

AI statement

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Part 1

This assignment will critically analyse the curriculum for Wales and its evolution from the foundation phase. It will emphasise the role of play based learning, inclusion and provision for children with additional learning needs. Furthermore, it will discuss how the curriculum for Wales supports progression and wellbeing. Challenges to implementation will also be discussed.

Welsh Government (2020,a) suggests that the curriculum for Wales framework is legislative guidance that enables schools in Wales to develop their own curriculum for children aged three to sixteen years old. It states that there are four purposes and through using this guidance it supports children through their development. This guidance clarifies the curriculum requirements and provides advice for learning and planning as well as setting expectations for assessments and learners' progression. Oldcastle primary (2025) agrees that the schools curriculum supports and enables children to pursue the four purposes mentioned in the Curriculum for Wales. This is not only effectively done through the way the children are taught but how they are taught. Structural learning (2026) states that the curriculum for Wales is revolutionary and fundamental to transform the way in which children are taught through put Wales ensuring a skills focused approach. It is suggested that previously curricula was profoundly concentrated on coverage, however the new framework concentrates on deep meaningful learning through enabling schools more flexibility and enhance children's engagement.

According to Welsh Government (2026) the foundation phase was the curriculum in Wales from 2004 until 2022. Furthermore, Welsh Government (2015) states that the foundation phase concentrated on reinforcing children's holistic development through enhancing the child's previous knowledge, understanding and experiences. It focused on equality, diversity, strong parental and carer relationships and inclusion. The foundation phase also acknowledged that parents were children's initial educators. It is suggested that learning was based heavily around play and the child's first hand experiences. This enabled them to learn through exploration of their environments, problem solve, and develop their individual independence, self-esteem and confidence.

Welsh Government (n.d., a) suggests that the curriculum for Wales replaced the foundation phase and removed key stages to enable settings to provide a continuous learning environment. Although foundational learning is embedded in the curriculum for Wales it is designed to meet the children's individual developmental needs along side supporting children with additional learning needs. It is suggested that the new curriculum recognises the vitality of early education and gives guidance to enable practitioners to meet the needs of all children with continuity. They state that the foundation phase has been replaced with a curriculum that is broader.

Both the foundation phase and the curriculum for Wales have the goal of supporting children's learning and development. However, they have different structures and approaches to achieve this goal. The foundation phase was for children aged three to seven and focuses greatly on child-led learning and gaining first hand experiences. It consisted of seven areas of learning and supported children's social, emotional, cognitive and physical skills at their own speed. It also placed importance on learning in the outdoor environment (Welsh government, 2015).

In contrast, the curriculum for Wales was established in 2022 and offers a consistent framework for children aged three to sixteen. This new curriculum doesn't place importance on key stages; however, it endorses a continuous progression throughout the child's education and learning. The curriculum for Wales consists of six areas of learning and experiences, this is conducted through the four purposes with the goal to enhance the development of children making them capable, ambitious, creative, informed, ethical, enterprising, informed, healthy and confident (Welsh government, 2020, a).

Both of these frameworks place value on children learning through experience, however; the curriculum for Wales poses a more flexible approach for schools for settings to design the learning suitable for the children in their care ensuring every child's needs are met (Welsh government, 2015, a; Welsh government, 2020, a).

According to Welsh government (2018) the curriculum for Wales has a focus on ensuring all children are able to develop their knowledge, skills and experience to ensure success. It is also suggested that this curriculum is designed to ensure all children are able to reach their full potential though having their individual needs met.

This includes Children that require additional support to help them excel. The additional learning needs system offers a framework to support children and young people until the age of twenty-five. If a child has ALN they can experience complications with learning, they may also face challenges that their peers do not.

Play plays a vital role in enhancing children's development as it gives them opportunities to develop their imagination, communication, emotional wellbeing, social skills, cognitive abilities and creativity. When a child has ALN, play is fundamental for them as it ensures they feel safe and provides inclusivity in their environment. Play enables them to learn at their own pace through exploration and ensures they are able to learn and develop. A child with ALN may need the learning environment adapted to meet their needs to ensure they are able to participate. When planning sessions practitioners are able to consider the child's physical capabilities to ensure they are able to complete tasks or ensure there are quiet areas available for them to work. When considering this the children are provided with a supportive and inclusive environment that ensures their needs are met. Play provides children with valuable learning opportunities. When a child is engaging in play such as role play, construction play or imaginative play, they are gaining vital and valuable skills. Therefore, providing children with learning and developmental opportunities in a way they enjoy (Maynard, 2024). This can be seen with in the curriculum for Wales through providing play-based learning that supports the child's individual development and needs. This is done through enabling children the opportunity to explore and be creative. in regard to children with ALN the curriculum endorses an inclusive approach in which the setting is able to adapt activities and environments to meet the child's individual needs so that they are able to part take along side their peers and progress. This also aligns with the additional learning needs code of practice Wales, that states the importance of ensuring that appropriate support is available to make sure equitable access, so they are able to learn and develop (Welsh government, 2021).

Mansfield (2026) states that one of the barriers to implementing the curriculum for Wales is that staff do not have sufficient time to plan their lessons. Welsh government (2025, a) agrees that lack of time for planning is an issue for staff but also adds that there is also an issue with collaborative work and ensuring individual needs are met for every child particularly children with ALN. Furthermore, Welsh

Government (2025, a) suggests that there are many challenges to implementing the curriculum for Wales. One of these are resources, lack of resources can cause inconsistencies in the children's learning. It is stated that to tackle this the Welsh government have introduced additional staff training to ensure the curriculum is being delivered effectively. This report also highlights that there is a need for enhancements for initial teacher training so they can improve their practice and their understanding of inclusion and meet the unique and individual needs of all children. They also state that additional funding has been authorized to ensure all children are supported through their environments. This funding is to ensure that the curriculum is accessible for all children.

Gatley and Oostendorp-Godfrey (2026) suggests that the curriculum for Wales has faced many challenges similar to Scotland's curriculum for excellence. Some of the challenges faced are external pressures on teaching staff, inspections, time for planning, lack of funding and lack of resources. They also suggest that there is great emphasis on values and not results and this could negatively impact the way teachers deliver the curriculum. Furthermore they state that this could have a knock on affect on learners experiences. As a result, Welsh government have implemented additional training and learning opportunities for staff to ensure that practitioners are able teach the curriculum successfully.

In conclusion, the curriculum for Wales shows shows clearly that the curriculum has moved on from the foundation phase although aspects are still present. The curriculum for Wales is a more flexible and inclusive framework that enhances the children's progression. Although both approaches place Importance on play based and experiential learning, the curriculum for Wales provides a broader concept through its four purposes and highlights the importance of continuous development. The curriculum for Wales ensures that inclusion is of the upmost importance through supporting diverse needs and ensuring all learners needs are met, including children with additional learning needs. However, it is clear that effective implementation is dependant on a variety of aspects, such as available resources and professional development.

Part 2

Ambition Institute (2025) states that the unique child is embedded in the early years foundation stage. It suggests that every child develops at their own pace. Through continuous assessment it is suggested that practitioners are able to fully understand each child's individual strengths, weaknesses, interests and needs. When practitioners use their understanding of child development alongside effective assessment practices, they can provide personalised learning and care that enables every child to achieve the best possible outcomes from their starting point. It is evident that children can benefit greatly when setting adapt to meet children's individual needs. When learning is tailored to each child, they are more involved, feel more confident, and achieve better progress (Sylva et al., 2004; Nutbrown, 2012, Ofsted, 2023 cited in Ambition instituter, 2025). Leicestershire county council (2026) agrees but adds that the unique child is a child centred approach that promotes high expectations of all children while acknowledging that they are individual. They also state that when practitioners give children a supportive environment, children are more inclined to develop their confidence, resilience and a positive approach to learning. It is also suggested that it is important to listen to the children and provide them with opportunities to express themselves, this ensures they feel valued, gives them a sense of belonging and supports their wellbeing. They also state that practitioners should ensure children are able to build positive relationships to ensure they feel secure, especially through periods in their life where there may be change.

According to Buckingham council (2021) assessment is vital in practice. Assessments ensure that everyone including parents/carers and practitioners are able to identify where the child's development and progress is at and how they progress throughout their journey. Through continuous assessments, practitioners gain knowledge of the children's development, understanding, achievements, learning styles and interests.

Through doing this practitioners are able to plan appropriate lessons so that each child is catered for. It is also suggested that practitioners need to use their knowledge of each child and use their own judgement when assessing children to see if that child meets the expectations for their age developmentally. These assessments should not entail copious amounts of paper work or long breaks. Similarly the Department of education (2024) states that practitioners are required to carry out assessments and observations regularly, this is to ensure they are able to recognise the child's abilities and interests. Furthermore they state that through doing assessments regularly, practitioners are able to recognise any gaps in the child's knowledge and development and provide appropriate support early on. This ensures the child's individual needs are met. Children develop and progress at different rates and not every child will follow the same or typical developmental or progression pattern. However, this does not have an impact on their ability to excel or progress, as it is vital to place importance on their strengths (Department of education, 2024).

Welsh Government (2017) states that the foundation phase profile assessment assesses children's abilities through observation and assessments. Through this it outlines outcomes that relate to the four areas of learning. Assessments should observe a vast range of abilities across all areas of the foundation phase. These areas are physical development, mathematical development, language, communication and literacy and personal and social development.

When assessing children as they start school it should be considered that this transition can be difficult for some children and may reflect in the results. The foundation phase profile is beneficial to track a child's progress from nursery to year two, with continuous assessments and observations. When a child starts on the setting it enables practitioners to assess what level that child is at and learn of the child's needs. When a child enters reception, they undertake a baseline

assessment during the first six weeks. This is done through observations instead of using a formal testing process, concentrating on the skill ladder for each area of learning and development embedded in the foundation phase. This should be done using the compact profile (Welsh Government, 2017).

According to Welsh government (n.d., b) the benefits to the foundation phase profile are having a reliable data collection on each child and where appropriate having such information to share for example with parents/carers so that they know where their child is with regard to their development and academically and also with other practitioners so that they are able to get support where needed. Another benefit is having the ability to monitor children's progress and track it through out their journey. This enables additional needs to be addressed and where appropriate for early intervention and support to be available to the child and family. They also suggest that it enables easier transitions, this would mean that when a child moves up and academic year their new teacher will know what abilities they had last year and be able to access where they are now and if they have progressed. Furthermore, Welsh government (2022) states that practitioners that the compact profile is a beneficial tool to track a child's overall ability and covers a wide variety of skills to aid observation and assessments. They also state that this is a valuable asset to ensure that suitable targets are set and to pinpoint next steps.

However, Welsh government (2022) also state that the compact profile is not suited for all areas, some areas being more difficult to access than others, such as the personal and social development. It also states that this method can be time consuming for practitioners. Another of the challenges stated was that there was a lot of tick boxes, therefore practitioner's felt that they weren't able to personalize learning experiences adequately to each individual child. Another

limitation was also mentioned, this was that when it came to identifying learning difficulties, the profile was too vague and wide.

According to Welsh Government (2020, b) assessment is vital within the curriculum for Wales framework. Assessments allow individual children to progress at their own pace, enabling them to be supported and challenged. The progression steps assessment is intended to support children to progress. It ensures settings are able to make, implement, review and revise through assessment within the curriculum. Assessment is embedded within the curriculum for Wales within the everyday teaching. It is designed to support all children and help them progress. Assessments are an ongoing continual process and not a stand alone evaluation. This enables practitioners to recognise children's strengths, weaknesses, needs and what next steps are needed. It is suggested that assessments are used to identify children's needs, track their progression and reflect to inform the need for support and further learning, and to help practitioners to comprehend group progress so that they are able to improve their own practice. Children are assessed when they enter a new school regardless of their age, this is to provide the practitioner with knowledge to know the starting point for the individual child and how to progress. It is important to know where they are in their learning journey (Central south consortium, n.d.).

Welsh Government (2025, b) suggests that there are many strengths to using the progression steps assessment. It highlights that it uses a vast range of methods to carry out assessments and not the same format each time. It also states that this method can enhance self reflection and children being involved in their own learning. This method permits schools to swap and change the ways they carry out assessments in order to get the best from the children through ensuring assessments suit them. Another strength is that assessments are not just based on just formal tests and instead uses a mix of child centred approaches as well.

However, Welsh government (2025, b) also states that there are also some weaknesses to this approach. They suggest that there are concerns that there is a lack of consistency and progress amongst children especially when children transition between primary school and secondary school. This is due to the flexibility schools are given to design their own curriculum for each setting. Children may gain different skills and knowledge from their peers in primary school and arrive at secondary school with different experiences. another challenge discussed is external pressures on staff such as inspections and attainment data, this could influence the way in which assessments are carried out. It is suggested that some schools will still use formal testing for literacy and maths as a result of this even though they work under the curriculum for Wales. They also state that some practitioners expressed that that the guidance for assessments was too vague and insufficient, thus making it harder to create effective assessment methods.

The foundation phase profile is centred on children between the age of three to seven years old. The foundation phase profile carries out baseline assessments during reception and then continues to track the child's development up to year two. Its sole focus is on holistic development and learning. This assessment type uses two different forms of profiles, the compact profile and the full profile. The compact profile is used for baseline assessments, and the full profile is used to track the child's progression up until they leave year two. the foundation phase profile comprises of skill ladders to ensure that practitioners are able to see where the child is in regards to their development. This assessment type is based around structured observations that contain a lot of tick boxes. The foundation phase profile is a more structured system (Welsh Government , 2015, 2017).

In contrast, the progression steps assessments are focused on a much wider age range of three to sixteen. This type of assessment focuses on the child's

development and learning continually throughout their education until age sixteen. This assessment type is used across the whole school continuously; this enables tracking all the way through their school years. This assessment type replaces the assessments carried out in the foundation phase. There is no one singular assessment and instead focuses on continual progression. The progression steps are more flexible and adaptable (Oldcastle primary, 2025, Welsh government, 2020, a).

To conclude, both the foundation phase profile and the curriculum for Wales progression steps use observations to assess and support children's development, learning and individual progress. The foundation phase profile is a more structured assessment for children aged three to seven that uses skill ladders and baseline assessments to track children's progress up to year two. This can be time consuming and has very little flexibility. In contrast, progression steps assessments are for children aged three to sixteen and are a more flexible and continuous approach assessed through every day teaching. Overall both assessment types can improve children development and learning, however, the effectiveness depends greatly on the understanding and training of staff.

Part 3

A sensory circuit can be comparable to a physical exercise circuit, however, instead of the focus being on fitness the purpose is to regulate arousal levels. Arousal indicates the range of the levels of attentiveness in the child's body, this can range from highly stressed to sleeping. It is important to maintain an appropriate level of arousal to ensure the child can focus and engage effectively. Sensory circuits can support by ensuring children achieve by ensuring students are ready to learn. Sensory circuits are a valuable tool for children with sensory processing difference, ensuring they are able to regulate their feelings and focus (NHS borders,2024). Furthermore, NHS Gateshead Health (2025) states that sensory circuits comprises of three stages. These are alerting, organising and calming and these need to be achieved in sequence. The alerting stage ensures the brain is ready to learn by encouraging body awareness and balance. The organising stage helps develop coordination, focus, motor skills, and attention by supporting children to complete movements. Lastly, the calming stage incorporates deep pressure and proprioceptive input to assist children to feel relaxed, regulated and ready for learning. Sensory circuits are usually utilised during the morning session or after lunch time enhance the children's engagement and concentration. Every child has unique needs and sensory circuits should reflect this.

Kilroy, Aziz-Zadeh and Cermak (2019) states that Dr. A. Jean Ayres was an occupational therapist in the 1970's who theorised that there was a link between behaviour and sensory integration. She suggested that children that present with sensory processing differences may contribute to characteristics associated with autism. Ayres proposed that effective sensory processing is reliant on cognitive ability so that the child is able to go through the stages and be able to register, modulate and organise sensory input.

Sensory Surroundings Limited (2026) suggests that there are many benefits to using sensory circuits such as enhanced engagement. This can be achieved through doing alerting activities running on the spot. Organising activities can achieve the same result for example balancing on a beam. These activities utilise different parts of the mind and body, and can improve a child's ability to concentrate. It is also suggested that while doing such sensory activities children can develop their motor

skills, reduce anxieties, improve their coordination and behaviours. Furthermore, Norfolk Schools and Learning Providers (2026) agrees and adds that the use of sensory circuits can enhance children's self awareness and enable them to create robust connections between their senses the task they are undertaking, preparing them to learn in an engaging and fun way.

There are strengths and weaknesses to sensory circuits. Learning through sensory play does not suit every child, however, it can provide significant benefits for many children by encouraging them to explore and utilise their senses. It is suggested that this approach supports deeper engagement, enhances creativity, and promotes active participation in learning. By offering hands-on and meaningful experiences, sensory learning can strengthen children's understanding and retention of knowledge, helping to develop skills that support long-term learning and development. Nexus Education (2023) also state that even though sensory play has many benefits to children and can be highly effective, it may not be suitable for all children. Potential limitations include the risk of children becoming overly reliant on sensory input and the significant time and resources required to implement sensory-based activities. Consequently, sensory learning is most effective when used alongside a range of teaching approaches, providing a balanced learning experience that supports both engagement and the development of independence (Nexus education, 2023). Furthermore, GriffinOT (2022) agrees that sensory circuits are an effective strategy to support children in groups or individually by enhancing their self regulation, improving their readiness to learn and helping children with transitions throughout the day by providing structure. However, the use of sensory circuits needs to be adapted to meet the individual needs of each child in order to be effective. They also suggests that although there seems to be positive outcomes, currently there is very limited research to support the effectiveness. Additionally, successful implementation requires practitioners to have a good understanding of sensory processing and appropriate training to ensure activities are delivered safely and effectively.

As previously mentioned staff need have appropriate training to effectively implement sensory processing, sensory integration and strategies for meeting

children's individual sensory needs. Psychology and therapeutic services. (n.d.) states that before implementing, children should be assessed to ensure that the practitioner is able to tailor the sensory experience to their needs. They also state that schools should have suitable environments with visual aids and ensure that the resources and equipment needed are readily available to undertake the strategy effectively.

According to Quinn (2025) children with additional learning needs can benefit from sensory play greatly. Sensory play can benefit children with a variety of ALN conditions. Autistic children can learn to manage their sensory overload and reduce their anxiety by having structured predictable routines and calming strategies. Children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder can be provided with movement opportunities and structured opportunities, this can support them with their concentration and executive functioning. It is also suggested that children with dyslexia can benefit through strengthened coordination, sequencing, processing skills and memory skills to further enhance and develop their literacy skills. They also suggest that sensory processing can help children suffering with anxiety to regulate their emotions and reduce stress.

In conclusion, sensory circuits are an inclusive strategy that can support children's self-regulation, concentration, and readiness to learn. Based on Ayres' sensory integration theory, sensory circuits provide structured opportunities for children to process and respond through alerting, organising and calming activities. As research suggests, sensory circuits can be greatly beneficial for children that have additional learning needs, such as, autism, ADHD, anxiety and dyslexia, through providing support to ensure they are able to regulate their emotions, engage and participate in learning. However, as discussed there are limitations to this, these include staff training, assessments, resources and adapting for each individual. Although current research is limited, sensory circuits prove to be a

valuable tool to ensure inclusivity in the school environment when used along side other teaching approaches to ensure all needs are met.

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