

Report to: **Scrutiny Committee for Children's Services**  
Date: **15 September 2014**  
By: **Chair of the Review Board**  
Title of report: **Scrutiny Review of Early Years Attainment**  
Purpose of report: **To present the outcomes of the scrutiny review and make recommendations.**

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**RECOMMENDATION: That the Committee considers the report of the Review Board and makes recommendations to Cabinet for comment, and County Council for approval.**

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**1. Financial Appraisal**

1.1 The financial implications are outlined in the report of the Review Board.

**2. Summary**

2.1 The Review Board comprised Councillors Kathryn Field (Chair), Kim Forward, Alan Shuttleworth, Francis Whetstone and Catherine Platten (Parent Governor Representative).

2.2 The attached report (appendix 1) contains the findings and recommendations of the Review Board. An evidence pack of supporting documentation is available on request from the contact officer.

2.3 The Committee is recommended to receive the Review Board's report for submission to Cabinet and County Council on 14 October 2014 and 21 October 2014 respectively.

**3. Recommendation**

3.1 The Committee is requested to consider and endorse the report of the Review Board for submission to Cabinet and Full Council.

COUNCILLOR KATHRYN FIELD  
Chair of the Review Board

Contact Officer: Martin Jenks

Tel No. 01273 481327

Local Members: All

**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

None



# Scrutiny review of early years attainment

## Report by the Review Board

of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Kathryn Field (Chair)

Councillor Kim Forward

Councillor Alan Shuttleworth

Councillor Francis Whetstone

Catherine Platten (parent governor representative)

## September 2014

**Children's Services Scrutiny Committee – 15 September 2014**

**Cabinet – 14 October 2014**

**Full Council – 21 October 2014**



# Report of the scrutiny review of early years attainment

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	<b>Home learning &amp; Children's Centres</b>	
1	<p>Children's Centres fulfil a number of roles. However, they should focus their work to improve children's early development and educational attainment by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Conducting outreach work in order to know all the families in their area and to identify their needs early (children's centres KPI 9 &amp; 10).</li> <li>b) Co-ordinating work to support families to ensure school readiness and language development needs are being met (children's centres KPI 1 &amp; 5).</li> <li>c) Making child development progress and language development checkers available to all parents/carers.</li> <li>d) Providing parenting courses for parents/carers and examine ways of involving parents/carers in their children's learning to improve home learning environments (children's centres KPI 4).</li> <li>e) Working with Health providers to review the child development advice and guidance given to parents/carers from pre- birth through to age 2 in the light of the withdrawal of free universal antenatal classes.</li> </ul>	7
2	<p>Following the withdrawal of early years teachers from Children's Centres, examine the feasibility and benefits of bringing Children's Centres and the Early Years Improvement Team under the same management to strengthen the early years education role of Children's Centres.</p>	7
	<b>Information for parents and carers</b>	
3	<p>Children attending high quality early years provision have higher levels of attainment. It is important for parents and carers to have good information so they can access high quality early years provision and understand the benefits for their children. The review board recommends that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Information for parents/carers on the quality of pre-school providers should be improved to make it easier for them to identify high quality provision in their area and those settings who are working with the Council to improve attainment.</li> <li>b) Information for parents/carers on the East Sussex County Council (ESCC) web site must be easier to find, be up to date and show the Ofsted rating for the setting together with the qualification level of the staff (e.g. an A-Z list of settings assessed as 'good' or 'outstanding' together with qualification levels of lead and support staff).</li> <li>c) The ESCC website should contain advice for parents/carers highlighting the benefits of choosing 'good' or 'outstanding' settings for children's education.</li> </ul>	8
	<b>Transitions, assessment and the quality of early years teaching practice</b>	
4	<p>Attainment can be improved if pre-school early years providers work closely with primary schools and one another to improve transitions and school readiness, the quality of their assessment of children's progress, and their teaching practice. The review board recommends that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The Early Years 'Village' and quality across the foundation stage (QUAFS) projects are extended to all primary schools by September 2016.</li> <li>b) Early years hubs are developed to promote good practice through clusters of providers and consideration be given to creating foundation stage leaders/area co-ordinators for early years settings (a strategy is currently being introduced by the Early Years Team).</li> <li>c) Pre-school providers should be included in primary school alliances to facilitate the spreading of best practice across all settings.</li> <li>d) ESCC should take opportunities to promote pre-school provision co-located with primary schools, which could be either private, voluntary or maintained provision.</li> </ul>	10

	<b>Quality of Early Years Provision</b>	
5	<p>Evidence suggests that attending good quality early years provision leads to higher levels of attainment. However, not all provision in East Sussex is 'good' or 'outstanding' and levels of attainment are below national averages. The review board recommends that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) ESCC continues to work with early years settings in the Ofsted categories of 'requires improvement/satisfactory' and 'inadequate', so that at least 85% of settings are in Ofsted categories of 'good' or 'outstanding' by September 2015 and at least 90% by September 2016 to ensure all parents/carers have access to a good quality setting in their area.</li> <li>b) The Early Years Improvement Team continue to develop programmes to tackle early years foundation stage (EYFS) profile weaknesses in literacy development, communication &amp; language development and mathematics development.</li> <li>c) Primary schools consider including an early years specialist as part of the school leadership team, and governing bodies should appoint a governor with specific responsibility for the early years foundation stage (EYFS).</li> <li>d) ESCC should develop enhanced quality assurance measures and target those settings whose attainment results are not in line with their Ofsted rating.</li> </ol>	12
	<b>Qualifications and Training</b>	
6	<p>Evidence highlights the role that highly qualified early years practitioners have in improving attainment. The review board believe that ESCC should take action to improve the qualification levels and practice of early years leaders and staff in East Sussex. It recommends that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) ESCC adopt a policy that all child minders and pre-school early years staff should hold or be working towards at least a Level 3 qualification by September 2016. Any prospective child minders should be required to obtain a Level 3 qualification.</li> <li>b) ESCC provide a list of preferred training providers for Level 3 early educator training courses and higher level training, to increase the number of early years staff and practitioners with higher level qualifications.</li> <li>c) The Early Years Improvement Team provide training for managers of early years settings in staff mentoring/supervision, appraisal and staff development to support the development of best practice within settings (i.e. Level 5 minimum qualification standards for lead practitioners).</li> </ol>	14
	<b>Funding</b>	
7	<p>It is recognised that the Council's financial position may not allow additional resources to be invested in early years education. However, some re-allocation of resources should be considered to improve early years attainment as evidence suggests this will also improve attainment at Key Stage 1 &amp; 2. The review board recommends that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) ESCC review the allocation of funding for early years education through the Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) process, and by agreement with the Schools Forum, to provide a 2 year transitional programme of resources for early years provision in 2015/16 and 2016/17 to fund: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• transformative measures to raise staff qualification levels in all settings;</li> <li>• training for early years educator level 3 qualifications;</li> <li>• delivery of more quality across the foundation stage and early years village projects and;</li> <li>• the establishment of peer to peer quality improvement networks so that all providers are included within a network of providers.</li> </ul> </li> <li>b) The East Sussex early years funding formula is changed to encourage and enable pre-school providers to employ well qualified staff though the use of an enhanced lump sum supplement for high quality providers.</li> <li>c) Officers investigate the mechanism for calculating the per child amount in the early years funding that ESCC receives from central government, to ensure it reflects fairly the needs of children in the County.</li> </ol>	16

## Overview

1. The review board decided to examine the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) because it is the basis for a child's education and supports later learning. There are possibilities to influence attainment through Children's Centres and in other parts of Early Years provision.
2. Early Years education covers children from birth up to the age of five years old. During this time a child may be educated at home, cared for by a child minder, attend a nursery or playgroup, and when they turn four years old, enter a reception class at a primary school.
3. The Early Years Foundation Stage is the statutory framework published in 2012 by the Department for Education that sets the standards for the development, learning and care of children from birth to age five. Early Years providers must ensure that they meet the learning and development requirements as specified in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).
4. In the summer term of the academic year that a child reaches age five, their progress is assessed against the areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). A child is judged to have a good level of development (GLD) if they meet expected levels of development in the three prime areas of learning, and two specific areas of learning. These are:

### Prime

- Communication and language development
- Physical development
- Personal, social and emotional development

### Specific

- Literacy development
- Mathematics development.

5. From September 2016 the EYFS assessment will no longer be mandatory and will be replaced by a new baseline assessment which will be carried out when a child enters the reception year at primary school.
6. In 2013, 44% of East Sussex children were assessed as having a good level of development (GLD) in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). This is below the national average of 52%. For children in receipt of free school meals the gap in educational attainment was wider, with 33% of East Sussex children achieving a good level of development (GLD).
7. The review board found there are many different types of organisations and individuals (providers) involved in providing a child's early education. Some are private businesses such as nurseries and child minders; some are voluntary organisations; and others are local authority maintained primary schools and nurseries. These organisations do not always work closely together to enable children to move smoothly between settings (transitions) where their progress is monitored and their individual developmental needs met.
8. Children do best when they have a nurturing home, attend a quality pre-school provision with highly qualified staff (child minders, nurseries, playgroups etc.), followed by a high achieving primary school. A key component of good quality early education provision is having well managed transitions when children move through and into the early education system, and are supported by highly qualified early years staff.

9. In this report, we have identified the key factors involved in attainment and we have made recommendations to improve early years attainment in East Sussex. Our recommendations address the areas of:
- Home learning and Children's Centres
  - Support and Information for parents and carers
  - Transitions
  - Quality assurance
  - Staff qualifications and training
  - Funding of early years education

## Factors affecting attainment

### 1. Home learning environment and the role of Children's Centres

#### *A nurturing home*

10. A child in the early stages of development learns most from their parents and caregivers, but not all parents/carers have the same capacity to support their children's early development. In such cases, support is available from other sources including Children's Centres and for those eligible, funded nursery places for 2 year olds.
11. The review board found that there is evidence that a nurturing home environment, sometimes referred to as a good 'home learning environment' (HLE), is an important factor. Research and practice shows that involving parents/carers in their children's education has a positive effect on improving attainment. An example of this is the early help programme which is designed to give support to children and families at an early stage.
12. Other support for parents/carers such as parenting classes, adult literacy classes, and training are ways in which a child's home learning environment can be improved. Key research suggests that a mother's education level is closely linked with providing a good home learning environment and a child's level of development. Children's Centres are well placed to support parents/carers to improve a child's home learning environment.

#### *The role of children's centres*

13. Local authority managed Children's Centres have an important role to play in early years education. They are already working with young children and their parents/carers in all areas of the County. The evidence suggests Children's Centres are well placed to meet children's early development needs, and in particular those children aged from birth to 2 years old. Their early help and outreach programmes, together with programmes delivered by healthcare partners, mean they can support and improve home learning environments.
14. Children's Centres provide venues at which additional nursery provision could be made. This may be particularly important in areas where there is a lack of high quality nursery places for 2 year olds, and where there are a number of children eligible for free nursery places.
15. Current provision is focussed around the early help programme to provide help and support to the most disadvantaged children and families. In 2015, the Council will become responsible for commissioning health-visiting services. This provides an opportunity to identify and support language and communication development issues at an early stage, which will in turn support literacy development.



16. The review board notes that Early Years teachers have been withdrawn from Children's Centres as part of recent restructuring exercises. The review board considers that it is vital that Children's Centres retain some emphasis on early years education, which was part of their initial role, alongside the early help programme.
17. Children's Centres are managed separately from the Early Years Improvement Team within Children's Services Department. Although the two teams work closely together, it is the review board's view that it would be beneficial if both teams were managed together to reinforce the early years education role that Children's Centres have.
18. The review board notes the consultation on the proposals to de-designate a number of Children's Centres and wants to be sure that services will be continued, especially in areas of deprivation.

### ***Recommendations***

**1. Children's Centres fulfil a number of roles. However, they should focus their work to improve children's early development and educational attainment by:**

- a) **Conducting outreach work in order to know all the families in their area and to identify their needs early (children's centres KPI 9 & 10).**
- b) **Co-ordinating work to support families to ensure school readiness and language development needs are being met (children's centres KPI 1 & 5).**
- c) **Making child development progress and language development checkers available to all parents/carers.**
- d) **Providing parenting courses for parents/carers and examine ways of involving parents/carers in their children's learning to improve home learning environments (children's centres KPI 4).**
- e) **Working with Health providers to review the child development advice and guidance given to parents/carers from pre- birth through to age 2 in the light of the withdrawal of free universal antenatal classes.**

**2. Following the withdrawal of early years teachers from Children's Centres, examine the feasibility and benefits of bringing Children's Centres and the Early Years Improvement Team under the same management to strengthen the early years education role of Children's Centres.**

## **2. Take up of early years education places and access**

### ***Take up of funded places***

19. The review board examined the level of take up of local authority funded nursery and pre-school places for 3 and 4 year old children. The take up levels of funded places are high across all areas of the County. For the most deprived 20% of children the take up rate was 92% in spring 2013. Therefore, the review board found that a poor take up rate of funded provision is not a contributing factor to the lower levels of attainment in East Sussex.
20. Although poor take up does not appear to be a factor, work should continue to promote the entitlement to free nursery places, and to target those children who would benefit most from early education support. Research evidence shows that attending good quality pre-school provision has a positive impact on attainment.

21. Other evidence that came to light during the review indicates that attending a nursery or pre-school place regularly, is as important as the number of hours a child attends. Even if a child cannot attend for all the hours they are entitled to (up to 15 hours per week), it is still beneficial for them to attend for as many hours as they can. Research studies have shown that it is important for children to develop positive relationships with staff. Attending regularly enables them to do this, to become familiar with the environment, and to understand what is expected of them.

### **Access**

22. The Effective Pre-school and Primary Education Project (EPPE 3-11 project) is a research study that followed children's progress from Early Years provision through to Key Stage 2. It found children who do well, go to a good quality pre-school and school provision. Being able to access good quality child minders, nurseries, pre-schools and schools is important for attainment levels.
23. Parents and carers need to have good information about the early years provision that is available in their area when choosing where to send their child. They also need information on which type of provision would benefit their child most.
24. The review found that information available to parents/carers about early years provision needs to be improved. In particular, it was difficult to find information on the quality of pre-school provision and the Ofsted quality rating of that provision. It was not always easy to see the qualification level of the staff employed to look after the children, or whether the child minder, nursery or pre-school was working with the Council (or other organisations) to improve standards.

### ***Recommendations***

**3. Children attending high quality early years provision have higher levels of attainment. It is important for parents and carers to have good information so they can access high quality early years provision and understand the benefits for their children. The review boards recommends that:**

- a) Information for parents/carers on the quality of pre-school providers should be improved to make it easier for them to identify high quality provision in their area and those settings who are working with the Council to improve attainment.**
- b) Information for parents/carers on the East Sussex County Council (ESCC) web site must be easier to find, be up to date and show the Ofsted rating for the setting together with the qualification level of the staff (e.g. an A-Z list of settings assessed as 'good' or 'outstanding' together with qualification levels of lead and support staff).**
- c) The ESCC website should contain advice for parents/carers highlighting the benefits of choosing 'good' or 'outstanding' settings for children's education.**

### **3. Structure and nature of early years provision**

#### ***The structure of the early years sector***

25. There are many different types of organisation involved in providing early years education. Between birth and the age of 5, a child may be educated at home, go to a child minder, attend a nursery or playgroup and then enter the reception year at a primary school. A mix of private, voluntary, independent (PVI) and state maintained (provided by the local education authority) organisations and individuals operate the various types of provision.
26. The fragmented nature of early years provision can make it difficult to maintain quality and consistency across a child's early years education. This is supported by evidence from a number of sources including Ofsted's Early Years annual report 2012/13. There is evidence that different providers do not always "trust" each other's assessments of children's development and progress against the areas of learning described in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

#### ***Transitions and quality across the foundation stage.***

27. In response to the fragmented nature of early education provision, the Council's Early Years Improvement Team has set up the Quality Across the Foundation Stage (QUAFS) and Early Years 'Village' pilot projects to focus on transition between pre-school settings and the reception year in primary schools. These projects aim to improve the way children's development in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is supported; how their progress is measured; how their move between establishments or settings is managed (transitions); and to encourage closer working relationships between pre-school providers such as nurseries and primary schools.
28. The review board believe that the Early Years 'Village' Quality Across the Foundation Stage initiatives have led to an improvement in children's attainment at the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). At one school the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) outcomes improved by 5.8% compared with a County average of 1.3%. The following factors were found to be important in improving attainment.
  - Managing transitions to provide well connected, integrated, 'seamless' provision across the foundation stage and by developing early years foundation stage leaders.
  - Improving the EYFS assessment process by undertaking joint assessments, joint moderation of EYFS results and training had led to improved quality assurance.
  - School Readiness. Taking a co-ordinated approach to tackling identified weaknesses in the EYFS profile through literacy and mathematics support; communication and language development; improving self-help skills; sharing of assessments and identifying children with a special educational need and disability (SEND) at an earlier stage.
29. In a recent Ofsted inspection of arrangements for school improvement the inspectors found that: "Initiatives like the 'Village School' in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where private, voluntary or independent settings are working closely with local schools, is helping to prepare children for school more effectively and improve the quality of provision".
30. Possible solutions to improve attainment in East Sussex could be the extension of projects to improve quality such as the 'Village School' and quality across the foundation stage (QUAFS). It would also be beneficial to consider initiatives to develop opportunities to share good practice between early years providers.

31. This could be through the creation of foundation stage leaders and/or area co-ordinators who would be responsible for improving early years attainment across pre-school and primary school settings. Early years system leadership should also be considered when developing peer to peer support such as alliances, teaching schools etc. so that the foundation stage and pre-school providers are also included.

### ***The nature of early years providers***

32. In East Sussex, approximately 60% of children attend pre-school settings that are operated by private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector organisations. The rest attend publicly provided maintained settings, such as nursery classes that are part of schools and Children's Centres. There is evidence to suggest that levels of attainment are higher in other parts of the country where there are more maintained nurseries.
33. The reason for this difference in attainment is attributed to the fact that maintained settings are more likely to have qualified teachers and early years practitioners, than PVI settings. Where nurseries and nursery classes are provided as part of primary school, there are better levels of attainment for young children. The impact of staff qualifications is explored in more detail in section 5 of the report.
34. The review board found that there are many 'good' and 'outstanding' providers in both the PVI and maintained sectors located across East Sussex. It was not clear from the evidence, that creating more maintained provision on its own, would have a substantial positive impact on attainment. The review board considered that it would be appropriate to address the nature and structure of provision in a way that develops good practice in all settings e.g. through cross phase alliances of schools, nurseries and other providers. The review board also believes that where primary school provision is being reviewed, consideration should be given to creating co-located pre-school provision.

#### ***Recommendations***

**4. Attainment can be improved if pre-school early years providers work closely with primary schools and one another to improve transitions and school readiness, the quality of their assessment of children's progress and their teaching practice. The review board recommends that:**

- a) **The Early Years 'Village' and quality across the foundation stage (QUAFS) projects are extended to all primary schools by September 2016.**
- b) **Early years hubs are developed to promote good practice through clusters of providers and consideration be given to creating foundation stage leaders/area co-ordinators for early years settings (a strategy is currently being introduced by the Early Years Team).**
- c) **Pre-school providers should be included in primary school alliances to facilitate the spreading of best practice across all settings.**
- d) **ESCC should take opportunities to promote pre-school provision co-located with primary schools, which could be either private, voluntary or maintained provision.**

## **4. Quality of settings**

35. There is strong evidence that good quality provision leads to better attainment in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). This is what the Department for Education (DfE) believe and they have highlighted the importance of having highly qualified early years practitioners as a way to improve attainment (see section 5 of this report). The Council needs to continue to work with education providers to ensure that there is good quality provision available to all children.

36. An analysis of the geographical location of good quality provision revealed there are 'good' and 'outstanding' providers in all parts of the County. However, around 20% of early years providers have not achieved this standard. Those settings assessed as 'requiring improvement' (previously 'satisfactory') or 'inadequate' should continue to be targeted for improvement.
37. However, the picture in East Sussex is more complex than simply promoting good quality provision. The review board found that in 2013 80% of pre-school children attended a setting rated as either 'good' or 'outstanding' and 78% of the primary schools were rated 'good' or 'outstanding', but average attainment at the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) was still below the national average.
38. The review board explored the reasons why the level of attainment was lower than expected with the number of 'good' or 'outstanding' providers. It would appear there are a number of factors that may influence the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) results.

### ***Foundation stage profile weaknesses***

39. Evidence from the review has identified the following areas that require improvement in order to increase good levels of development at the early years foundation stage (EYFS):
  - Literacy development. This involves encouraging children to read and write, both through listening to others reading, and being encouraged to begin to read and write themselves.
  - Communication and language development. This involves giving children opportunities to speak and listen in a range of situations and to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves.
  - Mathematics development. This involves providing children with opportunities to practise and improve their skills in counting numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems, and to describe shapes, spaces, and measures.
  - Self-help skills (school readiness). Children manage their own basic hygiene and personal needs successfully, including dressing and going to the toilet independently. They can communicate their needs and separate confidently from their parent or carer.
40. Specific programmes are being used to target these areas of weakness, such as the East Sussex Early Years Speech, Language and Communication Pathway used to improve communication and language development. The Early Years Improvement Team has also targeted these areas of development through its annual training programme.

### ***Quality assurance.***

41. There are a number of local authorities that have better results than East Sussex, who have a history of quality assurance. Some of these local authorities are our statistical neighbours (i.e. they are similar in nature) and have used quality assurance systems based on the rating scales used in the Effective Pre-school and Primary Education Project (EPPE 3-11 project). East Sussex no longer has a quality assurance scheme in place.
42. The review board found evidence from the quality across the foundation stage approach that suggests that quality assurance is a factor in improving attainment. There must be a continued focus on those settings whose attainment results are not in line with their Ofsted rating.

### ***Assessment consistency***

43. It has been suggested that recent changes to the way in which the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) is assessed have contributed to the lower results. In particular, assessments may have been applied too strictly and children may have been assessed as having lower levels of development than they actually had. Since 2013, additional training and moderation work has been undertaken to improve the consistency of assessments. It is believed that the impact of this work will be seen in the next set of Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) results in September 2014.

### ***Ofsted inspections***

44. At present, Ofsted does not separately inspect the reception year in primary schools. The Ofsted assessment rating is for the whole school, and may not necessarily reflect the quality of the reception year where the EYFS assessments are undertaken. Some commentators have suggested that there have been inconsistencies in the way Ofsted inspects the early years sector. Ofsted has announced that it will stop using consultants to carry out inspections in the future and is looking to adopt a more consistent approach to inspecting the different types of early years providers.

### ***Early years expertise in primary schools***

45. There is evidence that there is a lack of understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) by primary school head teachers. Often primary school heads have more experience in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 education for older children. This is currently being addressed by the Early Years Improvement Team, so that the appropriate level of attention and focus can be given to early years education in primary schools.
46. The review board recognise that arrangements for formally assessing a child's progress are being changed. The review board considers that having a baseline assessment at the start of the reception year supports best practice and the review board believes that the sharing of information between phases is essential to ensure a child's progress.

### ***Recommendations***

**5. Evidence suggests that attending good quality early years provision leads to higher levels of attainment. However, not all provision in East Sussex is 'good' or 'outstanding' and levels of attainment are below national averages. The review board recommends that:**

- a) ESCC continues to work with early years settings in the Ofsted categories of 'requires improvement/satisfactory' and 'inadequate', so that at least 85% of settings are in Ofsted categories of 'good' or 'outstanding' by September 2015 and at least 90% by September 2016 to ensure all parents/carers have access to a good quality setting in their area.**
- b) The Early Years Improvement Team continue to develop programmes to tackle early years foundation stage (EYFS) profile weaknesses in literacy development, communication & language development and mathematics development.**
- c) Primary schools consider including an early years specialist as part of the school leadership team, and governing bodies should appoint a governor with specific responsibility for the early years foundation stage (EYFS).**
- d) ESCC should develop enhanced quality assurance measures and target those settings whose attainment results are not in line with their Ofsted rating.**

## 5. Qualification level of staff and training

### *Staff qualifications*

47. Evidence from a number of research reports emphasise the impact of having highly qualified early years teachers and practitioners in improving early years attainment. The Nutbrown Review commissioned by the DfE provides some detailed research and evidence from the UK and other countries. In particular, studies have shown the link between providers who have qualified teachers and degree educated leaders and higher levels of attainment. Research suggests that all staff involved in early years education should have at least a Level 3 qualification in early years education.
48. For child minders and smaller PVI providers this may present a particular challenge, as having more highly qualified staff will be more expensive and may be viewed as unaffordable. For child minders there has been a change in focus from providing a service that looks after and cares for a child, to one that also educates a child. For example, Hampshire County Council have a policy that all child minders offering funded places should have a Level 3 qualification.
49. In East Sussex there are 232 pre-school groups who provide funded early years places. In 111 of these, the lead practitioner for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) holds a qualification higher than the minimum (early years educator Level 3 qualification), and 73 have a Foundation Degree or above. The Review Board's recommendation is that lead practitioners (e.g. nursery managers and senior staff) should hold at least a Level 5 qualification.
50. The review board found evidence that the level of staff qualification was one of the most important factors in improving attainment. This has implications for the way the Council funds early years education and the training it provides.

### *Training*

51. The Early Years Improvement Team provide an annual training programme to support and meet identified training needs of early years staff and managers in East Sussex. Each year part of the training programme focusses on specific areas of learning contained within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).
52. The majority of the training courses provided are short course programmes targeted around specific issues to meet statutory requirements, assessments, moderation or parts of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) e.g. safeguarding/child protection, EYFS assessments, Literacy, Understanding the World etc. At present there are no programmes to promote higher level qualifications such as Level 3 or above.
53. Future improvement support activity includes developing peer to peer support through alliances and system leadership. There are opportunities to use training as a mechanism to support system change and improvement.

### ***Recommendations***

**6. Evidence highlights the role that highly qualified early years practitioners have in improving attainment. The review board believe that ESSC should take action to improve the qualification levels and practice of early years leaders and staff in East Sussex. It recommends that:**

- a) ESSC adopt a policy that all child minders and pre-school early years staff should hold or be working towards at least a Level 3 qualification by September 2016. Any prospective child minders should be required to obtain a Level 3 qualification.**
- b) ESSC provide a list of preferred training providers for Level 3 early educator training courses and higher level training, to increase the number of early years staff and practitioners with higher level qualifications.**
- c) The Early Years Improvement Team provide training for managers of early years settings in staff mentoring/supervision, appraisal and staff development to support the development of best practice within settings (i.e. Level 5 minimum qualification standards for lead practitioners).**

## **Issues**

### **6. Funding**

54. The main source of funding for early years education in East Sussex comes from the central government Department for Education (DfE). This is from the early years 'block' of the dedicated schools grant (DSG). The early years 'block' provides funding for nursery places for 2 year old children from deprived backgrounds and funds pre-school places for 3 and 4 year olds. Funding for the reception year in primary schools comes from the schools 'block' of funding, which is also funds the education of older children.
55. The early years funding in the dedicated schools grant is based on a per child amount multiplied by an estimate of the number of eligible children. For the financial year 2013/14, the funding that ESSC received from central government was £3,605.96 per child. The amount of funding per child is based on historic expenditure levels and is not calculated using a needs based formula. Therefore, early years funding per child is less than the amount paid to some of our neighbouring authorities, who have similar levels of deprivation.

#### ***Early years funding formula***

56. The School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2013 allow the Council to retain up to 20% of early years funding to pay for centrally provided services such as training, moderation and improvement services. At present East Sussex retains 10% of funding for centrally provided services. The remainder of the funding is allocated through the local early years funding formula to pay for 'free', funded, pre-school places for 3 and 4 year olds.



57. The early years funding for 3 and 4 year old children pays for pre-school places of up to 15 hours per week. The hours can be used flexibly over a minimum of 38 weeks, and up to a maximum of 570 hours in any one year. In 2013/14 early years providers were paid a base rate payment of £3.54 per hour, per child for funded places for 3 and 4 year olds. This is one of the lowest funding rates of our statistical and geographic neighbouring local authorities (the highest being £4.15 per hour per child). The average funding rate of our statistical neighbours is £3.77 per hour, per child.
58. The local funding formula for early years has to be agreed by the Schools Forum. The funding rate for early years providers has not been increased for the last 4 years until small increase was recently agreed. The funding rate has been increased from £3.54 to £3.60 per hour, per child from April 2014.
59. The review board examined the funding formulas that are used by other authorities. It found that there was a wide variety of approaches, which made direct comparisons difficult. The East Sussex local funding formula consists of a single payment rate of £3.60 per hour per child, with supplements for quality of 79p per hour per child (paid to providers with the highest level of staff qualification) and deprivation consisting of a lump sum payment of £92.52 per provider.
60. Other local authorities had more than one hourly rate that they paid pre-school providers, to reflect differences in the cost of some types of provision e.g. provision for children with disabilities. There was widespread use of additional payments to providers on top of the hourly rate. These additional payments (supplements) were used to pay for features of provision such as quality (including qualification levels of staff), levels of deprivation, and flexibility. The additional payments were made either by adding to the hourly rate paid per child, or via lump sum payment. Lump sum payments for quality can be important as they can incentivise PVI providers to employ more highly qualified staff.

#### ***Other funded early years services***

61. There are other services for children which are funded from the Council's main budget that are not part of the early years team. These are primarily the network of Children's Centres around the County that provide services for children aged 0-5 and their families. The remainder of spending comes from an allocation of funding in the high needs 'block' to support pre-school children with disabilities and complex special educational needs.

#### ***Potential changes to the way ESCC funds early years***

62. It is possible to use central government funding flexibly and to use funding from the schools 'block' to pay for early years education. A reallocation of expenditure between funding 'blocks' has to be agreed by the Schools Forum. There is an opportunity to re-focus education funding in a different way to achieve the best outcomes for children over their whole school career.
63. The way early years provision is funded can be used as a mechanism to improve the quality of early years provision. The Council may not be able to influence the amount of early years funding that it receives from central government. However, the local funding formula can facilitate the changes in attainment that the local authority would like to see. The most important issue is to ensure the Council uses the funding it gets as effectively as possible.

### ***Recommendations***

**7. It is recognised that the Council's financial position may not allow additional resources to be invested in early years education. However, some re-allocation of resources should be considered to improve early years attainment as evidence suggests this will also improve attainment at Key Stage 1 & 2. The review board recommends that:**

- a) ESCC review the allocation of funding for early years education through the Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) process, and by agreement with the Schools Forum, to provide a 2 year transitional programme of resources for early years provision in 2015/16 and 2016/17 to fund:
  - transformative measures to raise staff qualification levels in all settings;
  - training for early years educator level 3 qualifications;
  - delivery of more quality across the foundation stage and early years village projects and;
  - the establishment of peer to peer quality improvement networks so that all providers are included within a network of providers.**
- b) The East Sussex early years funding formula is changed to encourage and enable pre-school providers to employ well qualified staff through the use of an enhanced lump sum supplement for high quality providers.**
- c) Officers investigate the mechanism for calculating per child amount in the early years funding that ESCC receives from central government, to ensure it reflects fairly the needs of children in the County.**

## **Conclusions**

### **7. Concluding comments**

64. A child's early education underpins their later learning as they progress through primary and secondary school. It is essential that all children get off to a good start and have access to high quality early years provision.
65. The review board recognises that a child's relationship with their parents/carers is of paramount importance. This should be reflected throughout a child's early education and all providers should strive to have strong relationships with parents and carers.
66. The review board found that having highly qualified early years staff, having well managed transitions between settings, and good relationships between settings and parents/carers are key components of good quality provision. It is also important that early years practitioners have opportunities to develop and spread best practice through training and peer to peer support.
67. East Sussex has many early years settings that have been assessed by Ofsted as 'good' or 'outstanding'. However, work needs to continue to ensure that all children have access to good quality provision, and that this provision is effective. Children's Centres should continue in their role of supporting children's early development.
68. The review makes a number of recommendations that can be implemented with existing resources. However, some re-allocation of funding may be required to bring about system wide improvements in early years attainment.

# Appendix

## Scope and terms of reference

During 2012/13 the Children's Services scrutiny committee noted that educational attainment in East Sussex was disappointing compared with many other authorities. Achieving a commonly accepted understanding of the underlying reasons for differences in attainment may provide the best chance of developing effective strategies to sustainably tackle underperforming schools or pupils.

On 9 September 2013 the Children's Services scrutiny committee established this scrutiny review board to investigate and report back to the committee on improving educational attainment in East Sussex.

On 3 December 2013 the review board held a scoping meeting to agree the terms of reference for the review. It was agreed to focus on the early years stage of education as this is important in providing a sound basis for a child's education and offers possibilities to influence attainment. Therefore, this review will examine the factors that lead to a strong and sustained improvement in attainment at the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), looking at the performance of all early years settings.

## Review Board Members

Councillors Kathryn Field (Chair), Kim Forward, Alan Shuttleworth, Francis Whetstone  
Catherine Platten (parent governor representative)

### ***Support to the Board was provided by the following officers:***

Fiona Wright, Assistant Director – Schools, Youth & Inclusion Support  
Ruth Szulecki, Early Years Development Manager, Early Years Improvement  
Lesley Wickham, Head of Education Improvement, Early Years Improvement

## Witnesses

Alison Rendle and Elizabeth Funge, Head of Education Improvement.  
Diana Frankcombe, Senior Manager Governor Services & Planning  
Debbie Adams, Head of Children's Centres Services  
Sam Attwater, Nursery Manager Oakwood Nursery  
John Greenwood, Executive Head of Oakwood Academy  
Margaret Coleman, Head Teacher Manor Primary School

### ***Review Board meeting dates***

3 December 2013	2 June 2014
13 February 2014	1 July 2014
13 March 2014	29 July 2014
22 April 2014	

## List of evidence papers

Item	Date
Excellence For All – A strategy for education improvement in East Sussex (2013 to 2015).	December 2013
Are you Ready for Your Inspection? A guide to inspections of provision on Ofsted's Early Years and Childcare Registers. Ofsted.	August 2012.
Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Handbook 2014 – Standards & Testing Agency	2013
Reforming assessment and accountability for primary schools: government response to consultation on primary school assessment and accountability. DfE.	March 2014
Nutbrown Review – Foundations for Quality DfE.	June 2012
More Great Childcare – Raising quality and giving parents more choice. DfE	January 2013.
Effective Pre-School and Primary Education 3-11 project. A longitudinal study funded by the DCSF (2003 – 2008)	2008
Sammons P. et al (2008) EPPE 3-11 Project: Influences on Children's Attainment & Progress in Key Stage 2.	2008
Sound Foundations, The Sutton Trust. A review of research evidence on quality of Early Childhood Education and Care for children under three.	January 2014
Premium Policies: What schools and teachers believe will improve standards for poorer pupils and those in low attaining schools. The Sutton Trust.	January 2012
Early Education and Childcare. Statutory guidance for local authorities. DfE.	September 2013.
Early years annual report 2012/13. Ofsted.	March 2014
Off to a flying start – assessment in reception Year: West Hove Infant School. Ofsted Good practice example.	19 July 2012
Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Attainment by Pupil Characteristics, England 2013. DfE.	21 November 2013
Quality and Inequality: Do three and four year olds in deprived areas experience lower quality early years provision? Nuffield Foundation.	May 2014
Exploring trends in Early Years Education Entitlement (EYEE) take up and Foundation Stage outcomes. ESCC	December 2009
School Readiness Briefing – Learning Together Alliance and Pilot Project. Early Years Improvement Team, ESCC.	March 2013
Children's Centres – Key Performance Indicators. ESCC.	February 2014
Early Years Improvement Team Training Strategy: 2014-15. ESCC.	2014

## Early Years Foundation Stage areas of learning and their associated early learning goals

### Prime areas of learning

**Communication and language development** involves giving children opportunities to speak and listen in a range of situations and to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves.

#### ELG 01

**Listening and attention:** Children listen attentively in a range of situations. They listen to stories, accurately anticipating key events, and respond to what they hear with relevant comments, questions or actions. They give their attention to what others say and respond appropriately, while engaged in another activity.

#### ELG 02

**Understanding:** Children follow instructions involving several ideas or actions. They answer 'how' and 'why' questions about their experiences and in response to stories or events.

#### ELG 03

**Speaking:** Children express themselves effectively, showing awareness of listeners' needs. They use past, present and future forms accurately when talking about events that have happened or are to happen in the future. They develop their own narratives and explanations by connecting ideas or events.

**Physical development** involves providing opportunities for young children to be active and interactive, and to develop their co-ordination, control, and movement. Children must also be helped to understand the importance of physical activity, and to make healthy choices in relation to food.

#### ELG 04

**Moving and handling:** Children show good control and co-ordination in large and small movements. They move confidently in a range of ways, safely negotiating space. They handle equipment and tools effectively, including pencils for writing.

#### ELG 05

**Health and self-care:** Children know the importance for good health of physical exercise and a healthy diet, and talk about ways to keep healthy and safe. They manage their own basic hygiene and personal needs successfully, including dressing and going to the toilet independently.

**Personal, social and emotional development** involves helping children to develop a positive sense of themselves and others; to form positive relationships and develop respect for others; to develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; to understand appropriate behaviour in groups; and to have confidence in their own abilities.

**ELG 06**

**Self-confidence and self-awareness:**

Children are confident to try new activities, and to say why they like some activities more than others. They are confident to speak in a familiar group, will talk about their ideas, and will choose the resources they need for their chosen activities. They say when they do or do not need help.

**ELG 07**

**Managing feelings and behaviour:**

Children talk about how they and others show feelings, talk about their own and others' behaviour, and its consequences, and know that some behaviour is unacceptable. They work as part of a group or class, and understand and follow rules. They adjust their behaviour to different situations, and take changes of routine in their stride.

**ELG 08**

**Making relationships:** Children play cooperatively, taking turns with others. They take account of one another's ideas about how to organise their activity. They show sensitivity to others' needs and feelings, and form positive relationships with adults and other children.

**Specific areas of learning**

**Literacy development** involves encouraging children to read and write, both through listening to others reading, and being encouraged to begin to read and write themselves. Children must be given access to a wide range of reading materials – for example books, poems, and other materials to ignite their interest.

**ELG 09**

**Reading:** Children read and understand simple sentences. They use phonic knowledge to decode regular words and read them aloud accurately. They also read some common irregular words. They demonstrate an understanding when talking with others about what they have read.

**ELG 10**

**Writing:** Children use their phonic knowledge to write words in ways which match their spoken sounds. They also write some irregular common words. They write sentences which can be read by themselves and others. Some words are spelt correctly and others are phonetically plausible.

**Mathematics development** involves providing children with opportunities to practise and improve their skills in counting numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems, and to describe shapes, spaces, and measures.

**ELG 11**

**Numbers:** Children count reliably with numbers from one to 20, place them in order and say which number is one more or one less than a given number. Using quantities and objects, they add and subtract two single-digit numbers and count on or back to find the answer. They solve problems, including doubling, halving and sharing.

**ELG 12**

**Shape, space and measures:** Children use everyday language to talk about size, weight, capacity, position, distance, time and money to compare quantities and objects and to solve problems. They recognise, create and describe patterns. They explore characteristics of everyday objects and shapes and use mathematical language to describe them.

**Understanding of the world** involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment.

**ELG 13**

**People and communities:** Children talk about past and present events in their own lives and in the lives of family members. They know that other children do not always enjoy the same things, and are sensitive to this. They know about similarities and differences between themselves and others, and among families, communities and traditions.

**ELG 14**

**The world:** Children know about similarities and differences in relation to

places, objects, materials and living things. They talk about the features of their own immediate environment and how environments might vary from one another. They make observations of animals and plants and explain why some things occur, and talk about changes.

**ELG 15**

**Technology:** Children recognise that a range of technology is used in places such as homes and schools. They select and use technology for particular purposes.

**Expressive arts and design** involves supporting children to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials, as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role play, and design and technology.

**ELG 16**

**Exploring and using media and materials:** Children sing songs, make music and dance, and experiment with ways of changing them. They safely use and explore a variety of materials, tools and techniques, experimenting with colour, design, texture, form and function.

**ELG 17**

**Being imaginative:** Children use what they have learnt about media and materials in original ways, thinking about uses and purposes. They represent their own ideas, thoughts and feelings through design and technology, art, music, dance, role play and stories.



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