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# How is my child doing in the Foundation Phase?

A guide  
for parents  
and carers

Helping  
3 to 7-year-olds  
play, learn  
and grow



chwarae • dysgu • tyfu  
play • learn • grow

cyfnod sylfaen 3–7 foundation phase

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# Introduction from the Minister

We have been very open and frank about the need for Wales to raise standards and education performance across the board. One of our flagship policies, the Foundation Phase is based on learning through play, active involvement and practical activities which enhance your child's creativity, knowledge, skills and understanding.

The Foundation Phase has been designed to give your child the best possible skills for future learning with a strong emphasis on developing reading and writing skills.

The Welsh Government believes that giving our youngest learners a sound foundation for the future will benefit children and Wales as a whole in the long term.

This guide will explain what your child will learn through the Foundation Phase and give you some examples of how they will learn.

Leighton Andrews AM  
Minister for Education and Skills

# What is the Foundation Phase?

The Foundation Phase is a developmental curriculum for 3 to 7-year-olds in Wales; it encourages children to be creative, imaginative and to have fun and makes learning more enjoyable and more effective.

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



## When will my child benefit from the Foundation Phase?

Your child will be offered a free part-time good quality Foundation Phase place in a school, nursery, playgroup or with a childminder in the term following his/her third birthday.

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

You can contact your local Family Information Service who can provide you with information, advice, guidance and support on all services, ranging from childcare to a list of settings in your area which are registered to provide a free part-time Foundation Phase place.

There is a Family Information Service in every local authority.



## What is my child learning?

The Foundation Phase has seven Areas of Learning, where stimulating structured play activities can be woven into the learning experiences. The seven 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 school)
- Mathematical Development
- Welsh Language Development
- Knowledge and Understanding of the World
- Physical Development
- Creative Development.

## Will my child still learn to read and write?

The Foundation Phase emphasises how important good reading and writing skills are. These skills are fundamental to how the Foundation Phase is planned and delivered. Many young children do not have the necessary speaking and listening skills when they enter education to take advantage of the opportunities available to them. These are very important skills if children are to become successful learners in the future; and essential as the foundation for reading and writing.

In the Foundation Phase your child will have the opportunity to enjoy books and to make progress in his/her ability to follow stories, read them and respond as appropriate. Your child will read books with or without an adult, show interest and enjoy their content while increasing his/her fluency, accuracy, understanding and independence.

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

Your child will be given opportunities to explore the world around him/her and understand how things work by taking part in practical activities that are relevant to his/her developmental stage.

Your child will be challenged with open-ended questions from practitioners and given opportunities to explore and share ideas for solving problems.



### Personal and Social Development, Well-being and Cultural Diversity

Your child will learn about themselves and form relationships with other children and adults. They are encouraged to develop self-esteem, and their personal moral values.

#### Example learning activity: Tasting Sessions

Some children are reluctant to try out new fruit, so the practitioners create a fun session exploring different fruits. The children are blindfolded, given a selection of fruit segments and asked to describe what they can taste. The game helps to develop the children's powers of expression and communication. The children then look at the countries where the fruit is grown and learn about the culture and the people.

At the end of the session the children draw the fruit that is left and a role-play corner is turned into a fruit shop where the children can use money to buy and sell the fruit.

## Language, Literacy and Communication Skills

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

Your child will have opportunities to choose and use reading materials and will be given a wide range of opportunities to enjoy drawing, scribbling and writing experiences.

Your child will be encouraged to communicate their needs, feelings and thoughts and retell experiences.

### Example learning activity: Secret 'Squidgy' Garden

One of the children was reading *The Secret Garden* with a practitioner. Before long a group of children gathered round and started to talk about the book. The children dressed up and acted out characters, which enhanced their language and communication skills. The practitioner then prepared an indoor sensory garden using cress, cooked spaghetti as worms, liquorice as snails, and shaving foam with cocoa as mud.

The children explored the texture of the display with their eyes closed and explained what they felt to practice their communication skills and increase their confidence. The children improved their number skills by adding and subtracting worms and slugs from the earth. The activity extended to the outdoor garden to develop their knowledge of the world.



## Mathematical Development

Your child will develop his/her skills, knowledge and understanding of mathematics by solving problems. They will use numbers in their daily activities and develop a range of flexible methods for working mentally with numbers in order to solve problems from a variety of contexts.

Your child will investigate the properties of shapes and will sort, match, sequence and compare objects and create simple patterns and relationships.

## 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 the longest and the 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 comprehend 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 in English-medium settings/schools will have the opportunity to learn to use and to communicate in Welsh to the best of their ability. Your child will develop these skills by participating in a range of enjoyable, practical planned activities and using a range of stimuli that build on and increase previous knowledge and experiences. Your child's oral experiences should be used to develop their reading skills.

Welsh-medium schools will develop children's Welsh-language skills by ensuring that they are embedded throughout their learning and development which will be delivered primarily through the medium of Welsh. Through the Foundation Phase all schools and settings will provide children with more opportunities to learn and enjoy using the Welsh language through daily access to appropriate Welsh-medium play-based activities.

## Example learning activity: Growing Flowers

The children have been growing and observing flowers in the school grounds. Back indoors they read books about flowers and created spelling flowers (words on sticks made to look like flowers). The children visited a florist and learnt how to make a bouquet. Back at school, they pretended they were in the florist selling flowers – learning more about money in the process. They looked up the Welsh names for the flowers and made labels for the shop.



## Knowledge and Understanding of the World

Your child will be given experiences that increase his/her 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 learn to express their own ideas, opinions and feelings with imagination, creativity and sensitivity.

## 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.

The children heat everyday objects, and learn what effect heat and fire has 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 also an important personal and social development aspect to this activity. The children are taught to recognise danger, respect the fire and treat it carefully, and learn how to handle sharp tools safely.



## Physical Development

Your child will be encouraged to enjoy physical activity and the developing sense of identity will be linked closely to his/her own self-image, self-esteem and confidence.

Your child will be introduced to the concepts of health, hygiene and 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. The practitioners, however, 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 scale the wall.

By supporting and encouraging each other through the difficult sections they improved their personal, social and communication skills, and enhanced 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

Your child will engage in creative, imaginative and expressive activities in art, craft, design, music, dance and movement. He/she will explore a wide range of stimuli, develop their ability to communicate and express their creative ideas and reflect on their work.

### 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 their 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 waste materials, which became a backdrop for role-playing and stories about 'penguins'.



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

It is about capturing your child's imagination and interests and making it enjoyable. The more your child is stimulated and engaged, the more they will learn.

You can help your child's development by getting actively involved in their learning, not just at home, but in the garden, in the park and at the shops.

We have put together some learning ideas for you and your child to enjoy on the following pages, but these suggestions are just the tip of the iceberg.

Remember, you are the person who spends the most time with your child, so you can have an enormous influence on their learning.

So whatever you do together and wherever you go, make it fun and inspiring for your child by turning it into a learning game.



## Numeracy and Literacy Tips

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

## Fun ways to help your child with numeracy

- When you go shopping, ask your child to count the number of fruit pieces you want, for example, ask for 3 oranges, 5 apples and 3 bananas.
- Play games that include spotting numbers on clocks, coins, supermarket rails, buses and packages.
- While in the car or on the bus, count the number of blue cars or wheels on a lorry, bus or car you can see.
- When you're cooking ask your child to help weigh out the ingredients.
- Involve your child as you pay for the shopping bill, showing them different ways you can pay for things using bank cards and money.
- If your child has birthday money help them to plan how they intend to spend it, this will help them develop money management skills.
- Count how many sleeps it is by using a calendar until a birthday or important event.

## Fun ways to help your child with literacy

- Don't just read books; give them comics, magazines, pages from the internet, cookery books, games... the list goes on... let them choose.
- Play i-spy word games, indoors or outdoors. This will help your child to recognise words and sounds and match them to the object.
- While in the car or on the bus, point out different road signs and ask them to explain what they think they mean.
- 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 – story telling, fun events and children's books 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.

For more hints and tips on reading go to [www.betterreading.co.uk](http://www.betterreading.co.uk)



## Do children with special educational needs follow the Foundation Phase?

Most learners including those with additional learning needs will be able to follow the Foundation Phase curriculum. However, very occasionally, a headteacher may need to disapply all or part of the Foundation Phase curriculum on a temporary basis for a learner with special educational needs. In exceptional cases some learners, such as those with Statements of special educational needs issued by the local authority, may be disapplied permanently.

More information can be found in the Welsh Government's information booklet for parents and carers.

Please visit <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/senforparents> or call 029 2082 6044.

## Can I withdraw my child from the Foundation Phase?

It is not statutory for your child to start compulsory education until he/she is five years old. However, there are benefits in your child starting school early. Your child can mix and socialise with other children and it will make starting primary school a lot easier. He/she will be immersed in rich, practical hands-on experiences which will enhance their learning and encourage them to develop their skills as they start on their education journey.

If your child has reached compulsory school age and is attending a maintained school, there is no parental right to withdraw learners from the Foundation Phase Areas of Learning or from the associated assessment arrangements.

Parents/ carers do, however, have the right to withdraw their children from religious education and any sex education which may be provided.

# How is my child being assessed?

Observing children is a key part of assessment within the Foundation Phase. Practitioners will assess your child's progress through observing them in their everyday activities and use the information to plan the next stage of their learning and development. Children will be assessed on a statutory basis at the end of the Foundation Phase.



## 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. You will also have the opportunity to meet your child's teacher.

Information from the end of phase assessment will form part of the yearly report.

The yearly report will also include feedback from your child's teacher about strengths and areas for improvement, attendance and achievements.

The report will form the basis for a discussion about your child's learning needs and next steps.

At the end of primary school, your child's report will include a Foundation Phase Outcome for each of the three core Areas of Learning:

- Personal and Social Development, Well-being and Cultural Diversity
- Language Literacy and Communication Skills
- Mathematical Development.

This will give you a 'snapshot' view of your child's progress and level of achievement against national standards.



## Foundation Phase Outcomes

### A – Above Outcome 6

Some children might be expected to achieve significantly above the expected level.

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### Foundation Phase Outcome 6

Achievement at Outcome 6 or beyond shows they are achieving above average.

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### Foundation Phase Outcome 5

This is the expected level for children at the end of Foundation Phase – most but not all children will achieve this level.

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### Foundation Phase Outcomes 1, 2, 3 and 4

For some children, performance below the expected level may be a huge achievement.

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### W – Working Towards Outcome 1

Some children may be progressing towards gaining the skills and knowledge expected at Outcome 1.

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### D – Disapplied

In some circumstances the headteacher may decide that all or part of the Foundation Phase curriculum does not apply to an individual, for example because of a child's special educational needs.

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### N – Not awarded a level

Very rarely, there are circumstances that prevent a school from having enough knowledge and evidence on which to base a teacher assessment.

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It is important to remember that different children will achieve at different rates, but at the end of Foundation Phase most children are expected to achieve Outcome 5 on the national Foundation Phase Outcome scale in each core subject.

For more information visit [www.wales.gov.uk/foundationphase](http://www.wales.gov.uk/foundationphase)

## Reports for all children will include information about

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

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

- the teacher assessment 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'
- 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 comparison report provided by the Welsh Government.



## 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, and others who may 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 an annual meeting for you to discuss the Governors' Annual Report and to share views on how the school is developing. You are entitled to attend this meeting and are encouraged to do so.

## Where can I find out about school results?

The school's results will be reported in your child's report. They are also published annually in the School Prospectus as well as the Governors' Annual Report.

## A seamless transition to Key Stage 2

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

If you would like more information on Key Stage 2, there is a parent's and carer's information guide called 'How was school today?'. Ask your teacher for a copy or visit:

[www.wales.gov.uk/schoolsinfo4parents](http://www.wales.gov.uk/schoolsinfo4parents)

# Where can I find further information about the Foundation Phase?

## More information for parents and carers

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.

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

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

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

Copies of current schemes of work and other syllabuses should be available, and the arrangements for parents/carers to view any of these documents should be set out in the School Prospectus.

Copies of the Foundation Phase documents should be available in public libraries or you can visit [www.wales.gov.uk/foundationphase](http://www.wales.gov.uk/foundationphase)