



Dame Clare Tickell
c/o Department for Education
Consultation Unit Area Ground B
Castle View House
Runcorn
Cheshire
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4 October 2010

Dear Dame Clare,

Tickell Review of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The Advisory Committee on Mathematics Education (ACME) is pleased to offer some thoughts on the review of the Early Years Foundation Stage framework.

ACME is an independent committee based at the Royal Society and operating under its auspices, with a remit of 5-19 mathematics education in England. The EYFS review is therefore at the boundary of ACME's core expertise and our response is tailored appropriately, focusing on a small number of high-level comments relating to Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy (PSRN) within the EYFS. For more detailed comments in this area we refer the review to the submission from the Children's Mathematics Network, whose remit is better suited to this consultation.

In particular, we would like to direct the Advisory Group toward Sir Peter Williams' *Independent Review of Mathematics Teaching in Early Years Settings and Primary* (DCSF, 2008)¹; this is an important document and carries ACME's support. The Williams Report includes a chapter on EYFS which should be referred to as part of the review process. There are several recommendations in the report that have not yet been fully realised and it would be beneficial if these could receive attention through this review.

In response to a selection of the consultation questions we would like to make the following points:

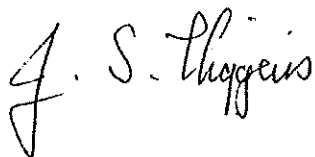
1. **The EYFS (Q12)** – the attention given through the EYFS to this crucial stage of a child's mathematical development is welcome and should continue. Mathematical thinking in the form of problem solving, reasoning and numeracy begins early; the Williams Review notes how mathematical learning through supported play activities at this age can provide a solid foundation for subsequent educational stages.

¹ See <http://publications.education.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/WMR%20Final%20Report.pdf>

2. **Transition** – the smooth transition from the EYFS into Key Stage 1 (KS1) is crucial to pupil progress.
 - a. The Williams Review notes the importance of the **Foundation Stage Profile** in providing information for the Year 1 teacher planning a relevant curriculum. This information must continue to be provided but needs to be more fully exploited to make sure the next steps are well planned.
 - b. The scale point level data provided by the EYFS profile consistently show that while many children acquire basic knowledge and skills too few are able to ‘use their developing mathematical ideas and methods to solve practical problems.’ It is essential that children have the confidence to apply their knowledge and skills, otherwise in KS1 and beyond teaching is forced to build on shaky foundations.
3. **Early Learning Goals (ELGs) (Q25)** – Too few children attain the goals related to using developing mathematical ideas and methods to solve practical problems, but this is not because the scale point goals are too difficult. Many teachers lack confidence in this area, are not sure how to recognise when children are meeting these goals or how to support their attainment through play activities. It is important that the ELGs are retained and that **professional development** addresses the weaknesses in the provision. The Williams Review recommended that all early years practitioners must have access to appropriate Continuing Professional Development (CPD), in which mathematics is given adequate priority. The National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics (NCETM) will be a key contact for the review in assessing the professional development needs associated with the EYFS.

Finally, we note in responding that there seems to be no overall plan for reviewing other educational stages in terms of the impact of the EYFS review. A systematic and joined up approach to educational reviews would ensure that pupils can build continuously on their knowledge and understanding from one stage to the next.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dame Julia Higgins FRS

Chair, Advisory Committee on Mathematics Education

cc: Rt Hon. Michael Gove MP, Secretary of State for Education