrates all pupils' progress, including linear and lateral progress, the consolidation and maintenance of knowledge, skills and concepts and the prevention or slowing of a decline in pupils' performance, whilst recognising that a minority of pupils may have a regressive condition.
- Engagement can help schools reflect on how well the bespoke curriculum they offer to their pupils is helping them progress. It will not necessarily replace a school's existing plans, assessments and reporting systems, but adds value to them by helping schools assess pupils' progress from a different angle.
- Effective use of the engagement model is based on regular observational assessment and reflective pedagogy. Assessments should be conducted by someone who knows the pupil well so that schools are able to identify existing educational barriers.
- Progress through each of the 5 areas of engagement should be measured by identifying how established the pupil is against each of the areas of engagement. This will differ for each pupil according to their profile of needs as set out in their Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan.
- The model combines a formative and summative assessment approach. It should be used to assess pupils' progress and development regularly throughout the year. This enables a continuous cycle of 'assess, plan, do and review' to take place, which enables the pupils' achievements and progress to be measured over time.
- Schools are not required to submit data to the Department for Education (DfE) about the achievements and progress of each pupil. However, schools must report which primary-aged pupils are being assessed using the engagement model.
- Schools can use the engagement model across all key stages, including for pupils attending secondary schools, as the principles of engagement are equally relevant to pupils of all ages. However, there is no statutory requirement to do so, and in key stages 3 and 4 and in post-16 education, schools and colleges should ensure there is an emphasis on how their pupils' acquired skills are preparing them for adulthood.
- The model can be used as a tool for assessing why pupils who are currently working below the level of the national curriculum but are engaged in subject-specific study, may have begun to plateau or regress in their anticipated development outcomes.

2 What is the engagement model?

The engagement model is an assessment tool to help schools support pupils who are working below the level of the national curriculum and not engaged in subject-specific study.

The engagement model was adapted from the 7 aspects of engagement, which was devised by Professor Barry Carpenter in the DfE-funded Complex Learning Disabilities and Difficulties project in 2011¹. The engagement model was developed with the support of an expert group involving members of the Rochford Review and using the evidence from an evaluation of the 7 aspects carried out in 2018.

The model recognises that engagement is multi-dimensional and breaks it down into 5 areas that allow teachers to assess:

- how well their pupils are being engaged in developing new skills, knowledge and concepts in the school's curriculum
- how effective the special educational provision is in empowering their pupils to progress against the agreed outcomes in their EHC plans and how effectively pupils are engaging with and making progress against these plans
- pupils' achievements and progress across the 4 areas of need of the SEND code of practice (communication and interaction, cognition and learning, social, emotional and mental health difficulties, and sensory and/or physical needs)

The engagement model:

- is a unique method of observation, allowing insight that improves provision for all pupils
- uses a pupil-centred approach that focuses on their abilities rather than disabilities
- values all sources of knowledge and information provided by those working with the pupil, including teachers, school staff, other professionals and parents or carers
- promotes consistency and a common language amongst schools and all those working with the pupil
- recognises there is a complex interaction between pupils' physical, sensory, communication and learning disabilities that affects how they progress

¹ Carpenter, B., Egerton, J., Brooks, T., Cockbill, B., Fotheringham, J., and Rawson, H. (2011)

The Complex Learning Difficulties and Disabilities Research Project; developing pathways to personalised learning. Final Report. <https://barrycarpentereducation.com/tag/cldd/>

The engagement model does not:

- provide the curriculum for pupils who are not engaged in subject-specific study
- provide the teaching tools and strategies that a school should use for pupils who are not engaged in subject-specific study
- replace a school's existing planning, assessment and reporting systems

2.1 Who should be assessed using the engagement model?

The engagement model must be used for pupils at KS1 and KS2 who are working below the standard of the national curriculum assessments and not engaged in subject-specific study. Subject-specific study occurs where a pupil can demonstrate recognisable and specific skills, knowledge and understanding in English language comprehension and reading, English writing and mathematics. The pre-key stage standards must be used for statutory assessment at the end of [KS1](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-key-stage-1-standards)² and [KS2](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-key-stage-2-standards)³ for pupils who are working below the standard of the national curriculum assessments and engaged in subject-specific study.

Pupils assessed using the engagement model are usually described as having severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. This means they have serious cognitive impairments and learning difficulties, which lead to significant delays in reaching developmental milestones. They operate at very early stages of cognitive, physical, social and emotional development. In addition, these pupils are likely to experience at least one or more of the following:

- significant sensory impairment
- significant communication impairment
- significant motor impairment
- complex medical needs
- dependencies on technology (including augmentative and alternative communication such as Makaton)

Some of these pupils may use technology to communicate or to control and affect the world around them. They may require a high level of adult support, are likely to need sensory stimulation and a curriculum that is broken into small steps and personalised in a way that is specific to their needs. Some pupils communicate by gesture, eye pointing, use of symbols or by simple language, whilst other pupils are ambulant.

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-key-stage-1-standards>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-key-stage-2-standards>

Using engagement as the focus of statutory assessment for pupils who are not engaged in subject-specific study helps to ensure that they are developing the right skills and concepts in their physical, social, emotional and cognitive development. This can help them progress on to subject-specific study, when they feel confident enough to do so. The school's curriculum will determine whether the pupil is ready to move onto subject-specific study.

2.2 How schools should use the engagement model

The engagement model should be used in conjunction with a school's existing planning, assessment and recording systems to provide a flexible, holistic assessment of pupils not engaged in subject-specific study. It also helps schools ensure that they have high-quality teaching, pedagogy and appropriate special educational needs provision in place for their pupils.

The engagement model can be used in the 2020/21 academic year. From September 2021 when it becomes statutory, schools will be required to:

- use the engagement model to assess pupils who are working below the standard of national curriculum assessments and not engaged in subject-specific study at the end of KS1 and KS2
- report to DfE which pupils are assessed using the engagement model for KS1 and KS2 — schools are not required to submit any other data to DfE about the progress of these pupils
- ensure that evidence relating to pupils' achievements and progress is reported as part of the end of year academic report, which schools must provide to parents, as outlined in The Education (Pupil Information) Regulations 2005⁴ and paragraph 6.64 of the [SEND code of practice](#)⁵

Schools will have autonomy over how they implement the engagement model, and have the freedom to decide:

- how to use the engagement model to reflect on the success of the curriculum that they provide to their pupils
- how to use the engagement model alongside their existing planning, assessment and recording systems

⁴ *The Education (Pupil Information) Regulation 2005*, <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2005/1437/contents/made>

⁵ Department for Education, Department of Health, *Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

- how often the assessments are conducted, ensuring that they take place regularly throughout the academic year to capture the progress that pupils are making at any time, not just at the end of the academic year, but also at the end of KS1 and KS2
- how long the assessments are, who conducts them and how they are recorded
- how to use the qualitative information gathered from the assessments, alongside any other assessments they use, to provide evidence of pupils' achievements and progress
- how to report evidence of their pupils' progress against the outcomes in their EHC plans, within the SEND code of practice 4 areas of need, on a regular basis and as part of pupils' annual EHC plan reviews
- how to use the information and evidence from the assessments to put in place — and adapt as necessary — a personalised curriculum and pedagogy for the pupil
- how to use insights provided from the assessments to identify and implement the specialist provision required to maximise pupils' engagement in their education

3 The areas of engagement

The engagement model has 5 areas of engagement, these are:

- exploration
- realisation
- anticipation
- persistence
- initiation

Each of the 5 areas are interrelated and should be used when assessing pupils who are not engaged in subject-specific study. Each area can provide a focus on how well pupils are achieving a specific outcome or individual development target as set out in their EHC plans or high-needs funding agreements.

The 5 areas are not hierarchical, so there is no expectation that pupils need to demonstrate progress in all 5 areas. Instead, each of the areas represent what is necessary for pupils to fully engage in their development and reach their full potential. The areas also provide the scaffolding to enable pupils to become independent in developing a new skill or concept.

3.1 Exploration

This shows whether a pupil can build on their initial reaction to a new stimulus or activity; for example, whether they display more than an involuntary or startled reaction to the activity. Additionally, the pupil may be interested in and curious about the stimulus or activity; for example, they may notice it or reach out to it.

Exploration becomes more established when the pupil is still responsive to the same stimulus or activity when it is presented in different contexts or environments; for example, a different time of day, a different place or with different people.

Exploration is important in identifying which stimuli or activities interest the pupil and motivate them to pay attention and investigate them further, so that they can develop new knowledge and skills.

3.2 Realisation

This shows how the pupil interacts with a new stimulus or activity or discovers a new aspect of a familiar stimulus or activity. They will display behaviours that show they want more control of the stimulus or activity, for example by stopping it or trying to make changes to it. The pupil will often show what familiar adults consider to be 'surprise', 'excitement', 'delight', 'amazement' or 'fear'.

Realisation becomes more established when the pupil uses the newly developed skills or knowledge in new ways and in different contexts or environments. This is important as it can keep the pupil excited in their education and prevents an activity from becoming routine.

3.3 Anticipation

This shows how much the pupil predicts, expects or associates a stimulus or activity with an event. They may anticipate that a familiar activity is about to start or finish by interpreting cues or prompts such as auditory (what they hear), tactile (what they feel) and visual (what they see).

Anticipation becomes more established when the pupil shows awareness that a familiar activity is about to start or finish, even when cues and prompts are reduced.

Anticipation is important in measuring the pupil's understanding of cause and effect; for example if they do this, then something will happen. This prepares the brain and helps with the pupil's memory and sequencing.

3.4 Persistence

This shows whether the pupil can sustain their attention in a stimulus or activity for long enough that they can actively try to find out more and interact with it.

Persistence becomes more established when the pupil shows a determined effort to interact with the stimulus or activity. They will do this by showing intentional changes such as changes in their gaze, posture and hand movement.

Persistence is important so that the pupil maintains an activity long enough to develop, reinforce, and apply their skills or knowledge so they can achieve their desired outcome.

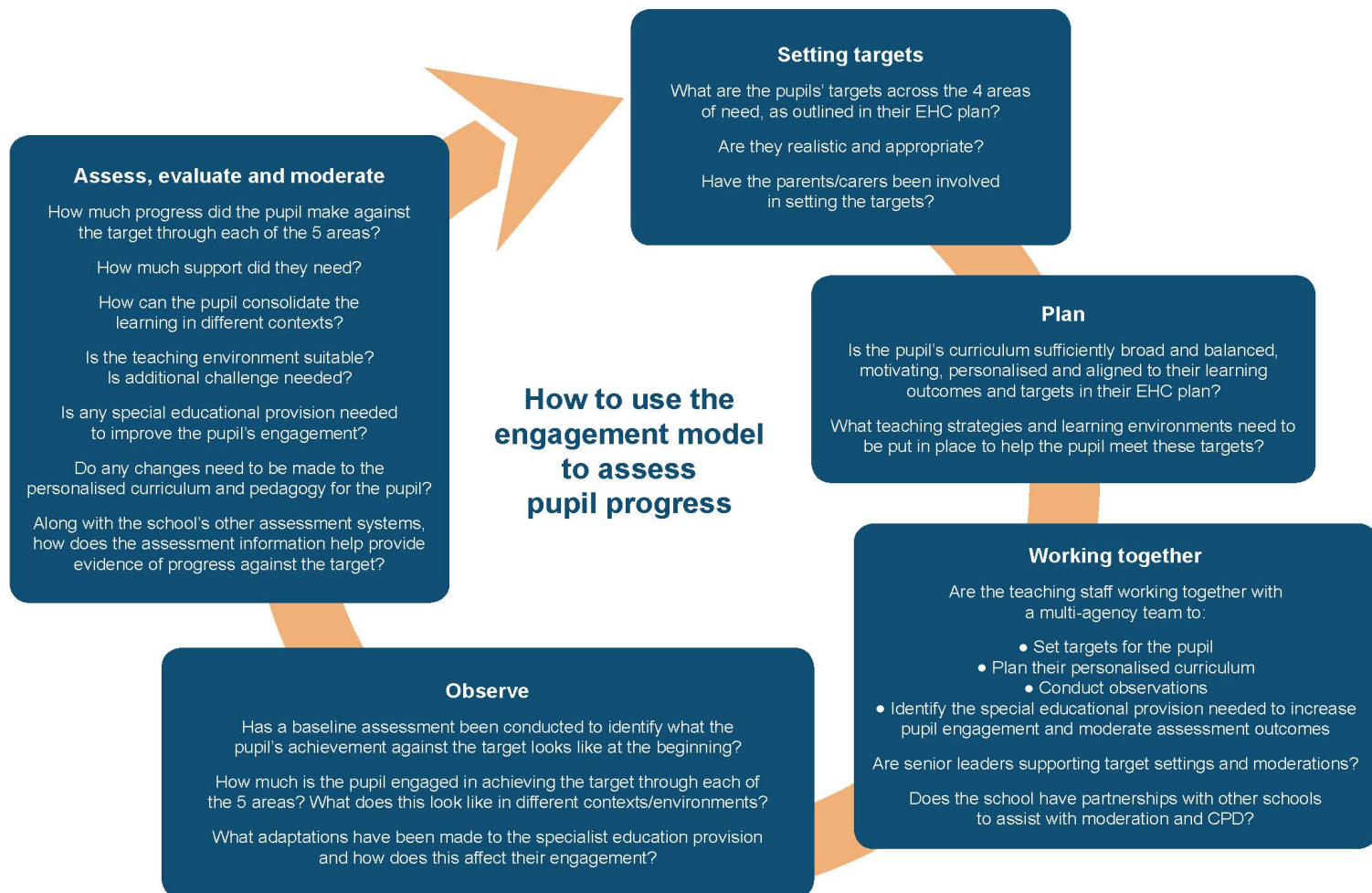
3.5 Initiation

This shows how much, and the different ways, a pupil investigates a stimulus or activity in order to bring about a desired outcome. The pupil will act spontaneously and independently during a familiar activity without waiting for direction.

Initiation becomes more established when the pupil shows they understand how to create an impact on their environment in order to achieve a desired outcome.

Initiation is important to establish how well the pupil is developing independence, which is required for more advanced progression.

Figure 1: how to use the engagement model to assess pupils



4 Effective use of the engagement model

Effective use of the engagement model is based on regular observational assessment and reflective pedagogy. Observational assessment is central to understanding what the pupil knows and what they can do. It is the most reliable way of building up an accurate picture of the pupil's progress.

When a teacher observes a pupil, they should:

- clearly plan and structure their observations
- try to make sense of the pupil's responses
- ensure all members of staff working with the pupil are able to contribute to the observation process

Reflective pedagogy is when teachers and other professionals have a good understanding of how children develop. It is important to enable them to accurately assess the pupil's achievements and progress. Reflective pedagogy involves the use of assessment information to plan relevant and motivating educational experiences for each pupil.

Observing a pupil to identify whether there is a response from them or a change in their behaviour requires skill. This is because it involves identifying small variations in performance; therefore good observation is linked to knowing the pupil well. Based on the teacher's knowledge and experience of the pupil, they must be able to establish:

- that the pupil's response is intentional and not reflexive (such as a startled reaction)
- that the pupil's response is a direct result of the stimulus and not a response to the teacher's actions
- what qualities of the stimulus led to the pupil's response
- that the pupil's response is not due to seizure activity or stereotyped movements

When observing a pupil, teachers may look for subtle nuances of response and behaviour. These might include:

- fleeting eye movements or pupil dilation
- 'stilling' (a momentary 'freeze')
- a small change in breathing pattern
- tensing or relaxing
- a small change in posture
- a change in facial expression
- vocalisation
- a movement of the mouth, hands or feet

Schools should encourage parents and carers to share their observations of the pupil. This is because the pupil's behaviour may be different at home or in the presence of family members. Their input, as well as contributions from professionals involved with the pupil, is very important.

Schools must ensure regular observations take place so they are able to see evidence of pupils' improved progress across a range of activities, settings and staff.

4.1 How to conduct the assessments

The curriculum should be sufficiently motivating and stretching to engage pupils in their education and development. Schools should ensure that the means of assessment captures the pupil's interest and is appropriate for their age.

To allow maximum engagement, teachers should set realistic but appropriate success criteria that are specific to the pupil and set out how progress will be monitored against each of the criteria. This should be based on the curriculum used by the school, linking to the pupil's outcomes in their EHC plan, or high-needs funding agreement if the pupil does not have an EHC plan.

Where possible, evidence of the pupil's progress through each of the 5 areas of engagement should be collected in a range of different ways. Observations should be replicated in different environments to identify what works best for the pupil. Equally, one assessment activity can assess the pupil's development through more than one of the 5 areas of engagement.

Good assessment should look at the pupil's development through the 5 areas of engagement individually. However, it should also consider the 5 areas and what they show about the pupil's achievements and progress when viewed together. Insight and evidence gathered from the engagement model assessment can inform the teacher's knowledge of the pupil's development of skills, concepts, knowledge and understanding through the school's curriculum.

The special educational provision provided and the effect this has on the pupil's level of engagement should be recorded. Over time, teachers will be able to chart the success of the special educational provision, any adjustments made and the effect this has on the pupil's engagement.

In instances where the pupil does not engage with a new activity, insight from the assessment can be used to identify the kinds of activities that the pupil engages with more constructively. The findings can be used to indicate starting points to identify ways in which the pupil can engage in new activities.

4.2 When to conduct the assessments

DfE does not specify the number of times that the assessments should be conducted. Schools should set their own minimum requirements as to how often the assessments take place, ensuring they are manageable. They should also consider how often is suitable based on the needs of each pupil.

The engagement model should initially be used to identify the pupil's engagement during their highest-interest activity, whether this is at school or home. This will enable a baseline to be developed of when the pupil is most engaged. The engagement model should then be used in lessons where the pupil is struggling, where there is low interest or where progress has plateaued. This will allow the teacher to reflect upon, trial and implement different ways to increase the pupil's engagement in their education and development.

Schools should make sure that the assessments are conducted regularly throughout the academic year so that they are able to demonstrate whether the pupil is able to sustain the new skills, concepts and knowledge over time, rather than just reflecting a snapshot of one activity or observation. This will enable the gathering of information required to show the pupil's progress towards the outcomes in their EHC plan and reported as part of the annual EHC plan review process.

When deciding how often the assessments should take place, schools should consider:

- how well they know the pupil — in situations where there is a new pupil, schools may need to conduct frequent observation in order to familiarise themselves with the pupil and their needs
- if the education outcomes and targets are pupil-centred and suitably matched to the pupil's abilities
- whether the activity and environment provided is giving the pupil the best opportunity for them to meet their outcomes and targets
- whether the classroom environment for the pupil is encouraging their engagement across all 5 of the areas
- if any issues such as health and sleep patterns have had an impact on the pupil when reflecting on information gained from an observation
- how many observations are required to effectively interpret the evidence of progress and if what they are observing is consistent behaviour
- the pupil's response time and the duration of the observation session
- how to extend the pupil's development and what can be put in place to ensure this happens

4.3 Who should conduct the assessments?

The assessments should be conducted by an appropriate adult familiar to the pupil so they are able to identify existing educational barriers. This may be the class teacher, teaching assistant or SENCO.

As set out in paragraph 6.36 of the SEND code of practice, teachers are responsible and accountable for their pupils' education and development, including where pupils access support from teaching assistants or specialist staff. Teachers therefore, have overall responsibility for ensuring that robust evidence is gathered during the assessments and that this is used to plan the appropriate next steps for the pupil's education and development.

4.4 How the engagement model links with other assessment approaches

Assessment is important as it allows teachers to:

- monitor pupils' education and development
- evaluate and improve the provision they make for pupils
- gain information about pupils' achievements and progress
- inform their future planning

The engagement model should not replace a school's existing planning, assessment and reporting system. It should be used in conjunction with the assessment systems that a school is already using. It is a flexible and holistic assessment model and should be used as one of the tools in a school's assessment toolkit.

DfE does not specify what other assessment and reporting systems a school should use, or endorse any specific system. Schools should ensure that the assessment of their pupils is supported by a range of strategies that are holistic and personalised according to individual SEND profiles. These assessment criteria and their related curricula will be related to pupils' early developmental skills, such as their functional abilities in the use of vision, hearing, touch, early communication, behaviour and motor skills.

A variety of frameworks for assessing pupils with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties are available, which schools can use alongside the engagement model if they wish to do so. These include [Routes for Learning](#)⁶ and [Quest for Learning](#)⁷.

⁶ Welsh Government, *Routes for learning*, <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales-2008/routes-for-learning>

⁷ Welsh Government, *Quest for learning*, http://ccea.org.uk/curriculum/sen_inclusion/assessment/quest_learning

There are also frameworks which focus on early childhood development, such as the [early years foundation stage profile](#)⁸ and the [early years development journal](#)⁹.

4.5 The use of multimedia and technology

Schools should consider how they use multimedia and technology, including video, photographs and IT-based hardware and software applications, when conducting and recording observations. These can assist schools with time management and the effectiveness of assessments.

Video recordings and photographs

Video recordings and photographs of a pupil's interactions at different times and in different situations can be a useful observational tool as they can provide detail of subtle patterns in a pupil's response and behaviour.

Schools can capture small steps in a pupil's achievements and progress in video recordings that might otherwise be missed in a classroom. Video recordings can help support a teacher's assessment of a pupil's development as it may allow them to reflect in more detail at a later stage. This should support schools to identify what behaviours the pupil did and did not demonstrate, whether the intervention was successful and how it might be built upon or altered next time. Such reflective practice is important in enabling teachers to develop a personalised curriculum and pedagogy for each pupil.

Schools should ensure they have all relevant permissions — both parental and legal — in order to ensure they comply with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Other technology

Schools should consider how they can use other technology and IT solutions in their assessments. These could include:

- apps that capture and tag evidence of a pupil's progress, which can be easily retrieved for annotation and teacher assessment
- inter-connectivity that enables schools to upload and share bespoke curriculum and assessment frameworks as part of peer-to-peer support

⁸ Standards & Testing Agency, *Early years foundation stage profile*, http://ccea.org.uk/curriculum/sen_inclusion/assessment/quest_learning

⁹ Early Support, *Early Years Developmental Journal*, <https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/help-resources/resources/early-years-developmental-journal>

- online password-protected sites that facilitate high quality parental engagement by allowing schools and parents to upload and share videos and photographic evidence of pupils' progress
- online password-protected sites that enable colleagues to upload information relating to the EHC plans of individual pupils, to ensure their SEND profiles are updated in real time
- online analysis of pupil performance from a holistic EHC plan perspective
- online password-protected transfer capability so that teachers' records of pupil evidence of progress can be easily moderated
- resources and ability to extract and analyse evidence of progress data for incorporating into end of key stage and EHC plan reports

Staff should always ensure that any multimedia and technology methods used reflect and support the school's policy in this area.

4.6 Involving other professionals in the assessments

Many pupils who are not engaged in subject-specific study will have specific needs which are central to their development and quality of life. Some pupils may have a range of therapeutic needs or require paramedical care. Provision for these needs is an essential element of a school's curriculum and assessment planning. This provision can enhance a pupil's development in many ways, for example by:

- helping the pupil maintain good posture, appropriate muscle tone, ease of movement and encouraging the development, refinement or maintenance of skills in independent mobility
- promoting relaxation and support to help the pupil manage stress and anxiety
- providing palliative treatments for painful or degenerative conditions to support the pupil's health and wellbeing
- promoting the pupil's autonomy and independence using specialist aids and equipment
- allowing the pupil's behaviour and alternative ways of communicating to be acknowledged and understood

Some forms of therapy, for example speech and language, occupational or physiotherapy, may be necessary to maintain the pupil's physical wellbeing or the development of basic education, health or emotional needs. The nature and extent of the support required for individual pupils and the best ways of providing this must be considered carefully.

Other professionals' insight can be used to improve the design of special educational provision for the pupil. They can identify barriers to engagement for the pupil that a teacher may not be aware of and advise on changes that may improve engagement, and

therefore the educational possibilities for the pupil. They can also provide specialist insight into how the pupil is demonstrating engagement through each of the 5 areas.

The sharing of ideas and strategies from different perspectives encourages the enrichment of the pupil's personalised curriculum and pedagogy. Many schools encourage this collaborative, multi-agency approach through:

- active support from members of the senior management team
- providing time for regular, formal and informal discussions and moderation
- joint planning, problem solving and decision making
- an understanding of, and respect for, the roles and goals of other professionals
- the use of a common, easily understood language
- in-service training in teamwork

4.7 Recording the assessments

Schools should record the assessments and document evidence from the observations in a way that ensures accuracy and also identifies the pupil's progress. The recording must be manageable to be effective, therefore schools are given the freedom to determine their own approach to recording methods and formats in line with the requirements of the [Data Protection Act 2018](#)¹⁰.

It is important that a school's records:

- recognise the pupil's individual needs
- show and celebrate the pupil's success, however minimal
- provide evidence of the pupil's responses and achievements
- provide ways of comparing the pupil's current responses with past ones in order to show evidence of their achievements
- capture information about the quality of the pupil's progress so the complexities and subtle differences of individual responses can be described, interpreted and explained
- contain information and evidence that enable decisions to be made concerning the pupil's needs
- can be used to inform planning and next steps for pupils, including special educational provision
- assist in gathering evidence for reporting the pupil's achievements and progress against their EHC plan as part of the annual review process

¹⁰ Data Protection Act 2018, <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/12/contents/enacted>

- assist in compiling evidence as part of end of academic year reporting to the pupil's parents, LAs and governors

Schools should also ensure their records include relevant contextual information. Regular monitoring and recording of the pupil's responses and progress against their outcomes in their EHC plan can identify areas where they are improving and where progress is not being maintained. This can help build up the profile of the pupil and capture evidence that may help in planning next steps for them. The responses of the pupil may change from lesson to lesson and may be dependent on factors such as:

- the activity involved
- preferences for certain members of staff
- the pupil's mood
- proximity to certain pupils
- different environments
- the time of day
- access to favourite items of equipment
- types of sensory experience

There is no requirement that observations should be formally recorded, documented or provided to DfE. However, schools may want to have an effective plan in place that enables them to capture information about the engagement process to inform their next steps in teaching and personalised provision.

Schools must also be able to provide evidence to support a dialogue with parents and carers, inspectors, school governors and those engaged in peer review, to ensure robust and effective accountability for assessing the achievements and progress of their pupils. It is recommended that schools use a template, as well as photos and videos, to support assessments and reduce the effect these may have on teacher workload.

A 'setting assessment' policy should outline when it is necessary to record evidence. It should consider how to minimise teacher workload so that schools can focus their efforts on teaching. When evidence is recorded, this should follow the principles and recommendations outlined in the independent report: [Eliminating unnecessary workload associated with data management](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reducing-teacher-workload-data-management-review-group-report)¹¹.

An effective recording system should also enable moderation to take place within and across schools and settings.

¹¹ Department for Education, 2016, *Eliminating unnecessary workload associated with data management*, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reducing-teacher-workload-data-management-review-group-report>

4.8 Moderation

Statutory external moderation of observations and assessments made using the engagement model will not be required, however it is good practice for schools to ensure that their assessments using the engagement model are moderated internally, involving all professionals who work with the pupil. This can help build knowledge and understanding of the engagement model and how to use it to assess pupils.

Moderation can help to quality assure teachers' judgements and ensure that professionals working with the pupil are able to conduct accurate and consistent assessments. It also provides opportunity for continuing professional development. This can be valuable for mainstream schools who may have a smaller number of pupils who are not engaged in subject-specific study.

When undertaking moderation, schools should make sure they are not comparing one pupil with another. Instead, the focus of the moderation discussions should be for staff to agree on their interpretation of the progress of each pupil.

4.9 Involving parents and carers in the assessments

As outlined in paragraphs 6.64 to 6.71 of the SEND code of practice, schools must provide parents and carers with information about their child's achievements and progress.

Schools should explain to parents and carers how their child is doing and how they can help them make progress. Parents and carers should also be involved in setting out the aspirations and expectations for their child. This dialogue with parents and carers plays an important role in holding schools to account for the education that they provide.

Schools should speak to parents and carers regularly to set clear targets, outcomes and review progress towards them. They should also discuss the activities and support that will help achieve these targets and outcomes, and identify the responsibilities of the parent and the school. The SEND code of practice recommends that schools should meet parents at least 3 times a year. These discussions can build confidence in the actions being taken by the school, and can also strengthen the impact of SEND support by increasing parental engagement in the approaches and teaching strategies that are used.

In addition, as outlined in paragraph 6.64 of the SEND code of practice as well as The Education (Pupil Information) Regulations 2005¹², schools must provide an annual report

¹² *The Education (Pupil Information) Regulation 2005*,
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2005/1437/contents/made>

for parents on their child's progress. However, some schools may provide more regular reports for parents on how their child is progressing. Section 5.3 of this guidance outlines how a pupil's progress should be reported.

Parents and carers can also provide essential information on the impact of SEND support outside of school and any changes in the pupil's needs. They can provide insight about their child's interests and development outside of school, particularly in terms of what activities the child highly engages with. This can help to inform the approach to the pupil's assessment, personalised curriculum and pedagogy.

Paragraph 6.67 of the SEND code of practice outlines that these discussions should be led by a teacher with a good knowledge and understanding of the pupil. This will usually be the class teacher, supported by the SENCO. It should provide an opportunity for the parent to share their concerns and agree their aspirations for the pupil, with the teacher.

Engagement can be an important part of this interaction with parents and carers. They can help schools understand when a pupil is at their most engaged, and a discussion of how the pupil is doing at school can be enriched by reference to the engagement model.

5 Recognising progress and achievement

5.1 Progress of pupils not engaged in subject-specific study

Pupils who are not engaged in subject-specific study are likely to be at the earliest stages of development in either one, a combination of, or all of the 4 areas of need as set out in the SEND code of practice: communication and interaction, cognition and learning, social, emotional and mental health difficulties, and sensory and/or physical needs.

This means that the assessment of their progress needs to be holistic. Improving pupils' ability to use their senses, for example their hearing and sight, as well as their motor skills and communication, can help to improve pupils' ability to engage in education. This targeted intervention should be incorporated into lesson plans and used by teachers to personalise the curriculum for each pupil.

The engagement model celebrates the different abilities of pupils not engaged in subject-specific study. It enables the collection of qualitative information and evidence that should inform a teacher's assessment of their pupils' evidence of progress in the following areas:

- the effective use of their senses, including the use of both near and distant senses and the use of sensory integration
- the application of physical (motor) skills to permit active participation in new experiences
- states of emotional wellbeing to facilitate sustained motivation to learn
- communication and language skills to inform thought processes

The progress of these pupils can often be inconsistent and is dependent on their complex needs and unique starting points. As such, comparing progress amongst pupils is unlikely to be meaningful.

The engagement model does not use a numerical scale or provide a quantitative score. This is because the complex behaviours of pupils not engaged in subject-specific study cannot be adequately described by a single number. Often these pupils do not make progress in a linear way. There may be a period in which the pupil does not gain new concepts or skills, but adapts to apply existing ones to a broader range of contexts. For a pupil with complex needs, this can be a significant development and can demonstrate real evidence of achievement.

Progress for these pupils can also be variable. They may make progress for a period, but then either plateau or lose some of the gains they have made, before progress starts again. These patterns of progress are typical for pupils who are not engaged in subject-specific study. Preventing or slowing a decline in the pupils' performance may also be an appropriate outcome of intervention.

Not all pupils will make progress. As a result of their medical conditions, some pupils may regress in their achievements and progress. This can be temporary, but sometimes it can be lengthy or permanent. In these cases, pupils' recorded progress may decline. For these pupils, existing skills may have priority over the promotion and assessment of new skills. In these instances, the engagement model can highlight the nature of their decreasing abilities and identify ways in which their existing skills can be maintained to compensate for skills that are lost.

When assessing the progress of pupils not engaged in subject-specific study, schools should be mindful that:

- not all pupils develop in the same way — their progress is complex and unique and may not develop in a linear way
- pupils' responses may vary widely across different times of the day, over different days, with different people and in different settings or contexts
- pupils may not easily transfer the skills they have learned in one setting or by using a particular communication method to a different setting or a different communication method — they may need to be taught the skill or concept across different settings or contexts or by using different communication methods to ensure they are able to use the skill more widely
- the engagement model should be used to capture and celebrate the small lateral steps pupils may make, as well as any linear steps — it should also be used to identify the maintenance of essential skills and concepts for those pupils with regressive conditions

5.2 Planning for progression

Planning for progression for pupils not engaged in subject-specific study might focus on:

- creating opportunities to practice, consolidate, maintain and generalise skills and concepts
- introducing new skills, knowledge and understanding and increasing the breadth of the curriculum content
- introducing opportunities to apply skills, knowledge and understanding in new settings and environments
- including more age-appropriate activities and resources and a wider range of people and environments
- increasing engagement and participation by providing pupils with a variety of support equipment that provides them with the opportunity to take control of their environment, to increase mobility and to develop and use different ways of communicating
- introducing a range of teaching methods and styles
- providing opportunities for pupils to move away from adult support and towards autonomy in using a new skill

In practice, all of these will be linked. Planning can ensure that different forms of progression relate to and support one another, for example, providing educational opportunities outside pupils' familiar environments can help them apply skills in a range of contexts.

5.3 How to measure progress

For all pupils, including those with learning difficulties, progress is about change and development. This could be progress towards a curricular target or an outcome in a pupil's EHC plan.

Progress through each of the 5 areas of engagement should be measured by identifying how established, overall, the pupil is against each area. This will be different for each pupil, according to their profile of needs, as set out in their EHC plan, and their unique starting point.

Pupils not engaged in subject-specific study require a considerable amount of adult support to develop new skills and concepts. To assist in identifying how established the pupil is in a skill, and what their progress is in achieving their EHC plan outcomes, teachers should consider:

- how independent the pupil is in the skill and how much prompting and support they require
- how accurate, confident and consistent the pupil is in the skill
- whether the pupil is able to apply the skill in different contexts, for example at different times of day, in different environments, with different adults and amongst peers

Schools may want to consider how they will monitor each of their pupil's achievements and progress within their individual EHC plan related targets. As part of this, they should consider whether the timeline set within each target includes specific dates of when improved performance is expected. This is to ensure that if the pupil's evidence of progress is stalling, assessment using the engagement model can be applied in a timely manner to revise the personalised curriculum and pupil-centred pedagogy, as required.

The engagement model can be used as a baseline assessment and as a tool to track and support on-going progress; for example formative assessment. It also provides evidence that can be used, in conjunction with a school's other assessment information, to help evaluate a pupil's progress towards the targets and outcomes in their EHC plan and the 4 areas of need; for example summative assessment. This insight can be reported as part of the annual EHC plan review process and to LAs and governors.

The model also supports positive reporting to parents and carers, as part of the end of academic year reporting process.

5.4 How to measure the effectiveness of teaching

It is important for teachers and other professionals to monitor the effects of the planning, teaching and assessment methods used, resources and the pace of lessons on pupil progress and achievement. When reviewing the effectiveness of teaching, staff may find it useful to consider:

- the purposes and intended outcomes of the pupil's personalised curriculum and pedagogy provided and if they were met
- the range of teaching methods and strategies used, how they varied for individual pupils and the impact they had on the pupil's engagement
- whether the educational activities led to progress
- whether the special educational provision encouraged the pupil's engagement
- if the resources were suitable and helpful
- if the physical environment helped

Progress may be recognised when pupils not engaged in subject-specific study:

- develop methods of communication from the use of concrete ways (body language and the use of real objects) towards the abstract (pictures, symbols, print, signs, ICT and the spoken word)
- develop a range of responses to social interactions with individuals and in groups, from resisting contact with others to tolerance, passive cooperation and supported involvement, to enjoying social interaction and experiences
- show the same achievement on more than one occasion
- show an ability to maintain, refine, generalise or combine skills over time and in a range of circumstances, situations and settings
- transfer skills between different contexts or combine or use skills in different ways
- show a reduced need for support in carrying out particular tasks, for example from another person, technology or individualised equipment
- show a reduced need for artificial reinforcement as they become motivated by naturally occurring events or consequences
- move from dependence on a secure or predictable routine to a greater degree of autonomy, shown by increased risk-taking and increased confidence
- show a reduction in the frequency or severity of behaviour that inhibits attainment and an increase in more appropriate behaviour that encourages progression
- show an increased ability to cope, for example, with frustration and failure or with new or challenging opportunities or situations

The above points show that progress of pupils can move in several directions. The significance of progress in any of the above must be recognised and considered when planning pupils' future achievement.

6 Accountability

6.1 What data needs to be submitted

Schools must report which pupils are assessed using the engagement model at the end of KS1 and KS2. This is so DfE is aware of how many pupils are not engaged in subject-specific study and where they are being educated.

However, schools do not have to submit data about the achievements and progress of each pupil working below the overall standard of the national curriculum assessments and not engaged in subject-specific study. This is because the progress that these pupils make will be personal to them, and it is not possible to meaningfully consider data for these pupils.

6.2 Accountability to parents, governors and local authorities

Schools must be able to provide evidence about their pupils' achievements and progress to parents and carers, school governors and LAs in light of The Education (Pupil Information) Regulations 2005¹³. This progress should be reported as part of pupils' annual EHC plan review and funding meetings and as part of the end of year academic report process. However, schools may want to provide more regular reports for parents on how their child is progressing.

Schools should report pupils' progress in the form of a qualitative narrative. They should use the information gathered from the assessments using the engagement model, alongside evidence gathered from any other assessments used, to provide evidence of pupils' progress against the outcomes in their EHC plan. The narrative should be provided in a format that is accessible with language that effectively describes the achievements and evidence of progress of the pupils in a positive, inclusive and jargon-free manner.

Governors and LAs will require a focus on outcomes and will need evidence of a rigorous approach to the monitoring and evaluation of SEND support provided to pupils. They should be able to see that the outcomes in pupils' EHC plans have been meaningfully co-produced and whether they are being met.

¹³ *The Education (Pupil Information) Regulation 2005*,
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2005/1437/contents/made>

6.3 Accountability to Ofsted

The engagement model is designed to align with Ofsted's education inspection framework, particularly in supporting schools in identifying, assessing and meeting the needs of pupils who are not engaged in subject-specific study. This includes assessing whether pupils' outcomes are improving as a result of the different or additional provision made for them.

Ofsted's education inspection framework applies to state-funded and non-maintained special schools' provision and to mainstream schools' provision for pupils with SEND. In the 2020 to 2021 academic year only, schools should review the [guidance](#) about the interim plans for the phased return to inspection during the autumn term. As detailed in paragraph 309 of Ofsted's [school inspection handbook](#)¹⁴, inspectors will gather and evaluate evidence about:

- whether leaders are ambitious for all pupils with SEND
- how well leaders identify, assess and meet the needs of pupils with SEND and how well they develop and adapt the curriculum so that it is coherently sequenced to all pupils' needs, starting points and aspirations for the future
- how successfully leaders involve parents, carers and other professionals and specialist services in deciding how best to support pupils with SEND
- how well leaders include pupils with SEND in all aspects of school life
- how well the school assesses the education and development of pupils with SEND and whether pupils' outcomes are improving as a result of the different or additional provision being made for them
- how well pupils with SEND are prepared for their next steps in education, employment and training, and their adult lives, including further or higher education and employment, independent living, participating in society and being as healthy as possible

As outlined in paragraph 6.72 of the SEND code of practice, as part of any inspection, Ofsted will expect to see evidence of the pupil's attainment, a focus on outcomes and a rigorous approach to the monitoring and evaluation of any SEND support provided. Ofsted have published more information about their expectations in their [framework](#)¹⁵.

¹⁴ Ofsted, *School inspection handbook*, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-eif>

¹⁵ Ofsted, *Education inspection framework*, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework>

Annex: glossary

Assessment: allows teachers to monitor pupils' progress and development, evaluate and improve the provision they make for pupils, provide information about pupils' achievements and progress and inform their future planning.

Annual review: is the review of an EHC plan, which the LA must make as a minimum every 12 months.

Curriculum: refers to what pupils need to learn and the academic content they should be taught. It is the vehicle that teachers use to provide opportunities for their pupils to acquire, practise and develop skills and meet the targets specified in their EHC plans. The curriculum also determines how pupil performance will be assessed and reported and defines the model of progression for pupils.

Education, health and care plan (EHC plan): an EHC plan details the education, health and social care support that is provided to a child or young person who has SEN or a disability. It is made by the LA after an EHC needs assessment where it has been determined that an EHC plan is necessary.

Engagement: refers to the degree of attention, motivation, curiosity, interest and optimism that pupils show when they are developing new skills and knowledge. Ensuring that pupils are engaged is essential for them to develop new skills, concepts and knowledge.

Engagement model: is the assessment tool for schools to use to assess pupils who are not engaged in subject-specific study at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2. It can be used from the 2020/21 academic year and becomes statutory from 2021/22 academic year.

Formative assessment: takes place during lessons and allows teachers to gauge pupils' attainment, to identify what the next steps should be and to inform lesson planning.

Holistic assessment: focuses on the pupil as a whole, rather than only focusing on specific elements. A holistic assessment of pupils' progress and development considers all aspects of their individual needs, including how they interrelate with each other and the factors that influence them, and how this affects how they learn. This allows the assessment to capture a fuller picture of pupils' progress and development over a period of time.

Inclusive assessment: recognises all pupils' entitlement to an assessment that respects diversity, enables participation, removes barriers and anticipates and considers a variety of educational needs and preferences.

Independent school: for the purposes of this guidance, an independent school is a school that is not state-funded.

Ofsted: Office for Standards in Education, a non-Ministerial government department established under the Education (Schools) Act 1992 to take responsibility for the inspection of all schools in England. Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) form its professional arm.

Pedagogy: is the method and practice of teaching. It encompasses teaching styles, feedback and assessment and teacher theory. It refers to the way that teachers deliver the content of the curriculum to pupils. Differences in the needs and abilities of pupils, their age and the curriculum content that is being delivered can influence the pedagogical practices a teacher will choose to use. Reflective pedagogy is when teachers have a good understanding of how children develop and use assessment information to plan relevant and motivating educational experiences for each pupil.

Pre-key stage standards: must be used to report assessment outcomes at the end of key stages 1 and 2 for pupils who are working below the standard of the national curriculum tests and assessments and engaged in subject-specific study. There are pre-key stage standards in English language comprehension and reading, English writing and mathematics.

Progress: is a judgement about pupils' development over time, for example how much progress a child or young person has made in getting from 'A to B'. This could be progress towards a curricular target or an objective in an EHC plan.

SEND code of practice: explains the duties of LAs, health bodies, schools and colleges to provide for those with special educational needs under part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014.

Summative assessment: is used to understand pupil performance at the end of a period of teaching and informs teachers what they have achieved.

Statutory assessment: is an assessment that a headteacher must administer to comply with the law. This includes the early years foundation stage profile, the key stage 1 and key stage 2 national curriculum tests and assessments and GCSEs.

Subject-specific study: is when pupils can demonstrate recognisable and specific skills, knowledge and understanding in English language comprehension and reading, English writing and mathematics.



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