



## Reception Practice in the Spotlight: Ofsted's Changing View?

The Publication of Ofsted's document 'Bold Beginnings: The Reception curriculum in a sample of good and outstanding primary schools' has generated an unprecedented response from YR teachers and EYFS specialists. In our own contribution ([available here](#)) Early Excellence explored how the narrow focus of the recommendations on specific aspects of Literacy and Maths had the potential to be misinterpreted with a negative impact on YR provision and outcomes.

This reflects the many concerns being expressed about the recommendations for schools which appear to be pre-empting a shift in emphasis and balance regarding Ofsted Inspections and their expectations for YR classes.

In response to this we have undertaken an analysis of the Ofsted Inspection reports of all of the 41 schools visited by Ofsted for 'Bold Beginnings'. The reports indicate that the emphasis on practice, provision and curriculum delivery in YR was not the same as those reflected in the recommendations for Primary Schools in 'Bold Beginnings'.

All of the Inspection reports identify the following aspects as key features that underpin a 'good' or 'outstanding' judgement:

- A rich, varied and balanced curriculum
- The importance of the learning environment and appropriate resources in enabling independent learning
- An effective balance between adult directed and child initiated activities
- The use of ongoing formative assessment through observation that supports next steps in teaching and learning
- The importance of and progress made in the areas of Personal, Social and Emotional Development and Communication and Language
- Varied contexts for supporting writing
- The role of induction into and transition from YR
- The importance of parental engagement and support

It is quite clear from this analysis that the 'good' and 'outstanding' judgements were derived from a much broader and balanced view of the Reception curriculum, pedagogy and provision than those specified in the recommendations in 'Bold Beginnings'.

It is also clear that the inspection judgements were consistent with a view of the curriculum and provision that reflects the principles and requirements of the statutory EYFS framework and the findings of the previous Ofsted thematic studies; 'Are You Ready?', 'Teaching and Play in the Early Years - a Balancing Act?' and 'Unknown Children – Destined for Disadvantage?'

Therefore, we believe that clarity is required to avoid further confusion posed by potential misinterpretation.

If Ofsted do not intend to change their view of 'good' and 'outstanding' YR practice, as described in current Ofsted Inspection reports, then we recommend that they produce additional documentation to contextualise the recommendations contained in 'Bold Beginnings'. This documentation would need to recognise the importance of all Areas of Learning and Development, the Characteristics of Effective Learning and how the interrelationship of these support good outcomes – including those in Literacy and mathematics – for children in YR.

If Ofsted are considering changes to their view of 'good' and 'outstanding' YR practice to reflect the recommendations from 'Bold Beginnings' rather than existing documents (including the statutory EYFS) then there are serious questions to be asked regarding Ofsted's view of effective practice and how this is contradicted by evidence of how good outcomes are achieved.

Early Excellence will be supporting schools to unpick these issues at two key briefings to be held on the 10th and 18th January, when Gill Jones will provide the back ground to and context of the report. The Briefings are Free of Charge to be held at the Early Excellence Centres, Huddersfield and London.

<http://earlyexcellence.com/national-services/bold-beginnings-a-free-of-charge-briefing/>

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