



**Office for Standards  
in Education**

# **Transition from the Reception Year to Year 1**

**An evaluation by HMI**

**HMI 2221**

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## Introduction and evidence base

1. Ofsted, through Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and Early Years' Inspectors, inspected the transition from the Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1 and the introduction of the Foundation Stage Profile over three terms in 2003. Inspectors visited 28 schools in nine local education authorities (LEAs) in the spring, when pupils were in their reception classes (Year R), and again in the autumn term when the same pupils were in Year 1. A further 18 schools in 10 LEAs were visited during the summer term to focus on the use of the Foundation Stage Profile. The use of the Profile was also evaluated during the autumn term visits to Year 1 classes.

2. During the spring term visits, inspectors observed 70 teaching sessions across all the areas of learning. In the autumn term, they observed 44 lessons in all the National Curriculum subjects except history: just over half of these were English or mathematics. As part of all visits, discussions were held with headteachers, teachers and teaching assistants. Discussions were also held with parents and pupils, and pupils' work was scrutinised.

3. This survey focuses on two aspects of transition:

- the extent to which pupils make appropriate progress from Year R to Year 1. Such progress includes developments in their social skills, in their attitudes towards school and learning, in their knowledge and in their learning
- the management of transition, including planning for curricular continuity, assessment and recording, communication with parents and the induction of pupils.

4. In an international comparative study published in July 2003, HMI noted that Year 1 teachers often felt caught between the expectations of the Foundation Stage and the impact of National Curriculum testing in Year 2, as well as concerns over curricular continuity and coherence between the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.<sup>1</sup> This report explores these and related issues, as well as providing further evidence of the implementation of the national literacy and numeracy strategies (NLNS) and their effects on the primary curriculum, including the Foundation Stage. It identifies issues of school and curriculum organisation affecting teachers' planning and the assessment of pupils. It also reports on the implementation of the Foundation Stage Profile nationally and at LEA and school levels.

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<sup>1</sup> *The education of six year olds in England, Denmark and Finland* (HMI 1660). Ofsted, 2003.

## Main findings

- The introduction of the Foundation Stage as a separate stage of learning has raised teachers' awareness of the need to plan for and manage the transition of pupils from Year R to Year 1.
- Primary schools generally supported the transition from the Foundation Stage in Year R to Key Stage 1 in Year 1 effectively and most teachers and teaching assistants were very aware of the concerns felt by pupils and parents. At its best, the management of transition from Year R to Year 1 is part of a broader whole-school approach to achieving good curricular continuity and progression in pupils' learning.
- Nationally, insufficient consideration has been given to the relationship between the areas of learning in the Foundation Stage and the subjects of the National Curriculum in Year 1. The subject-based approach of the National Curriculum has been interpreted sensitively by many Year 1 teachers. However, constraints of timetabling and the need to make sure that pupils make good progress towards the standards expected in the national end of Key Stage 1 tests sometimes lead to abrupt transitions to more formal approaches in Year 1.
- The two national strategies have been effective in providing schools with guidance to support progression and continuity in English and mathematics. Schools give less attention, however, to curricular continuity in the foundation subjects. In some Year 1 classes, the curriculum emphasises the NLNS at the expense of regular attention to other subjects. The result is an imbalance in the Year 1 curriculum, with insufficient time given to improving standards through other creative and expressive areas.
- A significant number of subject co-ordinators are not sufficiently involved in planning for transition. Co-ordinators for pupils with special educational needs contribute positively to smooth transition, especially when they are involved in monitoring the curriculum and setting targets for individual pupils.
- Teaching assistants frequently play an important role in the successful transition of pupils from Year R to Year 1. They contribute to assessment, support pupils with special educational needs, provide insights into the needs of individuals and maintain established routines where they change classes with the pupils.
- Effective communication with parents is a key element in pupils' successful transition from Year R to Year 1.
- The introduction of the Foundation Stage Profile has had unintended effects on the age at which children are admitted to school. Some schools were proposing to change their admission arrangements from three to either one or two points in the year to make sure that they were able to complete the Foundation Stage Profile at the required time. The result was that four year olds were starting school earlier than they would otherwise have been.

- The Foundation Stage Profile has created further assessment demands and schools are generally not clear enough about its purpose or value. The desire to create a common pattern of baseline assessment has been welcomed, but the complexities of school admissions and organisation have made its application problematic. Teachers have not found it easy to use or helpful enough in supporting transition and making judgements about pupils' progress.
- Very few Year 1 teachers during the autumn term used the Profile for pupils who had not attained the early learning goals. The absence of clear transitional links between the Foundation Stage curriculum and the subjects of the National Curriculum was unhelpful for teachers of those Year 1 pupils who were not yet at level 1 of the National Curriculum.
- Many Year R teachers were keeping far too many records and assessments which were not relevant to their successors in Year 1; where these records were for their own use, as in a mixed Year R/Year 1 class, their value was even less clear. Schools were not doing enough to make sure that their assessments and recording were of direct value.
- Almost all schools did not realise that they did not need to complete the Profile booklet if they were able to record assessments in another way, such as through their LEA profile. Some schools completed the Foundation Stage Profile as well as their LEA profile, thereby duplicating information and work.

## **Points for action**

- Those with national responsibility for the Foundation Stage and the Foundation Stage Profile should:
  - give detailed consideration to the links between the areas of learning in the Foundation Stage curriculum and the subjects of the National Curriculum
  - clarify the purposes of the Foundation Stage Profile and how the information is to be recorded.
- Those with responsibilities at LEA level should:
  - review the number and range of assessments teachers undertake during Year R
  - clarify the functions of any pupil profiles they devise and the Foundation Stage Profile, especially where the former have been modified to include the latter.
- Schools which admit pupils to the Foundation Stage should:
  - ensure that learning experiences in Year 1 build upon the practical approaches and structured play in Year R

- review the number and range of assessments required during Year R, considering the use made of the information subsequently in Year 1
- involve subject co-ordinators and co-ordinators for special educational needs in planning for curricular continuity from the Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1.

## School organisation and transition

5. The development of the Foundation Stage as a separate phase has highlighted differences between pupils' early experiences. It has also drawn attention to the differences in approaches to teaching and learning taken in the early years and the later National Curriculum, which affect successful transition.

6. By the time pupils enter Year 1, their educational experiences may have varied widely. Some will have attended a parent and toddler group, then a pre-school setting, followed by a nursery school or class, before spending up to a year in a reception class. Some pupils will also have spent time with a childminder. In contrast, some pupils will experience just one term in a reception class with no other previous organised contact with other children. These wide variations in experience support the emphasis in the Foundation Stage on developing pupils' personal and social skills so that they learn to work and play together.

7. Growing awareness of the need to improve transition from the Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1 led some schools in the survey to make changes to management and organisation to establish a discrete Foundation Stage curriculum:

*In one school, reorganisation included establishing an early years unit. This changed the class organisation from a mixed-age Year R/Year 1 class to a discrete Foundation Stage unit. This, in turn, prompted curriculum planning across the two Year groups (nursery and Year R).*

*In another school, involvement in the Primary National Strategy leadership programme led to the reorganisation of management responsibilities to establish a clear structure and rationale for overseeing progression from the Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1. Regular meetings between the early years and Key Stage 1 co-ordinators supported this.*

8. Co-ordinators for special educational needs contributed positively to the transition of pupils with special educational needs, especially when they were involved in curricular monitoring and setting targets for individual pupils.

9. In mixed-age classes, the difficulties of managing transition were sometimes more subtle, especially in small schools with mixed age classes of possibly three age groups and a wide range of ability. Arrangements included:

- Year R pupils moving into a Year 1 class
- Year R pupils staying in a mixed-age Year R/Year 1 class

- Year R pupils staying in a mixed-age Year R/Year 1/Year 2 class
- Year R pupils moving into a mixed-age Year 1/2 class
- Year R pupils staying in a mixed Year R/Year 1 class while other pupils in the same age-group moved into a single-age Year 1 class.

All these arrangements were liable to change, depending on the number of pupils admitted.

10. For the last of these, parents were not always clear about the criteria for identifying which pupils joined a particular class. In some schools, the decisions were based on age (which occasionally led to the same group remaining together throughout the primary school). Elsewhere, decisions were made on the assessments of pupils' ability: either informally, drawing on teachers' knowledge of the pupils, or more formally, using assessments of reading and, possibly, mathematics.

11. In the minority of schools with three points of entry, the introduction of the Foundation Stage Profile during the school year 2002/03 prompted some schools to review their admission policies, moving to either one or two entry points, omitting the one in the summer term. This was partly in order to provide enough time for pupils to be assessed against the Profile's criteria and is an unintended effect of the introduction of the Profile: pupils were admitted to school earlier than they might otherwise have been simply in order to give teachers time to complete the Profile in sufficient detail and with enough knowledge of the pupils.

## **Quality of teaching and learning**

12. Lessons were observed when the pupils were in Year R during the spring term 2003 and again when the same pupils were in Year 1 during the autumn term.

### **Quality of teaching in Year R**

13. The teaching in Year R was at least good in half of the sessions and was satisfactory in a further third. In about one in six sessions, the teaching was unsatisfactory. Good teaching had clear objectives based on individual pupils' needs, with reinforcement of the positive elements in their work. Child-initiated activities were used effectively to develop learning. A significant strength of the good teaching in Year R was effective assessment and planning which promoted pupils' enquiry skills. Teaching which was unsatisfactory frequently involved activities which were not matched well to pupils' differing needs, such as making Mother's Day cards using a standard stencil or template. Too often work was left incomplete and pupils lost motivation when given new tasks. This was particularly evident where adults did not encourage pupils, especially boys, to persist at one of a range of available activities. In the unsatisfactory teaching, monitoring and assessment were also poor.

14. Where the literacy strategy had been introduced effectively in Year R, there was a strong emphasis on using the elements of the literacy hour flexibly to maintain



both the pace of learning and pupils' interest. Assessment was used effectively to determine the questions to be asked and to raise the level of challenge as pupils' skills and knowledge developed. The weaknesses in the teaching of literacy were often linked to a lack of understanding of the skills pupils needed to participate in group or whole-class sessions, such as encouraging them to listen while others were contributing. Weaker teaching was also characterised by insufficient planning for pupils to talk and listen in a variety of groups.

15. In mixed-age classes, organisational difficulties affected Year R pupils. Sometimes the youngest pupils were withdrawn from the literacy session and worked with a teaching assistant. This worked well when their activities were planned and taught effectively. However, where all such work in literacy was led by someone other than the teacher, especially out of the classroom, there was often a focus on managing their behaviour rather than advancing their learning.

16. The good teaching of mathematics in Year R shared many of the characteristics of the good literacy teaching: work was matched well to individual needs, was appropriately challenging and focused on practical problem-solving. Teachers were aware of the ways in which mathematical learning could pervade classroom and outdoor activities. There was also a willingness to use information and communication technology (ICT), including interactive whiteboards. Again, the unsatisfactory teaching did not take enough account of individuals' needs and focused too often on early written recording of mathematics.

17. The general issues about the quality of teaching of literacy and mathematics applied in the other areas of learning. The good teaching showed:

- clear objectives
- judicious use of the areas of learning and appropriate aspects of the NLNS for planning the curriculum
- appropriate challenge in activities, enabling pupils to work at their own level
- high quality questioning
- the involvement of all pupils, motivating them to learn
- the use of appropriate language to extend pupils' learning and vocabulary
- the encouragement of pupils to persist and develop their concentration
- the provision of first-hand experiences, both indoors and outdoors, to develop pupils' skills of investigation

The unsatisfactory teaching did not build enough upon pupils' earlier learning and gave them insufficient feedback on how they were progressing.

18. Most teachers sought to develop the early skills of reading, writing and mathematics sensitively, appropriately introducing elements of the literacy hour and daily mathematics lesson as the reception year progressed. However, this was not easy where new pupils were admitted in the summer term: they had to acquire the social skills of settling into a new class alongside pupils who were already familiar with routines; at the same time, they were introduced to the structured approaches of whole class and group work sessions. The skills needed to support learning, such as social skills, perhaps understandably often received less emphasis than the content of the curriculum.

### **Quality of teaching in Year 1**

19. In Year 1, nearly half of the teaching of English was good or better, with very little that was unsatisfactory. Much of the teaching took place through the literacy hour. Where the teaching was unsatisfactory, too little consideration was given to what pupils needed to learn, especially where they still had some way to go before reaching the early learning goals.

20. The teaching of mathematics was always at least satisfactory and was good in just under a quarter of lessons. Similar issues to those in English held back the satisfactory lessons from being good. Too often, the work did not meet the needs of all pupils well enough, especially for those who had not reached the early learning goals. In addition, not all the tasks had a sufficiently clear mathematical purpose, such as those which simply involved cutting out pictures of similar objects. In these cases, the work was not always completed properly and the activities did no more than occupy some pupils whilst the teacher taught others directly.

21. With the exceptions of art and design, physical education and design and technology, the quality of teaching in most of the other lessons in Year 1 classes was mostly satisfactory. In design and technology, and in art and design, the quality of the teaching in nearly three quarters of the lessons was at least good. This was either because the teaching met the needs of individuals successfully or because the group work was organised effectively. Pupils clearly enjoyed the sessions and benefited from them.

22. The unsatisfactory teaching in Year 1 failed to build adequately on the pupils' skills and knowledge and teachers were not making sufficient use of the information from Year R when planning for the pupils in Year 1. Although their social development was generally well supported, their skills were not always used across the curriculum. Less mature pupils, for example, had difficulty concentrating in longer sessions such as the whole class work in the literacy hour.

### **Quality of learning in Year R and Year 1**

23. In reception classes, the quality of pupils' learning was good or better in half of the lessons and satisfactory in a third. Clear routines and expectations helped pupils to settle quickly and to work in pairs or groups. In nearly two thirds of lessons in Year 1, learning was satisfactory: in half of these it was good or better. Few lessons were unsatisfactory in terms of pupils' learning.

24. In a small number of Year R classes, staff found it difficult to settle some boys into social routines such as listening, concentrating and focusing on a task, as well as taking part in the full range of activities rather than equipment such as the sand tray. One teacher felt they needed to 'let off steam', but effective approaches showed pupils channelling their interests through activities requiring first-hand experiences, accompanied by some form of recording to promote early writing skills.

25. Such behaviour in Year R also affected pupils' learning in literacy and mathematics; some discussion sessions, for example, were dominated by a few boys or pupils who did not listen to each other. Mathematical learning was weakest where tasks were not matched closely enough to pupils' needs. This led to disruption, poor concentration and an over-reliance on adult support because pupils were not clear what to do next.

26. In both Year R and Year 1, whole-class discussions were often too long, lasting up to 30 minutes: many pupils became bored. In Year R, this was partly related to pupils' limited concentration span and their need for adult support to focus their attention, and partly, too, to their lack of skill in working co-operatively. Often they would become more involved with the lesson again when it was time to work more actively.

27. In Year 1 the most frequent causes of poor concentration were, similarly, over-long whole-class sessions, poorly organised 'circle time' discussions where not every pupil was fully involved and, most frequently, work which was not matched well enough to pupils' needs. In some classes, teachers did not take enough account of pupils' individual capabilities – not just in terms of knowledge, but also the extent to which they were able to work independently or needed regular adult support to sustain their involvement.

28. In both Year R and Year 1, some teachers used mixed-sex pairs of pupils, working together often on computer-based tasks. This was only partly successful: too often the boy used the keyboard whilst the girl watched or, frequently, provided the answers for the boy to type in.

29. Overall, however, the development of personal and social learning was good in Year R and was built upon successfully in Year 1. Pupils showed they were able to work in a variety of groups and individually. Where work was planned to meet the needs of individuals and small groups of pupils, the development of skills and knowledge was good across both year groups.

## **Curricular continuity and its management**

30. Ofsted's survey on the education of six year olds, referred to above, noted that many teachers in England were uncertain about the relationship between the Foundation Stage curriculum, organised in areas of learning, and the subjects of the National Curriculum in Year 1, as well as the respective priorities of both. The tensions many teachers identified were exacerbated by the introduction of the two national strategies and by teachers' own views about what sort of activities are most appropriate for four, five and six year olds. Such issues are called into sharper focus in mixed-age classes. One teacher expressed her concerns: 'I feel guilty that my

planning is not as good as it should be for my mixed-age class. Examples of Foundation Stage [planning] never address the mixed-age issue directly. The examples come from nursery or Year R classes, not from those with older children as well.' Teachers also recognise the need for pupils to make good progress in Year 1 in preparation for the national tests towards the end of Year 2. In practice, they seek to adapt both the later part of the reception year and the start of Year 1 to make the transition as smooth as possible. Nevertheless, there is a tension which derives from teachers' wish to match, somehow, the 'stepping stones' which lead up to the goals of the areas of learning, with the initial stages of the National Curriculum.

31. The Foundation Stage Profile also confused many teachers by including assessments which are 'beyond the level of the early learning goals', but which are not linked explicitly to the levels of the National Curriculum. The lack of clear links between the two stages meant that many Year 1 teachers began to introduce the subjects of the National Curriculum at the start of the autumn term, irrespective of the pupils' prior attainment. Over eight in ten of the schools in the survey did this, whilst many had used the NLNS frameworks for teaching during Year R. Two in three of the schools taught a literacy hour or daily mathematics lesson within a few weeks of the start of the school year.

32. Overall, the main changes in the curriculum between Year R and Year 1 in the current survey reflect the greater emphasis given to teaching literacy and mathematics. This was noted by teachers, teaching assistants, parents, and also the pupils. Regret was also expressed at the reduction in time for other creative and expressive areas of the curriculum. The sense was of provision which swung heavily and suddenly, for all pupils at the beginning of Year 1, towards literacy and mathematics.

33. The management of curricular continuity is delegated largely to Year R and Year 1 teachers, effected mainly through regular meetings, reviews of planning and, in a few cases, moderating judgements on pupils' attainment and progress. In a significant number of the schools, subject co-ordinators were not sufficiently involved in plans for transition from the Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1. Many had little understanding of progression and continuity across the full age-range from the Foundation Stage to the end of Key Stage 2, and many subject co-ordinators working in Key Stage 2 lacked experience of working with younger pupils.

34. In a number of the schools, the role of the subject coordinator across the whole school was complemented by that of key stage co-ordinators. Especially in the Foundation Stage, these tended to have responsibility for subject planning, mainly because of their expertise with that age group and their knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Where such arrangements formed part of a planned whole-school structure, the two types of coordinators supported each other well:

*One school set up fortnightly meetings between the Foundation Stage coordinator and the Key Stage 1 coordinator to plan ways of teaching the curriculum which were appropriate to each key stage and yet shared common elements. Such meetings were occasionally joined by subject coordinators.*

35. The clearest curricular links between the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 were in planning and teaching of literacy and mathematics, with curriculum policies

and other documentation often referring appropriately to the Foundation Stage. Only about two thirds of all subject policies, however, referred to the Foundation Stage as well as to the National Curriculum in Years 1 to 6. A similar proportion of subject co-ordinators had received training about the Foundation Stage Profile. Apart from some physical education coordinators, other subject co-ordinators did not consider that there was a good match between the National Curriculum planning for their subject and the organisation of the areas of learning in the Foundation Stage. Only where geography was taught in Key Stage 1 through humanities was the link with knowledge and understanding of the world in the Foundation Stage felt to be useful by co-ordinators.

36. In about half of the schools, the funding of resources through allocations to classes rather than by subjects had a tendency to weaken links between the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. There was an implicit encouragement for Year R teachers to work separately from later classes by providing resources suitable for that age group rather than seeing the Foundation Stage as an integral part of the school's approach to teaching and learning. However, many teachers felt that funding classes rather than subjects provided a fairer allocation to the younger age groups.

## **Assessment, induction and transition**

37. There was a growing awareness by schools of the importance of assessment data in the transition from the Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1. The most positive aspect of transition was the exchange of information between Year R and Year 1 teachers. This applied especially to information about pupils' progress in literacy, mathematics and personal and social education.

38. Year R and Year 1 teachers exchanged a great deal of information and met regularly, often with their support staff. Such meetings included discussions about individual pupils and the moderation of judgements about pupils' work. Sometimes, targets were set for individuals or groups. These procedures were important in supporting curricular continuity and progression in pupils' learning. Some teachers also considered, jointly, the grouping of pupils which might be advantageous in Year 1, taking into account pupils' learning and their personal and social development. High staff turnover, however, or the employment of part-time teachers and assistants, hampered the exchange of information because meetings were not sufficiently regular for staff to discuss planning and assessments.

39. Most schools transferred from Year R to Year 1, as a minimum:

- the Foundation Stage Profile
- samples of pupils' work
- records of reading and mathematics
- copies of the reports sent home to parents
- notes on some or all pupils.

40. About one third of the schools provided pupil Profiles with baseline assessments made on entry to the nursery class or Year R, curriculum documentation and data from Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS). The transfer of information was less well developed in areas other than communication, language and literacy and mathematical development.

41. Three quarters of the Year 1 teachers said that the reading records were useful, with slightly fewer finding the mathematics record, notes on individual pupils and samples of work helpful. Just over half had used the Foundation Stage Profile, although not many had found it particularly helpful. Apart from curriculum documentation, which half of the teachers had used, other documents were used by under a third of staff.

42. The reasons for transferring so much information were not always clear. Some assessments, such as the Profile, were national policy. Others came about because teachers found them useful, such as reading and mathematics records and notes on pupils. Others were transferred mainly because they had been kept over time and formed a record of a pupil's past progress: some profiles, for instance, recorded progress since the age of two. In many schools, headteachers did not monitor adequately the amount of work involved for staff or the value of the transferred information. The large amount of time spent in completing records and assessments was very much called into question when the pupils were in a mixed-age class and, in essence, teachers were passing on the information to themselves.

43. Arrangements for pupils' transition from Year R to Year 1 varied considerably. In a number of schools, events such as assemblies, school performances and activity days helpfully involved both year groups. In some cases, Year R pupils joined Year 1 for specific sessions, such as for phonics or introductions to work in literacy and numeracy in Year 1. For their own development, Year 1 teachers sometimes spent a short time in Year R. Such practices helped teachers and pupils to develop an awareness of the differences and similarities between the two year groups, with teachers adapting their approaches as a result. For example, in Year R many schools had developed more direct teaching during the summer term, introducing elements of the literacy hour and daily mathematics lesson. The autumn term in Year 1 showed more flexibility, including the use of outdoor activities, an awareness of the need for teaching to take account of pupils' social development and ways of developing pupils' capacity to concentrate for longer.

44. When pupils entered Year 1, most staff worked hard to make sure that the environment had features similar to those in the Year R classroom so that pupils felt reassured and were able to find equipment and use displays to support their independent learning. In some schools, Year 1 pupils used the Year R outdoor area, enhancing common experiences across the two year groups.

45. Considerable advantages were gained where teaching assistants moved class with the pupils, either full-time or part-time. Where teaching assistants worked with specific pupils with special educational needs, they were likely to be particularly involved in assessment and also to move class with the pupil.

*In one school a teaching assistant worked with a physically disabled boy and continued to work with him in Year 1. The pupil was developing more independence and the assistant became able to support him with a group of children rather than just on his own. Her detailed knowledge and oversight of the pupil's strengths and needs, including knowledge of personal and social aspects, significantly aided the transition from one stage to the next. The pupil benefited because the teaching assistant provided a constant point of familiar reference in an otherwise changing situation.*

## **Pupils' views on transition from Year R to Year 1**

46. The Foundation Stage is important in providing pupils with a range of practical experiences and opportunities for structured play. Through such activities they achieve early success and gain confidence. These are vital in developing their positive attitudes and in supporting their progress in learning as they move into Year 1. How they saw themselves as learners in Year 1 derived strongly from being successful and being told so directly. Transition was eased when they felt confident about themselves and their work and they embraced positively the idea of tackling 'harder work'.

47. Pupils were aware of the significance of the move from Year R to Year 1 and perceived themselves to be 'more grown up' in Year 1. They recognised the shift from play-centred activities to more formal learning and the greater demands made on them by 'harder work'. They had a growing awareness of a broader range of their own strengths, reflected in the curriculum in the Year 1 classroom. Year 1 pupils told inspectors that they liked 'listening to stories and reading'; 'writing – because I have sharp pencils and am good at keeping my writing on the line'; 'PE – because I can do a forward roll and I have springy ankles'; 'money... because it's easy'; 'painting giants, and maths games in the afternoon' and 'jigsaws... because I can do really big jigsaws'.

48. Pupils' perceptions of what was difficult changed from Year R to Year 1. In Year R, they told inspectors that they found it difficult to 'write numbers without the dots'; 'colouring inside the lines'; 'tricky words... ones you can't sound out'; 'jigsaw puzzles with missing pieces'; 'writing when I can't copy' and 'tying up shoelaces'. By Year 1, they talked about aspects of number such as 'working out sums in my head', 'counting back', and 'counting to big numbers such as to 50 or 100'.

## **Parents' views on transition**

49. Most parents were satisfied with the arrangements for their child's move from Year R to Year 1. They appreciated the support that schools gave them and their children through:

- special events such as parental workshops on literacy and mathematics
- information about how to help their child at home with reading, writing and mathematics

- the provision of curricular plans for the term or year, indicating topics or themes to be covered
- reading diaries where both staff and parents could comment on the child's progress
- parents' meetings near the start of the year to update information and talk further about the routines and expectations of Year 1.

50. Parents who had received the Foundation Stage Profile on their child valued comments made by teachers (although these were the exception, as mostly only the tick boxes had been completed).

51. In LEAs where pupils were admitted to school at more than one point in the academic year, a small number of parents felt that their child would have benefited from more time in Year R. This was especially true where pupils moved from a Year R class into Year 1 after only one term. In several schools, parents spoke of the upheavals in Year R where new groups of pupils were admitted each term.

52. Parents expected to see changes in the balance between structured play-based activities and more formal teaching and learning. These changes included a sharper focus on the development of reading and writing skills, taking 'reading books' home, more recorded work in pupils' books (including mathematics), more direct teaching and differences in the organisation of the school day, especially through more focused work in literacy and mathematics. Some parents felt that 'They are forced into it [reading and writing] too early' and that 'They should be enjoying their young lives'. One mother felt that 'there would be no more fun' when her child moved from Year R to Year 1.

53. Many understood that 'the curriculum and level of challenge would be different'. Parents generally accepted that there was likely to be a greater structure to teaching and learning in Year 1, with an emphasis on the core skills of reading, writing and number. Reading diaries provided the basis for good communication between teachers and parents in many schools, enabling both to comment on the child's developing skills and any problems. Parents valued these as a means of keeping in touch, not only with reading but other issues affecting their children. One father commented about his daughter: 'I want to know is she is settling in well and is beginning to start to read and write a bit as well as recognising numbers. But above all, I want to know if she is happy.'

## **Foundation Stage Profile**

54. Schools saw the introduction of the Foundation Stage as a positive initiative. It clarified ideas about what three to five years olds might be expected to achieve. The Foundation Stage Profile, in contrast, had a mixed reception. Despite being developed with practitioners, its introduction in 2003 led to some confusion in schools about what was required.

55. Prior to the introduction of the Profile, there were over 90 baseline schemes in use, which were accredited by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA).



Importantly, they were used at varying times, generally on children's entry to Year R or a nursery class. The Foundation Stage Profile:

- moved the statutory baseline assessment to the end of the Foundation Stage
- introduced a single national scheme for statutory baseline assessment.

56. The Profile is made up of thirteen assessment scales covering all six areas of learning in the Foundation Stage. Each scale has nine points: up to three indicates a pupil who is progressing towards the early learning goals; from four to seven indicates that the pupil is working within the early learning goals; and the two final points describe achievement at or above the early learning goals. Schools were generally unclear about the link between performance beyond the early learning goals and level 1 of the subjects of the National Curriculum. The QCA intended that staff should complete the Profile throughout Year R as a continuing record, replacing the baseline assessments formerly made on entry to school. This was not possible during 2002/03 as the Profile was sent to schools part way through the school year.

57. However, the Profile does not serve the same purposes as assessment at the start of the year. It provides cumulative evidence during a pupil's time in Year R and summarises achievement at the end of the Foundation Stage. As such, it is neither a baseline assessment nor a profile across the whole of the Foundation Stage. While providing a view of achievement by the end of Year R, it includes different periods of experience depending on the term of entry to Year R.

58. A major concern expressed by schools during the summer term of 2003 was the status of the Profile in the pilot year (2002/03). Not all schools were aware that the Profile had to be completed and data submitted to the LEA. The schools were also unclear about the use to which the data was to be put.

59. There is no weighting to indicate at what point an assessment is completed and the nine points on each scale are not progressive: each assesses a different aspect of the area of learning and there is no need to complete one point before the next. As the scoring is not cumulative, pupils could achieve the same total but with different items on each scale, making direct comparisons impossible. Adding together the evidence on the three elements to provide a single score out of nine ignores these differences. To attempt to draw conclusions from analysis of pupils' scores out of nine is statistically flawed and highlights the confusion about the Profile's purposes.

60. Many schools that wished to record pupils' achievement on entry to school retained their previous baseline assessments, adding the Profile to the assessments made previously. Schools with Year R and Key Stage 1 pupils only, and no nursery, were most likely to want to conduct a baseline assessment on entry to provide a view of the value added over the whole time a child was in school. Most of the infant schools surveyed in the summer term either had moved or were going to move to one entry point in September 2003, although one was keeping three entry points. Here, as in primary (4–11) schools with a similar arrangement, three entry points

increased the workload significantly as staff were completing Profiles for all pupils, after already having undertaken baseline assessments for others.

61. Three admission points created complications in 2003 as the Profile had to be completed within six to eight weeks of the child's entry if this was at the start of the summer term.

62. Usually teachers intended to complete the Profile for each pupil at the end of each term. However, about one in six teachers completed it more frequently – monthly or at the end of each half term – or less frequently, usually just at the end of the year. A similar proportion completed it as an on-going record throughout the year. There was little evidence of the Profile being used in nursery classes; in any case, the training, funded by the DfES, was directed at reception class teachers.

63. The optional electronic Profile summary record was not available for the start of the summer term in electronic formats, although some LEAs produced versions themselves. Most schools used administrative staff to complete the returns, using the paper copies completed by teachers – an additional and unforeseen cost to schools.

64. Although the QCA had sought to send the Profile to everyone at the same time, many schools insisted that they had not received the Profile documentation until late in the spring term 2003; by this time they had planned and largely completed their own assessments and recording. As a result, many continued to use existing profiles developed by their LEA alongside the optional QCA Profile scales booklet, adding to teaching and administrative workloads.

### **Purposes of the Foundation Stage Profile**

65. The schools visited in the survey during the summer term 2003 were questioned about their views on the purposes of the Profile, as set out in the guidance for it, namely:

- as a written report at the end of the school year
- as support for ongoing records
- to track progress informally
- as a basis for reporting to parents
- for periodic discussions with parents
- as information for the next teacher.

Schools' views on each of these purposes are set out below.

#### **a) Conventional written report at the end of the school year**

Approximately three quarters of schools were not going to use the Profile for this purpose. There were three main concerns:

- schools felt that the Profile emphasised what pupils had not achieved rather than what they were able to do
- it was too detailed for many parents and did not give the appropriate information about the next steps; it was also seen as too impersonal
- the language used was often too complex.

One teaching assistant noted

*It was asking for too much information in one question. I found a lot of them were like this. ... After reading through the Foundation Stage Profile, I thought that on a number of the questions the wording was just too much for me to understand. I had to read most of the questions quite a few times before I fully understood them, and then there were some that I still could not take in. There were a lot of questions that were too long.*

### **b) A support for on-going records**

Three fifths of schools were going to use the Profile for this purpose in some way. However, teachers were adding it to their existing records rather than substituting it for any of these.

Almost all schools did not realise that the QCA's guidance meant that they did not need to complete the booklet if they were able to record the data for the return to the DfES via their LEA in another way, such as through their LEA profile. Schools considered that their LEA profiles were more detailed, although several considered that the Profile supported the LEA profile and so continued completing the latter.

The Foundation Stage Profile did not provide sufficient detail to inform future curriculum planning. Several schools developed their own summary sheet to show the numbers of pupils achieving each element of the Profile in order to plan further teaching.

About half of the Year 1 teachers in the autumn term who had received the Profile said that they had referred to it, whilst a third said that it had not been useful. Its main value was as a quick overview of pupils' development at the end of Year R, rather than the more detailed picture of attainment such as that often provided by reading and mathematics records. Its relevance to the Year 1 National Curriculum subjects was a major question for Year 1 teachers.

### **c) Tracking progress informally**

Half of the schools were intending to use the Profile for this purpose in the future. However, the others already had systems in place to do this and some intended to use the Profile in addition to another system. They considered that the Profile was more useful as a snapshot of a pupil's achievement at a particular point than as an informal record of progress. The Profile records the term in which pupils reach each point: schools generally wished to mark progress more frequently – usually half-termly.

Teachers felt the Profile was 'unsophisticated' in comparison to their existing materials. In several schools, the demise of the previous baseline assessment was regretted, since those assessments could provide detailed material from which test levels at the end of Year 2 might be predicted and used by the schools to track pupils' progress through Year R and Key Stage 1. Infant schools regarded this as especially valuable.

Very few Year 1 teachers during the autumn term were using the Profile for those pupils who had not attained the early learning goals. Even where there were mixed-age Year R/Year 1 classes, the Profile was seldom used for the Year 1 pupils: instead they were introduced to the National Curriculum in terms of 'working towards level 1'. The absence of clear transitional links between the Foundation Stage curriculum and the National Curriculum exacerbated this trend.

#### **d) As a basis for reporting to parents**

Nearly three quarters of the schools were going to use the Profile for this purpose, although none had done so in the summer term. In most cases, existing report formats were being used, as they were written before the Profile had been completed fully. Annual reports to parents were completed by the end of the half-term holiday, whereas the Profile was being completed after that.

The Profile was generally used as only one of a range of sources for a written report; again, this was often in addition to existing sources which duplicated and extended its information. The way in which the Profile might form the 'basis' for reporting was not clear, and most schools did not intend to use it as the main source or, indeed, as the only form of report.

#### **e) For periodic discussions with parents (mainly termly)**

Over half the schools were going to use the Profile for this purpose, whilst the remainder had not yet decided or were going to use it in this way for only some pupils. Most schools saw the Profile as a further source of evidence for discussions; few saw it as replacing existing sources. By the time the pupils were in Year 1, over one third of schools had shown the Profile to parents, and nearly two thirds had used it in discussions with them.

Although teachers and teaching assistants regarded this purpose as potentially beneficial, they considered that the Profile needed considerable interpretation before parents could understand it properly. Most schools had not tackled this issue, but those that had were less confident about its value. A relatively inexperienced teaching assistant noted, 'I haven't any idea what "mark making" is', and suggested some parents, too, would have problems with its language. One parent believed that the concept of 'Knowledge and Understanding of the World' was flawed as an indicator of potential achievement in several National Curriculum subjects; he also noted that the Profile's requirement of a single response to questions with several elements was 'poor practice at best'.

#### **f) Information for the next teacher**

Nearly three quarters of the schools intended to pass the Profile to the next teacher. However, many doubted that it would be read in detail, both because of its length and the absence of clear links to the detail of the subjects taught in Year 1. Some schools had summarised the Profile onto a smaller document for the next teacher – an additional task. 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. It was seen as part of the evidence, not its entirety. It was not used where the teacher also taught Year R and had more detailed records.

During the summer term only the main form had been used: no-one had used the further assessments (for pupils with special educational needs or gifted children) in any great detail, although a small minority had experimented with them.

### **Workload and the Foundation Stage Profile**

66. In all the schools in the survey, teachers were completing the Profile rather than staff adopting systems such as ‘key workers’ assessing groups of pupils. Mostly, informal discussions between all staff had enabled the teacher to make informed judgements; occasionally, teachers made the judgements alone. No teaching assistant was completing the Profile alone.

67. Except in one school, internal moderation had not begun during the summer term, other than through informal staff discussions. External moderation was not due to start until the autumn term 2003. In three LEAs, there was some awareness of moderation starting at the end of the calendar year; elsewhere there was no awareness of this. One LEA had advertised for moderators, but headteachers were reluctant to let staff apply for this work because of the time out of school it would require.

68. The workload requirements to complete the Profile could not be assessed accurately because staff had not used it for a full year. However, it was clear that few teachers had been able to complete the full Profile in less than an hour altogether. Where they did so, very few made any written comments. In general, completing the Profile (but not written comments) seemed to require between 60 and 90 minutes, once teachers had become accustomed to it. The time spent was therefore greater than that envisaged by the QCA.

69. Over three quarters of the schools visited during the summer term were using the Profile in addition to existing records and assessments, and a similar proportion of those visited in the autumn were also doing so. In such cases, the overall workload was very high. Since most teachers doubted whether the Profile alone could satisfy most of the purposes set out for it, it was added to current assessments and increased workload significantly.

*One teacher with a mixed-age Year R and Year 1 class kept a number of assessments and records for all of the class. These included the Profile, the LEA profile (which recorded information from the Foundation Stage Profile as well), detailed portfolios of pupils’ work, self-devised summative sheets*

*recording coverage of the Foundation Stage Profile elements to aid her planning, National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) assessments and the LEA Baseline document. She was also writing detailed annual reports to parents for each child. She noted that she was spending most of her time completing assessments and that her planning was being adversely affected by this.*

Of her current assessments and records, there were plans to drop only the NFER and LEA baseline assessment in the next academic year.

70. Where teachers had non-contact time for other purposes (such as being the co-ordinator in a beacon school or the school's child protection officer), some of this time was also being used for work on the Profile rather than for the original purposes.

71. Only one school in the survey allocated additional non-contact time for completing the Profile: three days each were provided for two teachers and two days to a nursery nurse at a total cost of £700. A few schools were considering the possibility of providing time for next year, although budget restrictions were likely to make this difficult unless the headteacher taught the classes.

### **Training on the Profile**

72. The training for LEAs focused almost exclusively on the Profile booklet and how to complete it. This in turn meant that schools understood that the booklet was the record to be kept, which is not what QCA had suggested. The QCA had explained that the Profile judgements could be made as an integral part of planning and that the booklet need not be used separately; the assessments could be recorded in a modified LEA profile. Several LEAs had understood this and modified their profiles, but schools still, separately, completed the Foundation Stage Profile as well, thereby duplicating information.

73. Year R teachers (rather than headteachers) attended the training, which lasted either a full day or a half-day. Some full-day training was seen as too long and some half-day training was too short. In several cases, the continued use of the LEA profile was emphasised, leading to some confusion. The dominant perception of the training was that it was rushed because of the mid-year introduction of the Profile. Teaching assistants were not generally involved in the training and, as a result, some of them found difficulties in understanding the Profile fully.