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Campaigners to draw up 'alternative' EYFS [1]

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EXCERPTS:

Early Childhood Action acknowledges that attempts have been made to simplify the early learning goals, which have been cut from 69 to 17, but says the Government's focus on targets and monitoring is leading to the ‘schoolification' of early childhood.

The group, which has the backing of more than 50 academics, practitioners and early years organisations, will draw up an alternative early years curriculum - the Alternative Foundation Phase.

The letter announcing the group's intentions, published by The Daily Telegraph, has been signed by 22 leading figures including children's author Philip Pullman, Oxford University neuroscientist Baroness Greenfield, child development expert Dr Penelope Leach, and literacy specialist and author of the book Toxic Childhood, Sue Palmer.

The letter says, ‘There is a need to consider the central place of imaginative, spontaneous play, and of young children's physical development in the curriculum.

‘We must look at the "schoolification" of early childhood, with its over-assessment and excessive monitoring,

‘Controversial early learning goals are putting premature emphasis on cognitive learning.'

It goes on to say that parents are under pressure to prepare children for formal schooling and that the system is too inflexible to cater for young children's ‘highly diverse developmental needs.'

Child psychologist Dr Richard House, from the University of Roehampton, founder of the new group, said, ‘Our soundings across the field suggest that there is continuing widespread unease about the direction in which the Government's reforms are headed, and it is for this reason that Early Childhood Action is taking this unprecedented grass-roots initiative to draw up an alternative curriculum document that is genuinely rooted in the most progressive, leading-edge thinking in the field.'

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