

In Brief

SLEEP OR SLIM

Young children who do not get enough sleep are at increased risk of becoming overweight, even after taking account of lifestyle factors, according to a study in the *British Medical Journal*. It found that young children who sleep less are at a significantly increased risk of having a higher Body Mass Index by the time they are seven.

DIGITAL RESEARCH

The news story 'Staff "need digital guidance" for supporting literacy' last week reported incorrectly that research by Rosie Flewitt at the Open University found that some children do not have access to learning with new technologies because they come from less affluent families. This over-simplifies a complex set of factors identified by the research, which found that parent and practitioner beliefs about the role of new technologies in children's lives shaped their opportunities for engaging with digital media. Some children from highly educated, affluent families had very little exposure to new technologies, whereas some children from less affluent families were given excellent support at home to develop their literacy skills through new technologies. Some parents were fearful of potential harm to 'childhood' from digital media. But, says Ms Flewitt, 'The children we observed who were the most computer savvy, were also the ones who took part in the greatest range of indoor and outdoor activities, and led extremely diverse lives. What matters most is the quality of support they receive from adults and peers.'

EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

Russian nursery can stay in EYFS

By Sue Learner

A Russian bilingual nursery school has won its two-year battle with the Department for Education and can now operate purely in Russian and still work within the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The EYFS framework states, 'Parents may choose to have their children educated primarily in their home language and choose a provider specifically for this reason. As part of the learning and development requirements, providers should be able to support children to develop their communication, language and literacy skills in English.'

As children move into the Key Stage 1 curriculum, it says, 'English will be crucial as the language they use to access learning.'

This presented a problem for

Azbuka nursery school in Richmond, London, which has an ethos of 'language immersion'.

Maria Gavrilova, who runs Azbuka nursery school, said, 'The children are immersed in the language environment with their classmates and peers on a daily basis. We don't learn Russian; we learn through play, in Russian.'

'So when EYFS came to our nursery school, we experienced some problems. The policies forced upon us were a requirement to introduce English in all areas of learning, thus effectively killing the whole idea of language immersion for children.'

'This was particularly true when considering the hours we operate – just a few mornings a week – and we want to maximise the teaching effort to the children.'

Ms Gavrilova added, 'Most children at our nursery are bilingual already, also attending English nurseries and often having one English speaking parent as well.'

'The reason the families choose to come to our nursery is to immerse in the Russian side of their development and help to maintain their bilingualism.'

Ms Gavrilova said that the nursery school had won its case with the DfE and had become 'one of the first "language" nursery schools in England to be working within the EYFS framework, importantly without a need for applying for exemption'.

'This is a really big achievement, not just for us personally but for all language settings and for education pre-school policy in England today,' she added.

PRACTICE

Letters and numbers learned at a touch

By Sue Learner

A nursery chain is using iPads to teach children about letters, numbers and shapes.

Snapdragons Nurseries, which has two settings in the city of Bath and four in Wiltshire, has invested in Apple iPads for its three- and four-year-olds. Five of the high-tech devices have been provided for three nurseries and the chain plans to have iPads in all of its settings by the summer.

To protect the iPad screens, the chain has also bought sturdy plastic reinforced cases.

James Collard, manager of Snapdragons nursery in Weston, Bath, said, 'Many of the children have access to touchscreen devices at home already and therefore have the skills needed to make the most of the iPads.'

'We have introduced the iPads because they are so child-friendly and easy to use. The touchscreen technology is ideal for young children's hands and the small size and portability make them perfect for sharing and using in different



Touchscreen technology is found to be ideal for children's hands

ent areas of the nursery. The parents are very impressed by it and they are amazed at how quickly the children learn to use them. The children have had great fun communicating with each other between rooms and other nurseries in the group using FaceTime video chat.'

Mr Collard said he thinks the potential and possibilities for using ICT in the Early Years Foundation Stage are extremely exciting.

Snapdragons has selected apps for the iPads to encourage a broad and balanced range of skills, including learning the basics about letters, numbers, shapes and colours, as well as drawing and even composing music.

'At Snapdragons we encourage children to enjoy learning from their interactions with resources drawn from as many sources as possible in both the natural and man-made environment,' he said.