2

Values and principles of assessment in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Julie Percival

Chapter Objectives

- To consider why all practice begins with the careful consideration of values and principles.
- To reflect on current policy values and principles in relation to assessment.
- To assert the view that the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is a framework for regulation but also reflection, giving scope for autonomy.
- To consider how values and principles evolve over time: they are not fixed or given but shaped by our understanding.
- To prompt reflection and evaluation of assessment processes starting from shared principles.

Why is it important to include a chapter about values and principles in a book about assessment? Principles may be defined as a general set of rules or beliefs which guide behaviour. The EYFS (DCSF 2008c) themes and commitments have been the subject of information boards in the entrance halls of many early years settings. How many more focus instead on the six areas of learning, without reference to any underlying principles? Assessment is an integral part of practice and not an additional consideration once provision for care, learning and development has been decided upon. The values and principles you have adopted for your assessment practice should be in harmony with the values and principles that influence your wider work.

The policy context

The overarching aim of the *EYFS*: *Setting the Standards for Learning, Development and Care for Children from Birth to Five* (DCSF 2008) is to help children achieve the five *Every Child Matters* (DfES 2004) outcomes of staying safe, being healthy, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, and achieving economic well-being. One of the ways in which the policymakers hope this will happen is through the setting of universal standards that all providers of childcare and early education can refer to as a basis for their work. These standards should offer parents reassurance and enable workers across the variety of provision to have a shared professional language. Most importantly, entitlement to quality should not to be dependent on where children live, their ethnicity, culture or religion, home language, family background, learning needs or disabilities, gender or ability.

The commitment to improve the lives of children and young people has been reinforced with the publication of *The Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures* (DCSF 2007). The theme of this document is that 'services do not bring children up, parents do.' Collaborative respectful partnerships between practitioners, children and families should be a feature of universal services and ensure that in times of need, children are supported to have the best possible outcomes. For responsive, flexible services to be a reality, practitioners must hold certain principles and values in the forefront of their mind. This can be quite challenging.

Both *Every Child Matters* (DfES 2004) and the *Children's Plan* (DCSF 2007) are the focal point for a plethora of initiatives and guidelines. It is not altogether clear how the values and principles will be translated into effective practice. Each layer of decision making must grapple with the values and principles contained within the documents, knowledge of existing resources, and histories of service delivery – along with local and practitioner priorities.

Reflective Activity

Visit the following sites to find out more about two useful documents that you can use to develop your thinking.

- Go to www.info4localgov.uk to find the General Social Care Council (2008) Values for Integrated Working with Children and Young People.
    - What kind of practitioners do children value?
    - What key attributes underpin values-led practice?
    - Within your particular specialism and through integrated working, it is suggested that the values shown in Table 2.1 should underpin practice.

Table 2.1 Aspects of professional practice that exemplify value-led practice

respect	trustworthiness	patience
honesty	reliability	integrity
resilience	supportive	sensitivity
transparency	positive	creativity
listen and take account	clear communication	safeguarding

Could you define these values? Could you cite an example of your practice that exemplifies each value?

- Go to www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/ to find the Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for the Children's Workforce (DfES 2005). Within the Common Core prospectus, communication is seen as central to working with children, young people, and their families and carers.
    - How do your behaviour and your everyday practice communicate your values?
    - Trust, rapport, continuity and engagement underpin effective communication. What do you understand by these terms? Do you think there is a shared understanding, common to the practitioners you work alongside?
    - How can you evidence your thoughts?

The EYFS: designed for reflection

The *EYFS: Setting the Standards for Learning, Development and Care for Children from Birth to Five* is a collection of documents that is made up of five elements. The *Statutory Framework* (DCSF 2008a) sets out the legal requirements relating to welfare, learning and development. The *Practice Guidance* (DCSF 2008b) contains 'essential advice and guidance' for those working with babies, toddlers and young children, from birth until the term after they are 5 years old. There is a pack

of 24 *Principles into Practice Cards* (DCSF 2008c) that are designed to be a source of 'best practice'. The *Wall Poster* serves as a 'daily reminder' of some of the needs of children and the principles of the EYFS. Finally, the CD-ROM contains all four documents along with an extensive bank of information and resources.

The EYFS pack (DCSF 2008) seems to have been designed to help front-line practitioners develop practice in particular kinds of ways. All do need to be clear about the basic minimum standards that enable provision to be operational and registered with Ofsted, but this is not all that is offered. Examples of best practice and research are accessible, with a commitment to the updating of the online resource index. Questions to prompt reflection are posed on the cards. Principles are mapped out for all to see. The EYFS became mandatory in September 2008. However, there remains considerable flexibility and choice as to how you use this pack to respond to the uniqueness of each child. Relationships and environments evolve according to the decisions you make. Children's creativity and enthusiasm, confidence, and sense of self-worth are in your hands. How have you chosen to work with the principles?

- Which document from the pack has had the most use in your setting?

- If our practice is a reflection of our values, what does your *use* of the EYFS materials show about your approach to supporting the care, learning and development of young children?

Accountability: a reflective approach to regulations

The implementation of the EYFS is monitored and inspected by Ofsted through a process that begins with completing a self-evaluation form designed around the EYFS statutory requirements and the *Every Child Matters* outcomes. Rules and regulations have long been a feature of working with babies, toddlers and young children. Prior to the introduction of the EYFS in September 2008, the *National Standards for Under 8s Day Care and Childminding* (DfES 2003), the *Birth to Three Matters Framework* (DfES 2002), and the *Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage* (DfES 2000) were used to structure and guide practice. The previous inspection regime for private, voluntary and independent settings (such as private day nurseries, playgroups and independent schools) was based on the

Every Child Matters outcomes and reflective, evidence-based practice was implied.

Currently, practitioners are requested, for example to 'take a critical look at the effectiveness of what you and any assistants or staff do to help children enjoy learning and achieve as much as they can' (Ofsted 2008). Evidence of the impact of practice needs to be recorded along with any plans for improvement. The views of stakeholders, as with any inspection, have to be recorded. It is not enough to have, for example, the appropriate number of practitioners employed, or the appropriate policies in place: in the spirit of the EYFS, practitioners should be working reflectively for quality and equality. This involves each lead practitioner having an understanding of what is being done, when and how, along with why certain practices take place and what the impact of those practices are.

Deciding 'what next', either session by session or through the setting of longer-term goals, requires careful thought. Why choose this course of action? Will stakeholders be consulted? What resources are required? What techniques and behaviours will be important? What will success look like?

The EYFS can be a source of support to help teams to discuss their values and make choices about their practice. Fundamentally, settings and their teams – including you as an individual – are being asked to be accountable for the quality of what you provide. More cynically, you are being asked to account to the taxpayer for any funding, such as Nursery Education Funding or Graduate Leader Fund, that you receive. Are you spending wisely? Accountability is part of professional responsibility.

Families access care outside their own home for their children for very many reasons. They send their children to school, again, for many reasons. To date, rules and regulations have not eliminated the diversity of provision available to children and parents, nor have they led to uniformly good (or, indeed, excellent) provision.

Communicating clearly and purposefully about your work could be seen as a fundamental responsibility. It enables you to demonstrate the basis upon which you do indeed put children at the centre of what you do and practically how it is done. Without a certain amount of evidence gathering, reflection, action and review, could you be certain that you were not basing decisions on personal

assumptions and intuition? Reflective processes can also help target driven settings to complement numerical data with richer qualitative data that are more accessible to a wider range of audiences, such as parents and children. Reflect on your values, the aspects of your work you believe are vital for young children to thrive, and the guiding principles that you return to when you need inspiration or support to make a decision. Regulations provide a framework but regulations are open to interpretation. How regulations are played out in your setting is to a large extent in your hands.

Finding a theoretical grounding for your work

Values and principles can be hidden in our beliefs about the children in our care. Along with our personal assumptions and intuition, we are offered a variety of theoretical perspectives upon which to base our decision making and evidence gathering. MacNaughton (2003) challenges practitioners to think critically about their ideas and methods so that they can account for their practice both to themselves and others. Different theoretical positions are grouped according to their fundamental view of the child as a being but also a learner. Table 2.2 has been created through the selection of just one example of a position that sits within each of the three paradigms. When you look out onto the children and the setting you work in, what you see and attend to is mediated by the theories you subscribe to. This in turn impacts on how you assess children and make provision for their well-being and learning.

Table 2.2 Comparing theoretical positions, their implicit values and principles

Child	Practitioner	Assessment
'Conforming' position (e.g. behaviourism) Culture determines learning: behaviour is shaped so that children can conform.		
Starts off unknowing, uninitiated, liable to become bored. Compliant, ready and willing to learn if appropriately motivated, the rules are clear and the rewards/sanctions consistently applied.	Direct the learning through carefully designed programmes with clearly stated goals that can be monitored and measured. Refine, remodel and prepare the child to 'fit in'.	Measures what has been taught, perhaps to the exclusion of other aspects of development and learning. Assessment tasks are designed to complement the instructional programme and can be standardised across all learners. Accountability comes through standardisation and measurability?

Table 2.2 (Continued)

Child	Practitioner	Assessment
'Reforming' position (e.g. constructivism) The interaction between nature and culture enables thinking to be reformed and improved as the child progresses through stages in development.		
Learns through the senses as a social being. Builds own understanding but this can be shaped by interaction with and through the physical and social environment. Competent at each stage of development with the propensity to see themselves as active learners.	Carefully design the environment so that children can learn by doing, using open-ended materials and play. Focus on intellectual performance as an indicator of holistic well-being. Facilitate creative thinking. Learning possibilities are identified.	Observes and reflects on how the child operates in the environment (context) provided. Assessment systems are designed to capture the child's interests and dispositions along with the learning process, not just the end product. Curriculum development and assessment opportunities are interwoven and evolve. Accountability comes through the practitioner knowledge of developmental ages and stages and/or the prevailing national policy framework.
'Transforming' position (e.g. postmodern, social constructionalism) Learning can only be understood within and through the context in which it occurs. Understanding and relationships are transformed or reconstructed through situated interaction.		
Development implies the child is less formed than an adult, instead the child is seen as a meaning maker, a contributor and influencer from birth. Learning takes place in and through race, gender and class. As social beings, the collective learning is as relevant as the personal learning.	Attention is paid to the values and power relations. Differences are not only acknowledged but explored because learning is 'situated' in different places and times. Planning centres on equity and what is just, and is based on the dynamics of the group as well as children's interests and the collaboratively constructed curriculum.	Is a process shared between practitioners, parents and carers and the child. Responsibility is taken to ensure that the assessment systems. capture how children learn in and through their culture, gender race and disability. Ages and stages (norms) are seen as cultural tools with a limited use for some settings. Accountability comes through: • active participation, the documentation and relationships of those involved; • the application of detailed knowledge of pedagogy across a range of domains of care learning and development along with the prevailing national policy framework.

Source: adapted from MacNaughton 2003.

Being accountable for our practice in an autonomous, professional way relies on being able to identify the source of our beliefs about children, families and our practice. At times we need to challenge our beliefs, discuss them openly, and maybe alter the course of our actions. We need to acknowledge that there are multiple ways of viewing children, but also that children have multiple ways of being themselves.

The EYFS CD-ROM is a well-researched collection of ideas, carefully selected on the basis of growing theoretical knowledge and understanding of a variety of aspects of early years work. It is possible to interpret the inclusion of this resource in the pack as an attempt to take the information to the practitioners in the hope that theoretical concepts and suggestions for effective practice will be more widely disseminated. Perhaps practitioners will be reminded of key concepts covered during initial training? Perhaps leaders and managers will structure time into the working week for professional discussion?

'There's no time for values and principles and besides the EYFS is more or less the same as the other documents it replaced'

Unfortunately, evidence of what has worked before, reported outcomes of carefully designed research and accessible interpretations of theory, can easily be left on the bookshelf. The learning and development grids that look quite like the stepping stones from the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage (DfES 2000) could be well thumbed. On a weekly basis, practitioners may become more familiar with the grids as they match observations to 'Look, listen and note' statements.

Superficially at least, it seems that the EYFS is being implemented. Unfortunately, without taking the time to consider the values that underpin practice, the following two dangers (at least) may occur:

1. A system is grafted onto existing practice. Confident practitioners, familiar with their effective routines, care practices and rich curriculum, may lose momentum. There are a variety of reasons why they have not been able to reflect on their wealth of skill and knowledge. They have strong values yet these are not clearly articulated: they are not readily to mind to be integrated with new

ideas. This loss of momentum can be disheartening. Less effective practitioners begin to appreciate the need for development so systems and processes are adopted quickly. Some practitioners are not sure why new systems need to be put in place. Without the underpinning rationale, setbacks cannot be explained – the vision cannot be defended. The EYFS becomes just another policy directive that has been found wanting. For some there is a strong feeling that once again they could not match up to the expectations placed upon them. For others, the explanation that policymakers never really know about the 'real world experiences' of working with young children seems plausible.

2. Practice remains the same (but with different headings on the planning sheet!). Policies say children are at the heart of practice, but practice does not bear this out. The 'folk model' of practice described by Margaret Carr (2007) is perpetuated through the common-sense, gut instinct approach. Values and principles are never explored. Institutionalised, 'one-size-fits-all' routines continue to dehumanise children. Inappropriate learning experiences are repeated and dispositions to explore and solve problems whither. Practitioners know what to do when required. A principled approach to practice passes the setting by.

Values and principles: themes and commitments

The four principles of the EYFS are:

- Every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured, the *theme* of this principle being the uniqueness of the child.

- Children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or a key person: the *theme* of this principle is positive relationships.

- The environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development and learning: the *theme* of this principle is enabling environments.

- Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates, and all areas of learning and development are equally important and interconnected: children's learning and development are the *themes* of this principle.

Table 2.3 The underpinning values of integrated working and the EYFS commitments

Respect for each human being's capacities and their culture. No child or family is discriminated against	**Trustworthiness** You trust each child to be themselves: they trust you to be genuine and loving	**Patience** Environments, development, learning and relationships do not happen overnight
Honesty Fundamental to building a secure and loving relationship together	**Reliability** Fundamental to building a secure and loving relationship together	**Integrity** Fundamental to building a secure and loving relationship together
Resilience Work with young children is varied, complex, challenging and rewarding! Promoting resilience in children and colleagues enables us to face the challenges of life	**Supportive** Development and learning can be challenging; all children need to build confidence in their abilities – supportive relationships with adults who are generous with their knowledge beat any amount of resources	**Sensitivity** Intimate and personal care carried out sensitively on the basis of a careful review of need is the basis of all work with babies and young children. Sensing when to support children's learning – using your senses in combination with knowledge
Transparency Openness supports secure relationships with babies, children, parents, colleagues and the wider community of professionals – agendas are not hidden – testing does not masquerade as play	**Positive** Enables you to constructively build relationships and environments where children can be seen as capable	**Creativity** Using every resource to flexibly respond to the child's needs and interests Being open to possibilities, different patterns of need and learning, that adult's knowledge can be used flexibly/creatively to meet needs and take learning further
Listen and take account ***Time*** is made for children, parents and colleagues to express their view, and the environment, care plans and provision for learning reflects this	**Clear communication** Ambiguity is kept to a minimum. Children know they are loved and valued; they know what they are good at and that communication is a two-way process	**Safeguarding** Every child (every person) is potentially vulnerable. Psychological and physical well-being is central for children to become resilient adults

Direct links between the values set out for integrated working and the principles of the EYFS (DCSF 2008) have been made in Table 2.3.

What do these values and principles look like in everyday practice? Given the diversity of the sector, it is only to be expected that they will look different in every setting! The EYFS in some respects is a 'manifesto' of beliefs laid out under the four themes. Working to any principles requires a *commitment* to certain beliefs about children and best practice. There are four commitments for each of the four themes. If you have made a commitment to work in a certain way, try to understand why this might be. If you are studying for a qualification, you are probably using a learning journal to help you reflect on the content of the course and its application to your work-based learning. Mind mapping or simply writing can be a useful starting point for reflection. If you are not sure what you are committed to, now is a good time to get deciding!

A principled approach to practice is not new

Bruce's influential text (1987, first edition) argued for a principled approach to practice that could empower practitioners in their decision making. Table 2.4 compares Bruce's principles with a more recent publication from the series edited by Hurst and Joseph (Brooker 2008). Decades have gone by. Priorities change or are expressed in new ways, and notions of what constitutes quality practice evolve over time.

The highly regarded approach to supporting and documenting children's learning that has been developed by the teams who work in the Reggio Emilia region of Italy is founded on what Rinaldi calls 'a sensitivity to knowledge' (2006: 72) and a richness of questioning. The 'pedagogy of listening' (Rinaldi 2006: 65) helps practitioners to be curious and doubtful, to suspend prejudice and be open to change. A series of values and principles do not provide answers but they do provide an evolving framework for learning about practice, which in turn informs our decision making. The EYFS principles have evolved through the accumulated thinking, provoked by key thinkers (of which Bruce, Brooker, Hurst and Joseph cited here are examples) and the lobbying of practitioners and researchers. In many ways they represent compromise between a host of competing policymaking agendas. However, they do provide space for you to reflect and take ownership of your work; to exercise your senses, to represent not only the thinking of children but also the hundred, if

Table 2.4 Changing principles over time

Ten common principles of early childhood education	**Principles for a developmental curriculum**
• Childhood is seen as valid in itself, as part of life, and not simply as a preparation for adulthood. • The whole child is considered important. • Learning is not compartmentalised into subject areas. • Child-initiated, self-directed activity is valued because it is an indication of the child's motivation to explore. • Nurture self-discipline. • Receptive periods are characterised by patterns in behaviour that support learning and exploration (such as schemas). • What children can do (rather than what they cannot) is considered first when assessing and planning for the future. • Favourable conditions support children to display their thinking and connect their inner life with the world around them. • Interaction with peers and adults is of central importance. • 'Education is seen as an interaction between the child and the environment, including in particular, other people and knowledge itself.'	• Each child is an individual and should be respected and treated as such. • The early years is a specialism with its own criteria of appropriate practice. • Support for young children centres on their concerns and actively engages them. • The practitioner has the responsibility to counter negative messages and foster positive attitudes. • 'Each child's cultural and linguistic endowment is seen as the fundamental medium of learning.' • Anti-discriminatory approaches are essential for a developmentally appropriate curriculum. • 'All children should be offered opportunities to progress and develop and should have equal access to good quality provision.' • Coherence and continuity in the offered and experienced curriculum is founded on partnership with parents. • Quality provision is linked to democratic relationships.
From Bruce, T. (1987) *Early Childhood Education.* London: Hodder Stoughton (p10).	From Brooker, L. (2008) *Supporting Transitions in the Early Years.* Supporting Early Learning Series. Maidenhead: Open University Press (pp. ix–x).

not the thousand languages, symbols and codes we use when we carry out our work.

Energy and time are necessary but the journey is worth beginning. Your values and principles will evolve, and the way your practice is framed by them will almost certainly never stay the same as each child comes into the setting, each policy imperative looms, or, most importantly, your own understanding or 'sensitivity to knowledge' (Rinaldi 2006) blossoms.

Key Point

- Audit where you are before making changes to practice. Incremental (or even whole-scale) changes without reference back to principles and values can lead to disjointed practice: sometimes it seems expedient to do something and yet on reflection it takes you off course (Table 2.5).

Table 2.5 Interrogating our assessment of young children: an audit

Assessing young children's care, learning and development
Question and describe
Who will contribute to this description? Children, families, colleagues?
What is being done to inform our understanding of the child?
When are assessments taking place?
How are assessments being carried out?
What aspects of care, learning and development are assessed?
How is information gained and used?
Question and evaluate
What is the quality of the assessment information we gather?
Have we decided on a rationale for our judgements about quality?
What is the impact of our assessment processes on children?
What is the impact of our assessment processes on families?
What is the impact of our assessment processes on colleagues?
Question and analyse
Why does assessment happen the way that it does?
How are decisions about the assessment processes made?
Whose voice is heard loudest – child, parent or practitioner?
Do our assessments actually have a positive (or negative) impact on our systems, routines and provision?
Can we see our values and principles/the EYFS principles in our work?
If yes, can we document this and celebrate it?
If no, can we begin a process of development so that the uniqueness of the child is supported through responsive relationship and enabling environments?
How will we document our shared learning: children and adults together?

Mary Jane Drummond (2003) has been involved with supporting early years workers to reflect on their practice for many years. Assessment practice can be challenging and a worry for adults and children alike, depending on the type of assessment tools being used. Her experience, supported by her research leads her to assert that

> Effective assessment – clear seeing, rich understanding, respectful application – will be advanced by a full appreciation of the value-base from which teachers' choices are made. (Drummond 2003: 14)

Having gathered the data for your audit, you should ensure you have time to *read* and *interpret* and then *recall* and *reconstruct* your understanding (Rinaldi 2006). What activities attract the most time and effort? How do the most time-consuming activities inform your understanding of each child's learning? Are the assessment activities enabling the enriching of the learning experience for each and every child?

The concept of the work-based learner-practitioner (Rawlings 2008) working within a 'community of practice' (Lave and Wenger 1998) is a useful one for all interested in assessing children and provision. Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child encourages adults to ensure that children actively contribute to decision making where matters concern them. Their views should be taken seriously and the child's competent participation should be expected and nurtured (Clarke and Moss 2001; Lancaster and Broadbent 2005). It takes a particular type of listening and a challenging of certain discourses to consider alternative perspectives. The audit is a suggested starting point for understanding what is actually happening in your setting. Definitive answers as to what and how to assess cannot be supplied to fit the needs of every setting. Learning together, building shared understandings, and revisiting actual actions in the light of values and principles can help to keep coherence and quality at the forefront of your practice.

Purposeful assessment

The purposes of your assessment practice must be kept in mind and balanced carefully so that one purpose does not outweigh another. Nutbrown (2006), for example, identifies three broad purposes:

- Assessment for management and accountability.
- Assessment for research.
- Assessment for teaching and learning.

Implicit in this list of purposes is the need for practitioners to ensure that well-being is accounted for and built into any setting's practice. We assess to ensure equity of practice and delivery of social policy imperatives. We assess to find out more about our practice and its impact on all involved. We assess to celebrate children's learning and so practitioners can select what they might teach next and how they might teach it.

However, the EYFS does not just provide a framework for practice in schools. For many practitioners the intimate care of groups of children must be carefully thought out and organised for extended periods of the day. Children's well-being is a feature of much unrecognised practice in terms of assessment in the EYFS.

> Care was (and to many still is) regarded as second best to education and this tunnel vision has been a serious obstacle in the way of quality provision for very young children. (Lindon 2006: 23)

Tuning to children's sleep patterns or preferences for being comforted and changed, for example, is a vital consideration for many parents and carers but also early years practitioners. It is not that schools do not provide a caring environment – they most certainly do! Practitioners throughout the EYFS should to be open to the need to assess children's well-being so that they can plan appropriately for care that respects each child as an individual. Supporting babies and young children in their development in ways that respond to individual patterns in growth and development takes careful observation and the application of high levels of knowledge and skill. Routines must be carefully planned to ensure that dehumanising systems do not evolve and that each person living in a care-led setting feels first and foremost respected as a person, not just a learner, capable of achieving the Early Learning Goals.

Alongside assessment for teaching and learning should come assessment for care and well-being. Progress that is trackable through the 'learning and development grids' (DCSF 2008b) should be interlinked with a child's fundamental well-being. This is not a plea for additional, specialised assessment techniques, but a valuing of the social, interpersonal assessment that many practitioners carry out and use to inform their daily practice. Closely linked to a child's learning, assessment for care and well-being needs asserting as valuable and purposeful in its own right.

Owning values and principles

Read the following case study. It illustrates how a group of practitioners chose to learn about their own practice so that they could improve their assessment of children's behaviour. They used their beliefs about children and the principles of the EYFS to help guide their choices as to how their practice needed to develop.

Case Study: a team explore their values and principles, as they search for a way to change practice

An early years professional (EYP) working alongside a team of colleagues discussed how the behaviour of some children was causing concern. Their informal assessments had not been transferred to written observations, as generally, those were only made for significant achievements within the six areas of learning (DCSF 2008a). Negative behaviour was not really something they chose to record, unless part of a particular strategy for particularly inappropriate behaviour. Lots of instances of inappropriate behaviour seemed to be occurring. Various ideas were floated as to how to deal with the situation. The only consensus was that something had to change so that things could settle down again and parents would not feel there was a problem.

The EYP decided to lead a staff meeting, using the work of Louise Porter (2003) to help the team step back from the behaviour and talk about their values and principles (Table 2.6).

There were some very challenging discussions, as the staff were asked to place themselves along the continuum between controlling and guiding children in their learning about their behaviour. Assessments of behaviour were coloured by the views practitioners held about children, their behaviour, and the possible intervention methods. The discussion about rewards and punishments became particularly heated!

When they looked at principles of the EYFS, alongside the work of Porter (2003), it seemed as if they should reconsider their assessment of their children's behaviour. It was decided to follow the current setting policy for the time being, but to jot down instances of the behaviour that caused concern to review at the next meeting.

The team spent 2 weeks making brief observations of instances of behaviour they deemed inappropriate and sharing some short

sections from the EYFS and other literature: this gave them some thinking space so that when they met again, they were ready to reflect on values and principles, and consider what the behaviour consisted of and why it might be happening. Their assessments of the children led them to reconsider their provision, but, significantly, they began to formulate some different strategies for responding to children's behaviour, based on the principles behind the guidance style of discipline.

During subsequent meetings colleagues confided that they found it really difficult to work in a guiding way. Sometimes it was more time-consuming and needed such patience! They juggled with making sure that children knew what was unacceptable or hurtful and remaining calm, when sometimes behaviour seemed very challenging.

For the next 6 months, behaviour became a standing item on the agenda. By then the EYP felt able to review the behaviour management policy. The staff decided that the policy needed a new title that reflected the new approaches being taken. Words like control and management were replaced in the document with support and guidance. Staff responded to the unique learning needs of the child through their key person system and talked with parents about their work. They built in time to explore powerful emotions rather than push them to one side. Talking explicitly with children about feelings became an accepted aspect of their work that warranted time, resources, recording and assessment – the curriculum became enriched and assessments acknowledged children's emotional intelligence. The environment became more settled. Values and principles led the development of practice.

Drummond (2003) argues that claiming principles as your own will not bring about the changes that you hope for. She discusses how thinking about practice should be scaffolded so that answers do not come from a policy document with principles, an authoritative text (such as Porter's), or set behaviour management techniques derived from psychological theory (for example, reward systems such as sticker charts). These can only be starting points to prompt thinking. The confidence of the practitioners to make changes in their assessment of behaviour in this case study came from their questioning of what was going on and how it related to their values and principles. This questioning of what is good and worthwhile is central to our autonomy as professionals.

Table 2.6 A continuum of styles of discipline: a copy of the handout that was discussed

Control ←	Discipline style	→ Guidance
Lies *outside* the child: control is in the hands of the 'rule-maker'	**Locus of control**	Lies *within* the child: the child is supported to exercise control over their own behaviour
Obedience and compliance are prioritised through direct instruction Challenging feelings need to be controlled or ignored, not acknowledged and explored	**Goals**	Strategies are used by adults to support children to • be autonomously considerate • develop ways of dealing with (powerful) emotions • cooperate with those around them • have a sense that they too have an impact on the community/ setting in which they live
Perhaps adults have failed to 'reward' appropriate behaviour sufficiently Perhaps inappropriate behaviour has been inadvertently rewarded or gone unchecked	**Causes of disruptive behaviour**	Normal exuberance Normal exploration Lack of coordination and or self-control Natural response to having little autonomy or chance to learn about feelings and actions
It is natural for all children to misbehave Sometimes children are 'naughty'	**View of children**	Children learn to 'behave' at different rates and in different ways Will behave well if treated well
Inappropriate Wilful noncompliance	**View of disruptive behaviour**	An opportunity for scaffolding the learning Some errors are inevitable – we all wish we could have done things differently sometimes!
Rewards Punishments	**Intervention methods**	Acknowledgement (not necessarily agreement!) Problem solving and resolution
Dictator!	**Adult status**	Emotionally intelligent leader

(Source: adapted from Porter, 2003, p18).

Assessment as your opportunity to learn

The questioning was not a comfortable process for the practitioners in the case study. Carr (2007) describes how she was anxious to be seen as the competent practitioner in the face of her local community and the parents. She assumed that readiness for school was the main priority for her and her children in terms of assessment (and in turn for her planning of the curriculum). Niggled by the fact that exciting learning episodes were going unrecognised, she decided to challenge her assumptions and reviewed her assessment practice. The documenting of children's learning that Carr and her colleaques developed has been very well received. The 'learning stories' are purposeful and identify the focus for future interventions for the practitioner, parent and child together. Progression can be seen and authenticity is captured so that parents and children can connect with the learning – it means something to them and they develop the language of learning for themselves, so that they can join in the talk that surrounds assessment. Administrative demands are met through tracking sheets. But the tracking sheets do not stand alone – evidence supports the ticks and highlighted sections. Children are not seen as one-dimensional, following a single pathway because the time and effort goes proportionately into the stories and not just the tracking.

Rights and responsibilities

Value the time you spend exploring your values and principles! You have the right to work in an environment where all are prepared to challenge ideas and existing practice. You have the right make choices about practice. You have the right to have your values acknowledged.

But with your rights, you have responsibilities. When you challenge ideas and practice, you have a responsibility to have a reasoned, researched position. You are responsible for choosing to practise in a way that puts the child at the centre of what you do. You are responsible for implementing the statutory requirements of the EYFS. However, approaching the implementation of the EYFS as a practitioner-learner (Rawlings 2008) with integrity will give you scope for expressing your values and keeping them with you as you work.

Provision for young children in the EYFS must address well-being and learning. Assessments will never be worthy of the child if they do not take account of the powerful and varied ways children influence their world and learn through it. If provision is narrow and unresponsive, assessments will only reveal a partial picture. Accountability, a worry for many practitioners will remain elusive. Reviewing your principles and checking that they drive your decision making can put the child at the centre of your work and in turn ensure that assessments are useful and authentic.

Further Reading 

Both the Clarke and Moss (2001) text and the Lancaster and Broadbent (2005) (see references) materials provide practitioners and parents and carers with underpinning knowledge and practice skills to aid listening to children. Suggestions for 'when', 'why' and 'how' to listen are skilfully woven together, making for inspirational reading.

Fleer, M. (2006) 'The Cultural Construction of Child Development: Creating Institutional and Cultural Intersubjectivity', *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 14 (2): 127–140.

- This is a theoretical paper that asks readers to broaden their assumptions about institutionalised practice so that they can better understand children in the context in which they live. This will lead you to consider the work of Lave and Wenger.

Marsh, J. ed. (2005) *Popular Culture, New Media and Digital Literacy in Early Childhood.* London: Routledge Falmer.

- This locates children, with their multiple identities, as competent learners within their culture. The gap between home-based learning and setting-based experiences of new media challenges the possible misconception that the setting is the place where children learn. Our assessments are incomplete when we fail to acknowledge the cultural world in which and through which children learn.

Penn, H. (2008) *Understanding Early Childhood: Issues and Controversies.* Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill/Open University Press.

- Accessible problematising of taken-for-granted understandings and practice, including consideration of the ethics of routine observation (or surveillance) of children.

Seitz, H. and Bartholomew, C. (2008) 'Powerful Portfolios for Young Children', *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 36 (1): 63–68.

- This article makes the case for 'authentic assessments' through portfolios that are constructed by the child, the parent and the practitioner. However, from the start there are clear lines of responsibility for each partner, and time is planned for all to share in the assessment process. The lasting meaningful documentation

enables parents and children to understand the learning process more fully and for practitioners to take responsibility for identifying relevant national benchmarks for accountability purposes.

Whalley, M. and the Penn Green Centre Team (2007) *Involving Parents in Their Children's Learning,* 2nd edn. London: Paul Chapman.

- Each person who goes through the doors of this centre for children and families is seen as having the capacity to be self-directing and capable of 'constructive discontent' (Whalley 2007). Are parents viewed as having a reasoned voice that you take account of?

Useful Websites 

www.info4localgov.uk/documents/publications [accessed May 2008].

- General Social Care Council (2008) *Values for Integrated Working with Children and Young People*.

www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Forms-and-guidance [accessed May 2008].

- Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) (no date) *Early Years Self Evaluation Form and Guidance.*

www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Forms-and-guidance [accessed May 2008].

- Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) (no date) *Are You Ready for Your Inspection? A Guide to Inspection of Provision on Ofsted's Childcare and Early Years Registers.*

www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/eyfs/ [accessed May 2008].

- Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) (2008) *The Early Years Foundation Stage: Setting Standards for Learning Development and Care for Children from Birth to Five.* Nottingham: DCSF.

www.ewenger.com/theory/ [accessed May 2009].

- Wenger, E. (no date) *Communities of Production: A Brief Introduction.*