

Entitlement for Two Year Olds:

What does high quality look like?

Context

The present government, with cross party support, will be extending the legal entitlement to free early education to the most disadvantaged 2 year olds. The offer is initially to the 20% most disadvantaged children from September 2013, and then to 40% from September 2014.

A child's future is significantly shaped by the quality of early learning and care, at home and in provision, in the earliest years of the child's life. Intervention at this stage is intended to ensure development and attainment in the foundation years does not fall behind other children, thus minimising any possibility of a negative, long lasting effect on the child's achievement and success in school and in later life.

*'High-quality early education is crucial to making a difference to children's achievement, **especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds**, since the overwhelming majority of children who achieve a good level of development in the foundation years go on to achieve well in later stages of learning'.*

Department for Education (DfE), *Supporting Families in the Foundation Years*, 2011
www.education.gov.uk/publications

Purpose

This paper provides a framework to promote high quality early years provision and practice in support of the work on building capacity for the extended entitlement for vulnerable two year olds. It will serve as a guide for providers and OCC nominated officers and will support any assessment of quality and the readiness of the setting to offer funded two year old places.

This paper offers:-

- a) Supporting guidance to be used alongside, but not in place of, the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage
- b) Supporting guidance to Oxfordshire's Nursery Education Funding Agreement. The Funding Agreement sets out the responsibilities and requirements agreed by both parties and gives a clear indication of what providers 'must' do in exchange for funding.

Quality provision and practice

OFSTED is the body responsible for the quality assessment of all providers but in some cases the local authority reviews the quality of providers that offer free early learning places for two year olds. Providers may include children's centres, private, voluntary and independent (PVI) nursery and pre-schools, as well as childminders schools and academies. If a provider has been approved to be part of the two year old offer, it will be expected to maintain and develop the quality of the setting.

Children and their families are at the heart of quality provision and practice. Where providers offer (or intend to offer) places under the entitlement for two year olds (also referred to as 'funded early learning places for two year olds'), this paper sets out the expectations for high quality care, play and learning opportunities, underpinned by an ethos of *strong partnership* with parents and carers. The expectations relate to the guidance and statutory requirements of the revised [Early Years Foundation Stage, 2012](#).

Where a provider is offering places to 2 year old children for the first time then it should review its policies, making updates required to ensure they are also relevant to the younger children.

Section A- High quality for funded two year olds in all provision

High quality provision and practice for funded two year olds will feature specific characteristics, including key EYFS requirements:

1. *Appropriately qualified and experienced staff with a good understanding of child development*

- Experience of working with two year olds
- Commitment to training in early childhood education
- Qualifications/training to work with two year olds
- Understanding the 'Twoness of Two' (their characteristics and needs)
- Understanding how to help children deal with their emotions and support their language development
- Undertaking specific training to support vulnerable two year olds

2. *A secure key person approach is in place*

Young children need support on their journey of self-discovery from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or a key person' EYFS 2012

- A key person who understands the meaning and value of a close relationship with the child (and their parent/carer);
 - *Do you know me, my family and my circumstances?*
 - *Who will I meet here and how do I know who cares for me?*
(The child asks)

- Children play and explore alongside a close, attentive, warm and sensitive adult;
 - *Children form secure attachments that promote their well-being and independence (The observer can see)*
- A key person who helps the child to belong and grow emotionally, socially, physically and intellectually by providing consistent, supportive and caring approach, with high aspirations appropriate to the child's stage of development;
 - *I feel welcome; it feels right for me here*
 - *I am helped to be more confident and independent (The child says)*
- A key person who relates well to the child's parent/s;
 - *Parents are made feel welcome and valued*
 - *Parents feel confident in the provision and become increasingly involved in their children's learning*
 - *Parents are supported in their child's early learning at home*
- A key person system that seeks consistency and continuity for the child and the parent, taking account of possible changes and transitions

3. Staff support and promote children's learning and development, by closely matching what they provide for the child's current needs and next steps

- Demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the themes and principles of the EYFS in practice
- Thoughtfully use Development Matters to support each child's learning and development; *learning journeys record each child's progress*
- Observe, assess and plan next steps with appropriate use of development statements for young children (16-26 months and 22-36 months)
- Use summative statements (including the Progress Check between 24 and 36 months) to review children's progress and to support information sharing with parents, colleagues and other settings

4. A provision that strongly features *The Characteristics of Effective Learning (EYFS)*

- Playing and exploring, active learning, and creating and thinking critically underpin experiences in all areas of learning; *there is a stimulating, well-resourced and welcoming environment, both in and outdoors*
- The Prime areas of learning and development are given due emphasis; the specific areas grow out of the prime areas
- A strong awareness of individual needs, that may well include help in building aspects of well-being and early language development

5. A well-managed provision that benefits the children and their families, featuring the following (in line with Ofsted expectations for registered early years provision <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/early-years-and-childcare>)

- A clear and self-explanatory Action Plan of the most important issues for improvement, *including the provision for funded two year olds*
- An effective *programme of professional development* arising from identified needs of staff and linked to Action Plan
- Effective means of *knowing how well staff and children are getting on*, including observing provision and practice, supervision and appropriate support
- Effective arrangements for safeguarding, including recruitment, and the impact on children's well-being: *children's behaviour will show that they feel safe*
- A strong emphasis on fostering positive relationships with parents and finding ways to involve and engage them in their children's learning at home and in the provision; *families feel welcome and are well supported, including in the child's learning at home*

6. A well-managed provision that offers places for vulnerable, funded two year olds will also feature:

- Working collaboratively with relevant professionals (including other early years providers and children's centres, local authority staff, advisory teachers, health visitors, SEN service) to ensure the best outcomes for children
- Ensuring that arrangements are made in particular to support children with SEN or disabilities and children who come from disadvantaged backgrounds, ensuring the best outcomes for all children
- Providing inclusive services which include identifying a setting-based SENCO and operating an inclusion policy in line with the SEN Code of Practice and the Equality Act 2010
- Ideally and where possible, providing opportunities for playing and learning with older children in a mixed age group (and not just two year olds together)
- Continuing to provide a place for the child in a three and four year old provision or, where this is not possible, ensuring a smooth transition.

Section B- Overall Quality: measures and monitoring

Settings

Providers accepting funded two year old children need to be judged good or better in their most recent OFSTED inspection (inspection to have taken place during the period when they have been taking 2 year old children).

This document and the accompanying checklist will be sent by the 2 year old Project Support Officer for the setting to reflect on their own practice. They will be invited to request support if they need it but will be accepted onto the scheme.

For providers judged good or better in their most recent OFSTED inspection, but not taking 2 year old children at the time of the inspection, or judged satisfactory (requires improvement) in their most recent OFSTED Inspection or with a new registration and therefore not yet had an inspection, then a local authority assessment will be organised using the 2 year old checklist. A decision will be taken as to their eligibility to receive funding by the officer carrying out the checklist.

Providers with a satisfactory (requires improvement) OFSTED inspection outcome, or with a new registration will only be funded to take two year olds if:

- They positively engage with the Oxfordshire Early Years Quality Improvement Scheme (QIPs), with the aim of achieving a good or better OFSTED outcome at their next inspection outcome *'Any setting that has a satisfactory (requires improvement) or inadequate outcome from Ofsted must not offer any new funded places for two year olds unless they have successfully participated in a quality improvement programme supported by Oxfordshire County Council, such as ITERS or ECERS'*.
- On completion of the formal quality improvement programme, in order to offer places for funded two year olds, an Early Years Advisory Teacher must recommend that the provider now offers good enough quality provision. For example, a setting with a satisfactory Ofsted outcome might have an initial ITERS audit, develop and implement an action plan alongside their Early Years Advisory Teacher. Then, on completion of the ITERS re-audit, the Early Years Advisory Teacher should be in a position to recommend the setting is ready to offer places for funded two year olds.
- Those providers will now be eligible to receive funding for 2 year old places where, in the judgment of the Foundation Years Leader (Settings), through a monitoring visit and a report on two year olds, they are making good progress towards providing a high quality provision.

In some cases further development work may be needed to achieve the recommendation; Oxfordshire's Quality Improvement Partners (QIPs) programme also supports this process.

Childminders

Childminders are able to provide places for funded two year olds if they:

a) Registered childminders, with an Ofsted inspection grading

- Have an Ofsted rating of 'Good' or 'Outstanding'
- Childminders with a satisfactory/requires improvement Ofsted inspection outcome will only be funded to take two-year-olds where there are not enough good or outstanding providers in the area and they positively engage with the Oxfordshire [Early Years Offer](#), with the aim of achieving a good or better Ofsted at their next inspection outcome. Satisfactory completion of additional quality checks may also be required.

b) Newly registered childminders

- Are registered with Ofsted

Further guidance and procedures for joining the Nursery Education Funding scheme can be found at:- <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/two-year-old-entitlement-information-providers>

NOTE: Where a 2 year old placement(s) is already made and subsequently these quality standards are not met (including providers accepted with a satisfactory (requires improvement) inspection outcome not achieving good or better at their next inspection or a setting going down from good to satisfactory (requires improvement)) the children already attending will normally continue to be funded, in order to provide continuity for the children and their family, and the setting will be supported to draw up and implement an action plan to restore the required quality levels. Whilst this is taking place Oxfordshire County Council may decline to fund further children at the setting. The provider will be kept informed by the nominated officer who will be supporting them, about their eligibility to take funded 2 year olds

Section C- Schools – practical arrangements

A number of schools have expressed interest in either expanding their age range to take younger children and/or merging with local pre-schools who already take two year olds.

- Currently the provision for two year olds will need to be *separately registered with Ofsted as Early Years provision*, although the government intends legislating to remove this requirement. This process can take up to 6 months. More information is available on the [Ofsted website](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). www.ofsted.gov.uk (DfE advice March 2012)

- Schools should review the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage to ensure their practice meets the additional standards and requirements for the younger children
 - Schools are required to meet the quality standards mentioned in sections A and B. The following additional information is provided for schools:
 - Schools should review their policies, making updates as required to ensure they are also relevant to the younger children
 - Schools may further use the accompanying checklist as a self-evaluation tool for assessment of practice and provision for two year olds.
- A school may enrol two year olds in two main ways:
 1. As 'pupils' of the school, with the provision directly run as part of the school. In order to do this the governors must consult with parents, other early years providers in the locality, the school community and the Local Authority* about changing the age range of the pupils in the school. If the school does not already have a nursery class they must also formally apply to the Local Authority * for approval to amend the age range.

Being directly run by the school allows the two year olds to be included within the budget for the whole school. Staff are employed through the school, on the same pay scales as other school teachers and staff. The two year olds

could be subsidised by the budget for older pupils, or indeed vice versa. If fee paying places are also offered (see below) then schools normally keep the income and expenditure for these places separate from the school budget.

2. Not as 'pupils' of the school, but offered place/s under the school's 'community use powers' (i.e. like extended services or an after school club);

It is expected that this will be established as a not for-profit organisation and there are a number of options for the legal entity. Currently the most appropriate entity is likely to be a not for profit limited company, managed by some of the school governors, as directors of the company.

All the finances for two year olds are handled entirely separately from the school budget.

The school is free to set the staff rates and the other terms and conditions do not need to match the schools, although there are employment rights to adhere to.

There may be a requirement to register as a charity.

- However pupils are “enrolled”, payment for funded two year olds is on the same basis as funded 3 and 4 year olds, which means payment on actual attendance, although the hourly rate is higher.
- Schools are also able to offer fee paying places, in addition to the funded early education places. The school can decide on the fee to be charged to parents – it is recommended that this at least covers the cost of providing the places.
- It should be noted that the funded early education places must be provided without any charge to the parents or any obligation to take additional paid for services, including lunch or payment for snacks.
- The Foundation Stage Unit (FSU) Framework will be revised to take account of these younger children. In addition to quality aspects and advice set out in the existing FSU handbook, the school must ensure that:

Where the provision is an FSU, then ‘key issues’, either in EYFS or Leadership and Management in recent inspections, should be fully addressed.

* Local Authority contact in the first instance is School Organisation and Planning:
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Phone: 01865 816453
Email: earlyeducation@oxfordshire.gov.uk