

A National Curriculum for Toddlers

A letter to the Herald, Sept 2008

Sir,

Last week, Hampshire nurseries and childminders became subject to the government's "Early Years Foundation Stage" or EYFS. It is a "statutory framework" for pre-schooling – a national curriculum for three- and four-year-olds.

There are almost 70 so-called "early learning goals". Nursery staff and childcare workers, of course, will be doing the paperwork. Many professionals have expressed deep concern about the bureaucracy and hoop-jumping that will be required.

It reads like a spoof out of *Private Eye*, but the government is deadly serious. Having introduced command-and-control to almost every other walk of life, the new target is the toddler.

There is a facility for parents, collectively, to contract out of the arrangements – but it is a predictably complex and uninviting procedure.

As it happens most of the objectives in the EYFS are entirely sensible – and good nurseries will be doing these things, and monitoring progress, anyway.

It is also sadly true that there are some nurseries which do not come up to scratch, and the government is right to require improvement from them. But it is typical of this government to come up with this sledgehammer, one-size-fits-all approach.

Ed Balls perhaps gave the game away when he said "We want to give all children a level playing field". Labour crave uniformity – even if it means holding up those who do a great job anyway, without needing a "statutory framework".

Sincerely

Damian Hinds