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Active and experiential learning

Effective foundation phase practice in delivering literacy and numeracy in Year 1 and Year 2

December 2017

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Introduction

This report is written in response to a request for advice from the Welsh Government in the Minister's annual remit letter to Estyn for 2016-2017. The report focuses on how schools apply effective foundation phase practice in delivering literacy and numeracy in Year 1 and Year 2. It builds on the toolkit produced by Estyn in 2009, 'Play and active learning, a toolkit for Foundation Phase practitioners'. It also includes an evaluation of current practice.

The report is intended for the Welsh Government, headteachers and staff in schools, local authorities and regional consortia. It may also be of interest to those working with teacher training institutions.

The report draws on evidence collected during primary school inspections since 2010. For this survey, we also visited twenty-seven schools across Wales to observe foundation phase practice in delivering literacy and numeracy in Year 1 and Year 2.

The report includes examples from lessons and case studies outlining how schools overcome perceived barriers to apply sound foundation phase practice when delivering literacy and numeracy in Year 1 and Year 2. Schools may wish to consider these examples. In addition to this written report, Estyn has worked with schools to produce an online video to exemplify good practice. This is intended to stimulate discussions within and between schools, local authorities and regional consortia.

Common characteristics

Findings

Effective practice

Case study

Questions

Background

The introduction of the foundation phase curriculum in September 2008 marked a radical departure from the more formal, competency-based approach associated with the previous Key Stage 1 National Curriculum. It was developed on the premise, backed by international research, that the adoption of an overly formal curriculum and extensive adult-directed teaching before the age of six or seven results in lower standards of attainment in the longer term. It was designed to promote discovery and independence, and placed a greater emphasis on using the outdoor environment as a resource for children's learning.

Schools introduced the foundation phase in three stages. Twenty-two schools piloted it during 2004-2005. Children born during 2000-2001 were the first cohort to follow the foundation phase programme in these pilot schools. In 2007-2008, it was introduced in a further 22 schools. Children born during 2003-2004 were the first cohort to be assessed at the end of the phase in these schools. In 2008-2009, the foundation phase was rolled-out to all remaining schools in Wales. In September 2010, the Foundation Phase Framework for Children's Learning became the statutory curriculum for three to seven-year-olds.

The Foundation Phase Framework (Welsh Government, 2015), sets out to provide an experiential, active approach to learning. It emphasises the importance of the child being at the centre of all learning and the significance of children's wellbeing. It advocates a balance of child-initiated and adult-directed activities.

The following areas of learning are common to English and Welsh medium schools:

- Personal and Social Development, Wellbeing and Cultural Diversity
- Language, Literacy and Communication
- Mathematical Development
- Knowledge and Understanding of the World
- Physical Development
- Creative Development

In addition, English medium schools provide Welsh Language Development.

The foundation phase curriculum is a progressive framework that spans the four years, from aged three to seven. It is designed to meet the diverse needs of all children, including those who are at an early stage of development and those who are more able.

The curriculum is designed to be appropriate to a child's stage of learning rather than focusing solely on age-related expected outcomes. Children are encouraged to move on to the next stages of their learning when they are developmentally ready and at their own pace.

The National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (Welsh Government, 2013) was introduced and assessment against the framework became a requirement in September 2014. The framework was designed as a curriculum planning tool, aiming to bring about a more coherent approach to developing literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. It sets out clear annual expected outcomes in literacy and numeracy, with a view to improving pupils' literacy and numeracy standards across Wales.

In 2014, an Independent Stocktake of the Foundation Phase (Welsh Government, 2014) took place. In response to the findings in the report, the Welsh Government established a foundation phase expert group to devise a long-term approach in developing consistently good and effective foundation phase practice across all settings and schools.

An important feature of the foundation phase was to reduce inequalities in social and education outcomes. However, Evaluating the Foundation Phase, Final report (WISERD 2015) reveals that the introduction of the foundation phase is not, to date, associated with notable changes in the differences in outcomes between boys and girls or those pupils who are eligible for free school meals and those who have special educational needs. The patterns that existed prior to the introduction of the foundation phase persist, namely that these pupils generally perform less well than their peers. However, despite this it does appear that the performance of pupils involved in the initial piloting of the foundation phase approach appears to have improved compared to the attainment of earlier cohorts of pupils who went through the more formal approach associated with the previous key stage 1 National Curriculum.

This is particularly evident from data obtained from the national pupil database about their performance in English, mathematics and science at the end of key stage 2.

In February 2015, the Welsh Government published Professor Donaldson's 'Successful Futures, an Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales' (Donaldson, 2015).

Successful Futures proposes that the curriculum in Wales should ensure that children and young people develop as:

- ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives
- enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work
- ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world
- healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society

Successful Futures (Donaldson, 2015) states 'nursery and primary school leaders identified the ethos, principles and pedagogy of the current Foundation Phase as a significant strength of current educational practice in Wales. A curriculum based on Areas of Learning and Experience instead of subjects will enable schools to build on successful 'Foundation' practice into the middle and later years of primary education and beyond. A few schools have already extended the 'Foundation' philosophy and pedagogy into the 7–11 age range in this way. Often they have found it successful in increasing children and young people's engagement and removing the subject barriers that are often seen as inhibitors to creativity and flexibility in the curriculum.'

Successful Futures (Donaldson, 2015) also states that 'literacy and numeracy should be the responsibility of all teachers and they should both be represented in the curriculum in ways that ensure their progressive development for all children. Literacy and numeracy must mean more than basic competence and must acknowledge their central role in thinking and the ability to use language and number confidently and creatively.'

In support of these principles, the Foundation Phase Action Plan (Welsh Government, November 2016) outlines a national approach to 'continuously improve the way in which the Foundation Phase is delivered in schools and funded settings in Wales.' In line with the four core purposes of Successful Futures, the Foundation Phase Action Plan outlines a set of pedagogical principles, placing practical 'hands on' learning, and children initiating their own learning, at its heart. The plan states that 'practitioners should plan the learning environment carefully to reflect pupils' interests and stage of development, so that they can 'apply, use, consolidate and extend their skills' using resources that are always available (continuous provision)'. Practitioners should use extra challenges or tasks, which match the topic or the interests of pupils, using resources in addition to the usual continuous provision resources (enhanced provision). They would combine this with adult-direction, which usually involves the direct teaching of a specific skill (focused provision). This can involve teaching specific skills, knowledge and concepts through whole class teaching, working in groups or alongside individuals in the continuous provision. All of this should take place both indoors and outdoors, reflecting and engaging children's developing interests.

Foundation phase terminology

Where there is good foundation phase practice there is an appropriate balance between continuous, enhanced and focused provision with continuous provision being the starting point and activities building from this. It is important for the development of pupils' skills that continuous provision is given high status, and that the majority of pupils' time is spent using the continuous provision to develop these skills.

Continuous provision

This term refers to the use of resources that are continuously available in the indoor or outdoor classroom for pupils to use independently. The resources should match pupils' interests and general stage of development, and give them the opportunity to practise, consolidate and extend their learning. Generally, teachers designate parts of the classroom to support different areas of learning, such as role-play, construction, reading and creative development. Schools refer to these as areas of continuous provision. Where the continuous provision works well, practitioners plan carefully to make sure that it meets the needs and reflects the interests of each cohort of learners successfully. Where pupils choose the area they want to work in, and what they are going to do there freely, this is called 'child-initiated learning'.

Enhanced provision

This describes additions to the continuous provision to provoke children to think more deeply, practise new skills, or learn new ways of working. Teachers add resources, questions or suggestions to the continuous provision to help move pupils' learning forward. Teachers plan additions linked to the skills and concepts introduced during focused teaching, to spark interest in a new topic or to enable an individual or group of pupils to follow a particular thread in more depth. The enhanced provision will change over time, to support pupils' learning as it develops. Occasionally, enhanced provision resources become part of the continuous provision as pupils progress. Where practitioners choose the enhancements and require pupils to work in a specific area, this is 'adult-directed learning'. If pupils choose the enhancements, and where they work, this is 'child-initiated learning'.

Focused provision

This is where adults teach pupils specific skills, knowledge and concepts through whole-class teaching, working in groups or alongside individuals. This is 'adult-directed learning'.

Where there is good foundation phase practice, once the teacher has introduced a new skill or concept, pupils have the opportunity to practice this in their play in the continuous and enhanced provision. This provides a meaningful context for pupils' learning and helps deepen their understanding.

Where there is good foundation phase practice, skilful teachers have a thorough knowledge of child development and the stages children generally reach at different ages. They observe each cohort of pupils carefully and get to know their needs and interests well. They use this knowledge to plan appropriate next steps for individuals and groups of learners.

Child-initiated learning

This is where pupils choose what and how they learn. For example, they choose the area where they are going to work and the resources that they are going to use. They contribute to choosing the topics and themes that they study. Where this works well, pupils have the opportunity to develop interests and to become increasingly skilful in different areas of learning. They embed the skills they are learning through focused tasks well by practising them in a context that they have chosen. Where there are good opportunities for child-initiated learning, pupils develop confidence and persistence, and learn to take risks and solve problems.

Adult-directed learning

This is where teachers and other practitioners lead the learning, through direct teaching, or planning enhancements and directing pupils to complete specific tasks in the continuous or enhanced provision.

Learning through play

Good foundation phase practice allows pupils to learn through active involvement and exploration indoors and outside. This means that they are often moving around, talking to one another, thinking of and trying out different ways to do things. This is essential to develop strong foundations for later learning, including essential communication and physical skills. However, occasionally schools misunderstand 'learning through play'. They see this simply as a time for pupils to play in the different areas of learning when they have finished their 'real' work or to let off steam outside. They do not value what pupils achieve during their play, plan carefully enough to make the time productive or work alongside pupils to ensure that they get the most out of their experiences.

Main findings

Around a quarter of schools deliver the foundation phase well. In the other schools, pupils have limited opportunities to practise their literacy and numeracy skills independently, and are overly reliant on adult direction. Many of these schools, particularly in Year 1 and Year 2, focus too much on making sure that pupils attain well within a narrow range of literacy and numeracy indicators, and this impacts negatively on pupils' broader development.

Standards in literacy and numeracy

1. In a majority of schools, most pupils develop effective speaking and listening skills. In these schools, teachers and support staff engage with pupils regularly to extend their learning during child-initiated activities. They provide exciting contexts for learning and this stimulates a rich response in children's spoken language.

2. Teachers in around half of schools recognise the importance of 'talking to learn'. In these schools, most pupils demonstrate an increased understanding of language, have active imaginations, and are able to use language to explore their own experiences and imaginary worlds. In a minority of schools, where activities are adult-directed for most of the time, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to explore language by talking to adults and other pupils about topics that interest them. They do not develop an extended vocabulary or become confident in speaking to others.

3. In a minority of schools, pupils are immersed in a learning environment that gives them numerous opportunities to read a variety of texts and to practise and improve their reading skills throughout the day. However, pupils' progress in developing their reading skills can be adversely affected by having to adhere rigidly to a set number of texts from a reading scheme.

4. In around of quarter of schools where pupils have meaningful opportunities to write for a variety of purposes, most pupils develop confidence in transferring their understanding of the different forms of writing to other areas of learning successfully. In around a quarter of schools, pupils do not apply their writing skills across areas of learning well enough. There is an over reliance on formal teaching and the use of worksheets or writing frames, to scaffold pupils' writing. Teachers do not provide stimulating opportunities for writing during continuous and enhanced provision, limiting pupils' ability to write at length imaginatively and independently.

5. Most pupils achieve well in mathematics when they have lots of interesting opportunities to use their skills through enhanced activities, both indoors and outdoors. For example, when learning about going on holiday, pupils use their knowledge of addition and multiplication to work out the cost of the holiday for one person and then for a family of four.

6. In around a quarter of schools, pupils transfer their mathematical skills to independent activities well. For example, pupils weigh porridge oats for 'The Three Bears' in grams and accurately measure their footprints in centimetres. When looking at a range of information, many pupils apply their numeracy skills successfully to record their findings and transfer them to a simple bar chart. However, in general, a majority of pupils do not interpret and extract information from data handling activities well enough.

Pupil voice and independence

7. The amount of child choice varies considerably from class to class and from school to school. In the most successful schools, the interests of pupils and their views are an important consideration in the school's vision for improvement. Pupils' opinions and feedback are a central feature in curriculum planning and developing learning experiences. As a result, in many of these schools, pupils work together well and demonstrate high levels of engagement in their learning. Where the delivery of the foundation phase becomes overly adult-directed and too formal in Year 1 and Year 2, pupils' levels of perseverance, and a willingness to take calculated risks in their learning, reduces. These pupils become less confident in applying their literacy and numeracy skills independently across areas of learning. Overall, inspections identify more adult-directed learning than child-initiated learning in Year 2.

Provision for literacy and numeracy

8. Classrooms in nursery and reception are generally set up well to promote pupils' learning through doing, experiencing and finding things out for themselves. However, in Year 1 and Year 2, many classrooms have a more formal layout and the delivery of literacy and numeracy is often too structured and adult-directed. In these classrooms, pupils tend to sit at a desk for a large proportion of their day and are not engaged sufficiently in active and experiential learning.

9. Teachers in around half of all schools do not plan their work effectively to ensure that pupils develop their literacy and numeracy skills systematically enough across all areas of learning.

10. In a majority of schools, the learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, is not well organised. Teachers do not understand what good quality continuous, enhanced and focused provision looks like.

11. In a few schools, appropriate foundation phase practice is limited to afternoons only or one or two afternoons a week, which conflicts with the pedagogy of the foundation phase. In these schools, teachers do not always consider how they can make links between the areas of foundation phase learning well enough. Many of these schools have literacy and numeracy sessions in the morning only, and do not make the most of developing pupils' skills throughout the day.

12. In a few schools, teachers integrate the teaching of phonics, reading and specific writing skills in innovative ways during continuous and enhanced provision. They expand upon them, often in innovative ways, during continuous and enhanced activities. This, allows pupils to practise and embed them, with a good balance between experiential learning and formal aspects of teaching. However, by Year 2 these skills are often taught in isolation. As a result, pupils' literacy skills become too narrow and teachers do not always encourage these pupils to write at length, independently, across areas of learning.

Teaching and assessment

13. In a quarter of schools where teaching is effective, teachers consolidate pupils' literacy and numeracy skills well. They teach a particular skill through a focused task, and plan exciting and relevant opportunities to practise, consolidate and develop this skill and to extend pupils' learning during continuous and enhanced provision. Staff facilitate, demonstrate and collaborate in learning. They motivate their pupils and use questioning to stimulate further, open-ended learning.

14. In many schools, teaching assistants, rather than teachers, do most of the work outdoors, but a minority do not always have a clear understanding of foundation phase practice or the learning objective. As a result, pupils do not make enough progress in developing important skills in literacy and numeracy and are not actively engaged in purposeful learning for considerable periods of time.

15. In many schools, processes for assessing literacy and numeracy are too complicated and time consuming. They focus on collecting a large amount of information rather than analysing pupil progress over time, or identifying specific areas for development. In too many cases, assessment is used as a process to follow and is not diagnostic enough to inform future planning or 'next steps' for pupils.

16. In addition, many schools feel pressurised to prepare pupils formally for national reading and numeracy tests, contributing to wide variations in foundation phase practice. This is frequently at the expense of the development of pupils' creative and physical skills.

Leadership

17. In most schools with effective foundation phase practice, foundation phase leaders play a key strategic role within the senior leadership team. They focus well on improving provision and raising pupil outcomes. They act as skilled role models to model effective foundation phase principles and practice in teaching and learning to colleagues. They support staff in analysing data robustly.

18. Where foundation phase leads are new to the role, they do not always have the knowledge and understanding of effective practice to deliver literacy and numeracy well enough. Often, they do not receive training in the delivery of effective Foundation phase practices. This in turn limits their ability to support colleagues in modelling good practice when delivering and planning for literacy and numeracy activities across areas of learning.

19. Leaders of schools with consistently good standards evaluate the progress and success of initiatives regularly. They consider the learning taking place and its impact on pupils' outcomes and their attitudes to learning. They are not afraid to make changes if things are not working, and this empowers them to be innovative and try new ideas.

20. Where leadership is adequate or unsatisfactory, leaders have a narrow view of the purpose of learning, they are overly prescriptive in applying the Literacy and Numeracy Framework, and they do not understand the principles of the foundation phase well enough. As a result, they fail to identify and address weaknesses in the delivery of literacy and numeracy in line with good foundation phase practice.

21. In many cases, challenge advisers do not have enough knowledge or experience of the foundation phase and its pedagogy. Because of this, they do not always understand what constitutes good standards of literacy and numeracy. This means that the support and challenge they offer schools sometimes contradict and undermine effective foundation phase practice.

Recommendations

Schools should:

R1: Provide professional learning opportunities for all foundation phase staff to make sure that they have the skills, understanding and confidence to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills

R2: Ensure that foundation phase learning in Year 1 and Year 2 classes is suitably balanced between experiential learning and formal teaching

R3: Plan regular opportunities for all pupils in the foundation phase to apply their literacy and numeracy skills in enhanced and continuous provision areas, both indoors and outdoors

R4: Involve pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 in decisions about what and how they learn

Local authorities and regional consortia should:

R5: Provide training for headteachers to help them to identify, develop and share effective foundation phase practice

R6: Make sure that challenge advisers identify, develop and share effective foundation phase practice and apply this knowledge when supporting schools

R7: Provide training for schools to help them to identify, develop and share effective practice in teaching and assessing literacy and numeracy skills in the foundation phase, across the areas of learning

The Welsh Government should:

R8: Make sure that schools understand the pedagogy of active and experiential learning when developing a new curriculum for Wales

Standards in literacy and numeracy

Standards in literacy and numeracy

Around a quarter of schools deliver the foundation phase well. In many schools, delivery of the foundation phase in Year 1 and Year 2 has become too formal. Pupils have limited opportunities to practise their literacy and numeracy skills independently, and are overly reliant on adult direction. Many of these schools focus too much on making sure that pupils attain well within a narrow range of literacy and numeracy indicators, and this impacts negatively on pupils' broader development.

In a minority of schools where staff understand and implement good foundation phase practice in Year 1 and Year 2, nearly all pupils show increased motivation and enjoyment of learning. This has a positive impact on the standards they achieve. Active learning approaches and the use of the outdoor learning environment help pupils to be more engaged in their learning, particularly boys. This develops pupils' skills in oracy, reading and numeracy effectively and pupils apply these skills well across the foundation phase areas of learning. Staff in these schools plan in a creative and imaginative way, making learning active and fun. As a result, many pupils that are more able achieve well at the higher-than-expected outcomes in literacy and mathematical development.

Standards of oracy

In a majority of schools, pupils develop effective speaking and listening skills. In these schools, staff engage with pupils regularly to extend their learning during child-initiated activities. They provide exciting contexts for learning and this stimulates a richness in children's spoken language. For example, in a museum role-play area most pupils can talk confidently about the artefacts and describe their purpose to visitors to the school. In a minority of schools, where activities are adult-directed for most of the time, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to explore language by talking to adults and other pupils about topics that interest them. They do not develop an extended vocabulary or become confident in speaking to others. As a result, few pupils develop an extended vocabulary or become confident in speaking to others.

In around half of schools teachers recognise the importance of 'talking to learn' and regularly retell or make up stories using a variety of props such as puppets, photographs and pictures. In these schools most pupils demonstrate an increased understanding of language and the image making involved in storytelling and writing. They have active imaginations and the ability to use language to explore their own experiences and imaginary worlds. For example, when using puppets to retell the story of Jack and the Beanstalk, they take on the personae of the different characters confidently. Most increase and enrich their vocabulary, use clear pronunciation and speak to different audiences with ease. These pupils transfer these skills to their writing, showing a good awareness of grammar, punctuation and the importance of engaging the reader. However, in many schools only a minority of pupils write at length for a variety of purposes.

Standards of reading

Many pupils develop their reading skills suitably through reading to solve problems or to complete hands-on tasks. For example, a group of pupils follow a set of clues to find the next section of a story in the outdoor area and ask and answer questions about the story, before moving on to the next clue. This approach develops pupils' reading skills to a high level and increases their confidence when reading aloud to an audience.

In a minority of schools where pupils are immersed in a learning environment that gives them numerous opportunities to read a variety of texts and to practise their reading skills throughout the day, most develop particularly good skills in reading. They understand that language conveys meaning and apply this knowledge well when decoding unfamiliar words. However, this only happens in around half of schools.

In a minority of schools, pupils' progress in developing their reading skills is hindered by having rigidly to follow a set number of texts from a reading scheme. There is little choice about what pupils read and, as a result, most become demotivated, show little interest and see reading as a chore.

Standards of writing

In a minority of schools where pupils have meaningful opportunities to write for a variety of purposes, they develop confidence in transferring their understanding of the different forms of writing to other areas of learning successfully. For example, when learning about going on holiday, most pupils can record information independently, using subject specific words, capital letters and simple punctuation. Many of these pupils use opportunities during enhanced activities to write postcards and to produce colourful information posters. When outdoors, they make lists of what to take on holiday, and write descriptions of the resort and directions for getting to the airport.

In around a quarter of schools, most pupils do not apply their writing skills across areas of learning well enough. They do not embed these skills successfully in order to write using a variety of genres or to write at length. Many pupils become over reliant on formal, directed teaching and the use of worksheets or writing frames, to scaffold their writing.

In a minority of schools, pupils plan and redraft their writing. Where this is done well, pupils have a clear sense of what they want to write about and the correct format for the particular style of writing. They are able to create a 'bank' of words and demonstrate and extend what they already know to create interesting pieces of writing.

Standards of numeracy

In a majority of schools, pupils use the correct mathematical terminology to discuss or solve problems confidently. For example, when they collaborate with each other to build a model house in the creative area, pupils discuss size and shape confidently. This flexibility and creativity enable pupils to apply the skills learned during focused teaching effectively. For example, when learning about going on holiday, pupils use their knowledge of addition and multiplication to work out the cost of the holiday for one person and then for a family of four independently.

Most pupils achieve well in mathematics when they have interesting opportunities to use their skills through enhanced activities both indoors and outdoors. For example, they apply their knowledge of subtraction and addition in a garage role-play area to complete a car hire form and an MOT certificate, and to work out the cost of repairs accurately. Others create a healthy smoothie, listing and weighing the ingredients in grams, and work out what to sell them for to make a profit. These pupils select and use relevant mathematical operations and mental strategies effectively.

In around a quarter of schools, pupils transfer their mathematical skills to independent activities well. For example, pupils weigh porridge oats for 'The Three Bears' in grams and accurately measure their footprints in centimetres. When looking at a range of information, many pupils apply their numeracy skills successfully to record their findings and transfer them to a simple bar chart. However, in general, a majority of pupils do not interpret and extract information from data handling activities well enough.

STANDARDS:
COMMON CHARACTERISTICS

Common characteristics of schools where pupils achieve high standards in literacy and numeracy

Schools with consistently high standards in literacy and numeracy often use a cross-curricular, topic-based approach. Teachers plan skills carefully, linked to the Literacy and Numeracy Framework (Welsh Government, 2013), to support pupils' application of literacy and numeracy skills across the foundation phase areas of learning. There is a good balance of adult-directed focused activities and child-initiated independent learning. Teachers develop interesting enhanced and continuous learning activities to consolidate these skills further, according to the interests and abilities of the pupils in their class.

Pupils regularly

- exercise choice, participate, initiate and direct their own learning
- learn from first-hand, experiential and practical, hands-on activities
- experience an appropriate level of challenge and support from the adults
- have access to a stimulating learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, so that good progress is made
- transfer literacy and numeracy skills across areas of learning confidently

Year 1 pupils in a role-play castle prepare invitations and a menu for the Queen's birthday celebrations. They work out the cost of the food and then use their multiplication skills to work out the costs involved for 5 and then 10 people. They prepare and rehearse a welcome speech, improving their oracy skills.

STANDARDS:
EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

Examples of developing effective practice in raising pupils' standards of **literacy**

Oracy skills

What do pupils do?

After listening to the story of 'The Three Billy Goats Gruff' pupils, use their information and communication technology (ICT) skills to find information about trolls.

They create an interesting presentation about them. They choose pictures from the internet, adding sentences to describe the picture, which they then share with the class. During the presentation, pupils must use as much descriptive language as possible to highlight the troll's features and character. Following this, they work in groups to record themselves, playing it back to analyse how clear they have been and to highlight any areas for improvement. They transfer this dialogue to role-play scenarios talking about how they feel as the troll when the Billy Goats try to cross their bridge.

What was the impact?

Nearly all pupils are able to talk about their presentations clearly and can choose their words carefully to adapt to the role.

Many use adjectives well to describe the troll's features and the food on offer in the café.

A few pupils that are more able use their knowledge of similes to engage the listener effectively.

Most pupils are able to give an opinion clearly and articulate the main reasons behind it.

As part of a topic on foods from around the world, pupils decide to set up a global café in the role-play area.

They allocate roles and decide what kind of conversations various characters may have. They adapt their vocabulary accordingly, for example a food salesman, needing to be persuasive, an angry customer complaining about the food, and a waiter describing the food on offer.

They rehearse various scenarios then act out a scene to the class. Most confidently express opinions and can adapt their vocabulary easily.

Pupils video each other and give constructive feedback about how they could improve.

Context

A group of pupils map the course of a river using words that they have collected from their theme about water.

Seeking opportunities to extend literacy and numeracy skills through art and music

What do pupils do?

They recall prior knowledge about the water cycle and rivers, and place words on the floor of the hall in a large flowing movement. They intersperse these words with descriptions about how the river is flowing. Where pupils know the Welsh word, they match this to the words on the floor.

In response to music played, pupils decide how they will depict the journey of the river and work together to plan a sequence of movements. They take time to reflect with the teacher and analyse whether they have the descriptions in the right place and whether or not they need additional words or descriptions.

Once the pupils are happy with their performance, they think about and discuss how they can enhance it with music. They try out a range of instruments and describe the sounds they make and which parts of the story of the river they suit best. They work together to plan how to use the instruments and count the beats in the music.

What is the impact?

Nearly all pupils build on previous experiences, making themselves understood effectively by organising what they say and choosing words deliberately. They use a range of appropriate vocabulary confidently and recall information, sequencing events correctly. Nearly all listen to others with concentration and read words with accuracy. They develop their counting skills and understanding of repeated patterns successfully.

Reading skills

What do pupils do?

Pupils place five large hoops on the floor, and label each one with a sound blend that they are finding difficult. They take turns to throw beanbags into the hoop that matches the sound blend identified on a card that they turn over.

They listen carefully, identifying the letter sounds, and throw the beanbag accurately. Once they are able to do this confidently, teachers increase the level of challenge. Pupils then have to say a word containing the sound blend and throw the beanbag into the correct hoop.

Pupils that are more able put these words into sentences and write these down on a long roll of paper on the floor. They read these to each other.

Pupils identify key Welsh vocabulary related to the beach. This is followed by a visit to a local beach where pupils find the various beach related items and read the word from the card. They also identify and read other signs, such as shop names, and list items sold at the beach shop.

On their return, pupils design and help to build a class 'beach shop' and decide what is to be sold.

In the following role-play activities, pupils use their reading skills to support them in making labels and signs and to write a menu board to display outside the shop.

The class look at the frozen ground. Pupils are curious to know how small birds found food during the very cold weather, particularly when there was a frost. They decide to use the library to research information about what birds like to eat.

They talk about the features of non-fiction books, locate the index and take note of headings in order to scan for and locate useful information quickly. They apply their knowledge of high frequency words to support them in reading the text and use their phonic knowledge well to decipher unknown words quickly.

What was the impact?

All pupils enjoy what they are doing and are fully engaged in their work.

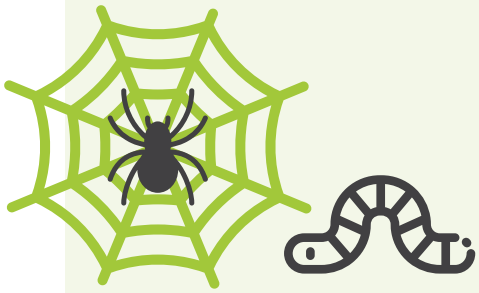
Most practise their reading skills and show that they are able to follow instructions successfully.

Many use a dictionary skilfully to support their writing and to find the meaning of words.

Nearly all develop their personal and social skills well, co-operating to work together in pairs, and sharing equipment effectively

Writing skills

What do pupils do?



An autumn walk

Pupils go on an autumn walk in the school grounds, where they find a worm. They are interested to find out what other mini beasts are in the outdoor areas, so the focus changes from collecting and sorting autumn leaves to collecting and sorting mini beasts.

Impact

Pupils' literacy skills are enhanced and developed as they learn new vocabulary for talking about, describing and writing about what they found.

Pupils develop their numeracy skills effectively through handling data, sorting and counting the mini beasts.

The Olympic Games

During a topic on the Olympics, the construction area is set up for the children to explore the different buildings and structures in Brazil. Pupils spend time looking at these buildings and which construction resources best resemble them.

They look closely at the Christ the Redeemer statue, using a 360-degree viewer on a computer tablet to look at it from other angles. Pupils find large boxes and crates and create similar structures in the outdoor area.

Impact

Pupils independently write clear instructions about how to make a model of the statue and a factual pamphlet about the Olympic Games and its history, using interesting vocabulary.

Carrying cargo

During a topic on water, pupils look at constructing boats that can float and carry cargo. They explore a variety of different materials and spend time testing them on water and evaluating them before looking in more detail at different weights.

Impact

Nearly all develop their oracy and problem solving skills effectively when discussing which design was the best for the boat. This activity then moves on with the challenge set for a group of pupils to make their own boats from any items available to them in the classroom and outdoors. The only instruction is that it must carry as much cargo as possible. Pupils confidently make, test and evaluate the boats. Finally, they independently write up the instructions for the best designs so that other pupils can follow them to make their own version.

Context

A group of pupils use 'The Magic Porridge Pot' as a stimulus for re-telling a familiar story.

What was the issue?

Staff are concerned that pupils' literacy skills are not developing well enough through child-initiated learning. In order to address this they decide to increase the number of enhanced activities to focus on developing specific literacy skills.

What do pupils do?

Pupils make porridge following a set of written instructions. They take part in sensory activities, such as writing the words of the week in wet porridge and dry porridge oats, feeling the cold porridge and writing lists of adjectives to describe it.

They work in groups and individually to complete character descriptions and to tell the story using a puppet theatre. They record the puppet show, then watch it back and evaluate their performance.

What is the impact?

Nearly all pupils talk about things they have made or done, explaining the process clearly. They are able to retell narratives that they have heard often, sequencing events correctly. Most read for information confidently and when writing use specific words related to a topic. They talk about what they are going to write, which supports purposeful writing.

STANDARDS:
EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

Examples of developing effective practice in raising pupils' standards of **numeracy**

Number skills

Context

Pupils practise their recall of number bonds and doubles while developing their gross motor skills and building physical strength and stamina.

What do pupils do?

Pupils practise their recall of number bonds and doubling of numbers to 10 as a group indoors.

Once outdoors, pupils work in pairs. They read the number on a card and double it mentally. They then check the 'how to travel' card to see how they should travel from the starting point to a bucket with the correct answer on it.

They run lightly, skip, and hop on different legs, take small jumps, big jumps or gallop to travel to the answer buckets in the correct way. Once there they pick up their ball and place it in the bucket.

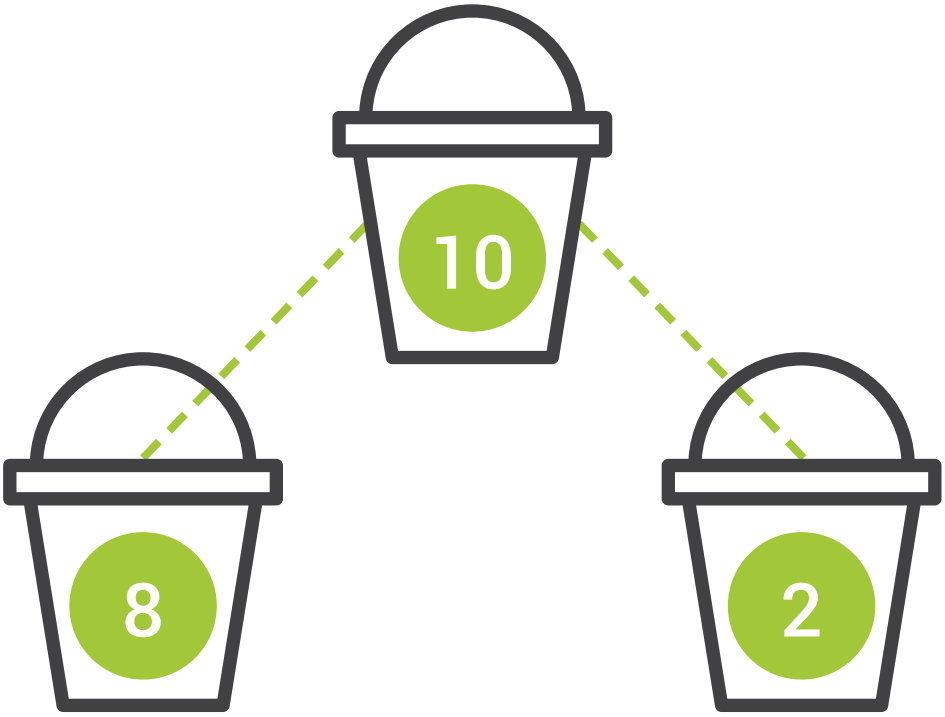
Some of the buckets are set higher up on a wall to encourage stretching and throwing skills.

Pupils check that they are right by looking at the correct answers under the flaps on the 'checking board'. If they are correct, they put a point up on the tally chart and begin again with the next number card and 'how to travel' card.

High performing schools share a passion and vision for making sure that pupils have plenty of opportunities to be physically active and learn outdoors. They believe that this leads to high levels of engagement and involvement from the pupils, which in turn leads to high standards. Teachers find imaginative ways for pupils to develop and apply their mathematical skills across the curriculum through active learning in the outdoors.

What is the impact?

Most pupils use mental recall of number facts to 10 to double and halve numbers accurately. They select and use relevant number facts and mental strategies quickly, recalling doubles and near doubles to 10 correctly. Nearly all pupils co-operate well with each other and talk about what they are doing enthusiastically. Most read words accurately and follow instructions successfully. Nearly all understand and use relevant mathematical vocabulary appropriately.



Number and measuring skills

Context

Pupils transfer mathematical skills to play and classroom activities

What do pupils do?

In a 'pop up' bakery in the role-play area, pupils weigh, measure and cost ingredients to make cakes.

They read the recipe instructions, accurately weighing out ingredients and design posters for opening and closing times, the costs of various cakes and to advertise the shop.

Pupils decide how much each cake should be sold for to cover the cost of the ingredients, working out answers by applying their knowledge of addition and multiplication. They design clocks to display opening and closing times and write a weekly timetable, which varies according to the need to have early closing.

The shopkeeper and shop assistants work out how much change they need to keep in the till to be able to give customers change quickly.

Pupils use the story of 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory' as a stimulus to design and make their own chocolates. They calculate the costs by visiting a local supermarket to look at what chocolates sell for.

They conduct a survey of pupils' favourite chocolate in order to decide what sort to make. Different groups measure and weigh ingredients to make white and flavoured chocolates in different shaped moulds.

They sell these in the summer fair and take charge of marketing, packing and selling the items. After the event they workout the profit margin and design a simple bar chart depicting the most popular items sold.

Pupils discover 'dinosaur bones' buried in sand outside. They use paint brushes in different sizes to excavate and clean them. They carefully uncover and piece back together to create the full skeleton of the dinosaur. They compare this to their own bodies, estimating how much longer it is.

They decide to find other body parts in the outdoors. For example, some find sticks for smaller bones and small stones as teeth. This creates lots of discussion and estimates about size.

Pupils then create dinosaur footprints of different sizes on the yard, using coloured paper, measuring and cutting them out carefully. They estimate how many pupils' feet will fit in each footprint.

Pupils that are more able take this further and decide to map out the size of another large 40m dinosaur. They use a trundle wheel to measure it out and then they record this on a tablet computer and mark it out in chalk so that other children can see how big a Diplodocus was.

What was the impact?

Most pupils use every day mathematical language to talk about their own ideas and use checking strategies to decide if answers are reasonable.

Many pupils find totals and give change for items up to £1.

Many pupils demonstrate a good understand of and accuracy in weighing items in grams.

Most pupils read and set times in hours and minutes on a clock, including half past and quarter to and quarter past.

Many pupils use their knowledge and practical experience to inform accurate estimates of length, using standard and non-standard measurements.

Number and mathematical reasoning skills

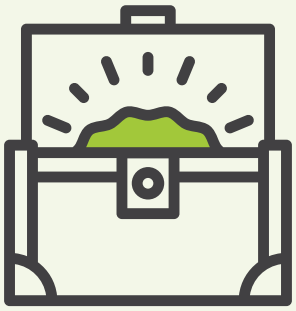
Context

Pupils transfer mathematical skills to play and classroom activities

What do pupils do?

Pupils look at a bag full of clothes that have been mixed up in the wash. They sort them into small, medium sized and large.

The pupils discuss how they can measure the clothes and what sort of equipment they need to do the measuring. A few are familiar with standard measures and use a ruler or metre stick while other use non-standard measures. They sort the clothes into the correct piles and justify their choices when challenged by an adult.



Pupils read word problems based around sharing out gold coins from a treasure chest discovered by pirates.

Examples of problems are:

If you share four gold coins between four pirates, how many gold coins will they get each?

Pupils use magnetic, toy fishing rods to fish for the correct number of coins in the water tray. They collect the correct number of pirate cards and work practically to solve the problem. They record the number sentence to show the answer.

Pupils follow a set of instructions outdoors to find and solve mathematical problems hidden outside. As they do this, they draw a simple map of their journey. This involves counting out their steps and the number of forwards, backwards, left and right paces needed. They write the number of steps onto their map and use arrows to identify left or right turns, and whether these are half or full turns.

They work in pairs to find the clues and solve them using their mental recall of number facts. For example, they find and hook ducks that have numbers on the bottom. They have to add the two digits together, then double or halve the answer. Pupils also find clocks and have to move the fingers to show different times including half past and quarter to and past. Pupils that are more able have then to show what the time would be an hour later or four hours later.

What was the impact?

Many pupils use their 2, 3, 4 5 and 10 times table to solve division problems and begin to understand remainders.

Most select and use relevant number facts and mental strategies confidently.

Many sort items by size accurately and explain their thinking clearly.

Many pupils present their work pictorially in the form of a map, showing clear directions, and using non-standard measurements and an awareness of directional turns.

Pupils that are more able can read and change the time accurately on an analogue clock.

Measuring and mathematical reasoning skills

What do pupils do?

Pupils express an interest in building their own den during a Forest School session. They discuss what they need to construct the den, and how many people need to use it.

They discuss how they will build it, for example using rope, knots, tarpaulin and supports. They collect the supports and then estimate lengths required. They ask questions such as 'Is it taller than me? Is it straight? Is it long enough for the cover to fit on securely?' They use the appropriate support sizes and covers to construct the den.

Another group decide that they want to light their own fires. Instead of using the fire pit, they choose objects, such as a shell, small fire bowl and camping tin. They talk about the three different elements required to make a fire.

air

fuel

spark

They discuss health and safety implications. They collect sticks and use protocols to decide if they are dry, for example 'you can hear them snap'. They make accurate estimates based on the sizes of the containers being used to make the fires.

What is the impact?

Most pupils listen to others with attention and respond appropriately.

Many talk about things they make, explaining the process, take part in activities with others and talk about what they are doing.

Many transfer mathematical skills to play and classroom activities confidently; they select appropriate equipment and resources independently.

Most use their knowledge and practical experience to inform estimates and are able to use mathematical language to talk about their choices.

Most use non-standard and standard units to measure length accurately.

Pupil voice and independence

Pupil voice and independence

Guidance about successful foundation phase practice highlights that schools should plan and structure the curriculum and learning environment to enable pupils to be actively involved in what and how they learn. In schools where pupils are directly involved in planning, teachers enhance their independent learning experiences successfully.

When teachers limit pupils' input, learning becomes more adult-directed and too formal. They lose the flexibility to react to pupils' changing interests or to respond to an event that has captured the pupils' imagination. This rigid approach often reduces pupils' enjoyment and engagement in learning and limits their independence. In classrooms where learning is more adult-directed, staff do not involve pupils well enough in making decisions about what and how they learn. As a result, these pupils become less confident in applying their literacy and numeracy skills across areas of learning independently. Overall, inspections identify more adult-directed learning than child-initiated learning in Year 2.

In many successful schools, the interests of pupils and their views are an important consideration in the school's vision for improvement. Pupils' opinions and feedback are a central feature in curriculum planning and developing learning experiences in the foundation phase. In these schools, teachers ask for pupils' input at the initial stages of planning and record what they already know and what they would like to find out and regularly adapt their planning when pupils bring items from home. At the end of a topic they ask pupils what they have learned.

In a few schools, staff allow pupils to come up with lots of possibilities for literacy and numeracy learning activities and to vote to decide the most popular ideas that they wish to pursue. For example, a group of Year 2 pupils studying 'Crwydro Cymru' (Wandering in Wales) as their topic decide to set up a 'Caffi Cymreig' (Welsh café) and invite pupils from key stage 2 to attend. They set about making menus and adding up the cost of items sold. It is clear that these pupils feel they have influence over the direction of their learning and are very enthusiastic and engaged.

These schools often run literacy or numeracy 'booster' classes for more able pupils in Year 1 and Year 2. In one school, pupils are inspired by 'The Enormous Crocodile' by Roald Dahl and write a report about a missing crocodile in the local area. Pupils decide to make and hide crocodiles around the local area for others to find. A local farm park hear about this and invite the group to see their baby crocodiles. This leads to pupils creating high-quality information booklets, which they display proudly. Pupils involved enjoy their learning and feel empowered to contribute their own ideas. Teachers in these situations become confident facilitators and allow pupils to take ownership of their learning.

However, in general, the amount of child choice varies considerably from class to class and school to school. In a minority of schools, pupils perceive child-choice as being allowed to choose once they finish their work, which is not in keeping with good foundation phase practice.

PUPIL VOICE AND INDEPENDENCE:
EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

Examples of developing pupils' involvement in planning which topic to learn about and influencing subsequent literacy and numeracy activities

Context

Using visits and trips to engage pupils' interests and to raise standards and levels of pupils' wellbeing, literacy and numeracy

These real-life experiences are particularly useful in giving a meaningful context for learners with English as an additional language, or additional learning needs. They allow them to practise newly acquired vocabulary and to assimilate and consolidate concepts and ideas.

What do pupils do?

Pupils decide where they would like to visit in order to deepen their understanding of the topic or theme they have chosen.

They ask questions before the visit, so that they can explore these during and after the trip.

Pupils visit local cafés, walk to look at a nearby building site, visit a vet, and go to the beach.

What is the impact?

Regular visits lead to notable improvements in pupils' vocabulary. Pupils have worthwhile opportunities to practise and develop their numeracy skills in a real context. For example, a visit to the café helps to consolidate pupils' understanding of 1:1 correspondence, counting and sharing accurately, and adding and subtracting while using money.

Pupils engage in meaningful role-play, and act out their shared experiences. Most pupils' writing is more descriptive and they make good use of the vocabulary that they have heard during the visit. Pupils are eager to look at books linked to the visits, increasing reading opportunities and motivating pupils to look at fiction and non-fiction books in the enhanced provision.

Most pupils develop their digital learning effectively, as they create video diaries, make green screen books, look at location maps, and create graphs and charts.

Regular off site visits enrich and enhance pupils' learning experiences and give variety and depth to the curriculum the school offers.

Engaging **Meaningful** **Fun**

Examples of developing pupil involvement in planning literacy and numeracy activities

Context

Gathering pupils' views on what they already know, what they would like to find out and what they have learnt

What do teachers and pupils do?

At the beginning of each topic, teachers plan a 'knowledge harvest' to find out pupils' previous knowledge and interests. This information informs a medium-term planning matrix, enabling them to plan activities to develop pupils' key skills in oracy, reading, writing and numeracy, which they know pupils will enjoy and find interesting.

Pupil ideas either compliment the original teacher ideas or replace them with a child-initiated concept or activity.

Teachers display ideas on a pupil voice board in each classroom. Pupils add to the board throughout the topic, either by writing on sticky notes, or by explaining their ideas to an adult who scribes for them. Teachers use these to change, amend or add to the planning for focused and enhanced provision.

Small freestanding photo frames contain activities from the pupil voice board. Pupils read the information in the frame and then identify which area of learning is best suited to completing the task. They complete the activity in the area of provision they select. Teachers expect pupils to self-differentiate the activities based on their own judgement of their skill level.

At the end of each week, pupils discuss what they have learned and what they have enjoyed doing. Staff consult them on how to improve the activities. Two pupils fill out the 'what went well' and 'even better if' sheets to display on the walls. This provides a valuable opportunity for staff to evaluate the learning from the pupils' point of view, allowing them to improve the quality of the tasks and strategies as they go along.

What is the impact?

Nearly all pupils are motivated and engage with their tasks. Most understand and demonstrate how to apply their literacy and numeracy skills in different contexts successfully.

They complete a range of literacy and numeracy tasks confidently and access resources independently. All make at least good progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills during both focused teaching and in the enhanced provision.

Classroom culture ensures that pupils are very comfortable with suitable degrees of challenge. Where support is required, pupils use self-help and peer-to-peer collaboration effectively before they seek teacher input.

Nearly all evaluate their own learning well via adult-led discussions and by assessing their own and the work of others.

Provision for literacy and numeracy

Provision for literacy and numeracy

Classrooms in nursery and reception are generally set up well to promote active and experiential learning. However, in Year 1 and Year 2, many classrooms have a more formal layout and the delivery of literacy and numeracy is often more structured and adult-directed. In these classrooms, pupils tend to sit at a desk for a large proportion of their day and are not engaged enough in active and experiential learning.

In around half of all schools, there are shortcomings in the provision for literacy or numeracy, and curriculum planning does not always ensure that pupils develop these skills systematically enough across all areas of learning. For example, there are limited opportunities for pupils to apply and consolidate their knowledge of shapes through drawing or making shape pictures in the creative area or to recognise shapes in the local environment. In these schools, teachers do not always consider how they can make links between the areas of foundation phase learning well enough. Many of these schools have literacy and numeracy sessions in the morning only, and do not make the most of developing pupils' skills throughout the day.

In a majority of schools, the indoor and outdoor learning environments are not always organised effectively. There is a lack of understanding of what is meant by good quality continuous, enhanced and focused provision. In a few schools, good foundation phase practice is limited to one or two afternoons a week, which conflicts with the pedagogy of the foundation phase. As a result, pupils have limited opportunities to develop their independence and are overly reliant on adult direction.

Successful schools develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills through a range of stimulating hands-on learning experiences. They plan activities that stem from the pupils' interests and needs. Focused tasks concentrate directly on teaching and rehearsing specific literacy or numeracy skills with adult support.

Teachers plan activities for continuous and enhanced provision areas that link directly to the specific literacy or numeracy skill, or learning intention previously taught. They provide regular opportunities for pupils to apply and transfer their skills and knowledge independently, indoors and outside.

In a few schools, teachers integrate the teaching of phonics, reading and specific writing skills in innovative ways during continuous and enhanced provision. They expand upon them, often in innovative ways, during continuous and enhanced activities. This allows pupils to practise and embed them, with a good balance between experiential learning and formal aspects of teaching. However, by Year 2, these skills are often taught in isolation. As a result, pupils' literacy skills become too narrow and teachers do not always encourage these pupils to write at length, independently, across areas of learning.

Good schools with a lack of easy access to outdoor space for Year 1 and Year 2 pupils overcome these issues well by providing strong and interesting learning activities and by timetabling the use of the outdoors to support the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills successfully.

PROVISION FOR LITERACY AND NUMERACY:
EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

Provision for the delivery of pupils' reading, numeracy and problem solving skills

Context

Using small world equipment imaginatively to develop pupils' reading, comprehension, numeracy and problem solving skills

What do pupils do?

They read a letter from a fisherman called Dai Pysgod after a storm in the town where he lives.

They read a set of clues to match the characters to their homes, for example 'Bold is the caretaker and he lives in the school'.

They work collaboratively to decide where the characters go and support one another with reading and understanding the text.

They apply their mathematical knowledge to solve problems in order for Dai to deliver the correct amount of fish to each character, for example: 'I ordered two fish last week and this week I would like double that amount'.

What is the impact?

Nearly all pupils express their opinions well, and provide appropriate answers, including reasons.

They are able to apply a range of reading strategies to decode text confidently and read aloud with attention to punctuation.

Nearly all look for key words to find what the text is about quickly.

Nearly all apply their mathematical knowledge well to solve problems.

Theme

The class is studying 'Water' as its theme.

Equipment required for the activity:

- a village made of different colour houses including a school, garage and church
- a range of different characters
- cards with written clues in a mixture of English and Welsh
- cardboard or plastic fish

'Quiet time' for contemplation and thought

Developing independence in their learning

Provision for the delivery of numeracy

Context

Using a grocer's shop in the role-play area to consolidate pupils' understanding of doubling numbers and using money in a mixed Year 2 and Year 3 class

Accessing resources that enable pupils to use choice and develop independence in their learning

Consolidating and extending literacy and numeracy skills across areas of learning

What do pupils do?

They hold a dialogue using language prompts, between the shopper and the shopkeeper.

They act out a scene, in Welsh, from the time of O.M. Edwards to a high standard.

They practise their mathematical skills learnt during the focused teaching session.

They adopt a persona, dressing up as people from a bygone era and deciding between themselves which roles they will take.

Pupils who are shoppers choose to buy items in twos in order to practise doubling numbers. For example, they buy two apples at 23p, and two oranges at 17p each.

Pupils acting as the shopkeeper work out how much the shopper must pay and choose how many coins the shopper has to use to pay, using either three, four or five coins of different denominations.

Pupils develop their own dialogues by improvising and thinking about the characterisation.

What is the impact?

Nearly all pupils strengthen their procedural mathematics skills effectively.

They develop and extend their vocabulary well, including learning interesting idioms.

Pupils whose home language is not Welsh practise and embed language patterns successfully, including learning correct mutations.

Pupils learn to act out different roles confidently, developing their imaginations and creative skills well.

Nearly all pupils enjoy what they are doing and engage well in their learning.

Provision for the delivery of pupils' reading, numeracy and problem solving skills

Context

Using the school grounds and local area to enrich pupils' learning experiences and to promote interesting literacy and numeracy activities

What do pupils do?

They engage in learning outside and transfer skills confidently. For example, Year 1 pupils enjoy gathering pebbles to make repeating patterns at the beach. They concentrate well to create a sculpture based on the artist Andy Goldsworthy's work.

Nearly all discuss their work confidently with peers and staff and use features such as alliteration to create a name for the 'Superhero of the Sea'.

Most are able to operate simple ICT equipment to scan the sand to find hidden treasure with a metal detector, and practise using simple co-ordinates to map its location carefully.

They all write detailed instructions to show how to make a shelter in the Forest School area.

They use their thinking skills effectively to solve problems. For example, when a shelter falls down in the wind, nearly all demonstrate resilience to rebuild the shelter successfully. They are confident to try again, readily discussing the reasons for the collapse in a mature way with their peers.

What do staff do?

Staff plan a good balance of adult-directed and pupil-initiated learning to make sure that pupils make good progress. They introduce new skills and concepts formally.

They plan interesting scenarios to capture pupils' imaginations.

They use all resources within the school grounds and beyond, well, for example a 'beach school' classroom where staff teach health and safety matters before taking pupils down to the local beach as part of their lessons.

They use the local town and nearby amenities, such as the beach, to stimulate learning.

They demonstrate clear expectations for the pupils and monitor their progress carefully.

They complete evaluation sheets after outdoor sessions to inform future planning and to enable staff to adapt lessons in order to reflect pupils' interests and understanding closely.

What is the impact?

Pupils enjoy coming to school and are eager to take part in activities in the different learning environments.

Nearly all develop their independence well and learn to negotiate and co-operate with one another successfully.

There is a good balance between teacher-directed and child-initiated learning.

Teachers use the local environment effectively as a stimulating context to introduce and consolidate new skills.

Teaching and assessment

Teaching

In a minority of schools where teaching is effective, Year 1 and Year 2 teachers consolidate pupils' literacy and numeracy skills well. They teach the skill as a focused task, but they also plan exciting and relevant opportunities to develop this skill, and to extend pupils' learning, as part of continuous and enhanced provision. They take into account pupils' prior knowledge and understanding to provide suitable levels of challenge. Teachers explain what they want pupils to learn clearly and simply and encourage pupils to decide how they will tackle the task, allowing them to choose equipment.

In a minority of schools where the delivery of literacy and numeracy is good, teaching is strong, and staff use a variety of teaching styles. They facilitate, demonstrate and collaborate in learning. They motivate their pupils and the quality of teaching is high across the school, with all staff using questioning to good effect to provide stimulating open-ended learning tasks.

Teaching assistants and teachers work together well to plan learning and all have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, and understand their role in facilitating this. All staff are skilled in knowing when to intervene and when to allow pupils time to investigate for themselves.

In a majority of schools where teaching is not as strong, there are too many adult-directed literacy and numeracy based activities, and not enough opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy and numeracy skills independently. Adults spend a majority of their time directing pupils' learning and do not step back to observe pupils well enough. In addition, many schools feel pressurised to prepare pupils formally for national reading and numeracy tests, contributing to wide variations in foundation phase practice. This is frequently at the expense of the development of pupils' creative and physical skills.

In many of these schools, both the indoor and outdoor learning environments are not always organised effectively. There is a lack of understanding of what good quality continuous, enhanced and focused provision looks like.

Inspectors find that, by Year 2, many teachers are not always offering continuous provision. In these classes, they enhance nearly all activities with the use of prompts rather than providing opportunities for pupils to try out skills independently and to experiment with learning to practise and improve their skills.

In many schools, teaching assistants work outdoors, rather than the teacher, and a minority do not always have a clear enough understanding of the learning objective. When this happens regularly, pupils do not make enough progress in developing key skills in literacy and numeracy and are not actively engaged in purposeful learning for notable periods. This slows down their rate of progress over time and frequently limits the amount of challenge provided for pupils that are more able.

When headteachers and challenge advisers from regional consortia monitor the quality of teaching in foundation phase classrooms, there is sometimes a lack of understanding of what good foundation phase practice looks like. During monitoring, there is often a conflict between the amount and presentation of work that they expect to see in books and delivering good quality foundation phase practice. This is because of a lack of understanding of the purposes of focused, enhanced and continuous learning experiences. Many headteachers, who do not have a foundation phase background, require specific training around what constitutes effective foundation phase learning.

TEACHING:
EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

Examples of effective foundation phase teaching in delivering literacy and numeracy in Year 1 and Year 2

Context

Using the story of the 'Three Little Pigs' as a stimulus for work in literacy and numeracy in Year 1

Enable children to apply, use, consolidate and extend their skills across areas of learning and experience

Plan developmentally

Actively engage

What do pupils do?

Pupils discuss how they can measure the clothes and what sort of equipment they will need to do the measuring. A few are familiar with standard measures and use a ruler or metre stick while other use non-standard measures according to their stage of learning. They sort the clothes into the correct piles and justify their choices when challenged by an adult.

They watch a video clip of the big pig asking them for help to build a new and better house. The pig has sent the pupils a letter with a challenge that he would like them to complete throughout the week.

In groups, they build three new houses using cardboard boxes, crates, foam bricks and a range of materials. They note measurements and count how many bricks, boxes and crates to use.

They test each house by huffing, puffing, and using fans. They take photographs of the final product and send instructions about how it was made to the pig, using a tablet computer.

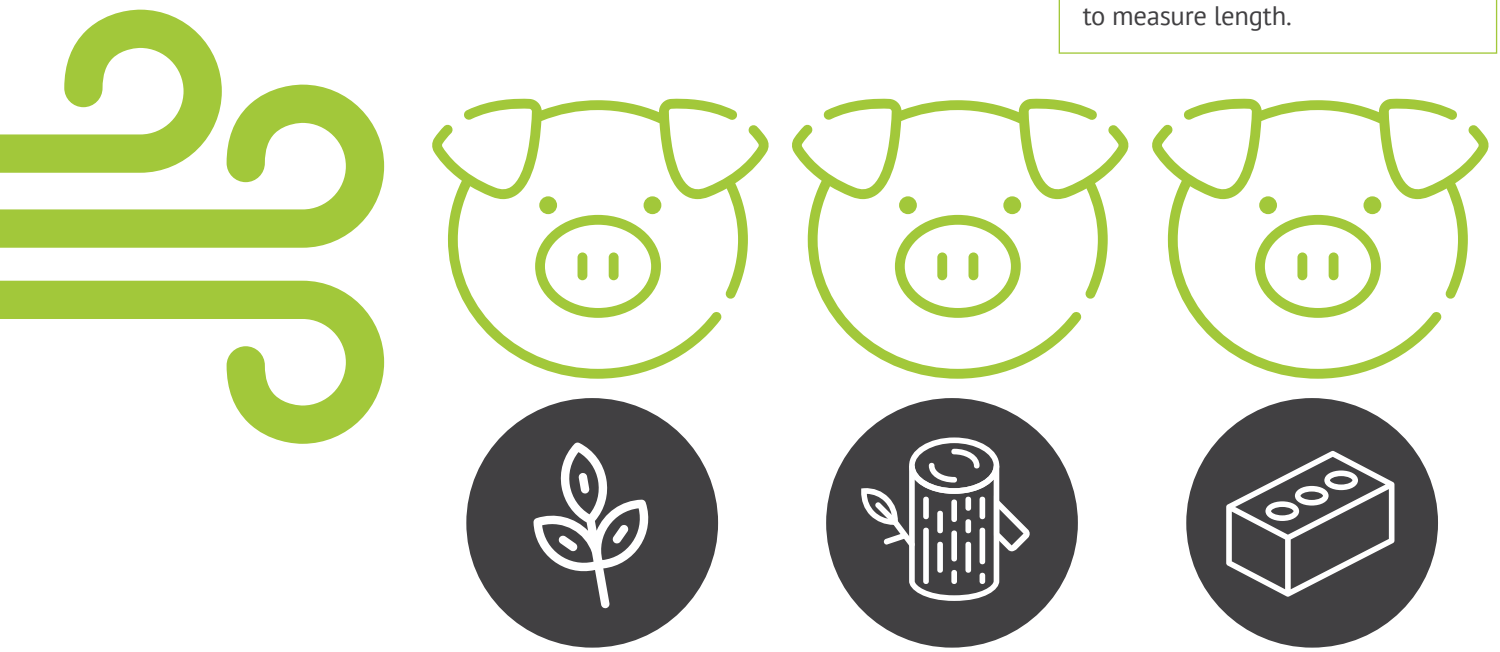
What does the teacher do?

The teacher shows pupils a bag full of clothes that she has mixed up in the wash and pupils sort them into the right clothes for each of the little pigs. For the purpose of this activity there needs to be a small, medium sized and large pig.

What is the impact?

Nearly all pupils listen to others with attention and respond appropriately. They are able to talk about things they have made explaining the process. Most take part in activities with others and talk about what they are doing confidently.

They communicate purposefully in writing and transfer their mathematical skills to play and classroom activities confidently. Nearly all select appropriate equipment and resources independently. They use their knowledge and practical experience to inform estimates, using mathematical language to talk about their choices. Most use checking strategies to decide if answers are reasonable, count reliably up to 20 objects and use non-standard and standard units to measure length.



Examples of effective foundation phase teaching in delivering literacy and numeracy in Year 1 and Year 2

Context

Pupils receive a parcel from the Pirate Barti Ddu. The pupils read the letter, which explains the science problem within the parcel that he needs help in solving.

Posing interesting problems for pupils to solve using taught literacy and numeracy skills

Prompting pupils to think about and reflect upon their learning experiences in order to extend their learning when appropriate

What do pupils do?

Pupils have a problem to solve – to find which material will keep the pirate's parrot dry in the rain.

They make predictions based on previous knowledge, discuss ways to make the test fair and carry out the investigation.

They record their findings during the activity.

Pupils then write a letter back to the pirate to explain their findings.

Pupils sort the materials into two hoops based on whether they would absorb or resist water. Correct scientific vocabulary is encouraged while discussing their findings.

Example questions – Do you think that this will absorb or resist water? Why?

What is the impact?

Nearly all pupils show good understanding of what they have heard by asking relevant questions to find out specific information. They develop reading skills well and listen to others with concentration, understanding the main points and asking for clarification if needed. Nearly all share activities and information to complete a task and use written language for different purposes, audiences or functions within play and structured activities. They use specific words that relate to the topic with confidence and use different types of recording appropriate for the purpose.

Effective teaching in delivering literacy and numeracy in Year 1 and Year 2

Where teaching is most effective

There is a focus on developing pupils' skills in the foundation phase areas of learning. Plans cover experiential and active learning through continuous and enhanced provision as well as focused teaching and can change in response to pupils' interests.

Planning links closely with assessment and practitioners use daily observations and lesson evaluations, as well as skilful questioning, to make sure that pupils progress successfully.

Practitioners plan good quality practical learning experiences in the enhanced provision as often as possible.

There is a balance between teacher-directed and child-initiated learning. Practitioners incorporate a range of different direct teaching approaches, including working with the whole class and focusing on smaller groups or individuals.

Practitioners take note of pupils' ideas and encourage them to practise or apply specific skills in different areas independently. This helps pupils to understand that teachers expect their independent work to be of a high quality.

All practitioners know how to support pupils' learning in the continuous and enhanced provision areas. They make sure that they understand when to step back and when to challenge pupils through skilful questioning, as well as when to step in with key information to move them forward.

Practitioners provide high quality oral feedback during focused sessions, supporting pupils' progress well.

Examples of effective teaching

Context

Using direct teaching and skilful questioning to support pupils application of literacy and numeracy skills in 'real life' contexts

When teaching pupils to understand and use standard measurements, teachers set up a stimulating scenario in the classroom. They tape up an area to look like an alien spaceship had landed and there is a letter from the school's police liaison officer asking the children for their help to find out where the alien is and what he looks like. Teachers use this opportunity to develop pupils' numeracy skills when following clues, for example by measuring the size of footprints using standard measurements and mapping out the site using co-ordinates.

Establishing a cooking station in Year 2. Teachers use this well to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in a very practical and enjoyable way. They provide differentiated recipes, which challenge more able pupils to halve or double the ingredients to cater for different size groups of people. They change the recipes every fortnight to provide variety.

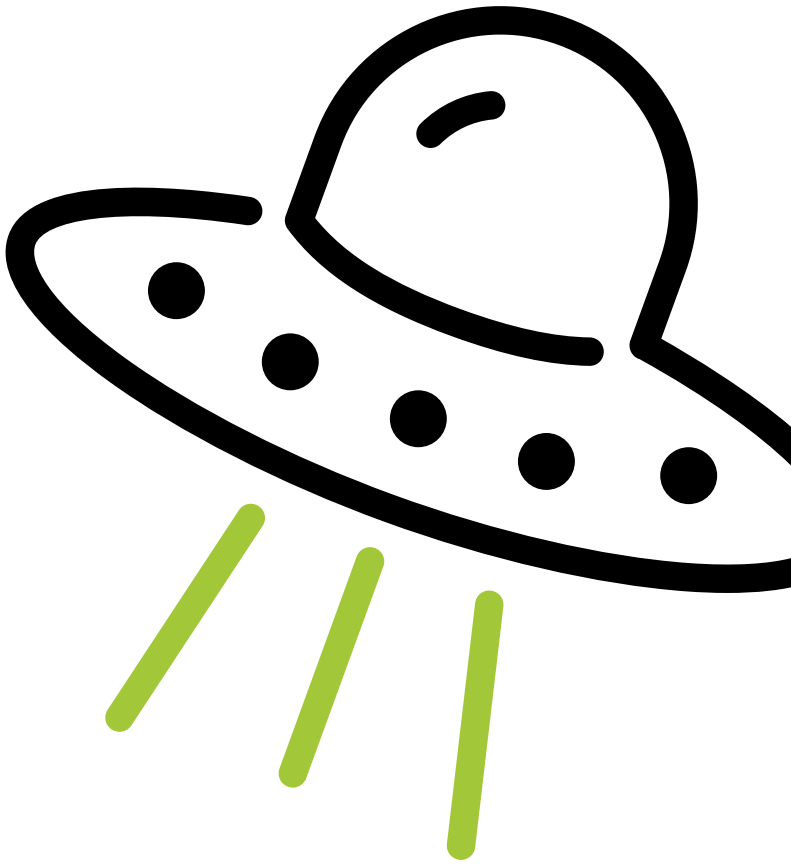
What is the impact?

Stimulating learning experiences capture the interest of all pupils.

Planning and teaching take account of the extremely important role of experiential and active learning in developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.

Nearly all pupils learn to measure in centimetres and grams accurately. Most can read and follow instructions highly effectively.

Planning, teaching and assessment link together effectively and meet the needs of individual pupils well. Teachers plan interesting and authentic learning experiences that engage pupils effectively and help them make good progress. All staff use skilful questioning to ascertain pupils' understanding and to move their learning on.



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Assessment

In many schools, processes for assessing literacy and numeracy are too complicated and time consuming. They focus on collecting a large amount of information rather than analysing pupils' progress over time, or identifying specific areas for development. In the worst cases, assessment is a process only, and is not diagnostic enough to inform future planning or identify 'next steps' for pupils. As a result, work seen in pupils' books and in classes does not reflect teacher assessments accurately enough.

In a minority of schools where teachers understand and make skilful use of a range of assessment strategies, there is constructive feedback to pupils that is focused and purposeful and helps them to make progress. Teachers celebrate what pupils have done well and set bespoke targets for improvement that link to developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. These are not overly complicated and pupils understand them. Teachers often discuss success criteria with the pupils and provide simple methods for pupils to evaluate their performance against them.

These teachers provide pupils with regular opportunities to improve their work and to respond to oral and age-appropriate written comments. This reduces the burden of recording copious amounts of information at the expense of having high-quality discussions with pupils.

In successful schools, teachers use a variety of assessment for learning techniques well to promote pupil engagement and to assess pupils' understanding. They regularly involve pupils in evaluating their own learning and that of others. Skilled teaching assistants are no longer spending too much time completing administrative tasks such as sticking in examples of work, freeing them up to teach, assess and facilitate learning.

In good schools, professional judgements are tested, monitored and openly evaluated with colleagues and the senior leadership at regular intervals. Teachers benefit from suitably focused professional learning opportunities to develop the effective use of assessment. The performance management targets of teachers focus on raising standards for the pupils in their care.

ASSESSMENT:
EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

An example of effective practice in assessing literacy and numeracy in Year 1 and Year 2

Context

Refining planning and assessment procedures to make them more manageable and to help all pupils make good progress

Prompting pupils to think about and reflect upon their learning experiences in order to extend their learning when appropriate

Planning developmentally appropriate, engaging learning opportunities informed by regular observation and assessment of children's abilities

Problem

Schools often experiment with a number of different ways of assessing pupil progress, during focused tasks, in the enhanced provision and in the outdoor learning environment.

Evaluation of this practice shows that only a minority of the observations are useful in assessing pupils' progress.

Systems are often too complicated and take a great deal of the teacher's time at the end of each week.

Schools frequently collect many observations on all children throughout the day. However, recording these is time consuming and they are not all relevant when it comes to planning for the next steps.

Solution

Where assessment is effective:

Teachers understand that planning carefully to meet the needs of all pupils, including the most and the least able, is essential, particularly in mixed-age classes.

Teachers identify which pupils are doing particularly well, and which pupils are struggling with concepts and skills.

Staff use this information to identify pupils' differing needs across areas of learning, and plan learning tasks flexibly to accommodate these.

Teachers map the literacy and numeracy skills carefully to ensure progression and consolidation, ensuring that they are free to follow the pupils' interests when planning the context for pupils to learn and practise these skills.

All the literacy and numeracy skills are broken down into small steps. This enables the teacher to differentiate work effectively, aiming for outcome 6, but providing appropriate opportunities to support the different needs of all pupils.

They introduce literacy and numeracy skills in formal teaching sessions, usually working with small groups. Pupils then practise and experiment with their skills indoors and outside, taking part in purposeful and meaningful activities across the curriculum.

What is the impact?

The system is manageable and effective.

It enables the teacher to assess pupils successfully and plan to meet their needs well, focusing appropriately on developing key skills.

It allows the teacher to respond flexibly to pupils' needs, interests and experiences. Pupils enjoy the learning experiences and engage well in their learning because teachers take pupils' interests into account.

Pupils have a wide range of experiences and opportunities to practise their skills in different contexts, so that it is clear whether they have fully understood them or not.

The teacher has valuable time to revisit any concepts or skills that pupils have not understood fully, using different contexts.

By the third term, pupils have regular opportunities to practise and embed different skills, particularly number skills and communication skills, as they use these daily in order to succeed with other tasks.

Appreciate that learning is a journey and that each child needs to build on what they already know

Ensure that assessment procedures are accurate

Build strong links with parents and carers through regularly sharing information

Ambitious, capable learners

Examples of effective practice in assessing literacy and numeracy in Year 1 and Year 2: what we see in good schools

Context

Developing effective assessment for learning strategies that have a positive effect on pupil outcomes

Teachers and support staff pose challenging questions that encourage pupils to think and solve problems effectively.

Example

Cinderella is holding a dinner party. There are a set number of chairs around a table. Teachers change the number of chairs according to pupils' ability. Pupils have to place guests around the tables according to the number of place settings. Teachers encourage pupils to discover how many different ways they are able to do this and to choose the most appropriate way to record their work.

All staff provide valuable verbal feedback to pupils during focused tasks and when accessing enhanced and continuous provision. Pupils are able to develop their ideas further during the task and are constantly striving to improve their work. Teachers mark pupils' work simply and effectively. Marking focuses clearly on learning intentions and provides clear ways forward for pupils.

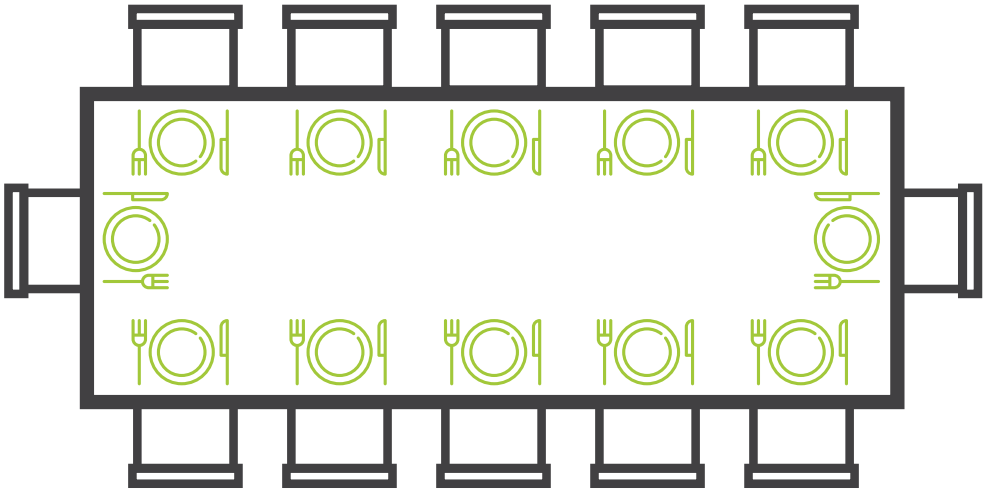
Teachers provide valuable prompt questions, which enable pupils to consolidate their skills and improve their written work. Teachers plan valuable opportunities for pupils to respond to marking through, for example STAR time (Stop, Think and Reflect). This ensures that pupils receive regular and meaningful opportunities to make improvements to their work.

Teachers use assessment for learning strategies effectively to measure pupils' interest and engagement in enhanced and continuous provision activities. Pupils write how they feel the different activities went and how confident they were in completing their work. Year 2 pupils develop their understanding of how to self-assess their work successfully.

The school has useful strategies for target setting with pupils. For example, in Year 1, pupils make effective use of their 'Assessment for Learning Wall' when reviewing their targets. Pupils use target cards both during teacher focus, enhanced and continuous activities. Once they meet their target, they move the squirrel up the tree and then set new targets.

What is the impact?

The school has a wide range of assessment for learning strategies that ensure that pupils take a full and active part in their learning. Pupils have a good understanding of what they are learning and how to achieve their targets. Pupils use a wide range of strategies successfully to respond to feedback and to make improvements to their work.



Leadership

Leadership

Role of the foundation phase leader

Where foundation phase leaders are new to the role, they do not always have the knowledge and understanding of effective practice to deliver literacy and numeracy well enough. Often they do not have access to bespoke training in the delivery of effective foundation phase practices. This in turn limits their ability to support colleagues in modelling good practice when delivering and planning for literacy and numeracy activities across areas of learning.

In most schools with effective foundation phase practice, foundation phase leaders play a key strategic role within the senior leadership team. They focus well on improving provision and raising pupil outcomes. They act as skilled role models to model effective foundation phase principles and practise in teaching and learning to colleagues both within and beyond the school. They regularly scrutinise work, observe sessions, both formally and informally, and review planning. They support their team in analysing data and to track pupils' progress in language, literacy and communication and mathematical development closely. This enables them clearly to identify strengths and areas for development quickly and work with the headteacher to address them.

Effective foundation phase leaders actively engage parents and carers in the school community. They understand fully the important role they play in their children's learning. They run drop-in sessions to explain and demonstrate effective teaching and learning in developing children's literacy and numeracy skills. For example, workshops on teaching their children to read the signs around them and recognise numbers and shapes when out and about support parents effectively in developing ideas to use to enhance their child's learning at home.

Role of senior leadership

When headteachers understand and are supportive of foundation phase practice, they access specific training and support for teachers in leading and managing the increasing numbers of additional practitioners within their classroom. Where headteachers do not fully understand foundation phase practice and pedagogy, they focus too much on test and assessment data. This results in a narrow curriculum where the foundation phase is marginalised, and this impacts negatively on pupils' broader development.

Leaders in the best performing schools ensure that all their foundation phase staff have access to up-to-date training. They train and develop all staff to become highly skilled in order to facilitate good quality learning experiences to meet the needs of all learners. Leaders are proactive in accessing training and use internal expertise to good effect. They forge strong links with other schools to share and model effective practice and encourage teachers to look at best practice case studies from Estyn inspections and international research about how young children learn best.

Such leaders create professional learning organisations where staff are reflective and self-improving. There is an open and honest culture where staff are happy to observe each other, model effective practice, make constructive suggestions for improvements, and encourage innovation. Pupils' outcomes generally improve year on year, particularly at the higher-than-expected outcomes.

In many schools where standards in literacy and numeracy in the foundation phase are good or better, self-evaluation is a strong feature. In these schools, leaders evaluate systematically the progress and success of initiatives. They look at the learning that is taking place and what the impact is on pupils' outcomes and attitudes to learning. They intervene in a timely manner to make changes if things are not working as well as expected. They actively seek out professional learning opportunities to keep up-to-date with the most effective practice in the foundation phase, and are confident to introduce innovative and creative approaches to delivering foundation phase learning.

Where leadership is adequate or unsatisfactory, leaders have a narrow view of the purpose of learning, and they are overly prescriptive in applying the Literacy and Numeracy Framework and do not take account of the principles of the foundation phase well enough. As a result, they fail to recognise and address weaknesses in the delivery of literacy and numeracy in line with good foundation phase practice.

In general, there is too much variation in the success of the transition from the end of the foundation phase into key stage 2. In a few schools, teachers continue to provide opportunities for pupils to practise and embed their learning through practical experiences. However, a majority of schools do not fully understand the importance of remaining true to foundation phase principles. In these schools, teachers make pedagogical changes in Year 2, and occasionally Year 1, to 'prepare' children for key stage 2. These include requiring pupils to sit for longer, to engage in a greater number of formal lessons, and offering them less choice of learning activities, especially outdoors to consolidate these skills. Such approaches are often unhelpful and, as a result, pupils' progress in developing and embedding their literacy and numeracy skills slows.

Role of local authorities and regional consortia

In many cases, challenge advisers do not have enough knowledge or experience of the foundation phase and its pedagogy. Because of this, they do not always understand what constitutes good standards of literacy and numeracy. This means that the support and challenge they offer sometimes contradict and undermine effective foundation phase practice. For example, during book scrutiny, they sometimes place too much emphasis on neatness and presentation of writing. Teachers then feel pressurised to formalise learning and to scaffold pupils' writing so that it is not representative of independent work. Writing in books can look impressive, but pupils cannot read it back with understanding or answer questions about what they have produced.

LEADERSHIP:
EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

Common features found in schools with strong leadership at every level, and high standards in pupils' literacy and numeracy skills

A strong collaborative culture where staff plan and work closely together in departmental teams. The foundation phase leader is part of the senior management team.

Senior leaders have a good understanding of the foundation phase.

The headteacher monitors the work closely through leadership meetings, scrutiny of teachers' planning and pupils' books. They undertake regular lesson observations and talk often to pupils. All staff, governors and parents contribute to the process by taking part in 'learning walks'. This results in robust monitoring of the quality of the curriculum, and its planning, delivery and impact on raising pupil standards. By doing this, the school meets the needs of the pupils very successfully.

There are effective procedures for identifying and addressing training and professional development needs. Leaders identify specific expertise and examples of good practice in the school during monitoring. They share this through in-house training sessions, helping staff to support each other effectively.

A systematic approach to training ensures that all staff are familiar with the requirements of the Literacy and Numeracy Framework (Welsh Government, 2013) and know how to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills successfully through active and experiential learning. Teachers and support staff enter into high quality professional dialogue about the experiences pupils have and how they can develop these further.

Developing a consistency of approach and expectation

Senior leaders have a clear vision for establishing effective foundation phase practice in the newly amalgamated school. They recognise their opportunity to create a good quality foundation phase learning environment. They are committed to ensuring that all staff across both phases have a thorough understanding of foundation phase principles, to support the development of a strong foundation phase pedagogy within the school. They believe that this approach results in the best literacy and numeracy outcomes for all pupils, in both the foundation phase and key stage 2.

What do well-led schools do?

They ensure a balance of experience and expertise in both the foundation Phase and in key stage 2 when they appoint the leadership team.

They give professional development a high priority.

Leaders move staff around different age groups regularly to build up their experience and expertise across and between phases.

Leaders encourage and enable all staff to access training regularly. This is linked to school priorities including foundation phase pedagogy and developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum.

What is the impact?

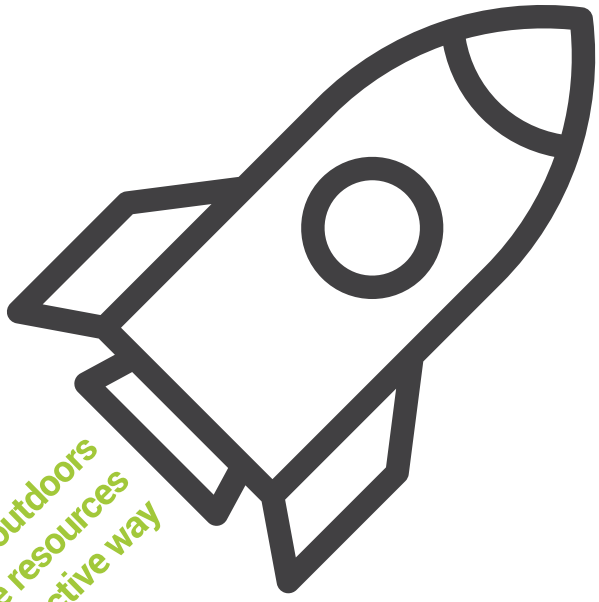
There is an improvement in pupils' literacy and numeracy standards.

Practitioners have a clearer understanding of how to incorporate literacy and numeracy activities into both indoor and outdoor learning activities in fun and interesting ways.

There is a strong culture of sharing good practice within the school and with other schools.

Transition between phases is smooth because pupils have developed strong independent skills in the foundation phase and teachers design the key stage 2 curriculum to make best use of these skills.

Key stage 2 staff make greater use of the outdoors and provide more opportunities for older pupils to develop their skills independently.



Free flow access to outdoors
Share and access expensive resources
in a cost effective way

Developing a consistency of approach and expectation, with strong leadership, across federated schools

Common features of well-led federations

Leaders within the federation of schools have a clear strategic plan for the development of literacy and numeracy skills within the foundation phase.

Across the schools, there is an emphasis on good foundation phase pedagogy and this permeates all aspects of pupils' experiences.

The foundation phase ethos is at the heart of all aspects of schoolwork, from the planning of lessons to creating a school environment that supports pupils' learning effectively.

The focus across the federation is to embed opportunities to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in the planning and throughout the learning environment.

An example of how one successful federation works

Leaders use meetings and training opportunities effectively to make sure that there is a consistent approach across the federation in applying foundation phase pedagogy and principles.

All staff meet as teams regularly to share good practice and look at areas for future development. This helps pupils across the federation to make good progress.

Staff across the federation work together to create clear documents and toolkits that support pupils' learning well and ensure a consistent approach across the schools, while raising standards successfully.

These help adults working in the different learning areas to understand expectations and support pupils effectively. For example, they may develop useful documents to help all adults enhance pupils' literacy and numeracy skills during focused tasks. These provide clear guidance on the types of questions that can be used and helpful suggestions for ways to enhance specific activities to enable pupils to practice a taught skill further.

Teachers plan 'reflection on learning' time and guidance, which highlight skills taught and possible areas for future development. This allows them to track quickly which areas they have addressed and which pupils they have worked with, in order to assess them effectively.

What is the impact?

The federation has robust systems and procedures to monitor and evaluate teaching, learning and provision across all settings. The senior leadership team work well with staff at every level to ensure that standards achieved across all schools are at least good. Leaders use training and meetings to communicate messages effectively.

Clear communication around effective foundation phase pedagogy ensures that there is a good balance between child-initiated and adult-directed activities. Areas of learning are carefully thought out, and pupils are very independent and consolidate literacy and numeracy skills effectively. Useful guides and toolkits enable all adults in the federation to work together effectively and to develop pupils' skills progressively.

All staff have a clear understanding of the requirements of the revised framework including the requirements to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, and of effective foundation phase pedagogy. Shared and collaborative training opportunities raise standards of teaching and learning successfully.

Appendix 1: Case studies

- Sandycroft Primary School
- Tongwynlais Primary School
- Brackla Primary School
- Borras Park Community Primary School
- Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Derwen
- Sealand Primary School
- The Meads Infant and Nursery School
- Ysgol Glan Gele

Raising standards in literacy and numeracy by promoting pupil independence and engagement

Sandycroft Primary School, Flintshire

Information about the school

Sandycroft Primary School is in Mancot, in Flintshire local authority. There are 354 pupils on roll. The school has 14 single aged classes, including three nursery classes.

Around 24% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The school identifies around 32% of pupils as having additional learning needs. Around 14% of pupils speak English as an additional language and a very few pupils speak Welsh at home. Currently, around 5% of pupils are members of the gypsy traveller community.

Description of activity/strategy

In the Year 1 and Year 2 department, planning for teaching and learning follows the principles, skills and range set out in the Foundation Phase Framework. This provides pupils with a wide range of indoor and outdoor learning experiences through the directed, enhanced and continuous learning provision. In order to reflect pupils' current learning needs and interests, medium and short-term plans are flexible. Pupils help plan the themes by sharing their ideas in a 'topic talking tub'.

In order to ensure that all pupils make good progress, the school introduces new learning concepts through direct teaching. In lessons, there is always one adult-directed focused activity involving a group of pupils. The rest of the class practise and embed their skills by working independently on continuous or enhanced learning tasks, linked to the theme or topic. This helps pupils to develop a wide range of skills successfully, while putting into practice new skills learned through the focus tasks. For example, as part of a recent theme, the school linked the creative continuous provision area, to work on fairy stories. This inspired pupils to begin to write and film their own story. To do this, they chose costumes and props, and used equipment such as microphones and simple recording devices. They discussed and wrote the script, and negotiated roles successfully. While working on this task, many pupils made good progress with their speaking and writing skills, for example practising using speech marks and exclamation marks, and changing their voices to reflect the different characters. They developed their ICT skills further, through the use of a 'green screen' and by adding special effects for the chosen backdrop on their own.

The school ensures that pupils work to a high standard in the continuous provision areas. Pupils have their own continuous provision learning book where they record what they have done while working independently. This includes different literacy and numeracy challenges that they have chosen to tackle. Pupils display this work proudly on a 'work wall'. Other pupils look at this regularly and this encourages them to have a go themselves. Their peers offer constructive feedback on how the work could be improved. Most pupils accept this confidently, showing strong levels of maturity, resilience and a desire to produce the best work they possibly can.

What is the impact?

Nearly all pupils engage in their learning enthusiastically and apply their literacy and numeracy skills confidently in many different contexts. Nearly all pupils are able to choose tasks independently and work productively on their own and in small groups. They are able to plan, do and reflect on their work and that of others successfully.

Nearly all make good progress with their literacy skills, for example reading fluently and extracting information from texts quickly and skilfully. Most write effectively at length, making good use of language to add interest to their work. Pupils develop strong speaking skills, including negotiating well with each other.

Nearly all make good progress with their numeracy skills. They develop their problem solving skills particularly well, select and explain their methodology clearly and have high expectations of what they can achieve.

The school's end of foundation phase outcomes show an improving trend over time at the expected and higher than expected levels in literacy and numeracy.

Using 'Big Questions' and 'Busy Bee' planning to build independent learners

Tongwynlais Primary School

Information about the school

Tongwynlais Primary School serves the community of the village of Tongwynlais on the northern fringe of Cardiff. There are 237 pupils on roll organised into nine single aged classes. Around 16% of pupils are eligible for free school meals and the school has identified around 31% of pupils as having additional learning needs. Very few pupils have a statement of additional learning needs. Around 6% of pupils speak English as an additional language. No pupils speak Welsh as their first language.

Description of activity/strategy

Initial discussion with pupils

Year 1 and Year 2 teachers engage pupils and include their ideas in the planning process successfully. Previously, the stimuli used for each fortnight's planning were 'Big Questions'. The 'Big Questions' were effective in that they linked all of the learning over a period of time in an organised and systematic way, but staff found that the pupils were struggling to generate their own meaningful ideas and lines of inquiry. The pupils needed more structure to help them to generate ideas. Staff decided to use text, such as a story, poem, non-fiction or an educational visit as a stimulus for each fortnight.

Text/stimulus sharing

The week before each text/stimulus is to become the focus, the pupils take part in a planning session. Teachers read a text either to or with the pupils and give them time to discuss possible learning activities, to generate ideas and to refine any lines of inquiry. Pupils plan ideas, ensuring a breadth of different types of activities within different learning areas in the indoor and outdoor environment.

'Busy Bee' planning

The pupils record their ideas for different learning areas in the classroom by writing on sticky notes and attaching them to a 'Busy Bee' planning sheet. Teachers expect most Year 2 pupils to write at least one idea on the sticky notes independently, while staff support Year 1 pupils with their writing if needed. The pupils are used to this process and many talked about the challenge of thinking of ideas that would suit the different areas that they had set up in the classroom. The pupils thought that it was always easy to think of ideas for the creative area, but that some areas required more thought.

Teachers' response to 'Busy Bee' planning

During planning, preparation and assessment time, teachers work together, taking account of pupils' ideas. They select from the pupils' ideas and map activities that are rich in literacy and numeracy against the Literacy and Numeracy Framework. These activities usually become enhanced planning for that fortnight, but can also be used as teacher focused activities.

'Busy Bees' Jobs

Each day, staff enhance areas of learning in line with pupils' ideas. They record the activities on the 'Busy Bees' Jobs board for the pupils' reference. They change the activities throughout the fortnight to maintain pupils' interest and enthusiasm. The ethos of this system is very much about pupil choice, so teachers do not insist that all pupils participate in all of the 'Busy Bees' Jobs. As pupils are engaged in the planning process, they are much more likely to access the activities that they have planned or requested.

'Busy Bees' Job Leaders

After a while, teachers felt that they needed to make sure that pupils were engaging in enough of the enhanced activities to meet learning objectives. As a result, nominated Year 2 pupils, chosen on a rota basis and based upon their enthusiasm towards activities, lead other pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 to access the 'Busy Bees' Jobs. These pupils wear bee boppers and issue the pupils with a bee sticker on completion of the activity.

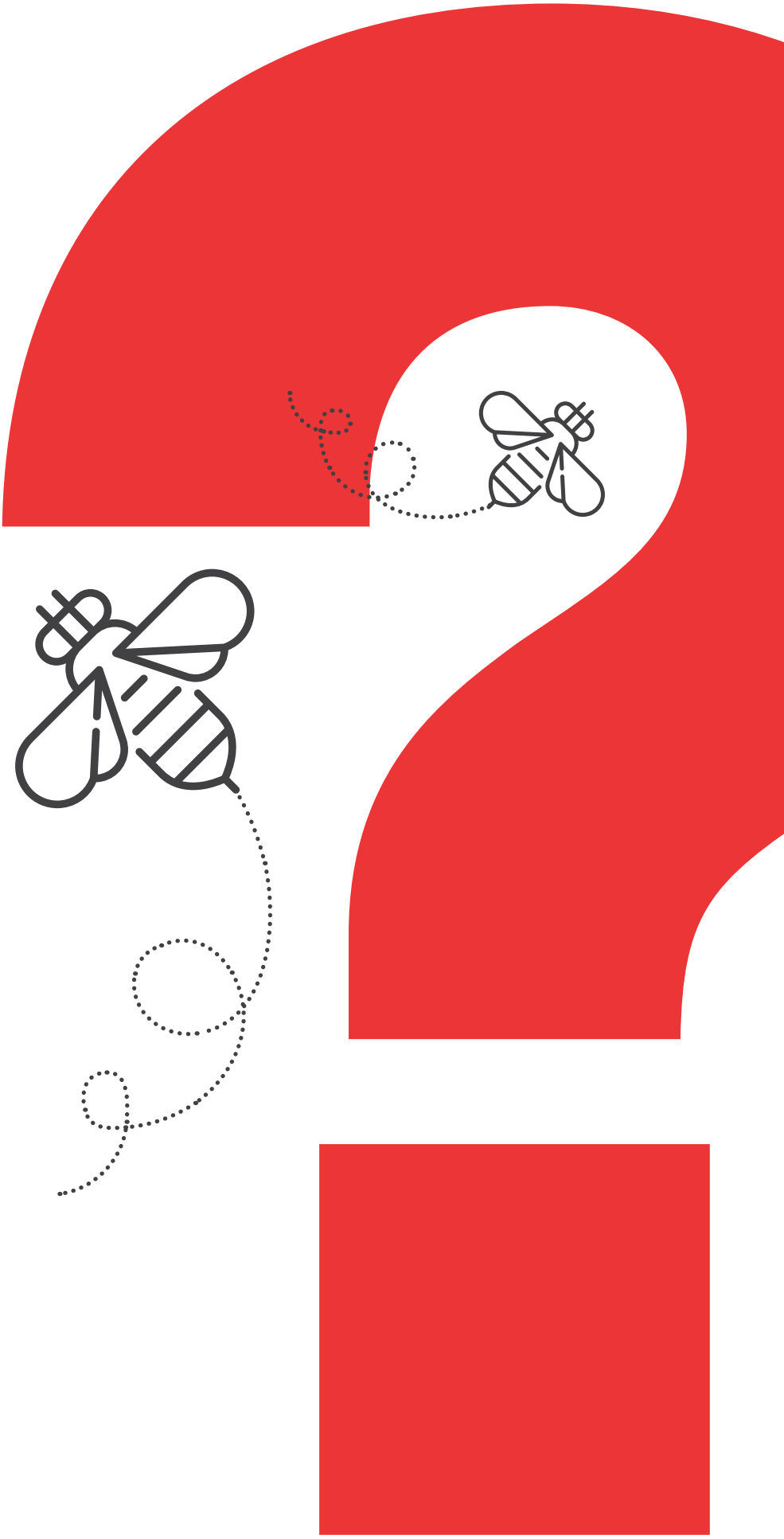
The pupils place the stickers on the 'Busy Bees' Class Record Sheet. At a glance, it is possible to see which pupils have completed jobs and which pupils have not. It is possible to see whether any pupils miss activities on a regular basis. Teachers target and encourage these pupils to access activities by choosing some of their suggestions and making them 'Busy Bees' Job Leaders.

What is the impact?

Nearly all pupils readily accept more responsibility for their own learning and display high levels of resilience. Most pupils access activities independently and complete them to at least a good standard. A small minority of pupils still need guidance and support; however, they respond well to the intervention from the timetabled, adult 'facilitator'.

Nearly all pupils show good levels of collaboration and co-operation, concentration, persistence, creativity, evidence-gathering skills. Most develop good learning habits, which they transfer effectively into lower key stage 2. All make at least good progress in all areas of learning including literacy and numeracy, with many making accelerated progress.

Nearly all are better engaged in their learning, particularly the boys and less able pupils. Over time the quality of the pupils' responses to the stimulus has improved and the breadth of their ideas has widened. Most speak confidently and clearly about the planning process and understand their part in it. School attendance has improved too and the school is now in the top 25% for attendance compared with similar schools.



The use of 'My Time' and outdoor learning in developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills

Brackla Primary School

Information about the school

Brackla Primary School is in Bridgend. There are currently 313 pupils on roll aged three to eleven. The school has 10 classes in total. Around 20% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The school identifies about 31% of pupils as having additional learning needs. A very few pupils speak Welsh at home and around 7% speak English as an additional language.

Description of activity/strategy

Teachers initiated 'My Time' on Fridays to introduce pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 to the book or theme for the coming week. This gives pupils the chance to contribute suggestions for activities in the different provision areas, involving them effectively in their learning.

Teachers use these suggestions to plan six activities that fit in with the theme or book. Four are literacy and numeracy based, and the other two focus on developing creative or physical skills. The activities can be undertaken indoors or outdoors and may involve pupils spending all morning outdoors in the extensive school grounds completing their tasks. Pupils can choose to complete the tasks in any order, either on their own, with a partner, or in a group. Staff set clear expectations for the quality of work done and check the standard before signing the work off. As a result, pupils make good progress and feel fully involved in directing their learning.

An example of the outside activities includes following a series of directional clues and then mapping out the route in pairs and writing down what they find at the end. This develops pupils' understanding of left, right, forwards, backwards, more than and count on, and their ability to read the instructions and any associated numbers accurately. Pupils need to solve number problems through hooking a duck with a two-digit number on its base, then saying a number that is smaller than or bigger than or 10 or 20, more than or less than. More able pupils are challenged to add this number to other numbers, developing their understanding of hundreds, tens and units effectively.

What is the impact?

Nearly all pupils make good progress with developing their literacy and numeracy skills. For example, they read and understand how to follow instructions well, and they have a thorough understanding of place value.

They develop a greater sense of resilience and are confident to try new learning experiences independently. They readily lead continuous provision activities, giving greater input into what and how they learn. This has a notable improvement in their personal and social skills.

The quality of literacy and numeracy work in teacher-led focused learning is of a higher standard and more closely tailored to pupils' individual needs. The school shares its effective practice with colleagues and other schools, upskilling staff and schools in the consortia.

Developing the indoor and outdoor environment and use of the locality to enrich learning experiences for pupils

Borras Park Community Primary School

Information about the school

Borras Park Community Primary School is in Borras, in Wrexham local authority. It opened in September 2016 following the amalgamation of the Borras Infant and Junior schools. The school continues to operate on the original infant and junior sites, which are a short distance apart. There are 475 pupils on roll, organised in to 17 classes. There is also a Hearing Impaired Unit on site. Around 13% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The school has identified about 18% of its pupils as having additional learning needs. Around 5% of pupils use English as an additional language and almost all come from English speaking homes.

Description of activity/strategy

Improving the foundation phase learning environment was a high priority in the School Improvement Plan. Teachers worked hard to raise the standard of the indoor and outdoor environment with the aim of supporting pupils' literacy, numeracy, problem solving and social skills effectively.

The school developed an attractive Forest School area, including a durable shelter, and trained staff in its use. Teachers reorganised the classrooms to make it easier to share the outdoor areas and improved the outdoor provision, building shelters, 'interest areas', small allotments and sand, water and construction areas.

Teachers plan timetables and rotas carefully to make sure that all pupils have equal access to the different provision areas. An internal review of coverage and quality of provision shows that there has been a clear improvement in the quality and breadth of learning experiences and in pupil engagement, and that this has raised pupils' standards. The learning environment now provides good coverage and stimulating opportunities for pupils to embed skills across areas of learning independently.

Pupils use this area regularly to develop and embed a range of skills. For example, they look after hens and use their eggs in cookery lessons. The area supports pupils' problem solving and application of numeracy skills well. Teachers give Year 2 pupils a blank grid sheet and their task is to locate and scan hidden QR codes scattered around the Forest School area. Pupils read these to extract information on how to solve time related problems involving analogue and digital times. To consolidate this further, pupils play a game where the teacher shouts out a time and they run and squirt the corresponding analogue or digital clock face on laminated card. The school reorganised the classrooms to make it easier to share the outdoor areas. The learning environment now provides good coverage and stimulating opportunities for pupils to embed skills across areas of learning independently.

Teachers use the local environment as much as they can to provide rich learning experiences to support pupils' learning throughout the year. For example, they visit the local hair salon after reading 'Hugh Shampoo', to see a hairdresser in action for themselves. They visit the supermarket to buy ingredients for baking or to find Fairtrade products, and arrange to take the school chickens to the vets for a check-up. They make maps, undertake traffic and housing surveys and treasure hunts, and make observational drawings. Pupils visit the park with a local community group for litter picking, bird box building and environmental days, helping to develop their respect for the environment. They work with the environmental team and develop and maintain flowerbeds by the local shops and their own small allotment. All of these visits provide a rich context for pupils' learning and teachers plan carefully to make the most of the opportunities provided to promote their literacy and numeracy skills. For example, pupils give verbal instructions on how to dig out large weeds and turn over the soil ready to plant potatoes. Another group write out instructions on how to do this successfully in order to get the maximum crop. Senior leaders regularly review the effectiveness of provision by monitoring planning, through lesson observations and via staff and pupil feedback.

What is the impact?

Nearly all pupils enjoy their learning and are fully engaged in tasks, especially reluctant or immature boys. They develop as resilient and independent learners, capable of transferring their skills across different areas of learning.

There are improved literacy and numeracy outcomes, especially at the higher than expected outcomes at the end of Year 2. The highly effective use of the local area enriches pupils' learning experiences and raises the school within the local community.

Creating a manageable system for planning and assessment better to inform provision and 'next steps' for pupils

Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Derwen

Information about the school

Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Cwm Derwen is a Welsh medium school in the village of Oakdale near Blackwood, in Caerphilly local authority. There are 235 pupils on roll organised into 10 classes, including a nursery class. Around 9% are eligible for free school meals. The school identifies around 28% of pupils as having additional learning needs. Most pupils come from homes where English is the main language and about 7% of pupils speak Welsh at home. A very few pupils come from an ethnic minority background.

Description of activity/strategy

Leaders created a bespoke planning and tracking document for the school and tried it out in a few classes. The document focuses on skills, allowing the teacher to be very flexible in the choice of context for the learning and to respond to pupils' developing interests as they emerge. This avoided teachers just working towards expected outcomes, which tended to limit their expectations and restrict progress for a few pupils. The tracking document includes the literacy and numeracy statements for the following year as well as the expected outcomes for the current year. This raises teachers' expectations and enables them to plan work at an appropriate level for more able pupils.

The new planning and tracking document shows the plan for the coming week and pupils' progress all on one page. Every teacher shows the aspects they plan to cover that week by highlighting the skills in the document. At the end of the week, the teacher notes the progress made by each individual pupil using a 'traffic light' highlighting system. Teachers plan for the following week, taking all pupils' needs into account highly effectively. This includes which pupils are ready to move on, and which need more support or time to consolidate their understanding.

Mapping the skills termly in this way allows teachers to plan creatively, following pupils' interests and developing interesting themes across all areas of learning effectively. The planning is very flexible. It allows teachers to evaluate pupils' progress weekly, and then adapt their plans to suit pupils' needs.

What is the impact?

Teachers plan effectively to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills across all areas of learning over time, responding well to pupils' interests and needs. Planning builds on pupils' previous learning successfully. Before implementing the new system, the school asked teachers whether they found the old planning system easy to use, and whether they could complete their planning within the allocated planning preparation and assessment (PPA) time. Fewer than 50% responded positively.

In November 2016, school leaders evaluated the new system. This time over 70% stated that they could complete their weekly planning within PPA time and that the system enabled them to plan opportunities across the areas of learning for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. Over 80% of teachers feel that their evaluations feed into individual pupil profiles effectively and enable them to track progress consistently, compared with less than 40% under the previous system. They stated that the system is easy to follow and implement and is purposeful. Teachers spend less time planning and recording assessments, making their job more manageable and enjoyable and leaving them with more energy to use in the classroom.

Using assessment information to drive up literacy and numeracy standards

Sealand Primary School

Information about the school

Sealand Primary School is in Flintshire. Nearly all pupils live locally with a few coming from the surrounding area. There are 210 pupils on roll, organised into eight classes. Around 31% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The school identifies around 25% of pupils as having additional learning needs. Very few pupils have a statement of special education needs. Around 18% of the pupils have English as an additional language. No pupils speak Welsh as their first language.

Description of activity/strategy

The school developed a computerised, live tracking programme, aligned closely with the school's assessment framework. Leaders identified this as a whole school improvement target, ensuring that it was a high priority. This gives leaders and staff a clear and accurate picture of how well pupils are progressing. The school holds regular meetings on training days in January, April and July when all staff meet with senior management and department leaders to review individual pupil progress in core areas. Before the meeting, teachers prepare accurate progress reports linked to pupil target information. The system is very manageable and instantly accessible, and teachers update it regularly. Leaders allocate appropriate time for teachers to discuss and review pupil progress in depth. This informs any necessary changes to provision effectively. They monitor the impact of literacy and numeracy intervention programmes robustly and make necessary adjustments. The performance management cycle links to these pupil reviews and leaders challenge staff on under-performing pupils and support them in accessing any additional training and support.

What is the impact?

Teaching staff are better informed and more accountable for pupil progress and cohort reviews. Intervention programmes are more flexible and relate more closely to changing needs. This allows the school to focus time and valuable resources where they make the most difference. Reviews link well to consortium formal target setting times so that there is no extra workload for staff. They inform planning well so that teachers plan pupils' next steps successfully. The school has improved its provision and intervention approach because of trends identified through this process.

Analysis of data shows that most pupils achieve targeted outcomes. There has been a steady improvement in foundation phase performance over the last three years, especially at the higher than expected outcome.

There is a consistent approach to whole school assessment, which supports monitoring and accurate moderation effectively. Assessment is well informed and encompasses a broad range of data and teacher assessments, enabling the school to be very secure in its assessments and levelling. Progress meetings offer all staff a positive base for dialogue. Meetings prepare staff for new cohorts and for parent teacher meetings well and support leaders in monitoring standards successfully. The next step is to combine additional learning needs formal reviews and to include teaching assistants in these meetings, thus upskilling them.

Developing a sound understanding of the foundation phase as a new headteacher with key stage 2 experience

The Meads Infant and Nursery School

Information about the school

The Meads Infant and Nursery School is in Milford Haven, Pembrokeshire. The school is a maintained nursery and infant school for around 436 pupils aged three to seven years, organised into 16 classes. There is a Flying Start unit on the school site, which caters for around 64 pupils.

Around 30% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The school identifies around 66% of its pupils as having additional learning needs, including a very few who have statements of special educational needs. Around 5% of pupils have English as an additional language. None of the pupils speak Welsh as a first language.

Description of activity/strategy

Initially the headteacher observed other foundation phase settings and sought support and advice from the local authority advisory teacher and consortium challenge adviser. She conducted an audit of practice at the school by observing classes alongside the advisory teacher, undertaking learning walks and looking at the standards that pupils achieved. She also asked teachers, learning support assistants, parents and governors what they thought of the quality of foundation phase provision. She asked them to consider what the barriers to achieving excellent foundation phase practice were. She collated this feedback to obtain a clear picture of strengths and areas for development.

The headteacher and teachers recognised that, while there were strengths, they needed to improve standards and provision. The standards in the national tests were low, and staff identified standards across the school in literacy and numeracy as giving concern.

The barriers identified were:

- The school relied on a prescriptive phonic scheme that took pupils out of class and taught phonics in isolation
- Pupils had difficulty transferring phonetical knowledge learned through the scheme into other areas of learning
- Tracking the skills coverage in literacy and numeracy was not consistent
- Coverage in numeracy was inconsistent and not all skills were being covered thoroughly enough
- Next steps for pupils' development in literacy and numeracy were not clearly identified
- Key questions and vocabulary were not included in planning, and therefore at times important learning opportunities were missed when delivered by other adults in the classes
- Success criteria for lessons were not shared with pupils, so pupils were unable to move forward independently

- Teachers and often learning support assistants did not fully understand the purpose of activities, particularly in continuous and enhanced provision
- Literacy and numeracy activities were not always meaningful or at a suitable level
- Teacher assessment was too generous
- Staff had some misgivings that managing pupils' behaviour might become more of a challenge if they had more freedom
- The organisation of classrooms did not always support active learning – clear areas of learning were not evident
- The outdoor areas needed refreshing to include a greater focus on literacy and numeracy
- Classes in different year groups were not sited together and this made it more difficult to share resources or to facilitate cross year group working
- Learning support assistants were not involved in planning
- Planning was too complicated and not flexible enough

There were no teaching and learning responsibility posts at the school, so the headteacher and governors restructured the staffing and looked for strong practitioners to take on these roles. The school took the decision to pay learning support assistants for additional hours to contribute to planning and assessment.

All teachers met in year groups for planning, preparation and assessment time. The headteacher focused training on areas where staff were less confident, for example in child-initiated learning and improving continuous provision.

Using the outdoors became a focus for the whole school and staff. The headteacher insisted that all staff took part in outdoor activities and that outdoor provision was included consistently in the planning. She drew up a list of 24 non-negotiable expectations for foundation phase classrooms and checked progress against these regularly. Sharing innovative lessons and demonstrating good practice in literacy and numeracy became a priority in every staff meeting.

What is the impact?

Many of the areas initially identified as points for development have become strengths. The school has identified additional areas for development with a focus on developing pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. There is better access to outdoor provision and classes make purposeful use of shared areas. Classrooms facilitate active and experiential learning. Pupils are a lot more active, and behaviour and attendance have improved. The school, alongside the challenge adviser, has identified four areas of practice worthy of sharing: standards and provision in Welsh; assessment for learning; approach to physical literacy; and improving attendance. Teacher assessment is more robust and evidence based.

Ensuring high standards through providing exceptional professional development for all school staff

Ysgol Glan Gele

Information about the school

Ysgol Glan Gele is an infant school situated in Abergele, in Conwy local authority. There are 295 pupils on roll aged between three and seven, organised into 10 classes. Around 28% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The school has identified around 51% of its pupils as having additional learning needs. Around 5% of pupils use English as an additional language and almost all come from English speaking homes. The school has a transient population due to the nature of the area.

Description of activity/strategy

The school has developed its own 'language of practice', which teachers use consistently to ensure that lessons are highly effective and are frequently judged as excellent, using a set of specific criteria from the 'Excellence in Practice' training. All staff are involved in planning interesting and challenging learning experiences, which include identifying clear expectations for what pupils will learn.

This gives staff the opportunity to say if there is anything they do not understand. Leaders then provide training to address this. All staff have an exceptional understanding of how to support pupils to make the best progress during lessons.

The headteacher is proactive in identifying high quality training for school staff. She researches national award programmes in order to find effective staff training in bespoke areas, such as 'Learning outside the Classroom', the 'Primary Geography Mark', the 'Inclusion Mark' and 'Parent Partnerships'. This upskills all staff very successfully and makes sure that messages and practice are consistent across the school.

The school is committed to training all staff to deliver the curriculum effectively in both the indoor and outdoor environment. A number of staff have received accredited training to deliver Forest School and Beach School education. They share their expertise in-house and with other schools to develop best practice.

The headteacher believes firmly that all teachers have expertise to share, whether they are newly qualified or more experienced. She makes the most of what every individual staff member has to offer the school. Teachers and support staff take part in lesson observations and model best practice through 'teaching triads' Teachers take part in teacher swap sessions with other schools, and then share findings with staff in their own school on their return, for example around the use of effective questioning and assessment for learning techniques. All this contributes very effectively to building a highly skilled and dedicated workforce.

Ysgol Glan Gele acts as a learning hub for the local consortia to share best practice. This ensures that their own practice is current and broadens their knowledge base. Leaders and staff report that they learn as much from working with other schools as schools learn from them.

What is the impact?

Improving staff's knowledge and understanding has led to improved outcomes for pupils. The school has a clear commitment to ensure that all staff have access to high quality training. All staff are clear about the expectations of the Literacy and Numeracy Framework and use it effectively to develop pupils' ability to transfer their skills successfully across areas of learning. There is useful professional dialogue between senior leaders and class teachers about pupils' skill development, enabling nearly all to make outstanding progress.

The school's focus on developing a 'language of practice' is well embedded and all staff use skilful questioning during lessons to develop pupils' thinking skills. Developing staff confidence and skills has led to improved teaching and learning across the school. The high skill level of the staff and exceptional subject knowledge ensure that nearly all lessons are engaging and often innovative. This has a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to learning.

Lessons, both indoors and outside, and the imaginative use of the locality allow pupils to consolidate skills in an experiential and stimulating way. Sharing good practice on all levels develops staff expertise effectively. This improves staff knowledge, which then has a direct impact on raising pupil outcomes.

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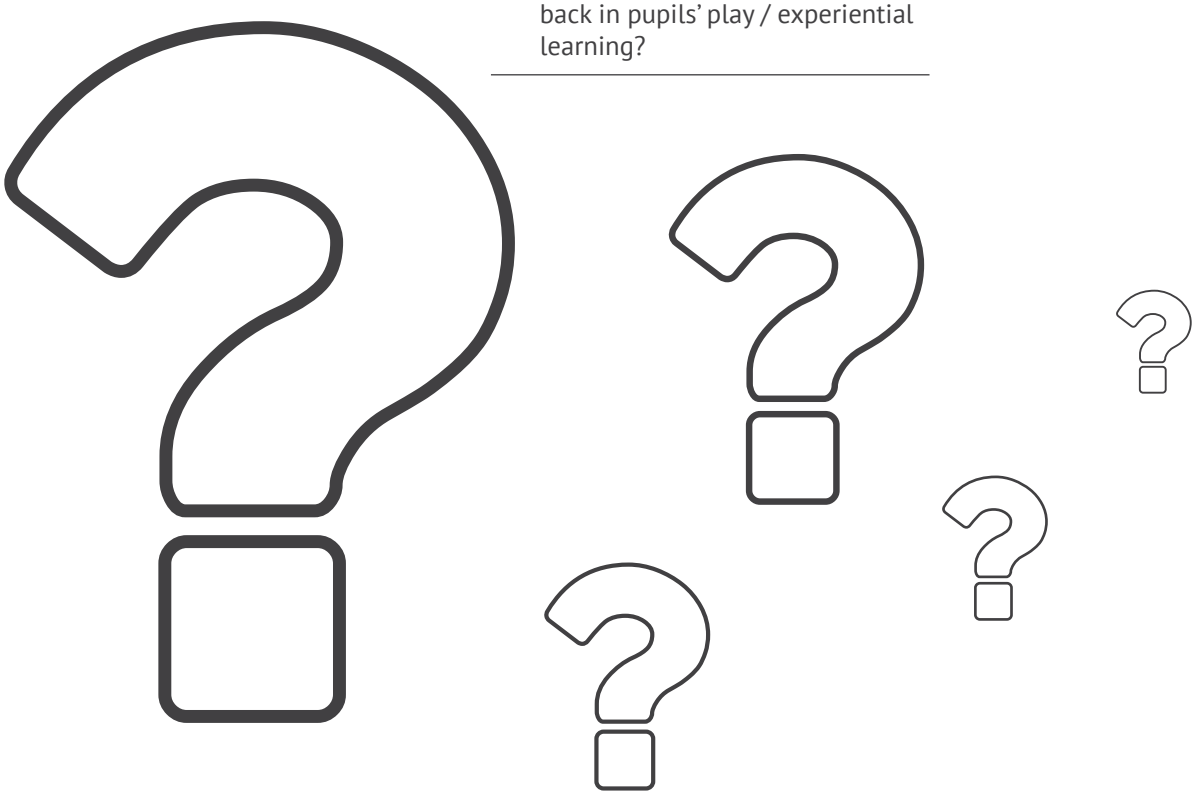
Appendix 2: Questions for schools to consider

Questions for schools to consider

1. How do you use experiential and active learning to motivate and stimulate pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills?
2. How do you raise standards of literacy and numeracy through improved use of active and experiential learning?
3. Do you consider the work in pupils' books as representing what they are able to do independently?
4. How flexible is your planning? Do children make valuable contributions to what literacy and numeracy activities they think are working well and what needs to be changed?
5. How well are pupils involved in deciding the lesson focus, and in the planning and setting up of literacy and numeracy activities and areas indoors and outdoors?
6. How regularly do you alter your planning to respond to changing circumstances and to pupils' interests?
7. How do you link continuous, enhanced and focused literacy and numeracy activities, located indoors and outdoors?
8. How do you monitor and evaluate the provision you make for experiential and active learning to ensure good coverage of literacy and numeracy skills in Year 1 and Year 2?
9. How do you ensure an appropriate balance between experiential learning and formal teaching in developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in line with good foundation phase practice?
10. Consider how well you use the locality to enhance pupils' learning experiences and to extend their literacy and numeracy skills.
11. What range of teaching approaches is used to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills? Do staff act as facilitators, motivators, demonstrators and collaborators in learning?
12. How well do teachers and support staff understand when to intervene and when to stand back in pupils' play / experiential learning?
13. How do teachers encourage pupils to think for themselves, solve problems and be creative?
14. In what way are your systems for assessment effective, manageable and not overly burdensome for staff?
15. Outline senior leaders' understanding of the pedagogy of the foundation phase.
16. How do leaders ensure that literacy and numeracy are delivered in line with good foundation phase practice? How do you monitor this?
17. What professional learning opportunities do you provide for staff so that they understand how to plan for and assess literacy and numeracy across the foundation phase areas of learning?



Appendix 3: Evidence base

Evidence base

The findings and recommendations in this report draw on the analysis of primary school inspections since 2010. This evidence was supported by visits to 27 primary schools to observe foundation phase practice in delivering literacy and numeracy in Year 1 and Year 2.

During their visits, inspectors:

- observed foundation phase practice in Year 1 and Year 2
- scrutinised pupils' work
- met representative groups of pupils
- reviewed a range of documents from schools, including curriculum plans and assessment materials
- interviewed teachers and school leaders

The schools visited as part of this study were:

Ysgol Esceifiog, Anglesey

Brackla Primary School, Bridgend

St. Gwaldys Bargoed, Caerphilly

Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Derwen, Caerphilly

Tongwynlais Primary, Cardiff

Ysgol Mynydd Bychan, Cardiff

Ysgol Gymraeg Teilo Sant, Carmarthenshire

Ysgol Saron, Carmarthenshire

Ysgol Rhos Helyg, Ceredigion

Ysgol Eglwysbach, Conwy

Ysgol Glan Gele, Conwy

Ysgol Melyd, Denbighshire

Ysgol Bryn Collen, Denbighshire

Sandycroft Primary School, Flintshire

Sealand Primary School, Flintshire

Victoria Primary, Vale of Glamorgan

Ysgol Morfa Nefyn, Gwynedd

Troedyrhiw Primary, Merthyr Tydfil

Melin Infant School, Neath Port Talbot

Ysgol Ifor Hael, Newport

The Meads Infant and Nursery School, Pembrokeshire

Oldford Infants, Powys

Ynyastawe Primary School, Swansea

Blaenavon Heritage V.C. School, Torfaen

George Street Primary, Torfaen

Borras Park Community Primary School, Wrexham

Pentre Church in Wales Primary School, Wrexham

Glossary

Active learning

Gaining first hand experiences through learning by doing and through play and hands-on involvement

Challenge Advisers

Professionals who support schools to improve the quality of teaching and learning and build leadership capacity so that schools can successfully deliver the agreed annual cycle of school improvement

Forest School

Learning takes place in a woodland or natural environment and supports the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world using a range of learner-centred processes.

Foundation phase

An approach to learning for children from three to seven years of age in Wales. It is the statutory curriculum for all children in Wales between these ages in both maintained and non-maintained settings.

Foundation phase Profile (FPP)

A statutory national method for scoring the foundation phase outcomes and progress data. It assesses children's abilities and development in four areas of learning:

- personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity
- language, literacy and communication skills, incorporating the literacy component of the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework [LNF])
- mathematical development, incorporating the numeracy component of the LNF
- physical development

Key stage 2

The legal term for the four years of schooling in maintained schools in Wales normally known as Year 3, Year 4, Year 5 and Year 6, when the pupils are aged between seven and eleven

Learning Walk

A formal or informal observation of teaching, provision or another aspect of school life, which is taking place in a classroom or other learning environment

National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF)

A skills framework developed by the Welsh Government. It became statutory in schools from September 2013 and includes statutory assessment against the framework from 2014. It is designed to help teachers embed literacy and numeracy into all subjects for learners aged five to fourteen.

Planning preparation and assessment time (PPA)

Time for teachers to carry out planning, preparation and assessment activities during the school day

Small world play

Play where children enter an imaginary world where they can create characters, develop stimulating and unique ideas, and revisit and represent real-life experiences. It allows development of language and imaginative thinking.

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