

The UK's only independently evaluated early years curriculum



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Dr Jackie Musgrave



In summary

Earlier this year, Busy Bees launched its new curriculum - Bee Curious - which rolled out nationwide from September 2024.

This has been independently evaluated by an external childhood education expert at the Open University who concluded that Bee Curious is a “flexible” and “child-centric” curriculum which “equips children right from the start of life”.

Research study undertaken by Dr Jackie Musgrave, an early childhood education expert and the Associate Head of School with responsibility for Learning and Teaching at the Open University's School of Education, Childhood, Youth and Sport (ECYS).



What research was undertaken - and why?

An independent research study was conducted by Dr Jackie Musgrave, the Associate Head of School with responsibility for Learning and Teaching at the Open University's School of Education, Childhood, Youth and Sport (ECYS).

Dr Musgrave completed exploratory research including an online questionnaire sent to educators involved in the pilot, a series of centre visits and online meetings with Busy Bees Area Managers.

The aim was to provide an objective view of the impact of Bee Curious on both educator knowledge and child development, and an understanding of how we continue to build on our industry-leading early years education in the future.

Bee Curious is a very well-designed curriculum which gives scope to be implemented flexibly to meet the individual needs of children.



Overview of the Open University's observations

"Equipping children right from the start of life with the skills and knowledge, while supporting their development, lays the foundations for children to make a positive contribution as they move into adulthood."

"Bee Curious is a very well-designed curriculum which gives scope to be implemented flexibly to meet the individual needs of children."

"There are pleasing signs of how the implementation is having a positive impact on educators' knowledge and practice. In turn, educators are observing positive impact on the development and learning of babies and children."

Dr Jackie Musgrave

The report describes Bee Curious as a contemporary research-based curriculum that promotes "playful teaching". According to the research, the "uniqueness of each child is at the heart of Bee Curious" and its progression model is understood to "enhance educators to focus on supporting children's development".

The study states that Bee Curious is a vehicle to set Busy Bees children up for success from the very start of their lives because high-quality preschool teaching is related to better intellectual and social development.



The main strengths of Bee Curious

The Open University's report recognised the following as key strengths of the curriculum:

Going beyond the government's Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework

The EYFS outlines the aims and principles that must be met by providers, without guidance on how to do this, so outcomes depend on the quality of educators.

Bee Curious removes this uncertainty and inconsistency by providing clear guidance to enhance educators' knowledge and understanding, therefore ensuring strong foundations for children.

Principles based on scientific research

Bee Curious is guided by key findings from the latest scientific research on effective preschool education, including Oxford University's Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) project.

For example, the importance within Bee Curious of the progression model, as well as the value placed on a positive key person / child relationship and knowing children well.

Fully adaptable to each, unique child

According to the researcher: "Bee Curious is a very well-designed curriculum which gives scope to be implemented flexibly to meet the individual needs of children."

The Open University report found that the curriculum allows for educators, with an in-depth understanding of individual children, to have flexibility in how they adapt content to suit each child's unique needs.

This includes support with tailoring content for babies and children with special educational or additional needs.

Setting educators up for success

Dr Jackie Musgrave says: "Bee Curious has been received with enthusiasm. There are very positive indications of how educators can see how Bee Curious will enhance the development and learning of babies and children."

The researcher praised the resources and comprehensive training provided by Busy Bees to accompany the rollout, which she believes has been effective in helping educators understand and implement the new curriculum.

The business is committed to continuous professional development, mentorship, training materials, and providing easy to use tools for educators.

Busy Bees is setting its educators up for success from the very outset and is investing in Bee Curious, and the training to support it, to maintain the unrivalled early years development and school readiness it offers.



