The focus of this document is - getting children ready for school... using the early years to build 'a secure foundation for future personal and academic success' (Wilshaw, pg 3). To effectively prepare children for school, all early years providers including childminders must have -

- High expectations for every child
- Strong communication skills
- A good understanding of child development so we know how much young children are capable of doing and so we can support and challenge them
- Clear routines to support children as they develop personally, emotionally, socially, physically and as they learn to communicate with and listen to others
- An excellent understanding of how the 3 prime areas of learning - PSED, physical and communication and language - must be prioritised in the early years and how they make a positive impact on outcomes for children
- Good teaching skills using the EYFS to support children’s learning - we must see ourselves as ‘educators’ (Executive Summary, pg 4)
- Highly skilled and experienced practitioners

**Note** - the document does not mention the ‘prime’ or ‘specific’ areas of learning or the Development Matters guidance. This is my interpretation of the wording to help other childminders understand what it is saying, so I am using those terms because I know they make sense to my readers.

**Staff** - the document is not just written for childminders. There is quite a lot of information about staffing throughout the document. A lot of childminders have staff (assistants or co-childminders) so this bit will be relevant to them. Ofsted talk about -

- ‘Teams of well qualified and skilled practitioners who see themselves as educators’ (page 5)
- Rigorous performance management - regular reviews and action plans for improving future practice
- A strong focus on the quality of teaching
- Children making good progress because staff are supporting their learning and development well
- Ongoing staff professional development - induction training, ongoing training and CPD opportunities, staff reviews leading to training provision
- Team meetings focussed on improving teaching skills - are you seeing a theme going on here?
- Self reflection journals for staff
- Observations of staff at work leading to better focused training opportunities
- Formal and informal supervision opportunities
- Management who challenge poor performance and replace staff who cannot do their jobs properly!
**Strong leaders** - the document talks about too many children not having the ‘knowledge, skills and attitudes’ they need to do well when they start school - and then goes on to look at how high quality provision can provide children with the starting points they need so they achieve in the future.

Ofsted note that there are strong leaders in all settings where children make outstanding progress. A childminder is also a leader of their provision and strong leadership in a childminding provision might include you having -

- Passion for your job and a clear vision for the future
- High expectations for yourself - your professional development (training and CPD) and your action planning for the future
- Strong teaching skills and inspired, qualified and motivated staff
- High expectations for every child - clear evidence of how you support each child to make good progress in their learning and development from their starting points (the things they could do when they first start in your care)
- Strong self evaluation - including comments from and views of staff, parents and children. Ofsted talk about children being consulted on how the provision meets their needs and exit interviews when children leave to find out their thoughts about their time in the provision (pg 9)

Strong leaders welcome external support and advice to improve their provision - partnerships with other settings, visits from advisors, quality assurance schemes etc. For childminders, Ofsted acknowledge that links with networks and local support can raise outcomes...

I have written a blog recently about leadership which you might find interesting -
http://independentchildminders.weebly.com/1/post/2013/06/leadership-cpd-advice-for-childcare-professionals.html

**Focus on school readiness** - to appropriately teach young children the skills they need to promote school readiness, we need to focus on -

- Prioritising the prime areas of learning for very young children
- Using all 7 areas of learning (although these are not specifically detailed the inference is that all 7 areas are important) for older children
- Ensuring high quality resources are in place to support learning across all 7 areas
- Accurate observations and assessments - to show what children already know -> leading on to focussed teaching opportunities, planned to enhance learning and ensure children do not ‘fall behind’ (pg 11)
- Using a balance of adult led and child initiated activities through the day - so ‘structured teaching opportunities’ (Pg 11) are part of a child’s experience every day
- Adult guided learning - using opportunities during children’s play to extend and guide their learning, develop their language and vocabulary, challenge them etc (pg 11)
- Developing listening skills in children

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Written for www.childmindinghelp.co.uk/forum
Self reflection - Ofsted have decided that only a ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ inspection grading is good enough and that every practitioner should be supported to gain at least ‘good’ in their inspection. Here are some self reflection questions to ask yourself -

- Do some of your observations focus on specific areas of learning so you can gain an accurate snapshot of what the child can do?
- Does your planning focus on what you want each child to learn? Future learning is also known as ‘learning outcomes’
- Are your questioning skills appropriate to the child’s play? Have you picked the right time to ask a question? Does the question encourage conversation and shared thinking?
- Do you visit other settings and practitioners and bring back ideas and inspiration to use with your children? Do you encourage other practitioners to visit you and do the same for them? Do you record your visits - and how they have improved your practice - in your personal self evaluation or the Ofsted SEF?
- Do you track each child’s progress regularly - and is tracking done well so you can see how children are making progress and what they need to work on next?
- Do you consult with parents regularly and agree ways to support the child to achieve more in the future?
- What do you do if a child is struggling in one or more areas of learning? How well do you support them to develop their skills and knowledge?
- How well do you involve parents in their child’s learning and development journey? How well do you share information about the EYFS, their child’s routine and experiences... and how well do you continue sharing this information?

How can you improve in the future?

More good practice guides worth reading -

www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120312
www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130025
My action planning
As a result of reading and reflecting on this document, I have recognised 2 gaps in my already outstanding practice that I intend working on over the coming weeks.

1. Benefitting from visits to other providers
I regularly visit other provisions including childminders and my local Children’s Centre but I do not record what I have learned from the visits and how they have supported my practice.

My thoughts for the future - I will look at how I can record this information and include it in my SEF (I use the Ofsted document). I will include a very simple form in my CPD file which notes -

Date -
Visit to - childminder / Children’s Centre / local Nursery / other...
Good practice shared -

…………………………

2. Observing all areas of learning
How do I ensure every child is making good progress across each of the 7 areas of learning? Do my observations accurately reflect each child’s progress, at any one time in, for example, communication and language - listening or PSED - behaviour?
I tend to write my observations as they happen over the month and on reflection it is possible I might be missing important information about a child’s overall learning. For example, I might not have spotted that they are not making good progress in their communication development because the child has been demonstrating so many new skills in physical development recently that I have been too busy writing those down instead of looking at the bigger picture.

My thoughts for the future - one way to record this is to have a sheet for each area of learning with some observation prompts across the top. I have written some helpful observation prompts for each area of learning here -

http://www.childmindinghelp.co.uk/freeresources/Free%20downloads/Resources/Observation%20prompts.pdf

I will set myself a challenge to note an observation from each of the areas of learning every ... say ... 3 months for a part-time child / more regularly for a full-timer.

I will use the observations when I am planning for the child’s future learning. I will think about what the observations tell me (assess) and then focus on how I can, along with parents and other settings, work together to support the child to make sure they are not lagging behind.
My personal, social and emotional development

My name is -
My date of birth -

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of learning</th>
<th>PSED 1 - relationships</th>
<th>PSED 2 - self confidence &amp; awareness</th>
<th>PSED 3 - feelings and behaviour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obs prompts for my age / stage of L &amp; D</td>
<td>Being affectionate</td>
<td>Being independent</td>
<td>Expressing feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Copying games... etc</td>
<td>Sharing ideas... etc</td>
<td>Developing patience... etc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observations of my learning

Date -
Location - in the house / in the garden / on an outing to - / other -
With contributions from - parents / the child / other settings / other -
Observation -

My wellbeing during the activity - 😊 😊 😞

Ideas for planning the next steps in my learning and development -