

THE CHILD AT THE CENTRE  
SELF-EVALUATION IN THE EARLY YEARS



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**SELF-EVALUATION IN THE EARLY YEARS**



Please note in the six-point scale a level 3 evaluation where strengths just outweigh weaknesses is now described as 'satisfactory'.



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## FOREWORD

I am delighted to commend to you this revised edition of *The Child at the Centre*. It replaces all previous versions. Along with a revised edition of *How good is our school?*, this document forms the third part of *How good is our school? The Journey to Excellence*. The sets of quality indicators will continue to provide the core tool for self-evaluation for all early education centres and schools, but they are now complemented by the very useful materials in other parts of *The Journey to Excellence* series.

The indicators within *The Child at the Centre* reflect the developing context for early education. They focus specifically on the impact early education has on improving the educational experiences and lives of our youngest children in Scotland. This edition of *The Child at the Centre* highlights the importance of children's successes and achievements, particularly the broad outcomes for learners within *A Curriculum for Excellence*<sup>1</sup> and the vision statement for Scotland's children.<sup>2</sup>

The early years of childhood are a key time in influencing the future lives of children. The benefits of high-quality experiences have been shown to enhance children's emotional, social and intellectual development. Getting it right from the start is essential in contributing to long-term outcomes.

The emphasis on impact and outcomes underlines the principle that self-evaluation is not an end in itself. It should lead to improvements in the educational experiences and outcomes for children, and to the maintenance of the highest quality where this already exists. *The Child at the Centre* is about doing just that. It builds on existing good practice in early education across Scotland and internationally. It helps staff to evaluate their practice and identify priorities for action, including ensuring better continuity in learning between home and the centre, and from centre to primary class.

*The Journey to Excellence* provides sets of tools which can be used for continuous improvement. *Journeys to Excellence*, the digital resource which forms Part 5 of this series, will include the stories of those in early education who have moved forward significantly in their own journeys towards excellence.

<sup>1</sup> Curriculum for Excellence, Scottish Executive, 2004

<sup>2</sup> Improving Outcomes for Children and Young People: the role of schools in delivering integrated children's services, Scottish Executive, 2006



Early education centres are now part of a wider partnership of professionals, all of whom deliver a range of services to children. This edition of **The Child at the Centre**, therefore, has evolved by adopting a framework for self-evaluation common to all public services and structured around six questions which are important for any service to answer. It also ensures the continuity of links with the National Care Standards which HMI and the Care Commission use in their integrated inspection work.

This edition also emphasises a culture in which all staff engage in professional discussion and reflection based on a shared understanding of quality and a shared vision of their aims for children. All staff should, therefore, be involved in the self-evaluation process, sharing observations and evaluating their work together.

In this context, self-evaluation will be a series of reflective professional processes which will help centres to get to know themselves well, identify their agenda for improvement and promote well-considered innovation. The quality indicators are a guide in that process and not a set of

recipes for success. They sit alongside professional expertise and other sources of guidance, for example on the curriculum, on learning, and on the leadership of change, in contributing to a lively debate about quality and the factors involved in achieving it in any playroom, nursery class and school.

Since the first publication of **The Child at the Centre**, self-evaluation has become increasingly embedded across Scottish education and has contributed well to improving achievement for all children. I commented in **Improving Scottish Education**<sup>3</sup> on the great strides taken by educational establishments in becoming aware of their own strengths and weaknesses, placing Scotland at the forefront of quality improvement internationally. I commend this second edition of **The Child at the Centre** to you in taking forward our collective commitment to continuous improvement and excellence in early education.

**Graham Donaldson**  
HM Senior Chief Inspector

<sup>3</sup> Improving Scottish Education, HM Inspectorate of Education, 2006.



# INTRODUCTION





# SELF-EVALUATION

## INTRODUCTION

The third part in the *Journey to Excellence* series is made up of the revised editions of *The Child at the Centre* and *How good is our school?*. They are based on a revised framework of indicators which help you to work out where your early education centre is in improving its quality and aiming for excellence. We have become very familiar with the use of quality indicators in this way in Scotland. *The Child at the Centre*<sup>4</sup> will be of interest to staff working in the pre-school sector and in the early stages of primary school where the indicators reflect the active learning which takes place across these early years.

The child is at the centre of what we do in the early years. This is a critically important stage in the development and learning of children. Children are naturally curious and eager to find out about the world around them. We must build on their curiosity and enthusiasm to learn when we develop their learning environments, working outwards from their individual interests and needs.

Self-evaluation is a reflective professional process through which centres get to know themselves well and identify the way forward which is best for their children. It should, therefore, promote well-considered innovation. The framework of indicators is there to guide you in that process. The illustrations are not designed to be used as checklists or recipes. They are there to be referred to alongside other sources of guidance such as curriculum advice, research into learning and pedagogy, and studies of leadership approaches. As thinking about the curriculum and learning is constantly developing, so our application of the indicators also develops to take account of the dynamic context which is early education in Scotland.

Self-evaluation, and the indicators on which it is based, is forward looking. It is about change and improvement, whether gradual or major. It should result in clear benefits for children.

<sup>4</sup> *The Child at the Centre* can continue to be used in conjunction with the National Care Standards for Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16.



## REFLECTION AS A COMMUNITY OF PROFESSIONALS

All staff constantly reflect on the quality of their work. As professionals, and as members of the staff team which is accountable for the overall quality of education, you are accountable for the quality of your work and for the achievements of the children you teach and engage with.

Members of staff engaging with children's learning take pride in their own work and reflect on it in relation to individual responsibilities. For this you can use the quality indicators and other sources of advice such as the Conditions of Registration with the Scottish Social Services Council and their Codes of Practice, the Standards for Full Registration as teachers, for Chartered Teacher or for Headship, and the National Framework for Continuing Professional Development.

Self-evaluation also involves groups of staff reflecting on their work together. You can do this in a number of ways by:

- commenting on each other's work;
- discussing plans for learning experiences and children's progress;
- working together to promote high-quality play experiences;
- engaging in cooperative teaching and discussion; and
- looking at each other's practice to experience different methods of organising play activities or interacting with children.



Peer evaluation is a very important professional activity. It is often well established in early education teams where feedback is shared across the team. It complements professional discussion you engage in with senior colleagues who might teach and work alongside you or observe practice in the playroom. The indicators in this edition have been written to talk directly to staff teams to recognise this important collegiate responsibility. Teams in early education centres may include teachers, nursery nurses, other early education professionals and care workers.

The process of collegiate self-evaluation, by staff and with centre managers, works best when all working in the centre have a shared understanding of what is meant by 'quality'. This often stems from a shared vision of what you as a centre community want for the children, and what you want your provision for children to be like in two or three years time.

A shared vision doesn't always come easily. There are usually different views and interests across groups of staff, children and parents, other professionals and key members of the community. To develop a shared vision, the centre must engage with all of these in clarifying and agreeing its values and principles. It also needs to agree how its values and principles will be put into action to influence the work of the centre, the curriculum, the learning environment, the ethos of the centre and the way that everyone is included. A centre which achieves a common vision and shared values has a strong sense of purpose to achieve its aims.

These activities, carried out by reflective professionals, are the basis of the collegiate culture which underpins leadership at all levels: in the playroom; class; within working groups and development teams; as promoted staff within stages; as senior managers as a whole; or as the head of centre ultimately accountable for the quality of everything which goes on in the centre. Taking part is what we mean by being a member of a 'community of learners'.



## **USING THE FRAMEWORK OF QUALITY INDICATORS IN EVALUATION**

The framework in this publication provides a structure for self-evaluation which can be used in different ways.

Every year you will want to look closely at aspects of your centre's successes and achievements (Key Areas 1 to 4) and aspects such as learning, teaching and meeting learning needs (Key Area 5). From this analysis, and from your day-to-day professional reflection, you may identify key issues for further exploration, observation and analysis using more of the detail of the quality indicators provided within Key Areas 5 to 9.

The aspects addressed within the Key Areas are closely inter-related. This means that strengths or weaknesses in one area may have an effect on quality in another area. Climate and relationships influence learning; working with partner agencies affects children's care and welfare; leadership affects and is affected by staff morale. In other words, the framework can help you to diagnose the causes of the strengths and weaknesses you have found.

If self-evaluation is well established in your centre, a selective approach based on your knowledge of your successes and achievements, as well as issues which need to be addressed, is an effective way of using the framework of indicators.

Sometimes, however, a more comprehensive approach may be needed. For example, a new headteacher or manager who has just taken over a centre might find it helpful to work through all or most of the indicators to gain a clear picture of the quality of the centre's work. All centres will benefit when staff look across the breadth of their work, 'taking a broad view' every so often to ensure everything is working well. In this way, you will come across issues where you need to 'take a closer look'. This familiar approach of taking a broad view and taking a closer look is another approach to using the indicators.



## USING INDICATORS AND SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

The selection of evidence on which you base your evaluations should be kept manageable by sampling. The extent and nature of sampling should be thought through carefully and discussed and agreed by staff. It is also useful to test out the strength of your evidence through testing one source of evidence against a second and a third source. For example, the effectiveness of your centre's policy on meeting the needs of learners could be checked against its implementation in playrooms and discussed with staff, children and parents. This process should help to evaluate the impact of policy in meeting the needs of children.

The key sources of evidence will come from what you actually observe, from data of various sorts and from the views of people who are closely involved with the centre, such as the children themselves, parents, partner agencies, as well as staff.

Children can provide thoughtful and valuable views about the learning they experience and what 'works for them'. Ways of tapping into their views include talking with small groups, listening to them at play and one-to-one

discussions while you are helping individuals to talk about their work and progress.

Parents<sup>5</sup> have unique experience of their children and have important knowledge of their progress as learners over time within the centre, at home and in other settings. They also have important insights into the quality of provision as participants in, and users of, the centre. Their views on the centre can be gathered through informal daily contacts, organised events for parents, their responses at times of difficulty or concern and periodic questionnaires to gather their views.

If you become aware of weaknesses in practice, you may also find it helpful to check out written guidance and documentation. Such documentation could include curricular programmes, staff plans, policies and guidelines and minutes of meetings. However, what is written down is not necessarily the same as what actually happens. Similarly, progress reports on your centre's improvement plans can be helpful but will need to be checked against what has actually happened. What really matters is the impact of all the key activities in the centre on children themselves and their learning.

<sup>5</sup> Throughout the document the term parents is also used to include carers



## MANAGING EVALUATION

It is important to have reasons for evaluating the aspects you have chosen, and a clear idea of exactly how you are going to carry out evaluation, when and with whom. Time is a key resource in busy centres and there is no need to evaluate everything at once. However, you do need to be systematic as you do not want important aspects of the centre's work to 'slip through the net' and only find out that things are going awry when they have already had an effect on children. Time spent on diagnosis needs to be balanced against the time to be spent on improvement. You also need to keep focusing on the key work of the centre – to promote children's development and learning.

Many managers build monitoring and evaluation into a calendar of activities. For example, the headteacher of a school will want to include nursery staff in the annual evaluation of the whole school. A playgroup leader may include a review of provision at regular staff meetings and set aside time once a year for a look across all the playgroup's work. By keeping a note of discussion and evidence, managers and

their staff gradually build up a body of evidence which they can use when arriving at evaluations using quality indicators. The time frame can be flexible to suit the needs of the centre. The most important requirement, though, is that such activity is built into the work of the centre and has a clear focus on children's learning and success. All the key processes of education, and leadership activities, need to be tracked through to their impact on children.

At the heart of self-evaluation we want to know:

- How are we doing?
- How do we know?
- What are we going to do now?

Excellent centres focus these questions on learning. Learning is at the heart of an excellent centre. Learning is its core business.





## THE QUALITY FRAMEWORK

The indicators in this edition of *The Child at the Centre* are arranged under six questions which HMIE, and other agencies, are adopting for evaluation purposes.

- What outcomes have we achieved?
- How well do we meet the needs of our centre community?
- How good is the education we provide?
- How good is our management?
- How good is our leadership?
- What is our capacity for improvement?

These six simple but powerful questions are set out in nine key areas in a chart in this edition of *The Child at the Centre*.

The first two questions are very important:

- What outcomes have we achieved?
- How well do we meet the needs of our centre community?

These two questions focus on the achievements of the centre in relation to its key purpose and the impact of the centre on children, parents and the community at large. They relate to the centre's successes in helping children to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors within the community. They also relate to Scotland's Vision for children and young people that they should be safe, nurtured, healthy, achieving, active, included, respected and responsible.



To judge your success in relation to these two questions and to plan for improvements, you will need to consider the key factors which influence them. For example, if your children are not developing as confident individuals, you might look at the curriculum that children follow, or the kinds of learning in which they are engaged. You should, therefore, consider the first two questions in the light of other questions relating to:

- How good is the quality of education provided through the curriculum or learning and teaching?
- How good is our management in terms of planning, use of resources or deployment of staff?
- How good is our leadership?

This approach enables professionals to reflect on practice within our own playrooms and nursery classes, and within the centre or school as a whole, and to consider the deep inter-relationships between aspects of our work and our successes and achievements. Where best practice is identified, it should be celebrated and shared with others. If things are not going well, you can track down the source of the issues by using some of the indicators to take a closer look at particular aspects.

For example, if children are not learning effectively or are not motivated to learn, you may need to look at aspects of the quality of education your centre provides and ask the following questions.

- Is the curriculum appropriate for their needs?
- Do the teaching approaches suit the needs of all the children?
- Can you, individually and as a team, do more to motivate children?
- Do you need to be more specific about meeting individual needs?
- How can we involve parents more?

This kind of focused approach enables you to concentrate on areas of priority rather than routinely covering all aspects of the centre's work in turn.

# THE QUALITY FRAMEWORK





# THE QUALITY FRAMEWORK: KEY AREAS

The quality framework is divided into nine key areas under the six questions and can be evaluated against the six-point scale.<sup>6</sup>

## WHAT OUTCOMES HAVE WE ACHIEVED?

Key Area 1 focuses on how well the centre is responding to its vision and values as a centre community. Key Area 1 also focuses on the extent to which the centre fulfils legislative requirements, follows appropriate codes of best practice and is financially secure.

## HOW WELL DO WE MEET THE NEEDS OF OUR EARLY EDUCATION CENTRE?

Key Areas 2, 3 and 4 focus on the centre's impact on those it serves – children, parents, carers and families, and the community.

## HOW GOOD IS THE EDUCATION WE PROVIDE?

Key Area 5 focuses on the core work of the centre. The activities which the indicators describe are key responsibilities of individual staff, and of teams. Key Area 5 also looks at the quality of the centre's processes for improving its work.

## HOW GOOD IS OUR MANAGEMENT?

Key Areas 6, 7 and 8 focus on the management activities which enable good learning and teaching to prosper. They do not of themselves guarantee that the educational experiences of children will be interesting or productive or that they will achieve well, but they are important in enabling that to happen.

## HOW GOOD IS OUR LEADERSHIP?

Key Area 9 focuses on the leadership of the centre. It looks at its vision and values, how these have been developed by the centre community and how they are used to drive the centre forward.

## WHAT IS OUR CAPACITY FOR IMPROVEMENT?

Underpinning all of the key areas is this final question.

<sup>6</sup> Appendix 1.

# THE QUALITY FRAMEWORK



## THE QUALITY INDICATORS

No	QUALITY INDICATOR	THEMES					
<b>KEY PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES</b>							
1.1	Improvements in performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Children's progress</li> <li>➤ Overall quality of children's achievement</li> <li>➤ Impact of the centre improvement plan</li> </ul>					
1.2	Fulfilment of statutory duties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Financial performance</li> <li>➤ Compliance with legislation, and responsiveness to guidance and codes of practice</li> </ul>					
<b>IMPACT ON CHILDREN</b>							
2.1	Children's experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The extent to which children are motivated and actively involved in their own learning</li> </ul>					
2.2	The centre's successes in involving parents, carers and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The extent to which parents, carers and families are committed to and actively involved in the life of the centre</li> </ul>					
<b>IMPACT ON STAFF</b>							
3.1	The engagement of staff in the life and work of the centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The extent to which staff are committed to and actively involved in the life of the centre</li> </ul>					
<b>IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY</b>							
4.1	The centre's successes in engaging with the local community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The extent to which the centre engages with the local community</li> </ul>					
4.2	The centre's successes in engaging with the wider community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The extent to which the centre: encourages and supports creativity and innovation; learns from and adopts leading-edge practice; influences wider policy or practice; anticipates and responds rapidly and flexibly to change; and engages in global issues</li> </ul>					
<b>PROVISION OF EARLY EDUCATION</b>							
5.1	The curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The rationale and design of the curriculum</li> <li>➤ The development of the curriculum</li> <li>➤ Programmes</li> <li>➤ Transitions</li> </ul>					
5.2	Teaching for effective learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The learning climate and teaching approaches</li> <li>➤ Staff-child interaction including children's engagement</li> <li>➤ Clarity and purposefulness of dialogue</li> <li>➤ Judgements made in the course of teaching</li> </ul>					
5.3	Meeting learning needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Learning opportunities, tasks, activities and resources</li> <li>➤ Identification of learning needs</li> <li>➤ The roles of staff</li> <li>➤ Meeting and implementing the requirements of legislation</li> </ul>					
5.4	Assessment for learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Assessment approaches</li> <li>➤ Planning learning experiences and activities</li> <li>➤ Use of assessment information to identify and plan future learning</li> <li>➤ Arrangements for recording and reporting</li> </ul>					
5.5	Expectations and promoting achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Staff expectations and use of praise</li> <li>➤ Children's expectations and sense of achievement</li> <li>➤ Promoting and sustaining an ethos of achievement</li> <li>➤ Staff-child relationships</li> </ul>					
5.6	Equality and fairness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Approaches to inclusion</li> <li>➤ Promoting equality and fairness</li> <li>➤ Ensuring equality and fairness</li> </ul>					
5.7	Partnerships with children and parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Engaging parents in their children's learning and the life of the centre</li> <li>➤ Consulting and communicating with children and parents</li> <li>➤ Dialogue with children and parents about the work of the centre</li> </ul>					
5.8	Care, welfare and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Arrangements for ensuring the care, welfare and protection of children</li> <li>➤ Approaches to, and provision for, meeting the emotional, personal, social and physical needs of individual children, including continuity of care and care routines</li> <li>➤ Choices about education and care</li> </ul>					

No	QUALITY INDICATOR	THEMES						
5.9	Improvement through self-evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Commitment to self-evaluation</li> <li>➤ Management of self-evaluation</li> <li>➤ Centre improvement</li> </ul>						
<b>POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING</b>								
6.1	Policy review and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Range, clarity and appropriateness of aims and policies</li> <li>➤ Coherence of policies</li> <li>➤ Managing, evaluating and updating policies</li> </ul>						
6.2	Participation in policy and planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Active participation in policy and planning</li> <li>➤ Communication and consultation</li> </ul>						
6.3	Planning for improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Developing, implementing and evaluating improvement plans</li> <li>➤ Structure and content of improvement plans</li> <li>➤ Use of management information</li> <li>➤ Joint improvement planning with partner organisations and services</li> <li>➤ Planning for sustainability</li> </ul>						
<b>MANAGEMENT AND SUPPORT OF STAFF</b>								
7.1	Staff sufficiency, recruitment and retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Provision of staff</li> <li>➤ Recruitment, appointment and induction of staff</li> <li>➤ Care and welfare of staff</li> <li>➤ Recognition of achievement</li> </ul>						
7.2	Staff deployment and teamwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Appropriateness and clarity of remits</li> <li>➤ Deployment of staff, including partner agencies</li> <li>➤ Effectiveness of teamwork</li> <li>➤ Communication</li> </ul>						
7.3	Staff development and review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Processes for staff review and support</li> <li>➤ Training and development</li> <li>➤ Joint training with staff from partner agencies</li> </ul>						
<b>RESOURCES</b>								
8.1	Partnerships with the community, educational establishments and agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Clarity of purposes and aims</li> <li>➤ Working across agencies and disciplines</li> <li>➤ Staff roles in partnerships</li> </ul>						
8.2	Management of finance for learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Sufficiency of available finance and setting budgets</li> <li>➤ Financial procedures and controls</li> <li>➤ Management of budgets, including links with the education authority/Board of Managers/Parent Committee</li> <li>➤ Best Value use of finance to support centre improvement</li> </ul>						
8.3	Management and use of resources and space for learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Accommodation, display and presentation</li> <li>➤ Provision of resources and equipment</li> <li>➤ Organisation and use of resources</li> <li>➤ Arrangements to ensure health and safety, including security</li> </ul>						
8.4	Managing information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Data collection, storage and retrieval</li> <li>➤ Sharing information</li> <li>➤ Analysing, evaluating and using information</li> </ul>						
<b>LEADERSHIP</b>								
9.1	Vision, values and aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Appropriateness and coherence with corporate and community vision, values and aims</li> <li>➤ Sharing and sustaining the vision</li> <li>➤ Promotion of positive attitudes to social and cultural diversity</li> </ul>						
9.2	Leadership and direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Strategic planning and communication</li> <li>➤ Strategic deployment of resources</li> </ul>						
9.3	Developing people and partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Development of leadership capacity</li> <li>➤ Building and sustaining relationships</li> <li>➤ Teamwork and partnerships</li> </ul>						
9.4	Leadership of improvement and change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Support and challenge</li> <li>➤ Creativity, innovation and step change</li> <li>➤ Continuous improvement</li> </ul>						
<b>CAPACITY FOR IMPROVEMENT</b>								



# THE QUALITY INDICATORS AND ILLUSTRATIONS





## IMPROVEMENTS IN PERFORMANCE

### Themes

- Children's progress
- Overall quality of children's achievement
- Impact of the centre improvement plan

### Key features

This indicator relates to the achievements of the centre. It relates to the children's progress in becoming more successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. It also relates to how successfully the centre has taken forward its vision. The application of this quality indicator should take account of the nature of the centre, its children and its immediate context.<sup>7</sup>

### LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- Children in our centre make very good progress in all aspects of their development and learning. Children at risk of missing out achieve and progress very well.
- Our children are becoming successful, confident learners and are achieving across a range of areas. They are able to show responsibility and independence. With support, they contribute well to the life of the centre and its community.
- The priorities set out in our improvement plan have a measurable impact on improving the progress of our children's learning and developing the work of the centre.

### LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- Our children make limited progress in key aspects of their development and learning and from their prior achievements. We do not meet the needs of, and support progress well for, vulnerable individuals and groups.
- Children have limited success and achievement across a wide range of areas. Our children show limited responsibility or independence. They take part in the centre community but have little involvement in the wider community.
- Although improvement planning is carried out, it has not been used effectively to identify or implement priorities which improve the experiences and progress of children.

<sup>7</sup> In evaluating improvements in performance, consideration should be given to QI 5.2, QI 5.3, and QI 5.5 relating to teaching for effective learning, meeting needs and expectations and promoting achievement.

## FULFILMENT OF STATUTORY DUTIES

### Themes

- Financial performance
- Compliance with legislation, and responsiveness to guidance and codes of practice

### Key features

This indicator relates to the impact of the centre's fulfilment of statutory duties and requirements. It focuses on the extent to which arrangements ensure Best Value, particularly use of available finance to improve and maintain provision for children. This indicator also relates to the centre's arrangements for implementing legislation to ensure that the needs of all children are met.



### LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- Our budgetary management and financial decisions reflect the needs of the centre and lead to clear improvements in children's experiences, achievement and progress.
- We comply and actively engage with all relevant statutory requirements, legislation and codes of practice.<sup>8</sup> Our staff, parents, and our other partners are familiar with what is expected in these areas and are involved, where appropriate, in fulfilling the statutory duties.

### LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- We do not always allocate sufficient financial resources to priority developments which would improve our children's experiences and achievements, and the work of our centre.
- Our implementation of statutory requirements, legislation and codes of practice has some weaknesses. For example, there are cases of delay in implementing or revising relevant documentation, and staff are not always fully aware of the implications of legislation for them.

<sup>8</sup> Examples include the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act, the Additional Support for Learning Act, the Race Relations Amendment Act, the Disability Discrimination Act, the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act and the Scottish Social Services Council Codes of Practice.

# 2.1

## CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES

### Themes

- The extent to which children are motivated and actively involved in their own learning

### Key features

This indicator relates to the quality of children's learning experiences. It also relates to the extent to which the views of children are sought and acted upon.<sup>9</sup>

### LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- Our children enjoy and are actively involved in learning through play. They are fully engaged, highly motivated and interact well during activities. In our centre, activities sustain children's interest, help them make decisions, solve problems and develop independence. Children can plan and initiate their learning experiences. They exercise choice and take increasing responsibility for their own learning. Our children are treated with equality, fairness and respect. Almost all children are making very good progress and achieving well. They have formed friendships with other children and are increasingly able to cooperate with them and take turns. Our centre uses imaginative and appropriate methods to ask children about their learning. Our staff listen to children and act upon their views and interests. Children feel successful and are confident, and they can contribute appropriately in our centre. They feel valued, safe and secure.

### LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- While children are sometimes active and involved in learning through play, they do not always interact well or sustain interest in their activities. Some children are not making appropriate progress from their prior levels of achievement, and are not challenged to achieve their full potential in some important areas. Particular groups of vulnerable children are not achieving well. Our children sometimes choose activities for themselves but only occasionally take responsibility for their own learning. They rarely make decisions, investigate and solve simple problems. The views of children are not considered and acted upon well by our centre. Not all children are treated with equality, fairness and respect. Children do not feel successful, valued or confident.

<sup>9</sup> Key sources of evidence will include: levels of attendance; planning and assessment documentation; children's profiles; personal learning plans and transition records; the extent to which the needs of all children are met; analysis of the views of children; and analysis of questionnaire responses from parents about their children and their satisfaction with the centre's provision.

# 2.2

## THE CENTRE'S SUCCESSES IN INVOLVING PARENTS, CARERS AND FAMILIES

### Themes

- The extent to which parents, carers and families are committed to and actively involved in the life of the centre

### Key features

This indicator relates to the involvement of parents, carers and families in their children's learning and development in the centre and their views on the quality of education their children receive. It focuses, in particular, on their current experiences.<sup>10</sup>



### LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- Our parents play an important part in their children's learning and development. They are represented on our parent groups, such as the nursery school council or playgroup committee, and participate in relevant meetings and in our centre's events. They contribute, as fully as possible, to their children's development and learning, safety and health. Parents, carers and families are satisfied with the quality of education and care we provide. They feel valued, supported, informed and recognised as joint partners. Our parents report that the centre supports and encourages their involvement in their children's learning and in discussions about education and their contributions to our centre's improvement. Parents, in particular those with vulnerable children, indicate that they receive prompt and carefully-considered responses to their views and enquiries about their child's learning.

### LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- Some of our parents, including those with children who have additional support needs, are not effectively supported. A number of parents do not feel valued as partners or that we have taken account of their views on the quality of education and care provided. This is reflected in some parents' lack of confidence in supporting their children's development and learning and engaging with our centre. Attendance at parents' meetings is low and parents receive only limited information on curriculum, learning and teaching. Our parents feel they have insufficient opportunities to engage with us to discuss and influence their children's development and learning. Parents feel that they are not always able to raise concerns about, and that they are sometimes given insufficient information on, their children's progress.

<sup>10</sup> Evidence will come from direct contacts, ongoing dialogue and appropriate documentation, surveys, questionnaires and discussions with representative groups or individuals. It will include evidence about complaints and compliments from parents.

# 3.1

## THE ENGAGEMENT OF STAFF IN THE LIFE AND WORK OF THE CENTRE

### Themes

- The extent to which staff are committed to and actively involved in the life of the centre<sup>11</sup>

### Key features

This indicator relates to the professional involvement and commitment of staff. It also focuses on the views of staff on their involvement in ensuring that children receive a high-quality experience of education and care.<sup>12</sup>

### LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- We have a clear and shared understanding of what is involved in providing high-quality education for children. We are motivated and meaningfully engaged in improving the quality of education and care for our children. We are actively involved in developing the centre's work through effective teamwork within our centre and with our partner agencies. We readily engage in continuing staff and professional development which improves children's development and learning and their achievements. We feel valued, consulted and supported, and that our views and skills, individually and as teams, influence how the centre improves the quality of its work and its impact on children. We have positive views on conditions of work, facilities and services, career review and staff development opportunities. We feel supported and able to provide high-quality education.

### LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- In our centre, we do not have an agreed view of what is involved in delivering high-quality education. A significant number of staff have low morale. While some seek involvement in development work, many do not respond to consultation exercises, take part in career review or staff development. Management arrangements are not challenging and supportive, and there are too few opportunities for teamwork. We feel we have limited involvement in meetings to suggest ways of improving learning, and on aspects such as career review, conditions of work and staff development.

<sup>11</sup> This refers to all staff in the centre. For example, it includes care staff, teachers, health specialists, therapists, nursery nurses, play assistants, psychologists and a wide range of administrative and support staff.

<sup>12</sup> Data would include information about staff absence rates and staff turnover.

# 4.1

## THE CENTRE'S SUCCESSES AND ENGAGING WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

### Themes

- The extent to which the centre engages with the local community

### Key features

This indicator relates to the centre's effective engagement with the local community. It relates to the community's views of the work of the centre and the extent to which community members and organisations feel that the centre and community engage in partnership working.<sup>13</sup>



### LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- Members of the local community are actively involved with our centre. We work collaboratively with relevant organisations in the wider community to support our children and families, for example to assess children's needs, broaden their experiences or provide targeted support to reduce barriers to learning. Organisations in the community engage with and support our centre. We respond quickly and effectively to enquiries and complaints. Our local community, organisations, trainers and colleges report positive views on the quality and impact of the services we provide for families and children. The community feels that we take account of its views on aspects such as our centre's reputation, its use as a community resource, its responsiveness to complaints from the community and the level of community involvement in the life of our centre. Colleges and agencies providing training and work experience feel that our centre provides very good support for students on placements. Partner agencies and statutory organisations indicate that our centre has effective partnership arrangements which enrich our provision and the experiences of our children.

### LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- Members of our community do not engage sufficiently with our centre. Community representatives are informed about the activities and services provided by the centre but have insufficient opportunities to influence these. Organisations in the community are not actively involved in supporting children and families, and there is little use of the centre for community activities. Members of our local community report some involvement with the centre but community members feel that too little attention is given to their concerns or suggestions about how the centre might improve and support our families and children. Some organisations feel they have limited involvement in, and impact on, the life of our centre. Agencies providing training and work experience do not always feel that we support students on placements well or use placements effectively to guide staff career paths. Some partner agencies and statutory organisations feel that we could work more closely with them to improve the experiences for children and families.

<sup>13</sup> Evidence will come from available data derived from surveys, questionnaires and discussions with community representatives, training providers (including local colleges and universities), voluntary organisations, employers, agencies and statutory organisations.



## THE CENTRE'S SUCCESSES IN ENGAGING THE WIDER COMMUNITY

### Themes

- The extent to which the centre
  - encourages and supports creativity and innovation, and learns from and adopts leading-edge practice
  - influences wider policy or practice
  - anticipates and responds rapidly and flexibly to change
  - engages in global issues

### Key features

This indicator focuses on the impact the centre has on the wider educational community. It deals with the culture of the centre in encouraging and supporting creativity and innovation, and being open to new ideas, while sharing its own good practice more widely where it can. It is about being a centre that looks for challenge and deals well with change. It also relates to the influence and impact of the centre on wider developments.<sup>14</sup>

### LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- We are well informed about, and where appropriate are involved with, a range of innovative programmes, including links with centres and schools in other parts of the country and overseas. There are examples of leading-edge practice from other centres and schools and countries being adopted and adapted within our centre. We work in partnership with other centres, agencies and organisations. These have led to significant improvements in education and services for our children.
- We are involved in developments or working parties with other centres, organisations, the education authority, or nationally, where relevant.
- Our centre places an emphasis on changing its practices to meet changing needs and ensure children receive consistently high provision.
- Our centre is outward looking. We understand and engage with wider issues affecting people in other areas. We educate for sustainability and prepare our learners for global citizenship.

### LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- We do not have a culture of encouraging creativity or change. Our centre provides education which broadly meets the needs of children but we are seldom innovative and rarely learn from good centres or from abroad.
- Few of our staff are involved in committees or advisory groups beyond our centre. Our centre makes little impact beyond our own locality.
- We respond too cautiously to change. We do not always respond proactively to the changing needs of our children.
- While we have some understanding of issues beyond our community, we do not consistently prepare our children for global citizenship.

<sup>14</sup> Evidence will come from programmes that have origins in national or international best practice; staff who have made major influential contributions to national developments; and anticipating demographic, economic or social changes and responding with the re-allocation of resources and services.

# 5.1

## THE CURRICULUM

### Themes

- The rationale and design of the curriculum<sup>15</sup>
- The development of the curriculum
- Programmes
- Transitions<sup>16</sup>

### Key features

This indicator relates to the ways that curriculum areas, the life of the centre as a community and opportunities for personal achievement develop children's capacities as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. It focuses on the quality of the curriculum across stages and key transition points in children's learning, and the need for exciting, active learning through play. It highlights the need for the curriculum to be dynamic, to take account of professional experiences of innovation and to be flexible to meet the needs and interests of all children.



### LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- Our curriculum has a clear rationale based on shared values. It starts from the needs of the individual child. It is designed to enable all children to make progress in the key aspects of their learning and development. It promotes challenge, enjoyment, personalisation and choice in learning. It has breadth, balance, depth and sufficient flexibility to meet the needs of individuals, including those with additional support needs. The curriculum takes full account of local and national advice and leaves scope for staff to introduce well-considered innovations, and for children to follow their interests. The curriculum is based firmly on play and active learning.
- We develop and refresh our curriculum on a regular basis, involving all staff in the process and taking account of the views of our children and parents. We reflect as a staff on the curriculum we provide and improve the range and quality of experiences for all children, the impact of these experiences on children and the outcomes which they achieve.
- Our programmes are stimulating, challenging and enjoyable. We respond to and meet the needs and interests of individual children. Our curriculum supports progression within and links between areas of learning, and promotes progress in wider achievements very well.
- We provide very effective support to our children when they have a split placement with our centre and another, and in transition from home to pre-school. We pay very good attention to continuous progression in children's learning, including how they learn, during the key transition stages of pre-school to P1.

<sup>15</sup> Reference can be made to the Curriculum Framework for Children 3-5 and A Curriculum for Excellence when reviewing and developing programmes and activities.

<sup>16</sup> Reference should be made to QI 5.8: Care, welfare and development.



## LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- Our curriculum design lacks breadth and balance across its key elements in some important respects. It does not fully reflect the needs or interests of the individual child. There is not enough scope for flexibility or innovation and limited consideration is given to national and local guidance. There are weaknesses in some curriculum areas and the needs of some of our children are not well met. Our children experience insufficient opportunities to be active in their learning within the context of play. The curriculum is driven too much by resources for activities.
- We have not updated our curriculum well in response to changing needs or adapted it sufficiently to meet the needs of our learners. We do not consistently involve all staff, parents and children in reviewing and improving the quality of experiences for our children.
- The curriculum has weaknesses in supporting children to fulfil their potential. Some of our programmes are insufficiently challenging and stimulating.
- We do not give sufficient emphasis to ensuring progression in learning for our children or continuity in how they learn during key transition stages.

# 5.2

## TEACHING FOR EFFECTIVE LEARNING

### Themes

- The learning climate and teaching approaches
- Staff-child interaction, including children's engagement
- Clarity and purposefulness of dialogue
- Judgements made in the course of teaching

### Key features

This indicator relates to the quality of teaching for effective learning in the context of a positive climate and range of experiences that promote active learning and help children to think about their experiences. It highlights the need for a varied, flexible and responsive range of approaches to ensure teaching is motivating and relevant to children's needs. It focuses also on the use of staff interaction with children to form sound judgements of how teaching should be directed to meet children's needs. The indicator recognises the importance of information and communications technology (ICT) in enriching teaching and supporting and motivating children.



### LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- We use a wide range of learning environments and teaching approaches which are challenging, enjoyable and include creative and imaginative play activities. They start from, and are well matched to, the needs of individual children. They sustain their motivation and engagement and build on their previous learning. We work directly with our children to develop their independent learning skills. Play activities involve them with others in making decisions, investigating and solving problems. The pace of learning enables all children to make appropriate progress. We make effective use of ICT during learning and teaching.
- Our children enjoy their learning experiences. Our interactions with them show we have a comprehensive understanding of children's learning and development. They are very well judged to increase the complexity of children's play. We understand and develop children's motivation and build on this to sustain their purposeful involvement in play. Our relationships with children are consistently friendly and trusting and we use praise effectively to promote learning. We observe children closely to decide whether intervention is required and use information about their progress to plan future learning.
- Our teaching fully involves children and encourages them to express their views and ask questions. Our questioning is skilled and we ensure children have time to think and reflect before responding. We value children's responses and develop their answers fully to extend learning and encourage effective contributions. We consistently promote curiosity, independence and confidence in children.
- We make sound judgements about children's progress and respond quickly to ensure that activities and experiences meet the needs of individual children. We take full account of children's varied patterns of attendance at our centre and ensure play and care routines are very well coordinated to take full account of their individual needs.



## LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- Our teaching approaches are limited and lack stimulation and creativity and do not take full account of individual needs of children. Activities are not sufficiently challenging or relevant. We are not always consistent in our approach to sustaining children's interest and engagement in their play experiences. We make limited links with children's previous development and learning. Our children's activities are overly directed by adults and do not develop independence and confidence sufficiently. Few activities build on and extend children's previous experiences or support progress. They are not well matched to the needs and stages of development of the children. We do not make effective use of ICT in learning and teaching.
- Our interaction with children does not always increase the complexity of play. Although we support children in their learning, often we intervene too early in their play, reducing opportunities for children to develop their ideas. We do not always offer appropriate assistance during challenging activities. We are knowledgeable about the children for whom we have responsibility but our awareness of child development is not of sufficient depth to promote progress in learning.
- Our staff questioning does not support the development of children's thinking and is too adult led. We listen to children's responses, but do not build on them sufficiently well to encourage them to be effective contributors.
- Our judgements about children's progress in their development and learning are sometimes based on limited understanding of how to interact effectively to extend children's learning and this hinders us in responding appropriately to individual needs, interests and circumstances.

# 5.3

## MEETING LEARNING NEEDS

### Themes

- Learning opportunities, tasks, activities and resources
- Identification of learning needs
- The roles of staff
- Meeting and implementing the requirements of legislation

### Key features

This indicator relates to the centre's arrangements for meeting the needs of all children, including potentially vulnerable groups, and addressing barriers to learning. This includes identifying the needs of, and providing support and challenge for, groups and individuals who may have additional support needs such as: looked after, and looked after and accommodated children; children with irregular attendance caused by illness, family circumstances or respite care; those with English as an additional language; refugees and Gypsy/Traveller children; and more able children.



### LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- We place meeting the learning and development needs of children at the centre of our work. We match learning activities and resources, including natural materials, to the age, needs and abilities of individual children. Our approaches to development and learning are relevant and challenging and take full account of children's experiences, interests and individual ways of learning. Our children are able to make choices, follow their interests and are absorbed in their play. Our programmes are flexible to enable individuals to progress at their own pace. We make effective use of resources to support children's learning and meet a wide range of learning and teaching styles.
- We identify at an early stage, review and evaluate children's needs, including those whose needs are significantly different from their peers. We fully involve parents and carers and partner services in the process. We organise regular and helpful support to allow our children to participate fully in all aspects of their development and learning.
- Our centre staff, learning support staff, partner agencies and parents have regular opportunities for discussion to ensure any factors which may hinder learning are promptly identified and addressed. We are responsive to the differing learning needs of children and are sensitive to individual circumstances. We have a clear understanding of our roles and provide effective learning experiences to help our children make steady progress. Learning support staff and partner agencies in our centre provide valuable support and advice to staff and parents on ways of meeting individual children's learning needs. We have realistically high expectations of all children.
- We implement effectively current legislation and advice relating to children requiring additional support for their learning. Individualised educational programmes and coordinated support plans contain appropriate targets for our children. We place a high value on parents' contributions in reviewing their children's needs and learning plans.



## LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- We match some activities and resources to the needs of individual children, although we do not always build sufficiently on their prior learning and support them in achieving next steps in learning in all areas of the curriculum. Our children have limited opportunities to select resources independently and follow their interests.
- We take steps to identify learning needs but observations of children at play and arrangements to track children's progress are not well developed. We do not always work closely enough with children, parents and appropriate agencies to identify the needs of children who may require additional support for their learning. Our parents and carers are not fully involved in the process to identify specific learning targets for their child.
- When we plan the learning activities for all children, we give insufficient attention to factors such as learning environment, family circumstances, health or disability, or social and emotional factors which may hinder learning. We are unclear of our roles and how to support children's learning and developmental needs. Those with leadership responsibilities and learning support staff in our centre do not offer sufficient support and advice to staff on ways to meet children's needs.
- We are not fully aware, and do not make good use, of current legislation and advice relating to children requiring additional support for their learning. Records of children's progress do not accurately reflect their needs and are not regularly reviewed. There is insufficient involvement of parents, children and outside agencies in the process.

# 5.4

## ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING

### Themes

- Assessment approaches
- Planning learning experiences and activities
- Use of assessment information to identify and plan future learning
- Arrangements for recording and reporting

### Key features

This indicator relates to the engagement of staff, children and parents in sharing and using a range of assessment information to improve learning and development, and to reflect on the quality of teaching. It focuses on assessment as an integral part of the learning and teaching and planning high quality learning activities for all children. It highlights the need for children, parents, staff and other appropriate agencies to work together to develop learning outcomes. It also relates to the accountability of staff for the appropriate progress for all children.



### LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- Our staff use an appropriate range of assessment methods, including observation and high-quality interaction with children. We monitor the support and intervention individuals and groups require. At least one member of staff knows the whole child very well.
- We plan high-quality learning experiences using our understanding of children's learning and development and of the learning outcomes. We know and respond to individual needs and interests and are clear about what we expect children to learn. We build on and extend appropriately children's previous learning.
- We make effective use of assessment information to evaluate learning and teaching and to improve our practice. We observe children closely at play, track their progress and use the information to plan their future learning and decide whether intervention is helpful. We seek and use information on children's development from parents and, where appropriate, support agencies. Our children play an active role in their learning and are involved in evaluating their learning and progress.
- We have manageable arrangements for record keeping which support us to track and record children's progress and report to parents. Parents receive regular and up-to-date information, including written reports on their children's progress across the curriculum. Our staff share individual profiles regularly with parents. Children contribute information to these profiles and have a sense of ownership of them.





## LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- We assess children's progress but often use only a narrow range of approaches. We do not respond actively or provide quality feedback to children in our interactions with them.
  - When planning learning experiences for children, we make insufficient use of information from parents, specialists, or support for learning staff to decide what support or intervention is required. We do not take full account of children's learning and development or the pace of their progress.
  - We spend time collecting assessment information but do not use it effectively. It is rarely used to evaluate learning and teaching or shared openly and discussed constructively amongst staff, including those from other agencies, or with children. Our children do not always receive feedback on their learning.
- We inform parents about their child's progress but assessment methods and terminology are not explained clearly. Written reports lack relevant detail and record progress in only some aspects of learning. Our children and parents are not encouraged to contribute to, or comment on, reports.

# 5.5

## EXPECTATIONS AND PROMOTING ACHIEVEMENT

### Themes

- Staff expectations and use of praise
- Children's expectations and sense of achievement
- Promoting and sustaining an ethos of achievement
- Staff-child relationships

### Key features

This indicator relates to expectations of staff and children, and the extent to which the centre promotes an ethos of achievement for all children. It focuses on setting challenging but realistic expectations for children and on praising and celebrating achievement. It highlights an ethos of endeavour and success within which there is mutual respect between staff and children.



### LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- We all have consistently high expectations of children's achievement and behaviour, and share these with children and parents. We use praise appropriately to motivate children and promote independence and cooperation through use of a variety of suitable strategies.
- Our children have high expectations of themselves and others. They have a sense of achievement and progress, and enjoy appropriate opportunities to exercise responsibilities. Their work is displayed well around the playroom and centre.
- We provide a stimulating and motivating learning environment and have high expectations for achievement. We have well-planned opportunities for children to experience worthwhile achievement. Our children's high aspirations show in an enthusiastic approach to playroom activities, progress and achievements. Their high levels of motivation and depth of engagement demonstrate a positive attitude to learning. We celebrate children's achievements regularly within the centre and with family and the community.
- Relationships throughout the centre are warm and positive and founded on a climate of mutual respect and trust. The atmosphere in our playrooms is relaxed and purposeful. Children are well behaved and are learning consideration for others.



### LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- Our expectations of children's achievement and behaviour are sometimes too low. We use praise to support children but this is not always consistent in motivating children and not always successful in supporting positive behaviour in children.
- Too many of our children underestimate what they can do. Some have low self-esteem and little confidence in their ability to achieve or to take responsibility.
- The environment we provide is sometimes uninspiring. Our children show only a limited interest in the activities and have difficulty in concentrating. Not all staff promote an ethos of achievement throughout the centre, and insufficient attention is given to planning, recognising or sharing children's achievements.
- Relationships between staff and children are not always founded on mutual respect or an understanding of working alongside children. Some of our staff do not always engage fully with children in their play, and play is not always purposeful.

# 5.6

## EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS

### Themes

- Approaches to inclusion
- Promoting equality and fairness
- Ensuring equality and fairness

### Key features

This indicator relates to the steps taken by the centre to promote and ensure a strong sense of equality and fairness through the curriculum and across all aspects of its work. It focuses on the roles undertaken by staff in the centre to ensure that all children are included in the life of the centre and that diversity in the centre and beyond is valued.<sup>17</sup>



### LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- In our centre, we welcome all children and families. Effective working relationships between staff and partner services ensure that their needs are reviewed, evaluated and met. We assist families who experience difficulties in accessing support services. Our centre removes barriers to development and learning and ensures that children and their parents are included fully in all aspects of the life of the centre. Our parents are enabled to participate as equal partners in their child's care and education. We maintain a clear focus on vulnerable children.
- We promote equality of opportunity, and a sense of fairness is strongly evident in the centre's work. Diversity is recognised, valued and promoted in our centre and its community whilst stressing what is shared in our values and experiences. Issues about equality and fairness to others are discussed openly and sensitively among our children and staff.
- Our children, parents, and staff are treated equally, with respect and in a fair and just manner. Culture and language, disability, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation and additional support needs do not become barriers to participation and achievement. Our children feel confident and know who to tell if they are treated unfairly. Everyone in our centre feels valued, safe and secure.

<sup>17</sup> When applying this indicator, centres should use information about the achievements and progress of different groups of learners such as: boys and girls; children of different ethnic groups; refugees; Gypsy/Traveller children; looked after children; children for whom English is an additional language; children with disabilities; those with irregular attendance caused by illness, family circumstances or respite care.



## LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- Not all children and parents feel they are welcome or involved in the centre. Our centre has not been fully successful in removing barriers to learning. Our staff work with partner services but not always closely enough to ensure that all children's needs are met.
- Equality of opportunity and a sense of fairness do not feature significantly in the work of our centre. Diversity issues are generally ignored or undervalued. Limited attention is given to preparing our children to promote equality and fairness in their future lives in society.
- It is assumed that our children, parents, and staff are treated fairly and respectfully but few steps are taken to ensure this. Some groups of children are under-represented in activities. There is a variation in the approaches adopted by our staff to equality and fairness issues. Our children are not always supported in recognising and responding to unfairness.

## PARTNERSHIPS WITH CHILDREN AND PARENTS

### Themes

- Engaging parents in their children's learning and the life of the centre
- Consulting and communicating with children and parents
- Dialogue with children and parents about the work of the centre

### Key features

This indicator relates to the centre's partnerships with all parents, carers and families in the work of the centre and its impact on children's learning and progress. It highlights the way the centre values all parents and their contribution to supporting learning as fundamental to successful two-way partnerships. It focuses on the centre's work in promoting parental involvement in their children's learning, seeking and acting on parents' views and informing them about the centre's work.



### LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- We have a welcoming centre and actively encourage all parents to participate in the life of the centre. We support parent representation on formal committees or councils. Parental support and involvement is planned and purposeful. It leads to productive partnership with our parents and participation in their children's learning. Our staff are skilful in working alongside parents and welcome them, where appropriate, in working alongside us in the centre. We support parents well in understanding and taking an active part in discussions about their children's progress and ways of working together on their next steps in learning. We meet parents at times most convenient to them where possible.
- There is high-quality communication and consultation with our parents on aspects such as the quality of care and education provided in our centre and the way the centre is run. Parents are involved in decisions about the future work of our centre. We have clear complaints procedures and parents understand how to use them. We have effective arrangements to meet the varying needs of parents such as those who need interpreting or translation services or have restricted mobility.
- We report annually to our parents, children and partners on success in meeting our improvement priorities and achieving key outcomes. We provide clear information on all aspects of our work. Reports on the quality of the centre give accurate evaluations of key aspects and identify strengths and areas for improvement.



## LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- We accept the help parents offer but do not actively involve them in a planned or purposeful way. Parents are not well represented on groups such as the playgroup committee or parent council. Our parents are encouraged to be involved in their children's learning, for example through home link initiatives, but are given insufficient guidance on how to support their children. Few steps are taken to enable all our parents to participate in their children's care and education. Some of our staff lack skills in working with parents in the processes of developing their child's learning. Our arrangements for parents to visit the centre or meet with staff are not sufficiently flexible.
- Methods for communicating with parents are limited and do not encourage them to give their views or suggest ways of improving our centre's provision. Little account is taken of the range of needs of parents, such as those with English as an additional language. Parents are unclear how to raise issues with us or about arrangements to make complaints.
- We report to our parents and partners on achievements and areas for development in a number of aspects of our work. However, the information is of limited value to our parents through, for example, poor presentation, lack of clarity and lack of detail about important aspects of the work of the service.

## CARE, WELFARE AND DEVELOPMENT

### Themes

- Arrangements for ensuring the care, welfare and child protection
- Approaches to and provision for meeting the emotional, personal, social and physical needs of children, including continuity of care and care routines
- Choices about education and care

### Key features

This indicator relates to the centre's arrangements for meeting children's emotional, physical, health and social needs. It focuses on the centre's procedures for ensuring that children feel safe and on the provision of appropriate programmes to ensure their emotional, personal and social development. It highlights the need for advice which will enable parents and children to make informed choices.



### LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- Our policies and procedures for pastoral care and welfare are clear, appropriate and implemented by all staff. We understand our roles and responsibilities and take care to ensure our children's health, safety and general wellbeing. We have been trained in, understand and implement child protection procedures. The needs and concerns of our children and their families are dealt with sensitively and effectively. We emphasise healthy living and health promotion across the centre.
- We are very aware of children's emotional, personal, social and physical needs, and promote their development across the curriculum and in all our work. Our children's achievements are recognised and valued and friendships are encouraged and supported. They are comforted if they are upset. They have opportunities to care for others and to develop citizenship skills. Our children take part in decisions about, and are actively involved in, the life and work of our centre. There is a climate of trust, respect and confidence. Our children and their families are supported by all staff and specialists from partner services. We have an effective system in place to ensure the continuity of care for our children, including effective liaison with parents and other centres or services the child attends. Our staff take account of parents' preferences and reflect familiar care routines at home. We carefully support our children and families when there are changes in staffing, particularly with key workers. Children who attend full day provision have suitable opportunities to rest and to enjoy a balanced and healthy diet. They have regular access to fresh air and engage in energetic activities.
- Our children are encouraged to make choices in their education and care. Families are consulted and supported in making choices about their child's education and care.





## LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- Our policies omit some aspects of care and welfare or are not fully implemented. Some of our staff have limited understanding of their roles in child protection or procedures to be followed, and need further training. While staff support children's needs, they sometimes neglect to take account of children's rights, confidentiality, dignity and privacy.
- A limited range of approaches and programmes is used to develop children's emotional, personal and social skills. There are few opportunities to recognise achievement or to develop an awareness of citizenship. Our children are not always encouraged in their friendships with others. Our approaches to creating a climate of mutual trust, respect and confidence are not fully effective. There are examples of a lack of sensitivity to children's background information and in responses to emotional needs. Care routines are not fully effective in supporting our children's emotional and physical needs. Insufficient attention is given to continuity of children's care. We do not always take account of children's

care routines at home or children's experiences in other services or centres. Liaison with other services and support agencies is not well established. Our communication with families about changes in provision is inadequate and some staff lack skill in interacting with, and in supporting, our parents through change.

- Opportunities for our children to make choices in their education and care are limited. Our parents have too few opportunities to influence their child's education and care and to make choices.

# 5.9

## IMPROVEMENT THROUGH SELF-EVALUATION

### Themes

- Commitment to self-evaluation
- Management of self-evaluation
- Centre improvement

### Key features

This indicator relates to the centre's arrangements for improvement through self-evaluation and commitment to this. It highlights the importance of gathering and responding to the views of all parents, children and other interested parties and involving them. It focuses on the extent to which a centre knows itself well and improves the successes and achievements of children, and makes improvements in the life and work of the centre.



### LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- As individuals and with colleagues, we evaluate our own work as reflective practitioners and make improvements, for example in playroom activities or the organisation of our programmes for the curriculum. We work together to evaluate provision in order to secure continuous improvement, including major changes where this is needed. We have very effective systems to gather the views of our staff, parents, children and others about the quality of our work. Our vision, values and aims are used as the basis for reviewing our work.
- Our self-evaluation focuses on key aspects of our children's successes, achievements and wellbeing. It draws on a wide range of evidence and is rigorous, systematic and transparent. We reflect on current practice and evaluate any new initiatives or changes we have introduced. We use accreditation schemes, where appropriate, as a sound basis for improvement. Strengths and areas for improvement are clearly identified. We share good practice.
- In our centre, self-evaluation is used to gauge progress and improvement and we can show clear evidence of improvement based on our cycle of self-evaluation. We focus particularly on continuing improvements to learning and teaching and the achievement of all our children.



## LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- In our centre, self-evaluation is regarded largely as the responsibility of senior managers and does not significantly involve all staff, children or parents. Self-evaluation lacks rigour, does not focus on our children's experiences and achievements, and rarely leads to action for improvement.
  - While our promoted staff evaluate aspects of provision, they use a limited range of methods which do not always focus on children's achievements and wellbeing or clearly identify strengths and areas for improvement. Our views on strengths and areas for improvement lack rigour. We are unable to demonstrate the impact initiatives are having on children.
- Self-evaluation has little impact on improving learning, teaching and achievements for all children. Related evidence does not always provide key management information and is not used well to evaluate progress and plan improvement.

# 6.1

## POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT

### Themes

- Range, clarity and appropriateness of aims and policies
- Coherence of policies
- Managing, evaluating and updating policies

### Key features

Policies are about action. This indicator relates to the need for clearly stated policies which reflect local and national priorities, provide clear direction for the work of the centre and improve provision. It highlights the key role of all stakeholders in ensuring that policies promote coherence in our work with other staff and partners. It focuses on the extent to which policies reflect the centre's vision, values and aims and highlights the need for effective systems to keep policies up to date so that they guide practice which leads to improved outcomes for children.



### LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- Staff and parents share, and are committed to, our centre's aims and values which are shared with our children. Our policies put children first. They provide guidance, take account of local and national priorities and comply with relevant legislation. They are consistent with aims and policies of the education authority or governing body and with national policies. They provide clear and concise guidance which improves practice in our centre and has a positive impact on children's experiences.
- Our centre's policies are directed at meeting children's needs and reducing barriers to learning. Our working links with partnership initiatives are clearly indicated in our policies and are evident in practice.
- Staff and parents are actively involved in the development and review of our policies and the impact the policies have in the work of the centre. We keep these policies updated to reflect current legislation requirements, especially in risk assessment and the care, welfare and protection of children.<sup>18</sup>

### LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- The links between our aims and policies are not always evident to parents. Our policies do not always give clear and concise guidance for staff, parents and other stakeholders to help consistent practice and delivery. Our aims have insufficient focus on providing high-quality learning experiences and enabling all children to achieve the highest standards.
- Our centre's policies have a limited impact on the work of our centre and are not sufficiently directed at meeting children's learning needs and reducing barriers to learning. Our contribution to partnership working is not well defined and has insufficient impact on improving outcomes for all children.
- We do not review and amend policies regularly enough. Many of our policies have not been updated to reflect current legislation requirements, our centre's changing circumstances or national and local priorities. We have only limited engagement with interested parties in the formation and review of policies to ensure they guide practice which leads to improved outcomes for children.

<sup>18</sup> In evaluating this QI, due attention should be paid to evaluations of QIs within Key Areas 1 to 4.

# 6.2

## PARTICIPATION IN POLICY AND PLANNING

### Themes

- Active participation in policy and planning
- Communication and consultation

### Key features

This indicator relates to the involvement of all interested parties (including staff, children, parents, members of the wider community and partner agencies) in policy development and the work of the centre more generally. It highlights the importance of keeping all interested parties well informed about the centre's work and development, and of consulting them on action for improvement.

### LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- We use the views of all involved in our centre's work to inform the development, evaluation and review of our policies in order to secure improvements for our children. Our senior managers actively involve parents and staff in the work of the centre, for example in meetings, parent groups and working groups.
- We are committed to communicating and consulting with our children, parents, staff, and all interested stakeholders. We interact regularly with an appropriate range of consultative groups, and have clear policy guidelines for communication and providing feedback to all stakeholders. Staff, children, parents and partners are confident in contributing ideas, expressing concerns and making suggestions.

### LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- We have in place few structures, such as meetings, working groups and other forums, to support and encourage the participation of our children, parents and staff in taking forward the work of our centre. Some key groups of stakeholders are not sufficiently involved in developing our centre's policies in a purposeful way. Our children's views are considered but not always acted on when it would be appropriate to do so. Our stakeholders do not always feel ownership of, or commitment to, centre policies.
- We provide parents and staff with information about our work and progress but the information is not always clear, comprehensive or up to date. We use a limited range of communication methods. We have no structure for systematically consulting with the various groups of stakeholders and give little feedback where consultation takes place.

# 6.3

## PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

### Themes

- Developing, implementing and evaluating improvement plans
- Structure and content of improvement plans
- Use of management information
- Joint improvement planning with partner organisations and services
- Planning for sustainability

### Key features

This indicator relates to the impact of the centre's arrangements for planning for improvement. It focuses on the centre's procedures for implementing plans and evaluating their outcomes for all children and their families. It highlights the need for a clear, concise structure based firmly on information from self-evaluation. It relates to inter-agency planning and implementation to secure improvements which will bring benefit over the longer term.



### LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- We have a clear and well-understood cycle for improvement planning. We involve our stakeholders at an early stage to shape our plans. Our staff are committed to developing the improvement plan and to implementing it. We rigorously evaluate the impact of the plan on improving outcomes for all our children and families.
- Our centre improvement plan fully reflects the centre's circumstances along with local and national priorities and is presented in a way which makes it accessible to the full range of our stakeholders. The plan sets achievable but challenging targets and clearly indicates how developments will be resourced, who will be responsible, when they will be implemented, their impact on children and how success will be evaluated.
- In producing our improvement plan, we make effective use of information from self-evaluation and career review and development. In particular, we draw on evidence from monitoring the quality of teaching and children's experiences and on evidence relating to children's development and progress and achievements.
- Our commitment to joint planning with partner organisations and services is evident in the use of integrated working to achieve improvement objectives. Our partners are fully involved in planning to ensure that children are safe, healthy and well cared for, and they achieve to their fullest potential.
- We take careful account of issues of continuity and sustainability of planning improvements.



## LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- We engage in improvement planning but it is not always well managed to focus on improving the quality of learning and maximising children's achievements. We undertake some evaluation of improvement plans but this rarely extends to consideration of the direct benefits for children. Although many of our staff are involved in the planning process, a number lack commitment to implementation.
  - The structure and presentation of our improvement plan is not clear or helpful as a working document. There are too many or too few improvement objectives and these are not always focused on key priorities for the centre. We are unclear how we will evaluate the success of our plans.
  - Our planning process is not well founded on management information derived from quality assurance, or analysis of relevant information, including a focus on children's experiences. This results in the omission from the plan of key priorities for improvement.
- We work to some extent with associated schools and centres, professional groups and support agencies to identify priorities and engage in joint planning. There is a lack of clarity about areas for joint action and roles and responsibilities in implementing the plan.
  - Our improvement planning gives insufficient attention to ensuring the long-term viability of projects.

# 7.1

## STAFF SUFFICIENCY, RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

### Themes

- Provision of staff
- Recruitment, appointment and induction of staff
- Care and welfare of staff
- Recognition of achievement

### Key features

This indicator relates to the provision and recruitment of staff and the effectiveness of the arrangements to ensure their care and welfare and readiness to do the job. It focuses on transparency and equality and fairness in allocating staff to posts, and on the extent to which staff successes are recognised and celebrated in the centre.



### LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- We have sufficient skilled and qualified members of staff<sup>19</sup> and support from specialist services to provide an appropriately high-quality curriculum for all children, including those with additional support needs. We have access to appropriately and well-qualified supply staff and ensure their effective deployment and support.
- Our centre has effective, safe and transparent recruitment procedures. When appointing staff we give due regard to qualifications and skills, aptitudes and experience needed for each post. We have effective induction procedures for all new staff, including supply and other temporary staff. We operate an effective equal opportunities policy in the recruitment and support of our staff. We systematically address and monitor issues of equality and fairness including race, religion, ethnicity, disability and gender.
- We have clear procedures for setting the standards of conduct, care and welfare which all staff can expect and which are expected of them. Our staff know their responsibilities and rights and relevant professional codes of practice.
- We recognise and celebrate our achievements and support staff to give of their best. Those with leadership responsibilities regularly communicate staff successes and highlight best practice.

<sup>19</sup> Pre-school staff will want to refer to the Scottish Social Services Council conditions for registration.





## LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- Our range of staff expertise enables broad coverage of the curriculum but there are gaps in some areas of skill such as additional support for learning for children who need it. We do not make best use of the expertise of staff from partner agencies and other organisations.
- Our recruitment procedures generally operate well but could be better planned and more proactive. Our staff induction procedures are not always sufficiently customised to ensure that staff are well prepared for their roles. Parent helpers, visiting or supply staff are sometimes unfamiliar with basic organisational procedures. We are committed to equality and fairness in recruitment but do not always systematically monitor that these principles have been implemented.
- Our policies for setting standards of conduct and care and welfare for staff are sometimes unclear or inconsistent. Some staff are unsure of their responsibilities and rights and relevant professional codes of practice and are unclear what they can expect or what is expected of them.
- Staff sometimes feel that those with leadership responsibilities do not value their achievements and that we do not have an ethos of recognising success. We have little formal or public recognition of staff successes.

# 7.2

## STAFF DEPLOYMENT AND TEAMWORK

### Themes

- Appropriateness and clarity of remits
- Deployment of staff, including partner agencies
- Effectiveness of teamwork
- Communication

### Key features

This indicator relates to the effectiveness of individual and team contributions. It also focuses on the extent to which staff are empowered to give of their best and their work is directed towards improving outcomes for children. It highlights the processes involved in effective team working.



### LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- Staff, including those from partner services, have clear job descriptions and remits focused on the needs of learners. Staff are empowered, challenged and supported. Team members have clear responsibilities, for example for an area of the playroom or as a keyworker for a group of children, and their work is monitored and evaluated. Senior managers evaluate overall performance.
- We deploy staff effectively and their duties are defined and understood. Staff work alongside children and contribute effectively to their development and learning. Managers deploy support and ancillary staff effectively to complement those staff working directly with children and allow them to focus on teaching and learning and promoting high-quality play experiences.
- We have established a collaborative and collegiate approach to our work. An ethos of team working and professional engagement is evident within our centre. We work well with learning support staff and visiting specialists. Managers ensure effective liaison between staff and other professionals involved with the care and education of individual children, including the release of time for effective consultation.
- Lines of communication and accountability for staff are clear. Our staff are aware of how to raise concerns and make constructive suggestions. We all take responsibility for communicating, consulting and sharing information with staff in our centre and those from other agencies. Those with leadership responsibilities are responsive, visible and accessible.



### LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- The roles and responsibilities of staff are not always clearly understood and some remits are not well focused on the needs of learners. Involvement in teamwork varies in quality and not all staff contribute fully to the work of the centre.
- Deployment of staff does not always make best use of their skills and does not always match children's needs. Staff do not always understand the roles of visiting or learning support staff. Senior managers sometimes spend time on routine tasks which could be undertaken by others.
- Deployment of visiting or learning support staff does not always match our children's needs.
- Our staff do not communicate and consult with each other sufficiently to support individual children. Opportunities for effective communication and consultation between staff and managers are limited. Not all managers are seen by staff as accessible and approachable.

# 7.3

## STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW

### Themes

- Processes for staff review and support
- Training and development
- Joint training with staff from partner agencies

### Key features

This indicator relates to the impact of the centre's arrangements for staff development and professional review for all staff managed by the centre. It focuses on clear and systematic procedures for staff review which are supported by a wide range of appropriate opportunities for development. It relates to joint training which is designed to promote effective partnership working.<sup>20</sup>



### LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- The staff review process in our centre meets best practice and, where appropriate, what is set out in local and national guidelines. It identifies the strengths and skills of all staff and meets their development needs. We have a clear and well-supported framework of continuing professional development and review for all staff deployed in our centre. Information from staff review and other sources informs staff development activities and supports continuous improvement.
- We take responsibility for identifying the aims and priorities for our own professional development. Staff development is well planned, matched to identified needs and draws on local and national expertise. Staff development includes relevant national and local training, work shadowing, and peer coaching and mentoring. We follow up and evaluate impact, and the findings are used to influence future planning.
- Our staff come together to share new knowledge and skills gained and to engage in joint staff development on common priorities and practices. Joint staff development for our centre staff and partner service staff leads to recognisable improvements in the arrangements for supporting children and their families.

<sup>20</sup> In evaluating this QI, reference should be made to QI 3.1 The engagement of staff in the life and work of the centre.



## LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- We have procedures for the review of staff, but reviews are not sufficiently systematic or effective in identifying individual development needs. Some staff are unclear about how to make best use of the review process and do not see it as supportive. The outcomes of staff review are not used systematically to support continuous improvement in the development of the centre or staff careers.
- Staff review identifies the strengths and skills of most staff but staff development or training does not always meet our specific needs. Our programme for training and development is sometimes limited in scope and does not always draw on available expertise. We do not systematically evaluate and follow up impact. New staff or students in training are not consistently well supported
- We undertake some inter-agency training but many centre and partner service staff have limited understanding of each other's contributions. Joint staff development sessions have not focused sufficiently on how staff can support children.

# 8.1

## PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE COMMUNITY, EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS, AGENCIES AND EMPLOYERS

### Themes

- Clarity of purposes and aims
- Working across agencies and disciplines
- Staff roles in partnerships

### Key features

This indicator relates to the effectiveness and impact of the centre's partnership with the community, educational establishments, colleges, agencies, employers and others in supporting children. It focuses on the centre's arrangements for consulting and communicating with others in regular, structured, supportive and efficient ways.

Key considerations include the extent to which the centre works effectively in a range of multi-disciplinary partnerships and is committed to joint working in planning, delivering, monitoring and evaluating joint projects.



### LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- We have effective partnership working which makes a difference to the quality of support for children. We are clear about the areas for which we have the main responsibility and those where we need the support of our partners. We are committed to working with partners and are clear about the aims of joint working.
- Our links with other educational establishments and specialist agencies have enriched learning and improved children's achievements and support to their families. Our staff work well with others to ensure children are very well supported and their learning and welfare needs are addressed at key transition points. We maintain effective partnerships, where appropriate, with community groups, colleges, education psychologists, medical services and social workers. Staff work with these partners to enrich the experiences or target support for individuals or groups of children.
- In our centre, those with leadership responsibilities actively seek opportunities to work and engage with partners. We work with partners providing integrated services to children and community-based projects to support local priorities and objectives. Our arrangements for communication, planning, assessment, recording, reporting and review are clear and work well.



### LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- We lack a clear set of aims for partnership working. We have some partnership projects which meet the needs of individual children but there is potential for improved contributions to support others. There is little evaluation of joint working.
- Our links with other centres or educational establishments are not always used effectively to improve learning and progress. The links focus on pastoral aspects but give insufficient attention to improving learning and development. Our networks and partnerships provide support for most children but the needs of vulnerable children are not always met.
- We work in partnership with others but are not always clear about each other's roles and responsibilities within partnership working arrangements. Those with leadership responsibilities are not sufficiently proactive in seeking opportunities to work and plan with partners so that the needs of all children can be met.

# 8.2

## MANAGEMENT OF FINANCE FOR LEARNING

### Themes

- Sufficiency of available finance and setting budgets
- Financial procedures and controls
- Management of budgets, including links with the education authority/Board of Managers/Parent Committee
- Best Value use of finance to support centre improvement

### Key features

This indicator relates to the impact of the provision and management of the centre's finance for learning. It focuses on the transparency, equity and Best Value management of the centre's finances and the extent to which the use of financial resources leads to improved outcomes for children.



### LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- Our finance is sufficient to support the centre's work and we make best use of the finances provided. We consult staff, children and parents on funding bids and these are clearly linked to local improvement objectives and national priorities.
- We have clear procedures for financial control. We manage and monitor our expenditure openly and effectively and take account of local and national advice.
- Our systems for budget management provide clear and current information. Our arrangements for day-to-day financial management are efficient of staff time.
- Our priorities for the use of financial resources are clearly linked to centre improvement priorities. We use our finances to improve the quality of learning and support specific developments. Our finances have been allocated effectively and efficiently to support our improvement priorities which in turn has led to positive outcomes for our children.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> In evaluating this QI reference should be made to QI 1.2.





## LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- Our finance is generally sufficient to support our centre's work but some of our staff are not consulted appropriately about financial arrangements. We often do not consider bids for projects linked to local and national priorities in sufficient depth.
- Arrangements for managing the budget lack clarity, openness and fairness.
- Information from budget systems is incomplete and not up to date. Our day-to-day financial management involves staff unnecessarily with financial detail.
- Some budget allocations have only a general link to improving the quality of learning. Our budget decisions do not always take due account of the need to support our centre's improvement priorities and improve outcomes for children.

## MANAGEMENT AND USE OF RESOURCES AND SPACE FOR LEARNING

### Themes

- Accommodation, display and presentation
- Provision of resources and equipment
- Organisation and use of resources
- Arrangements to ensure health and safety, including security

### Key features

This indicator relates to the impact of the provision and management of the centre's resources and space on the environment for learning. It focuses on the extent to which children are motivated by the accommodation and facilities, and on the centre's health and safety arrangements.



### LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- Our accommodation provides a safe, pleasant and stimulating environment for learning through play and social and care activities. We have appropriate space to accommodate all ages of children catered for by the centre. There are well-appointed areas for children to engage in energetic activities inside and out, and for them to rest and sleep. We have appropriate areas for staff and parents, and sufficient space for storage and display. We meet statutory duties on accessibility. Our displays of children's work support learning and create a stimulating environment. We create an appropriate balance between children's own work, printed text, photographs and other displays.
- Appropriate resources, including ICT, are sufficient, up to date and well maintained. Resources support staff interaction well and help children to learn effectively.
- Our resources are well organised, accessible, used effectively and managed in a sustainable way. Learning and teaching is enriched through planned use of ICT, the local environment and resources from outwith our centre. We encourage children to make independent and responsible use of resources. We monitor and evaluate the use of resources to ensure our children's needs are met.
- Our buildings are secure and health and safety aspects of accommodation and facilities are identified and addressed. We implement relevant health and safety legislation and are vigilant in ensuring the security and safety of children.



## LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- Our accommodation provides a safe environment but needs to be adapted to support learning, social or care activities. Lack of space in some areas limits opportunities for learning. Our accommodation is in need of some decoration and access is difficult for some users. Our displays of children's work and items of interest are limited, seldom changed and often contribute little to learning and teaching. Printed text and commercial materials often dominate displays.
- Most resources, including ICT, are functional but many need updating and/or repair. We have a limited range of resources which will motivate and challenge children.
- Our resources are generally well organised. Some staff enrich learning through imaginative use of resources including ICT, but we make little use of the environment and resources from outwith our centre. Our children make little independent use of resources.
- We do not monitor the security of the building with sufficient rigour. We have identified some related health and safety issues but these are not always addressed effectively.

# 8.4

## MANAGING INFORMATION

### Themes

- Data collection, storage and retrieval
- Sharing information
- Analysing, evaluating and using information

### Key features

This indicator relates to the centre's arrangements for managing information. It focuses on the centre's systems for collecting and processing information and on the extent to which it is shared to help staff improve outcomes for children. It highlights the extent to which information is used to monitor children's progress.



### LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- We use effective approaches for collecting and storing data to improve learning and raise achievement. We manage information efficiently to identify children's progress, meet their needs and target support and resources. Our staff have appropriate access to information. Our arrangements to store, file and retrieve information comply with legislation.
- We understand and follow protocols for information sharing. We share information among staff efficiently, including data on budgets and children's attendance. Our systems allow relevant partners to have access to information necessary to ensure our children's wellbeing and improve their learning. Our parents are fully aware of the information held about their children and with whom it might be shared.
- We use data analysis to monitor and demonstrate improvement.



## LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- We collect and store a range of data but this does not include some key data needed to monitor and improve our performance. Our system provides staff with some support for planning improvement. Our management of information meets the needs of some users but does not always enable appropriate access. Our arrangements for managing information do not comply fully with legislation.
- We do not always share sufficient information among staff to give them an overview of our centre's work and enable them to improve outcomes for children.
- We have systems in place to track children's development and progress but the progress of some groups, such as children who have additional support needs and looked after children, is not well identified.

# 9.1

## VISION, VALUES AND AIMS

### Themes

- Appropriateness and coherence with corporate and community vision, values and aims
- Sharing and sustaining the vision
- Promotion of positive attitudes to social and cultural diversity

### Key features

This indicator focuses on how the centre works with others to create a shared vision and sense of purpose and direction which is ambitious and challenging. The indicator focuses on the extent to which vision, values and aims guide planning for, and impact on, improving the quality of learning and teaching, and outcomes for learners and their families.



### LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- We work with children, parents and other partners to develop and shape a common vision for our centre and community through reflection, debate and ongoing consultation. Our vision is based firmly on high-quality early education and care for children and is in line with local and national priorities. The work of our centre gains direction from our clear statements of our vision, values and aims.
- We continually revisit and reinforce our vision, values and aims through our events and activities. This results in a strong sense of common purpose throughout our centre community. We take full account of our vision, values and aims when we review our work, implement improvements and shape future direction.
- Our vision, values and aims set out clear expectations for, and positive attitudes to, diversity. We are strongly committed to equality. We promote equity and celebrate diversity and inclusion, and this is reflected in our improvement plan.

### LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- The statement on vision, values and aims in our centre is generally in accord with national and local priorities. Members of our centre community and our partner organisations had little involvement in shaping our vision, values and aims. As a result, our aims have only limited relevance to different groups within our centre or are insufficiently linked to the main activities of our centre.
- There is no strong sense of shared values, vision or common purpose in our centre community. Values are generally not revisited or reinforced through our daily interactions, communications, events and activities. When evaluating our work, we do not take sufficient account of our vision, values and aims.
- While our vision, values and aims set out clear expectations for positive attitudes towards diversity and inclusion, these are not fully embedded in the work of our centre.

## LEADERSHIP AND DIRECTION

### Themes

- Strategic planning and communication
- Strategic deployment of resources

### Key features

This indicator focuses on leadership to map out future developments, linked to vision, values and aims. It focuses on leadership skills and knowledge, professional and personal commitment and the creation of processes which give direction.

### LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- Continuous improvement and successes and achievements for learners are central to our centre's strategic direction. We ensure that high-quality learning through play is the central focus of our improvement plans, and that improvement priorities are linked to our practice. We communicate a clear view of our centre's aims so that the wider staff team and children are clear and committed to their part in achieving them.
- We make transparent and evidence-based decisions on the allocation of resources to target agreed objectives and achieve best value. Those with leadership responsibilities in our centre demonstrate that they are committed to learning by making class or playroom visits, modelling good practice, giving feedback, sharing insights widely and stimulating self-evaluation. We reinforce a culture where staff feel able and confident to take lead roles in the work of the centre.

### LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- We have established a broad direction for the work of our centre, but this has not been communicated sufficiently well to all our children, parents or partners. Centre improvement, partnership working and pursuing high standards are key components in our strategic plan, but we do not always give a clear lead on how to achieve these or their implications for practice. Our future direction is ambitious, but not always guided by analysis of appropriate data.
- We give learning sufficient emphasis in our improvement plans but resources are not well targeted to support this. Those with leadership responsibilities in our centre are not sufficiently engaged in activities which impact directly on learning and teaching.

## DEVELOPING PEOPLE AND PARTNERSHIPS

### Themes

- Development of leadership capacity
- Building and sustaining relationships
- Teamwork and partnerships

### Key features

This indicator relates to the effectiveness of the centre in building capacity for leadership at all levels and securing positive working relationships and successful outcomes with stakeholders and partner agencies. The indicator relates to the ethos and culture of the centre, through interactions within the centre and joint working with partner agencies. The effectiveness of those with leadership responsibilities, their deployment, responsibilities and team working in relation to organisational requirements and key strengths are relevant. Delegation to, and empowerment of, staff and partners and support of effective teamwork are important features.



### LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- We focus on high-quality learning through play as the key to our centre's improvement. We adapt leadership styles to the context and situations in our centre, and are sensitive to relationships. We deploy a wide range of skills, and motivate and support others. Our approach is consultative and collegiate, securing shared commitment. When required, we drive action forward directly. Those with leadership responsibilities reinforce a culture of distributed leadership where staff feel able to exercise initiative and take lead roles within and beyond the classroom or playroom. We make good use of the collective knowledge, experience and personal interests of staff and of children's views. We have made an impact individually, within teams and across our centre.
- We have developed a supportive work environment in which people share a sense of responsibility to ensure successes and achievements for children. Our working relationships are built on trust and a genuine concern for staff and partners. We help people tackle challenging problems, share information and deal with difficulties. We reinforce an atmosphere of collective responsibility and mutual support across the centre community. We create, review and improve our structures for management, learning and support, to build positive relationships. We encourage staff and recognise and celebrate their achievements.
- We have a high level of commitment to partnership working and team development to secure continuous improvement. An ethos of teamwork is evident in our centre. We engage actively with relevant partners and have high levels of participation by partners in our own work and improvement. We evaluate team performance regularly against agreed objectives.





## LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- A number of individuals have weaknesses in their leadership skills or in corporate working. Leadership styles do not meet the needs of the centre to make improvements. We support some initiatives suggested by others but do not motivate staff to propose improvements. Leaders place insufficient focus on learning and teaching and the culture of our centre, although positive, does not convey a full sense of challenge or progress.
- We generally have a supportive work environment in which most people share a sense of responsibility to improve the quality of learning and teaching. Overall, the quality of relationships and the culture of the work environment are too variable across our centre. Our working relationships are not always characterised by trust. We give little attention to creating, reviewing and improving structures for management, learning and support to build positive relationships. We do not regularly recognise or celebrate achievements of staff.
- We have built and sustained effective teamwork with some key partners and have some examples of effective partnership working, but the overall picture is inconsistent. We do not systematically demonstrate commitment to partnership working or take an active role in activities initiated by partner agencies. In general, teamwork in our centre is not well established, and we do not regularly evaluate team performance against agreed objectives.

## LEADERSHIP OF IMPROVEMENT AND CHANGE

### Themes

- Support and challenge
- Creativity, innovation and step change
- Continuous improvement

### Key features

This indicator is concerned with the effectiveness of the leadership of the centre in maintaining high levels of quality and promoting continuous improvement and excellence in the provision for all children.<sup>22</sup> An important component of leadership is the need for those with leadership responsibilities to challenge staff to improve the quality of provision for children, by setting demanding but realistic targets and by providing high-level support to assist them to achieve these. The indicator also relates to the ability and success of those with leadership roles to encourage and support innovative practices which bring about positive changes in children's experiences.



### LEVEL 5 ILLUSTRATION

- We are committed to planning and implementing strategies for improvement. We understand the need for change, support and challenge, have demanding targets and manage change effectively. We use best practice in self-evaluation to improve learning. Improvement in our centre takes account of the capacity for improvement and staff have time to consider and embed changes.
- We have a coherent vision of what is important for our centre, its community and our children. We innovate in line with that vision. We guide and manage the pace of agreed change. We win over hearts as well as minds. We deal effectively with potential divisions among staff. We routinely use the results of self-evaluation to consolidate what we do well and welcome innovative approaches aimed at improving the quality of learning and teaching and outcomes for children. We lead and manage change effectively and strategically by prioritising and focusing on a manageable number of high-priority initiatives and communicating them well.
- Leaders at all levels play a very strong role in maintaining high levels of quality and leading improvement and innovation, learning and teaching, with a focus on impact and outcomes. All have clear roles and responsibilities in quality improvement. Our centre constantly explores ways to create more capacity for improvement through developing talents and skills. We provide opportunities for staff to undertake lead roles in a variety of contexts and nurture and develop their expertise and confidence.

<sup>22</sup> In evaluating this indicator, consideration should be given to indicators in Key areas 1-4 outlining the centre's successes and achievements.



## LEVEL 2 ILLUSTRATION

- Some staff resist change even where it is designed to achieve improvements for children. The pace of change is not well managed. Those with leadership roles do not consistently support and challenge staff or focus sufficiently on setting targets for improvement. Our processes for self-evaluation are not well enough developed or targeted to improve learning and teaching. We do not allocate sufficient time and resources for some developments or take sufficient account of our centre's capacity for improvement, or the need to gain the commitment of staff.
- We have a vision of what is important for our centre and our community but innovative and effective practice is not systematically identified, supported, evaluated or disseminated across the centre. We are aware of examples of good practice within our centre but have not yet focused on the key levers which will improve the quality of learning and teaching. Our communication of change is often insufficient to enable staff to understand the reasons for, or the anticipated benefits from, implementing change.
- Leaders at all levels do not adopt a sufficiently high profile or strong leading role in driving forward our centre's commitment to continuous improvement in learning and teaching and outcomes for children. There is a lack of effectiveness in quality improvement. In the implementation of their remits, those in leadership roles tend to focus on systems, functions and processes rather than on improved outcomes and impact for children. Staff across our centre generally work hard, but we do not build their talents and skills sufficiently and provide them with opportunities to undertake lead roles.





# APPENDICES



# APPENDIX ONE

## THE SIX-POINT SCALE

The quality of what you observe within each indicator can be judged against six levels.

<b>LEVEL 6</b>	<b>EXCELLENT</b>	outstanding or sector leading
<b>LEVEL 5</b>	<b>VERY GOOD</b>	major strengths
<b>LEVEL 4</b>	<b>GOOD</b>	important strengths with areas for improvement
<b>LEVEL 3</b>	<b>ADEQUATE</b>	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
<b>LEVEL 2</b>	<b>WEAK</b>	important weaknesses
<b>LEVEL 1</b>	<b>UNSATISFACTORY</b>	major weaknesses

In the complex context of education there are many ways in which provision can merit a particular evaluation. We need to bear in mind that awarding levels will always be more of a professional skill than a technical process. However, the general guidelines on the following pages should be consistently applied.



An evaluation of **excellent** applies to provision which is a model of its type. Children's experiences and achievements are of a very high quality. An evaluation of **excellent** represents an outstanding standard of provision which exemplifies very best practice and is worth disseminating beyond the centre. It implies these very high levels of performance are sustainable and will be maintained.

An evaluation of **very good** applies to provision characterised by major strengths. There are very few areas for improvement and any that do exist do not significantly diminish the children's experience. Whilst an evaluation of **very good** represents a high standard of provision, it is a standard that should be achievable by all. It implies that it is fully appropriate to continue to make provision without significant adjustment. However, there is an expectation that the centre will take opportunities to improve and strive to raise performance to excellent.

An evaluation of **good** applies to provision characterised by important strengths which, taken together, clearly outweigh any areas for improvement. An evaluation of **good** represents a standard of provision in which the strengths have a significant positive impact. However, the quality of children's experiences is diminished in some way by aspects in which improvement is required. It implies that the centre should seek to improve further the areas of important strength, but take action to address the areas for improvement.





An evaluation of **adequate** applies to provision characterised by strengths which just outweigh weaknesses. An evaluation of **adequate** indicates that children have access to a basic level of provision. It represents a standard where the strengths have a positive impact on children's experiences. However, while the weaknesses are not important enough to have a substantially adverse impact, they do constrain the overall quality of children's experiences. It implies that the centre should take action to address areas of weakness while building on its strengths.

An evaluation of **weak** applies to provision which has some strengths, but where there are important weaknesses. In general, an evaluation of **weak** may be arrived at in a number of circumstances. While there may be some strengths, important weaknesses will, either individually or collectively, be sufficient to diminish the children's experiences in substantial ways. It implies the need for structured and planned action on the part of the centre.

An evaluation of **unsatisfactory** applies when there are major weaknesses in provision requiring immediate remedial action. The children's experience is at risk in significant respects. In almost all cases, staff responsible for provision evaluated as **unsatisfactory** will require support from senior managers in planning and carrying out the necessary actions to effect improvement. This may involve working alongside other staff or agencies in or beyond the centre.



## APPENDIX TWO

### THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE QUALITY FRAMEWORK OF INDICATORS AND THE TEN DIMENSIONS IN PART 2 OF THE JOURNEY TO EXCELLENCE.

The framework of **indicators** in this edition of *The Child at the Centre* provides a set of tools to help you to evaluate the quality of education in your centre. The indicators cover the full range of a centre's work and are designed to help you to identify strengths and priorities for improvement which you can build into your improvement plan. Over the years, staff have become accustomed to using indicators in this way to help them to manage the process of continuous improvement. A centre will always need to know how well it is doing across the full range of its work, and the indicators will help you to do this.

Each of the **dimensions** of excellence in Part 2 of *The Journey to Excellence* is associated with one of the key areas in which the indicators in *The Child at the Centre* are organised. The dimensions can help a centre to move forward on those aspects of work where it judges that it is ready to go from good, or very good, to great. They can help to make real changes to those aspects which are at the heart of what a centre is about – learning and success for all. The dimensions are not audit tools. They do not cover everything which goes on in a centre. They only look at those aspects which have a **direct** impact on learning and outcomes for all young people. They are levers for transformational change, moving straight into the activities and practices which are associated with excellence. The dimensions and their related features give ideas of some of the things which can make a centre an excellent centre.



How and when you use the dimensions will depend on the stage the centre has reached on its journey to excellence and the kinds of improvements which are necessary. It will also depend on features of its capacity for improvement, that is, how well prepared the centre is for making the kinds of changes which can transform the lives of its children. These would include:

- how well the centre 'knows itself', its strengths and weaknesses;
- how strong leadership is at all levels of the centre;
- how successful the centre's 'track record' is of improvement in the past; and
- how ambitious staff are as a community for the children the centre serves.

Planning for Excellence, part 4 of *How good is our school?: The Journey to Excellence* looks in more detail at the various ways in which your centre can engage in developing its vision and values, its approaches to self-evaluation and planning for improvement so that you can tailor the approach to meet the needs of your centre.



## APPENDIX THREE

### A COMMON APPROACH ACROSS ALL PUBLIC SERVICES

Early education centres and schools are not islands. They work with other centres, schools, colleges, employers and a number of other services to improve the quality of the curriculum for children and young people, to provide them with the support which they need and to help them to achieve to their highest potential.

The framework of indicators in this second edition of *The Child at the Centre* is used by a number of public services. Education authorities use it to evaluate the quality of the service they provide across the range of their work. The same framework is used by youth workers, by social workers and by teams of professionals working in children's services. Using the same framework provides a common language about quality. This makes it much easier for everyone who works with children and young people to share their findings and to support each other in improving the experiences and achievements of young people.

HM Inspectorate of Education will use the same framework in inspection, as will other inspectorates. When HMI inspect early education centres and schools, they will use a group of indicators selected from the overall framework. These indicators focus in particular on the outcomes and impact of the education provided by the centre and the important factors which contribute to these. HMIE will continue to take account of the **National Care Standards for early education and childcare up to the age of 16** in our integrated inspections with the Care Commission.

The quality framework has been developed to be compatible with a number of quality models and awards, for example Investors in People, Charter Mark and the Excellence Model of the European Foundation of Quality Management, and can be used in conjunction with them. For example, the results of a Charter Mark assessment, and the evidence it was based on, can contribute to your evaluations using the quality framework, and vice versa.



The framework has been designed to be used at more than one level. For example, it can be used:

- across the whole authority;
- within a group of schools, or centres or a neighbourhood;
- by individual centres, schools or services;
- by individual teams or departments; and
- in relation to a specific issue or theme.

This means that the evaluations you arrive at in your centre, and the evidence on which they are based, can also contribute to evaluations in other contexts. For example, they could be used in evaluating the quality of services to children within your neighbourhood. They could also be used together with evaluations from other centres, schools, and teams to contribute to evaluations of the effectiveness of your education authority.



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