Early Years Placements
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Early Years Placements
A Critical Guide to Outstanding Work-based Learning

Jackie Musgrave
Nicola Stobbs
Contents

Acknowledgements vi
Meet the authors vii

1 Introduction 1
2 Preparing for placement 4
3 Becoming a professional in practice 15
4 Safeguarding 27
5 Key documents 36
6 Your first day 50
7 Linking theory to practice 57
8 Observation, planning and assessment 69
9 Statutory assessment 81
10 Working with colleagues 87
11 Working with parents 96
12 Relationships with children 104
13 Reflecting on and writing about placement 113

Glossary 124

Appendix 1: Teachers’ Standards (Early Years) September 2013 127
Appendix 2: Self-assessment audit of skills and knowledge 130
Index 136
Our grateful thanks to the students who have generously shared their experiences and provided contributions to this book.

We would also like to acknowledge our use of Crown copyright material.
Meet the authors

**Jackie Musgrave** is a senior lecturer in the Centre for Early Childhood at the University of Worcester. She qualified as a sick children’s nurse and then taught early childhood care and education at a college of further education. She has taught higher education students for the past ten years. Jackie gained her Masters degree at the University of Sheffield, her dissertation focusing on an aspect of practice-based learning for level 3 students. Her thesis for her doctorate examined the effect of chronic health conditions on young children’s inclusion in their early education.

**Nicola Stobbs** initially trained as a primary school teacher, teaching across various age groups. She then worked in an early years setting for 12 years as the setting manager. During that time, Nicola mentored many students on placement in her setting and also completed her MA in early childhood and gained Early Years Professional Status. Having combined her early years role with university tutoring for two years, Nicola then became a full-time lecturer at the University of Worcester. She remains committed to supporting students in becoming the excellent practitioners that children deserve.
Work-based learning (WBL), sometimes known as practice-based learning or professional practice, is a vital component of vocational higher education courses. The skills and knowledge that you can gain from WBL can dramatically increase your employability. The focus of this book is to guide student practitioners on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) courses through your WBL with the aim of enabling you to have an outstanding experience and maximise your future employability. This focus is especially pertinent because the early years workforce is becoming increasingly professionalised.

The Nutbrown Review has focused attention on WBL as a vital part of becoming an effective early years practitioner:

*Practice placements are an essential part of training .... Students need to observe and work alongside practitioners whose practice is high quality ... Only settings that are rated ‘Good’ or ‘Outstanding’ by Ofsted should be able to host students on placement.*

(Nutbrown, 2012, p 7)

There was also a recommendation that students should ‘be experiencing practice in a variety of settings ... so that they can see different ways of working and learn from a variety of expert practitioners’ (p 21). Further emphasis on the importance of placements was stressed by the recommendation that this should take place in ‘at least three different and appropriate settings, to last a total equivalent of a minimum of twenty percent of the total course duration’ (p 23).

Although some of you will have undertaken some WBL prior to beginning your course, many of you may regard the expectations of you as undergraduates as daunting as well as liberating. This is partly because you are expected to work as part of a team of practitioners rather than as a student under the direction of teachers or college tutors. Tutors will explain the activities that you are expected to undertake during placement, however there may be little time to address individual concerns or cover all possible eventualities. In addition to addressing the
needs of undergraduate students, this book will address the position of graduates who are
trainees for Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS).

**About this book**

Each chapter has a visual map, which signposts the content of the chapter, and an explain-
ation of how the content links to the Early Years Teacher Standards (that were published
in September 2013). This book has been written in a way that incorporates our students’
opinions and views, as well as advice from practitioners, in the form of *Dear Student* letters.
The content of the letters is intended to offer you support by covering a range of subjects
and issues relevant to WBL. Other features to help you understand the topic being covered
include critical questions, case studies and critical reflections as well as suggestions for fur-
ther reading.

Chapter 2 includes a range of practical considerations for you to address ahead of starting
your placement. The theme of the chapter is to help you plan carefully for your WBL so that
you do your utmost to ensure that you have an outstanding experience.

Chapter 3 deconstructs the meaning of professionalism for student early years practition-
ers. It explains the concept and helps you to understand what it means to be a professional
student.

Chapter 4 outlines the main points about safeguarding and child protection. It draws on the
messages learnt from Serious Case Reviews and focuses on your role in safeguarding chil-
dren as a student in practice.

Chapter 5 summarises key documents that have formed government policy in recent years.
The chapter content makes links to your practice and includes suggestions of how they influ-
ence your practice and how they can be used in your academic work.

Chapter 6 includes a range of practical guidance of what you can do to make a good impres-
sion on your first day. For example, how getting to know the routines straight away can reflect
well on how you are viewed by your temporary colleagues.

Chapter 7 helps to define what is meant by ‘theory’ and explains how and what you can use
to support theoretical understandings of your practice.

Chapter 8 emphasises the vital place of observation, planning and assessment in contem-
porary ECEC. The content explains in clear language the links between these three concepts.
The content explains how observations are the key to knowing children and how in turn,
knowing children can help you to plan how best to manage children’s behaviour.

Chapter 9 addresses the statutory assessment elements of the Early Years Foundation
Stage, including the 2-year-old check and the end of key stage profile.

Chapter 10 gives you some suggestions of how to manage relationships with colleagues
when on placement. It addresses some of the difficulties that male practitioners can experi-
ence in a predominantly female environment.
Chapter 11 discusses some of the challenges associated with working with parents from your perspective as a student practitioner.

Chapter 12 explores the difficulties associated with student practitioner and child(ren) relationships. The content encourages you to acknowledge your own feelings in such relationships and encourages you to think about your responses to contradictory, and sometimes unethical practices that you may encounter.

Chapter 13 helps you to explore the concept of reflective practice in relation to your WBL experiences. There are examples that you can adapt to help you develop your skills in this important aspect of ECEC.

Before the appendices is a glossary of terms and acronyms used in ECEC.

**Our commitment**

As a Registered General Nurse/Registered Sick Children’s Nurse and a trained primary school teacher, we are committed to the practice and principle of WBL, having benefitted from this when we were student practitioners and then subsequently as we mentored students undertaking WBL in our institutions post-qualification.

This commitment, based on our personal experience rather than evidence-based research, was upheld as we moved into higher education and we became responsible for the preparation of early childhood studies students in becoming professional practitioners. As we planned programmes that included elements of WBL we struggled to find a theoretical framework to guide our planning for student preparation for placement. Therefore, we decided to gain students and practitioners’ views of what they think all students need to know as they partake in this valuable learning experience. We hope that you enjoy your placements, and most of all we hope that you find this book useful.

**Reference**

# Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-year-old check</td>
<td>Statutory assessment which is part of the EYFS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s Centre</td>
<td>Place that offers multi-agency services for child development including the third sector (volunteers and charities).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPD</td>
<td>Continuing Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical friend</td>
<td>Trusted friend who can provide support and give constructive criticism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CV</td>
<td>Curriculum Vitae – a résumé of your professional experience and qualifications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development Matters</td>
<td>Non-statutory guidance material that supports practitioners in implementing the statutory requirements of the EYFS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DBS</td>
<td>Disclosure and Barring Service: the service that makes police checks to identify whether people have a criminal record. It is a statutory requirement that people who are working with vulnerable people, such as children, are screened. If they have convictions for criminal activity, they may be barred from working with vulnerable people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSO</td>
<td>Designated Safeguarding Officer: is the designated member of staff in an organisation for staff to go to if they have a concern about safeguarding. The DSO is screened and trained to be able to conduct this role and will have up to date knowledge of referral routes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Years Teacher</td>
<td>Recognised qualification in parallel with existing Early Years Professional.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECEC</td>
<td>Early Childhood Education and Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECM</td>
<td>Every Child Matters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EYE</td>
<td>Early Years Educator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glossary</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EYFS</strong></td>
<td>Early Years Foundation Stage: the Statutory Framework which comprises of a set of Welfare and Learning Development Requirements that must be followed by providers who care for children between 0 and 5 years of age. The EYFS became statutory in 2008 and there were two revisions in 2012 and 2014.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EYITT</strong></td>
<td>Early Years Initial Teacher Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EYTS</strong></td>
<td>Early Years Teacher Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mentor</strong></td>
<td>Trusted advisor (possibly tutor or lead professional) who has experience in the early years, who is able to offer support and advice through reflection on work and practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mentoring</strong></td>
<td>Nurturing an individual’s progression through a supportive, professional relationship with a mentor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Multi-disciplinary</strong></td>
<td>Using the input of several professional agencies at the same time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nutbrown Review</strong></td>
<td>A review of childcare qualifications carried out by Professor Nutbrown on behalf of the government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NCMA</strong></td>
<td>National Childminders Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ofsted</strong></td>
<td>Office for Standards in Education, responsible for inspections and grading of settings in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parents</strong></td>
<td>Described in law to include biological relationship (mother, father) and any other responsible adult (carer) who has taken this role in a child’s life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Partnership with parents</strong></td>
<td>Working relationship with parents/carers, which encompasses mutual respect and information sharing to promote equality and prevent unfair practice towards families and children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PBL</strong></td>
<td>Practice-based learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pedagogy</strong></td>
<td>Theory and main beliefs of teaching children with regard to the nature of children’s learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practice</strong></td>
<td>Work methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practitioners</strong></td>
<td>Adults involved – in this regard – with caring and supporting young children’s learning across a range of settings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reflective practice</strong></td>
<td>Reviewing actions and outcomes to inform future practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SaLT</strong></td>
<td>Speech and Language Therapist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Schema</strong></td>
<td>A cognitive framework or concept that helps to organise and interpret information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SCR</strong></td>
<td>Serious Case Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SEN</strong></td>
<td>Special Educational Needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Setting</strong></td>
<td>A place where children and parents can access children’s services. These cover a wide range of places including Children’s Centres, nurseries, preschools or playgroups.</td>
</tr>
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<td>---------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Te Whariki</strong></td>
<td>New Zealand Early Years curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UNCRC</strong></td>
<td>United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WBL</strong></td>
<td>Work-based learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Index

adjourning, 90
Allen, G, 46
Athey, C, 61
attachment theory, 65

Bowlby, J, 60, 65, 105
Bruce, T, 62
Bruner, J, 60

case studies
  comment on, 63
  Little Stars Nursery, 30
  Little Teds Nursery, 31–2
  practitioner views, 25
  pre-placement visit, 12
  sustained shared thinking, 78–80
  two year-old check, 83
  Victoria Climbie, 34

card development
  chronic/complex medical need, 64
  context and environment, 63
  cultural expectations, 64
  minor illness, 64
  special educational needs, 64

child protection, 28
childminding, 20
Children Act 1989, 29, 46
Children Act 2004, 29
chronic/complex medical needs, 64
communication, 8
Communication, 132
communities of practice, 21
continuing professional development, 19

cultural unease, 93

dBS, see Disclosure and Barring Service
Development Matters, 70, 84
Dewey, J, 115
Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), 33
documents
  age of opportunity, 44
  Allen report, 41
  EPPE project, 37
  Every Child Matters, 46
  Field report, 39
  Marmot review, 39
  Monro review, 46
  Nutbrown review, 42
  supporting families, 41
  UNCRC, 46
  Donaldson, M, 60

eyearly childhood education and care (ECEC)
  grand thinkers, 59
  placement preparation, 6
  theory in, 58
  Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), 29, 65
  Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP)
    case study, 84
    research focus, 84
    summary of check, 84
  Early Years Professional Status (EYPS), 18
  early years professionalism, 21
  early years settings, 5, 6
  Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS), 18
  ECEC. see early childhood education and care
  Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) project,
    37, 70, 78
  emotional transition management, 114
  ethical relationships, student responsibilities, 106
  ethical responsibility, 54
  ethos, 116, 117
  event sampling, 74
  Every Child Matters, 29, 46
  EYFSP. see Early Years Foundation Stage Profile
  EYPS. see Early Years Professional Status
  EYTS. see Early Years Teacher Status

Field report, 39
Field, F, 46
  first day, see planning goals; professional responsibilities
  first impressions, 51–2
  flow, 71
  forming, 90
  Freud, S, 60
  Froebel, F, 59

good enough parenting, 99

great thinkers, 59

hidden curriculum, 116
informal learning, 55
initiative, 53
Isaacs, S, 60, 70

Laevers, F, 71
legislation
  relationship with children, 105
  safeguarding, 29–33
Leuven Scale for Involvement, 72–3
long-term planning, 76

male practitioners, 93
Marmot review, 39
Marmot, M, 39
Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, 91
medium-term planning, 76
minor illness, 64
modern theorists, 61
Monro review, 46
Montessori, M, 60

narrative observation, 74
NMC. see Nursing and Midwifery Council
NNEB. see Nursery Nurse Examination Board
norming, 90
Nursery Nurse Examination Board (NNEB), 17
Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), 19
Nutbrown review, 1, 7, 42
Nutbrown, C, 18, 42

observation
  checklist method, 74
  description, 73
  event sampling, 74
  narrative, 74
  planning and assessment with, 70
  rating scale, 74
  time sampling, 74
  tracking, 74
Ofsted, 7
outstanding, Ofsted rating, 7

Page, J, 109
partnership, 98, 99, 125
Pascal, C; 22
pedagogy, 125
performing, 90
Piaget, J, 19, 59, 60, 70

placement preparation
  communication settings, 8
  contact via email, 9
  early years settings, 5, 6
  good/outstanding Ofsted rating, 7
  keeping yourself well, 11–12
  learning opportunities, 13
  professional conduct, 12
  researching suitable settings, 7
  selection of settings, 5
  planning

individual needs, 74–5
Leuven Scale for Involvement, 72–3
long term, 76
medium term, 76
observation and assessment with, 70
process/product, 76–8
short term, 76
planning goals
capturing informal learning, 55
description, 53
ethical issues, 54
practical skills, 53
policy and practice theory, 65–6
practice-based learning, see work-based learning (WBL)
practitioner as theorist, 61
pre-placement visit, 10
professional conduct, 12
professional educator
description, 21
placement approach, 23
research focus, 22
professional register, 19
professional responsibilities
  finding position, 52
  first impressions, 51–2
  initiative, 53
  policies, 52
professionalism
  body of knowledge and research, 19
  continuing professional development, 19
  definition, 16
  early years, 21
  entry restrictions to occupation, 18
  features of, 16–21
  leadership, 20
  pay and status, 20
  professional register, 19
  standards and code of conduct, 21
  training and education, 17–18

rating scale, 74
reflection for action, 116
reflection in action, 116
reflective integrity, 93
reflective journals, 117–18
reflective practice, 115
reflective writing
  critical analysis, 118–21
  reflective journals, 117–18
  SMART style, 122
  structure and style, 121
relationship with children
  ethical, 106
  interacting with toddlers in practice, 108–9
  interaction with young children in practice, 109–10
  interactions with babies in practice, 107–8
  legislation, policy and research, 105
  role of key person, 105
safeguarding
being suitable person, 33
definition, 28
knowledge of factors, 33
legislation and policy, 29–33
policies in settings, 30
whistleblowing policy, 30
Schön, D, 115
SCRs. see serious case reviews
self-assessment audit, skills and knowledge, 130
serious case reviews (SCRs)
Little Stars Nursery, 30
Little Teds Nursery, 31–2
short-term planning, 76
Skinner, B, 60
SMART targets, 122
social networking, 32
special educational needs, 64
Steiner, R, 60
storming, 90
summative assessment
Early Years Foundation Stage Profile, 84–5
two year-old check, 82–4
supporting families document, 41
sustained shared thinking, 78–80
targeted plan, 82
team development theory, 90
theorists
grand thinkers, 59
modern, 61
practitioner as, 61
theory
attachment, 65
child development, 63–4
creation of, 58
defining in ECEC, 58
importance of, 61
policy and practice, 65–6
team development, 90
Tickell, D C, 46, 84
time sampling, 74
tracking, observational strategy, 74
two year-old check
case study, 83
research focus, 82
summary of check, 82
UNCRC. see United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), 29, 46
Victoria Climbie, 34
Vygotsky, L, 60, 78
Wave Trust, 66
WBL. see work-based learning
Whariki, T, 99
whistleblowing policy, 30
Winnicott, D, 99
work-based learning (WBL), 1
Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance, 29
working with colleagues
importance of relationship, 88
male practitioners, 93
Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, 91
problems during placement, 93
successful relationships, 92
working with parents
all kinds of families, 98
fostering wellbeing, 99
good enough parenting, 99
implications for placement, 101–2
research focus, 97
role of key person, 99
shared dialogue, 100
zone of proximal development, 78