autism education trust
schools programme

A PROGRESSION FRAMEWORK FOR PUPILS ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM:

NOTES, GUIDANCE AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE

www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk

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1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

This document provides an overview of the Autism Education Trust (AET) Progression Framework for pupils on the autism spectrum which is available as a free download (in EXCEL) from the AET website (www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk). A half day or twilight training session on Using the Progression Framework is available through AET training hubs (www.aettraininghubs.org.uk). Step-by-step instructions for using the Framework are included as Appendix 1 of this document. The development of the Framework is based on a thorough consultation and literature review, the report of which is also available through the AET website (Farrell et al, 2015).

In 2015 the Autism Education Trust (AET) received funding from the Department for Education to commission a Progression Framework and accompanying training module specific to the needs of children and young people on the autism spectrum. The need for work in this area had previously been identified by Wittemeyer et al. (2011) in their report on Educational Provision and Outcomes for People on the Autism Spectrum for the AET:

"Schools should look beyond what is measured by National Curriculum level descriptors and be encouraged to include data that are collected as part of the school's standard or in-house assessments (e.g. on social-communication and independent living skills; sensory sensitivities)"

(Wittemeyer et al, 2011, p12 of Executive Summary)

This message is supported in documentation relating to recent legislative changes in relation to pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). For example, the 2015 SEND Code of Practice places a focus on the wider long-term outcomes for pupils with special educational needs such as higher education, employment and independent living. Other changes include the removal of national curriculum levels and changes to the OFSTED Framework. Documentation relating to these changes supports the need for an increased focus on ways of demonstrating progress in relation to areas that may fall outside the National Curriculum and an expectation that progress information should provide evidence that targeted provision is having an impact:

"Most schools monitor closely the progress that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make in their academic subjects. However, less attention is paid to the progress they make in developing personal and social skills and in becoming more independent."

(OFSTED, 2014, p16)

For many pupils with SEND, intervention may be required in areas related to their communication, social and emotional needs in order to enable them to access learning in other subjects. For example, improvements in a pupil's ability to regulate their own behaviour or sensory needs may lead to improved engagement which, in turn, may result in progress within National Curriculum subjects.

"Schools should consider meaningful ways of measuring all aspects of progress including communication, social skills, physical development and independence. Assessment should reflect the extent to which a pupil can apply their learning in a wider range of contexts and enable teachers to determine what they need to do to ensure that the intervention and support provided enable children to progress in all areas of their learning and development."

(Final report of the Commission on Assessment without Levels, September, 2015)

Feedback from the AET's successful schools training programme (Cullen et al., 2013, Cullen et al., 2014) also highlighted the need for a means of supporting schools in demonstrating progress being made by pupils on the autism spectrum and to assist in evaluating interventions being used.

In order to inform the development of the Framework consultation took place with over 500 practitioners, parents, pupils and adults on the autism spectrum via on-line survey. There was also direct consultation with a range of professionals via school visits, email, telephone conversations and meetings. A very positive response was received highlighting a need from both schools and parents for such a resource:

"So challenging for schools to show progress, even when they are doing a really good job – quite dispiriting for them"

(Teacher, School survey, Progression Framework consultation)

"My child is 'tracked' the same as neurologically typical children, which means he is always consistently scoring lower. I would love to see SEN accounted for within the tracking"

(Parent, Parent survey, Progression Framework consultation)

2. ABOUT THE PROGRESSSION FRAMEWORK FOR PUPILS ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM AND HOW TO USE IT

The Progression Framework has been designed to be accessible to practitioners in a range of settings working with pupils across the autism spectrum. Some pupils may have additional learning needs or disabilities and other measures which target these needs directly might be required alongside the Progression Framework.

The Framework is designed to be flexible so that practitioners can use it according to their own needs. Some of its main features and ways of using it are outlined below.

2.1 Content

The content of the Framework is divided into 7 main areas based on the findings of the literature review and consultation (www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk). These relate closely to autism 'differences' as described within other AET materials, and the impact of these on the pupil's social, emotional and learning needs, their independence and community participation. The main Progression Framework areas are:

- Social Communication
- Social Interaction
- Social Imagination / Flexibility
- Sensory processing
- Emotional understanding and self-awareness
- Learning
- Independence and community participation

Each area has been subdivided to allow the user to focus in on the relevant learning for a particular pupil. For example:

Social Imagination / Flexibility is subdivided into: Coping with change; Transitions; Special interests; Play; Problem solving and thinking skills

See **Appendix 2** for a breakdown and overview of all areas included

The content of each area has been drawn from a review of relevant literature (**see Appendix 4**) and informed by the experience of the project team from their work in schools. The Progression Framework does not attempt to replace other specialist assessments that may accompany specific approaches or interventions that might be used with pupils on the autism spectrum. Nor does it replace National Curriculum progress information. The content aims to address skills and understanding that pupils may find difficult as a consequence of their autism but also strives to recognise and build on the pupil's strengths and interests and to improve their overall well-being. Most importantly, it aims to alert the practitioner to the fact that pupils may need support in these areas and that their progress is dependent on this support. Where possible, the content of the Framework lays emphasis on supporting the pupil to *understand* both their own and others' behaviour, what might be expected within certain situations and how this might be of benefit to them. It encourages practitioners to support pupils' independence through the development of skills such as self-regulation, self-expression and problem-solving.

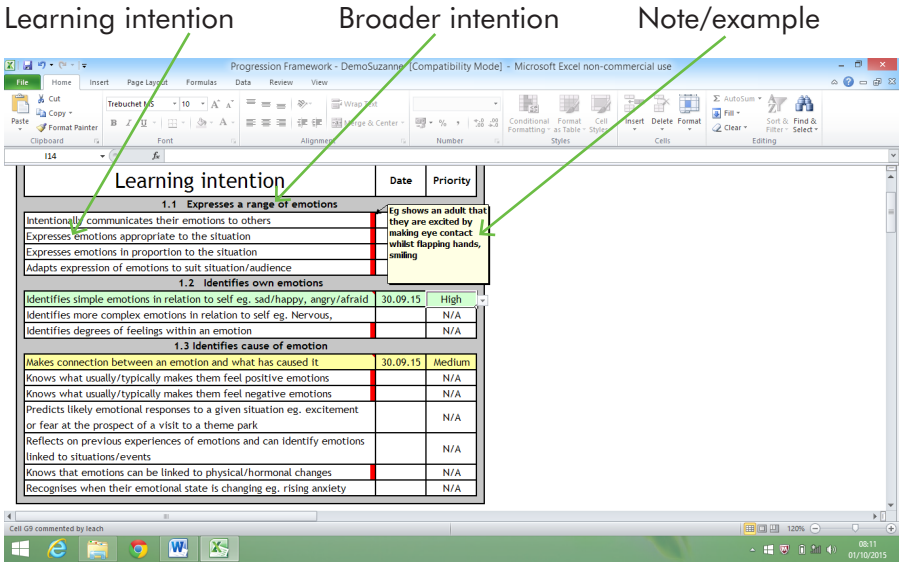
The 'Progress' page (see below) of each sub-area within the Framework contains some introductory guidance for the practitioner. It is recommended that this is referred to when setting priorities.

2.2 Identifying learning intentions

A key feature of the Progression Framework is a focus on the individual pupil and the facility to set specific priorities and evaluate progress based on individual learning needs with a recognition that pupils may have uneven or 'spiky' profiles with varying abilities across areas. It is very important that the Framework is NOT seen as a checklist of skills to be worked through. Throughout its materials the AET stresses the uniqueness of each learner with autism and one of the aims of the Framework is to provide a starting point for identifying individual priorities via consultation between key people, including parents and the pupils themselves. As part of this 'learning conversation' ways in which pupils can be supported towards achieving priorities ie provision planning, will need to be set out.

The Framework provides an extensive 'bank' of learning intentions based on an understanding of autism and the challenges that young people may face within education settings. It is by no means exhaustive and practitioners are encouraged to tailor the learning intentions according to each individual's needs. Where possible, intentions relate to 'in context' situations eg working in a group, making friends, having a conversation etc. and it is recommended that practitioners consider the *purpose* of the priorities identified in order to avoid the teaching of isolated skills. Also important is that the *number* of learning intentions set for each assessment period is kept manageable and realistic with an emphasis on the quality of provision planned in order to support pupils to make progress. In order to navigate the Framework more easily, sets of learning intentions have been grouped under broader intentions in the form of numbered headings, allowing users an 'at a glance' view of learning priorities that may be relevant to their pupils. Notes and examples are included alongside some learning intentions in order to provide more information for users where appropriate (See Fig. 1).

Fig. 1



Schools have a number of options for ways in which the Framework might be used. They may choose only to draw on the content of the Framework to inform existing procedures such as Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans, Individual Education Plans (IEPs) / Targeted Support Plans (TSPs) or Provision Maps. Or they may use learning intentions with existing progress measures within their schools. Or they may use the Framework as an interactive tool with the Progress Scale provided as described below.

It is for schools to decide how often they set and review learning intentions. Termly review is recommended but this is flexible. The interactive tool allows for progress to be tracked across 3 assessment periods which might make up the 3 terms of a school year, or 3 reviews of an EHC plan over a year.

3.USING THE PROGRESSION FRAMEWORK AS AN INTERACTIVE TOOL

As an EXCEL document the Progression Framework provides a number of features in relation to identifying learning intentions and measuring pupil progress. **Appendix 1** provides step-by-step instructions on use.

3.1 Identifying priorities – High, Medium, Low

This feature allows users to prioritise learning intentions as High (H), Medium (M) or Low (L) as within the AET Standards and Competencies (www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk). When identifying learning intentions for a pupil it is important that they are given a priority so that they are 'activated' within the Framework. However, some users may prefer to simply rate any selected priority as High until they have finished working on it.

Priorities identified may not necessarily focus on skills that are not yet developed. For some pupils the generalisation of an established skill may form a starting point (see Progress Scale) below.

3.2 Overview of 'active' learning intentions

This feature collates all learning intentions identified for an individual pupil on one page. As stated above this can be used as a basis for drawing up provision plans such as EHC plans or IEPs.

3.3 Setting a baseline

In order to demonstrate progress from starting point the Progression Framework requires a baseline to be set so that progress can be tracked over a year or other specified time period.

3.4 Recording progress using the Progress Scale

At the end of each term (or other time period) a judgement should be made as to the amount of progress made by a pupil towards a learning intention. It is important that information is gathered from all those who work with the pupil and that there is evidence to support the judgement which might take a range of forms (see below).

Progress is recorded against a scale (Fig. 2) which takes into account *progress towards* the consolidation of learning. Important for pupils on the autism spectrum is also the facility to record application or generalisation of learning across contexts or with different people. Again, this acknowledges the potential unevenness of pupils' profiles whereby skills may be present in certain situations but not in others. Discussion with all those working with the pupil is important in order to agree a consensus as to the extent to which a learning intention has been achieved. It is also recommended that schools agree procedures in order to moderate judgements. This could take the form of teachers meetings where examples of Progression Framework recording are compared and discussed.

Fig. 2

Not yet developed (NYD) Not present or only beginning to emerge. High level of prompt or support.
Developing (Dev) Evidence of progress, lower level of prompt or support. Sometimes spontaneous.
Established (Est) Is used frequently and maintained over time. Mostly independent / spontaneous, only occasional reminders.
Generalised (Gen) Consistently used and applied within range of settings/contexts and with a range of people. Independent and unprompted.

3.5 Descriptive recording and evidence

The 'Progress' pages within the Framework provide a space for written comments so that users can provide details of progress specific to the individual. This information can be used to report on progress and to inform planning for next steps.

In addition, users should consider ways in which evidence of progress might be made available in order to support judgements eg photos, observation reports, pupils' work, pupils' own evaluation. Evidence of progress should be referenced (or hyperlinked) within the Comments section.

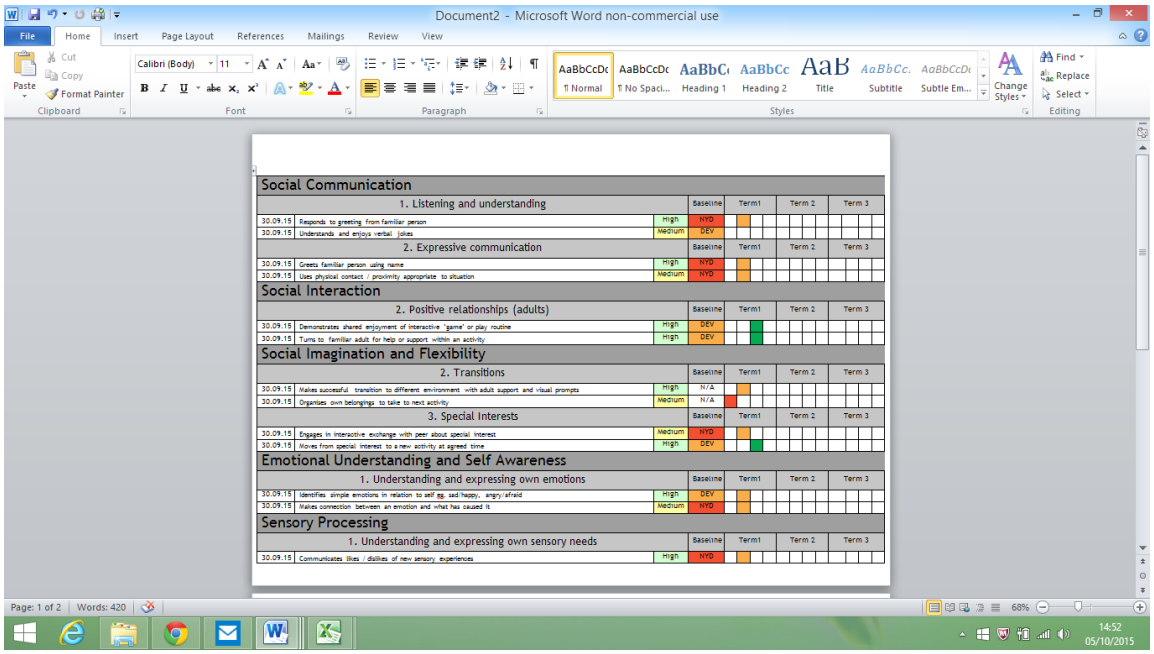
Schools should ensure that progress information serves a useful purpose either formatively ie to identify learning needs and next steps, or summatively ie to evaluate learning and progress and provide information to parents and other interested parties. In relation to inspection:

"OFSTED will not expect to see any particular type of assessment system in a school. It is important that each school develops a system that is consistent with its own curriculum and supports teaching and learning."

(Final report of the Commission on Assessment without Levels, September, 2015)

3.6 Overview of progress

The Overview page of the Framework provides an easily accessible 'at a glance' view of progress towards the learning intentions prioritised for an individual pupil. This page can be printed to support reporting to parents, to provide information for transition and as a starting point for the next year's planning. It also provides a useful resource for discussions with external agencies eg EHC partners or OFSTED. It will need to be supported by the descriptive recording and evidence referred to above.



3.7 Charts

The Progression Framework also provides a chart facility for a visual record of the progress made in each area or overall.

4. INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS AND PUPILS

With the introduction of Education, Health and Care plans (DfE/DoH, 2015) there is an emphasis on the involvement of pupils and parents in identifying outcomes and reviewing progress towards them through person-centred approaches.

The Progression Framework might provide a focus for such discussions and could be used for both identifying goals and evaluating progress with parents and pupils. Schools will need to consider ways in which pupil participation (including those with complex needs) can be ensured within this process. **Appendix 3** provides an example of how a sub-area of the Framework might be translated into 'I can' statements relevant to the pupil.

5. REFERENCES

See also Appendix 4 for a list of references and resources referred to when drawing up the Framework

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Appendix 1

Instructions for using the Progression Framework

These instructions provide a detailed 'How to…' guide for using the Progression Framework when downloaded as an EXCEL document.

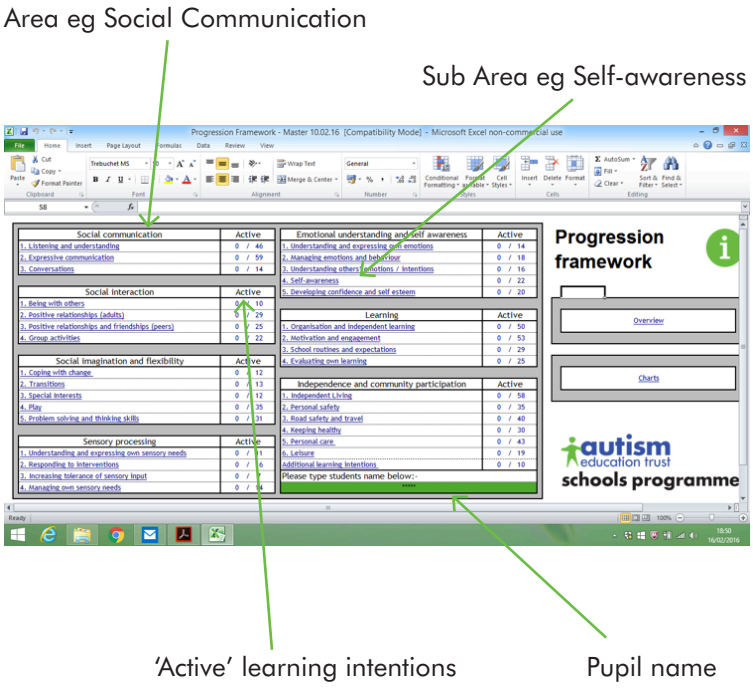
Home page and Progression Framework summary

1. Open up the EXCEL document which will take you straight to the **Title** page. To begin using click on the **Home** button. If the document has been used before it may open on the last page used, in which case click on the **Home** button.

   Note: when using the Framework for the first time a message may appear about 'macros' being disabled or about the document being 'read only'. You will need to click on 'Enable' in the box near the top of the page (eg Enable Content, Enable Editing etc) until this message nolonger shows. This may also occur within the 'Overview' page when used for the first time.

2. The **Home** page provides an overview of all the Progression Framework areas and sub-areas. It allows you to see the number of learning intentions available in each sub-area and, once in use, the number of learning intentions that have already been selected as priorities and are 'active' during that year (see '6' below)

Home page



3. Type the name of the pupil in the box at the bottom right of the Home page. This will be transferred to all pages. It is now also advisable to save the file with the students name and date. Go to **File, Save As** and give the file a name eg **JohnSmith2016**. The Progression Framework allows for 3 'assessment' periods. Once these have all been completed it is recommended that a new file is started from the blank Master (eg JohnSmith 2017).

Alternatively, the existing file can continue to be used but priorities from the previous year must be deselected by clicking on N/A in the Priority column on the planning page. New priorities can then be selected and will appear in the Overview page. Previous recording will remain in the Progress page.

Note: the Framework has been created in an early version of EXCEL (2003) to accommodate any versions that schools may have. When saving, a message about compatibility may appear. Click Continue to save.

4. Once you have identified a sub-area that is an area of priority for the pupil click on its title from the **Home** page eg Group activities (in the **Social Interaction** section)

   Note: the sub-group 'Additional learning intentions' allows the user to add in up to 10 additional learning intentions of their own specification over the year (or specified time period)

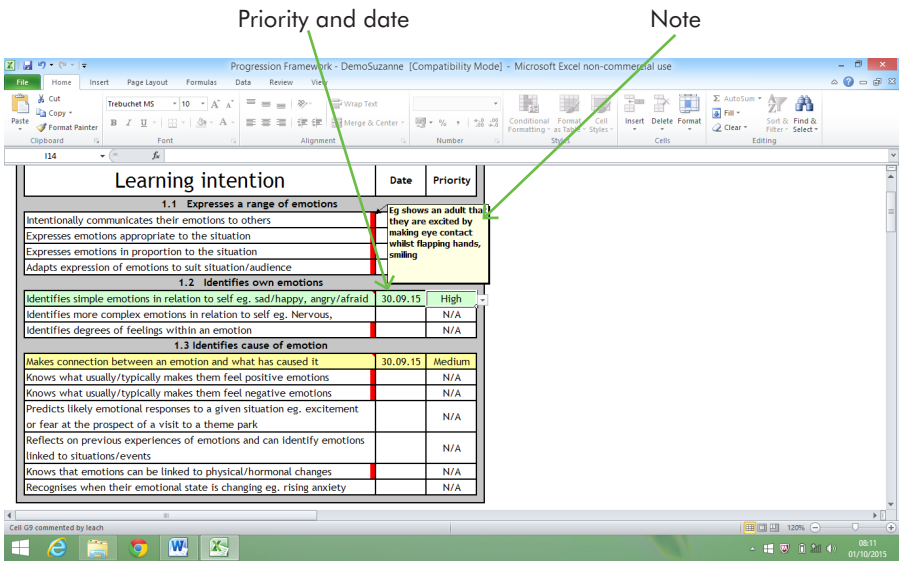
Setting priorities and baseline

5. Each sub-area has a **'planning'** page which allows you to see all the learning intentions within that area 'at a glance'. Learning intentions have been broadly grouped under headings to make them easier to access. The broader headings have also been written in a learning intention format but do not form part of the progress recording. They allow users to quickly 'drill down' to an area. Specific learning in this area can then be identified using the more detailed learning intentions. Some learning intentions include a **'note'** which may provide further clarification or an example. Holding your mouse over the red line will bring up the note. Some learning intentions (eg in the Social Communication area) include a drop down box to allow for a means of communication to be added eg sign, symbol etc. When selected this will transfer to the 'Progress' page and Overview.

6. To identify priorities for the pupil click on the **Priority** column and select **High, Medium** or **Low** from the drop down options. Also type in the **date** of when these priorities have been selected. This information will be transferred to the **'progress'** page (below).

   Important: When setting date please use the format **'09.10.15'** to ensure carry over to subsequent pages

Planning page

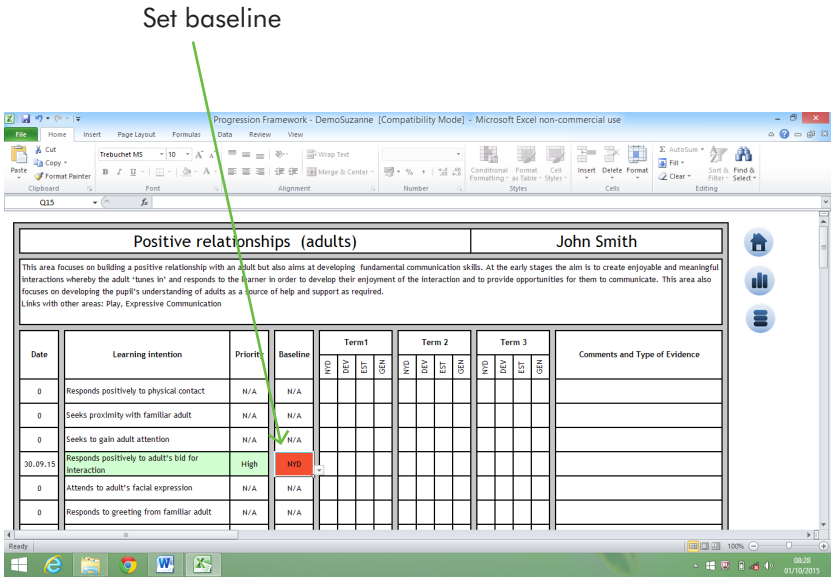


It is for schools to decide how often they set priorities and how they use the High, Medium and Low facility. This is an optional facility and some users may wish to simply use the 'High' priority option.

Important: Priorities and date must be set from the **Planning** page as this links to other areas within the Framework. Priorities and dates cannot be set or changed from the **Progress** page.

7. Now click on the button to take you to the **Progress** page for this area. The learning intentions you have selected will be highlighted. It is important that the pupil's starting point in relation to each learning intention is included here. Within the **Baseline** column on the left select a baseline description according to the **Progress Scale** (see below) from the drop down box.

Progress page



8. Now return to the **Home** page and repeat the above for any other areas that have been identified as priorities for learning for the pupil.

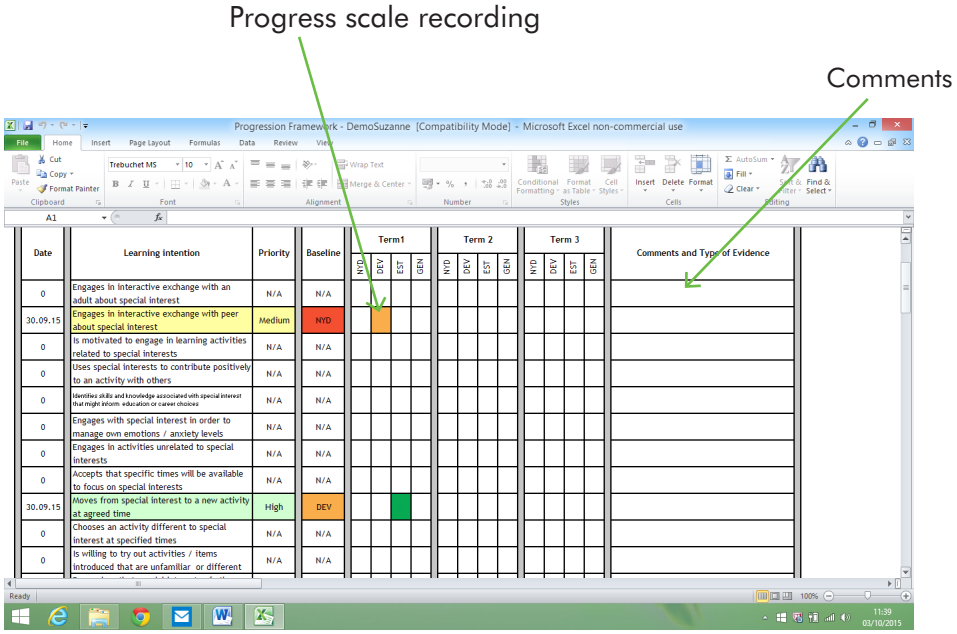
   Once you have finished setting your learning intentions return to the **Home** page where you will see the number of **'Active'** learning intentions under each sub-area. For an overview of all learning intentions prioritised click on **'Overview'** at the right side of the page (see '14' below).

Recording progress

10. Schools will need to decide the time period over which progress towards learning intentions are reviewed and recorded. The facility for recording across 3 time periods is included ie Term 1, Term 2, Term 3. These headings can be changed within the Overview page (see '15' below)

11. To record progress within a 'Term' select the relevant description from the **Progress Scale** (below) and click on **'Y'** (Yes). A colour will appear in the box which provides a visual record of progress.

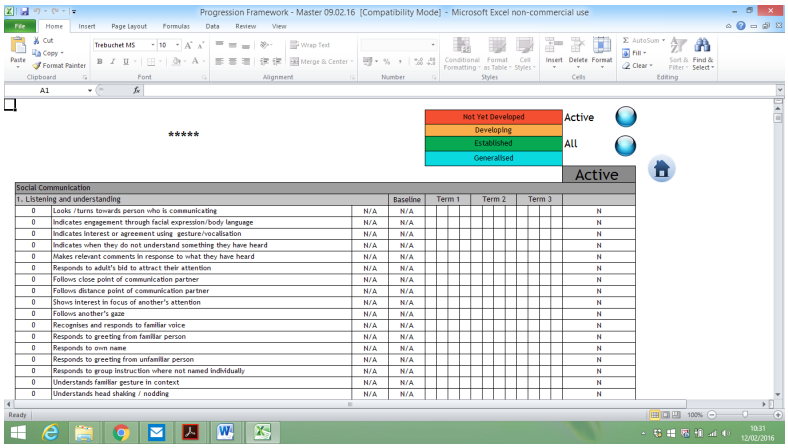
12. There is also a box available for written **Comments** and to signpost examples of **Evidence.** Again, schools will need to agree expectations for this type of descriptive recording and it is essential that any information recorded is useful, either in relation to reporting of progress or in order to inform future planning. Note: comments included within the Comments box can be extended as far as needed. It is recommended that comments are dated.



Overview

13. The **Overview** page is accessed from the Home page and its main purpose is to provide a summary of learning intentions prioritised during the specified time period and progress recorded. It also provides an overview of all learning intentions in list form. Click on the **All** button to view.

Overview (All)



14. To provide a summary of priorities and progress for the individual pupil click on the **'Active'** button

    Active

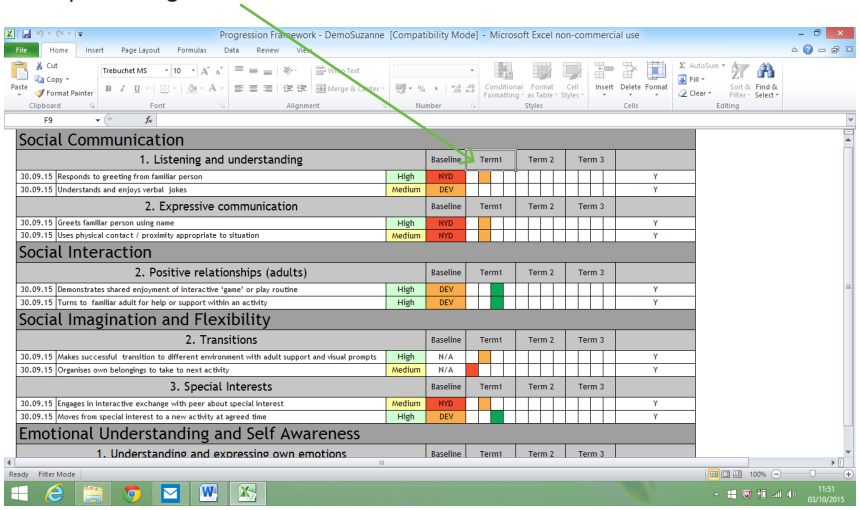
    Note: the active button must be refreshed each time a learning intention is added as a priority in order to update the overview list.

15. The time periods used can also be adjusted within this page by clicking on the 'Term' boxes. **It is recommended that dates are added** so that time scales from baseline are clear.

Note: Dates must be set from the 'All' rather than the 'Active' page within the Overview.

Overview of active priorities and progress for individual pupil

Time period eg term and/or date

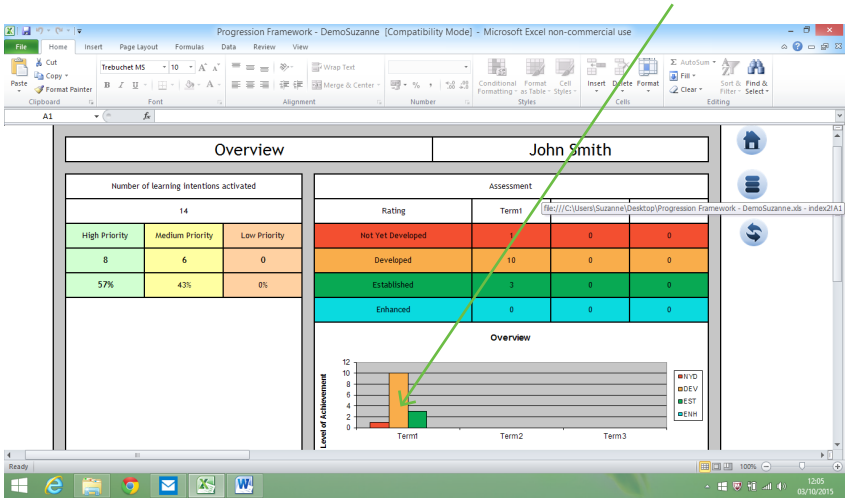


Charts

16. A **visual summary** of progress in each area and across areas can also be viewed within the charts section accessible from the Home page. Charts show the type of progress made within each area each term according to the **progress scale**. There is also an overview of progress across areas presented in chart form.

Charts page

Progress within Term 1



17. Also available in the **Charts** section is a **summary** of each area which can be used to identify areas of focus for those unfamiliar with the content. Sub-areas can be accessed directly from this page.

Summary of content of Social Interaction area

Social Interaction
1. Being with others
1.1 Tolerates the presence of others
1.2 Engages in shared activity
2. Positive relationships (adults)
2.1 Responds positively to familiar adult
2.2 Engages in interactive exchange
2.3 Shares attention focus
2.4 Accepts support from an adult
3. Positive relationships and friendships (peers)
3.1 Initiates interaction with peers
3.2 Engages positively in interaction with peer/s
3.3 Takes account of others' interests / needs / feelings within interactions
4. Group activities
4.1 Is motivated to join group
4.2 Attends to focus of group
4.3 Participates in group activity
4.4 Is aware of self as part of group
4.5 Understands and conforms to expectations of working in a group

Printing

18. Although the EXCEL version of the Framework is designed to be used electronically it is recognised that some practitioners may want a paper copy of certain pages eg the Overview page at the end of a 3 term period. The Print Area of the Overview page has been set to allow for ease of printing. To print other pages you will need to select the print area required. Since printer settings vary it may be necessary to seek advice from your administration or IT team. A useful facility is **Fit on one page** setting within the Printer settings. Margins may also need adjusting. Alternatively it may be beneficial to copy the selected part of the document to a **Word** document which can then be resized for printing.

Progress scale

Not yet developed (NYD) Not present or only beginning to emerge. High level of prompt or support.

Developing (Dev) Evidence of progress, lower level of prompt or support. Sometimes spontaneous.

Established (Est) Is used frequently and maintained over time. Mostly independent / spontaneous, only occasional reminders.

Generalised (Gen) Consistently used and applied within range of settings/contexts and with a range of people. Independent and unprompted.

Appendix 2

Social Communication – Expressive communication; Listening and understanding; Conversations

Social Interaction – Being with others; Positive Relationships (adults); Positive relationships and friendships (peers); Group activities

Social Imagination and Flexibility – Coping with change; Transitions; Special Interests; Play; Problem solving and thinking skills

Emotional Understanding and Self Awareness – Understanding and expressing own emotions; Managing emotions and behaviour; Understanding others' emotions / intentions; Self-awareness; Developing confidence and self esteem

Sensory Processing – Understanding and expressing own sensory needs; Responding to interventions; Increasing tolerance of sensory input; Managing own sensory needs

Learning – Organisation and independent learning; Motivation and engagement ; School routines and expectations; Evaluating own learning

Independence and Community Participation – Independent living; Personal safety; Road safety and travel; Keeping healthy; Personal care; Leisure

Appendix 3

Example of pupil involvement in evaluating progress

My Friendships

I can…..

- Start a conversation with another pupil that I know
- Use a greeting that shows how well I know someone
- Take turns talking and listening to another pupil about something that we are both interested in
- Play a game with another pupil
- Help another pupil with something they find difficult
- Listen to others' ideas and try them out
- Recognise when another pupil is hurt or upset and get help if needed

Appendix 4

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