The Highland Council
Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd

Child Observational Assessment – Interpretation and links to the Developmental Continuums

	POLAAR Item	Developmental aspects
1	When shown letters they have been previously taught, can the child say the correct sounds?	*Working memory* • Are they trying to learn too many at a time? • Are there particular letters/sounds that get confused? *Concepts of print* • Is this easier for the child if the letter is in a context? • Is the child sufficiently familiar with the visual letter forms? • Are they confusing letter names with letter sounds? *Phonological Awareness* • Do they understand the concept of "a sound"? • Can they say the sounds in question (articulation)? • Can they identify the sounds in question in spoken language? • Can they match the sound to the letter if the teacher says the sound? *Other* • Can they visually discriminate the letters? Do they need more practice with the letter forms?
2	When shown letters they have been previously taught, can the child say the correct letter names?	*Working memory* • Are they trying to learn too many at a time? • Are there particular letters that get confused? *Concepts of print* • Is this easier for the child if the letter is in a context? • Is the child sufficiently familiar with the visual letter forms? • Are they confusing letter names with letter sounds? *And see other points under (1)*
3	Can the child accurately repeat unknown words?	*Working memory* • Does this depend on length of word, or number of syllables? • Are there common confusions? • Are words easier to repeat in a real context (e.g., a natural sentence about something of interest?) • Does the child need more than one "go"?

		Phonological awareness • Can the child discriminate between the sounds at a single-sound level (e.g., b/p, t/d, etc)? • Can the child segment the sounds that make up the word? • Is the child able to blend sounds together? • Is the child aware of syllables? • Can the child articulate the sounds? *Other* • Hearing check?
4	Can the child put sounds together to make spoken words?	*Working memory* • What if you reduce length/numbers of sounds? *Phonological awareness* • Are they secure in awareness of the sounds involved? • If they have the sounds, can the child blend them? *Oral language* • Articulation difficulties? • Is this a word in the child's spoken vocabulary?
5	Can the child identify the first sound in a spoken word?	*Concepts of print* • Does the child understand "first"? • Is the child clear on what a "word" is? • Does the child have the same word for the picture as you do? *Phonological awareness* • Does the child have onset-rime skills? • Can the child identify the initial sound in question? *Oral language* • Does the child understand the language of the task?
6	Can the child identify words that start with the same sound?	*Concepts of print* • Do they understand what you mean by "same"? *Working memory* • Can they recall one or two?

		• Can they choose out of some pictures the correct words, • or tell you when two given words have the same/different sounds? *Phonological Awareness* • Can the child identify if 2 words start with the same sound when an adult says them? • Can the child identify if 2 words start with the same sound when the child says them out loud? • Can the child identify if 2 words start with the same sound when the child doesn't say them out loud (silent sorting)? • Can the child generate other words beginning with the same sound? *And see under* (5)
7	Can the child read a variety of consonant-vowel-consonant words correctly?	*Phonological Awareness* • Explore the skills in the **Phonological Awareness continuum** *Oral Language* • Are the words in the child's spoken vocabulary? *Phonics*: • Do they have the necessary sound-letter correspondences *securely*?
8	Can the child read new short words with initial or final consonant blends? (e.g. fast)	As for (7)
9	Can the child read out loud taught sight words? e.g. come	*Working memory* • Is this easier in a context? • Are they rushing the task? *Vocabulary* • Are the words sufficiently familiar? *Concepts of print* • Are they misapplying phonic strategies? • Do they know this is a sight word?
10	Can the child read simple continuous prose correctly?	*Executive function* • Have they sufficiently automated the skills needed?

		• Are they trying to go too fast for good performance? • Have they got over concerned about accuracy and thus lost fluency? *Oral language* • Does the child understand the language of the text? • Are the sentence structures in the child's spoken language?
11	Can the child understand the words and phrases used in the classroom?	*Oral language* • Is the child attending and listening? • Are they using non-verbal cues (e.g., copying others, watching for gestures, knowledge of routine etc.) to help understand? • Do they know the words/sentence structures being used? • Do they need extra processing time? *Other* • Is the child sufficiently aware of themselves as part of the class?
12	Can the child follow instructions of increasing complexity?	*Executive function* • Are instructions too long, have too many component parts, too many unfamiliar words/actions? • Do you have the child's attention for instructions? • Do they get distracted mid-task? • Are the instructions given in the same order as expected to be carried out? And see under (11)
13	Can the child ask and answer questions about everyday experiences?	*Concepts of print* • Are the questions about experiences they have? • Are they comfortable talking about experiences? • Does the child feel secure in turn-taking? • Has the child had enough conversational experience to know how to do this? *Oral language* • Are the questions at a suitable level for the child? • Does the child have sufficient vocabulary to describe experiences? • Does the child have the words, but have difficulty in word-finding? • Does the child get words in the wrong order?

		• Is the child interested enough to ask questions? • Can the child structure questions appropriately?
14	Can the child make shapes (e.g. circles, triangles & squares) and forms resembling letters?	*Handwriting* • Check **Pre-Handwriting continuum**
15	Can the child write his/her own name and the names of peers?	*Concepts of print* • Does the child understand what a name is? • Do they understand that names are words? • Do they recognise names when written? • Can they read a name when shown? *Handwriting* • Check **Pre-Handwriting continuum** – are they ready to write? • Do they know all the letters in the name? • Are they able to form all the letters in the name?
16	Can the child use phoneme knowledge to help them begin to write down simple words?	*Executive function* • Are the skills sufficiently practiced that the child can remember all they have to do? • Which skills are least secure and need work? • Does having a context help? • Do they know what they want to say? *Phonological awareness* • Check **Phonological Awareness continuum** *Oral language* • Are they sufficiently familiar with the words? • Does the child have word-finding difficulties? *Phonics* • Can the child recognise and discriminate the letters involved? • Do they have securely the required grapheme-phoneme correspondences?

17	Does the child engage with a good quality supply of fiction and non-fiction books of appropriate difficulty?	*Concepts of print* • Do available books correspond to their interests? • Do they understand what books are for? • Do they need support to choose? • Does the child have enough experience of reading along with another?
18	Does the child show an independent, spontaneous interest in books and reading, asking to be read to and wanting to read themselves?	*Concepts of print* • Is encountering books enjoyable or an onerous task for the child? • Do they have enough modelling of literacy practices? • Do parents or others feel sufficiently confident in reading with them? • Are the books linked to their interests? • Do they have some interests that the book can be linked to? *General* • Any developmental aspect can add effort and reduce spontaneous interest
19	When faced with a reading task, does the child persist and strive to succeed?	*Executive function* • Is the task too difficult or complex? • Or too simple so it does not hold attention? • Is the material of sufficient interest to scaffold attention and persistence? *Attributions* • If reading has been a struggle, does the child worry about failure? • Do they do better if sharing the task, or by themselves?
20	Does the child respond to computer-based programmes regarding phonics or real books?	Are you providing learners with exposure to a variety of texts, including computer-based programmes?