Language, Literacy and Communication Skills

Yr Adran Plant, Addysg, Dysgu Gydol Oes a Sgiliau
Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills
Language, Literacy and Communication Skills

**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 Language, Literacy and Communication Skills 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 3–14 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

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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 Language, Literacy and Communication Skills 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.

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to developing and promoting the Welsh language. All settings/schools will implement a Welsh language educational programme in the Foundation Phase for children 3 to 7 years.

Those settings and schools that are defined as Welsh-medium providers should follow the educational programme of the Language, Literacy and Communication Skills Area of Learning. They will not need to deliver the Welsh Language Development Area of Learning.

In settings and schools where English is the main medium of communication, children's Welsh language skills should be progressively developed throughout the Foundation Phase by implementing the Welsh Language Development Area of Learning.

In Welsh-medium settings and in those where Welsh is used as a medium of instruction for at least part of the day, some (and in some cases most) of the children will be developing language skills in a language that is different to the language they speak at home. In immersion settings, an even greater early emphasis is needed on speaking and listening activities in order to provide a firm foundation for the children’s language development. Settings using Welsh as a medium of instruction for part of the day should also put a particular emphasis on speaking and listening activities in order to increase children’s familiarity with language patterns in Welsh.
Language, literacy and communication are crucial and important factors in children’s development.

Language is a form of communication to express thoughts, ideas, feelings, emotions and information. Other forms of communication can include non-verbal gestures and actions such as:

- facial expressions
- body posture and movement
- tone of voice.

Children can also express themselves and communicate through using ICT, role/imaginative play, drama, dance and movement, and also through other creative activities such as art and music. As well as being a tool for communicating, language is also a tool for thinking and is closely linked to children’s cognitive development.

It is important that the different elements of language and literacy are seen as linking and having a purpose. Language, reading and writing skills develop together and are interconnected. They should not be taught in isolation of each other. These literacy skills are developed through real life and meaningful experiences for the children.

Language is a means by which children learn about the world and communicate with their peers and practitioners. It is crucial in enhancing their cognitive development and in the way they go about solving problems and forming relationships.

Language, Literacy and Communication Skills consists of the progressive development of children’s skills in:

- speaking
- listening
- reading
- writing
- communicating.
Oracy

Speaking and listening are essential skills for children’s cognitive development and for making progress in the other literacy skills of reading and writing. Children need many opportunities to speak and listen with practitioners and children. When appropriate, it is also important that children are encouraged to look at the person to whom they are speaking or listening.

**Speaking**

Speaking involves children producing sounds, having an understanding of language development and developing the ability to speak for different purposes and audiences. Through speaking children learn and make sense of their world.

Children enter settings/schools with a variety of language experiences and language skills, having had different linguistic and cultural experiences. These can impact on their current achievements and understanding of the power of the skills of speaking, listening and communicating.

Good role models will engage children in discussions so that they can develop their thinking and understanding of their experiences as well as a wide and varied vocabulary. Further along in their development, most children who have been exposed to enriching language experiences will be able to produce words and simple sentences.
The following case study describes how an articulate child shared his enjoyment of a favourite book with practitioners and children, and the effect that this had on the children.

Dialogue

Ethan is articulate and is very fond of books. At one time his favourite book was about Saxons, Normans and Vikings. For a while Ethan brought the book to school daily, insisting on discussing it with the practitioners. This led to varied conversations concerning William the Conquerer, King Harold, France, knights, helmets and armour, longboats, cruelty and battles.

Discussion developed about ‘walking the plank’ and was demonstrated by Ethan. The children in the nursery have a wide range of ability but Ethan’s interest in the subject was inspirational to others, resulting in role-play scenarios as well as extending language.
To progress in their development children will need to have experienced quality speaking and listening activities, both spontaneous and planned, throughout the Foundation Phase. It is through these experiences that children should become more confident and willing to contribute.

These experiences will also develop their skill in controlling their voice to match the audience and activity; for example, the noise level and voices used in a reading corner or during circle time will be very different to the voices needed in team games outdoors or playing cooperatively in the role-/imaginary-play area.

Speaking provides opportunities for children to:

- be involved in active play
- ask and answer questions
- share ideas and experiences
- discuss different emotions and feelings
- develop their ideas and those of others
- learn to take turns, to be patient and tolerant of others
- solve problems and create solutions individually, in pairs and small groups
- contribute to discussions/debates
- reflect on what they have learned
- argue constructively over moral issues and whether they are right or wrong
- articulate that they do not understand
- ask for information and clarify their thinking and understanding
- have fun with sounds, words, rhymes and songs.
This case study explains what happened when Jean-Paul (a doll that was bought in France during the holidays) was introduced into the playgroup.

Jean-Paul

We had observed during circle time that only some of the children would speak out individually and thought that perhaps a ‘prop’ might encourage all the children to take part in circle time discussions.

Jean-Paul was introduced into playgroup as having come from France and living in my house. However, at weekends he had no-one to play with as there were no small children at my house. We asked the children if they would mind if at weekends he went to stay with one of them, to play and have adventures.

So each Thursday Jean-Paul is taken home by a different child, who then brings him back the following Monday and at circle time tells the other children what Jean-Paul has done, what he has eaten, etc., during the weekend. The first time we used him we asked one of the children that we knew would be happy to talk about their weekend at the next circle time. Since then a variety of children, including one with a speech problem, have been happy to take him home and tell us what they have done with him. We now find that children who have been reticent to speak in circle time are just as eager to take Jean-Paul home as our more extrovert children are, and are as happy to relate their stories of the weekend.

When Jean-Paul goes to a child’s house we send a letter with him to explain to his parents/carers who Jean-Paul is, why the child is bringing him home and what they are supposed to do with him over the weekend. When he returns on the Monday we tend to ask the parent/carer what Jean-Paul has done over the weekend so that if the child is having difficulty remembering we can provide a little support.
Some of the activities to support the development of speaking skills could include the following:

- joining in with nursery rhymes, action songs and singing
- telling stories, sharing and recounting information, celebrations and events that are important to children
- circle time to provide opportunities for children to discuss, speak and listen to others’ ideas, feelings, emotions and events
- relaying messages, sharing greetings in daily routines and giving instructions to others
- discussing and describing objects and artefacts
- using stimuli for speaking and responding, such as treasure baskets and puppets
- role/imaginative play and drama activities that encourage children to talk to/communicate with each other
- working collaboratively towards a specific purpose/goal
- questioning visitors about their role in the community
- debates over topical and moral issues
- reviewing their work
- using ICT, such as taping children’s voices/conversations and playing them back to them for discussion.

The following case study describes what happened when circle time was used to provide an opportunity for one child to retell the story of a film that he had recently watched.

## Dialogue about a film featuring an extraterrestrial

During ‘circle time news’ a normally reticent boy began retelling the story of a film that he had watched. The film obviously had had an emotional effect on him as he spoke animatedly about the story and characters he had seen. His enthusiasm prompted other children to offer relevant comments empathising with the story. A classmate clearly identified with his feelings and emotions, asking “Did you cry at the end? I did.”
Listening

Listening is an intricate and complicated skill that children need to develop and practise. Listening does not come naturally to all children and therefore practitioners must provide opportunities for children to develop their listening skills. Some children may need to learn how to listen. As with other skills, some children enter the setting/school with quite sophisticated and developed listening skills.

Today, some children live in noisy environments with a great deal of background sounds, such as television, music, and noisy electronic games, so there is an explicit need to ensure that all children have opportunities to develop and enhance their listening, concentration and thinking.

There are many activities that support the development of listening skills. Through participating in listening activities children should be able to differentiate between sounds and discriminate sounds from each other. Activities should be differentiated to ensure children make progress.

Some of the activities to support the development of listening skills could include the following:

- listening to and joining in with action songs and rhymes
- sound walks indoors and outdoors, to allow children opportunities to listen to a wide range/variety of sounds and to identify them
- encouraging children to listen to short pieces of music, of the present/past, classical/modern and a variety of styles
- practitioners or children tapping/clapping a rhythm and the children repeating it
- using sorting trays, for example asking children to sort pictures/words that start with the same initial sound, rhyming words or by using a more sophisticated form of classification
- playing sound lotto
- children having to identify which sound is the odd one out
- playing the game ‘I went to the supermarket and I bought...’ (name an item), each child repeating the previous object and adding another item beginning with the same initial sound
• through use of a listening centre, children listening to familiar and unfamiliar stories
• using music in the setting/classroom while the children are engaged in activities, as a stimuli or to indicate something such as the end of a session
• using circle time to provide opportunities for children to listen to others, both practitioners and their peers
• listening to visitors
• collaborative activities that encourage children to listen to each other.

This case study describes how one school has improved poor speaking-and-listening skills in nursery and reception.

Hot seating

We have found over the last few years that the spoken language of children entering nursery and reception is considerably poorer than it used to be. We have a group of children in each class with speech and language problems, and the development of speaking and listening skills is a priority for us. So now every week, in addition to activities such as role play, etc., we set up a group activity that is specifically targeted at speaking and listening.

We combine small group circle time and hot seating on a variety of topics, where sometimes we lead and sometimes the children lead (e.g. birth of a sibling, a house move). The children have a special ‘talking cushion/chair’ and their confidence when speaking to a group has developed well with regular sessions. By restricting the size of the group, we have found that the children do not get frustrated waiting too long for their turn to speak and as a result their listening skills have also improved.
Reading

Early literacy is best promoted through meaningful and real contexts of learning and a print-rich environment. Children do not learn to read in isolation of the other skills of speaking, listening and writing. Learning to read should be fun for all children and it should not be rushed as ‘learning to read’ is special and unique to all children.

Many factors can influence when children are ready to read; these can include children’s:

- previous linguistic and social experiences
- developmental readiness, which can include auditory, visual and speech development
- intellectual and emotional development.

In settings/schools, activities that can support early reading skills could include:

- allowing children plenty of opportunities to enjoy, handle and look at a range of books in a quiet area
- using children’s own books (individual, group or class) as first readers
- using listening centres/tape recorders to listen to and follow a story using tapes and books
- using storiesacks/storyboxes to encourage parental/carer involvement in the home
- sharing stories and rhymes in a fun and pleasurable way
- using role play and drama activities to ‘act out’ roles and characters from familiar stories
- identifying words and linking them to the relevant pictures
- breaking down words into letters – teaching phonics in a structured and imaginative way to ensure the progressive continuum of phonic development
- identifying that the top left-hand corner is the starting point, and left-to-right orientation
- activities that encourage auditory and visual development, left-to-right orientation and having fun with letters and words
• sequencing pictures, events and celebrations, for example sets of cards and pictures, as well as ICT programs
• book days where children dress up as their favourite book character
• book fairs and book bus.

As children progress through these early stages of reading, within a comprehensive reading program they should have experiences of:
• observing a practitioner reading
• shared/guided reading
• matching picture cues to words
• sequencing pictures to create a story
• looking at and discussing patterns in words
• shapes of letters and words
• using and looking at common words
• matching words
• breaking down words into letters
• creating simple sentences in groups and individually
• early stages of punctuation.

Making words using coloured modelling clay

This case study shows children (aged three to four years) having fun making words out of coloured modelling clay. This activity also provides children with an opportunity to use fine manipulative skills.
Some of the activities to support the development of early reading skills could include the following:

- playing with jigsaws and sequencing cards
- listening to stories on listening centres
- making group/class and individual books with an audience in mind (e.g. making a book for visitors, or for younger or older children)
- having an interactive and contextualised print-rich environment where children use and recognise words, sentences, etc., in their activities
- having a reading area and access to reading materials outdoors
- responding to stories through role-play/drama activities
- using puppets to create individual, group and class stories
- playing games like lotto, odd one out, spot the difference
- retelling stories that they have heard and discussing the characters’ actions, motives, appearance, etc.
- telling stories from picture cards and cartoons
- having time in a quiet ‘reading area’ to handle, look at and read to themselves books (both fiction and non-fiction) that they enjoy
- reading together activities, such as shopping lists for a cooking activity or a list of resources needed for a project
- listening to poets, authors and guests reading to them
- opportunities to play with letters and words, such as putting back together cut-up words.

Children progress from looking at and showing an interest in books through to reading a range of fiction and non-fiction texts, and showing an understanding of the main ideas or events. They should have had opportunities to experience reading across the curriculum and for a range of purposes.

Reading should always be a fun and pleasurable activity for children whether they are reading to a practitioner, for themselves or to find out information for a specific task. They should be allowed to read from books that have meaning for them and not just be made to read through a commercial scheme.
An environment that is rich in print and colourful displays, along with areas for speaking and listening (as well as reading and writing) will encourage a love of words, books and reading in children.

This case study describes how children were encouraged to make silly sentences using colour words and consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words.

A word hunt

The words were pegged in the trees and bushes. The sentence starters had a wooden peg. The colour words had a red peg and the CVC words had a green peg.

Once the children had found one of each, they returned to the patio to make a silly sentence.

Going on a word hunt made an ordinary reading activity a bit more fun, and it got the children moving about outside.
Writing

Children should have plenty of opportunities to make marks and write in meaningful activities. Through participating in purposeful writing tasks, children will develop and improve their written skills as they move along the learning continuum. Although there are stages of writing that the children move through, it is important to note that even if they are at the stage of mark-making they are still able to write for a variety of purposes. At all stages of development children’s work should be valued and displayed. The following is a breakdown of the different stages children move through to become confident and competent writers:

- mark-making
- unexplained scribbles
- explained scribbles
- attempts to write letters
- left-to-right orientation
- modelled writing
- making lists/notes, etc.
- attempts to write simple sentences
- writing simple sentences using word books/dictionaries
- writing simple sentences with capital letters, full stops, question marks
- writing short stories/accounts using word books/dictionaries with increasing independence
- writing for a variety of purposes mainly unaided, with evidence of planning/shaping.

Children should have opportunities to write in a variety of styles and genres, and for a range of purposes. These could include:

- **recounting**, for example events that have happened, visits, etc.
- **expressing personal feelings** thoughts and ideas, for example something funny, something serious
- **descriptive writing**, for example describing objects, people, the outdoor environment, animals, minibeasts and artefacts
• **predictive writing** for example what they might think will happen next in a story or experiment

• **letters/invitations**, for example writing to an organisation to get information for a topic

• **imaginative writing**, for example writing about how Baby Bear might have felt in the story Goldilocks and The Three Bears

• **information writing**, for example researching, collating and writing about a famous person or local celebrity, or developing a questionnaire

• **instructive writing**, for example how to make a fruit salad

• **poems/rhymes**, for example making up some nonsense poems

• **persuasive writing** for example trying to persuade someone to choose the healthy option for snack or lunch

• **explanatory writing** for example to explain why they felt someone had behaved in a certain way or writing to explain what the meaning of a story was

• **report/factual writing**, for example, writing a factual account of a visit or activity that had happened for the setting/class/school magazine

• **narrative/story**, for example using three story-cubes to identify character, circumstance, setting.
Example of mark-making/attempts to write letters

The example below illustrates how one child attempted to write the letters ‘Ka’ on two separate occasions; once when working in the art area and later when working outside.
Example of unexplained scribbles

Matthew was very excited about the picture he had drawn. This is his drawing. As you can see it has bees, birds, branches, leaves and a tree. I agree with Matthew; I think it is a very good picture indeed.

Example of explained scribbles
Example of attempts to write letters

Letter formation

We started the activity with a whole-class introduction to the letter ‘c’. The children were then encouraged to form the letter ‘c’ using a variety of different materials such as leaves and pine cones. They then chose to use paint sticks to paint the letter ‘c’ and make marks in the ‘rice and peas tray’.
Example of making lists/notes

The class register

The children often like to play ‘schools’ and set up the ‘registration’ and ‘news’ sessions in small groups. Lauren made her own ‘register’ (extract reproduced and explained below). She sat on a chair in the middle of the group calling names and marking.

Line 1 – Lauren has made a good unaided attempt at spelling ‘Chelsea’.

Line 2 – One child’s name begins with the letter ‘X’. He always says his name starts with a ‘kiss’! All the children recognise his name easily and when making the register this was obviously the most familiar name for her to attempt to reproduce.

Since observing the activity and the amount of emergent writing/language development that has arisen from the activity, I have made a ‘class register’ for the children to use. This has developed their ability to recognise one another’s names in print as well as the individual letters in each name (e.g. “You’ve got two ‘n’s in your name Brandon”).

This case study provides an example of emergent writing within the child-led topic of ‘School’. It outlines how one child made her own register (making lists/notes, etc.) and describes how this activity has since been extended for all the children to use.
Example of own attempt to write simple sentences

Wini Wenynen

The following illustrated stories show how two children made their own attempts to write simple sentences in their stories.
The bumble bee went around the bee hive to get some nectar and he went home and he sat on a rose.
Example of using story cards to help sequence a story

The children in our Year 2 class have been using story cards to help them sequence their stories. For this story they were asked to choose a character, describe it, write about where the character was, the problem the character encountered and a suitable ending.

**The beautiful princess**

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Once there lived a beautiful princess. She was waiting for her best friend in her old castle. Suddenly a spider came down from the web. The princess screamed and said, “What are you doing in my old beautiful castle?” Then her best friend came and said, “What was that? I was screaming. A big spider came down. That’s why I was screaming.” Then she said, “Who is this? I am a prince. I’ve come to marry you. So they were married and had a happy life ever after.”
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To support the development of children’s written skills, it is essential to provide plenty of opportunities for children to develop, use and improve their hand–eye coordination, their gross motor and fine manipulative skills. They should handle and manipulate materials in the learning environments, including natural resources and those commercially purchased. The following are some activities that can support children’s hand–eye coordination and early writing skills:

• threading and lacing activities, beginning with larger/chunky resources
• jigsaws and puzzles
• drawing, painting and writing using a variety of resources and media, such as large paintbrushes/crayons during children’s early stages of development, progressing to smaller/thinner ones as their skills become more sophisticated
• pattern making using art-and-craft activities
• using scissors to make patterns and to cut out pictures
• using light boxes to support pattern/letter formation
• playing with beanbags, large and small balls for throwing and catching
• following pathways and joining dots
• appropriate tracing activities
• early letter-formation activities using mark-making materials, indoors and outdoors
• forming letters, patterns and names in sand trays, shaving foam, rice, etc.
Communication skills

Children can communicate through actions and gestures as well as through language. Practitioners working with children can pick up many cues from children. These could be to do with their involvement in their learning, their relationships with peers, practitioners and the environment and how they feel about themselves and those around them.

Through their play and structured activities, children use and communicate through verbal and non-verbal interactions. Children should have plenty of opportunities throughout the Foundation Phase and across the curriculum to:

- express themselves, their needs, feelings, emotions and desires
- use facial expression, including eye contact
- use body gestures
- follow instructions and directions
- understand spoken language and discriminate between different sounds
- practise using words and sentences.

An appropriate, active, experiential learning curriculum should provide children with ample opportunities to express themselves. Through participating in art and craft, movement, dance, drama and music activities, children should be able to see immediate results, represent aspects of their world and follow up on their own experiences.

Art-and-craft activities allow children to squeeze, mould and touch materials which can provide them with opportunities to experiment, discover and represent different emotions. Mark-making using a variety of media will allow children to represent different feelings and aspects of their lives and experiences, as well as allowing them to communicate new ideas to others.

Movement, dance and drama activities are ideal for allowing children to use their imagination and to take on different roles while moving and responding to different stimuli. They are able to express themselves and release their emotions and feelings through using their bodies in a variety of ways. Music and movement activities are often linked and allow children opportunities for self-expression.
Most children respond to music and it is a wonderful medium for them to communicate their emotions and feelings. Music can provide a release for them as well as allow them to explore sounds by making their own using instruments that have been made and commercially purchased. A range of music activities, as well as opportunities to listen and respond to a variety of different music, will provide children with opportunities to learn about different cultures and the special music that plays an important part within their customs.
Planning

As children will move along the learning continuum at different rates, it is important to observe children’s skills, consider individual needs and take into account the range of language, literacy and communication skills when planning activities. Relevant and engaging learning experiences will enable children to make steady progress appropriate to their stage of development. Children’s involvement in planning and decision making will enhance the learning experiences for them.

Progression in children’s language, literacy and communication skills can be supported by opportunities for:

- play
- experimentation
- talking/discussing
- predicting/estimation
- practise
- review
- application
- evaluation.

Examples of planning

- A policy statement for Language, Literacy and Communication Skills, possibly a curriculum map and scheme of work.
- A plan for a cross-curricular theme, integrating several Areas of Learning.
Progress in learning

Oracy

Through taking part in speaking, listening and viewing activities, the Foundation Phase should enable children to make progress in their ability to:

• use simple language in their play and communicate understanding of basic instructions

• listen to and join in with simple rhymes, songs and stories

• make themselves understood, have something to say; talk about matters of immediate and personal interest; convey meaning in a simple way; listen to others and respond appropriately; listen to and carry out instructions

• tell stories, both real and imagined; take part in imaginative play and drama; read and listen to nursery rhymes and poetry, including repeating some from memory; be able to retell stories in sequence, with some detail

• express feelings, likes, dislikes and needs

• express some thoughts, ideas and feelings through structured activities; listen, view and respond with growing attention and concentration to a range of stimuli, including media and ICT texts, such as children’s TV programmes and animated tales on DVD

• relate their contributions in a discussion to what has gone on before, taking similar/different views into account; use the conventions of discussion and conversation

• work as individuals and in different-sized groups, talking to different audiences including friends, the class, teachers and other familiar adults

• adopt a role, making a conscious use of movement, gesture and speech; participate in drama activities, improvisation and performances of varying kinds, using language appropriate to a role or situation; respond to drama they have watched, as well as that in which they have participated

• predict outcomes and discuss possibilities, giving reasons for opinions; make simple, clear explanations of choices, giving reasons for opinions and actions
• speak with confidence, making themselves clear through organising what they say and choosing words with precision, building on their previous experience; speak with clear diction and appropriate intonation in their own accents, modifying their talk to the requirements of the audience

• understand that there is variety in the language they hear about them

• incorporate relevant detail in explanations, descriptions and narratives, and distinguish between the essential and less important; recognise the importance of language that is clear, fluent and interesting in order to communicate effectively

• respond appropriately and effectively to what they have heard

• ask and answer questions that clarify their understanding and indicate thoughtfulness about the matter under discussion.

Reading

The Foundation Phase should enable children to enjoy books and to make progress in their ability to:

• follow stories read to them and respond as appropriate; look at books with or without an adult and show an interest in and enjoy their content; handle a book as a reader; be able to follow stories from pictures

• become increasingly aware of different types of books:
  – picture books, plays, poems and stories with familiar settings and those based on imaginary or fantasy worlds
  – stories, poems and chants containing patterned and predictable language
  – retellings of traditional folk and fairy stories
  – stories and poems from Wales and a range of cultures
  – books and poems written by significant children’s authors
  – adaptations and translations
  – stories and poems that are particularly challenging in terms of length or vocabulary

• read information, both in print and on screen, and make use of a range of sources of information, including dictionaries, ICT-based reference materials, encyclopaedias and information presented in fictional form
• read with enjoyment and increasing fluency, accuracy, understanding and independence, building on what they already know, including:
  – the sounds and names of the alphabet
  – an awareness of the sounds of spoken language in order to develop phonological awareness
  – the use of various approaches to word identification and recognition
  – the use of their understanding of grammatical structure and the meaning of the text as a whole to make sense of print

• read their own work and other texts aloud

• understand and respond to stories and poems, and in particular to:
  – talk about characters, events and language in books, and begin to use appropriate terminology
  – say what might happen next in a story
  – retell stories
  – explain the content of a passage or whole text
  – choose books to read individually and with others
  – review their reading with a practitioner
  – read complete short texts, including playscripts
  – re-read favourite stories and poems, reciting some from memory
  – listen to stories and poems read aloud frequently and regularly, including some longer, more challenging material
  – prepare, present and act out stories and poems they have read

• explore meaning within a book as a whole:
  – using their knowledge of book conventions, story structure, patterns of language and presentational devices, and their background knowledge and understanding of the content of a book
  – keeping the overall sense of a passage in mind as a checking device
  – recognising the structural devices for organising information, for example contents, headings, captions.
At the same time, children will be developing their ability to:

- understand that written symbols have sound and meaning; recognise alliteration, sound patterns and rhyme, and relate these to patterns in letters; consider syllables in longer words; identify initial and final sounds in words; identify and use a comprehensive range of letters and sounds, including combinations of letters, blends and digraphs, and paying specific attention to their use in the formation of words; recognise inconsistencies in phonetic patterns; recognise that some letters do not always produce a sound themselves but influence the sound of others

- develop a vocabulary of words recognised and understood using their sight vocabulary to help them read words that have similar features; discuss alternative meanings of words and phrases

- focus on what can be learned about word meanings and parts of words from consistent letter patterns

- recognise the way language is ordered and organised into sentences:
  – using their knowledge of word order and the structure of written language to confirm or check meaning
  – recognising the value of surrounding text in identifying unknown words
  – checking the accuracy of their reading, and attending to whether it sounds right and/or makes sense grammatically
  – rereading and/or reading ahead passages when the sense has been lost.
Writing

The Foundation Phase should enable children to enjoy experimenting with written communication and to make progress in their ability to:

- make marks and communicate by using a variety of media
- begin to produce pieces of emergent writing, developing some letters correctly
- understand that writing is a means of communication; understand the connections between speech and language; differentiate between print and pictures; understand the different purposes and function of written language as a means of remembering, communicating, organising and developing ideas and information
- understand that writing can be a source of enjoyment
- experiment with mark-making; express ideas for a scribe to write; begin to write in a conventional way; recognise the alphabetic nature of writing and discriminate between letters
- write independently on subjects that are of interest and importance to them, including stories, poems, class activities and personal experiences; identify the purpose for which they write, and write for a range of readers; organise and present writing in different ways, helpful to the purpose, task and reader, using ICT as appropriate; write with increasing confidence, fluency and accuracy
- write in a range of genres, incorporating some of the different characteristics of those forms – the range should include a variety of narratives (e.g. stories, diaries), poems, notes (e.g. lists, captions), records (e.g. observations) and messages (e.g. notices, invitations, instructions)
- plan and review their writing, assembling and developing their ideas on paper, using ICT as appropriate
- collaborate, to read their work aloud and to discuss the quality of what is written, to encourage confidence and independence
- make choices about vocabulary and organise imaginative and factual writing in different ways
- recognise that punctuation is essential to help a reader understand what is written; read their work aloud in order to understand the connections between the punctuation of a sentence and intonation and emphasis; punctuate their writing, be consistent in
their use of capital letters, full stops and question marks, and begin to use commas

• spell common and familiar words in a recognisable way:
  – writing each letter of the alphabet
  – using their knowledge of sound–symbol relationships and phonological patterns
  – recognising and using simple spelling patterns; writing common letter strings within familiar and common words
  – spelling commonly occurring simple words
  – spelling words with common prefixes and suffixes
  – checking the accuracy of their spelling and using word books and dictionaries, identifying initial letters as the means of locating words
  – experimenting with the spelling of complex words and discussing misapplied generalisations and other reasons for misspellings
  – scrutinising word families

• develop their handwriting, holding a pencil comfortably in order to develop a legible style that follows the conventions of written English and Welsh, including:
  – writing from left to right and from top to bottom of the page
  – starting and finishing letters correctly
  – ensuring regularity of size and shape of letters
  – ensuring regularity of spacing of letters and words
  – the conventional ways of forming letters, both lower case and capitals
  – building on their knowledge of letter formation to join letters in words
  – presenting their writing clearly and neatly in order to communicate their meaning effectively.
Effective provision for the development of Language, Literacy and Communication Skills needs careful planning across all Areas of Learning to ensure that children have opportunities to develop, apply and extend their skills of communication, speaking, listening, reading and writing through a variety of media. There are many opportunities to develop these within the other Areas of Learning and within the different teaching areas in the setting/school, for example:

**Personal and Social Development, Well-Being and Cultural Diversity**
- through role/imaginative play children have opportunities to discuss and communicate different emotions with others in order to develop their personal and social skills
- through listening to events (happy and sad) that have happened to others, children could discuss or record how they think they might have felt in the same situation

**Mathematical Development**
- through handling 3-D and 2-D shapes children’s mathematical language could be developed by describing the properties of these shapes
- through problem-solving activities and relevant questions such as ‘What do you think might happen next?’ children’s thinking and speaking skills can be developed through providing relevant and possible answers/solutions

**Welsh Language Development**
- opportunities for children to listen to simple rhymes/songs/stories in Welsh through to writing sentences about their favourite stories, activities undertaken or visits made in the community
- listening to and talking about stories from around the world and writing recipes for food from different cultures
Knowledge and Understanding of the World

- children recording pictorial through to written accounts of investigations undertaken in both the indoor and outdoor environments
- children giving directions on their journey to school orally, pictorially or in writing

Physical Development

- listening to instructions/directions in movement activities
- making lists and rules of how to keep healthy and safe in their immediate and local environments

Creative Development

- talking, listening and writing about their work and that of others in art and craft
- listening to and copying rhythms that are clapped/tapped by practitioners and other children, and creating their own musical pieces on the computer or through using instruments.
Useful information and contacts

A Process-Oriented Child Monitoring System (research started 1976) by F Laevers (Experiential Education series, Centre for Experiential Education, Belgium). This is a programme for observing and assessing children’s well-being and their involvement. The English learning tools section of it, and other related materials, can be accessed by visiting www.cego.be

Communication, Language and Literacy by I Yates (Brilliant Publications) ISBN: 9781897675960

Foundations of Literacy: A balanced approach to language, listening and literacy skills in the early years by S Palmer and R Bayley (Network Educational Press Ltd) ISBN: 9781855390935

How to Teach Story Writing at Key Stage 1 by P Corbett (David Fulton Publishers Ltd) ISBN: 9781853469169

How to Teach Writing Across the Curriculum at Key Stage 1 by S Palmer (David Fulton Publishers Ltd) ISBN: 9781853469190


The First Reading and Writing Book by M Hooton (Shepheard-Walwyn, 1976) ISBN: 9780856830082


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.

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 age 8.

www.ecrp.uiuc.edu

Toe by Toe is a scheme that builds a child’s reading confidence step-by-step using phonemes and ‘polynons’ (nonsense words), rules which can then be applied to all multi-syllabic words, opening the path to a whole new world of reading.

www.toe-by-toe.co.uk

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/

Growing Schools is a government programme that aims to encourage and inspire the use of the outdoor classroom, both with and beyond the school grounds, as a context for learning across the curriculum.

www.teachernet.gov.uk/growingschools
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.
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