



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION, DOCUMENT

Principles for teaching language and literacy in Wales

Fundamental elements that all schools should build into their teaching of language and literacy for learners aged 3 to 16.

First published: 3 March 2026

Last updated: 3 March 2026

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Principles for teaching language and literacy in Wales

These principles set out the fundamental elements that all schools should build into their teaching of language and literacy for learners aged 3 to 16. They are underpinned by a commitment to celebrate, promote and encourage bilingual and multilingual literacy. The principles are evidence-informed, focused on education practice, and designed to:

- inform clear expectations for the teaching of language and literacy for all learners, including learners who require additional support to develop these skills effectively
- support greater consistency and improvement in language and literacy across the system
- guide the development of a national programme of professional learning to ensure all practitioners have access to high-quality professional learning, support, and strategies to teach and assess learners' language and literacy skills
- inform initial teacher education programmes to ensure that all new practitioners understand how to teach and assess language and literacy skills effectively
- support the review of the Literacy Framework

The Literacy Expert Panel has identified five principles for the teaching of language and literacy in Wales:

1. A strong foundation in spoken language is essential for the successful development of learners' language and literacy across all stages.
2. The teaching of literacy should be systematic, structured and explicit.
3. Making connections between listening, speaking, reading and writing is vital for supporting learners to learn, communicate and make meaning.
4. Effective language and literacy teaching enables learners to experience enjoyment, success and motivation.
5. Purposeful assessment is fundamental to support the informed, responsive

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teaching of language and literacy.

Further information on each principle is provided below, with supporting statements describing what they mean for schools and settings.

How schools and settings can apply the principles

1. A strong foundation in spoken language is essential for the successful development of learners' language and literacy across all stages

Schools and settings should:

- provide language and literacy-rich learning environments where both Welsh and English are used meaningfully for communication, creativity and learning
- support learners' communication and speech through the explicit modelling of language, including the use of rhythmic language
- use a range of real-life and imaginative contexts, indoors and outside, to develop and extend learners' knowledge, understanding and skills
- explicitly teach listening and speaking skills
- provide regular, planned, and structured opportunities for learners to develop their vocabulary knowledge and understanding, as an integral part of language learning
- ensure that concepts and skills build incrementally to support the successful development of learners' language and literacy
- work with families, communities and external agencies to understand the broad range of factors, including linguistic and cultural contexts, that influence children's language and literacy development

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2. The teaching of literacy should be systematic, structured and explicit

Schools and settings should:

- use systematic and explicit instruction to provide learners with the range of knowledge, skills and strategies they need to develop the effective use of language
- develop phonological awareness, such as through songs and rhyme
- ensure that all learners know how to decode unknown words effectively through the systematic, structured and explicit teaching of phonics
- recognise and plan for the distinct pedagogical approaches required for each language, including differences in sound-symbol correspondence, morphology and syntax
- develop learners' abilities to read fluently with appropriate intonation and pace to convey the meaning of a text when reading aloud
- develop learners' skills of inferring, deducing, analysing, interpreting, evaluating, summarising, synthesising, comparing and appreciating texts
- support the development of learners' writing skills through the explicit teaching of letter formation, sentence construction, punctuation and spelling within meaningful contexts
- use a systematic and structured approach to teaching spelling
- use evidence-informed approaches to develop language and literacy, integrating strategies that have demonstrated positive impact on learner progress

To support this work, the Panel has written a [Statement of intent on the teaching of early reading skills, including the teaching of phonics](https://www.gov.wales/statement-intent-teaching-early-reading-html) (<https://www.gov.wales/statement-intent-teaching-early-reading-html>).

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3. Making connections between listening, speaking, reading and writing is vital for supporting learners to learn, communicate and make meaning

Schools and settings should:

- encourage collaboration across Welsh, English and multilingual teaching to provide equitable and purposeful opportunities and ensure consistent expectations and progression pathways
- help learners connect what they hear and read to their own experiences and systematically build background knowledge to deepen understanding
- plan systematic opportunities to develop learners' speaking and command of language for different audiences and purposes, engaging them in dialogue to encourage them to think about how they communicate and how they can improve
- use modelling and demonstrations to develop learners' ability to understand and use language effectively
- teach learners to plan, draft, revise and refine their spoken and written ideas, and to take responsibility for checking, correcting and redrafting their writing so that they convey ideas and information coherently and effectively
- enable learners to understand different forms and genres
- design purposeful opportunities for learners to develop and apply their language and literacy skills across and within the Areas of Learning and Experience

4. Effective language and literacy teaching enables learners to experience enjoyment, success and motivation

Schools and settings should:

- create a culture of high expectations and purposeful challenge to motivate learners and build confidence in developing language and literacy skills
- encourage motivation through the design and selection of high-quality

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- resources, experiences and activities to engage learners' interest
- balance adult-directed activities with independent learning, developing autonomy by allowing learners to choose topics and texts for individual or group study
 - develop disciplinary language and literacy skills to strengthen learner motivation and engagement across their subjects
 - support learners to regularly reflect on the strategies they use and the progress they are making
 - develop a culture of reading that nurtures reading for pleasure, includes regular opportunities to listen to adults reading aloud, and promotes positive reading habits
 - support learners to develop a sense of belonging and cultural identity through their use of language

5. Purposeful assessment is fundamental to support the informed, responsive teaching of language and literacy

Schools and settings should:

- use ongoing assessment to identify learners' strengths and needs, adapt provision and provide targeted support
- regularly provide learners with precise feedback and encouragement, appropriate to their stage of development, to guide and motivate further improvement in language and literacy skills
- ensure assessment approaches are developmentally appropriate, inclusive, and aligned with the principles of the Curriculum for Wales
- use teaching and intervention strategies that respond to learners' language profiles, including those with ALN, EAL, and speech, language and communication needs
- use flexible models of support, including small-group and one-to-one provision, to meet diverse learner needs effectively
- support enquiry-based practice, where practitioners evaluate the impact of their teaching strategies on learner outcomes and adapt based on evidence

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