

Entitlement for Two Year Olds: What does high quality look like?

Context

A child's future is significantly shaped by the quality of early learning and care in the earliest years of the child's life. Intervention at this stage is intended to ensure that a child's development and attainment in the early years does not fall behind other children, thus minimising any possibility of a negative, long lasting effect on achievement and success in school and later life.

Evidence shows that attending high quality early education has a lasting impact on social and behavioural outcomes (taken from Early Education and childcare [statutory guidance for Local authorities](#)).

This document sets out Oxfordshire County Council's (OCC) expectations for high quality care, play and learning opportunities and can be used alongside the Quality Provision and Practice audit for funded two year olds by providers who offer, or intend to offer places under the Entitlement for Two Year Olds. It is underpinned by an ethos of strong partnership with parents and carers. The expectations relate to the statutory requirements of the [Early Years Foundation Stage](#).

Funding

A child will be entitled to the 15 Hours free Two Year Old Free entitlement from the term after they turn two if both of the following conditions are satisfied:

- (1) the child has attained the age of two
- (2) the child or parent meets the [eligibility criteria](#).

The OCC Early Education Funding (EEF) terms and conditions sets out the rights and responsibilities of the council and providers being funded for early education places for 2, 3 and 4 year olds. Settings will be required to confirm each time they claim funding that they accept the terms and fully comply with them.

The decision to fund the Approved Provider to deliver Early Education places will be based on the Provider's Ofsted registration status and inspection judgement.

Ofsted and inspectorates of independent schools have regard to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in carrying out inspections and report on the quality and standards of provision. The EYFS statutory framework is mandatory for all early years providers in England setting out the standards that providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. It is the Government's intention that, as far as possible, free places are delivered by providers who have achieved an overall rating of 'outstanding' or 'good' in their most recent Ofsted inspection report.

Where Ofsted categorises the setting or childminder as Inadequate or Requires Improvement then the Provider acknowledges that the Council will not place any further funded 2 year old children with the Provider. The Council reserves the right to review the continuing placement of any existing funded 2 year old children attending the Provider's setting. Where the Council considers that the setting is in an area where there is not sufficient alternative high quality

provision and, it is evidenced through monitoring by the Council that the Provider has demonstrated the capacity to sustain improvements made to the quality of the setting, then the Council may (at its absolute discretion) place funded 2 year old children at a setting that Ofsted has categorised as requires improvement. (EEF 8.16)

Quality provision for funded two year olds

Where a provider is offering places to 2 year old children for the first time then it should review its policies, making updates required to ensure they are also relevant to the youngest children.

High quality provision and practice for funded two year olds should feature specific characteristics which include:

Appropriately qualified and experienced staff who have a good understanding of child development. It is desirable that they have:

- Experience of working with two year olds
- Qualifications/training to work with two year olds
- A commitment to training in early childhood education
- An understanding of the 'Twoness of Two' (their characteristics and needs)
- An understanding of how to help children deal with their emotions and support their language development

A secure key person approach

Each child must be assigned a key person. Their role is to help ensure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs, to help the child become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents. [EYFS](#) paragraph 3.2

The setting should:

- develop a key person system that seeks to provide consistency and continuity for the child and the parent, taking account of possible changes and transitions.
- provide regular supervision meetings which support the key person in meeting the safeguarding and welfare and Learning and development needs of the child

The Key Person(s) should:

- understand the meaning and value of a close professional relationship with the child and their parent/carer who are made to feel welcome, valued, confident in the provision and are supported in developing their child's learning at home
- support the child in developing secure attachments that promote their well-being and independence
- play and explore alongside the child and be attentive, warm and sensitive
- help the child to belong and grow emotionally, socially, physically and intellectually by providing a consistent, supportive and caring approach, with high aspirations appropriate to the child's stage of development

Staff who support and promote children's learning and development, by closely matching what they provide for the child's current needs and next steps. They should:

- Demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the themes and principles of the EYFS in practice
- Thoughtfully use Development Matters to support each child's learning and development
- Observe, assess and plan for next steps
- Use summative statements (including the Two Year Old Progress Check between 24 and 36 months) to review children's progress and to support information sharing with parents, colleagues and other settings

Provision that strongly features the Prime Areas of Learning and The Characteristics of Effective Learning

- The Prime Areas of Communication and language, Physical Development and Personal, Social and Emotional Development are given due emphasis; the Specific Areas grow out of the prime areas
- Playing and exploring, active learning, and creating and thinking critically underpin experiences in all areas of learning
- There is a stimulating, well-resourced and welcoming environment, both in and outdoors suited to the specific needs of two year olds
- A strong awareness of individual children's needs

A well-managed provision that benefits the children and their families, featuring the following (in line with Ofsted expectations for registered early years provision <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/early-years-and-childcare>)

- An Action Plan of the most important issues for improvement, including an effective programme of professional development arising from identified needs of staff
- Effective means of knowing how well staff and children are getting on, including observing provision and practice, supervision and appropriate support
- Effective arrangements for safeguarding, including recruitment, and the impact on children's well-being
- A strong emphasis on fostering positive relationships with parents and finding ways to involve and engage them in their children's learning at home and in the provision
- Working collaboratively with relevant professionals (including other early years providers, local authority staff, advisory teachers, health visitors, SEN services) to ensure the best outcomes for children
- Ensuring that arrangements are made to support children with SEN or disabilities and children who come from disadvantaged backgrounds, ensuring the best outcomes for all children
- Providing inclusive services which include identifying a setting-based SENCO and operating an inclusion policy in line with the SEN Code of Practice and the Equality Act 2010
- Ideally and where possible, providing opportunities for playing and learning with older children in a mixed age group (and not just two year olds together)
- Continuing to provide a place for the child in the three and four year old provision or, where this is not possible, ensuring a smooth transition.

Schools – practical arrangements

When considering changing the age range schools should refer to

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/making-significant-changes-to-an-existing-academy>

or

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-organisation-maintained-schools>

Ofsted Guidance on registering school based childcare provision can be found

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/factsheet-childcare-registering-school-based-provision>

Schools should also:

- use the Statutory Framework for the EYFS to ensure their practice meets the Learning and Development and Safeguarding and Welfare requirements for the youngest children
- review their policies, making updates as required to ensure they are also relevant to the youngest children
- consider using the accompanying checklist as a self-evaluation tool for assessment of practice and provision for two year olds

A school may enrol two year olds in two main ways:

1. **As ‘pupils’ of the school, with the provision directly run as part of the school.**

To do this the governors must follow the relevant process for extending the school age range. This process differs according to the type and designation of the school so do consider this at an early stage as an approval/decision, where required, may take a number of months. For more information refer to the OCC [Establishing a Nursery Class booklet](#)

2. **Not as ‘pupils’ of the school, but as place/s provided under the school’s ‘community use powers’** (i.e. like extended services or an after-school club). In this case, all the finances for two year olds are handled entirely separately from the school budget. The school is free to set the staff rates and the other terms and conditions do not need to match the schools, although there are employment rights to adhere to.

Schools should liaise with OCC Education Sufficiency and Access Team to ensure that their accommodation can support additional nursery places, and if the Published Admission Number for existing nursery places will be affected.

Payment for funded two year olds, regardless of how they are enrolled, is on the same basis as funded 3 and 4 year olds, which means payment on actual attendance, although the hourly rate is higher.

Schools are also able to offer fee paying places, in addition to the funded early education places. The school can decide on the fee to be charged to parents – it is recommended that this at least covers the cost of providing the places.

It should be noted that the funded early education places must be provided without any charge to the parents or any obligation to take additional paid for services, including lunch or payment for snacks.

Additional Information

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/two-year-olds-in-schools-demonstration-project-and-case-studies>