



Department  
for Education

# **Early Years Foundation Stage Reforms**

**Government consultation response**

**July 2020**

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## Introduction

The early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework is mandatory for all early years settings, including maintained schools, non-maintained schools, independent schools, all nurseries and childminders on the Early Years Register, and all childminders registered with an early years childminder agency. It sets the standards that schools and early years providers must meet to ensure that children are taught and develop well, and are kept healthy and safe from birth to age 5. At the time of publication of this consultation response, the EYFS learning and development and the EYFS profile requirements have been disapplied for the duration of the Covid-19 outbreak. All references to the EYFS refer to the requirements in force up to 23 April 2020 and the subsequent re-instatement of the full EYFS following removal of the disapplication regulations.<sup>1</sup>

The EYFS was first introduced in 2008. In 2012, following an independent review of evidence and practice (the Tickell Report, 2011)<sup>2</sup>, the learning and development requirements were revised to create three prime areas of learning and four specific areas of learning, rather than the previous six areas of learning. It also introduced three characteristics of effective teaching and learning.

Sections 1 and 2 of the EYFS framework set out the learning and development and assessment requirements and include the educational programmes that early years providers are required to follow across the seven areas of learning<sup>3</sup>. All early years practitioners and teachers are required to pursue rich daily activities in supporting each child's educational development under these areas. In addition, this section also sets out the early learning goals (ELGs), which are 17 goals distributed across the seven areas of learning that all children are assessed against at the end of the reception year. This assessment forms the early years foundation stage profile (EYFSP).

The EYFS framework does not prescribe a particular teaching approach. It recognises that effective teaching in the early years requires skilled use of a teaching practice repertoire which responds appropriately to the age and needs of the children being

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<sup>1</sup> Current EYFS arrangements can be viewed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-early-years-foundations-for-life-health-and-learning-an-independent-report-on-the-early-years-foundation-stage-to-her-majestys-government>

<sup>3</sup> The seven areas of learning are: communication and language, physical development, personal, social and emotional development, literacy, mathematics, understanding the world and expressive arts and design.

taught. In recognition of this, the revised EYFS framework will reference the definition of teaching currently included in Ofsted's Early Years Inspection Handbook<sup>4</sup>:

*'Teaching should not be taken to imply a 'top down' or formal way of working. It is a broad term that covers the many different ways in which adults help young children learn. It includes their interactions with children during planned and child-initiated play and activities: communicating and modelling language; showing, explaining, demonstrating, exploring ideas; encouraging, questioning, recalling; providing a narrative for what they are doing; facilitating and setting challenges. It takes account of the equipment adults provide and the attention given to the physical environment, as well as the structure and routines of the day that establish expectations. Integral to teaching is how practitioners assess what children know, understand and can do, as well as taking account of their interests and dispositions to learn (characteristics of effective teaching and learning), and how practitioners use this information to plan children's next steps in learning and monitor their progress.'*

The EYFSP is a teacher-observed assessment completed at the end of the reception year which provides teachers and parents with a well-rounded picture of a child's knowledge, understanding and abilities against expected levels and their readiness for year 1. Each child's level of development is assessed against the 17 ELGs.

This summative assessment informs the dialogue between reception and year 1 teachers to support each child's transition to year 1, including identifying where further support is needed. The EYFSP also provides a national and local population-level assessment of child development at age 5, including attainment for particular groups, e.g. children eligible for free school meals and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). It is not used as an accountability measure for school performance.

Section 3 of the EYFS framework sets out the safeguarding and welfare requirements that must be followed to ensure children are kept safe and are well cared for. This consultation sought views on one change to section 3 of the framework.

## **Background to the reforms**

Last October, Government launched a consultation<sup>5</sup> on reforms to the EYFS. The consultation sought views on changes to the learning and development and assessment requirements as set out in the EYFS statutory framework. In addition, we sought views

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-inspection-handbook-eif>

<sup>5</sup> <https://consult.education.gov.uk/early-years-quality-outcomes/early-years-foundation-stage-reforms/>

on a single change within the safeguarding and welfare requirements section. The proposals were as follows:

- **Revisions to the educational programmes;**
- **Revisions to the ELGs;**
- **Changes to the assessment and moderation process for the EYFSP; and**
- **A proposed change to the safeguarding and welfare requirements to promote good oral health.**

As Government set out in the consultation document, the two key aims of the proposed changes are to improve outcomes at age 5, particularly in early language and literacy, and reduce workload so that teachers can spend more time interacting with children in their care. This consultation follows extensive engagement with early years experts and the sector in developing a set of proposals following the Government response to the primary assessment consultation<sup>6</sup> (published September 2017) with the objective to:

- make all 17 ELGs clearer, more specific and easier for teachers to make accurate judgements;
- focus on strengthening language and vocabulary development to particularly support disadvantaged children;
- strengthen literacy and numeracy outcomes to ensure all children have a good grasp of these areas of learning in preparation for year 1;
- ensure the ELGs are based on the latest evidence in childhood development; and
- ensure they reflect the strongest predictors of future attainment.

To reduce teacher workload, we considered different approaches to assessment moderation, streamlined assessment guidance and strengthened the important message that teachers should use their professional judgement and not rely on unnecessary evidence to justify their assessments.

In July 2018 we published a draft revised EYFS framework with revised educational programme summaries and ELGs and a draft revised EYFSP handbook, which we piloted during the academic year 2018/19 in 24 randomly-selected schools across England. The pilot evaluation was carried out by the Education Endowment Foundation

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<sup>6</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/644871/Primary\\_assessment\\_consultation\\_response.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/644871/Primary_assessment_consultation_response.pdf)

(EEF) in partnership with NatCen Social Research and Action for Children. An independent report by the EEF was published on 24 October 2019.<sup>7</sup>

The key findings from the evaluation include:

- Participants viewed the revised ELGs positively overall, describing them as clearer than previous ELGs. They also made practical suggestions about improving the revised ELGs.
- Schools reported that their workload had reduced due to the reduced expectations for assessment and evidence-gathering (or would do once the changes were embedded). Staff reported using this extra time to spend with children.
- The revised ELGs by themselves were not felt to be sufficient: teachers wanted supporting materials, such as exemplification and curriculum guidance.
- There were mixed views about whether children would be better prepared for key stage 1 as a result of the changes, and about whether the new ELGs were more or less challenging than before. Follow-up research would be required to investigate this further.
- Teachers welcomed using their own judgement and felt empowered to do so. However, some felt that external moderation would still be important for ensuring consistency between schools, and for gaining alternative perspectives.

The EYFS reforms consultation was also launched on 24 October 2019. This document sets out a summary of views we have heard through the consultation and the government's response.

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<sup>7</sup>[https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Projects/Evaluation\\_Reports/Early\\_Years\\_Foundation\\_Stage\\_Profile\\_\(EYFSP\)\\_Reforms.pdf](https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Projects/Evaluation_Reports/Early_Years_Foundation_Stage_Profile_(EYFSP)_Reforms.pdf)

## Summary of responses received and the government's response

The EYFS reforms consultation was launched on 24 October 2019 and closed on 31 January 2020 and ran for 14 weeks. In total, the consultation received **2,452** responses. This figure includes<sup>8</sup>:

- 695 school reception teachers
- 508 school head teachers and senior leaders
- 221 managers of private, voluntary or independent early years group settings
- 154 local authorities
- 106 Maintained Nursery School teachers and practitioners
- 92 training providers
- 69 practitioners in private, voluntary or independent early years group settings
- 48 early years sector representative bodies
- 47 parents and carers
- 41 childminders
- 34 Maintained Nursery School head teachers
- 6 teaching unions

The number of people whose views have been considered as part of this process is far greater than 2,452. Representative organisations such as teaching unions canvassed their members before responding. People also contributed via consultation events and meetings. The consultation questions were deliberately framed in an open and discursive manner to encourage full consideration of the issues presented. Statistical analysis is not appropriate for a qualitative<sup>9</sup> consultation, therefore this report summarises the key themes, and sets out the Government's response, in line with consultation principles.

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<sup>8</sup> Respondents were asked to select the capacity in which they were responding to the consultation from a drop-down menu. Respondents not included in these figures either selected "other" or did not respond to this question. Some respondents recorded that they were from a Maintained Nursery School however, responses given indicate that they were in fact from maintained primary schools with nursery provision. It is therefore likely that the number of respondents from Maintained Nursery Schools is lower than recorded, and the number from schools is higher than recorded.

<sup>9</sup> This research is qualitative in nature therefore numerical values cannot be applied. However, some descriptive words are used to give an indication of the level of interest in emerging themes against other emerging themes. For clarification, words such as; 'central', 'consistently', 'many', and 'recurring' indicate strong emerging themes, and we have used 'common view', clear and 'popular view' interchangeably to mean the strongest emerging themes. 'Some' and 'other' is used where this was an emerging theme but not considered strong.

# Main findings from the consultation

## Learning and development

### Educational Programmes

The EYFS framework sets out brief, high level summaries of the sorts of activities that practitioners and teachers should undertake with children from birth to reception, under each of the seven areas of learning. These summaries help to inform the curriculum for early years settings and reception classes. These were revised as part of the pilot EYFS framework to give greater clarity and specificity in supporting effective daily practice across the 0-5 age range covered by the EYFS. More detailed curriculum guidance on early years education from birth to reception is being developed separately through a revision of the 'Development Matters' guidance. The new curriculum guidance will remain non-statutory and did not form part of this consultation.

#### We asked

***Q. Please give us your views on whether the activities described in each of the proposed educational programme summaries support children's learning and development throughout the EYFS.***

#### We heard

**There was clear agreement from respondents that the proposed educational programmes support children's overall learning and development and this was broadly consistent across all seven areas of learning.** A recurring theme was that the emphasis on language and vocabulary development is a positive feature. Some views also expressed that the summaries are too broad and do not reflect the individual needs of children. Some views suggested the need for greater focus on play and experience-based activities. Some other views remarked on the absence of activities covering the breadth of the birth to reception age-range. Some comments included the need for further guidance to support the educational programme summaries, for instance detailed curriculum guidance.

Where respondents had specific views on each area of learning, the following were recurring themes:

- *Communication and Language* - a recurring view was that the emphasis on language and vocabulary development is welcomed. Other views expressed



concern that some elements were too advanced, for instance, the absence of pre-verbal communication, including listening, attention and understanding, as a precursor to later speech and language development.

- *Personal, social and emotional development (PSED)* – some views stated that PSED should underpin all other areas of learning. Views were mixed on whether health and self-care should be included in PSED or physical development. Some respondents said that PSED should be given greater importance than communication and language and more emphasis is needed on the links to the characteristics of effective teaching and learning.
- *Physical Development* - a consistent view for this educational programme was that the summary is too short. Other views expressed that greater information is needed on the links between gross and fine motor skills and the development of these from birth to reception.
- *Literacy* - a consistent view was that the inclusion of ‘a love of reading’ in this educational programme is a welcome addition. A central theme suggested that more information is required for children’s learning in pre-reception settings, for instance language development, and concern over the advanced level of development required from some children. Some other views expressed that this educational programme features appropriate links with year 1 learning.
- *Mathematics* - a central theme was that the focus on children developing a greater depth of understanding number from 0-10 has important benefits, particularly as children move to year 1. Another central theme was the need for a greater focus on shape, space and measures within the educational programme.
- *Understanding the World* - a central theme was a concern that technology is missing. Other recurring views from respondents suggest the need for more experience-based activities.
- *Expressive Arts and Design* – some respondents expressed need for a greater focus on children’s freedom of expression, imagination and other creative or artistic activities. In addition, there were other views on the need for further guidance on activities which could support this educational programme.

## **Government response**

Government recognises the importance of the educational programmes in the EYFS as the basis from which practitioners and teachers can plan and set their own individual curriculums. As we set out in the consultation, more detailed curriculum guidance on early years education from birth to reception is being developed separately alongside

these reforms through a revision of the 'Development Matters' guidance. The new curriculum guidance will remain non-statutory, but we recommend that it is used to complement the new educational programmes.

The terms 'prime' and 'specific' for the areas of learning were out of scope of this consultation. These terms will remain, as will the names of the seven areas of learning. Communication and language, personal, social and emotional development (PSED) and physical development should continue as the core basis for all children's development in the EYFS and continue to work hand in hand with the specific areas of learning of literacy, mathematics, understanding the world and expressive arts and design. Communication and language will continue to underpin all areas of learning, and all areas of learning are inter-connected and complement one another.

Government has carefully considered all responses to the consultation on the proposed educational programmes and, in light of this, the following changes will be made and implemented as part of the reformed EYFS statutory framework:

- *Communication and language* will remain as proposed;
- *PSED* will include additional information on self-care and healthy eating;
- *Physical Development* will be strengthened to include a greater focus on development from birth to reception and on the link between gross and fine motor skills;
- *Literacy* will include a stronger emphasis on pre-reception literacy learning, and the link between language comprehension and later reading and writing;
- *Mathematics* will include a greater detail on the importance of shapes, spatial reasoning and measure as part of early maths learning, and how children can foster a love of maths;
- *Understanding the World* will include wider experiences for children; and
- *Expressive Arts and Design* will include a wider variety of ways children can develop their creative skills.

## **Final Educational Programmes**

The sequential order in which the areas of learning appear in the EYFS statutory framework will remain the same as set out in previous frameworks.

## **Communication and Language**

The development of children's spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning and development. Children's back-and-forth interactions from an early age form the foundations for language and cognitive development. The number and quality of the conversations they have with adults and peers throughout the day in a language-rich

environment is crucial. By commenting on what children are interested in or doing, and echoing back what they say with new vocabulary added, practitioners will build children's language effectively. Reading frequently to children, and engaging them actively in stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems, and then providing them with extensive opportunities to use and embed new words in a range of contexts, will give children the opportunity to thrive. Through conversation, story-telling and role play, where children share their ideas with support and modelling from their teacher, and sensitive questioning that invites them to elaborate, children become comfortable using a rich range of vocabulary and language structures.

### **Personal Social and Emotional Development**

Children's personal, social and emotional development (PSED) is crucial for children to lead healthy and happy lives, and is fundamental to their cognitive development. Underpinning their personal development are the important attachments that shape their social world. Strong, warm and supportive relationships with adults enable children to learn how to understand their own feelings and those of others. Children should be supported to manage emotions, develop a positive sense of self, set themselves simple goals, have confidence in their own abilities, to persist and wait for what they want and direct attention as necessary. Through adult modelling and guidance, they will learn how to look after their bodies, including healthy eating, and manage personal needs independently. Through supported interaction with other children they learn how to make good friendships, co-operate and resolve conflicts peaceably. These attributes will provide a secure platform from which children can achieve at school and in later life.

### **Physical Development**

Physical activity is vital in children's all-round development, enabling them to pursue happy, healthy and active lives. Gross and fine motor experiences develop incrementally throughout early childhood, starting with sensory explorations and the development of a child's strength, co-ordination and positional awareness through tummy time, crawling and play movement with both objects and adults. By creating games and providing opportunities for play both indoors and outdoors, adults can support children to develop their core strength, stability, balance, spatial awareness, co-ordination and agility. Gross motor skills provide the foundation for developing healthy bodies and social and emotional well-being. Fine motor control and precision helps with hand-eye co-ordination which is later linked to early literacy. Repeated and varied opportunities to explore and play with small world activities, puzzles, arts and crafts and the practice of using small tools, with feedback and support from adults, allow children to develop proficiency, control and confidence.

## **Literacy**

It is crucial for children to develop a life-long love of reading. Reading consists of two dimensions: language comprehension and word reading. Language comprehension (necessary for both reading and writing) starts from birth. It only develops when adults talk with children about the world around them and the books (stories and non-fiction) they read with them, and enjoy rhymes, poems and songs together. Skilled word reading, taught later, involves both the speedy working out of the pronunciation of unfamiliar printed words (decoding) and the speedy recognition of familiar printed words. Writing involves transcription (spelling and handwriting) and composition (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech, before writing).

## **Mathematics**

Developing a strong grounding in number is essential so that all children develop the necessary building blocks to excel mathematically. Children should be able to count confidently, develop a deep understanding of the numbers to 10, the relationships between them and the patterns within those numbers. By providing frequent and varied opportunities to build and apply this understanding - such as using manipulatives, including small pebbles and tens frames for organising counting - children will develop a secure base of knowledge and vocabulary from which mastery of mathematics is built. In addition, it is important that the curriculum includes rich opportunities for children to develop their spatial reasoning skills across all areas of mathematics including shape, space and measures. It is important that children develop positive attitudes and interests in mathematics, look for patterns and relationships, spot connections, 'have a go', talk to adults and peers about what they notice and not be afraid to make mistakes.

## **Understanding the World**

Understanding the world involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community. The frequency and range of children's personal experiences increases their knowledge and sense of the world around them – from visiting parks, libraries and museums to meeting important members of society such as police officers, nurses and firefighters. In addition, listening to a broad selection of stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems will foster their understanding of our culturally, socially, technologically and ecologically diverse world. As well as building important knowledge, this extends their familiarity with words that support understanding across domains. Enriching and widening children's vocabulary will support later reading comprehension.

## **Expressive Arts and Design**

The development of children's artistic and cultural awareness supports their imagination and creativity. It is important that children have regular opportunities to engage with the arts, enabling them to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials. The quality and variety of what children see, hear and participate in is crucial for developing

their understanding, self-expression, vocabulary and ability to communicate through the arts. The frequency, repetition and depth of their experiences are fundamental to their progress in interpreting and appreciating what they hear, respond to and observe.

## Early Learning Goals

The 17 ELGs define the level of development children are expected to have attained by the end of the EYFS. The ELGs are a specific end-point assessment and **should not be used as a curriculum**. Under the current EYFS framework, at the end of reception year each child is assessed as either 'emerging', 'expected' or 'exceeding' against each goal to form the EYFSP. Assessments are carried out through a 'best fit' approach. 'Best fit' does not mean that the child has equal mastery of all aspects of the ELG. Practitioners should look at the whole of each ELG description when making this summative judgement. A child will be judged to have reached a 'good level of development' if they achieve 'expected' against the ELGs under the prime areas of learning and the specific areas of literacy and mathematics. Teachers are not required to collect or record unnecessary evidence to prove accuracy of judgements, rather they should rely on their own professional judgement and knowledge of the child. All 17 ELGs and descriptors were reviewed and revised before being piloted in 2018/19, and revised again, following feedback, to form the proposed ELGs within the consultation.

### We asked

***Q. Please give us your views on whether the proposed ELGs are clear, specific and easy to understand.***

***Q. Please give us your views on whether the proposed ELGs contribute to a well-rounded assessment of a child's development at the end of reception year.***

### We heard

**The popular view from respondents was that the proposed ELGs are clear, specific and easy to understand. Some respondents said that they were an improvement on the current ones.** This was broadly consistent across all ELGs. A recurring theme was that additional guidance in the form of exemplification materials is needed to provide greater clarity in making assessments against each of the ELGs, particularly for communication and language, maths, literacy and understanding the world ELGs. Some

respondents expressed that they would like further guidance to ensure that the ELGs are not used as a tick list.

**The clear view was that the ELGs contribute to a well-rounded assessment of a child's development at the end of reception year. This was broadly consistent across all ELGs.** Other views included the need for a greater focus on recognising the child as an individual and concern over the advanced stage of development required particularly for communication and language, PSED, literacy, mathematics and understanding the world ELGs. Where respondents expressed particular views about specific ELGs, under both consultation questions, these were as follows:

- *Communication and Language* - there were some views on the need for more individualised support for children and some concern about the advanced stage of development needed to demonstrate these ELGs.
- *PSED* – some respondents viewed the inclusion of an ELG on self-regulation as positive, whilst others said that more guidance is needed on self-regulation.
- *Physical Development* – respondents consistently welcomed the separation of gross and fine motor skills. Some respondents commented on the over-prescriptive nature of these ELGs, for example a lack of focus on children with disabilities and the specific mention of the 'tripod' grip.
- *Literacy* - some welcomed the inclusion of comprehension as an additional ELG under literacy, these respondents felt this was important to support later word reading and comprehension. Some other comments were that the ELGs are too prescriptive and a variety of reading strategies should be used as well as phonics.
- *Mathematics* - A recurring view was the welcome focus on children understanding the depth of number from 0-10. Some respondents felt this was necessary to ensure mastery of number concepts by the end of reception in readiness for year 1. A central theme was concern that shape, space and measures has been removed as an ELG. Respondents felt it was important for well-rounded learning and may not be taught if not included as an ELG. Some respondents expressed that the proposed ELGs might be too stretching for reception children, in particular automatic recall of number bonds.
- *Understanding the World* - a consistent view was that the removal of technology as an ELG would be a negative step. Some respondents viewed these ELGs as a positive change, for instance respondents remarked upon the welcome clarity and specificity of subject areas within the proposed ELGs, such as geography, history, science, the environment and communities, with some respondents commenting that this will be helpful in preparation for year 1 learning. There were positive comments on the breadth and detail of the proposed ELGs. Others thought there is too much focus on books and not

enough on a child's own experiences. Some other views expressed the lack of developmental appropriateness, for instance recalling 'figures from the past'.

- *Expressive Arts and Design* - where respondents had particular remarks, these included the need for greater focus on children's freedom of expression, creativity and imagination and the need to include a greater variety of creative and artistic activities, for instance, through 3D modelling, dance and music.

## Government response

The ELGs will continue to reflect the broad level of development we expect children to reach by the end of reception.

The ELGs form an important measure of each individual child's level of development and attainment at the end of the EYFS. Government believes the proposed ELGs meet the objectives of the reforms, in improving the clarity and specificity of each of the ELGs to drive more accurate assessments, the known evidence about the strongest predictors of later attainment, and to ensure that all children, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, have the early language and vocabulary development needed to flourish in year 1 and beyond.

Government has carefully considered all views from the consultation, early years experts and stakeholders. Changes are as follows:

- *Communication and Language* will include focus on adult-child interactions, and the word 'accurate' has been removed from the *Speaking* ELG when referring to tenses;
- *Personal, Social and Emotional Development* will remain as proposed;
- *Physical Development* will remain as proposed;
- *Literacy* will remain as proposed;
- *Mathematics* will include greater clarity to counting and comparing quantities in the *Numerical Patterns* ELG. Government will proceed with its focus on number and numerical patterns within the mathematics ELGs as the strongest predictor for later maths outcomes. This also reflects government's continued commitment to strengthen the teaching of early numeracy so that all children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, are able to start year 1 with a strong and confident foundation in number. Practitioners and teachers will still be required to teach children about shape, space and measures, as part of a well-rounded curriculum, as set out in the revised mathematics educational programme;

- *Understanding the World* will include a change in relation to the *Past and Present* ELG to further clarify the expectation of children understanding the concept of 'past'; and
- *Expressive Arts and Design* will include reference to a greater variety of use of tools, materials and techniques that children will need to demonstrate for the *Creating with Materials* ELG.

The responses from the consultation will inform the new ELG exemplification materials to ensure teachers have a clear understanding of each ELG and have the confidence to make accurate and consistent judgements for each child across the 17 ELGs, as part of the summative assessment, and to support moderation of the EYFSP.

## **Final Early Learning Goals**

### **Communication and Language**

#### Listening, Attention and Understanding ELG

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Listen attentively and respond to what they hear with relevant questions, comments and actions when being read to and during whole class discussions and small group interactions;
- Make comments about what they have heard and ask questions to clarify their understanding;
- Hold conversation when engaged in back-and-forth exchanges with their teacher and peers.



## Speaking ELG

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Participate in small group, class and one-to-one discussions, offering their own ideas, using recently introduced vocabulary;
- Offer explanations for why things might happen, making use of recently introduced vocabulary from stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems when appropriate;
- Express their ideas and feelings about their experiences using full sentences, including use of past, present and future tenses and making use of conjunctions, with modelling and support from their teacher.

## **Personal, Social and Emotional Development**

### Self-Regulation ELG

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Show an understanding of their own feelings and those of others, and begin to regulate their behaviour accordingly;
- Set and work towards simple goals, being able to wait for what they want and control their immediate impulses when appropriate;
- Give focused attention to what the teacher says, responding appropriately even when engaged in activity, and show an ability to follow instructions involving several ideas or actions.

### Managing Self ELG

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Be confident to try new activities and show independence, resilience and perseverance in the face of challenge;
- Explain the reasons for rules, know right from wrong and try to behave accordingly;
- Manage their own basic hygiene and personal needs, including dressing, going to the toilet and understanding the importance of healthy food choices.

### Building Relationships ELG

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Work and play cooperatively and take turns with others;
- Form positive attachments to adults and friendships with peers;
- Show sensitivity to their own and to others' needs.

## **Physical Development**

### Gross Motor Skills ELG

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Negotiate space and obstacles safely, with consideration for themselves and others;
- Demonstrate strength, balance and coordination when playing;
- Move energetically, such as running, jumping, dancing, hopping, skipping and climbing.

### Fine Motor Skills ELG

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing – using the tripod grip in almost all cases;
- Use a range of small tools, including scissors, paint brushes and cutlery;
- Begin to show accuracy and care when drawing.

## **Literacy**

### Comprehension ELG

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Demonstrate understanding of what has been read to them by retelling stories and narratives using their own words and recently introduced vocabulary;
- Anticipate – where appropriate – key events in stories;
- Use and understand recently introduced vocabulary during discussions about stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems and during role-play.

## Word Reading ELG

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Say a sound for each letter in the alphabet and at least 10 digraphs;
- Read words consistent with their phonic knowledge by sound-blending;
- Read aloud simple sentences and books that are consistent with their phonic knowledge, including some common exception words.

## Writing ELG

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed;
- Spell words by identifying sounds in them and representing the sounds with a letter or letters;
- Write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others.

## **Mathematics**

### Number ELG

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Have a deep understanding of number to 10, including the composition of each number;
- Subitise (recognise quantities without counting) up to 5;
- Automatically recall (without reference to rhymes, counting or other aids) number bonds up to 5 (including subtraction facts) and some number bonds to 10, including double facts.

### Numerical Patterns ELG

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Verbally count beyond 20, recognising the pattern of the counting system;
- Compare quantities up to 10 in different contexts, recognising when one quantity is greater than, less than or the same as the other quantity;

- Explore and represent patterns within numbers up to 10, including evens and odds, double facts and how quantities can be distributed equally.

## **Understanding the World**

### Past and Present ELG

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Talk about the lives of the people around them and their roles in society;
- Know some similarities and differences between things in the past and now, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class;
- Understand the past through settings, characters and events encountered in books read in class and storytelling;

### People Culture and Communities ELG

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Describe their immediate environment using knowledge from observation, discussion, stories, non-fiction texts and maps;
- Know some similarities and differences between different religious and cultural communities in this country, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class;
- Explain some similarities and differences between life in this country and life in other countries, drawing on knowledge from stories, non-fiction texts and – when appropriate – maps.

### The Natural World ELG

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Explore the natural world around them, making observations and drawing pictures of animals and plants;
- Know some similarities and differences between the natural world around them and contrasting environments, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class;
- Understand some important processes and changes in the natural world around them, including the seasons and changing states of matter.

## **Expressive Arts and Design**

### Creating with Materials ELG

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Safely use and explore a variety of materials, tools and techniques, experimenting with colour, design, texture, form and function;
- Share their creations, explaining the process they have used;
- Make use of props and materials when role playing characters in narratives and stories.

### Being Imaginative and Expressive ELG

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Invent, adapt and recount narratives and stories with peers and their teacher;
- Sing a range of well-known nursery rhymes and songs;
- Perform songs, rhymes, poems and stories with others, and – when appropriate – try to move in time with music.

## Assessment

### EYFSP moderation

Local authorities (LAs) have a statutory duty to externally moderate EYFSP data in 25% of local schools each year. While an external check is an important part of ensuring that the EYFSP produces trusted assessment outcomes, practitioners have told us that the current moderation process can be burdensome and is contributing to the perception of the EYFSP as a high stakes accountability measure for practitioners and for schools. Our focus throughout these reforms has been to reduce unnecessary gathering of physical evidence to support professional judgements and free teachers and practitioners up to spend more time interacting with and supporting the children in their class.

#### We asked

***Q. What are your views on removing the LA statutory element of EYFSP moderation?***

***Q. What are your views on whether removing the LA statutory element of the EYFSP moderation will help to reduce teacher workload?***

***Q. What alternatives to LA statutory moderation do you think could help to ensure consistency of EYFSP judgements across the ELGs?***

#### We heard

**The common view from respondents was that statutory moderation of the EYFSP by LAs should be retained.** Consistent reasons given were that moderation is an important part of teachers' professional development and that removing an external check could have an impact on consistency of interpretation of the ELGs and on the validity and accuracy of the EYFSP dataset. In contrast many respondents agreed that statutory moderation by the LA should be removed, giving heavy workloads, unhelpful behaviours and a lack of trust in professional judgements as the most common reasons. Some respondents commented that they did not feel that LA moderation was necessary if effective internal and cluster moderation practices are in place or if improvements could be made to the current system.

**The popular view from respondents was that removing statutory moderation of the EYFSP by LAs would not reduce teacher workload.** A central theme was that teachers felt that they do not currently collect extra evidence or complete extra paperwork for the purposes of LA moderation. Some respondents commented that the requirements for physical evidence come from elsewhere in the system, including from

within schools, and others felt that if LA moderation was removed, it would be likely to be replaced by a process with similar requirements. However, many respondents did agree that removing statutory moderation would reduce their workload, citing unnecessary paperwork associated with the process. Again, some views suggested making improvements to the current system.

**Inter-school moderation, high quality guidance, internal moderation and effective training were all suggested as means of ensuring consistency of EYFSP judgements across the ELGs.** A consistent view was that it is important to retain external moderation to ensure consistency of judgements across all schools and other approaches to moderation should be conducted alongside, and not as an alternative to, an external check.

### **Government response**

Government is committed to ensuring that all children can reach their full potential by the end of reception year, closing development gaps between disadvantaged children and their peers is a key part of this. While assessment and moderation can play an important role in professional development and in ensuring consistent judgements, our ambition remains to strengthen teaching practice by freeing up teachers to spend more time interacting with children, so that they are well supported and can flourish as they move into year 1 and beyond. We know from the EYFSP pilot evaluation findings that in the absence of external moderation and associated evidence gathering and paperwork, teachers found that their workload had reduced, allowing them to focus on teaching. Government believes that it is increasing the interaction with children that will have an impact on improving outcomes and closing attainment gaps.

The purpose of the EYFSP is to form a professional dialogue between reception and year 1 teachers about an individual child and to inform parents about their child's development. It should not be used as an accountability measure for schools or for teachers and it should not be used to provide a baseline for progress measures. However, we know from anecdotal evidence that the statutory moderation process can contribute to perceptions that the EYFSP is a high stakes and high accountability assessment for teachers and schools.

In light of this, we will proceed with the Government proposal to remove the statutory duty for LAs to externally moderate the EYFSP in 25% of schools each year. Schools may still wish to moderate internally and with other schools to ensure consistency of judgements and to form part of teachers' continuing professional development. Government will issue new exemplification materials to ensure that all teachers have the confidence to make accurate and consistent judgements for each child across the 17 ELGs. The popular view from respondents that the proposed new ELGs are clear, specific and easy to understand, along with the provision of high quality exemplifications

materials that respondents have asked for, suggests that the reliance on external moderation to ensure the consistency of judgements may be reduced.

Schools will still be required to submit EYFSP data to their LA and this will still be collected nationally, however we will review the current use of the EYFSP dataset and consider the contexts in which it may no longer be appropriate to use. The unmoderated dataset will be suitably caveated on publication.

## Exceeding judgement criteria

Currently when teachers make a judgement on children's attainment against the EYFSP, they assess whether a child is 'emerging', 'expected' or 'exceeding' across each of the 17 ELGs. Children who can broadly demonstrate the ELG descriptor will have met the expected level of attainment for the ELG. The 'exceeding' level also has descriptors against the 17 ELGs, but as part of our reforms we heard from experts, practitioners and teachers that this set of descriptors is unhelpful in making consistent and accurate judgements, as there are inherent challenges in what level to pitch exceeding descriptors. We also heard that judging children as exceeding against descriptors generates additional unnecessary collection of evidence and creates workload pressure for internal and external moderation events.

### We asked

***Q. What are your views on the proposal to remove the 'exceeded' judgement from the EYFSP?***

### We heard

**The popular view from respondents was to agree with removal of the exceeding judgement criteria.** A consistent view from respondents was that it is more important to focus on supporting children to achieve expected levels of development and that removal of the exceeding judgement would reduce workload pressures. In contrast many of the respondents who disagreed with the proposal, expressed concerns about the need to recognise and support more able children. Views were mixed on whether or not the exceeding judgement is useful as an assessment measure.

### Government response

Government recognises the importance of supporting all children to reach their potential, including children who teachers judge to be more able. Government is also committed to increasing the number of children who reach expected levels of development by the end of reception and closing attainment gaps, particularly between disadvantaged children



and their peers. After carefully considering the responses to this proposal, we will proceed with removing the exceeding judgement criteria. We are confident that this will free up teachers' time so that they can spend more time supporting children in rich curriculum activities and ensuring that as many children as possible can reach an expected level of development before they begin year 1. Teachers will be expected to continue to identify and to stretch more able children, support them to excel and provide information to parents and the year 1 teacher, but they will not be required to record exceeding judgements for national data collection purposes.

## Safeguarding and Welfare

### Promotion of oral health

Evidence published by Public Health England suggests that more than 1 in 5 children age 5 have experienced tooth decay with one or more teeth being extracted or filled<sup>10</sup>. The promotion of good oral health in the early years can help reduce the incidences of tooth decay and hospital admissions. While the EYFS framework currently requires providers to promote the good health of children attending the setting, it does not explicitly specify that this also includes oral health.

#### We asked

***Q. Should the requirement in the EYFS framework to ‘promote the good health of children’ also include oral health?***

#### We heard

**The popular view from respondents was that the requirement within the EYFS framework to ‘promote the good health of children’ should also explicitly include oral health.** A recurring theme from respondents was that their setting already does this. Where respondents did not agree that the requirement should include oral health, a central view was that this should not be the role of an early years practitioner and should sit with parents and with healthcare professionals. A central view was that, if included, this requirement should be delivered in collaboration with other professionals and with parents. In addition, some respondents said that the scope of including this should be clarified.

#### Government response

After carefully considering the responses to this question, Government will include this new requirement within the new EYFS framework. It will be for individual settings and schools to determine how this requirement is met. In addition, practitioners and teachers will not be required to assess this.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/oral-health-survey-of-5-year-old-children-2017>

## Equalities Assessment

We are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all children and it is important for us to consider the possible impact that the consultation proposals could have on different groups. We asked for respondents' help in identifying any potential impacts of our proposals on people with protected characteristics<sup>11</sup>.

### We asked

***Q. Please provide any representations and/or evidence on the potential impact of our proposals on people with protected characteristics for the purposes of the Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010).***

### We heard

**Of the responses we received to this question, the popular view was that these proposals would not have an impact on people with protected characteristics, however some respondents did identify potential impacts.** Where an impact was identified, the most common views were with regard to children with a disability (in most cases in relation to special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)), boys' attainment and race, either directly or implied through reference to English being an additional language. Some respondents also referred to the protected characteristic of age, specifically citing concerns that summer-born children are less likely to be assessed as having reached the expected level of development than their autumn-born peers.

### Government response

The EYFS framework is underpinned by the overarching principles that every child is a unique child and that children develop and learn at different rates. Government has no plans to change these principles and practitioners must continue to reflect on the different ways that children learn and reflect these in their practice.

The EYFSP Handbook<sup>12</sup> is clear that, in order to reach accurate assessments, practitioners must be alert to the general diversity of children's interests, needs and inclinations. This includes children who have summer birthdays, children with SEND and children for whom English is not their home language. The Handbook has always been clear that the ELGs for communication and language, and for literacy, must be assessed

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<sup>11</sup> The following are considered as protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation.

<sup>12</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/858652/EYFSP\\_Handbook\\_2020v5.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/858652/EYFSP_Handbook_2020v5.pdf)

in relation to the child's competency in English. However, the remaining ELGs may be assessed in the context of any language, with support from parents or bilingual support assistants. There are no plans to change this policy.

We recognise that it is important for teachers and practitioners to be supported with high quality guidance to support EYFSP assessments, including on inclusivity and completing EYFSP assessments for children who may have additional needs. We will work with SEND and other sector experts to review the current EYFSP Handbook and ensure that this is clear on how practitioners should complete the Profile for children with SEND, EAL and who are summer-born, including signposting to additional advice and support where appropriate.

## Next Steps

Government recognises the impact the Covid-19 outbreak has had on the early years sector and schools, particularly in terms of the impact on children's learning and development as a result of closures. The EYFS reforms outlined in this response provide a strong basis to support children who may have missed critical months of early education. Therefore, government will proceed with offering schools the opportunity to adopt the final reforms from September 2020, followed by statutory national implementation as planned from September 2021.

## Annex A: List of organisations that responded to the consultation

Amongst those that responded to the consultation were:

- A Better Start Southend
- Achievement for All
- Action for Children
- ADCS
- Afasic
- Agora
- Ali McClure Education and Parenting
- Alison Featherbe Learning and Development
- All-Party Parliamentary Group on Speech and Language Difficulties
- Anne Gladstone Education & Training Services Ltd
- Arts Council England
- ASCL
- Association for Achievement and Improvement through Assessment (AAIA)
- Association of Dental Hospitals
- Babcock Learning and Development Partnership
- Best Practice Network
- Birth to Seven Matters
- BMDC
- Bolton Start Well Service
- British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry
- British Dental Association
- British Society of Paediatric Dentistry
- Centre for Research in Early Childhood
- Childminding UK
- Children at Heart
- Children's Mathematics Network
- Cirencester Opportunity Group
- Cognus Limited
- Community Dental Services CIC
- Consensus Action on Salt, Sugar and Health
- Co-operative Childcare
- Creative Cascade UK Ltd
- Croydon Best Start Early Learning Collaboration
- E2E London Ltd
- Early Childhood Forum
- Early Childhood Mathematics Group (ECMG)
- Early Childhood Studies Degrees Network
- Early Education
- Early Excellence
- Early Learning Consultancy
- Early Years Alliance
- Early Years Out of the Box
- Earlyarts UK

- Educator Solutions
- Ella's Kitchen
- Exeter Supply Partnership
- Faculty of Dental Surgery at the Royal College of Surgeons of England
- Families and Babies
- Family Support
- Fellowship of St Nicholas
- Finding the Magic in the Early Years
- First Steps Nutrition Trust
- First4Maths
- Fit 2 Learn CIC
- GECCO
- Halifax Opportunities Trust
- Herts for Learning
- Hillyfields Ltd
- I CAN the children's communication charity
- IAPS
- Influential Child Care Training
- Institute of Health Visiting
- Jigsaw Initiatives Ltd
- KSConsulting
- Learning with Parents
- LGIU
- Little Forest Folk
- London Early Years Foundation
- London Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Studies Training Course
- Make Believe Arts
- Mayet Consulting Ltd
- Mine Conkbayir Consultancy
- Montessori Centre International
- Montessori St. Nicholas Charity
- NAHT
- NASUWT
- National Association for Primary Education (NAPE)
- National Association of Mathematics Advisors
- National Day Nurseries Association
- National Education Union
- National Foundation for Educational Research
- National Handwriting Association & Brunel University London
- National Literacy Trust
- NCB
- NCFE
- NCN
- NHPLTD
- NHS England
- North of England Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Studies Programme (NESWEC)
- North Yorkshire & Humber Local Dental Network
- Octavo Partnership
- Ofsted

- PACEY
- PATA (UK)
- Pearson
- Prospect
- RMT
- Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists
- Royal National Institute of Blind People
- Ruth Miskin Training
- Scalchemy Training & Development Co. Ltd.
- SchemaPlay
- Sector Endorsed Foundation Degrees in Early Years (SEFDEY)
- Special Educational Consortium
- Starting Life Well
- Stonewall
- TACTYC: Association for Professional Development in Early Years
- The Faculty of General Dental Practice UK
- The Foundation Stage Forum Ltd
- The Froebel Trust
- The Infant & Toddler Forum
- The National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics (NCETM)
- The National Deaf Children's Society
- The Open University
- The Soil Association, Food for Life
- Triple P
- United Kingdom Literacy Association
- Vision for Education
- Voice the Union
- WatchMeGrow





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