

# MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

## SCRUTINY REPORT

### CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

20<sup>th</sup> January 2020

#### Addressing Poverty Issues and the Impact on Learning.

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#### Introduction

The School Readiness team works in a number of ways with families who have children aged 0-5 years, including:

- Helping children become ready for nursery and primary school.
- Access to good quality childcare, including free early education for two, three and four year olds. Information can be found via the Family Information Service/Family Service Directory - [www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/fsd](http://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/fsd). Information on SEND and the Local offer is also available on this page.
- Supporting childcare settings in terms of the quality and standard of their provision by working closely with setting staff on their safeguarding policies and procedures, paying particular attention to those settings who are at risk of slipping from an OFSTED Good judgement.
- Linking closely with the Early Years Strategic board to ensure joint working takes place between both the School Readiness team and the School Achievement team.

#### EVIDENCE FOR DISCUSSION

##### Information on the early educational support provided to those children from deprived backgrounds:

Middlesbrough Council are measured by the DfE on the number of A2YO children they have in childcare. A2YO stands for Achieving 2 year olds and is available to families on certain benefits. The LA are measured on a termly basis by the DfE on how many eligible children have taken up their place. This is called our headcount figure and the most recent figure we have is for autumn 2019 of which we had 87% in settings. (Settings includes childminders). We are also measured on the validation of 30 hours extended entitlement codes (3 and 4 year olds) and this figure

currently sits at 91%. This is funding which is available for parents who have a household income of less than 100k and it entitles parents to an additional 15 hours childcare, which is in addition to the universal 3 and 4 year old childcare offer. Parents need to validate a code which is sent by the DWP and it is this figure which is counted by the DfE.

Middlesbrough PVI (private, voluntary and independent) sector (nursery provision) and Childminder data:

There are currently 38 Ofsted registered settings in Middlesbrough, 7 of which are Outstanding, 23 are Good, 0 are Requires Improvement, 1 is MET and 7 are newly registered. This does not include nurseries which are linked to Schools and therefore linked to the Schools Ofsted judgement which are illustrated as follows:

| School         | Ofsted Grade                  |
|----------------|-------------------------------|
| Abingdon       | Good                          |
| Archibald      | Academy (yet to be inspected) |
| Ayresome       | Academy (yet to be inspected) |
| Berwick Hills  | Good                          |
| Breckon Hill   | Good                          |
| Caldicotes     | Good                          |
| Corpus Christi | Good                          |
| Linthorpe      | Academy (yet to be inspected) |
| Park End       | Good                          |
| St. Gerard's   | Good                          |
| Whinney Banks  | Good                          |

There are also 75 registered childminders: 16 of which are Outstanding, 33 are Good, 0 Require Improvement, 0 Inadequate. 15 newly registered, 10 who are MET and 1 NOT MET. 48 CM's deliver funded childcare, of which 14 are Outstanding, 23 are Good, 0 are Require Improvement or Inadequate, 2 are MET and 9 are newly registered.

The Family Information Services (Statutory requirement for the LA, as per the Childcare Act 2006) sits within the School Readiness team. These staff work closely with settings, childminders and parents to ensure that children take up their funded childcare places. They also work closely with Jobcentre Plus and are responsible for the Family Service Directory, which is where everything relating to childcare is advertised. See [www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/fsd](http://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/fsd)

Managers from both the Stronger Families School Readiness team and the School Achievement team work together on the Early Years Strategic Board and jointly deliver on the Early Years Development plan. The Early Years Development Lead (EYDL) works closely with settings who are at risk of slipping from a Good Ofsted judgement on their action plans, carrying out observations on staff and upskilling where necessary. The Early Years Quality Lead (EYQL) works with settings on their safeguarding policies and procedures and carries out safeguarding audits and safeguarding reviews. Other ways in which support is offered to settings includes:

- PVI Communication meeting: information session to local childcare providers.
- Childminder networks: information session which covers topics such as Ofsted – current themes and trends, any LA updates, etc.

- Childminder support visits: a focussed support visit to childminders to ensure they are prepared for their Ofsted inspection. This includes support with continuous improvements through self-evaluation, challenge and questions relating to their practice, which is reviewed. 57% of childminders engage with this support package.

**An overview of the measures implemented to prevent the attainment gap becoming entrenched before children start school:**

**Children’s centre’s early help offer:**

- The Children’s centre offer is delivered via the School Readiness Pathway, a model created in partnership with health colleagues which consists of multi-agency key contact points for each child. There are clear points for interventions to improve a child’s learning and development. One such example is the Ages and Stages Questionnaire which health visitors carry out when a child is 2 years and 3 months old. This is a scoring system which helps measure where a child sits in terms of their developmental milestones. If a child is identified as not meeting their milestones, then they are referred into the School Readiness team and we will work with the family, in the home to deliver our Play and Learn Together intervention, which is a tool created by us to share specific key messages with families, including helping parents to understand how they can help improve their child’s learning and development. When we have completed our piece of work, the health visitor will review the child’s development milestones at their 3 month review. From the period July 2018 – July 2019, we had 79 children who completed this programme, 70% of whom were observed to have made progress in their development at their 3 month review.
- One of our newly developed interventions is available to all those under 5 who sit within families open to family case work in Stronger Families, which is an average of 248 children at any given time. We named the intervention ‘Chat, Play, Read and Sing’ and Children’s centre staff share specific key messages with families aiming to close the word and attainment gap. We want to ensure children are ready for nursery by working alongside parents so that they are aware of their role within this, to understand the importance of a good home learning environment and to support them in making effective changes.

**Children’s centres universal offer:**

- Baby Play, Stay & Play, and child and health clinics all have a focus on making every contact count, promoting conversations around early learning with parents and carers.
- Our Children’s centre offer has a clear communication focus, with literacy being the vehicle. We work closely with The Book Trust and The National Literacy Trust to ensure our work is evidence based and is of best practice. The School Readiness Literacy Pathway is a multi-agency model, with contacts at key developmental points in a child’s life, progressively building on from one contact to the next.
- The Borrow-a-book scheme was launched in 2017 in all of the Children’s centres and is about removing barriers to families accessing libraries. Data from January to December 2019 shows that we had 727 families join the library via Children’s centre sessions and we also had 759 books issued to parents at these sessions.
- Parenting Programmes: 0-5 Family Links Early Years workshops and HENRY (healthy eating and nutrition for the really young): Children’s centre staff deliver both these parenting programmes on a termly basis.

## **Examples of the work undertaken by the best quality early year's settings to tackle development gaps, especially key early language and literacy skills:**

The LA have staff within the School Achievement Team (Early Years Development lead) and the Stronger Families School Readiness team (Early Years Quality lead) who work with all settings, including childminder's to ensure children from the most deprived backgrounds are given the best of opportunities by working with schools and settings in a number of ways, which are detailed below:

- *Focused Improvement Programme* - an action planning tool to support settings with continuous improvements through self-evaluation and through challenge and questions relating to their practice. This is reviewed termly and currently 47% of settings are engaging with this programme. Settings are responding positively and feel this is a very supportive way to challenge, improve and celebrate their practice and provision. Reviews of the first term will be carried out in January 2020.
- *Early Years Quality Mark* – this is a strategic management tool to support a whole school/setting approach to literacy and numeracy, with a particular focus on early years practice. This national award recognises a school's/early years setting's commitment to the on-going development of all children's literacy and numeracy skills within the EYFS and provides valuable evidence of impact for Ofsted. The Early Years Development Lead and Lead practitioner are trained assessors and guide schools or early year's settings through the process. They then undertake initial award or re-assessment. Assessment is based on self-evaluation, across ten different criteria and will help schools and settings to effectively self-evaluate their practice and provision. This is followed by an assessment where schools/settings are visited by the assessors who consider all evidence and award the setting the quality mark. Currently 57% of schools and 32% of nurseries in Middlesbrough hold the Early Years Basic Skills award.
- *A high quality continuous professional development programme* - specially targeted to Middlesbrough childcare provider's needs, has been accessed by a significant proportion of teachers and practitioners in schools and settings. Case studies have been conducted which demonstrate the positive impact of the training on the practice and provision provided for our youngest children in Middlesbrough. The EYDL continues to support through individual visits to settings and is currently working with 17 Early Years Leads from schools and nurseries who successfully completed a two day leadership course.
- *The Early Years Development Lead* - provides bespoke support to nurseries and schools, based on an individual needs basis. The support focusses on all aspects of learning and development to support improving outcomes for all children. Currently 78% of PVI nursery settings have engaged with the support offered and this is having a demonstrable impact. For example a recent Ofsted inspection report stated: *'The setting has worked closely with the local authority to identify strengths and areas for future development, which have been quickly implemented by staff. This has improved learning outcomes for children and supports continuous improvement in the overall provision.'*

- *Cluster meetings* have been established termly to share key early year's messages and provide opportunities for practitioners to share good practice. We welcomed 43% of schools and 32% of PVI nurseries at the autumn term meetings. This forum is providing opportunities for relationships to develop with more teachers and practitioners moderating together and sharing good practice and resources by visiting each other's settings.
- *Moderation drop-in sessions* - have recently been established to encourage Reception teachers to make accurate judgements when assessing their children's progress towards achieving the early learning goals at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It is hoped that by providing termly opportunities and sharing experiences, outcomes will improve.
- *The Early Years Professional Development Programme* - is funded by the Department for Education (DfE) and forms part of the Government's plan to improve social mobility through education. The aim of the Programme is to improve children's early language, literacy and numeracy through providing an offer of high quality, evidence-based, fully-funded professional development support for practitioners in selected areas of greatest need. The Early Years Professional Development Programme (EYPDP) is a programme which will support pre-Reception Early Years Practitioners (EYP's) to improve their practice in working with very young children between the ages of 2 and 4, to improve outcomes in language, literacy and numeracy for the most disadvantaged children, with an emphasis on improving school readiness. So far we have recruited four highly skilled and experienced champions who are currently engaging in a training programme and will cascade their new learning to a partnership of fifteen Middlesbrough settings.