

# **Cross-phase Moderation at the End of the Early Years Foundation Stage**



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## Introduction

### The report

It is a requirement for Early Years practitioners to complete the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) in the final term of the academic year in which children reach the age of five. The primary purpose of the EYFSP is to inform year 1 teachers of the attainment of the child to ensure that they can, 'Plan an effective, responsive and appropriate curriculum that will meet children's needs', (*EYFSP Handbook*, page 5, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority [QCA], 2008). This report looks at whether or not cross-phase moderation, between Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and year 1, enhances this process.

### The chosen topic

We are committed to ensuring that assessments during the EYFS are valid, reliable, manageable, comparable and minimise bias. We have a duty to keep under review all aspects of assessment arrangements used in the EYFS, and to inform the Secretary of State if there are any significant failings in these assessments.

We review and engage with the development and implementation of assessment arrangements that give a reliable indication of achievement and report attainment consistently in relation to defined national standards. Therefore, the assessment arrangements we promote must be useful and meaningful to teachers, practitioners, parents and carers, and anyone with an interest in the development of the child.

The Expert Group on Assessment reported to the Secretary of State in 2009, and recommended cross-phase moderation of teacher assessment to improve reliability and trust. Relevant sections include:

### **Recommendation 2: Cross Key Stage moderation of teacher assessment to improve reliability and trust**

(a) 'Within and between schools, both Early Years practitioners and Key Stage 1 teachers should be involved in the moderation of EYFSP judgements', (*Report of the Expert Group on Assessment*, page 7, 2009).

In the section *Moderation between Early Years and Key Stage 1*, the Expert Group says, 'Key Stage 1 teachers should be involved in the moderation of EYFSP assessments within schools. This should lead to a greater shared understanding of the similarities and differences between approaches to teaching and learning in these two phases; greater trust between professionals at these two phases; and smoother transition between Early Years and Key Stage 1.' They also say that, 'There is great benefit in having teachers from the two phases involved in moderation of teacher assessment. This helps to develop a shared language and understanding, and

contributes to the development of richer, more useful information being passed on', (*Report of the Expert Group on Assessment*, page 14, 2009).

**Recommendation 5: Strengthening the quality of teacher assessment**

(a) 'The assessment capacity of the teaching profession should be increased further, by encouraging teachers to take part in moderation', (*Report of the Expert Group on Assessment*, page 8, 2009).

In the section *Cross Key Stage Working and Transition*, the report identifies the merits of teacher assessment, but points out that, 'It is vitally important that it is as accurate and detailed as possible.' It recognises that, 'For a variety of reasons, transition between Key Stages is not always as smooth as it might be', and that, 'assessment information does not always play as helpful a role as it might in facilitating transition.' It recognises that, 'Teacher assessments are largely moderated, at present, within the confines of a Key Stage', and that, 'there can be insufficient trust between teachers and educational professionals on either side of the "transitional divide", for example Key Stage 1 teachers may not have full confidence in the assessments made by Early Years practitioners', (*Report of the Expert Group on Assessment*, page 13, 2009).

## **Project objectives**

### **Research question**

To what extent does cross-phase moderation improve the provision and use of reliable and accurate information to year 1 teachers about each child's level of attainment at the end of the EYFS?

### **Objectives**

Our objectives for this project were to establish:

- which responsible bodies are accountable for advice and guidance on cross-phase moderation
- how well local authorities (LAs) are supporting schools in cross-phase moderation
- the effectiveness of cross-phase moderation and the extent to which schools are engaging in it
- the extent to which year 1 teachers are provided with, and make use of, reliable and accurate information to plan an effective, responsive and appropriate curriculum that meets children's needs
- how valid, reliable, manageable and comparable the information is and how it is used to minimise bias.

### **Related information in the *Regulatory Framework for National Assessments***

The common criteria used to evaluate assessments are noted in our *Regulatory Framework*:

- **Validity:** The assessment should generate outcomes that provide a valid measure of the knowledge, skills and understanding that the child is required to demonstrate, as specified by the assessment objectives. Validity is the central concept in the evaluation of the quality of assessments. Therefore, the focus of the body or bodies' processes and procedures is expected to be on ensuring and generating evidence to support the way the assessment outcomes are interpreted and used. Validity is the first review criterion, and the other review criteria are subsumed within it and, for that reason, it will be the focus for review activities.
- **Reliability:** The assessment should generate outcomes that provide a reliable measure of a pupil's/child's performance.

- Comparability: The assessment should generate outcomes that are comparable in standards over time.
- Minimising bias: The assessment should minimise bias, differentiating only on the basis of each child's ability to meet the requirements of the early learning goals and the National Curriculum.
- Manageability: The assessment should be manageable so that the scale of the assessment process is balanced by the usefulness of the outcome.

## **The evidence**

In order to reach our recommendations we did the following:

- started the project with a literature review to establish which publications supported cross-phase moderation
- devised questionnaires for responsible bodies, LAs and schools, which were shared with our Early Years Advisory Group
- conducted meetings and semi-structured discussions with LAs
- conducted visits and semi-structured interviews with responsible bodies and schools
- required LAs to provide case studies of good practice
- the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) conducted a large-scale questionnaire with 658 schools, of which almost two thirds had both reception year and year 1 classes.

The national stakeholder bodies interviewed were:

- Department for Education (DfE)
- Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA)
- Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted)
- Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA).

Although we originally intended to interview the National Strategies and the Children's Workforce Development Council, we now understand that they do not have any responsibilities relating to cross-phase moderation.

## **Dates of the research and final reporting**

We started collecting evidence in May 2010. By the start of 2011, our Early Childhood Team had:

- gathered information on the accountabilities of all EYFS-responsible bodies
- reviewed all aspects of cross-phase moderation in England.

This has enabled us to:

- identify gaps and overlap in the accountabilities of EYFS-responsible bodies, which will help to ensure that the whole system for EYFS assessment arrangements runs smoothly
- identify good practice and make recommendations for cross-phase moderation.

## **Accountability for advice and guidance on cross-phase moderation**

### **Department for Education**

Our first source of evidence was to look at the policy and requirements identified by the DfE. It was confirmed that no body has responsibility for cross-phase moderation, and that there are no statutory duties relating to it or to transition (outside of statutory reporting arrangements).

However, we established that LAs must currently have regard to any guidance given by QCDA in exercising their function to make provision to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the assessments made by Early Years providers in their area.

In conclusion, there are no statutory requirements for cross-phase moderation, although LAs must have regard for any guidance provided by QCDA.

### **Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency**

The following guidance, with examples of the most effective practice, is provided in QCDA's *EYFSP Local Authority Moderation Requirements* booklet for 2009/10, pages 17-18, to which LAs must respond. LAs have to demonstrate on their Profile Evaluation and Planning Form how they meet the key elements listed below.

## **Section L: Use of Data to Support Planning in Year 1**

The primary purpose of the EYFSP is to inform the year 1 teacher of the attainment of each pupil to ensure that the teacher can, 'Plan an effective, responsive and appropriate curriculum that will meet children's needs', (*EYFSP Handbook*, page 5, QCA, 2008).

<b>Key elements</b>	<b>Examples of most effective practice</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Training is provided for year 1 teachers, focused on the understanding and interpretation of EYFSP outcomes, and how these may be used to support transition, provision and planning in year 1</li><li>■ Year 1 teachers participate in internal EYFSP moderation within the school</li><li>■ Year 1 teachers understand and use EYFSP data effectively to ensure they plan a curriculum that meets the needs of all their pupils.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Year 1 teachers attend training alongside EYFS practitioners</li><li>■ Year 1 teachers participate in LA moderation events</li><li>■ Funding is made available to support joint attendance at training for Year 1 teachers and EYFS practitioners</li><li>■ Transition processes are developed and evaluated each year in response to EYFSP outcomes, to reflect the needs of the current cohort.</li></ul>

There is no other published guidance for cross-phase moderation.

The purpose of the work carried out by QCDA in relation to statutory requirements is to ensure that teacher assessment is consistent and accurate in relation to national standards, and supports the delivery of the curriculum. The work is undertaken under remit to the DfE.

As there are no statutory requirements for cross-phase moderation and there is no formal remit to promote or quality-assure cross-phase moderation between the EYFS and year 1, such activity has been a voluntary feature, which QCDA has been encouraging for some years.

Although there is no hard evidence, anecdotal evidence gathered from LAs during monitoring visits has led QCDA to believe that, despite its non-statutory status, cross-phase moderation has evolved very well, with many LAs and schools recognising its value.

QCDA also believes that, where year 1 teachers are involved in moderation of the EYFSP, the data appears to be more accurate and is more likely to be used.

Since cross-phase moderation is not statutory, there is no requirement for QCDA to ensure that it contributes towards EYFSP assessments being valid, reliable, comparable, manageable and minimising bias. However:

- there is some evidence that the data is more likely to be used by year 1 teachers if they have been involved in cross-phase moderation, and, if the data is used, this is likely to add to its validity
- although it may be regarded by some as time consuming, it could result in better progress for children and offer value for money in terms of teachers' professionalism (the time taken by EYFS teachers in making the judgements) and development
- it could result in teachers and parents having greater confidence in the data.

In terms of the benefits of cross-phase moderation, QCDA believes that it:

- represents good practice in respect to transition and continuity of learning
- enhances practitioners' professional skills
- increases understanding of the EYFSP
- values professional dialogue and supports professionalism
- increases the use of EYFSP data
- builds trust between EYFS and Key Stage 1 practitioners
- is supportive of, and is supported by, the nationally developed Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP) approach
- supports year 1 teachers in continuing to provide an appropriate curriculum for those pupils not ready for provision based entirely on the National Curriculum programmes of study.

Nationally organised training has been provided directly by QCDA for moderators new to the EYFSP, but it has not specifically addressed cross-phase moderation.

The training package *Continuing the Learning Journey*, produced by QCDA in 2008, can be used by schools to build upon the work that is already taking place to improve provision in the EYFS. The package has been designed to help schools provide children with a positive experience of transition as they move into Key Stage 1, and to show how to make the most effective use of the information that comes from the EYFS. Those who have used it have said that it has been very useful, and it has

enhanced practice. However, there is no quantitative or qualitative information about the extent to which it has been used, or about the effectiveness of the package.

Since it became a requirement for LAs to have accredited moderators for the EYFSP, all 152 LAs have been invited to send up to four moderators for accreditation over the two academic years 2008/09 and 2009/10. Approximately 550 moderators have now been accredited, which QCDA estimates to be about one third of active EYFSP moderators. Although the accreditation of EYFSP moderators does not specifically include cross-phase moderation, it does look at the development of skills that would be useful in cross-phase moderation.

QCDA points out that cross-phase moderation is but a small part of the transition process.

Practice is patchy. It is strongly embedded in some LAs and non-existent in others, with little consistency regionally or nationally.

To support schools in standardising their judgements, QCDA has provided a range of videos illustrating the EYFSP assessment scales and scale points; they can be found on QCDA's website at [www.qcda.gov.uk/assessment/352.aspx](http://www.qcda.gov.uk/assessment/352.aspx). These short clips of film show children behaving in a variety of situations directly relevant to assessment scales and scale points, and could be used to support cross-phase moderation. They supplement the written exemplification of national standards set out in the *EYFSP Handbook* (QCA, 2008).

The following were identified by QCDA as significant obstacles in cross-phase moderation:

- the data is not used
- the outcomes might be influenced by the need for schools to demonstrate added value
- there is no earmarked funding.

### **Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills**

Ofsted does not have any direct responsibility for cross-phase moderation. Under the current inspection framework, inspectors would look only at the EYFSP and the effectiveness of transition. The inspection judgement would take into consideration the accuracy and consistency of assessments, and only if there were an issue in this area would inspectors delve more deeply and look at specifics such as moderation.

Periodically, Ofsted does surveys to look at particular aspects of schools' work, which would include transition between all stages. During such a survey, Ofsted would look at how and when schools moderate and make use of assessment information. Such

surveys vary in scale and identify good practice. There have been two revisions to the EYFS since the most recent Her Majesty's Inspectorate report in this area, *Transition from the Reception Year to Year 1*. It states that, 'Many year 1 teachers were not familiar with the early learning goals and so the Profile was a record only of past achievement rather than an indication of what still needed to be taught. Few year 1 teachers had used the Profile in any detail during the autumn term', (*Transition from the Reception Year to Year 1*, Ofsted, 2003). Recent information from QCDA suggests that this situation is improving.

Ofsted says that there was substantial training for all inspectors on the EYFS, the EYFSP and assessment in 2008. However, the training and guidance for inspectors focuses more on assessment, and looking at validity, reliability and accuracy rather than specifically on moderation. The *Guidance on Inspecting the Early Years* makes no reference to cross-phase moderation.

As there is not a specific judgement about cross-phase moderation, it would mean trawling the text of individual inspection reports to find any such evidence.

Our conclusion is that, although individual school inspection reports may contain information about cross-phase moderation, Ofsted has not recently analysed these reports to draw any relevant conclusions.

## **Training and Development Agency for Schools**

TDA does not have any specific responsibility or remit for cross-phase moderation.

It is, however, the responsibility of TDA to ensure that Initial Teacher Training (ITT) providers deliver training to ensure that trainee teachers meet the standards. It is essential that the standards are fully understood so that high-quality training can be delivered. The effectiveness of the training is monitored by Ofsted.

The ITT requirements guidance (*R2.7, age range requirements*), requires ITT providers to, 'Prepare all trainee teachers to teach across two or more consecutive age ranges.' 'Providers must engage trainees with the age ranges immediately before and after the ones they are training to teach', and, 'engage them with the expectations, curricula, strategies and teaching arrangements in the age ranges immediately before and after the ones they are trained to teach', (*Professional Standards for Qualified Teacher Status and Requirements for Initial Teacher Training*, TDA, Revised 2008)

In conclusion, those training to teach ages 3 to 5 (EYFS) would also be required to engage with pupils aged 5 to 7 (years 1 and 2), and those training to teach ages 5 to 7 would be required to engage with EYFS provision.

## Local authorities and schools

Without exception, all the LAs and schools involved in the project said that cross-phase moderation was very important and essential to fulfilling the primary purpose of the EYFSP, as stated in the *EYFSP Handbook*, 'To inform the year 1 teacher of the attainment of the child to ensure that the teacher can, "Plan an effective, responsive and appropriate curriculum that will meet children's needs"', (*EYFSP Handbook*, page 5, QCA, 2008). It was seen as crucial to ensuring smooth transition from one phase to another and in securing continuity in learning. However, despite being thought as crucial, some LAs are not involving year 1 teachers in moderation with EYFS practitioners, and the majority of the schools we spoke to do not involve year 1 teachers in internal moderation of EYFSP outcomes. This is usually because of perceived lack of time and funding, and also because it is not a requirement. Teachers do, however, engage in a variety of activities (which will be described later in the report) to ensure smooth transition from the EYFS to year 1.

Although all the LAs were familiar with the *Report of the Expert Group on Assessment*, schools were not. Even so, when familiarised with the recommendations they were in full agreement with them. Both LAs and schools recognised cross-phase moderation as essential to smooth transition.

It also emerged, in discussions with LAs and schools, that moderation in itself is not sufficient. As well as moderation of EYFS practitioners' judgements, it is crucial that teachers are first and foremost familiar with national standards. LAs and teachers pointed out that the differences between the EYFS curriculum and the National Curriculum made it difficult to make direct links between the two, and, therefore, prior knowledge and understanding of both is vitally important.

In discussions with schools we found that there was often confusion between what is meant by standardisation and moderation. We make the following distinctions:

### ■ **Standardisation**

Standardisation is when teachers have access to and actively engage with nationally produced exemplification materials, to enable them to become familiar with national standards. As teachers become familiar with the criteria for assessment they can then make informed and increasingly accurate judgements about children's attainment.

### ■ **Moderation**

Moderation takes place after teachers have made their judgements and can engage in a dialogue focused on discussion of evidence of attainment (such as the teacher's knowledge of the child, anecdotal incidents, observations or

information from additional sources that supports the overall picture of the child's development) in order to establish the accuracy of those judgements.

In the context of the EYFSP, both these processes help to ensure that practitioners' judgements in relation to scale points are consistent with national exemplification, and are arrived at through a reliable, accurate and secure process.

#### ■ **Cross-phase moderation**

Cross-phase moderation helps year 1 teachers, as well as EYFS practitioners, to quality-assure practitioners' judgements and develop confidence in relation to assessment and understanding of the EYFSP. Agreement of the assessment judgements in the EYFSP is essential so that full use can be made of the information provided, in the knowledge that it is accurate and reliable.

National standards are exemplified by a range of materials produced to support this process. In addition to the written material contained in the *EYFSP Handbook*, QCDA has more recently produced a range of video clips that illustrate the EYFS assessment scales and scale points referred to earlier in this report. Although standardisation is often included in LAs' training, these sessions are not always attended by year 1 teachers.

Schools also felt it was equally important for EYFS practitioners to be familiar with National Curriculum standards, so that they knew what they were aiming for, and so that teachers had suitably high expectations for children's learning in the EYFS. The *Assessment Guidelines and Standards Files*, which form part of the *Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP)* materials used by many teachers in Key Stage 1, could be shared with EYFS practitioners.

#### **Local authority support for cross-phase moderation**

The feedback provided by QCDA shows that most LAs do currently have regard for the guidance given by it in making provision to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the assessments made by Early Years providers in their area. The majority provide training for year 1 teachers; in most of these LAs, year 1 teachers attend with Early Years practitioners, and many participate in moderation events.

The following data from the *Implementation and Moderation of the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile – Annual Monitoring Reports* for 2009/10 provides an indication of how many LAs, nationally, are involving year 1 teachers in training and cross-phase moderation.

	2009	2010
LAs that provided training for year 1 teachers	138 (91%)	133 (88%)

LAs where year 1 teachers attended training alongside EYFS practitioners	124 (82%)	131 (87%)
LAs where year 1 teachers participated in LA moderation events	124 (82%)	135 (89%)
LAs that provided funding to support joint attendance at training for year 1 teachers and EYFS practitioners	124 (82%) Please note that this figure denotes where training was provided for year 1 and EYFS practitioners, though the extent of funding is not clear.	131 (87%) Please note that this figure denotes where training was provided for year 1 and EYFS practitioners, though the extent of funding is not clear.
The extent to which year 1 teachers understood and used EYFSP data effectively to ensure that they planned a curriculum that met the needs of all their pupils	Patterns show that effectiveness increases over time	
	62% effectively 28% could be more effective 10% ineffective	77% effectively 23% could be more effective

Although there has been a slight decline in the number of LAs reporting that they offered training for year 1 teachers in 2010, compared with the previous year there has been an increase in those attending alongside EYFS practitioners, and in the number of year 1 teachers taking part in LA moderation events. More LAs are offering schools funding for cross-phase training, but it is not known how much. Even though the above figures reflect what LAs offer schools, there is no indication of the number of schools or teachers taking part. The feedback from LAs suggests that year 1 teachers' understanding and use of EYFSP data to plan a curriculum that meets the needs of all their pupils is improving.

Feedback from LAs and schools in this project demonstrates that there are inconsistencies in practice across LAs. When asked about the extent of year 1 practitioners' participation in moderation activities alongside Early Years practitioners, responses varied from no involvement up to 40 per cent involvement. In those LAs where this is not happening at all, it is usually because it is not statutory and there is no funding, although most LAs reported that involvement was growing. Even though training and moderation events are usually offered to schools at no cost, they do have to fund their own supply cover. One LA reported that some strong clusters of schools ran their own inter-school moderation meetings. Another LA said that, when supply cover funding was provided by the National Strategies, attendance was good.

When asked about LA support, 38 per cent of schools involved in the project said that their LA provided training for EYFS and year 1 teachers to attend together, and 62 per cent said that there was no training at all. When asked whether or not year 1 teachers took part in LA moderation activities, only 25 per cent of schools said that they did.

Given that the primary purpose of the EYFSP is to inform the year 1 teacher of the attainment of the pupil to ensure that the teacher can, 'Plan an effective, responsive and appropriate curriculum that will meet children's needs', (*EYFSP Handbook*, page 5, QCA, 2008), we asked LAs:

i. How well do year 1 teachers understand and use EYFSP data effectively to plan a curriculum that meets the needs of all children?

The varied responses included: 'Some do, some don't!'; 'In schools where consultants are involved, it happens'; 'Approximately 35 per cent'; 'The knowledge and confidence to undertake this is still developing and we estimate that between 60 and 70 per cent do this effectively.'

ii. How is this monitored to ensure that it happens once the children are in year 1?

Only one LA in the sample said that this was being done by School Improvement Partners (SIPs). The rest were not doing any monitoring.

iii. How are transition processes evaluated by the LA?

Responses were various, including: 'Not at all'; 'By the EYFS team'; 'Senior managers are supported by the LA to monitor their own practice'; 'Transition data is analysed on entry and at the end of year 1 and through feedback provided from moderation visits'; 'An annual summary is produced with analysis, priorities and impacts.'

The LAs pointed out that cross-phase moderation was only part of the transition process and that many of them involved schools in transition projects, looking at pedagogy and curriculum as well as assessment. Many LAs also provide training for headteachers and assessment co-ordinators, and produce guidance on transition for schools.

In conclusion, although there is much good practice relating to cross-phase moderation, it is patchy and inconsistent. It is not a requirement and there is no dedicated funding to support it. However, as pointed out by QCDA, although it may be time consuming, cross-phase moderation is likely to result in better progress for children and to better support the professionalism of teachers as well as promoting greater confidence in the data. It could, therefore, be argued as good value for money.

## **Schools' engagement with cross-phase moderation**

### **National Foundation for Educational Research large-scale questionnaire**

When 414 schools with both reception year and year 1 classes were asked if they carried out cross-phase moderation, 63 per cent said they did and 32 per cent of schools said they didn't. Five schools failed to respond to this question.

The following responses came from Early Years practitioners in 685 schools, of which 414 had both reception year and year 1 classes.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No response
	%	%	%	%	%
I would like training on moderation between reception year and year 1 teachers	16	42	27	5	10
I would like to ensure that the next school and the next teacher have an understanding of my pupils' needs	56	42	1	0	1
I would like the next teacher to have a full understanding of my pupils' needs	61	37	1	0	2
If I had the chance to discuss the Profile and scale points with year 1 teachers, reporting would be more valid and reliable	27	44	15	1	14
I think the reporting of pupils' progress would be more valid if I participated in cross-phase moderation with year 1 teachers	23	48	13	1	14
I would like my LA to provide more guidance and case study examples on cross-phase moderation and reporting pupils' progress	18	52	22	1	7
I think there should be guidance on the minimum level of engagement with year 1 teachers	11	45	28	5	11

It is clear from these findings that virtually all practitioners thought it important that the next teacher should have a good understanding of children's needs. Almost 60 per cent wanted training on moderation and thought that there should be guidance on the minimum level of engagement between EYFS practitioners and year 1 teachers. Almost three quarters wanted the opportunity to participate in cross-phase moderation and believed that the data would be more valid and reliable as a result. There was strong agreement with the view that reporting of progress would be more valid and reliable through engaging in more cross-phase moderation. Schools also wanted the LAs to provide them with more guidance and case studies.

In the schools where semi-formal interviews were conducted, teachers and headteachers all said that cross-phase moderation was extremely important, but that it needed to be a two-way process. Although this wasn't a question asked in the questionnaire, some schools mentioned this two-way process as essential. They considered it equally important for EYFS teachers to have a secure knowledge and understanding of National Curriculum assessment as for the year 1 teachers of the EYFSP.

They also thought it equally important for each type of teacher to understand the pedagogy and curriculum from the other phase as well as the assessment outcomes. In one school, both the EYFS lead and the year 1 teacher had experience of teaching in both phases.

This echoes the TDA's requirement for trainee teachers to experience the age ranges immediately before and after the ones they are training to teach.

In one of the case studies the following approach was taken, which proved most successful.

### **Case study example**

This is a high attaining primary school at all stages, with very good parental involvement.

Previously, in the school, there were separate leads for EYFS and Key Stage 1. At senior management meetings, the leads had very different agendas. The approach to teaching in reception year was to prepare children for year 1 by introducing more formal teaching. Members of staff were aware that reception-year children were not truly experiencing the EYFS pedagogy, and this reflected in their wellbeing. Also in year 1, pupils were not fully enjoying their experience, with a minority of pupils reluctant to come to school.

This formal approach was supported by parents, as it was seen as the correct way to help children achieve. The only transition arrangements for children moving to year 1

were a letter to parents, telling them which class their child would be in the following school year, and a one-hour visit by the children to their new class.

In recognition of these shortcomings, the headteacher appointed a joint EYFS/Key Stage 1 lead, who was given the remit to improve EYFS practice, including transition, within the EYFS and year 1, for both children and parents. So, although there was the need for year 1 staff to have confidence in and understanding of the EYFSP data, it was identified as part of a wider agenda of transition.

Many changes were made by the new EYFS/Key Stage 1 lead, the impact of which has been significant. Importantly, all children are now eager to come into school. The EYFS principles are fully embedded and staff practice reflects this. Teaching assistants are now recognised as key workers for children and contribute to the observation and assessment process.

Staff report that year 1 parents appear more relaxed as their children start a new school year, and their children are settling in much more quickly than previously. year 1 staff are also feeling more confident about their understanding of the individual needs of the pupils and their ability to provide for them.

The EYFS/Key Stage 1 lead reports that staff discussions are now more child focused, and there is improved understanding by staff of the expectations for children in each year group. Both the EYFS and year 1 results have improved. This coming year, it is expected that the improvements in outcomes will also be seen in year 2.

In another of the case studies the leader for the EYFS is also the leader for Key Stage 1. Much can be learned from the successes achieved by both schools in enhancing transition, where outcomes for children have greatly improved.

### **Year 1 teachers' use of information**

When asked whether year 1 teachers take part in internal moderation of the EYFSP, only half of the schools said that they did. Where there are no formal moderation meetings, EYFS practitioners and year 1 teachers are engaging in other activities to assist with transition, such as:

- teaching the EYFS and year 1 children together on a regular basis, for example shared golden time, shared stories, singing and themed days
- Year 1 teachers becoming familiar with EYFS pedagogy and ensuring that children have similar experiences in year 1, although one school said this was difficult to sustain given the demands of the National Curriculum
- an ongoing dialogue between teachers from both stages to ensure that children are making adequate progress and being sufficiently challenged in their learning

- structured discussions between EYFS practitioners and year 1 teachers (and between all teachers in the school) about individual children
- the EYFS leader observing children throughout year 1 to ensure that prior learning is built upon and that children are making sufficient progress
- sharing and discussing both quantitative and qualitative data
- discussions about what is expected for each of the scale points
- every staff meeting beginning with a brief moderation session, involving all staff and looking at outcomes from each year group over the year
- ensuring that all teachers in the school have experience of teaching in different year groups and stages.

We also asked schools how transition processes were developed and evaluated each year, to reflect the needs of the current cohort.

In schools where transition is effective, it is seen as an ongoing process with teachers from both stages engaged in dialogue to ensure that the children are making adequate progress and being sufficiently challenged in their learning. At the point of transfer from the EYFS to year 1, consideration is given not only to children's achievements and next steps in learning, but also to how they learn best and their friendships and interests. Year 1 teachers are mindful of the pedagogy in the EYFS and ensure that children have similar experiences in year 1. EYFSP data is analysed and matched against both LA and national outcomes. Areas for development are identified and become the focus for the coming year. For example, in one school writing was identified as needing improvement, so it became the focus for the coming year. Particular attention was paid to letters, sounds and reading, especially with boys, who were provided with a more environmental print. As a result of this year's evaluation the focus is now on mathematics.

Data is also evaluated for particular groups of pupils such as summer-born children, boys and girls, and so on. In one school, for instance, it was found that summer-born children achieved much better than expected. Teaching is also evaluated, in light of the outcomes, as are assessment practices. This information is then used to identify the continuing professional development needs of teachers.

In conclusion, there is much good practice in schools to ensure that an effective, responsive and appropriate curriculum is planned to meet the needs of children in year 1, but overall it is patchy and inconsistent. It is also recognised that standardisation is a prerequisite to moderation. Prior to agreeing judgements teachers need to be familiar with national standards. It was also strongly felt that this

should be extended to include EYFS practitioners becoming familiar with National Curriculum requirements.

Our evidence suggests that teachers feel that the benefits need to be recognised and understood by schools' senior management teams, as well as by EYFS practitioners and year 1 teachers. It was deemed essential to have a whole-school approach to ensure ongoing engagement in both standardisation and moderation activities as elements of good practice. Although teachers recognised the benefits of cross-phase moderation, this was not always supported at senior management level, and, so, time and resources were not provided in the way and to the extent that teachers would have liked.

## **Conclusions**

### **Validity**

The validity of an assessment refers to the extent to which evidence supports the interpretation that the assessment outcomes meet their intended uses. The validity of the EYFSP would be supported and improved in the proposed interpretation of the outcomes by the involvement of teachers in cross-phase moderation.

### **Reliability**

Reliability is about consistency and, so, concerns the extent to which the EYFSP assessment process generates outcomes that would be replicated when the assessment is repeated. The reliability of an assessment is affected by a range of factors such as the sampling of assessment outcomes and the consistency of teachers' judgements. The variability of these factors is reduced by standardisation and moderation of practitioner judgements.

### **Comparability**

Comparability is about generating assessment outcomes that are comparable in standards over time and between assessment cycles. Therefore, moderation should ensure that the level of demand of the assessment is taken into account when recording attainment so that pupils in different classes or schools can be compared fairly. This would mean that comparability is improved by standardisation, and by improved understanding of the context of the assessments, the assessment pedagogy and the curriculum the pupils have been assessed against. Cross-phase moderation would support this.

### **Minimising bias**

Minimising bias is about ensuring that an assessment does not produce unreasonably adverse outcomes for particular groups of pupils. The minimisation of bias is related to fairness to all pupils and is also closely related to statutory equality duties. Greater moderation and questioning of individual assessments by wide practitioner engagement is likely to improve fairness in the assessment outcomes.

### **Manageability**

Manageability relates to the feasibility of carrying out particular assessment processes. A manageable assessment process is one that places reasonable demands on schools and pupils. The evaluation of the reasonableness of the demands will be based on the scale of the assessment process on the participants, balanced by the usefulness of the outcomes. Although manageability is reduced by greater demands on practitioners through cross-phase moderation, the perceived benefits by practitioners probably outweigh this. This view is strongly supported by both QCDA and practitioners. However, if cross-phase moderation were to become a

more widespread feature of everyday practice, schools would need to be more creative in using available time such as that allocated to staff meetings; Planning, Preparation and Assessment (PPA) time; as well as professional development days.

We found that cross-phase moderation was regarded by all as a key aspect of smooth transition from the EYFS to year 1. Standardisation was regarded as equally important, as was the need for EYFS and year 1 teachers to be familiar with the pedagogy, curriculum, assessment practices and outcomes from one another's phases. The more teachers who work together and understand practice across phases, the more likely they are to trust one another's judgements and use information to plan an effective, responsive and appropriate curriculum that will meet children's needs, defined in the *EYFSP Handbook* as the primary purpose of the EYFSP. However, the benefits need to be recognised at senior management level and teachers provided with the necessary time and support for these benefits to be realised.

## **Recommendations**

As a result of all our findings we make the following recommendations:

### **Recommendation 1**

We strongly recommend cross-phase moderation of assessment judgements between the EYFS and year 1. It has been shown to improve the reliability and accuracy of information, increase trust between the two phases and help ensure that EYFSP outcomes are used by year 1 teachers to plan an effective, responsive and appropriate curriculum that will meet children's needs. For this to have maximum impact it should be driven at senior management level and involve teachers both within and across schools.

### **Recommendation 2**

We also strongly recommend standardisation of teacher assessment to promote better understanding and the more consistent application of national standards when making judgements about children's attainment. For this to have maximum impact, teachers from both phases should have opportunities to become familiar with national standards within the context of both the EYFS and the National Curriculum.

### **Recommendation 3**

In line with ITT requirements, teachers' continuing professional development should include engagement with the age ranges immediately before and after the ones they are currently teaching, with opportunities to become familiar with the expectations, curriculum, strategies and teaching arrangements.

## **Executive summary**

### **The report**

It is a requirement for Early Years practitioners to complete the EYFSP in the final term of the academic year in which children reach the age of five. The primary purpose of the EYFSP is to inform year 1 teachers of the attainment of the child to ensure that they can, 'Plan an effective, responsive and appropriate curriculum that will meet children's needs' (*EYFSP Handbook*, page 5, QCA, 2008). This report looks at whether or not cross-phase moderation, between the EYFS and year 1, enhances this process.

### **The context**

We are committed to ensuring that assessments during the EYFS are valid, reliable, manageable, comparable and minimise bias. We have a duty to keep under review all aspects of assessment arrangements used in the EYFS and to inform the Secretary of State if there are any significant failings in these arrangements.

### **Key findings**

Cross-phase moderation between the EYFS and year 1 is not statutory and so there are no responsibilities for ensuring that it takes place. However, given that LAs must currently have regard to any guidance given by QCDA, LAs are expected to provide information about the training and involvement of year 1 teachers in cross-phase moderation when completing their Profile Evaluation and Planning Form, submitted each year to QCDA.

Without exception, all the LAs and schools involved in the project believe that cross-phase moderation is very important, and essential to fulfilling the primary purpose of the EYFSP, as stated in the *EYFSP Handbook*. It is seen as crucial to ensuring smooth transition from one phase to another, and in securing continuity in learning. Teachers would welcome opportunities to work together to standardise and moderate their judgements. However, the involvement of senior management is essential to this process since careful consideration needs to be given to making best use of available time such as that allocated to staff meetings, professional development days and PPA. Although manageability has been identified as the main reason behind the lack of more widespread cross-phase moderation activity, it is generally agreed that this is far outweighed by the benefits.

Information provided by LAs to QCDA indicates that the majority of them provide training and opportunities for cross-phase moderation for their schools. However, from our talks with schools, it was clear that many do not take part and there is a lack of school-based moderation between EYFS practitioners and year 1 teachers. Practice is patchy and inconsistent.

It also emerged, in discussions with LAs and schools, that moderation in itself is not sufficient. It is deemed crucial that teachers are first and foremost familiar with national standards. It is, therefore, important for teachers to standardise as well as moderate their judgements, even though currently this rarely happens within schools.

Schools also felt strongly that it was of equal importance for EYFS teachers to have a secure knowledge and understanding of National Curriculum assessment as it was for year 1 teachers to have a secure knowledge and understanding of the EYFSP. It was also considered important for teachers in each phase to understand the pedagogy and curriculum of the other phase, as well as the assessment outcomes.

This echoes the TDA requirement for trainee teachers to experience the age ranges immediately before and after the ones they are training to teach.

Given the benefits of cross-phase moderation identified in this report we have made the following recommendations.

## **Recommendations**

### **Recommendation 1**

We strongly recommend cross-phase moderation of assessment judgements between the EYFS and year 1. It has been shown to improve the reliability and accuracy of information, increase trust between the two phases and help ensure that EYFSP outcomes are used by year 1 teachers to plan an effective, responsive and appropriate curriculum that will meet children's needs. For this to have maximum impact it should be driven at senior management level and involve teachers both within and across schools.

### **Recommendation 2**

We also strongly recommend standardisation of teacher assessment to promote better understanding and the more consistent application of national standards when making judgements about children's attainment. For this to have maximum impact, teachers from both phases should have opportunities to become familiar with national standards within the context of both the EYFS and the National Curriculum.

### **Recommendation 3**

In line with ITT requirements, teachers' continuing professional development should include engagement with the age ranges immediately before and after the ones they are currently teaching, with opportunities to become familiar with the expectations, curriculum, strategies and teaching arrangements.

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