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## **Aims of the film and its use**

The pack is designed to help students learn the skill of target child observation. The target child method is used to follow one particular child in a group of children. Everything is recorded in relation to that particular child. This is a very useful method of observation but does need practice to become proficient. This tape provides footage of 5 children in an everyday classroom situation. It is versatile and can be used as a whole with all the provided information or in sections to fit your own teaching style and needs. Although this is only a short sequence it does show how much information can be gleaned from a seemingly uneventful ten minutes.

### **The pack consists of:**

- ◆ Empty target child sheet for making observations.
- ◆ Filled in sheets for each of the two target children observed in the dvd providing the same information as that seen on the screen.
- ◆ Evaluations of the two target children observed.
- ◆ Copies of the drawings of all five children.

### **The dvd is structured as follows:**

#### **◆ Complete uninterrupted sequence**

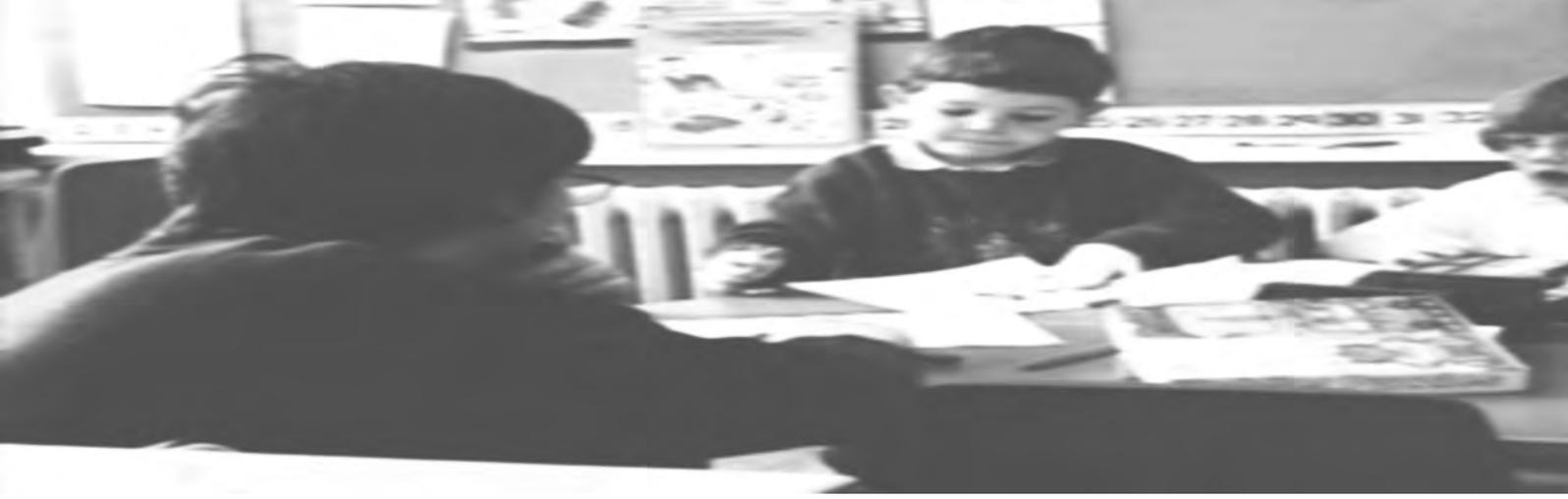
An uninterrupted 10 minute sequence with introductory information about the setting and details of children. The sequence is of five 4 and 5 year olds, in a class full of children, seated around a table working on the task of drawing a picture of themselves doing something helpful for someone else. There is one teacher.

Each child is identified by a letter on the screen. Their age and sex is as follows:-  
Child A boy 5.4 Child B boy 5.2 Child C girl 5.6 Child D boy 4.11 Child E girl 4.11

The 10 minute sequence is presented initially without any interruption so that it can be used to practice the target child technique with any starting objective you wish, (e.g. social behaviour, concentration, language development etc.)

#### **◆ Playback with observations of Child C recorded**

The 10 minute sequence is now repeated. This time there is a detailed example of a target child observation written on the screen using the same headings from the target child observation sheet in this booklet. We have chosen here to look particularly at social development. Minute by minute we record what Child C is doing and as much of the language used as possible. We identify which child the behaviour recorded is directed



towards or who is spoken to. In this example the task column is the same throughout - drawing a picture. The social column is the type of social contact the child is engaged in - in this case 'small group' except where the teacher is also present in which case it is 'small group plus teacher'. This section finishes with an evaluation of the information collected.

♦ **Playback with observations of Child D recorded**

The same sequence is repeated this time observing and evaluating a different target child.

♦ **The children's drawings**

The drawings produced by the two target children at the end of the session are shown on the screen with an evaluation of the level of development they show.

## **About making target child observations:**

Choose one of the five children to be the target child and before starting the observation draw up an observation sheet with a grid (or photocopy the sheet provided in this booklet). Decide on abbreviations for words that are likely to be needed often to speed up note taking. A key to the abbreviations should be included with the observation. In the activity column write what the child does within each minute. In the language column write down as much as possible of what the child says; conversation directed towards the child can also be added. The task and social columns can be filled in after the observation has been made. The task column is the actual task the child is involved in and the final column is the type of social contact the child is engaged in, i.e. solitary, parallel, small or large group etc.

### **About our observations:**

Our observations are intended as a guide for students – they aren't the definitive recording of this sequence!

### **What our abbreviations mean:**

$\mathcal{TC}$  = target child (the child you choose to observe)

$\mathcal{T}_e$  = teacher

$\mathcal{Sg}$  = small group

$\rightarrow$  = the child directs behaviour or speaks to another

$\leftrightarrow$  = two children interact with each other



**Child:** C **Age:** 5yrs 6m **Sex:** F **Date:** 24/3/98 **Time:** 2.00pm  
**Aim:** To observe the current social & emotional abilities of a 5yrs 6m year old girl

Min	Activity	Language	Task	Social
1	Draws  Rubs out	(E brings TC a rubber) TC → E "thank you" TC → all "I'm doing kisses" (why?) TC → A "I love Mrs Ward that's why" TC and E laugh.	Draw picture.	sg
2	Rubs out Shows paper to B  Rubs out	TC → B "look I've done kisses" TC ↔ B argue about kisses. (B calls → Te) TC → Te "I love you ... done kisses". (Te asks what the picture is about). TC → Te "I have to rub it out".	Draw	sg  sg & Te
3	Gives rubber to E Sucks thumb Watches E  Puts hand up Takes rubber	TC → E asks for rubber back.  TC ↔ B talk about his picture. TC → all asks who likes B's best "I love yours". TC → E ".... finished?"	Draw	sg
4	Rubs out.  Watches all. Rubs out.	TC → B about B's picture. TC → B " ... get your crayons?" TC → all about her rubbing out.	Draw	sg



Min	Activity	Language	Task	Social
5	Plays with rubber (D takes rubber)  All investigate crayons	TC → D "no, no Martin!" A ↔ TC both tell D off.	Draw	sg
6	Finds rubber rubs out	B ↔ TC have a conversation about "privates"	Draw	sg
7	Rubs out	(B & E talk about party) TC joins in - spells "P.A.T!" TC → B about her rubbing out. (Te says talk to neighbour about picture) TC listens to Te	Draw	sg
8		(follows Te's instructions) TC → B about own picture TC ↔ B talk about swimming. TC → Te "I haven't been to swimming lessons".	Draw	sg & Te
9	Watches all rubs out	TC → Te "I haven't done mine ..." TC → all "I've done lots of love"	Draw	sg & Te
10	Draws picture	TC → B "... me who was a baby" TC → all about what she is drawing	Draw	sg



## Evaluation

### Evaluation of observation of target child C (Girl 5 years 6 months)

The observation shows that our target child is a friendly and confident child. She frequently initiates conversation and speaks to everyone in the group during the session and also addresses the group as a whole. Her social confidence is further illustrated by the way she speaks to the teacher without being asked each time the teacher joins the group as seen in minutes 2, 8 & 9.

She shows a caring attitude to others by the way she responds to B about his work – taking the initiative by asking the whole group what they think of B's picture and voting her own approval by putting her hand up (minute 3).

She shows a developing understanding of rules by the way she reacts to D when he takes a rubber in minute 5. She herself reveals knowledge of socially acceptable behaviour by asking for things before taking them as in minute 3.

She doesn't appear to be satisfied with her own work as she spends most of the time rubbing it out. However she responds well to the teacher's request to "tell your neighbour what your picture's about". In minute 8 she describes how she "let Kimberly and Sam watch the television".

From this short observation our target child seems to be an example of a child whose social development and behaviour is as expected from a child of her age. She appears to be well balanced and sociable. She exhibits a sense of fair play and seems to understand social rules.

Observations can point to possible difficulties – why the constant rubbing out? - is it a real problem in completing tasks?



**Child:** D **Age:** 4yrs 11m **Sex:** M **Date:** 24/3/98 **Time:** 2.00pm

**Aim:** To observe the current social & emotional abilities of a 4yrs 11m year old boy

Min	Activity	Language	Task	Social
1	Play with pencil watches all draws watches C		Draw picture.	sg
2	Watches C watches all	(B → TC "do you want something Martin?") TC → B "No" moves back from B	Draw	sg  sg & Te
3	Watches E watches all draws watches all		Draw	sg
4	Plays with rubber watches all gets crayon		Draw	sg
5	Takes rubber from C smiles  watches all	(C → TC "No, no Martin!") (A and C tell TC off) No response	Draw	sg



Min	Activity	Language	Task	Social
6	<i>Watches all</i>		<i>Draw</i>	<i>sg</i>
7	<i>Watches all</i>	<i>(Te says talk to neighbour about picture) TC listens to Te No response</i>	<i>Draw</i>	<i>sg</i>
8	<i>Draws (TC out of view)</i>  <i>"</i>		<i>Draw</i>	<i>sg</i>  <i>sg &amp; Te</i>
9	<i>(TC out of view) plays with pencils</i>	<i>Te → TC "Martin?" TC → Te starts to talk (C interrupts) Te ↔ TC "Martin what's yours about?" "I'm helping my mam to make the tea" Te repeats answer "lovely"</i>	<i>Draw</i>	<i>sg &amp; Te</i>
10	<i>Draws watches C</i>	<i>(E → TC "me and Martin are the same ... helping mams to make the tea") TC → E nods and smiles</i>	<i>Draw</i>	<i>sg</i>



## Evaluation

### **Evaluation of observation of target child D (Boy 4 years 11 months)**

This observation shows that our target child is quiet – never initiating conversation although possessing adequate listening and answering skills as shown in minute 9 when he responds to the teacher's question about the nature of his drawing.

He spends most of his time watching the rest of the group, easily distracted from his task. He only seems to do his drawing after an intervention from the teacher as in the 3rd, 8th and 10th minutes.

His interactions with the other children is minimal and very non-assertive – shown in minute 2 where he answers with one word and draws back when spoken to. He shows a limited range of emotions illustrated by his lack of response to being chastised by the others in minute 5. However he seems a pleasant child who interacts appropriately by smiling and nodding – as in minute 10.

Our target child would appear to be quite immature for his age, his social development being more what would be expected of a three year old – so although he appears to be affectionate and tries to please he does not exhibit a typical 4 (almost 5) year old's increasing confidence and self assertion with his peers.

The teacher might be aware of the wider picture e.g. the family structure and information about the family home – in this case child D lives in an isolated rural area.

**Child:**  
**Aim:**

**Age:**

**Sex:**

**Date:**

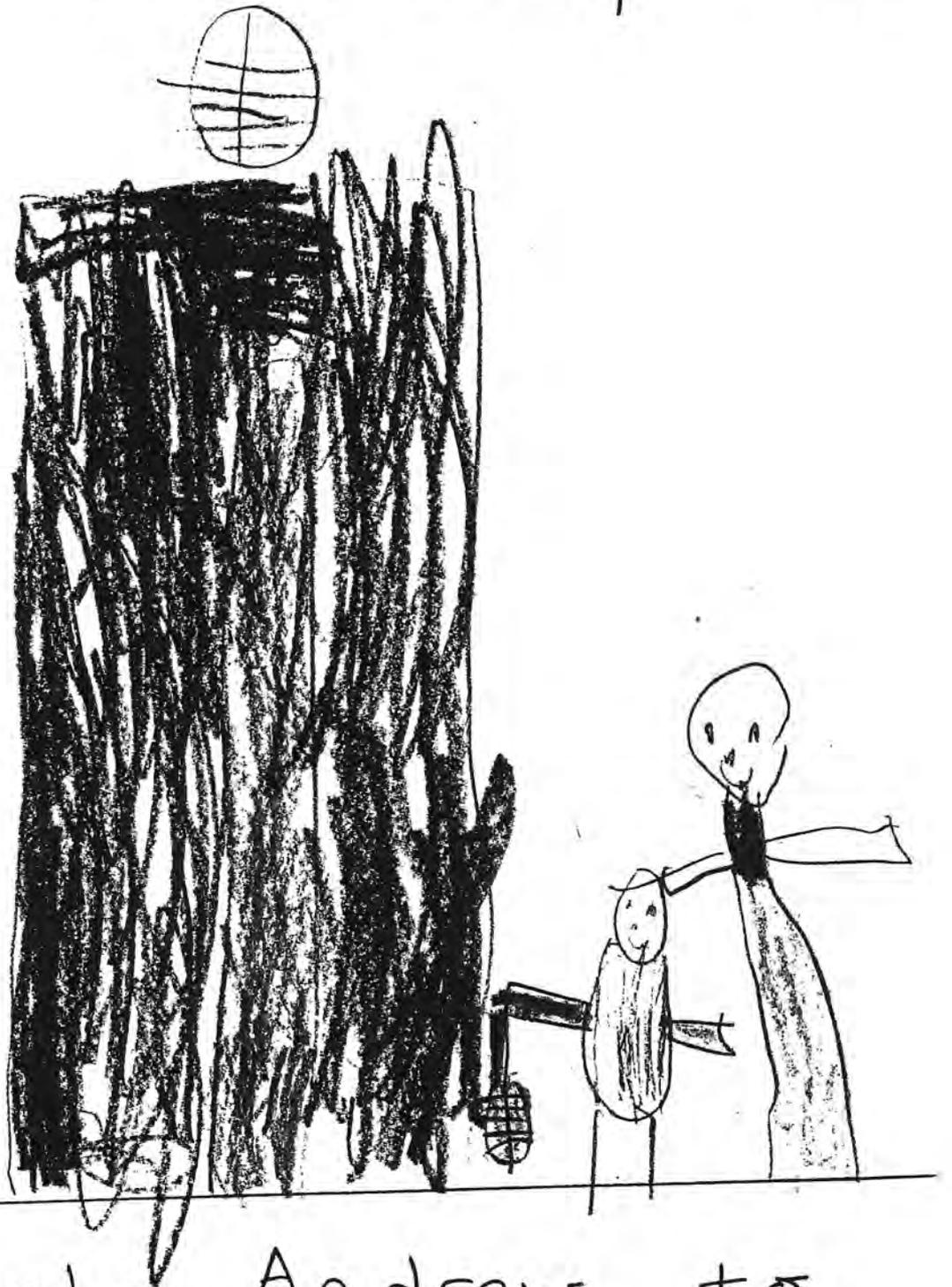
**Time:**

<b>MIN</b>	<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>LANGUAGE</b>	<b>TASK</b>	<b>SOCIAL</b>

CHILD A

I like to help.

24/3/98



I help Andrew to  
I h e - P Andrew t o  
catch a ball.  
catch a ball

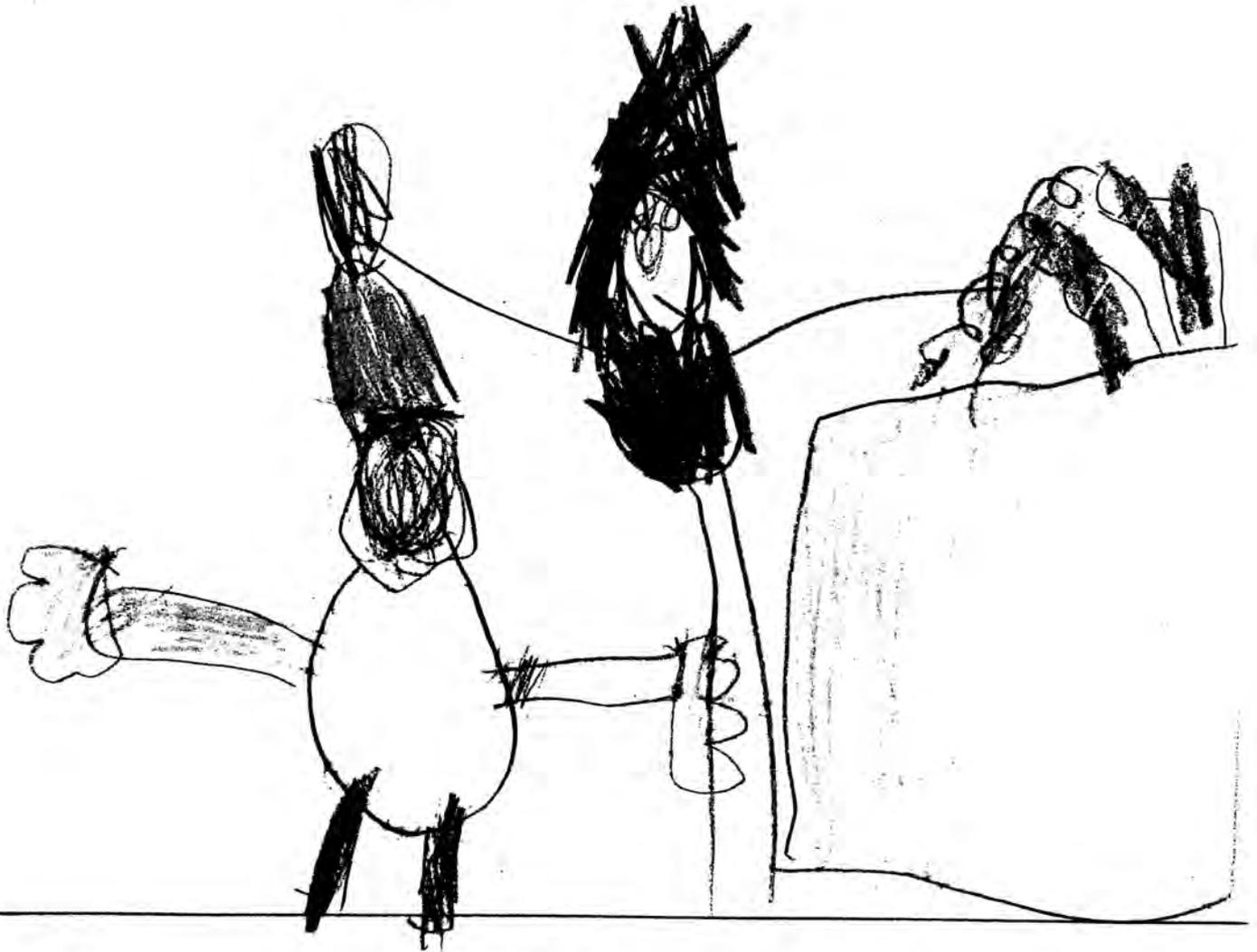
CHILD B

0

I like to help.

0

24th Nov 02



I like to help my  
I like to help my

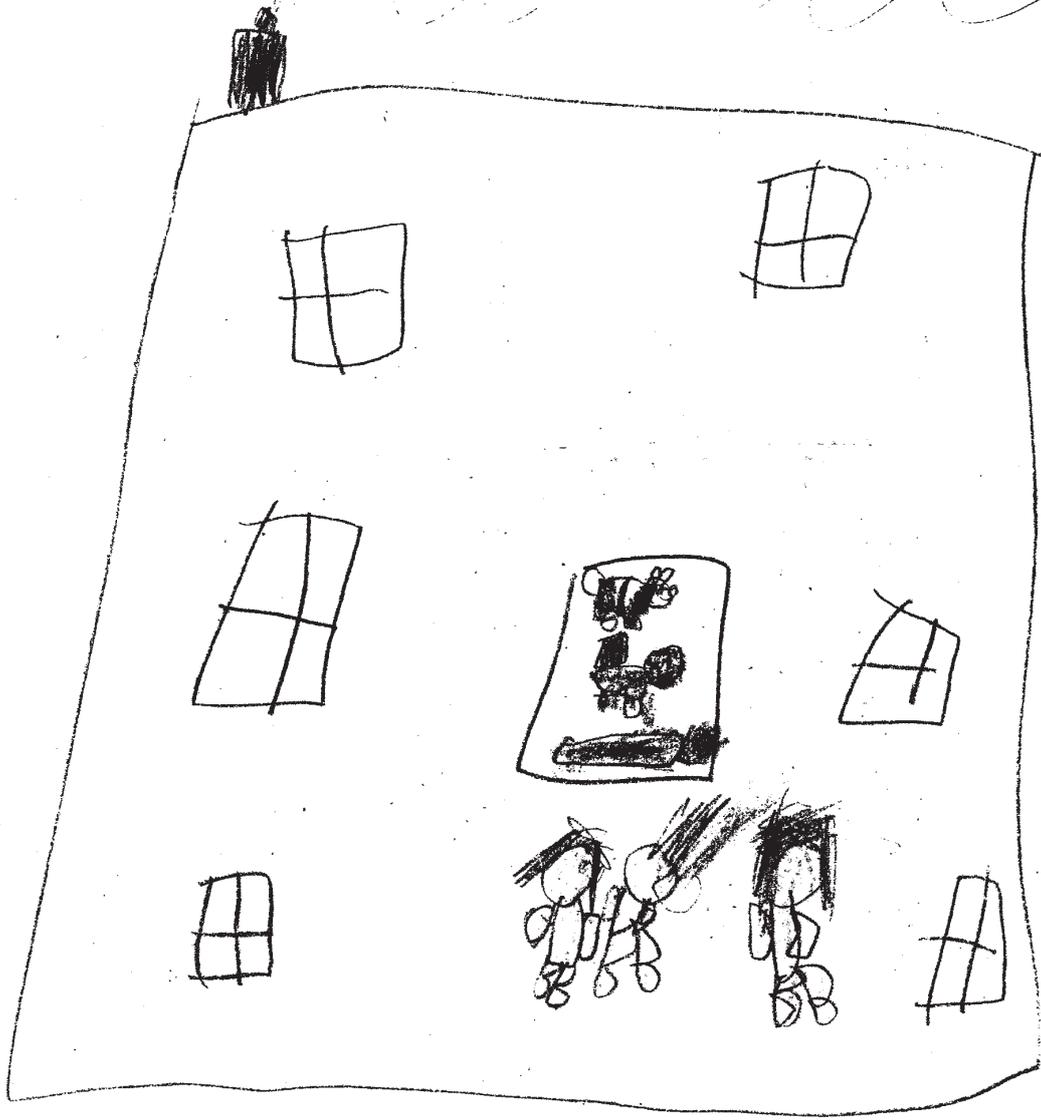
mam wash up.  
mam wash up.

CHILD C

I like to help.

24th Marc

www

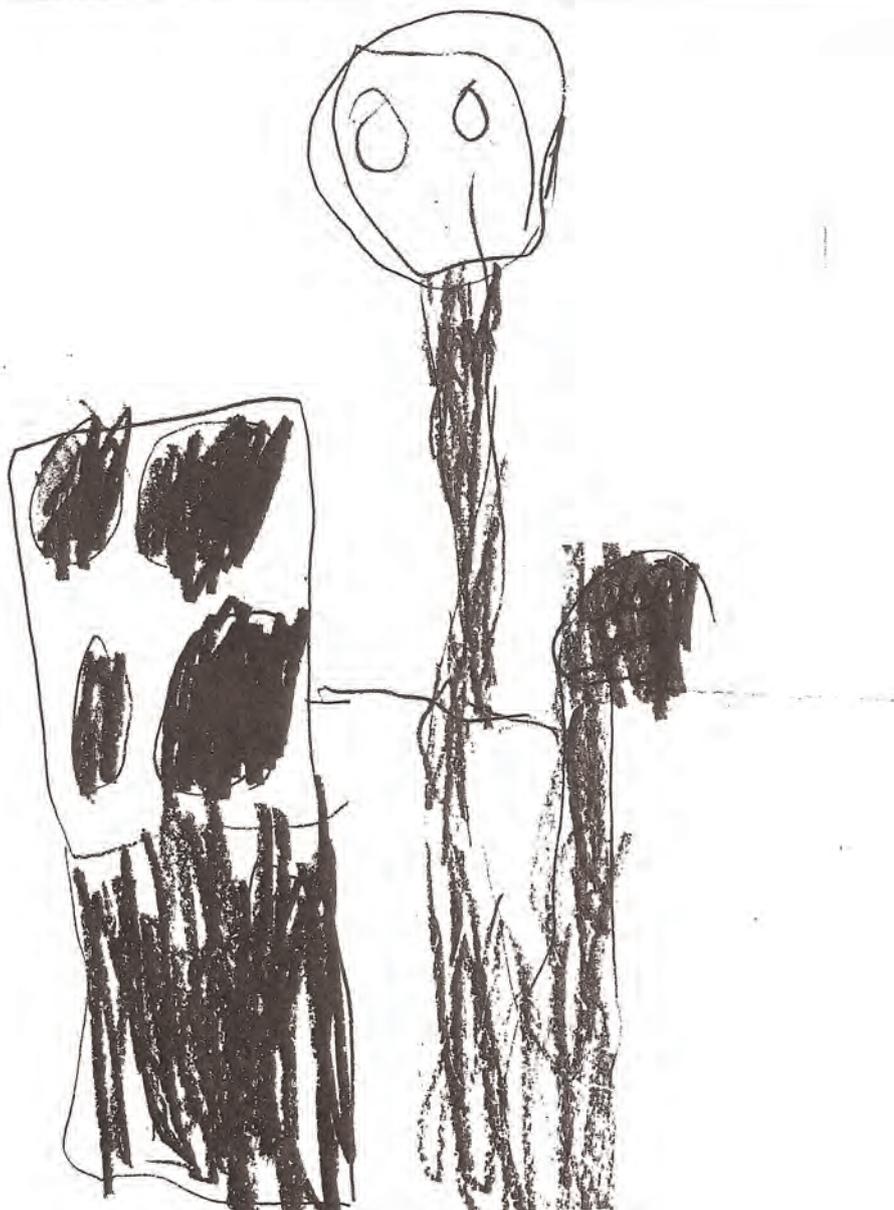


I let Kimberley  
 I let K Kimberley  
 and Sam watch  
 and Sam watch  
 TV

CHILD D

24/3/98

I like to help my mum  
to cook the dinner.



CHILD E



I like to help Mammy  
to cook.



## Evaluation of drawings

Child C's picture shows a detailed drawing with the people drawn with separate head, trunk, arms and legs. This is typical of a 5 to 6 year old and by this age drawing is starting to become more realistic – shown here by the dog. Also at this age children often make drawings showing insides that can't normally be seen – here you can see both the inside and the outside of the house.

Child D's picture shows the people drawn with heads and dangling lines coming straight from the head for legs – often called a tadpole figure. This is the type of drawing often produced by a 3 and a half year old.

## References & further reading

Beaver et al (1994) *Babies and Young Children Book 1 – Development 0 – 7*. Stanley Thornes.

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Fawcett, M. (1996) *Learning Through Child Observation*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Hobart, C. & J. Frankel (1994) *A Practical Guide to Child Observation*. Stanley Thornes.

Meggitt, C. (2006) *Child Development, An Illustrated Guide*. Heinemann.

Thomas, S. & A. Silk (1990) *An introduction to the Psychology of Children's Drawing*. Harvester Wheatsheaf.