

Self and peer assessment – Early Years

By Claire Martindale

As an Early Years teacher, I find assessment checkpoints, sometimes known as mini plenaries, throughout a period of learning is an effective way to support self-assessment. After a whole class input to a text or piece of writing, the children in Reception move on to tasks which are to be completed independently or supported by the teacher or teaching assistant. With half the class working independently, it gives a good opportunity to use assessment checkpoints to refocus the children, to assess their understanding of the task, and to remind the children of expectations. Within this time, I ask for the attention of all children and explain what I like about individual children's work and asking them to look at their own work and see if they have similar or think about how they could but this 'positive' into their own work. The modelling of what I'm thinking, and what I think is successful, helps them to self-assess whether they recognise it in their own work.

Within continuous provision, self-assessment is set up in areas such as the construction or glue area. Adults enhance the learning in these areas by supplying a task that could be completed if the children need this structured support, rather than child-initiated work. An example of this task is a 'child planning sheet'. These are placed in various areas across the continuous provision, and they encourage children to draw what they want to make, they then go away and create their models, and move on to complete the sheet with a 'How to make it better next time?' Although this takes time for young children to be able to self-assess their own work, a child who is assessed as 'Exceeding', is expected to be able to 'carry out activities and state what they might change if they were to repeat them'.

To support the development of peer-assessment, each week we have a whole class writing lesson which includes some peer-marking. I place a large copy of a child's work onto the whiteboard and question children 'What do you like about this work?' When the children become familiar with what I'm looking for and what is in 'good' writing they are able to hold dialogues about their peers' work at the age of four or five. This is then marked with the children as it would be in books.