

The Joint Primary Group of the
Association of Teachers of Mathematics
and The Mathematical Association



Response to the DfE's Consultation on a
Revised Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

September 2011

Introduction

The introduction to the EYFS describes its overall aims and principles. The Government agrees with the Tickell Review findings, that the aims and principles should remain in place, but that the EYFS overall could be simplified and shortened.

1 Is the introduction to the revised draft EYFS, and the explanation of its principles, clear? If not, what changes would you suggest?

1 Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

We think the explanation is clear, however we are concerned about the sentence "Teaching in the early years should be focused on improving children's 'school readiness'". We would prefer to see 'life readiness' as 'school readiness' could imply ready for the structures and discipline of school life.

Although we know that the academic interpretation of 'school readiness' encompasses three aspects: the readiness of the individual child, the school's readiness for children, and the ability of the family and community to support optimal early child development (High, 2008), we feel that the reference to 'school readiness' in paragraph 11 could imply a more limited meaning. We would like to reinstate paragraph 3.2 from the original Tickell Review 'In my review, I was asked to consider how the early years can provide the right foundation for all children, including the disadvantaged and vulnerable, and prepare them for good progress through school. This is an issue attracting strong feelings and powerful arguments. My view is that the skills a child needs for school are part of the

skills they need for life. We all want our children to lead happy, enquiring, active childhoods, recognising that this provides the foundations for fulfilled and productive adulthoods. The time spent in school is a huge part of this. However, I know that some people interpret the term 'school readiness' as implying that children could be pressured to learn to read and write at inappropriately young ages. Others have a wider concern about leaving children free to enjoy their early years without pressure, and argue that schools should be ready for children, not the other way around. Balanced against this, some feel that we do children no favours if we fail to prepare them for the realities of the school environment, where skills such as literacy are at a premium.'

The idea of 'school readiness' pervades the whole document and therefore creates an impression that the only function of the EYFS is preparation for school - it is of course so much more than that, as Tickell stated.

Section 1 - Learning and Development Requirements

This section of the EYFS explains what early years providers must do to support young children's learning and development.

The Tickell Review recommended some changes to the EYFS *areas of learning* and that these should be in two categories: three *prime* areas which reflect the essential foundations all children need if they are to develop further: and four *specific* areas in which the prime skills are applied. The revised draft EYFS also suggests the broad areas of focus for educational programmes in each area of learning.

The *early learning goals* describe what most children should be able to do by the end of the year in which they turn 5. The Government agrees with Dame Clare Tickell, that there are more goals than is necessary or useful in assessing children's progress in the current EYFS.

Accordingly, the revised draft EYFS reduces the number of early learning goals from 69 to 17.

The Tickell Review also suggested that the learning and development requirements should not apply in full to settings where children spend limited time, outside school hours - for example, holiday and wraparound care. The revised draft EYFS suggests that where children attend more than one setting that providers should work together, with parents, to determine how they can most appropriately support that child.

2 Do you agree with the proposals that there should be three *prime* areas of learning and development? The three *prime* areas are: personal, social and emotional development; physical development; and communication and language (paragraph 1.3).

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	1 Partly
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Sure		

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Comments:</p> <p>We agree that the three areas that have been identified are extremely important in a child's development and that <i>communication and language</i> especially is essential to teaching, learning and development in other areas, including (importantly) mathematics.</p> <p>Some clarification of the meaning of the phrase 'prime', how this relates to areas labelled 'specific' and how this will be communicated to practitioners would be helpful.</p>
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3 Do you agree with the proposals that there should be four *specific* areas of learning and development? The four specific areas are literacy; mathematics; understanding the world; and expressive arts and design (paragraph 1.4).

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	1 Partly
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Sure		

<p>Comments:</p> <p>We agree that mathematics should be identified as important. But how important? What does it mean to be a 'specific' subject? We'd like to see more clarification about what 'specific' might mean in practice.</p>

We are pleased to see a wide range of ways to make learning enjoyable described in 1.11 and would be delighted to see (and happy to provide) examples that are mathematical in nature.

4 Paragraph 1.6 explains how learning in the prime and specific areas should be supported. Is this a clear explanation? If you ticked no, or not sure, please say how this could be clarified.

Yes

1 No

Not Sure

Comments:

We understand the initial emphasis on the three prime areas and agree that they are necessary prerequisites to development in other subjects. We also agree that they should continue to be monitored throughout a child's development including into the primary school.

However, we have some concerns that the statement "The three prime areas reflect the key skills and capacities all children need to develop and learn effectively, and become ready for school" might lead practitioners to think that that is all children need and that it doesn't matter if they do no mathematics.

We are also slightly concerned that the statement "For the older age range, the balance should shift towards a more equal focus on all areas of learning, as children grow in confidence and ability within the three prime areas" is very open to interpretation and could be used as an excuse by weak practitioners to not support children equally in the different areas/subjects. A practitioner who lacks subject knowledge in mathematics and ideas of how to engage children with mathematical problems and activities

may well use this flexible approach to their advantage and spend their time doing what they feel comfortable with rather than doing what the children in their care need.

We wonder whether a diagram might be helpful here, showing the balance of the prime and specific areas as children develop. We believe it needs to be clear that this shift in balance must be dependent on the individual child.

Early Learning Goals

We are proposing to reduce the number of early learning goals from 69 to 17. The 17 Goals are all covered by the 7 areas of learning and development (3 prime areas and 4 specific areas). Appendix 4 of the revised draft EYFS describes the detailed content of the goals, which practitioners and teachers would use to assess children's development and achievement.

For each of the 7 areas of learning and development listed below in 5 a) - g), please say whether you agree with the early learning goals which relate to them.

We have no comment to make on:

A. Prime Areas of Learning and Development

5 a) **Personal, social and emotional development:**

5 b) **Physical Development**

5 c) **Communication and Language**

B. Specific Areas of Learning and Development

5 d) **Literacy**

5 f) **Understanding the World**

5 g) **Expressive Arts and Design**

5 e) **Mathematics:** Numbers, Shape, space and measures

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	1 Partly	
<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure			

<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Comments:</p> <p>We are disappointed that the ELGs are limited to easily-assessed skills and knowledge and we are worried about what has been left out. Where is the problem solving and reasoning? Reducing the ELGs to statements such as those suggested will, perhaps inadvertently, close down mathematical opportunities and lose the richness and joy of discovering mathematical connections and ideas. Many of the goals could be improved by the addition of the phrase 'conceptual understanding' as this would signal to practitioners the need for deep exploration of underpinning concepts, for example, 'children develop conceptual understanding of matching and comparing ...'.</p> <p>It is not clear to us where practitioners will get support in understanding the mathematical progression which leads to the ELGs. Appendix 3 details development of the three prime areas but there is no similar exemplification for the four specific areas.</p>
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5 h) Do you agree that the early learning goals define clearly enough what children should be able to do by the end of the school year in which they turn 5? If you ticked no, or not sure, please indicate which goal(s) you consider unclear and suggest how the goal(s) could be clarified.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	1 No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Sure
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We have no further comments in relation to Q5 h)

The Government is keen to ensure that the EYFS helps ensure children's English language skills are sufficiently developed to allow them to take full advantage of Key Stage 1 and the opportunities that schools offer. It also recognises that bilingualism is an important asset conferring positive advantages for children's learning and development. The revised draft EYFS tries to strike a balance between supporting children's overall language development, and ensuring appropriate opportunities are provided for children to reach a good standard of English and be ready for school. It also seeks to ensure that the

assessment requirements appropriately measure children's progress in English, taking due account of the needs of children who have not had the appropriate time or support to develop their English language skills.

We have no view on Q6.

7 The EYFS requires providers to support children through *planned, purposeful play*. The Tickell Review recommended that this requirement should be explained more clearly. Do you agree that paragraphs 1.10 and 1.11 of the revised draft EYFS clearly outline expectations of the approach practitioners should take to supporting children's learning?

1 Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Comments: We would like to see removal of the sentence "This will move increasingly towards adult-led learning as children start to prepare for reception class" in paragraph 1.10. There are two reasons for this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) EYFS includes Reception classb) The focus, even in KS1, should not be exclusively adult-led learning.
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We have no comment to make on 8 a) and 8 b).

Section 2 - The Assessment Arrangements

There are two types of assessment in the EYFS. The first is formative assessment which practitioners should use on an ongoing basis to identify children's needs and plan activities to meet them and support children's future progress. Careful observation is particularly important. Many people who responded to the Tickell Review were in favour of continuing to require this type of assessment, although some people expressed concerns about the paperwork that was associated with it. It appears that paperwork may often be a response to *perceived* pressures, or reflect practitioners' own training needs, rather than the requirements of the EYFS. The revised draft EYFS retains the requirement that practitioners undertake on-going formative assessment but aims to make clear that the paperwork associated with assessment should be limited.

9 Paragraph 2.2 aims to discourage practitioners from completing excessive levels of paperwork. Do you think these paragraphs would achieve this aim? Please explain.

1 Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Comments: We suggest that the sentence “Key achievements and any concerns should be recorded periodically” would be better phrased as “Significant personal achievements and areas for development should be recorded when appropriate, and reviewed regularly”.
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10 Do you have any further comments on paperwork associated with the formative assessment of children's learning and development?

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	1 No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not sure
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We have no additional comment to make here.

The second type of assessment is summative assessment, in which practitioners step back and record what children can do across all of the areas of learning, to review their progress at a given point in time. This includes an assessment of children's achievements, and the extent to which progress is as expected, against benchmark standards. It is useful for parents as well as early years practitioners in understanding a child's level of development, and in supporting their future learning and development.

Currently, the only summative assessment required by the EYFS is at the end of the year in which children turn 5. It is called the EYFS Profile. A significant number of people have raised concerns about the EYFS Profile in its current form. Some respondents to the Tickell Review felt that it was not challenging enough for more able children but was too challenging for some other children - including children born in June, July and August, who will be the youngest in their school year. Many early years practitioners also highlighted that the EYFS Profile is not always used by Year 1 teachers (teaching pupils aged 5-6 years), owing to the lack of connection between the content of the EYFS

Profile and the National Curriculum.

It is proposed that:

a. the EYFS Profile is slimmed down to reflect the proposed (reduced) 17 early learning goals;

b. 'emerging' and 'exceeding' bands are included in the assessment measures, to help identify clearly where children are working towards or have gone beyond the goal. This aims to provide clear information on children's progress for parents and to help Year 1 teachers to support very young children, gifted and talented children or children with additional needs;

c. the wording of the goals is amended to fit more clearly with the goals of the National Curriculum (and the wording of the National Curriculum will be considered in relation to appropriate continuity with the EYFS).

11 Do you think the revised draft EYFS Profile would provide an improved vehicle for capturing the essential information about a child's development at the point at the end of the EYFS? Please explain.

<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Partly
<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure		

<input type="checkbox"/>	Comments: We believe the revised draft is a great improvement, but would draw attention to the points we have made above.
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12 Do you agree with the content of the 'emerging' and 'exceeding' bands? Please explain.

<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Partly
<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure		

We have no comments to make here.

13 Do you agree that the terms 'emerging', 'expected' and 'exceeding' appropriately describe levels of progress? Please explain.

<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partly
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Sure		

We have no comments to make here.

14 The revised draft EYFS asks practitioners to supplement the Profile and give Year 1 teachers a short commentary on each child's skills and abilities in relation to the three characteristics of effective learning (paragraph 2.7). Do you agree this is helpful? Please explain.

<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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We have no further comment to make here.

15 Do you have any further comments on the proposed revised draft EYFS Profile?

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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We have no further comment to make here.

Early years settings have a duty to collect EYFS Profile data and provide it annually to their local authorities. Local authorities need to provide this annually to the Government. These duties will remain.

The Government has also considered the difficulties which can be experienced by children if they need additional support and their needs are not identified at an early stage. For many children, identifying their needs at age 5 is not soon enough to help them catch up to be successful learners in school. In response to this, building on Dame Clare Tickell's advice, we propose that a summary of children's development is provided to parents when their child is aged between 24 - 36 months. This must cover the prime areas of learning. Its purpose is to identify where children may need some additional support and to help practitioners work with parents and others to provide that tailored support. It is for practitioners to decide what the summary might include beyond the above requirements, reflecting the development needs of

each individual child, and to decide on the format for the report.

For the longer term the Government is exploring the feasibility of a single integrated review at around age 2 (as recommended by Dame Clare Tickell), in which health and early years providers jointly assess children's progress, and work together, and with parents, to plan tailored support as appropriate. This would build on and strengthen the progress review we propose to introduce for September 2012 (as outlined above) to help ensure all children reach a good level of development at age 5 and are ready and able to learn in school.

We offer no views in relation to questions 16-19.

Section 3 - Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements

This section explains the requirements that all early years providers must meet, in relation to children's safety and welfare. In the main, the current welfare requirements were supported in responses to the Tickell Review. The revised draft EYFS aims to simplify and clarify existing requirements. It also provides additional guidance on child protection.

We offer no views in relation to questions 20-26.

Inspection Arrangements

Ofsted inspection assesses how well providers meet the standards of the EYFS and Ofsted publishes inspection reports on its website.

If providers breach any of the welfare requirements Ofsted can issue a Welfare Requirements Notice. If providers do not comply with the Welfare Requirements Notice by the date specified, then Ofsted can cancel the provider's registration and prosecute as they judge appropriate.

There are some breaches of requirements which can lead to immediate prosecution without a Welfare Notice first being issued. These are detailed at (paragraph 3.79 and 3.80) of the draft EYFS. The Government is considering whether the system for handling breaches of requirements could be simplified and would welcome views on whether any of these requirements could be appropriately dealt with through Welfare Notices rather than under caution/through prosecution.

We have no comments on questions 27 and 28.

General

29 Overall, do you think that the revised draft EYFS is clear and easy to navigate? Please explain.

1 Yes

No

Not Sure

We have no additional comment to make here.

30 Do you think the Government should make any further revisions to the EYFS, to simplify and shorten it further? Please explain

Yes

1 No

Not Sure

We have no additional comment to make here.

We offer no view on Q31.

32 Please use this space for any other comments on the proposals.

Comments:

The first time mathematics is mentioned in detail is on page 6, paragraph 1.5. The tone and content of these key issues seem to be at variance with the others in that they are focused on acquiring and improving skills rather than supporting understanding. This feels very different from the emphasis on '**Problem solving, reasoning** and numeracy' of before and we are concerned about the implications of lowering the profile of these key areas of and approaches to mathematics.

In addition, we would prefer some reference to number sense in the same way that 'Understanding the World' involves 'guiding children to make sense of their physical world'.

Can we also please request that explicit links between the proposed new framework and the National Curriculum are made, and that inconsistencies between the expectations of the two are addressed.

To end, we commend your view of education as being about the whole person and would suggest that as mathematics is an essential component of human functioning it deserves a high profile.