

3. Using the SAST

The SAST is designed to:

- be child-friendly according to age and stage of development
- be used flexibly to suit individual teachers and classes/groups
- complement other statutory assessment requirements (such as the Foundation Stage Profile) without duplicating work

Good practice in the assessment of SEAL

All of us can move up and down the continuum of excellent to poor in using our social and emotional skills. The extent to which we are able to demonstrate the skills we have will be dependent on many factors including the context, the people we are with, our confidence level, how tired or stressed we are etc. All of us can show particular skills in some contexts while not in others. For this reason, best practice in the assessment of the skills, knowledge and understanding associated with SEAL involves observing and talking to children in a range of contexts, over time.

Progression in SEAL is unlike progression in other aspects of learning, e.g. literacy or mathematics, because of its contextual nature. Children should therefore be encouraged to think of positive examples of times that they have used a skill, and to make a judgement on the basis of how confident they feel in using the skill independently and in a range of contexts.

Completing the self-assessments

The self-assessment should take place alongside or following discussion and reflection, and never as a 'worksheet exercise'. Children will need varying levels of adult input to understand the statements and assess their own skills, knowledge and understanding. The aim when completing the self-assessments should be to make them meaningful and helpful to the individual.

The self-assessments can be used flexibly, to suit different contexts and ways of working and to fit in with SEAL curriculum work that is ongoing. The self-assessments could be used at the end of school year, at the end of each SEAL theme, or at relevant stages in a child's year (for example prior to an Annual Review for a child with a Statement of Special Educational Need). In the Foundation Stage and KS1, teachers may choose to use specific statements relating to SEAL themes rather than complete the whole booklet at the end of the year.

With younger children, at the Foundation Stage for example, the adults might work through the assessment statements with a child individually, or make a section the focus of a small group circle time or activity (such as children standing on a line according to how confident they feel in a particular area). They will be in a position to draw attention to a time that a child has displayed a particular skill (e.g. waiting his or her turn) and encourage the child to record his or her achievement in the assessment booklet. Learning diaries, journals, photos or other methods used to collect observational evidence could be shared with the children. This will support their understanding of situations and instances where they have used the skills, knowledge and understanding indicated in the assessment statements. Practitioners should use the booklet alongside this talk and reflection to help make self-assessment part of the teaching process.

As children become more independent, they might be encouraged to consider the statements in groups, or individually, giving each other feedback and exploring their own perceptions of their skills and abilities in different areas, and comparing these to other people's perceptions. Children can be encouraged or invited to complete the profile and target setting sheets at the teacher's professional discretion – the value of completing the self-assessment lies primarily in the process, although the motivational value on subsequent work can be great.

It is important that the self-assessment does not become competitive, and an ethos of valuing different strengths and abilities should be maintained. The clear focus is on children actively developing their skills over time, and identifying their own progress in a celebratory spirit.

Self-assessment in SEAL, as in other areas, should contribute to the learning and embedding of skills, through providing the opportunity for learners to reflect on what they know, understand and can do. It should form the basis for the setting of self-selected targets (which can be linked to children's individual plans) and the consideration of the degree to which these are met over time. Discussion resulting from the self-assessment process provides a valuable opportunity to ensure that pupil voice is heard and acted upon.

4. Uses of the self-assessment results

Schools might like to use the learning resulting from the completion of the self-assessment tool to inform their own assessments (e.g. the APET^{*}) in order to provide new teachers or schools with a comprehensive profile of an individual's skills in SEAL, for planning purposes, and to identify pupils who have additional needs or above-average ability in a given area. Note that the self-assessment results should NEVER be used to label or stigmatise an individual or group of children.

Schools might also use the profile for discussion with parents, as it allows them to see a child's individual achievements and areas of difficulties, and to discuss the particular skills that the child has acquired, and how he or she can be supported to develop those that he or she has not yet mastered.

* See footnote, page 1