

Early Years Curricula

Foundation Phase and the new curriculum within Wales.

A new play-based curriculum for Wales has been introduced to every setting within the early years, it has been structured similar to the foundation phase framework for its key purpose to ensure that every child receives an education. (Welsh Government, 2021). As stated within Article 29 of the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of a Child (UNCRC), UNICEF (2017) every child within their early years has the right to an education as this encourages them to reach their full potential, for later in their lives. McLeod (2022) discusses how Piaget believed enabling children to reach their full potential is important as when children play their intelligence grows, building on their cognitive development and knowledge.

Dauncey (2021) reviewed the Donaldson report and the introduction of the new curriculum for Wales and discusses the four purposes strategy on how it supports children and ensures that every child within the early years will receive a play-based curriculum as children learn about their own abilities and skills through play. The Foundation Phase Framework, Welsh Government (2015) states the Curriculum within Wales aims to set out different areas and milestones in children's development, with the help and support from practitioners, this should be done through seven areas of learning within every setting that provides education to children within the early years from the ages of two to seven (Welsh Government 2017). Therefore, for this to be achieved all early year's settings should receive support from the Welsh Government to carry out the plan to move forward and use the new curriculum within their early year's settings (Welsh Government 2021). The four purposes have become law in Wales within the legislation of the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021; therefore, every early year's setting should follow the Welsh Government guidelines as stated by the Welsh Government (2021).

OCED (2022) believes there can be a few obstacles in the way of the new curricula such as a teacher understanding and receiving the appropriate training to help them understand the new structures and how will children learn by playing. Additionally, the Welsh Government (2020) states to achieve the four areas of learning, there needs to be improvement with the way practitioners are trained, to help practitioners understand the pedagogy and engage in the way that children learn through a play-based curriculum. Furthermore, Welsh Government (2016) believes an action plan for practitioners should be in place for professional learning and improving leadership. Encouraging practitioners to develop new abilities and adapt to what suits a child's abilities. As stated by Welsh Government (2017) within the foundation phase professional learning and leadership is a reflection on a practitioner's own practice. Therefore, practitioner should adapt with the change in the curriculum, and how learning and assessing children's development should be approached in accordance with the new curriculum.

Within the Foundation Phase the Welsh Government (2016) states for practitioners to understand a child's development they should improve their own skills through professional courses and teachers training. Donaldson (2015) agrees as stated within

Successful Futures, in order for children to learn a practitioner should also receive the right training, to help them understand strengths and weaknesses and if a child has additional learn needs, so the understand how to help children build on the developmental skills. However, funding for the courses may be limited as within non-school settings therefore, not every practitioner will receive the appropriate training and without this it becomes difficult to understand and assess children. Estyn (2019) states settings can be eligible for funding to provide education for children before school age, they must work towards agreed educational outcomes and ensure that children are developing skills towards the foundation phase. Therefore, providing the appropriate professional training to understand and work within the new curriculum.

Within the new curriculum Welsh Government (2022) states all educational non-funded early years settings will receive funds to help provide the settings the abilities to teach children as young as two to prepare them for the foundation phase, therefore, leaving additional funds within the settings to receive the additional training they need to learn about the new curriculum and how it will help children develop. Meithrin (No date) states a non-funded setting is a charity-based setting, however, it is one of first steps within a child's early years education, for example, a Cylch Meithrin, for some children this will become the first milestone within their education, where they learn about their culture and learn the Welsh language. Therefore, receiving funds from the government for these settings is important, as the funds will help buy equipment such as books and indoor and outdoor play areas, to help build on a child's knowledge, as when children play or read for example, they become better thinkers and build confidence in themselves, and it encourages them to learn new skills (Welsh Government, No date).

According to Prothero (2022) the four purposes within the new curriculum is to encourage children to learn about ambitious, enterprising, ethical and healthy, with ambitious children become capable learners, and learn through life, enterprising, creative, ready to play a part in life, ethical, become citizens of Wales and the world around them and healthy, becoming self-confident ready to lead full life within society. Welsh Government (2022) agrees with Prothero (2022) as the four purposes is a shared vision for every child within the early years, to fulfil these, with a high expectation for all. This promotes "individual and national well-being, tackle ignorance and misinformation, and encourage critical and civic engagement", (Welsh Government 2022).

Furthermore, as part of the New Curriculum for Wales, Waters (2016) discusses the four purposes and states how children from the age of three should learn the Welsh language, therefore, practitioners should speak the language. Welsh Government (2015) discusses how they agree with Waters (2016) and how the Foundation Phase states the Welsh language should be central within every early year setting, although they believe there can be barriers in the way that can prevent the Welsh language from being used in every setting, therefore this can prevent settings from following the

guild lines to the new curriculum and making it difficult for children to develop on their language skills.

Additionally, as Gonebydd (2013) states not every practitioner can speak the Welsh language. According to Dr Popkins (2022) due to the differences in which the Welsh language is pronounced, for example, double barrelled letters it makes Welsh a difficult language to learn, therefore some practitioners may not be comfortable teaching children Welsh, as they are unable to use the right pronunciations or understand the Welsh language themselves. As stated by Early Years Wales (2020) there are many free online Welsh courses for practitioners to learn the language, therefore, enabling them to teach Welsh to children, working in line with the new play-based curriculum. With-in the Foundation phase the Welsh Government (2015) states every practitioner should participate in every course available to them, as the understanding of play-based and child-initiated activities may not be clear to them.

According to the Welsh Government (No date) children can learn to speak the Welsh language, this can be achieved through play, with the use of their holistic development through play-based activities and their own imaginations, learning about their culture and working together with the use of sustained shared thinking and open-ended questions. Within the Te-Whariki Curriculum New Zealand Government (2017) states 'our bicultural foundation, our multicultural present and shared future we are creators'. New Zealand Government (2017) believes that every child learns in their own unique way, with the support of a practitioner. Children can grow to be confident and can learn to identify their own culture, speak their own language and learn other languages. According to WJEC CBAC (2019) and Welsh Government (No date) every child should be given the opportunity to hear the Welsh language on a daily basis. Children can learn the language through Welsh based activities, audio materials and reading books. Encouraging them to build on their self-confidence during play.

Additionally, in accordance with Early Years Wales (2022) every practitioner within the early years should receive support and have the appropriate training for the new play-based curriculum within Wales, as this can ensure all practitioners understand why play is important and how children develop skills through playing. Kurt (2020) states Vygotsky supports this as he believes practitioners are to scaffold children, therefore, a practitioner should have the training to ensure children receive the best education in line with their abilities and skills.

What is a Unique child?

As stated by Early Years Matter (2022) a unique child does not only mean ensuring every child's needs are met or does not mean they have additional learning needs also known as (ALN) it can mean every child has a different personalities, abilities and beliefs. As suggested by Essex County Council (2022) practitioners should respect children and understand how every child should be valued, this is to ensure every child

can develop on their skills, as when a child feels they are being valued and respected it encourages them to participate in activities as they are comfortable in their surroundings. Furthermore, Kelly (2016) suggests that adapting to a child's unique traits through changing activities can enable a practitioner to set out milestones for each individual child and this can ensure that practitioners understand an individual child. When the uniqueness of a child is considered, children will learn to develop their own boundaries by understanding right from wrong, therefore, encouraging their own self-confident and self-esteem.

Welsh Government (2008) states within the Early Years sector, children should have a play-based curriculum, this should be introduced to children between three and seven years old, as children learn and build on their own skills and abilities through playing. Pacey (2022) discusses the New Curricula within Wales and how it has been structured into four purposes to ensure every child within the early years receives a play-based curriculum, as every child is unique, and they all have different skills and abilities. Welsh Government (2022) states the four purposes are to help child with their development and to set themselves their own standards. It can help children to develop knowledge through creativity, problem solve and encourage them to learn languages and about culture, they can learn through challenges that are fun and they enjoy, therefore building on their own individual skills to the best of their abilities. New Zealand Government (2017) agrees with Pacey (2022) every child is unique as they learn at different stages and have different skills, therefore believes that a play-based curriculum will encourage children to become better learners and build on their own skills. The Education Hub (2021) states Piaget believed hands on learning through play is important as when children play, they learn and develop new skills at different stages through their own abilities and becoming capable learners can ensure they become more confident and provide them with the abilities they need to go through life. Gatley (2020) states all children can become ambitious, and capable learners, encouraging them become comfortable and confident in themselves, therefore they can be valued contributors within society and play a part within their future.

Additionally, Dauncey (2021) discusses the six areas of learning, within the four purposes in the New Curriculum, stating every child should have a chance to experience learning within the six areas of as this can increase their abilities and develop and ensures they have different opportunities to encourage them to build of the own individual skills. Nortje (2021) suggests Piaget agrees with Dauncey (2021) children develop their own skills over time. However, Piaget believed that children developed their cognitive development in four different stages Sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete and formal stages, within an age range. OCD (No date) agrees with Dauncey (2021) a child develops within an age range; However, OCD (No date) believes children learn at different paces, one child can reach the milestone expected of them and the other may go at a slower pace therefore, stating every child is unique and every child learns at different paces.

HM Government (2018) states a child centred approach is important for the welfare of every child therefore working in partnership with families is fundamental to safeguarding children. Tri.x (2019) states a child centred approach means to safeguard children and to ensure that all Practitioners work in partnership with families

and focus of every individual child “when making decisions about their lives” (Tri.x 2019). However, Donaldson (2015) discusses a child centred approach where it is believed children should think I can, and I am instead of can I. As stated within the New Curriculum for Wales this approach is more inclusive, as it is from a child’s perspective of what they think they can do. Therefore, if a child is centred it enables a child-centred approach and a child’s uniqueness. State Government Victoria (2019) states a child centred approach designs the aspects for individual need and abilities for every child, giving them the same opportunities, and to adjust to all children’s unique needs.

Welsh Government (2017) believes within the Foundation Phase Framework children develop in their own unique way and at their own pace. This should be scaffolded, and practitioners should encourage learning opportunities for children to develop on their skills. McLeod (2019) states Vygotsky agrees with Welsh Government (2017) when practitioners scaffold children and ensure they have opportunities to use their own abilities and skills it enables children to become confident learners and build on their unique skills. Rock (2022) believes scaffolding children while they play is a key concept within a child’s early years, practitioners play a supporting role. Children learn to problem solve and participate in activities or tasks to achieve their goals, building on their skills and enhancing their emotional developmental skills. Practitioners can support these skills by adding new things to activities and be available for open-ended questions so further support every individual child. Furthermore, Dauncey (2021) discusses the Donaldson review and states if the New Curriculum is not straight forward, is not clear and agreed it can be argued, as the wonder is, why we are doing it? Therefore, recommending the four purposes and when supported “they should guide all future decisions about national and local educational priorities” (Dauncey, 2021) this can underpin teaching within Wales.

OECD (2018) discusses the Pisa rating within the United Kingdom, the Pisa rating is about measuring children’s abilities of reading, maths, science and skills with life challenges. As OECD (2018) states Wales rates the lowest out of the four countries within the United Kingdom, therefor, challenging practitioners to become better teachers and children to become achievers. Furthermore, within the Foundation Phase Framework Welsh Government (2015) agrees with OECD (2018) there are expectations for children to achieve well by the end of the year, making it difficult for practitioners to scaffold children and for children to learn at their own pace, as children are assessed the same way. Donaldson (2015) states children with Additional learn needs are not considered within the Foundation Phase Framework as they are not considered to achieve the same things, therefore, following the Transformation Programme (Welsh Government, 2019). Welsh Government (2022) states the Transformation programme was designed to deliver support to children and their families in a joint approach in a piloting way of working, therefore, Pisa may not include children with Additional Learning Needs within the curriculum ratings.

Forest School Portfolio (No date) discusses the importance of assessments and observation within Forest School’s, stating that observing and assessing children enables a practitioner to understand individual child needs and developmental abilities, however, they believe using a chart with labels is more beneficial as children

are less likely to acknowledge that the a being observed, therefore this will not affect their learning, as when children feel or know they are being watched they may not want to continue with the activity they are participating in, as they can become uncomfortable and it can distract them from their learning and abilities. However, Frontiers (2021) discusses how children are assessed does not encourage uniqueness as children are sorted into groups within their abilities, Frontiers (2021) believes children can be aware of this and understand what it means, therefore children with a lower ability that recognise this become mindset of their own abilities and therefore believe they may not be good enough to achieve the same things as others. First Five Years (2021) believes when a child has a fixed mindset, they believe they are failures therefore believing failure defines who they are and making them unable to challenge themselves to do better and unwilling to extend on their own abilities.

In addition, a unique child means every child is different therefore practitioner's working with children within the Early Years and the New Curriculum for Wales should see every individual child as unique and not every child can work at the same pace, therefore practitioners should support and encourage children, with the abilities and skills they have and encourage them to think positive about themselves become self-confident and to ensure they have growth mindset and not a fixed mindset for them to move forward ensuring they develop on their skills to get through life (Louick, No date).

How Can Children Grow Their Mindset Within the New Curriculum Wales?

The definition of having a growth mindset as suggested by Cambridge University Press, (2022) is how a child thinks and how they have their own opinions. According to Goodstart Early Learning (2022) a child's growth mindset can perceive how they think about themselves and what their beliefs are on their own abilities. When a child views themselves, it becomes a challenge for the child to change their own views which can continue into adulthood. However, Louick (2022) believes children can be fixed mindset this is where children do not believe they have the abilities similar to other children therefore, children who have a fixed mindset do not want to challenge themselves as they believe they are not good enough or smart enough to learn to the same capacity as others.

Twinkl (No date) discusses the importance of a child's growth mindset within their early years, suggesting the main focus is a child's well-being and their mental well-being, with this in focus a child can be encouraged to be positive thinkers building on their own self-confidence and awareness, to increase their growth mindset. Furthermore, Estyn (2017) suggests that settings can provide learning experiences such as, problem solving and thinking to build on children's own self-confidence and encourage their growth mindset to become more positive about themselves. First Five Years (2021) believes not all children can build on their growth mindset when children become fixed mindset, their beliefs are they are failures and when children believe they are failures it makes them feel incapable learners therefore they lose their confidence in themselves, and this can make them not participate and challenge themselves through activities and become unwilling participants to build on their own abilities.

Therefore, as stated by Positive Psychology (2022) practitioners should support and encourage children to think positive and build on their self-confidence through praise to encourage them to build on their growth mindset and not a fixed mindset to enable them to move forward with their skills and abilities for their future. However, as Louick (2022) states it is important for children to keep trying as this can build on their confidence, become better thinkers and problem solvers as it can encourage them to build on their own growth mindset. MA Education (2015) believes in order for a child to build on their growth mindset a practitioner can encourage children to use the skills they have by doing what they enjoy. Furthermore, as the curriculum states every child is different, they know their own abilities and skills, and this should be encouraged by practitioners to help the child to become more mindset and believe they are able to move forward with their skills and encourage them to no longer be fixed mindset (Welsh Government 2021).

The New Curriculum for Wales (Welsh Government, 2021) discusses how the four purposes play is an important part with children's growth mindset, whether this be through hands on play or their well-being. Children learn many things through play, as Estyn (2017) previously states they learn to solve problems and use their thinking skills, therefore teaching them to be more confident and positive about their selves. Where they can build on their growth mindset and therefore helping them achieve the skills they need for later in their lives. Donaldson (2015) discusses the "I can, I am" approach, from child's perspective of I can do this, as stated a child thinks positive and believes they can achieve better through their own goals, using their skills, they can build on their growth mindset, therefore, encouraging them to keep moving forward building on their self-confidence and abilities. The Montessori Notebook (2022) agrees with Donaldson (2015) however, Montessori believes that hands on learning is important, children who work hands on gain understanding, therefore leading to new experiences which can build a child's abilities, encouraging them to become confident learners building on their own growth mindset. Loveless (2022) states Piaget recognises the hands-on approach to early years learning therefore, agrees with The Montessori Notebook (2022) for children to have a growth mindset they should be confident learners. Therefore, believes being hands on enhances a child's skills and encourages them to become self-confident of which encourages them to build on their abilities.

Louick (2022) believes practitioners can enhance a child's mindset by encouraging them to become confident in the own abilities and skills and encourage them to set out their own goals. Items can be added or take away from activities to enable a child to develop their own skills therefore building on their confidence to the best of their ability. Furthermore, Welsh Assembly Government (2010) believes for a child to build on their growth mindset and fixed mindset they should be supported by practitioners. Early Years Wales (2020) agrees with Welsh Assembly (2010) practitioners should support children's emotional and mental health in order to understand if there may be other reasons why children do not want to learn. Therefore, working in partnership with families to understand and support a child and ensuring they get the appropriate help that the child may need. As stated in the UNCRC (2017) article eighteen working in partnership with families is important for children, as parents, practitioners and the

Welsh Government should provide the support for children and any additional needs they may have.

Additionally, The New Curriculum for Wales and the four purposes supports every individual child and encourages practitioners to support children in all areas of learning as it builds on a child's mindset therefore, developing their own unique abilities to help them move forward towards their future life Welsh Government (2021).

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