



Leveraging the Two-Year-Old Progress Check: An Essential Baseline for SEND Support

About the AUTHOR

Maria Morgan has spent most of her teaching career working in early years. She was Leader of a Foundation Stage Unit in a primary school and Headteacher of a Maintained Nursery School. She's been a SENCo for 10 years and now works part-time in the early years team in a primary school which has specialist provision for children with autism.



“The two-year progress check provides a window of opportunity to intervene early.”

Samantha Gordon, Coram Pacey”

In the Early Years sector, we often view the two-year-old progress check through the lens of statutory compliance. However, for practitioners working with children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), this assessment serves a much more strategic purpose. It is not merely a summary of past development, but the definitive **baseline** from which all future graduated support can be measured. When approached with holistic observations and a collaborative spirit, this integrated review becomes an invaluable tool for early identification and targeted intervention.

The Foundation of the Graduated Approach

The SEND Code of Practice (*Department for Education and Department of Health, 2015*) emphasises the "Assess, Plan, Do, Review" cycle. The two-year check provides a really robust "Assess" phase required to kickstart this cycle effectively.

By establishing a clear baseline across the three prime areas - Communication and Language, Physical Development, and Personal, Social and Emotional Development - we can pinpoint specific delays that may indicate an underlying need.

Without a firm baseline at this stage, it becomes difficult to measure the impact of subsequent interventions. The check allows us to move beyond anecdotal concerns and towards evidence-based practice.



Enhancing Multi-Agency Collaboration

Combining the educational perspective of educators with the clinical oversight of a Health Visitor is vital for children with SEND. Via parents or direct liaison with a HV, we can develop a professional, well-documented baseline demonstrating that all professionals are operating from the same set of facts. When we have a clear picture of a child's starting point, we facilitate smoother referrals to Speech and Language Therapy (SALT), Occupational Therapy, GPs or Educational Psychology. Working in this way transforms the check from a standalone document into a shared roadmap for the child's multidisciplinary team.

Empowering Parents through Clarity

Sharing a child's emerging needs with parents at the two-year check meeting can create significant anxiety. As a SENCo or key person, including views from home and having a professional yet empathetic tone are essential. By framing the assessment as a "baseline for growth," we can shift the conversation from deficit to potential. A clear baseline helps parents understand the specific "small steps" their child needs to take. It provides a benchmark that celebrates progress relative to the child's individual starting point, rather than solely against age-related expectations.



Securing Future Provision

For some children, the data captured during the two-year check serves as critical evidence for High Needs Funding or Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) applications. A detailed baseline recorded at age two provides a longitudinal view of a child's development, proving where gaps are narrowing or where developmental plateaus require more intensive support.

Conclusion

The two-year-old progress check is the cornerstone of early intervention. By treating it as a professional baseline rather than a bureaucratic requirement, we ensure that every child with SEND has a documented starting point that respects their unique pace of learning while demanding the right support at the right time.



Example in Practice

Adam's parents shared that he had communication delays and sensory processing differences before he started at nursery and that his Health Visitor had already made a referral for ASD assessment. To secure early intervention, Adam's 2-Year-Old Progress Check was used as baseline evidence for an EHCP application. The original nursery check, and his HV's assessment, both completed alongside parents, highlighted that Adam had significant differences in development at age two. By using the Progress Check as a starting point for APDR, and pairing it with later nursery observations, it was possible to evidence that Adam's gaps were widening despite targeted interventions and support well in excess of ratio. This evidence, coupled with input from professionals in health, successfully triggered a formal EHCP assessment.

Names and other identifying details have been changed.

Feedback:

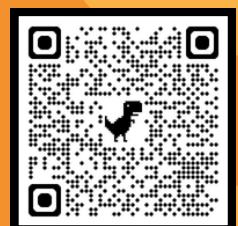


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References and Useful Resources:

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