



Centre for Research in Early Childhood

Getting it Right in the Early Years Foundation Stage: A review of the evidence

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Agenda

- Review Rationale
- Review Questions
- Review Methodology
- Key Findings
- Action Points
- Coalition Recommendations



Review Rationale

- EYFS sets standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five years old.
- EYFS last reviewed in 2011 by Dame Claire Tickell and an expert panel.
- Recommendations were informed by a strong evidence base compiled by Maria Evangelou et al in 2009.
- Aim to ensure current EYFS review by Government is informed by more recent research.



Review Questions

1. How far does the rationale for the prime and specific areas and the characteristics of effective learning reflect current knowledge about early learning and teaching?
2. What aspects of the EYFS are affirmed and what need adjustment based on evidence from the last 10 years?

Review Methodology

- The evidence review was conducted using the principles of Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA).
- Drew on identified secondary research reviews and papers in peer reviewed journals from 2009 to 2019.
- Other relevant sources identified by steering group members and a call for evidence from a wide range of professional associations and groups representing diverse academic disciplines.
- Relevant studies were categorised according to quality and relevance and the highest scoring evidence was prioritised.



Key Findings

1. The evidence suggests that there is no substantiated case for the EYFS Statutory Framework to be significantly changed.
2. However, less advantaged children continue to underachieve and this perpetuates the gap as they progress into primary schooling.
3. Recent evidence reveals that with some modifications, particularly in relation to guidance on Communication and Language Development, and giving greater prominence to the Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning, these children might be better served.



Action Point 1

There should be some modifications to the current EYFS Statutory Framework to give greater prominence to the Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning and Personal, Social and Emotional Development to ensure the foundational skills, understandings and knowledge in these areas are securely founded before more advanced, formalised learning is introduced to the children.



Action Point 2

The current EYFS framework which highlights Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED) as a prime area of learning is supported by recent evidence and the current EYFS Early Learning Goals should be extended to cover a wider range of learning dispositions and capacities, including self-regulation.



Action Point 3

It is particularly important that EYFS children have a confident grasp of oral language and communication before they are moved on to grasp the skills of written forms of language.



Action Point 4

There should be more focus on conceptual knowledge in Mathematics and practical rehearsal of Mathematical, Communication and Language, and Literacy skills in real world contexts which have meaning for the child. (No evidence to support ceasing to assess children at the end of Reception on Shape, Space and Measure and Technology).



Action Point 5

The current EYFS requirements on teaching and learning approaches is supported by recent evidence but the value of a balanced teaching approach which incorporates play-based and relational pedagogic approaches, alongside more structured learning and teaching, needs to be recognised more fully, especially when children are in transition between EYFS and Key Stage 1.



Action Point 6

Some additional guidance for teaching Understanding the World is needed to ensure that the development of citizenship and children's rights are foregrounded in classroom practice, and more attention is given to the teaching of science and the implications of children growing up in a digital age. (Research Gap)



Action Point 7

It is suggested that more time and attention should be given to supporting creativity (along with problem-solving) in children's development as a capacity which underpins all areas of learning.



Action Point 8

There is a need for more encouragement and support to be given to the teaching of Expressive Arts and Design within the curriculum, as this area of learning enhances mental health, wellbeing and underpins many other aspects of learning. (Research Gap)



Action Point 9

It is evident that the features of effective pedagogic practice for disadvantaged children are congruent with those found to work for all children and there is no evidence that a different or more intense teaching approach is required. There is strong evidence that these children, as do their peers, need more opportunities for play, language consolidation and extension and opportunities to develop their wider learning dispositions and capacities.



Action Point 10

To effectively support children within diverse cultural and social norms, for example, recent immigrants, the diversity of learners must be recognised within all teaching content. Teaching content needs to equally recognise life experiences, including acknowledging the different needs of summer born children, and a broader span of social and behavioural competencies.



Coalition Recommendations

- Recognising the central importance of the Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning.
- Supporting the current emphasis on the Prime Areas within the EYFS as particularly crucial and time sensitive in the early years.
- Acknowledging all Areas of Learning are interconnected, demonstrating the holistic nature of young children's development.
- Noting there is no evidence to support giving mathematics and literacy greater emphasis than any other areas of learning within the EYFS.



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Further Information

www.early-education.org.uk/getting_it_right_in_the_eyfs

<http://www.crec.co.uk/announcements>

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