ELEMENT ONE – The Learning Environment

1. ORGANISING AND MAINTAINING THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

A. Goals of a quality learning environment

When making decisions regarding the learning environment it may be helpful for the teaching assistant to keep in mind what it is that is being promoted. The goals of a quality learning environment should include to:

- maximise learning
- create a safe and positive environment
- minimise behaviour problems

B. Effective classroom organisation and maintenance

Teaching assistants working in any type of school setting, whether they are employed to support an individual pupil, a group of pupils, a class, a subject or year group, should contribute to maintaining an effective learning environment. This may involve some or all of the following duties:

- Keeping classroom resources in good order.
- Assisting in preparation of resources before lessons and tidying afterwards.
- Cleaning and ensuring the classroom is tidy.
- Repairing and maintaining apparatus and resources.
- Assisting in the presentation of work and display areas

In order to carry out these duties the teaching assistant will first need to establish these important factors, which may vary from school to school;
• Their role and responsibility for helping to organise the learning environment

• The roles and responsibilities of others within the school in respect of establishing and maintaining learning environments

• The principles and practices of inclusive education and the implications of these for setting out learning environments

• What safety equipment is kept in different learning environments

• Where different equipment and materials are kept

• The school’s health and safety policy as it applies to learning environments, resources and materials

• The school requirements and any other guidance for health, hygiene, safety, security and supervision in the setting, including access to premises, storerooms and storage areas.

C. Prepare and maintain the learning environment

Tasks which an assistant may be asked to carry out after a short period of induction training and with straightforward guidance from the classroom teacher might include;

• Participate in the organisation and maintenance of the classroom environment.

• Decorate bulletin boards, as appropriate for time of year, lesson content, etc.

• Make displays e.g. Mount examples of children’s work, pictures, interest tables under the supervision of teaching staff

• Check the availability and location of safety equipment in the learning environment

• Maintain neat and clean desks, bookshelves etc

• Encourage pupils to return materials to the appropriate place after use
• Dispose of waste and redundant resources safely, making maximum use of opportunities for recycling materials and equipment
• Encourage pupils to dispose of wastes in a safe and tidy manner

D. Prepare the learning resources

The learning resources are the basic classroom furniture and equipment needed to support a learning activity, including general resources such as tables and chairs, curriculum specific resources such as PE equipment, science equipment; and ICT equipment such as computers or digital cameras. Duties the teaching assistant may have to perform whilst preparing the resources might include:

• Prepare and set out learning resources in line with the preparation requirements given by the teacher
• Maintain a complete and accurate inventory of resources
• Ensure that the necessary information about legal, regulatory and school requirements, and the manufacturers’ instructions, are at hand
• Ensure users are aware of relevant health and safety guidance when issuing resources

E. Prepare learning materials for use

Materials may include the written materials and consumables needed for the learning activity, including general classroom items such as pencils, rulers and paper, curriculum specific materials such as paints, science materials or cooking ingredients and written materials such as handouts, worksheets and books. The teaching assistant may be required to;

• Make or organise necessary materials i.e. Flash cards, pictures, worksheets
• Record educational television and radio programmes • Identify where different equipment and materials are kept
• Prepare materials ahead of time.
• Set out learning materials as directed by the teacher
• Store stock safely and securely, ensuring effective stock rotation where appropriate
• Develop places for convenient storage of frequently used materials.

F. Monitor and maintain the learning environment and resources

So that resources and materials are always readily available in a good condition, it will be necessary to keep accurate records of them and monitor their condition.

• Check the condition of learning resources and materials after use

• Bring any damage or losses to learning resources and materials to the attention of the teacher

• Report shortages of learning materials to the teacher

• Ensure that the quality and quantity of resources is maintained

• Inform relevant people when there is a problem with maintaining resources that is outside their area of responsibility

• Work safely at all times, complying with health, safety and environmental regulations and guidelines

• Monitor the demand for and use of resources to identify areas for improving quality, supply and suitability

• Carry out and record regular inspections of resources in line with legal, regulatory and organisational requirements

• Carry out routine cleaning and maintenance of resources in accordance with school requirements and manufacturers’ instructions
2. USE LEARNING MATERIALS, RESOURCES AND EQUIPMENT EFFECTIVELY, APPROPRIATELY AND SAFELY.

A. Effective use equipment, resources and materials

The teaching assistant may also be asked to prepare many types of instructional materials for the teacher, especially if they are artistically inclined. To get an idea of what they may be expected to do, the following is a list of tasks sometimes performed by the teaching assistant;

- Operating the laminating machine
- Videotaping events in the classroom
- Supervising students working on media projects.
- Working computer software
- Using a camera to take pictures of class work
- Using a photocopying machine.
- Setting up and operating tape recorders, filmstrip projectors, projectors, etc.
- Making transparencies for the overhead projector.
- Preparing posters, charts, and other visual aids

B. Safe use of materials, resources and equipment

All equipment, resources and materials should be used within the manufacturers’ recommendations and the guidelines stated in the schools Health and Safety policy. The teaching assistant should therefore be familiar with this policy and assist the teacher in its implementation at all times. In addition they should;

- Ensure the learning environment is safe and free of hazards during practical activities;
- Ensure equipment and materials are used properly to support the student’s learning needs;
  - Ensure equipment and materials are stored in a safe manner when not in use;
- Assist in implementing appropriate safety procedures in an emergency.

C. Safe Use of the Internet
The Internet and other digital and information technologies are powerful tools, which open up new opportunities for everyone to have access to the wealth of cultural, scientific and intellectual material. All school staff share a responsibility to make sure that children and young people are able to use the internet appropriately and safely. Risks to pupils can include:

- Exposure to threat of physical danger, abuse, intimidation and bullying
- Misuse of resources
- Access to inappropriate material

The teacher and the teaching assistant should teach responsible use when pupils are accessing the Internet, and provide guidance and supervision of students using the Internet in the following ways:

- Discuss the appropriate use of the Internet with pupils, monitor their use and intervene if the resource is not being used appropriately.
- Ensure computers that allow access to the Internet should only be placed in areas where adults are present.
- Discourage pupils from accessing inappropriate materials.
- Ensure pupils do not reveal the identity, password, personal address or telephone number of themselves or anyone else.
- Ensure pupils report any objectionable content that makes them feel uncomfortable.
- Students should be directed to safe areas of the Internet.
- Fit ICT tools that improve security;
  - Firewall and virus protection
  - Software filters
  - Accredited ISPs
  - Awareness of wireless technology issues
3. HOW LEARNING MATERIALS, RESOURCES AND EQUIPMENT CAN HELP CHILDREN’S LEARNING.

Quality learning environments are those that offer children new prospects. Examples of quality environments that help children and young people are those that:

- Test boundaries – mentally and physically
- Create imaginary worlds
- Utilise their natural surroundings
- Are both sociable or solitary
- Construct and alter their surroundings
- Experience change and continuity

The general aim of any educational establishment should be to plan a variety of learning experiences in the curriculum that meets the needs of all the areas of the child’s development. Those areas of growth and development are:

- **Physical development** – the physical growth and the development of both gross (e.g. walking) and fine motor (e.g. finger movement) control of the body.

- **Communication and language development** – the acquisition of language and expression of thoughts and feelings.

- **Social Development** – The child’s identity, their relationship with others, and understanding their place within a social environment.

- **Perception and sensory development** – How a child functions using their senses and their ability to process that information.

- **Cognitive development** – How the individual thinks and reacts.

- **Emotional Development** – A child’s increasing awareness and control of their feelings and how they react to these feelings in a given situation.

Learning materials, resources and equipment could include any of the following:

- Basic classroom items
• Curriculum specific equipment and materials,  • General Information Technology resources  
• Written materials.

A. How basic classroom equipment can help children’s learning.

The growth in technology in our world is reflected in the abundance of ICT tools available for young children to use in their learning and to learn about. Hardware that may be used in the curriculum might include any of the following;

• Colour printers  
• Scanners or digital stills or video cameras with associated software  
• Multimedia computers – including desktop computers, portables and personal digital calculators  
• ‘Floor turtle’ or robot  
• Control interface with associated switches, sensors, buzzers, lights and motors  
• Digital microscopes

Software that might be used as part of the curriculum might include any of the following;

• Software to move and match words and pictures; word banks;  
• Word processors  
• Paint and object-based drawing software  
• Clip art files  
• Music composition programs or means of recording and editing sounds  
• Multimedia authoring programs  
• Graphing programs to draw bar charts, pie charts and line graphs  
• Flat file and branching databases  
• Simple spreadsheets  
• Turtle graphics programs that include the use of repeats and procedures  
• Control programs that include sensing  
• Simulations  
• E-mail and access to the Internet
B. How curriculum specific equipment and resources can help a pupil’s learning

Choosing the right curriculum resources requires knowledge of both the learners and how they learn. Resources and equipment chosen to implement the curriculum and promote learning should;

- reflect the lives of the children and families.
- reflect the diversity found in society, including gender roles, age, language, and abilities.
- provide for children’s safety while being appropriately challenging.
- encourage exploration, experimentation, and discovery.
- promote action and interaction.
- be organised to support independent use.
- be rotated to accommodate new interests and new skill levels.
- be rich in variety.
- accommodate children’s special needs.

C. Scientific equipment

Laboratories and practical classes can also help students to develop the kinds of practical intelligence so highly valued by professionals in many fields. The purpose of the lab or practical class may be to:

- improve students’ understanding of the methods of scientific enquiry through experiments or problem-solving activities
- help students to develop a range of skills such as measurement, observation, reasoning, working in teams, note taking and presenting work in a written form
- support learning

4. THE AVAILABILITY AND LOCATION OF SAFETY EQUIPMENT.

A. Health and safety in schools

Under this Act the employer has a duty to ensure as far as is reasonably practicable:
• the health, safety and welfare of teachers and other education staff
• the health and safety of pupils in-school and off-site visits
• the health and safety of visitors to schools and volunteers involved with school activities.

B. Safety equipment

Safety throughout the school should be promoted by:

• Providing safe working conditions and a healthy working environment
• Mandatory safety training
• Providing materials and equipment needed to work safely
• Proactive identification and control of hazards
• Incident and accident investigation
• Legal compliance
• Occupational Safety and Health Management System and Programmes
• Communicate and encourage a culture of safe working practices
• Regular reviews

5. SCHOOL WORK DISPLAYS

Displays of objects and materials can not only arouse pupil’s interest and catch their imagination but also provide opportunities for discussion and reinforcement of learning. Displays can take a number of forms for example:

• a collection of objects or books on a theme
• items from other parts of the world
• musical instruments
• nature tables
• posters and pictures

When choosing what work to display, it should be decided what criteria to use. Staff should ask themselves “Why do we display work in the classroom?” The answers might be;

• enable pupils to see what each other is doing
• show work that we are proud of
• to learn more about a topic
• so that there are interesting things on the wall.
A. How to create an effective display

A list of qualities that make a display effective could be for example:

• Displays should be simple
• Displays should show what is most important in the work
• Decorations should fit with the piece of work and show it off
• Displays should include a label with the name of the student and the title of the work
• Displays should be neat

B. Framing and hanging the work

There are several ways to make the display attractive and attention grabbing.

• Simple frames can be made by placing the work on top of another piece of paper that is slightly larger and of a complementary or contrasting colour

• A straight line drawn around the outside of the piece

• Pieces hung at different angles, or pieces at staggered steps or in an interesting pattern

• Work displayed against a backdrop, which can draw the viewer’s eye to the piece. Perhaps a large piece of paper or a piece of fabric in a complementary or contrasting colour cut to a different shape or size behind the displayed work

C. Tips about displays

Displays should:

• have a meaningful connection to the curriculum.

• be an effective tool for teaching and learning.

• reflect effort and not just perfectly mastered work. Displays should make every child feel valued regardless of his or her academic or artistic abilities.
always be one display that reflects the efforts of everyone in the class. These displays affirm each child’s sense of belonging and have a powerful effect on creating community.

be fresh, useful and uncluttered. Pupil’s work should be changed often enough to keep the displays relevant to the curriculum and keep them from getting stale. Where there is limited space, it is better to regularly rotate the children’s work than to crowd and clutter the area.

**ELEMENT TWO – PUPIL BEHAVIOUR**

**1. PROMOTING GOOD BEHAVIOUR**

There are strategies and practices that if applied consistently will do much to raise standards of behaviour.

- consistent good teaching will promote good behaviour in pupils.
- positive strategies for managing pupil behaviour that help pupils understand their school’s expectations.
- a clear range of rewards and sanctions, which are applied consistently and without bias by all staff.
- good behaviour has to be learned – so schools must adopt procedures and practices that help pupils learn how to behave.
- Good behaviour has to be modelled by all staff all of the time in their interaction with pupils.

**A. Planning the approach**

The teaching assistant should imagine possible classroom challenges and review their strategies for dealing with them. Having clear-cut strategies will help to keep them grounded when these challenges do arise.
• Balance correction with praise and encouragement
• Use rewards and consequences consistently and teach them to pupils
• Plan the language to use
• Plan alternatives to confrontation
• Know how to get help when necessary

B. Making Expectations Clear

In schools with good standards of behaviour there is a balance between the use of rewards and sanctions. Praise is used to motivate and encourage pupils. At the same time, pupils are aware of sanctions that will be applied for poor behaviour. Schools should:

• have a wide range of appropriate rewards and sanctions and ensure they are applied fairly and consistently by all staff

• ensure that planning about behaviour improvement is informed by statistical information

• ensure their systems identify which matters should be dealt with by classroom teachers and those which require referral to a more senior member of staff.

2. THE ROLE OF THE TEACHING ASSISTANT IN THE MANAGEMENT OF PUPIL BEHAVIOUR

The teaching assistant should promote positive behaviour in line with school policies by:

• Praising and encouraging pupils as appropriate.

• Implementing the school’s behaviour policy by enforcing school guidelines on behaviour management.

• Encouraging pupils to work together and co-operate with each other.

• Encouraging pupils to pay attention and concentrate on given tasks.

• Supporting pupils in following instructions and the routines of the school.

• Encouraging good standards of pupil behaviour at all times.
A. School policies

The fact that the rules are displayed on the wall will not guarantee that pupils will understand, remember or follow them. Rules are most effective in promoting positive behaviour if:

- staff and pupils develop them together
- there are just a few of them for pupils to remember
- they are phrased positively
- they are referred to regularly by all staff.

B. Example school behaviour policy;

For the safety of all, everyone is expected to conduct themselves in a polite, caring and sensible manner at all times. School and class rules are based on right and values.

School Rules:

- Listen attentively and do as staff tell you straight away
- Be polite and well mannered to others at all times
- Move carefully around the school. Do not run
- Be civil. No shouting or offensive language
- Keep any food, drink, sweets etc, for having at the proper time and place
- Keep all areas of the school tidy

Playground Rules:

- No climbing
- Do not leave the playground without permission
- Keep all areas clean and tidy. Do not drop litter or throw juice
- Play safely – no pushing, kicking or fighting

The classroom rules are displayed on the walls of every class in a prominent position. They are gone over at the beginning of every session and are frequently reinforced in the year.

Classroom Rules:

- Listen to instructions carefully and follow them straight away
- Keep unhelpful hands, feet, objects and comments to yourself
- Complete your work as well as you can and let others do theirs
• Take care of your own and school property and respect the property of others
• Be careful as you move around the classroom Raise your hand for attention without shouting out.

### 3. RESPONDING QUICKLY AND CALMLY TO INCIDENTS

Incidents that they may have to deal with may include cases of:

- bullying
- abuse
- violence
- dispute
- accidents

#### A. Bullying

Bullying can take many forms, but three main types are:

- physical – hitting, kicking, taking belongings
- verbal – name calling, insulting, making offensive remarks
- indirect – spreading nasty stories, exclusion from social groups, being the subject of malicious rumours, sending malicious e-mails or text messages

Indications that a child is being bullied may include the following:

- Emotionally unsettled, reluctance to go to school or to sports activities.
- Clingy, depressed or tearful.
- Behavioural changes, reduced concentration, becoming withdrawn.
- A drop in performance or standard of play.
- Physical signs such as stomachache, headache, sleeping problems, scratching or bruising, damaged clothes, over or under-eating.
- Often short of money, loses possessions frequently.

Schools play a critical role in stopping bullying because most aggression happens on school grounds during break times, in dining rooms, or in toilets. Schools should develop zero-tolerance programs that make it clear that bullying won’t be tolerated. School-based programs can help reduce bullying by:
- Increasing awareness of bullying through school assemblies and classroom discussion of the problem. These conversations should include teaching healthy ways to control anger. They should also address the value of cooperation, positive communication skills, and friendship.

- Increasing parents’ and teachers’ involvement.

- Increasing supervision of children on school grounds when they are out of the classroom.

- Forming clear rules about behaviour that will not be tolerated.

- Providing support and protection for children who are bullied.

**B. How to respond to bullying incidents**

All signs of bullying should be taken very seriously. The response to incidents should be appropriate, according to the age and level of understanding of the pupils. Teaching staff should:

- Deal with each incident individually and assess the need of each pupil separately

- Provide a secure environment in which pupils can report incidents confidentially

- Show all pupils that bullying is always taken seriously

- Respond calmly and consistently to all incidents

- Reassure pupils that the school will protect and support all parties involved while the issues are being resolved

- Provide long-term and positive programmes of personal development where it is required

- Ensure all incidents are recorded and dealt with as quickly as possible

**C. Procedures and Policy**

They should follow a similar format to this as recommended by St John Ambulance and the Child Accident Prevention Trust:
• Keep calm
• Assess injury/illness without moving the casualty
• Reassure and comfort the casualty
• Get help – first aider/doctor/emergency services
• Contact the parent or carer
• Defuse the situation by explaining it and reassuring or distracting the other children
• Get cover to supervise the children
• If you cannot contact the parent or carer, go to the hospital with the child yourself – your setting should have obtained parental permission for this when the child’s registration card was signed
• If there has been an accident record it in the accident book
• Explain the situation to parent or carer
• Report the incident to the appropriate person

D. Accident reporting procedures

Any incident that results in a serious injury to an employee. This includes:

• a break or fracture of any bone except those of the fingers or toes;
• any amputation;
• dislocation of the shoulder, hip, knee or spine;
• loss of sight (whether temporary or permanent);
• chemical or hot metal burn to the eye or any penetrating injury to the eye;
• an injury resulting from electric shock or electrical burns;
• an injury that leads to a loss of consciousness or requires resuscitation; and
• an injury that requires the injured employee to be hospitalised for more than 24 hours.

E. Disputes between students; demeaning comments:

When classroom discussion gets out of hand, or a pupil uses demeaning or stereotyping language.

• Pupils should be reminded of classroom rules for respectful behaviour.

• It should be stated very clearly that demeaning comments will not be tolerated, especially those based on race, gender, or sexual orientation.

• If appropriate the offending student should be offered a graceful way to backtrack.

• Pupils should be reminded that although they get passionate about issues, they must keep their comments constructive and avoid personal attacks.

• It may be appropriate to stop discussions and ask all pupils to write briefly about what just happened, and what they think should be done about it.

F. If the behaviour is serious or repeated:

• The problem should be discussed with a supervisor or another trusted colleague, who could assist in forming a plan for dealing with it.

• A written record of dates and what happened should be kept, as well as any witnesses. This will be crucial if further action becomes necessary.

• If it is suspected that the student might have psychological/emotional problems, help should be sought in referring them to a Counselling Service.

G. Violence prevention practices

The most effective school antiviolence programs employ the following strategies.
• Teaching social competence.

• Understanding and recognising the emotions of oneself and others.

• Accurately perceiving a situation to enable appropriate responses.

• Predicting the consequences of personal acts, particularly those involving aggression.

• Staying calm in order to think before acting, to reduce stress and sadness, to replace aggression with positive behaviour, and to control anger.

• Selecting positive role models and supportive mentors, and nurturing peer relationships.

• Creating a positive, calm environment.

• Establishing behaviour standards.

• Establishing rules and regulations for responding to violence.

4. RESPONDING TO INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR

The “golden rule” is to act in a professional manner by trying to calm down the situation and immediately seek assistance.

• Keep your voice low, look the student directly in the eye and stay outside his/her “personal space”

• Motion the other students to move away from the scene and, if necessary, to summon help

• Try to reason with the student along the lines of “this is an unacceptable situation, you need to calm down, we will continue this conversation in the Principal’s Office”

• When help arrives, continue to try and calm the situation as you begin to direct the student towards the head teacher’s office
An issue involving harassment or abuse comes to the attention of school officials in one of three ways:

- A student experiencing harassment or abuse reports it to a person in a position of authority, or
- Another student or teacher, believing that harassment or abuse is occurring, reports it to a person in a position of authority, or
- Through some other means (rumours, comments of others, observations), a person in a position of authority becomes aware of a situation of possible harassment or abuse.

A. Fact-Finding

It is the responsibility of school administrators, teachers, and other staff to:

- treat complaints seriously and respond appropriately
- take action when there is perception or knowledge of harassment and abuse
- communicate and reinforce the school policy and procedures on harassment and abuse
- educate and inform. For example, put up awareness posters throughout the school, include information in student handbooks, arrange in-service training for all staff and school volunteers, promote awareness sessions for students
- use appropriate terminology and inclusive language

The person dealing with a disclosure should:

- React calmly so as not to frighten the child.
- Tell the child he/she was right to tell and is not to blame.
- Take the child seriously.
- Keep questions to a minimum – do not ask leading questions such as “what happened next?”
• Reassure the child, but do not promise to keep the information given a secret.

• Try to have another adult witness present – if the child agrees.

• Never confront an alleged abuser, or try to deal with a disclosure on your own.

• Make a full written account on the Incident Report Form of what has been said, heard and seen.

ELEMENT THREE – OBSERVING AND RECORDING

1. OBSERVE THE PERFORMANCE OF INDIVIDUAL PUPILS OR GROUPS OF PUPILS

Observation is intended to:

• provide reliable information of pupils’ progress on the curriculum • identify pupils’ strengths and weaknesses
• discover how well pupils are responding to the teaching resources
• enable feedback to pupils of what they need to do to progress
• enable feedback to teachers of the response of pupils to the work

A. The purpose of observation

Before making and recording observations in the classroom, the teaching assistant should first make clear the focus of the observation which could be any of the following reason; To check;

• checking learning

• forms of interaction
• differentiated learning materials

• basic/key skills e.g.
  - social and emotional skills – How pupils relate to others
  - language and communication skills – Reading, use of vocabulary
  - intellectual and cognitive skills – How they understand and use knowledge
  - physical abilities and skills – How they handle objects

B. Planning the observation

These are some of the characteristics that may be on display whilst a pupil is being closely observed:

• Their skills and accomplishments
• Their personalities and temperaments
• Their interests and preferences
• Their levels of cognitive and social development
• Their strategies for creating desired effects

C. Methods of observation

In addition to generally watching children and making mental notes of any changes or developments there are a number of specific observation techniques that can be used. These techniques include:

• time sampling
• event sampling
• structured observation
• naturalistic observation
• participative observation
• longitudinal observation
• target child observation

D. Time sampling
This means observing the chosen child for pre-planned periods throughout the day, at preplanned times. It should be decided beforehand if there is one particular aspect of a pupil’s learning to focus on. In this method notes should include:

- what the pupil was doing or trying to do.
- what help they seemed to need

**E. Event sampling**

This method is useful for monitoring particular forms of behaviour especially those where change is desired. It helps the teacher to get an accurate perspective of the behaviour as the basis for planning how to respond to it. Each time the particular behaviour occurs, it should be noted briefly:

- what actually happened
- when the incident occurred, the time of day or the point in the daily routine
- how long the behaviour lasted on each occasion, or for what proportion of the day
- whether other pupils were involved, if so in what way
- who else was around at the time

**F. Structured observation**

This technique involves setting up an organised situation. The teacher or assistant should arrange a particular activity so that they can observe how the pupil is doing with a specific skill. This is usually a quite narrowly defined skill such as:

- completing an exercise
- drawing a particular item
- reading a passage in a book

The teacher and teaching assistant should decide how far or how tightly they are going to structure the activity. For example will they;

- ask particular questions
- show the pupil what they want him to do?
- prompt him to continue or complete the task?
- suggest what to do next?
G. Naturalistic observation

This is the opposite of structured observation and involves observing a pupil or group of pupils as he/they gets on with the usual routine of the day. For this kind of observation an observer should note:

- what the pupil/s is/are doing or achieving
- what they can almost do or need help with
- what they are saying
- how they are interacting with others

H. Participative observation

This type of observation is carried out when both the assistant and the pupil/s are engaged in an activity together. This might be:

- playing a game
- reading a story
- joining in role play

If the assistant is part of the activity it will be more difficult for them to make a record. Therefore they should try to make notes as soon after the activity ends as possible. Those notes should be of:

- what the child is doing or achieving
- what they can almost do or need help with
- what they are saying
- how they are interacting with others

I. Target child observation

This form of observation is used in group settings to find out whether pupils are getting worthwhile experiences in the group. A pupil may be selected for a particular reason or at random. The pupil is observed for a concentrated period of time noting:
• the language they use
• how they interact with others
• what they are doing
• what materials they are using

2. RECORDING OBSERVATIONS

The teaching assistant shouldn’t try to interpret their observations at this stage, but stick to describing what is happening and focus on recording what they see and hear, ready to come to conclusions later. If the record created is to be of real value, it is important that what is written down is what actually happened and not what was thought to have happened. For this reason the teaching assistant:

• should be consistent
• shouldn’t make assumptions
• shouldn’t be judgemental
• shouldn’t be intrusive

3. PROVIDING FEEDBACK

A. Data Protection Act 1998

Information held by schools on children and adults can only be used for specific purposes. The Act requires schools to notify the office of the information commissioner of:

• the purposes for which the school holds personal data
• what data it holds
• the source of the data
• to whom the data is disclosed
• to which countries the data might be transferred.