

Country Background Report – Wales

Transitions from Early Childhood Education and Care to School

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Background

In 2015–2016 the Education Department within the Welsh Government participated in an OECD project 'Review of Policies and Practices for Transitions from Early Childhood to Primary Education'.

The objective of this project was to examine the policies and practices of different countries for achieving high-quality transitions from early childhood education and care. For this purpose, the participating countries undertook to produce country notes on transitions by responding to themes and questions formulated by the OECD.

In the context of the study, the Welsh Government prepared the Country Background Report which describes policy measures, planning, organisation, steering and objectives of transitions as they were in spring 2018. The country note also describes the transitions from the perspective of professional, pedagogical and developmental continuity. It further provides a summary of the challenges associated with transitions and the strategies deployed to overcome these challenges.

Participation in the project and the production of the country note has widened the frame of reference for transitions from early childhood education and care to pre-primary education and further to school. Participation in the project produced a more comprehensive picture of Wales' national situation regarding transitions.

The OECD published its report '[Starting Strong V](#)', in June 2017.

Chapter 1: The transition system and its organisation

1.1 Policy context

Flying Start Programme (0-4 years)

The Flying Start programme, introduced in Wales in 2006-7, is part of our early years programme for families with children under 4 years of age living in disadvantaged areas of Wales. The core elements of the programme are designed to maximise positive outcomes for children and their families in four key areas:

- free quality part-time childcare for 2-3 year olds
- an enhanced health visiting service
- access to parenting support, and
- support for the development of speech, language and communication.

More than 37,600 children benefitted from Flying Start in 2016-17, around 25% of the total population of children in the age-group. Evidence on the impact of Flying Start to date is very positive. The final report from a three year qualitative research project with Flying Start families was published in July 2018 (Qualitative research with Flying Start families: Wave 3)¹. The majority of parents interviewed reported that Flying Start had a positive impact on their child in terms of: speech, language and communication skills, school-readiness and social skills and behaviour. Most parents whose children had made the transition to the Foundation Phase felt that accessing Flying Start services had helped prepare their child for attending nursery school. More than half of those interviewed in the final year of fieldwork reported that their child had shown improvement in terms of: an increased interest in looking at books; being better able to listen to stories; improved ability to concentrate; counting or recognising numbers; singing or recognising nursery rhymes and recognising letters or knowing the alphabet.

Foundation Phase (FP)

Introduced in 2010 the FP is the statutory curriculum for all 3-7 year olds in Wales. It encourages children to be creative and imaginative, making learning more enjoyable and effective while addressing their developmental needs. The FP curriculum is delivered as a progressive framework to meet the diverse needs of all children, including those who are at an earlier stage of development and those who are more able. Children should move on to the next stages of their learning when they are developmentally ready and at their own pace.

A universal early education entitlement to education prior to statutory school age - for children aged 3-4 year olds - has been in place for some time, and now forms part of the FP. Local authorities decide whether this provision is in state-run nurseries, which are normally attached to schools, or in private or third sector nurseries (referred to as 'non-maintained settings' or 'settings') funded by the local authorities for the purpose of delivering early education. Take-up of the early education offer is high with around 88% of children in schools the term after their fourth birthday, with the majority of the remaining children attending either private or third sector nurseries also delivering the FP.

¹ <https://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/national-evaluation-flying-start/?lang=en>

Drawing on evidence from early years programmes in Scandinavia, New Zealand (Te Whāriki) and the Reggio Emilia approach in northern Italy which indicated that experiential, play based approaches resulted in higher standards of attainment as opposed to the adoption of an overly formal curriculum the introduction of the FP marked a radical departure from the more formal, competency-based approach associated with the previous Key Stage 1 National Curriculum for 5-7 year olds. The approach emphasises the centrality of the child, the significance of children's well-being and advocates a balance of child-initiated and practitioner-directed (or practitioner-initiated) activities within stimulating indoor and outdoor environments.

The introduction of a curriculum which runs from age 3-7 years, and so bridges ECEC and primary schooling, is intended to support easy transition between the two.

A key aspect of the FP is the setting of high staff to child ratios to comply with the national minimum standards for childcare settings for pre-statutory school age children in non-maintained settings and to enable the more extensive adult attention needed to deliver the pedagogy. The ratios were set as 1:8 for 3-4 year olds i.e. pre-statutory school age and 1:15 for 5-7 year olds.

The Welsh Government commissioned a large-scale 3-year evaluation of the FP which was published in 2015. The evaluation was overwhelmingly positive and showed that where the FP was being implemented well it was raising the attainment of all children. There was positive evidence that the FP was associated with improvements in overall school attendance, literacy, numeracy and learner well-being. However, the evaluation also showed that there was variability in the quality of implementation across schools and settings. For this reason, the Welsh Government published a Foundation Phase Action Plan in November 2016. The plan sets out a national approach to continuously improve the way in which the FP curriculum is implemented and delivered in our schools and nurseries. It was developed with a wide group of stakeholders under the guidance of an expert group and sets out key actions identified through the evaluation.

In 2013, the Welsh Government commissioned an Independent Stocktake of the FP in Wales led by Professor Iram Siraj to examine how well the FP had been implemented. Amongst other things, it looked at how and when children entered the FP and how progression, from Flying Start to the FP and to Key Stage 2 (at the age of 7), is or can be demonstrated.

The report found that across Wales, transition processes varied from having very good processes to none at all. In those schools/settings that embedded the FP well, children developed good learning dispositions such as concentration and independence which strengthened the transition process into statutory education. It recognised that many local authorities in Wales, as well as schools and settings, had developed their own processes for transferring information through the transition phase and identified that strengthened arrangements could be achieved by multi-agency training involving for example FP practitioners from maintained and non-maintained settings, Flying Start and Key Stage 2 staff. To further aid the transitions process the Welsh Government is exploring how we can help create a more effective early years' system which includes information sharing.

Public and media attention in the UK general election in 2015 and also the Welsh Assembly elections in 2016 focussed on the provision of affordable childcare for working parents. This has also prompted a renewed focus, particularly in Wales, on preserving or enhancing the early education offer. The Welsh Government's commitment through its national strategy *Prosperity for All* is to provide 30 hours government-funded childcare for working parents of 3-4 year olds for up to 48 weeks a year. This would provide working parents with childcare in addition to the minimum 10 hours of Foundation Phase Nursery provision currently available, so that eligible parents receive a combined total of 30 hours early education and childcare per week. Early implementation of the Offer began in 7 local authorities in September 2017, with a further 7 local authorities scheduled to be added from September 2018. The intention is for the Offer to be available to all eligible parents from September 2020.

An independent review of curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales for ages 3-16 was published in 2015. This identified the FP as a particular strength of the curriculum in Wales and stated that much was to be learned from it as we developed the new curriculum. This particularly related to the emphasis on experiential learning which it recommended should be reflected throughout the curriculum for all ages. The recommendations of the review were fully accepted.

The new curriculum and assessment arrangements will be available for feedback in April 2019 and the final arrangements will be available in January 2020. The new curriculum will be used in all maintained schools and settings from September 2022.

One of the key and most significant influences for transitions policy has been the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)². Wales is recognised as being the only UK country to fully adopt the UNCRC into its policy making: "The Welsh Assembly Government in 2004 announced that all policy development and interventions related to children and young people in Wales will adopt the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)" (Davies, 2016)".

The Welsh Government has re-organised the articles within the UNCRC framework into the following seven core aims:

- early years
- education and learning
- health, freedom from abuse and bullying
- play, sport, leisure and culture
- participation and respect
- a safe home and community, and
- freedom from poverty.

These seven core aims were the basis for initiatives, campaigns and law that would affect children and young people in Wales. As a result, the Welsh Government published *The Children and Young People Wellbeing Monitor for Wales* in 2008 (Statham and Chase, 2010).

² https://downloads.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/UNCRC_united_nations_convention_on_the_rights_of_the_child.pdf

The Welsh Government's commitment to put the child at the heart of policy making (child-centred approach) has had significant impact on how policy is shaped, delivered and implemented ensuring that transition is recognised as being key to a child's early learning and development.

The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 will replace the current legislative framework for special educational needs (SEN) by 2023, and will improve the planning and delivery of additional learning provision for learners aged 0-25, through a person-centred approach to identifying needs early. It will establish an integrated, collaborative process of assessment, planning and monitoring of the support provided to ALN learners that puts the views, wishes and feelings of children, their parents and young people at the heart of their learning and support.

In Wales, there are possible horizontal transitions. Most commonly these will be between a school nursery providing early education for 10 hours or more a day and a child-minder or private sector nursery covering the remaining hours of the day, including after school hours. Other key traditions and values that influence policy making in Wales with regards to transitions from an ECEC setting to primary school are:

- information sharing
- safeguarding
- Special Educational Needs
- Welsh Language, and
- equality and diversity.

These key points have become more important over the last five to ten years. It is recognised in Wales that children and adults experience various transition stages throughout their lifetime. Whilst adults are generally equipped to deal with these transitions, it is those experiences at the start of their life journey in the early years that have the most influence and impact.

Before entering statutory education, which in Wales is at 5 years of age, children have potentially undergone many transitional changes. For some children in Wales, entering the FP is one of the first major transitions from home/setting to school (Siraj, I. 2014). Research by Vogler et al. (2008) suggests that prior to statutory education, this time in a child's life is considered to be one which has many, and potentially challenging, phases. These changes can have an impact on a child's well-being and outcomes (Vogler et al, 2008).

1.2 Goals and purposes

In Wales, the core purpose of managing transitions effectively is to ensure that all children and their parents experience practical and emotional support through every transition to:

- facilitate continuity in their care
- support continuity of and progression in their development and learning
- enhance their well-being, and
- ensure that they have a positive experience of change.

Transition from home, childcare or Flying Start to the FP is an important time for children and their families. As part of a multi-agency approach, to help children move from one phase of learning to the next, improve standards and educational outcomes, and ensure that every child is supported, we recognise the need to develop strengthened approaches to key transition times for a child and their family.

Building a Brighter Future, published in 2013 sets out the Welsh Government's 10-year plan for early years and childcare and the commitment to improve the life chances and outcomes of all children in Wales. The plan brought coherence across the wide range of the Welsh Government's policies and programmes which impact on, and influence, the Early Years (ages 0 to 7 years). Building on this foundation the challenge is to learn from our current programmes and evaluations, and then harness all activity and resources to amplify our collective impact across the public sector.

The Welsh Government's National Strategy, Prosperity for All, published in 2017, sets out the vision for the Early Years; for children from all backgrounds to have the best start in life. As part of this, there is a commitment to ensuring consistent regulation and delivery of pre-school provision. An important part of this work will be the way in which we can deliver a truly integrated early education and care system in Wales, including the workforce.

Under the Early Years' theme, Prosperity for All also includes the commitment to: "Take the most effective elements from all our current early years' programmes and create a more joined-up, responsive system that puts the unique needs of each child at its heart"

A programme of work is underway, to make the ambition for a joined up Early Years system a reality. It is exploring what it would take to create an Early Years' system, both locally and nationally, focused initially on health, education, social and other local authority services.

The Welsh Government's Flying Start transitions guidance highlights that transitions are of the highest quality when:

- processes and procedures are supportive and inclusive
- the child and their family is placed at the centre of transitions planning
- positive relationships are established, and all adults who are involved with the child and family work closely together
- environments are welcoming, accessible and non-stigmatising, and
- there is continuity in a child's care, development and learning.

The guidance covered all the key transitions, including transition into the Flying Start programme; transition from home into Flying Start Childcare; transition from Flying Start Childcare into the FP; transition from the Flying Start health visitor to school nurse; and transition out of Flying Start and signposting to other family support services.

Flying Start is a geographically targeted programme and, whilst not available universally, there is some flexibility within the programme to offer support via Flying Start Outreach to those children and families living outside of recognised Flying Start areas. It is important there is continued provision to children who may be receiving assistance for aspects such as language development when they transition from Flying Start settings into the FP and primary education.

Breaking the cycle of deprivation and poverty is a long term commitment of the Welsh Government. To reduce the gap in attainment between the children from the most deprived backgrounds (as measured by entitlement to free school meals) and their peers, the Pupil Development Grant includes an element for 3-4 year olds: the Early Years Pupil Development Grant (EYPDG). This grant is available for each child likely to be entitled to free school meals when they begin school, and has increased from £300 in 2015 to £700 in 2018. The aim of the EYPDG is to accelerate the rate of attainment of children of all abilities from low income households to help them reach their potential.

Under the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 a standard, portable Individual Development Plan (IDP) will be developed and maintained for all those children and young people with identified ALN. This will encourage and embed well planned, smooth transitions across settings.

The ALN code of practice, which will operate alongside the Act, will set out the arrangements that should be put in place to ensure smooth and effective transitions for children and young people with ALN between the various phases of education, including the use of IDP reviews to support a smooth transition. The IDP itself also contains mandatory sections on transitions which should aid this process.

1.3 Organisation of ECEC and primary education

Flying Start

The Flying Start programme provides quality childcare which is offered to parents of all eligible 2-3 year olds for 2 and a half hours a day, 5 days a week for 39 weeks. In addition, there should be at least 15 sessions of provision for the family during the school holidays. This should be linked to FP entry into schools/settings to ensure a seamless transition between the two offers with no gaps in provision.

Foundation Phase Nursery (early education offer)

Local authorities in Wales are required to provide a minimum of 10 hours per week of funded Foundation Phase Nursery (early education) for children the term following their 3rd birthday for 38 weeks a year (i.e. during school terms). Local authorities decide whether this provision is in state-run nurseries, which are normally attached to schools, or in private or third sector nurseries (referred to as 'non-maintained settings' or 'settings') funded by local authorities to deliver early education. Whilst the minimum provision is 10 hours per week, around half of local authorities provide 12.5 hours with some delivering more.

Some local authorities provide the early education provision in 5 morning or afternoon sessions of 2 or 2.5 hours. In an ECEC setting, a parent may choose to only send their child for the education element of the day (2.5 hours) or for the full day (with the rest of the day considered as wraparound childcare and chargeable).

Local authorities are under a specific duty to secure, as far as reasonably practicable, sufficient childcare to meet the requirements of parents and carers in order to train, work, or study. They must undertake Childcare Sufficiency Assessments (CSAs) every 5 years, with annual reports on progress against their action plans. The duties on local authorities and other parties delivering ECEC are set out in primary and secondary legislation, and often supported by statutory guidance documents to support delivery.

Foundation Phase (Primary education)

The majority of children will start full-time education in the September of the academic year in which they turn 5. This will be for around 25 hours of education a week, delivered over 5 days. It is not compulsory to attend an ECEC setting prior to the statutory school age. Once the child has turned 5, unless parents decide to electively home educate their children, they are required to attend primary school 5 days a week for 38 weeks of the year.

Childcare Offer

The introduction of a new entitlement to 30 hours early education and childcare for working parents of 3-4 year olds may lead to new arrangements for the early education entitlement and childcare for the same age group. Whilst exact arrangements are subject to further scoping and planning work and agreement by Welsh Government Ministers, the intention is to build on the existing offer. New arrangements are due to be in place by the end of the current Welsh Government term, 2021 at the latest.

Inspection process

The inspection frameworks for the Care Inspectorate Wales³ (childcare) and Estyn⁴ (education and training) set out the expectations on childcare settings and schools and settings providing education. Private sector nurseries funded to deliver the FP will be subject to inspection from both inspectorates.

Curriculum Reform

In 2015, Professor Graham Donaldson completed his independent review of curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales and his report, [Successful Futures](#), was published. The 68 recommendations in the report were accepted in full by the Welsh Government and work is well underway to develop our new curriculum, with a network of pioneer schools at the heart of the design process. Draft curriculum and assessment arrangements will be available for feedback in April 2019 and the final versions published in January 2020. All maintained schools and settings will be using the new curriculum and assessment arrangements from September 2022.

The new curriculum for Wales will be organised as a continuum of learning from 3 to 16 year olds without phases and key stages (as currently exists). As a result, it is felt that learning will be less fragmented because all teachers will understand how their input contributes ultimately to the end point in the continuum of learning.

1.4 Distribution of responsibilities

All 22 local authorities in Wales are responsible both for determining the provision of early education for 3-4 year olds as well as assessing the availability of childcare within their area. There are also four regional education consortia which undertake the function of school improvement on behalf of groups of local authorities. Their precise function in

³ <http://careinspectorate.wales/providingacareservice/our-inspections/how-we-inspect-childcare-and-play-services/?skip=1&lang=en>

⁴ <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/inspection>

relation to that of local authorities in the delivery of the FP will vary, but in general they will undertake the function of monitoring and supporting the quality of the delivery of the curriculum, including developing networks of support and providing expert advice and training. Increasingly support is provided to schools/settings by other schools/settings recognised as being leaders in the delivery of the FP and which are provided with additional funding in order to undertake that role.

As local authorities have primary responsibility for early education, primary education and childcare sufficiency this presents a considerable strength in terms of effective cooperation between different organisations involved in supporting transition. However, there remains the potential for incoherent approaches between different departments within a local authority due to their having differing priorities in terms of delivering an ECEC model. These can often be linked to the organisational structure within a local authority and particularly the coherence between education and childcare. Funding pressures within local authorities in Wales in recent years has meant that they have needed to look at more innovative ways of delivering services.

Following the FP pedagogy, which at its heart has an emphasis on the individual child, it is intended to support staff in ensuring that children develop from age 3-7 years in a positive learning environment. This is likely to be more easily achieved for children who move from a nursery located in a school to the start of primary education in the same school. It may be more difficult for children who move from a private or third sector childcare setting to a primary school. At present there are around 650 such settings providing the FP in Wales and staff in these organisations should be supported by advisory teachers, who are qualified teachers employed by local authorities. The 650 settings are also supported by a network of other settings through membership of one of Cwlwm's⁵ four educational focussed umbrella organisations. The Welsh Government funds a Foundation Phase development officer in each of these organisations in order to provide additional support.

Generally, all children are entitled to start school at the same age, irrespective of their stage of development. The Education Act 1996 places a legal duty on local authorities to provide suitable education for all learners, including those who have special educational needs (SEN). To support LAs in meeting their current legal responsibilities under the Education Act 1996, the Welsh Government has published the SEN Code of Practice for Wales, to which all LAs in Wales must have due regard. This provides practical advice to LAs, maintained schools, early years settings and others on carrying out their responsibility to identify, assess, and provide for learners with SEN.

The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018, due to commence in 2023, will replace the current SEN Code of Practice for Wales. The Act will strengthen the effectiveness of early years provision by placing a duty on local authority funded, non-maintained nursery providers to have regard to any relevant guidance in the ALN Code. Further, the Act will require local authorities to create a statutory 'Early Years Additional Learning Needs Lead Officer' role to coordinate local authority functions under the legislation in relation to children under compulsory school age who are not yet attending a maintained school. The Lead Officers will play a vital

⁵ <http://www.cwlwm.org.uk/>

role in improving the early identification of lower level needs, promoting early intervention, establishing referral routes and raising awareness amongst multi-agency partners.

One of the key barriers to transitions in Wales is the sharing of information from one child service such as non-maintained setting (ECEC setting)/Flying Start childcare, to another, such as a school.

1.5 Monitoring transitions

Arrangements for monitoring transitions happen locally and are focused on monitoring the development of each individual child, using national tools.

It is compulsory for children to be assessed within the first six weeks of starting primary education i.e. the school year in which they turn 5, this assessment is known as the 'baseline assessment'. The Foundation Phase Profile ('the Profile'), which was introduced on a statutory basis in September 2015, provides a nationally consistent baseline assessment which aligns with the end of Foundation Phase Outcomes. Through the use of observations and formative assessments, the Profile supports practitioners to provide a developmentally appropriate holistic curriculum for all children.

Joining a new setting or school can be a challenging time for a child and it is important that their needs are considered when carrying out assessments. As the Profile supports tracking children's progress throughout their time in the FP it can be used in a nursery setting or school from age three, at baseline in Reception and through to the end of Phase in Year 2.

There are two versions of the Profile: a short version - 'the Compact Profile' - designed for use at the start of primary school and containing 16 skills which can be easily assessed without having to build up a picture of the child over time; and a comprehensive version - 'the Full Profile' - which contains 42 skills and is intended for use later in the FP once there has been time to assess children's skills more fully. Assessments derived from the Compact Profile and the Full Profile are comparable and are based upon the same outcomes scale. The associated handbook provides detailed guidance on the use of the Profile.

The Profile assesses children's skills in the following four Areas of Learning:

- Personal and Social Development, Well-Being and Cultural Diversity
- Language, Literacy and Communication Skills
- Mathematical Development
- Physical Development.

The Welsh Government and practitioners are exploring the potential for using the Foundation Phase Profile in Flying Start settings.

The inspection framework for education and for childcare assessments includes elements related to how well organisations manage transitions. Care Inspectorate Wales and Estyn have a significant role to play in ensuring the quality of the education and care our children receive. In recent years – and following an independent evaluation – Care Inspectorate Wales and Estyn have developed a common inspection framework which encourages inspectors and settings to consider the care and learning elements of

provision for children in a more holistic and unified way. The independent evaluation showed that the pilot joint inspection framework proved fit for purpose in enabling aligned inspections in an area where both organisations have responsibility, delivering a more streamlined and proportionate inspection process. This joint inspection process will be implemented from January 2019.

The Foundation Phase Profile has been designed to link up with assessments carried out by health professionals and also supports early identification of possible developmental delay and special educational needs (SEN); this will ensure support and where necessary special educational provision is given to children who need it. The assessments gathered as part of the Foundation Phase Profile will provide useful information for all stakeholders in children's learning and development, supporting transitions between settings and schools. The inspection framework for childcare settings has been recently enhanced to include elements relating to how well settings monitor the development of their children.

Childcare settings are also subject to National Minimum Standards which are designed to assist providers in meeting childcare regulations. The standards cover a wide range of areas including staffing ratios, qualifications of staff as well as requiring settings to have an understanding of the principles of FP, its seven areas of learning and their application in a way which is appropriate to the age, abilities and stages of development of children in their care and the nature of the provision.

Chapter 2: Professional continuity

It is recognised in Wales that having a highly skilled workforce is key in delivering effective services in the early years, and evidence suggests this is particularly key for those living in disadvantaged areas. The Childcare, Play and Early Years Workforce Plan, which aims to raise the professional status of early years, childcare and play sector as a recognised career of choice was published in 2017. In respect of schools the plan provides a commitment to review the qualifications of teaching assistants and learning support workers as part of the workforce plans aspirations to professionalise the early years workforce.

2.1 Leadership

Primary school head teachers and leads of school early education provision nurseries will have overall responsibility for ensuring that members of their staff have the relevant skills and knowledge to support transitions and ensure that the FP is delivered effectively. Larger primary schools will also normally have a separate lead for the delivery of the FP, so the extent to which they personally get involved in supporting staff on ensuring smooth transitions will be dependent on the extent to which they devolve that area of work to their FP lead. Practitioners are likely to be encouraged to attend training sessions run by their local authorities or third sector organisations.

2.2 Staff support for transitions

There is national guidance to support those providing services as part of the Flying Start Programme with all transitions, including to early education. The need for support from early education to primary is minimised by the fact that the majority of children experience a phased approach when they attend a FP school nursery in the year before they attend the primary school to which it is attached.

There is, however, a greater need for school staff to be aware of the learning and development of children who move from a private or voluntary sector nursery to a primary school. Arrangements for this support will vary locally and in the best cases the local authority or regional consortia will provide support and training, which is likely to be in the form of case studies, infographics, training days, action research days, open days at other schools/settings and possibly regional conferences run by academic/research institutions or consortia to settings/schools, on this aspect.

In maintained primary schools whilst the general duty to identify and make provision for children with SEN lies with the Governing Body; provision for pupils with SEN is a matter for the school as a whole. Each primary school will have a SENCO who has overall responsibility for ensuring the coordination of special education provision to all learners with SEN within the education setting.

The SENCO will work closely with the headteacher, senior management and teachers on the strategic development of SEN policy and provision as well as overseeing the day-to-day operation of the schools SEN policy and provision. For a learner transitioning to the school, who is known to have SEN, the SENCO, headteacher and other staff should:

- in a timely fashion, seek to use information arising from the learner's previous educational experience to provide starting points for the development of an appropriate curriculum for the child
- ensure that the learner's learning styles are taken into account to ensure there are planned opportunities for continuity and progression
- identify and focus attention on the learner's skills and highlight areas for early action to support the learner within the class
- use the curricular and baseline assessment processes to allow the child to show what they know, understand and can do, as well as to identify any learning difficulties
- ensure that ongoing observation and assessment provide regular feedback to teachers and parents about the learner's achievements and experiences and that the outcomes of such assessment form the basis for planning the next steps of the learner's learning, and
- involve parents in developing and implementing a joint learning approach at home and in school.

In early years settings including maintained nursery schools whilst the general duty to identify and make provision for children with SEN lies with the local authority the provision for pupils with SEN is a matter for everyone in the setting.

Early years settings, except specialist SEN provision, will need to identify a member of staff to act as the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO). In the case of accredited child minders who are part of an approved network, the SENCO role may be shared between individual child minders and the co-ordinator of the network.

Larger primary schools will often have dedicated staff with responsibility for working with families experiencing difficulties and/or who have responsibility for working with children from disadvantaged backgrounds, often supported by central funding through the Pupil Development Grant.

2.3 Collaborations between authorities and ECEC/primary school on professional continuity

There is a wide range of differing approaches to collaboration. These range from separate nursery schools to integrated children centres where everything from maternity services to ECEC is co-located within the local primary school.

This is an important area of development and the Welsh Government is using levers at its disposal, such as 21st Century Schools and Education Programme - its school building and refurbishment programme, to ensure local authorities plan to ensure that primary schools collaborate effectively with ECEC providers.

In determining whether the provision of childcare is sufficient in their area local authorities must have regard to the needs of parents for the provision of childcare which enables them to access their FP early education entitlement.

Chapter 3: Pedagogical continuity

3.1 Curriculum framework and development goals

Pedagogical continuity from ECEC is not an issue in Wales as the curriculum runs from 3 to 7 year olds. However, there may be discontinuities related to children moving from an organisation which is delivering the FP well to one which is not. The implementation of a Foundation Phase Action Plan by the Welsh Government and its key delivery partners - aims to reduce the levels of inconsistency nationally.

A change in pedagogy happens when the child moves to the more formal delivery of education in the latter years of primary (age 7–11 years). Often this will affect the delivery of the pedagogy in the FP as schools phase into a new approach. However, this is mainly true for the later years of the FP.

The introduction of the new national curriculum will bring a standard pedagogy running from age 3 to 16 years. The new curriculum will be organised into 6 Areas of Learning and Experience (based on the FP philosophy of Areas of Learning) that establish the breadth of the curriculum. The FP was recognised as a strength of the current education system in Wales and many of its approaches, such as experiential learning, will form the basis of the new curriculum.

3.2 Pedagogy

The FP draws on evidence from early years programmes in Scandinavia, New Zealand (Te Whāriki) and the Reggio Emilia approach in northern Italy which indicate that experiential, play based approaches resulted in higher standards of attainment compared with a more formal curriculum. The approach emphasises the centrality of the child, the significance of children's well-being and advocates a balance of child-initiated and practitioner-directed (or practitioner-initiated) activities within stimulating indoor and outdoor environments. The FP, other than on international research, was based on Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning before Compulsory School Age (ACCAC 2000), and is linked in with the Programmes of Study and focus statements that were in the National Curriculum for KS1.

The FP curriculum is set out in the FP Framework Document. Its key pedagogical principles are set out as follows:

'The Foundation Phase encompasses the developmental needs of children. At the centre of the statutory curriculum framework lies the holistic development of children and their skills, building on their previous learning experiences and knowledge. The Foundation Phase curriculum promotes equality of opportunity and values, and celebrates diversity. Positive partnerships with the home are fostered and an appreciation of parents/carers being the children's first educators is recognised.

Children learn through first-hand experiential activities with the serious business of 'play' providing the vehicle. Through their play, children practise and consolidate their learning, play with ideas, experiment, take risks, solve problems, and make decisions individually, in small and in large groups. First-hand experiences allow children to develop an understanding of themselves and the world in which they live. The

development of children's self-image and feelings of self-worth and self-esteem are at the core.

The FP curriculum is planned as a progressive framework that spans four years (three to seven years) to meet the diverse needs of all children, including those who are at an earlier stage of development and those who are more able. Throughout their formative years, children's learning develops more rapidly than at any other time. However, progress is not even and children go through periods of rapid development and times when they seem to regress. A curriculum for young children should be appropriate to their stage of learning rather than focusing solely on age-related outcomes to be achieved. Children should move on to the next stages of their learning when they are developmentally ready and at their own pace.

Indoor and outdoor environments that are fun, exciting, stimulating and safe promote children's development and natural curiosity to explore and learn through first-hand experiences. The Foundation Phase environment should promote discovery and independence and a greater emphasis on using the outdoor environment as a resource for children's learning'.

The curriculum is flexible with a broad range of activities and learning and development skills set out for seven Areas of Learning (AoL). The AoL have been identified to describe an appropriate curriculum for 3-7 year olds that supports the development of children and their skills. The Framework sets out that they must complement each other and work together to provide a cross-curricular approach to form a practical relevant curriculum and should not be approached in isolation. Emphasis is placed on developing children's skills across the AoL, to provide a suitable and integrated approach for young children's learning. The seven AoL are:

- Personal and Social Development, Well-being and Cultural Diversity
- Language, Literacy and Communication Skills
- Mathematical Development
- Welsh Language Development
- Knowledge and Understanding of the World
- Physical Development
- Creative Development.

The delivery of the literacy and numeracy elements of the FP are tied in to the more general approach by a national Literacy and Numeracy Framework, introduced in September 2014, which sets out a development pathway and the specific outcomes for children aged 3 to 14. The development of effective approaches to literacy and numeracy is supported by national programmes.

Delivery of the FP is also supported by a range of guidance documents and other resources, including those related to active learning, outdoor learning and observation. The initial implementation of the FP was supported by a national training programme and training modules. However, over time, training approaches and materials have been developed and delivered locally. An exercise to identify and share best practice began in

2017. This work has already resulted in a number of case studies being made available via the Foundation Phase Excellence Network (FPEN) Zone⁶ on Hwb.

3.3 Child development

The Healthy Child Wales Programme sets out what planned contacts children and their families can expect from their health boards; from maternity service handover to the first years of schooling.

The programme will be implemented fully by all Health Boards across Wales by October 2018. The programme includes a consistent range of evidence based preventative and early intervention measures which aims to support children to meet all growth and development milestones. Work has commenced on scoping out the next phase of the Healthy Child Wales Programme, which will raise the age range to 16, to incorporate all children of compulsory school age.

One of the fundamental elements of the FP is that schools and nurseries should fully engage parents in their child's learning. Schools and nurseries are required to provide an annual report to parents which sets out the child's progress and next steps in all the AoL. Schools are required to undertake a 'baseline assessment' of children in the first 6 weeks of primary school i.e. the school year in which they turn 5, using the Foundation Phase Profile (see Section 1.5 for more detail). The Profile is suitable for use from age 3 and is being widely used on a voluntary basis for children before they enter primary school. The intention is to make this a universal approach.

The Foundation Phase Profile has been designed to be suitable for all children. It aligns with assessments carried out by health professionals and supports early identification of possible developmental delay or SEN. This will ensure support is given to children who need it. The assessments gathered as part of the profile will provide useful information for all stakeholders in children's learning and development, supporting transitions between settings and schools.

The Profile does not provide sufficient detail to fully assess SEN and therefore practitioners may need to use appropriate assessments designed for specific purposes as well as seek advice from SENCOs or appropriate professionals with the support and permission of the parents and carers. Nevertheless the Profile should alert teachers to children who have particular difficulties of whom some may have special educational needs. Children whose overall attainments or attainment in specific subjects fall significantly outside the expected range may have special educational needs.

The SEN Code of Practice recognises that 'at the heart of the work of every primary school class is a continuous cycle of planning, teaching and assessing which takes account of the wide range of abilities, aptitudes and interests of children.' The majority of children will learn and progress within these arrangements. Early years education settings are required to have regard to the SEN Code of Practice which includes planning for children with SEN through Early Years or Early Years Action Plus. Schools should make full use of information passed to them when the child transfers from early

⁶ <https://hwb.gov.wales/fpen>

years education provision including records for children already identified as having SEN in an early years setting.

Differentiated teaching is often the first course of action for children that do not appear to be making progress either generally or in a specific aspect of learning. If these difficulties continue then this may indicate the need for a level of help above that which is normally available for children in the particular early years setting or school.

The current SEN system recognises that there is a continuum of SEN and individual settings will decide the exact procedures they should adopt and the nature and content of the special educational provision. SEN are currently met through three graduated stages of intervention:

- **School Action/Early Years Action** where additional support is provided by the school;
- **School Action Plus/Early Years Action Plus** where additional support is provided by the schools together with the involvement of external agencies; and
- **A Local authority Statement of SEN** where a legal entitlement to a specified package of support is provided.

The additional or different provision from the differentiated curriculum plan provided in School Action and School Action Plus should be recorded in an 'Individual Education Plan'.

Whilst children with special educational needs who have attended a nursery class, playgroup or other early years setting should have had their needs identified already it is possible that some may not. Schools should be aware that any child admitted to the reception class or transferring from one school to another during the primary phase may have unidentified SEN.

It is possible that some children under five will receive considerable support without the necessity of making a statement. If a local authority decides that a child's needs are such that they will require a statement prior to entering primary school then careful attention should be paid to the parents' views and to information available from the full range of assessment arrangements within all the relevant agencies making provision for young children with special needs. The child's general health and development and home circumstances should be carefully considered to ensure that a learning difficulty is not directly related to wider family problems.

Records produced by an early years setting for a child with a possible special need should be passed on to the school with the parent's consent. The importance and benefits to their child of providing these records to schools should also be carefully explained to parents.

Flying Start support for Speech Language and Communication (SLC) is multi-faceted and the Flying Start workforce responsible for delivering early SLC interventions is diverse. This includes health visitors, childcare staff, community nursery nurses, and Speech and Language Therapists. Flying Start SLC intervention includes evidence based activities to engage and inform parents of the importance of interacting and communicating with children from birth to aid SLC development. Structured interventions

are offered to Flying Start families to encourage and develop early speaking and listening skills between the children and their parents.

3.4 Collaboration between authorities and ECEC/primary school on pedagogical continuity

As described earlier, the emphasis in Wales is not on pedagogical continuity from pre-school to primary school, as the FP runs across both, but on ensuring consistency of delivery of the FP across all organisations. Section 1.4 sets out the parties involved in that aspect and their roles.

Chapter 4: Developmental continuity

4.1 Collaborations with the child

Putting the child at the centre is an essential part of the pedagogical principles of the FP. The FP Framework sets out that children should be given the opportunity to express themselves and be actively involved in shaping their learning experience.

Children within the FP are given opportunities to learn and understand through first-hand experiences and by helping to plan and take part in practical activities relevant to their developmental stage. The FP puts the child at its heart. The child has choice and participates – and is involved in initiating and directing his or her own learning over a period of time. They learn from first hand, exploratory and practical hands on activities and should be challenged appropriately and supported by the adults and the environment in which they are learning to progress. This would naturally fit in with an approach of helping the child move from ECEC to primary education.

4.2 Collaborations with the home environment

Parental discussion is a key element of all transitions. Schools and settings are required to report to parents annually on how their child is doing, and are expected to develop strong links with parents in order to encourage them to be actively engaged in their child's learning and development. We know that this is an area where improvement is needed as the evaluation of the FP highlighted that its introduction had not improved the extent to which schools and nurseries engage with parents.

In June 2015 the Welsh Government published its Family and Community Engagement (FaCE) the Challenge Together toolkit. This is a practical resource to help schools reach out to all families and communities and to engage with them as serious and practical partners in education.

The FaCE toolkit has been welcomed by schools and academics, and has a strong focus on helping schools engage with families living in poverty and in deprived areas. For the early years (0-7) the toolkit encourages practitioners to help families to:

- have conversations that encourage children's natural inquisitiveness and love of learning
- play with their child, including role play, to encourage purposeful talk
- read stories together and talk about the pictures, and
- teach songs and nursery rhymes.

The FaCE toolkit links closely with the Welsh Government's Education Begins at Home (EBaH) campaign which encourages families to do simple things at home that greatly support their child's learning. The campaign has a specific focus on school readiness.

The EBaH campaign is designed to help bridge the learning gap between the most affluent and deprived pupils by demonstrating to parents and carers how simple things they do at home can help their child in school. 'Ready to Learn', launched in 2016, is a key element of this campaign. This was designed to help parents and carers prepare their child for school through a range of engaging resources.

The 'How is my Child Doing in the Foundation Phase?' booklet is provided to all parents of children who have completed their first year of FP. It explains the fundamental pedagogical principles and broad approaches of the FP and sets out what parents can expect from schools and settings. It also offers suggestions on how they can support their child's learning and development.

4.3 Collaborations at setting level

The links between settings delivering the Flying Start Programme for 0-3 year olds and schools are increasingly being developed with those which are co-located having particularly strong links.

The types of collaboration at setting level vary markedly due to the considerable variety in the delivery of the FP across the 22 Welsh local authorities – relating to the hours of provision, extent of the use of private and third sector nurseries, and local authority / consortium arrangements.

The umbrella organisations for the private and third sector nurseries will often provide advice and guidance and a network of others to which settings could look to for support. Formal approaches of school/setting to school/setting support are becoming increasingly common. Individual schools will also often develop formal or informal links with nurseries from which they commonly receive pupils.

4.4 Collaborations with early childhood services and other settings, agencies or organisations

Flying Start will be involved in the transition from the childcare they provide to an early education setting. How they should be involved is set out in Welsh Government guidance, but there will be a variation in how effectively this operates in practice.

Where children have a recognised significant health condition then health services will normally be involved in supporting the children through transitions by working with those schools/settings and parents.

The universal child health surveillance programme run by Health Visitors, is designed to identify children with developmental delays, and respond to parental concern. Any child demonstrating developmental problems is offered appropriate interventions from health professionals and community resources. If despite these interventions the child has a residual difficulty likely to impact on their education, the health professionals refer them on to local authority education services for an assessment of any special educational needs that may require additional support in school.

Chapter 5: Challenges and strategies

5.1 Strategies to overcome challenges

The Childcare Offer

The new Childcare Offer represents a major change in ECEC provision in Wales and a major opportunity to enhance children's experiences. The detail of how this is implemented is being considered carefully to ensure that the early education element is preserved or enhanced and that the quality of ECEC is maintained at a high level.

Flexibility of Foundation Phase Nursery provision (the early education offer)

Linked to the Childcare Offer, we need to ensure that early education is flexible and fits with childcare arrangements to ensure that it is as easy as possible for parents to access both to encourage maximum take-up of early education. Wales has large rural areas where this is a particular challenge as a proportionally large number of childcare settings would be needed to enable parents to readily access local provision. In urbanised areas, a large number of childcare settings delivering early education also present the challenge of ensuring that they are given sufficient support to deliver early education provision.

Curriculum reform

In time the FP will form part of the new curriculum and assessment arrangements and extensive work for this major change has already begun. Ensuring that the early years aspect of the new curriculum maximises the development of children will be a key element of the design work.

Consistency of pedagogy

While the FP Framework and Profile provide a consistent basis for the pedagogy being delivered in early education and primary school, evidence has shown that there are inconsistencies in the extent to which how well the FP pedagogy is being delivered. The Foundation Phase Action Plan aims to put in place a number of actions to improve consistency, including updating training, initial teacher training, further parental engagement support materials as well as school/setting to school/setting support.

The Foundation Phase Excellence Network (FPEN) launched in March 2018 provides a structured approach for Foundation Phase pedagogical support through a virtual collaboration of regional education consortia, non-maintained sector umbrella organisations, identified lead schools and settings, and other relevant stakeholders. FPEN partners work together to improve the teaching and learning of Foundation Phase in various education settings across Wales, primarily through supporting practitioners develop innovative pedagogies and enhanced practice.

The network will:

- strengthen the links between schools, settings, consortia and local authorities to universities to develop research on professional learning for Foundation Phase practitioners.
- use global and local evidence to develop nationally recognised Foundation Phase professional learning for staff, and
- support Pioneer Network Schools in the development of professional learning for the new curriculum.

The delivery of the FPEN is supported by a FPEN zone on Hwb – the Welsh Government’s education platform - which provides access to a ‘one stop shop’ for Foundation Phase education to facilitate:

- sharing of research informed practice
- setting up action research networks between schools/settings and universities
- access to courses and conferences
- sharing of resources.

The Childcare, Play and early years workforce

It is recognised in Wales that having a highly skilled childcare and play workforce is key in delivering effective services in the early years, and evidence suggests this is particularly key for those children living in disadvantage. To support professional development of the sector the Welsh Government’s Childcare, Play and Early Years Workforce Plan, was published in 2017. The Welsh Government’s ambition is to develop a highly skilled and highly regarded childcare and play workforce, which is seen as a profession and a career of choice and one which society recognises for the vital role the sector plays in supporting our children’s development. The plan sets out proposals across 3 key themes:

- Attracting High Quality Recruits
- Raising Standards and Skills
- Investing in Building Capacity and Capability.

We will introduce a new suite of childcare and play qualifications across levels 2-5. These will be introduced for teaching in September 2019. The new qualifications will provide structured career pathways and progressions routes to other related sectors such as health and education and includes a pathway to pursue a childhood development degree route. The Welsh Government’s all age Apprenticeship programme will play a key role in supporting the sector to up skill and training their workforce including higher level apprenticeships. The Progress for Success ESF funded programme also supports the up skill of the workforce by funding existing practitioners to undertake the approved childcare and play qualifications.

Specific funding for schools and providers of early education to support their children from the poorest backgrounds is likely to continue for at least the short term.

Additional Learning Needs Transformation Programme

Implementation of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 and delivery of the wider ALN Transformation Programme is underway.

A critical part of this work includes developing the skills of the education workforce to deliver effective support to learners with ALN in the classroom and easier access to specialist support, information and advice. By ensuring practitioners have the necessary skills to effectively operate the new system we will ensure consistency across Wales and transform the expectations, experiences and outcomes for children and young people with ALN.

Information sharing

Significant progress has been made in putting in effective processes to share information between settings providing childcare for 2-3 year olds as part of the Flying Start programme and the nurseries to which they subsequently move. Individual profiles are

provided for each child leaving Flying Start childcare and starting in a new Foundation Phase setting. Individual profiles provide relevant information to Foundation Phase settings regarding an individual child's needs and skills. This enables schools and settings to prepare for a child's next steps in learning and address any identified needs.

Another effective way of information sharing which has been adopted by many Flying Start teams locally is arranging face-to-face meetings between Flying Start and Foundation Phase practitioners. This provides an opportunity for discussion about the individual needs and skills of a child as they move from Flying Start to the Foundation Phase. The Flying Start programme benefits about 25% of children in Wales and further improvements in approaches are needed for all children.

Speech and language

Programmes are in place to provide support and knowledge to parents in order for them to help their children to develop their language skills as early and effectively as possible. The Welsh Government has also commissioned a review of the support services available for early intervention on speech and language difficulties.

References and links

Qualitative research with Flying Start families: Wave 3

<https://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/national-evaluation-flying-start/?lang=en>

Evaluating the Foundation Phase: Final Report (Welsh Government, 2015)

<http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/evaluation-foundation-phase/?lang=en>

The Foundation Phase Action Plan (Welsh Government, 2016)

<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/foundation-phase/action-plan/?lang=en>

An independent stocktake of the Foundation Phase in Wales (Siraj, 2014)

<http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/20340/1/140519-independent-stocktake-of-the-foundation-phase-in-wales-en.pdf>

Qualitative research with Flying Start families: Wave 3

<https://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/national-evaluation-flying-start/?lang=en>

Successful Futures: Review of Curriculum and Assessment (Welsh Government, 2015)

<http://learning.gov.wales/news/sitenews/successful-futures/?lang=en>

The Children and Young People Well-being Monitor (Welsh Government, 2008)

<http://gov.wales/docs/caecd/research/081117-children-young-people-well-being-monitor-2008-en.pdf>

Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan (Welsh Government, 2013)

<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/earlyyearshome/building-a-brighter-future-early-years-and-childcare-plan/?lang=en>

Early Years Outcomes Framework (Welsh Government, 2015)

<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/earlyyearshome/early-years-outcomes-framework/?lang=en>

Flying Start, including Transitions Guidance (Welsh Government, 2014)

<http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/children-and-young-people/parenting-support-guidance/help/flyingstart/?lang=en>

Flying Start Evaluation (Welsh Government, 2015)

<http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/national-evaluation-flying-start/?lang=en>

Teaching Tomorrow's Teachers

<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/publications/wagreviews/teaching-tomorrows-teachers/?lang=en>

The Foundation Phase Profile (Welsh Government, 2015)

<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/foundation-phase/foundation-phase-profile/?lang=en>

Childcare, Play and Early Years Workforce Plan

<http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/children-and-young-people/early-years/childcare-play-early-years-workforce-plan/?lang=en>

National Minimum Standards for Regulated Childcare

<https://gov.wales/docs/dsjlg/publications/cyp/160411-regulated-child-care-en.pdf>

Progress for Success (Welsh Government, 2016)

<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/earlyyearshome/progress-for-success/?lang=en>

The Foundation Phase Framework (Welsh Government, 2015)

<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/earlyyearshome/foundation-phase/?lang=en>

Literacy and Numeracy Framework (Welsh Government, 2014)

<http://learning.gov.wales/resources/browse-all/nlnf/?lang=en>

National Literacy and Numeracy Programme (Welsh Government, 2016)

<http://learning.gov.wales/docs/learningwales/publications/160316-national-literacy-and-numeracy-programmes-en.pdf>

Family and Community Engagement Toolkit

<http://learning.gov.wales/resources/browse-all/family-and-community-engagement-toolkit/?lang=en>

Education Begins at Home (Welsh Government, 2016)

<http://gov.wales/newsroom/educationandskills/2016/get-children-ready-to-start-school/?lang=en>

How is my child doing in the Foundation Phase?

<http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/170627-hwst-foundation-en.pdf>

Well-Being of Future Generations Act 2015

<http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/future-generations-act/?lang=en>

Early childhood transition's research. A review of concept , theory, and practice (Vogler Crivello & Woodhead, 2008)

http://oro.open.ac.uk/16989/1/Vogler_et_al_Transitions_PDF.DAT.pdf

Additional learning needs transformation programme

<https://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/additional-learning-special-educational-needs/transformation-programme/?lang=en>

The Children and Young People Wellbeing Monitor for Wales in 2008

<https://gov.wales/docs/caecd/research/081117-children-young-people-well-being-monitor-2008-en.pdf>

Case Studies



*Wales Pre-school
Providers Association*

*Cymdeithas Darparwyr
Cyn-ysgol Cymru*

Transition Case Studies, Conwy, September 2016

Llanddulas Playgroup

Llanddulas Playgroup is a long established sessional care facility operating from the site of Ysgol Llanddulas.

The voluntary managed playgroup was established in 1970 and was initially sited in a Youth and Community centre in the village before moving to the 'Old Schoolhouse' on the school site. More recently they moved to the purpose-built venue on the site that they share with the schools Nursery class.

The playgroup is open five mornings per week during term time and welcomes children from the age of 2 years and 3 months up to 5 years of age. The group provide both funded early education for younger 3 year olds and wraparound care for children who will attend the Nursery class in the afternoon. This arrangement provides a valuable link between the playgroup and the school and this link is reinforced by playgroup regularly inviting teaching staff from the school to come to their group to participate in and lead activities.

The playgroup also attend activities within the school and share facilities where appropriate so overall, the transition from playgroup is as seamless as possible.

The playgroup retains their autonomy as an independent voluntary managed setting but they enjoy an excellent and mutually respectful working relationship with the school Head and other teaching staff.



Wales *Pre-school*
Providers Association

Cymdeithas Darparwyr
Cyn-ysgol Cymru

Case study on transitions between NMS and schools;

Aberporth Playgroup

Aberporth Playgroup is a bilingual setting based in a chapel vestry on the Cardiganshire coast.

High quality practice example and its positive impact upon children's learning, development and wellbeing.

The setting has strong links with a variety of professionals and local primary school allowing them to support each child's transition into the next steps of their education. Practitioners provide opportunities for teachers from the local school to attend the setting in order to see children that will transition in an environment where they are most comfortable. All assessments/observations made are shared and provide foundations for children to continue their learning and development on their transition into school.

Due to the excellent partnership between parents, carers, children and professionals the practitioners are able to provide the best possible care and support to enhance each child's learning and development. Estyn identified the children's enthusiasm to attend the playgroup and leave their parent or carer "without a care in the world". All the children engage in activities set out and fully understand daily routines and display outstanding attitudes, care and concern for each other. This provides children with confidence and supportive transition links to allow the transition from playgroup into school a seamless and positive experience.

The setting provides a nurturing environment for all children to feel safe and secure allowing them to reach their full potential. Parents value the care shown towards children which provides the foundations for partnerships to develop between practitioners, children and parents.

Case Study - August 2016

Registered Childminder delivering Flying Start provision – Supporting transitions

Overview

This is one of a range of case studies which have been prepared to demonstrate examples of good practice where childminders are delivering Flying Start childcare in Wales. PACEY Cymru strives to raise standards within the sector and provides a range of support to assist with the continuous professional development of individual childcare practitioners. The childminders featured in each of these case studies have benefitted from PACEY Cymru support and guidance to aid their practice.

The purpose of this series of case studies is to raise awareness and evidence the quality of service and professionalism that can be achieved by registered childminders who are providing local authority funded care and/or education.

Overview of the setting

Childminder E registered in Torfaen during 2002, and currently delivers Flying Start funded childcare in Cwmbran. They are currently working towards the PACEY Cymru Quality Comes Home Award, having to date completed Fellow level of PACEY Professional Standards. To support with completion of the award they attended the Foundation Years Policy into Practice Workshop during summer 2016.

Childminder E has been working closely with PACEY Cymru to support their ongoing Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and progression.

“Great [progress has been made with the Quality Comes Home Award] only with the help of yourself through PACEY.”

Childminder E, Torfaen

They have accessed a range of PACEY Cymru training and support from initial pre-registration training and guidance, newly registered support and through regular attendance at PACEY Cymru events such as regional Local meetings where they have contributed to discussions and shared their experiences with peers. Childminder E also makes use of the PACEY website and membership benefits often for further information including the fact sheets, practice guides and ‘how to’ videos to support their CPD.

Having already completed a level 3 qualification, PACEY Cymru have facilitated their access to work towards a level 5 qualification in Children’s Care Learning and Development (CCLD) with Educ8. This is also helping them to progress their knowledge and reflect on practice.

Supporting transitions

Childminder E recognises the importance of supporting children through transitions, particularly as they move from the childcare setting to school. Having recently completed a unit of the level 5 CCLD qualification [*Children’s Care, Learning and Development qualification*] on transitions, they were able to reflect more deeply on ways to support a specific Flying Start funded child whilst planning for their transition into school.

In order to support the transition to school for this child, a number of strategies were adopted:

- Opportunities to discuss the transition with the child were created.
- Taking visits to the school in order to become familiar with the environment

- Using books and resources to support discussion and help make sense of this period of change.
- The introduction of school uniforms and bags to the 'home corner' within the setting, in order to encourage familiarity of these and support role play opportunities around the theme of school.
- The development of a transition policy which will benefit all children and families accessing the service.
- The introduction of packed lunches, as the child in question would be staying on for lunch once in school. This was seen as an opportunity to introduce routines that will be familiar for the child when they move to school.
- Partnership working with the school teacher to support their understanding of the individual child. This was addressed by arranging a meeting with the school teacher in order to discuss the child's development, and providing a copy of the Flying Start Baseline Record form which was completed by themselves along with the SOGS document [*Schedule of Growing Skills*] which had been completed by the child's Health Visitor.

The feedback from the school was positive and helped with planning in advance of the child starting, it's felt that good working relationships between childcare and schools are paramount to a smooth transition for the children involved.

A number of the strategies adopted and in particular the setting's policy on supporting transitions will be of benefit to all children accessing the service.

What next?

PACEY Cymru continue to work with the setting as they progress with their PACEY Cymru Quality Comes Home Award.

Childminder E will continue to work towards the level 5 qualification in Children's Care Learning and Development, and to access training and guidance from PACEY Cymru to support their ongoing CPD.

PACEY Cymru continue to provide information, training, support and guidance on good practice in relation to support transitions. PACEY Cymru offers a workshop on 'children's emotional development', individuals can book on to access this by Webinar. PACEY members are able to access a how to video and practice guide specifically on 'transitions'. To support settings with looking towards supporting children who will be moving to school in September, the July 2016 practice page focussed on transitions, this included links to the recent Welsh Government 'Ready to Learn' campaign.

There is a wealth of information available through PACEY to support in preparing for the transition to school, through their 'School Ready Campaign'. One example for childcare settings is this Blog posted in 2015 [Moving on, moving up: supporting transitions](#), there are also resources and information for parents on [Starting School Together](#).

Setting: The Mill Childcare Centre Ltd
Local Authority: Denbighshire
Setting Type: Day Nursery
Case Study: Transition process from home through to school

Background

The nursery has a strong key worker process which is implemented as soon as a child registers to attend the setting. Every practitioner has their own key worker box- this is a personal box to the practitioner and contains such things as a photo of the staff member, a bit about them as people such as how long they have worked in the nursery, their pets, own children if they have them, interests etc as well as a few things such as stickers, simple objects children like to touch and feel (a bracelet, some pens, key ring, soft toy etc) Parents can take the box home and look through it with the child to help build a trusting supportive relationship as well as the child looking at it in the nursery with their key worker as part of a bonding process.

The nursery offer free sessions when a new child joins the nursery- this enables the child and key worker to bond and for a relationship to start to develop between the nursery and the family which is so important.

Transition process from home - nursery

The nursery ensures that each child has their own coat peg with a photo or picture on it before their first day in nursery to give them some sense of belonging and to show they are valued and important and that the nursery are prepared for the children to join the setting.

Every child also has a water bottle with their photograph attached to it to help develop independence and to have free access to fresh drinking water. This again also helps make them feel included within the setting and provide a sense of belonging and inclusion.

When a child first joins the setting, they ask parents to provide information about their Childs routine to help provide consistency and familiarity and are also encouraged to bring a special comforter if they have one for security in those early days.

Transition between rooms within the nursery

When the nursery are preparing a child to move from one unit to the next they ensure the child's key worker is the one who takes them to the next group to play and to provide familiarity and security and then the key worker will start to ease away when they feel the child is ready. A new key worker is identified before the children move into the next room and the two key workers share information that will help the child settle and feel prepared for the transition. Parents are kept informed of these visits through written and verbal feedback, practitioners will also often take photos of the child in the first week of nursery for parents to keep.

Transition from nursery to school:

The nursery invite local schools to visit the setting each term to get to know the children and to identify children who are planning to join their school in the upcoming September term.

Not all schools take up the offer of visiting the nursery, those schools which have visited have proved a positive experience for the children, enabling the children to meet and get to know their future teacher whilst helping them to look forward to the transition rather than be worried or nervous when they leave the nursery setting.

During visits from schools, teachers have read stories in circle time, had chats with the children and played simple games. This has worked positively, although the setting would like to strengthen this engagement and make it more structured if possible to get maximum benefit for the children for the all important transition.

Denbighshire County Council employs family link workers to strengthen the relationship between families and settings in order to further support transition.

At the end of the summer term the settings link worker collects the children's progress reports that the setting completes for each child and shares these with the feeder schools for each child. Parents also receive their child's observation and development books to take home once the child leaves the setting.

Developing good practice

As children transit throughout the nursery they ask parents to complete a room evaluation, enabling the nursery to make sure each child's experience was positive and to identify any areas they can improve further.

The nursery manager embeds the importance of the transition process within practitioner inductions and within regular staff newsletters outlining that:

“the better the transitions the better the outcome for the child. It works for us and we can see the confidence the children gain from these transitions being strong and in the environment the children feel secure in.”

The nursery works hard to continually develop the transition process further.

Setting: Gofal Plant Gogerddan
Local Authority: Ceredigion
Setting Type: Day Nursery
Case Study: Transition process for children with Additional learning needs

Background:

Gofal Plant Gogerddan's policy is to be fully inclusive for all children, regardless of their individual needs. In order to ensure this is fully implemented, they fund the cost of additional staff so that any child with additional needs has the full support they require at nursery. They receive support from the County's Helping Hand's scheme – maximum of 10 hours additional support for school term weeks to employ a Support Worker (Helping Hands). The nursery are open for 51 weeks of the year therefore they will fund any additional hours needed and during the school holidays if required so that any child is able to attend for the length of time the parents wish.

The nursery arrange any relevant training from other professionals e.g. speech and language therapist - Sign Along training / Intensive Interaction Training not only for the helping hand employed but for the whole team within the room to ensure everyone is able to help the child/ren with additional needs.

Transition process:

The nursery have developed a strong transition process to support all children throughout the nursery and especially to ensure the smooth transition for children with additional needs as they move on to school. They work very closely with families and a range of professionals to ensure everyone is prepared for the transition, contacting the schools children will attend with their suggested transition plan for each individual child – this has received a positive response from the schools.

School staff which will be working with the relevant child/ren visit them in the setting and the Helping Hands from the nursery then goes to the school with the child for planned sessions prior to the child's start date. The nursery also work closely with parents to help prepare for transition, e.g. offering a longer session to help prepare the child for the longer school day.

Following a new child enrolling at the nursery, as a team, they have worked very closely with the family, SEN Advisory teacher and other professionals involved as a multi-agency approach to develop and improve a "one page profile" so that anyone who works with the child at home or in nursery has a better understanding of their needs and how to respond to them.

Impact on children's standards/provision: The Nursery have discovered that the revised transition process is a lot smoother for the child and the child settles far quicker in the new environment. Schools have taken on what the nursery have suggested e.g. a staged start to the term to ensure the child does not get overtired.

The Nursery feels that the process enables schools to be better prepared and able to adapt their environment, if necessary, to accommodate the child's needs.

How does the nursery share good practice?

They welcome visits from other settings and during the last twelve months have received visits from local schools and settings, day nurseries from Montgomery and Newport. The nursery also discusses their initiatives with the LA Advisory Teacher, who then shares the good practice with other settings in the county; with the LA Early Years additional needs teacher and a variety of other agencies.

The nursery sees transition as an evolving process to support children's individual needs and as such continues to gather feedback from the feeder schools and families and will adapt the transition process as necessary in order to ensure the smoothest transition possible for each child within their care.

Case study – Transition

Cylch Meithrin Y Llys, Prestatyn, Denbighshire, North Wales

Cylch Meithrin Y Llys is a Welsh medium cylch meithrin setting located in the grounds of Ysgol Y Llys, Prestatyn, Denbighshire. It opens for five days a week, six hours a day and is registered for 27 children a session. It accepts children from two and a half to three years old. It is an Early Years Education Provider and a Flying Start setting.

Cylch Meithrin Y Llys was a Foundation Phase pilot setting in 2008. Most of children do not come from Welsh speaking homes. The setting had a very good Estyn inspection in May 2016.

The Head Teacher of Ysgol Y Llys Dyfan Phillips is very supportive of the cylch and the cylch takes part in many of the school's activities. The children of the cylch take part in the end of term concerts held in the school hall and have a stall at the Christmas fair. When the school hold their parents 'open days and evenings, the leader of the cylch is invited to speak to parents about the services they provided. These services include the after school club (wrap around sessions) and the Ti a Fi (Parents and Toddlers) session. The Ti a Fi sessions are held in a classroom in the school and a member of the Cylch Meithrin staff runs these very popular and busy sessions.

There is a very strong and effective partnership between the cylch and the school. The Foundation Phase Head works closely with the cylch Leader on the planning of the continuous and enhanced provision. The nursery teacher advises and teaches in the setting for one tenth of the week. This assists and supports the children's transition arrangements. The arrangement for transferring assessments and personal information to the school are very effective. This supports the staff and the parents as the children settle into school.

The Cylch Meithrin and the school work on similar themes and the outdoor areas are adjacent. The setting also uses the school grounds for the children's physical development and for environmental investigations such as planting and growing. The Cylch Meithrin has a high staffing level and ensures that the resources are appropriate and in good condition. The parents and the voluntary management committee work together enthusiastically as a team. They support the cylch meithrin with fundraising and marketing. The Cylch Meithrin staff work closely with the local authority, outside agencies and with the Mudiad Meithrin Support Officer.

These very effective partnerships and the excellent planning for careful transition has resulted in a 100% transition from Cylch Meithrin Y Llys to the Welsh medium primary school.

Case Study - Transition

Cylch Meithrin Felinfoel, Llanelli, Carmarthenshire

Cylch Meithrin Felinfoel is located in the Children's Integrated Centre on the site of Ysgol Y Felin, Felinfoel, Llanelli. The children come from the town and the local area. The Cylch Meithrin is an Early Years Education Provider and also a Flying Start setting. The setting is registered to take 24 children per session and is open for both morning and afternoon sessions.

Most children come from homes where English is the main language but recently the cylch has welcomed children from Indian, Polish, Chinese, Turkish and Pakistani backgrounds. The cylch prides its self on having a wide variety of multicultural toys, books and puzzles and the children contribute fully to the objects in the continuous and enhanced provision.

The planning is adaptable enough to accommodate children's interests or their need to learn more about a topic. The cylch ensures that the children experience events that enhance their understanding of the cultural diversity and background of others. They regularly cook different foods associated with other countries and take part in activities such as celebrating the Chinese New Year and the festival of Divali.

The cylch makes positive use of the training received in areas such as provision for children with additional learning needs. The arrangements for practitioners' further professional development give good attention to the needs of children as well as the needs of the practitioners.

There are well established and constructive arrangements for supporting children with additional needs. The clear lines of communication with key agencies, such as children's services and speech therapists ensure appropriate advice and support for practitioners.

The cylch works closely and constructively with the voluntary management committee, the parents, the local authority link teacher and the Mudiad Meithrin Support Officer to develop the setting. The Cylch Meithrin regularly consults with the children in a variety of ways and the results of the consultations are evident and embedded in the cylch's practice.

There are productive links with the local Welsh medium school through visits by the children, discussions with staff and the opportunities for children to attend concerts and events organised by the school. There are strong links between the cylch and the local Ti a Fi (parents and toddlers) session.

The cylch has excellent links with the community and there is purposeful local fundraising for both the cylch and for local charities. Cylch Meithrin Felinfoel has won the

gold standard for 'Small Workplace Award', it promotes tooth brushing; participating in the 'Design to Smile' scheme and has won the 'Pre school Healthy eating Award'. These very effective partnerships, schemes and awards and the excellent planning for careful transition has resulted in very high transition numbers from Cylch Meithrin Felinfoel to the local Welsh Medium school.