



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



How is my child doing in the Foundation Phase?



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

A guide for
parents and carers



mae addysg
yn dechrau
yn y cartref
education
begins
at home

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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.



When will my child benefit from the Foundation Phase?

Your child will be offered a minimum of 10 hours of free, part-time, good-quality Foundation Phase education in a school, or funded nursery, in the term following their third birthday. Foundation Phase education will still be available as part of any new childcare offer.



How can I find a Foundation Phase place for my child?

You can contact your local authority Family Information Service (FIS) who can give you information, advice, guidance and support on services ranging from childcare to a list of settings in your area which are registered to provide free, part-time places in the Foundation Phase.

What is my child learning?

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

The Areas of Learning are:

- Personal and Social Development, Well-Being and Cultural Diversity
- Language, Literacy and Communication Skills (this will be in English or Welsh depending on the language policy of the setting or school)
- Mathematical Development
- Welsh Language Development (this is not a requirement when settings or schools follow the Language, Literacy and Communication Skills Area of Learning through the medium of Welsh)
- Knowledge and Understanding of the World
- Physical Development
- Creative Development.

Will my child learn to read and write?

The Foundation Phase emphasises the importance of good reading and writing skills. However, it is important that children are not pushed into reading and writing too early. Very young children will be encouraged to develop pre-reading and pre-writing skills through language development and activities that help them understand sounds through games, making patterns, singing and stories. Pre-writing skills will be developed through mark making with tools and writing instruments on a variety of surfaces such as chalk on the playground or sticks in the mud, drawing, painting,

threading and other activities that develop their muscle control.

Once your child is developmentally ready, they will move on to linking sounds and letters for reading and spelling through recognising and building words in playful activities, understanding books and stories – first with picture books and then moving onto those that are appropriate for their reading level. The National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF) will support the development of these skills across all the Areas of Learning.

How will my child learn and what type of activities will they be taking part in?

Your child will be given opportunities to learn and understand through first-hand experiences and by helping to plan and take part in practical activities relevant to their developmental stage. Being outdoors is an important part of the Foundation Phase, offering your child the chance to learn and discover through planned and spontaneous activities.

It is worth mentioning that your child will have fun learning through activities that can be messy and may not always come home as clean as you may expect. But there are many benefits of learning through multisensory, creative activities. For example, your child may be encouraged to develop their letter-forming skills by using runny mud-paint outdoors, which may splash on their clothing. While staff at the setting or school will provide protective clothing for messier activities and will encourage your child to stay clean and wash themselves, there are bound to be splashes and smudges.



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 their understanding of the Welsh culture and the wider world.



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 rubber toy 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, e.g. 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.



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 LNF. The children then created a digital book, explaining and evaluating their activities that was then shared on the school website.

What is the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF)?

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

In September 2015 we introduced revised Areas of Learning for Language, Literacy and Communication Skills and Mathematical Development in order to integrate the skills identified in the LNF and to strengthen the teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy skills.

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.



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, etc.
- 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, e.g. 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.

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 www.gov.wales and search for 'Is your child being bullied?'.

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

poridrwystori.booktrust.org.uk

Can I withdraw my child from the Foundation Phase?

Children do not have to start compulsory education until they are five years old. However, there are benefits in your child starting education early. Your child can mix and socialise with other children and it will make starting primary school a lot easier. Children will be immersed in practical, hands-on learning experiences which will improve their development and encourage them to expand their skills as they start on their education journey.

If your child has reached compulsory school age and is going to a maintained school, there is no parental right to withdraw them from the Foundation Phase Areas of Learning or from the associated assessment arrangements. However, as a parent/carer, you do have the right to withdraw your child from religious education and any sex education which may be provided.



Do children with special educational needs follow the Foundation Phase?

All learners, including those with special educational needs, will be able to follow the Foundation Phase curriculum. However, very occasionally, a child with special educational needs may need to be 'disapplied' for all or part of the Foundation Phase curriculum on a temporary basis. In exceptional cases some learners, such as those with Statements of Special Educational Needs issued by the local authority, may be disappled permanently.

Disapplication allows headteachers to excuse children from the requirements of the Foundation Phase curriculum in special circumstances, either on a temporary or permanent basis.

If your child has special educational needs and you need advice and information about matters relating to those needs, contact your local authority who will be able to direct you to their parent partnership service.

Find out more about what is provided for children with special educational needs by going to **learning.gov.wales** and searching for 'Information for carers of young people'.

How is my child being assessed?

Children will be formally assessed at the beginning of their Reception year in four Areas of Learning:

- Personal and Social Development, Well-Being and Cultural Diversity
- Language, Literacy and Communication Skills (English or Welsh)
- Mathematical Development
- Physical Development.

These assessments are carried out by observing children during their usual classroom activities and they give practitioners information about the children's stage of development. Practitioners will then use this information to plan appropriate active learning experiences for children.

Children will also be formally assessed against Foundation Phase outcomes at the end of the Foundation Phase in three Areas of Learning:

- Personal and Social Development, Well-Being and Cultural Diversity
- Language, Literacy and Communication Skills (English or Welsh)
- Mathematical Development.



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 teacher.

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 across the curriculum
- the overall results of children of the same age within the school (except in very small schools where five or fewer were assessed)
- the most recent school comparative report provided by the Welsh Government; this report compares the school's performance with other schools within the local authority and across Wales.



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 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 school. Most 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.

Where can I find out about school results?

The school's results will be in your child's report. They are also published every year in the school prospectus as well as the governors' annual report, and can be found on the My Local School website at mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk



National school categorisation

A national school categorisation system was introduced by the Minister for Education and Skills in September 2014. This system gives us a clear and fair picture of how well your child's school is performing compared with other schools across Wales, and helps us to identify the schools that need the most help, support and guidance to improve.

You can find the performance measures that schools are assessed against and the guide for parents and carers at www.gov.wales by searching for 'National schools categorisation'. Categorisation outcomes are published each year on the My Local School website at mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk.

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*. Ask your teacher for a copy or search for 'How was school today?' at www.gov.wales.

Where can I find further information about the Foundation Phase?



More information for parents/carers

We want you to be totally reassured that your child is receiving the best possible start in life, so we are determined to give you all the information you need about the Foundation Phase and how your child's learning will develop.

Your child's practitioner, teacher or childminder is always there to provide help and advice about your child's development, or to provide any more information you need about the Foundation Phase.

Where can I find copies of other school documents and Foundation Phase materials?

You can ask to see copies of the Foundation Phase documents, the LNF 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 **www.gov.wales/foundationphase**

Free school meals

If you receive certain benefits, your child may be eligible for free school meals as long as you meet certain eligibility conditions. If you feel you meet these conditions, you can collect a form from your child's school or apply to your local authority. If you claim free school meals for your child, the school can claim extra funding to provide further support to your child.

To find out if you are eligible, go to **www.gov.wales** and search for 'Free school meals'.

Healthy breakfasts

Children in primary schools can have a free healthy breakfast at school before the start of the school day. Where schools don't run the free breakfast scheme and there is demand for free breakfasts, the school governing body should write to the local authority to ask for free breakfasts to be provided at the school.





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. (This website is only available in English.)

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

Change4life

Gives you ideas and recipes to help you and your family be healthier and happier.

www.change4lifewales.org.uk

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.wales.gov.uk

Estyn

Find out more about how your child's school is performing.

www.estyn.gov.uk

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.ecw.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

Learning Wales

Learning Wales is a web-based resource, designed to meet the needs of educators and practitioners and improve the standards of learning providers across Wales.

learning.gov.wales

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.wales.gov.uk

Hwb+

The individual school learning platform where learners, parents, carers and teachers can access a wide range of online tools and services that can support digital learning.

hwb.wales.gov.uk

Creative Learning Zone

A new zone on Hwb with information and inspiration to help make creative skills an established part of the curriculum.

hwb.wales.gov.uk/creativity

A curriculum for Wales

To find out more about the development of the new curriculum and assessment arrangements for Wales see *A curriculum for Wales: a curriculum for life*.

www.gov.wales/curriculumforwales

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.

learning.gov.wales

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

Notes