



## **Ofsted confirms good playwork practice meets EYFS requirements**

Playworkers have welcomed a new publication from Ofsted, entitled 'Regulating play-based provision – a childcare factsheet'<sup>1</sup>, which describes how good playwork practice meets the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage<sup>2</sup>.

The factsheet confirms that playworkers who are already providing play according to the Playwork Principles<sup>3</sup> should not have to change their existing good practice in order to meet the EYFS requirements: 'In a play setting, playworkers should be planning for play by providing the best environment possible; they should not be planning the play itself.' The factsheet emphasises the importance of 'freely chosen, self directed play' and goes on to stress that 'there is no legal requirement for playworkers to plan and assess children's progress across all six areas of learning.'

Sue Saunders, Workforce Development Manager, Bedfordshire Training and Assessment Centre (BTAC), welcomed the clarification on observations. "Playworkers have been struggling with the idea of keeping detailed records on individual children, which is not good playwork practice. This factsheet confirms that for inspection purposes playworkers need to observe and record as part of their normal reflective practice in order to provide effective play spaces, rather than recording individual learning, and that 'playworkers do not necessarily need to write down their observations'. This is in line with current National Occupational Standards for Playwork<sup>4</sup>."

The factsheet also refers to other key playwork models and theories of good practice, including The Playwork Principles, Best Play<sup>5</sup>, and the theory of loose parts<sup>6</sup>. It reinforces the idea of children's choices in how they play, and gives a concrete example of what the Inspectors would see as good practice; 'it would be up to the children whether they built a den, did something else with the materials, or ignored them completely.' Inspectors are also looking for the playworkers to be able to demonstrate that; they 'know what children like and don't like', which refers to children's play preferences which will change over time; that they 'are aware of what they can and can't do', which is part of the normal playwork risk-benefit assessment process; and that they 'plan for children's progress', which playworkers do by resourcing the play environment according to children's play needs.

"Playworkers will find it very easy to describe to the inspectors how their setting enables children to 'achieve well and make progress in their chosen play', said Rebekah Jackson, Childcare Development Officer, Cheshire West and Chester Authority. 'Skilled playworkers understand that play which is freely-chosen and

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personally-directed enables children to try out new things at a time when they feel comfortable to do so, and that even very small things can be huge achievements for a child. Playworkers notice – very often from a distance - when a child has managed to solve a 'technical' problem for themselves, or has engaged in a play type that they have not previously dared to try, for example. This is the sort of thing that playworkers will be able to describe to an inspector to demonstrate that they 'know each child's abilities, where they need help and how you can help them through providing a supportive physical and emotional environment.'

### References

- <sup>1</sup> [www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Forms-and-guidance/Browse-all-by/Other/General/Factsheet-childcare-Regulating-play-based-provision](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Forms-and-guidance/Browse-all-by/Other/General/Factsheet-childcare-Regulating-play-based-provision)
- <sup>2</sup> <http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/earlyyears>.
- <sup>3</sup> Playwork Principles Scrutiny Group (2005) *The Playwork Principles*. Cardiff: [www.playwales.org.uk](http://www.playwales.org.uk)
- <sup>4</sup> <http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/151379>
- <sup>5</sup> National Playing Fields Association (2000) *Best Play – What play provision should do for children*. Download from [www.ncb.org.uk](http://www.ncb.org.uk).
- <sup>6</sup> Nicholson, S (1971) *How not to cheat children - the Theory of Loose Parts*. Landscape Architecture.

**ENDS**

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- ◆ See [www.commonthreads.org.uk/eyfs.htm](http://www.commonthreads.org.uk/eyfs.htm) for more information on Playwork and the EYFS.
- ◆ Further details will appear in *Playwords* Issue 41 - published December 2009.
- ◆ *Playwords* is a free magazine for anybody who works in children's play and can be requested for free from [www.commonthreads.org.uk/playwords.htm](http://www.commonthreads.org.uk/playwords.htm) or received by post for postage and packing costs.
- ◆ *Playwords* is produced by Common Threads, a social enterprise which develops and produces training and resources for people working in children's play.
- ◆ For more information contact Shelly Newstead at Common Threads as below.
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