

# Outcome of the consultation on inspecting provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage from September 2008

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# Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Key findings</b> .....	<b>4</b>
Self-evaluation form.....	5
Provision judged as outstanding.....	5
Notice of inspection .....	5
Wrap-around care provided by childminders in the private and voluntary sector .....	6
Childminders with no children on roll.....	6
Proportionate inspections of early years settings .....	6
Other comments on the proposals .....	6
<b>Annex A: respondents</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Annex B: consultation questions and responses</b> .....	<b>8</b>

## Introduction

The Childcare Act 2006, which sets out how early years provision must be registered, will be implemented in September 2008. It provides for the introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage as a statutory framework for the learning, development and welfare of children, from birth to the 31 August following their fifth birthday, in early years settings and maintained and independent schools.

We consulted with the sector about a number of proposals underpinning our inspection of the Early Years Foundation Stage. In the consultation document we outlined our proposals for the inspection of early years provision from September 2008 in response to changes introduced by the Childcare Act 2006. We asked for views on a number of aspects specifically relating to the inspection of early years settings.<sup>1</sup>

We consulted with providers, stakeholders and others through:

- an online consultation document
- focus groups with key stakeholders
- a feedback day for providers and parents who took part in a pilot programme
- conferences and events at which we were asked to speak about the new inspection arrangements
- opportunities for users in schools and local authorities to comment on updates in our bi-monthly newsletter *Schools and inspection*.

The consultation took place between 22 November 2007 and 1 February 2008 and received 796 responses, which were sent via an online questionnaire, by email and on paper. Respondents were invited to provide an open-ended response to each question and extensive comments were received. Some large organisations sent a corporate response. A summary of results is provided in the annexes to this report.

## Key findings

1. Our plans for inspecting the Early Years Foundation Stage from September 2008 were well received and supported by the great majority of respondents. In particular, the simultaneous inspection of provision in schools was welcomed as a means of streamlining inspection and reducing the burden. However, respondents agreed that there should be parity and consistency in the inspection process and the judgements made across the sector.

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<sup>1</sup> The consultation document is available from [www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/20070041](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/20070041)

## **Self-evaluation form**

2. The large majority (86.2%) of respondents were in favour of giving all early years settings the opportunity to complete and submit a self-evaluation form online. The existing form is not mandatory and is currently very simple. The new form will not be mandatory either, but will be more demanding and will require a much more robust self-evaluation from the provider. Respondents were pleased to know that the self-evaluation form will be available online as well as in a paper version, and the majority of childminders (78%) and day-care providers (88%) said they would complete the self-evaluation form online. Providers of early years provision in schools felt that the self-evaluation form would benefit from additional questions specifically relating to the Early Years Foundation Stage.
3. The majority of local authorities agreed or were neutral when asked if the current self-evaluation forms adequately allow schools to evaluate their provision. The small number of respondents from independent schools also agreed or were neutral. The majority of maintained schools that responded felt that further questions should be added to the self-evaluation form to help them make a clear evaluation of the provision.

## **Provision judged as outstanding**

4. In both schools and early years settings, the consensus was that recommendations for improvement benefit all providers, even those judged as outstanding.

## **Notice of inspection**

5. The majority (77%) of respondents agreed that the current arrangements of giving little or no notice of inspection should continue. There was considerable comment about the notice period. Respondents gave support in broadly equal measure for both no notice and short notice (two days), but those who commented said that, whichever option was taken, there should be consistency for all providers and schools.
6. Providers consistently asked for the notice period to be the same across all early years provision. A few day-care providers commented that short notice allowed them to be present at their inspection which may not be the case if the inspection is unannounced. Childminders acknowledged that unannounced inspections may be difficult for them as many take children out on a daily basis, alongside taking and fetching children to and from school and nursery.

## **Wrap-around care provided by childminders in the private and voluntary sector**

7. The large majority of respondents agreed that wrap-around provision should be graded.

## **Childminders with no children on roll**

8. The large majority of respondents agreed with the proposal that the quality of a childminder's provision should not be graded when there are no children on the roll.

## **Proportionate inspections of early years settings**

9. The majority (60%) of all respondents were in favour of reduced tariff (lighter-touch) inspections for the highest performing settings. Respondents had mixed feelings about reduced tariff inspection in early years settings and in the private and voluntary sector. Some thought it was a good idea. Others believed that much could change in the private and voluntary sector during an inspection cycle and that each setting should have a full inspection in each cycle. Providers in both early years settings and schools felt that the reduced tariff inspection report should comment on all aspects of the provision to be of most help to parents.
10. Some respondents were not convinced of the value of a shorter inspection. Comments referred to situations changing on a very regular basis and inspectors not being present for long enough to become aware of all that is on offer or to consider and collect evidence to ensure areas for improvement are correctly identified.

## **Other comments on the proposals**

11. Schools commented on the need for a well-qualified workforce of inspectors to inspect the provision. Several suggested that each school inspection team should include an experienced and trained early years inspector.

## Annex A: respondents

The table below shows the breakdown of respondents by category.

Category	Percentage of respondents
Day-care provider	30.6
Childminder	29.2
Local authority	16.0
Other	7.9
Maintained school/nursery	7.4
Parent or carer	4.0
Provider organisation	3.7
Independent school	1.2

Face-to-face consultation took place with:

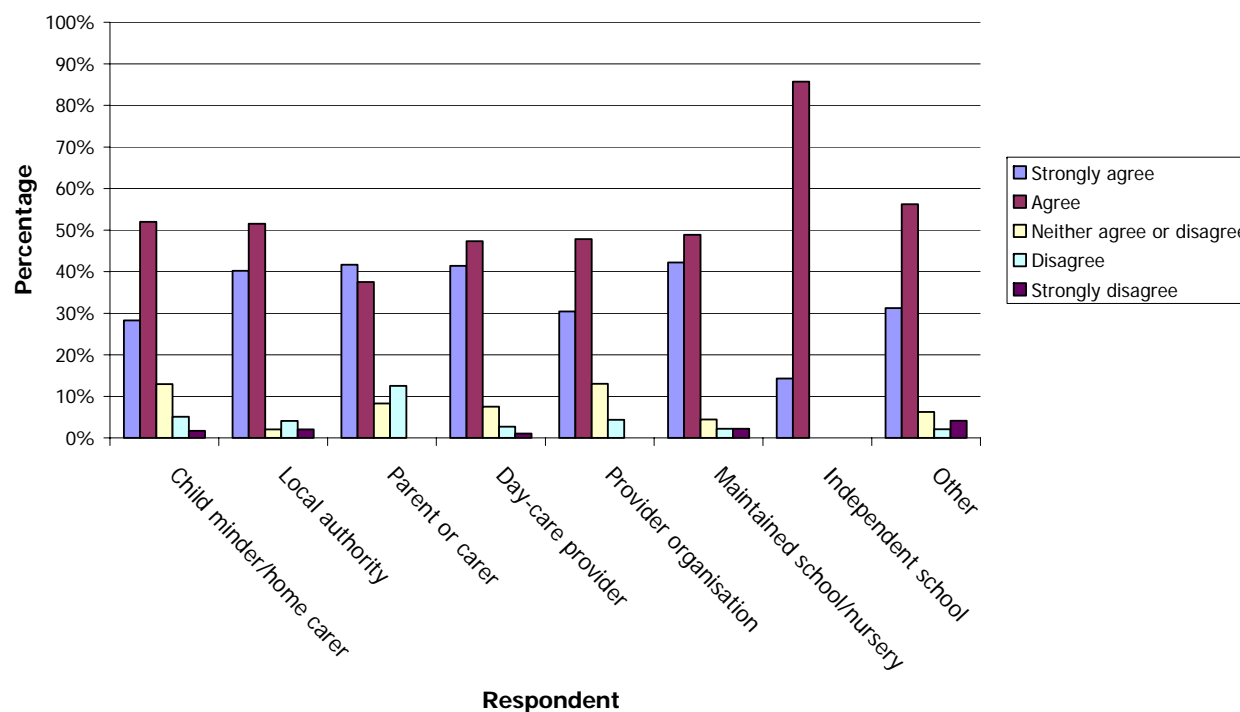
- providers who took part in pilot inspections
- representatives from Norfolk County Council
- Ofsted's National Consultative Forum, which includes the main national provider organisations
- Ofsted's National Provider Scheme meetings, which include the largest national childcare providers.

Written responses were received from:

- National Childminding Association
- National Day Nurseries Association
- National Union of Teachers
- National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers
- Pre-school Learning Alliance
- 4Children
- Early Childhood Forum.

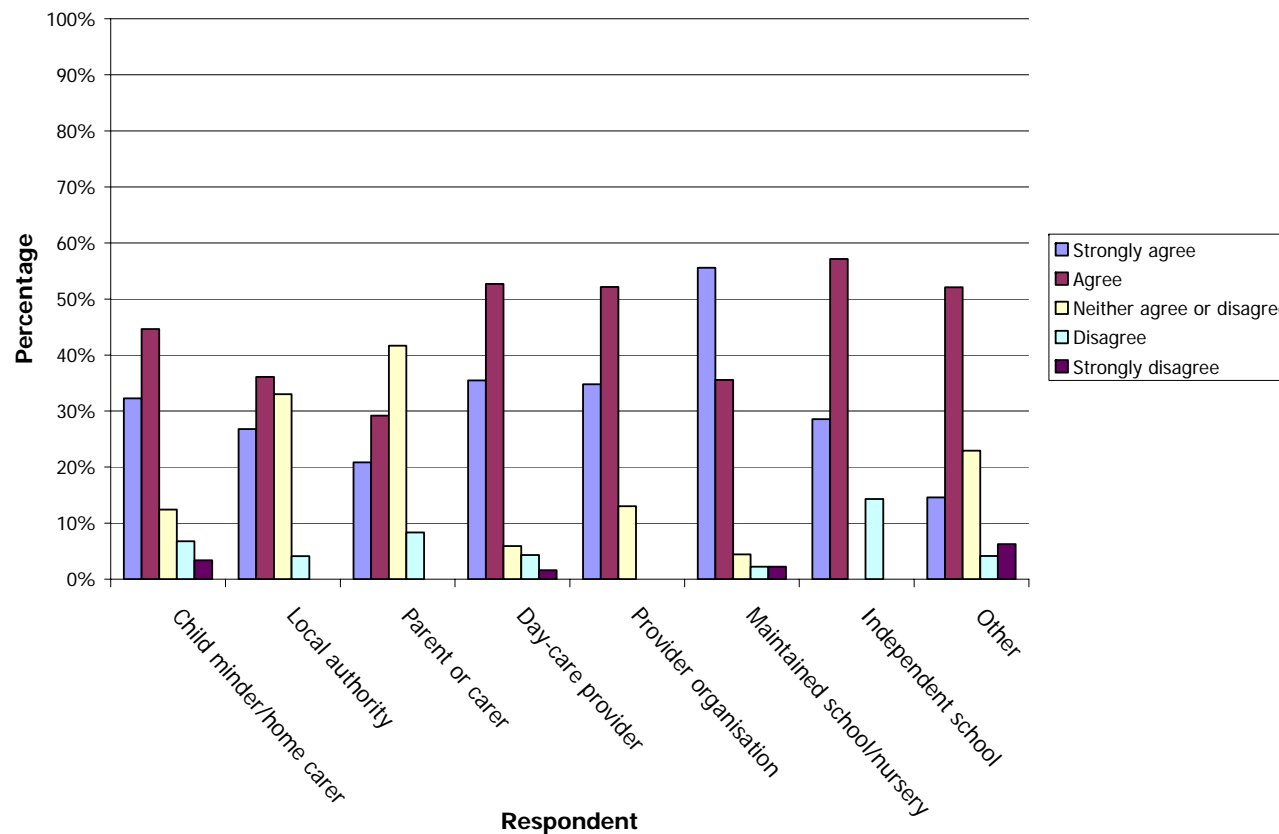
## Annex B: consultation questions and responses

Q1: Do you agree with the proposal that all early years settings should be given the opportunity to complete and submit a self-evaluation form (SEF) online?

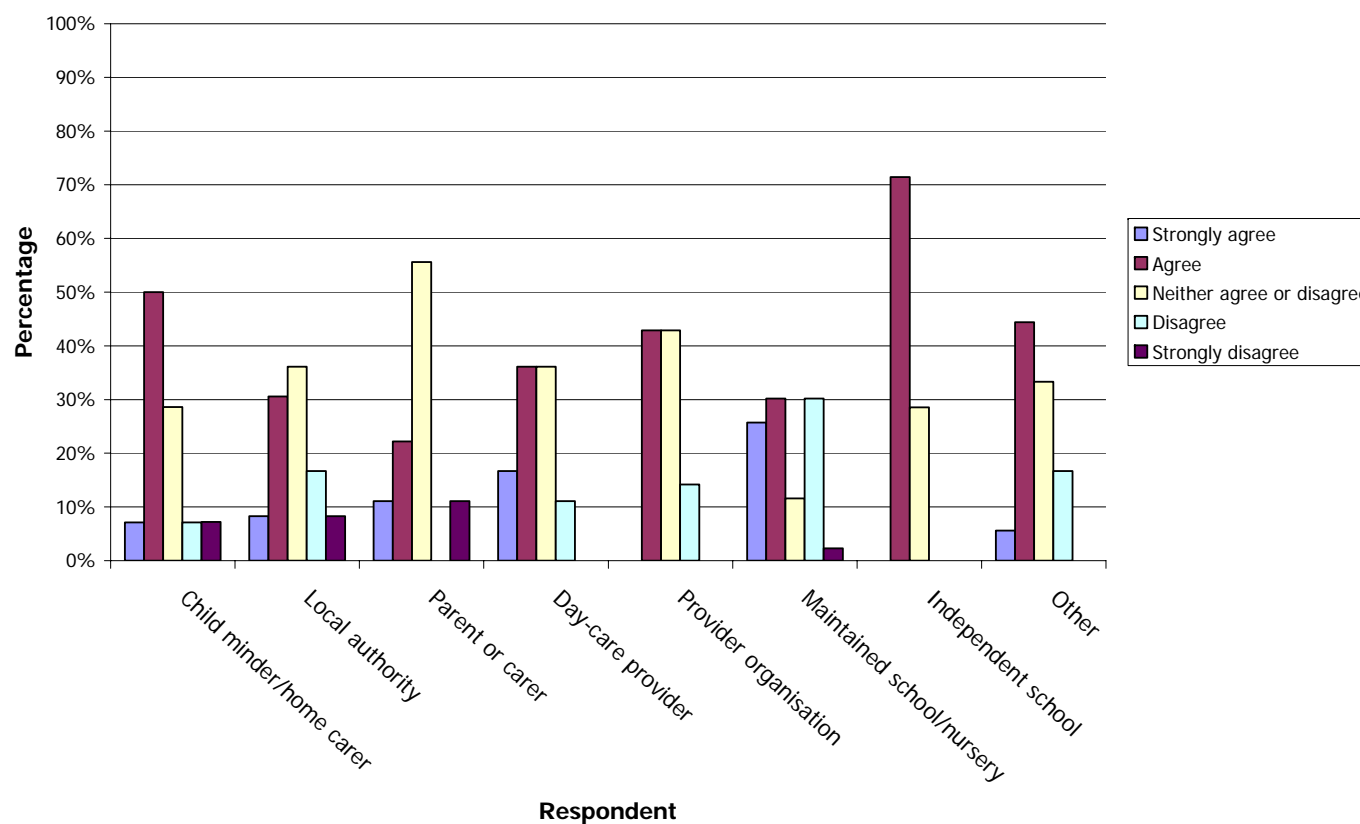




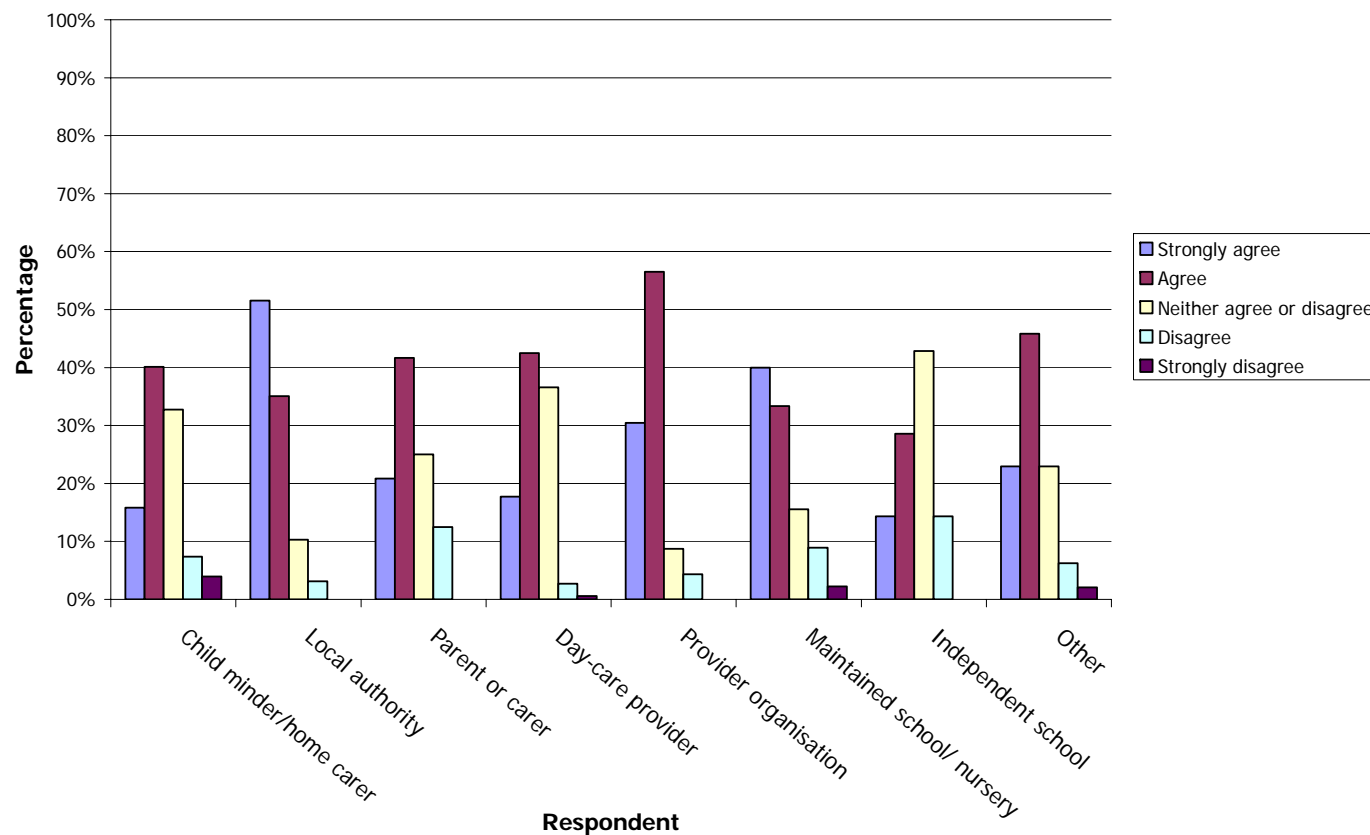
**Q2: Would you complete the SEF online?**



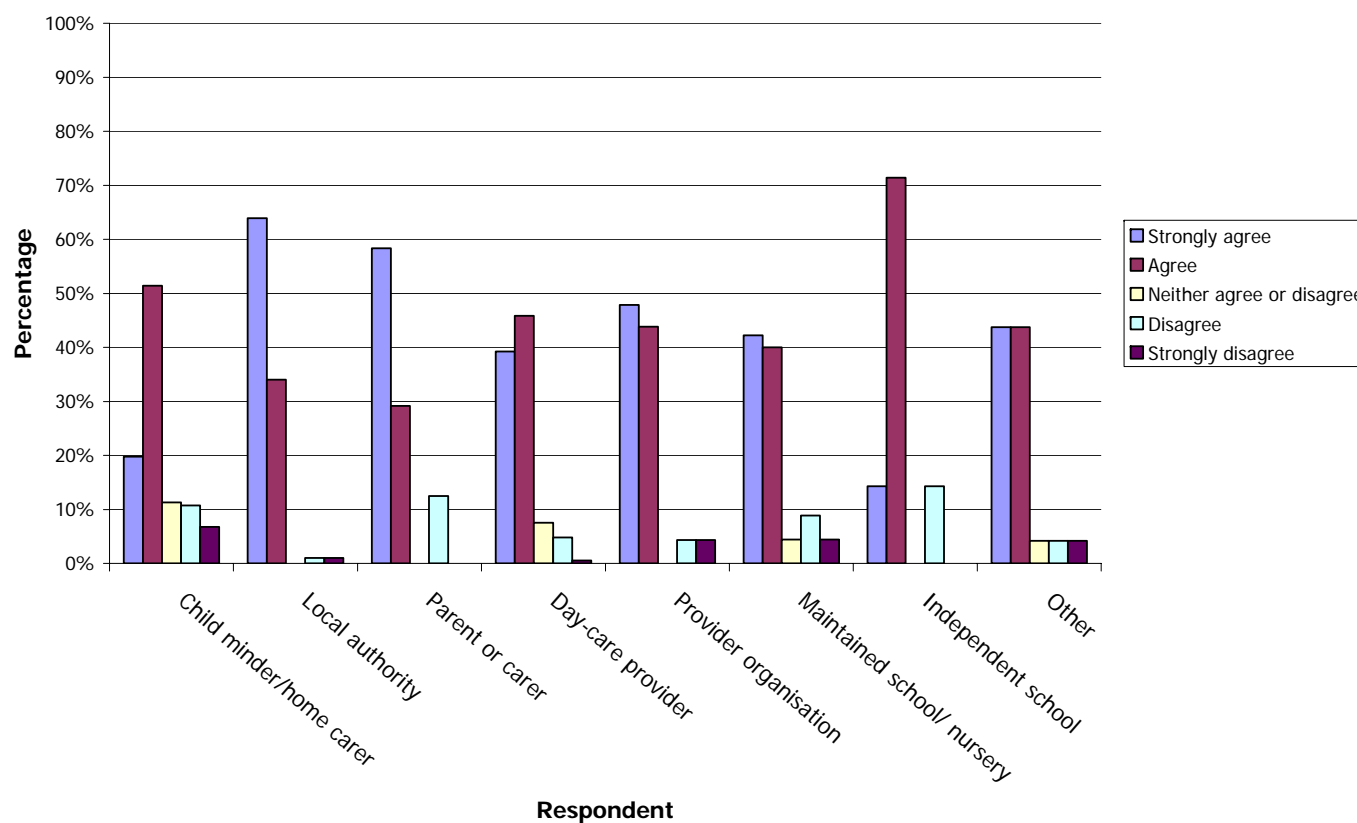
**Q3: If you are an early years provider in a school, do you think it will be possible to evaluate the provision effectively within your current SEF format?**



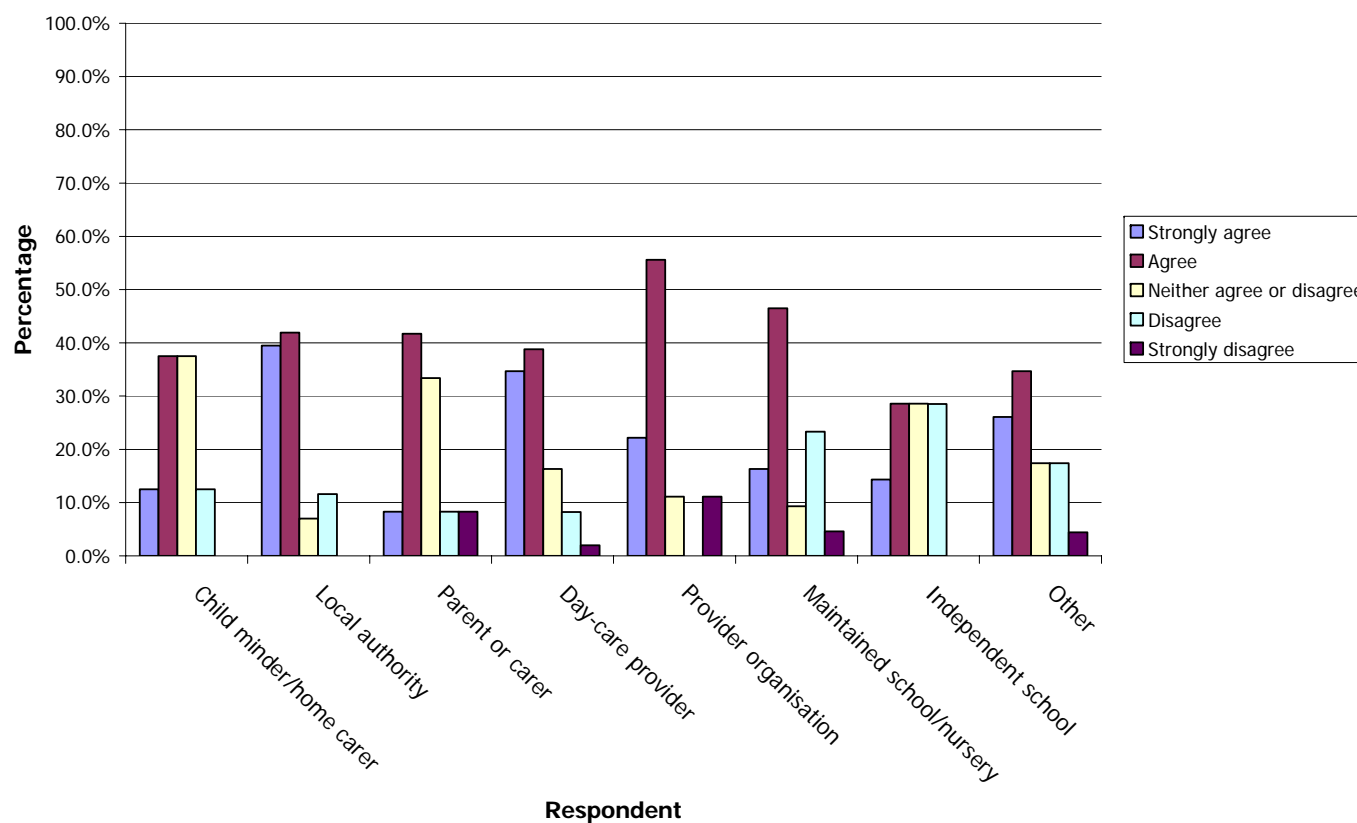
**Q4: Do you think further questions specifically related to EYFS are needed?**



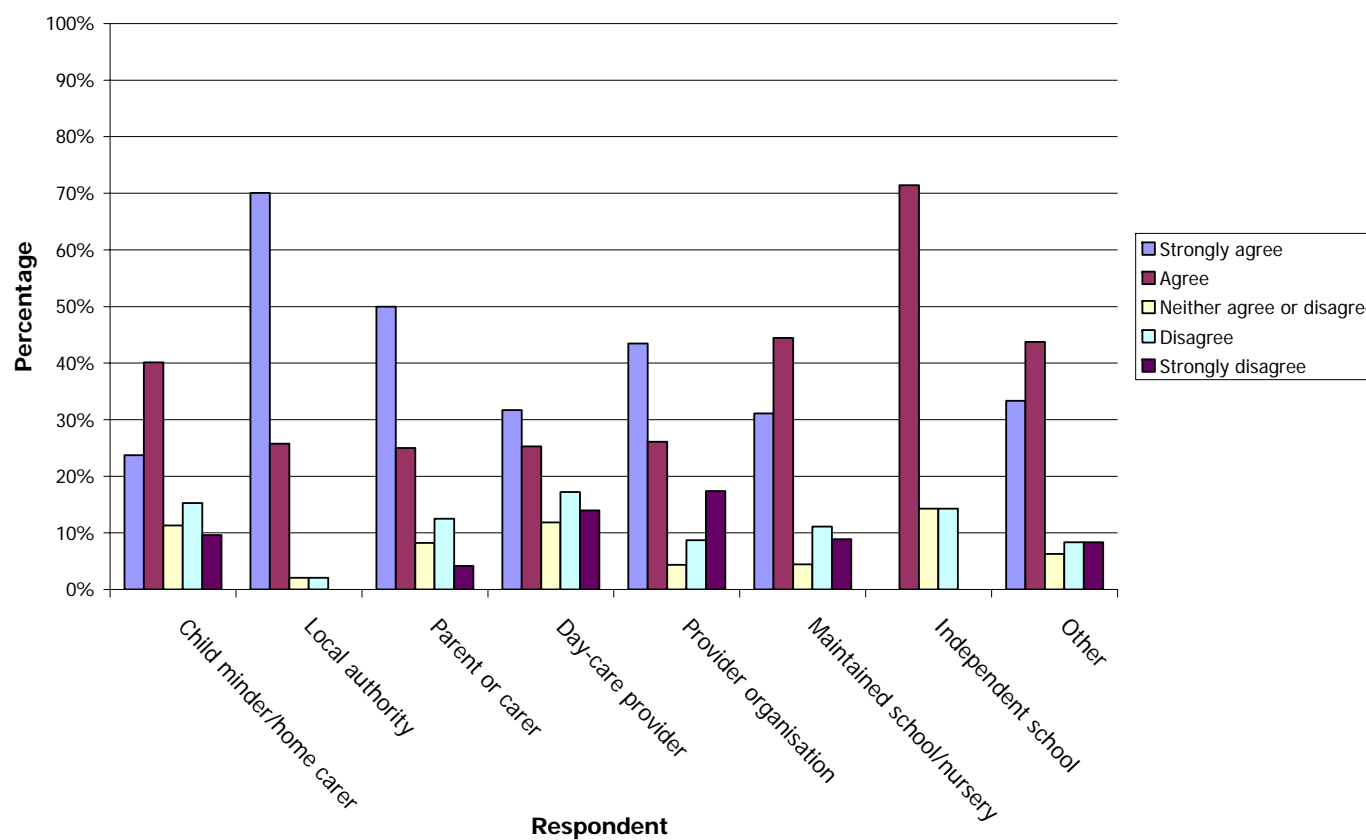
**Q5: Do you agree with Ofsted’s proposal to include recommendations for improvement, where appropriate, in early years settings’ inspection reports with outstanding provision?**



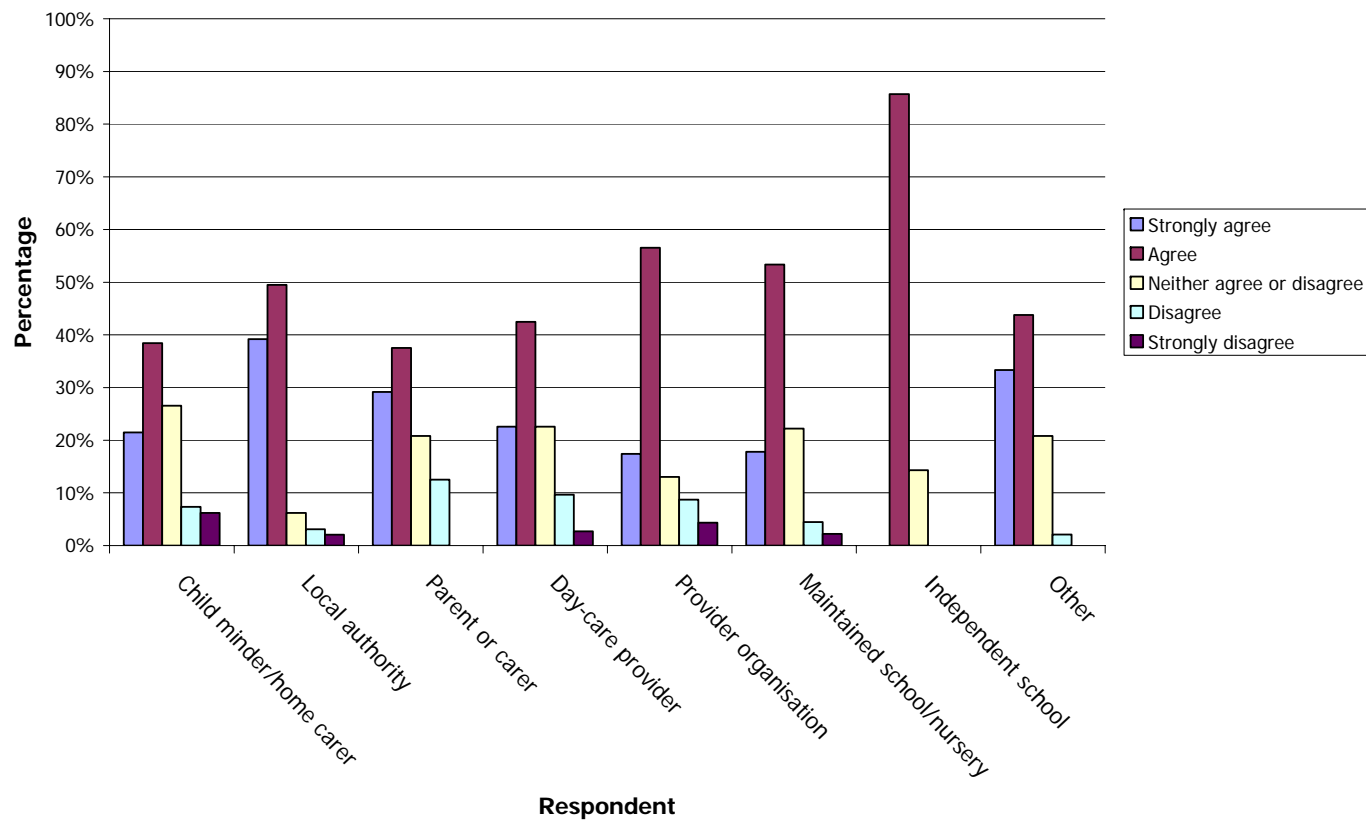
**Q6: If you are an early years provider in a school, would you always want the inspection to identify a specific area for improvement for this provision, even when it is outstanding?**



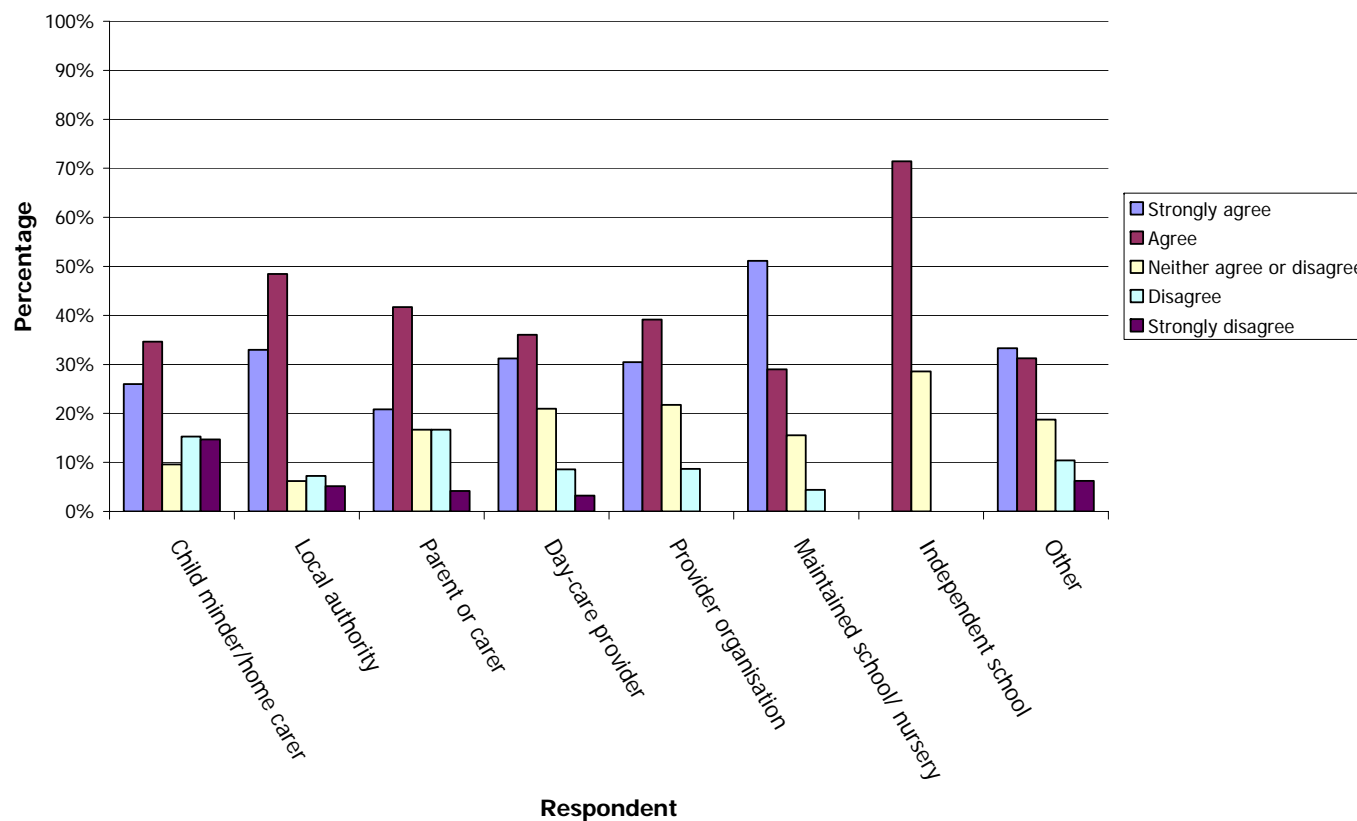
**Q7: Do you agree that the current arrangements of giving schools and early years settings little or no notice of routine inspections should continue once the EYFS is implemented?**



**Q8: Do you agree with Ofsted’s proposals for grading and reporting on wrap-around care?**

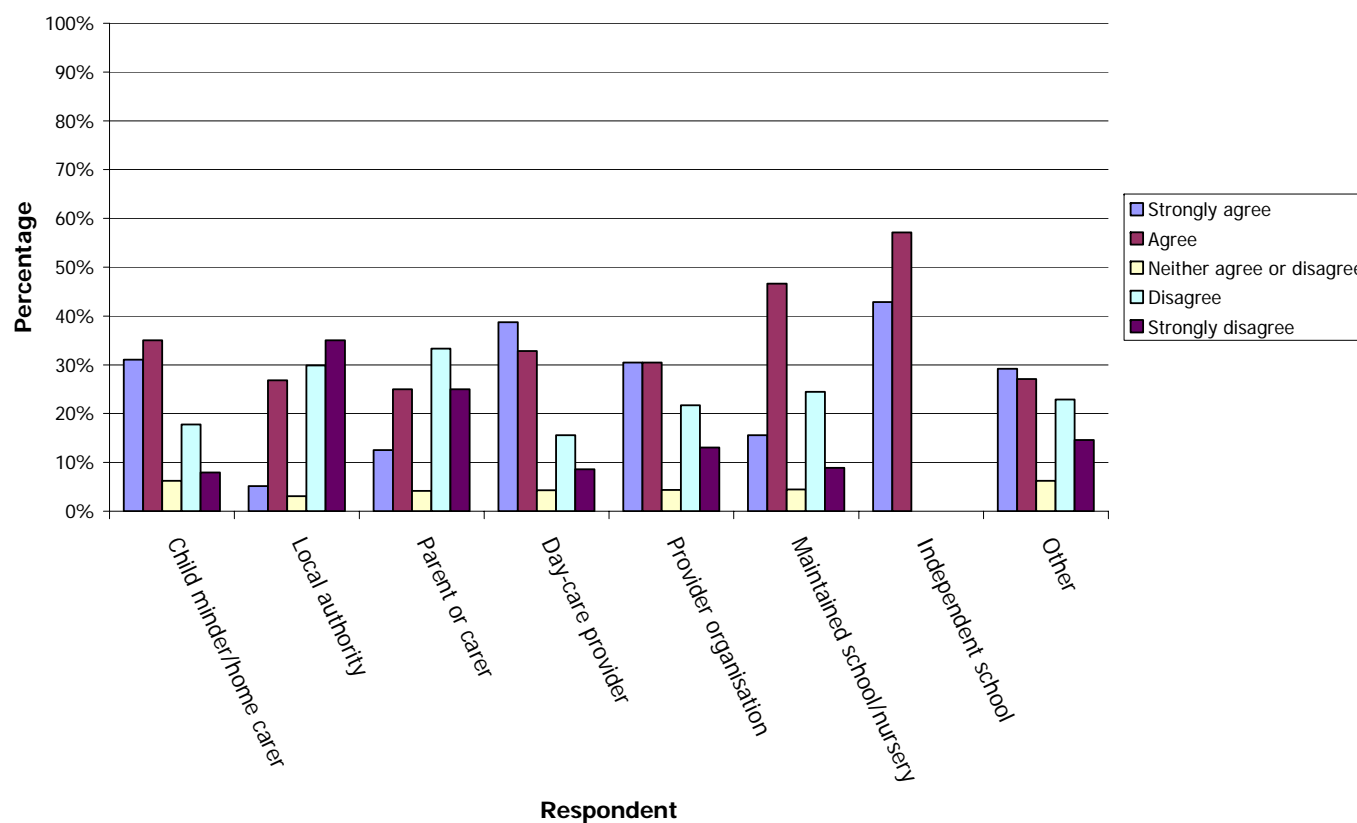


**Q9: Do you agree with Ofsted’s proposal that when an inspection is due, but a childminder has no children on roll, the quality of early years provision should not be graded?**





**Q10: Do you agree that provision in private and voluntary sector early years settings that consistently perform well and where there are no concerns should be subject to reduced inspection?**



**Q11: If you are an early years provider in a school, is there anything else you would like to tell us about regarding our proposed approach to inspecting this provision?**

Schools took the opportunity to express their views on the need for a well-qualified workforce of inspectors to inspect the provision. Several suggested that each school inspection team should include an experienced and trained early years inspector.