



ESSENCE-observation in preschool

To be used in assessment of preschool children with suspected development-related difficulties

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How should this material be used?

The italicised observation points are intended to be focused on primarily during the observation itself. The non-italicised points are prioritised in the discussion with the responsible teacher at preschool, but the observed areas should also be broadly checked with the teachers' perception of the child.

Situations that should be prioritised for observation are:

- free activity (play situation)
- transition to organised activity (e.g., assembly)
- organised group activity (e.g., assembly)
- preparation for outdoor activities (dressing)



Background to the material

The observation material is designed based on areas that may be connected to difficulties in children in the area of **ESSENCE** (Early Symptomatic Syndromes Eliciting Neurodevelopmental Clinical Examinations) (Gillberg, 2010). In short, ESSENCE means that it is important to pay attention at an early age to difficulties with, for example, communication, perception, activity regulation, etc. The aim of early detection of possible difficulties is to increase possibilities of focusing on appropriate support measures, not least in terms of adaptations in preschools for children in need of special support.

The areas that have been scientifically evaluated and compared with the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS) Modules 1 & 2 are included in the observation. The results of the study showed good agreement between the preschool observation and the ADOS conducted at the clinic.

Article: Westman Andersson G., Miniscalco C., Johansson U., Gillberg C. (2013). Autism in toddlers: Can observation in preschool yield the same information as autism assessment in a specialised clinic? *The Scientific World Journal*, vol. 2013: Article ID 384745



ESSENCE-observation in preschool

Date:	
Child's name:	
Educator's name:	
Preschool and dept:	
Telephone:	
Number of children:	
Number of staff:	

Italicised: For investigators to prioritise during the observation itself

Non-italicised: Discussions with staff

INTERPLAY	Do not agree	Agree to a certain degree	Agree
<i>Does not respond with eye contact</i>			
<i>Does not seek eye contact when attempting to make contact with others</i>			
<i>The eye contact is poor</i>			
<i>Difficulty making contact with others</i>			
<i>Rarely makes contact with others</i>			
<i>Does not initiate shared attention, i.e., does not seek another's gaze - looks towards something (may include pointing at the object) to share an experience</i>			
<i>Does not respond to shared attention i.e., when someone else initiates the above described</i>			
<i>Does not respond to one's own name</i>			
<i>Does not share pleasure with others in an activity e.g., laughs with others, not just at the activity itself</i>			
<i>Boundaryless towards child/adult i.e., can come too close or not differentiate between known and unknown people</i>			
<i>Does not show things to others</i>			
<i>Interplay is perceived to be poor</i>			

INTERPLAY (continued)	Do not agree	Agree to a certain degree	Agree
Difficulty playing in a reciprocal manner, for example difficult to let others decide or has difficulty with own initiatives			
Does not play alongside/parallel play			
Plays only/mostly running games with others			
Difficulty with interactive play with others			
Difficult to take part in gathering or group activities			
Is often involved in conflicts			
Appears to be unable to see one's part in a conflict			
Does not seek comfort			
Interplay occurs but on own terms			
Shows limited interest in interplay			
Do you have anything else to add?			
COMMUNICATION	Do not agree	Agree to a certain degree	Agree
<i>Does not speak</i>			
<i>Describe child's sentence length (how many words are used)</i>			
<i>Speech is not communicative</i>			
<i>Has difficulty taking part in reciprocal communication</i>			
<i>Difficulty directing one's communication to others</i>			
<i>Uses unusually advanced words for age</i>			
<i>Has an unusual grammar for that age</i>			
<i>Direct echolalia</i>			
<i>Delayed echolalia</i>			
<i>Creates own words which do not appear to mean anything</i>			
<i>Does not use communicative gestures</i>			
<i>Does not point (coordinated with eye contact)</i>			
<i>Gestures and facial expressions are exaggerated and can appear learned</i>			
<i>Unusual volume, intonation, rhythm and so on in speech</i>			

COMMUNICATION (continued)	Do not agree	Agree to a certain degree	Agree
<i>Does not direct varying facial expressions to others</i>			
<i>Uses others' hand/body as tool for help</i>			
Difficult to ask for help (with or without words)			
Difficult to recount e.g., what has happened earlier			
Difficult to follow verbal instructions in familiar situations			
Difficult to follow verbal instructions in new situations			
Does not imitate others			
Do you have anything else to add?			
BEHAVIOUR	Do not agree	Agree to a certain degree	Agree
<i>Has repetitive movements for example waving of hands, jumping and so on when happy or frustrated</i>			
<i>Walks on toes</i>			
<i>Demonstrates limited variation of interests during observation (can be certain toys or areas of interest)</i>			
<i>Shows unusual interest in parts of things</i>			
<i>Demonstrates involuntary sounds or movements (tics)</i>			
<i>Suspect absenteeism attacks</i>			
Exhibits difficulties when it comes to transitions			
Has periods of intensive/limited interests			
Becomes worried when things change			
Creates own routines/rituals			
Demonstrates compulsive behaviour			
Is usually attentive to details			
Lines up and sorts more than creative play			
Cannot imitate activities			
Gets easily worried when demands are made			
Becomes unruly when frustrated. Describe how?			
Becomes easily frustrated or has outbursts			
Do you have anything else to add?			

PERCEPTION	Do not agree	Agree to a certain degree	Agree
Demonstrates unusual reactions for different sensory impressions (e.g., sound, light, taste, touch).What?			
Appears to have difficulty judging distances or how hard for example one can touch others			
PLAY	Do not agree	Agree to a certain degree	Agree
<i>Does not play exploratory games (explores)</i>			
<i>Does not play with toys the way they are intended</i>			
<i>Does not play spontaneous and creative pretend play</i>			
<i>Only imitates others play without coming up with own initiatives</i>			
Same game occurs frequently			
CONCENTRATION	Do not agree	Agree to a certain degree	Agree
<i>Cannot remain focused on an activity</i>			
<i>Appears to have difficulty listening to what others are saying</i>			
<i>Suspected hearing loss</i>			
<i>Easily distracted</i>			
ACTIVITY LEVEL/IMPULSIVITY	Do not agree	Agree to a certain degree	Agree
<i>Has a high activity level, often runs around</i>			
<i>Has difficulty sitting still even if it does not mean running around</i>			
<i>Often fiddles with things</i>			
<i>Unusually passive</i>			
<i>Often appears to be (in one's own world)</i>			
<i>Acts impulsively</i>			
<i>Becomes easily over excited</i>			
<i>Talks unusually much</i>			
<i>Mood swings</i>			
Do you have anything else to add?			

DAILY LIVING SKILLS	Do not agree	Agree to a certain degree	Agree
Does not eat varied food			
Does not eat independently			
Cannot manage dressing			
Cannot manage toilet visits			
Uses nappies (UK)/ diapers (US)			
MOTOR SKILLS	Do not agree	Agree to a certain degree	Agree
<i>Clumsy gross motor skills</i>			
<i>Clumsy fine motor skills</i>			
<i>Unusual patterns of movement</i>			
LEARNING	Do not agree	Agree to a certain degree	Agree
<i>Does not give the impression of more or less being on the same developmental level as one's peers</i>			

SPECIAL EDUCATION ADAPTIONS

(Use the following main headings, but write notes on separate paper for more space)

1. Supervision of special education teacher or other
2. Support from adults in play and routine situations
3. Communication support, clarification
4. Adaptions to educational environment
5. Extra added staff resources
6. Do you have anything else to add?

SUMMARY

Compile the number of points in each area - where "Do not agree" means 0 points, "Agree to a certain degree" means 1 point and "agree" means 2 points. Then, calculate the percentage to see in which areas any difficulties predominate.

	Do not agree (0 points)	Agree to a certain degree (1 point)	Agree (2 points)	Total/ Domain	Max points/ domain that can be reached	%
Interplay					44	
Communication					40	
Behaviour					34	
Perception					4	
Play					10	
Concentration					8	
Activity level					18	
Daily living skills					10	
Motor skills					6	
Learning					2	