

# Learning in the Foundation Phase

A guide  
for parents  
and carers

A new approach  
to the education  
and care of  
3 to 7 year olds



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Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government



This leaflet is available in large print, braille or audio format.

# Helping your child to learn and grow

If you are a parent/carer of a child aged 3-7, then this guide is for you. It tells you all about the new Framework for Children's Learning known as the Foundation Phase. It is being introduced into schools, local authority funded nurseries, as well as playgroups, private day nurseries and childminders who are registered and funded to deliver education.

The Foundation Phase will combine what we currently call Early Years education (for 3 to 5 year olds) and Key Stage 1 (5 to 7 year olds) of the National Curriculum, to bring more consistency and continuity to the education of your child at such an all-important period in their development.



# What is the Foundation Phase?

The Foundation Phase is about enhancing the learning experiences which enable children to be creative, imaginative and to have fun whilst learning.

Children will be given more opportunities to explore the world around them and to understand how things work through engaging in relevant practical activities which are fun and enjoyable and relevant to their developmental stages.

The Foundation Phase places greater emphasis on experiential learning, active involvement and developing each child's:

- skills and understanding
- personal, social, emotional, physical and intellectual well-being, so as to develop the whole child
- positive attitudes to learning so that they enjoy it and will want to continue with their education for longer
- self-esteem and self-confidence to experiment, investigate, learn new things and form new relationships
- creative, expressive and observational skills to encourage their development as individuals with different ways of responding to experiences, and
- activities in the outdoors where they have first-hand experience of solving real-life problems and learn about conservation and sustainability.



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# Why introduce the Foundation Phase?

One reassuring aspect of the Foundation Phase for parents/carers is just how much thought, research and evidence gathering has gone into creating the curriculum and its learning and teaching strategies that are appropriate for your child. The curriculum focuses on the developmental stages through which each child progresses.

Planning for the Foundation Phase started in 2004, when the new approach was piloted in 41 schools/settings across Wales.

The Pilot has now been fully evaluated and the lessons learned during that period were reflected in the arrangements introduced from September 2008.

The enthusiasm and positive feedback that the Foundation Phase has generated in teachers, support staff, practitioners, parents/carers and, more importantly, children, led to the Pilot being extended to a further 42 schools/settings, from September 2007.





# Will your child still learn to read and write?

In the Foundation Phase great emphasis is placed on developing your child's communication skills.

Through appropriate focused activities your child will receive a solid foundation for the development of reading and writing.

Evidence shows that some children are not motivated to read or write because they have lacked stimulation or encouragement to develop their language skills. Other children will enter education with well developed communication, speaking and listening skills and practitioners will support them in moving their learning forward.

It is imperative that all children learn how to communicate their experiences and discover how to listen and interact with others... and the best way to learn these skills is by interacting with other children, peers and adults – enabling them to progress in their communication skills.





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# Additional learning needs

Some children find it easier to learn than others and it is reassuring to know that the Foundation Phase has been

designed to help all children flourish, whatever their stage of development or learning ability.

# Learning indoors and outdoors

Indoor and outdoor environments that are fun, exciting, stimulating and safe promote children's development and natural curiosity to explore and learn through first-hand, real-life experiences.

The Foundation Phase will promote discovery and independence, and place a greater emphasis on using the outdoor environment as a resource for children's learning.



# Seven Areas of Learning in the Foundation Phase

The Foundation Phase has seven Areas of Learning, where stimulating structured play activities can be woven into the learning experiences.

The curriculum is built around these seven areas to support and encourage your child's personal, social, emotional, physical and intellectual well-being and development.

## Personal and social development, well-being and cultural diversity

This Area of Learning focuses on children learning about themselves, their relationships with other children and adults.

They are encouraged to develop their self-esteem, their personal beliefs and moral values.

The Foundation Phase supports the cultural identity of all children, to celebrate different cultures and help children recognise and gain a positive awareness of their own and other cultures.

Children are supported in becoming confident, competent and independent thinkers and learners.



# Language, literacy and communication skills

This Area of Learning focuses on children being immersed in language experiences and activities. Their skills develop through talking, signing/communicating and listening.

They are encouraged to communicate their needs, feelings and thoughts and retell experiences. Some children will communicate by means other than speech.

Children refer to their intentions by asking questions, voicing/expressing opinions, reacting to situations and making choices through a variety of media.

They are encouraged to listen and respond to others.

They have opportunities to choose and use reading materials, understand conventions of print and books and are given a wide range of opportunities to enjoy mark making and writing experience.



# Mathematical development

This Area of Learning focuses on children developing their skills, knowledge and understanding of mathematics by solving problems.

They use numbers in their daily activities and develop a range of flexible methods for working mentally with number, in order to solve problems from a variety of contexts, moving onto using more formal methods of working and recording when they are developmentally ready.

They investigate the properties of shape and sort, match, sequence and compare objects and create simple patterns and relationships.

They use appropriate mathematical language to explain their reasoning and present their work in a variety of ways using objects, pictures, diagrams, words, symbols and ICT.



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# Welsh Language Development

This Area of Learning gives those children in schools where the main medium of education is English the opportunity of learning to use and communicate in Welsh to the best of their ability.

Skills are developed through communicating in a range of enjoyable, practical planned activities and using a range of stimuli that build on and increase children's previous knowledge and experiences.

The children's oral experiences should be used to develop their reading skills. They should listen to a range of stimuli, including audio visual material and ICT interactive software.



## Knowledge and understanding of the world

This Area of Learning focuses on children experiencing the familiar world through enquiry and investigation.

Children are given experiences that increase their curiosity about the world around them and to begin to understand 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 learn to express their own ideas, opinions and feelings with imagination, creativity and sensitivity.



# Physical development

This Area of Learning focuses on children's physical development. Enthusiasm and energy for movement is continually promoted through helping them to use their bodies effectively, by encouraging spatial awareness, balance, control and coordination and developing motor and manipulative skills.

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

Children are introduced to the concepts of health, hygiene and safety and the importance of diet, rest, sleep and exercise.



# Creative development

This Area of Learning focuses on children developing their imagination and creativity through the curriculum.

Their natural curiosity and disposition to learn is stimulated by everyday sensory experiences.

Children engage in creative, imaginative and expressive activities in art, craft, design, music, dance and movement.

Children explore a wide range of stimuli, develop their ability to communicate and express their creative ideas and reflect on their work.



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# How will I know if my child is progressing?

An initial assessment should be made when your child enters education to determine what he or she can do and understand.

This information will help to ensure that each child's first experience of education is appropriate to their stage of development and the activities and experiences planned for them will help them to move forward in their learning.

Staff will assess each child's progress through observing them in their everyday activities and use the information to plan the next stage in their development.

You will receive a report each year on your child's progress in the seven Areas of Learning. At the end of the phase, the report will include the teacher's assessment of your child's achievements during the Foundation Phase.





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# Keeping you informed

We want you to be totally reassured that your child is receiving the very best possible start in life. So we are determined to give you all the information you need

regarding the Foundation Phase and how your child's learning will develop and flourish.

If you want to find out more you can go to the following website or contact your child's school.

[www.wales.gov.uk/foundationphase](http://www.wales.gov.uk/foundationphase)



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