**Outstanding primary schools**

***Based on reviews of 20 outstanding primary schools***

* They provide affection, stability and a purposeful and structured experience. They build – and often rebuild – children’s self-belief.
* They teach children the things they really need to know and show them how to learn for themselves and with others.
* They give the children opportunities, responsibility and trust in an environment which is both stimulating and humanising.
* They listen to their pupils, value their views and reflect and act on what they say.
* They build bridges with parents, families and communities, working in partnership with other professionals.
* They ensure their pupils progress as fast as possible and achieve as much as possible (outperforming similar schools)
* They put the child at the centre of everything they do, and high aspirations, expectations and achievement underpin the schools’ work.

***What follows are examples of observed best practice from some of these outstanding schools***

**Success factors**

* a strong and caring ethos and commitment to the children from all staff, coupled with a genuine desire to achieve the very best for the children
* a very positive ‘can do’ culture where praise and encouragement prevail and self-esteem is high
* outstanding teaching by consistently high-quality staff who show great commitment and passion
* a constant focus on maintaining and improving standards of attainment, emphasising the systematic development of basic literacy and numeracy skills
* high-quality planning, assessment and targeted intervention to enable all children to achieve the best they can.

**Teaching and learning**

* stimulating and enthusiastic teaching which interests, excites and motivates pupils and accelerates their learning
* high expectations of what pupils can do
* consistency in the quality of teaching across the school
* development of good learning habits, with many opportunities for pupils to find things out for themselves
* highly structured approaches to reading, writing and mathematics, with some ability grouping
* well-planned lessons which provide for the differing needs of pupils
* stimulating classroom environment
* frequent praise and a valued reward system
* well-trained and deployed teaching assistants
* a close check on learning during lessons, with effective marking and assessment.

**Applying the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum**

* a strong and explicit focus on play, sociability and enjoyment
* ready access to resources so pupils can choose and take responsibility
* curriculum planning which is closely related to
* pupils’ interests, so that it motivates them
* explicit encouragement of cooperation between children, promoted by skilled questioning by and support from staff
* plenty of space, including ‘messy’ and ‘clean’ rooms as well as large, accessible, and well -structured outdoor areas
* well-focused speaking and listening activities
* much use of ICT, preparing for a future unknown
* no rush to pursue writing; pupils choose when they wish to start writing; in practice, they all start writing by the end of the reception year

**Curriculum provision**

* placing a strong emphasis on, and making exemplary provision for, the basic skills
* strengthening English, mathematics and science through applications in other subjects and areas
* still retaining a broad curriculum for arts and humanities
* writing for purpose in a variety of transactional styles
* developing language by encouraging pupils to communicate their understanding and evaluate their learning
* activities carefully tailored to widen pupils’ learning and enrich their lives
* a vibrant and exciting range of visits and stimulating inputs
* planning which tailors activities to individual pupils including the gifted and talented
* well-managed homework carefully communicated to pupils and parents.

**Early Years excellence**

* an insistence on high-quality teaching and learning and continuous self-evaluation
* an absolute commitment to children’s progress by all staff, with a constant emphasis on tracking each individual child’s progress; keeping a ‘promises book’ for every child, containing their targets for literacy and mathematics, which are shared regularly with parents
* relentless use of positive reinforcement and language to reward all children’s efforts
* teaching children how to become learners and how to develop self-confidence and believe in themselves
* setting targets for the curriculum, each class and groups within a class, as well as for every child, which are reviewed every six weeks
* providing an exciting and relevant curriculum which makes full use of every space in and out of the school building. Displays of children’s work celebrate their achievements but also stimulate further learning, such as work linked to visiting artists and theme weeks exploring patterns across different cultures
* giving children as rich and wide opportunities as possible, for example a range of visits out of school and input from visitors such as Visiting Creative Partnerships; lunchtime and after-school clubs such as a gardening club
* working as a close-knit team with teaching assistants playing a key role in helping pupils achieve their targets. The teaching assistants are trained and involved in teaching groups for ‘Letters and Sounds’ running the Nurture Room, assessing, planning, ICT, reviewing individual education plans, target-setting and the use of positive language and discipline
* providing induction and ‘buddy’ systems for all staff new to the school including lunchtime supervisors
* rewarding children who demonstrate positive attitudes to work, for example ‘star worker’ where a child can use a special cushion for the day and take it to sit on in assembly; a ‘finer diner’ where children eat lunch at a dining table beautifully laid with golden plates and flowers
* involving parents with a shared family liaison worker, home visits, workshops on positive parenting, mathematics and literacy, a parents’ notice board in every classroom
* standardisation of assessment across all year groups through the extensive analysis and use of data
* growing leadership skills among senior and middle leaders as part of succession planning.

**Sustaining excellence**

**Teaching, leadership and teamwork**

* an insistence on high-quality learning and teaching, and continuous self-evaluation
* excellent communication and team work, with teaching assistants playing a key role
* an induction and ‘buddy’ system for all new staff, including lunchtime supervisors
* support for succession planning through the development of middle and senior leadership skills

**Targets and tracking**

* close, termly tracking of each child’s progress
* individual targets – every child has a ‘promises book’ (the name used by a child) which has their targets for English and mathematics
* targets for the curriculum, each class, and groups within a class, reviewed every six weeks
* extensive analysis and use of data, with standardisation of assessment across all year groups

**Developing positive attitudes to learning**

* rewards for children that enhance positive attitudes, such as ‘stars of the week’ badges, certificates and team points, Year 6 leaders and elected Head Boy and Girl
* an exciting and relevant curriculum which makes full use of space in and outside the building
* displays of children’s work that celebrate their achievements and stimulate further learning

**Involving parents**

* close links with parents through ‘reading record books’, two outreach workers who are accessible to parents and pupils at the beginning and end of a school day, and an ‘open door’ policy.

**Sharing excellence**

* The school has worked closely with the local authority advisory service to develop the policy, scheme of work and delivery for personal, social and health education.
* An advanced skills teacher, previously a Year 6 teacher, supports other schools in planning for literacy and maintains email contact with them.
* Teachers from other schools visit lessons taught by the advanced skills teacher for mathematics.
* Other headteachers and their colleagues visit and observe lessons.
* Teaching assistants visit for training and shadowing.
* Universities send trainee teachers because of the high quality of professional practice.
* School staff work in teams to moderate literacy assessments.
* The quality of assessment and the provision offered by the Early Years Foundation Stage practitioners are used by the local authority as models of excellence for other schools