

Physical Development




chwarae • dysgu • tyfu
play • learn • grow
cyfnod sylfaen 3–7 foundation phase



Physical Development

Audience Headteachers, teachers, practitioners, governing bodies of maintained schools and practitioners and management committees in the non-maintained sector in Wales; local education authorities; teacher unions and school representative bodies; church diocesan authorities; national bodies in Wales with an interest in education.

Overview This guidance supports the Physical Development Area of Learning in the *Foundation Phase Framework for Children's Learning for 3 to 7-year-olds in Wales*. The document provides guidance on the skills and knowledge that children acquire, along with case studies on its implementation in settings and schools. The guidance and Area of Learning should not be viewed or delivered in isolation; it should be planned for across the curriculum

Further information Enquiries about this document should be directed to:
Curriculum and Assessment Division
Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills
Welsh Assembly Government
Floor 10, Southgate House
Wood Street
Cardiff
CF10 1EW
Tel: 0800 083 6003
Fax: 029 2037 5496
e-mail: C&A3-14.C&A3-14@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Additional copies Can be obtained from:
Tel: 029 2037 5427
Fax: 029 2037 5494
Or by visiting the Welsh Assembly Government's website
www.wales.gov.uk

Contents

Background	2
Introduction	4
The role of the practitioner	7
Parents/carers	9
Physical play	10
Case study: Moving like minibeasts	
Case study: Spheres in a bucket	
The development of physical skills	13
Gross motor skills	
Case study: Responding to an autumn poem	
Fine motor skills	
Health and safety including healthy eating and well-being	19
Safety issues	
Healthy living	
Healthy eating	
Case study: Making leek and potato soup	
Planning	21
Progress in learning	23
Physical Development across the curriculum	25
Useful information and contacts	28
Foundation Phase glossary	30
Acknowledgements	36

Background

The proposals in the Welsh Assembly Government's document *The Learning Country: Foundation Phase 3–7 years* included developing a curriculum that linked and strengthened the principles and practice in ACCAC's document *Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning before Compulsory School Age* (2000) with the programmes of study and focus statements in the Key Stage 1 national curriculum, to create a rich curriculum under seven Areas of Learning for children in the Foundation Phase. The Foundation Phase curriculum advocates that positive links between the home and the providers of care and education are fostered and promoted.

The Welsh Assembly Government's approach to education and lifelong learning is set in the broader context of our vision for children and young people overall.

We have seven core aims for children and young people developed from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. These will underpin all of the activities of the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS).

We aim to ensure that all children and young people:

- have a flying start in life and the best possible basis for their future growth and development
- have access to a comprehensive range of education, training and learning opportunities, including acquisition of essential personal and social skills
- enjoy the best possible physical and mental, social and emotional health, including freedom from abuse, victimisation and exploitation
- have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities
- are listened to, treated with respect, and are able to have their race and cultural identity recognised
- have a safe home and a community that supports physical and emotional wellbeing
- are not disadvantaged by any type of poverty.

This guidance supports the Physical Development Area of Learning in the *Foundation Phase Framework for Children's Learning for 3 to 7-year-olds in Wales*. The document provides guidance on the skills and knowledge that children acquire, along with case studies on its implementation in settings and schools. The guidance and Area of Learning should not be viewed or delivered in isolation; it should be planned for across the curriculum.



Introduction

This Area of Learning relates to the development of children's body control and coordination of large movements, fine manipulative skills, spatial awareness and balance. It also focuses on children's knowledge and understanding of a healthy lifestyle upon which physical well-being depends.



Physical development focuses on increasing the skill and performance of the body. Physical and cognitive development are closely linked, especially during the early years. Problems with a child's physical development can be an indication that the child may have some learning difficulties. Physical development can be divided into gross motor skills and fine manipulative skills. Throughout the Foundation Phase, children acquire and develop their skills in many ways.

Physical development involves the increasing skill and functioning of the body whereas growth relates to a child's increasing height, weight and general size. Both growth and development depend on suitable nourishment, including a balance of the right foods and sufficient water to drink. Increasing control and coordination is enabled by the maturing brain and nervous system, growing bones and muscles, exercise and physical activity.

The sequence of physical development involves firstly gross motor skills that require control of large muscles in the body, arms and legs. This is followed by development of fine manipulative skills, which depend on small muscle coordination. As children progress and become more confident, improvement in coordination of gross and fine movements will continue to develop and new skills will be learned. Children cannot learn a new skill until the muscles are sufficiently developed, and the activities and resources provided should be suitable for their developmental needs.

The ages at which children accomplish particular physical skills can vary considerably. Most children will progress through the same stages of development at their own rate. The timing of this development can depend on different influencing factors such as eating habits, emotional development and confidence in tackling new activities.

During play children engage in learning experiences that require them to use a range of physical skills whether playing indoors or outdoors.

Physical skills, body and spatial awareness contribute to a child's personal and social development by enhancing confidence and self-esteem. Young children are active learners who enjoy learning through play and physical activities. During play children engage in learning experiences that require them to use a range of physical skills whether playing indoors or outdoors. Physical activities can be incorporated into every Area of Learning, from simple action rhymes and games in Mathematical Development to large movements in response to creative music. The development of children's physical skills should be developed holistically across all Areas of Learning.





Appropriate space is essential for physical movement both indoors and outdoors in order that children can use their bodies actively to gain spatial awareness and experiment with movement without restrictions. Children need access to large and small equipment that they can get out and put away themselves, for use independently or with a practitioner. All forms of physical activity also require time for children to develop and practise skills.

Children need opportunities to:

- work alone or collaboratively
- work at their own pace to practise and consolidate their skills
- extend their skills and move on in their development
- make connections between skills acquired indoors and outdoors.



The role of the practitioner

In addition to providing for active, experiential learning through careful planning, organising, facilitating, challenging, observing, interacting, intervening and evaluating, the role of the practitioner includes provision of the following in order to give children the best opportunities for physical development:

- physical activities that offer developmentally appropriate learning opportunities and elements of risk taking
- frequent opportunities for physical activities through all Areas of Learning
- a learning programme that includes a range of physical and restful activities each day
- opportunities for gross motor activities in order to develop coordination skills and strengthen muscles
- opportunities to develop gross and fine motor skills indoors and outdoors, through activities that challenge and motivate children
- creative use of the indoor and outdoor learning environments to support physical development in all Areas of Learning
- sensory areas to develop inner rest and calm through relaxation, and creative visualisation
- relevant vocabulary related to movement, and clear use of positional language when giving instructions in everyday activities. Relevant Welsh vocabulary should be introduced as well as English, for English-medium settings/schools
- a range of equipment and resources that promote gross and fine motor skills in all Areas of Learning and that support children's individual interests and development
- help and support for the child to move on and develop new skills
- resources that are developmentally appropriate and encourage progression
- sufficient time to develop and practise physical skills
- opportunities for children to give their views on their performance and how it might be improved

- books and posters illustrating parts of the body, explaining how to perform specific movements, and giving information on health issues
- opportunities and accessible resources to provide for spontaneous physical play
- multi-sensory experiences that can provide a stimulus for activity or stillness.



Parents/carers

Practitioners in the setting/school should share their observations of children's physical skills with parents/carers and encourage them to:

- support children's physical development by providing suitable opportunities for physical play, skills development and practise at home
- be aware of the importance of physical skills to children's self-esteem, health and well-being, and for developing positive, healthy attitudes
- share physical activities with their children
- celebrate their successes
- provide opportunities for children to join out-of-school clubs and holiday schemes that extend their interest in physical activities and sports
- participate in home tasks that promote physical skills
- be aware of the importance of healthy eating.



Physical play

Through physical play activities children should learn to move safely and confidently.

Children are motivated by play opportunities and games that involve them in physical activity. Through physical play activities children should:

- progress steadily as they develop
- learn to move safely and confidently
- develop increasing control over their bodies
- develop awareness of the space around them
- understand and use appropriate vocabulary to name relevant body parts (in both English and Welsh, for English-medium settings/schools)
- describe movements such as walking, running, jumping, stopping, turning, climbing, bending, stretching (in both English and Welsh, for English-medium settings/schools)
- recognise positions in relation to others, for example behind, in front, over, under, above, below
- gradually become more skilful at actions that involve different parts of the body, for example hand–eye coordination to catch a ball.

This case study describes how young children were able to demonstrate their understanding of the concepts of behind, in front, over, under, above and below.

Moving like minibeasts



The nursery and reception children were involved in work that required them to move from different pieces of apparatus and become familiar with different ways of moving through, over, under and around the equipment. The work was based on the theme of minibeasts and the children

role-played different minibeasts moving in and out, over and under, through and around different obstacles.

The children were able to describe where they were positioned in relation to a piece of equipment and how they had arrived there.

As they become more skilful children should progress to:

- developing games skills such as running, chasing and dodging
- developing skills such as throwing, striking, kicking, rolling, bouncing and catching, using appropriate equipment
- developing and playing simple cooperative and competitive games with a partner or small group of children
- developing understanding of rules and fair play, taking responsibility for their own actions and being alert to the safety of themselves and others.

In this case study a group of four boys who are in nursery develop their own game including a set of rules, which are explained to others as they join in the game.

Spheres in a bucket

The children have been given many opportunities to handle a variety of equipment to develop skills of throwing, catching, striking and rolling and have used balls, beanbags, quoits, etc., to aim at a target in order to develop coordination.

John, Gareth, Isaac and Omar were playing in the den with a construction kit that included spheres. The boys tipped the bucket of construction materials onto the carpet. John picked up a sphere and threw it back into the bucket. The sphere landed in the bucket and John cheered. At this point Gareth, Isaac and Omar followed suit and began to pick up the spheres and aim them towards the bucket.

The game continued for a minute until there was some disagreement about how close they were allowed to stand to the bucket (some of them were standing closer to the bucket than others). Under the leadership of Isaac, the group agreed to get a cushion each to sit on and they placed these cushions in a line about two metres from the bucket.

They then continued the game, collecting spheres and aiming them towards the bucket until Gareth was hit by a sphere. Isaac, the leader of the group, said: "Everybody throw the spheres together and stop when I say." This was agreed to by the group;

The game continued with the children's aim becoming increasingly more accurate.

when Isaac said "Go", they all threw their spheres, and when Isaac said "Stop", they all collected the spheres from the bucket and floor and sat on their cushions ready to begin again.

The game continued with the children's aim becoming increasingly more accurate. When John and Omar left the game other children joined in and the rules were explained by Isaac: "You've got to sit on a cushion and throw your spheres when we do. When I say 'Stop' you've got to get the spheres off the floor."

One new child to the group created another disagreement by collecting more than his fair share of spheres and leaving very few for the other three children. They discussed sharing the spheres equally between them but were unable to agree on a strategy to physically do this, at which point I intervened.

We talked about how to share equally and the group helped me to distribute the spheres, each taking one sphere in turn, then a second, then a third, then a fourth until each child had four spheres and there were two spheres remaining. I asked the children "Are there enough spheres left for you to have another one?" to which they all replied "No". "What should we do with these two spheres then?" I asked. Gareth said we should put them away because "it's not fair if we have more spheres and they don't". This then became the third rule of the game and each child collected four spheres each time ready to throw in the next round. The game continued with no further disagreements and with obvious enthusiasm.

In addition to developing coordination and throwing skills (and gaining an awareness of distance and accuracy), the children were also working collaboratively, playing cooperatively, showing an awareness of safety, and developing an understanding of rules and fair play.

The development of physical skills

Gross motor skills

Children's control and coordination of their gross motor skills develops through movement that involves the use of muscles in the body, legs and arms. As they develop most children will acquire the following skills:

- walking
- running
- stopping
- jumping
- climbing
- pushing and pulling wheeled toys
- pedalling a bike
- rolling a ball
- throwing/catching a beanbag or ball
- balancing.



As they become more skilful children should have opportunities to participate in gymnastics and dance activities.

As they progress children will continue to refine their movements and apply their skills in new situations, for example:

- hopping and skipping, following games marked on the ground or the wall
- gaining awareness of space, height and distance as they move around, using climbing equipment or riding wheeled toys
- building large constructions such as a den
- rolling, striking, skittles, throwing/catching balls (of different sizes), quoits, hoops and other developmentally appropriate resources.

As they become more skilful children should have opportunities to participate in gymnastics and dance activities in order to:

- develop skill at travelling, including jumping, stepping and landing, turning, changing direction
- learn to balance on different parts of the body, rolling, transferring weight from feet to hands
- use the floor and apparatus for climbing and swinging
- learn to lift, carry, place and use apparatus safely
- respond with gesture and stillness as appropriate
- improve their control, use different shapes, levels and directions of travel
- create their own patterns of movements that combine some of the above actions
- collaborate in pairs and small groups to produce a sequence of movements following instructions and applying new skills
- use mime and gesture to respond creatively to a stimulus
- use their body movements expressively to reflect rhythms, moods or feelings conveyed by music
- perform movements, including some from traditional Welsh dances
- create sequences of movements in response to music, and to perform their own sequences and traditional dances from various cultures.



This case study focused on a movement session where during the autumn term children were invited to make their own movements in response to a poem about leaves.

Responding to an autumn poem



Firstly they went outdoors to collect a range of leaves from the school grounds.

Then, as an introduction to our movement session in the hall, the leaves were dropped from a height to demonstrate a variety of movements. We talked about the colour of the leaves and the children were invited to choose from a selection of coloured ribbons as props for this movement lesson. They responded in their own ways to the vocabulary in the poem (for example swirling, twirling, fluttering down) using the ribbons to accentuate their movement.



Later on that day during an outdoor play session, the children chose to use streamers to copy the leaves that they observed falling from the trees in the playground.

Fine motor skills



Skill at manipulating a range of malleable materials and small items of equipment depends on the development of small muscles. Fine motor control is needed, for example, to build a tower of blocks, complete a jigsaw puzzle, or tie shoe laces.

Physical skills are also linked with perceptual development, visual skills, cognitive skills and understanding of specific vocabulary related to spatial relationships. These are enhanced through a visually stimulating environment and opportunities to explore and talk about a wide range of resources and materials.

As children's small muscles (including eye muscles) mature, hand-eye coordination will develop. Hand-eye coordination is a prerequisite for being able to hold a pencil properly to make marks on paper and later produce precise writing patterns, letters and numbers.



Children will develop fine manipulative skills and hand-eye coordination by handling a wide range of resources, including:

- dough, clay
 - painting – first with large brushes and then with finer ones
 - jigsaw puzzles, peg patterns, a range of equipment for threading and weaving
 - small world figures, animals and vehicles
 - construction equipment of different sizes for large constructions and tabletop activities
- sand- and water-play equipment
 - clothes for role and imaginative play
 - scissors, cooking equipment, sewing equipment
 - a range of mark-making equipment for use in and on different types of medium
 - computers and other programmable devices.

As children progress most should be able to:

- handle increasingly small equipment skilfully, for example construction toys
- use crayons, pencils, pens and paintbrushes of varying sizes to support their individual development when mark-making, writing and making pictures
- use hammers, saws and nails to create their own models
- make intricate models from modelling dough/clay
- pour and measure liquids
- cut accurately with a knife or scissors
- handle items such as sequins, paper fasteners and a large needle and thread when decorating or joining items they design and make
- handle the computer mouse with increasing control
- use ICT to support their work and development across all Areas of Learning.



Health and safety including healthy eating and well-being

Physical well-being is essential to personal and social development. Children need to learn how to keep themselves physically safe and healthy.

Safety issues

Children need to become aware of potentially dangerous situations and how to avoid them. They also need to know how to move equipment safely without hurting themselves, or causing hazards for others.

Healthy living

Children should learn to:

- respect their bodies
- take reasonable risks
- understand the importance of fresh air, exercise, rest and sleep
- take responsibility for keeping their bodies healthy
- identify the dangers of medicines and drugs, smoking, alcohol and other dangerous substances.

As their understanding increases children will be able to:

- observe the effects of exercise on the body (for example raised temperature, increased heart rate, deeper breathing)
- recognise that regular exercise makes them feel good and helps the body to work well
- develop positive attitudes towards healthy living.

Healthy eating

Children should be introduced to the importance of the right foods to keep their bodies healthy:

- to understand why we need food and water – how our bodies work
- to develop awareness of what constitutes a balanced combination of foods – all food groups are needed in appropriate quantities (the terms 'diet' and 'good' or 'bad' foods should be avoided)
- to be able to opt for healthy food choices, for example for breakfast, lunch boxes and snacks.

Making leek and potato soup

One of our teaching assistants was making leek and potato soup during Welsh week with a group of reception children. All the children were very excited and involved, but one little boy, who usually has a short concentration span, was particularly engrossed in the activity.

Child: Miss, I'm like a chef doing this

TA: Yes, a chef has to chop up vegetables just like you when making soup.

Child: I like this. I need a chef hat.

The child then went and found himself a chef's hat and collected bowls, a plastic knife, and a saucepan and spoon, and returned. He then spent a considerable amount of time cutting up the leftovers and peeling to make his own pretend soup. He was joined by several other children. They then ate up all the real soup and asked when they could do it again.

Planning

As some children will be physically skillful before others it is important to observe children's skills, consider individual needs and take into account the range of physical development when planning activities. Relevant learning experiences will enable children to make steady progress appropriate to their stage of development.

Progression in physical skills and physical play can be supported by opportunities for:

- play
- experimentation
- practise
- application
- refinement
- evaluation.



The example below includes extracts from one practitioner's five-weekly planning and illustrates the close links between Physical Development and Creative Development.

Monsters and minibeasts		
	Physical Development	Creative Development
Week 1	<p>Improve coordination and increase control over their bodies.</p> <p>For example, using benches for balancing.</p>	<p>Begin to enjoy role play and imaginative drama.</p> <p>For example, pretending to be animals from a story they have heard.</p>
Week 2	<p>Handle small tools and objects with increasing control.</p> <p>For example, using coloured modelling dough to make caterpillars.</p>	<p>Move imaginatively in response to a story.</p> <p>For example, pretending to be a chrysalis turning into a butterfly.</p>
Week 3	<p>Become aware of space when moving.</p> <p>For example, using their own space when playing 'sticky kids'.</p>	<p>Make choices about colour and medium.</p> <p>For example, making 'monster' paintings using paint/milkshake/gravy browning.</p>
Week 4	<p>Practise different ways of sending, receiving and travelling with a ball.</p> <p>For example, using balls in the outdoor area.</p>	<p>Use a range of materials to create representational images.</p> <p>For example, for making bug biscuits.</p>
Week 5	<p>Become more competent in hand-eye coordination.</p> <p>For example, using connecting blocks.</p>	<p>Use a range of materials and tools to experiment.</p> <p>For example, painting using various tools and equipment.</p>

Progress in learning

Participating in practical activities helps children develop gross motor and fine manipulative skills.

Participating in practical activities helps children develop gross motor and fine manipulative skills. Games and gymnastics activities that require children to move, work with others to solve problems, apply rules and think creatively will enable them to make progress in their ability to:

- improve coordination and have increasing control over their bodies when undertaking different activities
- become more competent in hand–eye coordination, artistic and writing skills as well as in their ability to handle materials
- understand how their bodies move, bend and stretch, make a variety of shapes such as rounded or tucked, piked or straddled, twist and turn, swing and climb
- balance in an upright or an inverted way; rock and roll their bodies; move safely with increasing control and coordination and be able to avoid others
- understand the differences between crawling and creeping, running, walking, skipping, hopping, jumping in a variety of different ways, balancing, travelling and climbing
- use space that is around them, behind, underneath, below, over and under, on top of and away from them and adjust their speed and direction; show fast/slow, high/low or strong/light movements and be able to stop suddenly
- become aware of space and others around them when using apparatus or when moving
- present their work in sequence form, using floor and apparatus
- understand and apply rules and elements of games play; create and develop simple cooperative and competitive games and play these fairly; work out how to win a game; solve problems of dodging others
- practise different ways of sending, receiving and travelling with a ball; handle different pieces of equipment such as hoops, beanbags and rings
- understand and recognise the changes that happen to their bodies as they exercise and describe the changes to their breathing, heart rate, appearance and feelings

- know that exercise and hygiene and the right types of food and drink are important for healthy bodies and that to keep their bodies safe they will need to prepare for and recover from activity appropriately
- ask for assistance when needed, to know about the dangers in the home and outside environment and understand that medicines are taken to make them feel better (and that some drugs are dangerous).



Physical Development across the curriculum

Effective provision for Physical Development needs careful planning across all Areas of Learning to ensure that children have opportunities to develop, apply and extend their gross motor and fine manipulative skills, as well as opportunities to develop their understanding of health and safety issues. There are many opportunities for children to develop skills, knowledge and understanding within the other Areas of Learning and within the different teaching areas in the setting/school. For example, children could:

Personal and Social Development, Well-Being and Cultural Diversity

- use movement to express themselves – happy skips or slow stomping movements to express anger, progressing to using their whole bodies in an expressive way
- play and work together in imaginary and structured games activities to promote cooperative working

Language, Literacy and Communication Skills

- have opportunities, through pictorial and written form, to devise games and rules to adhere to
- respond to instructions in physical games, starting with verbal and pictorial then moving on to written instructions

Mathematical Development

- develop fine manipulative skills through cutting out shapes/ recyclable materials to make 3-D and 2-D shapes, pictures and models
- develop gross motor skills by using large climbing equipment to develop the language of position, for example 'below' and 'above'

Welsh Language Development

- communicate by listening to and responding to instructions in Welsh in physical activities
- develop fine manipulative skills by creating mosaics/patterns from the Welsh culture

Knowledge and Understanding of the World

- (through using a variety of equipment) develop fine manipulative skills by learning to grow and care for plants/vegetables – indoors and outdoors
- (through planned structured activities) develop an awareness of dangers in their immediate environment, indoors and outdoors, such as by following routes on large and small scales using a variety of resources

Creative Development

- develop fine manipulative skills through expressing ideas using a variety of media – charcoal, chalk, paints, etc.
- develop coordination skills by moving and dancing to music from different cultures.



Useful information and contacts

Balance of Good Health: Information for educators and communicators (Food Standards Agency, 2001)

Food in the School Curriculum in Wales (ACCAC, 2001)
ISBN: 1861122853

Myself – Themes for Early Years by J Evans and L Burgess
(Scholastic, 2006) ISBN: 9780439965576

Outdoor Play in the Early Years: Management and Innovation
by H Bilton (David Fulton Publishers, 2002) ISBN: 9781853469527

Skills across the curriculum: Key Stages 1–3 (ACCAC, 2003)
ISBN: 1861124147

Smart Moves: Why Learning is Not All in Your Head by C Hannaford
(Great Ocean Publishers, 1995) ISBN: 9780915556373

Supporting Physical Development and Physical Education in the Early Years by J Doherty and R Bailey (Open University Press, 2008)
ISBN: 9780335209811

The Great Outdoors: Developing Children's Learning Through Outdoor Provision by M Edgington (British Association for Early Childhood Education, 2002) ISBN: 9780904187281

It is crucial that prior to using any website with children that the practitioner visit the website in advance. This should be done to check that the information/material intended for use:

- supports the learning of the children
- is relevant to the work being explored
- is appropriate for the children

The Early Childhood and Parenting (ECAP) Collaborative website is home to more than a dozen projects that focus on educating and raising young children. ECAP hosts research, technical assistance, and service projects, and its experienced writers and editors respond to content-specific questions, preparing publications as well as providing training and presentations.

ecap.crc.uiuc.edu/

Learning through Landscapes helps settings/schools and early years settings make the most of their outdoor spaces for play and learning.

www.ltl.org.uk

Early Childhood Research and Practice (ECRP) is an electronic journal covering topics related to the development, care, and education of children from birth to eight years.

www.ecrp.uiuc.edu

Health Challenge Wales believe that education, from nursery to university, is a vital opportunity to ensure that future generations make positive lifestyle decisions. Pupils and students must leave the education setting health literate, that is, understanding the importance of good health and knowing how to achieve it through their everyday actions.

www.healthchallenge.wales.gov.uk

The Youth Sport Trust includes the TOP Tots programme for children 18 months to 3 years old.

www.youthsporttrust.org

The Sports Council for Wales is the national organisation responsible for developing and promoting sport and active lifestyles. The 'In Your Area' section of its website contains a searchable database of sports events and facilities throughout Wales.

www.sports-council-wales.org.uk/

Foundation Phase glossary

Active learning

This term relates to children being active and involved in their learning. Children learn best through first-hand experiences. It is crucial that children have active experiences indoors and outdoors that build up the skills, knowledge and understanding that will support their future learning.

The purpose of play/active learning is that it motivates, stimulates and supports children in their development of skills, concepts, language acquisition/communication skills and concentration. It also provides opportunities for children to develop positive attitudes and to demonstrate awareness/use of recent learning, skills and competencies, and to consolidate learning.

Assessment profile

The assessment profile provides guidance on key child developmental stages and skills that children develop and acquire from approximately 18 months through to 84 months.

Child initiated/centred

The Foundation Phase curriculum should focus more on children's interests, development and learning rather than the curriculum and pre-determined outcomes. It is important to note that the planned curriculum has to have structure and clear learning objectives but enough flexibility to enable the children to follow their interests and their needs.

Careful observations of the planned curriculum and how children respond to it should provide evidence of whether the children are focused on their learning and not playing aimlessly. An understanding of child development is crucial to ensure that the children are extended in their learning.

Cognitive development

Cognitive development is the development of the mind. It focuses on children's thinking and understanding, imagination and creativity (including problem solving/reasoning/concentration and memory).

Communication/language development

Language is made up of different forms and skills which include speaking and listening, reading, writing, thinking and observation. The tone of a voice is a powerful form of communicating meaning. Some children may use alternate systems to the voice such as signing.

Non-verbal communication also takes on different forms such as facial expressions (smiling), gestures/body movements (shoulders slouching and eye contact).

Cooperative/group play

Children start to play together, they share their play. Children become more sociable, take on roles in the play and take account of the roles of other children. They begin to be aware of the needs and wishes of their peers, so that gradually the play becomes more complex. Rules are sometime devised and some cooperative play will be revisited over several days.

Cultural diversity

The Foundation Phase supports the cultural identity of all children, celebrates different cultures and helps children recognise and gain positive awareness of their own and other cultures. Positive attitudes should be developed to enable children to become increasingly aware of and appreciative of the value of the diversity of cultures and languages that exist in Wales.

Curriculum

Seven Areas of Learning have been identified to describe an appropriate curriculum for 3 to 7-year-olds that supports the development of children and their skills. They complement each other and work together to provide a curriculum that is holistic. Each Area of Learning includes the statutory education content (skills and range) that needs to be followed.

Curriculum Cymreig

The Foundation Phase contributes to the Curriculum Cymreig by developing children's understanding of the cultural identity unique to Wales across all Areas of Learning through an integrated approach. Children should appreciate the different languages, images, objects, sounds and tastes that are integral to Wales today, and gain a sense of belonging to Wales, and understand the Welsh heritage, literature and arts as well as the language.

Differentiation

The curriculum should be flexible to match children's abilities, skills and developmental needs.

Emotional well-being

Emotional development focuses on the development of children's self-esteem, their feelings and their awareness of the feelings of others.

Fine manipulative skills

The development of children's fine manipulation/motor skills begins within the centre of their bodies and moves out. Through appropriate development, children will eventually be able to undertake fine and intricate movements. Fine manipulation skills include using finger movements and hand-eye coordination.

Gross motor skills

The development of gross motor skills starts with the young baby controlling head movements and then, moving down the body, controlling other parts of the body. Gross motor development includes using whole body movements, coordination and balance.

Holistic curriculum

The holistic curriculum is one where Areas of Learning are interlinked and learning and teaching support many aspects of the children's development rather than focusing on one specific stage or need. The curriculum is viewed and delivered as a whole.

Imagination

Imagination is having the skills and ability to form images, ideas and concepts that either exist but are not present, or that do not exist at all.

Independence

Independence refers to having the ability and skill to be less dependent on others. Skills of managing and coping should be progressively developed throughout the Foundation Phase.

Learning styles

There are different learning styles or preferred ways of interacting. The learning styles are: visual, auditory and kinaesthetic. When learning styles are taken into account learning can be enhanced.

Some children learn best if they have a visual stimulus, others an auditory one or a kinaesthetic (practical) task. Research into brain development has shown that individual learning styles are affected by the environment, the type of learning activity and whether the child is working independently or in a group.

Memory

The memory is the part of the brain where information is collected, saved and later retrieved. Initially information has to be taken in and understood; it is then saved and recalled when needed. All of these processes are needed for learning to take place.

Outcomes

The Foundation Phase Outcomes incorporate baseline assessment scales and descriptions and the national curriculum level descriptions. They have been developed to support the end of phase statutory teacher assessment. There are six Outcomes per Area of Learning and for information purposes Outcomes 4–6 broadly cross-reference to the current descriptions for Levels 1–3.

Outdoor learning

There is a strong emphasis on outdoor learning in the Foundation Phase. The outdoor learning environment should be an extension of the indoor learning environment. Structured experiential activities should be planned for throughout the day, and children should as far as possible (taking account of health and safety issues) be able to move freely between the indoors and outdoors.

Parallel play

Children may appear to be playing together, but closer observation reveals the children are actually playing alone and not interacting with each other. Children can be using the same equipment, or sitting or standing next to each other, but both are working independently of each other, with no interaction (either positive or negative) between them in their play.

Partnership/associative play

Children operating in the partnership/associative stage of play will begin to become aware of other children. They start to communicate with each other and are more aware of the play/games that other children are involved in. They begin to explain to each other what they are doing. Gradually one child will become involved in the other child's play.

Pedagogy

Pedagogy refers to the relationships between learning and teaching. It embraces the concept of the practitioner as a facilitator of learning, responding to the needs of individuals, willing to learn alongside the children, using appropriate methods to manage the process of learning and continually reflecting on and improving practice.

Personal development

Personal development focuses on the children's awareness of themselves and the development of their self-help skills.

Physical development

Physical development focuses on increasing the skills and performance of the body. Physical and cognitive development are closely linked, especially during the early years. Physical development can be divided into gross motor skills and fine manipulative skills.

Practitioners

This generic term refers to the adults that work with children in the Foundation Phase. It includes teachers and classroom assistants in the maintained sector, and staff that work in the funded education settings in the non-maintained sector.

Practitioner/adult guided

Practitioners need to plan an appropriate curriculum that engages children in their learning. They need to encourage, motivate and develop attitudes. Practitioners need to be aware of when it is appropriate to intervene sensitively to extend children's learning, when to challenge their problem-solving and thinking skills, and when to allow the children to come to satisfactory conclusions on their own. Practitioners should support/'scaffold' children's learning, observing, monitoring and assessing children's progress to ensure that they are moving on to the next stages of their development and that their skills are being extended.

Problem solving

Problem solving focuses on developing the ability to assess a problem/situation then gathering information to find a solution/answer. As children's skills increase they will be able to draw on previous experiences when attempting new activities and solving problems.

Self-esteem

This refers to the way children feel about themselves. Positive feelings indicate a high self-esteem, while negative feelings about themselves are an indication of low self-esteem.

Skills framework

The non-statutory *Skills framework for 3 to 19-year-olds in Wales* outlines progression in developing thinking, communication, number and information and communication technology (ICT).

Social development

Social development focuses on children's social interactions and relationships with their peers, practitioners and adults.

Solitary play

Children play contentedly alone. They are involved in their own play and will move from activity to activity regardless of any other children. Often in this stage of play children enjoy imitating everyday activities.

Spectator play

Children observe other children but do not join in. They like to watch other children playing. Often they can be observed standing/sitting on the fringes of where other children are playing. Although they can appear to be alone or lacking in confidence, they can often be concentrating while observing the play in order to develop an understanding of what to do.

Statutory assessment

Within the Foundation Phase there are two statutory assessments that have to be implemented: the baseline assessment and the end of phase statutory teacher assessment.

Structured educational play

Structured play experiences have specific planned outcomes to extend children's learning, skills and development. Structured play should be planned with flexibility so as to allow children opportunities to choose and extend an activity according to their interests and knowledge.

Acknowledgements

The Curriculum and Assessment Division of the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS) would like to thank the many children, practitioners, parents, carers, settings, schools and other organisations who have helped in the production of this document, including:

Cadle Primary School, Swansea

Cylch Meithrin y Bontfaen, Vale of Glamorgan

Kitchener Primary School, Cardiff

LEA Advisory Services

Mount Airey Nursery and Infant School, Haverfordwest

Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin

National Childminding Association

Pontllanffraith Primary School, Caerphilly

Swansea School Improvement Service

Troedyrhiw Infants School, Merthyr Tydfil

Wales Pre-School Playgroups Association

Ysgol Rhiw Bechan, Newtown

Ysgol y Gogarth, Llandudno.