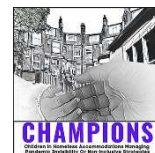


Education recovery in early years providers: summer 2022 Ofsted report summary

Study methodology

- Collected during routine inspections of 29 early years providers between 24 April and 13 May 2022 (9 childminders and 20 nurseries).
- Collected insights from 21 early years inspectors between 24 April and 13 May 2022.



1. Communication and language development

- More children needing speech and language support than before pandemic. Children from all backgrounds affected. Some spending significant amount of time on devices at home. As a result, they have poorer communication and language skills than those who have had more interaction with adults at home.
- Children's speech and language delays not always been identified early, and providers struggled to access speech and language therapist support. In some local authorities, there is a wait of 9 to 12 months for NHS speech and language intervention. Not all providers giving children the support that they need while waiting for referrals, or providing internal interventions without external help.

2. Personal, social and emotional development

- Children further behind in personal, social and emotional development than expected. Social skills particularly affected.
- Children continue to need support with sharing and turn-taking.
- Children very shy when they start at a nursery or with a childminder. They are reluctant to join in or have little confidence when speaking to adults.
- Taking longer than usual for toddlers and babies to settle.
- Children getting distressed when leaving parents at the door.
- Children do not interact as much with their peers, especially children who started early years provision after national lockdowns.

3. Physical development

- Children have not had regular opportunities for physical activity to develop their gross motor skills. For example, children have missed out on using playground equipment and going to soft-play areas.

4. Child readiness for next stage of education affected

- Fewer children ready for move to Reception.
- Disruption to children accessing early years provision, such as temporary closures, permanent closures or COVID-19-related isolation. Some providers have prioritised helping pre-school children to be ready for school over other age groups.
- Children cannot do things for themselves as needed to prepare for Reception, such as toileting and getting cups and plates for snack times.

5. Continued changes to practice and procedures due to COVID-19 restrictions

- Providers chose to continue restrictions because they do not want to risk staff illness. Parents not entering providers' premises has affected parent partnerships. For example, parents and providers have missed the opportunity to agree how they will work together to support children's learning and development. Staff are less likely to form close enough relationships with parents to be able to assess changes in behavior and refer risks to the relevant agencies. Parents cannot be certain that their child is in a safe environment.
- Providers continued to use digital platforms as an alternative to face-to-face interaction. Parents say they do not check the online platforms. Providers are spending a lot of time recording and documenting on apps.

6. Less local authority support

- Routine local authority visits have continued at reduced rate. Some providers have not had a local authority visit for more than 2 years.
- Local authority early years services still using telephone calls instead of visits and online staff training in place of face-to-face courses. This has meant that childminders, in particular, have not had needed support and guidance.

7. Staff training changes

- Most providers choosing to continue with online staff training although some staff say that they are not picking up the content as well as with face-to-face training, especially in relation to safeguarding scenarios, especially less experienced or less qualified staff.

8. Funded places affected

- Many 2-year-olds with funded places are joining with a lower level of personal, social and emotional development and communication and language development than they would have done before pandemic.
- Providers had fewer eligible 2-year-olds than before the pandemic. This is a concern as most disadvantaged children may not be routinely accessing free education. Some providers not actively promoting funded places for 2-year-olds due to financial pressures and staffing constraints.

9. Staffing challenges

- Many report difficulties in retaining staff due to low pay in comparison with other work available.
- Few providers recruited unqualified staff to meet legal requirement for staff/student ratios.
- Staff not deployed appropriately based on knowledge and skills, i.e. sometimes inexperienced staff all together in one room, staff being moved from one group of children to another to allow for breaks. This impacted on children's personal, social and emotional development, particularly their sense of belonging and willingness to take part in activities.

Source: GOV.UK. 2022. *Education recovery in early years providers: summer 2022*. [online] Available at:

<<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-recovery-in-early-years-providers-summer-2022/education-recovery-in-early-years-providers-summer-2022>> [Accessed 10 August 2022].