

Dear Early Years practitioner,

The team at *Keeping Early Years Unique (part of the More Than A Score coalition)* ask for your support with the campaign to halt the proposed changes to the assessment structure of the EYFS. These were summarised in the government's response to the Primary Assessment Consultation. You can see the full document at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/primary-assessment-in-england>

Below are some key extracts from the document. These are followed up by our objections.

#### *On The Areas of Learning & Early Learning Goals*

- The seven areas of learning and development specified in the EYFS will remain unchanged, as will the number of ELGs underpinning this framework.

We will:

- Explore the feasibility of reducing the number of ELGs assessed and reported upon at the end of the reception year to the Prime areas and Literacy and Mathematics. This could potentially reduce the assessment burden and ensure that we are focusing on those areas that have the strongest correlation with future attainment, whilst retaining the breadth of the EYFS curriculum.
- Make the descriptors for a typical level of development against the ELGs clearer, and bring the ELGs in line with key stage 1, particularly the ELGs for literacy and mathematics.
- Ensure that the ELGs reflect the latest evidence on child development and predictors of future attainment and we will undertake work to strengthen the teaching of literacy and numeracy in the early years.
- Refine and clarify the ELGs in understanding the world and expressive arts and design, and bring these up to date with the evidence on child development.

#### *On the EYFS Profile*

- The purpose of the EYFSP has never been to hold individual schools to account for their performance and this will not change.

We will:

- Retain the existing assessment scales ('emerging', 'expected' and 'exceeding'), but we will review whether it is right to introduce an additional band within the 'emerging' scale and we will clarify the descriptors underpinning these scales (particularly for 'emerging' and 'exceeding')
- Explore ways in which individual information on a child's progress and development needs can be captured accurately and efficiently in order for year 1 teachers to be able to make a diagnosis of whether a child needs more focussed attention on particular areas of the curriculum
- Work with a range of experts and practitioners, and we will establish an advisory panel to review and analyse the body of academic literature in child development to inform the specific changes we will make to the EYFSP, including the descriptors underpinning the ELGs, the assessment and the processes needed to administer and maintain standards of the EYFSP. We will approach this in the clear context that we do not wish to increase workload or burden or compromise the integrity of the EYFS learning and development framework. Any changes to the ELGs will come into effect from the 2020 to 2021 academic year.

#### *On a new Baseline Test for Reception*

- We intend to develop a new baseline as a statutory assessment and to test and evaluate it so that it is ready for introduction in reception by autumn 2020.
- The Standards and Testing Agency will shortly start the process of engaging a commercial partner to work with them to design and deliver the assessment. Learning from the previous multi-supplier model used for the optional baseline assessments in the 2015 to 2016 academic year, there will be a single supplier for this new assessment.
- The prime focus of the new assessment will be on skills which can be reliably assessed and which correlate with attainment in English and mathematics at the end of key stage 2, most notably early literacy and numeracy.
- If new assessment in reception is to be introduced, then it would be useful if it could also provide some formative information to help teachers to identify pupils' needs and inform their on-entry assessments. We will ask the supplier to ensure that the assessment can provide a narrative summary of the pupil's strengths and weaknesses to inform teaching. This narrative information would not indicate how well a child was likely to do in future, or suggest their future progress score.

- The new assessment should be undertaken early in the school year, allowing for time for pupils to settle in, first half of the autumn term. If a new child starts after September they would need to complete the assessment no more than six weeks later.
- The new baseline will only be used seven years later to make progress measure at the end of KS2

#### *On workload*

- We understand that this means two statutory assessments will be administered in reception, we will work with the sector to minimise burdens.

#### **Why we object to the government's proposals**

- 1) One-off baseline testing is flawed practice as a means of understanding the unique child and as a benchmark for schools to demonstrate progress. There is extensive research – <https://morethanascorerecampaign.files.wordpress.com/2018/02/neu352-baseline-a4-16pp-crop.pdf> showing you can't create a reliable test of numeracy and literacy for four year olds.
- 2) Recent news headlines have highlighted that there is problem with child mental health in this country. Pressures are put on young children. Moving this pressure to an even earlier age is not going to help
- 3) The important areas of Understanding the World and Expressive Arts and Design are missed in the judgement of a 'Good Level of Development'. Both of these areas provide much of the content and variety of expression needed in Literacy and Mathematics to locate them in the real world. The current proposals will downgrade these areas of learning still further
- 4) There is an increasing focus on Literacy and Mathematics. This narrowing focus is of concern as it does not reflect what we know of child development research and norms. The proposals imply an earlier formalisation of teaching.
- 5) The time taken to conduct these tests with each child in the class is time wasted in the early weeks of Reception. This is the time when the children need to feel secure while we interact with them and get to know them. It is not appropriate or useful to assess skills they have not yet learnt or embedded
- 6) The demands of the revised National Curriculum have been set high for both children and practitioners. This is now having an impact in the EYFS with a drive towards a restructured Literacy and Mathematics curriculum

We urge you to take action –

- through your professional associations
- by contacting the Chartered College
- by writing to your Members of Parliament, and
- by asking your senior leaders in school to consider questioning the plans through their headteacher associations.
- by following More Than A Score on Facebook and Twitter.

Please use evidence in this letter to inform your conversations

We are calling on the government to consider the consequences of their actions on children's development and teachers' workload.

You can sign a petition <https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/four-year-olds-dont-need-exams> and share a letter to parents which you can use **if the school is happy to do so**. Please also talk about these issues with senior leaders and parents and let others in Keeping Early Years Unique know that you are taking action now and standing up for the children you will teach in future.

Thank you for your continued support and commitment!  
Keeping Early Years Unique

<https://www.keyu.co.uk/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/548117901996416/?fref=ts>

