

Notes from AGENDA ITEM 1 from the Early Childhood Forum

Meeting June 8 2018

10.40 OFSTED update and Q & A with Wendy Ratcliff HMI EARLY YEARS
(<https://educationinspection.blog.gov.uk/author/wendy-ratcliff/>)

OFSTED HAS removed the self evaluation form from website.

Discussion followed

- Preschool Learning Alliance: many of our members looking for another template. Practitioners do need to evidence self evaluation. Many feel more comfortable evidencing it in written form.
- Montessori Saint Nicholas members have been advised to continue. Having developed a culture of self evaluation it becomes an important document for the setting.

Wendy Ratcliff said Ofsted did not want to create a prescriptive document.

Comments

- it is good to have a document that allowed staff to talk and discuss and evaluate practice.
- great that it is not prescriptive, but settings might need a little more guidance and evidence
- people will buy one

Wendy Ratcliff: when getting rid of it - we asked ourselves should we take it to something simpler and then remove the original? or remove it totally. We don't want to be prescriptive. We want settings to have the freedom to chose their method of self assessment. A very simple format would be: What do you do well? How do you know? What do you need to improve?

Comments:

- If doing it for the first time it can be harder, so skeletal questions can be helpful
- having those conversations, the style, an example of a conversation that leads to self evaluation.
- Not everyone can talk well during an inspection
- What will happen now in inspection?

Wendy Ratcliff: The inspector is there to find out: What is it like to be a child in this place? What do you find is working well? What do you feel are your strengths? What would you like to improve?

? will there be an example for people to see so they can develop competence?

Wendy Ratcliff - We are doing joint observations with training inspectors, practice inspections, checking their accuracy. Inspectors will feed in some of those things about self evaluation. The inspectors will look with the practitioner at what is happening.

(see the inspection blog webpage link above) Within the training we are asking them to find out when inspecting "What is it you would like me to see? While I am here, what do you want me to celebrate? What are you proud of?

Comments

- a positive move, getting away from settings feeling they need to prepare in a particular way, and so don't highlight their good practice.
- Want the practitioner to be able to talk about what is not going well too as you cannot control what happens on the day. Good preparation - showing the inspector what matters to us.
- Regret inspections not two days - more relaxed second day - do wish it would be possible.
- skill of inspector and how they ask the questions to really drawn out the strengths

Wendy Ratcliff - we made small amendments in April to the Early Years Compliance Handbook. (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/703947/Changes_to_the_early_years_compliance_handbook_-_May_2018.pdf)

? Anything in the new framework on the importance of outdoor play?

Wendy Ratcliff - It will be coming into the common inspection framework in 2019.

-There is an updated OFSTED Early Years Myth Busting page, (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-registered-early-years-providers-guidance-for-inspectors/early-years-inspections-myths>). This update mentions SEF, the use of gloves, socket covers, etc; risk assessment. We are constantly updating this page.

WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN NEXT?

We will be updating the early years inspection framework. Amanda Spielman's talk at the Preschool Learning Alliance Conference 1st of June is now online and addresses this. (<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/amanda-spielman-at-the-pre-school-learning-alliance-annual-conference>) We are doing lots of research and work around it, visiting, asking, consulting, wanting to hear-maybe by the next meeting we will be ready.

What in the current framework do you think works well? What doesn't?

Participants:

-if meeting all the requirements for EYFS you are fine - but the handbook is where the real detail is for providers. There are things referred to in the handbook which aren't mentioned in the EYFS. Maybe when reviewing the inspection handbook, it would be helpful to look at the gaps between these two documents.

Wendy Ratcliff: If meeting requirements of EYFS, it doesn't necessarily mean it is good. It may require improvement to be good.

-There were questions about adult child ratios and qualifications - QTS (but without early years); high quality EYFS training; Nursery Nurses.

Wendy Ratcliff: We are noting the many questions about qualifications for EYFS.

Participant: the importance of native English speaker teachers and helpers in the environment with young children to pass on the cultural background of nursery stories, clear English and extensive vocabulary.

Wendy Ratcliff - this comes in under 'good level of English development'. How the setting delivers it is for the setting to decide. If children are having lots of exposure, showing love of books, etc. the inspector is there to observe and ask.

Comments

- This new approach will help because no script for people to speak from to an inspector.
- how much time will inspectors spend outdoors?

Wendy Ratcliff: Our most recent training focuses on physical development and outdoor learning and taking risks. Amanda Spielman's talk (link as above) alludes to this, wanting children to take risks.

leading on from risk - if a provision is offering mainly time outside, there needs to be a yurt or shed that is well insulated and policies about when children need to go in; babies to sleep outdoors in a covered area.

Wendy Ratcliff: IN ESSENCE we will be reviewing what we are currently doing and what needs to be in the next framework Anything else to say?

-we feel outdoors is equally important and that inspectors are trained to appreciate that.

-to promote effective literacy with emotional bonds for 2/3 years olds the book trust asked providers, "Do you read stories to children daily?" Everyone said they did - 98%. But when story times were observed, the children were in a group with a story teller, another adult on the door, another moving around the room cleaning. The story experience was broken up, interrupted. The children did not have a complete story experience. How do children come to love story if there is no pre-thought, it is broken up by handing out information? How can you read using phonics if you haven't had an uninterrupted story experience? Maybe we need to be collecting research here. Story time needs a special space. Which stories are read? Adults who know their groups, can use stories to extend children's experience. If going to a farm, can be reading about farm animals.

Wendy Ratcliff - This is a key message of Amanda Spielman's speech and Bold Beginnings, exposure to reading and story is a vital part of literacy development.

Participant comment: it's a broad sector - some nursery schools are right up there with training and continuous professional development from the word go, working with parents and babies - rhymes, stories, all rich and part of the picture. Bold Beginnings got the wrong message going.

Wendy Ratcliff: This is not what was intended in publishing Bold Beginnings and Amanda Spielman talks about this. If I am observing poor practice when inspecting I will get the manager to come along and see this with me.

Participant comment: People need to be trained to tell a story, they perhaps haven't any background, or knowledge of children, there is a need to have studied child development, and to have training and practice.

Wendy Ratcliff: and inspectors need to know this too. Serious issues emerging here about Bold Beginnings and practitioners' misunderstanding.

? what is your understanding/inspectors' understanding of Bold Beginnings?

Wendy Ratcliff: Bold Beginnings is a Reception Year Survey which is still part of the EYFS Foundation stage. It is part of the Reception documents. Inspectors are clear Bold Beginnings is based on end of Reception Year.

Melian (Chair) - But reception year should be a continuation of the nursery.

Wendy Ratcliff Yes.

Melian - Bold Beginnings is not really until year 1. So providers thinking they need to be doing something in early reception - what is lost is massive - all the preparation of the EYFS can be sidelined due to Bold Beginnings.

Another participant - EYFS is starting to end pre Reception. This is a perception some headteachers are now carrying. We need to do work with Headteachers about Reception. And about two year olds as there is nursery provision with two year olds. Often this part of the school is not being managed by an Early Years specialist - a whole schoolification process is going on.

Another participant: mixed messages create unintended consequences - Headteachers without early years training and experience have no true understanding of the difference of the young child and the older child.

It is hard for a Head Teacher to say Early Years is not my area of expertise.
All teachers should have an element of EY training.

Another participant comments: I was disappointed by the questions they asked Head Teachers in the Bold Beginnings survey. When do you consider school begins? If a head of a school with Reception classes is asked that they would say Reception. But EYFS is to end of reception.

Wendy Ratcliff: Yes, EYFS is from birth to 5. Statutory schooling begins at 5.

Melian - as an organisation we have a charter which states Early Years goes up to the age of 7, as in other countries.

Discussion shifted to the impact of the closure of children's centres; less early support for parents with young babies' speech and language development; the impact of

austerity on Early Years local authority budgets when Educational Psychology input was often offered as part of the school support system. Learning difficulties not being picked up until much later now.

Wendy Ratcliff We are in the process of working on the early years framework - we are listening. I am very involved in the framework development so would love to hear you. wendy.ratcliff@ofsted.org.uk