

Schools begin teaching reformed Early Years Foundation Stage

Reception teachers returning to the classroom at 'early adopter' schools this week will benefit from improved curriculum and assessment as part of the reforms to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework.

As pupils return to school full-time for the new term, some schools who have chosen to be among the first to adopt the revised EYFS reforms will begin delivering the new learning and development requirements to Reception classes, with a focus on improving outcomes in language, literacy and maths. Teachers will also see a cut to their paperwork meaning that they can spend more time focusing on teaching and interacting with pupils.

The Department for Education has today [Thursday 3 September] published [new guidance](#) called Development Matters which will support more than 2,800 early adopter schools as they deliver the new framework this year.

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb said:

Getting every pupil back into full-time education is a national priority because of the significant benefits to their academic and social development as well their wellbeing.

These improvements will continue to drive up the standards of early education, strengthening practice while also reducing unnecessary paperwork for staff so that they can spend more time teaching and supporting pupils.

We cannot afford for the youngest children to miss out at this vital time for their development, which is why we have introduced these reforms to the Early Years Foundation Stage and why so many schools are keen to make these important changes from this term.

The reformed Early Years Foundation Stage framework, with its revised educational programmes and early learning goals, was published in July, following a pilot and a consultation which had responses from more than 2,000 early years professionals, organisations and sector bodies. The focus of the revised framework is on improving outcomes for all children, but particularly for disadvantaged children.

All seven areas of learning have been strengthened to support children's holistic learning and development. The changes also ensure all children in Reception year leave their crucial first year of school with a better grasp of language, literacy and maths – the building blocks for success later on in life – as they move into Year 1 and beyond. Other changes include removing the requirement for local authorities to moderate teachers' EYFS profile assessment within schools, freeing teachers from excessive burdens of

paperwork, allowing them to spend more time teaching and interacting with children.

Over 2,800 schools who have signed up to be early adopters of the revised EYFS will also be able to use the new curriculum guidance, developed by Dr Julian Grenier, and will change their practice and see the benefits before the revised EYFS becomes statutory for all registered early years providers in September 2021. Those who are not participating in the early adopter year may also choose to refer to the new curriculum guidance from now if they so wish, but they will still need to follow the existing EYFS framework until statutory roll out of the reforms in September 2021.

The reforms to the Early Years Foundation Stage follow the Government's commitment to improve the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) in response to the Primary Assessment consultation in September 2017.

This builds on an a package of targeted support for the early years including a new multi-million pound 'catch up programme' to boost early language skills in Reception aged children. This will focus on raising outcomes in speaking and language skills among young pupils whose education has been disrupted by Covid-19 at a crucial time for their development.

Iram Siraj, Professor of Child Development and Education at University of Oxford, said:

Although there is a statutory framework for the seven domains of the EYFS this Development Matters is a valuable and important starting point as non-statutory guidance. Importantly it states that 'it guides, but does not replace, professional judgement'. This is critically important in supporting and asserting that professional judgement is central to staff creating a contextually full and relevant curriculum and the right learning, teaching and well-being support for young children.

The document supports the notion that how we support children is important and not just what we teach them. It provides central place to active learning, playing, exploring and developing a young child's thinking capability. There are helpful examples of how practitioners can support children to learn within the context of high-quality care, individual attention, a creative curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. It provides a great foundation for managers, head teachers and pedagogic leaders in the early years to be creative, extend staff professional knowledge and support children by going beyond and above a basic curriculum.