



## EARLY YEARS POLICY ADVICE:

# PLAY AND PEDAGOGY

### IMMEDIATE CONCERNS

In order to improve learning outcomes for young children and families we recommend the following:

- Teachers' Standards for EYT and QTS be developed to include study of play and related pedagogy. This focus should be underpinned by evidence-based research regarding play, and include exemplars of practice to demonstrate features of integrated pedagogical approaches.
- EYFS be developed to ensure that high-quality play is given prominence, informed by professional knowledge of up-to-date evidence from theory and research. In conjunction with these points amend the Early Learning Goals and Ofsted's Early Years inspection framework to reflect the importance of play as soon as possible.
- The role of the 'key person' approach be emphasised throughout this age range including in schools, i) to ensure adults come to know and support a group of children and ii) that they understand all aspects of play, and use pedagogical documentation to record children's learning and development.
- EYFS promotes learning across *all* contexts including play, emphasising i) an appreciation and understanding of the existing cultural knowledge children bring to the setting and explore in their pretend play; ii) respectful and democratic learning cultures in all settings across this age range and iii) the importance of talk and social interactions to support learning, thinking and understanding.
- In order to improve the quality of children's understanding in mathematics, literacy (and other areas of learning), strong foundations are necessary to connect children's existing and new knowledge, including *cultural* knowledges that enable children to make sense of the role and purposes of subject knowledge. The social nature of *pretend play* provides meaningful contexts in which children can make extensive use of their emergent literacies and emergent mathematical representations (*children's mathematical graphics*) to communicate, thereby providing strong foundations for progression in school.
- Promote greater appreciation and understanding of how children learn and the importance of play among all staff working through the birth to 6 years age range: this should include relevant knowledge gained through initial training, through CPD and higher qualifications including study at

Masters degree level. This should include peer-to-peer networks for sharing of knowledge; exemplars of effective practice from recent research; staff research within and across early childhood settings through collaborative projects; Nursery and Primary Teaching Schools and network learning groups.

## MID-TERM ISSUES

- Introduce 'Specialist Leaders of Education' (SLE) for play throughout England, to be accorded equal status and importance as SLE for subject areas.
- The significance of OfSTED's influence on play and pedagogy in early years settings and classes should be recognised. We recommend that training for OfSTED inspectors should include knowledge about the value of play, to inform their judgements across EYFS inspections. Accordingly, Ofsted inspection frameworks which cover the early years should be amended to reflect the importance of play and the role of the 'key person' approach, as soon as possible.

## LONG TERM ASPIRATIONS

- We acknowledge the value of practitioner research in early childhood settings, and research collaborations with local Higher Education Institutions. Such research provides a means for developing professionalism, creating networks, and informing practice to achieve effective and high-quality play. We recommend that research into effective play, and the pedagogy to support this, is promoted as an integral aspect of staff development in all early years settings. Encourage practitioner-researchers to disseminate their findings locally and nationally.

### One of six documents from:

**BERA/TACTYC (2014) Early Years: policy advice and future research agendas**

### For further information and the full document see:

**[www.tactyc.org.uk](http://www.tactyc.org.uk) • [www.bera.ac.uk](http://www.bera.ac.uk)**

## References

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