

C HAPTER 2

How to achieve the Every Child Matters Standards

This chapter outlines the process of working towards achieving the Every Child Matters Standards. Using the analogy of a journey it covers:

- the two routes that can be taken, based on the educational setting's context and current position with regard to implementing Every Child Matters;
- the cycle of school improvement planning and self-evaluation underpinning the achievement of the Every Child Matters Standards Award;
- the programme of support offered by the external ECM Standards assessor and the expectations at each stage of the assessment process.

Introduction

Educational settings will undoubtedly benefit immensely from working towards achieving the Every Child Matters Standards. The process of evidence gathering will enable the individual setting or cluster group of settings to focus on improving practice in relation to meeting the Every Child Matters five well-being outcome requirements. It will also provide the necessary checks and balances to support educational settings in implementing the Every Child Matters Change for Children programme.

Through offering the potential for external assessment and accreditation, the ECM Standards enable educational settings to gain recognition for their work and achievements in the area of Every Child Matters.

The route map

Educational settings working towards achieving the ECM Standards will be at varying stages in implementing the Every Child Matters change agenda. As a result of this factor, one of two

routes can be adopted by the setting or cluster on their journey towards obtaining the ECM Standards Award.

Route 1

Route 1 is appropriate for those settings or clusters who consider they have already made a very good start in implementing ECM policy and provision. For example, they may be a full-service extended school or a children's centre, offering a good range of personalised learning opportunities, wraparound care and personalised services to children, young people and their families. If this is the case, then they will be well placed to work on gathering evidence on all twelve ECM Standards and to consider achieving the ECM Standards Award over a period of between one and two years.

Route 2

This second route is ideally suited to those educational settings or clusters who have only just begun to raise awareness about Every Child Matters with stakeholders, and who are still seeking to establish productive partnerships in order to extend and enhance personalised services and personalised learning opportunities. In such an instance, these educational settings would be well advised to work on no more than four ECM Standards within a period of twelve months, completing their evidence-gathering process covering all twelve Standards in three years.

Whichever route is selected for the journey towards achieving all the ECM Standards, they are both underpinned by the improvement planning and self-evaluation processes necessary to meet the requirements of an Ofsted inspection and a New Relationship with Schools single conversation with the School Improvement Partner (SIP).

Improvement planning, self-evaluation and Every Child Matters

Figure 2.1 illustrates the sequence of improvement planning and self-evaluation stages that are followed when working towards achieving the ECM Standards.

Stage 1 – Baseline current position: how are we doing with Every Child Matters?

An initial consultation with stakeholders and an audit is carried out using the ECM Standards Initial Audit Framework Summary to establish a baseline, which indicates current thinking, practice and progress within the educational setting or across the cluster, in relation to informing future Every Child Matters policy, planning and provision.

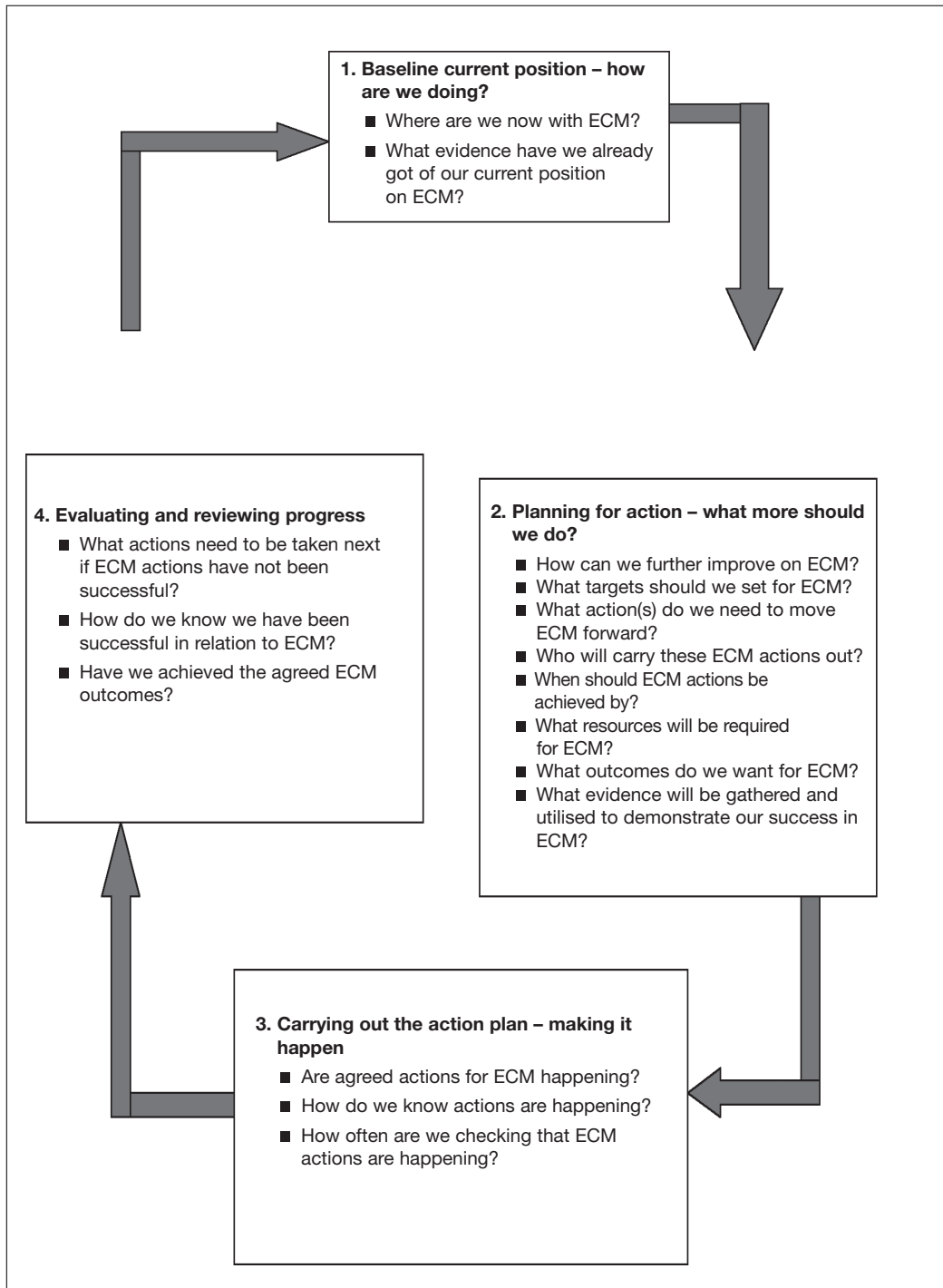


Figure 2.1 Improvement planning and self-evaluation underpinning the ECM Standards
 (Adapted from Birmingham City Council Education Service, 2002: 11., © BBC.)

Stage 2: Planning for action – what more should we do for Every Child Matters?

This stage requires the ECM priorities identified from the audit requiring further development and improvement for the year, to be clarified in a plan of action which forms part of the educational setting's development plan.

Stage 3: Carrying out the action plan for Every Child Matters – making it happen

The senior manager responsible for overseeing Every Child Matters within the educational setting, along with the six or twelve key staff each responsible for leading, monitoring, evaluating and reviewing progress made in one or two of the twelve ECM standards, regularly check that agreed and planned actions take place. Evidence of the actions taken and of the progress made towards meeting the ECM priorities on the development plan, are fed back to the leadership team and the governing body or management board, as well as being included in the ECM portfolio of evidence.

Stage 4: Evaluating and reviewing progress for Every Child Matters

This stage of the process focuses on self-evaluation of Every Child Matters Standards, i.e. judging the impact of actions taken on the ECM well-being outcomes for children and young people. It will confirm, through the ongoing gathering of evidence, whether the educational setting or cluster has achieved the expected outcomes and met the success criteria in relation to the ECM priorities on the development plan. In addition, it will identify ECM strengths as well as areas for further improvement in Every Child Matters. This self-evaluation and review of progress will be recorded against the ECM Standards descriptors.

The process towards achieving the Every Child Matters Standards Award

In order to enable an educational setting to achieve the ECM Standards, one of two routes can be pursued.

Individual educational settings and the Every Child Matters Standards

Where a local authority or a higher education institution or any other external accreditation organisation have been commissioned as the external ECM Standards assessor, an individual educational setting can buy into the assessment scheme, which will provide:

- an initial visit by an external ECM Standards assessor who will outline and explain the process and procedures towards achieving the Standards Award to the setting's leadership team/leader, advise on ECM marketing and the action planning process and negotiate a contract for consultancy and support;

HOW TO ACHIEVE THE EVERY CHILD MATTERS STANDARDS

- an initial INSET session for staff and other key stakeholders in the educational setting/cluster on the ECM Standards process, explaining how to use the ECM Standards Framework;
- access to telephone support, and/or on-line support and e-mail conferencing from the ECM Standards Team;
- an interim visit from the external assessor to the educational setting in order to review progress towards meeting the criteria for each of the twelve ECM Standards and in meeting the ECM priorities set on the action plan/development plan;
- advice to the educational setting/cluster as to whether and when they are likely to be ready to be externally assessed for the ECM Standards Award;
- an allocated external assessor(s) from the ECM Standards Team who will request the ECM portfolio of evidence and other key accompanying ECM documentation two weeks before undertaking the on-site final ECM assessment visit;
- an agreed date for the day visit to the educational setting or cluster, with a programme outlining the first-hand evidence the external assessor wishes to collect, which can include observation of ECM practice and provision, interviews with key stakeholders and examples of children and young people's ECM achievements, including data analysis;
- four weeks following the on-site assessment visit, a full report from the assessor confirming success or otherwise in fully meeting all the twelve ECM Standards;
- an ECM Standards Certificate which will be awarded at a local authority or regional awards ceremony to the educational settings who successfully and fully meet all twelve ECM Standards.

Clusters and the Every Child Matters Standards

One educational setting within an Education Improvement Partnership (EIP), a federation, a cluster or a networked learning community, for example, will take a lead role in implementing the ECM Standards across a group of local educational settings, which may comprise a children's centre, a primary and secondary school, a special school and a pupil referral unit. Together, the group of educational settings can work towards achieving an ECM Cluster Standards Award, once external assessment and accreditation have been secured, following the same assessment process as for an individual setting.

Each setting within the cluster, EIP, federation or networked learning community would have to achieve the ECM Standards 1 and 2 at embedded level, and the other ten ECM Standards between them, across the settings. The eventual goal, however, would be for each individual educational setting within the cluster to achieve all twelve ECM Standards at embedded level.

Validity of the Every Child Matters Standards Award

Once an educational setting or cluster of settings has achieved the ECM Standards Award, this becomes valid for three years. After this three-year period the setting or cluster is recommended to undertake an ECM review and to reapply for a renewal external assessment from the ECM Standards Team. The same requirements have to be met as those undertaken for the first ECM Standards Award.

Points to remember

- Giving external recognition for achievements in Every Child Matters outcomes is reliant on gathering in-depth telling evidence from a range of stakeholders, to present to an external ECM Standards assessor.
- An individual setting, or a small group of educational settings in a cluster, will need to decide the length of time they judge to be reasonable in which to work towards achieving the ECM Standards award within a three-year period.
- The ECM Standards assessment process readily fits into the regular improvement and self-evaluation annual cycle.
- The ECM Standards external programme of support, monitoring and final assessment provides a robust quality assurance check, tailored to the context of the educational setting or cluster of settings.