

Research Report

No 350

Implementing the Foundation Stage in Reception Classes

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1 SUMMARY

Background

In September 2000 the Foundation Stage was implemented for children aged three to the end of the reception year in primary school. For the first time, this phase of education had a distinct identity with explicit intended outcomes – that by the end of the Foundation Stage, most children should achieve the Early Learning Goals in six areas of learning :

- personal, social and emotional development;
- communication, language and literacy;
- mathematical development;
- knowledge and understanding of the world;
- physical development;
- creative development.

A series of conferences held by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) in autumn 2000 raised a range of particular challenges for those seeking to implement the Foundation Stage in reception classes. Additionally, Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCPs), Local Education Authorities (LEA), teacher associations and the Foundation Stage Working Group (a group of early years experts and academics from whom the DfES Minister with responsibility for the early years seeks advice on Foundation Stage issues) persistently reported anxieties about the successful implementation of the Foundation Stage in reception classes, reflecting those identified by the headteachers and governors who attended the QCA conferences. Taylor Nelson Sofres (TNS) was commissioned by the DfES to undertake a nationally representative survey of schools in consultation with Professor Carol Aubrey at the University of Warwick, to investigate and quantify these issues, covering provision and teacher characteristics, different reception class practices, and headteachers' and reception class teachers' views, attitudes and concerns.

Methodology

The research was designed to provide a snapshot of both practices and opinions regarding the Foundation Stage in reception classes during the Autumn of 2001. A total of 1,551 structured telephone interviews were conducted with a representative sample of schools, drawn from the DfES's register of educational establishments comprising 'all maintained primary schools in

England' with a lower statutory age below 6 years (this includes special schools). 799 primary school headteachers and 752 reception class teachers in England were interviewed between 29th October and 23rd November 2001. In 702 cases, the headteacher and reception class teacher were from the same school. The final response rate for headteachers was 67%.

School characteristics

Two thirds of schools surveyed had just one class containing reception-aged children. The average school had 29 reception-aged children in the autumn term, most of whom were attending school full time.

Almost half (44%) of schools had nursery classes, although this varied depending on the characteristics of the area. Schools in urban areas and those with high levels of deprivation among pupils were most likely to have nursery provision in school. 27% of reception class teachers also taught older children in the same class, and 5% taught reception year alongside younger children.

The average proportion of reception-aged children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) across all schools was 12%, although a third of schools reported having no children of this age with SEN. On average (across all schools) 6% of reception-aged children were identified as having English as an Additional Language (EAL), although two thirds of headteachers reported having no children with EAL in their reception classes.

Headteacher and reception teacher qualifications and training

Both headteachers and reception class teachers interviewed were generally very experienced. 77% of headteachers and 33% of reception class teachers had been in the teaching profession for more than 20 years. However, 9% of reception class teachers had less than three years teaching experience. In terms of teaching *reception* classes, substantial proportions of reception class teachers had only been teaching reception classes for a relatively short period of time. A quarter of reception class teachers had less than three years experience of teaching this age group. Nine out of ten headteachers were originally trained to teach primary children, although many of these (35% of all headteachers) were originally trained to teach children from the age of seven, rather than younger children. Regarding reception class teachers, while most were originally trained to teach primary children, a total of 14% were either trained for secondary or for primary children from the age of seven.

Approximately two thirds of headteachers had undertaken specific training in the Foundation Stage; over half had received training on *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*, and two fifths had received training on reception class literacy and numeracy. Headteachers who were initially trained to teach reception-aged children were the most likely to have received training in the Foundation Stage. 19% of headteachers had neither been early years trained initially nor received Foundation Stage training.

The vast majority (86%) of reception class teachers had received some specific training in the Foundation Stage. Three quarters (74%) had been trained on *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*, 60% in reception class literacy and 55% in reception class numeracy. However, only a third felt that they had received enough training to help them deliver the Foundation Stage, the general view being that some extra training would be useful. In particular those with less than three years experience in teaching reception classes wanted additional training. Specific areas highlighted for extra training were planning, assessment, Foundation Stage guidance, literacy, numeracy and Information and Communications Technology (ICT).

85% of nursery staff and 59% of Key Stage 1 staff had received Foundation Stage training. Training for Key Stage 2 staff and governors was much less common (29% and 31% respectively).

Resourcing

Three quarters (77%) of headteachers reported spending more money on reception classes as a result of the Foundation Stage, including 38% who felt they had spent 'a lot more'. When asked about the adequacy of facilities in their school, ICT, indoor areas for practical activity and indoor quiet areas were assessed to be at least 'adequate' by three quarters or more of headteachers. However, almost half (43%) of the headteachers interviewed felt that outdoor learning facilities for reception-aged children in their school were 'inadequate'.

66% of headteachers had included the Foundation Stage as a key priority in their School Improvement Plan for at least one year out of 2000-01, 2001-02 and 2002-03.

The Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership

Schools tended to receive regular written information from the EYDCP (three quarters received written information at least once a term), but beyond this there was little face to face involvement with the Partnership. Less than a third of headteachers described their relationship with the EYDCP as 'close'.

The Foundation Stage team

The vast majority (86%) of schools had an identified Foundation Stage co-ordinator, although only 37% had designated a Foundation Stage governor. Staff often took on a range of additional responsibilities, and most Foundation Stage co-ordinators were also the Early Years co-ordinator.

Support staff

The vast majority (97%) of schools had general classroom support staff for reception classes (i.e. not assigned to specific children). About half of classroom support staff worked part-time. 29% of support staff had no relevant childcare or early years qualifications. The most common qualifications, held by a third of support staff, were CACHE or BTEC Diploma in Nursery Nursing or NVQ Level 3 in Early Years Care and Education.

Admission procedures

In 60% of schools, all children entered the reception class in September. A quarter (24%) of schools had two admission points per year, and 12% admitted children to reception classes at three points. Two fifths (41%) of schools took reception-aged children full-time from their first day, and a further 29% started children part-time, but for less than half a term. Reception class teachers tended to be relatively well informed about their children before they began school. 82% always met with the child's parents mostly in school, although 13% carried out home visits. Half (53%) always received written records from the nursery or other pre-school provider, and similar proportions met with nursery staff or pre-school providers. 31% both received records from, and met with, nursery or pre-school staff.

General experience of the Foundation Stage

The vast majority of both headteachers and reception class teachers viewed the Foundation Stage as 'a good thing' (91% and 95% respectively). However, when asked to assess the commitment to the Foundation Stage among the teaching community as a whole, both

headteachers and reception class teachers were less positive, with 73% and 58% respectively assessing commitment as high.

The main benefits of the Foundation Stage that were described by headteachers and reception class teachers (in response to an open question) were as follows:

- **Defines the reception year** – mentioned by 37% of headteachers and 30% of reception class teachers. The Foundation Stage creates a bridge between the nursery and Key Stage 1, gives structure to the reception year, recognises that reception-aged children have different needs to older/younger children, and highlights the importance of the reception year.
- **Flexibility and informality of the reception year** – mentioned by 27% of headteachers and 34% of reception class teachers. A less formal teaching style than Key Stage 1, not as rigidly structured as the National Curriculum, and encourages integrated learning rather than segmenting by subject.
- **Focuses on child development** – mentioned by 26% of headteachers and 26% of reception class teachers. Emphasises personal, social and emotional development, encourages child centred learning and child led activities, puts more focus on verbal communication, and puts less pressure on the child.
- **Focuses on practical play and outdoor activity** – mentioned by 25% of headteachers and 38% of reception class teachers.
- **Benefits for teachers** – mentioned by 27% of headteachers and 28% of reception class teachers. The Foundation Stage provides good guidance for teachers, helps with lesson planning, improves the focus of training and puts less pressure on teachers.

The main problems of the Foundation Stage that were described by headteachers and reception class teachers (in response to an open question) were as follows:

- **Timing** – mentioned by 19% of headteachers and 16% of reception class teachers. The Foundation Stage was introduced too quickly. There was insufficient time for planning or to cover all the Early Learning Goals.
- **Cost** – mentioned by 18% of headteachers and 16% of reception class teachers. Increased staffing or resourcing costs and lack of facilities, equipment and materials.
- **Staffing** – mentioned by 17% of headteachers and 17% of reception class teachers. Lack or shortage of classroom support staff, poor adult to child ratios.

- **Unclear guidance** – mentioned by 10% of headteachers and 15% of reception class teachers. Mixed message about structured vs. unstructured work, training was provided too late, and the Foundation Stage is difficult to explain to parents.
- **Disrupts children by being so distinct from Key Stage 1** – mentioned by 8% of headteachers and by 8% of reception class teachers. The Foundation Stage is not felt to prepare the child sufficiently for, or fit in with, Key Stage 1. It holds children back who are ready for more formal learning.
- **Buildings and grounds are inadequate for activities** – mentioned by 16% of headteachers and 15% of reception class teachers.
- **Mixed classes using two different curricula** – mentioned by 12% of headteachers and 14% of reception class teachers.

The vast majority (86%) of headteachers felt that they had made ‘a lot of progress’ in implementing the Foundation Stage in their school. Reception class teachers were divided over whether work in their class had changed as a result of the Foundation Stage. Where changes had occurred, they tended to be in the reduction of formality and an increase in child focused and ‘hands-on’ activities.

Implementation for the Foundation Stage

About half of headteachers reported experiencing problems in fitting the Foundation Stage into the whole school approach to planning, but only 14% described it as a ‘big problem’. On the whole, the problem was that the Foundation Stage requires planning in a different way to Key Stages 1 and 2, therefore new planning forms were created, and teachers who have not been trained in the Foundation Stage were less able to be involved. There was also concern that the Foundation Stage should be tailored to ensure that children are ready for the requirements of Key Stage 1, and/or that Key Stage 1 teachers plan for a smooth transition from the reception year.

While nursery and other early years teachers were generally involved in all levels of planning the Foundation Stage curriculum and lesson planning (83% long term : 75% short term), classroom support staff were much more likely to be involved in short term rather than long term planning (57% long term : 72% short term). Where support staff were qualified (levels 2-4) they were slightly more likely to be involved in planning. Just over half (55%) of

headteachers/deputies were involved in long term planning, but only a quarter (26%) were involved in short term planning for the reception class. Similarly 43% of reception class teachers reported that Key Stage 1 teachers were involved in long term planning for the reception class, but only 23% in short term planning. Less than one in five reception class teachers reported that Key Stage 2 teachers were involved in any planning for the reception class.

The majority (70%) of schools organised teaching in reception classes in the same way throughout the year, in terms of the balance struck between structuring teaching by Foundation Stage areas of learning, or integrating learning across the curriculum. Almost half of reception class teachers used a combination of these methods rather than relying on a single style. Around one in three teachers reported using different groupings of children for different activities. Among the remainder, ability was the most frequently mentioned factor, increasing from 23% in term 1 to 40% in term 2 and 47% in term 3.

The majority of reception class teachers implemented both the National Literacy Strategy and National Numeracy Strategy flexibly in terms 1 and 2, but used a Literacy Hour and daily mathematics lesson in term 3. Most teachers felt that the Foundation Stage had 'got it about right' in terms of the emphasis placed on verbal skills (90%), taking a developmental approach to learning (90%), play (89%), formal learning (74%) and written skills (69%). However, a sizeable minority expressed concerns that too little emphasis was placed on formal learning and written skills (20% and 25% respectively). It is concerning that creative development and physical development were regarded as slightly, yet significantly, less important than literacy and numeracy.

Almost all reception class teachers with classroom assistants involved them in evaluating lessons, 38% involved them 'a great deal'. Involvement of classroom assistants was highest when the reception class teacher had less than 3 years experience, or felt that the Foundation Stage was 'a very good thing'. Most reception class teachers used a range of observation techniques and types of evidence to monitor and assess the progress of children. At least four out of every five reception class teachers used each of the following: general observations, their own baseline assessments, annotated examples of work, records from nursery or pre-school provider, and asking children's own views.

National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies

Around two thirds of both headteachers and reception class teachers felt that implementing the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies with a more flexible approach for reception-aged children had *not* been a problem. Less than 10% of each group felt that it had been a *big* problem.

Mixed-age classes

57% of headteachers and 60% of teachers with reception-aged children in mixed-age classes reported experiencing some difficulties in teaching from both the *Curriculum guidance for foundation stage* and the Key Stage 1 Programmes of Study in the same classroom. Problems tended to be about the increased planning required, and ensuring that work was tailored appropriately to both age groups. The different teaching styles of the phases were also thought to be problematic in a single classroom, as reception-aged children would spend less time at tables, and make more noise than Year 1 children.

Transition to Key Stage 1

72% of headteachers felt that the transition of children to Key Stage 1 had not been a problem since the introduction of the Foundation Stage. Just 7% felt that it had been a *big* problem in their school. Where problems had been encountered, they were generally concerned with adjusting to a more formal teaching method and having the skills required by Key Stage 1. Three quarters (77%) of reception class teachers always discussed each child's progress with their future Year 1 teacher before they moved on.

Parental involvement

The majority of schools were keen to make parents aware of the Foundation Stage, with 69% of schools having held meetings to explain it. However, parents' understanding of the Foundation Stage and the six areas of learning was generally described by reception class teachers as moderate (56%), with more describing it as low or very low (25%) than high or very high (16%).

Conclusions

There is evidence from this survey of the importance of training. Schools with headteachers originally trained to work with the youngest children, and who have received specific

Foundation Stage training, and whose Foundation Stage and other staff have continued early years training, tended to have had positive experiences of implementing the Foundation Stage in reception classes. The survey also shows that the majority of reception class teachers would welcome some additional training in the Foundation Stage, and that there are large numbers of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 teachers, and governors that have not received specific training in the Foundation Stage. One third of classroom support staff are unqualified (more in rural areas). This highlights the need for Foundation Stage training to be extended to support staff, especially in rural areas. Understanding and commitment of all staff is necessary for the smooth implementation of a curriculum for 3 to 11 year-olds. Raising the general understanding and awareness of the teaching community as a whole through Foundation Stage training is likely to enhance whole school curriculum planning, teaching and assessment, as well as facilitate the transition between the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. Progression and continuity across the primary years is, thus, ensured.

That those headteachers most strongly endorsing the Foundation Stage are most likely to report spending a lot of additional money on the reception year, and identify the Foundation Stage as a key priority in the School Improvement Plan provides further evidence of the importance of positive school leadership.

Headteachers' views on the challenge of incorporating the Foundation Stage within the school's overall curriculum planning for Key Stage 1 and 2 varied, but the greatest concerns were expressed in schools with mixed-age classes, teaching from two curricula. Whilst teachers were divided as to whether there had been much change to their work, there was a perception by a minority (10% of headteachers and 15% of reception class teachers) that 'mixed messages' and unclear guidance with respect to structure of the reception year had been given, and a feeling that the Foundation Stage teaching style does not fully prepare children for Key Stage 1. However, it is heartening to find that almost three quarters of headteachers did not perceive that transition of reception-aged children to Key Stage 1 to be a problem.

Reception class teachers feel able to provide opportunities for children to engage in activities they have planned and initiated themselves. In general, the implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies has not been regarded as a problem, and curriculum organisation shows a slight trend to shift from a pattern of integrating the six areas of learning

at the beginning of the year to a greater degree of differentiation later in the year, and an increasing use of the Literacy Hour and daily mathematics lessons. Despite the call from a number of headteachers and reception class teachers for more and clearer information about the Foundation Stage (including additional training for reception class teachers), and some initial planning difficulties, the vast majority of both headteachers and reception class teachers had positive overall views of the Foundation Stage and tended to believe that much progress had been made in implementing it in their school.

Schools both in urban and rural/mainly rural areas may have distinct, though similarly diverse teaching groups. On the one hand, urban schools face the challenge of targeted early intervention to increase the likelihood of deprived children being successfully integrated and, thereby, breaking cycles of educational under-achievement and social exclusion. On the other hand, rural/mainly rural schools with mixed-age classes face the challenge of providing learning opportunities and high expectations to meet the needs of all children so that most reception-aged children achieve the Early Learning Goals and, at the same time, older children progress further within Key Stage 1. To ensure *all* children make the best possible progress in all settings, a wide range of teaching strategies, based on children's diverse needs will be required to motivate, support and extend them appropriately.

2 BACKGROUND, OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Background

2.1.1 The Foundation Stage

In September 2000, the Foundation Stage was implemented for children aged from three to the end of reception year in primary school, by which time most children are of statutory school age. For the first time, this phase of education had a distinct identity with explicit intended outcomes – that most children should achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Foundation Stage in six areas of learning:

- personal, social and emotional development;
- communication, language and literacy;
- mathematical development;
- knowledge and understanding of the world;
- physical development;
- creative development.

Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage (CGFS) was written to support practitioners in all early years settings in planning a curriculum that would help all children make good progress towards, and where appropriate beyond, the Early Learning Goals. Alongside structured teaching planned by adults (both indoors and outdoors), it was envisaged that there should also be opportunities for children to learn through play, to experiment, plan and initiate activities themselves. The guidance was developed by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), working with early years practitioners and experts. The DfES, the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and OFSTED were also closely involved throughout.

Reception classes provide funded early years education in schools for the majority of 4 year - olds and are the first stage of compulsory schooling for around two thirds of 5 year-old children. The next stage of compulsory schooling is Key Stage 1, with children starting this

phase in Year 1 at the age of 5 or 6. Recommendations of the House of Commons Education and Employment Committee and Education Sub-Committee First Report *Early Years* (2000: paragraph 53) supported the CGFS approach that “more structured learning should be introduced very gradually so that by the end of the reception year, children are learning through more formal, whole-class activities for a small proportion of the day”. (Further information on the Foundation Stage and the Key Stages of schooling can be found at www.qca.org.uk).

2.1.2 The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies (NLS/NNS)

One of the first acts of this government was to announce national targets for literacy and numeracy, and the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies were implemented in order to raise standards and help schools meet these targets. As part of these strategies, all primary schools have available to them specially devised frameworks for teaching literacy and mathematics and now teach a daily, dedicated Literacy Hour (since September 1998) and a daily mathematics lesson (since September 1999). These lessons follow a specific format.

The Literacy Hour has four elements:

- Whole class working on a shared text
- Word-level or sentence work
- Independent work
- Plenary session to consolidate and think about next steps.

The daily mathematics lesson is broken down into three elements:

- Oral work and mental calculation using whole class teaching
- Main lesson for new topics and consolidating previous work
- Plenary session to draw together what has been learned.

The Early Learning Goals are in line with the objectives in the frameworks for teaching literacy and mathematics, which should be taught throughout the reception year. Reception

class teachers may choose to cover the elements of the Literacy Hour and daily mathematics lesson across the day rather than in a single unit of time. In order to ensure a smooth transition to the Literacy Hour and daily mathematics lesson in Year 1, both should be in place by the end of the reception year.

2.1.3 Background to the survey

A series of conferences held by QCA in autumn 2000, and attended by around 1,100 primary school headteachers and governors, raised a range of particular challenges for those seeking to implement the Foundation Stage in reception classes. Many reception class teachers and the support staff who work with them were not early years trained. Staffing ratios were less generous than in nursery classes (which tend to take 3 and younger 4 year-olds). Accommodation was often less than ideal, with provision for outdoor learning particularly problematic. In curriculum and organisation, many reception classes had previously followed similar patterns to Key Stage 1 classes, where the focus had been on the introduction of the Literacy Hour and daily mathematics lesson. Other subjects had been given a lesser priority and time allocation, and there had been a strong steer towards teacher directed and whole class teaching. Some felt that the implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies did not sit easily alongside following CGFS, which placed a strong emphasis on children's personal, social, emotional and physical development, and which promoted a broader pedagogical approach with play as a key way of learning. The 30 class-size limit directive for 5, 6, and 7 year-olds had meant that, increasingly, both reception and Key Stage 1 children were taught together in the same classes. This had added to the differentiation required of teachers to meet the differing expectations of the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.

The Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCPs) exist to plan, develop and support high quality, accessible, affordable and diverse early education and childcare in every local authority area. The partnership is a non-executive body - an alliance or consortium of key agencies and individuals. Partnerships have an important role in overseeing and recommending work that is part of the Strategic and Implementation Plans that set out how the EYDCPs will meet DfES targets for their early years and childcare services.

It was clear from the QCA conferences that, in many local authorities, the EYDCP's relationship with maintained sector schools and Local Education Authority (LEA) staff was weaker than with the voluntary and private early years sectors. Reception class teachers were reported to feel that they were not always seen as part of their local EYDCP and often did not see themselves as part of that group. The same was felt to be true of headteachers. They felt that, as a result of this, the training and support needs of teachers and support staff in primary schools were not given sufficient emphasis by EYDCPs, and schools were not playing an active role in their EYDCP.

EYDCPs, LEAs, teacher associations and the Foundation Stage Working Group (a group of early years experts and academics from whom the DfES Minister with responsibility for the early years seeks advice on Foundation Stage issues) persistently reported anxieties about the successful implementation of the Foundation Stage in reception classes, reflecting those identified by the headteachers and governors who attended the QCA conferences. The then Minister, therefore, asked that research should take place to quantify the following issues:

- headteachers who are uninformed / do not see the need to change existing practice;
- problems as a result of teachers who are not early years trained;
- tensions between CGFS and NLS/NNS expectations;
- inadequate staffing;
- inadequate accommodation and/or resources;
- tensions between Foundation Stage / Key Stage 1 curriculum when reception children are taught in mixed-age classes.

Taylor Nelson Sofres (TNS) was commissioned by the DfES to undertake this research in consultation with Professor Carol Aubrey at the University of Warwick.

2.2 Objectives

The overall objective of the research was to measure the extent of provision, teacher characteristics, different practices, and headteachers' and reception class teachers' views, attitudes and concerns in England in relation to:

- the implementation of the newly established Foundation Stage in reception classes;
- transition from reception classes to the Key Stage 1 curriculum in Year 1;
- to inform a DfES cascade programme of training planned for LEA advisers, for them to use with headteachers and reception class teachers.

More specifically, the research was to collect information on the following in relation to reception classes:

- headteacher awareness and understanding of the Foundation Stage and steps taken to implement it in school;
- children and school characteristics including number, ages, pre-reception provision, pattern of attendance (part-time/full-time), special educational needs, free school meals, English as an Additional Language, and organisation/ grouping in class;
- staffing, including use of support staff, their qualifications and amount of time spent in class;
- reception class teacher characteristics, qualifications, training, experience and knowledge including initial and ongoing training, and experience of early years age group;
- training on Foundation Stage guidance and NLS/NNS teaching frameworks/ guidance;
- accommodation, including outdoor space, and other resources;
- links to nursery classes / early years settings;
- curriculum planning, including coverage of areas of learning and Early Learning Goals; teaching approaches used; sources of planning; monitoring, assessing and recording; emphasis on play and on whole class teaching;
- how Literacy and Numeracy Strategy requirements are implemented;
- managing transition to Year 1 / Key Stage 1, including content and pedagogy;

- parental interest/involvement;
- headteachers' and reception class teachers' perceptions of good/effective practice and poor/ineffectual practice;
- headteachers' and reception class teachers' general view of the Foundation Stage.

2.3 Methodological approach

2.3.1 Data collection

The research was designed to provide a snapshot of both practices and opinions regarding the Foundation Stage during the Autumn of 2001. It comprised structured interviews with a representative sample of both primary school headteachers and reception class teachers in England. A total of 1,551 interviews were conducted - 799 with headteachers and 752 with reception class teachers. In 702 cases, the headteacher and reception class teacher were from the same school.

All interviews were conducted by telephone. This method was chosen because it allowed data collection to be conducted over a short period of time, minimised the administrative burden placed on schools and should raise the response rate over that from a postal survey.

As basic statistics from the survey were required at an early stage, the fieldwork was conducted in two stages, each lasting two weeks. During the first two weeks, the objective was to achieve a total of 500 interviews with each of headteachers and reception class teachers, which would allow a basic analysis of the data to be undertaken. During the second two weeks, the objective was to 'top up' each of the two samples with an additional 250 interviews, which would allow for a more detailed analysis of the data. In practice, these targets were exceeded at both stages, as a result of the high level of co-operation from both headteachers and reception class teachers.

Interviews were conducted between 29th October and 23rd November 2001.

All telephone interviewing was conducted using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) at the Taylor Nelson Sofres telephone interviewing centre in Manchester, under the controls of the IQCS (Interviewer Quality Control Scheme) and the MRS (Market Research Society) Code of Conduct. All interviewers working on the project received a personal briefing on the study.

2.3.2 *Sample source and structure*

The sample of schools was selected from the DfES' register of educational establishments. The universe (population of schools within the scope of this survey, including special schools) comprised 'all maintained primary schools in England' with a lower statutory age below 6 years. Schools that had recently taken part in DfES' research were excluded from the survey.

The sample was stratified by Local Education Authority to ensure a nationally representative sample. In so doing, this also controlled well for urban/rural/mixed areas. After this stratification, the sample was selected on a 'one in n' basis. Therefore there was no clustering, so ensuring the maximum reliability of the sample. Bearing in mind the two stages of the fieldwork, the sample was then divided into two, and a representative sample of schools issued for each of the fieldwork stages.

A letter was sent to all of the selected schools prior to telephone contact being made. The letter was addressed to the headteacher and explained the background and rationale for the research, the importance of participation, and gave details of what the survey would involve. Also included was a short form, which asked headteachers to gather together some basic factual information about the school before the interview actually took place. This approach worked well, and almost all headteachers who were contacted had prepared the relevant information on the form provided. A copy of the introductory letter can be found in Appendix A and a copy of the factual data form can be found in Appendix B at the back of this report.

Once telephone contact was established with a school, securing an appointment to interview the headteacher did not pose a problem. Selecting the reception class teacher for interview was slightly more complex, as there was sometimes more than one reception class teacher at

each school. In these cases, the headteacher was asked to provide details of the names of all permanent reception class teachers at the school and then the computer made a random selection from this list. This approach was designed to avoid any possible bias in the headteacher's choice of nominee for interview, and worked well in practice, with interviews only being carried out with the selected reception class teachers.

2.3.3 Response rate

A high response rate was considered very important for the success of the survey. The amount of sample issued to interviewers was therefore carefully controlled, and repeated calls made to selected schools in order to make contact with the headteacher. Over the two fieldwork periods, a total of 1200 sampled schools were released to interviewers. From these, 799 interviews with headteachers were achieved, representing a response rate of 67%. In the majority of cases where an interview with a headteacher was achieved, an interview with a reception class teacher was also achieved.

This is a very good and pleasing response rate, which was attributed to the following factors:

- The subject matter of the survey was regarded as extremely relevant to respondents, who were therefore very keen to participate. Indeed, once they had received the introductory letter, many headteachers contacted Taylor Nelson Sofres asking to participate in the survey.
- The letter was well targeted and provoked an interest in and co-operation with the research.
- The method of interviewing the headteacher initially and then the reception class teacher worked well, as once the headteacher had committed to the survey the reception class teacher usually followed suit.
- The sample of schools was up-to-date and accurate.
- The fieldwork was very tightly controlled, with interviewers making repeated calls (up to ten) to schools over the fieldwork period.

Figure 1 shows the full response analysis.

Figure 1: Response analysis

Issued sample	1200	100%
Interview achieved:		
With headteacher and reception class teacher	702	59
With headteacher only	97	8
With reception class teacher only	50	4
Refusals	144	12
Interview terminated	2	*
Unobtainable telephone number	36	3
Duplicate sample	2	*
Ineligible	32	3
Call backs, no replies	135	11

Non-response was fairly evenly divided between refusals and failure to schedule an appointment for interview.

After each phase of fieldwork, the achieved samples were examined in detail against the profile of the universe of schools (population of schools within the scope of this survey) to check that they were representative in terms of LEA, level of deprivation in the area, type of establishment, school size, and whether or not there was nursery provision. On all of these measures, the achieved samples were found to closely match the universe of schools. The achieved samples slightly under-represented special schools. This was mainly because many special schools have only very small numbers of reception-aged children and, therefore, did not feel that they had sufficient experience to take part in the survey. Many of those classified as ‘ineligible’ in Figure 1 are special schools.

2.3.4 Questionnaires

The questionnaires were developed by Taylor Nelson Sofres in close consultation with the University of Warwick and the DfES. Drafts of the questionnaires were piloted with 10 headteachers and 10 reception class teachers. TNS researchers, Professor Carol Aubrey and

representatives of the DfES listened in to the pilot interviews. In general the pilot interviews went well, and it was clear that respondents were keen to co-operate and were interested in the subjects covered by the survey. As a result of the pilot, small adjustments were made to the questionnaires. Copies of the final questionnaires can be found in Appendices B and C at the back of this report.

Interviews took an average of 20 minutes to administer for both headteachers and reception class teachers.

2.3.5 Reporting

The figures shown in the text, tables and graphs in this report have been rounded to the nearest percentage point. The cumulative effect of this rounding is that percentage figures may not always total exactly to 100%.

Where an asterisk (*) is used in a table or graph instead of a percentage, this means less than 1%, but not zero.

The term ‘all teachers’ in tables refers to all reception class teachers surveyed.

3 SCHOOL AND RECEPTION CLASS CHARACTERISTICS

3.1 Numbers of reception classes and reception-aged children

At the start of the headteachers' interview factual data was collected about the composition of reception classes¹ at the school. As headteachers might not have had this information immediately to hand, they were asked to prepare some of the figures in advance of the interview.

Two thirds (66%) of schools surveyed had just one class with reception-aged children (see Section 3.4), with 26% having two. This left 7% of schools with three reception classes, and 2% with four or more.

The majority of schools (57%) only had *one* teacher with reception class responsibility. 32% had two, and 10% had three or more. The average number of teachers per school with class responsibility for the reception year was 1.5. This was almost exclusively made up of *full-time* teachers: only 13% of schools employed *part-time* reception class teachers.

Overall, schools had an average of about 29 reception-aged children (note that this figure refers to October/November 2001, i.e. the autumn term, when fieldwork took place). The vast majority of these children were *full-time* – accounting for just over 24 of the 29 children on average. (Figure 2)

The number of reception-aged children varied considerably between schools. At one end of the scale, 18% of schools had between one and ten reception-aged children, while at the other end of the scale, 17% had more than 50 children of that age (Figure 2).

¹ In this report 'reception classes' always refers to classes with reception-aged children in them. These classes may solely contain reception-aged children, or may also include children of other ages. 'Reception class teachers' refers to the teachers who are responsible for such classes.

The smallest numbers of reception-aged children tended to be in rural areas (average of 12 reception children per school) and, to some extent, in schools with the lowest levels of deprivation amongst pupils (as measured by the percentage of children receiving free school meals²). There was an average of 24 reception children in these schools. Schools with a large number of reception children tended to be in urban areas (average of 34).

Figure 2: Number of reception-aged children in school (Oct/Nov2001)

Base: All headteachers	799
Mean number of reception-aged children	28.5
Mean number of full-time	24.5
Mean number of part-time	4.1
Distribution of total number of reception-aged children (i.e. full-time plus part-time):	%
1 – 10	18
11 – 20	25
21 – 30	24
31 – 40	9
41 – 50	6
51 or more	17

² Schools were divided into three bands, according to the percentage of children in the whole school who were in receipt of free school meals. The three bands are 0-5%, 6-25% and 26% or more. The lower and upper bands are referred to respectively throughout the report as ‘least deprived / low deprivation’ and ‘most deprived / high deprivation’.

3.2 Special Educational Needs

According to headteachers, overall the average proportion of reception-aged children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) across all schools was 12% (not necessarily with a Statement, but identified by the headteacher as having SEN). One third (34%) of headteachers indicated that they did not have any reception-aged children with SEN at the time of the survey.

Reception classes with the highest percentage of SEN children tended to be in the schools with the highest levels of deprivation among pupils. In those schools (more than 25% of children eligible for free school meals), only 15% of headteachers reported that they did not have any reception-aged children with SEN, and, on average, headteachers reported 23% of children in their reception classes had SEN. This compares to an average of just 6% in the schools with the least deprivation. Linked to this is the finding that the average level of SEN was more than 13% in urban areas, compared to just 7% in rural areas. Interestingly above average levels of SEN (17%) were also recorded in schools where headteachers indicated that no additional resources had been spent on the reception year as a result of the introduction of the Foundation Stage.

3.3 English as an Additional Language

Overall, across all schools, the average percentage of reception-aged children identified by headteachers as having English as an Additional Language (EAL) was 6%. Two thirds of headteachers stated that there were no reception-aged children in their school with EAL. Where schools had reception-aged children with EAL, they tended to have a relatively small percentage of such children - usually not more than 10%.

As with SEN, the highest levels of EAL tended to be in schools with the most deprivation. In schools with high levels of deprivation, the average percentage of children with EAL was 17%, compared to just 2% in those schools with the least deprivation. There was also a very clear difference between urban and rural areas on this measure: in urban areas, the average level of children with EAL was 8% compared to less than 1% in rural areas.

3.4 Mixed-age classes

Mixed-age classes, where reception-aged children are taught alongside older or younger children, were relatively common.

Of the reception class teachers surveyed, 68% taught classes comprised exclusively of reception-aged children, 27% taught reception-aged children alongside older children, and 5% taught reception-aged children with younger children in the same classroom. Mixed-age classes were particularly common in small, rural schools (as shown in Figure 3).

Figure 3: Composition of class

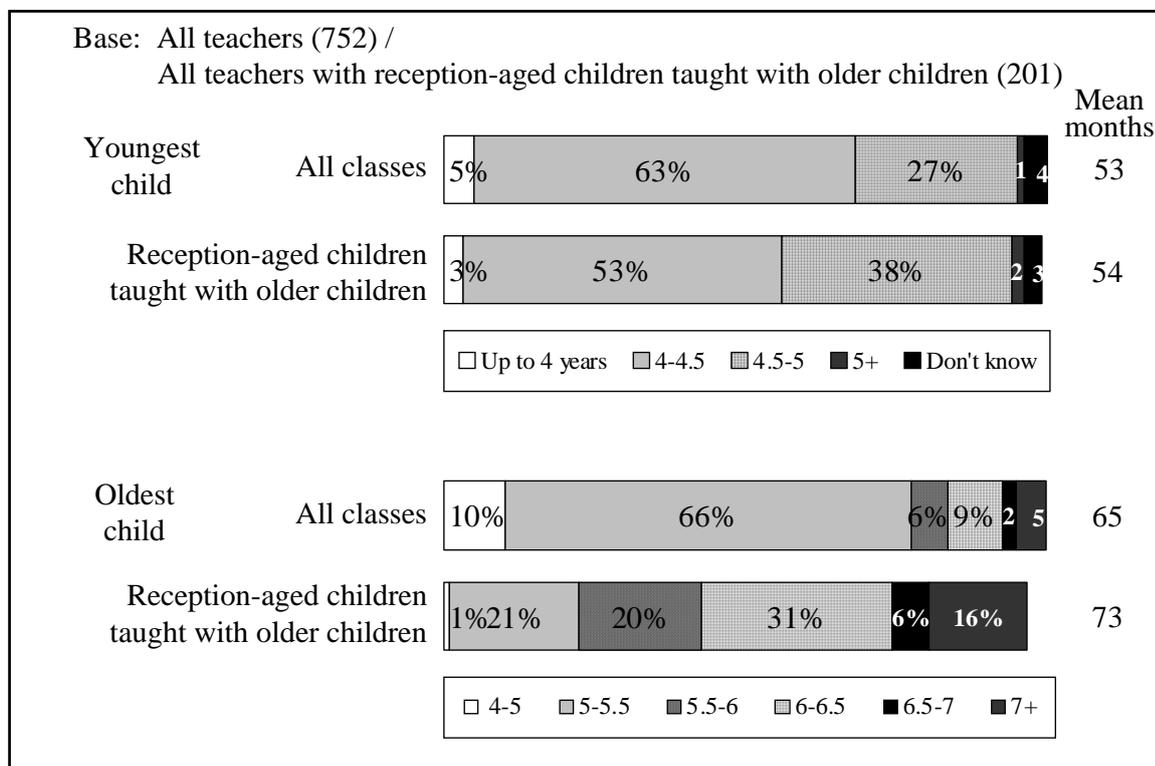
Base: All teachers	Total	Number of pupils in school				Area	
		Less than 100	100 to 199	200 to 299	300 or more	Urban	Rural
	752 %	131 %	176 %	249 %	196 %	554 %	134 %
Reception-aged children only	68	22	55	84	90	81	20
Reception-aged and younger children	5	11	4	3	5	5	5
Reception-aged and older children	27	66	41	13	5	14	75

From headteachers, the proportion indicating that they had classes in their school where older children were taught together with reception-aged children was 36%. This is slightly higher than the proportion of teachers reporting that they actually taught such classes and could be due to some reception-aged children in the school being in dedicated reception classes and others being in mixed-age classes.

Overall, in *all* classes with reception-aged children, the average age of the youngest child was 53 months and the oldest 65 months (see Figure 4). In classes where older children were taught with reception-aged children, the average age of the youngest child was about the same (54 months), but the average age of the oldest child was 73 months. Indeed, in 22% of

classes where reception-aged children were taught with older children, there were children aged 79 months or more, with some cases of children up to the age of 93 months.

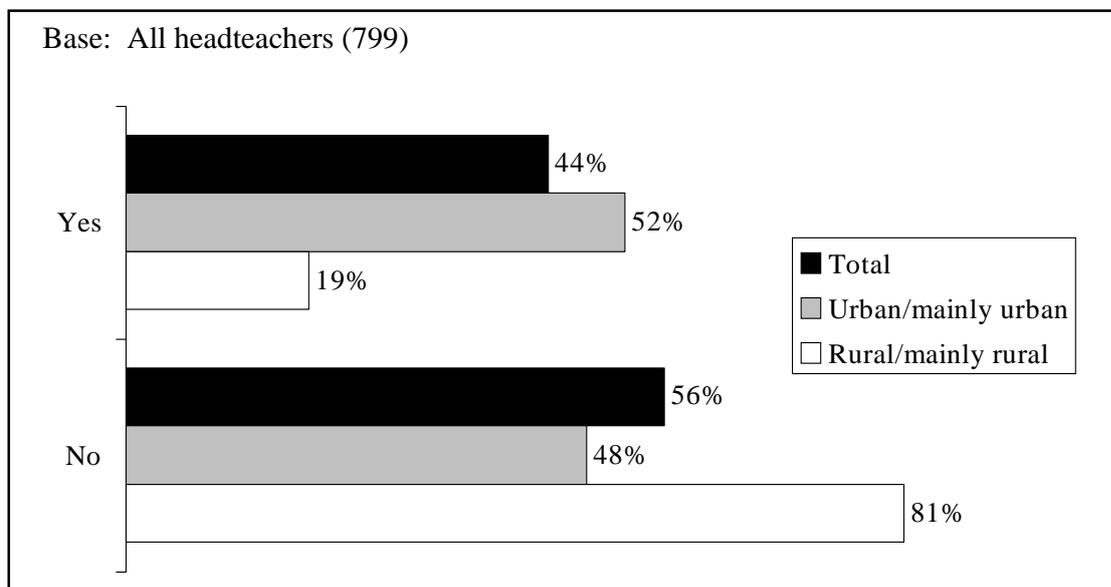
Figure 4: Ranges of the youngest and oldest children in classes including reception-aged children



3.5 Nursery class provision for children below reception-age

44% of headteachers reported that they had nursery classes at their school (Figure 5). Nursery provision for children below reception-age was associated with factors such as geographical location and level of deprivation. The proportion of the most deprived schools (26%+ of children receiving free school meals) that had their own nursery classes was more than three times higher than the proportion of the least deprived schools (0-5% of children receiving free school meals): 70% of the most deprived schools had nursery provision for children below reception-age, as opposed to just 22% of the least deprived schools. Similarly, schools in urban areas were almost three times as likely to have nursery provision than those in rural areas: 52% of schools in urban areas had nursery classes at their school, compared with just 19% of those in rural areas. This may reflect a long tradition of provision of nursery education for 3 and 4 year-olds by local authorities in deprived areas.

Figure 5: Percentage of schools with nursery provision for children below



reception-age

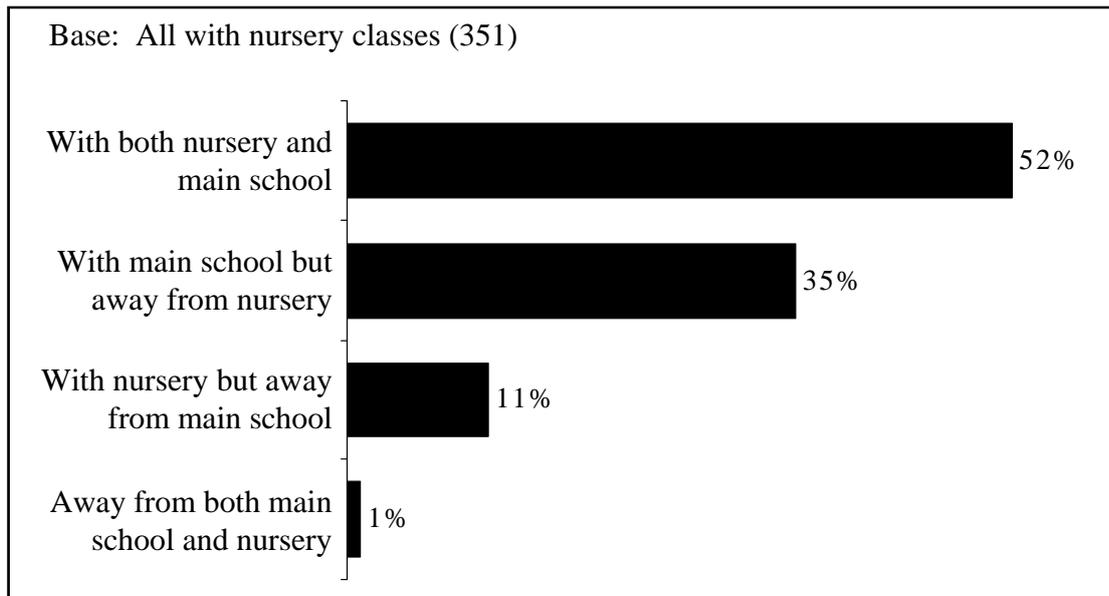
3.6 Physical location of reception classes

In schools that did *not* provide nursery classes for children below reception-age, nearly all reception classes were located with the main school (Figure 6). Nine out of ten schools without a nursery class had the reception class located with the main school.

In schools *with* nursery provision, a more complex picture emerged. The most common practice (52% of schools) was for a totally integrated site, with reception classes located with *both* the main school and the nursery, which might be expected to facilitate joint curriculum planning and implementation and shared resources (staff and equipment). In the remainder of schools, it was much more common for the reception classes to be located with the main school (35%) rather than with the nursery (11%). Here, there may be more challenges to be met in providing integrated early years education for 3 to 6 year-olds.

A fully integrated provision was most likely to occur in schools with the highest deprivation among pupils.

Figure 6: Physical location of reception classes in schools with nursery classes



3.7 Summary of school and reception class characteristics

In summary, two thirds of schools surveyed had just one class with reception-aged children and therefore the majority of schools had just one reception class teacher. These teachers were almost exclusively *full-time*.

The average school had 29 reception-aged children in the autumn term. There was a strong difference in the characteristics of urban and rural schools and of deprived and more affluent schools. Urban schools tended to be in the most deprived areas: these were generally large schools with relatively high numbers of reception-aged children. They also tended to have the highest proportions of children with SEN and EAL. Rural schools tended to be relatively small and tended to have low levels of deprivation among children. They had smaller numbers of reception-aged children and relatively low proportions of children with SEN and EAL.

Overall, 27% of reception class teachers indicated that they taught reception-aged children alongside older children. These mixed-age classes were particularly common in the small, rural schools, with low levels of deprivation.

44% of headteachers reported that they had nursery classes at their school. Schools in urban areas and with the highest levels of pupil deprivation were much more likely than schools in

rural areas and with low levels of pupil deprivation to indicate that they had nursery provision.

3.8 Conclusions

Overall, the existing characteristics of reception classes suggest that meeting the diverse needs of children (boys and girls, children who are older, younger, children with SEN, more able children, children with disabilities, children from all social, cultural and linguistic groups) to make the best possible progress to achieve the Early Learning Goals and beyond where appropriate, presents a challenge. Building upon and extending existing knowledge, experience, interests and competencies, including those of both younger and older children, in the Foundation Stage and beyond, in Key Stage 1 lies at the heart of this.

4 HEADTEACHER AND RECEPTION CLASS TEACHER EXPERIENCE, QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING

4.1 Headteacher and reception class teacher experience

As background to the survey, both headteachers and reception class teachers were asked about their length of experience in the teaching profession. In addition, headteachers were asked how many years' experience they had as a headteacher, and reception class teachers were asked about their experience of teaching reception-aged children.

In terms of general teaching experience, the table below (Figure 7) shows that both headteachers and reception class teachers surveyed were generally very experienced, having many years service in the teaching profession. Indeed, 77% of headteachers and 33% of reception class teachers had more than 20 years experience in teaching. Among reception class teachers, however, there were also reasonable proportions at the other end of the scale – 9% had less than three years experience in teaching.

Figure 7: Length of headteacher and reception class teacher experience

	Headteachers		Teachers	
	In teaching	As a headteacher	In teaching	Teaching reception
Base: All headteachers / all teachers	799	799	752	752
	%	%	%	%
0 – 2 years	-	19	9	24
3 – 5 years	-	21	16	28
6 – 10 years	2	23	18	26
11 – 15 years	9	19	13	11
16 – 20 years	11	11	11	6
Over 20 years	77	7	33	5

In terms of specific experience as a *headteacher*, it is a much more mixed picture. Indeed, one in five headteachers had less than three years experience in this role, and only 7% had been working as a headteacher for more than 20 years.

Substantial proportions of reception class teachers had only been teaching reception classes for a relatively short period of time. A quarter had less than three years experience, and about another quarter had just 3 – 5 years experience.

The length of experience in the teaching profession both among headteachers and among reception class teachers did not vary much by area type (urban/rural/mixed) nor by level of deprivation of the children attending the school. However, those teachers whose original training was for children from the age of three tended to have *less* experience (both in total and in teaching reception-aged children) than those who had trained to teach children from the age of four, five or seven and over. This may reflect the introduction of initial teacher training (ITT) courses covering the 3 to 8 age range in *Circular 4/98* (DfEE, 1998) which allowed trainees to take additional advanced study of early years as an alternative to a specialist subject across Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

4.2 Qualifications of headteachers

Over half (57%) of headteachers had gained the Teaching Certificate as their original qualification, with an additional quarter (26%) having initially obtained a BA(QTS) or BEd (Figure 8). The remaining headteachers had qualified with a PGCE (12%), a Certificate of Education (3%), or a Diploma in Education (2%).

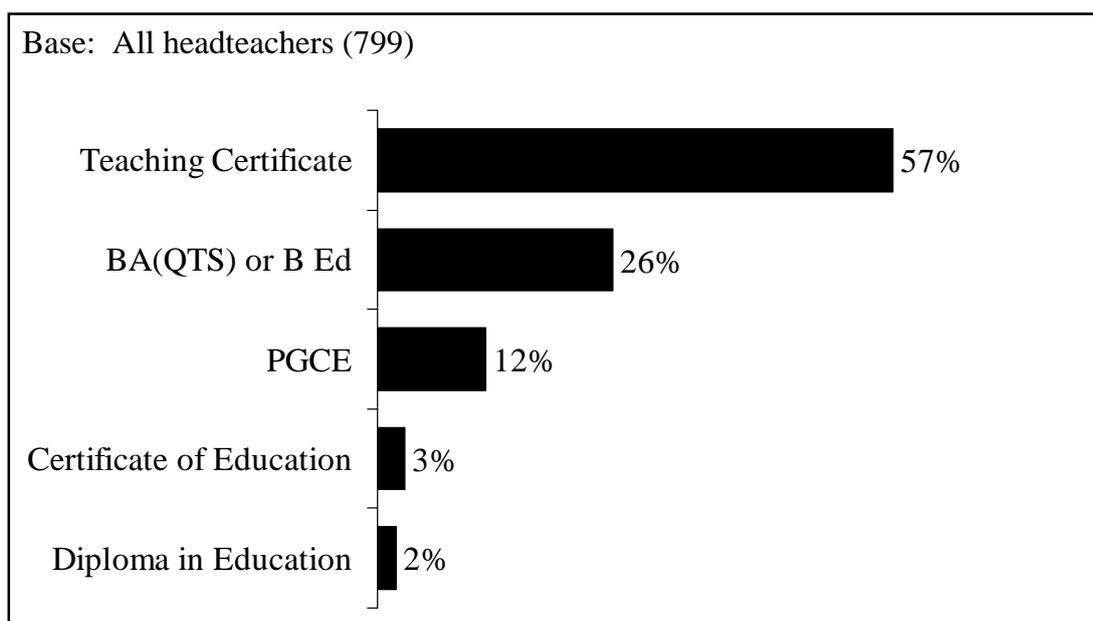


Figure 8: Original teaching qualification of headteachers

Nine out of ten headteachers were originally trained to teach primary-aged children, although not necessarily including the youngest primary-aged children in nursery and reception classes (Figure 9). In total, 22% of headteachers were initially trained to teach children from three years of age, 33% were trained to teach primary from four or five years of age, and 35% trained originally to teach primary from seven years of age. This means that, in all, more than two in five headteachers had *not* originally been trained to teach Foundation Stage aged children. While both those originally trained to teach Foundation Stage aged children and those trained to teach other ages had similar levels of overall experience, it is the latter group who tended to have slightly more years experience as headteachers.

Figure 9: Age group for which initially trained

	Total 799 %	Level of deprivation (% of children receiving free school meals)		
		0-5% 247 %	6-25% 367 %	26%+ 178 %
Base: All headteachers				
Primary from 3 yrs	22	18	22	25
Primary from 4 or 5 yrs	33	36	36	25
Primary from 7 yrs	35	37	33	35
Secondary	6	7	5	7

Other/Don't know	4	2	4	8
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Schools with the lowest levels of deprivation were more likely to have headteachers who had been initially trained to teach *older* primary children from four, five or seven years old than headteachers who had trained to teach younger children from three years old. Conversely, headteachers teaching in the most deprived areas were more likely to have been trained to teach children from aged three.

Accordingly, a greater proportion of headteachers in urban areas (23%) had been trained originally to teach children from the age of three than headteachers in rural areas (18%).

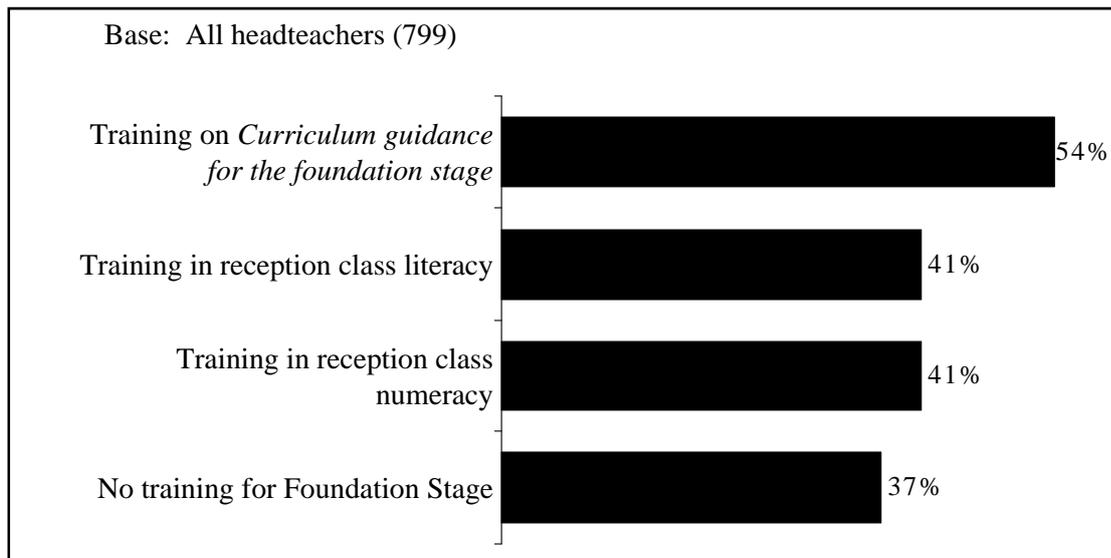
4.3 Training of headteachers in the Foundation Stage

The Foundation Stage awareness training was a DfES' training resources pack that focused on the principles outlined in QCA's *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*. Staff were introduced to the material at a series of cascade events at regional and EYDCP level. Representatives from settings who attended the latter were expected to cascade this training to their colleagues.

The majority of headteachers (62%) had undertaken specific training in the Foundation Stage, but this still left a large minority (37%) who had not.

Just over half (54%) of headteachers had attended training on *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*, and 41% had attended training both in reception class literacy and reception class numeracy (Figure 10). In particular, those headteachers of schools with nursery provision and those in larger, urban schools with more deprivation were more likely to have undergone specific Foundation Stage training. This suggests that headteachers of smaller, rural schools, most likely to have mixed-age classes, may be the least informed about the needs of their youngest learners.

Figure 10: Headteacher training specifically in the Foundation Stage



There appears to be a link between the age group that headteachers initially trained to teach and the percentage of headteachers who had followed training specifically in the Foundation Stage. Those who were originally trained to teach younger children (from three, four or five) are more likely to have undertaken training in the Foundation Stage. Specifically, 72% of headteachers who originally trained to teach children from three years had undergone Foundation Stage training, 63% of headteachers initially trained to teach primary pupils from four or five had undertaken training, and only 57% of those trained to teach older children had been trained in the Foundation Stage. This suggests that those headteachers with the least qualifications for work with the youngest children are also the least likely to have sought further training in this area.

The following chart (Figure 11) gives a summary of headteachers' qualifications and training, in terms of whether or not they had initially been trained to teach children from three, four or five and whether or not they have received Foundation Stage training. It shows that overall, 36% of headteachers were *both* initially trained to teach the youngest children *and* had received Foundation Stage training. A further 19% had the initial training with the youngest age group, but had yet to receive specific Foundation Stage training. 26% were initially trained for an older age group but had received Foundation Stage training, and the remaining 19% fell into the 'worst case scenario' of having neither had initial training with the relevant age group, nor having received Foundation Stage training.

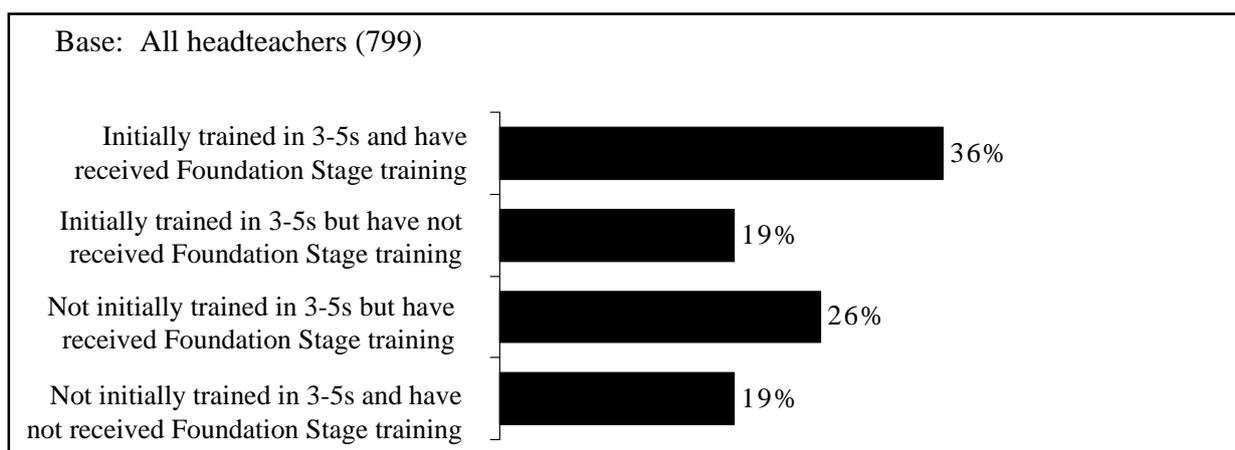


Figure 11: Summary of headteachers' training

Those in the first group identified in Figure 11 tended to come from small schools, establishments with a nursery provision and have between 3 and 5 years experience as a headteacher (the middle category). They tended to strongly endorse the Foundation Stage as a 'very good thing' and had made it a priority in a School Improvement Plan. Conversely, those in the fourth group identified above tended to have up to 2 years experience as a headteacher and were based in establishments without nurseries. They were less likely to strongly endorse the Foundation Stage and less likely to identify it as a priority in their School Improvement Plan.

Aside from the specific Foundation Stage training, 59% of headteachers reported that they have had some sort of training that helped them teach reception-aged children and 60% have had some other form of training in early years education. Once again, a higher proportion of headteachers of schools with a nursery had undertaken additional early years training than headteachers of schools with no nursery provision.

In the overwhelming majority of schools with a deputy headteacher in post, this deputy had *not* been trained as a Foundation Stage teacher. Just 16% of deputy headteachers were also Foundation Stage teachers.

4.4 Qualifications of reception class teachers

While the majority of headteachers had originally qualified with a Teaching Certificate, the picture among reception class teachers was rather different, reflecting the period when each of the two groups qualified. Reception class teachers were fairly evenly split with 42% having obtained a BA(QTS) or BEd and 37% having qualified with a Teaching Certificate (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Original teaching qualification of reception class teachers

	Total	No. of years' experience in teaching reception-aged children		
		Up to 2 yrs	3-10 yrs	10+ yrs
Base: All teachers	752	180	403	168
	%	%	%	%
BA(QTS) or BEd	42	62	45	15
Teaching Certificate	37	11	33	76
PGCE	17	26	20	2
Certificate of Education	1	-	1	2
Diploma in Education	1	1	-	2

Reception class teachers working in schools in schools with the highest level of deprivation were more likely to have initially gained a BA(QTS) or BEd (47%) than those teaching in schools with less deprivation (41%).

Half (51%) of all reception class teachers (Figure 13) trained initially to teach children aged from three years of age. A further 31% trained originally to teach primary aged four or five plus, 12% to teach primary aged seven plus, and 2% trained initially to teach secondary aged pupils. This means that a total of 14% of reception class teachers were originally trained to teach much older children. Reception class teachers originally trained to teach children older than reception year were a little more likely than average to work in schools where the headteacher's original teaching qualification was also for older children.

In those schools that have nursery provision, a much higher proportion of reception class teachers (57%) were originally trained to teach children from age three than those in schools without nurseries (48%).

The age group for which reception class teachers originally trained seemed to be linked to the number of years' teaching experience they had (see Figure 13). The less experienced the teacher, the more likely they were to have originally trained to teach children from the age of three. As noted earlier, this may reflect the recent introduction to ITT courses of an Early Years specialism as an alternative to a subject specialism across Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

Figure 13: Age group for which initially trained

	Total	No. of years' experience in teaching reception		
		Up to 2 yrs	3-10 yrs	10+ yrs
Base: All teachers	752	180	403	168
	%	%	%	%
Primary 3 yrs +	51	63	51	40
Primary 4 or 5 yrs +	31	25	29	43
Primary 7 yrs +	12	8	14	11
Secondary	2	1	2	2

4.5 Additional qualifications of reception class teachers

Reception class teachers were asked whether they had completed or were currently working on any additional qualifications which would help them deliver the Foundation Stage. The vast majority (83%) said no.

However, 15% of all reception class teachers indicated that they had already completed a further qualification, and 4% were currently working towards one, giving a total of 17% either having completed or working towards a qualification to help them deliver the Foundation Stage (some fell into both categories).

Respondents mentioned a range of qualifications: 4% had completed/were working on an Advanced Certificate, 4% an Advanced Diploma, and 4% a Masters degree. Smaller proportions mentioned a Certificate, Diploma or BA in Early Years, or a Certificate or Diploma in Special Needs.

Relevant additional qualifications were most likely to be undertaken by teachers who had the *most* experience in teaching reception classes.

4.6 Training of reception class teachers in the Foundation Stage

Although additional *qualifications* were relatively rare, the vast majority of reception class teachers have had specific training in the Foundation Stage. A total of 86% of reception class teachers had undergone specific training; 74% had been trained in *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*, 60% had received training in reception class literacy and 55% in reception class numeracy (Figure 14).

The age group for which teachers had originally been trained had very little association with whether they were likely to have gained any additional qualifications or received any training specifically in the Foundation Stage.

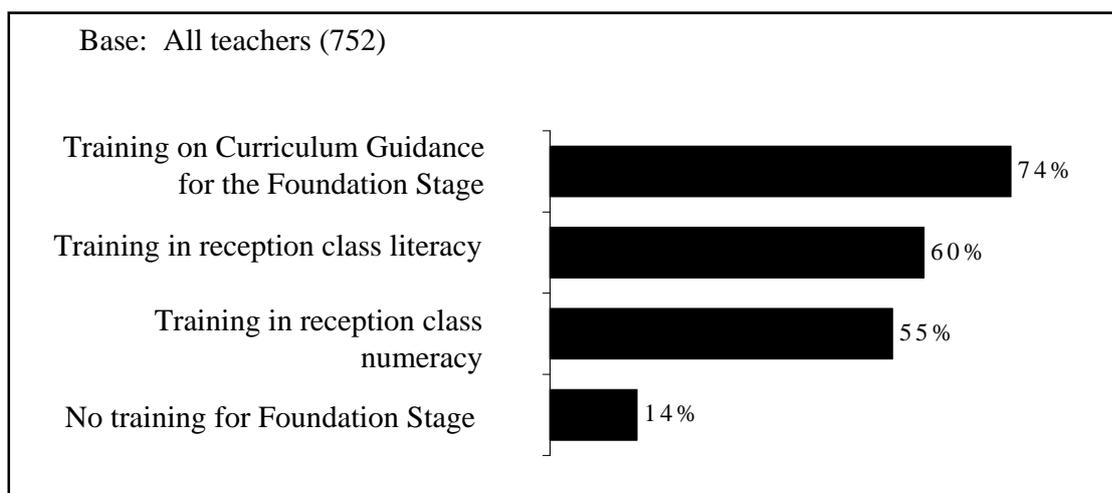


Figure 14: Reception class teacher training specifically in the Foundation Stage

There was no relationship between whether or not a *headteacher* had undergone Foundation Stage training and whether or not the *reception class teacher* in the same school had done so.

In contrast to specific Foundation Stage training among headteachers (where the headteachers were more likely to have had Foundation Stage training if they worked in deprived areas), there is an indication that reception class teachers were more likely to have followed specific Foundation Stage training in the less deprived areas. It is encouraging to find that in the type of schools where headteachers were less likely to have undertaken Foundation Stage training, the reception class teachers were more likely to have done so. In these areas, 87% of reception class teachers had undertaken specific training, whereas in the most deprived schools, 83% had followed this training. A similar pattern was observed with regard to urban and rural areas, reception class teachers in the former being more likely to have undergone this specific training.

Reception class teachers with less than three years experience were the least likely to have had any additional training specifically in the Foundation Stage (81%), while practically all (94%) of those with more than ten years experience had already followed training specific to the Foundation Stage.

The following chart (Figure 15) gives a summary of reception class teachers' qualifications and training, in terms of whether or not they had initially been trained to teach children from three, four or five and whether or not they have received Foundation Stage training. It shows that overall, 70% of reception class teachers were *both* initially trained to teach the youngest children *and* had received Foundation Stage training. A further 12% had the initial training with the youngest age group, but had not received specific Foundation Stage training. 15% were initially trained for another age group but had received Foundation Stage training.

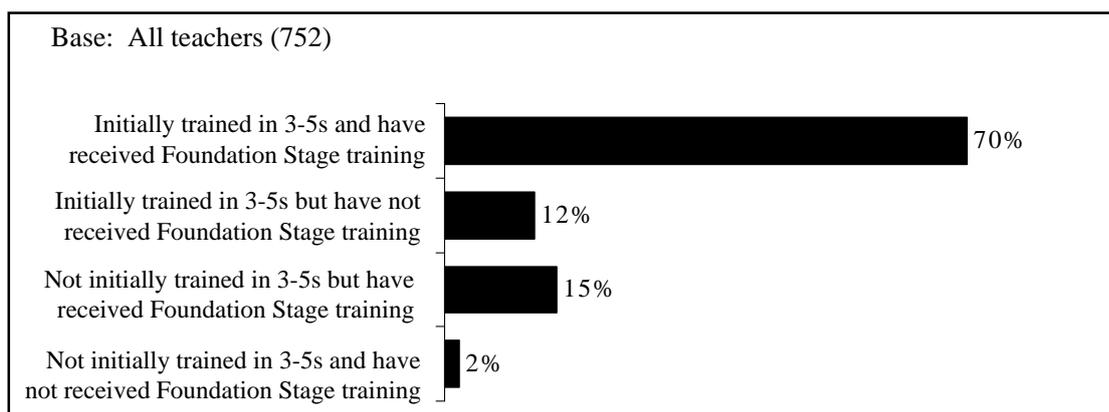


Figure 15: Summary of reception class teachers' training

Of reception class teachers who had undertaken other courses of any kind related to the Foundation Stage in the last 12 months, 56% had attended a course based on Information and Communication Technology, 38% on Special Educational Needs, 62% on assessing children, and 13% on other types of training.

4.7 Sufficiency of training for reception class teachers

Only a third (34%) of reception class teachers felt that they had received 'enough training' to help them to deliver the Foundation Stage (Figure 16). The most common view (51%) was that they had received *nearly* enough training, but that a little more would be helpful. The remaining 15% of reception class teachers felt that they had received 'not nearly enough training'.

Those who complained of not having nearly enough training tended to be those with less than three years experience and those who had not been trained specifically in the Foundation Stage. There were also some smaller indications in the data of links between a view of not having enough training and having originally been trained to teach children above the age of 6 and working in the largest schools. Reception class teachers were equally likely to feel that they had received sufficient training in the Foundation Stage whether the school they taught at had a high level of deprivation or low level deprivation.

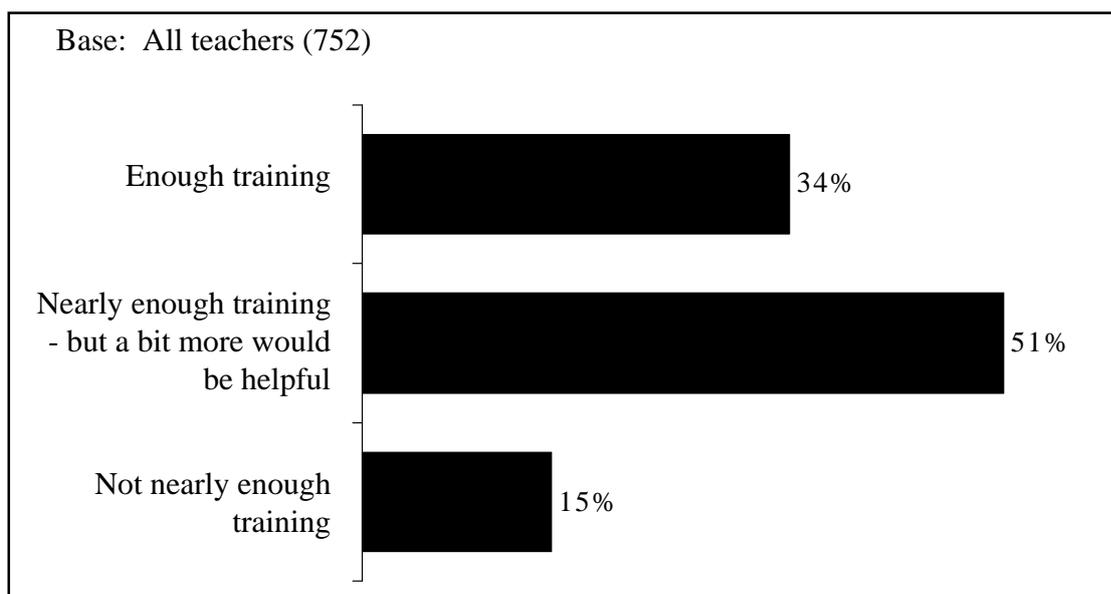


Figure 16: Sufficiency of reception class teachers' training in the Foundation Stage

Figure 17 shows areas highlighted for more training by at least one in ten reception class teachers who believed that they had not received nearly enough training or that a bit more training would have been helpful. The most commonly mentioned areas were:

- Planning
- Assessment
- Foundation Stage guidance to eliminate current mixed messages and confusion
- Literacy (including speech/language – though not English as a second language)
- Numeracy
- ICT

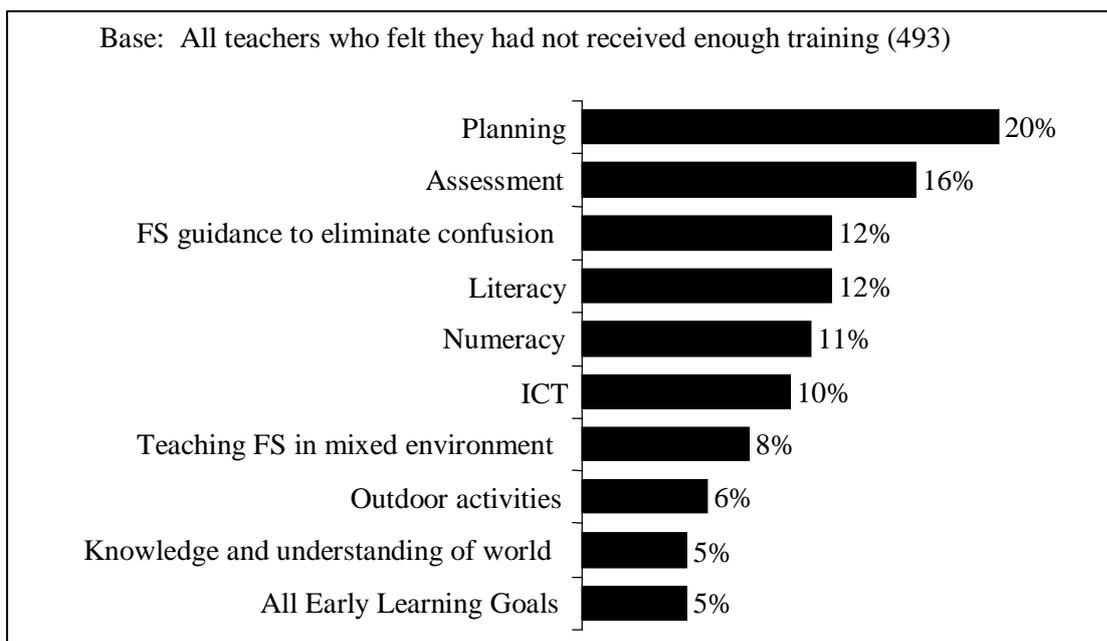


Figure 17: Areas where reception class teachers said they needed more training

Requests for the mixed messages to be eliminated or issues to be clarified by additional guidance include:

‘We’d just like guidance as to how much we are allowed to implement. There are so many mixed messages with it [the Foundation Stage], there’s not a uniform approach.’

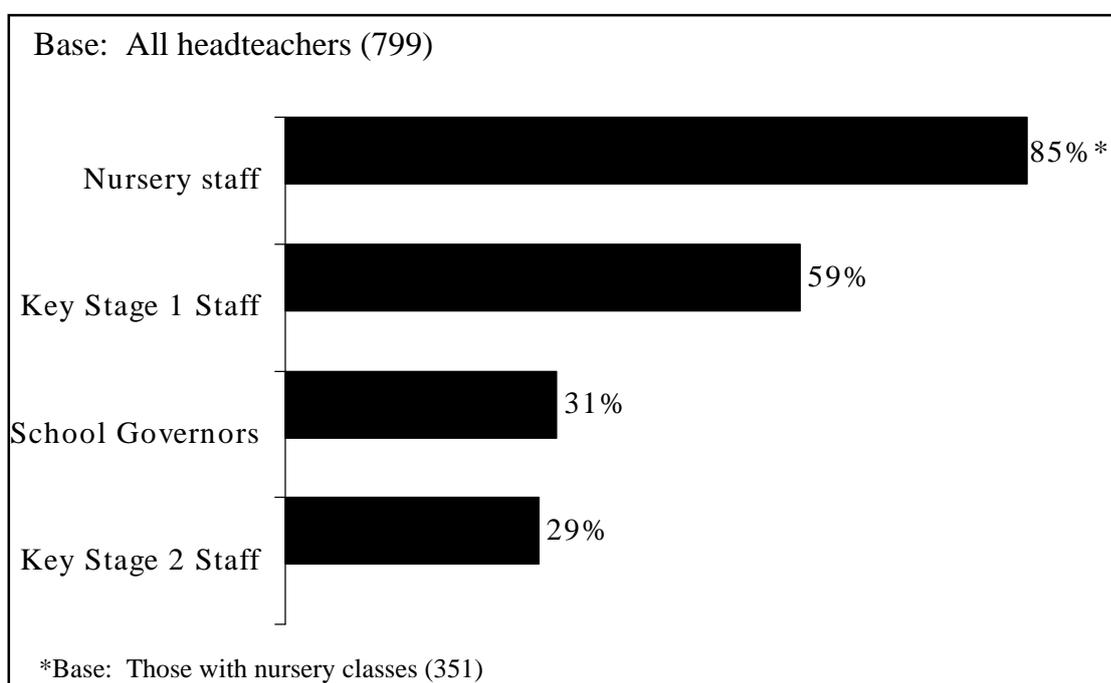
‘We need to know exactly what is expected of us and what will be required when we’re inspected. I’m still doubtful as to what it is that we really have to do – I’ve visited other schools, but they don’t seem too sure either.’

‘The assessment is contradictory. The curriculum is an extremely informal one, yet the assessment is very formal. If anything, they could change the huge gap, or train us to deal with this aspect better, as it’s generally quite confusing as to what the objectives are.’

4.8 Training of other teachers

Aside from the headteacher and the reception class teacher, the main people to participate in training in the Foundation Stage were nursery staff and Key Stage 1 staff (Figure 18). In the vast majority of cases where the school had a nursery, the nursery staff had received Foundation Stage training (85%). Regarding Key Stage 1 staff, 59% of headteachers indicated that their Key Stage 1 staff had participated in Foundation Stage training. However, training for Key Stage 2 staff and governors was reported by headteachers as much less common (29% and 31% respectively).

Figure 18: Specific training about the Foundation Stage for staff other than those



teaching reception-aged children

Foundation Stage training for staff other than those teaching reception-aged children was much more likely to have occurred in schools where the headteacher had been trained in the Foundation Stage.

4.9 Conclusions

This chapter provides evidence of the importance of informed leadership in bringing about a successful implementation of the Foundation Stage. The data shows that where a headteacher

was originally trained for work with the youngest children, they are more likely to have maintained this interest through specific training on the Foundation Stage. Whilst reception class teachers were more likely to have undergone Foundation Stage training where the headteacher was not trained, they may find themselves in a school community which is less informed and supportive of Foundation Stage colleagues. There is evidence to support the view that the school community as a whole, including governors, would benefit from Foundation Stage training. The training needs of those reception class teachers most recently qualified and least experienced are particularly noteworthy.

5 RESOURCES

5.1 Money spent on the Foundation Stage

About three-quarters of headteachers (77%) reported that they had spent more money on reception classes as a result of the Foundation Stage (Figure 19). In 38% of cases headteachers assessed this as being ‘a lot more’ and in 39% of cases ‘a little more’ money.

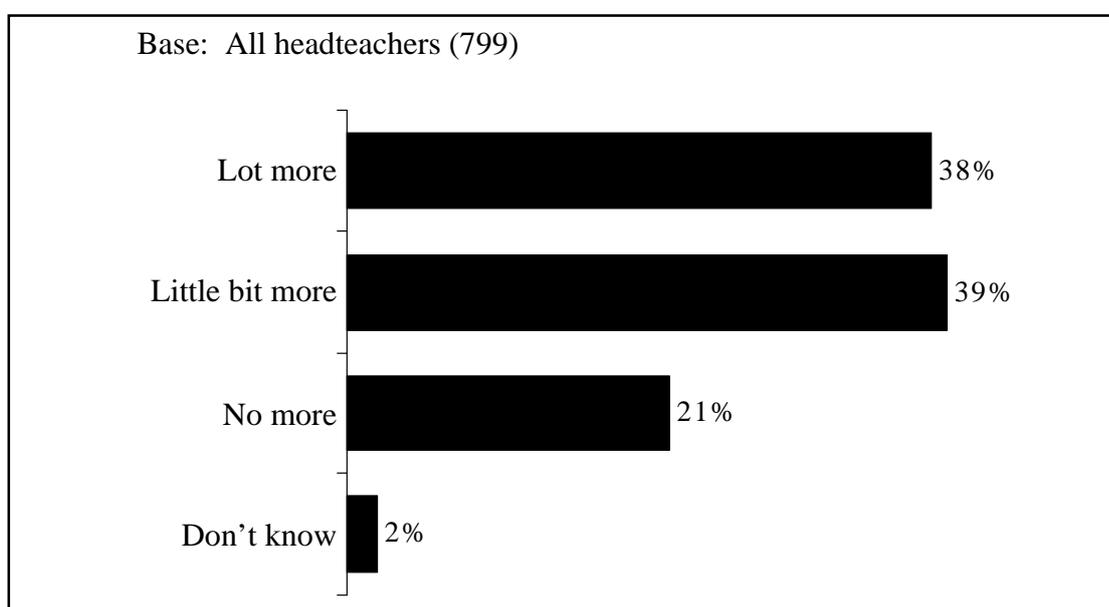


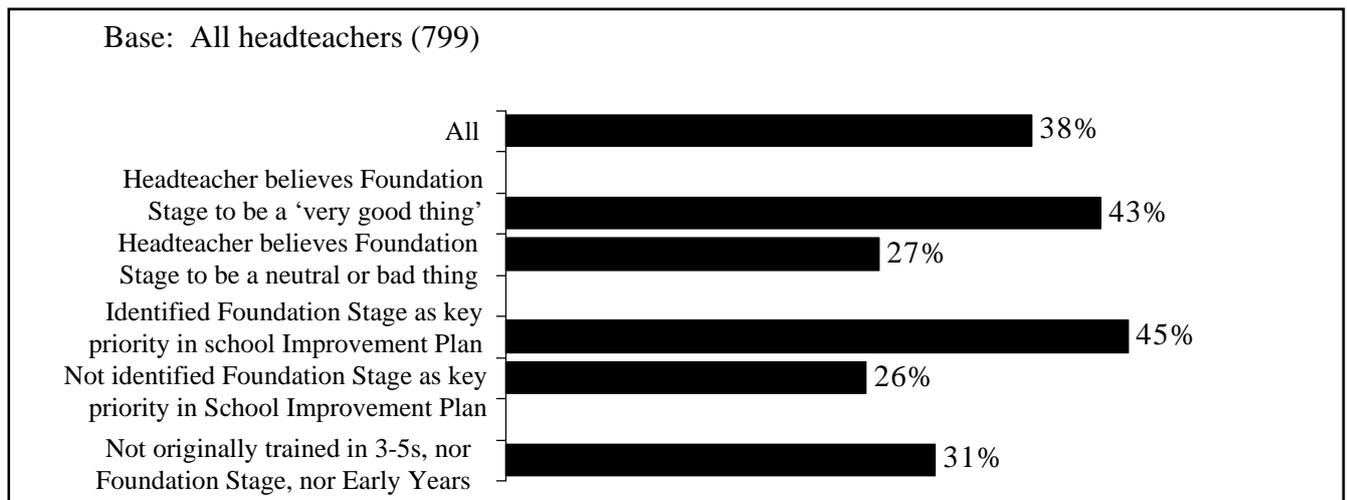
Figure 19: Whether headteachers spent more money

Those headteachers who stated that they had spent ‘a lot more’ money as a result of the Foundation Stage were equally likely to come from both rural/urban areas and deprived/affluent areas. The very largest schools (more than 300 pupils) were a little more likely than smaller schools to have spent a lot more on reception classes as a result of the Foundation Stage.

However, the factors which were most likely to be linked to whether or not ‘a lot more’ money had been spent, were more to do with the headteacher than with the characteristics of the school. Specifically, those headteachers who most strongly endorsed the Foundation Stage (believing it to be a ‘very good thing’) were much more likely than others to assess that

‘a lot more’ had been spent, as were those schools which had identified the Foundation Stage as a key priority in their School Improvement Plan (Figure 20). While a headteacher’s original and subsequent training was not a big factor, those who were not originally trained to teach 3 – 5s, nor had received Foundation Stage training, nor had received any other early years training were markedly less likely than others to indicate that ‘a lot more’ had been spent on reception classes as a result of the Foundation Stage.

Figure 20: Percentage of groups spending ‘a lot more’ money on reception classes as



a result of the Foundation Stage

5.2 Facilities for reception-aged children

One of the key areas for investigation in the survey was facilities for reception-aged children (Figure 21), which had anecdotally been highlighted as an issue prior to the survey. Headteachers were therefore asked to rate the different types of facilities on a scale of ‘good’, ‘adequate’ and ‘not adequate’.

In general ICT, indoor areas for practical activity and indoor quiet areas were perceived to be at least adequate by the majority (75% or more) of headteachers. *Outdoor* learning facilities were, however, much more of a problem, with high proportions of headteachers rating them as *inadequate*. Specifically, 43% of headteachers felt that their outdoor learning facilities for reception-aged children were inadequate.

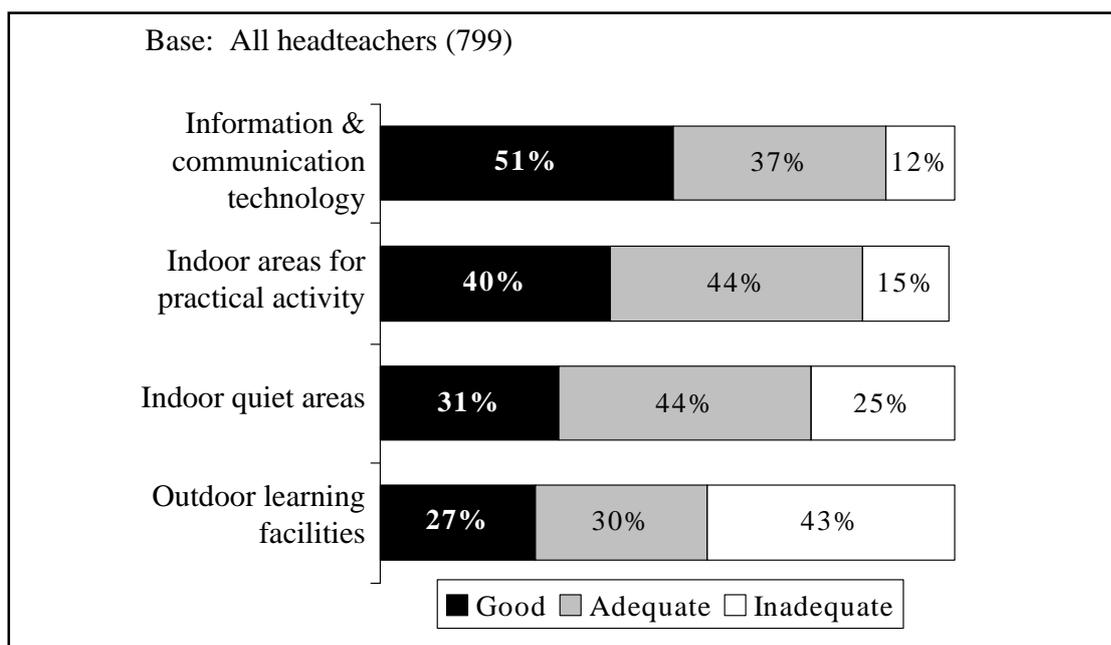


Figure 21: Adequacy of facilities for reception-aged children

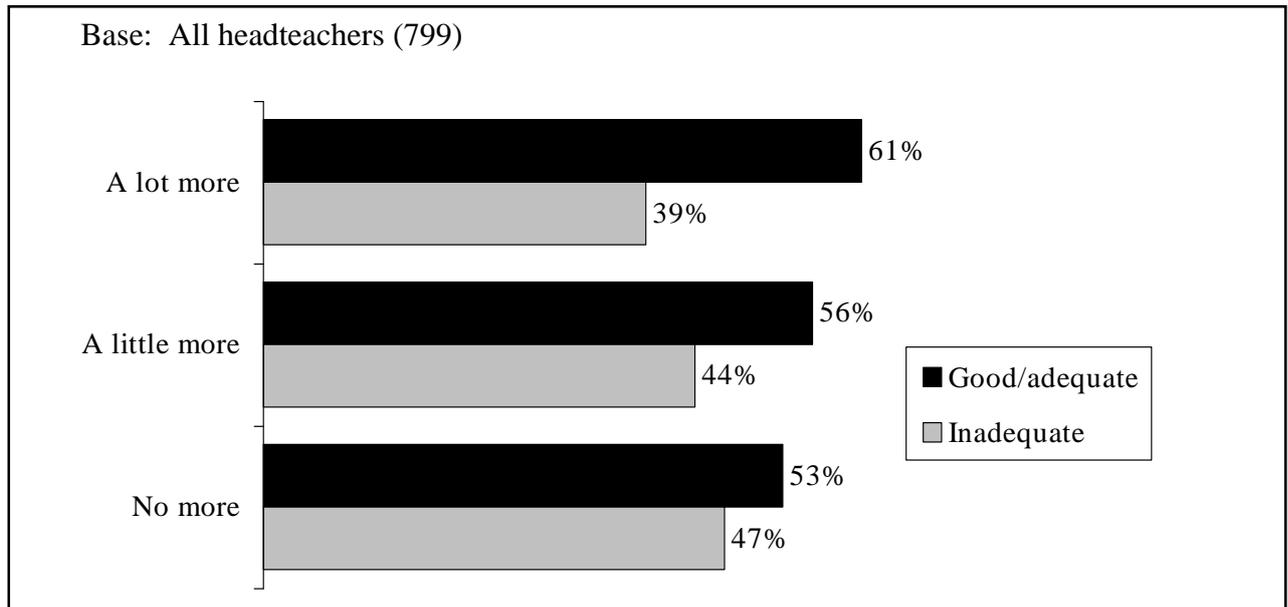
The perceived adequacy of outdoor facilities appeared not to be related to the type of area in which the school was situated, nor the level of deprivation of the school. However, there did seem to be a link between the perceived adequacy of outdoor facilities and the amount of additional money spent on reception classes as a result of the introduction of the Foundation Stage.

Figure 22 shows that in cases where headteachers indicated that a lot more money had been spent on the Foundation Stage at their school, only 39% rated their outdoor facilities as inadequate. This compares to 47% of headteachers who had not spent extra money on the Foundation Stage rating these facilities as inadequate.

Information and Communication Technology facilities were perceived to be the best resourced of all facilities related to reception-aged children in schools, with just 12% of headteachers seeing such facilities as inadequate in their school.

The highest levels of perceived inadequacy in ICT facilities were in schools with high levels of deprivation (schools in which 26%+ of pupils received free meals), where 17% of headteachers reported inadequate facilities.

Figure 22: Effect of additional spending on reception year on the adequacy of



outdoor learning facilities

In total, 84% of headteachers saw the indoor areas for practical activity in their school as good or adequate, while a slightly lower proportion of headteachers, 75%, described their indoor facilities for quiet work as good or adequate. For both aspects of indoor activity, there was a higher than average perceived inadequacy of facilities in rural/mainly rural areas. In these areas, perceived inadequacies in indoor areas for practical activity and quiet work were 11% and 7% above the national average respectively.

Overall, only a relatively small minority of headteachers (13%) described *all three* physical resources (outdoor, indoor areas for practical activity, indoor quiet areas) as good. On the other hand, 55% of headteachers assessed *at least* one of these physical resources in their school as *inadequate*.

5.3 The School Improvement Plan

Headteachers were asked what priority the Foundation Stage received in their School Improvement Plan last year (2000-2001) and this year (2001-2002), and how much priority it would be given in their Plan for next year (2002-2003). The rationale for collecting

information about all three Improvement Plans was that it enabled an analysis to be undertaken to establish the priority given to the Foundation Stage over time.

For all three years, headteachers were asked to state whether the Foundation Stage:

- Was identified as a key priority
- Was featured, but not identified as a key priority
- Was not featured.

Figure 23: Priority of Foundation Stage in School Improvement Plans

Base: All headteachers	799
	%
Key priority for at <i>least</i> one year of 2000-01, 2001-02 and 2002-03	66
Not identified as key priority for <i>any</i> of 2000-01, 2001-02 and 2002-03	34
Key priority for 2000-01, 2001-02 <i>and</i> 2002-03	14
Not featured for 2000-01, 2001-02 <i>or</i> 2002-03	1

In general the results indicated that the Foundation Stage was an important element of the Plan for the majority of schools (Figure 23). Two thirds of headteachers had identified the Foundation Stage as a key priority in their School Improvement Plan for *at least* one year. Conversely, one third had not included the Foundation Stage as a *key priority* in their Plan for either last year, this year, or next year. In 14% of schools the Foundation Stage had featured as a key priority for *all three years*. Only 1% of schools had not included the Foundation Stage in their School Improvement Plan *at all* over the three years.

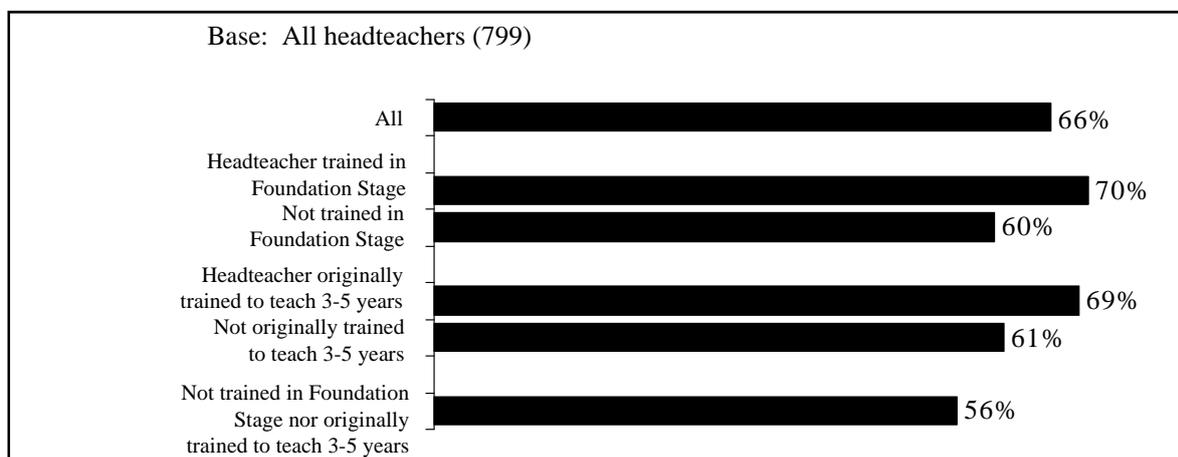
Looking at individual years, 41% of schools had identified the Foundation Stage as a key priority in their School Improvement Plan for 2000 – 01; 37% had done so for 2001 – 02; and 30% had done so, or had planned to do so for 2002-03.

Consistently across the three years, a higher than average proportion of schools in deprived areas had given priority to the Foundation Stage in their School Improvement Plans. Accordingly, the Foundation Stage gave key priority in School Improvement Plans in a much greater proportion of urban/mainly urban schools than rural/mainly rural schools. This was

also the case among schools with nursery provision – 70% of such schools had identified the Foundation Stage as a key priority in at least one of the three School Improvement Plans, compared to 63% among schools without nursery provision.

A higher than average proportion of schools in which the headteacher had attended training in the Foundation Stage gave priority to the Foundation Stage in their School Improvement Plans, presumably through being generally more aware of specific improvements needed for the Foundation Stage than those headteachers who had not attended training courses on the Foundation Stage (Figure 24). Specifically 70% of those headteachers who had received training in the Foundation Stage identified it as a key priority for at least one year, compared to 60% of those headteachers who had not had such training. In a similar way, those headteachers whose original training was for children above the age of 6 were less likely than those whose training was for younger children to identify the Foundation Stage as a key priority in their School Improvement Plan. Those headteachers who had neither received Foundation Stage training nor had initially been trained to teach children aged 3 – 6 were even less likely to highlight the Foundation Stage as a key priority – only 56% had done so.

Figure 24: Identification of Foundation Stage as a key priority in School



Improvement Plan in 2000/1, 2001/2, 2002/3

5.4 Conclusions

There is evidence here of the importance of effective school leadership on the overall Foundation Stage provision, with those headteachers most strongly endorsing the Foundation

Stage being most likely to have reported spending a lot of money in this area, as were those who identified the Foundation Stage as a key priority in the School Improvement Plan. Moreover, those headteachers not originally trained to work with the youngest children, those who had not received Foundation Stage training or any other early years training, were noticeably less likely to have stated that they spent a lot more money on the Foundation Stage in reception classes. A higher proportion of urban schools in deprived areas had made the Foundation Stage a priority in the School Improvement Plan than rural or mainly rural schools; more schools with nursery provision than without had made the Foundation Stage a priority. School size and the relative scale of the budget, however, may also be a factor operating here, small schools being particularly disadvantaged.

In terms of specific resources, ICT, indoor areas for practical activity and indoor quiet areas were perceived to be at least adequate by the majority (75% or more) of headteachers. However, adequate outdoor learning facilities (rated as inadequate by 43%) whilst apparently not related to the type of area, did appear to be associated with higher reported spending on reception classes, following the introduction of the Foundation Stage. More than a half of headteachers of schools with high levels of deprivation assessed at least one aspect of physical resources as inadequate.

6 THE EARLY YEARS DEVELOPMENT AND CHILDCARE PARTNERSHIP

6.1 Extent of contact

The Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCPs) are responsible for planning and delivering early years education and childcare in Local Authority areas.

Headteachers were asked about the extent of their involvement with the EYDCP in terms of the receipt of written information, the amount of face-to-face contact, and how close the school's relationship was with the Partnership. The research showed that schools tended to receive regular written information from the EYDCP, but beyond this there was limited involvement with the Partnership.

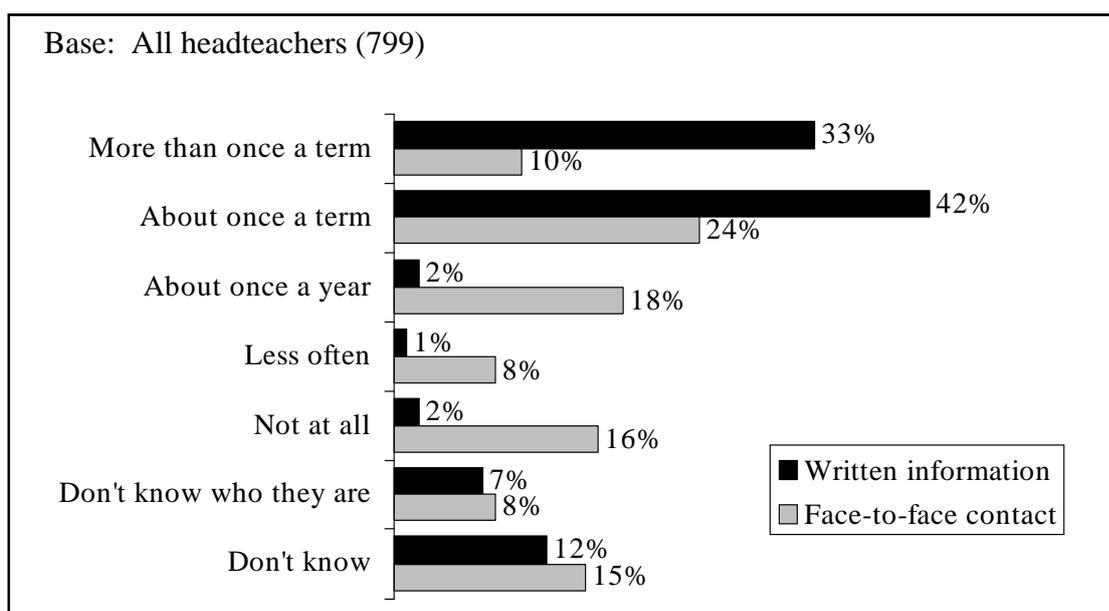


Figure 25: Frequency of contact with EYDCP

The great majority of schools (75%) received *written* information from the EYDCP at least once each term. Specifically 33% of headteachers reported that they received written information more than once a term, while 42% stated that they received written information about once a term. 7% stated that they did not know who the EYDCP were and a further 12% were unaware of how often written information was received.

Face-to-face contact with the EYDCP was much less frequent than written contact. Only 35% of schools had face-to-face contact with the Partnership at least once a term, as opposed to 75% having written contact within the same time scale. A quarter of headteachers (26%) reported face-to-face contact once a year or less often, while 16% did not have any face-to-face contact with a member of the EYDCP.

6.2 Closeness of the Partnership Relationship

As a summary question, headteachers were asked how close they would describe their school's relationship with the EYDCP. From this it is clear that the relationship in general was not very close. About a quarter of headteachers described their school's relationship with the Partnership as 'very close' (5%) or 'close' (22%). The majority, on the other hand, saw their relationship as being 'not very close' or 'not at all close', or in fact felt that they could not give a rating.

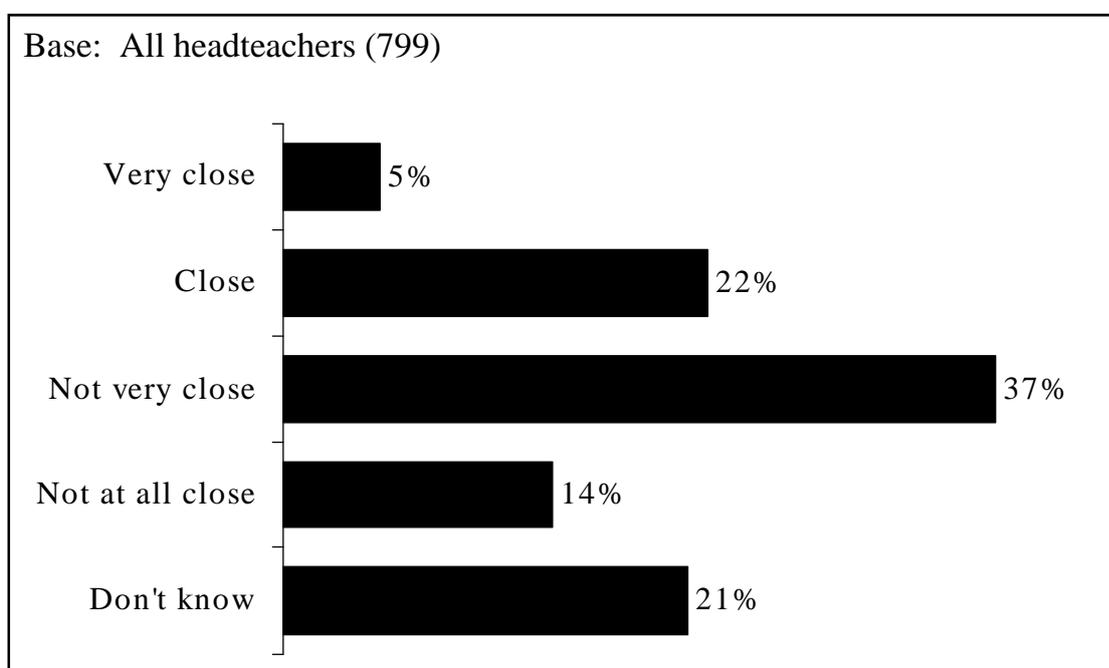


Figure 26: Relationship between school and EYDCP

The relationship between schools and the EYDCP tended to be weaker in rural areas and the least deprived schools and stronger in urban areas and deprived schools. It was stronger

among those schools with a nursery provision (32% of headteachers in these schools described the relationship as very close/close), among those headteachers who had only relatively recently taken up a headship (31% of headteachers with less than two years experience described the relationship as very close/close), amongst those who had received Foundation Stage training (30% very close/close) and amongst those headteachers who had the most positive view of the Foundation Stage (31% very close/close).

6.3 Conclusions

It is clear that the opportunities for gaining face-to-face contact and support of local EYDCPs, are in many cases being missed, though this is less likely to be the case in urban areas and where there is nursery provision. The relative isolation of smaller, rural schools should not be overlooked when factors influencing contact are being considered.

7 THE FOUNDATION STAGE TEAM

7.1 Foundation Stage co-ordinator

The survey found that the vast majority of schools had an identified Foundation Stage co-ordinator, suggesting that schools had generally taken the introduction of the Foundation Stage seriously and put a structure in place to help implement the Foundation Stage curriculum.

A total of 86% of headteachers (Figure 27) identified their school as having a co-ordinator for the Foundation Stage. A slightly higher proportion of schools in urban/mainly urban areas (87%) had a Foundation Stage co-ordinator than in schools in rural/mainly rural areas (81%).

Figure 27: Whether school has identified Foundation Stage co-ordinator

	Total	Area type		
		Urban	Mixed	Rural
Base:	799	579	69	145
All headteachers	%	%	%	%
Yes	86	87	81	81
No	14	13	19	18

7.2 Foundation Stage Governor

Although most schools had a Foundation Stage *co-ordinator*, the majority did *not* have in place a Foundation Stage *Governor*. Just over one in three headteachers reported that they had such a Governor (Figure 28).

While the research found that Foundation Stage co-ordinators were more likely to exist in *urban* areas, the reverse was true of Foundation Stage Governors. In 46% of schools in rural areas there was a Foundation Stage Governor in place, compared to just 35% of schools in urban areas. Linked to this was the fact that Foundation Stage Governors were much more

likely to be present in schools with low levels of deprivation than in schools with high levels of deprivation.

The data indicated a link between the presence of a Foundation Stage Governor and the headteacher’s initial training and receipt of Foundation Stage training, although this link was not particularly strong. There was no link between the existence of a Foundation Stage Governor and whether the headteacher had received any specific Foundation Stage training.

Figure 28: Whether school has identified Foundation Stage Governor

	Total	Area Type			Level of deprivation (% of children receiving free school meals)		
		Urban	Mixed	Rural	0-5%	6-25%	26%+
Base: All headteachers	799 %	579 %	69 %	145 %	247 %	367 %	178 %
Yes	37	35	43	46	38	42	27
No	60	63	55	52	60	56	68
Don’t know	2	2	1	2	2	1	5

7.3 Additional responsibilities of reception class teachers

Almost all reception class teachers had taken on additional responsibilities within their school.

Just over half (53%) of the reception class teachers interviewed reported that they held the position of Foundation Stage co-ordinator in their school (Figure 29). Of these teachers who identified themselves as co-ordinators for the Foundation Stage, three-quarters were additionally the Early Years co-ordinator and a third co-ordinated Key Stage 1. Many reception class teachers clearly had a number of different roles and responsibilities within the school, in addition to their basic teaching classroom commitments, although in many cases Foundation Stage and Early Years co-ordinator roles may be one and the same.

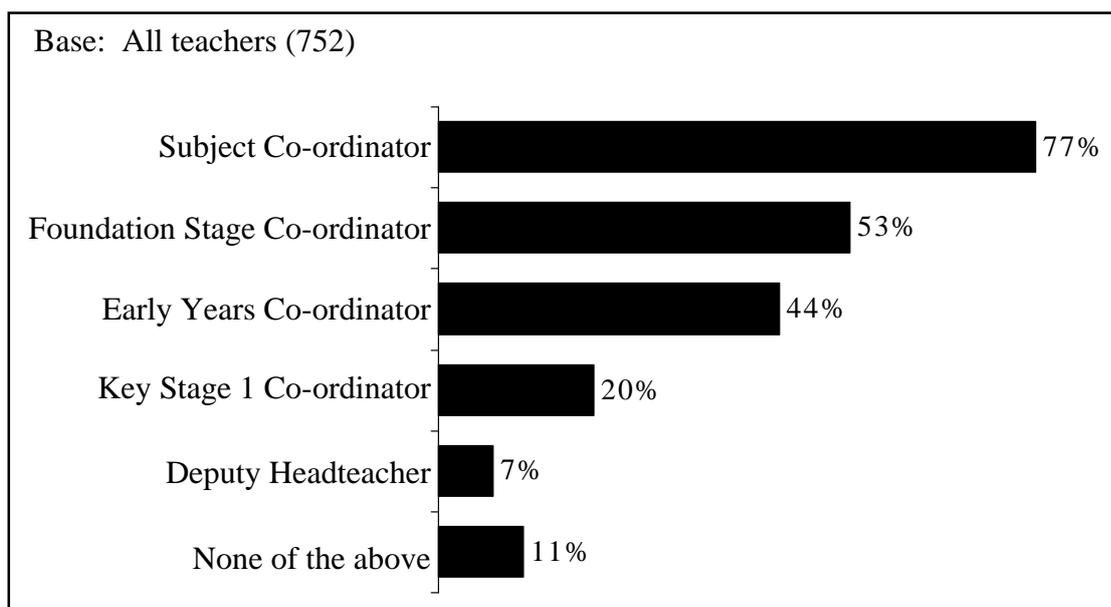


Figure 29: Additional responsibilities of reception class teacher within school

Additional responsibilities appeared to increase with teaching experience. For example, 73% of those with more than 10 years teaching experience with reception-aged children were also Foundation Stage co-ordinators, whereas 56% of those with 3-10 years experience and just 30% of those with up to 2 years experience had taken on a similar role.

7.4 Conclusions

As noted above, that the majority of schools have identified a Foundation Stage Co-ordinator is an indication of the overall priority of this area of work within the range of the school's activities. That many reception class teachers have a number of other roles, whilst related to experience, may also be linked to the size of the school. There is clearly more work to be done in raising the profile of the Foundation Stage among school governors, by designating a Foundation Stage Governor in more schools.

8 SUPPORT STAFF

8.1 Numbers of support staff

The headteachers' interview established that almost all reception class teachers (including those who teach mixed-age classes) had general classroom support staff (aside from any support staff assigned to specific children). In only 3% of schools was this not the case.

About half of classroom support staff were full-time, and about half part-time. Overall, just over half of reception classes had a *full-time* member of support staff.

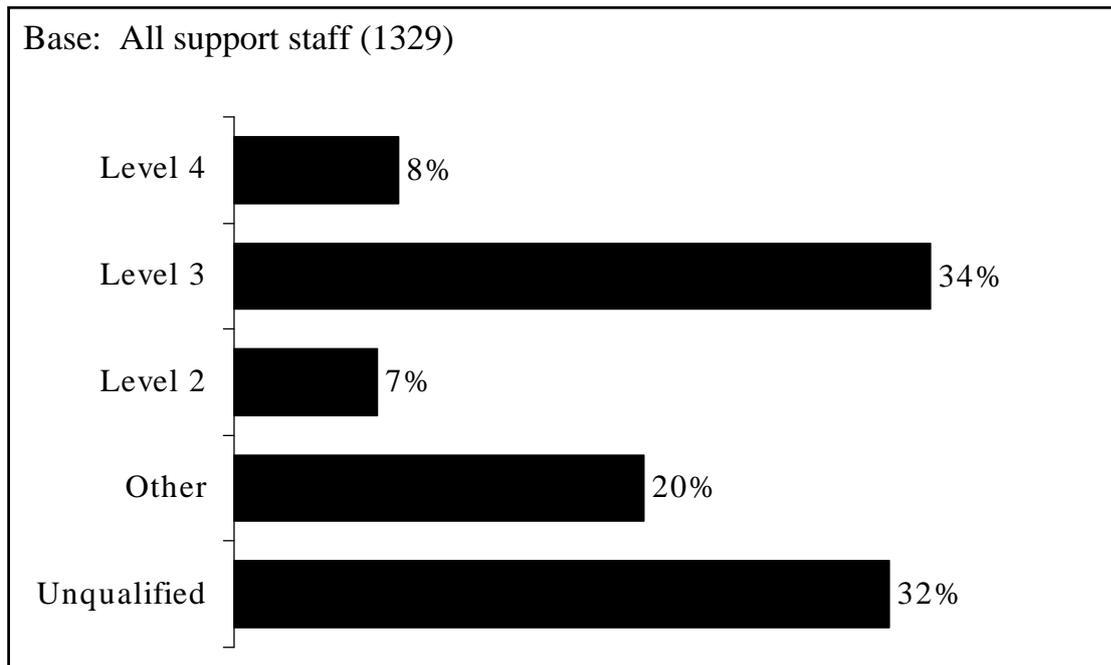
8.2 Qualifications of support staff

Detailed information was collected from the headteachers to establish the level of qualification of each reception class assistant. Headteachers were asked to give the highest level of qualification for each individual, as follows:

Level 4	HNC in Early Years or BTEC NVQ Level 4 in Early Years Care and Education
Level 3	CACHE Diploma in Nursery Nursing/Childcare and Education; BTEC National Diploma in Nursery Nursing; NVQ Level 3 in Early Years Care and Education or equivalent
Level 2	NVQ Level 2 in Early Years Care and Education, or equivalent
	Other relevant qualification
	Unqualified

It is clear from Figure 30 that while quite a high proportion of support staff were qualified at one of the recognised levels, many were unqualified or solely have some other form of qualification. The most common level of qualification was at Level 3 – just over a third of support staff were at this level, with much smaller proportions being qualified to Level 4 or Level 2. 29% were unqualified and 20% had some other qualification.

Figure 30: Highest qualification of support staff



Overall, 55% of schools had at least one member of support staff qualified at levels 2 – 4.

Larger schools, those with nursery provision, schools in areas with relatively high levels of deprivation, and classes where there were significant numbers of children with EAL tended to have the most highly qualified support staff.

8.3 Conclusions

Research supports the view that staff:child ratios influence the quality of care provided for pre-school and school-aged children (for instance, Munton *et al* (2002), so it is encouraging to find that almost all reception class teachers have general classroom support staff. Munton's research also shows that the influence of staff:child ratios cannot be considered independently of factors including staff education and training, since some degree of association is likely to be found between qualifications, group size and quality of provision. That nearly one-third of support staff are unqualified is therefore concerning. That more highly qualified support staff were found in large schools, those with nursery provision, high levels of deprivation or with large numbers of children with EAL, is unsurprising.

9 ADMISSION PROCEDURES

9.1 Points of admission

Schools had varying practices regarding the number of points in the year at which children entered reception classes. In the majority of cases (60% of schools surveyed), all children enter reception class in September. However, in 24% of schools, there were two admission points per year, and in 12% of schools, there were three admission points per year.

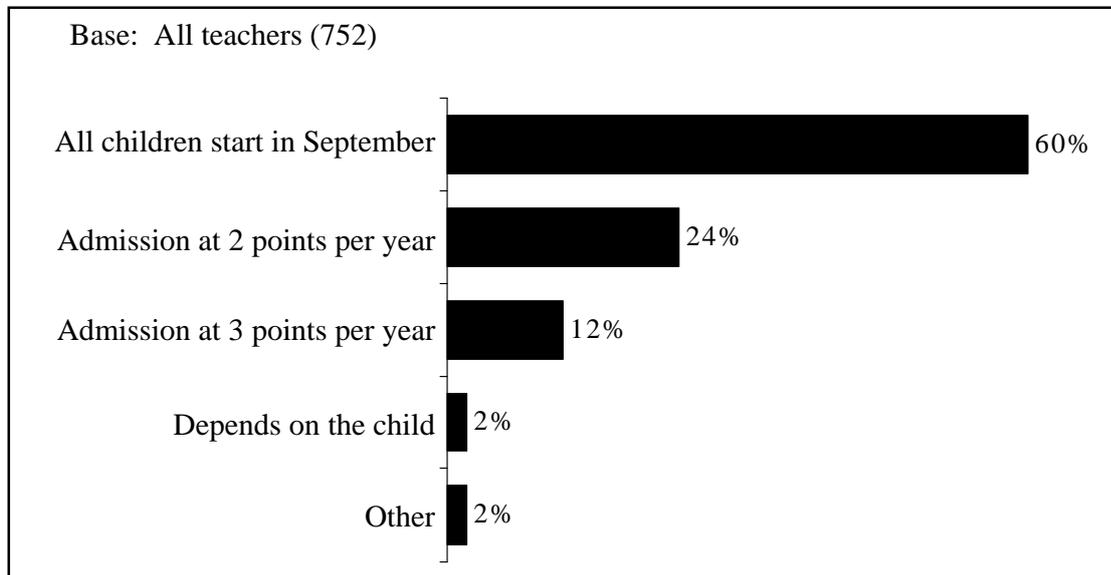


Figure 31: Admission points to reception classes

Schools were particularly likely to have more than one admission point per year in more deprived areas, if reception-aged children entered a class with children in Key Stage 1, where relatively large numbers of children had EAL and where there was nursery provision within the school.

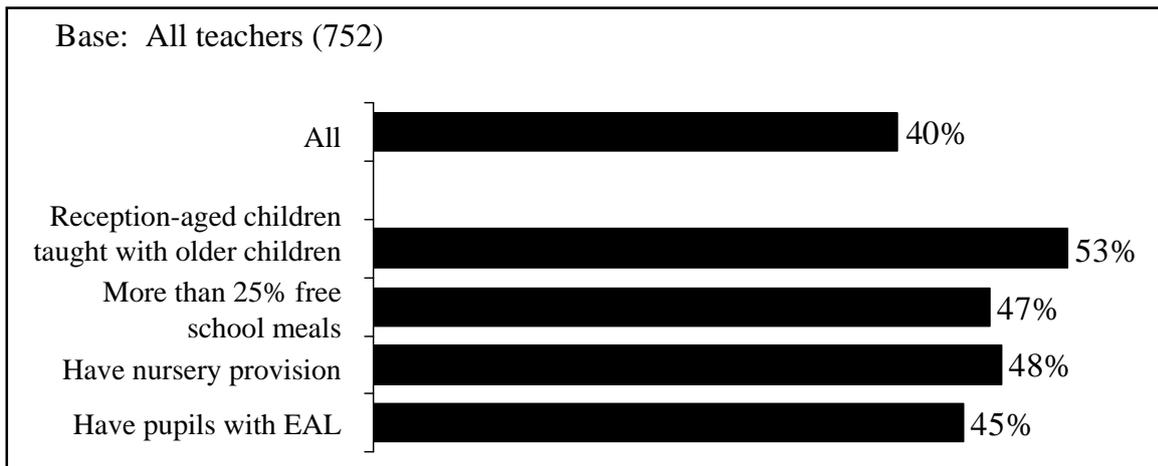


Figure 32: Percentage of schools with more than one admission point per year

Headteachers from 41% of schools reported that reception-aged children attend school *full-time* from their first day (Figure 33). In 29% of schools, children attended reception class *part-time* for less than half a term, and in 8% of schools, children attended part-time for their first half term. Overall, this means that in 18% of schools all children started in September *and* start on a full-time basis.

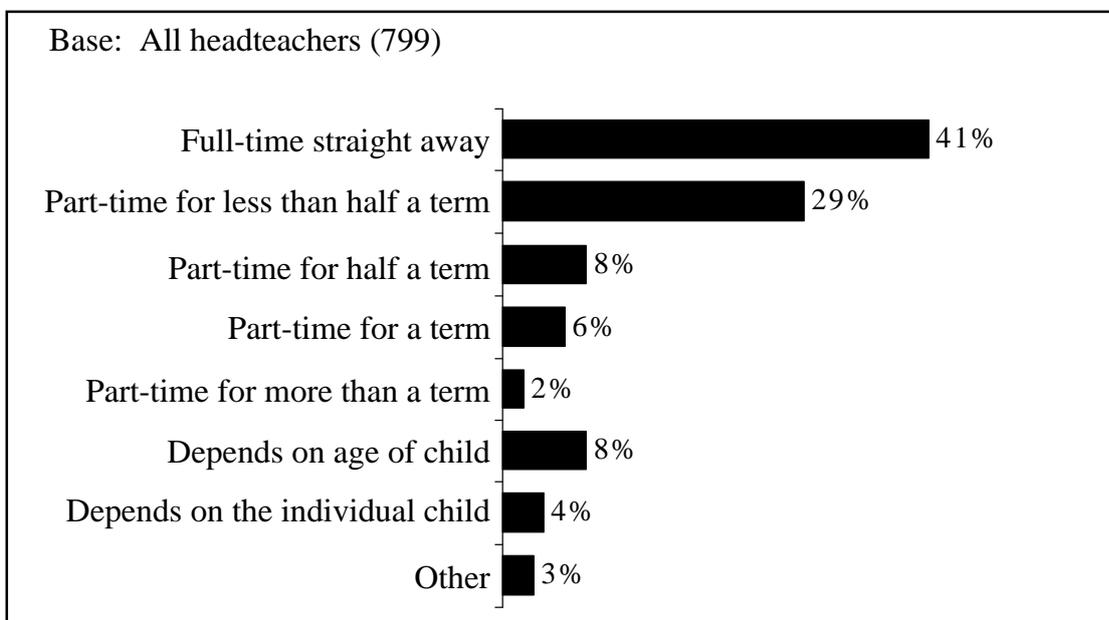


Figure 33: How long children attended school part-time

9.2 Contact and information gathering before admission

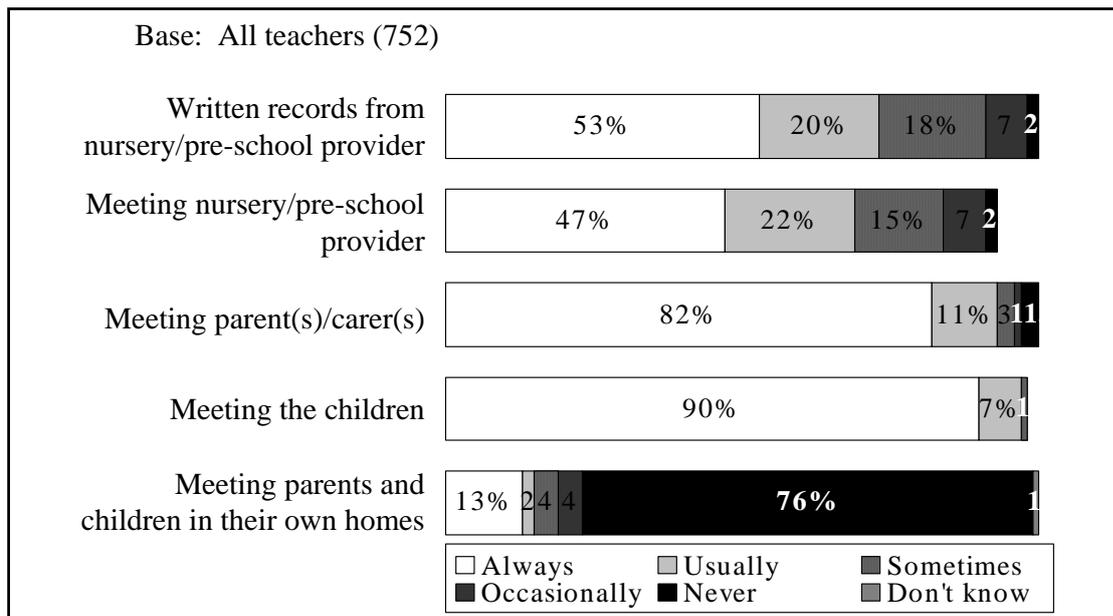
Reception class teachers appeared to be relatively well informed about children when they entered their class. Information about children was most likely to come from meetings with parents and the children (which nearly always took place), or from written records or meetings with the nursery/pre-school provider (which took place, at least, sometimes).

Specifically, 82% of teachers *always* met the child's parent(s)/carer(s) before the child started school, and just 3% *never* did so (Figure 34). 90% of teachers *always* met the children before they started in their class. However, meetings usually took place on the school premises, as 76% of teachers *never* met parents and children in their own homes. However, it is interesting to note that in reception classes with a relatively high number of children with EAL, such in-home meetings were more common.

Half (53%) of reception class teachers stated that they *always* received written records from the child's nursery or pre-school provider, a further 20% said that they *usually* received written records. Only 2% *never* received written records about children from pre-school providers. Similar proportions reported having meetings with nursery staff or pre-school providers prior to the child starting school. 47% *always* and 22% *usually* met with pre-school providers. 9% of reception class teachers stated that they never met with children's pre-school providers.

Overall 69% of teachers indicated that they either always or usually received either written records from the pre-school provider or had a meeting with the provider. This leaves 30% of teachers who either received this information on a sporadic basis, or not at all. 31% of reception class teachers report that they always received both written records from, and had meetings with, children's pre-school providers. However, only 3% report never receiving either written information or verbal information from pre-school providers.

Figure 34: Types of contact / information collected before admission



9.3 Conclusions

Admissions procedures to reception classes were very varied. Assuming that these procedures are planned to support transition to and between settings, they are to be welcomed in fostering, promoting and developing personal, social and emotional well-being. Supporting future learning, however, also depends upon safe information, and monitoring the progress of individual children throughout the Foundation Stage is essential. Prompt and appropriate intervention in the case of particular areas of difficulty or special educational need could make the difference in providing appropriate opportunities for success and avoiding later failure or lack of confidence and self-esteem. It is therefore of concern that a substantial minority of schools did not receive information from the parents/carers or pre-school providers before children were admitted to the reception class.

10 GENERAL EXPERIENCE OF THE FOUNDATION STAGE

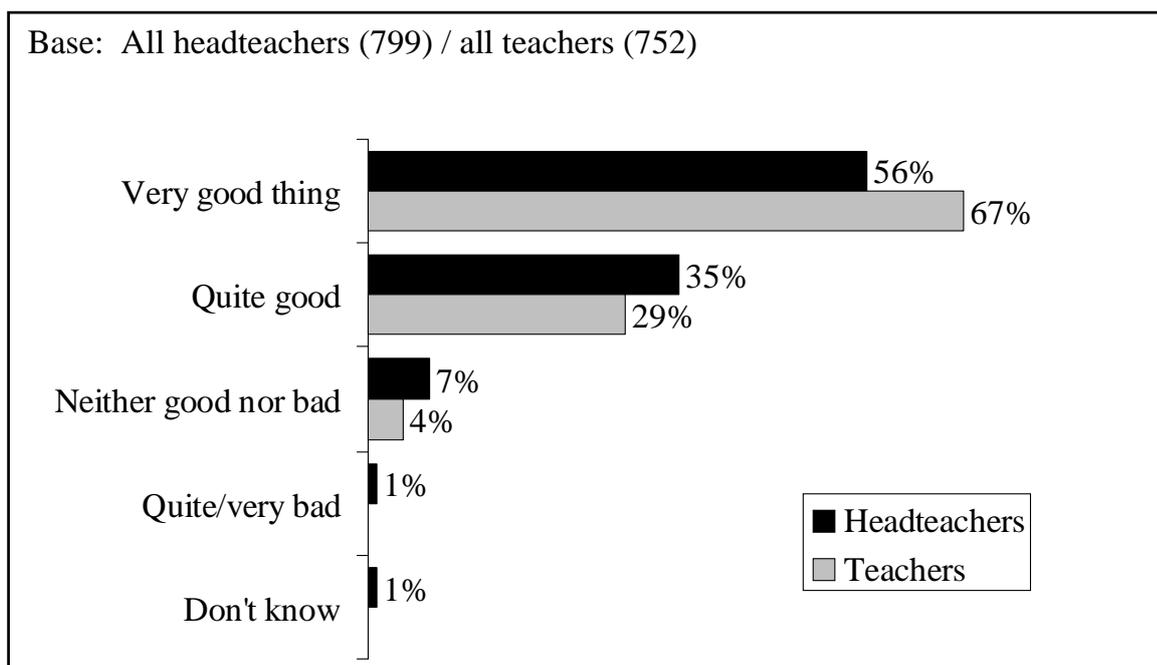
10.1 General reactions to the Foundation Stage

Both headteachers and reception class teachers were asked whether, taking everything into consideration, they believed the Foundation Stage to be a good thing or not.

This question provided a very broad measure of overall reaction to the implementation of the newly established Foundation Stage. It is therefore extremely encouraging to see that among both groups there was a very strong view that the Foundation Stage is a positive initiative (Figure 35). More specifically, 91% of headteachers and 95% of reception class teachers rated it as either a 'very good thing' or 'quite a good thing'. While small proportions of headteachers and reception class teachers did not express a definite view (i.e. they opted for the 'neither good nor bad' category), almost nobody held a wholly negative opinion.

It is also interesting to note that support was even stronger among reception class teachers who were in the 'front line' of the Foundation Stage implementation than it was among headteachers.

Figure 35: Overall reaction to the Foundation Stage



An index measure was calculated from twelve factors that were found to be indicators of successful operation of, and satisfaction with, the Foundation Stage. Each school was given a score of 1 for each of the following factors:

- school had a Foundation Stage Co-ordinator;
- school had a Foundation Stage Governor;
- Foundation Stage identified as a key priority in at least one School Improvement Plan;
- more money had been spent on reception classes as a result of the Foundation Stage;
- headteacher originally trained for 3-6 year olds;
- reception class teacher originally trained for 3-6 year olds;
- headteacher received specific training in the Foundation Stage;
- reception class teacher received specific training in the Foundation Stage;
- headteacher received other training for Early Years;
- reception class teacher received additional training for Early Years;
- headteacher believed the Foundation Stage is a good thing;
- reception class teacher believed the Foundation Stage is a good thing.

Figure 36 shows the proportions of various types of school having 0-7, 8-10 and 11-12 positive indicators. Only 18% of schools scored less than 8 out of 12 factors positively, two thirds (66%) scored 8-10 positively and 16% score all, or all but one factor positively.

Schools that were most likely to give scores below 8 were rural, had less than 100 children, no nursery provision, no more than 5% of children eligible for free school meals and had not spent more on the reception year as a result of the Foundation Stage.

Those schools scoring 11 or 12 factors positively were more likely to have two or more reception class teachers and to have spent a lot more on the reception year as a result of the Foundation Stage.

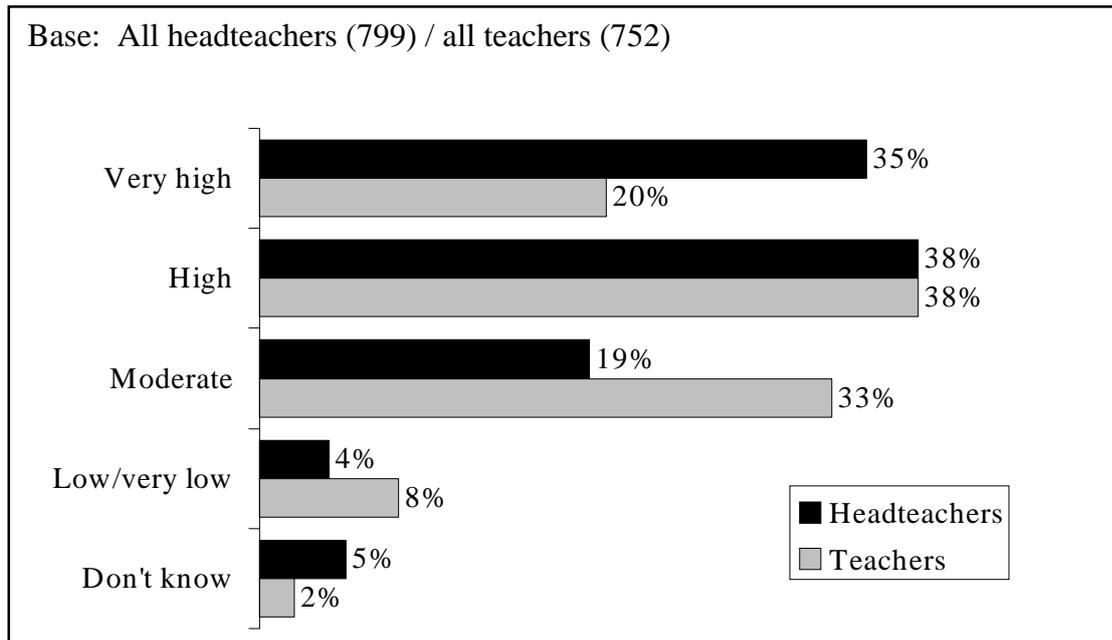
Figure 36: Positiveness Index

School characteristic		Score out of 12		
All bases below are for schools where both the headteacher and a reception class teacher were interviewed	Base	0-7 %	8-10 %	11-12 %
All schools	(702)	18	66	16
Urban / mainly urban	(514)	17	67	16
Mixed	(56)	14	70	16
Rural / mainly rural	(126)	25	58	17
Less than 100 pupils	(122)	22	60	18
100 - 199 pupils	(164)	18	69	13
200 - 299 pupils	(232)	19	63	18
300 or more pupils	(184)	14	70	16
One reception teacher	(397)	18	70	12
Two or more reception class teachers	(298)	18	61	21
Has nursery provision	(306)	12	70	18
Has no nursery provision	(395)	22	63	15
0-5% free school meals	(215)	25	58	17
6-25% free school meals	(327)	15	69	17
26%+ free school meals	(153)	15	70	15
Spent <i>a lot more</i> as a result of the FS	(273)	10	68	22
Spent <i>a little more</i> as a result of the FS	(273)	15	65	19
Spent <i>no more</i> as a result of the FS	(145)	35	63	1
All physical resources are <i>good</i>	(90)	20	60	20
All physical resources are <i>good or adequate</i>	(231)	19	64	16
<i>Not all</i> physical resources are good or adequate	(381)	16	68	15

10.2 Commitment to the Foundation Stage

Both headteachers and reception class teachers were asked what they perceived the level of commitment to the Foundation Stage was among the teaching community as a whole. The question was in part designed to pick up any implicit misgivings about the Foundation Stage which respondents themselves might be reluctant to air.

Figure 37: Perceived level of commitment to the Foundation Stage among teaching



community as a whole

The chart shows that on balance, both headteachers and reception class teachers felt that there was at least a reasonable level of commitment to the Foundation Stage among the teaching community as a whole. However, these results were less positive than for the questioning about whether the headteacher/reception class teacher personally thought that the Foundation Stage was a good thing or not, and also there was a marked difference between the views of headteachers and reception class teachers. While a total of 73% of headteachers felt that commitment among the teaching community was either high or very high, this opinion was only shared by 58% of reception class teachers. This is in contrast to the previous question on the respondent's own reaction to the Foundation Stage, where reception class teachers were even more likely to endorse it than were headteachers. Together these findings lead us to believe that there was some feeling that not all of the teaching community were fully behind the initiative and that there is still some work to be done in communicating the benefits of the Foundation Stage. They are, however, entirely consistent with the earlier finding (see 4.6) that where the headteacher was less likely to have undertaken Foundation Stage training, the reception class teacher was more likely to have done so but may lack the support of trained colleagues.

10.3 Benefits and problems

Headteachers and reception class teachers were also asked about both the benefits and the problems of implementing the Foundation Stage. Both questions were asked in a totally open way, where respondents were free to give whatever answers they wanted. The result was that many respondents gave very full and detailed responses, which were then classified into the categories shown in Figure 38.

The main identified benefits of the Foundation Stage were very similar from both the headteachers' and the reception class teachers' perspectives. Respondents identified *five* main benefits:

1. The Foundation Stage gave **definition to the Reception Year** – mentioned by 37% of headteachers and 30% of reception class teachers. Here both headteachers and reception class teachers were most likely to speak about the bridge that the Foundation Stage provided between nursery and Key Stage 1. They also felt that it highlighted the importance of the reception year, recognising that reception-aged children are different from both younger and older children.

'We have had a clear structure in the areas of learning...it has also given clear structures for assessment so that we know the goals that we are working towards. It has given us clear stages from nursery to reception'

'It follows on well from the nursery curriculum. It gives the child a good foundation for moving on to Key Stage 1, getting away from a watered down Key Stage 1, and recognises the skills which young children need to develop prior to Key Stage 1'

Figure 38: Benefits of the Foundation Stage

	Headteachers	Reception Class Teachers
Base: All headteachers/reception class teachers	799	752
	%	%
DEFINES THE RECEPTION YEAR	37	30
- bridge/transition between nursery and Key Stage 1	22	17
- gives structure to reception year	8	5
- recognises reception children have different needs to older/younger children	8	4
- highlights importance of reception year	6	9
FLEXIBILITY/ INFORMALITY OF THE RECEPTION YEAR	27	34
- less formal teaching style/teaching style more appropriate to age group	14	16
- not so structured as National Curriculum	10	11
- integrated learning/not segmented by subject	9	12
- flexibility	3	7
FOCUSES ON CHILD DEVELOPMENT	26	26
- it emphasises personal, social and emotional development	12	12
- child centred learning	10	7
- more focus on verbal communication	3	2
- child happier/settled better	3	3
- child led activities	2	4
- less pressure on children	2	2
- less recording/writing by children	1	2
PRACTICAL PLAY	25	38
- more time on play/practical activities	23	36
- more time for outdoor/physical activity	5	5
BENEFITS FOR TEACHERS	25	27
- good guidance for teachers	12	15
- helps/improves lesson planning	11	11
- more/better training	3	3
- less pressure on teachers	2	3
OBJECTIVES AND ASSESSMENT	12	17
- defines learning objectives	9	8
- stepping stones are a guide for progression	4	10
NONE	9	5

2. It allowed **flexibility and informality** – mentioned by 27% of headteachers and 34% of reception class teachers. Here both headteachers and reception class teachers highlighted the fact that the Foundation Stage is a less formal teaching style, which is more appropriate to the age group, and is not as structured as the National Curriculum. Also of

³ Responses sum to more than 100% as respondents were allowed to give more than one answer

importance is the fact that the Foundation Stage allows integrated learning, rather than a system which is segmented by subject.

'More flexibility for cross-curricular planning...literacy and numeracy now has a more flexible approach so children don't need to be in class all the time'

'More flexibility ... in the actual planning of the day. It's a more relaxed way of teaching children...it's not exactly less structured, it's more that it's spread out throughout the day'

3. It focused on **child development** – mentioned by 26% of headteachers and 26% of reception class teachers. The key points here put forward by respondents were that the Foundation Stage allowed a child-centred approach to learning, focusing on the personal, social and emotional development of the child. Other aspects of this focus on child development were mentioned, for example the greater emphasis on verbal communication rather than written work, resulting in less pressurised and happier children.

'It focused on the needs of the youngest children. We were always concerned about their needs...At last it [Foundation Stage] is being recognised as an important stage'

'It [Foundation Stage] shows areas of learning rather than curriculum. There's an emphasis on work through play, which is more focused towards child development and the way children learn.'

4. It provided **benefits for teachers** – mentioned by 25% of headteachers and 27% of reception class teachers. Two main advantages were highlighted under this heading – the guidance the Foundation Stage gave to teachers and the improved support for lesson planning.

'It has helped with planning. Has helped teachers to focus on certain areas'

'The guidance has been very useful in terms of structuring.'

'I think the actual Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage is a very useful document. The way it's set out is much more user friendly than in the previous'

document. I like the way the areas of learning have been set out so that I can personally integrate the Foundation children with the Year Ones. It enables me to use the areas of learning with the Level One National Curriculum.'

5. It focused more on **practical play** – mentioned by 25% of headteachers and 38% of reception class teachers. Here the main point was that the Foundation Stage allowed much more time for play and practical activity.

'The greater emphasis on play. It's given very clear goals and objectives and making sure that children have the play aspect of their learning'

'There is more emphasis on play and skills. Previously we thought that social skills were not being developed because of the rigid form of learning needed to prepare for the National Curriculum. The approach is more appropriate for this age group.'

'There is much more emphasis on play now we are not trying to cover National Curriculum objectives. Learning has become integrated in everyday activities, not set in stone to cover specific curriculum areas. It is now more flexible to cope with unforeseen events and things the children bring in from home. There is more time to talk about their own experiences and interests.'

Figure 39: Problems of the Foundation Stage

	Headteachers	Reception class teachers
Base: All headteachers / reception class teachers	799	752
	%	%
TIMING	19	16
- not enough time for planning/ lesson planning (<i>NB. In some cases it was not possible to determine whether the respondent was referring to the planning of the Foundation Stage or specific lesson planning</i>)	13	11
- introduced too quickly/rushed in	4	4
- not enough time – non-specific	3	2
- not enough time to cover the Early Learning Goals	1	1
COST	18	16
- increased staffing/resourcing costs	10	6
- lack of additional facilities/equipment/materials	8	10
- cost (non-specific)	2	2
- cost of additional training	1	*
BUILDINGS/GROUNDS INADEQUATE FOR ACTIVITIES	16	15
STAFFING	17	17
- increased staffing/resourcing costs	10	6
- lack of classroom support staff	5	9
- poor staffing ratios/class sizes too large	3	3
EXTRA PAPERWORK/WORK IN GENERAL	6	5
UNCLEAR GUIDANCE	10	15
- lack of additional guidance on the Foundation Stage/Early Learning Goals	5	7
- mixed messages about structured v. unstructured work	3	6
- training was too late	2	1
- difficult to explain to parents	2	3
- OFSTED want more structure than Foundation Stage requires	*	*
DISRUPTS CHILDREN BY BEING SO DISTINCT FROM KEY STAGE 1	8	8
- does not prepare the child well enough for Key Stage 1	4	5
- does not fit in well with teaching style of Key Stage 1	2	2
- holds back children who are ready for more formal learning	2	2
OTHER PROBLEMS		
- mixed class/teaching 2 different curricula	12	14
- discrepancy between baseline assessments and Early Learning Goals	4	5
NONE	24	20

In general it is pleasing to see that both headteachers and reception class teachers were more likely to be able to think of the benefits of the Foundation Stage than of problems associated

⁴ Responses sum to more than 100% as respondents were allowed to give more than one answer

with it. While there was broad agreement on the benefits, a wider variety of problems were mentioned, often by relatively small proportions of respondents. In general the opinions of headteachers and reception class teachers were similar, although reception class teachers were more likely than headteachers to mention benefits to do with flexibility, play and defining objectives and assessment and were also more likely to complain of unclear guidance.

The main problems highlighted by both headteachers and reception class teachers were as follows:

1. **Timing problems** – mentioned by 19% of headteachers and 16% of reception class teachers. The most common timing problem was a feeling that there was not enough time for planning/lesson planning. A smaller proportion of respondents spoke about the fact that the Foundation Stage had been rushed in too quickly.

'Time is a problem. There are a whole raft of initiatives coming in. It is difficult to give it sufficient focus.'

2. **Cost** – mentioned by 18% of headteachers and 16% of reception class teachers. Here, the main challenges were the increased staffing costs and the lack of additional facilities, equipment and materials.

'Serious under-funding. The budget is far less than what we require to meet the needs of the Foundation Stage'

'The outdoor element is an expensive element to fund: it would be nice if there was extra funding to help implement the Foundation Stage'

3. **Staffing** – mentioned by 17% of headteachers and 17% of reception class teachers. The challenges mentioned under this heading are similar to those cited under cost – the increased cost of staffing, the lack of support staff and poor staffing ratios.

'It is important to have the right levels of staffing to implement it.'

‘Although the ideas behind the Foundation Stage are good, it has been very difficult to implement. Class sizes are too big. Two adults to 30 children is not always enough.’

4. **Buildings/grounds inadequate for activities** – mentioned by 16% of headteachers and 15% of reception class teachers.

‘We don’t have a play area or equipment – we’ve never been able to afford them, but now it’s an actual requirement’

5. **Problems in teaching two different curricula in mixed-age classes** – mentioned by 12% of headteachers and 14% of reception class teachers. Focusing solely on those schools where there are older children in the same classes as reception-aged children (this happens in just over a third of schools), it is found that this problem is raised by 39% of headteachers and 30% of reception class teachers. This is, therefore, clearly a major problem for schools where mixed-age teaching takes place.

‘The difficulty is that you have reception year and year 1 in the same class and the curriculum is fundamentally different’

6. **Unclear guidance** – mentioned by 10% of headteachers and 15% of reception class teachers. This category encompasses a range of issues. Low numbers felt that there had been a lack of additional guidance on the Foundation Stage and the Early Learning Goals. Some felt that there had been mixed messages about structured v. unstructured work; that the training received had been too late and that it was difficult to explain the Foundation Stage to teaching colleagues.

‘Getting conflicting reports about the literacy and numeracy hours and whether we should or shouldn’t, and we’re not sure if we’re doing it right’

7. **Disrupts children by being so distinct from Key Stage 1** – mentioned by 8% of headteachers and 8% of reception class teachers. Here the reported problems were that the Foundation Stage does not prepare children for Key Stage 1, and that it does not fit in

well with the teaching style of Key Stage 1. A low number of respondents also mentioned that they felt children who were ready for more formal learning were ‘held back’.

‘Move from Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1. Not enough preparation for Key Stage 1’

However, nearly a quarter (24%) of headteachers and a fifth (20%) of reception class teachers did not report any problems in implementing the Foundation Stage which compared well with 9% of headteachers and 5% of reception class teachers who did not report any benefits.

10.4 Progress made in implementing the Foundation Stage

The overwhelming majority of headteachers – 86% - reported that they had made ‘a lot of progress’ in implementing the Foundation Stage, with only 1% indicating that they had made ‘not much’ or ‘almost no progress’ (Figure 40). Again this is an encouraging finding.

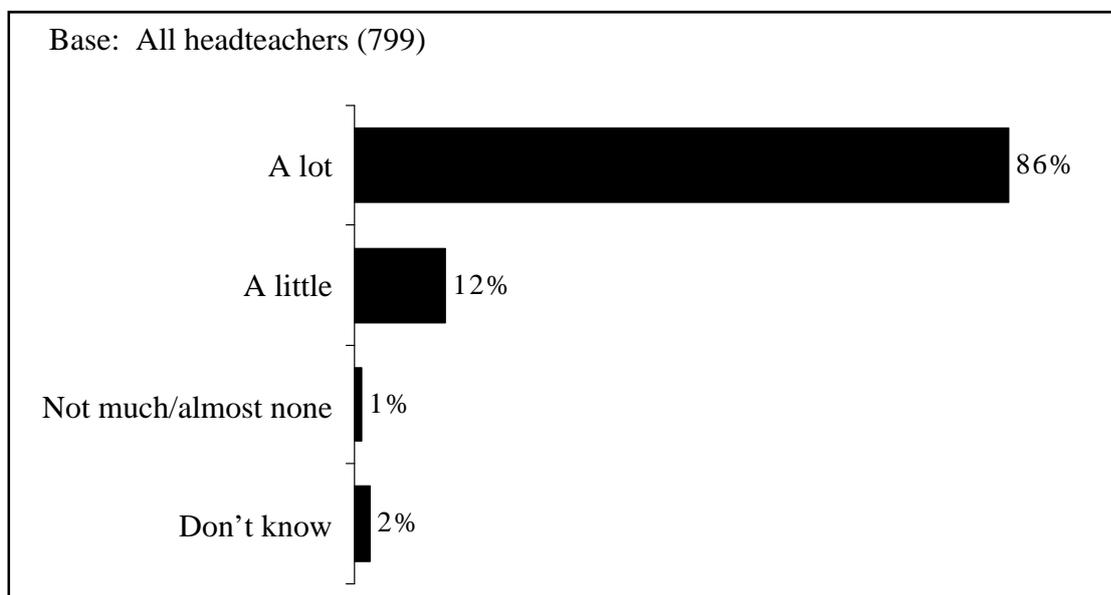


Figure 40: Progress made in implementing the Foundation Stage

Headteachers who were particularly likely to state that they had only made *a little* progress tended to be those where reception-aged children were taught in classes with older children, where the headteacher had not had training in the Foundation Stage and where the

headteacher had been in their job for less than two years. Those who felt they had only made a little progress also tended to be from those schools where either a little or indeed no more money had been spent on the reception year as a result of the introduction of the Foundation Stage and where the physical resources were not generally described as adequate.

Those headteachers who felt that they had *not* made ‘a lot of progress’ (12% of headteachers) were asked their views on why they had not been able to make more progress (Figure 41). Respondents were free to give any answer they chose: these responses were subsequently grouped into the categories shown below.

Figure 41: Reasons for not being able to make more progress in the Foundation Stage

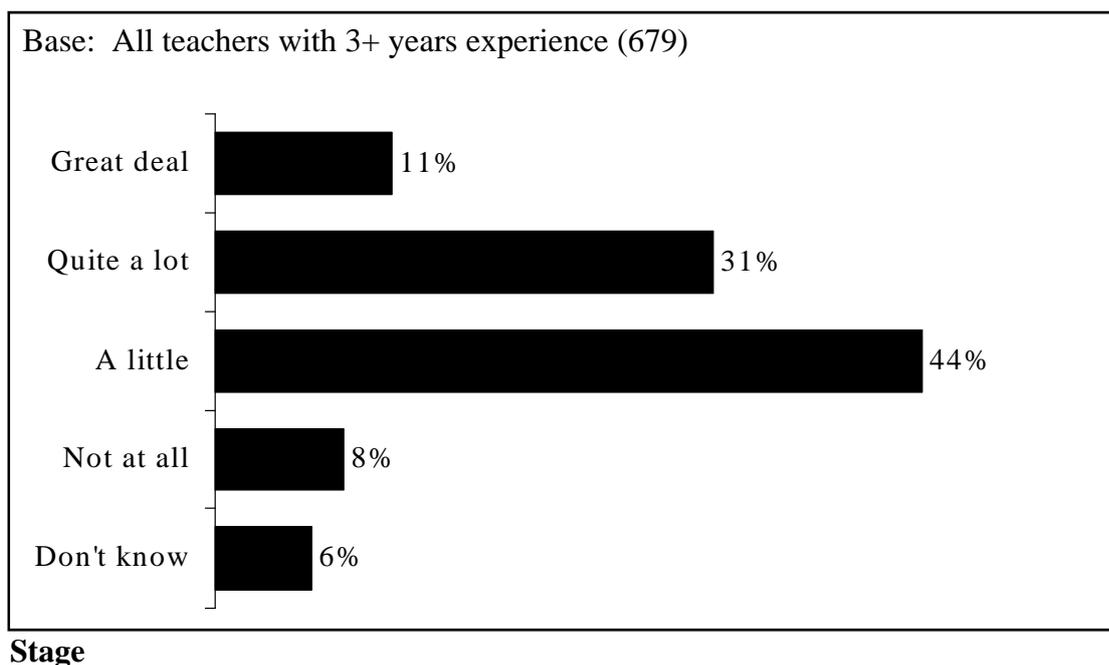
Base: All headteachers not making a lot of progress	99
	%
Time pressure (in general)	16
Need more/specific training	14
Still on learning curve/ more time needed	14
Resourcing/funding issues	10
Constraints of buildings/outdoor facilities	10
Staff changes	10
Too few classroom support staff	9
Mixed-age classes	8
Want to make changes to organisation	6

The main barriers to making more progress are similar to some of the problems highlighted in the previous section. Specifically, time pressure appeared to be the biggest issue, and the feeling that schools are still on a steep learning curve. The second major barrier mentioned by headteachers was the need for more training – either in the Foundation Stage in general or on a specific aspect of it. Other issues concerned resources, lack of classroom support staff, and the constraints of buildings. Mixed-age classes were also mentioned.

10.5 Changes in work as a result of the Foundation Stage

Among reception class teachers, there were divided views about how much the work in reception classes had changed as a result of the Foundation Stage. Whilst 42% felt that there had been either ‘a great deal’ or ‘quite a lot’ of change, 52% felt that things had changed either ‘a little’ or ‘not at all’. There appears to be a link between the level of deprivation of the school and the perceived amount that the work in the classroom has changed: those reception class teachers working in the most deprived schools were most likely to state that the work had changed a great deal or quite a lot. Perhaps, these were the teachers most keenly aware of the very wide range of experiences, competencies and interests likely to affect the learning and progress made by children of very diverse needs and the challenge presented to raise attainment and promote the development of those most disadvantaged.

Figure 42: Amount work in reception class has changed as a result of the Foundation



In terms of the ways in which the work in reception classes had changed, the most common change which teachers reported was an increase in play-based and outdoor activities: ‘*There is a lot of freedom for children to learn through play.*’ Other changes reported were:

- Less formality. *‘Not as pressurised for formal tasks such as getting the children to sit down and learn...that it a good thing.’*
- A more flexible and less prescribed approach, for example, in terms of not having to stick to the specific learning areas and not having to focus on numeracy and literacy. *‘The Foundation Stage has freed the restraints. I feel that I can teach how I wanted to teach prior to the numeracy and literacy hour.’*
- More child-centred, for example, children can choose their own activities: *‘A greater emphasis on the children being in charge of what they learn.’*
- Less written work. *‘There are a lot more practical activities going on so it’s not so much pen to paper.’*
- More practical and ‘hands on’. *‘It [the curriculum] has changed dramatically towards more practical work in all subjects. Now we can use the time as we see fit. Before, it felt like it was more of a secondary school...we enjoy it now!’*
- More integration of subject areas. *‘We don’t have to stick to the specific learning areas – work in an integrated way.’*
- More planning of work. *‘More detailed planning through the six areas of learning.’*

10.6 Conclusions

Overwhelmingly, headteachers’ and reception class teachers’ views of the Foundation Stage were positive, and both tended to feel that there was a high level of commitment to the Foundation Stage among the teaching community as a whole. A benefit of the Foundation Stage that was often described by both headteachers and reception class teachers was that it gives definition to the reception year, and bridges the perceived gap between pre-school provision and Key Stage 1. Similarly, many headteachers and practitioners mentioned the positivity of the flexibility and informality of the Foundation Stage, particularly when

compared with Key Stage 1, and the focus on child development and practical play were also frequently mentioned as benefits.

The majority of headteachers believed much progress had been made in implementing the Foundation Stage in their school. Lack of time was identified as a common problem and barrier to progress, with a feeling that the Foundation Stage had been introduced rather quickly. Other problems of resources – the cost of equipment, inadequate buildings and grounds and staffing costs echo the findings of chapter 5 on resources. Also mentioned were problems of teaching two curricula in mixed-age classes, what were perceived as ‘mixed messages’ or unclear guidance with respect to curricular structure, and the feeling that the Foundation Stage teaching style did not prepare children for Key Stage 1. In fact, these problems, to a large extent, mirrored the concerns which had led to this survey being carried out in the first place. Teachers themselves were divided over whether there had been much change to their practice, with those working in urban areas and with the most diverse teaching groups, being most likely to report practice had changed a lot. Commonly, change was associated with the perceived increase in play-based and outdoor activities. On the whole, the changes reported by both headteachers and reception class teachers were also identified as benefits of the Foundation Stage – its informality, child-centredness and practicality – precisely those features which provided a definition to the reception year and a bridge to Key Stage 1.

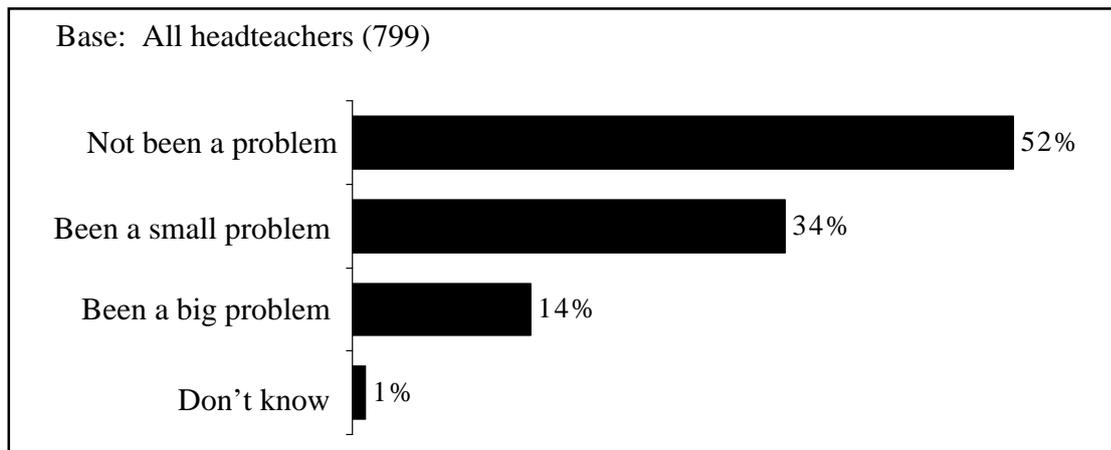
11 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FOUNDATION STAGE

11.1 Planning to teach the Foundation Stage in reception classes

Headteachers were divided on the issue of whether or not fitting the Foundation Stage into the whole school approach to planning the curriculum across Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 had been a problem or not. About half reported problems, about half did not. However, where problems had been encountered, headteachers were much more likely to indicate that it had been a 'small' (34%) rather than a 'big' (14%) problem (Figure 43).

Headteachers of schools where reception-aged children are taught in classes with older children were considerably more likely to report problems in this area than were schools where there were dedicated reception classes. Specifically, 56% of those with mixed-age classes reported some level of problem in fitting the Foundation Stage in with the whole school approach to planning and teaching: this compares to 42% reporting such problems in schools where mixed-age classes do not exist. In addition, those schools where headteachers indicated that they had spent a lot more money on reception year as a result of the Foundation Stage and where all the physical resources (outdoor, indoor practical and indoor quiet area) were described as 'good' were particularly likely to indicate that it had not been a problem. This strongly suggests that good facilities and funding smooth the way for the introduction of the Foundation Stage, but this may be more a problem for small schools in rural areas. The particular challenge of teaching mixed-age classes is developed in the next chapter.

Figure 43: Whether fitting the Foundation Stage in with the whole school approach



to planning and teaching has been a problem

Many headteachers explained the problems they had experienced in fitting the Foundation Stage curriculum into the whole school planning approach by saying that it was a new approach and that anything new causes some problems. In particular, the Foundation Stage was so different in terms of structure and content to the National Curriculum, that the system of planning and documentation used in many schools was not suitable for planning the Foundation Stage.

'We had planning sheets that we used throughout the school. These were not appropriate for the Foundation Stage. We had to look again at the format of these and at the ways we assess outcomes.'

'When you're looking at the National Curriculum, it's set out in discrete subjects. The Foundation Stage is set out in areas. Marrying up the two and ensuring consistency can be a problem. Also the National Curriculum is set out in a very precise and prescriptive way, as are the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. The Foundation Stage is set out in much more general terms.'

'It's a separate area now. It is tagged on to the end, and hasn't become an integral part of the whole school planning. Foundation Stage planning is separate and different from the rest of the school.'

The degree of difference from the teaching methods and organisation structures used by the rest of the school also created some problems of misunderstanding from teachers who are not directly involved with the Foundation Stage. As noted in chapter 4, Key Stage 2 staff were considerably less likely than Key Stage 1 staff to have received training in the Foundation Stage. Similarly, planning in an entirely different way to the rest of the teaching staff can be isolating for the reception class teacher.

'It has not been fully understood by the other staff. The other teachers know that there have been changes, but don't understand them because they are not working with Foundation Stage pupils.'

'It has created more work, liaising with subject co-ordinators, who need to be convinced of the need for change.'

'Because only two people know about the Foundation Stage, these two have to do all the work and planning.'

'The class teacher has to work alone with no help from colleagues.'

Some schools also noted that particular care had to be taken when planning for the school to ensure that transition from the explorative work of the Foundation Stage to the more formal work of Key Stage 1 was taken into account.

'We have had to look again at the Key Stage 1 curriculum to make sure that there is a natural progression to Key Stage 1.'

'The Foundation Stage is not subject led, so planning has to change to make sure that enough skills are actually taught before Year 1.'

Some headteachers also mentioned that having more than one admission point during the year made it difficult to prepare children for Key Stage 1 while operating within the Foundation Stage curriculum. This provides some evidence to support the view that phased intake of reception-aged children may increase the organisational complexity.

'We changed our admission procedure from having two reception in-take points per year to just having one in-take.'

Reception class teachers were asked who else, other than themselves, was involved in the planning of the curriculum and lesson plans for the Foundation Stage, both in the medium/long term and in the short term. Medium/long term was defined as planning for the whole term or year, and short term was defined as planning at a daily or weekly level. The general picture which emerged was that nursery/Early Years teachers and other reception class teachers (if they existed in a particular school) were usually involved in both medium/long term and short term planning, but practice was much more mixed regarding the involvement of support staff, Key Stage 1 teachers, headteachers/deputies, and other teachers.

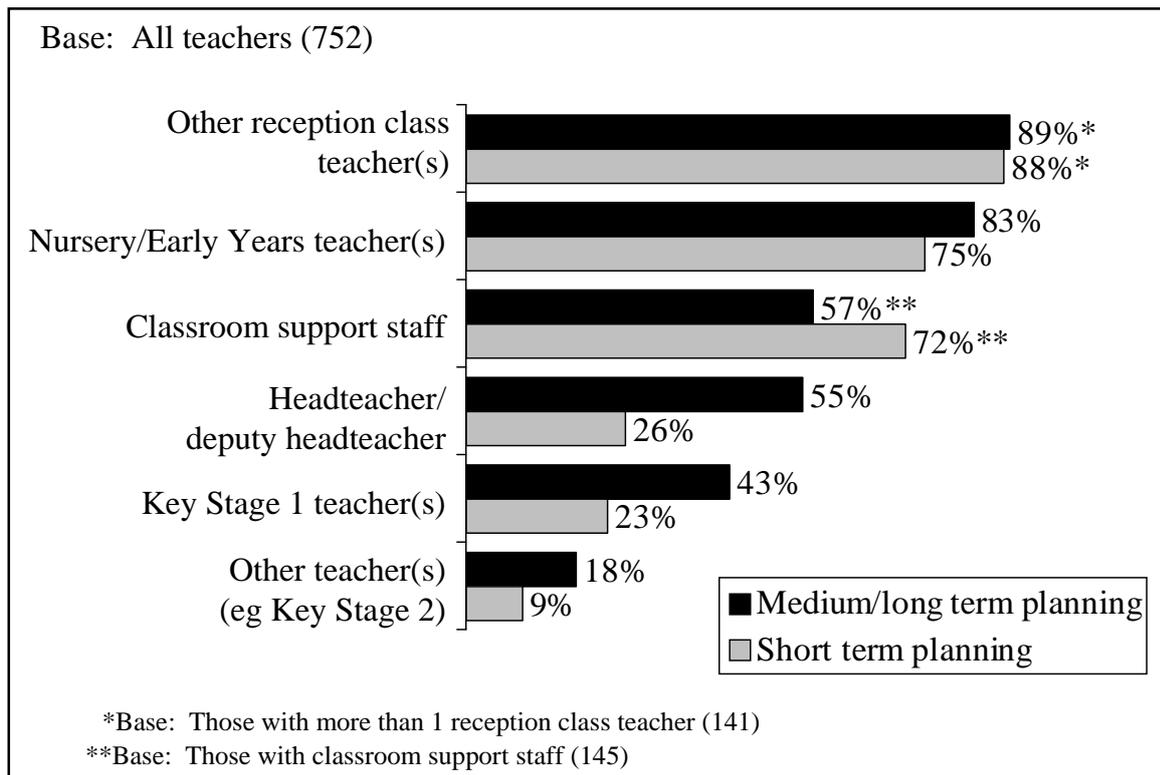
Specifically looking at the role of classroom support staff, it is apparent that where they are involved in planning it was much more likely to be short term planning (72% involved) than long term (57%) (Figure 44). Where support staff were qualified at levels 2 – 4, they were slightly more likely to be involved in planning, both long and short term.

Headteachers and deputies, on the other hand, were more likely to be involved in long term rather than short term planning. Although in just half of cases (55%) they were involved in medium/long term planning, only 26% were involved in short term planning.

Where Key Stage 1 teachers were involved it was usually in long term (43%) rather than short term planning (23%).

Both Key Stage 1 teachers and headteachers/deputies were more likely to be involved in the planning of the curriculum and lesson plans for the Foundation Stage if they had actually received training in the Foundation Stage. 37% of Key Stage 1 teachers who had received Foundation Stage training were involved in medium/long term planning, compared to 28% of those who had not. Similarly, 58% of headteachers/deputies who had received this training were involved in medium/long term planning, compared to 51% of those who had not.

Figure 44: Who was involved in planning the curriculum and lesson plans for the

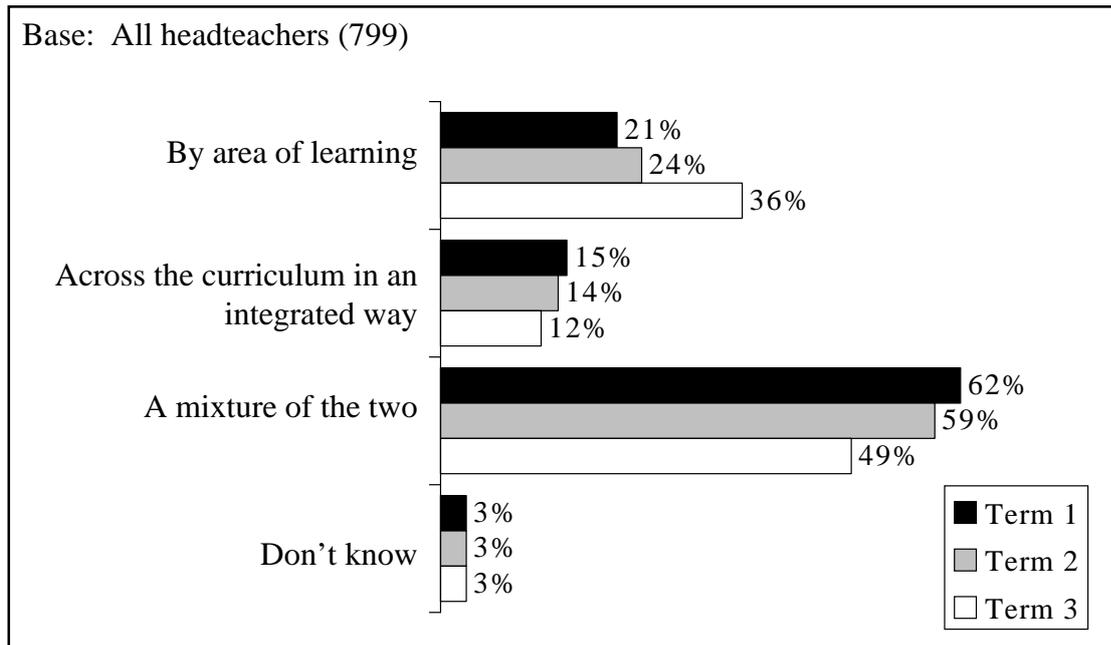


Foundation Stage

11.2 Curriculum organisation in reception classes

Headteachers were asked how the curriculum in their reception classes tended to be organised in each term of the reception year. The majority (70%) indicated that the *same* method of organisation was used in *all three* terms (Figure 45). 18% of headteachers indicated that in each term, the reception class curriculum was organised by individual areas of learning, 8% indicated that reception classes were timetabled in an integrated way in all terms. According to headteachers almost half (44%) of reception classes used a mixture of methods (by area of learning and across the curriculum) in all terms. Where schools did change the way reception classes were organised later in the year, the movement was away from arranging lessons by a mixture of methods, towards organising by area of learning in term 3.

Figure 45: Whether reception classes were organised by area of learning, or across

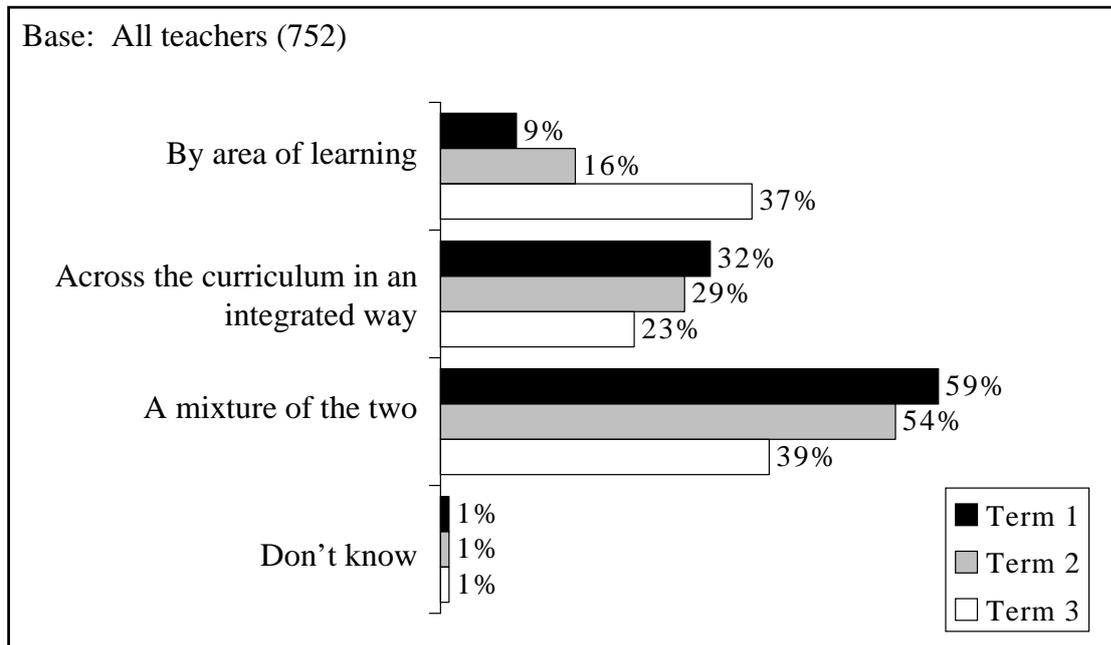


the curriculum in an integrated way (headteachers)

Reception class teachers echoed the message of transition from an integrated curriculum or a mixture of methods at the start of the year to separating activities by area of learning by the end of the reception year (Figure 46). However, more reception class teachers than headteachers reported this type of shift. 61% of reception class teachers reported using the *same* method of organisation throughout the whole of the reception year (this compares to 70% reporting this among headteachers). Just 8% indicated that they organised the curriculum by area of learning throughout the year, and 19% integrated areas of learning throughout the year. 34% used a mixture of these methods throughout the year (although they may have altered the balance over time between distinct areas of learning and integrated learning).

While in term 1, 32% integrated the areas of learning across the curriculum, by term 3 this had fallen to 23%. In contrast between terms 1 and 3 there had been an increase in the proportion covering the areas of learning in distinct blocks from 9% to 37%.

Figure 46: Whether reception classes were organised by area of learning, or across the curriculum in an integrated way

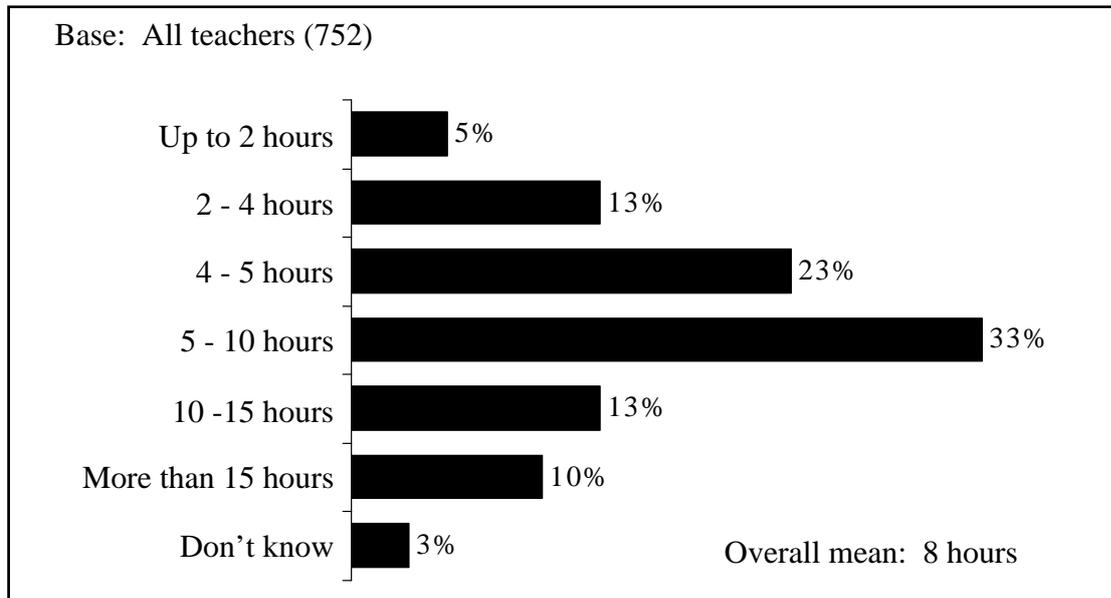


The two charts above show that headteachers' and reception class teachers' perception of the method of organisation of the curriculum varied slightly. In fact, when both the headteacher and a reception class teacher were interviewed from the same school, only 45% stated the same method of organisation for term 1, 41% in term 2, and just 38% agreed on the method of organisation used in term 3. This suggests that headteachers may have been less aware of the detail of classroom practice as the school year progressed.

11.3 Child-led and spontaneous learning

It has already been noted that reception class teachers recognised the importance of child-led and spontaneous learning. When specifically questioned about it, reception class teachers estimated that their children spent an average of 8 hours in a 25 hour week (about a third of their time) engaged in spontaneous activities or activities that children had either initiated or chosen for themselves (Figure 47).

Figure 47: Average time per week that children were engaged in child-led and spontaneous activities



Those whose initial training was for children aged 3 – 6, those who have specific training in the Foundation Stage, those who have the most experience in teaching reception classes and those who taught classes where Foundation Stage children were *not* mixed with other children all reported higher than average amounts of time in child-initiated activities. There is also a link between this measure and the teacher’s overall view of the Foundation Stage: those who believed it to be a ‘very good thing’ were particularly likely to report more time spent on child-initiated activities.

The vast majority (92%) of reception class teachers reported that their children had *daily* opportunities to engage in informal explorations of literacy and numeracy.

11.4 Grouping pupils

Practices regarding the grouping of reception-aged children within classes appear to change quite considerably over the year.

Around one in three headteachers said for each term that different groupings were used for different activities, so could not give the factors determining the groupings (Figure 48).

However, among the remainder, ability was the factor cited most frequently for determining child groupings. The proportion using this in term 1 was 23%, increasing to 40% in term 2 and 47% in term 3. Grouping by friendship was sometimes used in term 1 (13%) but rarely in terms 2 and 3 (4% and 3% respectively).

Low numbers of headteachers reported that they had too few children of this age to group them in any way, or that they chose not to group children and used only whole class or individual working.

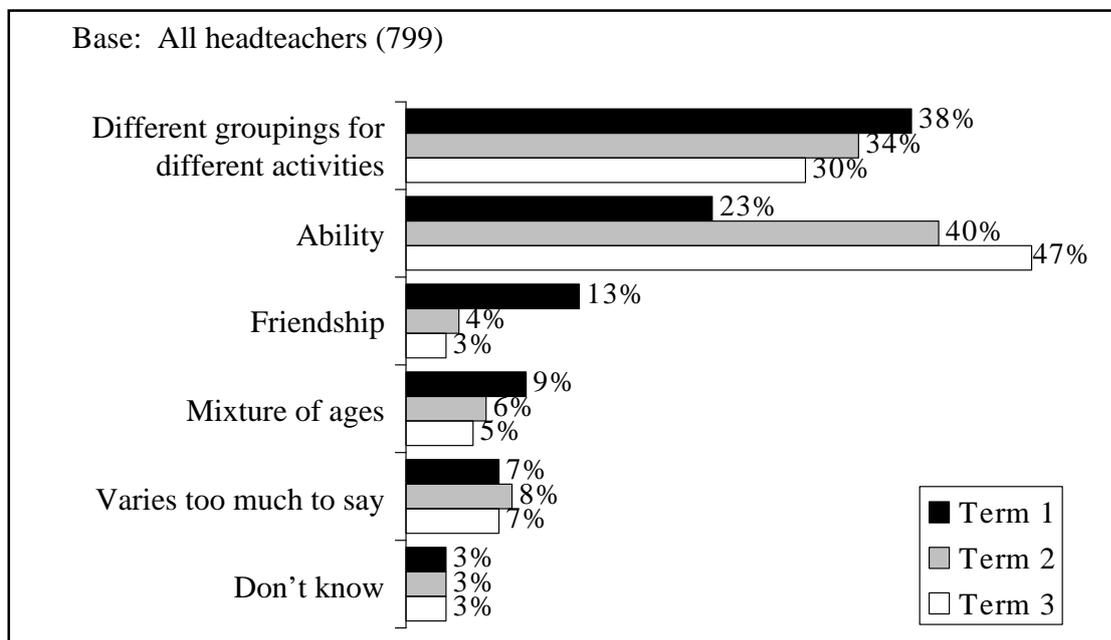


Figure 48: Main methods of grouping children within classes

Not only did the grouping of children change over the year, but it is also clear that the average percentage of time spent in whole class teaching rose steadily. The average percentage of term 1 spent on *whole class teaching* (as reported by reception class teachers) was 27%, increasing to 33% in term 2 and 40% in term 3 (Figure 49).

There is an interesting pattern over the three terms regarding the amount of time spent in whole class work in classes where older children were mixed in with reception-aged children. In both terms 1 and 2, in mixed-age classes, teachers reported that they spent an average of about 5% more time in whole class teaching than was the case in classes solely composed of

reception-aged children. By term 3, however, teachers in both types of class reported spending more or less the same proportion of their time in whole class teaching.

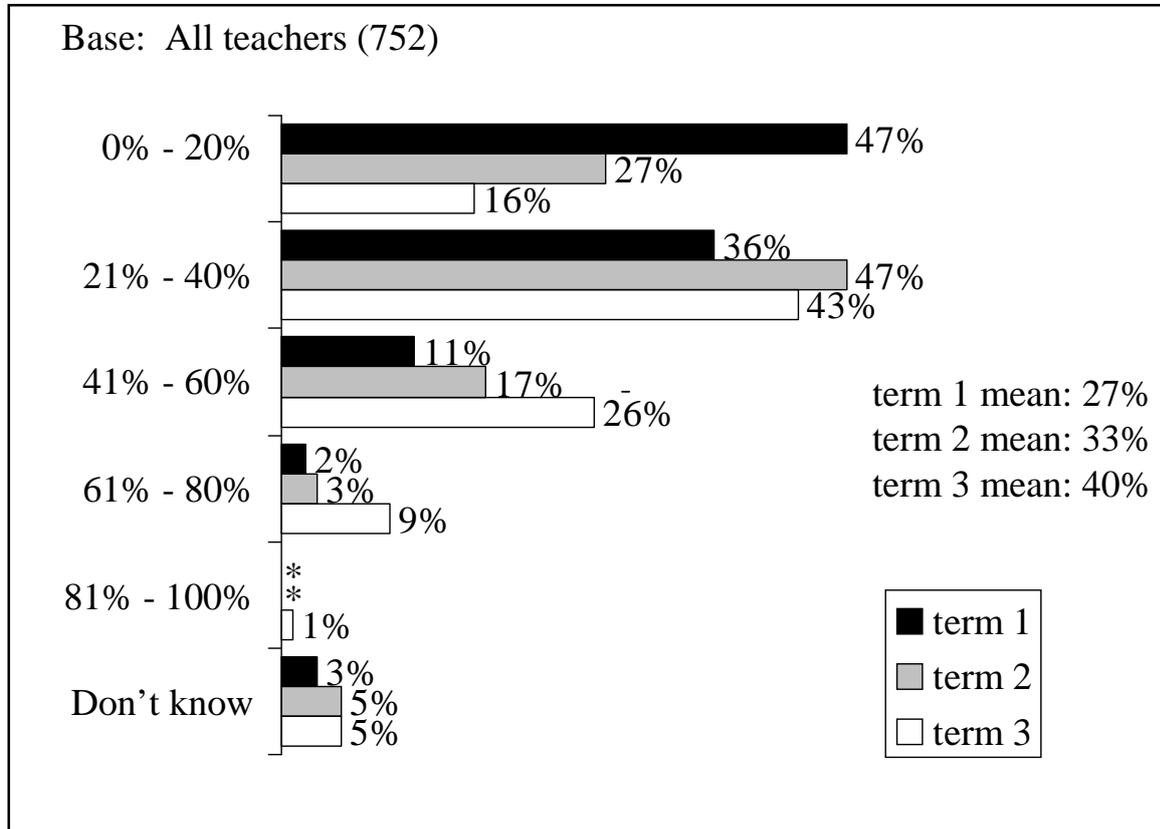


Figure 49: Proportion of classroom time spent in whole class teaching

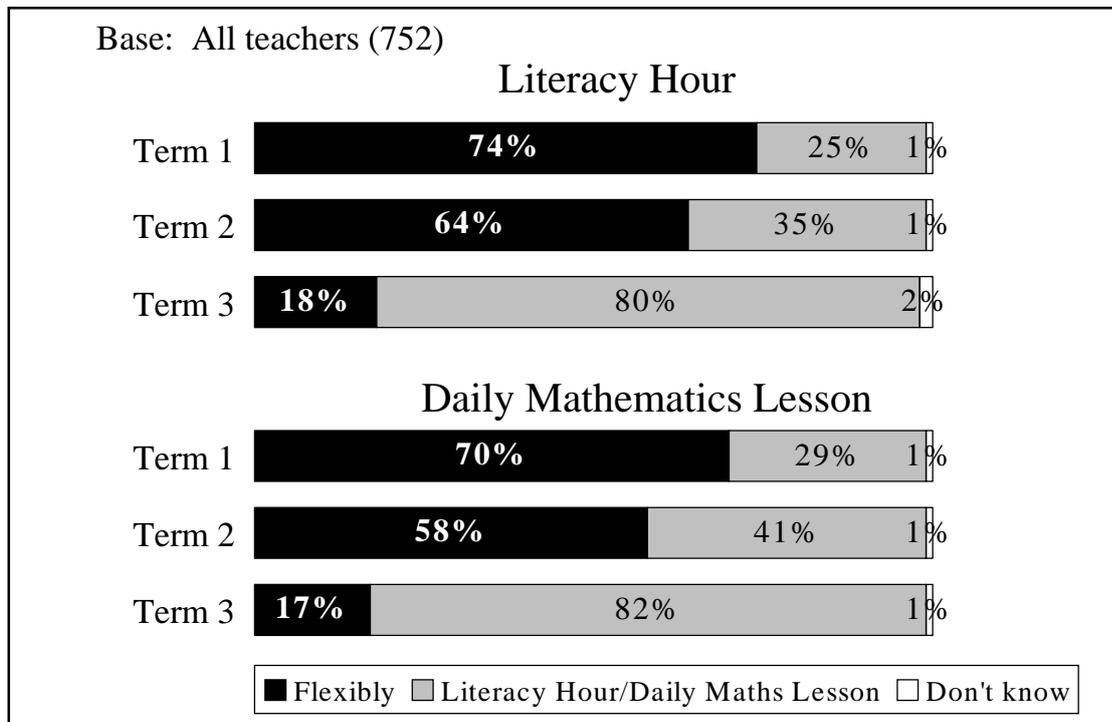
11.5 Literacy and Numeracy

Reception class teachers were asked how they implemented both the National Literacy Strategy and the National Numeracy Strategy in each term of the reception year: flexibly, or as a Literacy Hour / daily mathematics lesson (Figure 50). The majority delivered both strategies flexibly in term 1 (National Literacy Strategy 74%, National Numeracy Strategy 70%). There was a slight decline in the proportions delivering the strategies flexibly between term 1 and 2 (Literacy 64%, Numeracy 58%).

However, there was a much more significant decline by term 3 - in fact almost a reversal in proportions delivering the strategies flexibly and in set lessons in term 1. While 74% of reception class teachers delivered the National Literacy Strategy *flexibly* in term 1, by term 3

80% were teaching a Literacy Hour. Similarly, while 70% of reception class teachers delivered the National Numeracy Strategy *flexibly* in term 1, 82% were teaching a daily mathematics lesson by term 3.

Figure 50: Whether the National Literacy Strategy and National Numeracy Strategy



are implemented flexibly or as a Literacy Hour / daily mathematics lesson

In summary:

- 17% implemented the National Literacy Strategy flexibly in all terms
- 11% implemented it flexibly in term 1, but introduced a Literacy Hour in term 2
- 45% taught flexibly in terms 1 and 2, introducing a Literacy Hour in term 3
- 24% taught a Literacy Hour throughout the year.

Similarly,

- 16% taught the National Numeracy Strategy flexibly across all terms
- 12% introduced a daily mathematics lesson in term 2
- 41% introduced a daily mathematics lesson in term 3
- 29% used a daily mathematics lesson throughout the year.

11.6 Importance of skills acquired during the Foundation Stage

Reception class teachers were asked to rate the importance of reception-aged children acquiring nine specific skills during the Foundation Stage, using a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means not important at all, and 10 means absolutely vital. All skills were given mean importance scores of over 8.5, indicating that *all* skills were considered very important. However, there were some small differences between the scores awarded, with skills such as enthusiasm for learning and motivation being perceived as most important, with creative development, physical development and concentration being rated as less important. Differences of around 0.1 on the scores below are generally statistically significant.

The skills attracting the highest importance ratings from reception class teachers were:

Enthusiasm for learning	9.7
Motivation	9.5
Working with others	9.3
Active independence	9.3

These skills were then followed by literacy and numeracy:

Literacy	9.2
Numeracy	9.1

The final three skills in order of importance were:

Concentration	8.9
Physical development	8.9
Creative development	8.8

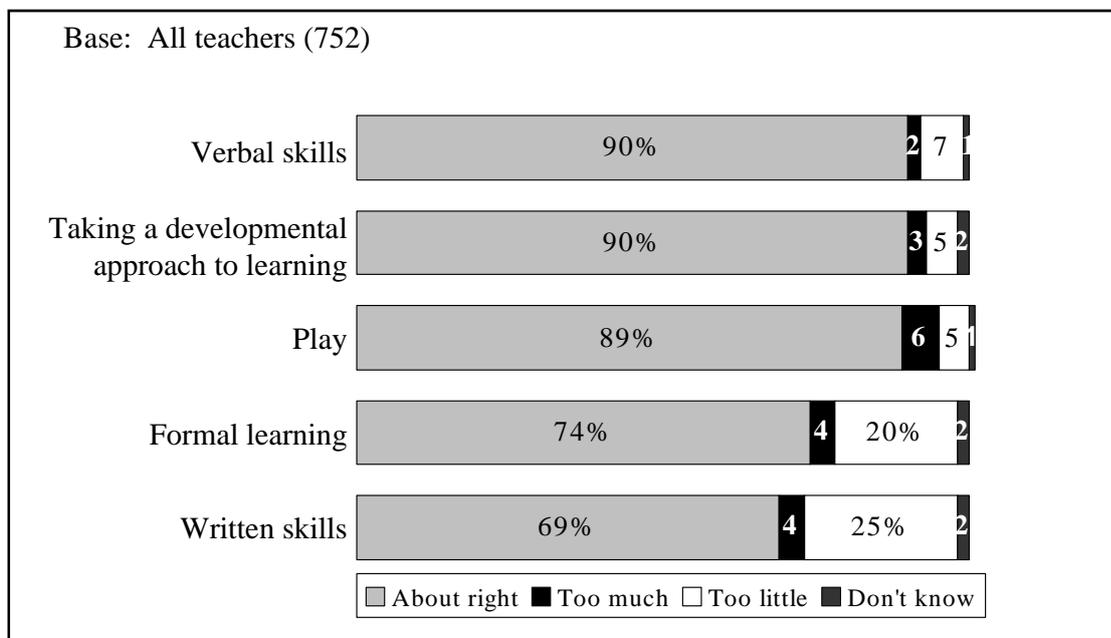
That two of the six areas of learning (physical development and creative development) were already regarded as slightly, though significantly less important, than literacy and numeracy in the reception year is a matter of some concern.

11.7 Level of emphasis placed on aspects of learning

It is encouraging to see that reception class teachers generally felt that the Foundation Stage had got it ‘about right’ in terms of the level of emphasis placed on different aspects of learning. This was particularly the case for verbal skills, play and taking a developmental approach to learning.

However, only 74% of reception class teachers felt that the Foundation Stage ‘got it about right’ for formal learning, and 20% felt that ‘too little emphasis’ was put on formal learning in the Foundation Stage. Slightly fewer (69%) felt that the Foundation Stage ‘got it about right’ in terms of the emphasis placed on written skills, and 25% felt that too little emphasis was placed on this. It is therefore apparent that some concern exists among a minority of reception class teachers that the Foundation Stage does not address sufficiently the more formal aspects of learning, including written skills and is consistent with the finding above, that physical and creative development are regarded as less important than literacy and numeracy.

Figure 51: Whether the correct level of emphasis has been put on various aspects of



learning

A relationship can be seen between the views of reception class teachers on emphasis placed by the Foundation Stage on various aspects of learning and with their actual teaching practice (the method of arranging the curriculum in each term). For example, while 74% of those who felt the Foundation Stage got the emphasis on formal learning ‘about right’ implemented the National Literacy Strategy flexibly rather than as a Literacy Hour, a higher proportion (84%) of those who felt there is too much emphasis on formal learning taught literacy flexibly rather than as a Literacy Hour. This trend continued in each term, although even those who felt the Foundation Stage leans too strongly towards formal teaching tended to implement the National Literacy Strategy as a Literacy Hour in term 3 (66%). A very similar pattern can be seen when comparing the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy by those who felt there was too much emphasis on formal learning (or too little) with those that felt the Foundation Stage had got it about right. Furthermore, similar relationships exist between reception class teachers’ views of the level of emphasis the Foundation Stage places on written skills and verbal skills and the method they employed to implement the National Literacy Strategy throughout the reception year, with those who felt that too little emphasis was put on these skills being most likely to use a Literacy Hour.

11.8 Evaluating lessons and progress

Almost all reception class teachers who had classroom support staff involved them to some degree in evaluating lessons afterwards. 38% involved their classroom support staff *a great deal* in evaluating lessons, 45% involved them *quite a lot*, and 15% involved them *a little*. Involvement of classroom support staff appeared to be higher in mixed-age classes than in classes comprised entirely of reception-aged children. Reception class teachers most likely to involve their classroom support staff *a great deal* were those with less than three years teaching experience, those who had received specific training in the Foundation Stage, and those who thought that the Foundation Stage was a very good thing.

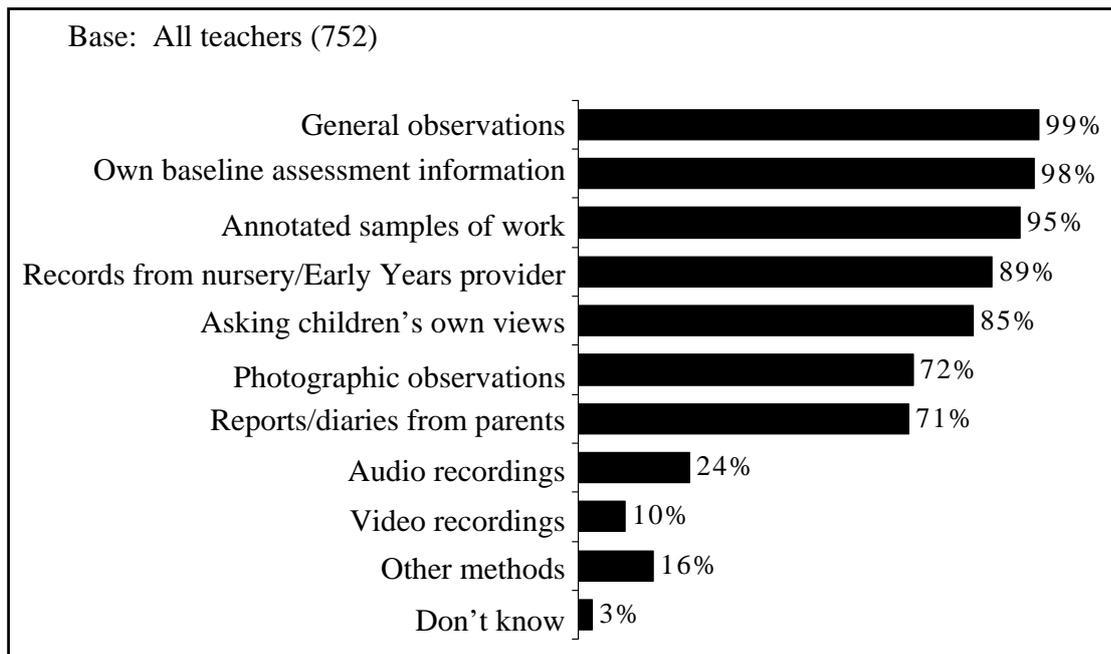
The vast majority of reception class teachers (Figure 52) used general observations (99%), their own baseline assessments (98%) and annotated samples of work (95%) to monitor and assess the progress of their reception-aged children (Figure 52). Nine out of ten (89%) also had access to and made use of records about the children from a nursery or other early years provider. 85% took the children’s own views into account when assessing progress made, but

the proportion of those who had not received specific Foundation Stage training who asked the children's own views on their progress is slightly lower (79%). Observing and responding appropriately to reception-aged children, informed by knowledge of the way children develop and learn, was likely to be enhanced by engaging children themselves in the learning process. Knowledgeable practitioners were more likely to ensure children felt included in this process, and felt their views were valued.

Three quarters (72%) of reception class teachers reported using photographic observations, but only 24% used audio recordings and just 10% reported using video recording to assist in monitoring and assessing children's progress. The use of both audio and video recordings was lower when the reception class teacher had not received any specific training in the Foundation Stage. Audio recording was more frequently used in schools with children with English as an Additional Language.

71% utilised reports or diaries completed by parents; this was slightly more common where classes included older children (75%) and slightly less common in schools with a relatively high number of reception-aged children with EAL. Use of parent reports or home/school diaries as evidence in assessing progress was also less common among teachers who had not received any specific training in the Foundation Stage (64%) and among reception class teachers with less than three years experience teaching reception-aged children (67%).

Figure 52: Methods used to monitor and assess the progress of children



Reception class teachers who were initially trained to teach children of 7 or older were more likely to use reports/diaries from parents, and also more likely to make use of audio recordings to monitor and assess children's progress. With the exception of general observation and the reception class teachers' own baseline assessment information, each method was used less frequently by reception class teachers who had not received any specific training in the Foundation Stage than by those who had. Those who did not rate the Foundation Stage as a *very good thing* were less likely to solicit the children's own views, or to use photographs, parental reports/diaries or audio recordings. Similarly, reception class teachers with less than 3 years teaching experience were less likely than others to use photographs, parental reports/diaries or audio recordings, particularly when compared with the practice of teachers with more than 10 years experience.

11.9 Conclusions

The challenge of planning the Foundation Stage within the context of whole school planning for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is likely to be ameliorated when supported by additional funding and good facilities. This suggests that small, rural schools with tighter budgets and less generous resources may be more challenged. Greater general awareness and

understanding of the Foundation Stage by the whole school community, which can be achieved through additional training, can smooth the process. At present, reception class teachers are most likely to plan the curriculum, long to medium and short term, with other reception colleagues and nursery staff. Involvement of other Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 staff, including the headteacher and deputy, is more variable and, again, associated with Foundation Stage training received. It is pleasing to note that support staff, particularly those with training, are likely to be involved in, at least, short term planning. Systematic observation to evaluate lessons and progress is used by almost all teachers and most involve support staff to some degree.

In general, the pattern for curriculum organisation remains similar across all terms. The survey showed that where curriculum organisation changed during the reception year, it tended to be from integration of areas of learning at the beginning of the year, towards a greater differentiation by the end. This shift may be greater than measured, as substantial proportions used a mixture of cross curricular integration and differentiation by area of learning, but the survey was unable to detect any change in balance between the two when a mixture of methods was used within a term.

A similar gradual shift could be seen towards a greater emphasis on whole-class teaching and grouping of children by ability over the year. This is entirely consistent with the finding that the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies tend initially to be delivered flexibly across the day but, by the end of the year, the Literacy Hour and daily mathematics lesson are generally in place. In spite of this, reception class teachers report opportunities for reception-aged children to engage in self-initiated activities, albeit with widely varying proportions of time available for this.

Perhaps, more worrying is the finding that two areas of the Foundation Stage – creative and physical development are regarded as slightly, yet significantly, less important than literacy and numeracy. Moreover, whilst reception class teachers feel that the Foundation Stage has “got it right” in terms of emphasis on different areas of learning, 25% feel that the Foundation Stage does not sufficiently address formal aspects of learning. This is an indication of the “scale of the challenge in the Foundation Stage Curriculum Guidance to practitioners, who will need to have imagination and flexibility to enable children to learn in

ways appropriate to their developmental stage” (the Education and Employment Committee, 2000: paragraph 69).

12 NATIONAL LITERACY AND NUMERACY STRATEGIES

12.1 Implementing the National Literacy Strategy

Reference has already been made to the implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies in the previous chapter, with a gradual shifting, over the reception year, from flexible delivery towards the Literacy Hour and daily mathematics lesson. The majority of headteachers (61%) felt that implementing the National Literacy Strategy with a more flexible approach for reception class children had not been a problem. 29% felt it had been *a small problem*, and only 9% felt it had been *a big problem*.

The responses given by *reception class teachers* to the same question were very similar to those given by headteachers. 64% felt that implementing the National Literacy Strategy with a more flexible approach for reception-aged children had *not been a problem*, 28% felt it had been *a small problem* and just 8% felt it had been *a big problem*. Teachers most likely to report problems teach classes where reception-aged children are taught alongside children in Key Stage 1: 40% of this group reported a problem compared to 33% among teachers who have dedicated reception classes.

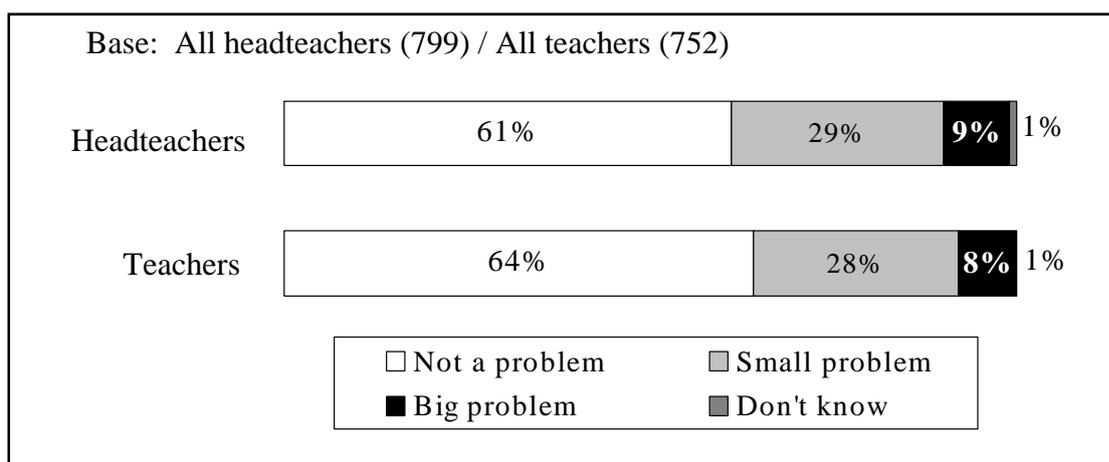


Figure 53: Whether implementing the National Literacy Strategy was a problem

12.2 Implementing the National Numeracy Strategy

Results to questions on the implementation of the National *Numeracy* Strategy were similar, but slightly more positive than for the *Literacy* Strategy.

Two thirds (65%) of headteachers reported that implementing the National Numeracy Strategy with a more flexible approach for reception-aged children had *not been a problem* in their school. Although 28% reported *small problems*, only 6% said that it had been a *big problem*. Headteachers most likely to report problems with implementing the National Numeracy Strategy with a more flexible approach for reception children were those in rural areas and those with older children in the same class as reception-aged children.

Reception class teachers were more positive about implementing the National Numeracy Strategy with a more flexible approach for reception children than were headteachers. 74% of teachers reported it had *not been a problem*. 21% reported *small problems*, and just 4% felt that it had been a *big problem*. As with the information given by headteachers, reception class teachers were most likely to report problems if they taught mixed-age classes or if they were located in a rural area.

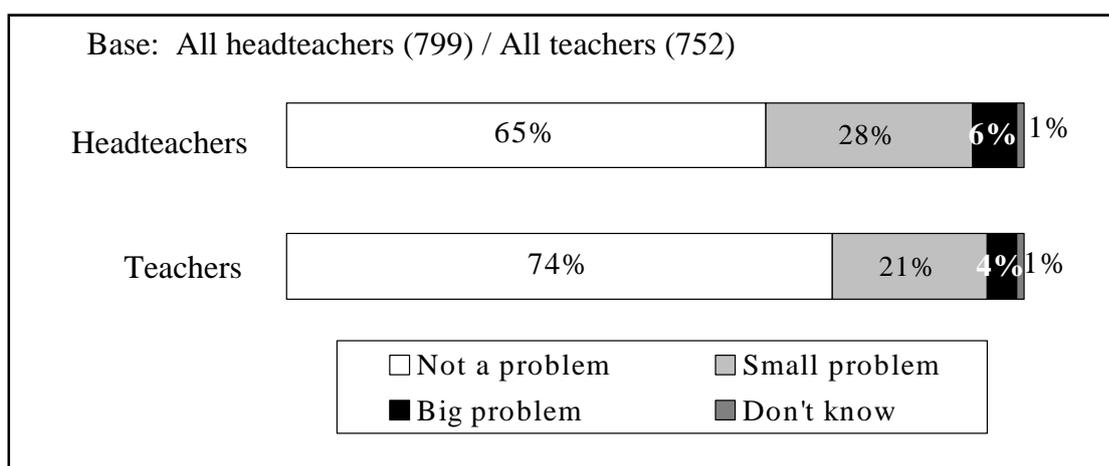


Figure 54: Whether implementing the National Numeracy Strategy was a problem

12.3 Conclusions

In general, implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies has not been regarded as a problem by headteachers and reception class teachers. Difficulties reported by those teaching mixed-age classes, typically in rural areas, are examined in more depth in the next chapter.

13 MIXED-AGE CLASSES

As stated in 3.5, mixed-age classes (where reception-aged children are taught alongside older or younger children) are relatively common. Of the reception class teachers surveyed, 27% taught reception-aged children alongside older children, and 5% taught reception-aged children with younger children in the same classroom.

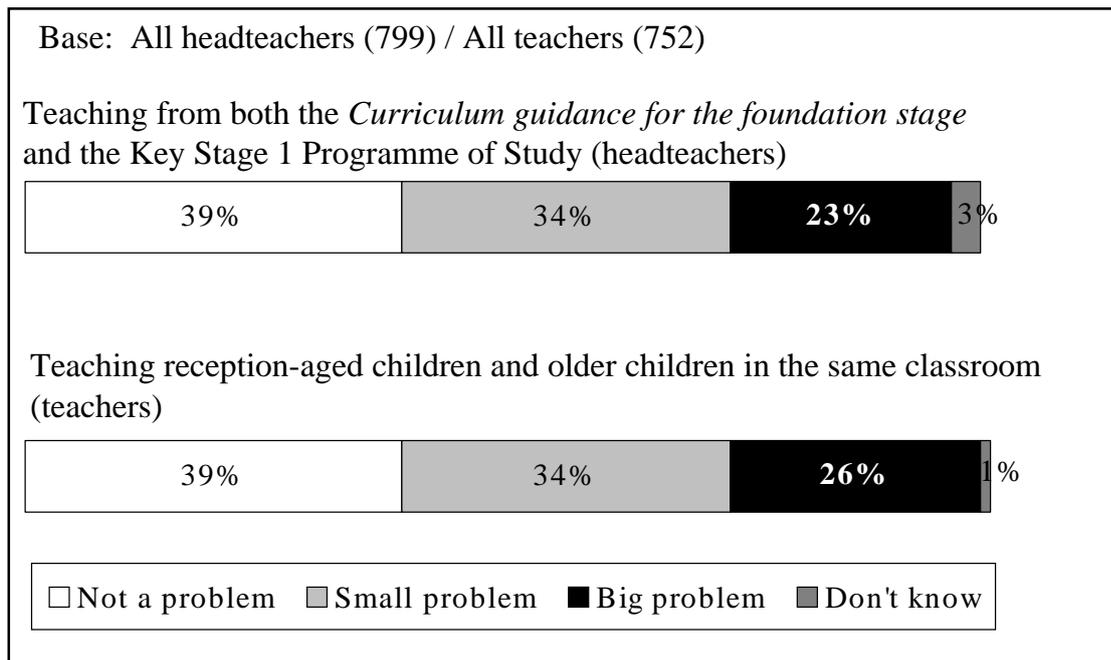
13.1 Problems with teaching reception-aged children alongside older children

Both headteachers and reception class teachers commonly reported problems in teaching reception-aged children alongside older children.

57% of headteachers of schools with mixed-age classes reported some difficulties in teaching from both the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage* and the Key Stage 1 Programmes of Study in the same class (Figure 55). 34% felt this had been a *small* problem, and 23% a *big* problem. Headteachers in schools with more than one reception class teacher were more likely than those with just one reception class teacher to report problems with teaching from two documents in one class (63% compared with 54%). Also, rural schools with mixed-aged classes were more likely than their urban counterparts to report having experienced difficulties (61% compared with 53%).

Similarly, 60% of reception class teachers reported (Figure 55) that teaching reception-aged children and older children in the same classroom was a problem in their school; 34% felt it was a small problem and 26% a big problem. As with teaching from two different documents in the same class, problems were more frequently reported in schools with more than one reception class teacher, and in rural schools. It is also the case that problems in this area were more likely to be reported in schools where there were not any qualified support staff working in reception classes.

Figure 55: Whether teaching mixed-age classes, and teaching from two guidance



documents is a problem

One of the main problems identified (by both headteachers and reception class teachers) with teaching from both the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage* and the Key Stage 1 Programme of Study in a single class is that there is an increased planning burden on teachers. Lessons and activities have to be planned for both age groups, ensuring that the work fits within the requirements of both documents. As already discussed in the previous chapter, there are particular difficulties in delivering the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies in classes that include both Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 children.

‘Although we work very hard to marry the two [sets of guidance] the nature of the work is very different. It doesn’t synchronise very well, so the teacher has to work that bit harder to match up to the statutory requirements.’

‘Going through it all and finding the right bits to put together... either they fit together or they can be taught independently.’

‘The problem of having two groups of children in the same class, whose needs are so different. There are great expectations for Year 1 to have literacy and numeracy

delivered in a certain way, but this is done alongside half the class who can't take a whole hour of teaching.'

Some headteachers indicated that working from two sets of guidance with different age groups in one class may be less problematic if there is sufficient classroom support to separate the two year groups.

'Reception children need more adult time (for toilet breaks and general reassurance) while we are trying to get older children ready for SATS.'

'Planning and staffing it. If you have your classroom assistant there it's OK, but if you are the only adult in the room, it makes it harder.'

'Because using two separate guidelines in one class is like teaching two classes in one. It becomes critical that the teacher has extra support in the classroom to manage the class successfully.'

'The biggest problem is you more or less can't do whole class teaching.'

It can be difficult to teach in two different ways within the same class, as the Foundation Stage allows reception-aged children to learn through play (which can be noisy) while Key Stage 1 involves a lot more individual, table based work.

'Younger children need a lot more space and make a lot of noise. Older children need to write.'

'It is difficult for older children to concentrate while there is a greater amount of creative play going on in the same room.'

'The emphasis on play can be a distraction to the Year 1 children and having no outdoor facilities exacerbates this.'

One suggested method of arranging the two groups is to use a standard, whole class introduction, with separate continuation activities.

'If you have a particularly focused lesson for the literacy programme in Year 1, it may not be totally suitable for the reception class at the same time. You need to have a broad based introductory part to the lesson, suitable for the whole class and then follow up with activities that are clearly different.'

In fact, chapter 9 has already indicated that, in both terms 1 and 2, reception class teachers in mixed-age classes spend about 5% more time in whole class teaching than is the case in classes composed solely of reception-aged children. This suggests that the more diverse the needs of the group, the more likely is the reception class teacher to use a mix of whole-class and differentiated learning.

13.2 Conclusions

Planning and teaching two curricula in a mixed-age class is regarded as a big problem by around a quarter of respondents, particularly in schools with more than one reception class teacher, and those in rural areas. As noted above, mixing grouping strategies to maximise the teaching impact has been one response to this challenge. Mixed-age classes appear to be less problematic with adequate levels of qualified support staff.

14 TRANSITION TO KEY STAGE 1

14.1 Whether the Foundation Stage has made the transition to Key Stage 1 problematic

The majority (72%) of headteachers feel that the transition of children from reception classes to Key Stage 1 has not been a problem since the introduction of the Foundation Stage. 19% reported *small problems*, and just 7% felt that transition to Key Stage 1 had been a *big problem* in their school.

Transition to Key Stage 1 was more frequently reported by headteachers as problematic when the class is comprised only of reception-aged children, and therefore the children would be moving into a new class (32% of headteachers in schools with dedicated reception classes indicated that they had problems in transition to Key Stage 1, compared to 17% in schools where there were mixed-age classes). These schools are more likely to be larger, urban schools with more than one reception class teacher.

Many headteachers mentioned the different approaches taken to teaching in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 as a reason why they had experienced problems with the transition from reception year to Year 1. Without some adaptation of either the end of the reception year (within the Foundation Stage), or the start of Year 1 (within Key Stage 1), it was felt inevitable that many children would struggle to adapt to the more formalised methods and academic demands of Key Stage 1.

‘Children had so much flexibility they were not ready to sit and read for any length of time.’

‘Trying to introduce them to more formal study, work habits, sitting and listening, and being quiet.’

‘Year 1 by necessity is more formal. Reception is insufficiently formal. An OFSTED inspection in July criticised us for lack of formality in maths and literacy in reception, the previous OFSTED inspection criticised us for being too formal.’

'There needs to be a transition term, to try to bridge the gap.'

Some headteachers suggested that there should not be a fixed switch from the Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1 and the associated different ways of working at a set date.

'Look at the children. When the children have achieved Early Learning Goals they are ready for the National Curriculum, not necessarily at the end of the reception year.'

As well as the concern that children entering Year 1 are not prepared for the discipline of formal teaching, some headteachers also expressed concern that the Foundation Stage does not prepare reception-aged children sufficiently with the basic skills for reading and writing.

'We felt that there was some loss of skills. Not so well equipped in literacy and numeracy as formal recording has not been done.'

However, in some cases it was suggested that the Foundation Stage approach was appropriate and the Key Stage 1 teachers should not expect too much from children at the start of Year 1.

'People had always expected children to come up from reception with a higher level of literacy and numeracy skills in terms of explicit skills rather than learning experience. It was a matter of managing the expectations of Year 1 teachers.'

14.2 Communication between reception class teacher and Key Stage 1 teacher

In most schools, reception class teachers reported discussing each reception-aged child's progress with the Key Stage 1 teacher before the child moves on, thereby helping to facilitate the transition (Figure 56). 77% of reception class teachers *always* discuss the progress of children with their future Year 1 teacher before they move on. For 8% of teachers, this is irrelevant as they will also teach the same children in Year 1.

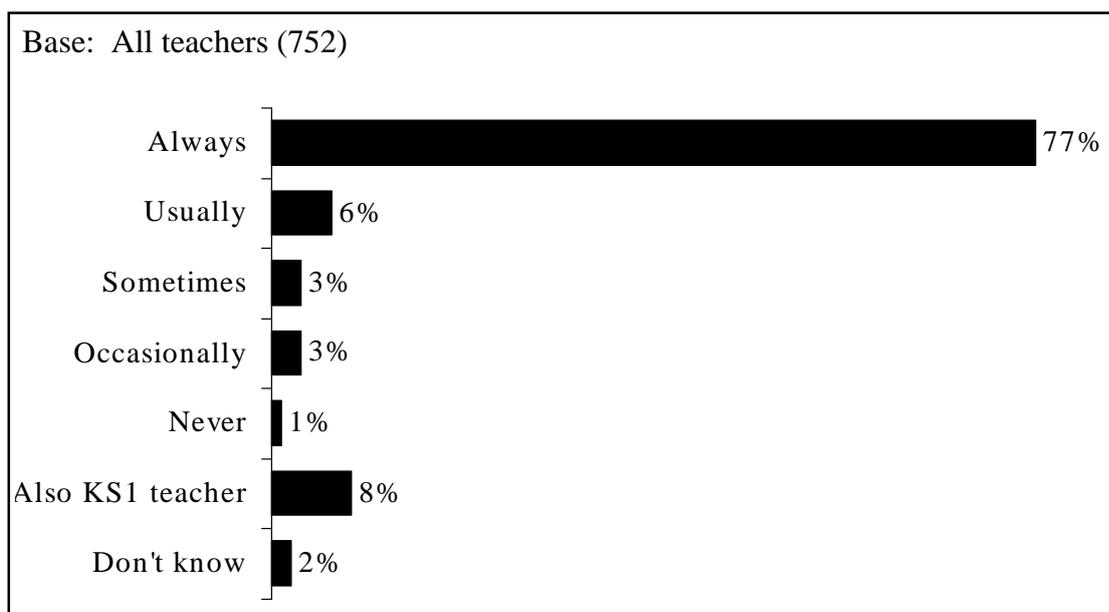


Figure 56: Discussing child's progress with Key Stage 1 teacher before they move on

14.3 Conclusions

It is encouraging to find that, for the majority of headteachers, transition of reception-aged children to Key Stage 1 is not regarded as a problem although this had been raised as a possible concern at the time this survey was first being considered. Unsurprisingly, transition was more frequently thought to be problematic in schools with separate classes for Key Stage 1 than in those with mixed-age classes. However, curriculum organisation was often adjusted towards the end of the reception year in order to increase the differentiation and formality, making the end of reception year more like Key Stage 1.

15 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND UNDERSTANDING

15.1 Meetings with parents to raise awareness of the Foundation Stage

The majority of schools showed that they are keen to make parents aware of the Foundation Stage. 69% of headteachers reported that meetings with parents, arranged specifically in order to raise awareness of the Foundation Stage, had taken place in their school (Figure 57). In particular, where there was more than one reception class teacher in a school, meetings with parents concerning the Foundation Stage were more likely to have taken place.

Figure 57: Meetings arranged with parents specifically to raise awareness of the Foundation Stage

	Total	No. of reception class teachers		% of children receiving free school meals			Head trained in Found. Stage	
		One	Two +	0-5%	6-25%	26%+	Yes	No
Base: All head teachers	799	452	339	247	367	178	495	298
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	69	66	72	66	69	71	74	61
No	30	32	27	34	29	27	25	37
Don't Know	1	2	2	-	2	2	1	2

Larger schools, those with higher levels of deprivation and those in urban areas were more likely to have organised meetings with parents than those in rural areas or with lower levels of deprivation. In schools where more than a quarter of pupils received free school meals, 71% of schools reported that parents had been invited to attend a meeting specifically about the Foundation Stage, compared with 66% of schools in the least deprived areas (where less than 5% of pupils received free school meals). Likewise, 72% of schools in urban/mainly urban areas had arranged parental meetings, in contrast to 58% of schools in rural/mainly rural areas.

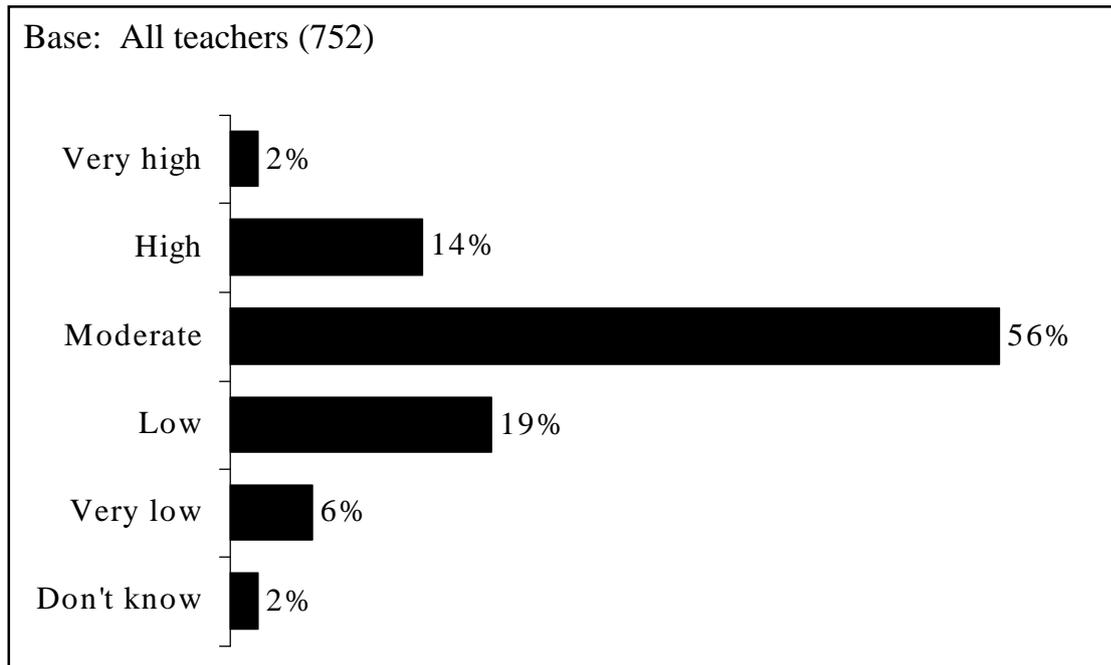
Headteachers who had undertaken specific training in the Foundation Stage also appeared to be keener to arrange meetings to raise awareness of the Foundation Stage among parents. Of schools where the headteacher had completed a Foundation Stage training course, 74% had arranged parental meetings. Where headteachers had not completed any Foundation Stage training, a significantly lower proportion of 61% had held parental meetings. Similarly, schools with headteachers who strongly endorsed the Foundation Stage as a ‘very good thing’ were particularly likely to have held parental meetings (74%).

15.2 Teacher perception of parents’ understanding of the six areas of learning of the Foundation Stage

On the whole, reception class teachers believed that parents of their current Foundation Stage children had a ‘moderate’ understanding of the six areas of learning of the Foundation Stage (Figure 58). A much greater proportion of teachers, however, indicated that parents had a ‘low’ or ‘very low’ understanding of the Foundation Stage (26%), than a ‘high’ or ‘very high’ understanding (16%).

Reception class teachers rated parental understanding at its lowest in those areas with the highest levels of deprivation – in these areas respondents felt that 44% had a low/very low understanding, compared to just 17% being assessed in this way in the least deprived areas. In line with this, parental understanding was also perceived to be higher in rural areas.

Figure 58: Teachers' perceptions of parents' understanding of the six areas of



learning in the Foundation Stage

Almost all reception class teachers (99%) reported that they encouraged parental involvement in the curriculum in either a structured way (e.g. using home school diaries or suggested reading) or an unstructured way (e.g. by book sharing or number games). An overwhelming majority (88%) encouraged parental involvement in the curriculum in a *structured* way, with just 11% opting for an *unstructured* approach. However, the data suggests that reception class teachers working in areas of highest deprivation were rather less likely to encourage parental involvement in a *structured* way, with more opting for an *unstructured* approach (79% structured compared to 19% unstructured).

Figure 59: Whether reception class teachers encourage parental involvement in the curriculum

	Total	% of children receiving free school meals		
		0-5%	6-25%	26%+
Base: All teachers	753	227	353	165
	%	%	%	%
Yes – in a structured way	88	91	89	79
Yes, in an unstructured way	11	8	9	19
No	1	*	1	2

15.3 Conclusions

In general, schools recognise the importance of parental involvement and, at least two-thirds of schools report holding meetings to raise parental awareness of the Foundation Stage. This was more likely to have taken place in larger, urban schools, where headteachers themselves had undertaken specific Foundation Stage training than in small, rural schools with lower numbers of reception-aged children and where headteachers were found to be less likely to have undergone Foundation Stage training. On the whole, parental understanding was regarded as moderate to low, especially in urban areas, where reception class teachers are less likely to encourage parental involvement in a structured way. It is clear from the findings reported in this chapter, that there is work to be done in raising parental understanding. As noted in the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage* ‘When parents and practitioners work together, the results have a positive impact on the child’s development and learning’.

16 CONCLUSIONS

This final chapter will return to the original objectives for the telephone survey and consider each of these in turn.

16.1 Headteachers' awareness and understanding of the Foundation Stage and steps taken to implement it in school

Evidence of the impact on overall Foundation Stage provision of informed and committed leadership was strong and emerged powerfully at a number of points in the findings. A higher proportion of those headteachers who originally trained to work with children of 3 to 5 years and who have received Foundation Stage training tended to have undertaken additional early years training, to strongly endorse the Foundation Stage as a 'very good thing' and to have made it a priority in the School Improvement Plan. Moreover, Foundation Stage training for staff other than those teaching reception class children was much more likely to have occurred in schools where the headteacher had trained in the Foundation Stage. Those headteachers who most strongly endorsed the Foundation Stage were much more likely than others to state that a 'lot more' had been spent on reception classes as a result of it, as were those who had identified the Foundation Stage as a key priority in their School Improvement Plan.

Conversely, those not originally trained to teach 3 to 5 year-olds, who had not received Foundation Stage training, nor any other early years training, were markedly less likely than others to indicate that a lot more had been spent on reception classes as a result of the Foundation Stage and less likely to highlight the Foundation Stage as a key priority on the School Improvement Plan. Moreover, headteachers likely to state that little progress in the Foundation Stage had been made tended to be from those schools where either a little or indeed no more money had been spent on the reception year as a result of its introduction and where physical resources were generally described as inadequate. Indeed, there did seem to be a link between perceived adequacy of outdoor facilities and the amount of additional money spent on the reception classes as a result of the introduction of the Foundation Stage.

16.2 Child and school characteristics

Valuable demographic data provided a context to the telephone survey. Two-thirds of schools have just one class containing reception-aged children, with the average school having 29 reception class children, most of whom attend full-time. Schools with the largest numbers of reception-aged children tend to be in urban areas where there has been a long tradition of nursery schooling aimed at raising the chances of deprived children. In fact, almost half of the schools (44%) have nursery classes, with those in urban and deprived areas being most likely to have this provision. Moreover, across all schools an average proportion of 12% of reception-aged children are reported by headteachers to have SEN and 6% to have EAL, again with higher concentrations in urban and deprived areas. The lowest numbers of reception-aged children tend to be in rural areas with, on average, lower levels of deprivation and where mixed-age classes are particularly common. This suggests that schools both in urban and rural/mainly rural areas may have distinct but, nevertheless, similarly challenging and diverse teaching groups.

16.3 Staffing, qualifications and training

The survey reveals a wide range of qualification and training. While at one end of the scale 36% of headteachers were both initially trained to teach children from 3 years *and* have received Foundation Stage training, it is worrying that 19% of headteachers were neither initially trained for this age group, nor have received Foundation Stage training. Among reception class teachers, only 2% indicated that they were neither trained for that age group nor had received Foundation Stage training.

Headteachers who were initially trained to work with children from the age of 3 are more likely than other headteachers to have followed this up with training in the Foundation Stage. Given the conclusion in 16.2 above - that there will be great diversity in the teaching needs of reception-aged children whatever the area – this finding raises questions about the awareness of and support provided for the Foundation Stage by those headteachers with least training and understanding of this area of their responsibility.

The finding that two-thirds of teachers, regardless of the area of their work, would welcome additional training in the Foundation Stage, taken together with headteachers' reports that other staff (41% in Key Stage 1; 71% in Key Stage 2) and 69% of governors had not participated in training, suggests ongoing training needs for the school community as a whole. In this respect, the needs of those teachers most recently qualified and least experienced, in particular, are highlighted. Further areas for training highlighted by the survey focus on planning, assessment, Foundation Stage guidance to eliminate confusion, literacy, numeracy and ICT.

16.4 The Foundation Stage team and support staff

The great majority of schools have identified a Foundation Stage Co-ordinator and this provides yet another strong indicator of the priority given to the Foundation Stage within those schools' overall provision. Almost all reception staff have general support staff in their classrooms which is encouraging. Education and training as well as staffing levels, however, must be considered in the context of quality provision and it is noteworthy that one-third of support staff are unqualified. The rapidly increasing availability of accredited courses for early years practitioners may be more accessible in urban contexts and account for there being more qualified support staff in such areas.

The finding that most schools (60%) do not have an identified Foundation Stage Governor is less comforting.

16.5 Resources

The survey showed that the great majority of headteachers (77%) have spent more money on reception classes as a result of the introduction of the Foundation Stage and that 66% of schools have identified the Foundation Stage as a key priority in their School Improvement Plan for at least one of three years.

The finding that those headteachers most strongly endorsing the Foundation Stage are most likely to report spending a lot of money in this area provides further evidence of the impact of

positive school leadership. Furthermore, those headteachers not originally trained to work with the youngest children, who had not received Foundation Stage training themselves or, indeed, any other early years training, were noticeably less likely to have assessed their spending increase on the Foundation Stage in reception classes as ‘a lot more money’.

Outdoor learning facilities, rated as inadequate by 43%, did not appear to be related to school location or area, although they were associated with higher reported spending on reception classes following the introduction of the Foundation Stage. Higher levels of inadequacy in ICT facilities, in fact, were reported in areas of deprivation and more than half of headteachers indicated at least one aspect of physical resources was inadequate. Whilst headteachers were asked to comment on a three-year planning period, it is fair to note that any substantial financial outlay is bound to be planned over time and in the context of other competing and, possibly, equally worthy demands. Moreover, whilst integrated nursery and reception class facilities are open to a more flexible and economical use, a third of reception classes (35%) with nursery provision are located with the main school, away from the nursery class. This leaves unexamined the circumstances of those reception classes in the 56% of schools without nursery provision who do not have the benefit of shared space and resources.

16.6 Admission procedures

Teachers are relatively well informed about children entering the reception class, with 82% always meeting the child’s parents/carers before the child starts school. Admission procedures to reception classes, however, are rather varied and, given the importance of detailed and specific information on the progress of individual children through the Foundation Stage, it is a matter of some concern that nearly one-third of reception class teachers receive neither written records nor meet with pre-school providers always or usually. Smooth transitions to and between settings are critical to personal, social and emotional well-being of very young children and to the promotion of positive attitudes towards future learning.

16.7 Implementation of the Foundation Stage

Headteachers' views on the challenge of incorporating the Foundation Stage within the school's overall curriculum planning varied. More reservations were expressed by headteachers in schools with mixed-age classes. Furthermore, there was evidence of less concern in schools where a lot more money had been spent on the reception year as a result of the Foundation Stage and where physical resources - outdoor, indoor practical and indoor quiet facilities - were reported as 'good'.

At present, reception class teachers are most likely to carry out long and medium term planning of the Foundation Stage Curriculum with other reception and nursery colleagues. The involvement of other Key Stage 1 and 2 staff, including the headteacher and deputy, is more variable, though related to whether they have received Foundation Stage training. Support staff, particularly those qualified, are likely to be involved in short term planning. Whilst the availability of information at entry to reception classes has been described already as variable, systematic observation to evaluate lessons and progress is used by almost all teachers and most involve support staff to some extent.

In general, the pattern for curriculum organisation remains similar across all terms. The survey showed that where curriculum organisation changed during the reception year, it tended to be from integration of areas of learning at the beginning of the year, towards a greater differentiation by the end. This is accompanied by a similar shift towards the greater use of whole-class teaching and the grouping of children by ability over the year, suggesting that reception class teachers are attuned increasingly to individual needs. It is also consistent with the finding that, in most schools, the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are initially delivered flexibly across the day but, by end of the year, the Literacy Hour and the daily mathematics lesson tend to be in place.

Reception class teachers feel able to provide opportunities for children to engage in activities that the children have initiated themselves. However, at the same time, reception class teachers report creative and physical development to be slightly, though significantly, less important than literacy and numeracy. Moreover, whilst reception class teachers tend to feel the Foundation Stage has "got it right" in terms of emphasis on verbal skills, a developmental approach and play, 25% think that the Foundation Stage does not sufficiently address formal aspects of learning. This suggests that there may still be some uncertainty on the part of some teachers about a broader pedagogical approach.

16.8 Meeting Literacy and Numeracy Strategy Requirements

As noted above, in general, the implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies for reception-aged children has not been regarded as a problem by the majority of headteachers or reception class teachers. Difficulties that were reported seem to be related to the meeting of needs of mixed-age classes and to perceptions of transition to Key Stage 1.

16.9 Mixed-age classes

Planning and teaching two curricula in a mixed-age class, as highlighted in the earlier QCA conferences, is regarded as a big problem by around a quarter of respondents, both by those in small rural schools with small numbers of reception-aged children and by those in larger urban schools, where mixed-age classes are more likely to have been an administrative, organisational or pedagogical choice. It has already been observed that both urban and rural schools face the challenge of diverse teaching groups and, indeed, there is evidence from this survey that, in both term 1 and term 2 of the reception year, reception class teachers of mixed-age classes spend about 5% more time on an average in whole class teaching than is the case for classes composed entirely of reception-aged children. It must be concluded that mixed-age classes as well as using a range of grouping strategies may be one of a number of possible responses to the challenge of maximising impact for diverse teaching groups.

16.10 Transition to Key Stage 1

It was heartening to find that, although raised as a concern at the time of the QCA 2000 conferences, for almost three-quarters of headteachers, the transition of reception-aged children to Key Stage 1 is not regarded as a problem. Unsurprisingly, transition was more frequently thought to be problematic in schools with separate classes for Key Stage 1 than in those with mixed-age classes. However, curriculum organisation was often adjusted towards the end of the reception year in order to increase the differentiation and formality, making the end of reception year more like Key Stage 1.

16.11 Parental Involvement

The importance of parents and practitioners working together is emphasised by the Education and Employment Committee (2000: paragraphs 14 to 20) and the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation* (2000: paragraphs 9 and 10) though, in practice, a third of schools do not report holding meetings to raise parents' awareness of the Foundation Stage. In general, parents' understanding of the Foundation Stage is regarded by reception class teachers as moderate to low, especially in urban areas. Parental involvement is encouraged, though this is likely to be done in a less structured way, especially where parents' understanding is perceived to be low. As is the case for the school community as a whole, there is work to be done in raising parents' awareness, understanding and support for the Foundation Stage.

16.12 Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships

It is clear that opportunities for gaining face-to-face contact and the support of the wider community in terms of interaction with the local EYDCP are commonly being missed, though this is less likely in urban areas and where there is nursery provision in the school. Whilst the greater isolation of smaller, rural schools should be appreciated, the need for concerted action to create a greater awareness, understanding and collaboration among school staff, governors, parents and the local EYDCP in respect of the Foundation Stage is clear.

16.13 General Experience of the Foundation Stage

Despite the call for increased awareness, understanding and partnership, overwhelmingly headteachers' and reception class teachers' overall view of the Foundation Stage is positive, and the great majority of headteachers believe that much progress has been made in implementing it in their school. A quarter of headteachers and a fifth of reception class teachers could not think of any specific problems when asked an open question. But no major change can be resource neutral. A commonly reported barrier to progress has been time – including a view by a small minority of headteachers, that one year on, the Foundation Stage

has been introduced too quickly. The need for more training was also commonly cited. Reported problems of resourcing – the cost of staffing and equipment, the inadequacy of buildings and grounds - indeed echo earlier concerns raised in the QCA 2000 conferences. Whilst teachers are divided as to whether there has been much change to their work, there is an unease by minorities of headteachers and teachers about teaching two curricula in mixed-age classes, perceived ‘mixed messages’ and unclear guidance with respect to structure, and a feeling that the Foundation Stage teaching style does not fully prepare children for Key Stage 1. Interestingly, change is also associated with the perceived increase in play-based and outdoor activities, indeed, with precisely those features described as benefits of the Foundation Stage – its informality, child-centredness and practicality, and the bridge it provides to Key Stage 1.

It has already been noted that schools both in urban and rural/mainly rural areas may have distinct, though similarly diverse teaching groups. On the one hand, urban schools face the challenge of targeted early intervention to increase the likelihood of deprived children being successfully integrated and, thereby, breaking cycles of educational under-achievement and social exclusion. On the other hand, rural/mainly rural school with mixed-age classes face the challenge of providing learning opportunities and high expectations to meet the needs of all children so that most reception-aged children achieve the Early Learning Goals and, at the same time, older children progress beyond, to Key Stage 1. To ensure *all* children make the best possible progress in all settings, a wide range of teaching strategies, based on children’s diverse needs will be required to motivate, support and extend them appropriately.

The early childhood field has undergone a period of rapid change over an extended period of time. Uncertainty still exists for some practitioners as the profession accommodates to the new Foundation Stage. For the majority, this will be a stimulating experience; inevitably it will be viewed as less positive by a minority. The effective leader, it seems, is able to provide sufficient training, support and effective use of resources for the current situation, as well as plan for the future.

References

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House of Commons (2000) *Early Years. Volume 1. Report and Proceedings of the Committee and of the Education Sub-Committee relating to the Report*. London: The Stationery Office Ltd.

Munton, T. *et al* (2001) *Research on Ratios, Group Size and Staff Qualifications and Training in Early Years and Childcare Settings*. London, DfES.

Respondent address 1
Respondent address 2
Respondent Address 3
Respondent Postcode

Date

Reference number: 1

Dear

RESEARCH ON IMPLEMENTING THE FOUNDATION STAGE IN RECEPTION CLASSES

I am writing to ask for your help with some research which is of direct relevance to your school.

The introduction of the Foundation Stage in September 2000 was a major initiative in the provision of early years education. The majority of children spend the final year of the Foundation Stage in the reception class of a primary school. Primary schools, therefore, have a key role to play in this new and distinct stage of learning.

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) has decided to seek the views of headteachers and reception class teachers on progress made so far in introducing the Foundation Stage, and any barriers to its successful implementation. The research is being carried out by Taylor Nelson Sofres (TNS), an independent research agency. It will explore issues such as organisation, staffing, planning, resource and training needs. The findings of the research will be used by DfES to inform future training and policy developments.

Your school has been selected to take part in this study. I do hope that you will participate. It involves the following:

- A researcher from TNS will contact you by telephone to arrange a time to conduct a 20 minute telephone interview with you between Monday 29th October and Friday 9th November.
- The interview can mainly be done without preparation. However, we will need to collect a small amount of factual information from you which you will need to prepare in advance. I enclose a brief form outlining the information that we would like to obtain from you at the start of the interview – please collect this information together on the form provided before TNS telephone you.

- At the end of the interview TNS will request the names of your reception class teachers, and will make arrangements to conduct a 20 minute telephone interview with one of them.

At the end of the study, a report will be produced for the DfES. Neither you nor your school will be named in the report. The results of the research will be presented in such a way that no one will be able to identify the answers given by any individual or school.

I very much hope that you will take part in this study: your views are very important. If you have any questions about this project, please either call Emma Newcombe at TNS on 020 8332 8554, or Lena Engel at the DfES on 020 7273 1192.

Thank you in advance for your help.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Roberts', with a stylized, wavy line extending to the right.

Paul Roberts

Early Years and Childcare Unit

**IMPLEMENTING THE FOUNDATION STAGE IN RECEPTION CLASSES
HEADTEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE**

JNH60133 final 23/10/01

ASK TO SPEAK TO HEADTEACHER

Good morning/afternoon. My name isfrom TNS, an independent research company.

The DfES recently wrote to you about research we are conducting on the implementation of the Foundation Stage in reception classes. Did you receive that letter?

Yes - CONTINUE

No - ARRANGE FOR LETTER TO BE FAXED

As it said in the letter, the research comprises two elements: an interview with the Headteacher, and an interview with a reception class teacher. Both interviews will last about 20 minutes. Is now a convenient time to talk to you?

Yes - CONTINUE

No - MAKE APPOINTMENT TO CALL BACK

ASK ALL

As I mentioned in the letter, I would also like to interview one of the reception class teachers at your school. Could you please give me the names of all the permanent reception class teachers at your school.

TYPE IN:

1.

2.

3.

4.

The computer has randomly selected ...(NAME OF TEACHER)...to be interviewed. When would it be a convenient time for me to call (NAME OF TEACHER) to talk to them?

TYPE IN APPOINTMENT DETAILS AND ANY OTHER INFORMATION THAT WILL BE HELPFUL.

The first few questions in the interview will collect the factual information which was listed on the sheet included with the letter. Do you have that information to hand?

Yes - CONTINUE

No - MAKE APPOINTMENT TO CALL BACK

ASK ALL

Q1 How many reception-aged children are there at your school?

FULL - TIME **TYPE IN NUMBER**

PART-TIME **TYPE IN NUMBER**

ASK ALL

Q3 How many other children (either older or younger) are there in classes with reception-aged children?

FULL - TIME **TYPE IN NUMBER**

PART-TIME **TYPE IN NUMBER**

ASK ALL

Q4 How many reception-aged children are there at your school with....

SEN (Special Educational Needs) **TYPE IN NUMBER**

EAL (English as an Additional Language) **TYPE IN NUMBER**

ASK ALL

Q5 How many classroom support staff do you have for reception classes?
(Exclude any assigned to specific children)

FULL -TIME **TYPE IN NUMBER**

PART-TIME **TYPE IN NUMBER**

ASK IF HAVE CLASSROOM SUPPORT STAFF (Q5 AT LEAST 1 F-T OR P-T)

Q6 How many classroom support staff for reception classes have the following early years and childcare related qualifications. **ENTER NO. OF RECEPTION CLASS SUPPORT STAFF WHO HAVE THIS LEVEL AS THEIR HIGHEST QUALIFICATION**

Level 4	HNC in Early Years or BTEC NVQ Level 4 in Early Years Care and Education	Full-time	Part-time
Level 3	CACHE Diploma in Nursery Nursing/Childcare and Education; BTEC National Diploma in Nursery Nursing; NVQ Level 3 in Early Years Care and Education or equivalent	Full-time	Part-time
Level 2	NVQ Level 2 in Early Years Care and Education, or equivalent	Full-time	Part-time
	Other relevant qualification (TYPE IN)	Full-time	Part-time
	Unqualified	Full-time	Part-time

ASK ALL

Q7 How many reception classes are there at your school - please include any classes where reception-aged children are mixed with Year 1 children or younger children

TYPE IN NUMBER

ASK ALL

Q8 How many teachers do you have with class responsibility for reception year?

FULL -TIME **TYPE IN NUMBER**

PART-TIME **TYPE IN NUMBER**

16.13.1.1 ASK ALL

Q2a Do all children attend reception class full-time right from their first day?

Yes 1 **go to Q9**

No 2 **go to Q2b**

ASK ALL

Q2b How long do children attend reception class part time before going full time?

16.13.1.2 READ OUT

S/C	Part-time for less than half a term	1
	Part-time for half a term	2
	Part-time for a term	3
	Part-time for longer than a term	4
	Depends on the age of the child	5
	Depends on the individual child	6
	Other arrangement (CODE AND TYPE IN)	0

17 CODE FOR ALL

Q9 INTERVIEWER: CODE RESPONDENT'S GENDER

S/C

Male	1
Female	2

ASK ALL

Q10 I'd now like to ask some questions about your own experience.
How many years experience in the teaching profession do you personally have?

S/C

0-2 years	1
3-5 years	2
6-10 years	3
11-15 years	4
16-20 years	5
Over 20 years	6

ASK ALL

Q11 How many years experience as a Headteacher do you personally have?

S/C **(SUPPRESS CODES HIGHER THAN ANSWER AT Q10)**

0-2 years	1
3-5 years	2
6-10 years	3
11-15 years	4
16-20 years	5
Over 20 years	6

18 ASK ALL

Q12 What was your original teaching qualification? ...**READ OUT..**

S/C

BA (QTS) or Bed	1
PGCE	2
Teaching Certificate	3
Other (CODE AND TYPE IN)	0
<hr/>	
DO NOT READ OUT (No teaching qualification)	9

ASK ALL

Q13 What age group was your initial training for? ... **READ OUT...**

S/C

Primary 3 to 7 or 8 years	1
Primary 3 to 11 years	2
Primary 5 to 7 or 8 years	3
Primary 5 to 11 years	4
Primary 7 to 11 years	5
Secondary	6
Other (CODE AND TYPE IN)	0

ASK ALL

Q14 Have you had any training specifically in the Foundation Stage? Please exclude any general training on early years. Have you had....**READ OUT...**

M/C	Training on Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage	1
	Training in reception class literacy	2
	Training in reception class numeracy	3
	DO NOT READ OUT (No training for Foundation Stage)	4

ASK ALL

Q15a Since your original teaching qualification, have you had any (other) training that helps you to teach reception year children? Please include any short courses as well as any additional qualifications.

S/C

Yes	1
No	2

ASK ALL

Q15b Since your original teaching qualification, have you had any (other) training in Early Years or not? Please include any short courses as well as additional qualifications

S/C

Yes	1
No	2

ASK ALL

Q16a Different schools use different methods of grouping reception-aged children WITHIN classes, including grouping by ability, by friendship, mixing ages, and using different groupings for different activities. Which of these methods are used most often in your reception classes in term 1?...**READ OUT AGAIN IF REQUIRED...**

Grouping by ABILITY	1
Grouping by FRIENDSHIP	2
Grouping to ensure A MIX OF AGES	3
Different groupings for different types of activities	4
<hr/>	
Or do you group in some other way (CODE AND SPECIFY)	0
<hr/>	
<i>DO NOT READ OUT (Varies too much to say)</i>	5

B ...and in term 2?

C ...and in term 3?

ASK ALL

Q17a Thinking about curriculum timetabling in your reception classes, how do you tend to timetable in term 1? Do you timetable...**READ OUT...**

By area of learning	1
Across the curriculum in an integrated way	2
A mixture of the two	3

B ...and in term 2?

C ...and in term 3?

ASK ALL

Q18a Do you have nursery classes at your school - that is provision for children below reception age?

19 S	<i>Yes</i>	1
/		
C	<i>No</i>	2

ASK IF HAVE NURSERY CLASSES (Q18a = 1)

Q18b Which of the following best describes where your reception classes are physically located? ...**READ OUT**...

S/C	<i>... with nursery classes, but away from the main school</i>	1
	<i>...with the main school, but away from the nursery classes</i>	2
	<i>...with both the nursery classes and the main school</i>	3
	<i>Other (CODE AND TYPE IN)</i>	0

ASK IF DON'T HAVE NURSERY CLASSES (Q18a = 2)

Q18c Which of the following best describes where your reception classes are physically located? ...**READ OUT**...

S/C	<i>Away from the main school</i>	1
	<i>With the main school</i>	2
	<i>Other (CODE AND TYPE IN)</i>	0

20 ASK ALL

Q19 The Foundation Stage was introduced in September 2000. What benefits, if any, have you seen as a result of implementing the Foundation Stage in reception classes at your school? **PROBE:** What have been the good things about it?

[INTERVIEWER NOTE : THIS MAY BE GOOD FOR THE SCHOOL, THE TEACHERS AND CHILDREN, OR ANY COMBINATION OF THESE]

ASK ALL

Q20 And what problems, if any, have there been in implementing the Foundation Stage in reception classes at your school?

PROBE: What have been the difficult things about it?

[INTERVIEWER NOTE : THIS MAY BE PROBLEMATIC FOR THE SCHOOL, THE TEACHERS AND CHILDREN, OR ANY COMBINATION OF THESE]

ASK ALL

Q21a How much progress would you say that your school has made in implementing the Foundation Stage in reception classes? Would you say it has made....**READ OUT....**

<i>A lot of progress</i>	4

<i>A little progress</i>	3
<i>Not much progress</i>	2
<i>Almost no progress</i>	1

ASK IF NOT MADE 'A lot of progress' (Q21a = 1-3)

Q21b Why do you think that you have not been able to make more progress?

PROBE FULLY

ASK ALL

Q22 How do you perceive the level of commitment to the Foundation Stage among the teaching community as a whole?

S/C

<i>Very high</i>	5
<i>High</i>	4
<i>Moderate</i>	3
<i>Low</i>	2
<i>Very low</i>	1

ASK ALL

Q23 I'm now going to read out a list of things which may or may not have been problems for you in the implementation of the Foundation Stage at your school. For each thing please tell me whether it has

S/C ...not been a problem
 each ...been a small problem
 ...or been a big problem.

READ OUT LIST...RANDOMISE ORDER...

1. The transition of children from reception classes to Year 1 classes
2. Fitting the Foundation Stage in with the whole school approach to planning and teaching
3. Implementing the National LITERACY Strategy with a more flexible approach for reception children
4. Implementing the National NUMERAY Strategy with a more flexible approach for reception children

	Statement	<i>T</i>	Three	Four
	1	<i>w</i>		
		<i>o</i>		
<i>Not a problem</i>	3	3	3	3
<i>A small problem</i>	2	2	2	2
<i>problem</i>				
<i>A big problem</i>	1	1	1	1

FOR EACH ONE IDENTIFIED AS A PROBLEM ASK

Q24 *You said that...(.....).....was a problem. In what way has it been a problem? **PROBE FULLY***

Statement 1:

Statement 2:

Statement 3:

Statement 4:

21 ASK ALL

Q25 Can I just check, are there any *older* children in the same classes as your reception children or not?

S/C *Yes* 1 - go to Q26
No 2 - go to Q28

ASK IF HAVE OLDER CHILDREN IN THE SAME CLASSES AS RECEPTION CHILDREN (Q25 = 1)

Q26 I'd like to ask about a couple more things which may or may not have been a problem at your school...

S/C **22 READ OUT LIST...RANDOMISE ORDER...**

each

1. Teaching from both the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage* and the Key Stage 1 Programmes of Study
2. Teaching reception aged children and older children in the same classroom

	Statement	<i>T</i>
	1	<i>w</i>
		<i>o</i>
<i>Not a problem</i>	3	3
<i>A small problem</i>	2	2
<i>A big problem</i>	1	1

ASK FOR EACH ONE IDENTIFIED AS A PROBLEM

Q27 *You said that...(.....).....was a problem. In what way has it been a problem? **PROBE FULLY***

Statement 1:

Statement 2:

ASK ALL

Q28 Regarding the facilities you have for reception class children, how would you rate the facilities you have for....**READ OUT FROM LIST**

S/C Would you say they were good, adequate, or not adequate?

each

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| A | <i>... outdoor learning</i> | 1 |
| B | <i>...ICT (Information & Communication Technology)</i> | 2 |
| C | <i>...indoor areas for practical activity</i> | 3 |
| D | <i>...indoor quiet areas</i> | 4 |

ASK ALL

Q29 Has there been any training specifically about the Foundation Stage for staff other than those teaching reception-aged children. This could include videos self-directed learning packages, as well as traditional short courses. Firstly ...

22.1.1.1 READ OUT EACH IN TURN

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| A | <i>Nursery staff</i> | 1 |
| | <i>[suppress if no nursery classes- Q18a=1]</i> | |
| B | <i>Key Stage 1 staff</i> | 2 |
| C | <i>Key Stage 2 staff</i> | 3 |
| D | <i>School Governors</i> | 4 |

ASK ALL

Q30a Does your school have an identified Foundation Stage co-ordinator or not?

23 S	Yes	1
/		
C	No	2

ASK ALL

Q30b Does your school have an identified Foundation Stage Governor or not?

S/C	Yes	1
	No	2

ASK ALL

Q30c Is your deputy head a Foundation Stage teacher or not?

S/C	Yes	1
	No	2
	DO NOT READ OUT (<i>No deputy in post</i>)	3

ASK ALL

Q31 As a result of the Foundation Stage, has your school spent more money on reception classes or not? Has it spent... **READ OUT...**

S/C	<i>A lot more money</i>	1
	<i>A little bit more</i>	2
	<i>No more money</i>	3

ASK ALL

Q32a Which of the following best describes how much the Foundation Stage features in your current School Improvement Plan - that is for 2001 to 2002?...**READ OUT..**

S/C	<i>The Foundation Stage is identified as a key priority</i>	1
-----	---	---

<i>The Foundation Stage is featured, but it is not a key priority</i>	2
<i>The Foundation Stage is not featured</i>	3
DO NOT READ OUT (<i>Don't know yet for 2002 -03</i>)	4

B *And what about last year's School Improvement Plan - that is for
2000 to 2001?*

C And what about next year's School Improvement Plan - that is for 2002 to
2003?

ASK ALL

Q33a Now a few questions about the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP).

How regularly, if at all, does your school receive *written* information from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership?

S/C	<i>More than once a term</i>	5
	<i>About once a term</i>	4
	<i>About once a year</i>	3
	<i>Less often</i>	2
	<i>Not at all</i>	1
	DO NOT READ OUT (<i>Don't know who they are</i>)	9

ASK ALL

Q33b How regularly, if at all, does your school have *face-to-face contact* with members of the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership ?

S/C	<i>More than once a term</i>	5
	<i>About once a term</i>	4
	<i>About once a year</i>	3
	<i>Less often</i>	2
	<i>Not at all</i>	1
	DO NOT READ OUT (<i>Don't know who they are</i>)	9

ASK ALL

Q34 How close would you describe your school's relationship with the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership ?...READ OUT...

S/C	<i>Very close</i>	1
	<i>Close</i>	2

<i>Not very close</i>	3
<i>Not at all close</i>	4

ASK ALL

Q35 Has your school arranged any meetings with parents specifically to raise awareness of the Foundation Stage or not?

S/C	<i>Yes</i>	1
	<i>No</i>	2

ASK ALL

Q36 Overall, taking everything into consideration, do you personally think that the Foundation Stage is a....READ OUT..

S/C	<i>Very good thing</i>	1
	<i>Quite a good thing</i>	2
	<i>Neither a good nor a bad thing</i>	3
	<i>Quite a bad thing</i>	4
	<i>A very bad thing</i>	5

ASK ALL

Q37 And finally, is there anything else you would like to add about the issues covered in this survey?

Thank you very much indeed for your time.

IMPLEMENTING THE FOUNDATION STAGE IN RECEPTION CLASSES

RECEPTION CLASS TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

JNH60133 final 23/10/01

ASK FOR NAMED TEACHER

Good morning/afternoon. My name is.....from TNS, an independent research company.

We are conducting some research on behalf of the DfES, looking into the implementation of the Foundation Stage in reception classes.

We were given your name by (HEADTEACHER), who has already taken part in the study. He/she may have already shown you a letter about the research.

The interview will last about 20 minutes.

Can I assure you [that you were chosen at random from the reception class teachers at your school, and] that any responses you give will be treated in the strictest confidence. [Suppress text if only one name given by head]

Is now a convenient time to talk to you ?

Yes – CONTINUE

No – MAKE APPOINTMENT TO CALL BACK

Ask all

Q1 Can I begin by checking, do you currently teach reception class children or not?

- Yes 1
- No 2 (CLOSE)

Code for all

Q2 INTERVIEWER: CODE RESPONDENT’S GENDER

S/C

- Male 1
- Female 2

Ask

all I'd now like to ask some questions about your own experience.

Q3 How many years' teaching experience do you personally have in total?

S/C

0-2 years	1
3-5 years	2
6-10 years	3
11-15 years	4
16-20 years	5
Over 20 years	6

Ask

all

Q4 How many years have you been teaching reception classes?

S/C (Suppress codes higher than answer at Q3)

0-2 years	1
3-5 years	2
6-10 years	3
11-15 years	4
16-20 years	5
Over 20 years	6

Ask all

Q5 What was your original teaching qualification? **READ OUT** (stop when get to right code)

S/C

BA (QTS) or BEd	1
PGCE	2
Teaching Certificate	3
<hr/>	
Other (CODE AND TYPE IN)	0
<hr/>	
No formal teaching qualification	9

Ask

all What age group was your initial training for? ... **READ OUT...**

Q6

S/C

Primary 3 to 7 or 8 years	1
Primary 3 to 11 years	2
Primary 5 to 7 or 8 years	3
Primary 5 to 11 years	4
Primary 7 to 11 years	5
Secondary	6
Other (CODE AND TYPE IN)	0

Ask all

Q7 Since your original teaching qualification, have you completed or are you
a/b working towards any additional qualifications which help you deliver the
Foundation Stage? This may include more general early years training.
**[suppress 'completed' for teachers with 2 years or less experience –
Q3=1] READ OUT**

	a	b
M/C	Completed	Working on
Advanced Certificate	1	2
Advanced Diploma	1	2
MA (Masters degree)	1	2
Other (please state)	1	2

Ask

all

Q8 Do you have any of the following additional responsibilities within the school?
Please also answer 'yes' if you are currently 'acting' in the role
READ OUT

M/C	Foundation Stage Co-ordinator [Children up to 6 years]	1
	Early years Co-ordinator [Children up to 8 years]	2

Key Stage 1 Co-ordinator 3

Subject Co-ordinator 4

[suppress if less than 2 years experience – Q3=1]

Deputy Head 5

Ask all

Q9a Do you have any general classroom support staff or not? Please exclude any who work only with specific children.

S/C	Yes	1	go to Q9b
	No	2	go to Q10

Ask if Q9a = 1

Q9b How many are full time and how many are part time?

No. Full time	No. Part time
---------------	---------------

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Ask all

Q10 Is the class comprised exclusively of reception year children, or does it include either older or younger children? READ OUT

S/C	Reception year only	1
	Reception year and younger children	2
	Reception year and older children	3

Ask all

Q11a What age is the youngest child in your class in years and months?

_____ years _____ months

Ask all

Q11b What age is the oldest child in your class in years and months?

_____ years _____ months

Ask all

Q12 The Foundation Stage was introduced in September 2000. What benefits, if any, have you seen as a result of implementing the Foundation Stage in your reception class? **PROBE:** What have been the good things about it?

[INTERVIEWER NOTE : THIS MAY BE GOOD FOR THE SCHOOL, THE TEACHERS AND CHILDREN, OR ANY COMBINATION OF THESE]

**Ask
all**

Q13 And what problems, if any, have there been in implementing the Foundation Stage in your reception class?

PROBE: What have been the difficult things about it?

[INTERVIEWER NOTE : THIS MAY BE PROBLEMATIC FOR THE SCHOOL, THE TEACHERS AND CHILDREN, OR ANY COMBINATION OF THESE]

ASK IF MORE THAN 2 YEARS EXPERIENCE (Q3 = 2-6)

Q14 Overall, as a result of the Foundation Stage, how much would you say that the work in your reception class has changed? Would you say that it has changed.....**READ OUT...**

S/C

A great deal	1
Quite a lot	2
A little	3
Not at all	4

ASK IF CHANGED (Q14 = 1-3)

Q15 How has the work in your reception class changed since the introduction of the Foundation Stage? **PROBE:** How else has it changed?

Ask all

Q16 I'm now going to read out a few things which may or may not have been problems for you in the implementation of the Foundation Stage in your class. For each thing please tell me whether it has....

S/C each

- ...not been a problem
- ...been a small problem
- ...or been a big problem.

READ OUT LIST...RANDOMISE ORDER...

5. Implementing the National LITERACY Strategy with a more flexible approach for reception children
6. Implementing the National NUMERACY Strategy with a more flexible approach for reception children
3. Teaching from both the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage and the Key Stage 1 Programme of Study [**Suppress if class has no older children (Q10 = 1 or 2)**]
4. Teaching reception aged children and older children in the same classroom [**Suppress if class has no older children (Q10 = 1 or 2)**]

	Statement 1	Two	Three	Four
<i>Not a problem</i>	3	3	3	3
<i>A small problem</i>	2	2	2	2
<i>A big problem</i>	1	1	1	1

Ask all

Q17 Excluding any general training on early years, have you had any training specifically in the Foundation Stage? Please include any Foundation Stage Network Meetings. Have you had....**READ OUT...**

M/C

Training on Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage	1
Training in reception class literacy	2
Training in reception class numeracy	3

Ask all

Q18a Since your original teaching qualification, have you attended any short courses which help you to teach this age group?

- | | | |
|-----|------------|---|
| S/C | <i>Yes</i> | 1 |
| | <i>No</i> | 2 |

Ask if attended short courses since qualification (Q18a = 1)

Q18b Did any of the courses taken in the last 12 months cover any of the following topics?

- | | | |
|-----|--|---|
| M/C | <i>ICT (Information and Computer Technology)</i> | 1 |
| | <i>SEN (Special Educational Needs)</i> | 2 |
| | <i>Assessing children</i> | 3 |
| | <i>None of the above in the last 12 months</i> | 4 |

Ask all

Q19 Do you feel that you have received sufficient training to help you to deliver the Foundation Stage? Would you say that you have had ...

- | | |
|--|---|
| Enough training | 1 |
| <hr style="width: 80%; margin-left: 0;"/> | |
| Nearly enough training – but a bit more would be helpful | 2 |
| Not nearly enough training | 3 |

Ask ASK IF NOT ENOUGH TRAINING (Q19 = 2 or 3)

all In what areas do you feel that you need more training? **PROBE FULLY**

Q20

I would now like to find out a little bit more about the admissions process to your reception class.

Ask all

Q21 I am going to read out a short list of types of contact that some teachers report having before children begin in reception classes. For each one, please tell me whether you do it always (4), usually (3), sometimes (2), occasionally (1) or never (0).

	Al	Usu	Smt	Occ	Nev
A Firstly, receiving written records from the child's nursery or pre-school provider(s)?	4	3	2	1	0
B Meeting with the child's nursery or pre-school provider(s)?	4	3	2	1	0
C Meeting with the child's parent(s) / carer(s)?	4	3	2	1	0
D Meeting the children themselves?					
E Meet parents and children in their OWN HOMES?	4	3	2	1	0

Ask all

Q22 How often do you discuss the progress of the individual child with their future Year 1 teacher before they move on? **READ OUT**

Always	4
Usually	3
Sometimes	2
Occasionally	1
Never	0
(I also teach Year 1)	9

Ask all

Q23a Do all children at your school enter reception class in September?

Yes	1 go to Q24
No	2 go to Q23b

ASK IF NO (Q23 = 2)

Ask

all

Q23b At how many points during the year are children admitted to the reception class?

READ OUT

S/C	Twice a year	2
	Three times a year (once a term)	3
	Whenever is most suitable for the individual child	4
	Other frequency (CODE AND TYPE IN)	0

**Ask
all**

Q24 On the whole, how would you assess the understanding of the six areas of learning of the Foundation Stage among the parents of your current class? **READ OUT**

S/C

Very high	5
High	4
Moderate	3
Low	2
Very low	1

**Ask
all**

Q25 Do you encourage parental involvement in the curriculum, for example by book sharing or number games?

S/C READ OUT

Yes, in a structured way (e.g. using home school diaries or suggested reading)	1
Yes, in an unstructured way	2
No	3

I would now like to move on to talk about lesson planning for your reception class.

Ask all

Q26a I'm going to read out a list of people who may be involved in the planning of the curriculum and lesson plans for the Foundation Stage in reception classes.

A Please tell me which of the following are involved in medium and long term planning – that is planning for the whole term or year.

	Yes	No	N/A
Nursery / early years teachers	1	2	3
Other reception class teachers	1	2	3
[suppress if only 1 YR teacher – Q heads]			
Key Stage 1 teachers	1	2	3
Other classroom teachers (eg Key Stage 2)	1	2	3

Classroom support staff	1	2	3
[suppress if no support staff – Q 9a = 2]			
Headteacher/deputy head	1	2	3

Ask all

Q26b And who is involved in short term planning – that is planning at a daily or weekly level.

[suppress as above plus any n/a at part A]	Yes	No	N/A
Nursery / early years teachers	1	2	3
Other reception class teachers	1	2	3
Key Stage 1 teachers	1	2	3
Other classroom teachers (eg Key Stage 2)	1	2	3
Classroom support staff	1	2	3
Headteacher/deputy head	1	2	3

Q27 **Ask if have classroom support staff (Q9a = 1)**

How much involvement do your classroom support staff have in evaluating lessons afterwards? READ OUT

S/C

A great deal	1
Quite a lot	2
A little	3
Not involved at all	4

Ask all

Q28 Thinking about timetabling the six areas of learning in your reception classes, how do you timetable Term 1? Do you tend to timetable...READ OUT...

the areas of learning in distinct blocks,	1
integrate the six areas of learning across the timetable	2
or, as a mixture of the two	3

B ...and in Term 2?

Ask all

Q29 S/C Approximately how many hours per week are the reception children engaged in spontaneous activity or activities that they have either initiated or chosen for themselves?

Up to 1 hour	1
Up to 2 hours	2
Up to 3 hours	3
Up to 4 hours	4
Up to 5 hours	5
Up to 10 hours	6
Up to 15 hours	7
More than 15 hours	8
DO NOT READ OUT (All the time)	9
Don't know	10

Ask all

Q30a In term 1, approximately what percentage of classroom time is spent on whole class work as opposed to other types of work ...READ OUT..

Whole class work	%
Other	%

Ask all

Q30b In term 2, approximately what percentage of classroom time is spent on ...READ OUT...

Whole class work	%
Other	%

Ask all

Q30c In term 3, approximately what percentage of classroom time is spent on ...READ OUT...

Whole class work	%
Other	%

ASK ALL

Q31 I would like you to assess how well the Foundation Stage addresses a series of issues. For each issue I read out, please tell me whether you think the Foundation Stage has got it ‘about right’, ‘puts too much emphasis on it’ or ‘puts too little emphasis on it’

a	<i>Formal learning</i>	1	2	3
b	<i>Play</i>	1	2	3
c	<i>Written skills</i>	1	2	3
d	<i>Verbal skills</i>	1	2	3
e	<i>Taking a developmental approach to learning</i>	1	2	3

Ask all

Q32 In general, how frequently in your reception class are there opportunities for children to engage in informal exploration of language and numeracy ...

READ OUT...

S/C	Daily	1
	At least weekly	2
	Less frequent	3
	Hardly ever	4

Ask all

Q33 Are you implementing all elements of the National Literacy Strategy flexibly across the day, or as a literacy hour?

each

a Firstly, in term 1, how do you implement the National Literacy Strategy in term 1?

READ OUT

Flexibly	1
or, as a Literacy hour	2

b And, how do you implement the National Literacy Strategy in term 2?

c And in term 3?

Ask all

Q34 Are you implementing all elements of the National Numeracy Strategy flexibly across the day, or as a daily maths lesson?

a Firstly, in term 1, how do you implement the National Numeracy Strategy in term 1?

Flexibly 1

Daily Maths Lesson 2

b And, how do you implement the National Numeracy Strategy in term 2?

c And in term 3?

Ask all

Q35 How important do you personally feel each of the following skills are for children to acquire during the Foundation Stage? Please use a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means not at all important, and 10 means absolutely vital. RANDOMISE LIST

A Concentration

B Motivation

C Working with others

D Active independence

E Enthusiasm for learning

F Literacy

G Numeracy

H Physical Development

I Creative Development

Ask all

Q36 We are interested in the ways you monitor and assess the progress of pupils in the reception year. I am going to read out a list of methods that have already been mentioned by some teachers, for each one, tell me whether you have used it in the last year.

M/C

Records from the nursery / early years provider 1

Utilising your own baseline assessment information 2

General observations 3

Photographic observations 4

Observations by audio recording	5
Observations by video recording	6
Annotated samples of work	7
Reports / diaries from parents	8
Asking children's own views of their learning	9
Other methods (CODE AND TYPE IN)	0

Ask

all

Q37 How do you perceive the level of commitment to the Foundation Stage among the teaching community as a whole? **READ OUT**

S/C

Very high	5
High	4
Moderate	3
Low	2
Very low	1

Ask all

Q38 Overall, taking everything into consideration, do you personally think that the Foundation Stage is a...**READ OUT..**

S/C

<i>Very good thing</i>	1
<i>Quite a good thing</i>	2
<i>Neither a good nor a bad thing</i>	3
<i>Quite a bad thing</i>	4
<i>A very bad thing</i>	5

Ask

all

Q39 And finally, is there anything else you would like to add about the issues covered in this survey?

Thank you very much indeed for your time.

FOUNDATION STAGE RESEARCH

Factual information required for telephone interview

This form outlines the factual information that we will need to collect during the telephone interview. Please look through it before the 29th October, and keep it to hand for when TNS telephone you.

Please do not post or fax it back to DfES.

Number of reception-aged children at your school: Full-time:

Part-time:

Number of other children (either older or younger) Full-time:
in classes with reception-aged children

Part-time:

Number of reception aged children at your school with SEN:

Number of reception aged children at your school with EAL:

Number of classroom support staff for reception Full-time:
classes (exclude any assigned to specific children)

Part-time:

How many permanent classroom support staff for reception classes have the following early years and childcare related qualifications? Please enter in each box the number of reception class support staff who have this level as their **highest** childcare or early years qualification.

		Full-time	Part-time
Level 4	HNC in Early Years or BTEC NVQ Level 4 in Early Years Care and Education	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Level 3	CACHE Diploma in Nursery Nursing/Childcare and Education; BTEC National Diploma in Nursery Nursing; NVQ Level 3 in Early Years Care and Education or equivalent	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Level 2	NVQ Level 2 in Early Years Care and Education, or equivalent	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Other relevant qualification (PLEASE SPECIFY) _____	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Unqualified	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

