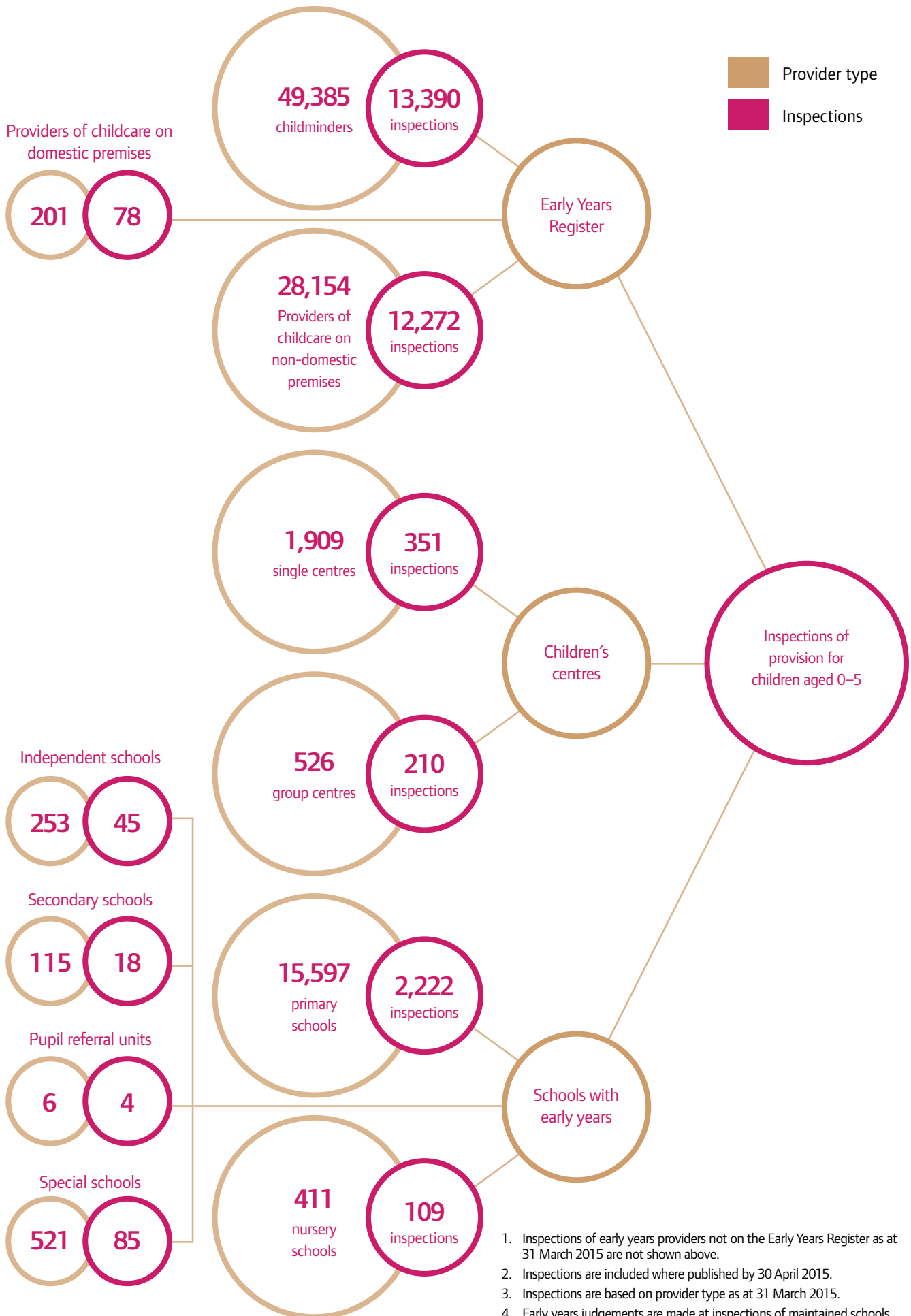


The report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of
Education, Children's Services and Skills 2015

Early years



Figure 1: Number of providers and inspections completed between 1 November 2013 to 31 March 2015



1. Inspections of early years providers not on the Early Years Register as at 31 March 2015 are not shown above.
2. Inspections are included where published by 30 April 2015.
3. Inspections are based on provider type as at 31 March 2015.
4. Early years judgements are made at inspections of maintained schools and independent schools with early years provision. The judgement was introduced on 1 September 2014.



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Foreword

In April 2014, we published our first report on the early years sector – a report we believed brought a fresh look at the potential of this sector and the challenges it faces.¹ Now, with the publication of our second report, it is worth reflecting on the major changes that continue to unfold.

For many years, early education has received a considerably lower profile in the media and in political debate than education for school-age children. However, this is changing. The recent general election campaign was evidence of this shift in focus. Provision for the youngest children was a major policy battleground and resulted in a key pledge in most party manifestos. Since the election, childcare has retained its priority in the national debate and featured in the first Queen's Speech. The status of early years has been further reinforced by the creation of a new ministerial Childcare Taskforce.

As a result of these changes, the sector is poised to receive a major injection of public money. To date, the focus of the debate has rested heavily on the cost of childcare and the burden this represents for many working families. The extent to which this focus broadens to address a more rounded view of the priorities of parents remains to be seen. While many parents may be concerned about the cost of childcare, they are also concerned that their child is in a caring environment where they are developing well.

Last year, we challenged the view that the early years sector is predominantly about childcare rather than education.¹

'The parents who teach, whether they realise they are doing it or not, give their children the greatest advantages from the very start. Teaching for small children is not blackboards and desks, it is counting bricks when building a tower, learning nursery rhymes and familiar songs, or gently coaching a child to put their own arms into their coat. The most successful early years providers, whoever they are, are focused on helping children to learn.'

Over the past year, we have worked proactively to develop a partnership with the sector. The feedback from this work is that, increasingly, professionals now embrace the notion of teaching the very youngest children and are more willing to see themselves as teachers.

In his speech accompanying our last report, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) argued strongly for a clearer and more ambitious role for schools in coordinating, supporting and delivering high quality early years for the most disadvantaged children. Last year, the government introduced legislation to reduce the burdens on schools that take two-year-olds. This legislation:

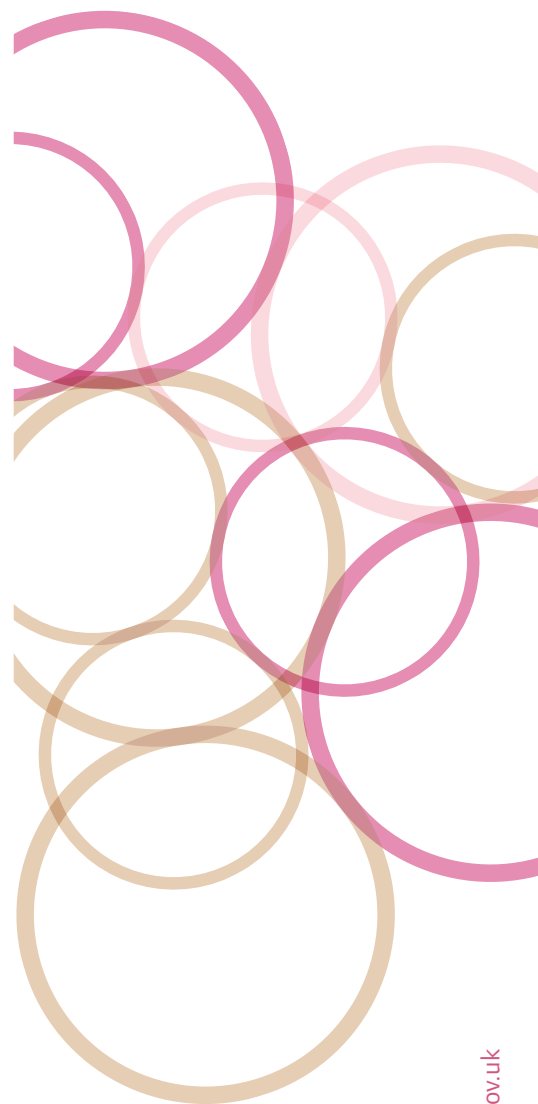
- removes the requirement for schools to register separately with Ofsted if they take two-year-olds
- will allow childminders to provide care on school premises under their childminding registration
- will allow childcare providers to register once for several premises.

The government has also brought in changes to the admissions code to enable schools to prioritise children eligible for the pupil premium and early years pupil premium in admissions.

In the period since our last report, Ofsted has also made progress. From September 2014, we re-introduced a separate early years judgement for schools with Nursery and Reception provision. From September 2015, we will go further. With the introduction of the common inspection framework,² all early years provision before Year 1, whether in the public, private or voluntary sector, will be judged using the same inspection framework.

Nick Hudson

National Director, Early Education



2. Changes to inspection from September 2015, Ofsted, June 2015; www.gov.uk/changes-to-education-inspection-from-september-2015.

Executive summary

1. When parents now research what is on offer for their children in their area, they will be looking at **early education that has never been stronger**. Parents can choose between private, voluntary, independent and public nursery and pre-school provision or a home-based setting with a childminder. More than 80% of each of these types of provision is now good or outstanding.
2. Early years practitioners increasingly appreciate that they are there to teach children, **not just provide childcare**. The Early Years Foundation Stage has been successful in focusing professionals in the sector on the importance of learning. Children have benefited from this and there has been a big jump in the proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of their Reception year.
3. At a national level, early years is enjoying a **political profile that is unprecedented**. Issues relating to the cost, capacity, accessibility and quality of early education and childcare have been making national headlines. The major commitment to increasing the 15 hours of funded early education for three- and four-year-olds from working families has featured in the Queen's Speech and the Prime Minister's early speeches. The challenge will be in implementation. The volume of early education places has remained relatively static over the past few years, but the child population has jumped. If demand grows in response to the government's increased funding, there are **likely to be areas where capacity comes under pressure**.
4. While it is encouraging that outcomes for children from disadvantaged backgrounds are rising in line with the peers, there is **no sign of the gap narrowing** in any substantial way. Early education can make a fundamental difference to life chances, but only if the child receives high quality early education at a young enough age. Around 113,000 two-year-olds were eligible for 15 hours of free early education but did not take up their place. This represents 42% of all eligible children. Health visitors hold the key to promoting take-up from age two to families; the universal one-year check on children is the opportunity to do so. With the transfer of public health to local authorities in September 2015, many important levers to deliver change in the early years from this point forward will sit with local leaders.
5. One of the reasons some children start school at a disadvantage is because the school does not have a good enough relationship with its feeder nurseries, pre-schools or childminders to make sure each child has a smooth transition into school. **Schools must do more to support transition** and the perverse incentives that work against this must be removed. Problems with transition can also be avoided if children attend school nurseries where they can progress directly to Reception without having to move provider. Fewer than 5,000 schools take two-year-olds, but, of those that do, the **two-year-olds attending are disproportionately from better off families**.³



3. Figure does not include maintained nursery or independent schools – www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2015.

About early years

Early education is crucial

6. Children's early years are the time between birth and the 31 August following their fifth birthday. This is a time of dramatic growth and development: a child's brain doubles in size in the first year and by age three it will have reached 80% of its adult volume. A child is creating synapses at a very fast rate. At age two or three, the brain has up to twice as many synapses than in adulthood.⁴ Because the early years are a time when children are learning rapidly, how well they are taught, whether that is at home or outside of the home, is very important.
7. Ofsted's role is to regulate and/or inspect the providers that teach children outside of the home. These providers include nursery schools, nursery classes in primary schools, private, independent and voluntary nurseries and pre-schools, and childminders.⁵ In this report, we describe the work the professionals do in these providers as **early education**.
8. By describing this as early education, we do not mean that these professionals don't also provide care that meets children's needs for secure attachments, healthy food, a safe environment and care for their physical well-being. Nor does describing this work as early education exclude play, exploration and enjoyment. On the contrary, the quality of every early years provider is judged against the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The EYFS is very clear that the way that children learn at this stage in their lives is in the context of play.⁶
9. We describe this work as early education because it is learning that is the ultimate aim. A child cannot learn if they are not well cared for. A child will not learn if they are not provided with experiences that help them learn through imitation and play.

But early education is only part of the story

10. In this report, we consider what our inspections have told us about the quality of early education. We will look at examples from providers that show what works well to help children learn.
11. However, there are limits to what we can know through inspection. Early education that is provided outside the home is only one small part of what happens in the lives of children from birth to starting school. Unlike in schools, which every child must attend, how children experience early education before they start school will vary considerably. Though almost all children have some experience of early education outside the home,⁷ for some children this experience will be quite brief.
12. In this context, we also consider the important question of why some children do not develop as well as others and therefore start school less ready to learn. The reasons for this may be less to do with what happens in early education providers and more to do with what happens throughout children's early years. We will consider whether inspection tells us enough and what might need to change to create greater understanding of what is not good enough.



4. <http://www.urbanchildinstitute.org/why-0-3/baby-and-brain>.

5. 'Nurseries and pre-schools' are used throughout to designate childcare on non-domestic premises.

6. *Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage*, Department for Education, July 2014; www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2

7. Ninety-six per cent of three- and four-year-olds and 99% of four-year-olds. Statistical first release: Provision for children under 5 years of age: January 2015, Department for Education, June 2015; www.gov.uk/government/statistics/provision-for-children-under-5-years-of-age-january-2015.

The provision of early education



13. Early education represents a major area of public investment. The government currently invests £5.2 billion annually in early education and this was set to rise to £6.4 billion with the implementation of the tax-free childcare scheme.⁸ The government has now announced an increase in the funded hours for three- and four-year-olds where both parents are working, from as early as 2016.⁹ This will increase investment further.
14. Some universal funded early education has been available since 1998; however, this was increased under the last government to 15 hours a week, for 38 weeks of the year.¹⁰ The take-up of this universal offer is very high and has been increasing year on year. In 2010, 94% of three- and four-year-old children benefited from some funded early education. In 2015, this was 96%.¹¹
15. The universal funded offer is only part of the story, however. The private, voluntary and independent sector provides funded early education to 524,300 three- and four-year-old children.¹² The same sector provides around 1.3 million places overall.¹³ The funding for the difference comes from parents. It is because of the cost to families that early education has become a high profile political issue. Issues relating to the cost, capacity, accessibility and quality of early education and childcare have been making national headlines. Childcare has featured in the Queen's Speech and the Prime Minister's first speeches at the start of the new term of government.¹⁴
16. Schools also play a major role in early education. More than half of three- and four-year-old children taking up funded early education are in Nursery and Reception classes in schools. Ofsted inspects all early education, regardless of the sector, but to date we have used different inspection frameworks for schools than for the childminders, nurseries and pre-schools that have to register with us in order to operate.

8. Next government must prioritise disadvantaged children in childcare budget, Lords Select Committee, February 2015; www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/lords-select/affordable-childcare/news/affordable-childcare-report/.

9. 'Government brings forward plans to double free childcare for working families', Prime Minister's Office, 1 June 2015; www.gov.uk/government/news/government-brings-forward-plans-to-double-free-childcare-for-working-families.

10. <http://www.ifs.org.uk/uploads/publications/docs/MISOC%20Childcare%20briefing%20paper.pdf>

11. Statistical first release: Provision for children under five years of age in England: January 2015, Department for Education, June 2015; www.gov.uk/government/statistics/provision-for-children-under-5-years-of-age-january-2015.

12. Ibid.

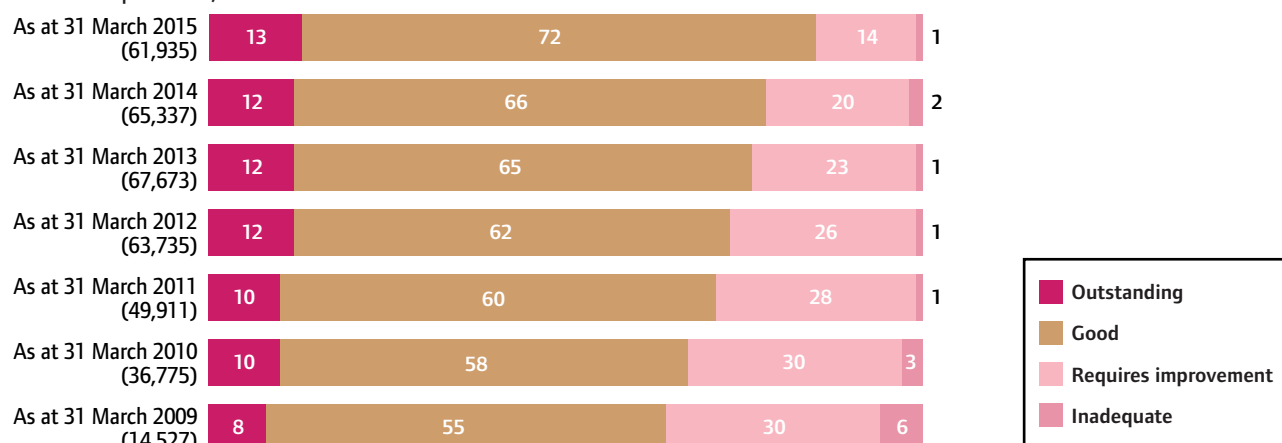
13. Childcare inspections and outcomes: March 2015, Ofsted, December 2014; www.gov.uk/government/collections/early-years-and-childcare-statistics.

14. Queen's Speech 2015; 27 May 2015; www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/queens-speech-2015.

Speech delivered by Prime Minister David Cameron on visit to Tetley, Stockton-on-Tees, 12 May 2015; www.gov.uk/government/speeches/prime-minister-david-camersons-speech-at-tetley-stockton-on-tees.

Figure 2: Most recent overall effectiveness judgements of early years providers (%)^{1,2,3,4}

Number of providers/schools in brackets



¹ Data reflect information held in Ofsted systems as at 31 March each year.

² Data include providers that were active and inspected as at 31 March each year, with a published inspection report as at 30 April each year.

³ Only providers on the Early Years Register are included above.

⁴ Percentages in the chart are rounded and may not add to 100.

Source: Ofsted

Standards are rising

17. Across the country, 85% of early years registered providers are now good or outstanding, a dramatic increase of 18 percentage points in five years. As a result, many more parents now have a better chance of finding a high quality early education place in their area.
18. Quality in all the English regions is rising for both nurseries and pre-schools and for childminders. There is still variation between the regions, but for the quality of childminders in particular, variation is now small. In four regions, the level of good or outstanding childminders is at 82%. This is only six percentage points below the South East, which has the highest levels of good or outstanding childminders. Variation is slightly wider for nurseries and pre-schools, in part due to the very high proportion of good or outstanding provision in the North East, at 91%.
19. The quality of early education is also rising in schools. Ofsted re-introduced a judgement of the standards and quality in early years for school inspections from September 2014. In the full year 2009/10, we inspected 4,573 schools and 73% were judged good or outstanding for their early years provision. In the first two terms of 2014/15, we inspected 2,438 schools and found good or outstanding early education in 86% of those schools.
20. We revised the early years inspection framework in November 2013, setting out shorter timescales for the re-inspection of inadequate providers. This was to ensure that we take rapid and robust action with settings that do not provide a good enough quality of early education. By the end of March 2015, nearly 2,000 providers had been judged as inadequate under the revised framework at some point in time.



21. Nationally, 4,236 investigations were carried out as a result of safeguarding concerns from parents and the public about settings – 30% of these resulted in action taken against the providers.

Teaching the youngest children

22. Ofsted does not have a preferred style or approach to teaching or play. It is those who work in schools and settings, not inspectors, who are best placed to make the important decisions about how children learn. However, Ofsted does define the elements of early years practice that make up teaching so that there is a common ground and degree of transparency when making judgements about the quality of teaching:¹⁵
 - communicating and modelling language
 - showing, explaining, demonstrating
 - exploring ideas, encouraging, questioning, recalling
 - providing a narrative for what they are doing
 - facilitating and setting challenges.
23. As part of our inspection work this year, we visited 21 schools and 28 pre-schools, children's centres and childminders to look in depth at how they teach the youngest children. All the providers had been judged good or outstanding. In these visits, we saw many examples of different ways that providers used adult interaction to promote successful learning. Where professionals were skilful, they spotted and created opportunities for learning. For example, we saw practitioners:
 - encouraging a child to share a story, idea or feeling with another child, which generated new discussions that allowed one child to develop listening and attention and the other to rehearse new words
 - setting a challenge to build the tallest tower with bricks and, by using subtle reflection and questioning as the children built, encouraging the children to count, predict and persevere
 - attending to a group of children's interest in construction and then transforming a part of a classroom into a construction zone, which extended children's thinking and imagination.¹⁶
24. The practitioners we observed did not subscribe to a rigid distinction between teaching and play. They demonstrated how the adult's role, and how much they interact with children, could shift during the course of an activity. Many leaders and staff in pre-school settings did not see themselves as teachers because they did not have qualified teaching status, but they still demonstrated a passion for supporting children to learn.

15. *Early years inspection handbook*, Ofsted, June 2015; www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-inspection-handbook-from-september-2015.

16. *Teaching and play in the early years – a balancing act?*, Ofsted, July 2015; www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-and-play-in-the-early-years-a-balancing-act.

25. The schools we visited, and those pre-schools and children's centres that were governed or overseen by schools, held a much more fluid view of teaching that did not depend on a member of staff's specific title or qualification.¹⁷

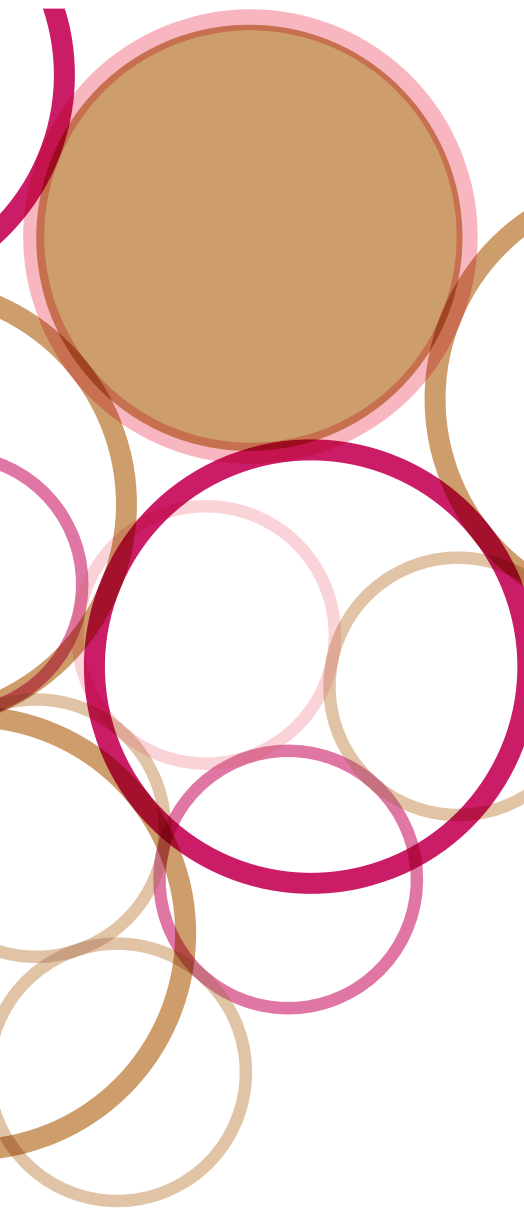
'Everyone is an educator. Children, parents, grandparents and other professionals all have something they can contribute (teach) in any scenario. In terms of staff, I consider all of the adults I employ to be teachers, regardless of their role, because everybody I employ is here to intervene and make a difference. For example, those who work in the children's centre are teaching parents about how to better support their child or how to better access resources to improve their quality of life. The speech and language therapists we employ are teaching children to communicate more effectively and, in turn, are teaching the other adults around them about how they can help reinforce this learning throughout the day. Everybody is in the business of teaching here, regardless of qualification, but it may look very different depending on the role they play.'

26. In these effective providers, we saw that their most formal or structured approach to teaching focused on letters and the sounds they make (phonics). In contrast, time devoted to mathematical development was not as frequent or systematic. Staff felt less confident in approaching mathematics because their own confidence in the subject, often borne out from their own negative experiences at school, was lower than that for other areas of learning. However, leaders and staff were resolute that this area of learning was just as important as literacy and so made a focused effort to give it more dedicated time in the daily programme.

Excellent teaching needs strong leadership

27. It is leaders and managers who create an environment where learning flourishes. The leadership and management seen on inspection since the last annual report was in line with quality overall (74% good or outstanding) but not as strong as the extent to which providers met the needs of children (77% good or outstanding).
28. A strong and visionary leader sees the potential in practitioners as well as in children. In our last report, we emphasised the importance of good qualifications for early years practitioners, but qualifications are only an indicator of ability. Where practitioners are successful teachers, it is because they have not just the understanding of how children learn, but also a commitment to seeing children develop well. A good leader knows this and fosters it.

17. *Teaching and play in the early years – a balancing act?*, Ofsted, July 2015; www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-and-play-in-the-early-years-a-balancing-act.



'I wanted staff to share my belief that children make sense of the world by having the time to genuinely engage with it, through activities and resources worth exploring, with staff knowing when and how to intervene to extend what children are learning, and when to hold back.

'I knew I couldn't do this alone. I needed a team who shared my aspirations for what children can achieve ... some staff chose to move to other settings. Other staff, including some who came as parents, have committed wholeheartedly to the changes. There has been very little change in the staff since then because we share a common aim to give children the best start we can.' (*Garstang Pre-school Nursery manager*)

Through joint evaluation, the team identified that the most sustainable way to improve their teaching and its impact on children's learning was to improve their own level of skills and pedagogical knowledge.

Staff willingly committed to both at significant personal cost in terms of finance, time and energy. Five of the team now hold early years degrees and two also have Early Years Professional status. Wherever possible, staff attend training sessions together, even if this means attending at weekends, as experience has shown that this helps them to reflect on what they do that works and discuss what they could do better.

An essential aspect of the manager's leadership of staff development is to encourage return visits to other outstanding settings, locally and further afield.

The manager is also keen that she and her staff learn from successful programmes and research. She has shared her experiences with the ECAT¹⁸ programme and her participation in the Elklan¹⁹ speech and language development training courses with the team and with the children's parents and carers.

29. Our regional work has allowed our inspectors to have involvement in some of the work being carried out by local authorities as community leaders. Some local authorities are demonstrating a commitment to raising outcomes for the youngest children by supporting providers to work collaboratively.

Torbay is a small unitary local authority where numbers of early years children are comparatively small. Over 50% of the primary schools have a maintained nursery.

Early years outcomes for the last two years have shown that the proportions of all children reaching a good level of development were higher in private, voluntary and independent providers than in schools. However, in schools, the gap between more disadvantaged children and their peers was narrower. Both sectors had learning to share. The local authority brought together over 80 staff from 60 different early years providers from both sectors to develop partnership working between the establishments.

Providers were grouped according to the towns they were located in and provided with data compiled by the local authority. The local authority had been able to establish where every child had received their funded early education place and provided analyses for each area of learning by gender and disadvantage. This shared vantage point meant each group could compile an action plan to address common areas for development. Priorities ranged from the achievement of boys to specific areas of learning such as numbers, writing and speaking. Providers committed to share practice to deliver improvement.

18. www.foundationyears.org.uk/2011/10/every-child-a-talker-guidance-for-early-language-lead-practitioners/.

19. www.elklan.co.uk/.

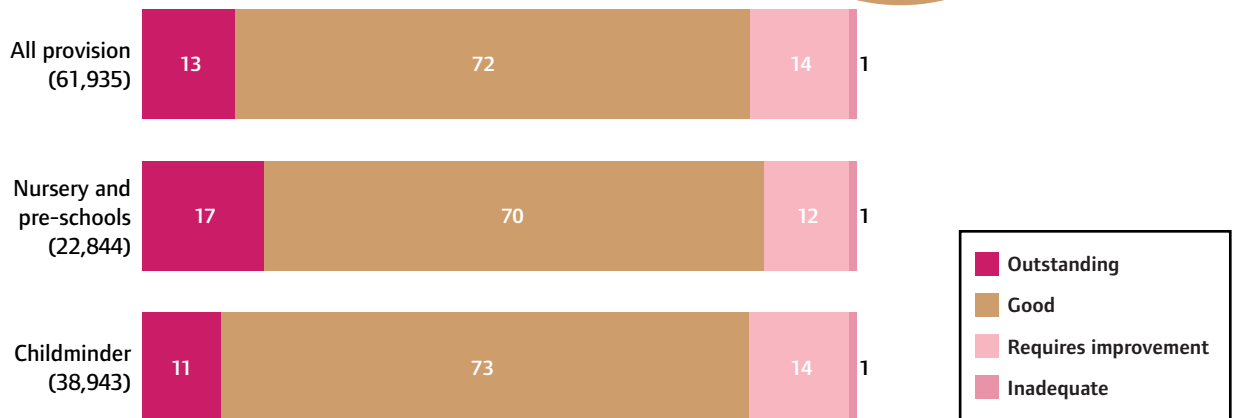
Comparing quality and choosing a provider



- 30. If early education is to be successful, it must serve the needs of both parents and children. Parents must be able to find a provider that suits their child, and what is on offer must also fit with family, the available budget and working life.
- 31. Parents choosing between providers are likely to find high quality education regardless of the type of provider. Every type of provider now has high levels of performance nationally.

Figure 3: Most recent inspection outcomes for early years providers as at 31 March 2015 (percentages)^{1,2,3,4}

Number of providers/schools in brackets



¹ Childcare on domestic premises are excluded from the chart because of their small number relative to other childcare provision types.

² Data include providers who were active and inspected as at 31 March 2015, with a published inspection report as at 30 April 2015.

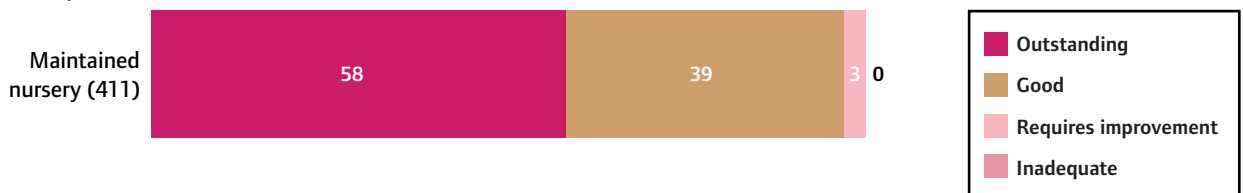
³ Only providers on the Early Years Register are included above.

⁴ Percentages in the chart are rounded and may not add to 100.

Source: Ofsted

Figure 4: Most recent inspection outcomes of maintained nursery schools as at 31 March 2015 (percentages)^{1,2}

Number of providers/schools in brackets



¹ Data include all open inspected nursery schools as at 31 March 2015, with a published inspection report as at 7 May 2015.

² Percentages in the chart are rounded and may not add to 100.

Source: Ofsted

Figure 5: Early years judgement recorded at school inspections between 1 September 2014 and 31 March 2015 (percentages)^{1,2,3,4}

Number of providers/schools in brackets



¹ Early years judgements are made at inspections of maintained schools with early years provision. The judgement was introduced on 1 September 2014.

² Data include all inspections in this period, including re-inspections and inspections of providers that have since closed.

³ Data include inspection outcomes published as at 30 April 2015.

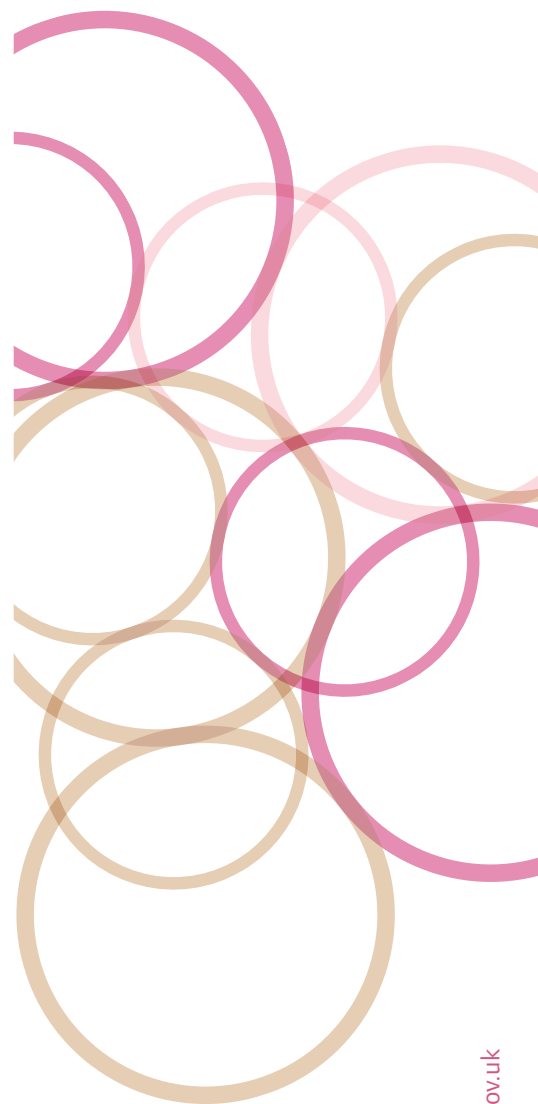
⁴ Percentages in the chart are rounded and may not add to 100.

Source: Ofsted

32. This means that, more than ever, there is no type of early education that is better for all children. Each family has to weigh the advantages and disadvantages and compare the quality of the providers, which are likely to be small in number, that happen to meet that family's constraints.
33. There are more **childminders** than any other type of provider – nearly 50,000 nationwide. However, because they operate on a very small scale, they offer only 260,000 places, far fewer than schools or nurseries and pre-schools. An advantage of a childminder for parents is the home-based setting, which will appeal to a parent who wants early education to be delivered in an environment that is as similar to their own home as possible. Because childminders are self-employed, they can offer very flexible hours and respond directly to the needs of the small number of families they support, for example by working around attendance at another setting, such as a part-time nursery place. A childminder may offer greater continuity of care so that a child can bond to a single person and stay with them as they grow.
34. Childminders can also be the hardest provider to find. Ofsted encourages childminders to give permission for their contact details to be published, because, as they operate from homes, they cannot be seen from the street.²⁰
35. The next largest type of provider in terms of places for children is **schools**. Every school with Reception classes delivers the Early Years Foundation Stage, but some schools also provide places for children before Reception. There are 307,000 children taking up places in these schools. Schools have the advantage of being easy to locate and are usually the most transparent and predictable in terms of how to apply for places and when children can take up those places. This can have drawbacks – the places schools offer can be very inflexible, often only three hours a day and not outside term time, and therefore only suitable where a parent is not working or supplements the school place with other arrangements such as childminding.

20. Ofsted publishes contact details for those childminders who have given their consent, which is 30% of all active childminders.

36. Schools have the unique advantage of being able to offer continuity across the transition to Reception, which is a critical time when some children's learning suffers if not managed well. Schools are also most likely to have established access to support for special educational needs such as special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) and speech and language therapists.
37. The largest provider of places for children by a significant margin, with over a million places available, is **nurseries and pre-schools**. These are often described as private, voluntary or independent, but as some are operated by local authorities they can also be in the public sector. Nurseries and pre-schools are usually easy to find online and on the street, though different ways of describing themselves can sometimes create the misleading impression that different providers offer different kinds of early education.
38. Nurseries and pre-schools often cater to the needs of working parents, with hours that wrap around the working day and with availability year-round. Because they employ greater numbers of staff, their doors remain more reliably open where a childminder may close due to sickness or holiday.
39. Early years is their sole focus, which means that excellence in early years is the sole priority for leaders and managers, in contrast to primary schools, which will also have older children's learning to consider.
40. Because of their size, nurseries and pre-schools can offer a wide range of opportunities for learning and play and can tailor those experiences for children at different ages. Children are likely to have opportunities to interact with many other children across the age ranges, but because settings are larger, children will likely experience many different carers. The ease of transition to Reception is likely to be variable and will depend both on the extent to which the nursery or pre-school is proactive but also the attitude and enthusiasm for cooperation in the receiving school.



Reports are becoming more comparable

41. Though different types of provider are likely to provide high quality early education when considered at a national level, from a parent's perspective, the quality of the particular providers in their immediate area may vary widely. A parent who is under pressure to make the difficult decision where to place their very young child will not only want to compare the quality of two local nurseries, for example, but will want to compare the quality of every local option, whether that is a nursery, pre-school, nursery school, primary school with nursery class or a childminder.
42. In our last report, we committed to making these comparisons easier for parents. From September 2014, every school with early years provision has received a separate grade for that part of the school. From September 2015, there will be wholesale change to inspection of education for any age.
43. Our new common inspection framework²¹ will mean that every provider of education will be held to account using a methodology designed to enable direct comparisons of quality. Not every school will have an inspection using this new framework: outstanding schools are not inspected unless we have reason to believe their performance is slipping. But these changes, along with many other changes designed to create an even playing field across schools, childminders, nurseries and pre-schools, will make it easier for parents to put inspection reports side by side and see how particular providers near them compare.

Progress is being made towards more accessible information

44. If parents are to make full use of inspection reports to compare the performance of different providers, they have to know they exist and be able to find them. Last year, we identified that the way that information about providers is published is piecemeal and inaccessible and therefore unhelpful to parents. A great deal of information about providers is held online, but there is no one place that any parent can go to find the necessary information about all of the providers that might be suitable for their child. Earlier this year, the Department for Education published new research on the views of parents that confirmed that the system is weak in this respect.²²
45. Since last year, there have been some steps taken nationally that, while small, suggest a positive direction of travel. The Department for Education has run a competition to identify a company or companies to develop an innovative proposal that would deliver a single, online resource for parents that would address the current failings of the system.²³ The Childcare Bill currently before Parliament has the potential, if passed, to enable better coordination of the information that is currently published. And, as part of wider improvements to our digital services, Ofsted will be redesigning its inspection report site. We will explore options to reduce the complexity of the language used to talk about early education and childcare and to make it easier to search for inspection reports across all relevant early years providers, including relevant schools.
46. The introduction in September 2014 of childminder agencies, where parents would be able to find a local childminder by contacting an agency, has yet to take off. To date, Ofsted has registered five agencies. As of June 2015, no childminders were registered with agencies.

21. Changes to inspection from September 2015, Ofsted, June 2015; www.gov.uk/changes-to-education-inspection-from-september-2015.

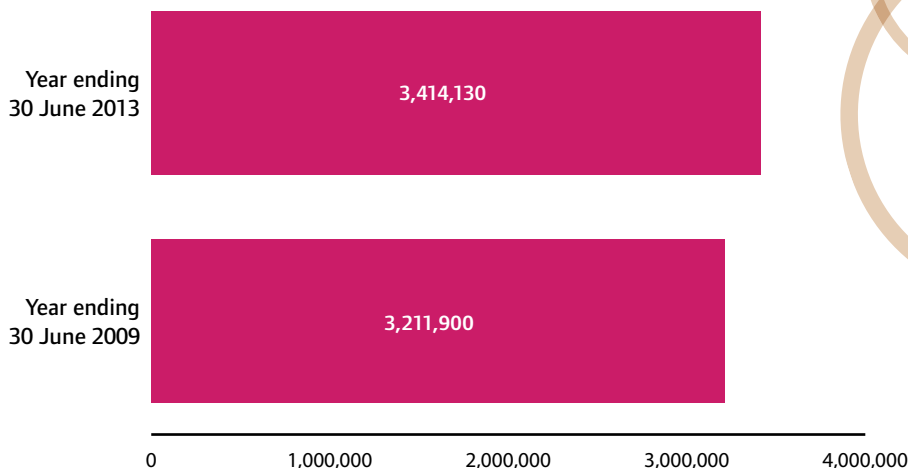
22. Childcare information for parents, research report prepared by Ipsos MORI and the Family and Childcare Trust, Department for Education, February 2015; www.gov.uk/government/publications/childcare-information-for-parents.

23. New online tool to make finding childcare easier for parents, Department for Education, February 2015; www.gov.uk/government/news/new-online-tool-to-make-finding-childcare-easier-for-parents.

Limited capacity could limit choice

47. It is often not enough for a parent that there are high quality early education providers near them of the kind that would suit their family and child. If there are insufficient places available in the area, then their child may not gain a place. Unlike a place in a primary school Reception class, children do not have a right to an early education place. Nor do parents have any recourse if the childcare they need to enable them to work is unavailable.
48. Ofsted registers early years provision for children under two²⁴ and all early years provision for children aged two and over apart from in schools. Quality has been rising and the number of places has remained relatively static,²⁵ while there has been a small increase in the number of children recorded in early years providers year on year. However, the number of children benefiting from early education in maintained nursery and state funded primary schools has fallen slightly. Furthermore, actual places may be fewer in 2014 than Ofsted data suggest, because of a change in the way Ofsted recorded capacity in childminders in 2012.

Figure 6: Population estimates for children aged under five^{1,2}



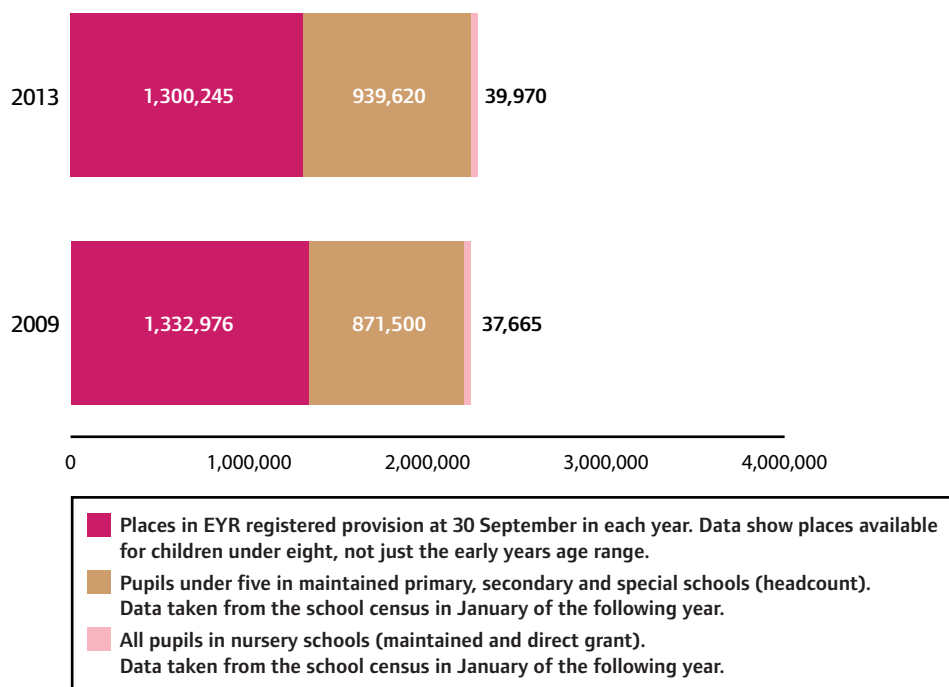
¹ Population estimate source: Office for National Statistics; www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables.html?edition=tcn%3A77-322718.

² Population figures for 2009 rounded to the nearest hundred.

24. The specific order setting out exemptions from compulsory registration is the Childcare (Exemptions from Registration) Order 2008 (2008 No. 979); www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2008/979/contents/made.

25. Compared with September 2013.

Figure 7: Number of places in EYR registered provision and number of pupils aged under five in schools ^{1,2}



¹ Number of pupils in nursery schools, maintained primary, secondary and special schools rounded to nearest five.

² Number of pupils in schools is used as a proxy for the number of places in schools.

Sources:

Number of places in EYR registered provision source: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/registered-childcare-providers-and-places-in-england-december-2008-onwards.

All pupils in nursery schools and pupils under five in schools source: Department for Education; www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2014; www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2010.

49. Though early years places have remained roughly static, there has been a marked rise in the estimated population between 2009 and 2013. There are always fewer places than children, as a large core of children in this age group at any given time are being cared for either wholly or in part at home. However, there is evidence that capacity is already under pressure in some areas.²⁶ Any increase in demand may exacerbate this further.

50. There are 15,000 childminders who have resigned their registration between 1 September 2008 and 30 April 2015. Pressures on capacity may create incentives to consider drawing childminders from this cohort back into the sector. However, the level of performance of these childminders is less likely to be high, with only 60% good or outstanding. Feedback from the sector suggests that some resignations will have been in response to higher expectations in the EYFS about support for children’s learning and development. Because childminders are home-based and self-employed, it is also likely to be the case that many inactive childminders are not taking children because childminding no longer suits their home life and circumstances.

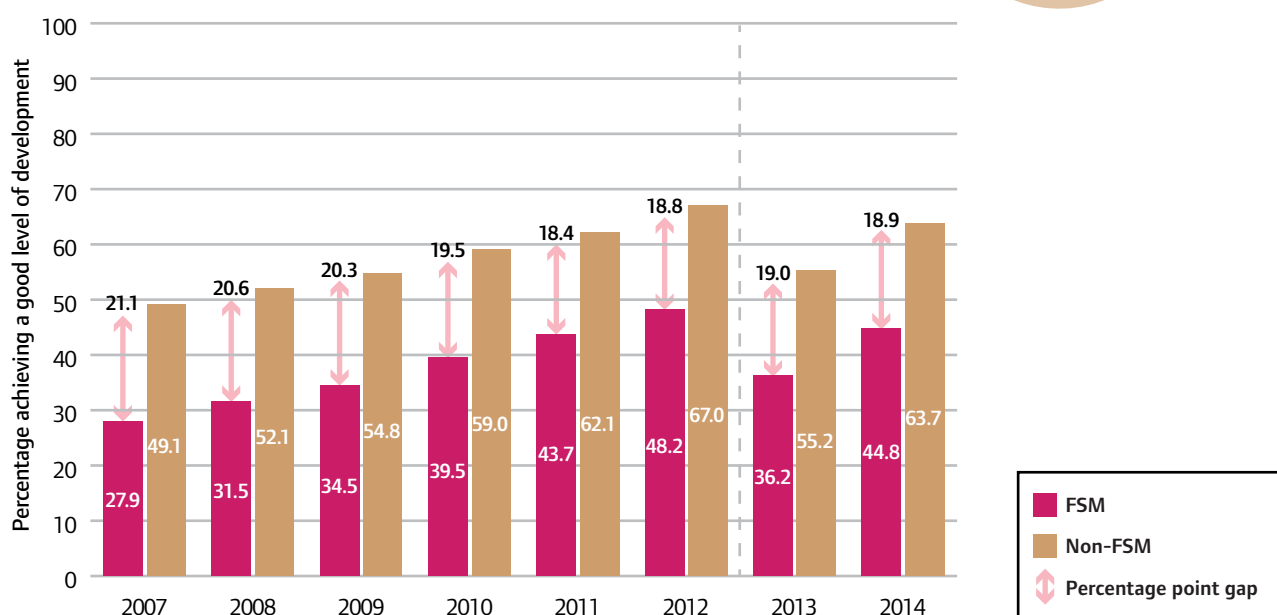
26. Access Denied: A report on childcare sufficiency and market management in England and Wales, Family and Childcare Trust 2015; www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/access-denied-report-childcare-sufficiency-and-market-management-england-and-wales.

Getting ready for school



51. In all of our inspections, we give consideration to how well provision meets the needs of all, particularly the most disadvantaged. In the early years, this means looking in more depth at how well children are being supported in their development and learning so that they are ready to learn when they start school.
52. In our last report, we noted that the percentage of children reaching the government's standard of a 'good level of development' at the end of Reception had been rising since it was first published in 2007. In 2013, the standard was sharpened to give a greater focus on physical development, literacy and mathematics. Between 2013 and 2014, there was a dramatic increase in children reaching a 'good level of development', from 52% to 60% nationally.

Figure 8: Percentage of children achieving a good level of development by free school meal eligibility^{1,2}



¹ The dotted line shows a change in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) methodology. New methodology applies for 2013 and 2014 assessments.

² A 'good level of development' is defined as the number and proportion of children achieving at least the expected level within the three prime areas of learning: communication and language; physical development and personal, social and emotional development; and the early learning goals within the literacy and mathematics areas of learning.

Source: Department for Education; www.gov.uk/government/statistics/eyfsp-attainment-by-pupil-characteristics-2013-to-2014 and www.gov.uk/government/statistics/eyfsp-attainment-by-pupil-characteristics-2013.



53. What did not shift was the extent to which disadvantaged children lag behind their more advantaged peers. Both groups have done better – the proportion of children eligible for free school meals reaching a good level of development increased from 36.2% to 44.8%. The gap, however, remained virtually unchanged: 19 percentage points in 2013, and 18.9 percentage points in 2014. Clearly, improvements in the quality of early education are benefiting children, but these improvements are not changing the degree to which the most disadvantaged are starting their educational paths already substantially behind.

Understanding what works

54. Our inspections have provided some insight into practice that is particularly effective for more disadvantaged children. In the providers visited for our thematic inspection of teaching and play, 'Teaching and play in the early years: a balancing act?', inspectors identified that the quality of teaching was paramount in helping more disadvantaged children to progress well.²⁷ Where providers were successful, they worked closely with parents to assess a child's development compared with what was typical, and continually revised this assessment. They used this information to focus on areas that needed greater support, which was often speech, language and communication, while balancing the need to continue to develop the full range of other areas.
55. The thematic inspection also identified other things that made a difference to the progress made by more disadvantaged children:
- Collaboration between providers to share expertise – Where schools and settings shared a site, were directly managed by one over-arching leader or had entered into a professional network with others in the locality, expertise was shared effectively to allow all early years professionals to learn from the best. Many had become early years hubs for their area, championing the importance of early education and raising the quality of learning and development.
 - Learning alongside older children – We observed disadvantaged two-year-olds making the greatest progress when they were able to learn and play alongside their older early years peers. They benefited from hearing more sophisticated language and seeing personal, social and emotional behaviours in action. We found this type of integrated working to be more prevalent in schools than pre-schools.
 - Sharing information, particularly at points of transition – The constant transfer of information between parents, other providers and staff was not only restricted to the initial assessments made on entry to the settings. Liaison about a child's ongoing successes and achievements continued throughout their time in the early years.
56. The evidence also showed that, for the most disadvantaged children, the balance between adult-led and child-led activity could shift, so much so that some children needed constant adult involvement so that they could benefit from the full range of opportunities to play on offer.

27. *Teaching and play in the early years – a balancing act?*, Ofsted, July 2015; www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-and-play-in-the-early-years-a-balancing-act.

'In one outstanding school, all of the experiences provided for the most disadvantaged two-year-olds involved adult direction and focus. Staff constantly played alongside the children, one-to-one and in pairs, to model the self-regulatory behaviours associated with play. Children's significant weaknesses in speech and language on entry necessitated frequent demonstration of how to interact and how to use the range of toys and equipment safely.'

What needs to change?

57. Evidence from the thematic inspection of what works with more disadvantaged children showed that providers must teach well and must tailor their approach to the needs of each child. We continue to reinforce this message in all our work with the sector, and the introduction of the common inspection framework for all of early education will reinforce this further. Registered providers will now have a judgement on the quality of teaching in the same way that schools do. Continued improvements in teaching will advantage all children, not just the more disadvantaged.
58. However, if there is to be a step change in reducing the gap between the more disadvantaged and their peers, improving individual providers of early education will not be enough. Improving readiness for school will require a combination of system leadership, more focused challenge from Ofsted and greater leadership from primary schools.

Take-up of targeted early education is too low

59. Good early education, including the teaching that parents provide, is necessary if children are to develop well. Research shows that some children's parents are very effective teachers and, for these children, early education outside the home makes less of a difference.²⁸ If teaching at home is less effective, then early education that provides high quality teaching can make a difference, particularly if the child is young enough. The government's targeted offer of 15 hours funded early education for 40% of two-year-olds from more disadvantaged groups seeks to bridge this learning gap.
60. From September 2014, the eligibility criteria was broadened from 20% to 40% of all children aged two. This represents 285,000 children. Most of these children are eligible because of their family's financial circumstances. A much smaller number (8,000) are eligible because they are looked after children, children with special educational needs, adopted children or children of asylum seekers.²⁹
61. To date, the take-up of these funded places has fallen short of expectations. As at the end of January 2015, 157,000 two-year-olds had taken up a funded early education place – 58% of all the children who were eligible. This means that there were 113,000 children who had not taken up their place.³⁰



28. *Social disparities in children's vocabulary in early childhood: does preschool education help to close the gap?*, Birgit Becker, Mannheim Centre for European Social Research, University of Mannheim, Germany; Paper for the EDUC Research Group Conference, Tallinn, 11-13 June 2009.

29. Guidance: LA allocations for early learning for 2-year-olds: 2014 to 2015, Department for Education, December 2013; www.gov.uk/government/publications/la-allocations-for-early-learning-for-2-year-olds-2014-to-2015

30. Statistical first release: Provision for children under 5 years of age: January 2015, Department for Education, June 2015; www.gov.uk/government/statistics/provision-for-children-under-5-years-of-age-january-2015.



62. Part of what we do in our inspection of children's centres is to consider how effective centres have been in getting more disadvantaged two-year-olds into early education. The following good practice example illustrates the impact of:
- helping parents to develop their parenting and teaching skills
 - universal screening
 - outreach to encourage parents to take up funded early education.

Balmoral Children's Centre, Morecambe

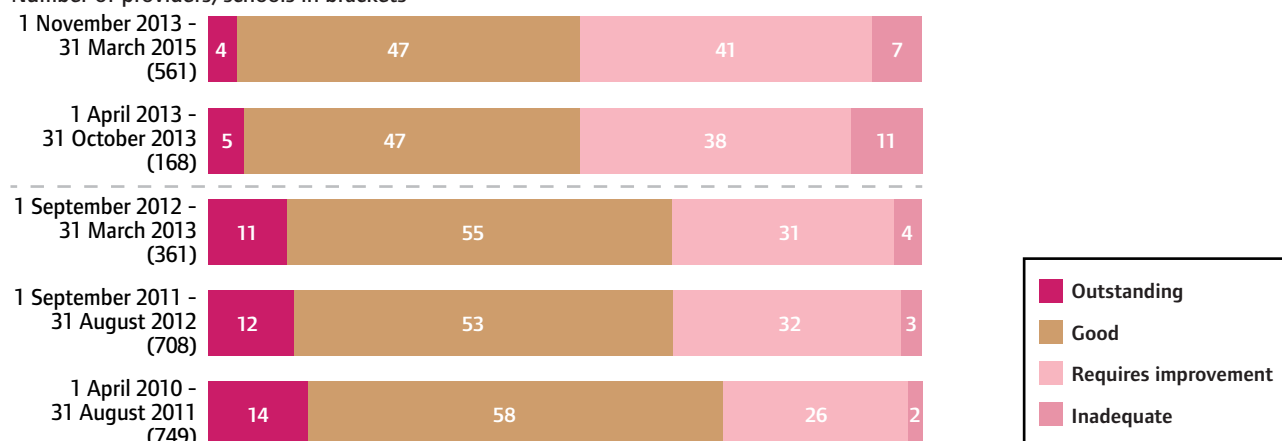
For centre staff, because of their deep understanding of how babies learn, preparing children for school begins at a very early age. Work towards identifying those eligible for funded early education and ensuring that they receive it in good quality settings is multi-faceted. It includes in-depth screening of children's language development, which can lead to early targeted support, reminders to parents of 18-month-olds about the two-year checks, and training for local childminders and early years settings. As a result, almost all eligible two-, three- and four-year-olds benefit from a good quality early start to their education.

Group sessions, whether they are open to all, such as 'Messy Play', for specific children, such as 'Make it, Shake it', or the crèche, which supports adult learning, are all sharply focused on promoting children's learning. Parents say that they gain good ideas about how to play with their children at home and, typically, comment that their 'children have done wonders through attending'. Children's skills on entry to Nursery are rising, as is their attainment at the end of Reception year. In 2014, boys, those eligible for free school meals and children with special educational needs in local schools all achieved more highly than similar children nationally.

63. However, the performance of children's centres does not suggest that, overall, they are well placed to improve readiness for school. While some children's centres do outstanding work in their communities, nationally, the troubled context that we observed last year in children's centres has not changed and this is reflected in our inspection outcomes, which remain low.
64. In the example above, the children's centre was able to make a strong contribution to readiness for school through identifying children early on and tracking children's learning and take-up of places. This particular centre was able to do this even though the quality of information provided by partners was not good, because they were determined to make what was available work. Unfortunately, accessing and using information continue to be widespread problems for children's centres. A review of recently inspected centres found that in 44 out of 50 centres judged less than good, the inability of the centre to track the progress that children and families were making was a key weakness.

Figure 9: Overall effectiveness judgements of children's centre inspections (percentages)^{1,2,3,4,5}

Number of providers/schools in brackets



¹ Inspections carried out between 1 April 2010 and 31 March 2013 took place under the old inspection framework. A new inspection framework was introduced on 1 April 2013.

² Data represent all inspections in each period, including re-inspections and inspections of providers that have since closed.

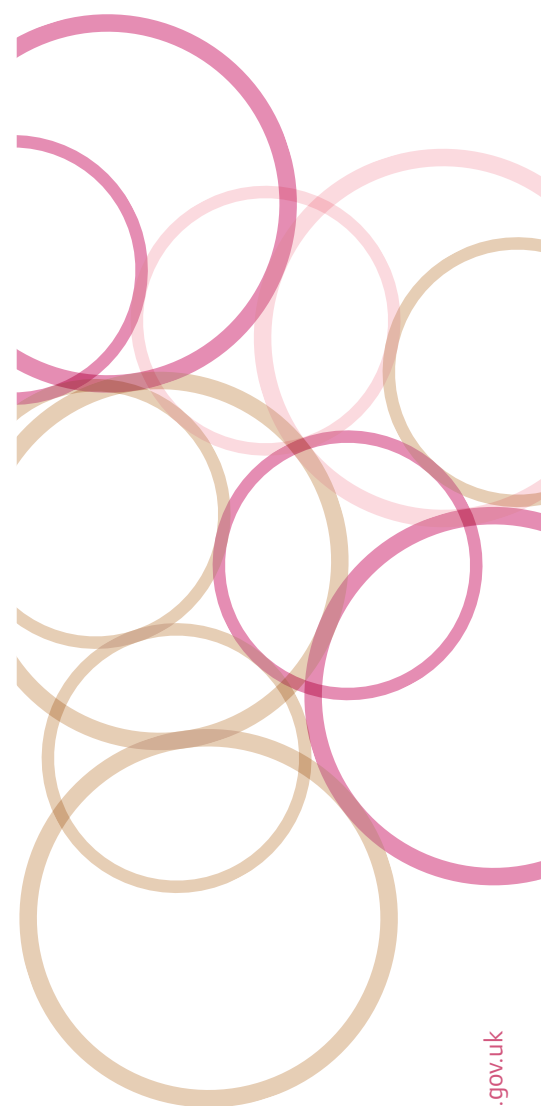
³ Time periods above are not equal and children's centres inspected in each time period are not representative.

⁴ Data reflect information held in Ofsted systems as at the time of publication.

⁵ Percentages in the chart are rounded and may not add to 100.

Source: Ofsted

65. It is even more of a concern that weaknesses in tracking are not only about looking at trends across the area. Six reports make specific mention that the centres were not assessing whether activities delivered on-site for children were having an impact on children's learning.
66. Partnerships are essential for children's centres, and centres' performance in this area was hugely variable. In the same group of weaker centres, partnerships were a weakness for some and a strength for others. Which partnerships were weak also varied considerably: in some cases it was health, in others schools, in others social care. Information-sharing remains a stumbling block – in more than half of centres (27 of 50), inspectors noted that at least one partner was not delivering usable, timely data. In many cases, it was the local authority's own data that were deficient because they did not relate to the centre's local area.



Who is responsible?

67. As we reported last year, it is the quality of the leadership in the local authority that determines the impact a children's centre will have. Local authorities have a mandate to lead on outcomes in the early years as the locally elected leader. However, as we found in our thematic inspection of early help, 'Early help: whose responsibility?',³¹ early intervention and prevention can only be successfully delivered by partnerships and it is not always clear who is accountable when opportunities are missed.
68. There is still wide variation in the development of more disadvantaged children in different local authorities. On pp 37–38 of this report is a ranking of local authorities by the proportion of children eligible for free school meals reaching a good level of development. There is a 36 percentage point gap between the local authorities at the top and bottom of the ranking.
69. From September 2015, local authorities will become the commissioners for public health. With these new responsibilities will come oversight and accountability for health visitors who are often the key professionals working with parents when children are aged 0–2. Inspections of children's centres have in the past identified partnerships with health as a challenge. Ongoing problems with information-sharing seen in this year's inspections should be easier to resolve with overarching accountability within the local authority.
70. A central focus of the health commissioning framework is educational achievement. Health visitors are the only professionals who are expected to proactively be in contact with the most disadvantaged children before the age of two. Though coverage is currently patchy,³² there is a commitment to make delivery of a one-year-old check universal. With rising health visitor numbers, this will be a critical opportunity to promote the two-year-old offer.
71. Inspections of children's centres on their own provide only a partial picture of the leadership in early years beyond early education. With an increased role for health visitors in future, inspections of children's centres will also provide only a partial picture of the interventions to raise participation in early education. From 2016, Ofsted will also begin inspecting the local authority's identification of, and provision for, disabled children and those with special educational needs. Because an essential time for identification is the early years, this inspection will provide another picture, also partial, of provision in the wider early years.
72. This changing landscape may provide an opportunity to clarify who has overall responsibility and how they will be held to account.



31. *Early help: whose responsibility?*, Ofsted, March 2015; www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-help-whose-responsibility

32. Integrated review at age 2: implementation study, Department for Education, November 2014; www.gov.uk/government/publications/integrated-review-at-age-2-implementation-study

Providers should be challenged to narrow the gap

73. An important aspect of the challenge we give to primary and secondary schools is through our use of risk assessment. We have access to a range of sources of information about how children are performing. Because this information lets us see in detail whether more disadvantaged children are performing less well, we can identify schools that are failing these children. Where we are concerned enough, this can be a reason to inspect that school. This is true even where we found a school to be good or outstanding the last time we visited. The right information means we can identify potential problems and investigate.
74. In early education, this is not the case. There is only one information source about children's performance, which is the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP). This assessment is done by schools at the end of Reception and the information it produces does not connect children's performance with the early education provider.
75. We are not able to see those cases where the more disadvantaged children who have attended the same early education provider are doing much less well than their peers. Because we cannot see the impact, we are not able to take steps to investigate.
76. The Department for Education have asked us to consider the impact of the early years pupil premium when we inspect early education from September. In schools, we can compare what we see on inspection to the information we have about pupils' progress and outcomes, to judge what is working and what is not working more effectively. In early education, not only will we not have information on the impact of what providers are doing, but we will not know which providers have children in receipt of the early years pupil premium until we inspect them.
77. From autumn 2015, health visitors will be required to provide parents with a short, common sense series of questions about their child's development to feed into the two-year-old check.³³ This has the major advantage of engaging parents in the activity of checking development, which was often absent from previous practice. The outcome of this check will be a national data set that will provide, for the first time, a standardised measure of child development at age two. If this new information source and the EYFSP both included a link to the child's early education provider, then some of this information gap could be filled.



33. This questionnaire is known as ASQ-3 and will only be made available to health visitors for distribution and will not be published generally for copyright reasons.



Schools must do more to support transition

78. There are, however, other potential sources of challenge and support for early education providers that could do more to improve the development of more disadvantaged children. Schools undertake the EYFSP and also undertake assessments when children enter Reception. If they are acting in the best interests of children, they will also have strong partnerships with all the early education providers that the children in their Reception classes are most likely to attend. The research underpinning the Tickell review identifies the transition from early education to school as a particular area where some children, particularly more vulnerable children, can encounter difficulties.³⁴
79. It is within the gift of motivated school leaders to work collaboratively with other early education providers to improve children's readiness for school. We therefore note with concern that some nurseries and pre-schools are reporting a negative response from schools when they have made an approach to develop a partnership with the school.³⁵
80. The reasons that partnerships do not succeed or are challenging to establish can be varied and complex. However, the current system of school accountability does not incentivise schools to work collaboratively with nurseries, pre-schools or childminders.
81. Because inspectors take account of the school's assessment of children's development on entry to Reception, there is a perverse incentive for schools to only begin to intervene once children have joined the school. While schools cannot be held accountable for the performance of other providers, they can be incentivised to work more closely with other early education providers. They can share expertise and develop shared practices so that they work collaboratively with parents to ensure that the transition from pre-school to school is seamless.

34. *The Early Years Foundation Stage review: a report on the evidence*, an independent review by Dame Clare Tickell for the Department for Education; March 2011; www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-early-years-foundation-stage-review-report-on-the-evidence.

35. Pacey, *Building Blocks* 2015; www.pacey.org.uk.

Inspector findings: How incentives can influence assessment in the early years

Current assessment underestimates the abilities of the children when they start at the school. Most have attended one of the two nurseries in the village. However, school data indicate that over half the children started school in September 2014 with skills and abilities similar to those of an average two- to three-year-old. This is not an accurate reflection of the lively, articulate and keen-to-learn children the inspection team met in the Reception classroom.

Assessment of children's attainment at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage in 2014 is too high. Accurate Year 1 assessment of the children who completed their Reception Year last July indicates that about half of them are not as far ahead with their learning as the Early Years Foundation Stage assessment suggested.

82. If primary schools were incentivised to see improving readiness for school as an opportunity, not a challenge, then those schools that take two-year-olds would also be incentivised to ensure that more of the children in their classes were from disadvantaged backgrounds.

'I see supporting the most disadvantaged children in this area as a moral imperative. As an outstanding school, we are seen as a centre of excellence and a hub for the local community. We are trusted and respected by parents and fellow professionals for the work that we do.'

'It is important that we continue to reach out and do all that we can to tackle the early failure experienced by many children. When the opportunity to enrol two-year-olds came along, it became a natural extension of the work we were already doing with families and other pre-school settings.'

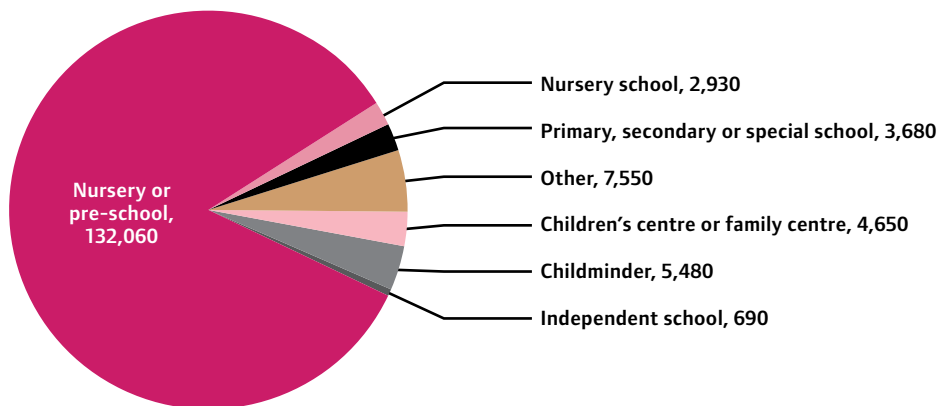
'Mums, in particular, like the flexibility of the offer we have in place. They can be reluctant to leave their two-year-olds initially as they can become their crutch, their reason for not expanding their own horizons and progressing in their own life. We normally start with just one or two half-days each week so that Mum can still have the important time they need with their young ones. As both parent and child become more confident, this often extends to a full 15 hours of provision. It is amazing how independent both mothers and children can become.'³⁶



36. *Teaching and play in the early years – a balancing act?*, Ofsted, July 2015; www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-and-play-in-the-early-years-a-balancing-act.

83. Overall, however, primary school places for two-year-olds are not focused on the most disadvantaged. In 2015, there were 43,000 two-year-olds³⁷ in primary schools. In the same year, 40% of two-year-olds were eligible for a funded place because of disadvantage. If schools were taking a proportionate number of funded two-year-olds, this would represent over 17,000 places for these children. In actuality, there were only 3,430 children with a funded place.³⁸ This means that primary school places for two-year-olds were disproportionately occupied by children from better off families.
84. There are 40 local authorities where there are no disadvantaged two-year-olds in any maintained school.

Figure 10: Number of two-year-olds benefiting from funded early education in 2015, by provider type^{1,2,3,4}



¹ Data include children aged two as at January 2015. Source: Department for Education; www.gov.uk/government/statistics/provision-for-children-under-5-years-of-age-january-2015.

² Primary schools include primary converter academies, primary sponsor-led academies and primary free schools.

³ Other schools include state-funded secondary schools (maintained secondary schools, secondary converter academies, secondary sponsor-led academies, secondary free schools and city technology colleges) and special schools (general hospital schools).

⁴ Figures have been rounded to the nearest 10 therefore totals may not add due to rounding.

Source: Department for Education; www.gov.uk/government/statistics/provision-for-children-under-5-years-of-age-january-2015.

85. Prior to this year, there was no clear lever to drive change in the demographic of children attending specific schools. In our last report, we called for changes to the admissions code to enable schools to prioritise the most disadvantaged children. The new admissions code, which came into force December 2014, now allows admissions authorities to make provision for children eligible for the early years pupil premium to be given priority.³⁹ Eligible children in Nursery classes may also be given priority if they are in the school's Nursery class, or a nursery established and run by the school. Evidence from the pilot project for two-year-olds in schools suggests that demand for new places aged two is primarily for funded places.⁴⁰

37. Statistical first release: Schools, pupils and their characteristics: January 2015, Department for Education, June 2015; www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2015.

38. Statistical first release: Provision for children under 5 years of age: January 2015, Department for Education, June 2015; www.gov.uk/government/statistics/provision-for-children-under-5-years-of-age-january-2015.

39. School admissions code, Department for Education, December 2014; www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-admissions-code--2.

40. The early education pilot for 2-year-old children: age 5 follow up, Department for Education, March 2013; www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-early-education-pilot-for-two-year-old-children-age-five-follow-up.

86. The track record of primary schools in reducing disadvantage suggests that if more primary leaders were to adopt a more ambitious role in improving readiness for schools this may have a positive impact. In literacy and numeracy skills specifically, the gap between more disadvantaged children and their peers narrows during primary school.

Figure 11: Achievement in mathematics at key stages by free school meals eligibility

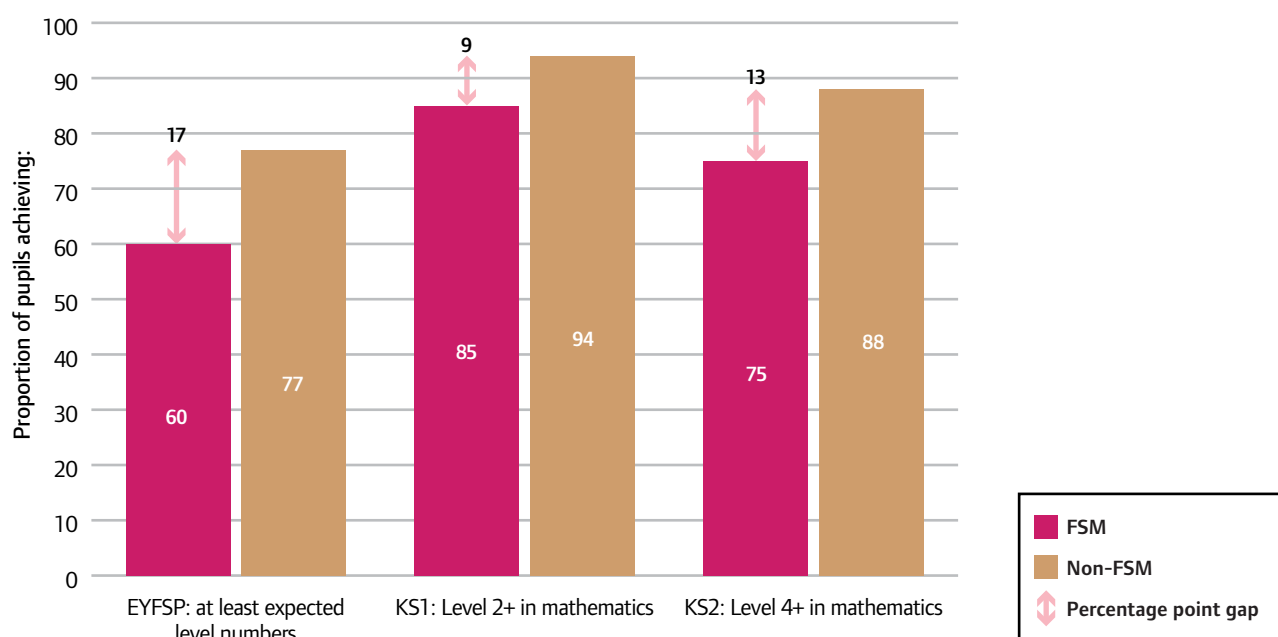
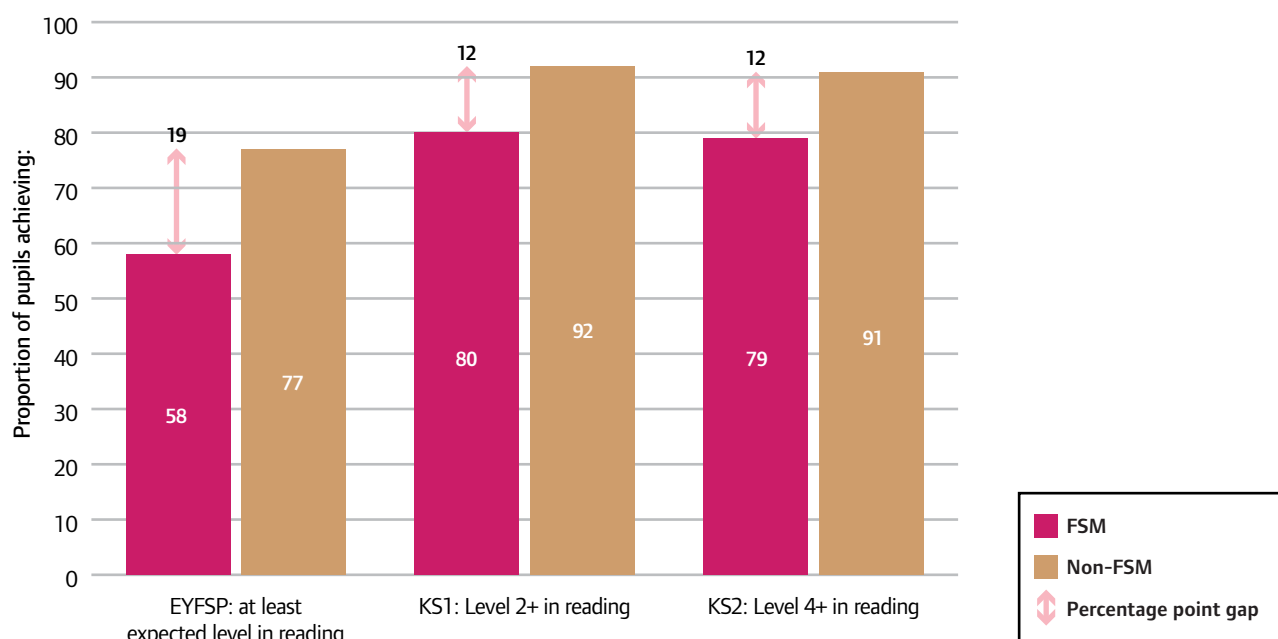


Figure 12: Achievement in reading at key stages by free school meals eligibility



Sources:

Table 3, National, local authority and pupil residency tables, www.gov.uk/government/statistics/eyfsp-attainment-by-pupil-characteristics-2013-to-2014.

Table 9, KS1 national tables, www.gov.uk/government/statistics/phonics-screening-check-and-key-stage-1-assessments-england-2014.

Summary table, National tables, www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-curriculum-assessments-at-key-stage-2-2014-revised.



Collaborating on improvement

87. Early education has made great strides in recent years: many more providers are good or outstanding, and more leaders and professionals working in the sector are demonstrating their knowledge of, and commitment to, learning and development.
88. We are committed to working in partnership with the sector, and are encouraged by feedback that the 'Big Conversation' between Ofsted and the sector is creating a more trusting, collaborative way of working. Early childhood regional steering groups are comprised of representatives from across the sector including private, voluntary and independent settings, childminders and local authority representatives. The meetings have evolved over the course of the year and what started initially as a challenge to Ofsted – with complaint-driven inspections – now offers a genuine forum to take forward improvement in the sector. We hope that this continues.
89. Following last year's Annual Report we refreshed the membership of our Consultative Forum to include wider representation from across the sector.

'The benefits of working with the consultative forum for the sector have been enormous. The Ofsted 'big conversation' came into being because people didn't feel that there was a conversation with our inspection and regulation body and now we have one. We have a positive one and we have engaged very well with the senior team to such a degree that they are now coming to the regional meetings. There's much more engagement at ground level... prior to the consultative forum there were quite a lot of tensions between the sector and Ofsted, a lot of miscommunication, it wasn't the happiest situation. Now we genuinely feel that Ofsted have been listening and are engaged.'

June O'Sullivan – CE London Early Years Foundation

90. We have committed to reaching more providers to provide more direct support for improvement. In the North West region, for example, this has taken the shape of a series of conferences, suitable in format for small businesses. The final conference will be attended by over six times as many as the first.
91. Regional working has also supported Ofsted's own improvement. Changes to the way that we quality assure our work has enabled us to more clearly review the work of individual inspectors. A more systematic approach has meant that we have identified specific development needs for individual inspectors. In most cases, tailored support and training has helped inspectors to tackle these issues successfully. In a few cases where performance was poor the outcome was that the inspectors left Ofsted's employment.

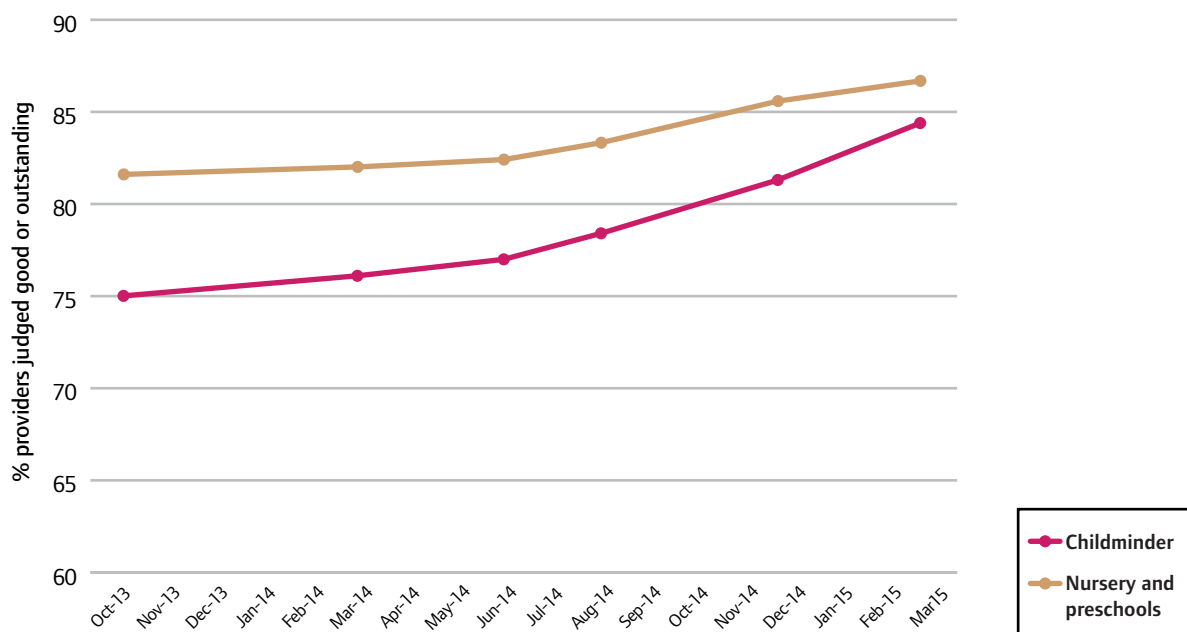
92. As part of the greater collaboration, we want to ensure that all aspects of our work, including our regulatory role and our work tackling concerns and underperformance, are clearly helping the sector to improve. At the same time, we are improving what we offer the sector, through our work directly with providers and our reviews of the work of our own inspectors.

Stronger registration leads to more effective new entrants

93. Last year, we reported that changes to our registration system and expectations mean that more weak childminders have been leaving and that childminders who are newly registering are performing better overall. A stronger registration process means that childminders start out with a better understanding of what it takes to deliver good quality learning and care. The process will deter those with unrealistic views of the demands of childminding, at the same time as providing clear guidance for those who want to get it right from the start.
94. Because there is such high turnover in the sector, this change in the make-up of the sector is having a marked effect on the level of performance overall. The pattern seen last year has continued. The level of performance of childminders at their first inspection rose from 73% to 79% good or outstanding after the introduction of registration changes. Since our last report, this has risen further to 86%.



Figure 13: Percentage of early years providers judged good or outstanding for overall effectiveness at their most recent inspection, by provider type^{1,2}



¹ Data reflect information held in Ofsted systems as at the time of publication.

² Only providers on the Early Years Register are included above.



Failure to meet minimum standards is not an option

95. Ofsted is empowered to take enforcement action against providers that consistently fail to meet minimum standards as set out in the EYFS. If a provider is judged inadequate, they have a brief six-month period to improve before re-inspection. Only 7% of providers did not improve in the six-month period. Where providers have not improved within the timescale, a fifth have had their registration cancelled or have resigned.
96. The following cases provide an illustration of the kind of circumstances where action is merited.

Ofsted received a complaint about a registered nursery concerning a lack of staff suitability checks, visitors having unsupervised access to children, lack of heating and locked fire exits. We inspected and found a number of the concerns to be upheld. The nursery chose to close temporarily to put things right, but when they re-opened we suspended the registration because children were still at risk of harm. When the provider tackled the risks, we subsequently lifted the suspension but continued monitoring. A few months later, we discovered further, similar concerns and investigated in conjunction with the local authority children's services. We concluded that we needed to cancel the registration. The provider appealed to the independent Health, Education and Social Care Chamber First-tier Tribunal but lost the appeal. The cancellation was therefore confirmed.

We were informed by a local authority children's services department that a young child had been left alone in a car by a childminder at a shopping centre a few days earlier. Security guards had contacted the police after they had been alerted by a member of the public who saw the child. We suspended the childminder's registration to protect the safety of children while we investigated. We subsequently discovered that they continued to childmind despite the suspension, which is an offence. Following our investigation, which included close liaison with the local authority and the police, we cancelled the registration of the childminder because we concluded that they were not a suitable person to care for minded children. We also successfully prosecuted and they were convicted of childminding while being suspended and fined. They subsequently appealed the conviction but lost the appeal.

Improvement through inspection

97. Supporting improvement in early education is only possible if inspection is reliable, consistent and findings from inspection help providers to improve. Ofsted's early years inspections are now overseen regionally. This regional approach has created the opportunity to see local performance from different angles.

Information held by Ofsted showed that a group of nurseries transferred ownership following a change in registered person. We had received complaints relating to the settings, notifications of injuries to children and referrals to the Local Authority Designated Officer. The South East region acted to inspect the four settings simultaneously. At inspection, one of the nurseries was judged to be inadequate, one required improvement and two were good. Common issues across the four centres related to the quality of staff observation, assessment and planning; the quality of the learning environments; the quality of leadership and management; partnerships with parents and the management of parents concerns. Feedback from the group was highly positive regarding the impact and that the inspection had been 'really useful for the managers and the organisation as a whole'.



Key statistics

Most recent overall effectiveness judgements of maintained nursery schools as at 31 March 2015^{1,2}

	Total number inspected	Percentage of providers			
		% Outstanding	% Good	% Requires improvement	% Inadequate
Nursery schools	411	58	39	3	0

¹ Data include all open inspected nursery schools as at 31 March 2015, with a published inspection report as at 7 May 2015.

² Percentages are rounded and may not add to 100.

Overall effectiveness for maintained nursery school inspections between 1 November 2013 and 31 March 2015^{1,2,3}

	Number of inspections	Percentage of inspections			
		% Outstanding	% Good	% Requires improvement	% Inadequate
Nursery schools	207	56	40	3	1

¹ Data include all inspections in this period, including re-inspections and inspections of providers who have since closed.

² Data include inspection outcomes published as at 7 May 2015.

³ Percentages are rounded and may not add to 100.

Early years judgement recorded at maintained school inspections between 1 September 2014 and 31 March 2015^{1,2,3,4}

	Number of inspections	Percentage of inspections			
		% Outstanding	% Good	% Requires improvement	% Inadequate
Nursery	109	60	39	1	1
Primary	2,222	13	72	14	1
Pupil referral unit	4	50	25	25	0
Secondary	18	17	61	22	0
Special	85	51	41	5	4
All provision	2,438	17	69	13	1

¹ Early years judgements are made at inspections of maintained schools with early years provision. The judgement was introduced on 1 September 2014.

² Data include all inspections in this period, including re-inspections and inspections of providers who have since closed.

³ Data include inspection outcomes published as at 7 May 2015.

⁴ Percentages are rounded and may not add to 100.

Early years judgement recorded at independent school inspections between 1 September 2014 and 31 March 2015^{1,2,3,4}

	Number of inspections	Percentage of inspections			
		% Outstanding	% Good	% Requires improvement	% Inadequate
Independent schools with early years provision	45	13	44	16	27

¹ Early years judgements are made at inspections of independent schools with early years provision. The judgement was introduced on 1 September 2014.

² Data include all inspections in this period, including re-inspections and inspections of providers who have since closed.

³ Data include inspection outcomes published as at 30 April 2015.

⁴ Percentages are rounded and may not add to 100.

Most recent overall effectiveness judgements of children's centres as at 31 March 2015, by provider type^{1,2}

	Total number inspected	Percentage of providers			
		% Outstanding	% Good	% Requires improvement	% Inadequate
Single children's centres	1,978	11	56	32	1
Children's centre groups	214	2	50	38	9
All provision	2,192	10	56	32	2

¹ Data include providers who were open and inspected as at 31 March 2015, with a published inspection report as at 30 April 2015.

² Percentages are rounded and do not always add to exactly 100.

Overall effectiveness for children's centre inspections between 1 November 2013 and 31 March 2015, provider type^{1,2,3}

	Number of inspections	Percentage of inspections			
		% Outstanding	% Good	% Requires improvement	% Inadequate
Single children's centres	351	5	45	45	5
Children's centre groups	210	2	50	36	12
All provision	561	4	47	41	7

¹ Data include all inspections in this period, including re-inspections and inspections of providers who have since closed.

² Data include inspection outcomes published as at 30 April 2015.

³ Percentages are rounded and may not add to 100.

Most recent overall effectiveness judgements of early years providers as at 31 March 2015, by provider type^{1,2,3,4}

	Total number inspected	Percentage of providers			
		% Outstanding	% Good	% Requires improvement	% Inadequate
Childminder	38,943	11	73	14	1
Childcare on non-domestic premises	22,844	17	70	12	1
Childcare on domestic premises	144	24	56	17	3
All provision	61,935	13	72	14	1

¹ Data include providers who were active and inspected as at 31 March 2015, with a published inspection report as at 30 April 2015.

² Only providers on the Early Years Register are included above.

³ Percentages are rounded and may not add to 100.

⁴ Total includes four Early Years registered inspections of home childcarers.

Overall effectiveness for early years providers inspections between 1 November 2013 and 31 March 2015, by provider type^{1,2,3,4,5}

	Total number inspected	Percentage of providers			
		% Outstanding	% Good	% Requires improvement	% Inadequate
Childminder	13,390	7	69	17	7
Childcare on non-domestic premises	12,272	9	62	19	9
Childcare on domestic premises	78	13	49	26	13
All provision	25,744	8	66	18	8

¹ Data include all inspections in this period, including re-inspections and inspections of providers who have since closed.

² Data include inspection outcomes published as at 30 April 2015.

³ Only inspections of providers on the Early Years Register are included above.

⁴ Total includes four Early Years Register inspections of home childcarers.

⁵ Percentages are rounded and may not add to 100.

Percentage of children eligible for free school meals achieving a good level of development at the end of the EYFS^{1,2}

Percentage of children achieving a GLD				Percentage of children achieving a GLD			
Local authority	2013 %	2014 %	% point change	Local authority	2013 %	2014 %	% point change
Lewisham	60	68	8	Slough	38	48	▲ 10
Greenwich	60	65	5	Southampton	38	48	▲ 10
Bexley	47	62	▲ 15	Telford and Wrekin	31	48	▲ 17
Hackney	55	61	6	Torbay	N/A	48	-
Newham	54	60	6	Birmingham	39	47	8
Waltham Forest	52	58	6	East Riding of Yorkshire	33	47	▲ 14
Ealing	49	55	6	Hampshire	37	47	▲ 10
Southwark	52	55	3	Isle of Wight	34	47	▲ 13
Thurrock	42	54	▲ 12	Lambeth	36	47	▲ 11
Barking and Dagenham	36	53	▲ 17	Poole	30	47	▲ 17
Barnet	46	53	7	Salford	41	47	6
Portsmouth	46	53	7	Shropshire	36	47	▲ 11
Haringey	41	52	▲ 11	Trafford	39	47	8
Kent	48	52	4	Wirral	28	47	▲ 19
Lincolnshire	47	52	5	Wolverhampton	35	47	▲ 12
North Lincolnshire	35	52	▲ 17	Hertfordshire	41	46	5
Peterborough	34	52	▲ 18	Manchester	39	46	7
Reading	40	52	▲ 12	North Somerset	39	46	7
South Gloucestershire	47	52	5	Plymouth	42	46	4
Wandsworth	40	52	▲ 12	Dorset	40	45	5
Westminster	41	52	▲ 11	Hartlepool	30	45	▲ 15
Bournemouth	42	51	▲ 9	Luton	40	45	5
Brent	52	51	-1	Rotherham	40	45	5
Bromley	40	51	▲ 11	Staffordshire	36	45	▲ 9
Hammersmith and Fulham	40	51	▲ 11	Sunderland	34	45	▲ 11
Tower Hamlets	43	51	8	Wakefield	39	45	6
Devon	48	50	2	York	31	45	▲ 14
Knowsley	44	50	6	Bristol	34	44	▲ 10
Medway	42	50	8	Cheshire West and Chester	31	44	▲ 13
Redbridge	48	50	2	Derbyshire	32	44	▲ 12
Coventry	42	49	7	Kensington and Chelsea	40	44	4
East Sussex	27	49	▲ 22	Kingston upon Thames	37	44	7
Enfield	41	49	8	Merton	33	44	▲ 11
Havering	40	49	▲ 9	Sandwell	35	44	▲ 9
Hounslow	29	49	▲ 20	Sheffield	37	44	7
Islington	36	49	▲ 13	St Helens	43	44	1
Kirklees	35	49	▲ 14	Swindon	37	44	7
Lancashire	40	49	▲ 9	Bracknell Forest	34	43	▲ 9
Croydon	35	48	▲ 13	Bradford	36	43	7
Harrow	31	48	▲ 17	Camden	34	43	▲ 9
Milton Keynes	32	48	▲ 16	Essex	35	43	8
North East Lincolnshire	41	48	7	Liverpool	37	43	6

Percentage of children achieving a GLD			
Local authority	2013 %	2014 %	% point change
Norfolk	31	43	▲ 12
Southend on Sea	26	43	▲ 17
Blackpool	40	42	▲ 2
Brighton and Hove	27	42	▲ 15
Cheshire East	36	42	▲ 6
Dudley	34	42	▲ 8
Suffolk	33	42	▲ 9
Walsall	33	42	▲ 9
Bedford	32	41	▲ 9
Cambridgeshire	31	41	▲ 10
Cornwall	33	41	▲ 8
Cumbria	30	41	▲ 11
Kingston Upon Hull	35	41	▲ 6
Northamptonshire	33	41	▲ 8
Rutland	25	41	▲ 16
Solihull	32	41	▲ 9
Somerset	31	41	▲ 10
Stoke on Trent	41	41	▲ 0
Buckinghamshire	32	40	▲ 8
County Durham	26	40	▲ 14
Doncaster	29	40	▲ 11
North Yorkshire	24	40	▲ 16
Sefton	32	40	▲ 8
South Tyneside	33	40	▲ 7
Stockport	34	40	▲ 6
Sutton	27	40	▲ 13
Windsor and Maidenhead	35	40	▲ 5
Bury	32	39	▲ 7
Calderdale	29	39	▲ 10
Hillingdon	28	39	▲ 11
Nottinghamshire	37	39	▲ 2
Surrey	28	39	▲ 11
Darlington	36	38	▲ 2
Leeds	34	38	▲ 4
Middlesbrough	28	38	▲ 10
Newcastle upon Tyne	28	38	▲ 10
North Tyneside	31	38	▲ 7
Northumberland	30	38	▲ 8
Oldham	27	38	▲ 11
Oxfordshire	27	38	▲ 11
Tameside	28	38	▲ 10
Warrington	18	38	▲ 20
Warwickshire	26	38	▲ 12

Percentage of children achieving a GLD			
Local authority	2013 %	2014 %	% point change
West Sussex	33	38	▲ 5
Gateshead	20	37	▲ 17
Nottingham	28	37	▲ 9
Redcar and Cleveland	33	37	▲ 4
Barnsley	33	36	▲ 3
Bolton	32	36	▲ 4
Central Bedfordshire	29	36	▲ 7
Derby	28	36	▲ 8
Richmond upon Thames	21	36	▲ 15
West Berkshire	41	36	▲ -5
Wiltshire	29	36	▲ 7
Worcestershire	27	36	▲ 9
Gloucestershire	34	35	▲ 1
Leicestershire	25	35	▲ 10
Rochdale	29	35	▲ 6
Wokingham	26	35	▲ 9
Herefordshire	34	34	▲ 0
Leicester	21	34	▲ 13
Bath and North East Somerset	29	33	▲ 4
Halton	24	33	▲ 9
Stockton on Tees	22	33	▲ 11
Blackburn with Darwen	32	32	▲ 0
Wigan	19	32	▲ 13

▲ denotes local authorities with a higher increase in the percentage of children eligible for free school meals achieving a good level of development than the national average increase of eight percentage points.

¹ A Good Level of Development is defined as the number and proportion of children achieving at least the expected level within the three prime areas of learning: communication and language, physical development and personal, social and emotional development; and the early learning goals within the literacy and mathematics areas of learning.

² Figures for Isles of Scilly and City of London suppressed due to small numbers. Figures for Torbay not published in 2013 by Department for Education.

Source: Department for Education; www.gov.uk/government/statistics/eyfsp-attainment-by-pupil-characteristics-2013-to-2014

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