



Response to the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) consultation on the first year of the implementation of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in England.

July 2009

About Early Education

1. Early Education is the leading independent national voluntary organisation for early years practitioners and parents, campaigning for the right of all children to early childhood education of the highest quality. Founded in 1923, it has members in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and provides a national voice on matters that relate to effective early childhood education, advising parents, central and local government and through the media. The organisation also supports the professional development of practitioners through training, conferences, seminars and access to a national and regional branch network.

Introduction

2. Early Education is delighted to have the opportunity to respond to the QCA's consultation of the first year of the implementation of the Early Years Foundation Stage in England, that they have been commissioned to undertake on behalf of the Department of Children, Schools and Families.
3. This consultation response is informed by the individual responses of 295 early childhood education and care practitioners across the country who responded to a survey from Early Education to inform our response to this consultation. 64 per cent of respondents to the Early Education survey were members of Early Education while the remaining 34 per cent responded as non members of Early Education.
4. In surveying its members and networks, Early Education has sought to replicate the questions being asked by the QCA as well as provide those who responded, with the opportunity to reflect what is good about the EYFS, as well as present the challenges and issues that practitioners may be facing a year on into its implementation.

About the respondents

5. Our respondents worked across a range of settings. Many respondents work across multiple settings – either as practitioners or consultants, academics, advisors or trainers supporting the delivery of the EYFS. Some respondents were also employees of local authorities. There were also a small number of practitioners working in playgroups. Their views are also reflected in this consultation response.

Table 1: What type of setting do you work in?

Before/after school setting	7.9%
Childminder	14.7%
Children's Centre	18.3%
Day Nursery	30.4%
Maintained Nursery School	16.8%
Nursery class/unit in a primary school	10.5%
Reception Class	19.4%
Year 1 class	2.1%

6. The majority of our respondents identified their roles as “managers” or “teachers”. Other respondents described their roles as advisors, trainers, consultants, academic teaching staff and owner operators. A small number of staff also fulfil multiple roles in a setting – in most cases they both manage the setting and are also qualified teachers.

Table 2: What is your role?

Childminder	13.3%
Manager	35.5%
Leader	22.3%
Support Staff	3.3%
Teacher	30.8%
Teaching Assistant	0.9%

7. The majority of our respondents worked with children aged three and four. Almost two thirds of our respondents also worked with two year olds. Many of our respondents also worked with children aged 5 and 6 through their transition from early years to primary school and the national curriculum.

Table 3: What are the ages of the children that you work with? (all that apply)

Less than 1 year old	39.4%
1 year olds	42.0%
2 year olds	62.1%
3 year olds	85.2%
4 year olds	92.0%
5 year olds	45.5%

8. More than a quarter (27.4%) of our respondents had worked with children in this setting for more than ten years. Almost half (44.8%) of our respondents had been in their setting for five years or less.

Table 4: How long have you worked with young children in this setting?

0-2 years	22.4%
3-5 years	22.4%
6-10 years	16.7%
Over 10 years	27.4%
Not applicable	11.0%

Where respondents answered not applicable, they are currently not employed by a setting but work in settings as consultants, advisors or trainers.

- More than 90 per cent (91.3%) of those who responded to our survey had formal qualifications in early childhood education. The majority of those who held formal qualifications were qualified teachers (QTS). Many of our respondents also held other formal qualifications including undergraduate and post graduate degrees and diplomas in Early Childhood Education and Care, specialist diplomas and certificates (eg; SEN, Montessori Nursery Diploma) and a small but not insignificant number have also progressed their qualifications in early childhood education to NVQ level 4.

Table 5: Which qualifications do you hold? (all that apply)

I have no formal early childhood education qualifications	3.4%
Nursery Nurse Examination Board (NNEB) equivalent	16.8%
NVQ level three equivalent	28.6%
B Tec Foundation Diploma	1.9%
Qualified Teachers Status	51.9%
Early Years Professional Status	12.2%

Planning for the Early Years Foundation Stage:

- Respondents used a range of documents to support their Early Years Foundation Stage planning. The EYFS Statutory Framework and the EYFS Practice Guidance were the documents that practitioners used the most to support their EYFS planning, with a number also using the EYFS CD Rom and Local Authority produced planning guidance as a supplementary resource. Very few respondents used commercially produced guidance to regularly support their EYFS planning however the Early Education produced “*Planning for Quality*” pack supported the EYFS planning of approximately a third of respondents ‘often’, ‘sometimes’ or ‘occasionally’.

Table 6: How often do you use these documents for planning?

	Often	Sometimes	Occasionally	Never	Not seen
EYFS Statutory Framework	64.5%	21.5%	12.4%	1.2%	0.4%
EYFS Practice Guidance	67.9%	21.7%	9.6%	0.4%	0.4%
EYFS Principles into Practice Cards	39.7%	30.1%	20.1%	10%	0.0%
EYFS CD Rom	18.1%	30.2%	33.2%	16.4%	2.2%
Local Authority produced planning guidance	17.9%	22.0%	19.3%	18.8%	22.0%

Commercially produced planning guidance	2.9%	12.7%	18.6%	45.6%	20.1%
Early Education 'Planning for Quality' pack	7.6%	10.9%	13.3%	16.6%	51.7%

11. For the most part, respondents EYFS planning is influenced most often by children's interests, observational assessments of children, learning stories and schemas. Practitioners are also supported by ideas and activities from magazines and supplements, books and online resources. Many respondents' planning was also influenced from the training, conferences and professional development in which they engaged as well as input from parents. Many also noted that much of their EYFS planning is undertaken collaboratively across the staff team through brainstorming sessions.

Table 7: What else do you use to help with your planning and how often do you use them? (all that apply)

	Often	Sometimes	Occasionally	Never
Children's Interests	94.6%	4.6%	0.4%	0.4%
Observational assessments of children	95.0%	4.2%	0.4%	0.4%
Learning stories	54.6%	21.3%	12.5%	11.6%
Schemas	36.7%	33.0%	17.2%	13.1%
Ideas/activities from magazines or supplements	26.1%	49.6%	19.5%	4.9%
Ideas/activities from books	30.4%	49.1%	16.5%	4.0%
Ideas/activities/resources from websites/message board forums	31.5%	43.7%	15.3%	9.5%
Ideas/activities from television programmes	11.1%	22.1%	37.5%	29.3%

12. Respondents relied heavily on information from children to support their planning. Many practitioners also described a range of consultation processes that involved not only the children in their settings but also intelligence gathered through parents – through parental involvement in the setting as well as engaging with the home through home visiting.

"One of our Dads went on a business trip to Japan, so we looked at Japan on the globe, made Japanese flags and cooked some Japanese food to taste this introduced new knowledge to all the

children but also created a link for the child whose Dad was away. The child's father was chuffed to discover that when he got back, he could chat with his child about some of the things that he'd seen while he was in Japan and that the child had an idea of where he had been."

Table 8: How often do you gather information from children in the following ways to help with planning?

	Often	Sometimes	Occasionally	Never
Observations of the children's responses to activities	92.8%	6.4%	0.4%	0.4%
Conversation with the children	91.9%	5.9%	1.7%	0.4%
Observations with the children's play	96.2%	3.0%	0.4%	0.4%
Asking the children to contribute to planning the activities with you	54.3%	34.5%	7.3%	3.9%

13. Almost 80 per cent (79.4%) felt that their EYFS planning reflected an equal balance of all six areas of learning and development. Seventeen percent (17.6%) felt that their EYFS planning reflected an equal balance of all six areas some of the time. Less than five per cent felt that their EYFS planning only reflected an equal balance of all six areas of learning occasionally (2.9%) or never (1.3%).

14. Of the small number of respondents who felt that their EYFS planning only occasionally or never reflected an equal balance of all six areas of learning and development, the majority focused on communication, language and literacy or personal, social and emotional development. Reasons for this varied.

"We feel that focusing on personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy is key to underpinning all other learning."

"Guidance states shared reading and writing, guided reading and writing, in addition to phonics and speaking and listening which should be provided a certain number of times a week. These are all very time consuming areas and because our school expects that this guidance will be followed, much of what we do is heavily weighted in favour of communication, language and literacy."

"Literacy and numeracy have a high profile within the school and the National Curriculum and as I have Y1's in my class, this is where the emphasis is. I do however try to make sure that our activities incorporate the other areas of learning as well."

Table 9: If your planning "never" or "occasionally" reflects an equal balance of all six areas of learning and development, which areas do you focus on?

Personal, social and emotional development	65.4%
Communication, language and literacy	73.1%
Problem solving, reasoning and numeracy	38.5%
Knowledge and understanding of the world	34.6%
Physical development	46.2%
Creative development	46.2%

15. For the most part, those who responded made sure that children experienced all six areas of learning and development through ensuring that all areas of provision are resourced to support all areas of learning and development. Spontaneous planning of activities initiated by the children was another technique that is frequently engaged. The following techniques were also engaged by those who responded to ensure that children experienced all six areas of learning and development.

“We track children’s observed learning and play and plan activities to fill any gaps which are appearing.”

“As well as continuous monitoring, termly parents meetings provide an opportunity to reflect on every child’s progress in each area of development – and we then use this enhanced intelligence to inform future planning.”

“The six areas of learning are planned for both indoors and outdoors to accommodate different learning styles.”

“The six areas, although specific, are also completely cross curricular. We do loosely decide on a ‘topic’ but this evolves as we work with the children.”

Table 10: How do you make sure children experience all six areas of learning and development?

Create physical zones for each area of learning and development	54.8%
Use planning sheets/spider diagrams that cover all six areas	53.0%
Pre-plan themes or topics that cover the six areas	42.6%
Ensure that all areas of provision are resourced to support all areas of learning and development	83.0%
Spontaneous planning of activities initiated by the children	76.5%

16. The majority of respondents felt that the statements in development are appropriately pitched. The exception however was in the communication, language and literacy where significantly fewer respondents felt that the early learning goals were appropriately pitched. The following comments capture the sentiment of many as to why this is the case.

“Many of the early learning goals in communication, language and literacy are too highly pitched ... they might be aspirational but they are also aspirational for Year 1!”

“The emphasis on letters and sounds is too early and conflicts with age and stage of development”

“There is a big leap from 30-50 months to 40-60 months in communication, language and literacy. It is worrying that children are being encouraged to write before ensuring that they are physically ready to do so. There needs to be more emphasis on developing gross motor control before writing is even attempted. Making marks in sand and the like should be the first step.”

“There is a lot of emphasis on speakingit doesn’t emphasise enough on listening”.

Table 11: Do you think that the statements in 'Development Matters' and the Early Learning Goals for each of learning and development are appropriately pitched?

	Yes	No	Don't know
Personal, social and emotional development	92.3%	5.6%	2.1%
Communication, language and literacy	66.9%	29.7%	3.4%
Problem solving, reasoning and numeracy	84.5%	13.4%	2.2%
Knowledge and understanding of the world	92.6%	3.9%	3.5%
Physical Development	93.6%	3.9%	2.6%
Creative Development	92.2%	5.7%	2.2%

Delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage

17. The majority of practitioners who responded deliver the EYFS through child initiated activity where an adult provides support and challenge. For the most part, where adults initiate the activity, it is in response to observation of a child's interests.

Table 12: How often do you use the following ways to initiate activities?

	Often	Sometimes	Occasionally	Never
Let the children initiate an activity and continue without any adult intervention	64.4%	31.9%	3.7%	0.0%
Let the children initiate an activity, but an adult provides the support and challenge	71.1%	26.1%	2.8%	0.0%
An adult starts off an activity then lets the child develop it in their own way	62.3%	35.8%	1.9%	0.0%
Offer adult led activities, but allow children to choose whether they do them or not	54.8%	31.8%	12.9%	0.5%
Deliver a teaching input to the whole group	28.9%	34.6%	25.1%	11.4%
Deliver an adult-led focussed activity which all children are required to do	13.8%	22.4%	27.6%	36.2%

18. On average, the majority of activity in the settings of those who responded was equally adult directed and child initiated. It is however worth noting that when it was not equally adult directed and child initiated, in the areas of personal, social and emotional development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development, it was more likely to be child initiated than in communication, language and literacy and problem solving, reasoning and numeracy.

Table 13: On average, how much activity in your setting is adult-directed and how much is child-initiated within each area of learning?

	Mostly adult-directed	Sometimes adult directed	Equally adult directed and child initiated	Sometimes child-initiated	Mostly child initiated	Don't know
Personal, social and emotional development	4.4%	13.3%	49.8%	5.9%	25.6%	1.0%
Communication, language and literacy	7.3%	23.4%	47.8%	5.4%	15.6%	0.5%
Problem solving, reasoning and numeracy	15.0%	26.7%	38.3%	7.8%	12.1%	0.0%
Knowledge and understanding of the world	6.3%	18.0%	43.7%	12.1%	19.4%	0.5%
Physical development	3.4%	9.2%	39.3%	11.7%	35.9%	0.5%
Creative development	2.9%	9.3%	43.9%	9.8%	33.7%	0.5%

19. Of the practitioners who responded, the majority found physical development and creative development the easiest areas of learning and development to deliver. Problem solving, reasoning and numeracy and knowledge and understanding of the world were identified as the most difficult.

“Staff struggle how to develop the calculation and problem solving aspects of PSRN – we have previously concentrated on mainly shape recognition and counting skills”

“I really struggle getting students to see the mathematical opportunities in children’s play”.

“Providing the children with the opportunity to learn about their own community and the wider world is a real challenge. Levels of staffing and lengthy risk assessments restrict the opportunities that we have to take them out and give them ‘real’ experiences.”

Table 14: How easy do you find it to deliver the different areas of learning and development?

	Easy	Moderate	Difficult	Don't know
Personal, social and emotional development	64.0%	32.7%	2.4%	0.9%
Communication, language and literacy	63.3%	35.2%	1.0%	0.5%

Problem solving, reasoning and numeracy	50.7%	44.5%	4.8%	0.0%
Knowledge and understanding of the world	55.2%	39.5%	4.8%	0.5%
Physical development	73.6%	25.0%	1.0%	0.5%
Creative development	76.0%	21.2%	2.4%	0.5%

20. While many of the respondents struggled with less than ideal outdoor areas, the majority were able to provide their children with plenty of opportunities to be outside across all areas of learning and development.

Table 15: How often do children have opportunities to be outside for all areas of learning and development?

	Often	Sometimes	Occasionally	Never
Personal, social and emotional development	89.9%	9.1%	0.5%	0.5%
Communication, language and literacy	85.1%	10.6%	3.8%	0.5%
Problem solving, reasoning and numbering	79.4%	16.3%	3.8%	0.5%
Knowledge and understanding of the world	87.0%	12.1%	0.5%	0.5%
Physical development	93.2%	5.8%	0.5%	0.5%
Creative development	77.8%	17.9%	3.4%	1.0%

21. Unsurprisingly, those practitioners who responded found it easiest to incorporate learning using the outside environment in the area of physical development. Consistent with other responses, the area of problem solving, reasoning and numeracy was the least easiest to incorporate learning using the outside environment.

Table 16: In which areas of learning is it easiest to incorporate learning using the outside environment?

Personal, social and emotional development	40.1%
Communication, language and literacy	33.0%
Problem solving, reasoning and numeracy	25.9%
Knowledge and understanding of the world	50.5%
Physical development	56.6%
Creative development	30.7%
None more than others	48.1%

Assessment:

22. When assessing children, the majority of practitioners who made responses, referred most often to the EYFS Statutory Framework, the EYFS Practice Guidance and the EYFS profile

when assessing children. The EYFS Profile online exemplification materials and the EYFS Profile scales reference sheets were the documents that were most likely to be never used by our respondents.

Table 17: How often do you refer to these documents when assessing children?:

	Often	Sometimes	Occasionally	Never	Not seen
EYFS Statutory Practice	53.1%	21.9%	15.3%	9.7%	0.0%
EYFS Practice Guidance	65.3%	23.0%	8.7%	3.1%	0.0%
EYFS Profile	49.2%	15.5%	12.3%	15.5%	7.5%
EYFS Profile online exemplification materials	12.1%	15.9%	18.1%	28.6%	25.3%
EYFS Profile scales reference sheet	25.0%	12.5%	18.5%	25.5%	18.5%
Creating the picture	5.6%	14.1%	16.9%	12.4%	50.8%

23. Responding practitioners also used a range of other tools and systems to support their assessment – the most popular being schemas, learning stories and local authority produced assessment tools.

Table 18: What other systems do you use when assessing children?

The Early Childhood Rating Scale	8.5%
Leuven Scales	14.6%
Schemas	34.7%
Learning Stories	38.7%
Local authority produced assessment tool	36.7%
Commercially produced assessment	6.5%
None of the above	25.6%

24. For the most part, practitioners who responded gathered information from parents and carers to inform assessment during individual conversations with them before the child started at the setting (97.1%) and ongoing formal conversations (79.4%). The capacity to visit the child in their home before they started at the setting and an ongoing “open door policy” that facilitated ‘informal’ conversation at the beginning and end of each day at the setting were highlighted as key factors in laying the ground for effective working in partnership with parents. Other mechanisms for gathering information from parents and carers to inform the children’s assessment included phone calls, contact via email, “WOW” slips for parents to complete and return to the setting, book bags with sheets for parents to complete that relate to the child’s enjoyment of the book, parents meetings and evenings, coffee days where all family and extended family are invited to attend and celebrate the child’s achievements.

Table 19: How do you gather information from parents to inform children’s assessment?

Talking with parents/carers individually before the child starts with you.	97.1%
‘All about me’ fact sheets, booklets or questionnaires	62.3%
Ongoing formal conversations	79.4%
Home liaison books	39.2%
Inviting parents/carers to stay at particular times	65.7%
Inviting parents/carers to contribute photographs/artefacts	76.5%

25. Observation in most settings was frequent and for the most part integrated into the day to day life of the setting. Assessments were recorded most often using photographs (98.0%) and children’s learning journeys/record books/files (90.1%). Practitioners also used post-it notes and stickers to assist them record their assessments (83.2%). Respondents also reported a number of other methods that they engaged to record assessments including dictaphone recordings of conversations with parents and children, a daily centre diary and videoing of the children within the setting in order to review later as a team in order to inform judgements and support forward planning.

Many respondents also spoke of being required to use ‘data collection systems’ as a part of their assessment practice.

“We have also developed a ‘data collection system’ based on the development matters statements. This provides us with whole school data, enabling us to compare different groups of children and analyse trends. Data collected on entry and upon exit enables us to ‘prove’ progress and achievement across the school. This was introduced after our last Ofsted inspection as we were told that our very expensive individual learning stories were not enough, and Ofsted needed to look at numerical data”.

“My Ofsted inspector clearly did not understand assessment in the way we did and expected a lot of data relating to groups and cohorts of children showing their progress through the Foundation Stage. It would be helpful if either a programme was produced which could be used by everyone to assess progress of cohorts/groups by inputting data or Ofsted inspectors understood that children could be assessed individually at this stage.”

Table 20: How do you record your assessments?

Photographs	98.0%
Post it/stickers	83.2%
Children’s learning journeys/record books/files	90.1%
E-profile	19.8%
Record sheets	50.5%
Target tracker	18.8%
No record is made	0.0%

26. The majority of practitioners (71.1%) reported that all children were assessed equally across all areas of learning and development. Where that was not the case, more time was spent assessing children in the communication, language and literacy (23.9%) and personal, social and emotional development (19.8%) areas of learning.

Table 21: Do you spend more time on particular areas of learning and development when assessing children? If so, which?

Personal, social and emotional development	19.8%
Communication, language and literacy	23.9%
Problem solving, reasoning and numeracy	9.6%
Knowledge and understanding of the world	3.6%
Physical development	8.1%
Creative development	3.0%
No, all children are assessed equally across all areas of learning and development	71.1%

27. For the most part, practitioners sought to assess both while children were engaged in adult-directed activities and child initiated activities. However given the emphasis on practice supporting child-initiated activities it's not surprising that in areas of learning and development where assessment is not equal, practitioners are focusing on assessing in mostly child-initiated activities.

Table 22: How much of your assessment is done while the children are engaged in adult-directed activities and how much when they are engaged in child-initiated activities?

	Mostly during adult-directed activities	Sometimes during adult-directed activities	Equally during adult-directed and child-initiated activities	Sometimes during child-initiated activities	Mostly during child-initiated activities	Don't know
Personal, social and emotional development	1.0%	4.5%	46.5%	2.0%	45.0%	1.0%
Communication, language and literacy	4.5%	9.1%	49.0%	4.5%	31.8%	1.0%
Problem solving, reasoning and numeracy	8.0%	13.6%	49.2%	5.0%	23.1%	1.0%
Knowledge and understanding of the world	1.0%	8.6%	50.8%	2.5%	36.0%	1.0%
Physical development	1.0%	5.1%	49.2%	4.6%	39.1%	1.0%
Creative development	2.0%	4.6%	48.2%	4.6%	39.6%	1.0%

28. Respondents identified that the key aspects of the EYFS where they would welcome additional guidance and advice were demonstrating progress (58.3%) supporting child-initiated activities (47.2%) and planning (45.4%). Other areas where additional advice and guidance would be welcomed were also identified. They include, leadership, management and EYFS, working in effective partnerships with wider teams to deliver the EYFS, Ofsted expectations of the EYFS, developing cultural awareness, delivering EYFS in a mixed nursery,

reception and year 1 unit, supporting children with special needs in the EYFS, supporting newly qualified staff with planning and observation, how to communicate the ethos and the framework of the EYFS to parents and supporting the transition of children between settings.

Table 23: Are there any aspects of delivering the EYFS for which you would welcome additional guidance and advice?

Planning	45.4%
Assessment	41.1%
Demonstrating progress	58.3%
Working with parents	28.8%
Using outdoor provision	33.1%
Supporting child-initiated activities	47.2%

29. For the most part, those practitioners who had attended local authority training on the EYFS had found it useful. A number of respondents commented that the quality of the training was hindered by those who were delivering it as they “did not have practical experience of how the EYFS documentation and guidance translated into live settings”.

Table 24: If you have attended local authority training for the EYFS, how useful did you find it?

Very useful	19.7%
Useful	38.3%
No opinion	1.6%
Slightly useful	25.9%
No use	5.2%
Haven't attended any training	9.8%

30. More than 90 per cent of those who responded identified as being either confident (48.8%) or very confident (43.8%) in their understanding of the EYFS. Sadly, many didn't have the same level of confidence in all their Key Stage 1 or Key Stage 2 colleagues.

Table 25: What level of confidence do you have that you and others understand the EYFS?

	Very confident	Confident	Neutral	Unconfident	Very Unconfident	Don't know
You	43.8%	48.8%	6.0%	1.5%	0.0%	0.0%
Key Stage 1 colleagues	3.6%	20.9%	25.9%	18.0%	4.3%	27.3%
Key Stage 2 colleagues	1.5%	5.2%	17.9%	15.7%	24.6%	35.1%
Head teachers	11.2%	20.3%	28.0%	15.4%	2.8%	22.4%
School Improvement Partners	9.3%	20.7%	20.0%	9.3%	2.1%	38.6%
Ofsted	13.9%	29.5%	23.5%	14.5%	3.0%	15.7%
Local authority advisers and consultants	38.4%	32.9%	15.9%	2.4%	0.0%	10.4%
Parents/Carers	1.7%	11.7%	38.9%	33.9%	8.3%	5.6%

31. Practitioners who responded were invited to make further comments in relation to the Early Years Foundation Stage one year on into implementation. The following comments reflect the sentiment of the additional comments that were made.

“The emphasis on child initiated learning has enabled us to implement more child focus into our planning. Adult led activities still dominate the planning although the children have increased opportunities for input”

“I have met and worked with many advisors and practitioners who are pleased that the EYFS affirms their principles and approaches..... Recent lobbying by a small group of individuals who are not supporters of the EYFS has lead to increased levels of confusion ... we need to continue to reinforce the key messages about meeting the needs of individual children through observational assessment and play based learning provision – particularly to ensure that both parents and practitioners feel confident in their contributions to the children’s experience.”

“Overall, this first year has been very positive and feedback from parents is encouraging. I have needed to increase staffing levels to achieve this but have been fortunate to have had the budget available to do this.”

“I think that there might be a need to develop a universal assessment tool – like the e-profile for nursery school children as we are being asked to compare, contrast and track data from entry to exit in the Early Years Foundation Stage.”

“Many of the materials are only available electronically – would it be possible for them to be provided in hard copy as well? In many settings (especially private and voluntary) access to computers is only for managers.”

“It’s a great tool for both planning and assessment and also good to share with parents.”

“I think it is a step forward however there is a huge gap between a trainee finishing their course and understanding the EYFS in practice. We have to spend time re-training newly qualified staff – this makes the training ineffectual and also lowers the self-esteem of newly qualified staff who think they know what to do but have a qualification that does not take account of the Early Years Foundation Stage.”

“I’m not sure that in my setting the EYFS is properly resourced. Money needs to be put into reception classes to support the same ratios as in nursery classes. The jump from 1:13 to 1:30 is unmanageable. Reception classes should be either part of the Foundation Stage and supported equitably or should be classed as Key Stage 1 and follow the National Curriculum. I love the ideas and theories behind the EYFS but in practice it is very difficult to balance as I always feel torn between the two camps. It needs to be made clear to all other staff through government directives that the Foundation Stage is not about preparing children for Key Stage 1, but is a developmental period in its own right. Children need this time to explore and learn through play.”

“I must insist on ongoing training for EYFS to take into account teachers who may be moved from another stage of primary education to teach/work within the early years.”

“It has been extremely beneficial to be able to use a framework for all children whatever their additional need and for teachers to increase their skills of providing education appropriate to the child’s needs and development.”

“I like the EYFS. It gives me the freedom to take forward children’s interests and schema.”

“The additional paperwork associated with the EYFS, although helpful, sometimes causes issues with practitioners, as they feel it is difficult to manage. In a busy day nursery it is hard to find the time to complete all records as well as expected. Practitioners are not always able to devote as much time to the paperwork for the EYFS as they would like.”

“I think it has been a challenge but it is the way forward. Once you have been on the courses it is easier to implement. I think we will grow in confidence and knowledge the more that we use it. I have just had to give a lot of support to certain members of staff to get to this place.”

“Overall, I am delighted at the emphasis on learning through play, observing the child, planning from and for children’s interests and partnership with parents and other professionals. I think the EYFS is a valuable document and I am pleased that it has been accompanied by a good programme of training by LEA EYAs. I feel the document could be more explicit about outdoor play and learning, with more guidance on addressing staff and parental concerns about risk, health and safety issues outdoors.”

“It has been well received by most of the PVI settings I support. They have risen to the challenge of adapting their previous way of working and implemented new ideas well. For some it has been a longer more arduous process than others. I feel that it has been more difficult for reception classes in some schools to take on the ethos of the EYFS and for some head teachers to fully appreciate the more child centred approach to learning.”

“Last September as a team we found the EYFS very daunting however almost a year down the line, we feel we are getting there. As manager, I struggled with child initiated sessions as planning was previously very formal however I now see the benefits of being led by the children and their interests. I still sometimes panic that we are not covering all areas – but I feel that this is more my problem than anything else - I just need to keep eye on ensuring through continuous provision we are covering the ground correctly.”

“Some of the comments in the media and press about the inappropriateness of the framework frustrate me. If you have a good understanding of child development and good practice, the EYFS only enhances our work. Where it is being used inappropriately reflects staff’s lack of knowledge and understanding not necessarily a downfall in the framework.”

“While believing that I have always approached my early years practice with flexibility and creativity, it has been reassuring to hear messages from local authority advisors and on training, that this is good EYFS practice. It has been nice to have ‘permission’ to start from the child and base a curriculum around their interests, experiences and needs.”

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