Message from the National Director

I am delighted to be writing my first newsletter to you as National Director and feel very privileged to be leading the Early Years phase within the National Strategies at the present time.

I know that Early Years teams in local authorities (LAs) are putting all their efforts into ensuring that the themes, principles and commitments of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are being put into practice to help improve quality in every setting, and that those efforts are then reaping benefits for children. As we move into a new Annual Plan year our priority now is to narrow the gaps so that disadvantaged children can do better than ever before.

We want to put a renewed emphasis on supporting practitioners to help engage parents, fathers as well as mothers. This is because we know that improving the home learning environment can make a significant difference to children’s life chances.

Much has already been achieved since the statutory implementation of the EYFS. Our energies will now focus on improving quality through programmes such as the Quality Improvement Support programme (QISP), Social and Emotional Aspects of Development (SEAD), Every Child a Talker (ECAT) and Communication, Language and Literacy Development (CLLD).

We have just launched some excellent resources which will help support narrowing gaps including the
Inclusion Development Programme (IDP) for children with autism, *Building Futures – Believing in children* (DCSF ref: 00008-2009BKT-EN) and the *Problem solving, reasoning and numeracy* (PSRN) e-learning resource.

We see *Progress Matters* (DCSF ref: 00217-2009BKT-EN) as integral in helping to support the progress of those children least likely to perform well. All the resources are detailed in the latest edition of the LA Directory including the new e-learning resource available through the Early Years section of the National Strategies web area. Future plans include guidance for schools on supporting transitions, further instalments of QISP and PSRN materials and guidance for childminders and out-of-school clubs on implementing the EYFS.

Early Years and CLLD events continue this term in the regions but please make a special note in your diaries for the National Conference on 3 June 2009. The theme of the day will be Narrowing the Gaps and we are delighted that both Sir Jim Rose and Iram Siraj-Blatchford will be attending.

I look forward to meeting many of you there.

*Sue Ellis, National Director, Early Years*

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**Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)**

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) was commissioned by the National Strategies (NS) to carry out research into the implementation of the EYFS. In spring 2009 the researchers interviewed local authority (LA) staff and practitioners across the full range of early years settings. The findings were similar to those from the National Childminding Association, National Day Nurseries Association, National Children’s Bureau and Pre-school Learning Alliance. Generally there was found to be a positive picture of EYFS.

- LA staff and practitioners feel it supports effective practice well.
- Most practitioners have received appropriate training to support the statutory implementation of the EYFS.

The following issues have been identified for further development:

- Some out-of-school clubs feel that they had not been included fully in training and development.
- Many practitioners, including childminders, feel that they need additional support in delivering the theme Enabling Environments, in particular Observation, Assessment and Planning.
- Communication between settings needs to improve in the interests of continuity and progression for children.

These issues are being addressed in our new Annual Plan, on-going work with LAs, *Progress Matters* and the provision of further guidance for out-of-school clubs and childminders.

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**Every Child a Talker (ECaT)**

Children’s early language and communication development is now being enhanced through the ECaT programme in 97 local authorities (LAs), with a further 46 Wave 2 LAs joining the original 51 LAs in April 2009.
Early language consultants in ECAT LAs are working closely with lead practitioners in targeted settings to:

- share understanding about how language develops from 0–5
- interact with and talk to children effectively
- regularly monitor how children's language is developing
- support identification of children who might be falling behind
- consider how to get parents more involved
- design, plan and lead on language activities.

Upcoming events are planned for new lead practitioners in Wave 2, early language consultants and strategic leads from Wave 1.

**Buddying**

The Buddying projects started in summer 2008 in 30 Making a Big Difference (MABD) and 0–7 Partnership local authorities (LAs) promoting joint working between leaders and practitioners in schools and early years settings. The expectation was that the funding would enable LAs to identify approaches which could be shared more widely both within the LA and at a national level. LAs were given the freedom to determine the nature of their buddying activity focused on three of the following themes: leadership, progression, transition, effective practice and parental involvement. Many LAs chose to test a new range of models and approaches. Successful approaches will be disseminated to all LAs later this year.

**Communication, Language and Literacy development (CLLD)**

From April 2009 the Communication, Language and Literacy Development Programme (CLLD) is being extended to act as a funded programme to all local authorities (LAs). It is envisaged that this will help support the implementation of Sir Jim Rose's *Independent review of the teaching of early reading*. This extension of the CLLD Programme will ensure that all LAs will have access to additional funded capacity to support improvements in early literacy, both in targeted support and through a universal offer for all schools.

**Early Years Quality Improvement Support Programme (EYQISP)**

The EYQISP materials were launched in September 2008 with the aim of complementing the *Early Years Consultant’s Handbook* (DCSF ref: 00127-2008BKT-EN). Feedback to-date has indicated that these materials are proving invaluable in helping early years consultants (EYCs) in their work with settings. In particular the guidance on categorisation has proved very useful in supporting the deployment of EYCs in inverse proportion to success. Future EYQISP material will be distributed each term and linked to the EYC events.

**Social and Emotional Aspects of Development (SEAD)**

Social and emotional development is fundamental to all areas of learning, and the SEAD materials have been widely distributed to offer support to local authorities (LAs) in training practitioners in this critical area. These comprise two booklets, a folder containing the revised red SEAL booklets and a CD-ROM which includes all of these resources plus additional support material.

At the spring term SEAD events, effective practice in training with emphasis on the social and emotional well-being of both adults and children was shared across LAs. Evaluating the impact of
such training and development was identified as crucial; the suggestion being that it could be made easier if a baseline is set out at the beginning of projects and steps towards improvement mapped out.

The SEAD materials are available to be downloaded by visiting the Early Years section of the National Strategies area of the Standards Site: www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies

Parents as Partners in Early Learning (PPEL)

The Parents as Partners in Early Learning (PPEL) project began in October 2006 and concluded in March 2008. A wallchart (DCSF ref: 00672-2007POS-EN) and DVD (DCSF ref: 00671-2007DVD-EN) were produced as part of this with the purpose being to celebrate parenthood and show that what many parents and carers already do really is valuable for their children’s learning.

The target audience for the wallchart is parents and the DVD can be used by practitioners and parents together.

Many LAs and early years providers have found the wallchart very useful as a way of introducing discussion with parents about how they can support their children’s development and learning. It is now available in 20 different languages.

To order additional copies, please complete this survey by selecting the required numbers for each of the languages. It is necessary to complete all fields as fully as possible and to include contact details and address for delivery.

The facility for ordering extra copies using this survey is available until Friday 29 May, and after that date, orders can be made in the usual way via www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies’

All PPEL materials can be found in the Parents as Partners section of the Early Years area within the National Strategies area of the Standards Site, where you can also order copies.

Early Years: Working with parents and carers

This e-learning course aims to support practitioners in developing effective partnerships with parents, in order to enhance the learning and development of the children with whom they work. Working with parents and carers takes a case study approach. Within each of the case studies, practitioners are able to gather ideas, research the topic, evaluate their current practice and plan for their next steps.

Progress Matters

New guidance material Progress Matters – Reviewing and Enhancing Young Children’s Development was launched in April 2009. It consists of a package of material that will assist and promote the development of good practice among leaders and managers ensuring that all children make good progress through the EYFS.

Included in the pack are:

- Progress Matters – Reviewing and Enhancing Young Children’s Development (DCSF ref: 00217-2009BKT-EN) handbook outlining the guidance
- a CD-ROM (00217-2009CDO-EN) containing examples of LA systems offering help to leaders and managers in supporting the monitoring of children’s progress, as well as a suggested monitoring tool
- an e-learning module which uses the example tool to show how such a tool could be used by leaders and managers to aid the monitoring of their children’s progress and to plan next learning steps.

The monitoring of children’s progress based on the principles of Progress Matters will be a focus for the summer term Early Years Consultant (EYC) events.

Progress Matters can be found under ‘Recent publications’ at: www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies/earlyyears
Building Futures: Believing in children

The Building Futures: Believing in children booklet (DCSF ref: 00008-2009BKT-EN) invites all practitioners to reflect on the quality of their provision for children of Black African and Black Caribbean heritage or any mixed Black background. Set within the themes and principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), this publication is one of a set of EYFS materials giving additional guidance on inclusion. By challenging attitudes and asking sometimes difficult questions we aim to encourage practitioners to give due regard to the specific backgrounds and circumstances of all their children, thereby improving the quality of their experiences.

The accompanying DVD (DCSF ref: 00008-2009DVD-EN) can be used alone or with the guidance booklet. It is referred to at certain points in the text to support the discussion activities and to exemplify the experience of settings that are developing effective practice.

Problem solving, reasoning and numeracy e-module

The Problem solving, reasoning and numeracy e-module gives clear guidance supporting all practitioners to focus on the holistic nature of problem solving, reasoning and numeracy. It contains interactive screens and video clips of practice which offer grounded practical support for all.

Inclusion Development Project (Autism)

Supporting children on the autism spectrum is now available as Phase 2 of the Inclusion Development Programme (IDP). This consists of a booklet (DCSF ref: 00040-2009BKT-EN), accompanying DVD (DCSF ref: 00040-2009DVD-EN) and e-learning course (available online) designed to give support to mainstream practitioners in meeting the needs of young children on the autism spectrum. It follows the same pattern as the recent IDP Speech, Language and Communication Needs support materials.

Resources

CLLD

The Communication, Language and Literacy Development (CLLD) area of Early Years can now be accessed through the National Strategies area of the Standards Site. All CLLD online materials are available here or in the literacy area of the Primary Framework.

Early Reading e-learning course

Launched in March 2009, the Early Reading e-learning course consists of four modules and aims to provide teachers and practitioners with support for the planning and delivery of reading provision in reception classes. The stimulating and interactive modules illustrate the broad nature of the early reading curriculum and include video examples of shared reading, guided reading, independent reading and teachers reading aloud to children. The resource has been designed to meet the needs of a range of teachers and practitioners including newly-qualified teachers, experienced teachers and those moving to work in reception classes. The modules can be worked through in sequence or used according to particular interests and needs.

Improving quality and raising standards in the Early Years: A directory of resources for local authorities


The new updated version, Improving quality and raising standards in the Early Years: A directory of resources for local authorities like the original published in 2007, lists resources that can help in working with practitioners across the early years sector. Information is provided on what each resource is, the intended audience, how it might...
help improve quality and raise standards and where it can be obtained.

**Making a Big Difference in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

Many LAs nationally have expressed an interest in Making a Big Difference (MABD) approaches and are adopting the programme as a way of rationalising their Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) planning for increasing the threshold and narrowing the gaps. The *Making a Big Difference in the Early Years Foundation Stage* handbook (DCSF ref: 00074-2009BKT-EN) will help those LAs not in MABD in developing this work.

**Forthcoming resources**

**Building Bridges**

In autumn 2009 guidance will be produced to support transitions both within and beyond the EYFS. A particular focus of this guidance will be from Reception to Year 1, often known as the ‘forgotten transition’. There will be a follow-up to this guidance in spring 2010, with specific events for school improvement partners and EYCs.

**Talk for Writing in Reception e-learning course**

The Talk for Writing in Reception e-learning course will be launched in summer 2009. It aims to provide teachers and practitioners with practical approaches to using talk in supporting and planning for children’s writing development in reception classes, particularly through storymaking. It will include video clips of reception class teachers using the storymaking approach with children and showcase tutorials based around these clips that will help to identify good practice and provide ideas for use in classrooms.

**Support for Childminders and Out-of-School providers**

In response to stakeholder feedback, we will shortly be producing some additional guidance on implementing the EYFS for childminders and out-of-school clubs. This will be web-based and focus particularly on observation, assessment and planning.

**Problem solving, reasoning and numeracy (PSRN) – updated**

More PSRN e-learning focusing on mathematical development and mark making is planned to complement and extend the currently available course. It will provide video examples of child and practitioner interactions designed to support practitioner skills in developing effective practice.

**Working with fathers and mothers**

The EYFS and all National Strategies Early Years resources emphasise the importance of working with parents. We are now making a particular effort to ensure that our events and materials recognise that the focus on parents should explicitly include fathers and other significant males in young children’s lives. To date we have had positive feedback from LAs about the ‘Learning with Dad’ section of the Playing and Learning together DVD (00671-2007DVD-EN) and the Working with parents and carers e-learning course.

**EYQISP Professional Development Meetings (PDMs)**

Additional EYQISP materials are planned to be distributed termly, linked to the EYC events. The summer term material will consolidate the materials on ‘Support and challenge and the use of data’. Further material will support inclusive practice, observing teaching and learning, and narrowing the gaps.
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