



## **SAVE CHILDHOOD MOVEMENT EARLY YEARS EDUCATION (EYE) GROUP**

### **THE ARGUMENTS AGAINST BASELINE TESTING**

Early childhood should be treated as a vital developmental stage in its own right – not merely as a preparation for school, but uniquely as a preparation for life.

Nearly 9 in 10 of the world's nations have a school starting age of 6 or 7 – and hardly any countries have England's effective starting age of 4.

Any assessment of young children when they have just started in a new setting will be unreliable, as many children need time to settle and form relationships before they can begin to show what they can understand and achieve

If teachers have to assess formally in the first few weeks they will not be able to prioritise the crucially important 'settling in' work with their children.

There is enormous variability in children's development up to the age of 6 and it is therefore inappropriate and potentially dangerous to compare their activities and achievements against any pre-determined 'norm'.

Children may be inappropriately judged and labelled against others and, therefore, wrongly considered to have special needs with clumsy and ill-timed interventions.

Younger children are more likely to be diagnosed as having learning problems and this is especially so for boys

There is a difference in age, between the oldest and youngest in the group, of up to a year when children start school and even a few days or weeks can make an enormous difference to children's development at this stage in their life.

It has two likely impacts for parents - 1) they will feel pressurised to conform and to have their children tested before age appropriately ready, and 2) those with younger children are likely to feel unnecessarily stressed and concerned when they feel their children are then labelled as underperforming

Inexperienced teachers may feel the need to focus on expected outcomes, which are developmentally inappropriate; the resulting pressure will damage children's self-esteem and natural learning dispositions. It will be difficult for all staff to address the true developmental needs of individual children

There may be a temptation to underestimate children's achievement on entry in order to be able to demonstrate rapid progress

It will add to the current downgrading of play

It prioritises measurable academic achievement over physical, social and emotional, and intellectual development

Based on the educational outcomes of European countries with a later school starting age, there is good reason to believe that introducing a developmentally-appropriate 'foundation stage' between 3 and 7 would help reduce the 'long tail of under-achievement' which has long bedevilled the UK school system, and which has led to the ever-widening gap in educational achievement between children from different socio-economic backgrounds.