

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS): Learning and Development Consultation Report

27 March 2012

Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Respondents	4
3. Results	4
4. Conclusion and next steps	7
5. List of organisations that responded	9

Introduction

The Early Years Foundation Stage

1. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework sets standards for the learning, development and care of children from birth to age five. In the three years since its introduction, it has helped improve outcomes for children. The framework describes what a good provider of early education and childcare should do, the level of development that most children can be expected to reach by age five, and the requirements against which Ofsted inspects to ensure high quality. In a diverse sector, the EYFS aims to assure parents of a consistent quality experience for their child. The framework supports an integrated approach to learning and care, with continuity for children for the transition from the foundation years into Year 1 of the National Curriculum.
2. The Government has made clear its intention to maintain a universal EYFS framework for early education and childcare, strengthened and simplified in line with the recommendations of Dame Clare Tickell's independent review. A revised EYFS framework will be introduced from 1 September 2012.

Consultation on reform

3. Between July and September 2011 the Government consulted on a revised EYFS. In response to this consultation we undertook further work on the early learning goals (ELGs) with practitioners, child development experts, academics and National Curriculum subject experts. This was to ensure the goals set the right expected level, were age appropriate and provided a strong baseline for the start of Year 1. For more details see [the Government Response to the EYFS consultation](#).
4. On 20 December 2011 we launched an additional one-month consultation on the EYFS Learning and Development requirements. This consultation sought views on the educational programmes and areas of learning, the revised early learning goals, and the *EYFS (Learning and Development Requirements) (Amendment) Order 2012*. There were 664 responses to the online consultation. It was supplemented by workshops and discussions with teachers and parents, academics and sector representatives.
5. This report provides an analysis of responses. It focuses on mathematics and literacy, as these goals and educational programmes attracted the most comment. Responses to the consultation were generally positive:
 - The large majority of respondents (89%) agreed or partly agreed with the descriptions of educational programmes and areas of learning.
 - The majority of respondents were content with the early learning goals:
 - Fewer than 1 in 6 respondents made comments in relation to 13 out of the 17 goals (i.e. those that did not relate to either mathematics or literacy).
 - In the case of the mathematics and literacy goals, opinion was more mixed. However, only a fifth to two fifths of respondents raised concerns with the relevant goals.
 - Just under a third of respondents commented on the draft Order.

Respondents

The organisational breakdown of respondents to the online consultation was as follows:

	Number	Percentage
Maintained school	168	25
Local Authority	120	18
Other*	104	16
Nursery	76	11
Pre-school/playgroup	60	9
Early Years Sector Representative	54	8
Childminder	47	7
Independent School	15	2
Parent/Carer	10	2
SEN Provision	5	1
Breakfast/After school club	4	1
Play Sector	1	0
TOTAL	664	100

*Those which fell into the 'other' category included inspectors, training providers, early years consultants and national organisations.

Results

The educational programmes and areas of learning

Question 1:

Do you agree that the descriptions of educational programmes and areas of learning summarise clearly what is involved?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	382	59
Partly	191	30
No	57	9
Not sure	13	2
TOTAL	643	100

6. 643 people responded to this question and 89% of these agreed or partly agreed that the descriptions summarised clearly what was involved in the educational programmes. 5% of online respondents made a positive comment about the descriptions, and just under 10% asked for guidance and exemplification to clarify the educational programmes. The areas of learning that attracted the most comment were mathematics and literacy.

- 56 respondents (8% of all respondents to the consultation) commented on mathematics. Around half of these thought that problem-solving should feature more prominently in the description of the educational programme, and around a third suggested that the mathematics programme did not emphasise sufficiently the need to ensure that children are given practical opportunities to apply their maths knowledge.

- 47 respondents (7% of all respondents to the consultation) commented on literacy. Just under a third of these suggested that the current description of the educational programme was too focused on teaching the functional skills needed to read and write and did not focus enough on encouraging a love of reading and writing through play-based activities.
- A further 5% of all respondents to the consultation commented on either the communication and language or the physical development educational programmes. Half of those who commented on communication and language thought the programme should include non-verbal as well as verbal forms of communication. Just over a third of those who commented on physical development asked that the programme refer to children making healthy choices in other areas as well as in relation to food.

The Early Learning Goals

Question 2:

Are there any Early Learning Goals where you think the wording is not clear, or where you think the level of development described is not pitched correctly? Please tick the goals to which you think these apply.

	Number	Percentage*
Communication and language		
Listening and attention	99	15
Understanding	65	10
Speaking	85	13
Physical development		
Moving and handling	98	15
Health and self-care	51	8
Personal, social and emotional development		
Self-confidence and self-awareness	64	10
Managing feelings and behaviour	73	11
Making relationships	41	6
Literacy		
Reading	189	28
Writing	213	32
Mathematics		
Numbers	254	38
Shape, space and measures	131	20
Understanding the world		
People and communities	64	10
The world	82	12
Technology	82	12
Expressive arts and design		
Exploring and using media and materials	76	11
Being imaginative	96	14

* Because the question asks respondents to indicate only those ELGs which they think are not clear the percentage figure relates to the percentage of all responses to the consultation rather than the percentage of people responding just to this particular question.

7. Responses on the early learning goals were positive overall. Just under a third of all respondents to the consultation (215 respondents) did not indicate a concern with any of the early learning goals. More than 80% of respondents to the consultation did not raise any concerns about 13 of the goals (those that do not relate to literacy or mathematics).
8. Parents we consulted in workshops generally felt the wording of the goals was clear. They made little comment on whether the goals were pitched correctly, preferring to defer to experts. They told us that having guidance and exemplification on the goals, and the ability to discuss their child's assessment, was more important. All the teachers and experts we spoke to felt guidance and exemplification would be crucial, particularly to ensure that the goals were set in an age-appropriate context, for example by demonstrating a strong emphasis on learning through play.

Numbers

9. 254 respondents (38% of all consultation respondents) indicated they considered this goal could be improved. 150 respondents (about 25% of all respondents to the consultation) offered more detailed comments.
 - Over half of these related to the pitch of the goal. Respondents felt that while children at the end of reception year are generally able to count from 1 to 20, the requirements in the rest of the goal were stretching. Instead, they suggested that manipulating numbers and doing calculations should be limited to numbers from 1 to 10.
 - Almost a fifth of those who commented felt that the numbers goal could emphasise that teaching and learning in this area should take place in practical and play-based contexts. Related to this, around 10% of those who commented felt that the proposed changes could result in a curriculum and teaching methods which are too formal and academic for this age range.
10. Around half of the teachers we consulted in workshops thought the revised goal was clear, appropriate and easier for parents to understand. Most of the remaining teachers echoed the comments made in paragraph 9 above.

Writing

11. 213 respondents (32% of all consultation respondents) indicated they considered this goal could be improved. Around 100 respondents (15% of all respondents to the consultation) offered more detailed comments.
 - Around a third of these related to the pitch of this goal, although they differed on which aspects presented the most challenge. For example, some focused on writing simple sentences, while other comments related to the ability to write some irregular common words.
 - Around a third of comments called for further clarification of the goal.
12. Teachers in our workshops generally supported the change from writing simple stories to writing simple sentences and felt this was developmentally appropriate and linked well with Year 1 of the National Curriculum. They requested that the supporting guidance and exemplification included references to other forms of writing, for example, using a keyboard.

Reading

13. 189 respondents (28% of all consultation respondents) indicated they considered this goal could be improved. Around 100 respondents (15% of all respondents to the consultation) offered more detailed comments.
- Around a fifth of these called for clarification of the goal.
 - A further fifth thought the pitch of the goal was too high, in particular the reference to 'reading simple sentences'.
 - A similar number were concerned that the goal may lead to a narrower curriculum.
14. Teachers in workshops were generally happy with the content and pitch of the reading goal. They asked that the guidance and exemplification makes it clear that the children do not need to be exclusively using phonic knowledge to accurately decode and read regular words.

Shape, space and measures

15. 131 respondents (20% of all consultation respondents) commented on this goal. 61 respondents (less than 10% of all respondents to the consultation) provided more detailed comments. 27 of these called for clarification of the goal. Only 13 of these thought that the goal appeared too stretching, but most of the comments indicated that with appropriate guidance and exemplification these issues could be addressed.

The Order

16. The consultation asked whether respondents had any comments to make on the draft *Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (Learning and Development Requirements) (Amendment) Order 2012*. 423 people responded to this question, of which just under half made further comments which varied quite widely. The most significant issues raised were:
- around 30 respondents asked for more guidance and training to support implementation;
 - around 20 supported the revisions to the EYFS and/or the learning and development requirements; and
 - around 20 commented on the Order itself. These were evenly split between those that agreed that the learning and development requirements should be legal requirements and those that did not.

Conclusion and next steps

17. Responses to the consultation were positive overall, indicating broad support for the educational programmes, the areas of learning and the early learning goals. Reflecting some helpful comments from consultees, we have made some minor changes to the areas of learning to better demonstrate age-appropriateness for all children aged 0-5. We have also

taken comments made by consultees into account in guidance being developed to support the EYFS implementation (as outlined in the Government response to the EYFS Consultation).

18. Given the level of support, and having considered carefully the nature of the comments made during the consultation, we have concluded that we should not make any changes to the early learning goals.

Organisations that responded

115 Club
ABC Childcare (Ipswich) Ltd
Acacia Playgroup
ACERT
Action for Children
Adwick Washington Infant School
Afacic
All Saints Pre-School
ASPECTS Early Childhood Education Group
Association of Teachers and Lecturers
Barbados Playgroup Ltd
Baring School
BEAM www.beam.co.uk
Beaulieu Village Primary School
Bedgrove Infant School
Birchanger Nursery
Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
Blackpool Council
Boundary Primary School
Bracknell Forest Council
Bradford Metropolitan District Council
Bram Longstaffe Nursery School
Brampton Primary School
Brent Early Years
Bricknell Primary School
Bridge Special School, The
Bright Beginnings Child Care Centre Leeds
Bright Horizons Family Solutions
British Heart Foundation National Centre for Physical Activity and Health
Broadfields Day Nursery
Broadstone Christian Nursery Ltd
Buckinghamshire County Council
Busy Bees
Butterfly Children's Centre
Butterfly Nursery School
Calderdale LA
Cambridgeshire LA
Canterbury Christ Church University
Castleton Primary School
Cayley Primary School
Central Bedfordshire Council
Cherry Trees Nursery School
Cherubs Montessori Day Nurseries Ltd
Cheshire East LA
Childbase Partnership
Childcare Consultancy
Childcare Corporation, The
Childminding Network
Children's Mathematics Network
Chippenham Nursery School
City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council
City of York Council
Cleveland Unit, The
Cornwall Council
Cornwall Learning
COT
Coventry City Council
Coventry Educational Psychology Service
Cullompton Pre-school
Derbyshire County Council
Design and Technology Association, The
Ditcham Park School
Dudley MBC
Dulwich Wood Nursery school and Children's Centre
Early Childhood Forum
Early Excellence
Early Learning Consultancy
Early Years and Childcare Team
East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Eaton House The Manor

Edgely and Cheadle Heath Children's Centre
Egg Day Nursery
Ellingham and Woodton Primary Partnership
Elmtree School and Nursery
ESCC
Everton Nursery School and Family Centre
Fakenham Children's Daycare Centre Ltd
Fern Hill Primary School
Fiona's Childcare Services
FRS Kindergarten
Glade Primary School
Glebelands Primary School
Gordon House Private Day Nursery
Grange Park Infant and Nursery School
Greenways Nursery School
Guildford Grove Primary School
Hague Bar Primary School
Hampshire County Council
Hertford Nursery and Infants School
Highwood Nursery
Histon Early Years Centre
Hounslow Early Years and Childcare
Ingfield Manor School
Iver Heath Infant School and Nursery
Jack and Jill School
Jack in the Box
Juniper Hill School
Kempsford Pre-School
Kendal Nursery School
Kennedys Kidz Childminding
Kennford Playbox, The
Keresforth Primary School
King Athelstan Primary School
Kings Meadow Day Nursery
Kingston upon Hull City Council
Knutsford Community Pre-school
LA Nursery School
Lake Street Community Playgroup
Leasowe Early Years and Adult Learning

Centre
Leicester City Council
Little Acorn Nursery
Little Acorns Pre-school
Little Ducklings Childminding and Shobdon
Arches Preschool
Little Monkeez Kidsclub
Little Shipmates Pre-School
Littlefish Pre-school
Loddiswell Pre-School
Loddon Infant and Nursery School
London Borough of Bromley
London Borough of Camden
London Borough of Hammersmith and
Fulham / Royal Borough of Kensington and
Chelsea
London Borough of Havering
London Borough of Islington
London Branch of Early Education, The
Lydalls Nursery School
Maidenhead Nursery School
Malden Manor Primary and Nursery School
Mary Paterson Nursery School
Mary Poppins Nursery
Mathematical Association and Association of
Teachers of Mathematics Joint Primary
Group
Medway Local Authority
Mencap
Merton Local Authority
Mickley Infants School
Millington Road Nursery School
Milton Keynes Council
Monkton Pre Prep
Montessori Centre International
Montessori Partnership, The
Mornington House Day Nursery
Mulbarton Infant School
NAPE
National Campaign for Nursery Education

National Association of Headteachers
 National Day Nurseries Association
 National Education Trust
 New Leaders in Early Years Canterbury
 Christ Church University
 Newcastle City Council
 Norfolk Adult Education
 North East Lincolnshire Council
 North Lincolnshire Council
 North Tyneside LA
 Northamptonshire County Council
 Norwich Steiner Kindergarten
 Norwich Steiner School Association
 Nottingham City Council
 Nottinghamshire County Council
 Oakfield Nursery School Ltd
 Open EYE Campaign
 Owl Pre-School, The
 Oxfordshire County Council
 Peasedown St John Primary School and
 Nursery
 Peterborough City Council
 Pied Piper Pre-School
 Polegate Pre-school Playgroup
 Pool Pre-School Group
 Pre-school Learning Alliance
 Priory, The
 Rainbow Pre-school
 Rainbow Training Centre
 Robert Sandilands School
 Rochdale MBC
 Rotherham LA
 Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames
 Rutland County Council
 Salford Children Services Directive
 School Food Trust
 Serco
 Service Children's Education
 Shiplake Primary School
 Shropshire Council
 Slade Nursery School and Children's Centre,
 The
 Slough Borough Council
 SMSC online
 Southend on Sea Borough Council
 St Catherine's Pre-school
 St Charles Catholic Sixth Form College
 St Michael's Church Pre-School and Nursery
 St. Matthews C.of E Primary School
 St. Matthew's Infant School
 Staffordshire County Council
 Starbank Primary School
 Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship
 Steps Community Nursery
 Stockport Council
 Stockton Borough Council
 Suffolk LA
 Sunbeams Nursery
 Sunderland City Council
 TACTYC
 TMA Helping Hands Preschool
 Tops Day Nurseries
 Trafford LA
 Training Depot Day Nursery
 Unicorn School
 Walker Day Care Nurseries Ltd
 Wandsworth Council
 Wessex Gardens Primary School
 West Kidlington Primary School
 Weston on Trent C of E Aided Primary School
 Weyhill Montessori
 Whipton Barton infant and Nursery School
 Wigan LA
 Windsor Kindergarten
 Woodthorpe Primary School

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