

The Foundation Phase is the statutory curriculum for all three- to seven-year-olds in Wales, which was introduced in September 2010. It encourages children to be creative and imaginative, and makes learning more enjoyable and more effective (gov.wales (2015)). The Foundation Phase was introduced as a replacement for Early Years education in schools in Wales (gov.wales (2019)). The Early Years Foundation Phase is a framework which can be built on through the seven areas of learning (education.gov.uk) (2021). However both Bruce (1947) and Bruner (1915) agree that the reason for the early years foundation stage not working is that the national curriculum was not play based and children learn and develop better through play rather than formal learning (eyfs pros and cons 2021). On reflection and feedback about the old from the eyfs not being a success, that is how and why the government decided to change it to the foundation phase because it allows children to learn through play and it keeps parents up to date about their child's progress on a regular basis (eyfa 2021).

The Foundation Phase, which is the name for early childhood education in Wales, reflects a worldwide trend within education systems of clustering subject matter into learning areas that extend beyond subjects (Macdonald 2003). At the age of three to seven years the Foundation Phase framework identifies seven areas of learning, which form part of a holistic, integrated and cross-curricular approach with an emphasis on the development of skills with the child 'at the centre of any planned curriculum' (Aasen and Waters 2006; DCELLS 2008a, 6; Maynard 2007). Aasen and Waters (2006, 126) suggest this change in approach in the Foundation Phase underpinned by childhood well-being requires teachers to be 'aware of and understand the shift in learning theories' to a socio-cultural view of learning in order for there to be successful implementation of the Foundation Phase.

According to gov.wales (2015) the foundation Phase is built on the principles of learning through play and is an essential part of the curriculum. We know from evidence that learning through play is an important tool. It can help children to develop and extend their language and communication skills. Play allows them to be creative, to investigate and explore different materials, and gives them opportunities to experiment and predict outcomes. It can also help them to develop their confidence, self-motivation and control their own thoughts and actions. Play also allows children to test their abilities, use initiative, take risks and make mistakes without fear of failure. Through play, children learn the skills of negotiation, sharing and how to form relationships with their peers.

The foundation phase is based on the principle that a developmentally appropriate curriculum should offer good foundations for a children's learning (estyn.gov.wales (2020)).

Key stage 1 national curriculum was designed to provide a developmental, experiential, play-based approach to teaching and learning. Some countries such as New Zealand (Te Whariki), Scandinavia and Reggio Emilia adopted the early years programme and from this research shows the extensive formal teaching before the age of six or seven years can result in lower standards of attainment in the longer

term. The play-based approach is very much emphasised on the wellbeing of the child, but there also needs to be a balance of input from the child and the practitioner. Welsh Government (2013/14)

There are three stages of the foundation Phase. These are the Pilot stage of 22 schools and 22 funded non-maintained settings in 2004/05; the Early Start stage of a further 22 schools and 22 funded non-maintained settings in 2006/07; and all remaining schools and funded non-maintained settings during the Final Roll-out stage in 2009/10. Welsh government 2013/14.

The reason the foundation phase was introduced in Wales is because it was designed to meet the developmental needs of all children and that is according to estyn.gov.wales (2020).

Wales decided to change the national curriculum from early years education to the foundation phase because the main aims for the foundation phase are to encourage children to use their initiative and imagination, So learning will be more effective and more fun and that is according to [gov.Wales](http://gov.wales) (2020)

Over the last ten years, Wales has gradually been involved and participated in the improvement plan for the introduction of the Foundation Phase. The different strategies and processes which were introduced, were designed to support the implementation of the Foundation Phase which are evidence based. From the research and practice within the Foundation Phase it has shown to have a positive impact on teachers' and practitioners, 'which will lead to better quality of provision for children and their families (Sylva et al, 2004; Siraj-Blatchford et al, 2006). Research and evidence show the importance of improving lives of children and families in poverty and supporting them with their learning and is particularly important for Wales (Siraj-Blatchford and Siraj-Blatchford, 2010; DfES, 2013a).

However, it requires time and foundational changes in culture in maintained and non-maintained settings and schools. For the foundation phase to be effective in Wales. (Mitchell and Cubey, 2003). UNESCO (2004) states the quality of the improvements which need to be considered across the world, they conclude by saying it requires a strong lead from the government and the importance of a long-term vision plan. They also state the significance of sufficiently motivated and well supported staff. Further, they noted that the impact of an education policy may not be apparent until several years after its implementation. 1.3. Welsh context: The findings of this independent Stocktake are in line with UNESCO's (2004)

In March 2024 the Welsh government asked Professor Donaldson to review the curriculum and assessment arrangements in schools. Donaldson states the aims are to "shape a successful and exciting future" for the children and young people in Wales. Donaldson visited around 60 educational settings and talked to staff, children, parents and carers to get their views and opinions on the new curriculum and they also looked at the estyn reports, Welsh government policies and other reports. The feedback from the discussions were positive, however teachers told Donaldson what was working well and was not working well and that they would like more power to make decisions about how and what to teach in the curriculum. There was also

feedback from teachers regarding assessment's and how it wasn't working well to support the children's learning. There was also greater focus on career advice, basic skills, life skill, confidence and health and wellbeing. Donaldson (2014)

The report suggests that there should be four purposes of the curriculum in Wales and these are: ambitious capable learners ready to learn throughout their lives, enterprising creative contributors ready to play a full part in life and work, healthy confident individuals ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society and ethical informed citizens ready to be citizens of Wales and the world. Donaldson (2014).

The report suggests there should be 'six Areas of Learning and Experience'. All six areas are equally important and will contribute in a different way to the four purposes. Learning should be a continuous progression for young children to help them grow and mature. Therefore, the way the curriculum is separated into key stages is no longer appropriate. The progression steps will be identified within the areas of learning and experience and this is designed to help children develop knowledge and skills. Donaldson (2014)

Research shows one reason why the curriculum was changed in Wales was due to the assessment arrangements. There were a number of issues with the current curriculum. An organisation for economic cooperation report was published in 2014 and it highlighted that there was a high percentage of young people in Welsh schools with low performance. Due to the results of the current assessments, these are now classed as unsatisfactory (Welsh government (2014)). There has now been an independent review of the curriculum and the assessment and an educational improvement plan has been put in place for 3–19-year-olds in Wales. It has been highlighted that continuity and the points of transfer are key elements in primary education Welsh government (2014)

International surveys such as OECD PISA states the performance between countries about loss of global competitiveness, if their education systems are seen to be weak. Research by the PISA states Wales is performance is still disappointing and that there is significant room for improvement. It is essential that that the curriculum is designed in the best interests of the children and that they are given the opportunities to achieve their goals.

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Section 2

Research by porter (2021) states that babies and young infants develop and mature at different rates. Therefore, parents and practitioners should not assume that all children develop at the same stage and rate especially whilst in early years settings. Children should be taught on their individuals needs and ability, not a one size fits all. By the children having their individual needs met, this helps to ensure positive learning

and experiences and will help when it comes to assessing the child that they will be included in the overall Framework.

Thankfully we live in a culture that celebrates diversity and uniqueness. This will provide young children with the confidence and self-respect necessary to overcome future obstacles and to respect their peers. Which will have positive effect and impact on a child's development porter (2021).

Children are unique and individual and they learn and develop at different rates. It is important that all children have the opportunity to do so and are allowed to. Children should be given opportunities of experiencing different situations and are allowed time to reflect on their work. In all areas of learning children should be encouraged, valued and respected for their originality Foundation phase (2015).

Assessment is carried out by practitioners to see what children know, understand and what they can do. Assessment is very important for tracking progress, planning next steps, reporting and involving parents and children in learning. The following steps are what teachers and practitioners use to assess children's learning and monitor their progress. These are: recognising children's performance and what they have accomplished through their schooling, school reports to parents and carers and parents' evenings to discuss children's progress and what they can do to help their child's learning and formal recognition of their achievements through profiles and qualifications. That is according to Early Years Assessment (2019).

Data which has been collected from the assessments is used to plan lessons and activities for the individual child. It is designed to meet the child's individual needs, which will help to identify their strengths and the areas that need improvement, and it needs to be used at the classroom level to find out how appropriate and effective the programme is. Practitioners and parents are the main audiences for assessment information gathered to advise direction. Practitioners need adequate time to review assessment information on how to improve the children's learning and reflect on its implications for practice. It is recognised that planning and monitoring plays a vital part in what children are learning, and this needs to be the main focus for staff and practitioners working in the Early Years Settings. Criterion-referenced or curriculum-based measures are used to plan instructional activities and monitor what children are learning. Assessment data can be collected through observation, collection of children's work, and talking to them (Dodge,

Heroman, Charles, and Maiorca, 2004). There are recommendations by The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) regarding the use in education planning and progress monitoring in relation to assessments. Teachers and staff are expected to attend the relevant training courses they need to ensure sure that they are up to date.

Campbell, 2003; Jackson, Boostrom, & Hansen, 1993; Shulman, 1987/2004) state that Fairness is common practice in the classroom. It involves taking turns, shared beliefs, reflection, raising of hands and fairness considered quality when assessing the individual child and their learning needs and recognising their achievements.

According to Maryville.edu culture influences development from the moment children are born and has an impact on how they grow. For example: culture can affect how children build values, language, belief systems, and an understanding of themselves as individuals and as members of society.

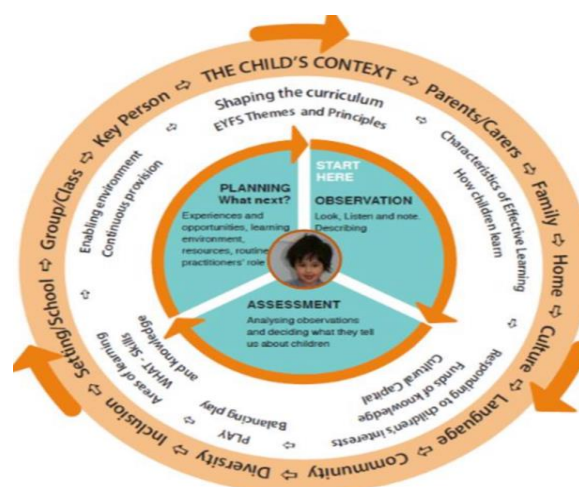
Cultural backgrounds give children a sense of who they are. The unique culture influences the child's responses from birth, including customs and beliefs around food, artistic expression, language, and religion, it may also affect the way they develop emotionally, socially physically, and linguistically. When a child's self-identity is at odds with the social environment due to cultural differences, it can have an impact on their learning. Educators of different cultural backgrounds learn by understanding and showing acceptance of diverse cultures and of the unique child. Practitioners need to understand the cultural influences on a child, and this can help professionals to be successful in their roles. By the practitioners having an insight into their background they can also help and support the families Maryville.edu. An awareness of the beliefs, values and attitudes can reduce the possibility of misunderstandings. However, it is important to note that not all families, even from the same backgrounds and culture will act the same.

According to Norfolk.gov, here are some examples of implications for cultural differences: Some children have access to different languages but not English which could be a barrier for their learning, there may be a dress code to adhere to, within Jewish and Muslim countries certain foods are forbidden such as pork, some children use their hands to eat instead of a knife and fork, sometimes children could be overwhelmed with the freedom and range of activities and children are more likely to become more tired by being surrounded with unfamiliar language.

Assessment takes place as part of ongoing learning and teaching, periodically and at key transitions. Children are individually assessed by observation in the classroom, whether that is the indoors or outdoors. Children are observed on day-to-day basis through learning. The evidence that is gathered by the practitioners is recorded and used for progress and achievements. The children will be assessed on their skills such as reading, writing, practical investigation, listening and answering questions art and discussion. Other evidence could also include a photograph, video or audio clip as part of a particular learning experience and the children will be involved in the planning and next steps in their learning and that is according to education.gov (2023).

Observation is a very important part in the Early Years Foundation Stage. It is the main basis for recording information about what stage the child is at and where they need to improve. Observation is used every day in the Early Years Foundation setting and practitioners are the ones that observe the children, and this helps them to fully understand the child's ability and their progress. Observation is also used for getting to know the child, building relationships, who their influences are which surround them and shape their lives and to build relationships with them. By using observation, it helps the practitioner to reflect, plan and provide relevant opportunities and support to the child.

The assessment and planning cycle below explains observations and assessment of the unique child and that is based on Bronfenbrenner's (1977) Ecological Systems theory.



The curriculum sets the structure for observations, assessment and planning, to give the child the best opportunity to progress. Practitioners need to ensure that all children are supported within the curriculum so they are able to have the opportunity to succeed. The curriculum is constructed by the influence of the child, the parents, families, culture and diversity. Each child will experience the curriculum in a unique way, which will be recognised through the adult's observation, assessment and planning. However, it is a curriculum that is shaped by the EYFS Themes and Principles effective for the child's learning and are the learning environments allowing good opportunities for their development. The quality of the curriculum will be set by the way in which all these aspects are linked together in meaningful and relevant ways to support children's development, learning and progress learning and development (2021).

The main reason for tracking a child's progress is to check their overall development in the EYFS.

Practitioners in the Early Years Settings should be able to demonstrate how children make progress in their learning and development in order that they reach their full potential. It needs to be tracked and reviewed on a regular basis. The importance of tracking regularly is that it allows practitioners to notice if a child is falling behind in any areas of their development and if any support needs to be put in place. It can also be shared with the parents so they understand and help with their child's learning. If there was a delay in support this could result in development disabilities further down the line.

If regular tracking is carried out in the EYFS then the developmental disability should be less. Early intervention is the key and often if there is an issue on the whole most children will catch up with their peers.

1 in 6 children have a developmental disability, however, only half are identified before starting school. Research shows children with developmental issues are more likely to have poor health and low performance in school. Nursery resources (2019).

The practitioners have worked alongside the Welsh government to construct the new curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings for practitioners. It looks at how practitioners can embrace it, for children to have a sense of belonging and pride. It celebrates the diverse culture of modern Wales. Hwb.gov (2022).

From the birth to five years the new curriculum supports the holistic development of children and their needs. It states the uniqueness of the child and the rapid development between those ages and stages and

also states that children are at the forefront of pedagogical practice.Hwb.gov (2022).

The Reggio Emilia (2022) approach to assessment focuses on a child's natural development to ensure that all children have plenty of opportunities and are helped and encouraged to make sense and understand the world around them. Also, it is important to get to know and learn about the individual child, their needs and interests. The heart of Reggio inspired assessment to make learning visual and for practitioners to focus on telling stories as well as displaying children's work.

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Blog

How does outdoor play benefit children based on the new curriculum?

Being outdoors increases all aspects of children's development such as social, physical, creative, cultural and personal. Children who already have these skills are better at learning and retaining information. It is a valuable resource and should be used to its full potential. There are lots of benefits to being in the outdoor environment and is a very important to make good use of the outdoors. It is very beneficial for children's health, wellbeing and education. The children are able to experience running, jumping and skipping and using toys and equipment that cannot be used inside. By children being given the opportunity access the outdoors it helps them to learn and experience nature, different weathers, how the different seasons effect the animals and plants and problem solving for example: how to move logs from one to another and that is according to gov.Wales (2022)

The Foundation Phase Outdoor Learning handbook (2009) highlights the many benefits outdoor learning can have on children's development. These benefits include- physical activity which is not beneficial for just the body, but the mind. As well as the opportunities to experience nature first-hand, problem solving with peers and social development. The Four Purposes of the Foundation Phase (2008) mention the aim to create healthy, confident individuals ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society. The outdoors has many ways of ensuring children succeed in becoming healthy and confident individuals.

The Foundation Phase curriculum reflects these approaches having personal and social development, well-being and cultural diversity at its core (Maynard 2007). Government documentation advocates an approach where 'children learn through first-hand experiential activities with the serious business of "play" providing the vehicle' (DCELLS 2008a, 4), in effect a play-based curriculum. Local authority support highlights this as emphasised in a phase one interview with the Foundation Phase Advisor who stated, 'all learning must have a context that the children understand. Children must be able to access the curriculum at their level so all the resources in the classroom must reflect the range and ability of the children in the classroom' (LA, 1). Teachers also explained how in this approach 'children learn through experience' (T7, 47) needing 'to feel touch explore' (T8, 26). Recognition of children's own responsibility in the learning was emphasised, as pupils were able to 'decide for themselves what they will need in terms of resources' (T1, 207), and the pupil centred nature of the approach allowed teachers the 'freedom to go with the children's interest' (T5, 48). The data from the documentary analysis, interviews with the advisory service and teachers from both schools identified that the Foundation Phase has many of the features of the open curricula that were influential in its conception. As such this research identifies one of the key features of the Foundation Phase as playbased active learning. The influences from Scandinavia see increased use of the outdoors as an integral part of children's learning. Moser and Martinsen (2010, 459) argue that a 'kindergarten's outdoor space is essential when it comes to children's social development'. Studies in Norway reveal how distinct differences in outdoor environments may influence physical activity and play as well as concentration and physical health (Björklid 2005; Fjørtoft 2001; Grahn et al. 1997). Concluding on such research, the Foundation Phase 'places great importance on practitioners using the outdoors as another classroom where children can work on a daily basis (M1). Outdoor learning is integral to the curriculum in each of the seven areas of learning with activities organised in both the indoor and outdoor learning environments (Waller 2007). This emphasis on the outdoors has been evident in the Foundation Phase documentation from its conception, with a requirement to view the outdoors as a holistic part of the day-to-day environment where all aspects of the curriculum can be experienced (ACCAC 2001). Consequently the Foundation Phase framework requires the outdoor environment to be viewed as a resource for children's learning and whilst both indoors and outdoors children should be given 518 N. WAINWRIGHT ET AL. opportunities to 'take risks' and 'become confident explorers' (DCELLS 2008a, 16). According to the former Minister for Education, this focus on the learning environment aims to promote discovery and independence, with a 'balance between the cognitive

development of the child and its emotional/social development ... exploiting the creative potential of play and child-cantered activities' (M1). Guidance from the local authority advocates children being outside and more actively involved in their learning with 'a greater emphasis on practical activities rather than worksheets, outdoor learning, involving a range of adults not just teachers (creates) a situation (where we) aim for the children to speak more than the teacher' (LA, 1). What is clear from this analysis is that the use of the outdoors is a second key feature of the Foundation Phase curriculum.

Early Childhood Education and Care (2012) found that curriculum and learning standards can have a positive impact on children's learning and development however this can only happen if the quality of care is of a high standard as research has shown that if quality is low, it can have long-lasting detrimental effects on child development, instead of bringing positive effects. According to Kelly (2016) High-quality settings have the biggest impact and are the settings which enable children to reach their full potential and support them in reaching good levels of development.

To conclude playing outdoors allows children to develop self-confidence, self-esteem and independence. They also become aware of boundaries, limits, challenges and trying new activities, that is according to play matters.gov.

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