



Have Your Say

The EYFS Consultation

Introduction

Above all, at Early Excellence we are saying - take part. There is so much change heading our way and it is essential that all involved in working with young children are part of this process.

As an organisation we concur with many in the sector, that some of the proposed changes are welcome, whilst others require greater clarity, represent missed opportunities or are significant cause for concern.

Please set aside some time and complete the [EYFS Consultation](#) by Friday 31st January.

While answering the questions in the consultation we are encouraging everyone to draw on their own experiences but to also make use of sources such as the recent in-depth literature review '[Getting it right in the Early Years Foundation Stage: a review of the evidence](#)'. This document provides current, relevant research and analysis into the effectiveness of the EYFS - an invaluable tool for helping evaluate any of the proposed changes.





Overview

We welcome that the Ofsted definition of teaching is now to be included in the framework. Recognising that successful teaching in the Early Years requires a variety of approaches and the skilful adult selects those which are most appropriate to the needs of the child is fundamental to quality practice.

Regarding the proposed changes to the Educational Programme Summaries and related Early Learning Goals we have identified below some key concerns:

Firstly, the evidence in the 'Getting it Right' document did not support the need for any significant change, although it did acknowledge that the research base in some aspects of learning was limited, e.g. Understanding the World. We are also **concerned that many aspects of the programme summaries now appear to describe the learning of older children, weakening the core principle that the EYFS is from birth to 5 years.**

There remains a clear mismatch between many of the expectations at the end of the EYFS, the Year One Curriculum and the age of individual children transitioning. The pilot of the proposed ELG's does little to allay this concern, worryingly concluding that "no evidence that children's needs were identified earlier; that children's needs were better met; or that children were assessed more accurately".

As with much of the existing EYFS, within the proposed changes it is difficult to isolate many aspects into separate strands of learning, which the ELG's do by their very nature to aid the process of assessment. Consequently, **we need to acknowledge that although a goal may appear discreet, it is often closely connected to others** - but to list all the possible connections would potentially create a framework far too complex to be useful at any practical level. **As a result, deep professional knowledge and understanding will be crucial if we are to avoid the goals turning into a shallow tick list exercise.** This was further emphasised by respondents to the pilot, who stressed the need to ensure high quality exemplification materials are made available to support practitioners with assessment.





Proposed Changes to the Areas of Learning

Our specific comments relating to the curriculum are as follows.

Communication & Language

Key Areas of Concern

- Language seen as more important than PSED & PD
- High emphasis on books, little emphasis on the role of practical / first hand experiences
- Assessing 'recently introduced vocabulary' becoming rote learning
- That expectations of spoken language may not be inline with child development

Whilst we recognise the critical role CL has as a thread throughout the whole early years, stating that 'The development of children's spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning and development' seems to conflict with the concept that the EYFS is strong because of the interconnectedness of the prime areas.

We would agree that the programme needed to be refreshed and welcome the reference to developing conversational skills, but to hold a conversation requires both speaking and listening, something identified as a concern in the pilot when it came to the use of the proposed ELG's for assessment.

We recognise that books are an extremely valuable tool to support early learning. However, the strong emphasis throughout the proposed changes to the programme summaries on learning new vocabulary through books and being read to, conflicts with our understanding of how young children learn - through 'being and doing', by being active learners and through first hand experiences.

Similarly, we are unclear about the emphasis on 'recently introduced vocabulary' in the Speaking ELG, over the need for children to use the appropriate vocabulary. This is not to say that children shouldn't be introduced to new words in meaningful ways so they can be embedded, but our fear is that this could be reduced to a tick list of new words that are used, assessed and quickly lost.

We welcome the reference to accurate use of past, present and future tenses, if the expectations are fully inline with what is appropriate for this age group, but have concerns that this may impact on the ability of some EAL children to achieve this ELG.





Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED)

Key Areas of Concern

- Whether PSED (Attachment & Self-Regulation) can be assessed accurately

Relationships are the key to learning and without secure PSED we know that children will struggle throughout their education. We therefore welcome the emphasis on attachments but given the age of the children this is the role of the adult to develop, as identified in the EYFS under positive relationships - it is not something we can necessarily assess them as achieving as an ELG.

Including Self-Regulation is a positive step, but we are concerned that to aid assessment this could become over simplified and the Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning will need to be closely cross-referenced to ensure depth.

Physical Development

Key Areas of Concern

- No recognition of the relationship between physical and cognitive development
- Whether the proposed ELG's are achievable by ALL children

We feel that there has been a missed opportunity for this to reflect the growing understanding of the relationship between physical development and cognitive development.

There also needs to be consideration of these goals and its impact on children within SEND.

We are unclear as to why health and self-care have been removed from this section.





Literacy

Key Areas of Concern

- Missed opportunity to reflect clearly the relationship between C&L and Literacy
- Lack of reference to reading beyond the classroom
- No reference to the role of physical development within writing

Whilst acknowledging that this is not a Prime Area, worryingly, this programme reads most like one for older children. Crucially, there needs to be much stronger recognition of the critical role of communication and language within early literacy.

We welcome the principle of helping children develop a life-long love of reading, but it appears to have been added as an afterthought. Reading beyond the classroom is also neglected and yet we know that we need to strengthen the home learning environment if we are to help close the attainment gap.

Disappointingly no reference is made to the early stage of writing or mark making, or any recognition of the critical relationship between physical development and writing. A missed opportunity.

Mathematics

Key Areas of Concern

- Lack of reference to meaningful and practical maths
- The removal of Shape, Space and Measure as an Early Learning Goal

We welcome the emphasis on numbers to ten but feel there has been a missed opportunity to teach and embed mathematics in practical ways that are meaningful to young children. The specific mention of 'small manipulatives' feels like a reference to the use of 'traditional' maths resources with older children.

Whilst shape, space and measure retains a place, albeit small, within the programme - its removal from the ELG's causes concern. We know that this strand of mathematics offers many rich, real-life maths experiences, specialist vocabulary and closely connects with the Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning.





Understanding the World

Key Areas of Concern

- Vagueness of the programme summary
- The lack of a clear technology focus

We feel that this new programme description is extremely vague - what is it about - visits, books, learning new words? Worryingly, there has also been a missed opportunity to embrace STEM in the early years, technology has disappeared even though our children live in an increasingly technological world.

The ELG's do break this strand into 'History', 'Geography' and 'Science' and again the reference to much of the learning, of often abstract concepts, being linked to books fails to acknowledge what we know about how best we can help young children learn - through first hand, meaningful experiences.

Expressive Arts and Design

Key Areas of Concern

- Lack of clarity in the programme summary
- The focus on 'creating' things rather than developing skills through broad experiences

The proposed programme for EAD no longer sets out an educational programme - it reads like an aspiration. There is no specific reference to any element of the arts and there appears to be a strong emphasis on experiences and again vocabulary.

We do welcome the statement that 'The frequency, repetition and depth of their experiences are fundamental to their progress in interpreting and appreciating what they hear, respond to and observe', e.g. we know the benefits of having the creative arts within continuous provision.

However, the proposed goals feel much more directed, the experiences limited - children will 'create' things to be used, children will 'perform' and there is an implication that using art media other than paint and drawing tools is no longer required. As for 'trying to dance' as a goal - the less said the better.





Proposal for removing the LA statutory element of EYFSP moderation

While recognising that for some teachers this process has created additional workload and anxiety we also know how, for many, this is the only CPD they currently receive. Moderation in its variety of forms has provided an opportunity to share skills and best practice as well as providing a rationale to sustain some networks.

We would therefore recommend that rather than removing the process it is further supported through professional development for teachers and moderators to ensure the process is both useful and manageable.

Proposal to remove the ‘exceeding’ judgement from the EYFSP.

We would have no objection to the removal of the “exceeding” judgement as this may simplify the current assessment processes. However, we feel that the continued support from LA moderators could be used to help support teachers in identifying those children who are working above age related expected levels and how to appropriately support them.