

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

How is my child doing in the Foundation Phase?

mae addysg yn dechrau **yn y cartref**
education begins **at home**

chwarae • dysgu • tyfu
play • learn • grow
cyfnod sylfaen 3–7 foundation phase

A guide for parents and carers

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Contents

What is the Foundation Phase?	3
Learning through play	4
What is my child learning?	5
What is the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework?	13
What is the Digital Competence Framework?	14
How is my child being assessed?	15
Foundation Phase Profile	15
End of Foundation Phase assessment	16
National Reading and Numeracy Tests	16
How will I know how my child is getting on?	17
Who is entitled to receive reports and other information from the school?	18
What opportunities do I have to discuss my child's report with the school?	18
How can I support and help my child's learning in the Foundation Phase?	19
Literacy and numeracy tips	20
A smooth move to Key Stage 2	21
Where can I find further information about the Foundation Phase?	21
Useful resources	22

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

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What is the Foundation Phase?

The Foundation Phase is a developmental curriculum for three- to seven-year-olds in Wales. It encourages children to be creative, imaginative and to have fun while making learning more effective.

Your child will be given opportunities to explore the world around them and understand how things work by taking part in practical activities relevant to their developmental stage. They will be challenged through practical activities and develop their thinking with open-ended questions. Your child will be encouraged to explore concepts and share ideas for solving problems.



Learning through play

Play is one of the main ways in which children learn. We recognise the importance of play in children's lives and state in our statutory guidance *Wales – a Play Friendly Country* (2014): 'The Welsh Government places great value on play and its importance in the lives of children in our society … We also believe that play is essential for the growth in children's cognitive; physical; social and emotional development.'



The Foundation Phase is built on the principles of learning through play and is an essential ingredient in the curriculum. We know from evidence that learning through play is a powerful tool. It can help children to develop and extend their language and communication skills. Play allows them to be creative, to investigate and explore different materials, and gives them opportunities to experiment and predict outcomes. It can also help them to develop their confidence, self-motivation and control of their own thoughts and actions. Play also allows children to test their abilities, use initiative, take risks and make mistakes without fear of failure. Through play, children learn the skills of negotiation and the art of forming relationships with their peers.

There are many forms of play that support the seven Areas of Learning in the Foundation Phase. Though not a full list, examples of this kind of play include construction play, role play, creative play, symbolic play such as mark making (for example drawing, painting, writing, and so on) and exploratory play.

What is my child learning?

The Foundation Phase has seven Areas of Learning (six when Welsh is the primary language of the setting – which can be a nursery, funded playgroup or childminder – or school) which are delivered through stimulating structured practical activities and active learning experiences both indoors and outdoors.



Notes

[1] This will be in English or Welsh depending on the language policy of the setting or school.

[2] This is not a requirement when settings or schools follow the Language, Literacy and Communication Skills Area of Learning through the medium of Welsh.

Personal and Social Development, Well-Being and Cultural Diversity

Learning about themselves and forming relationships with other children and adults is an important part of the Foundation Phase. Your child will be encouraged to develop their self-esteem and personal moral values as well as develop an awareness of their own cultural identity within a diverse multi-cultural society.

Example learning activity – the forest school

An area of trees and shrubs within the school has been set up as a 'forest school' with tents and a campfire where the children have picnics, role play and have music sessions. They are taught by a specially trained practitioner.



The children heat everyday objects, and learn what effect heat and fire have on different materials. They make necklaces from natural materials such as wood, berries and leaves. They cook curries in pots over an open fire, roast marshmallows and toast bread on sticks.

There is an important personal and social development aspect to this way of learning. Not only are the children learning and playing together but they are also taught to recognise danger, respect the fire and treat it carefully, and how to handle sharp tools safely.

Language, Literacy and Communication Skills

Children will be immersed in language experiences and activities. Their skills will develop through talking, signing/communicating and listening.

They will be able to choose and use a range of reading materials to develop their enjoyment and understanding and will be supported as they develop their skills for writing.

They will also be encouraged to communicate their needs, feelings and thoughts, and talk about experiences.

Example learning activity – teddy bears' picnic



A child brought in a new teddy bear to show the class. The children discussed teddy bears' picnics and decided to hold their own. They did research to support their plans and ideas.

They listened to the 'Teddy Bears' Picnic' song and decided to hold their picnic in the woods 'like the bears in the song'. Over the next week the children invited their bears to a healthy picnic and made shopping lists. They looked online at weather forecasts for the day of the picnic, finding their village on the map, and visited the local shops to buy the items on their list. The children learned the 'Teddy Bears' Picnic' song and added music with instruments.

On the day of the picnic, the children brought their bears to school, prepared the food following simple recipes, packed their bags and walked their bears to the woods for their picnic. The children photographed the picnic using a tablet computer to make their own digital book version of the 'Teddy Bears' Picnic' song.

Mathematical Development

Children will develop their skills, knowledge and understanding of mathematics through practical experiences. By playing with numbers in their daily activities they will develop different ways of solving problems in a variety of situations.

They will also investigate the properties of shapes and will sort, match, sequence and compare objects, and create simple patterns and relationships. Children will also develop their understanding of time and money in ways that are meaningful to them.

Example learning activity – dinosaurs

The children were interested in learning about dinosaurs after one child brought in a toy dinosaur from home. The practitioner shared a selection of dinosaurs with the children and asked them to measure each one to see which was longest and which was shortest. They also read a book about dinosaurs and discovered that the biggest real dinosaur was 27 metres long. This meant nothing to the children so the practitioner took them outside and they measured out 27 metres to help them understand just how big the dinosaurs were.



There was a lot of role play too. The children acted like dinosaurs and created a 'dinosaur stomp' using percussion instruments to sound like dinosaurs walking through the jungle.

Welsh Language Development

Children learning mainly through the medium of English will have the opportunity to learn to use and to communicate in Welsh to the best of their ability. Children will develop these skills by taking part in a variety of enjoyable, practical activities, using a range of resources that build on and increase previous knowledge and experiences. Their oral experiences will be used to help them develop their reading and writing skills.

Throughout the Foundation Phase all English-medium settings or schools will give children opportunities to learn and enjoy using the Welsh language through daily access to appropriate Welsh-medium play-based activities.

Example learning activity – greengrocers

Wanting to develop the children's use of questions in Welsh in a meaningful way, the practitioner set up a role-play greengrocer's shop. The practitioner led the activity using appropriate Welsh words to ask and answer questions and to use 'os gwelwch yn dda' ('please'). The greengrocer's shop was left for the children to play with on their own and to practise their new vocabulary.

The children were also encouraged to use their new language skills in the classroom, for example when asking for fruit at snack time or for a particular item they needed.



Knowledge and Understanding of the World

Children will be given experiences that increase their curiosity about the world around them to help them understand more about past events, people and places, living things and the work people do.

They learn to demonstrate care, responsibility, concern and respect for all living things and the environment.

They will develop their own ideas, and learn how to express their opinions and feelings with imagination, creativity and sensitivity.

Example learning activity – penguins

After a week of snow, the children began talking about cold places and wondered how penguins could live in such weather. First, the children explored the penguins' habitat through picture books and compared the climate to the one in Wales. Then they considered other animals living in harsh conditions. They talked about camels in deserts and tigers in jungles. The children filled balloons and rubber gloves with water and put them in the freezer and were amazed at the results. They asked and answered many questions, which developed their vocabulary. They played letter-recognition games, hiding the letter 'p' for 'penguin' around the room.

The practitioners then helped the children make penguin puppets and snowy scenes from things like empty plastic bottles and cardboard rolls, which became a backdrop for role playing and stories about 'penguins'.



Physical Development

Children will be encouraged to enjoy physical activity, and a developing sense of identity will be linked closely to their own self-image, self-esteem and confidence.

They will develop their views on health, hygiene, safety and the importance of diet, rest, sleep and exercise.

They will be given opportunities to develop their gross motor skills (larger movements of arms, legs, feet, or the entire body such as crawling, running and jumping) and fine motor skills (using the smaller muscles of the hands and fingers to carry out activities such as using pencils or scissors, threading, and doing up buttons), physical control, mobility and awareness of space, using large and small equipment, across all Areas of Learning, indoors and outdoors.

Example learning activity – the climbing wall

The new climbing wall proved to be a big hit with the children. However, the practitioners noticed that the same children were always climbing the wall while some children were left out of the game. They decided to focus the activity on how the children could help each other over the wall. The children partnered up and helped each other climb the wall.

By supporting and encouraging each other through the difficult bits, they improved their personal, social and communication skills, as well as improving their coordination and gross motor skills. By the end of the session the children were talking about how they could all use the climbing wall from now on and help each other over or around the wall.



Creative Development

Taking part in creative, imaginative and expressive activities in art, craft, design, music, dance and movement will help support children's creative development.They will explore a wide range of resources, develop their ability to communicate and express their creative ideas and reflect on their work.

Example learning activity – Stick Man

A group of children were reading *Stick Man* by Julia Donaldson in the class. The children were intrigued by the characters and extremely worried about the Stick Man's safety. Following a discussion with the practitioner, they decided to create a spider web planning chart for ideas and exciting follow-up activities that could be used to help plan activities across all Areas of Learning, indoors and outdoors. Their ideas included:

- creating a friend for Stick Man
- designing and making clothes for a stick family
- creating puppets and writing scripts
- making a large stick family in the woodland area
- creating a stick village
- sorting and measuring sticks
- writing a diary and information leaflets
- creating a stick family dance to celebrate Stick Man's return
- discussing good and bad characters in the story
- writing Stick Man problems as well as their own and placing them in a 'problem sack' to help begin discussions.

The class worked on and developed the Stick Man theme over a six-week period, learning, developing and practising new skills across all Areas of Learning and the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF). The children then created a digital book, explaining and evaluating their activities, that was then shared on the school website.

The curriculum for learners aged 3 to 16 in Wales is changing. From September 2022, starting with nursery to Year 7 initially, the curriculum will fulfill four purposes of education and be delivered through six Areas of Learning and Experience.

More information on the new curriculum can be found on our website at **gov.wales/education-changing**

What is the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework?

The National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF) was developed to help all learners develop excellent literacy and numeracy skills during their time at school. It provides continuous development for learners aged 3 to 16 in Wales, clearly setting out annual expected outcomes on literacy and numeracy.

Settings or schools will use the LNF to make sure that the learning and teaching of literacy and numeracy skills takes place across all Areas of Learning, in both the indoor and outdoor learning environments.

Pre-school children will develop their early literacy and numeracy skills, concentrating on speaking and listening, developing their vocabulary and their understanding of why we use numbers, and read and write.

All children are supported to develop sound literacy and numeracy skills. These skills are not just about learning English, Welsh and mathematics; they are about being able to use skills in different situations and across a wide range of activities.

Literacy describes a set of skills, including speaking and listening (oracy), reading and writing, which allow us to make sense of the world around us.

Numeracy describes the use of number, measuring and data skills, and the ability to identify and use these skills to solve problems.



What is the Digital Competence Framework?

We are developing an exciting new curriculum for all our learners aged 3 to 16 in Wales. This new curriculum will be delivered by 2022 but we have already begun to bring in elements into our settings and schools. The Digital Competence Framework (DCF) was introduced in 2016 as the first element of our new curriculum.

The DCF has been developed to complement the Foundation Phase, ensuring that learners develop the basic skills that will be built on as they progress through their education. Our children are entering a fast-moving digital world. We want them to have the skills to be confident, creative and critical when they use technology.

The DCF brings together the skills that will help children thrive in an increasingly digital world, for example how to stay safe online, saving their work electronically and also understanding the importance of balancing game and screen time with other parts of their lives.



How is my child being assessed?

Your child's learning is continually assessed throughout the Foundation Phase through observation of their day-to-day activities.



Foundation Phase Profile

The Foundation Phase Profile (the profile) (**gov.wales/foundation-phase-profile-guidance-practitioners**) supports assessment of children's learning and development throughout their time in the Foundation Phase.

The main purpose of the profile is to provide a nationally consistent baseline assessment which matches up to the end-of-phase outcomes. By using observations and formative assessments, the profile supports practitioners to provide a developmentally appropriate curriculum for all children. The profile has been designed to match assessments carried out by health professionals and also helps to identify, early on, possible developmental delay. This will make sure support is given to children who need it. The assessments gathered as part of the profile will provide useful information for everyone involved in children's learning and development, supporting the move between settings and schools.

End of Foundation Phase assessment

At the end of the Foundation Phase, practitioners will decide which Foundation Phase Outcome on the national curriculum scale best reflects your child's progress.

National Reading and Numeracy Tests

The National Reading and Numeracy Tests, for all children in Years 2 to 9, help schools across Wales assess their learners' reading and numeracy skills, and gain a clearer understanding of learners' development and progress. The information from the national tests is used alongside other forms of assessment to allow teachers to plan learning and teaching in order to support skills development from the end of Year 2.

The Welsh Government is phasing in online personalised assessments to replace the paper-based tests. Numeracy (Procedural) is available online now. Reading will become available during this academic year, followed by Numeracy (Reasoning) during the next academic year.

You can find more information about the National Reading and Numeracy Tests and online personalised assessments at **hwb.gov.wales/draft-curriculum-for-wales-2022/reading-and-numeracy-assessments/**



How will I know how my child is getting on?

You will receive a written report about your child's progress at least once a year and you will also have the opportunity to meet your child's practitioner. You are also encouraged to discuss informally your child's progress, especially if you are concerned about their development.

Reports for all children will include:

- brief details of your child's progress, including strengths and areas for development and next steps in all relevant Areas of Learning
- activities followed as part of the Foundation Phase curriculum, LNF and religious education
- information on your child's attendance
- the arrangements to discuss the report.

This will give you a 'snapshot' of your child's progress and levels of achievement against national standards. Information from the end-of-phase outcomes will also form part of your child's report at the end of Year 2.

Reports for children at the end of the Foundation Phase will also include:

- the teacher assessment of end-of-phase outcomes for Personal and Social Development, Well-Being and Cultural Diversity; Language, Literacy and Communication Skills (English or Welsh); and Mathematical Development
- results based on the National Reading and Numeracy Tests as well as information on how your child is doing in terms of literacy and numeracy
- the overall results of children of the same age within the school (except in very small schools where five or fewer were assessed).

All registered childcare providers have to complete an annual quality of care report which takes account of the views of everyone involved, including children, parents and carers.



Who is entitled to receive reports and other information from the school?

You are entitled to receive a copy of your child's report from the setting or school. You are also entitled to receive a copy of the governors' annual report.

Divorced or separated parents or carers, and others who have parental responsibility for a child, are equally entitled to this information unless there is a court order which would prevent this.

What opportunities do I have to discuss my child's report with the school?

Your child's report will also include details of how it may be discussed with practitioners at the setting or school. Most settings and schools hold parents'/carers' evenings when practitioners will be pleased to discuss your child's progress with you.

The school's governing body will hold a meeting each year for you to discuss the governors' annual report and to share views on how the school is developing. You are entitled to go to this meeting and are encouraged to do so.

How can I support and help my child's learning in the Foundation Phase?

Your child's experience of the Foundation Phase should be a happy one; if children are not happy they will be less ready to learn. You can support them by encouraging your child to be kind and respectful to others, and to speak out if they see or experience bullying. If your child is being bullied or is bullying you should discuss the matter with the school as soon as possible. For further help and support visit **gov.wales/bullying-school-guidance-parents-and-carers**

You can have a positive effect on your child's development, imagination and interest by getting actively involved in their learning, not just at home, but in the garden, in the park, and at the shops. The more children are stimulated, encouraged and involved, the more they will learn. Schools can also work with families to help support your child's learning.

We have put together some learning ideas for you and your child to enjoy, but these suggestions are just the tip of the iceberg. So whatever you do together and wherever you go, make it fun and inspiring for your child by turning it into a learning game.

Education begins at home

To help you help your child further we've launched a campaign 'Education begins at home' with tips and activities you can do at home to make sure your child gets on. To see how you can get involved have a look at our Facebook page at **www.facebook.com/beginsathome**

Pori Drwy Stori

Pori Drwy Stori is an exciting bilingual programme aimed at supporting children's literacy as they start Reception class in all maintained schools in Wales. The programme provides resources to use in the classroom and to support parents/carers at home in their vital role as partners in their children's learning. For more information visit **www.booktrust.org.uk/what-we-do/programmes-and-campaigns/poridrwystori/**

Literacy and numeracy tips

Words and numbers can be seen everywhere. Show children how important number and word skills are and boost their confidence by helping them to develop these essential skills.

Fun ways to help children with literacy

- Don't just read books, give them comics, magazines, pages from the internet, cookery books, games, and so on.
- When you go out for a meal, read the menu together and ask them to help you choose.
- Sing nursery rhymes together if your child is young or for the older ones, sing along to music on the radio.
- Join your local library for free. You'll be amazed what's on offer – storytelling, fun events and children's books that are free to borrow.
- Reading with your child for as little as 10 minutes a day can make a huge difference and make them a better reader.

Fun ways to help children with numeracy

- When you go shopping, ask your child to count the number of pieces of fruit you want, for example ask for 3 oranges, 5 apples and 3 bananas.
- Play games that include spotting numbers on clocks, coins, supermarket prices, buses and packages.
- Involve your child as you pay for the shopping bill, showing how you can pay for things in different ways using bank cards and money.
- Help your child plan how to spend their birthday money. This will help develop skills in managing money.

A smooth move to Key Stage 2

Once the Foundation Phase has been completed, your child will move smoothly into the learning stage known as 'Key Stage 2'.

If you would like more information on Key Stage 2, there is a parents' and carers' information guide called *How was school today? – Parents' and carers' guide to primary school for children aged 7 to 11* online at **gov.wales/primary-school-children-aged-7-11-guide-parents-and-carers**

Where can I find further information about the Foundation Phase?

You can ask to see copies of the Foundation Phase documents, the LNF, the DCF and the religious education syllabus held at the school.

Copies of the Foundation Phase documents should be available in public libraries or you can visit **gov.wales/foundation-phase-framework**





Useful resources

This list of useful resources will help you as a parent/carer to gain more information to help you support the children in your life.

Bitesize
The BBC's free online resource to help children in the UK with their school work.
www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize

Lovereading4kids
Will help you to explore books that will excite children and help them to fall in love with reading. (This website is only available in English.)
www.lovereading4kids.co.uk

Sumdog
A site that offers games to make mathematics fun. They are all free to play, with the option to subscribe for extra features. (This website is only available in English.)
www.sumdog.com

My Local School
Designed to open up access to schools' information for parents/carers and all others with an interest in their local school.
mylocalschool.gov.wales

Estyn
Find out more about how your child's school is performing.
www.estyn.gov.wales

Education Workforce Council (EWC)
EWC regulates education practitioners in Wales in the interests of learners, parents/carers, and the public. You can check online that teachers and support staff at your child's school are registered.
www.ewc.wales

Meic
A confidential helpline service for children and young people in Wales. From finding out what's going on in your local area to helping deal with bullying.
www.meiccymru.org

Hwb
The National Digital Learning Platform and content repository provides access to a range of high-quality digital learning tools and thousands of high-quality digital classroom resources to support digital transformation in the classroom.
hwb.gov.wales

Creative Learning Zone
A zone on Hwb with information and inspiration to help make creative skills an established part of the curriculum.
hwb.gov.wales/creativity

Online Safety Zone
A zone on Hwb containing a range of resources and links to access support and guidance to help keep children safe online.
hwb.gov.wales/onlinesafety

Our national mission
Education in Wales: Our national mission, Action plan 2017–21 builds on *Qualified for Life*, which was published in 2014, and *Successful Futures* the 2015 review of the curriculum. Our national mission sets out how the school system will move forward between 2017 and 2021 securing implementation of the new curriculum with a focus on leadership, professional learning, and excellence and equity within a self-improving system. The action plan focuses on raising standards for all, reducing the attainment gap, and delivering an education system that is a source of national pride and public confidence.
gov.wales/our-national-mission-0

Family and Community Engagement (FaCE) Toolkit
This is a collection of resources for schools that encourage and support parents and carers to become effective partners in their child's learning and attainment. Search for 'Family and Community Engagement Toolkit' online.
gov.wales/family-and-community-engagement-face

The Fostering Network
Established in 1974, this is the UK's leading charity for everyone involved in fostering, bringing together all those who provide, plan and deliver foster care. (This website is only available in English.)
www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk

Children's Rights
The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is a list of rights for all children and young people, no matter who they are or where they live. These rights are the things that they need to be safe, healthy and happy.
www.childrensrights.wales

Children 4–11
(Cymraeg – Live, Learn, Enjoy)
Whatever language you speak at home, Welsh-medium education can give children extra skills and more opportunities for the future. So even if you don't speak Welsh yourself, why not consider Welsh-medium education for your child? Search for 'Children 4–11' online.
www.cymraeg.gov.wales

Cyw
A series of Welsh-language television programmes from S4C, mainly aimed at children aged three to six, which runs from Monday to Friday 7am to 1pm and includes programmes which have been previously broadcast by S4C in the Planed Plant Bach (Little Children's Planet).
www.s4c.cymru/cyw/en