

AGENDA ITEM 8 - APPENDIX 3 – FREE FUNDED EDUCATION FOR EARLY YEARS

Background Information and Analysis

1. The Early Years are defined as between birth and age five. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child's experiences have a major impact on their future life chances.
2. Nationally, 94% of children will, at some point, benefit from government-funded early education. This presents benefits for schools as children presenting at compulsory school age have received their Early Years Foundation Stage entitlement which can generate a term and a half's progress for some children in English results, in Maths nearly two terms.
3. OFSTED have emphasised in their [Early Years 2012/13 Annual Report](#) the importance of Early Years education for breaking the cycle of disadvantage:
 - OFSTED's focus in inspection is to focus on teaching and learning. The most successful Early Years providers, no matter who they are, are focussed on helping children to learn.
 - Quality in the Early Years sector has been rising and 78% of providers on the Early Years register are good or outstanding, despite this only a little more than a third of children nationally, from low income backgrounds have reached a good level of development. One factor is that some types of provision in deprived areas are less likely to be good or outstanding.
 - Children from low income families make the strongest progress when supported by highly qualified staff, particularly with graduate qualifications. Nursery schools have high levels of graduate staff and perform as strongly in deprived areas as in more affluent ones.
4. As set out in the [Early Years Foundation Stage Framework](#), practitioners must consider the individual needs, interests, and stage of development of each child in their care, and must use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience for each child. The three prime areas of learning and development are: communication and language; physical development; and personal, social and emotional development. These reflect the key skills and capacities all children need to develop and learn effectively, and become ready for school.

Free Early Education Funding

5. In September 2010 all 3- and 4-year-olds became entitled to 15 hours a week (570 hours per year), of free early education (FEE). From September 2013, the entitlement was extended to 15 hours of free education per week for all looked-after 2-year-olds and 2-year-olds from families who meet the [criteria for free school meals](#). From September 2014 this has been extended further.
6. The FEE places must be provided free at the point of delivery. This means that providers cannot charge for any part of their free hours, refund them at a later date or charge a top up fee (ie the difference between what a provider would normally charge for a non-funded session and the amount they receive from the LA to deliver the FEE place).
7. Providers need to determine the hourly rate/session rate for additional hours accessed over and beyond the hours of the FEE place. Some providers use different rates depending on whether a child attends full time, full days, half days or a combination.

The Future for Free Early Education Funding

8. Nationally it is recognised there is a need to close the gap at ages 3 and 4 between the additional support disadvantaged children get at age 2 and that the free early years funding for 2 year olds is moved onto a stable, longer term footing.
9. Providers will receive an additional 0.53p per hour to the current hourly rate, for every eligible¹ 3 and 4 year old, this is an extra £300 per eligible child taking up the full 570 hours per year.
10. The government consultation also includes proposals to move the funding of the free entitlement for 2-year olds to mirror the current 3-4 year old model, called 'participation-based' funding.
11. An important aspect to the EYPP will require the LA to withdraw funding from settings that are inadequate as soon as 'practicable'. It is proposed that if a setting becomes inadequate, children will continue to be funded throughout that term but funding will no longer be available in the term following the inadequate score.

Quality and Improvement

12. A summary of the OFSTED standards for Darlington settings is below:

SETTING	No of settings	OFSTED				
		OUTSTANDING	GOOD	SATS/REQ IMP	INADEQUATE	OTHER
Private	19	4	10	4	0	0
Independent	1	0	1	0	0	0
Pre-schools and Playgroups	14	0	10	4	0	0
Total PVI	34	4	21	8	0	0
Schools with nurseries	17	3	12	2	0	0
Maintained nursery schools (B Road / G Dent)	2	1	1	-	-	-
Total Schools	19	4	13	2	0	0
Childminder	96	5	51	22	2	16

13. The LA duty to sustain the position of these settings that require improvement. The LA duty is summarised as:

To secure sufficient childcare for working parents¹.

¹ Childcare Act 2006 – Section 6

- To secure early years provision free of charge².
- To assess childcare provision³ through assessment (all providers are visited regularly as part of a 'moderation' cycle)
- To provide information, advice and training to childcare providers⁴.

14. The LA Early Years team (led by Chris Archer), works with providers in various ways:

- The pre-arranged annual quality meeting has 4 elements in the improvement model; the review of data, inspection report and other information, observation of practice, the brokerage of support and the encouragement to develop approaches to improvement. The 'quality conversation' will be tailored to the performance of the setting and their current arrangements for getting external support and challenge.
- An LA action plan is agreed with settings defined as 'requires improvement' by OFSTED. The LA will provide intensive support which will decrease with a clear exit plan within one term. The exit meeting analyses the progress made towards agreed targets and the recommendation to retain funding will be made if the setting demonstrates sustained improvement.
- There is a requirement for the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile to be implemented as the statutory assessment in all government funded settings/schools in which children reach the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The Local Authority has the responsibility for ensuring that the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile assessments are carried out in accordance with the regulations in all funded settings/schools. The service from the LA to settings/schools is free.
- Moderation is a process that takes place throughout the year and includes internal moderation in settings and school, 'agreement trialing' at cluster meetings, data-drop in meetings, moderation update meetings for practitioners and the training of new to EYFS staff. External moderation visits of the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile take place in Darlington schools/settings for lower EYFS in February and for end of reception in June each year. Schools and settings are identified for moderation visits through a range of triggers.
- Childcare Development Officers run Childminder Level 2 qualification for those entering the childminder profession. The course prepares the learners for the Level 3 Diploma for the Children and Young People's Workforce - Home-based Childcare Unit for childminders. The course is delivered on a model of 4 hours weekly attendance over a 10 week period. The course commenced in 2013 and to date 13 have registered with OFSTED and inspection outcomes for those visited by OFSTED are 5 graded good, 1 met the applicable criteria and 3 await inspection.

Staffing

15. A quality learning experience for children requires a quality workforce. A well-qualified and skilled staff profile strongly increases the potential of any individual setting to deliver the best possible outcomes for children.
16. The minimum criteria for staffing cover is set out in the EY Framework. The roles are most commonly referred to as Early Years Practitioners (EYP) or Early Years Teachers (EYT) in PVI settings.

² Childcare Act 2006 - Section 7 (as substituted by section 1 of the Education Act 2011, fully in force from 1 September 2013),

³ Childcare Act 2006 – Section 11

⁴ Childcare Act 2006 – Section 13

17. According to OFSTED, their research shows that children from low income families make the strongest progress when settings have highly qualified staff, and, in particular when supported by trained teachers.
 18. The national picture shows that in the 30% most deprived areas, only 11% of staff have at least the level 6 qualification in PVI settings, as opposed to 35% of staff in nursery schools. Therefore, maintained and academy nursery schools perform considerably better than other types of early years provision.
 19. Childminders must have completed training which helps them to understand and implement the Early Years Foundation Stage before they can register with Ofsted or a childminder agency. Childminders are accountable for the quality of the work of any assistants.
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