

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

27 March 2012

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# 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
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>664</b>	<b>100</b>

\*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
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>643</b>	<b>100</b>

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*
<b>Communication and language</b>		
Listening and attention	99	15
Understanding	65	10
Speaking	85	13
<b>Physical development</b>		
Moving and handling	98	15
Health and self-care	51	8
<b>Personal, social and emotional development</b>		
Self-confidence and self-awareness	64	10
Managing feelings and behaviour	73	11
Making relationships	41	6
<b>Literacy</b>		
Reading	189	28
Writing	213	32
<b>Mathematics</b>		
Numbers	254	38
Shape, space and measures	131	20
<b>Understanding the world</b>		
People and communities	64	10
The world	82	12
Technology	82	12
<b>Expressive arts and design</b>		
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](http://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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