

Effective leadership and management in the EYFS

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Introduction



Leadership in early years is not an easy role. Often, individuals find themselves in the job with little training and support.

Leadership is very much about being pro-active, being seen to get on and get things done, making a difference, taking action. It is about how you are seen to lead your team, whilst keeping everything running and ensuring requirements are met.

This book is designed to unpick the role from a variety of perspectives, drawing together its many elements, including one of the hardest, the management of people. Each chapter explores a different aspect, beginning with leadership itself, moving through teamwork, performance management, monitoring, partnership working and safeguarding and welfare requirements. There is a wealth of reflective practice questions, task sheets and also staff meeting pointers in each chapter.

What is a leader and what is leadership?

A leader is someone who rises above the ordinary and helps their team decide what is important to achieve and

accomplish. Leadership is about the ability to help your team define their goals and priorities and how to help them grow. A leader of a setting has to have a strong sense of intrinsic motivation and drive, desire and passion for both the job and the early years.

Leadership in early years, covers a broad remit and requires a complex mix of skills and knowledge. Everyday, your leadership is experienced and potentially questioned by staff and parents. Then one day every few years, it is judged by Ofsted.

The opposite chart looks at how Ofsted view early years leadership and management. This is then reflected and explored throughout the book.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of early years provision isn't just about the 'evidence', but, importantly, about the impression the leader/manager gives in relation to their skills, knowledge, passion and enthusiasm for their setting. How well they know their staff and the children, and how they are working to promote continuous improvement.

Outstanding grade descriptor

This table lists the grade descriptors for outstanding for leadership and management from the Inspection Handbook for Early Years (August 2015). The table unpicks each statement in the handbook, explaining what it means for you to then identify how you might develop practice in your setting.

Descriptor	What this means/evidence	Development in my setting
The pursuit of excellence in all the setting's activities is demonstrated by an uncompromising, highly successful drive to improve achievement or maintain the highest levels of achievement for all children.	This begins with your vision for the setting, how that is driven in conjunction with your staff team. How robust is your Quality Improvement Plan. What other forms of self evaluation are in place? Do you identify expected impact and actual impact, to track how improvements have made a difference? Do you have a Self Evaluation Form? If you are a multi room setting, are there development plans for individual rooms/units?	
Incisive evaluation of the impact of staff's practice leads to rigorous performance management, supervision and highly focused professional development. As a result, teaching is highly effective or improving rapidly.	Do you have a regular implemented cycle of supervision and appraisal? Is this documented with clear targets set and followed through? How often does the manager carry out observations on individual members of staff and rooms? How often do you model good practice. Are you supportive and do you challenge practice in order to improve? What opportunities do staff have to access professional development training, either outside the setting or internally, with an external trainer? How do you use information from staff observations and supervisions to inform continuous improvement targets for the setting as a whole?	
Leaders and managers actively seek, evaluate and act on the views of parents, staff and children to drive continual improvement.	How do you encourage and support reflection in the setting? How do you involve parents, staff and children in this process? Do you have a parent forum? Do you provide parent questionnaires? Do you ask the opinion of children about what they like in the setting? Do staff contribute to the Self Evaluation Form/ Quality Improvement Plan?	
Highly effective monitoring identifies where children may be slow to develop key skills so that specific programmes of support are implemented to help them catch up. Gaps in achievement between different groups of children, especially those for whom the setting receives additional funding are negligible or closing.	2 year old checks are completed and effective. Do you carry out effective cohort analysis to identify where children might be making less progress and identify and evaluate how to take action, to support increased progress? Do you look at comparison between different groups, children with SEND needs, children with EAL and those in receipt of EYPP funding? Do you track progress to identify if progress gaps are closing and link to identify how funding is spent and how this impacts on progress.	
The provider has excellent knowledge of the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage, and implements them highly effectively.	Are you up to date with and do you ensure that all the requires of the Statutory Framework are met? Staff are suitably qualified and ratios are maintained.	

Cont.

Setting a vision and effective communication



What do you need to do in order to be an effective leader? A leader needs to be a visionary and to have integrity, they need to inspire, be trusted and respected, have strong values and be consistent. Consistent in attitude, approach and mood. A leader is a role model and by the nature of their position sets the tone, atmosphere and culture of the setting. As a role model, the way they behave reflects their belief system and impacts on the behaviour of those they are leading.

Essentially, actions speak louder than words. An effective leader needs to be able to walk the walk and talk the talk. You need to demonstrate that your actions reflect your words. If you say you value the opinions and input of your team and then ignore that input, you are demonstrating a lack of respect and trust will be lost. The manager in a setting needs to demonstrate trust and respect for their team for it to be reciprocated. Trust and respect is a two-way process.

Leadership is about character, behaviour and relationships, being credible, open and honest, trusting, respecting, listening to and empowering your team. Having a focus on actions, development and improvement, being prepared to take risks and accept challenge. You need to be inquisitive, asking why? Why do we do that? Why do we do it that way? Can we make it better? How can we be the best we can possibly be? That inquisitiveness brings us back to the need to be a visionary, a visionary who inspires and motivates taking their team with them.

As a manager of a setting, you need a clear vision. This is about what you stand for, what you want the setting be and achieve, it is essentially an ethos or philosophy. The vision would also reflect the values of the setting. The vision can only be achieved with your team on board and working with you. Think of it like a train, you are the engine and the team are the carriages behind you. You want and need them to stay on the track behind you to reach the destination and

When you write up your QIP, it can be helpful to break down each target into component parts, so it is clear how it is anticipated it will be achieved. You should also identify who will have responsibility for ensuring each target is achieved. Finally, you should identify what you think the expected impact of this improvement will be on the children, the setting, staff and parents depending on the nature of the target. Once the target has been achieved and had time to embed, you revisit the target and identify what the actual impact was in comparison to what you identified as the expected impact. This enables you to measure the success and adapt or develop it if necessary.

When writing your QIP, you should identify how often it will be reviewed and updated and progress tracked. You may wish to have a QIP for the whole setting or break it down into areas linked with inspection criteria. A QIP is a working document and all staff should be aware of what is included as everyone will be playing a part in the achievement of the targets. The review of the QIP and progress can be reflected upon with these questions:

- What are we on track to achieve?
- What are we doing well?
- What is working?
- What should we be doing more of?
- What have we learnt so far?
- What are we not doing so well, in relation to meeting targets and why?
- What should we be doing differently?
- Should we be putting more resources into achieving a particular target?
- Do we need to adjust any of our targets?
- Are there any factors hindering progress?

The Quality Improvement Plan is a key part in demonstrating your commitment to continuous improvement. It isn't about everything in your setting being perfect, but about recognising what you want to improve and develop and demonstrating how it will be done.

Obviously, once completed it is important that what you have said will happen, actually happens. You as the manager have specific targets as well as your team. You need to lead by example, demonstrating that you are meeting your targets, so your team work towards that as well. Prior to everyone working on the QIP targets, you need to ensure that all concerned are clear about the objectives, what they are trying to achieve, how that will happen and that you will be available if they need to ask questions.

Leadership style

Everything that happens in the setting, or doesn't happen, is influenced by your style of leadership. There are three key styles of leadership, but before we explore those, let us consider organisational structure and authority.

As the leader, you have authority. Authority is about your right to guide and direct the actions of others and encourage and support them to attain the goals you set. You also have key responsibility, this is the obligation you have and that you place on others to carry out a task or specific role.

Finally, accountability, you are accountable to your employer (if applicable) or committee and to each member of your team.

Organisational structure

The organisation structure is the system of arrangements between the various positions members of staff hold.

The structure of how an organisation is established is explained in the table below.

concerned with	involves	seen in
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ how the work of an organisation is divided and assigned to individuals, groups and departments ■ how the required co-ordination is achieved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ allocating tasks and responsibilities to individuals e.g. how much choice they have about how they work ■ specifying and defining jobs ■ designing the formal reporting relationships ■ deciding on the number of levels in the hierarchy ■ deciding on the span of control of each supervisor and manager. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ organisation chart, job descriptions, establishing boards, committees and working parties ■ rules, policies and procedures ■ hierarchy ■ goal clarification ■ temporary task forces ■ permanent project teams ■ liaison roles ■ integrator roles.

Clear organisational structure, means that reporting lines are clear and responsibilities are allocated effectively. It brings a sense of order and stability to the setting. It is also particularly helpful for new staff in terms of getting an understanding of the setting.

How everything flows and the general effectiveness is down to you and how you lead the team, your style of leadership and ability to communicate effectively.

Everyone has a leadership style they feel comfortable with, what we must realise is that there are different styles of leadership that are required for different situations, and we may have to switch to a different style of leadership to get the job accomplished. Different teams and individuals will respond to different styles of leadership. The effective leader can match the style effectively and this is therefore reflective of how well you know your staff.

Autocratic style

Characteristics:

- tells others what to do
- limits discussion on new ideas and new ways of doing things
- group does not experience feeling of teamwork.



When effective:

- time is limited
- individuals/group lack skill and knowledge
- group does not know each other
- inexperienced staff who need more guidance
- staff lack of confidence
- you need to challenge practice
- when important action needs to be taken, e.g. relating to safeguarding
- evacuating the building

When ineffective

- developing a strong sense of team is the goal
- some degree of skill/knowledge is in members
- group wants an element of spontaneity in their work.

Democratic style

Characteristics:

- involves group members in planning and carrying out activities
- asks before telling
- promotes the sense of teamwork.

When effective:

- time is available
- group is motivated and/or a sense of team exists
- some degree of skill or knowledge among members of the group
- staff have good use of initiative
- you want to encourage a team to develop an area of provision and welcome ideas and suggestions
- you want to delegate and give others responsibility.

When ineffective:

- group is unmotivated
- no skill/knowledge is in members
- high degree of conflict present.

Laissez Faire style

Characteristics:

- gives little or no direction to group/individuals
- opinion is offered only when requested
- a person does not seem to be in charge.

When effective:

- high degree of skill and motivation
- routine is familiar to participants
- experienced and effective team who work well together
- strong use of initiative.

When ineffective:

- low sense of team/interdependence
- low degree of skill/knowledge is in members
- group expects to be told what to do.