Best Practice Network Assessment specification

Early Years Educator Level 3 v2

Best Practice Network Assessments

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Best Practice Network

Assessment Specification

Apprenticeship Standard Reference Number	ST0135	**Apprenticeship Standard Level**	3
Date Assessment Specification Created	06 July 2026	**Route**	Education and early years
EQA Provider	Ofqual	**Typical duration**	18 months
Version	2.0		

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Introduction

This specification defines the assessment framework for the Best Practice Network Assessment Organisation Level 3 Early Years Educator Apprenticeship (ST0135). It sets out the principles, processes, and quality requirements that underpin assessment delivery, including assessment activities, grading arrangements, key milestones, and stakeholder responsibilities. The specification supports the consistent, fair, and compliant evaluation of apprentices against the occupational standard.

Centres may deliver and mark assessments under the direction of the Awarding Organisation, in line with approved specifications and Best Practice Network Assessment Organisations Management's Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny (CASS) framework. The Awarding Organisation retains full responsibility for the validity, reliability, consistency and accuracy of assessment decisions.

Occupation summary

This occupation is found in a range of maintained and private, voluntary, and independent settings such as full day care, children's centres, pre-schools, reception classes, playgroups, nursery schools, home based provision, hospitals, social care settings, out of school environments, and local authority provision.

The broad purpose of the occupation is to provide high-quality early education and care to children. Through an evidence-based approach, they provide opportunities and learning experiences for all children, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Early years educators follow the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) requirements set by government for the learning, development, and care of children from birth to 5 in both indoor and outdoor environments.

In their daily work, an employee in this occupation interacts with children, parents, carers, colleagues, and wider multi agency professionals such as health visitors, early help services, social workers, and speech and language therapists. This includes supporting children with SEND.

An employee in this occupation will be responsible for ensuring a safe and secure environment for children's learning. They ensure that the learning environment and provision is inclusive and supports all children, and demonstrate a clear understand of equality, diversity, and inclusion. Early years educators teach and facilitate children's learning play. They apply the observation, assessment, and planning cycle to support progress and children's development. An early years educator will act as the key person for one or more children within their setting. They may play a leadership role within the setting or may act under the supervision of a manager.

The information in this Specification is based on the Skills England Assessment Plan for the Early Years Educator Apprenticeship. For reference, you can access the official document: **gov.uk/apprenticeships Early Years Educator**

Key Information for Partners and Employers

The Early Years Educator apprenticeship assessment has been updated as part of national assessment reform led by Skills England. These changes are designed to reduce duplication and ensure assessments reflect occupational competency.

Key changes include:

- Assessment timing can be flexible and based on apprentice readiness
- The 'Gateway Period' has been replaced by the 'Gateway to Completion' process.
- Apprentices can now complete some or on programme, at least one assessment should be towards the end of the programme.
- Employers are responsible for verifying that apprentices have sufficiently demonstrated the behaviours set out in the occupational standard before 'Gateway to Completion'.
- Assessment Organisations (AO) and Independent Training Providers (ITP) are no longer required to assess behaviours themselves. This ensures behavioural judgements are made by those with direct workplace insight and supports a more streamlined and appropriate assessment approach.
- Gateway to Completion will take place once the apprentice has:
- Passed both assessment components.
- Confirmation that the employer deems the apprentice competent against the required behaviours.
- Achieved their Paediatric First Aid or Emergency Paediatric First Aid

Level: 3 Additional information: Apprentices must successfully complete a first aid qualification in line with the requirements of the EYFS Framework (Annex A): Early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework - GOV.UK (**www.gov.uk**).

- Achieved any Math and English qualifications required in line with funding and employer rules. - Department for Education for Full and relevant at Level 3. To count within the ratios at level 3, staff holding an Early Years Educator qualification must also have achieved a suitable level 2 qualification in English. Setting managers must hold a suitable level 2 qualification in maths or must achieve one within two years of starting in the position. These are additional EYFS requirements that are independent of the apprenticeship requirements.

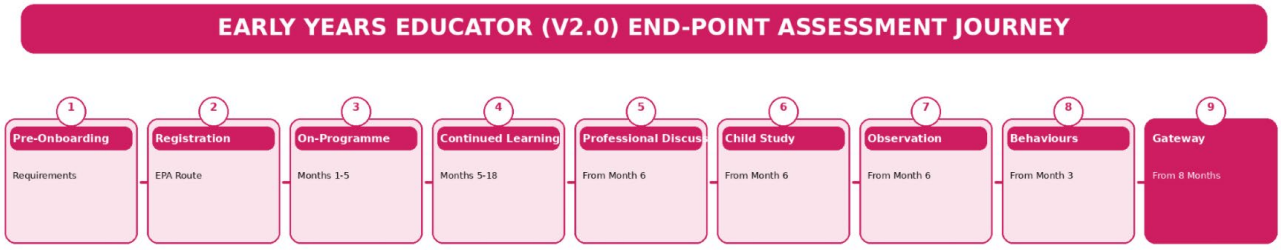
Entry Requirements

- Minimum age: 16 years old
- Must be employed in a relevant Early Years setting for the duration of the apprenticeship standard and gateway to assessment and hold a valid and current DBS.

Qualification Delivery Timeline

Suggested Timeline of Delivery

Apprentices may be assessed at any appropriate point during their apprenticeship programme.



Assessment Plan Overview

The Skills England assessment plan for this standard requires assessment organisations to design assessments that:

- are proportionate, valid and reliable
- ensure all assessment outcomes are assessed in full
- include a mandatory Observation
- use at least one additional assessment method selected by the Awarding Organisation

Assessment Options

The specification offers two options for Apprenticeship Assessment

- **Full Assessment Organisation Approach;** If providers choose this option, Best Practice Network Assessment Organisation will complete all assessment components
- **Approved Centre Approach;** If providers choose this option, specified components of the assessment can be undertaken by the approved centre. These components are carried out in line with Best Practice Network Assessment Organisation CASS strategy and are subject to ongoing External Quality Assurance (EQA).

Centres wanting to use ***Approved Centre Approach*** must undergo Centre Approval process prior to registering and undertaking any form of assessment of any apprentice.

Please contact ***epa@bestpracticenet.co.uk*** for further information and support for Centre Approval process.

Registration

Apprentices must be registered on ACE360 at the start of the programme, within 60 days of the start date, and will be subject to ongoing EQA activity.

For assessment components delivered by the Centre, Best Practice Network Assessment Organisation must be notified of the assessment date and time at least 4 weeks in advance, by completing the booking Form,

which must be uploaded to ACE360.

When the apprentice is ready to be assessed by Best Practice Network Assessment Organisation for the Observation with Question and Answers, the Centre must complete the Booking Form, confirming that the apprentice, employer, and Centre agree that the apprentice is assessment ready. Best Practice Network Assessment Organisation will then schedule and deliver the Observation with Question and Answers component.

Resits and Retakes

For standards comprising multiple assessment components, apprentices will only be required to resit or retake the component(s) in which they have been unsuccessful.

Apprentices may also choose to resit an assessment component with the aim of improving their grade; however, an increased grade cannot be guaranteed.

There is no formal cap on the number of resits and retakes, and the grade achievable is not restricted through reassessment attempts. However, it is strongly recommended that the apprentice is adequately prepared prior to re -assessment to minimise repeated attempts.

All resits and retakes must be completed within 12 months of the initial fail notification. Each resit or retake is subject to employer agreement and confirmation of apprentice readiness prior to booking.

Re-Submissions

Where an apprentice does not meet the requirements of an assessment method, resubmission or retake opportunities will be offered in line with Best Practice Network Assessment Organisation policy and Skills England requirements. Any resubmission must address the areas identified by the assessor and will be subject to internal quality assurance.

Results

All results remain subject to confirmation through the Assessment Organisations External Quality Assurance process.

For the assessed component, results will be sent to the apprentice, the centre and uploaded onto ACE360 within 10 working days after the completion of the final component. Results from the optional component, completed by the centre, will be subject to additional external quality assurance, and results will be confirmed within 10 working days from upload.

Following completion of all assessment components, centres must submit Gateway to Completion evidence in line with the requirements set out in the Gateway to Completion section of this document. Best Practice Network Assessment Organisation will confirm completion within 48 working hours of all evidence being uploaded

Assessment Design

The mandatory assessment method for this apprenticeship is an Observation with Question and Answer, which must be conducted in person within the apprentice's workplace. This assessment is delivered and quality assured by Best Practice Network Assessment Organisation to ensure consistent and robust assessment of occupational competence.

In addition to the mandatory assessment, and for this specification, Best Practice Network Assessment Organisation has determined that competence will be assessed using the following assessment methods. The apprentice, employer, and training provider must select one of the following optional assessment

methods:

- Professional Discussion
- Case Study Report based on Child Study with Question and Answer

The combination of the mandatory and selected optional assessment methods is designed to provide a holistic assessment of the apprentice's knowledge, skills, and behaviours against the requirements of the occupational standard. All assessment decisions will be made in accordance with the requirements set out within this specification and the relevant assessment guidance issued by Best Practice Network Assessment Organisation.

Assessment Outcome Mapping

All assessment outcomes (AO1–AO7) must be demonstrated across the combined assessment methods.

Assessment method	**Knowledge and skills assessed**
Observation with Questions	AO1, AO2, AO3, A04, A05, AO6- K5, K10, K15, K17, K18, K19 K20, K21, K22, K23, K24, K25, K26, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, S11, S12, S13, S14, S15, S16, S17, S18, S19, S20
Professional Discussion / Case Study	AO1, AO2, AO3, AO6, AO7– K1, K2, K3, K4, K6, K7, K8, K9, K11, K12, K13, K14, K16, K27, S1, S10, S21

Behaviours are validated through employer confirmation over a sustained period and are not assessed through a graded assessment method. Confirmation of behaviours is a pre-requisite for certification but does not contribute to grading decisions. Below is a list of behaviours the employer is required to confirm for this standard

B1	Confident to have difficult conversations.
B2	Child centred and empathetic, valuing equality, diversity, and inclusion and the uniqueness of each child.
B3	Vigilant and act with professional curiosity.
B4	Caring, compassionate and sensitive.
B5	Honest, open, respectful, and a role model.
B6	Self-motivated, using initiative and proactive.
B7	Playful and creative
B8	Reflective, reflexive and committed to CPD.

Planning meeting

A planning meeting will be available for each assessment method to support apprentices in their assessment preparation. The meeting provides an opportunity to discuss the assessment requirements,

review any permitted supporting documentation, confirm arrangements, and answer queries relating to the assessment process. The purpose of the meeting is to ensure apprentices feel informed, supported, and ready for the assessment, while maintaining the integrity and independence of the assessment itself.

Assessment Methods

Observation of Occupational Practice with Question and Answer

Overview

The Observation of Occupational Practice with Question and Answer is the mandatory assessment method for the Level 3 Early Years Educator Apprenticeship.

The assessment enables the apprentice to demonstrate occupational competence through direct observation of workplace practice within a real Early Years environment. The assessment focuses on the apprentice's ability to apply knowledge and skills in an integrated and meaningful way whilst undertaking their normal occupational role.

This assessment method must be delivered by a Best Practice Network Assessment Organisation Independent Assessor.

Assessment Purpose

The Observation is designed to assess the apprentice's ability to perform effectively within their occupational role and apply knowledge and skills in practice.

The assessment enables the apprentice to demonstrate their ability to:

- AO1: Safeguarding of children and colleagues

- AO2: Support for holistic child development

- AO3: Inclusive relationships and partnerships

- AO4: Design and maintenance of enabling environments

- AO5: Observation, planning, and response in relation to learning

- AO6: Advocacy for equality, diversity, and inclusion

Structure and Requirements

The Observation must:

- learner to provide photographic identification at the beginning of the assessment.
- Consist of a 60-minute workplace observation.
- Conducted face-to-face by a Best Practice Network Assessment Organisation Independent Assessor.
- Undertaken within the apprentice's normal workplace.
- Include a 30-minute assessor-led Question and Answer session. (+/- 10%)
- Observation and questions are to be completed on the same day.
- Optional – Observation support template

Total Assessment Time - 90 minutes

Simulation is not permitted.

Assessment Environment

The assessment must take place within the apprentice's normal workplace and provide sufficient opportunity for demonstration of the allocated knowledge and skills.

The environment must:

- Reflect normal workplace conditions.
- Be safe and representative of everyday Early Years practice.
- Provide access to children, colleagues and resources relevant to the occupational role.
- Allow the apprentice to undertake their normal responsibilities.

Grading

Observation performance is graded as:

- Fail
- Pass
- Distinction

The authoritative grading criteria are contained within the Assessment Outcome Grading Matrix.

Rationale

The observation, supported by a question-and-answer session, provides a valid and holistic assessment of the apprentice's ability to perform the duties of an Early Years Educator in a real work environment. The observation allows direct assessment of how the apprentice applies safeguarding, health and safety requirements, supports children's holistic development, builds professional relationships and partnerships, promotes equality, diversity and inclusion, creates enabling environments, and uses observation and assessment processes to support children's learning and development in practice.

The question-and-answer session complements the observation by enabling the apprentice to explain decisions made during practice, demonstrate underpinning knowledge, clarify actions that may not naturally occur during the observation period, and evidence professional judgement. Together, these methods provide sufficient opportunity for the apprentice to demonstrate occupational competence by evidencing the effective integration of knowledge and skills while delivering high-quality, child-centred care, learning and development in line with the requirements of the Early Years Educator occupational standard.

Professional discussion or Case Study of a Child Study with Question and Answer.

The purpose of these options for assessment is to provide the apprentice with the opportunity to demonstrate how they apply occupational knowledge, skills and behaviours in professional early years practice. Through analysis, explanation, justification and reflection, the apprentice will demonstrate their understanding of legislation, policy, theory and statutory requirements, evaluate their decision-making and

practice, and show how their professional actions support positive outcomes for children's learning, development, wellbeing and inclusion.

Assessment Purpose

The Professional Discussion or Case Study with question and answer assesses the knowledge and skills allocated to this assessment method and provides opportunities for the apprentice to demonstrate understanding of:

- AO1: Safeguarding of children and colleagues

- AO2: Support for holistic child development

- AO3: Inclusive relationships and partnerships

- AO6: Advocacy for equality, diversity, and inclusion

- AO7: Reflection and development of professional practice

Professional Discussion

Overview

The Professional Discussion is a structured, assessor-led discussion designed to assess occupational knowledge, understanding and professional reasoning.

The Professional Discussion assesses the same Assessment Outcomes as the Workplace Case Study Report and provides an alternative method of evidencing the allocated knowledge and skills.

Assessment Purpose

The Professional Discussion assesses knowledge and skills allocated to this assessment method and enables the apprentice to demonstrate their ability to:

- AO1: Safeguarding of children and colleagues
- AO2: Support for holistic child development
- AO3: Inclusive relationships and partnerships
- AO6: Advocacy for equality, diversity and inclusion
- AO7: Reflection and development of professional practice

Structure and Requirements

The Professional Discussion must:

- Structured against the allocated Assessment Outcomes and Knowledge and Skills statements
- Last 60 minutes. (+/- 10%)
- Conducted by an independent assessor.
- Video and Audio recorded for quality assurance purposes.
- Includes assessor questioning to allow for sufficient coverage of assessment outcome.

- Allow reference to an approved Assessment Preparation Template where applicable.?

The apprentice may additionally bring approved templated note document for reference during the assessment - these are to be bullet points and not to be read verbatim.

Assessment Environment

The Professional Discussion must:

- Include the learner to provide photographic identification at the beginning of the assessment.
- Be conducted under controlled assessment conditions.
- Be free from interruption.
- Have suitable audio or video recording arrangements in place.

Where the Professional Discussion is selected, a portfolio is not required. However, the approved supporting Notes Record may be referenced during the assessment to support authenticity and sufficiency.

Grading

Professional Discussion performance is graded as:

- Fail
- Pass
- Distinction

The authoritative grading criteria are contained within the Assessment Outcome Grading Matrix.

Rationale

The Professional Discussion is a valid and reliable assessment method for evaluating occupational competence because it enables the apprentice to demonstrate and evidence knowledge, understanding, professional judgement and decision-making through structured discussion. It provides opportunities for the assessor to explore the depth and breadth of the apprentice's understanding of legislation, statutory guidance, safeguarding responsibilities, child development, inclusive practice and professional standards.

The assessor can use targeted questioning to probe responses, clarify understanding and test the apprentice's ability to analyse, justify and evaluate their practice in authentic workplace contexts. This allows assessment of knowledge and reasoning that may not be directly observable in practice and supports holistic assessment across the allocated Assessment Outcomes. The Professional Discussion also enables apprentices to reflect on experiences, explain the rationale for decisions made in practice, and demonstrate how professional judgement contributes to positive outcomes for children, families and colleagues.

Assessment Organisation Delivered Model

The Professional Discussion may be conducted remotely or face-to-face by a qualified Independent Assessor appointed by Best Practice Network Assessment Organisation.

Where a face-to-face Professional Discussion is requested, Best Practice Network Assessment Organisation

will seek, where practical, to schedule the Observation, Question and Answer session and Professional Discussion on the same day.

Approved Centre Delivered Model

The Professional Discussion may be delivered by an approved centre were authorised by Best Practice Network Assessment Organisation

The approved centre may conduct the assessment:

- Face-to-face; or
- Remotely.

All Professional Discussions must:

- Be audio or video recorded.
- Follow BPN AO assessment requirements.
- Be assessed by an approved independent assessor.

The recording, grading documentation and assessor declaration must be made available to the AO within 10 working days of the assessment date.

Assessment decisions remain subject to External Quality Assurance.

Case Study of a Child Study with a 20-minute question and answer session

Overview

The Workplace Case Study of a Child or Children Study is a written assessment based upon a real workplace example.

The Case Study of a Child or Children Study is designed to assess the apprentice's application of occupational knowledge, understanding and professional judgement through the analysis, evaluation and reflection of workplace practice.

The Case Study of a Child or Children Study assesses the same Assessment Outcomes as the Professional Discussion.

Assessment Purpose

The Case Study of a Child or Children Study assesses knowledge and skills allocated to this assessment method and enables the apprentice to demonstrate their ability to:

- AO1: Safeguarding of children and colleagues
- AO2: Support for holistic child development
- AO3: Inclusive relationships and partnerships
- AO6: Advocacy for equality, diversity and inclusion
- AO7: Reflection and development of professional practice

Structure and Requirements

- The apprentice must complete a written Case Study Report based on a real workplace example involving an individual child, a small group of children, or a cohort of children within their setting. The report must:
- Be completed independently.
- Be the apprentice's own work and not include plagiarism. Content generated wholly or partly through the use of artificial intelligence (AI) is not permitted (please refer to the BPN Assessment Organisation Malpractice and Maladministration Policy regarding the use of AI and plagiarism).
- Be based upon authentic workplace practice.
- Have a maximum word count of 2,500 words.
- Demonstrate analysis, evaluation and reflection.
- Include appropriate referencing where required.

Following submission of the Case Study Report, the apprentice will participate in a 15-minute Question and Answer (Q&A) session with the assessor.

The Q&A session will:

- Be based on the content of the Case Study Report.
- Provide the opportunity for the apprentice to clarify, expand upon and evidence their knowledge, skills and behaviours.
- Be used to authenticate the apprentice's work and confirm understanding where further exploration is required.
- Be conducted by an assessor under controlled assessment conditions.
- Be included as part of the overall assessment of the Case Study Report.

Assessment Environment

The apprentice has a maximum period of 10 weeks to complete the Case Study.

Suggested timescales:

- Up to 4 weeks gathering evidence and observations.
- Up to 6 weeks completing the written report.

Reports must be made available to best practice assessments using approved submission documentation.

Grading

Case Study performance is graded as:

- Fail
- Pass
- Distinction

The authoritative grading criteria are contained within the Assessment Outcome Grading Matrix.

Rationale

The Workplace Case Study Report with Question and Answer Session is a valid and reliable assessment method for evaluating occupational competence because it requires the apprentice to analyse and evaluate a real workplace example involving an individual child, a group of children, or a cohort of children, demonstrating the application of knowledge, skills and behaviours within authentic early years practice. The written report provides evidence of the apprentice's ability to critically reflect on practice, interpret legislation and policy, justify professional decision-making and evaluate the impact of their actions on children's learning, development, wellbeing and inclusion.

The accompanying Question and Answer Session strengthens the validity of the assessment by providing opportunities for the assessor to confirm authenticity, explore the apprentice's understanding in greater depth and clarify aspects of the report where further evidence is required. Together, the report and Question and Answer Session enable a comprehensive assessment of professional knowledge, reasoning, reflection and applied practice across the allocated Assessment Outcomes, while allowing apprentices to demonstrate competence through a structured and evidence-based workplace example focused on an individual child, a group of children, or wider provision within the setting.

Assessment Organisation Delivered Model

The Case Study assessment may be conducted by a qualified Independent Assessor appointed by Best Practice Network Assessment Organisation.

Approved Centre Delivered Model

Approved Centres may assess and grade Case Study Reports where authorised by Best Practice Network Assessment Organisation.

The Case Study Report is reviewed and graded by a qualified Independent Assessor against the published Assessment Outcome grading criteria.

The report must be submitted to Best Practice Network Assessment Organisation using approved submission documentation.

Assessment Support and Resource Guidance

Centre Marking, Oversight and Risk-Based Scrutiny

Best Practice Network Assessment Organisation will provide approved assessment materials, guidance and updates. Centres must use only approved or authorised resources.

Centre Marking, Oversight and Risk-Based Scrutiny

Centre marking is permitted under CASS, subject to approval, sampling and risk-based scrutiny.

Conflict of Interest

Centres must manage conflicts of interest in line with Best Practice Network Assessment Organisation policy.

Malpractice and Maladministration

All suspected malpractice or maladministration must be reported immediately to Best Practice Network

Assessment Organisation

Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations

Reasonable adjustments and special considerations will be applied in line with Ofqual requirements and must not compromise assessment validity.

Employer and Learner Feedback

Feedback will be collected and reviewed to inform continuous improvement.

Data Retention, Access and Availability

Assessment records must be retained securely for a minimum of three years and made available for EQA on request.

Ongoing Review of the Assessment Specification

This specification will be reviewed annually to reflect regulatory updates, standard changes, CASS findings and stakeholder feedback.

Assessment decisions, grading documentation and assessor declarations must be uploaded to ACE360 within 10 working days of assessment completion.

All assessment decisions remain subject to External Quality Assurance.

Please Note: The Professional Discussion and Workplace Case Study Report assess the same Assessment Outcomes and grading criteria. This ensures consistency and accessibility without changing the requirements of the occupational standard.

Assessment Requirements

Assessment Assessor and IQA requirements apply equally regardless of the assessment option selected.

Assessor Requirements

Assessors must:

- Hold a recognised assessor qualification or be working towards one under the supervision of a qualified assessor.
- Be occupationally competent within the Early Years sector, typically demonstrated through recent and relevant industry experience.
- Hold an appropriate Early Years qualification at Level 3 or above.
- Maintain a current CPD record demonstrating ongoing professional and occupational competence.
- Participate in mandatory standardisation and quality assurance activities.

Conflict of Interest

Assessors must declare any actual, perceived or potential conflicts of interest before undertaking assessment activities.

Independence

Assessors must be independent of the apprentice and free from any relationship or circumstance that could

compromise the objectivity of assessment decisions.

Internal Quality Assurer (IQA) Requirements

IQAs must:

- Hold a recognised IQA qualification or be working towards one under the supervision of a qualified IQA.
- Be occupationally competent within the Early Years sector.
- Hold an appropriate Early Years qualification at Level 3 or above.
- Maintain a current CPD record demonstrating ongoing professional and occupational competence.
- Participate in mandatory standardisation and quality assurance activities.

Conflict of Interest

IQAs must declare any actual, perceived or potential conflicts of interest before undertaking quality assurance activities.

Independence

IQAs must be independent of both the apprentice and the assessment decision being quality assured to ensure impartiality and consistency of judgement.

Continuing Professional Development

Assessors and IQAs must maintain current knowledge of:

- Early Years practice and legislation.
- Safeguarding requirements.
- SEND and inclusion.
- Assessment and quality assurance practices.
- Sector developments relevant to the occupational standard.

Evidence of CPD may be requested as part of approval, monitoring or quality assurance activities.

Assessment Outcome Grading Matrix

Mandatory Component: Observation with Question and Answer

Assessment Outcome	KSBs Assessed	Pass Descriptor	Distinction Descriptor
AO1: Safeguarding of the children and Colleagues: Implements safeguarding procedures and risk management practices to ensure the health, safety, and wellbeing of children and colleagues, in full compliance with legal and organisational standards	**K5** The principles of risk assessment and management, and how to balance risks and benefits of activities for children. **S2** Apply legislation, policy and procedure to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of children in the setting. **S3** Implement procedures to maintain children's safety and wellbeing. **S4** Contribute to maintaining safe and secure environments.	Demonstrates effective risk assessment and risk management to maintain a safe, secure and enabling environment. Applies health and safety requirements in practice, manages risks appropriately, supports children's understanding of safe behaviours, and promotes their health, wellbeing, learning and development through safe, inclusive and engaging experiences.	Consistently applies risk assessment and risk management with confidence and professional judgement, balancing safety with opportunities for children's learning and development. Proactively identifies and manages risks, adapts practice to changing circumstances, and supports children to develop safe behaviours, independence and responsibility.
A02: Support for holistic child development - Promotes holistic development in children from birth to age 7 by recognising and responding to individual needs across physical, neurological, emotional, cognitive, and social domains, and by applying the principles of child development and knowledge of the factors that influence each child's growth.	**K10** The role and responsibilities of the key person. **K15** The development of social skills and maintaining relationships. **K21** How children experience change, transition and significant events. **K22** The theories of play and its fundamental role in learning and development. **K23** How children develop characteristics for effective learning. **S7** Undertake the role and responsibilities of a key person. **S8** Recognise and apply theories of attachment to develop effective relationships with children. **S9** Provide sensitive and respectful	Demonstrates an understanding of child development and responds appropriately to children's individual needs. Builds positive relationships with children and families, supports emotional wellbeing and independence, promotes play-based learning and inclusion, and uses appropriate strategies to support children's development, emotions and transitions.	Consistently applies child development principles with confidence and professional judgement, adapting practice to meet individual needs. Builds strong relationships that promote children's wellbeing and development, supports emotional security and independence, and creates responsive learning experiences. Proactively supports children's emotional regulation, behaviour, learning and transitions, adapting practice to achieve positive outcomes.

	personal care for children from birth to age five. **S11** Promote and facilitate children's interpersonal communication to develop social interactions and relationships. **S13** Support children to understand and respond to emotions and make considered choices about behaviour. **S17** Apply strategies that support children to manage change, transition and significant events.		
AO3: Inclusive relationships and Partnerships Establishes and maintains professional and supportive relationships with children, their families, and other professionals to improve children's care, learning, and development through clear and consistent collaboration and communication.	**S5** Use a range of communication methods, including technology, with other professionals to meet the individual needs of the child. **S6** Develop and maintain effective professional, collaborative relationships with others involved in the education and care of the child.	Demonstrates effective communication and partnership working with children, families, colleagues and other professionals to support children's learning, development, health and wellbeing. Shares information appropriately, maintains positive professional relationships, and contributes to collaborative working and positive outcomes for children.	Consistently demonstrates effective communication and collaboration, adapting approaches to engage children, families, colleagues and professionals. Builds strong partnerships, uses information and technology effectively to support decision-making, and proactively contributes to coordinated, inclusive support that improves outcomes for children.
A04: Design and maintenance of enabling environment Designs inclusive and engaging indoor and outdoor environments that actively support children's voices, prioritises their wellbeing, and provides learning experiences that are clearly	**K17** The elements and characteristics of a wide range of enabling environments. **K18** How the design, resourcing and use of the indoor and outdoor physical environment support children's learning and development. **K19** How the design of the day and expectations adapt to support and reflect all children's current needs. **K20** How the organisation's approach and	Demonstrates effective practice in creating and maintaining safe, inclusive and engaging learning environments. Uses observations and knowledge of children's needs to provide appropriate learning opportunities, adapts environments to support participation and inclusion, and promotes child-centred learning, wellbeing and development.	Consistently designs and adapts inclusive, engaging learning environments that maximise children's learning, development and wellbeing. Uses observations and assessment information to make informed improvements, responds proactively to individual needs, promotes children's voice and independence, and uses professional

aligned with their developmental stages.	values underpin the environment. **S14** Assess the responsiveness of the environment for effective child-centred experiences in line with curriculum requirements. **S15** Create inclusive, child-centred, dynamic, innovative and evolving physical environments both indoors and outdoors. **S16** Create an inclusive and supportive emotional environment that enables the child to feel safe, secure, respected and experience a sense of wellbeing, maintaining and prioritising the individual child's voice.		judgement to enhance participation, inclusion and positive outcomes.
A05: Observation, planning, and response in relation to learning Uses observation and assessment to understand each child and to plan specific learning experiences that build on the child's interests, curiosity, and developmental progress, in alignment with the curriculum and teaching framework.	**K24** How, when and why to conduct observations. **K25** How the observation, assessment and planning cycle is used to analyse and respond to children's learning, development and interests. **K26** How to create experiences and opportunities for children informed by the setting's curriculum and pedagogy. **S18** Analyse observation evidence to assess and plan holistic individual learning based on a comprehensive understanding of the child's needs and interests. **S19** Facilitate and support child-centred opportunities and experiences based on the setting's curriculum and pedagogy. **S20** Provide adult-led opportunities and experiences based on the setting's curriculum and pedagogy.	Demonstrates effective use of observation, assessment and planning to support children's learning and development. Uses observations to identify interests, progress and individual needs, plans appropriate learning experiences, and adapts practice to support engagement, participation and positive outcomes.	Consistently uses observation, assessment and planning effectively to maximise children's learning and development. Analyses information from a range of sources, adapts learning experiences to meet individual needs and interests, and applies professional judgement to create inclusive, engaging opportunities that promote progress, independence and positive outcomes.

AO6: Advocacy for equality, diversity, and inclusion Actively supports each child's individual identity, cultural background, and rights by eliminating obstacles to participation and fostering a strong sense of belonging through clearly defined inclusive values and practices.	**S12** Support children to develop a positive sense of their own identity and culture.	Demonstrates inclusive practice by promoting equality, diversity and inclusion through interactions, learning experiences and everyday practice. Supports children's sense of identity and belonging, responds to individual needs, and creates an environment where all children feel valued, respected and able to participate.	Consistently promotes equality, diversity and inclusion through inclusive environments, experiences and interactions. Proactively removes barriers to participation, responds effectively to individual needs, and promotes children's identity, belonging and respect for others. Uses professional judgement to adapt practice and improve outcomes, participation and wellbeing for all children.

Optional Component: Professional Discussion / Case Study Report

Assessment Outcome	KSBs Assessed	Pass Descriptor	Distinction Descriptor
AO1: Safeguarding of the children and Colleagues: Implements safeguarding procedures and risk management practices to ensure the health, safety, and wellbeing of children and colleagues, in full compliance with legal and organisational standards.	**K2** Safeguarding policies and procedures for children and colleagues, including child protection and wellbeing. **K3** Types of abuse, including domestic, neglect, physical, emotional and sexual abuse, and how to act to protect children and colleagues. **K4** The legal requirements and guidance on health and safety, security, confidentiality of information and safeguarding. **S1** Recognise when a child or colleague is in danger or at risk of abuse and act to protect them in line with safeguarding policy and procedure.	Demonstrates understanding of safeguarding, child protection, health, safety, confidentiality and security requirements. Explains how legislation, policies and procedures are applied, recognises and responds appropriately to safeguarding concerns, maintains accurate records, and shares information appropriately to support children's safety and wellbeing.	Consistently applies safeguarding, child protection, health and safety, confidentiality and information-sharing requirements with confidence and professional judgement. Proactively identifies and responds to safeguarding concerns, makes informed decisions using relevant information, works effectively with others to protect children, and evaluates actions taken to improve outcomes, safety and wellbeing.

A02: Support for holistic child development - Promotes holistic development in children from birth to age 7 by recognising and responding to individual needs across physical, neurological, emotional, cognitive, and social domains, and by applying the principles of child development and knowledge of the factors that influence each child's growth.	**K11** Theories and significance of attachment. **K16** How children learn and develop from conception to age seven physiologically, neurologically, biologically, psychologically, cognitively, emotionally and socially, including the impact of biological and environmental factors.	Demonstrates an understanding of child development from conception to age 7 and how developmental factors influence children's learning, wellbeing and outcomes. Explains the importance of secure relationships, recognises factors that affect development, and applies this knowledge to support children's individual needs, progress and positive outcomes through effective partnership working with families.	Consistently applies knowledge of child development to evaluate and respond to children's individual needs, progress and emerging concerns. Uses professional judgement to adapt practice, recognises the impact of relationships and experiences on development, and works proactively with families to support positive outcomes for children
AO3: Inclusive relationships and Partnerships Establish and maintains professional and supportive relationships with children, their families, and other professionals to improve children's care, learning, and development through clear and consistent collaboration and communication.	**K8** The role of colleagues and multi-agency working to support the child. **K9** The role and responsibilities of the Early Years Educator, including providing supervision to staff. **K12** The importance of professional relationships and collaboration with parents, families or carers. **K13** The importance of professional relationships with colleagues, other organisations and agencies. **K14** The influence of all key individuals in children's lives on children's learning and development.	Demonstrates understanding of the roles and responsibilities of early years educators and other professionals in supporting children's learning, development and wellbeing. Builds effective relationships with children, families and professionals, shares information appropriately, and contributes to planning and coordinated support to promote positive outcomes for children.	Consistently applies knowledge of professional roles and multi-agency working to support positive outcomes for children. Uses professional judgement to build effective partnerships, share information appropriately, make informed decisions, and proactively collaborate with families, colleagues and other professionals to meet children's needs.

AO6: Advocacy for equality, diversity and inclusion - Actively supports each child's individual identity, cultural background, and rights by eliminating obstacles to participation and fostering a strong sense of belonging through clearly defined inclusive values and practices.	**K1** The importance of inclusion and inclusive practice, and strategies to support all children to participate. **K6** The statutory and non-statutory frameworks and guidance for provision in early years, including SEND. **K7** The legal rights of each individual child according to their current and future needs. **S10** Advocate for all children's needs, including children who require SEND or EAL support.	Demonstrates understanding of equality, diversity, inclusion, children's rights and SEND requirements. Explains how inclusive practice supports children's individual needs, identities and backgrounds, promotes participation and belonging, and applies relevant legislation, safeguarding requirements and procedures while working with families and professionals to support positive outcomes.	Consistently applies knowledge of equality, diversity, inclusion, children's rights and SEND requirements to make informed decisions and promote positive outcomes. Proactively removes barriers to participation, champions children's rights and individual needs, works effectively with families and professionals, and uses professional judgement to support inclusion, wellbeing, development and belonging for all children.
AO7: Reflection and development of professional practice Engages in thoughtful self-evaluation, participates in structured supervision, and pursues ongoing professional development to improve self-awareness, enhance job performance, and support continuous improvement within the organisation.	**K27** Methods of reflective practice, including supervision, and opportunities for continuous professional development. **S21** Use reflection to develop themselves both professionally and personally.	Demonstrates understanding of reflective practice, supervision and CPD, explaining how they improve professional performance and outcomes for children. Uses self-evaluation, feedback and supervision to identify strengths and development needs. Explains how children experience transitions and significant events, adapting practice to support wellbeing, learning and development. Takes responsibility for maintaining professional competence and contributing to improvements in practice.	Critically applies reflective practice, supervision and CPD to improve performance and outcomes for children. Evaluates own practice using feedback and evidence to identify development needs and implement improvements. Justifies approaches used to support children through transitions and significant events. Demonstrates initiative in improving practice and evaluates the impact of changes on children, colleagues and the wider organisation.

Grading Principles

Assessment decisions must be based on the overall quality, consistency and sufficiency of evidence generated through the assessment method.

All grading decisions should be holistic and based on the apprentice's overall performance against the Assessment Outcome.

Distinction Achievement Requirement

To achieve a Distinction, the apprentice must meet all Pass requirements in addition to the Distinction requirements for the relevant Assessment Outcome.

Evidence must demonstrate:

- Consistently high-quality performance.
- Strong professional judgement and decision-making.
- Effective application of knowledge and skills beyond the standard expected of occupational competence.
- Clear justification of professional actions and decisions.
- A positive impact on outcomes for children, families, colleagues or the setting, where applicable.

Professional Judgement

Assessors must apply professional judgement when determining grades and ensure that all decisions are:

- Valid.
- Reliable.
- Fair.
- Consistent.
- Evidence based.

All grading decisions must be capable of withstanding internal and external quality assurance scrutiny.

Overall Grading

The overall grade is determined by performance across both assessment components. To achieve an overall **Distinction**, the apprentice must first achieve the **Pass standard** in both components.

Distinction is awarded where the apprentice meets **all Pass** requirements and demonstrates Distinction-level performance across the assessment, in accordance with the Distinction performance descriptors set out in this specification.

Assessors must use professional judgement to determine whether the overall evidence demonstrates consistent Distinction-level performance in accordance with the specified grading requirements.

Grade Aggregation Rules

Observation with Question and Answer	Professional Discussion or Case Study Report	Overall Grade
Fail	Any Grade	Fail
Any Grade	Fail	Fail
Pass	Pass	Pass
Distinction	Pass	Pass
Pass	Distinction	Pass
Distinction	Distinction	Distinction

Gateway to Completion

Gateway to completion is the last part of the Apprentice's journey and requires the training provider/centre to upload evidence that the Apprentice is ready to complete their Apprenticeship.

The Gateway to Completion form must be completed and submitted to, along with required evidence via ACE360.

Requirements for Gateway to Completion:

- Both components have achieved a minimum of a pass grade
- Evidence of achieving relevant Functional Skills qualifications or exemptions where required
- Confirmation that the employer deems the apprentice competent against the required behaviours.
- Evidence of successful completion of a recognised Paediatric First Aid or Emergency Paediatric qualification in accordance with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework (Annex A)

For further details, refer to the EYFS statutory framework on GOV.UK (www.gov.uk). Evidence must be uploaded during Gateway to Completion

Certification

The assessment result confirms achievement of the Level 3 Apprenticeship Assessment for ST0135 only. The apprenticeship completion certificate is issued separately by the Secretary of State via the Apprenticeship Service and is independent of Best Practice Network Assessment Organisation.

Clarification on Cross-Method Assessment Coverage

Knowledge and skills may be evidenced across assessment methods where appropriate. Assessors must use professional judgement to confirm sufficiency and authenticity across the combined evidence set.

Where example structures, templates or section headings are provided within assessment guidance, these are illustrative only and are not mandatory.

Knowledge and skills allocated to an assessment method may be evidenced:

- in any section of the submitted evidence

- across multiple sections or artefacts
- implicitly through applied delivery decisions, outputs or justification, rather than explicit narrative statements

Assessors must use professional judgement to confirm that each required knowledge and skill has been sufficiently and authentically evidenced across the full body of evidence, regardless of where it appears.

Assessment decisions must not be based on adherence to a particular document structure, but on the quality, depth and relevance of the evidence presented.

Re-Submissions

Where an apprentice does not meet the requirements of an assessment method, resubmission or retake opportunities will be offered in line with Best Practice Network Assessment Organisation policy and Skills England requirements.

Best Practice Network Assessment Organisation adopts a component-based approach to reassessment. Where an apprenticeship assessment consists of more than one assessment component, apprentices will only be required to retake or resit the specific component(s) that have not been successfully achieved.

Apprentices may also elect to resit an assessment component to seek a higher grade. However, participation in a resit does not guarantee an improved outcome, and the final grade awarded will reflect the apprentice's performance in the reassessed component.

There is no prescribed limit on the number of resit or retake opportunities available, and reassessment will not restrict the maximum grade that can be achieved. Apprentices remain eligible to achieve a distinction grade, provided the required performance criteria are met during assessment.

To support successful outcomes and avoid repeated reassessment attempts, it is strongly recommended that apprentices receive appropriate preparation and support before undertaking a resit or retake. All reassessments must be completed within **12 months of the initial unsuccessful assessment outcome**.

Each resit or retake is chargeable subject to employer approval and confirmation that the apprentice is ready to be reassessed before a booking can be made. Best Practice Network Assessment Organisation reserves the right to require evidence of apprentice readiness where this is deemed necessary to support a valid assessment outcome.

Any resubmission must address the areas identified by the assessor and will be subject to internal quality assurance.

Roles and Responsibilities

Apprentice

- complete training and assessment requirements
- provide authentic evidence • comply with assessment instructions

Employer

- support workplace opportunities for evidence generation

- confirm apprentice readiness where required

Centre

- deliver assessment in line with this specification
- ensure assessor and IQA competence
- comply with CASS requirements

Best Practice Network (Awarding Organisation)

- set assessment requirements
- maintain quality assurance systems
- conduct risk-based scrutiny and moderation Assessor
- conduct assessments
- make valid, reliable decisions maintain accurate records
- Occupationally competent to at least one level above the competency in this specification.

Internal Quality Assurer (IQA)

- sample assessment decisions
- support standardisation and consistency

Operational Support and Resource Development

Best Practice Network Assessment Organisation will provide approved assessment materials, guidance and updates. Centres must use only approved or authorised resources.

Centre Marking, Oversight and Risk-Based Scrutiny

Centre marking is permitted under CASS, subject to approval, sampling and risk-based scrutiny.

Conflict of Interest

Centres must manage conflicts of interest in line with Best Practice Network Assessment Organisation policy.

Malpractice and Maladministration

All suspected malpractice or maladministration must be reported immediately to Best Practice Network Assessment Organisation.

Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations

Reasonable adjustments and special considerations will be applied in line with Ofqual requirements and must not compromise assessment validity.

Employer and Learner Feedback

Feedback will be collected and reviewed annually to inform continuous improvement.

Data Retention, Access and Availability Assessment records must be retained securely for a minimum of three years and made available for EQA on request.

Ongoing Review of the Assessment Specification

This specification will be reviewed annually to reflect regulatory updates, standard changes, CASS findings and stakeholder feedback.