



EARLY YEARS POLICY ADVICE:

ASSESSMENT, TRANSITIONS AND SCHOOL READINESS

IMMEDIATE CONCERNS

- Review the level of the early learning goals (ELGs) for literacy and mathematics and the inclusion of literacy and mathematics in the 'good level of development'.
 - Literacy and mathematics have been added to the areas monitored for the 'good level of development' and the expectations for these areas have risen in the 2012-2013 EYFS Framework; e.g. for example, the new maths goal for number is equivalent to Level 1 in Key Stage 1. Effectively therefore literacy and mathematics have become additional Prime Areas by default.
 - The percentage of children achieving a 'good level of development' in 2012 was 64%; under the revised new Profile this dropped to 52% in the subsequent year (DfE, 2012; 2013). Thus according to the revised 2013 EYFS Profile, which focuses upon raised thresholds in maths and literacy, a much higher proportion of children have not achieved a 'good level of development' and are therefore deemed to have 'fallen behind' in their first year of schooling. Such negative labelling of children at a young age is inappropriate and undermines the central EYFS principle which states that children are 'strong and competent learners from birth'.
 - The heightened levels for mathematics and literacy emphasise what the child cannot do as opposed to what they can achieve. For example, learning dispositions and the three characteristics of early learning (EYFS 2012) that are an essential basis for all later learning and are at the heart of the EYFS are potentially sidelined.
- Assessment needs to benefit all children and not to focus resources on getting some children through to ELG. The current model puts some children, especially boys, in a deficit position. Furthermore, only 30 per cent of summer-born children reached a 'good level of development' compared to 52 per cent of the autumn-born children, thus highlighting just one important difference between children's birth dates.
- Any proposed Baseline Check would inadvertently become part of the Primary school assessment system since pupils' progress in particular areas (such as

literacy and maths) would be systematically monitored across Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 as a continuum. This would have the effect of side-lining the EYFS, especially if the Profile were to be made non-statutory.

- Practitioners should work with health professionals to identify children with additional needs as early as possible.

MID-TERM ISSUES

- Birth-to-six continuity means no need for summative assessment at age four or five. (*Currently there is a fixed expectation of attainment at five through the 'good' level assigned to the outcomes of 12 of the 17 ELGs.*)

LONG TERM ASPIRATIONS

- There are many ways to understand children's learning and there should be many interlocking ways to express this understanding. Continuing Professional Development for Early Childhood Practitioners should enable them to articulate and own a range of assessment strategies and be empowered by this.
- Schools should be ready for the children who arrive and not make children ready for them.

References

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