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ECEY 6011 (Part 1 Group discussion)

Members and role of the leadership team
Pandora - Reflective Practice Lead
Kerri - Parental Engagement Lead
Salmah - Policy Lead
Wing - SENCO

Case Study:
A non-maintained day care nursery, children ages from 6 months to 3 years old.

Area of Focus:
Ofsted inspection quality assurance

Pandora's script

Thank you for attending this meeting regarding the imminent Ofsted inspection.

We are currently registered as a nursery setting on the early years register and have six babies and twelve children under four years on role (UK Government 2024b, Childcare Act, 2006). Tonight, we will be using the minimum standards in the EYFS and Early Inspection handbook four key areas to reflect and review our settings quality (Department for Education [hereafter, DfE] 2024a, UK Government, 2024a section 169).

Whilst we are no longer required to complete a self-evaluation form prior to the inspection, we do have a self-evaluation process, which demonstrates our robust reflective practice, the settings strengths, areas that require improvement and how we are aiming to meet these (Nursery world, 2018, Arnerich, 2018). As leaders we have a duty to drive quality and improvement (Fullan, 2020 p.19).

Today we will examine the effectiveness of feedback structures and data from all stakeholders including families, agencies, and staff and how these impact our policies, inclusion, partnerships, professional development and quality provision and social justice for all in our setting (Dobson and Melrose, 2020, Feeney and Freeman, 2018 and Khalifa, 2018).

As Reflective Practice Lead, I have been examining our last Ofsted inspection report's findings and as a result have implemented a few structural changes regarding professional development (Early years inspection handbook, 2024a point 169). Currently we have two level 2 qualified staff and three level 3 qualified staff and a manager who holds a national professional qualification in early years leadership (DfE, 2024b, Best practice network, no date). We are therefore working beyond the standards in the EYFS for qualified staff and ratio’s, 1:3 for under 2 years, 1:5 for 2 years and 1:8 or 1:13 for 3 years (Foley, 2024, DfE, 2025, DfE, 2024a p.26-28).

The early years industry is well known for its high staff turnover (Heilala, 2024) and with our commitment to retaining staff, looking after wellbeing and valuing their voices, we are committed to ongoing quality professional development and as a result we currently have three paediatric first aiders, who have completed annual refresher training (Wilson-Thomas and Brookes, 2024, DfE, 2025, DfE, 2024a p. 26, DfE 2022), meaning we are prepared in instances of staff absence and meeting the minimum standards.

Kerri, have you updated the staff information board for parents to reflect which staff are currently paediatric first aid trained?

Kerri: Yes, the boards have been updated, and details of First Aid status are displayed beneath each staff photograph.

Following feedback from supervision forms, gaps in training have been identified (DfE, 2024a p.27, Waltham Forest education hub,2019). It is important to add that feedback from supervision coaching and observation does not replace our staff's annual appraisals (Taylor et al, 2021).

Salmah, I understand that you are also working on a hybrid approach to the supervision form, which is currently completed on paper, so that it is accessible to all staff (Real World, 2025, Equality Act, 2010)

Salmah: Yes, that's right.

A few children have received inclusion funding, this has enabled us to train two staff members in Makaton levels 1 and attention autism (DfE, 2024a p.27).

Wing How are you progressing with EHCP's for the other children that have been identified as needing extra support?

Wing: Thank you. We have been making progress with the EHCPs for the children identified as needing extra support. We have already completed and submitted some applications, ensuring they meet the statutory requirements outlined in the SEND Code of Practice (DfE, 2015). and we are in the process of gathering evidence for the remaining ones.

Additionally early years pupil premium funding (Grenier, 2025, Education Endowment Fund, 2025) has meant all staff have recently completed trauma-informed behaviour and baby rights training, due to findings in our SSTEW and ECERS assessments (Central collaborative Knowsley, 2019, Chudzik, Corr and Santos, 2023 and BEYTH, 2025).

This training supports Bowlby as cited in (NSPCC, 2021) attachment theory, to support primary caregiver's attunement to their child's emotional needs and in our capacity as 'key person' enabling the holistic development of children under our care

as well as their safety and welfare and promotes quality within workforce (DfE 2024a, p.17-28).

Salmah is in the process of updating our behaviour policy to include trauma-informed strategies. Do you have time to complete this before the inspection Salmah? This will assist us in embedding a trauma-informed approach in our practice.

Salmah: Yes, I'm updating the behaviour policy with trauma-informed strategies and will have it ready before the inspection.

And Kerri you mentioned that you would like to disseminate the baby rights training to parents soon are you still happy to do this?

Kerri: Yes, of course. I have booked a date of 15th April and letters have been sent to parents, to gain an idea of how many will attend. I will keep you updated.

From the data generated from questionnaires, assessments, and observation, we have been able critically reflect and improve aspects of our practice. For myself, the 'quality' that Ofsted grade our setting on is about championing inclusion and equity, which I honestly think you can both see and feel when you are in our setting due to these robust feedback systems and ongoing training. (Lindon and Trodd, 2016, p.20-22)

<u>Salmah's script</u>

At our setting, our top priority is creating a safe, nurturing, and inclusive environment where every child feels supported and valued. We take health and safety seriously, hence why our First Aid Policy ensures that there is one staff member which is a qualified first aider. All injuries, however minor, will be recorded in the accident book

and reported to parents. Emergency first aid kits will be accessible in key areas of the nursery. Staff will receive regular first aid training, including paediatric first aid, as per EYFS requirements. Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981 and the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework (Department for Education [DfE], 2024). It is our responsibility to protect and advance the wellbeing of each child in our care. Our safeguarding policy is in line with the *Children's Act of 1989*, Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024c), and Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018). Before starting work, all employees Required to complete enhanced DBS checks and regular safeguarding training is given. Concerns must be handled by a designated safeguarding lead (DSL). The relevant authorities are notified about any suspected abuse or neglect. For any concerns identified by visitors or agency workers, a safeguarding poster is displayed prominently, providing information about the DSL, contact numbers for reporting concerns, and signs of abuse. It is reviewed and updated annually or as needed.

To ensure children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) have the assistance they require to succeed, we are dedicated to inclusive education, in line with *The Children and Families Act (2014)* and the SEND Code of Practice (2015). We have a designated SENCO, our staff are trained in Makaton and we use communication aids such as now and next boards, to assist children's understanding of routines. Children with special needs are given individualised support plans, Co-ordinated support for children is ensured through multi-agency collaboration.

We believe that continuous professional development is essential to maintaining high standards of care and education. Our staff training policy ensures that all practitioners stay up to date with best practices, empowering them to provide exceptional support to the children in their care. Regular training sessions cover vital areas such as safeguarding and child protection, paediatric first aid, SEND training (including Makaton and autism awareness), behaviour management strategies, and EYFS curriculum updates. We also encourage our team to pursue additional qualifications relevant to their roles, ensuring that they are well-equipped to meet the diverse needs of the children they support. This commitment to ongoing learning allows our staff to consistently deliver high-quality care and education.

Positive behaviour is promoted by creating a nurturing and supportive environment where children feel valued and understood. Our behaviour policy is built around the principles of the EYFS and is designed to support children's social and emotional development. We focus on key strategies such as positive reinforcement and praise. Praise is a powerful tool in promoting positive behaviour, as it helps to reinforce sensible actions and encourages children to develop confidence and self-esteem. We use specific and meaningful praise to highlight children's achievements. Rather than just saying "good job," we focus on descriptive praise, such as "I like how you shared your toys with your friend" or "You worked so hard to tidy up—well done!" This approach helps children understand what they are doing well and motivates them to repeat those behaviours.ensuring clear and consistent expectations. Additionally, we provide individualised support for children who struggle with behaviour, helping them to develop important skills for managing their emotions and interactions. A child who is calm and engaged 3-year-old starts showing aggressive behaviour, such as hitting and shouting at peers, staff take a supportive and structured approach to address the changes. By observing and tracking behaviour, they identify that frustrations peak during group play. A discussion with the child's parents helps uncover any potential home-life changes, such as a new sibling or lack of sleep, that may be affecting their behaviour. To support the child, staff introduce a visual timetable for routine, provide a quiet space for self-regulation, and use emotion coaching to help them express feelings in a positive way. Progress is continuously monitored, and strategies are adapted as needed. By implementing these policies, we ensure that all children receive high-quality care, feel safe, and are supported in their development.

Kerri's script

Morning everyone. As Parental Engagement Lead, I would like to discuss some issues raised in response to our recent parent questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed in paper form, and responses have been minimal. Narak and Narayan

(2019) suggest that an online version may be preferable. These are low-cost and allow completion in small stages, when time allows. Whilst a digital version could yield a higher volume of responses, many of our families struggle with internet access and the setting may have to provide access to IT equipment and support. This will need evaluating in terms of staffing and safeguarding, however, could benefit by reducing the gap in social inequality among parents/carers, (de Souza and Manera, 2024, *Equality Act, 2010*, section 1). Providing internet access would improve the quality of our setting by ensuring all parties can access feedback methods.

The first set of feedback relates to the expectations around home reading. Many of the responses received question how parents and children should interact with books, when their child cannot yet read. The Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework, (EYFS, Department for Education 2024a, p 9-10) promotes children developing a love of reading whilst also recognising that to underpin their reading skills, they need exposure to language rich environments and to be given opportunity to use new words they have learned. This is also an outstanding grade descriptor for quality education in the Early Years Inspection Handbook (UK Government 2024a). Comments indicate that parents worry their child is falling behind, if they cannot read all words independently, or complete books in their entirety. To remedy this, we intend to host some parent workshops, demonstrating what a reading session could look like, together with providing a crib sheet for parents to use when reading with their child. This will give ideas for sharing stories together, removing the pressure of pre-conceived expectations. The local library has also been contacted and will provide dates for storytime sessions for young children, which can be distributed to parents.

A challenge to this suggestion could be children with English as an additional language (EAL). To overcome this, the crib sheet will be provided in languages relevant to our families, encouraging them to talk about pictures and text in the child's home language. Group leaders will talk privately with any known illiterate parents, explaining the benefits of simply talking about pictures and events in stories, and additional reading sessions will be offered for their child, in school time. Investigations are underway to source avenues of support for our illiterate parents, signposting them to organisations who can help, if they are interested. A study by

Otermans, Sharma and Aditya (2022), states that illiterate parents may struggle to maintain good communication with teachers and therefore be unaware of how they can support their child. Reaching out to these parents and visiting them at home, where they are more comfortable, would show that the setting is proactive in providing support where needed and that we are striving for children to receive the best quality education possible. Educators and parents are crucial parties in a child's microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979 as cited in Hopkins, 2019), hence working together will strengthen the child's chances of success. The steps taken above are linked with sections 187 and 188 of the Early Years Inspection Handbook (UK Government, 2024a), detailing the cultural capital of children and how their opportunities can be enhanced through the curriculum provided.

The second aspect of feedback was the lack of staff availability at drop-off and collection times. Parents said they found it difficult to speak with staff at these times, as they seemed eager to close the doors and get on with their day. Whilst parents and carers can raise concerns via the DOJO messaging system or at parents' evenings, they felt some issues could be more quickly dealt with, via a brief face to face conversation.

In practice, it can seem an inconvenience for teaching staff, when a parent keeps them chatting at the door. The teaching schedule is already a tight space of time and obviously staff are keen to make the most of the time they have. However, having a set time at each end of the day for parents to talk with the teacher would enable them to voice any immediate concerns and put their minds at rest.

The Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework (Department for Education, 2024a) states that children learn best when positive relationships are formed between the setting and parents/carers. It is recognised that a practitioner's willingness to talk to parents may be affected by several factors. For example, are they confident in speaking or do they feel under pressure if they cannot answer queries immediately? Under section 77 of the Early Years Inspection Handbook (UK Government, 2024a), inspectors can talk to parents to ascertain their views on the quality of care provided by the setting. It is therefore good practice to ensure that all staff are supported to feel confident in talking with parents, ensuring good communication around school systems, ideas for home learning and general safety

and wellbeing for their child. According to Salamon (2019), a child's identity can be informed by that of the person who educates them. If children see confident attempts at communication being made by adults, this will show them that communication is good and that everyone's voice needs to be heard. This also aligns with the outstanding grade descriptors for behaviour and attitudes, as mentioned in the Early Years Inspection Handbook (UK Government, 2024a, Section 197), which indicates children should have a high level of confidence in social situations.

Appleby and Andrews (2012) believe that reflective practice is key to improving quality in educational settings. After reflecting on their own identity, a practitioner could realise they have a bias or belief that does not align with other peoples' way of thinking, possibly causing friction. If continuous professional development opportunities can be sourced, providing strategies for effective parent communication, this would increase staff confidence, enabling tactful, informative interactions, leading to quality provision as per section 3.26 of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework (Department for Education, 2024a). Wing, I wonder whether you are aware of any good courses available through the agencies you deal with? Is that something you could investigate when you have time, please?

Wing: Yes, of course.

To make discussion more purposeful and time effective, it is recommended that we follow the suggestion of Jones Russell (2023), by using an electronic system for passing on basic information such as feeding or nappy changing times, therefore freeing up time at collection to discuss pedagogical issues, such as how the parent/carer can support their child's learning at home. It seems sensible to use DOJOS as parents are already familiar with how this works. Salma, if you could arrange for the Parental Engagement Policy to be adapted to include provision of a ten- minute discussion slot at the start and end of the session, that would be really helpful. Are you able to do that?

Salma: Yes, I can arrange that.

Thanks Salma. We will send out another questionnaire at the end of this term, in digital format with paper copies available on request and I will keep you updated on the responses in due course.

Wing's script

As SENCO, I appreciate the valuable feedback from Ofsted, parents, and external professionals, which helps highlight key areas for improvement in supporting children with SEND.

One major concern is the lack of consistent, targeted support. Recently, a three-year-old with autism in our toddler room experienced challenges with communication, social interaction, and sensory processing. Despite our staff's dedication, inconsistencies in practice were evident due to gaps in SEND training. Our curriculum also lacked enough sensory-based learning opportunities, making engagement difficult.

A safeguarding audit further highlighted the need for better staff awareness of the increased vulnerabilities of children with SEND. Speech and language therapists also flagged delays in information-sharing, impacting timely interventions.

Recognising these challenges, we are fully committed to making positive changes. We are strengthening our curriculum with more sensory-based learning, improving child-to-staff ratios for better individual support, and enhancing collaboration with multi-agency teams. These steps align with our legal duties under the *Equality Act (2010)* and the *Education Act (2011),* ensuring all children receive high-quality, accessible education (Government Equalities Office, 2015 & Department for Education, 2011).

To provide the best possible education for all children, we must ensure our curriculum is inclusive. The EYFS framework (DfE, 2024a) encourages a child-centred approach, where learning is flexible and adapts to each child's unique needs. Research from Nutbrown (2012) also highlights the importance of differentiated instruction - ensuring that every child can engage in activities meaningful and accessible to them. By embracing these approaches, we can create a learning environment where all children feel valued, supported, and able to thrive. Pandi, do you have any ongoing programs at this moment to support SEND children?

Pandi: we are waiting for hard copies of social stories and lanyard communication fans from the ‘Social Understanding and Communication’ training held last month. These should support children to communicate their needs and interests (Autism education trust, 2025).

Thank you for your follow- up, it is definitely worth promoting in our setting to improve the quality of education with SEND children. The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF, 2020) emphasises that high-quality interactions between practitioners and children significantly impact learning outcomes.

Having enough staff to support children, especially those with SEND, is key to providing high-quality care and education. Research shows that when staff numbers are higher, children benefit both emotionally and developmentally.

Rutherford *et al.* (2016) found that more staff in inclusive settings help children with autism engage, communicate, and thrive through tailored support. The Department for Education (2024c) also highlights that better ratios improve safeguarding, ensuring staff can quickly respond to children's needs and receive proper training. Sal, do you think it’s time to review our nursery’s staffing ratios for children with SEND?

Sal: Yes, I think it would be beneficial to review our staffing ratios for children with SEND to ensure we're providing the best possible support.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, as cited in Hopkins, 2019) shows that a child's development is influenced by many factors, including the support from professionals around them. The SEND Code of Practice (2015) stresses the importance of working together with external agencies to give children the right support.

However, our recent audit revealed that communication with these professionals has not always been as smooth as it should be, causing delays in support for children with SEND. To improve this, we can have regular meetings with external agencies to review progress and make sure we follow key policies like the SEND Code of Practice (2015) and the *Children and Families Act (2014).*

We will also assign a staff member to manage communication and ensure everything is shared quickly and clearly. This way, every child gets the support they need to thrive.

Kerri, for the reading group, would you like to collaborate with an agency for additional support? Let me know if you need help with this!

Kerri: Any organisations you can recommend would be very useful, thank you.

Alright, I can send you some details later.

By following the EYFS framework and key legislation, we can ensure every child receives the care and education they deserve. For our work, we need to observe staff practice, identify training needs, and use the EYFS Development Matters Framework to check children's progress. As Schön (1983), points out, ongoing reflection and evaluation are key to both personal growth and improving our setting. We will create a high-quality, inclusive environment that meets the needs of all our children. Thank you.

Does anyone have any other business before we bring this meeting to a close?Thank you for all your hard work in preparation the upcoming inspection.

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