



# EExBA

## An Overview of the Pilot Year

Early Excellence  
Baseline Assessment



## Introduction

**Early Excellence is the largest provider of Baseline Assessment. We are very grateful to the 12,500 schools and 30,000+ practitioners who have helped us to develop and implement the model over the past year. This document provides a brief overview of key findings from the pilot year and outlines planned improvements for 2016.**

## About Baseline Assessment

In March 2014 the Government introduced a policy of national assessment for children at the beginning of their reception year at school; the Baseline Assessment. The purpose is to help assess school effectiveness by providing a score for each child reflecting their attainment. This will be used to assess the relative progress of a cohort of children through primary school.

The Government invited organisations to tender to design, plan and deliver the Baseline Assessment in late 2014. Six Baseline Assessment providers were initially approved by the Department for Education (DfE) and schools were asked to sign up to an approved provider. Three providers failed to recruit a sufficient number of schools to move forward, whereas Early Excellence recruited over 70% of eligible primary and infant schools representing half a million children.

## Why did Early Excellence Bid?

Early Excellence is a national leader in early years education, providing a range of services to practitioners including consultancy, training and the provision of bespoke equipment. We are experts in the pedagogy of early childhood and have a strong commitment to evidence based practice and inspirational learning.

By providing the Baseline Assessment, Early Excellence could extend the principles that underpin the rest of our organisation and offer an appropriate and principled approach to on-entry assessment. Instead of pre-determined tasks or tests, practitioners build their knowledge of each child through their observations, interactions and every day activities.

## Why did Schools Choose EExBA?

The Early Excellence Baseline Assessment was chosen by 12,557 schools, over 70% of those eligible. The key reasons given by schools for this choice were:

- It does not involve tests or pre-set tasks.
- It is a non-invasive process and doesn't disrupt children's induction into school.
- It does not require children or teachers to be artificially removed from the classroom.
- It does not require excessive additional workload.
- It provides an accurate assessment of all aspects of the child.



'An excellent training day! Very good – I am confident I could go away and do this accurately now.'

**Peter Hilde**  
Maple Infants, Kingston upon Thames

Practitioners build their knowledge of each child through their observations, interactions and every day activities. EExBA asks practitioners to assess children using 47 statements that cover the Characteristics of Effective Learning, all three Prime Areas (PSED, C&L, PD) and the Specific Areas of Literacy and Maths. This includes exploring the drivers of learning (curiosity, imagination/creativity, motivation and flow) as well as critical learning behaviours such as self-regulation, resilience and empathy.

All schools using our model were required to attend a mandatory training course to ensure that they were fully aware of the principles and processes underpinning the model, and that they fully understood the statements used to record judgements.

13,908 practitioners completed training at 84 training days held across the country and 98% rated the training as either good or excellent. Early Excellence supported practitioners throughout the assessment period via exemplification materials, and both a curriculum and technical helpline and email support.

## What the Data Revealed

482,083 children were assessed in the first six weeks of the academic year 2015-2016.

The size and high quality of the data enabled Early Excellence to deliver 64 sessions across the country to share headlines and support schools to analyse and interpret their own data. Crucially this helped to identify strategic issues for practice which impact on children's progress.

The robustness and reliability of our data was quality assured by training and ongoing support, regional moderation meetings, on-site visits and online moderation. The findings from our National Monitoring Programme concluded that EEExBA demonstrated a high level of reliability, according to independent assessment.

However, our own monitoring and moderation indicated that there were four statements for which judgements appeared to be less consistent than the others. Headteachers and EEExBA Lead Practitioners were informed about this by email as soon as we became aware of the issue. To address these inconsistencies, we are reviewing support materials and the wording of statements, and will provide additional guidance to practitioners through future training and online resources.

It is important to remember that the majority of assessment statements (43 out of 47 statements) were assessed accurately and consistently. Including the four statements that were identified as less consistently applied, the overall accuracy is 96%.



'The most important thing I gained was the importance of using the data on an ongoing basis, using the positives as well as the negatives to develop provision further and the significance of the weighting, particularly in regard to motivation and readiness to learn'

**Sue Nield,**  
Headteacher, West Hill Primary  
School, Exeter



'The holistic assessment process gives a full and accurate picture of each child at the beginning of their reception year. I believe that the data we have received matches our pupils exactly, and makes for the most useful starting point to inform planning for the development of each child, that we have ever had.'

**Libby Whieldon,**  
Headteacher, Grassington C of E  
Primary School

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The first data set indicated the following outcomes across the country:

- 16.1% of pupils attained an outcome that was well below typical.
- 33.5% attained an outcome that was below typical.
- 37% attained an outcome that was typical.
- 13.4% attained an outcome that was above typical.

EExBA uncovered a number of interesting findings about how different groups performed.

The widest gender gap appeared in Literacy where 14.5% more girls than boys attained a score that was 'typical' or 'above'.

In all the Characteristics of Effective Learning (CoEL), children accessing pupil premium did not achieve as well as their peers. The gap was widest in motivation, with 9.7% fewer children accessing pupil premium scoring at 'typical' or 'above'.

In the Prime Areas of Learning and Development there were gaps in all areas but the most marked gap was in Communication and Language with 30% of children accessing pupil premium scoring 'well below' typical and 12% fewer children accessing pupil premium achieving at 'typical' or 'above' in comparison to the national outcomes.

Children with SEND were much less likely to show high levels of Well Being and Involvement, the gaps were wider than for any other group of children. Children with SEND were three times more likely to be assessed as having low levels of Well Being.

Children who speak English as an Additional Language were 11% more likely to score 'well below' typical and there were fewer children speaking EAL achieving at 'typical' or 'above' than the national cohort, a difference of 15%.

Looked After Children were 11% more likely to score 'well below' than their peers.



## Improvements for 2016

EExBA is a newly developed Baseline Assessment and we have been using the pilot year to make sure that the model is robust. We believe, and our independent audit confirms, that our model provides an accurate assessment that enables practitioners to work closely with pupils and understand their individual learning needs.

The feedback received from headteachers and practitioners, along with our in-depth review of EExBA will inform its' design next year. A summary of planned developments for 2016 is included below:

- Our initial training for EExBA was positively received and participants believed it equipped them well for implementing the assessment. As we move into the second year of implementation, we will put in place a more varied and differentiated approach to training.
- The exemplification materials for the four (a) statements for Literacy have been refined to add clarity. This additional guidance will be added to the EExBA Handbook 2016.
- During the mandatory training in the Summer term there will be a sharp focus on these four statements using the additional guidance and exemplification materials.
- Moderation activities will also be carried out focusing on the Literacy statements and 'On-site' moderation visits will be increased.
- The EExBA score sheet will be published. This will show the score bands for typical, above, below and well below typical within each aspect of the assessment.
- In September 2016 practitioners will be able to see the scores building up for each child as the assessments are completed online, pre-submission.
- Furthermore, school leaders will be able to view these so that support and feedback can be offered where the need arises, again pre-submission of the data to the DfE.



'It's [EExBA] given us permission to spend time getting to know the children, to watch and observe and really find out what the children's strengths and interests are. I feel like I know my children this year, better than I ever have before.'

**Leah Morris,**  
EYFS Leader, Richmond  
Avenue Primary

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We will also be making representations to the DfE on the following issues:

- There is wide concern amongst schools that the current requirement to assess only in English distorts the data and undermines accuracy for children who speak English as a second language, conflating global language delay with inexperience in speaking English. We strongly recommend that this requirement is removed for the Baseline Assessments for 2016-17.
- Some schools felt there were issues accommodating EExBA data into existing commercial tracking systems for demonstrating progress across the Primary phase. We will be inviting the DfE to chair a meeting with Early Excellence and commercial providers to address the issues to the data being integrated into existing systems.

We believe that EExBA offers a principled approach to on-entry assessment that supports teachers to build an understanding of the whole child. It also provides robust data and sophisticated reports to inform cohort progress through school.

Further information about Baseline 2016 will be sent to schools as soon as the DfE announce their intentions.



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