

OFSTED BIG CONVERSATION CHAIRS MEETING

Tuesday 13 March 2018, 13:00-16:00

Location: The London Early Years Foundation, 121 Marsham Street SW1P 4LX

Attendees:

| Member | Role | Organisation |
|-----------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| Gill Jones | Ofsted Deputy Director Early Years | Ofsted |
| Penny Fisher | HMI Lead Inspector Early Years London | Ofsted |
| June O'Sullivan | Chair London | London Early Years Foundation |
| Grace Essex | Note taker | London Early Years Foundation |
| Shirley Paddock | LEYF Ofsted lead | London Early Years Foundation |
| Selamawit Ghebreiesus | Nursery Manager | London Early Years Foundation |
| Catriona Nason | Deputy Chair London | Neytco |
| Simona McKenzie | News and Research Lead | Neytco |
| Juls Davies | Notetaker | Neytco |
| Ruth Pimentel | Co Chair East of England | Prime Learning |
| Jo Verrill | Co-Chair North East | CEEDA |
| Kate Peach | Co-Chair South East | Peacharno, Each Peach Childcare |
| Tricia Wellings | Chair West Midlands | MBKT Training |
| Neil Leitch | Advisor | Pre-School Learning Alliance |
| Vanessa Warn | Co-Chair | Little Green Rascals |
| Katie Angotti | Guest presenter | Early Years Nutrition Partnership |
| Sarah Mackenzie | Co-Chair South East | Childbase |
| Alison Beard | | Childbase |

1. Welcome and apologies

Cheryl Hadland Chair of South West and CEO Tops Nursery

Ken McArthur Co chair of the North East and Director of Polly's Nursery

Jo Kinloch and Jennie Johnson Chairs of North West

2. Ofsted update

Impact of the Bold Beginnings

GJ shared information behind the reasoning and process of the Bold Beginnings LINK including the Key Findings and full list of recommendations (see Appendix 1. Page 3). She commented that Ofsted was surprised by some of the responses as they had thought it was a useful report to draw attention to how the Reception Classes visited were very successful in helping disadvantaged children in particular to achieve a good level of development (GLD). The setor was more upset by the tone of the rport and the lack of focus on play.

We discussed the myth that Ofsted requires a lot of assessment data which can have a negative impact on the time staff have to teach children in Reception, particularly

when it came to reading and number. Reading to children frequently was highlighted as one of the key activities that is often left out because of time constraints. GJ said that assessment was not to produce masses of data, but to know what children needed to learn next. She gave some examples of poor practice she had observed where staff were photographing a mathematics activity, when the child did not understand what they were doing but the photograph would make it look as if they did, she said this was a common problem and made assessment a waste of time. She also explained the importance of reading the whole of the report, as it is in the body of the report that the most important aspects of what the schools were doing is found.

However, she said that had Ofsted held a launch event for the sector where they could have better explained the rationale for the report it might have been better understood. Some members explained their unhappiness about the emphasis on “school readiness” and the poor examples of what play looks like in a school. GJ said that school starting age was not a matter for debate with Ofsted as it is set by the DFE, not Ofsted. She explained that the reason the report focussed on schools where disadvantaged children were doing better than other children nationally was because it is of national interest to know what these schools are doing.

NOTE It may be useful to note that Ofsted has updated its document about early years myths and facts. It is online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-inspection-handbook-from-september-2015/early-years-inspections-myths>

3. Implications of removal of SEF

GJ confirmed that SEF was removed because the uploading process was unhelpful and cumbersome. It also felt that the dialogue about improvement and evaluation of practice was critical to the leadership and management discussions at inspections but these could be captured in a way that best suits the setting rather than in a format designed by Ofsted. There were many comments about how many SEFs were long and descriptive and failed to drive evaluative action. Many settings will keep a SEF but tailor it to suit their way of working. GJ agreed to check if it would be possible to send across SEFs to enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk in advance of an inspection and/or to provide an executive summary.

4. New ways of inspection / centralising the inspection

GJ confirmed that current legislation stipulates that Ofsted needs to report on individual settings (each EY number), so at present centralised inspections are not in line with legislation.

The Education Inspection Framework document, to be released September 2019, will continue to recognise early years settings, confirming the important difference that education at age 0-5 makes in a child’s future opportunities.

There was a discussion about the frequency of inspections especially the registration 30-month inspections. A question about “paid for inspections” elicited the response that it would be very unlikely as Ofsted is currently re-inspecting RI and Inadequate settings within a year and sixth months. It was suggested that “Good” settings should have less frequent inspections so Ofsted can focus on more frequent inspections for settings rated “inadequate” or “requires improvement”. GJ said that at the moment all ideas for the new Education Inspection Framework (EIF) are being considered.

There was a question about better management of malicious complaints. There was a twitter campaign on this lately. The group expressed a view that Ofsted should address malicious complaints which are disproved with a high level of legal ferocity

given the human implications. Complaints that waste Ofsted time should have equal sanctions to wasting police time. The steering group agreed that Ofsted panels were a good step in the right direction for dealing with complaints, but they remain slightly “toothless” as they focus on process rather than outcomes. GJ said that Ofsted continues to review its complaints procedures as they use a lot of staff resource.

5. Physical Development as a Suggestion for the next Ofsted Report

Questions were raised about lack of focus of physical development given we are facing an obesity crisis. GJ discussed the difference between Early Learning Goal and the obesity information recently published. She questioned whether the ELG for physical is challenging enough to encourage physical fitness for children. The Chairs recommended that the next Ofsted theme report focus on physical development.

6. Early years health and nutrition (presentation from EYNP with regards to Ofsted inspection of food and physical development)

Links:

- Tender Years Day Nursery and the EYN Partnership, an Ofsted success story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l2Si7stlR88&t=12s>
- <http://eynpartnership.org/>

Contacts:

- Katie Angotti (Programme Manager for EYNP) katie.angotti@danone.com
- Lucy Way (administration manager for EYNP) lucy.way@eynpartnership.org
- Steph Johnson (business development manager for EYNP) stephanie.johnson@eynpartnership.org.

There was discussion around the importance of nutrition in early years and general agreement that this can often be ignored by Ofsted. The suggestion was that Ofsted intervention would drive improvement.

ACTIONS:

- The next inspector training is scheduled for November 2018 so it is unlikely that Ofsted will be able to include a refresher of the inspectors’ guidance on nutrition and fitness, but it is agreed that it may be helpful for a sharpening of focus/training in this aspect without an update to the handbook.
- Chairs would like access to the number of complaints. GJ and PF confirmed that these figures are published online. To share.
- Ofsted to keep chairs up-to-date on Ofsted Website changes.

APPENDIX 1.

Recommendations

All primary schools should:

- make sure that the teaching of reading, including systematic synthetic phonics, is the core purpose of the Reception Year
- attach greater importance to the teaching of numbers in building children's fluency in counting, recognising small numbers of items, comparing numbers and solving problems
- ensure that when children are learning to write, resources are suitable for their stage of development and that they are taught correct pencil grip and how to sit correctly at a table
- devote sufficient time each day to the direct teaching of reading, writing and mathematics, including frequent opportunities for children to practise and consolidate their skills
- use the EYFSP as a guide to end-of-Reception expectations rather than to define what should be taught.

Initial teacher education providers should:

- make sure that all primary trainees have sufficient knowledge of Reception, so that they understand progression from the early years foundation stage onwards
- devote a greater proportion of their training programme to the teaching of reading, including systematic synthetic phonics as the route to decoding words, and the composition of numbers, so that all newly qualified teachers are competent and confident to teach early literacy and mathematics.

The Department for Education should:

- review the scope and breadth of the statutory EYFS framework to ensure that schools better understand the nature and purpose of the Reception Year and what should be taught
- review the content of the EYFSP so that there is greater alignment between the ELGs at the end of the Reception Year and the national curriculum for Year 1
- streamline the EYFSP and associated moderation processes so that they reduce teachers' workload around assessment and become more useful for benchmarking the knowledge and understanding children need for the rest of their formal education
- raise the profile of early mathematics teaching, similar to the investment made in early reading and the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics, by supporting the development of appropriate schemes and resources.

Ofsted should:

- review and update the guidance for inspectors about evaluating the quality of early years provision in Reception
- sharpen the focus placed on the teaching of reading and numbers during the inspection of schools, including schools inspected under section 8 of the Act⁴ and initial teacher education providers
- use the findings of this survey to help shape the new education inspection framework for September 2019
- report regularly on reading in primary schools, aggregated from routine inspections, to identify good practice and highlight the importance of this subject as the gatekeeper to a broad and balanced curriculum.