

Oxfordshire School Readiness and Lifelong Learning Strategic Plan



July 2020

Contents

Introduction	3
Why invest in school readiness	4
Developing the Strategy.....	4
Summary	6
School Readiness priorities	8
What Oxfordshire parents say.....	9
Barriers identified.....	10
Priority 1: Strong Home Learning Experiences to support children's learning.....	11
and development.....	
Priority 2: Early Engagement	15
Priority 3: High Quality Provision	18
Priority 4: Information sharing and High-Quality Transitions	22
References and sources of information.....	25

Introduction

The Oxfordshire's vision is for children and young people to be well educated and grow up to lead successful, happy, healthy and safe lives. The school readiness strategy is reflecting this vision to meet the needs of all children in Oxfordshire and I am pleased to introduce this strategy and commend it to all our valued key stakeholders.

Oxfordshire's School Readiness Strategy reflects UNICEF principles that school readiness is achieved through ready families, ready communities, ready services and ready children. School readiness begins at birth and the importance of the 1001 critical days; therefore, partnership working is crucial to generating meaningful impact on our children's school readiness.

There is a willingness from Early Years professionals to work together with the County Council to develop solutions to the current issues. Schools, settings, childminders, voluntary and community organisations, the local authority and health services in Oxfordshire have all been invited to comment and contribute to this strategy.

School Readiness is crucial to a child's lifelong development. Early experiences influence brain development, establishing the neural connections that provide the foundation for language, reasoning, problem solving, social skills, behaviour, and emotional intelligence – characteristics that often determine how well a child will do in school and in life.

The recently revised ILACS (Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services) indicates that children and families are increasingly benefiting from a range of early help services. My intention, as part of the Council's improvement programmes, is to secure better joint working across teams supporting children and families to provide the best start in life for children.

This strategy informs the Oxfordshire Children's Trust Board 2018-21 strategy. To enable the effective delivery of the aims within this strategy an annual action plan will be agreed by the Learner Engagement and Early Help Strategic Partnership Board.

The strategy sets out priorities for the next three years and I hope that this strategy will command widespread support, and that it will act as a spur for us all to redouble our efforts.

Jane Portman, Interim Director of Children's Services Oxfordshire County Council.

Introduction: Why invest in school readiness?

Failing to invest sufficiently in quality early care and education short changes taxpayers because the return on investment is greater than many other economic development options



Every **£1** invested in quality early care and education **saves** taxpayers up to **£13** in future costs



For every **£1** spent on early years education, **£7** has to be spent to have the same impact in adolescence



The benefits associated with the introduction of the literacy hour in the UK outstrip the costs by a ratio of between **27:1** and **70:1**



Targeted parenting programmes to prevent conduct disorders pay back **£8** over six years for every **£1** invested with savings to the NHS, education and criminal justice system

8

Centre for Research in Early Childhood (2013) *The impact of early education as a strategy in countering socioeconomic disadvantage*
DCSF (2008) *The impact of parental involvement on children's education*
Public Health England (2013) *The health and wellbeing of children and young people in London*

Developing the strategy

[The Early years inspection handbook for Ofsted registered provision](#), published in May 2019 highlights that Inspectors should take account of all the judgements made across the evaluation schedule; and they should consider the progress children make in their learning and development relative to their starting points and their readiness for the next stage of their education.

A number of different professional groups in Oxfordshire, particularly primary school Headteachers stated that there is an increasing issue in Oxfordshire in relation to young children not being “ready” for school. Given the views expressed by Oxfordshire practitioners and the national research, the Children's Trust asked a multiagency group of staff to look at the issues in Oxfordshire, establish the extent of the problem, and look at what would be required to address these issues.

A task and finish group was formed to look at good work already taking place in Oxfordshire but also identifying where the gaps in provision were; and how we might work together to address these gaps.

It is everybody's responsibility to support all children in Oxfordshire to achieve a good level of development in the Early Years Foundation stage; this can only be realised when we all work together in meaningful partnership. This collaborative approach has been used in developing Oxfordshire's school readiness strategic plan.

Over 120 professionals from a wide range of early years services have been involved in shaping the priorities and actions detailed in this strategy by being part of the School Readiness and Lifelong learning consultation. This was conducted online and by stakeholder meetings. Parents were also involved through the Best Start in Life parent groups.

This strategy aims to raise outcomes for all children at risk of under achievement in Early Years, and in particular, the most vulnerable, including children eligible for free school meals, early years pupil premium, 2-year-old funding, looked after children, children with special educational needs and children who speak English as an additional language (EAL). However, in the first instance it is important to consider the need and outcomes for each individual child when thinking about readiness for school.

Schools, settings, childminders, voluntary and community organisations, local authority departments and health services in Oxfordshire are expected to jointly deliver the strategic priorities as set out in the School Readiness and Lifelong learning strategy.

Oxfordshire's vision:

We want Oxfordshire to be a great place to grow up and for children and young people to have the opportunity to become everything they want to be. We believe a joint plan which sets the strategic direction and priorities for services for children, young people and families in Oxfordshire is a vital part of making this happen. Experience shows that when organisations work together to deliver services we make a real difference to the lives of children, young people and their families.

[Oxfordshire Children and Young Peoples plan 2018-2021](#)

Our Areas of Focus

We want to ensure that all children and young people can:

- **Be Successful** – Increasing school attendance
- **Be Happy and Healthy** – Helping early, supporting prevention
- **Be Safe** – Safely reducing the number of looked after children and managing demand
- **Be Supported** - Improving the confidence and capacity of the whole workforce

School readiness is a measure of how prepared a child is to succeed in school cognitively, socially and emotionally. [Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years \(PACEY\)](#) describes this as having strong social skills, being able to cope emotionally with being separated from parents, being relatively independent in their own personal care and to have a curiosity about the world and a desire to learn.

Children are born ready and eager to learn. However, for each child to reach their full potential, they need opportunities to interact in positive relationships and to be in environments that enable and support their development.

It is a [Public Health England](#) (PHE) priority to ensure that every child has the best start in life: being ready to learn at age two and ready for school at age five. Pregnancy and the early years provide an essential foundation for healthy development and achievement throughout school. Children who do not achieve a good level of development by the age of five will often struggle with reading, mathematics, social and physical skills leading to longer term impacts on their educational attainment and health.

Local Authority Data

Data on school readiness, including a range of public health indicators considered to contribute to levels of school readiness is presented at local authority level. The data analysis was performed between February and August 2018 (updated December 2018). The latest data available was incorporated into this report. The year available is specified for each individual indicator. The data analysis is presented under the following categories: The red, amber, green (RAG) ratings are from the Public Health England Fingertips toolkit and so have been calculated using [the PHE standard approach to the use of RAG ratings for indicator values](#). RAG ratings are not available for every indicator.

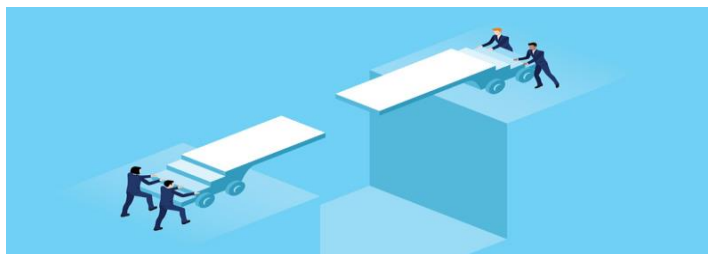
The National Association of Headteachers (NAHT) and the Family and Child Care Trust (FCCT) reported a growing concern that children do not have the necessary skills to be school ready. The report entitled "[School Ready](#)" believed that the issue of school readiness has worsened over the last five years.

[The Field report \(2010\)](#) demonstrates the overwhelming evidence that children's life chances are most readily predicted by their development in the first years of life. As a result, there is a critical window before the age of five where interventions will have the greatest impact.

[The first 1000 days from conception to age two](#)

We start building our health asset as a baby in the womb and this is a period of rapid growth. The first 1,000 days of life are a critical time for brain development and parents and carers have a fundamental role to play in supporting their child's early development. During this time, babies' growing brains are shaped by their experiences, particularly the interactions that they have with their parents and other caregivers. What happens during this time lays the foundations for future development.

Therefore, investing in the first 1000 days is a wonderful way to give children the best start in life and to invest in their future. Healthy development in the first 1000 days is linked to improved mental and physical health, reductions in risk and antisocial behaviour, and achievement at school and beyond.



Summary

From July 2020 the School Readiness strategy will be rolled out across Oxfordshire, under the strategic direction of the Children's Trust.

This outlines the steps that the Local Authority and providers should take to improve outcomes for all children and help children be ready for school. The key actions have been identified in collaboration with a wide range of providers and practitioners across the county and informed by academic research and locality data.

- Including strategy content and actions linking to [Oxfordshire Children and Young Peoples plan 2018-2021](#)
- Holding multi-agency professional meetings 3 times a year to develop and review the strategy and feedback to the Children's Trust.
- Communicating the strategy in a variety of ways e.g., organisational newsletters, Facebook, headteacher briefings, training, community events, school's news etc.
- Ensuring all providers and multi-agency professionals are aware of national and local EYFSP outcomes to inform actions to diminish the difference
- Supporting and implementing targeted projects across the county
- Co-ordinating local events for providers and practitioners to attend, guided by collective purpose and professional generosity and informed by local data and contextual information, to identify agreed areas of priority
- Continuing to work collaboratively cross-service to plan and hold meetings at locality level, to share local knowledge and priorities and best practice
- Using the expertise of The Early Years Advisory Team to support early years providers and settings in delivering high quality provision judged at least good by Ofsted.

The School Readiness strategic commitment

- All strategic activity in early years will have emphasis on closing the gap/diminishing the difference between disadvantaged pupil and their peers
- There will be a clear focus on early intervention and high-quality provision which improves the progress and attainment of young learners
- To support and challenge those Early Years providers judged to be less than good by Ofsted
- Through the Early Years advisory team, to challenge where outcomes for children are not improving and identify where additional work is needed to close the gap
- Every possible opportunity is taken to undertake activity to improve outcomes for children and to close the gap is taken
- The needs of individual children and their families is at the heart of work to improve children's outcomes
- All staff are aware of this strategy and programmes are linked to this strategy
- Opportunities are available at meetings for professionals to collaborate and jointly evaluate the impact of their work
- Training opportunities are available through [CPD online](#) to fulfil this commitment



The adult brain contains around 100 billion neurons or brain cells – a baby is born with most of them, yet the babies brain weighs about a quarter of that of an adult.

It is the connections being laid down between these brain cells where all of this growth and development is taking place. And these connections are formed through every single experience the growing child is exposed to. (Kathryn Peckham, 2018).

School Readiness priorities

Through the consultation 4 main priorities have been identified as being key for children to be ready for school and lifelong learning.

Priority 1: Strong Home Learning Experience to support children's learning and development

What is required?

- Parents and carers who are engaged and understand their child's development and learning needs; and are confidently able to support their children's learning through home experiences.
- Parents and carers access support and training opportunities; including those provided by the adult learning services to enable them to support their child's learning.

Priority 2: Early Engagement

What is required?

- Strong engagement with families, including engagement before birth.
- Timely information sharing across all services, providers and practitioners.
- Early identification and response to a child's area of vulnerability.
- Good levels of the take up of 2-year old places and effective use of Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) funding.

Priority 3: High Quality Provision

What is required?

- Knowledgeable and well qualified professionals with high aspirations for all children, including those with SEND, who are Looked After Children (LAC) or are eligible for EYPP, Pupil Premium (PP).
- Strong and effective leadership resulting in children's rapid progress to close the gap and ensure school readiness.
- All children are safe and cared for – strong safeguarding ethos with every Early Years provider
- All providers judged to be at least good or better by Ofsted
- Training embedded in practice, particularly communication and language, literacy, mathematics and personal, social and emotional development in order that all children achieve or exceed the Good Level of Development at the end of the EYFS

Priority 4: Information-sharing and high-quality transitions through life

What is required?

- Identifying and targeting children's individual vulnerabilities through quality observations that inform robust tracking to support transitions
- Work with families and other professionals known to the child to effectively manage all points of transition.
- Support and promote local networks, meetings to effectively share information.

All sources of information and resources are referenced at the end of this document.

What Oxfordshire parents say...

"It is nice to know what we can do to help them – we want the best for them and we want them to do well"

"Talking to parents and seeing that they are in a similar position, makes you feel a bit better"

"As a first-time parent, I thought my daughter had to know everything to start reception, it was only once she got there that I realised she didn't..."

"We have lots of antenatal classes – months of them – to prepare parents for giving birth but then there are no parenting classes for after the baby is born...how are you supposed to know what to do?"

"Parents need ideas around what to do with their children e.g. problem-solving ideas – activities they could do with their child to support school"

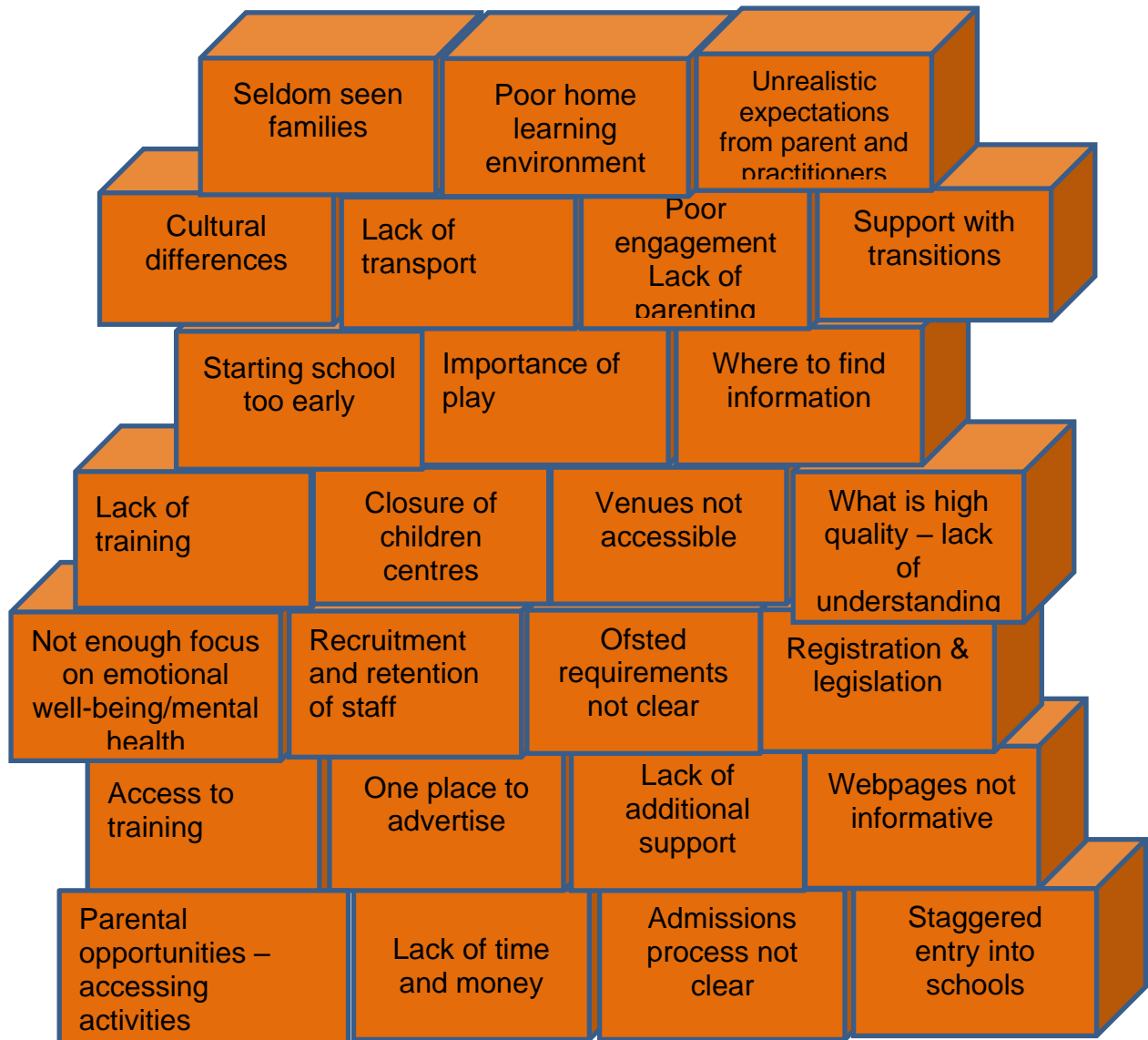
"There is no one telling parents when they are doing well and doing a good job. Parents need positive reinforcement too!"

"It's good that you can ring the health visitors if you need extra help"

"Information for parents needs to be convenient, accessible and highlighted as important if you want them to take notice"

"Avoid formal meeting sessions – these can make parents feel anxious and make them feel like they're not doing a good enough job when actually they just might need some more information"

Barriers identified



Priority 1: Strong Home Learning Experiences to support children’s learning and development

The ‘home learning environment’ (HLE) is a reflection of the home environment and interactions in and around the home with family members. Learning experiences are vital for young children’s development and are shaped by the nature of everyday life and activities for a small child. Children learn to investigate the world through the family context and as such it provides the blueprint for learning, behaviour, and attitudes.

Why this is important

Research demonstrates that all families want the best for their children, and most are highly motivated to achieve this. The home learning environment is central to children in the early years and is where most children spend most of their time. By supporting families to create stimulating and engaging home learning environments we can support all children to achieve their developmental targets.

We know that levels of parental engagement are consistently associated with children’s academic outcomes. We also know that a parent’s job, education and income matters less to their child’s development than what they actually do with them, [working with parents to support children’s learning, Guidance report \(2018\)](#)

We know that to support parents and carers to provide strong home learning environments for their children, we need to make environments accessible and engaging. We also need to know what families can benefit from and understand what is important to them. Most of all, we need to value and listen to our parents and carers.

Gutman and Fienstein (2007) suggest that parental involvement has a greater impact on children’s well-being and achievement than any other factor, i.e. family income, parental education or school environment. Supporting parents to provide a positive home learning environment is therefore a vital part of improving outcomes for children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Desforges and Abouchaar (2003), show that supporting parents to improve the learning that goes on in the home will have a major impact on the child’s outcomes, including school readiness and attainment and achievement up to the age of at least 16, [Provider influence on the early home learning environment \(EHLE\) \(2011\)](#).

A child’s language development begins long before formal schooling, when the child first begins to distinguish sounds heard within the mother’s womb, [Improving the Home Learning environment \(2018\)](#)

What parents and carers do is more important than who they are. We know that supporting the home learning environment from the beginning continues to have a positive impact on the children and their families throughout their childhood.



What is already happening in Oxfordshire

Training and resources for volunteers	Training and resources for Foster Carers	Professionals share resources for parents	Parenting courses	Forest school for families	Family Days
Stay and play sessions	Rhyme time sessions	Open days and home visits	Family information service listing a variety of groups in Oxfordshire	Summer projects and group activities	Websites, guidance, materials
Expert help and advice	Health visitors support				

Knowing Me Knowing You (KMKY) - An example of inter-agency working.

KMKY is a successful, evidence-based 7-week course for mothers who are suffering from depression and/or anxiety and who are in the first year following the birth of their baby. The aim of the course is to provide a “toolkit” of knowledge, skills and strategies to support and promote positive emotional health and wellbeing for life.

In Oxford City the course is run jointly by the local Health Visiting Team and Home-Start Oxford. Home-Start provides the venue and arranges transport for the attendees, it co-facilitates the sessions with the health visitor, undertakes a pre-course visit with the mother to encourage engagement, taking away what can be a frightening experience of walking into a room and not knowing anybody. It also completes a post-course visit to see if any further support is needed. Home Start provides this service through lottery funding.

A unique feature of this group is that mothers are encouraged to bring their babies along. The first part of each session is dedicated to self-help strategies to support emotional health and well-being. The second part has fun-based activities, such as messy play and rhyme time to support the parent infant relationship.

The following comments have been feedback from mothers who have completed the course:

'It has improved my mood and I now know how to manage it'

'I don't feel alone anymore'

'I have made new friends'

'I learnt new ways to play with my baby'

Easy Peasy parent app, 2018 pilot - Learning games for parents to play with their children to develop the skills they need to succeed at school and in life.

Oxfordshire County Council recognises that government initiatives are a valuable resource, both LA and voluntary groups in Oxfordshire look to work with projects to support children and families.

One of those initiatives in 2018 was working with schools to pilot [Easy Peasy parent app](#). The University of Oxford evaluated the pilot and overall, there was a significant difference between the intervention schools and matched comparison schools for children achieving a “good level of development” at the end of reception.

A new national campaign launched with ideas to support children's learning at home has brought LEGO and Easy Peasy together, so that families using the app can benefit from additional new ways to learn through play. Easy Peasy has also approached Oxfordshire to be part of another new project to work with parents of 0-2 year olds.

The Peep Training Course for Foster and Kinship Carers provided a unique chance for the carers to participate in an accredited programme of learning which developed their own skills as a 'professional parent' and was of direct benefit to the children.

Aims of the course was to support the carers to:

- value and extend learning opportunities in everyday life
- improve the quality of the home learning environment
- develop secure attachment relationships with their babies and children
- gain an accredited unit based on supporting their child's learning and development

That children were part of the course both made it more accessible and provided significant learning opportunities for all the participants. The additional challenges of working with looked after children were met within the context of the group, where there was an open acceptance of the demands of meeting the needs of children who often have complicated backgrounds and the emotional rollercoaster as children come and go from the carer's home. The carers said that they valued the learning on the course because it could be applied to the foster children that they have or might work with in the future. They all said that the course met their expectations and they would recommend the course.

Priority 2: Early Engagement

Why this is important

We know that supporting a child and their family can be a journey involving many different teams and services that begins before the child is born. We know that when children and families have a strong start, supported if needed by a range of services, the outcomes for the child and family are more likely to be good.

Central to this strategy is the work is helping early; working closely with settings/schools and other services to identify the right vulnerable children for support. Ensuring timely additional help for vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people, and their families is important. This is a major resource which is designed to have an impact on improving outcomes for these vulnerable children and families.

Alongside the influence of parents, and other family members, early years practitioners can have an important role in children's development, learning and wellbeing, [Nutbrown review \(2012\)](#)

We know that the journey for every family is different, and firmly believe that the services we offer should be made to fit the needs of the family, not the other way around.

'The phrase 'hard to reach' is often used to describe parents who do not access services. This rather loaded phrase puts the emphasis on the inaccessibility of parents but, it is the services that are hard to reach for some parents.' [Principles for engaging with families \(2013\)](#)

For this strategy to succeed, professionals should work collaboratively to support parents and carers in accessing the wide range of services in Oxfordshire. However, we recognise that families must trust the professionals who support them, and an open relationship is the first step to engaging with families.

'Trust is key to success. The most excluded families may be distrustful of 'officials' and may take time to open up and engage with offers of support. Staff in universal services such as teachers, doctors and health visitors can be important sources of support where families have built strong and sustained personal relationships. This can be crucial in achieving positive outcomes.' [Reaching Out: Think Family \(2007\)](#)

We need to work together effectively to recoup the benefits that early intervention can bring and this will require working differently, to higher standards and with focussed activity.

What is already happening in Oxfordshire

2 yr. old funding available for childcare providers	Multi-disciplinary services are available	Webpages and guidance	Health visitor and GP	Mental Health support and guidance	Parenting book given up registration of birth
Play and creative arts therapies	Activities to support children's physical and well-being	Locality and Community Support Service and Family solutions	School Nurses	MASH	Specialist services available for children with a disability
Health care available – pharmacy dentist	Additional funding for childcare available	Public Health initiatives and projects	Under 5's activities listed with FIS	Government funding used to engage early	Sugar smart Oxfordshire – supporting parents with healthy eating

The Community around the setting document identifies professionals to support Early Years
<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/children-education-and-families/working-children-and-young-people/what-school-readiness>

Family Solutions – Freedom Programme, referral for a Creche placement

When P came into the creche he was so distressed crying and clinging onto mum, he had never attended a creche or play & learn session before, mum was encouraged to settle P at the art and craft table with a drawing activity which was set up. There mum drew a picture of herself which P wanted to hold onto tightly as his mum said bye, she again explained that she was going into the other room and she will be back after two hours, he was also holding his comfort blanket and soft toy dog.

P stayed at the art table holding his items as he had 1.1 care, he was able to play for around 15 minutes, then began to get upset again, staff reassured then encouraged to play outside with the other children as he did the items had to be outside watching him play.

P slowly settled for longer periods of time over the weeks, he would request photos taken sometimes of his shoes when the camera was out; he was aware that photos were taken for the learning journals that would be given to his mum to take home. Mum could add more photos if she liked, staff would often show P the photo after it was taken. Mum was reassured once she saw some photos of P settled and playing.

During the weekly sessions P had the opportunity to learn through play and experience different activities which was set up in the creche, also about routine, being independent with hand washing before snack time and after he has been to the toilet, turn taking, making friends and being confident.

By the last session P would come in happy with his blanket and put it on the side ready for home time. This support has prepared the child for the next steps in life and future Early Years settings.

Oxford parent infant project (OXPIP) - Our clinical team are specialists in parent-infant work.

We focus on the relationship between parent and baby, observing the interaction to encourage the development of a strong and loving attachment. [OXPIP's strategic plan](#)

It's helped greatly to discuss how to deal with my thoughts and feelings whilst still being a parent who is 'present'!" - OXPIP Client

Before, I would worry about everything. I would panic. I believed he hated me. Gradually, I've seen love in his eyes – for me. I believe in myself as his mum.

I even know I can (will!) make mistakes. But we're going to be better-than-OK". – OXPIP client



Priority 3: High Quality Provision

Why this is important

One of the most effective steps we can take to improve outcomes for young children in Oxfordshire is to ensure that all early year's provision is judged to be good or better. Generally, across Oxfordshire the quality of early years provision is good, and the Early Years teams will continue to work with settings, schools and childminders who are below good to improve the quality of provision. Central to this is having a well-qualified and motivated workforce that can make a real difference for the children and families. Practitioners must reflect on their practice to drive forward in continuing improvements and supporting children in their next steps in learning.

Our ambition is for every Oxfordshire child to attend a school or setting that is at least good, [Oxfordshire County Council school /setting improvement guarantee](#)

Nationally, early years funding legislation means that more children will have access to funded places. It is our job to ensure that all children who are eligible, take up their places. Providers must keep up to date with local and National Early Years strategies. As the early years and childcare sector changes, it becomes even more important for those working in the field to keep abreast of current thinking and new developments in practice, research and policy.

'The Sutton Trust has always seen good early years provision as critical to social mobility.' [Sound Foundations \(2014\)](#)

High quality early education and childcare can have a positive long term impact on children's later learning and achievements, a fact reflected in Government investment over the last two decades in particular. Quality is the key to that positive impact, and staff with the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding are a crucial element of that quality, [Nutbrown review \(2012\)](#)

Good provision is about having practitioners and professionals who are knowledgeable, able and work together to achieve the best outcomes for the children in the setting and in the community, they support.

'Effective practitioners are able to:

- Recognise which groups of children are vulnerable to learning delay and undertake creative outreach activities to reach these families
- Build supportive relationships with parents within an ethos of partnership
- Understand why parents and the home learning environment are so important
- Work with a wide range of parents, including fathers, parents from different cultural backgrounds and parents with additional support needs
- Identify parents' starting points, and make informed and responsive decisions about how to tailor support to their particular needs
- Support parents to develop the confidence, knowledge and skills to help their children
- Identify difficulties early and know when and how to involve other specialist services
- Reflect on their practice
- Work effectively in multi-agency teams' Early Home Learning Matters (2009)

What is High quality?

- highly-skilled staff
- small class sizes and high adult-to-child ratios,
- a language-rich environment,
- age-appropriate curricula and stimulating materials in a safe physical setting,
- warm, responsive interactions between staff and children

(A science-based framework for early childhood policy, 2007)

Having a higher overall staff to child ratio (i.e. fewer children per staff member across the whole setting) (SEED 2017)

Financing, policies and regulations (EIF2018)

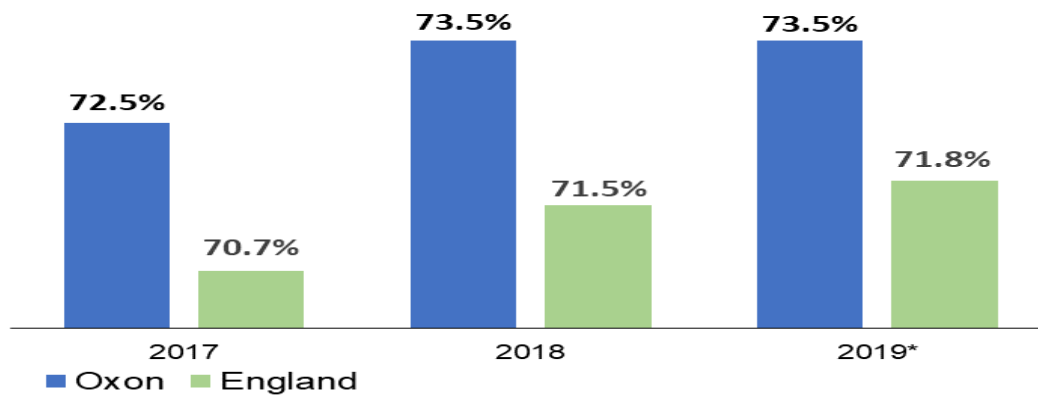
Workforce training and professional development (EPI 2018)

What is already happening in Oxfordshire

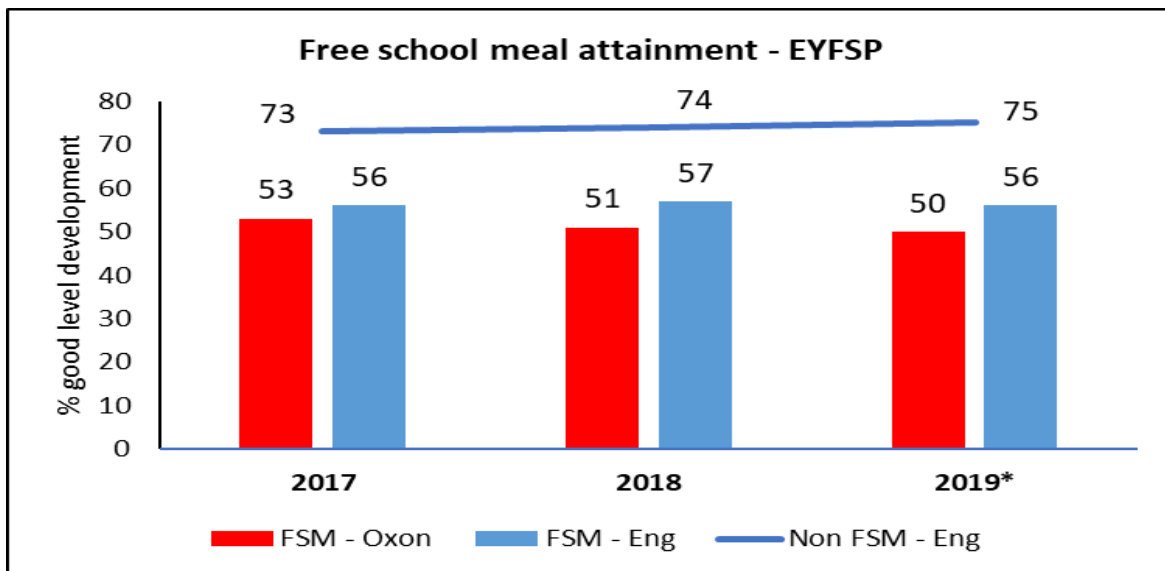
Training and support for childcare providers	Ofsted the regulatory body inspects LA and Registered provision	Family Information Service	Initiatives to improve quality and outcomes	Specialist multi-disciplinary teams supporting provision	Variety of statutory and non-statutory provision for 0-5 years
Conferences to upskill providers and professionals	Self-assessment documents to use to support and guide	LA and Ofsted work in partnership – Remove funding if quality is less than good	Signposting providers to national and local Early Years updates	It is the LA statutory duty to provide enough childcare places/ accessibility across the County	Safeguarding – Training/support and guidance for all organisations within Oxfordshire

The [Early Years Foundation Stage \(EYFS\)](#) sets standards for the learning, development and care of children from birth to 5 years old. All schools and Ofsted-registered early years providers must follow the EYFS, including childminders, preschools, nurseries and school reception classes.

A Good Level of Development (GLD)

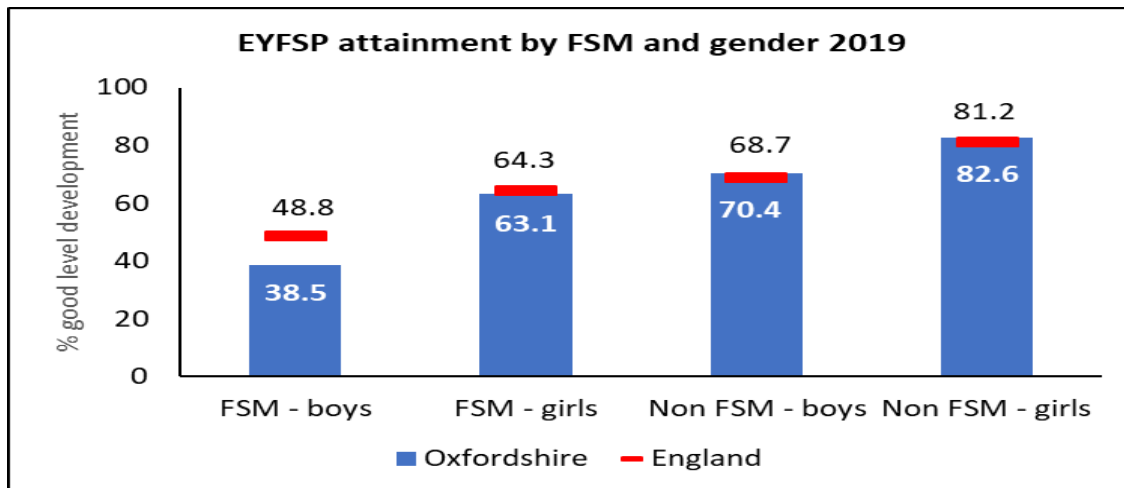


From a cohort of 7,484 pupils, 73.5% achieved a good level of development in 2018/19



The Early Years free school meal gap in Oxfordshire has been steadily increasing over the last few years.

The gap in attainment is currently 25 percentage points compared to 19 percentage points nationally. There is a decreasing proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the free school meals achieving a good level of development in Oxfordshire. This figure remains below the national average.



FSM girls in Oxfordshire perform broadly in line with the national average for this group (63.1% achieving a good level of development, 64.3% nationally). Just over one third of FSM boys in Oxfordshire reach a good level of development (38.5%). This is significantly below the national average for this group (48.8%)

To be in line with the national average, a further 33 FSM boys would need to reach a good level of development

Sally Harvey, Oxfordshire childminder - The Council offered me the opportunity to take part in the Early Years pilot they were running to use storytelling to promote literacy, communication and social and emotional development. This has given me access to the training and resources and our Tales Toolkit journey has started.

From the start, the engagement level of the children was high, the children, aged between 2 and 4, grasped the Character, Setting, Problem and Solution principles quickly and, with great excitement, took ownership and often self-lead their story making. The group story making enables the children to articulate their thoughts, learn about respecting others and build and extend vocabulary whilst having lots of fun. I've seen quiet children grow in confidence as they realise, they can come up with, and voice, solutions which will be listened to and respected. The children incorporate ideas they've seen or heard elsewhere, knowledge which we can consolidate and build upon; we've covered science, maths, geography, animal care, safety, fear and lots of PSE topics within our group story sessions.

Mark making and drawing stories are very popular with my cohort, they are illustrating the story that is in their head and are always very proud of their achievements. The problem-solving element has grown beyond storytelling and is now often used creatively in everyday situations. The children's imagination always amazes me: a Rubik's cube used as a setting becomes disco lights; an orange cloth a very handy hidey hole; a secret potion is the solution to turn a mean pirate into a nice one; and we can never under estimate the power of a burp in my setting! The children are learning so much and I believe the fun, joy, and sense of achievement they feel in creating Tales Toolkit stories are doing wonders for their wellbeing

Priority 4: Information Sharing and High-Quality Transitions

Why this is important

Many different practitioners and services work with children in the early years, but parents and carers remain a constant source of support and are the people who know their own children the best. When we can involve parents and carers, there can be effective information-sharing which supports successful transitions for young children.

Developmentally appropriate practice is as important for children in Key Stage 1 as it is in the EYFS, as research evidence and teachers' own experience shows. Supporting children making the transition to Key Stage 1 requires teachers to strike a balance between adult-led and child-initiated learning, with the right environment, **Julie Fisher (Nursery world)**

We believe that all services should work collaboratively and effectively to support parents and carers, and also work creatively to meet their individual needs and keep the family's wishes at the centre of all the work we do. This cannot be done without effective information-sharing.

We need to ask ourselves, is our school ready to support children with the social skills they have and help them develop more skills? Is our school ready to give children the time, space, and materials they need to explore and discover, **Tamsin Grimmer (2018)**

Transitions:

Key factors that we have identified to influence children's development, progress and educational achievement:

- Individual attributes, resilience and emotional wellbeing
- Parental influence, support and involvement
- High quality teaching and school leadership with moral purpose
- Effective use of resources to improve outcomes



What is already happening in Oxfordshire

Everyone must be GDPR compliant	There is guidance on transitions throughout life	Communications through posters, flyers, webpages and social media	Accessible webpages – reviewed and updated regularly	School Readiness information is available for parents/carers/provision and professionals	Meeting and sharing of information
Parent consultations and reports	Use of applications to share information about children's learning and development	Use of applications to share information about learning and development	Electronic tools available for practitioners to aid information sharing	Multi-disciplinary teams working together to share information and ensure high quality transitions	

Now I am two - On Wednesday afternoons at the Kidlington Community Hub, a small group of 2-year olds with their parent/carer meet for the Now I Am Two session. This is a stay and play session with the purpose of helping to prepare the children for when they receive their preschool place. If they are already attending preschool, the session can run alongside.

Now I am Two is run by two Children and Family Workers. The afternoon begins with all the children sitting in a circle and each child is encouraged to say hello to the rest of the group. This is followed by free play time. The children can choose for example; the home corner, dinosaurs, play dough, a craft or to play on the gym mats.

The free play time allows the children to interact with each other as well as turn taking. The craft is based on a theme and will help with early years skills such as mark making. After the free play time, the children are asked to wash their hands in preparation for snack time. All the children sit at the table for a healthy snack and drink provided by the hub. The children can help themselves to the snack and choose what they would like under the supervision of their parent/carer. The session ends with circle time, story and singing. The afternoon will finish with everyone singing the "Goodbye" song.

School Readiness: A child's experience of 'Transition' within EYFS at Hanwell Fields Community School, Banbury

Ladybirds - 'Pre-Nursery' Age 2- September after 3rd Birthday. 24 place pre-Nursery setting, mixture of funded and paid sessions.

Caterpillars - 'Nursery' September after 3rd Birthday-Reception year.52 place Nursery setting, daily 15 or 30 Hour sessions. Children attend Mon-Fri.

Butterflies – Reception, 60 place/two form entry. Reception setting, Children attend school on a full-time basis.

Ensuring that the language used within all three phases is consistent so that children are introduced to this from the second they join us, e.g. phrases to support transitions during their day and introducing key-concepts for learning.

When developing the learning environment for the start of the year we try to ensure that this is done consistently We have a weekly CPD session as a team and often 'walk' the environment together to ensure that this continues to show progression from Pre-nursery to Reception.

Using the same tracking tool (Target Tracker) and ways of evidencing learning (Tapestry and Learning Journeys) support children, parents and practitioners to see a child's journey with us as a gradual process that can be 'seen through' from joining us to moving into Year 1.

Adapting learning environments and routines throughout the year to slowly build upon the understanding and skills needed for the next phase for that child, e.g. introducing the RWI sounds to children in pre-Nursery through play part the way through the year (or where appropriate for individual children) supports them in preparation for learning those sounds from the get-go within their Nursery year.

Each child new to the setting receives a Home Visit in preparation. This is completed by both class teachers and practitioners, allowing us to get to know the child and their family within an environment where they feel most at ease. We take school uniform and resources with us from our learning environments so that they can explore these, as well as providing the parents with all of the information they need and answering any questions.

Children are invited for 'Transition Week'. For children joining us in Nursery, they come to a welcome session to play alongside a parent, getting to know the various adults that will work with them. For children joining us in Reception who already attend our Nursery setting, they are invited to come to school for three full-days with their new teachers. For children joining us in Reception that will be 'New to Hanwell', they are invited to join us for 3 morning sessions. Transition Week happens in July and is carefully planned by the Nursery and Reception teams. The children create art work, peg-labels and other supportive resources and decorations for us to put up in their classroom so that they then come back to something familiar.

Pre-Nursery, Nursery and Reception children attend various assemblies throughout the year in the school hall meeting new adults. They go to Forest School on a weekly basis with the school's Forest School Leaders. Our Nursery children eat their lunch in the school hall. Nursery and Reception children are taught PE in the school hall by our school's PE teacher... all of these small experiences contribute to our children developing relationships with different adults and becoming familiar with a range of learning environments.

In September, we offer a staggered start to those new to Hanwell, but this is only if it is needed and arranged for individuals in discussion with their parents and class-teacher. For those children who have attended our Nursery, they are used to coming to school on a daily basis and therefore they attend school full-time from the get-go, thus avoiding the need for a staggered start.

Information for parents

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/children-education-and-families/education-and-learning/get-children-ready-school>

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/children-education-and-families/information-parents/find-childcare/help-paying-childcare/early-years-pupil-premium>

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/children-education-and-families/early-years-education/free-education-2-year-olds>

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/schools/our-work-schools/virtual-school-looked-after-children-and-care-leavers-0-25/pupil-premium>

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/schools>

Strategy references

Introduction

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-giving-every-child-the-best-start-in-life/health-matters-giving-every-child-the-best-start-in-life>

<https://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/school-ready-survey-school-leaders>

<https://www2.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/default/files/folders/documents/childreducationandfamilies/ChildrenAndYoungPeoplePlan2018-2021.pdf>

<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110120090141/http://povertyreview.independent.gov.uk/media/20254/poverty-report.pdf>

Developing a strategy

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/education-inspection-framework>

Priority 1

https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/ParentalEngagement/EEF_Parental_Engagement_Guidance_Report.pdf

https://insight.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/system/files/documents/2018_East%20Timor%20HNA.pdf

https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/3998/1/3998_DFE-RR142.pdf

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-the-home-learning-environment>

Priority 2

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/175463/Nutbrown-Review.pdf

http://www.socialserviceworkforce.org/system/files/resource/files/engaging_with_families_0.pdf

<http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2008-0058/DEP2008-0058.pdf>

<https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-7647>

Priority 3

<https://www.oxfordshireearlyyears.co.uk/our-guarantee.html>

<https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/1sound-foundations-jan2014-3.pdf>

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/175463/Nutbrown-Review.pdf

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/723736/Study_of_quality_of_early_years_provision_in_England.pdf

https://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Early-years-structural-quality-review_EPI.pdf

<https://www.eif.org.uk/report/teaching-pedagogy-and-practice-in-early-years-childcare-an-evidence-review>

http://developingchild.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Policy_Framework.pdf

Priority 4

Role of the practitioner, [Julie Fisher, Nursery World 2012](#)

School Readiness and the Characteristics of Effective Learning:
[The Essential Guide for Early Years Practitioners, Tamsin Grimmer \(2018\)](#)

Links to other Oxfordshire strategies

- [Learner engagement strategy](#)
A strategy to build resilience, promote collective responsibility to support all pupils access their full educational entitlement
- [Oxfordshire Autism Joint Commissioning Strategy 2013-2017](#)
A strategy to enable children, young people and adults with autism to lead fulfilled lives.
- [Oxfordshire's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Sufficiency of Places Strategy \(pdf format, 984kb\)](#)
In December 2018 Cabinet approved the county council's strategy to deliver enough SEND provision. The strategy focuses on the five-year period 2018-2022, but also looks beyond to the following five-year period to 2027. Progress against the strategy will be reviewed annually and the strategy updated as required.
- [Schools Accessibility Strategy \(pdf format, 1.3Mb\)](#)
Schools and education authorities have a duty to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils, originally under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and more recently under the Equality Act 2010. This strategy helps school leaders, disabled students and their parents understand the reasonable adjustments duty and includes examples of good practice.
- [Accessibility Strategy Toolkit \(pdf format, 425Kb\)](#) - any school can use
Information about the Department for Education Special Provision Fund and how this is being used in Oxfordshire to create additional places and improve facilities for pupils with SEND.
- [Oxford City Council's Strategy for Children and Young People](#) - Working together to help every child and young person fulfil their potential
- Reducing exclusion from Oxfordshire schools
<https://schools.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/schools/files/folders/folders/documents/learnerengagement/Reducingexclusion.pdf>

Sources of information and resources

Home start school readiness project	Peep training	HENRY
Oxford Parent Infant Project (OXPIP)	Oxfordshire Play Association	One Eighty
Viva Doorsteps	Fegans	Family Links
OXNEST	Oxford Hub	Active Oxfordshire
Early Years Team website	Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) resources	Oxfordshire CPD online
Early Years Buy in support	Oxfordshire Health visitors	LCSS and community co-ordinators
EY SEN team	SENSS Local Offer	sltadvice@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk
The virtual school	https://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/camhs/	www.donnington-doorstep.org.uk
Easy Peasy	Tales Toolkit	Herts of Learning
Forest schools	Library service	Oxfordshire Family Information service
Oxfordshire Schools, Nursery Schools, Day Nurseries, Pre-schools and childminders	Practitioner Toolkit	Early Years Funding webpage
Children Heard and Seen	Clear Sky	Sugar Smart
Daily Mile Little Feet Living streets	Bookstart	Oxford Community Foundation
Ofsted	OSCB training	Early Years Facebook
Best Start in life school readiness initiative	Oxfordshire County Council	Oxfordshire Public Health