

Proposal to axe Level 3 maths

The Department for Education's planned regulatory changes to the EYFS are currently out for

- Nurseries, organisations and training providers share their thoughts on the proposed regulatory changes to the EYFS.
- Removing the Level 3 maths requirement 'long overdue' says training provider, who believes it could 'boost' the number of adult learners taking up the qualification.



Removing the maths requirement would please many

There are hopes within the sector that proposals to remove the maths requirement for Level 3 practitioners will reverse the decline in qualified staff.

Nursery World spoke to nurseries, organisations and training providers for their thoughts on the proposed changes to the EYFS, currently out for consultation by the Department for Education (DfE), and the potential impact they could have if given the go-ahead.

The consultation closes on 26 July.

One proposal is to remove the requirement for Level 3 practitioners to hold a GCSE maths qualification, or equivalent, to count within staff to child ratios. Instead, the requirement would be placed on managers, applying to anyone entering a manager role or moving to another managerial role. The consultation says 'managers already in post at the time of this regulatory change would be exempt, however they would be required to obtain the relevant qualifications should they subsequently move to a different manager role. There would be a two-year grace period to gain the qualification following appointment to a manager role.'



Lisa Tray, director of Premier Early Years Training, said the change to qualifications were 'long

overdue' as the maths requirement has had a 'huge impact' on the sector, resulting in a shortage of 'good Level 3 staff'.

The requirement for new recruits to have at least a C grade in English and maths to be classed as a Level 3 practitioner was introduced in 2014. In 2017, the Government updated the requirement to allow for functional skills to be accepted as an equivalent to GCSEs.

Tray said the removal of the maths criterion would 'really boost the take-up from adult learners entering the workforce'.

However, she warned that the requirement for managers who qualified before 2014, and did not need maths to be counted in ratios, to retake maths if they change positions could be a barrier and result in 'excellent managers' leaving the sector.



Sarah Lanchbery, manager of the nursery at Abbot's Hill School in Hemel Hempstead,

Hertfordshire, said it had seen first-hand the impact that struggling to pass a Level 2 maths qualification has had on some of its team.

'By removing the requirement to hold a maths qualification, the proposal ensures that individuals with a Level 3 qualification, who may not have a strong

mathematical background, are still recognised as having a valuable input into the children's development', she said.

'Placing the responsibility on managers to ensure their staff possess the necessary level of maths knowledge promotes a culture of accountability and professionalism within early education settings.'



London-based Alyth Kindergarten's deputy head, Lara Thomas, told *Nursery World*

the current requirement for practitioners to have a GCSE maths pass or equivalent functional skills has excluded 'so many fantastic, brilliant teachers'.

'As an early years practitioner/teacher with more than 30 years of experience, the fact that I have not got my GCSE maths qualification (I trained and qualified in South Africa) or a secondary school maths equivalent has not prevented me from being a good practitioner and teaching the children under my care adequately', she argued.

Her colleague, keyworker teacher Emma Viner, who admits to struggling to pass maths when she undertook her Level 3 qualification last year after working in settings for six years, said 'common sense has prevailed'. She explained, 'I am an

intelligent, competent intuitive practitioner and without the encouragement, support and optimism of my team and tutor, I would have cheerfully given up on my qualification for the simple reason that I find maths incredibly difficult, complicated, very stressful and frustrating.

'A job as an early years practitioner does not need GCSE or equivalent maths knowledge. The requirement to achieve this level of attainment is unnecessary and, quite frankly, ridiculous.'

Experienced-based route

The DfE has also proposed introducing a new experienced-based route for practitioners to gain approved status to work within staff to child ratios. The new route would be available to those with a qualification identified as meeting most of the relevant Level 3 Early Years Educator criteria.

As with the existing 'overseas adaptation route', candidates would meet missing criteria by working in their setting while under the supervision of a senior member of staff.

Tray called the new route a potential 'game changer', although she said it would need to be 'monitored so people aren't put off from doing a full qualification at Level 3. A suggestion of an outside assessor coming in to assess against a fixed criteria may be a good way around this and take the burden off managers', she explained.

Other proposals in the consultation include:

- Amending guidance on allowing students on long-term placements and apprentices to count within ratios, if the provider is satisfied that they are competent and responsible.
 - Changing the qualification requirements for ratios so these would not apply outside of peak working hours.
- Nursery manager Sarah

critterion broadly welcomed

consultation. Early years settings and others in the sector give **Katy Morton** their views

Lanchbery said lowering the qualification requirements at specific times raised concerns.

'Children's learning and development are not limited to peak hours and children deserve consistent and high-quality care and education regardless of the time of day,' she said. 'By limiting the hours where qualifications are a requirement, children who thrive during typically quieter, non-peak, times may miss out on opportunities for enriched learning experiences.'

'Implementing a system where qualification requirements fluctuate based on peak hours could create several logistical challenges. Additionally, there is no "one-size fits all" peak hours that would work for all nurseries.'

Childminders

The DfE consultation also features proposals specific to childminders. They include:

- Reviewing the requirement for childminders to undertake pre-registration training in the EYFS, letting

individuals decide how best to achieve the level of knowledge and understanding required to register with Ofsted or an agency. Understanding of the EYFS will continue to be assessed to the same level by Ofsted or a childminder agency prior to registration.

- Moving the Early Learning Goals (ELGs) (1.7-1.10) into an annex in the EYFS framework. In cases where a childminder must do an EYFSP assessment, the ELGs are provided.



Tina Maltman, executive director of Childminding UK, a charity that supports childminders,

said it had looked very carefully through the consultation document to check it was only a 'slimmed down', not 'dumbed down', version of the EYFS.

She said it was pleased to find this wasn't the case, but it does

not believe the 'slimmed down' version will reverse the decline in childminder numbers, as hoped by the DfE.

Maltman was also critical of the proposal to review the requirement for childminders to undertake pre-registration training in the EYFS, warning it could be seen as 'setting some childminders up to fail'.

She explained, 'The change means potential childminders who have completed any training in the past and feel they have knowledge of the EYFS can choose if they complete more training or not – even if their training and experience is several years old.'

'It could also result in people becoming childminders with no or very little experience of working with children at all – the EYFS training allows those people to really understand that this is a professional role and that they have a vital role to play in the children's development and safeguarding. This is not babysitting!'



Childminder Lucy Oram expressed concern that removing the requirement for

childminders to undertake pre-registration training, would mean they aren't taken seriously.

Oram, who is a member of Childminding UK, said, 'The changes appear to segregate our profession, which should be regarded as equal to group settings.'

Maltman added that Childminding UK would have liked to have seen a requirement for sector-specific training for new childminders.

Moving the ELGs

Maltman said while it does not want childminders to focus on children reaching ELGs earlier and possibly missing out on valuable experiences, the ELGs could be overlooked in the Appendices as there is no mention of them in the Learning and Development section.

Ofsted

Ofsted's planned changes 'are not enough'

by **Katy Morton**

Ofsted has been accused of not going far enough with its planned changes to the inspection system.

The inspectorate announced a number of changes to inspections, but the majority only apply to schools. Just one change, 'significantly' altering the complaints process, applies to both early years and schools.

Proposed changes to the complaints process, which are out for consultation, include:

- 'Enhancing' on-site professional dialogue to help address any issues before the end of the inspection visit.

- Introducing a new opportunity for providers to contact Ofsted the day after an inspection if they have any unresolved concerns. Calls will be answered by inspectors relevant to the concern and not who carried out the inspection.

- Introducing new arrangements for finalising reports and considering formal challenges to inspection outcomes.

- Replacing the current internal review process with a direct escalation to the

Independent Complaints Adjudication Service for Ofsted (ICASO) and adding a new periodic review of closed complaints, using external representatives from the sectors inspected by Ofsted.

Other changes, which apply only to schools, include inspectors returning to schools with an Inadequate grading due to ineffective safeguarding sooner and making it clearer when schools will be inspected.

The Early Years Alliance accused Ofsted of 'completely underestimating the negative

impact of inspections on the early years workforce.'

Matt O'Leary, professor of education at Birmingham City University, said the changes were 'little more than window dressing as Ofsted seeks to appease those communities that have criticised its practice and demanded change'.

Senior associate solicitor at law firm Stephenson, Chloe Parish, said that while the move to revisit Inadequate schools sooner is a 'step in the right direction, many will consider that the plans don't go far enough.'