

## **EYPS schemes - Keeping a reflective journal or learning log book**

### **What is it?**

A log or journal can be hand written in a notebook or on a pad of paper as a way of recording thoughts, reflections, feelings, personal opinions, and even hopes or fears during a work related experience. It can also be typed on a computer or compiled using an audio recording machine.

It is a record of your learning process and your reactions to it. It is good for making learning more personalised and interesting. You can buy a specific journal which could be something small enough to carry around with you. The size and shape of journal you use doesn't matter so long as it works for you.

The journal or log can be completely free style and written/typed on blank paper or structured with headings or a pro-forma can be used to focus the content. (see next page)

### **Why do it?**

It is an opportunity for you to think critically about what you do and why.

Writing a journal or log is a way of recording thoughts, daily experiences, and reflecting on what has happened then evaluating certain situations. The process may include questions to yourself, another person and/or your general thoughts. The advantage is that you can review or reread earlier reflections and see how things have progressed. This process of recording, reflecting, reviewing and evaluating enables you to remember and make sense of the progress of the interventions you have made.

Reflecting on learning in practice is an important element of continuing professional development. New challenges and the resulting learning offers a wider perspective of the issues involved in early years work.

The active learning process of writing and reflecting is a robust way of helping you to remember and benefit from your work experiences and should lead to an improvement in practice for you and others. Aspects of your journal may be used as a basis for pair or group discussion.

### **What does it look like?**

This is the likely content of your journal (not necessarily in this order):

- ✓ General information on what happened: context, details, activities, outcomes if appropriate. Factual and objective
- ✓ Observations; of individual children or groups relevant to scheme.
- ✓ Reflections; your thoughts and feelings on what happened to cover the period you are recording. This is your interpretation.

- ✓ Theory; linking your notes and thoughts to support your knowledge and understanding. Use this opportunity to find out more about the situation.
- ✓ Questions; ask yourself or others relevant questions. You may or may not get answers. You may find problems are solved and insights are gained
- ✓ Evaluation; identify the success of the happenings and identify any developments. This is the analysis of the effectiveness of the happenings.
- ✓ How has this experience improved my own practice?

### **Always remember to**

- ❖ **Write something regularly: every day if possible**
- ❖ **Date entries**
- ❖ **Follow confidentiality procedures**
- ❖ **Conclusions must be based on evidence**

### **For both the daily or weekly journal writing and the final report try asking yourself these questions as prompts for what to write.**

- What is the current situation, problem or issue? Describe the context
- What additional information would be useful?
- How is it related to other issues?
- Who or what could help?
- What are my assumptions? How did I test them?
- What can I do to create a change?
- What are the possible outcomes of these?
- What action did I take? Why?
- List the outcomes you hoped to achieve.
- Reflection on the actual outcome. What worked well?
- What could I do differently next time.

What is the most important thing I have learnt about:

- this area of my work?
- my role in this work?
- being part of the scheme?
- how I can improve my and staff's learning in this area?
- if using this journal has confirmed that I already know about the children's learning and how I effect that?
- what I could do to improve the quality of what I do?
- what I might do instead of what I do now?
- what innovation I could introduce?
- what professional development activities I should be seeking?

