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Monitoring and Evaluation of the Effective Implementation of the Foundation Phase (MEEIFP) Project across Wales

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Abstract

The Foundation Phase (FP) is a Welsh Assembly Government, national reform covering the combined 3-5 Early Years and Key Stage 1 provision (children aged between three and seven). In September 2004, the first stage of the pilot commenced in 41 pilot settings across the 22 local authorities in Wales for 3-5 year olds only. The 41 pilot settings will continue in 2005-2006 with Year 1 children (and some Year 2 children where mixed classes are operating) coming on board in the maintained sector and similarly Year 2 in 2006-2007.

The Foundation Phase proposes a continuum of learning for children from the ages of 3 to 7. The new curriculum is based on the current Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning before Compulsory School Age (ACCAC 2000), and links in with the Programmes of Study and focus statements currently in the National Curriculum for KS1. It contains seven areas of learning (AOL), which are:

personal and social development and well-being;

language, literacy and communication;

mathematical development;

bilingualism and multicultural understanding;

knowledge and understanding of the world;

physical development

creative development

The Foundation Phase advocates children learning through first hand experiential activities and play and places a child's personal and social development and well-being at the heart of the curriculum.

The Monitoring and Evaluation of the Effective Implementation of the Foundation Phase (MEEIFP) project is an evaluative study, commissioned and funded by the Welsh Assembly Government. This is the first year of a two-year evaluation, which is focused on implementation. Throughout the evaluation the MEEIFP team has worked closely with all the pilot settings and has consulted widely with all major stakeholders as well as some Welsh early years specialists.

Keywords

across, project, meeifp, phase, wales, foundation, monitoring, implementation, effective, evaluation

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**MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE
EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
FOUNDATION PHASE (MEEIFP) PROJECT
ACROSS WALES**

FINAL REPORT OF YEAR 1 PILOT –
ROLL OUT AGE 3-5 YEARS
NOVEMBER 2005

**AN EVALUATION FUNDED BY THE
WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT 2004-2005**

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	Head-teachers,	
	Governors,	
	Owner-managers,	
	Directors of Education,	
	Early Years Advisors and	
	EYDCPs	
	Associations	

1. Executive Summary and Recommendations

There is a glossary included in the report, which seeks to explain concepts, terms, acronyms and definitions used in this report.

The Foundation Phase (FP) is a Welsh Assembly Government, national reform covering the combined 3-5 Early Years and Key Stage 1 provision (children aged between three and seven). In September 2004, the first stage of the pilot commenced in 41 pilot settings across the 22 local authorities in Wales for 3-5 year olds only. The 41 pilot settings will continue in 2005-2006 with Year 1 children (and some Year 2 children where mixed classes are operating) coming on board in the maintained sector and similarly Year 2 in 2006-2007.

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The Evaluation Aims

To monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Foundation Phase in Wales through scrutinising:

- The implementation of the Foundation Phase; process, timing and content, support mechanisms.
- Transition issues for 3-5 year-olds and where possible, beyond this age.
- How appropriate and effective are the
 - Curriculum, its planning and implementation
 - Assessment strategies and record keeping
 - Qualifications and training of staff
 - Ratio of adults to children
 - Accommodation and resources
 - Organisation and management
 - Partnership with parents
 - Quality assurance, inspection

The MEEIFP project has explored six questions:

1. What does research tell us about effective pedagogy and curriculum for children of ages 3-7, drawing on key documents from the Welsh Assembly Government, for the Foundation Phase and from recent research studies?
2. What is the quality of provision provided by the pilot settings, and is it the *kind* of quality that has been shown to promote children's learning and attainment and meet the needs of the individual?
3. How do the 7 areas of learning in the Foundation Phase curriculum contribute to children's all-round development and what are the transition issues?
4. How does implementation differ for the Foundation Phase in the maintained and non-maintained sectors? And, how might any problems identified be overcome?
5. What are the perceptions of local authority partnerships, staff, parents and governors on the impact of the Foundation Phase in the pilot settings and the issues surrounding their implementation e.g. space, adult:child ratios, 'play' and the 'learning continuum' 3-7?
6. What are the main strengths of the Foundation Phase and the effective practice associated with it, where are the gaps which would make the implementation more successful e.g. in management or identifying training needs?

This report is based only on the first year's evaluation during which time the MEEIFP Team visited the pilot settings twice during the academic year 2004-2005. During these visits we conducted observations and interviewed practitioners and parents. In addition the Team devised, piloted and conducted semi-structured interviews and questionnaires with quantitative and qualitative components to obtain the perceptions and opinions of all major stakeholders involved in the pilot. All these data have been analysed in detail to provide the evidential basis for this report. The Team has also provided a Literature Review focusing on the current situation in Wales together with robust national and international research evidence on education and care of children aged 3 – 7.

Unlike many other educational reforms around the UK, it is refreshing that Welsh Assembly Government has built in evaluation from the first year of the pilot and implementation process. The purpose of the evaluation is to identify at an early stage of the implementation the strengths and limitations with the intention of informing and strengthening consequent years. As Jane Davidson the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning outlined:

"The pilots themselves will be carefully monitored and evaluated to ensure that standards are maintained and enhanced, and that all operational issues are identified and addressed".
(<http://www.learning.wales.gov.uk>)

Summary of Main findings

Current Quality and Standards

The MEEIFP Team visited all the pilot settings and rated each of them on three measures of quality: the ECERS-R (Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale: Revised) which assesses the daily routines, social interactions and facilities, the ECERS-E (Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale: Extension) which assesses the quality of the curriculum, and the CIS (Caregiver Interaction Scale) which assesses how responsive and sensitive the staff are as they interact with children. On most of these measures of quality, settings scored higher if they had qualified teachers on their staff.

There is a significantly higher proportion of qualified teachers working in maintained settings compared to either the private or the voluntary sectors. Thus the maintained sector in general had higher quality scores on the ECERS-E and the CIS. Settings with high scores on the curricular and pedagogical quality assessment (ECERS-E) tended to have high scores in the more general child centred assessment (ECERS-R). This shows that settings that nurtured children's intellectual development tended to nurture social-emotional development as well. However, the reverse was not true; some settings had high quality for social-emotional development but did not have a high quality curriculum to promote children's thinking and language. Surprisingly, settings with higher numbers of children for each staff member had higher quality scores; this was probably due to the fact that settings in the maintained sector which had more qualified teachers tended to have higher child: staff ratios as well.

In the first year of the pilot it was difficult to determine any change in standards in the absence of any measure of children's baseline attainment (this is not a study of child outcomes). We relied on the perceptions of stakeholders which were largely in relation to classroom management and organisation, the learning environment and learning opportunities as identified below. It is therefore too early in the pilot phase to provide any fully reliable evidence on changes in standards.

Based on stakeholders perceptions there is overwhelming support from all stakeholders for a greater emphasis on active learning and play. Almost all practitioners reported that improved ratios of 1:8 in the maintained sector have made a positive difference to the following:

- classroom management and organisation
- the learning environment
- learning opportunities

However the biggest impact was felt in organisation and management. More than two thirds of the non-maintained sector felt the introduction of the Foundation Phase had made a positive difference to educational experiences.

Practitioners identified the following:

The most prominent *strengths* of the first year of the Foundation Phase pilot implementation were identified as being:

- Curriculum based on play, active and experiential learning
- Child centred curriculum
- Broader / holistic / more relevant curriculum

The key *areas for improvement* in the first year of the Foundation Phase pilot implementation were identified as being:

- The need for clear guidance materials on AOLs and associated pedagogy
- Better planned and funded training
- Increased funding to improve management and resources

Curriculum and Pedagogy

There is overwhelming support for the FP curriculum and widespread agreement that the seven AOL provide a broad and balanced basis for children's learning and development in addition to strong support for the increased emphasis on active learning and play. High numbers of all respondents felt that the new AOL – Bilingualism and Multicultural Understanding had been most difficult to introduce, which was to be expected as it had only just been introduced at the start of the Foundation Phase pilot. However it is interesting to note that the non-maintained sector reported less difficulty in introducing this AOL than the maintained sector. In respect of the work ACCAC has undertaken there was a very mixed response to the degree in which participation in the working groups had benefited the

settings involved. Despite the Draft Framework being a more comprehensive document and Early Years Advisors generally feeling positive about its content, practitioners felt that it contained little new information in respect of content but that it had impacted positively on practice in terms of approach and style. In addition the majority of the non-maintained sector Associations reported that in its current draft format the DF was not very user friendly for their memberships. However, according to the Welsh Assembly Government and ACCAC this is not surprising as the remit for the Draft Framework was to build on the existing Desirable Outcomes and Key Stage 1 programmes of study. There is general dissatisfaction in the pilot settings and at Local Authority level that the guidance materials were not produced/delivered during the first year of the pilot. This, coupled with a perceived lack of communication about the status of the guidance timetable, has caused considerable difficulty and created heightened apprehension and concern about next year's pilot rolling on into KS1.

Assessment

All pilot settings have assessment strategies in place although the variation is considerable. We are aware that most LEAs have developed their own assessment strategies and that variation is to be expected. However given that there will be a national Foundation Phase Curriculum which is consistent across the sector the variation across LEAs may cause problems when children move across LEAs and might not provide the consistency required from preschool to school. A number of settings in both sectors identified that they would like further guidance and support with assessment for the Foundation Phase. It would be important and advantageous for the assessment continuum currently being produced by ACCAC to be used in all Foundation Phase settings to aid and support issues of transition, especially as Welsh Assembly Government continues to support a diverse range of providers to implement the Foundation Phase within the under-fives sector.

Transition

Currently transition arrangements between the maintained and non-maintained sectors are inconsistent and arbitrary. Procedures exist for internal transition within the Foundation Phase in the majority of school settings and some head-teachers have already started to plan for transition from the Foundation Phase to KS2. Generally stakeholders are positive that the Foundation Phase will provide continuity for KS2. However a number are concerned that children will have difficulty in transferring from a largely skills and dispositions based FP curriculum to a content driven curriculum in KS2 and feel that KS2 staff will need training about the FP. However as ACCAC reports the current proposed changes to the curriculum at Key Stage 2 should support the transition from the Foundation Phase to KS2.

Qualifications and Training

The range of qualifications held by staff working in the pilot settings varies greatly. A significantly higher proportion of staff are teachers with teacher qualifications in the maintained settings. The quality observations have shown that those settings with a higher proportion of qualified teachers score significantly higher on the ECERS-E (the curricular and pedagogical quality assessment) and the CIS (the 'emotional climate' assessment).

In respect of training there appears to be a large disparity in Foundation Phase training provided by each of the 22 LEAs across both sectors and at all levels - practitioner, head-teacher, governor and owner/manager. The Local Authorities reported difficulties in supporting Bilingualism without a stronger steer from either ACCAC or the Welsh Assembly Government and without further clarification on the meaning and expectations of Bilingualism. In addition a third of the LEAs reported difficulties for the non-maintained sector in attending local training largely due to a lack of available supply cover and the associated expenses. The Welsh Assembly Government did however finance the schools/settings to attend the Foundation Phase conferences which they provided in

addition to some training if it was available, through the £3000 and £800 the schools and settings respectively received for management, training and resources.

When MYM, NCMA, NDNA Cymru and Wales PPA senior representatives were interviewed about their role and responsibility for Foundation Phase training they reported that currently they did not have a specific role or remit but would welcome the opportunity to discuss a future role with the Welsh Assembly Government. Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin (MYM) felt they had a crucial role in respect of their remit to train new staff to work in the Welsh medium sector in order to meet the future staffing needs for the Foundation Phase across Wales.

Ratios

There is overwhelming support from both sectors for the 1:8 adult:child ratio for preschool, nursery and reception. All practitioners feel that the improved ratios in the maintained sector have made a positive difference to aspects of classroom management, environment and learning in their classrooms. In the non-maintained sector just over a quarter of practitioners felt that improving the ratios to 1:6 would be beneficial in terms of quality. There are very mixed feelings in the maintained sector in relation to the 1:13 ratio proposed for KS1 with 50% of respondents in agreement and 50% in disagreement feeling that lower ratios would be more appropriate. Around 60% of Early Years Advisors and EYDCPs reported that there had been difficulties in recruiting and then retaining (as explained on page 59) suitably qualified staff in pilot settings. This was the case in both Welsh and English medium settings. Crucially it is important to reiterate that ratio benefits are confounded with qualifications and training. As highlighted in the findings on quality reported in Section 5 those settings with a higher number of qualified teachers scored significantly higher on both the curricular quality and emotional climate assessments. In addition settings with high scores on curricular quality assessments tended to have high scores on the more general child centred assessments. Analysis showed that higher quality, especially on the curricular and pedagogical quality assessment ECERS-E, was associated with a *higher* ratio of children to staff. This finding is probably due to the fact that settings in the maintained sector which had more qualified teachers tended to have slightly higher adult:child ratios as well.

Funding and Resources

The vast majority of maintained sector responses were very positive about the funding received for staffing the new improved ratios. Settings in both sectors felt that the funding for both resourcing and training was insufficient partly because it had to be shared out between resources, management and training. In addition there was concern that funding was not related to the number of Foundation Phase children in the particular pilot setting. In respect of training there was concern about the lack of sufficient availability of training from the LEAs. More than half the non-maintained settings experienced delays in receiving funding from their LEAs. Directors of Education felt that more settings in the non-maintained sector rather than in the maintained sector do not currently have appropriate indoor accommodation for implementing the Foundation Phase. As for outdoor accommodation, the majority of Directors of Education felt that current outdoor accommodation in both sectors was generally not appropriate for implementing the Foundation Phase. Directors of Education felt they could not give specific details, as it was hard to generalise across all the maintained and non-maintained settings in each authority. They reported that there was a need for an in-depth audit of current accommodation provision in order to gain a clearer and more detailed picture of the current situation and future needs. One LEA has already begun this process with the maintained settings in their authority.

Organisation and Management

Setting Level

All lead classroom practitioners have taken on more of a managerial role as a result of improved adult ratios and almost 70% felt they would benefit from training in people management. Roles have also changed for support staff in schools. In the non-maintained

sector some lead practitioners feel they need support in planning and people management to contend with changes resulting from the Foundation Phase. Generally head-teachers are uncertain about how best to manage continuity across the primary school in respect of the seven AOLs. A large majority of owner-managers felt that the non-maintained sector continued to face existing difficulties in a number of areas: low staff wages; general lack of support/guidance; unavailable and inaccessible supply cover; insufficient training; nature of existing premises and outdoor facilities and delays in receipt of funding. The Welsh Assembly Government aims to establish a better partnership between the maintained and non-maintained sectors. The non-maintained sector Associations reported that given the Foundation Phase is still in its infancy a true partnership between both sectors has not yet been established and all stakeholders must remain committed to working towards this aim.

Local Authority / Non-maintained Sector Association Level

There are major inconsistencies between what strategies and developments are available to support the Foundation Phase, what each Local Authority is implementing and the level of involvement each pilot setting is receiving from their LEA. Early Years Advisors felt that they were actively involved with both sectors but these views contradict those of practitioners in terms of the support and training they feel they received. This may be explained by a mismatch in understanding and interpretation of what 'training' constitutes. However what is clear is that once again there seem to be inconsistencies between what each LEA is doing and the level of involvement the pilot settings receive. Around 60% of EYDCPs felt they were regularly informed of the progress of their pilot settings however a quarter of EYDCPs felt that they had no involvement with the pilot settings at all. The non-maintained sector Associations reported that they do not currently have the capacity to put in place additional strategies and developments to support and train their pilot settings or memberships to help support the implementation of the Foundation Phase. However, they expressed a strong preference for discussing how this could be achieved with the Welsh Assembly Government if there is any expectation that they shoulder some responsibility for supporting the implementation of the Foundation Phase in any practical way e.g. through providing training.

National Level

Although the sample of pilot settings includes all types of childcare and education providers, the settings were not randomly selected by LEAs and therefore cannot be considered *representative* of settings across Wales. Since the pilot settings were selected the Welsh Assembly Government has arranged meetings and conferences to enable the pilot settings to meet with them in order to share information and discuss how the pilot has been progressing (further details of this support structure can be found on page 68) General Local Authority opinion regarding the timescale of the national rollout is that it is realistic and achievable but only with the proviso of adequate resourcing, training and guidance in place. A number of aspects of Welsh Assembly Government communications systems regarding the FP are considered to be effective and efficient although there are areas requiring structural and communication improvements and development to aid the implementation process.

Parents

Overall parents' responses were very positive to the key new components of the proposed Foundation Phase. There was most concern from a relatively low percentage of parents around the new AOL, Bilingualism and Multicultural Understanding, with parents needing further clarification as to what these terms mean and what will be covered in this new aspect of the curriculum. Worryingly, despite many pilot settings being proactive and using a range of strategies in an attempt to inform their parents, high numbers in both sectors had either not heard of the Foundation Phase or did not know what it was. Head-teachers and owner/managers feel strongly that a national advertising campaign is needed to raise awareness of parents and in the wider public domain.

Recommendations

Curriculum, Pedagogy and Practice

- Pilot settings need ACCAC to deliver on outstanding curriculum guidance materials and associated guidance including assessment guidance *as soon as possible*.
- ACCAC and Welsh Assembly Government need to review and improve communication strategies with all stakeholders in respect of the status of the guidance materials.
- Welsh Assembly Government with ACCAC need to consider how the assessment continuum can aid and support implementing a national assessment profile to be used in all Foundation Phase settings to aid and support issues of transition.
- Transition arrangements between the non-maintained sector and the maintained sector need to be improved and promoted by the EYDCPs with maintained settings taking more of a shared responsibility in order to best support children moving through the early stages of the Foundation Phase.
- Infant and Primary School head-teachers need to plan and train staff for more effective and improved transition procedures for children moving within the FP and from the FP into KS2.
- Further clarification is essential on the vision of Bilingualism in the FP. We understand from the Welsh Assembly Government that the Welsh Language Board is currently looking at the definition of Bilingualism (although this is not specifically in relation to the term Bilingualism in the FP).
- Head-teachers require LEA support and guidance to ensure effective continuity of the seven AOLs into KS2.
- School governing bodies need to take a more active role in decision making related to the Foundation Phase within their school.

Staffing and ratios

- Non-maintained settings would benefit from increased input from staff with teacher qualifications as proposed in the consultation document.
- Care should be taken to ensure that improving ratios does not take precedence over high quality training for staff working in schools and settings. Staff qualifications show a stronger relationship to quality of provision than ratios. This being the case the current policy on ratios further advantages the maintained sector when ratios are reduced to one adult to eight children. This will mean that the maintained sector will be operating with the same ratios as the non-maintained sector but with at least one member of staff in each school setting with teacher qualifications. The Effective Provision of Pre-school Education research shows that provision which typically includes a ratio of one teacher to every nursery officer had higher quality and some higher child developmental outcomes. This means that ideally a greater input by teachers and qualified, NVQ level 3 staff is desirable to enhance quality and children's developmental outcomes.

Training

- A national training policy for the Foundation Phase needs to be put in place based on existing good LEA practice to ensure parity, equity and high standards across

Wales. Currently LEAs and local councils decide on the funding available for training. As a long term goal, we recommend aiming for greater consistency across local authorities.

- Increased LEA training and guidance are required to support practitioners in introducing the new AOL – Bilingualism and Multicultural Understanding to enable the vision to become a reality.
- Early Years Advisors and all non-maintained sector Associations should work more closely with pilot settings and all other LEA settings to discuss assessment arrangements and implement effective and relevant strategies.
- Welsh Assembly Government, LEAs, EYDCPs and non-maintained sector Associations (MYM, NCMA, NDNA Cymru and Wales PPA) need to begin a dialogue on how best to provide effective training and support for the non-maintained sector.
- LEAs and local councils need to ensure effective systems are in place to enable the non-maintained sector to access and attend LEA Foundation Phase training.
- Training in people management will be required for all lead practitioners in Foundation Phase settings especially where improved ratios are implemented as this increases the number of adults they work with.
- As the Foundation Phase rolls out there will need to be sufficient numbers of newly trained teachers specifically trained about the Foundation Phase. This will require a Foundation Phase strategy for training which incorporates continuing professional development of teachers and initial teacher education. Planning for this will need to commence almost immediately in order to meet the requirements of the planned roll-out.

Funding and Resources

- Funding allocated to settings for resources, management and training should be considered per child head above an agreed initial amount for all settings regardless of type.
- Funding for staffing improved ratios needs to be considered in the light of evidence on quality in relation to staff qualifications. Higher ratios are desirable but not sufficient to raise quality in terms of children's learning, to do this training is necessary, particularly more specialist Foundation Phase trained teachers and NVQ 3 staff trained to the standards of the NNEB.
- Funding for training at LEA level needs to be planned, ring-fenced and allocated by Welsh Assembly Government in sufficient time for it to be utilised in the most effective way in each Authority.
- LEAs need to improve systems and infrastructure for allocating settings their funding on time particularly in the non-maintained sector.
- An audit of indoor and outdoor accommodation should be undertaken in each LEA to enable long term planning for improvements in order for settings to be able to develop the Foundation Phase effectively.

Overall implementation

- Effective and sustainable strategies are required to ensure adequate resourcing, training and guidance are available before national rollout commences without which quality and impact on children's learning may be compromised.
- The non-maintained sector may need more support and financing to ensure that the implementation is developed on a more level playing field.
- Local authorities and non-maintained Associations need a steer from Welsh Assembly Government in respect of their involvement with and training and support of both pilot settings and prospective FP settings to ensure greater parity across Wales.
- Effective communication systems established by Welsh Assembly Government need to be built on and developed to improve the implementation process. A review of whether current resources allocated at this level are sufficient needs to be undertaken.
- Prior to national rollout Welsh Assembly Government needs to plan for and implement an awareness raising campaign in the public domain so that parents are well informed about the FP.

2. Introduction

The Foundation Phase (FP) is a Welsh Assembly Government national reform covering the combined 3-5 Early Years and Key Stage 1 provision (children aged between three and seven). In September 2004, the first stage of the pilot commenced in 41 pilot settings across the 22 local authorities in Wales for 3-5 year olds only. As can be seen from the table below the 41 pilot settings will continue in 2005-2006 with Year 1 children (and some Year 2 children where mixed classes are operating) coming on board in the maintained sector and similarly Year 2 in 2006-2007. Following the Minister of Education's recent announcement in respect of the Foundation Phase we are aware that the timetable for national roll-out has changed and currently is due to commence in September 2008.

The Foundation Phase is proposed to be a continuum of learning for children from the ages of 3 to 7. The new curriculum is based on the current Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning before Compulsory School Age (ACCAC, 2000) and links in with the Programmes of Study and focus statements currently in the National Curriculum for KS1. It has seven areas of learning (AOLs):

- personal and social development and well-being;
- language, literacy and communication;
- mathematical development;
- bilingualism and multicultural understanding;
- knowledge and understanding of the world;
- physical development
- creative development

These AOLs are the same as those found in the Desirable Outcomes (ACCAC, 2000) document except for the addition of well-being to the Personal and Social Development AOL and the new AOL – Bilingualism and Multicultural Understanding. The Foundation Phase advocates children learning through first hand experiential activities and play and places a child's personal and social development and well-being at the heart of the curriculum.

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 - Quality assurance, inspection

The MEEIFP project has explored six questions:

1. What does research tell us about effective pedagogy and curriculum for children of ages 3-7, drawing on key documents from the Welsh Assembly Government, for the Foundation Phase and from recent research studies?
2. What is the quality of provision provided by the pilot settings, and is it the *kind* of quality that has been shown to promote children's learning and attainment and meet the needs of the individual?
3. How do the 7 areas of learning in the Foundation Phase curriculum contribute to children's all-round development and what are the transition issues?
4. How does implementation differ for the Foundation Phase in the maintained and non-maintained sectors? And, how might any problems identified be overcome?
5. What are the perceptions of local authority partnerships, staff, parents and governors on the impact of the Foundation Phase in the pilot settings and the issues surrounding their implementation e.g. space, adult:child ratios, 'play' and the 'learning continuum' 3-7?
6. What are the main strengths of the Foundation Phase and the effective practice associated with it, where are the gaps which would make the implementation more successful e.g. in management or identifying training needs?

This report has been structured to address the evaluation aims and questions outlined above. The methodology has been explained in detail followed by our review of literature in section 4. The findings from our data are presented under the headings of Quality, Curriculum and Pedagogy, Assessment, Transition, Qualifications and Training, Ratios, Funding and Resources, Organisation and Management and Parents. The report concludes with a discussion around the key findings and issues, including both strengths and limitations at the end of the first year of the pilot. There is a glossary included in the report, which seeks to explain concepts, terms, acronyms and definitions used in this report.

This report is based on the first year's evaluation during which time the MEEIFP Team has had many contacts with the settings including visiting the pilot settings twice during the academic year 2004-2005. During these visits we conducted observations and interviewed practitioners and parents. In addition the Team devised, piloted and conducted semi-structured interviews and questionnaires with quantitative and qualitative components to obtain the perceptions and opinions of all major stakeholders involved in the pilot. All the data have been analysed in detail to provide the evidential basis for this report. The MEEIFP Team has included a Literature Review on the current situation in Wales together with robust national and international research evidence on the education and care of children aged 3 – 7. Further, we consulted Welsh specialists in early years, training, curriculum, inspection and policy development. We will continue the evaluation for another year.

Unlike many other educational reforms around the UK, it is refreshing that Welsh Assembly Government has built in evaluation from the first year of the pilot and implementation process. The purpose of the evaluation is to identify at an early stage the strengths and limitations of the implementation of the Foundation Phase with the intention of informing and strengthening the implementation process in consequent years. As Jane Davidson the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning outlined:

"The pilots themselves will be carefully monitored and evaluated to ensure that standards are maintained and enhanced, and that all operational issues are identified and addressed".
(<http://www.learning.wales.gov.uk>)

3. Methodology

The evaluation was conducted over a 12-month period between October 2004 and September 2005.

The evaluation has both qualitative and quantitative components. We adopted a mixed method approach, consisting of a literature review, systematic observations, field notes, semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and informal conversations.

It was important to collect the views of all the key stakeholders involved with the Foundation Phase and so parents, practitioners, head-teachers, school governing bodies, owners/managers/management committees of non-maintained settings, LEA Directors of Education, LEA Early Years Advisors and EYDCPs were approached through interview and questionnaires. It was also important to observe practice in the pilot settings in the first year of the implementation in order that in the future any difference in quality in Foundation Phase practice can be determined. Lastly, a literature review was undertaken which aimed to relate the current situation in Wales, addressing specifically the nature and coverage of the current provision, the national language policy and the evolution and development of the Foundation Phase to date, together with robust national and international research evidence on good quality education and care of children aged 3 - 7.

3.1 Sample and Procedure

The 41 pilot settings were selected by Welsh Assembly Government from a shortlist compiled by each LEA, providing they met Welsh Assembly Government prescribed criteria. Two settings were chosen from each of the 22 LEAs in Wales with the exception of three local authorities where there are no non-maintained sector settings funded to provide education. Therefore there are 22 maintained sector settings and 19 non-maintained sector settings, a total of 41 settings.

Table 2: Distribution and type of pilot settings

Maintained Sector	Welsh Medium	English Medium	Bilingual
<i>Nursery School</i>	-	1	-
<i>Infant Schools</i>			
Nursery and Reception Separate Classes	-	2	-
Under 5's Unit	-	1	-
<i>Primary Schools</i>			
Nursery and Reception Separate Classes	1	6	1
Under 5's Unit	2	.5 (pm)	-
Reception Class only	-	3	-
Nursery / Reception and Year 1 mixed class	1	-	-
Nursery / Reception / Year 1 and Year 2 mixed class	1	-	-
Reception / Year 1 and Year 2 mixed class	1	.5 (am)	-
<i>SEN School</i>			
	-	-	1
Non-maintained sector			
Playgroups / Cylchoedd Meithrin	3	11	-
Private Day Nursery	1	3	-
Childminder	-	1	-

Although the sample includes all types of childcare and education providers the settings were not randomly selected by LEAs and therefore cannot be considered *representative* of settings across Wales. From our discussions with LEAs we know that a number of LEAs handled the selection process differently from the clear selection criteria provided by Welsh Assembly Government.

The MEEIFP researchers communicated with all the pilot settings via telephone, email and letter in order to arrange dates for visiting the settings to conduct observations in the Spring Term 2005 and to conduct interviews in the Summer Term 2005. In order to minimise the pressure on staff in settings the researchers only spent a maximum of 2 days in each setting. Researchers had undergone rigorous training to:

- use 3 different quality observational instruments
- engage in devising, piloting and conducting semi-structured interviews
- collect and analyse documents such as policies, plans and information booklets
- conduct both qualitative and quantitative data analysis

3.2 Selection and Development of Instruments

3.2.1 ECERS-R, ECERS-E and CIS

Rationale for the use of ECERS-R, ECERS-E and CIS

The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS-R) (Harms, Cryer and Clifford 1998) has been used extensively as a means of measuring quality of provision for 3-5 year olds in Early Childhood Settings since its publication in the U.S. The scale has been translated into a number of languages.

The basic scale has remained the same, with assessment of the quality of 7 areas: Space and Furnishings; Personal Care Routines; Language-Reasoning; Activities; Interaction; Program Structure; Parents and Staff, (see Appendix A for examples) although changes were required in some indicators to make the various translations culturally relevant. Some countries have used the ECERS-R as a conceptual template on which to build assessment systems appropriate to environments very different to the U.S. settings in which ECERS was first developed.

In the U.K, the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale Extension (ECERS-E) (Sylva, Siraj-Blatchford and Taggart, 2003) was developed to supplement the ECERS-R, for use in the Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) project, because the ECERS-R did not examine in depth provision for developing emerging literacy, numeracy and scientific thinking. It also included a more detailed subscale to look at diversity issues such as gender, multiculturalism and meeting the needs of individual children. The ECERS-E introduced four new subscales: Literacy, Maths, Science and Diversity, which reflect the English Early Years Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage and are in keeping with new theoretical understanding of emerging literacy, numeracy and scientific thinking in pre-school children.

The Caregiver Interaction Scale (CIS) consists of 26 items focusing on the interactions between caregivers and children. The items are grouped to produce 4 subscales: positive relationships, punitiveness, permissiveness and detachment. The CIS was developed by Arnett (1989).

- 'Positive relationships' is a subscale made up of 10 items indicating warmth and enthusiasm interaction with children by the caregiver.
- 'Punitiveness' is a subscale made up of 8 items indicating harsh or over-controlling behaviour in interaction with children by the caregiver.

- 'Permissiveness' is a subscale made up of 4 items indicating avoidance of discipline and control of children by the caregiver.
- 'Detachment' is a subscale made up of 4 items indicating lack of involvement in interaction with children by the caregiver.

Please see Appendix B for a description of the reliability and validity of ECERS-R, ECERS-E and CIS instruments.

New Subscales for Welsh Language/Communication and for Welsh as a Second Language

When considering the potential use of both ECERS scales in Early Childhood Settings in Wales it was vitally important to take into consideration the Welsh context. Some Early Childhood Settings are Welsh language only. Some English medium settings teach Welsh as a second language; however this is currently only compulsory in LEA maintained educational provision for children in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 within the primary sector. There is no statutory requirement to teach Welsh as a second language in Nursery or Reception classes in the English medium sector, although many do. The new framework for children's learning in the Foundation Phase contains clear intentions to develop children's language skills bilingually, that is, in English and Welsh across all types of provision. However although children in the English medium sector will learn Welsh from Nursery age upwards, children in the Welsh medium sector will be taught through the medium of Welsh only in the Early Years and KS1 classes in order to establish confidence and fluency in Welsh before the formal introduction of English in Year 3. This intention is supported by the Welsh Assembly Government's vision for a bilingual Wales, as outlined in the document 'Iaith Pawb' (NAW 2003). It was also important to assess the provision for Curriculum Cymreig, the strand that develops an awareness of Wales' unique historical and cultural heritage.

The MEEIFP project required that equal attention in terms of rating should be given to Welsh and English. Therefore it was essential we create two entirely new subscales to cater for the assessment of quality of provision for Welsh as a Second Language in English medium schools and for Welsh as a first language in Welsh medium schools.

Welsh Medium Schools

It was felt that the ECERS-R scales were appropriate as they existed in this context, although translation into Welsh would be necessary in the future. This was also the case for the ECERS-E Literacy subscale, where Welsh would simply replace English as the main language of communication and provision would be assessed on that basis. Similarly it was felt that the Maths, Science and Environment and Diversity subscales could be used successfully as they were, in Welsh medium settings.

However in the ECERS-E literacy subscale, a new item was required in order to assess the extent to which children were immersed in Welsh during the day, bearing in mind that many children in the Welsh medium sector actually come from non-Welsh speaking homes in some parts of Wales. This scale would cover not only communication between adults and children, but also, crucially, children's use of Welsh independently with their peers. It would also assess the use of various communication strategies to support children's learning through a second language. This scale would also give some idea of the 'Welsh Ethos' of the different Welsh medium settings. (See Welsh Medium Subscale in Appendix A) However as there are some schools with a vast majority of first language Welsh speakers, an allowance had to be made for this within the scale. Consequently a number of indicators could be scored 'not applicable' (N/A) in settings where every child in an observed class was a first language Welsh speaker.

English Medium Schools

In order to assess the quality of provision for Welsh as a second language in English medium schools it was necessary to create a new subscale based on the original ECERS-E literacy subscale. As a result of our discussions with the pilot setting practitioners it was also decided not to include Item 5: Emergent writing/mark making, as this was considered inappropriate for assessment in a second language with the 3-5 age group. Provision for this would already be covered in English in the original literacy subscale. This would provide parity with Welsh medium settings, where assessment of emergent writing would also only take place in the original ECERS-E literacy subscale, but using Welsh as the language of communication. In addition it was decided that a new item: 'Bilingual language use during play and learning' (both adult adult-led and child initiated), was necessary in this subscale to assess the quantity and quality of Welsh in both planned activities across the curriculum and also in child-initiated activities, where the responses would be more 'ad hoc'. (See Welsh in an English Medium Setting Subscale in Appendix B)

Finally it was felt that an item to cover "Curriculum Cymreig" would ensure that this element of curricular provision in Wales was not neglected. This item would be included in the additional subscales for both Welsh and English medium settings.

Piloting of the New Subscales

Both of the new Welsh subscales were piloted in a variety of English and Welsh medium settings respectively and discussed with practitioners and language specialists. Following this, some amendments were made to both scales in order to clarify certain indicators and ensure their suitability for Wales.

Sample for ECERS and CIS

ECERS and CIS observations were conducted in all setting class/groups outlined in the table below with the exception of the childminder and SEN school where only the CIS was administered. In the sample there are 51 settings, 32 of which are maintained settings (of the 22 maintained providers in the pilot some had reception and nursery classes) and 19 of which are non-maintained. To study the differences in quality scores across maintained and non-maintained settings, independent samples (t-tests) were run to compare the mean ECERS-R, ECERS-E and CIS scores of the two groups (maintained or non-maintained). There was no significant difference in mean ECERS-R score between groups, but there was a significant difference ($t= 5.92$, $p<0.001$) in mean ECERS-E scores and in mean overall CIS score ($t= 2.67$, $p=0.01$).

Table 3: Number and Types of settings where observational instruments were used

Type of setting	Number in pilot
Playgroup / Cylch Meithrin	14
Private Day Nursery	4
Childminder	1 (only CIS)
Early Years Unit	3
Nursery Class	10
Nursery School	1
Reception Classes	13
Mixed Class (mix of early years and KS1 children in small schools)	4
SEN School	1 (only CIS)

3.2.2 Interviews and Response rates

Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were conducted with two of the key stakeholders – parents and practitioners. Both sets of interview questions were drafted, developed, piloted widely and amended prior to being sent out to the settings. All pilot settings received both

sets of interview questions at least a fortnight before the researchers conducted the interviews to enable the practitioners to familiarise themselves with the questions. Parents were made aware of the researcher's visit. The respondents were assured of anonymity throughout this process and after the data were analysed. The MEEIFP researchers were trained in semi-structured interview techniques and they conducted the interviews and probed and prompted respondents where necessary.

Parents Interview

See Appendix E

The interviews with parents were conducted at the setting either at the beginning or the end of the setting session. In some instances where this was not possible, for example in rural areas, head-teachers / owner-managers asked parents to meet with the researcher and complete the questionnaire in the researcher's company so that any queries or questions could be addressed. Each interview lasted about 5 minutes depending on the complexity of the information supplied by the parent. Where the parent's command of English or Welsh made it preferable, an interpreter was used.

Practitioners Interview

See Appendix F

The interviews with practitioners were conducted during the day but in a separate room from the children. The lead practitioners from each setting were interviewed and where possible in settings with more than one pilot class/group a second practitioner was also interviewed. For example in a school with both a nursery and reception class participating in the pilot both lead practitioners were interviewed. A typical interview lasted between 40-60 minutes.

3.2.3 Questionnaires and Response rates

Self-completion questionnaires were sent to all remaining key stakeholders – head-teachers, school governing bodies, non-maintained owner/manager/management committees, LEA Directors of Education, Early Years Advisors and chairs of EYDCPs. All questionnaires were drafted, developed, piloted widely and amended prior to being sent out directly to named respondents in the settings and local authorities. All respondents received their questionnaires at least a fortnight before they were due to either be returned in enclosed stamp addressed envelopes or, with prior agreement, the researchers collected them. The respondents were assured of anonymity throughout this process and after data were analysed. See Appendix G for examples of each type of questionnaire. See table below for the excellent response rate to the questionnaires.

Table 4 Response rate to questionnaires and interviews

Stakeholder	Number returned	% Achieved
Parents	635	40% of pilot parents
Practitioners	41/41	100%
Head-teachers	22/22	100%
Governing Bodies	21/22	95.45%
Owner-managers	19/19	100%
Directors of Education	20/22	90.90%
EYDCPs	19/22	86.36%
Early Years Advisors	21/21	100%

Only one school head-teacher felt that it was not appropriate for the governing body to be completing a questionnaire on the Foundation Phase at this stage of the pilot.

One Director declined to respond as it was not his policy to complete questionnaires. Researchers offered to conduct an interview face-to-face or over the telephone but these offers were also declined. The other Director delegated the task to another member of the senior directorate management team who unfortunately did not respond. Seven out of the

twenty returned questionnaires were completed by another member of the directorate senior management team who the Directors felt would be more in tune with Foundation Phase developments e.g. Head of Schools Service. This was particularly the case where the Director was also responsible for a number of disciplines in addition to Education e.g. community services, leisure, recreation and families

3.3 Analysis of Data

The observational data and interview / questionnaire data sets were entered into SPSS for ease of analysis, both quantitative and qualitative responses. Different stakeholder's data has been analysed and triangulated. All the data have been systematically analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively and where appropriate we have used quotations or reduced data numerically to demonstrate particular patterns in our findings.

The ECERS-R, ECERS-E and CIS have been analysed to inform on current quality and key aspects affecting quality in the pilot settings. The data were entered into SPSS for ease of analysis and in most cases represented graphically for ease of interpretation. The findings will be reported under section 5 on Quality and relevant section headings in the report.

4. A Review of the Literature

4.1 Introduction

The Monitoring and Evaluation of the Effective Implementation of the Foundation Phase (MEEIFP) project is a two-year study, commissioned by the National Assembly for Wales (NAfW). The project aims to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Foundation Phase in Wales, focusing on the appropriateness and effectiveness of:

- curriculum, its planning and implementation;
- assessment strategies and record keeping;
- qualifications and training of staff; ratio of adults to children;
- accommodation and resources;
- organisation and management;
- partnership with parents;
- quality assurance and inspection, and issues around transition for 3-5yr olds.

This review has been conducted to inform the evaluation.

Literature relating to the current situation in Wales has been considered, addressing specifically the nature and coverage of the current provision, the national language policy and the evolution and development of the Foundation Phase to date, together with the most robust national and international research on education and care of children aged 3 - 7.

Effective pedagogy and curriculum in early years education has been, and it continues to be, researched extensively. However, research on how this can be integrated into Wales in both English and Welsh medium settings has not previously been examined. The aim of this review is therefore to draw together the findings from research on education and care of children aged 3 - 7 with the Welsh vision for the Foundation Phase in order to highlight implications and inform the most effective way forward. We begin by examining the Welsh context for Early Years education.

4.2 Current situation in Wales

The curriculum for 3- 5 year olds in Wales is currently provided under the six areas of learning outlined in the *Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning before Compulsory*

School Age (ACCAC, 1996). For children between 5 and 7 years old, KS1 of the national curriculum for Wales applies. Education provision in the maintained and non-maintained sectors is inspected by Estyn (Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Wales). In addition, the Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales (CSIW) regulates the non-maintained provision under the requirements of the Children's Act, 1989.

Two important policy documents, published within two years of each other by the National Assembly for Wales (NAfW), are *The Learning Country* (2001b) and *Iaith Pawb, (Everyone's Language)* (2003a). The first sets out the agenda for education in Wales up to 2010 and the other the aim for Wales to become a more fully bilingual country by 2011. Both these are important in discussing the new Foundation Phase for children aged 3-7.

4.2.1 Provision for 3-5yr olds across Wales

Provision for 3-5 year olds across Wales is defined here primarily in terms of schools maintained by Local Education Authority (LEA), voluntary sector provision and private settings. There are 34 LEA maintained nursery schools and 1,588 maintained Primary schools in Wales (NAfW, 2005). The main feature of the overall provision for 3-5 year olds is the variety and range that exists: from Early Years classes in schools, through private day nursery provision to playgroups and child minders. Equally varied and complex is the take-up of the provision by parents and carers. Indeed, for one child several different providers may be used. For example, a three year old child might begin and end the day with a child minder who would take him/ her to nursery school or class for part of the week and perhaps to a playgroup on one or two other occasions. According to NAfW statistics for 2003/4, 75% of three year olds and 80.6% of three and four year olds attend some form of nursery education (NAfW, 2005).

Provision is also offered in a variety of languages. The Welsh nursery association, Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin (MYM), offers playgroups and nurseries through the medium of Welsh. In some areas, usually cities, other bilingual language provision is offered, especially in school settings where bilingual assistants speak the children's community language. This provision is run through the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (EMAS).

Providers:

LEA Nursery education: This might be provided in a nursery class or unit, an Under 5s unit attached to a school, a mixed nursery/reception class, or a separate nursery school. Children generally attend for a morning or afternoon at age 3 until they enter a full-time place in a reception class.

Reception classes: The great majority of children at the age of 4 go to the reception class of a school, either an Infant (4-7 years) or a Primary school (4-11 years). Reception classes may be part of an Early Years unit in a school or a separate year group in an Infants school. Reception classes can be of mixed age, such as Y1 and Reception, or Nursery and Reception; in small schools, classes can comprise Nursery, Reception and KS1. The distinguishing feature of reception classes is that they provide Early Years Education for children the year before schooling becomes compulsory at the age of five.

The National Assembly monitoring of provision for three and four year olds (NAfW, 2005) shows a trend of growth and different patterns for part and full time attendance. Part-time attendance is greatest in nursery classes (27.8%), followed by all other (non-nursery) classes catering for under 5s (4.7%) and nursery schools (2.0%). 0.5% of children attend independent schools. For full-time attendance, the largest proportion of attendance is in non-nursery classes catering for under 5s (35.5%), followed by nursery classes (7.7%) and nursery schools (1.0%). 0.8% attend independent schools full time and 0.2% attend Special schools (NAfW, 2005).

Integrated Centres: Since 2002 the development of integrated centres has begun within both English and Welsh medium provision. These are designed to offer early years education with 'wrap-around' (multi-agency) care. They coordinate varied provision such as playgroup, nursery and out of school clubs, plus training and open access play. This is a model that is well established in many European contexts and it is particularly beneficial for rural and isolated areas (Estyn, 2002). The 'Effective Provision of Pre-School Education' (EPPE) project (Sylva et al 2004) has also found that quality was highest in settings with integrated care and education and in nursery schools. In time, each local authority in Wales should have at least one integrated centre (MYM 2004; NAFW 2001b)

Private 3-5 provision: Outside the setting of a school, there is a range of provision for 3-5 year olds. A general feature of these is that many offer crèche facilities for babies and toddlers as well as nursery facilities for 3 and 4 year old children. The care offered by child minders comes into this type of provision, as does that of private day nurseries. A further aspect of this provision is that they often offer full time places to care for children while their parents are at work. This provision is fee based. A small number of children (1% of the total 3 and 4 year old population, NAFW 2005) also go to Independent schools. But as children become older the majority tend to move from private or day care providers to an Infant or Primary school.

Childminders: The National Childminding Association (NCMA) promotes quality registered childminding. They work in partnership with the Wales Assembly Government, local authorities, Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships and other childcare organisations. All NCMA childminders are expected to work towards 10 Quality Standards.

Playgroups: A further important dimension of provision offered for children is that of playgroups where children attend with or without their parents or carers. The Wales Pre School Playgroups Association (Wales PPA) is a voluntary organisation with over 1000 playgroups in membership, involving 29,000 children, mainly 2.5 to 5 year olds (Wales PPA, 2005). If a playgroup is to be recognised by the LEA as an education provider for 3 year olds, the equivalent of at least 10hrs a week is required.

Welsh Medium Playgroups / Cylchoedd Meithrin : An important feature of the 3-5 provision in Wales is the Welsh language and provisions for bilingualism. This is mainly organised by the Welsh Nursery Movement/ Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin (MYM). MYM has played an integral role in the development of Welsh medium education (Baker 1994; Baker 2002; Welsh Language Board 2004). A child can enter the playgroup or cylich from 2½ years of age and may stay until transfer to reception class in a Primary school. According to figures published by MYM there are currently around 586 cylchoedd across Wales (MYM, 2004). 82.6% of children transfer from the cylich to Welsh medium or bilingual Primary school (Wyn Siencyn, 2004).

4.2.2 National language policy

The National Language Policy was laid out by NAFW in several documents, *The Learning Country* (2001b), *Our Language: Its Future* (2002) and in the national language and action plan for Wales, *Iaith Pawb* (2003a). The strategy is implemented and monitored by the Welsh Language Board for the National Assembly for Wales. This board was established in 1988 as a focal point for Welsh language planning, monitoring, maintenance, and strategic development.

The aim of *Iaith Pawb* is ambitious: for Wales to be a more bilingual country by 2011 than in the recent past:

The long term aim for our early years' provision is to reach a situation where many more

children under five have had enough contact with Welsh and English to move either to a Welsh school or a school which operates bilingually (NAfW, 2003a, p 39)

It is required that all children in Wales are taught Welsh, as a core or Foundation subject, in Primary schools in KS1 and KS2. 26% of school age children are educated either wholly in Welsh or bilingually (WLB, 2004; Estyn, 2004a), but, as Roberts and Baker (2003) have identified, the continuing growth of Welsh medium early years education is threatened by acute shortages of bilingual staff. Wyn Siencyn (2004) noted the closure of 28 *cylchoedd* between 2001-3, partly for this reason.

The dimension of bilingualism and multicultural understanding, the *seventh* area of learning in the curriculum for the Foundation Phase, has important links to the national language policy for Wales.

4.2.3 Evolution and development of the Foundation Phase

Like other countries in the world the first years of learning are recognised as vital for both the individual and society. The first step towards a new curriculum for Early Years education in Wales was the establishment of an entitlement for young children's learning through the *Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning before Compulsory School Age* (ACCAC, 1996). This created a curriculum around six areas of learning for the Under 5s.

In 1999 Estyn reported on standards and quality in the Early Years, which they found to be satisfactory or better in 85% of settings in the maintained and 55% of the non-maintained sector. They noted aspects for improvement which were subsequently to form the bedrock of the new Foundation Phase 3-7:

- Formal skills of reading and writing introduced too soon
- Narrow range of opportunities and insufficient opportunity for children to show initiative and be independent learners.
- Insufficient opportunity for outdoor play
- Limited opportunity for creative play in music and dance
- Insufficient involvement of parents
- Staff insufficiently qualified in child development and its impact of planning and assessment

Since 2000 the development of the Foundation Phase has become a sustained curriculum initiative. In 2000 NAfW published *Interim report: Early Years Provision for Three Year Olds* and in 2001 *Final report Laying the Foundation: Early Years Provision for Three Year Olds*. These two documents focused on the principles of excellence for Early Years education, using evidence from several European countries which had innovative and successful practice in the 0-7 years continuum. In 2001, *The Learning Country* was published (NAfW, 2001b). Central to this important policy document, which set down the framework for the development of education across all age phases in Wales over a ten year period, was the Foundation Phase. Jane Davidson, Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning in Wales, said its purpose was to 'give every child a flying start.'

The evolution of the Foundation Phase can be illustrated by the following table showing policy documents and reports between 2000 and 2004. These culminated in 2004 in the publication of *The Learning Country: The Foundation Phase – 3 to 7 years Action Plan*. This was a key document which outlined the main stages of the Foundation Phase until its projected complete implementation into Year 2, by 2008.

Table to show the development of the Foundation Phase in Wales

Date	Document Title
2001 NAFW	The Learning Country: A Paving Document, a Comprehensive Education and Lifelong Learning Programme to 2010 in Wales.
2003 NAFW	The Learning Country: The Foundation Phase – 3 to 7 years
2003 NAFW	Summary of Consultation Responses for The Learning Country: The Foundation Phase – 3 to 7 years
2004 NAFW	The Learning Country: The Foundation Phase – 3 to 7 years Action Plan
2004 ACCAC	The Foundation Phase in Wales: A Draft Framework for Children’s Learning

A Project Board was established to oversee the roll-out of the Foundation Phase. During 2003-2004 41 pilot settings were chosen. These represented the range of settings for 3-4 year old children in Wales. As the scale of the implementation was very large and it was to be achieved within a short time, sub groups were created to oversee aspects of implementation. These had responsibility for the learning framework, finance, monitoring and evaluation, and training and development.

Through ACCAC, guidance material was produced in draft form in 2004: *The Foundation Phase in Wales: A Draft Framework for Children’s Learning*. This, along with guidance materials on all seven areas of learning in addition to guidance on play and child development, is to be produced as ‘*A Curriculum Framework for Children’s Learning*’. Alongside this, a ‘*National Assessment Continuum*’ (NAFW, 2004: 7) is to be developed to track children’s performance in the seven areas of learning in the Foundation Phase and to link with the Programmes of Study and focus statements at Key Stage 2.

The implementation of the Foundation Phase in Wales is being monitored by the MEEIFP (Monitoring and Evaluation of the Effective Implementation of the Foundation Phase) research project. This is funded by NAFW and reports to the Foundation Phase Project Board.

From the initial conception of the Foundation Phase in Wales is it clear that there are four focal theories of effective learning for young children implicit in its construction. These are

- the role of play;
- the need for a well planned environment, including outdoor space, for learning;
- the importance of the ratio of trained staff to children in a setting; and
- the development of Welsh, English and Bilingualism.

It can be noted, finally, that several of these key ideas mirror those in the Early Years Curriculum in other countries, while also reflecting clearly Wales’ own particular needs.

4.3 What has research told us about effective practice?

The effects of high quality early years education, and the question of what it is that constitutes the most effective practice has been, and continues to be, researched widely both nationally and internationally. In the last decade a number of major reports have also influenced policy, provision and practice. Ball (1994) in the Start Right Report (UK) concluded that good pre-school education has beneficial effects for children’s immediate and long-term development. The most influential research was undertaken in America in the

High/Scope Perry Pre-school study (Schweinhart and Weikart 1993) which has shown the long term social and economic benefits of investing in high quality pre-school programs over a thirty year period. Similarly recent research studies for the American National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) have highlighted that:

The early childhood years are increasingly seen as a crucial period for the growth and consolidation of important cognitive, literacy and social skills necessary for successful school transition and later academic functioning. (Chen, Lee & Stevenson, 1996 in NICHD, 2004 p1)

Most recently, the findings from the two major longitudinal studies, the UK based 'Effective Provision of Pre-School Education' (EPPE) Project (Sylva et al 2004) and the New Zealand based 'Competent Children at 12' (Wylie 2004), along with a number of NICHD studies (NICHD-ECCRN 2001; 2002; 2004a; 2004b) have clearly demonstrated that high quality pre-schooling is related to better intellectual and social/behavioural development for children. In the UK context we already know that this remains significant throughout Key Stage 1 (Sylva et al 2004).

As Bruce (1997) has consistently argued, effective practice in early childhood education is rooted in child development understanding and based on the work of educators such as Froebel, Montessori and Steiner. Expert opinion in this area recognises the importance of the whole child, that children are self-motivating and that learning is most effective when it engages children in first hand experiences and builds on their existing understanding (e.g. Ball 1994, Pugh 1996, Hurst 1997, Bowman et al. 2001, Blenkin & Kelly 1996, Bruce 1997, Edgington 1998b, Claxton 2002, Whitebread 1996). In addition, the enduring effect of sustained quality adult and/or parent-child interaction leads to favourable child development including persistence in problem solving, high self esteem, socially skilled behaviour, closer friendships and better peer relationships (Belsky and Cassidy 1994, Thompson 1998, Siraj-Blatchford et al 2003).

Similarly, as Fisher (2002) has argued effective early years teaching, learning and assessment needs to be underpinned by a number of key principles. These include the need for linked strands:

- to be rooted in developmentally appropriate practice
- to take place within familiar contexts (Bowman et al 2001)
- to be built on what the child can do rather than what they cannot (Bruce 1997)
- to be sensitive to how children build their knowledge, skills and understanding by drawing on a range of experiences, not categorised under subject headings
- to recognise that when children are motivated by activities they learn best
- to take place in an environment that promotes confidence and enhances self esteem (Dowling 2000)
- to be based on knowledge and information from a range of people who are involved with the child

Effective early education is thus built on the cohesion of a number of both distinct and interrelated key elements and these will now be examined in turn to establish what research has highlighted in these areas:

4.3.1 Curriculum, its planning and implementation

The main function of an early years curriculum, as the Committee on Early Years Pedagogy for the US National Research Council explain, is to promote the processes of learning and cognitive skills, in addition to the acquisition of information (Bowman et al. 2001). However, Bowman et al (2001) highlight that no one type or model of curriculum is superior to others and as Siraj-Blatchford et al (2003) comment, research suggests that the educational performance of settings in terms of child outcomes do not appear to be directly related to

curriculum content. The extant evidence suggests that pedagogy, the methods and strategies used to teach the curriculum, have a greater impact on children's attainment. Significantly however, Sylva et al (2004) in the EPPE study found that settings strong on the intellectual aspects of the curriculum (literacy, maths, science and environment and diversity) tended to be stronger on the social and behavioural aspects of the curriculum as well.

The National Assembly for Wales (NAfW 2001a; 2001b) makes clear its commitment to providing an early years curriculum that offers:

an appropriate developmental curriculum in harmony with the child's particular needs and interests (NAfW, 2001a, p 8)

This is a commitment rooted in the principles of child development and effective learning and pedagogy. In addition, the national action plan delivered through Iaith Pawb (2003) is to extend the opportunities for all children in Wales to be bilingual in English and Welsh.

Pedagogy is often referred to as the *practice* (or the *art*, the *science* or the *craft*) of teaching, but in the early years any adequate conception of educative practice must also be wide enough to include the provision of learning environments for play and exploration. As the American National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (1996) identifies, quality pedagogical practice enables children to have opportunities to make meaningful choices and to have time to explore their world through active involvement.

A number of research studies (Wylie 1998, Siraj-Blatchford et al. 2002, Sammons et al. 2002; 2003) have shown that one of the key variables in determining outcomes for young children is the effect of the teacher on the nature and quality of education. However, Siraj-Blatchford and Sylva (2004) comment that evidence from both the EPPE and Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years (REPEY) studies suggests that there is not only one way to support effective learning. The effective teacher plans and creates opportunities for learning by making use of a variety of skills and strategies in addition to taking into account the child's assumed 'zone of proximal development' (Vygotsky 1978). Notably, Siraj-Blatchford *et al.* (2002) suggest that effective pedagogy in the early years is an essentially 'instructive' practice that involves both the kind of interaction traditionally associated with the term teaching, and also includes the provision of instructive learning environments and routines.

Other major pedagogical findings of the REPEY study were that:

- Effective pedagogues model appropriate language, values and practices, encourage socio-dramatic play, praise, encourage, ask questions, interact verbally with children
- The most effective settings employ behaviour policies in which staff support children in rationalising and talking through their conflicts.
- Effective settings view cognitive and social development as complementary.

(Siraj-Blatchford and Sylva, 2004, p 8)

In a review of the research on effective pedagogy, that conducted in developmental psychology, and in the study of learning, Siraj-Blatchford et al. (2002) suggest that young children are *active* in their learning and that the most effective early years pedagogy requires both the educator and the child to be simultaneously involved in an instructive process of 'co-construction'. The idea that effective learning occurs when interacting with 'a more knowledgeable other' is corroborated by Vygotsky (1978) and as Siraj-Blatchford and McCallum (2005) state:

cognitive development (the building up of knowledge and understanding) is the result of *active* learning – the child participating in problem solving, together with a 'more-

knowledgeable other' who can provide leadership and guidance within the activity. (Siraj-Blatchford and McCallum, 2005, p.28)

A significant part of a child's earliest learning often results from interactions with adults and peers even where there has been no deliberate attempt to provide instruction. Therefore it is clear that learning does not take place in a social vacuum. Children learn from observations of those more competent than themselves and as Bandura (1986) has suggested, the process of social learning begins with *imitative* learning. Consequently the value of parents and other adults modelling appropriate language, behaviour, skills and attitudes should be especially recognised (Siraj-Blatchford et al 2002).

When a child is deeply involved in something that they are doing, they are learning and it is likely that fundamental changes in their understanding are taking place. Laevers (1994, 1997) identifies involvement as when children or adults are intensely engaged in an activity – in a special state; concentrating and eager to continue; they feel intrinsically motivated because the activity falls in with what they want to learn and know. The work of Laevers (1997) and Vygotsky (1978) suggests that:

involvement only occurs somewhere between 'being able to do something' and 'not yet being able to do something', between 'understanding something' and 'being on the verge of understanding. (Laevers (1997) and Vygotsky (1978) in Siraj-Blatchford and McCallum, 2005 p.28)

It is clear therefore, as Gipps and MacGilchrist (1999) highlight, that in order to foster effective learning teachers need to have a strong and complete understanding of how children learn in addition to good subject knowledge and classroom management skills.

A major assumption that has informed the amalgamation of the current Early Years and KS1 into the new Foundation Phase in Wales, where it is intended that children's development and learning will be seen as a continuum from 3-7, has been that there is no real reason for considering the development of children in two stages - under fives and over fives. As Lindon (1993) has argued, this later stage is merely a continuum of the first stage of child development. This belief is also supported by effective practice in a number of international contexts, where children begin formal education at a later age than in the UK.

4.3.2 Assessment strategies and record keeping

Assessment involves the process of observing, recording and documenting the work children do and how they do it, to provide a basis for a variety of educational decisions that affect the child. Assessment is both crucial and fundamental as it informs both planning and pedagogy and the conclusions of reflective practice can lead to improvements within settings. Bowman et al. (2001) explain that:

Assessment has an important role to play in revealing a child's prior knowledge, developmental concepts, and ways of interacting with and understanding the world so that teachers can choose pedagogical approach and curricular materials that will support the child's further learning and development. (Bowman et al. 2001 p.259)

Findings from the REPEY study highlighted that:

- Effective pedagogues assess children's performance to ensure the provision of challenging yet achievable experiences
- Effective pedagogues provide formative feedback during activities and differentiate their planning and teaching.

(Siraj-Blatchford, 2004, p 8)

Nutbrown (1999) outlines a number of key features of effective assessment which most importantly include 'clarity of purpose' and 'fitness of purpose', and, as research undertaken

by Wilkinson et al. (1998) made clear, the form that assessment takes is inextricably linked to its purposes. Assessment with young children must be used sensitively and carefully, as it is essential to take into consideration that development in young children is not linear which can mean that results and attainment may be misinterpreted (Bowman et al. 2001). The Foundation Phase proposals in Wales may therefore raise questions about the appropriateness of Baseline Assessment as was the case in the introduction of the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage in England (QCA 2000). Baseline Assessment in Wales is a statutory requirement and is conducted within seven weeks of a child's entry into a Reception class (or Year 1 if this was the first year of school). A strong case for Baseline Assessment does exist (Blatchford and Cline, 1992, 1994) as it provides information about a child's capability as they start school which can inform pedagogy and be used as a basis for measuring 'value added' at the end of Key-stage 1. Assessment conducted at the start of an educational phase provides a useful tool in discovering a child's prior knowledge and capabilities in order to build upon and develop learning in the most symbiotic, matched and appropriate way for the child. As EPPE highlights:

it is essential to have accurate baseline about children's cognitive attainments and details of their social and behavioural development, so that subsequent progress and developments can be measured (Sylva et al. 2000 p.3-4)

However some of the most significant problems with Baseline Assessment include:

- developmental age of the child - children are different ages on admission to school, some children are just four and others already five years old;
- early labeling of children, Wolfendale (1993)
- knowledge of the child – Baseline Assessments are often carried out by an adult who has little or limited knowledge of the child;
- gender bias - some baseline schemes put boys at a significant disadvantage.
- preparation for baseline in pre-school settings - as Rodger (2003) comments, concerns centre around teachers preparing children for baseline testing which may hinder young children's developing mental arithmetic skills;
- timing of Baseline Assessment - conducting the baseline on entry to school means that this statutory assessment will take place in the middle of the proposed Foundation Phase which is planned to be a 'learning continuum' from 3years of age to 7years of age;

As a result of many of these concerns and in response to the new Foundation Stage Curriculum in England the QCA introduced the foundation stage profile to replace Baseline Assessment. This profile records children's achievements in all six areas of learning. The importance of broad assessment when there is a broad curriculum is also highlighted by Wilkinson et al. (1998). However, there has been severe criticism from practitioners that the English Foundation Stage profile is too cumbersome. Any such system in Wales should take this into account allowing for a manageable system to be developed.

Research undertaken by Chilvers (2002) suggests that assessment of a child's personal social development and well-being should play a more prominent role in Baseline Assessments and this endorses the NAFW's plan to include assessment in Personal and Social Development and Well-being at Baseline Assessment, and then again at the end of the Foundation Phase (currently the end of Year 2). The importance of how well-being and emotional competence can impact significantly on the ability to learn is well documented in the works of Laevers (1994) and Goleman (1996). Bertram and Pascal (2002) develop this idea suggesting that the foundations for assessment of young children should include all of the following as these are the skills and attributes that create effective learners:

- dispositions to learning; independence, creativity, self-motivation and resilience;

- social competencies; establishing effective relationships, empathy, taking responsibility, assertiveness, and self awareness;
- emotional well-being; emotional literacy, empowerment, connectedness and positive self esteem

Expert opinion in this area recognises that observations and conversations provide vital tools for assessment to provide a rounded profile of the child as a learner are (e.g. Abbott and Rodger 1994, Drummond and Nutbrown 1996, Hurst 1997, Edgington 1998b, Chilvers 2002, QCA 2000 and Fisher 2002). When considering observation as an assessment tool Chilvers argues that:

Using observation as a method of assessment can create a much broader picture of the child and a more secure baseline from which to work (Chilvers, 2002, p.30)

As Lally and Hurst (1992) suggest quality observations and careful analysis of observations can be a very effective part of the assessment process. However participants need to be aware of the purpose of observation and be able to build the process into classroom routine. Edgington (1998a) also argues that, in order to gain a full and accurate picture of a child's abilities, it is important to include everyone involved in the child's learning and development. Fisher (2002) believes that conversations with a range of people including parents and the child him/herself can provide a very important context from which to build. These conversations can be vital with the youngest children as they enter into early education or transfer from one type of setting to another.

With the recent removal of SATs from the Key Stage 1 in Wales children's progress will be judged and documented through Teacher Assessment. It is of interest to note that Pidgeon (1992) highlights that:

there is much evidence to show teachers judgements are a more effective form of assessment than standardized tests (Pidgeon, 1992, p.124)

For teacher assessment and associated record-keeping to be most effective and informative it needs to take place within a clear and coherent framework with specific records regularly made about what a child has achieved. As Rodger (2003) points out, it is crucial to know who the information gathered is for and how will it be used to improve the quality of education for the child. Rodger (2003) suggests that essential record keeping components include: records of child's home environment and health; records based on observation in each area of learning; records on social and emotional development; records of any SEN concerns and welfare records (Hunter-Carsch 1995). In addition increasing numbers of nurseries and schools are using portfolios or records of achievement which children are actively involved in creating. As Pollard (1997) describes:

Each child should be loosely involved in the selection of evidence for inclusion in his or her portfolio and in review of the contents. . . The portfolio is an attempt to represent achievements and the child should have a sense of ownership of the contents. Portfolios move with children as they progress through school, thus providing information for successive teachers and facilitating continuity and progression. (Pollard, 1997, p.303)

This is an area where there will continue to be much development with the promotion and growth of e-portfolios in schools.

4.3.3 Staff: child ratios, staff qualifications and training

Currently, across the range of pre-school and early years provision and KS1 classes in Wales there are wide disparities in the ratios of staff to children. The CSIW sets firm legal requirements for the non-maintained sector of:

- 1:8 under eights for sessional and full day care and
- 1:6 under eights including up to 3 under fives for child-minders (CSIW 2002a; 2002b; 2002c).

The ratios are much higher in the maintained sector and are not statutory. Guidelines for Nursery schools are 1:10 and Nursery classes 1:13. It is not uncommon to still see Reception classes with ratios of 1:30, the same as the current statutory ratios for KS1 classes.

Adult child ratios and class/group size are different and distinct but both have been the subject of intense debate in recent years. When considering class size there is a widely held perception amongst teachers, parents and governors that smaller classes lead to better teaching and consequently more effective learning (Bennett 1994) a view strongly supported by Achilles and Finn (2000). Conversely both Ofsted (1995) and Alino-Wilcockson & Alino-Wilcockson (2001) argue that reducing class size is costly and therefore cannot be justified when there is little evidence to suggest that class size reduction plays a significant role in pupil attainment.

Despite international research evidence put forward by Munton et al. (2002, p.7) which suggests that in *pre-school settings* there is a 'better quality of care' as a result of improved staff: ratios, McGurk et al. (1995) and Sammons et al. (2002) highlight that it is very difficult to study the effects of improved adult child ratios as a stand alone variable in existing British practice. Munton et al (2002) concede that:

the influence of staff: child ratios on quality is inextricably linked to other elements . . . including staff education and training, staff salaries and group size. (Munton et al. 2002, pp7)

The significant complexities in measuring class size and ratios in Reception classes and in Key Stage 1 have been described by Blatchford et al (2002a and b) who also found the possible effects of ratio cannot be extracted or examined in isolation from those of staff qualification, training, resources and pedagogical practices.

Recent research notes that where the evidence suggests that there are benefits in class size reduction and lower *teacher: child* ratios in respect of pupil attainment, these are most notable in Early Years education and in the early stages of Key Stage 1 (Wilson 2002, ESTYN 2003). Blatchford (2003) emphasises that it is crucial to take account of children's age when examining classroom effects commenting:

The effects are most obvious in the first year in school . . . There is a clear case for reducing class sizes at Reception and KS1, and especially Reception. (Blatchford 2003, pp 143)

According to Blatchford (2003) the benefits of small class size on pupils' attainment included: more effective teacher support for learning, more effective classroom management and control; increased teacher interactions and decreased off-task behaviours.

This is not however, to be confused with the effectiveness of simply having additional staff/ adults in classes. Significantly some research studies have found that having extra unqualified or low-level qualified staff/ adults does not have any effect on children's progress in any year from Reception through to Year 2 (Blatchford 2003, Muijs and Reynolds 2002). It is suggested that this is probably due to a wide variation in effectiveness; some additional staff/ adults are effective and are used effectively by teachers and others are not. Blatchford (2003) concludes that the effectiveness of support staff was affected by three main factors: the extent and relevance of their training; the planned and efficient use of their time and their reliability and consistency, and the number of support staff available and the number of hours worked. In the case of pre-schools Siraj-Blatchford *et al* (2002) found that:

...qualified staff in the most effective settings provide children with more experience of academic activities (especially literacy and mathematics) and they encourage children to engage in activities with higher cognitive challenge. While we found that the most highly qualified staff also provided the most direct teaching, we found that they were the most effective in their interactions with the children, using the most sustained shared thinking interactions. Further, we found that less qualified staff are significantly better pedagogues when they are supervised by qualified teachers.

(Siraj-Blatchford *et al*, 2002, p11)

The EPPE study found that the analysis of ratios was confounded by staff qualifications and quality. Pre-school providers (apart from the integrated centres) where the staff had higher qualifications tended to have higher ratios (Sammons *et al* 2002). But despite these analytical difficulties multi-level modelling was still able to establish that low ratios were significant predictors of progress in at least one area of the curriculum; early numeracy (op cit p46). The current proposed ratios for the new Foundation Phase in Wales are consequently substantiated by current and recent research which supports smaller class sizes for the Early Years and the early stages of KS1. But as Munton *et al.* (2002) argue:

The influence of staff: child ratios cannot be considered independently of other factors including staff education, staff salaries and group size. (Munton *et al.* 2002, pp11)

Currently there are a range of job classifications in early years work including: teacher, nursery nurse, nursery manager, classroom assistant, teaching assistant, non-teaching assistant, learning support assistant, nursery assistant, play-worker, playgroup assistant and playgroup leader. Similarly the training and qualification schemes required to undertake these positions vary enormously. Egan and James (2004) point out that:

there is non-uniformity of training opportunities and in the quality of the training across Wales (Egan and James 2004 p 18)

As both the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2000) and Egan and James (2004) have highlighted, one type of qualified classroom assistant can be a nursery nurse with an NVQ level 3 qualification and another an enthusiastic 'parent' with no child care or education qualification. This apparent lack of national regulation is of concern because, as Bowman *et al.* (2001) point out, the professional knowledge and skills of adults working with children are one of the most important factors in determining how well a child learns.

Research has shown that the most effective pedagogues have amongst other indicators a good knowledge of child development (OHMCI 1999, Bowman *et al.* 2001, Siraj-Blatchford *et al* 2002). Consequently, as Fisher (2002) underlines, there have been real concerns about practitioners' pedagogical knowledge base as, until recently, on many initial teacher training courses, play and child development content has been reduced in support of a more subject-based approach. If, as ACCAC (2004 p.2) clearly states; 'the serious business of play' provides the context for children's learning', then early years practitioners will need to be more informed and conversant about its purposes and pedagogy.

In-service training for teachers in Wales is largely through LEA provision, and, as Egan and James (2004) highlight, there is again wide variation in the availability, nature and quality of this provision. Crucially the Egan and James Report has highlighted practitioners' requests for substantial training in both pedagogical and organisational areas to raise confidence and update expertise in order to meet the needs of the new Foundation Phase in Wales (Egan and James 2004). In addition Egan and James (2004) report that in service training for classroom support staff varies considerably ranging from regular provision to none at all.

In the Wyn Siencyn Report (2004) a number of key recommendations regarding Welsh language provision were identified. Most notable, in respect of training, was the need for a national Welsh language training strategy to be developed for all staff working in all types of settings with young children. As a consequence more recently two clear initiatives have emerged and received funding. Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin has plans to train 300 new Welsh language staff to work in the Welsh medium sector with the aim of expanding the provision. Trinity College Carmarthen plan to train 150 existing staff over 3yrs on the newly developed 'Geiriau Bach' project which is a Level 4 course - Certificate of Higher Education in Bilingualism and Bilingual practice in the Early Years. It is for non Welsh speakers or people with very little Welsh in order to enable them to use Welsh in a limited way in their setting.

Estyn (2004a) has also identified staffing shortages in their document of advice to support the implementation of Iaith Pawb. They have made important recommendations regarding the pre-school and Foundation Phase. These included clarification of the requirement to deliver bilingual education in this phase and the need for further training and guidance for teachers and others working in the sector. A final point was the need to monitor provision in order to raise the standards of bilingualism. Several similar issues are reported in the survey on training and professional development for the 0-7age phase carried out by Egan and James (2004).

Consequently it is clear that a number of training issues need to be dealt with in order to enable the current workforce and newly trained staff to be confident in delivering the proposed Foundation Phase together with the new expectations for developing the use of the Welsh language to a high and effective standard.

4.3.4 Organisation and management

The REPEY study (Siraj-Blatchford et al 2002) noted that strong leadership, long serving staff and an emphasis on staff development characterised all of the good and excellent case study settings that were identified by EPPE (Siraj-Blatchford *et al*, 2003). Strong leadership was often founded on a clear and shared philosophy, which was followed by all staff working in the setting in addition to the managers taking an active role leading the way forward. The most successful managers had a strong educational focus, valued the importance of adult: child interaction and supported their staff in developing better ways of engaging children. Similarly ESTYN (2005) identified that where leadership and management was effective; aims were clear and understood by both staff and parents, plans were in place to maintain and improve standards and the individual needs of children were considered. Many of the REPEY settings were involved in projects such as the Effective Early Learning (EEL) project, and were interested in a variety of curricula models such as Reggio Emilia (Italy), High Scope (America) and Te Whariki (New Zealand). It is interesting to note that the model of the Foundation Phase in Wales draws on key aspects of all the curricula models highlighted above.

Planning for the education of young children is multi-faceted and needs to include a number of key factors, although as Moyles (1995) underlines when considering planning for 3-7yr olds, the importance of children 'doing' and playing should not be underestimated. Notably, ACCAC's Draft Framework for Children's Learning (2004 p.2) puts the idea that 'children learn through first hand experiential activities' as central to its philosophy.

Play

Play has an important role in child development (Smilansky, 1990, Franklin 1999, Bowman et al., 2001, Siraj-Blatchford and McCallum 2005).

Psychological theories of learning have claimed that learning is an interactive event, where the child constructs his or her own understandings within a social and physical environment. This is 'active learning' (Hohmann and Weikart, 1995) where the child is acting on objects

and interacting with people, ideas and events – and then constructs new ideas. Play, then, is an environment in which the child is an active learner.

Much has been written about the value of play to learning (Dunn 1989, Cohen and MacKeith 1991, QCA 2000, Fisher 2002 and Tizard and Hughes 2002). As Siraj-Blatchford and McCallum (2005) outline, the literature suggests that children think when they play; they play with ideas, roles, knowledge and concepts. Wood and Attfield (1997) also highlight that the characteristics of children’s play such as exploration, investigation, making and testing hypotheses and taking risks are also integral to learning.

Play enhances all-round child development. Wood and Attfield (1997), as outlined in the table below, suggest that play contributes to a child’s development in the cognitive, affective and psycho–motor domains. Consequently, this provides a strong argument for play to be seen to contribute to the development of the ‘whole child’ (Fisher 2002).

Cognitive	Play contributes to all the skills and processes involved in learning, thinking and understanding.
Affective	Play contributes to all the skills and processes involved in learning a repertoire of appropriate behaviours: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ making relationships, ▪ social interactions, ▪ expressing and controlling emotion, ▪ developing a sense of self, ▪ understanding the needs of others.
Psycho-motor	Play contributes to all aspects of physical development including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ fine motor skills (use of hands, fingers, hand/eye co-ordination) ▪ gross motor skills (large body movements such as sitting, turning, twisting, balancing, controlled movement of head, trunk and limbs) ▪ loco-motor skills (large body movements involving travelling and an awareness of space such as crawling, running, climbing, walking, hopping, skipping, jumping)

In addition to the advantages of play highlighted above: play can motivate children; play has been seen to increase problem solving development; play can foster creative thinking; play is linked to goal setting (Tizard and Hughes 1987, Bruce 1994, Bruner 1986); play encourages the consolidation of previous learning; play can be significant in developing children’s social skills (Smith and Cowie 1991); play is crucial for developing children’s personal and emotional skills; play and creativity are connected (Wood and Attfield 1997, Cohen and MacKeith 1991) and play is important to the development of language, communication and literacy (Roskos and Christie 2001, Vedeler, 1997). All these benefits provide a strong argument for a emphasis being placed on ‘play’ being a central and integral part of the proposed Foundation Phase curriculum for young children in Wales (ACCAC 2004).

Wood and Attfield (1997) and Siraj-Blatchford and McCallum (2005) suggest that there are certain skills which are relevant to both play and work contexts which:

embody interdependence, collaboration and co-operation and enable children to develop confidence, motivation, the ability to take risks, consider alternatives, struggle, succeed and identify failure as a learning experience. (Siraj-Blatchford and McCallum, 2005, p.32)

Finally, based on Bruner’ s theory that there is an appropriate form of any skill or knowledge that may be imparted at whatever age one wishes to begin teaching (Bruner 1966), Wood

and Attfield (1997) strongly suggest that children from as young as three can be taught 'play/work' skills. These include:

- speaking and listening in a group;
- understanding the concepts of planning and making decisions;
- being able to implement a plan;
- selecting and knowing how to use materials and resources;
- acting independently and collaboratively;
- asking for assistance from peers and adults and specifying the assistance needed;
- paying attention to an activity;
- creating, identifying and solving problems;
- remembering how a plan was carried out;
- reflecting on activities;
- representing knowledge and experience;
- processing information and communicating the meaning and purpose of an activity
- making and sustaining relationships with peers and adults

Once again many of these skills feature within the NAFW and ACCAC's vision for the new Foundation Phase curriculum. The Framework document (ACCAC 2004) highlights the importance of planning and teaching 'skills for confident learning' suggesting that these skills together with the developmental areas (personal and social, emotional, moral and spiritual, cognitive, linguistic and physical) should lead the teaching and learning for children from 3-7.

Adult: child interactions

Siraj-Blatchford and Sylva (2004) propose that adults should be proactive and use their involvement with children in a planned and focused way to encourage sustained shared thinking. In the REPEY study (Siraj-Blatchford *et al* 2002) highlighted that adults and children in the most effective settings were more likely to engage at times in 'sustained shared thinking'; episodes in which two or more individuals "worked together" in an intellectual way to solve a problem, clarify a concept, evaluate activities, or extend narratives etc. During the periods of sustained shared thinking observed, both parties contributed to the thinking and developed and extended the conversation.

Teacher initiated and child initiated activities

Child initiated activities provide children with opportunities to make choices and decisions for themselves; to show their independence in addition to social skills when engaging with others and to have control which can empower children in their endeavours. Whitehead (1993) suggests that some of the most imaginative and innovative learning can result from well resourced child-initiated activity and that through child-initiated activity children build a picture of the world and learn to investigate, explore and take risks (Moyle 1989). Fisher (2002) argues that teacher initiated activity is of equal importance. Educators have responsibility for planning and providing opportunities and experiences to expand the children's knowledge, skills and understanding. Teacher-initiated activities present opportunities for children to engage with ideas, concepts and experiences that are new. Siraj-Blatchford and Sylva (2004) have now established, conclusively, based on longitudinal research undertaken in both the EPPE and REPEY studies, that the most effective settings provide carefully balanced provision of both child initiated and teacher initiated activities. This enables children to reap the benefits from both freely chosen play activities (the value of which has been discussed in an earlier section) and teacher initiated group work.

4.3.5 Partnership with parents

Home and school are the primary sites of childhood (Ericsson and Larsen 2002). Over the last 40 years there has been growing support and understanding of the importance of building strong links between home and school. A number of studies have shown that

parental attitudes towards an involvement in children's educational activities can have an effect on children's quality of learning, development, and attainment at all ages (Plowden Report 1967, Hargreaves Report 1984, Macbeth et al. 1984, Toomey 1989, Jowett 1990, Osborn 1990, David 1993, Bynner and Steedman 1995, Parsons and Bynner 1998, McMillan and Leslie 1998, Whalley 2001). In addition, two American studies have shown that improved parental involvement can be associated with increased attendance, fewer disciplinary problems and higher aspirations even after socio-economic status and pupil ability have been taken into account (Epstein 1987, Eagle 1989). The QCA (2000) also maintains that in early years settings where parents and practitioners work together the results have an encouraging impact on children's development and learning. In addition as Whalley (2001) suggests:

there are also many benefits for parents who become involved in their children's learning which relate to both their understanding of their children and their own raised self esteem. (Whalley, 2001, p.55)

As Siraj-Blatchford and McCallum (2005) note, many authors have supported the notion that parents and practitioners should work 'in partnership' (Cunningham and Davis 1985, Cohen 1988, Alexander 1997). This is where practitioners and parents work together in a complementary way, sharing their expertise and knowledge of the child and the child's development.

Almost all school improvement and effectiveness studies corroborate that parental involvement is one factor (among several other factors) which improves schools (Mortimore 1989). If we accept that children are likely to be provided with a more sensitive, socio-culturally 'embedded' learning environment in the home than in the school then it is likely to follow that where there is some consensus and consistency in the home and the school's approach to children's learning then more effective learning outcomes could be achieved (Jowett et al. 1991, Long 1991, Schaeffer 1992). The REPEY study (Siraj-Blatchford *et al.* 2002) found that in the most effective settings, child-related information, especially about curriculum and learning aims, was more frequently shared between parents and staff, and the parents were often involved in decision making about their child's learning programme. In addition settings that encouraged continuity of learning between the setting and the home achieved consistently better cognitive outcomes. Whether parents and/or children are tuned into what the setting is trying to achieve seems to be linked, at least partially, with what happens at home. It appears to be associated with what the parents do with their children when they are not at the setting or what the children initiate with their parents. In addition the EPPE project Siraj-Blatchford et al. (2003) established that parents felt that settings which were sensitive, responsive and consistent (in terms of staff), were more effective, and this links well with the research literature on good practice, especially in daycare (Bowman et al 2001). In Wales, the role of parents in supporting their children's learning has in many cases been integrally linked with the development of Welsh medium education (Baker 1988).

The importance of the home learning environment

There is a growing body of research evidence to corroborate the importance of the home learning environment (Melhuish et al. 2001, Tizard and Hughes 2002, Desforges and Abouchaar 2003 and Sammons et al. 2004a, 2004b). A home learning environment is one in which parents actively engage with their children in play and learning activities. The range and nature of possible activities is vast but can include, talking and listening, reading stories, playing games, playing with letters, numbers and shapes, painting and drawing and singing songs and rhymes. Findings from EPPE (Sammons *et al.*, 2004b) clearly demonstrated that higher quality home learning environments are positively associated with social, behavioural and cognitive development:

aspects of the home learning environment experienced by children during the preschool period continue to show positive effects on attainment and social behaviour at age 7 years plus. (Sammons et al. 2004b p.56)

It is also significant to note that this research has shown that what parents *do* is more important than who they *are*. In other words the effect of the home learning environment is stronger than either social class or parents educational attainment.

4.3.6 Quality assurance and inspection

Ensuring high quality provision is central to giving all children a good start. Both EPPE and recent NICHD research have shown that the quality of 'intellectual experience and stimulation' in settings when other factors are controlled does have a significantly positive affect on children's cognitive development (Sammons *et al*, 2002, NICHD 2003).

Raising quality and standards in early years services in both education and care is high on the political agenda. The National Childcare Strategy in Wales Consultation Document (Welsh Office 1998b) identified the need to improve what was then considerable variation in quality. The document identified the need for: uniformity in guidance content and availability; consistency in respect of inspection and regulation regardless of nature of provider; improvements both in qualifications and terms and conditions of the workforce; standardisation, transferability and equivalence in qualifications and increased opportunities for training.

In 1998 the Welsh Office BEST document 'Guidance on Early Years education' put forward that in order to achieve high quality provision all settings would need to:

- deliver the Desirable Outcomes;
- engage in self assessment,
- have appropriate training,
- work with qualified teachers to raise standards in planning and assessment,
- undergo inspections.

The Hanney Report (2000) and the NAFW (2001a) went further in identifying a number of key points that would aim to improve the quality of early years provision. These included recommendations that approved providers be inspected under a new joint system involving CSIW and ESTYN, agreed 'quality criteria' should be met in each setting, and the need for the development of a national quality assurance system for Early years care and education in Wales.

Currently ESTYN is responsible for inspecting the early education settings (providers of education for children under five) in Wales, in both the maintained and non-maintained sectors. But different procedures are followed, depending on whether provision is in the maintained school sector or in the non-maintained - private, voluntary, and independent sectors. From 2006 all settings will be inspected on their standards in bilingual education. It is helpful to note that in the guidance on inspecting bilingualism in primary and nursery schools inspectors are reminded:

It is essential that you always consider what is reasonable to expect taking into account the linguistic background and context of the school you are inspecting and the area it serves (Estyn, 2004a, p 6)

In future, ESTYN plans to improve its inspection of settings for all children under five, whether in schools or non-maintained settings by:

- using the same approach to all inspections for children under five
- working with CSIW to carry out inspections at the same time

(ESTYN 2005 p 89)

The non-maintained sector whether providing early education and/or care are also inspected annually by CSIW.

4.3.7 Transitional issues

Transitional issues at any point of the learning continuum have to be handled delicately and with great sensitivity. As the DfES/ Sure Start make clear:

Practitioners have argued that transition can be a particularly complicated time for parents, children and their teachers. It could also delay children's learning if a school is not managing transition properly. (DfES/Sure Start, 2004, p 1)

Educational transitions occur as children start school, as they progress to each new class or stage, and when they move to different schools. Transition requires children to adjust to new environments, to develop relationships and interact with unfamiliar adults and peers, to grasp new rules and routines and to get used to new ways of working.

Transition to pre-school

This is of significant importance when considering the varied and diverse types of pre-school provision for 3 and 4yr olds that need to merge when children join a reception class and reach compulsory school at the age of five. As Stephen and Cope (2003) highlight, pupils beginning primary school are a 'heterogeneous group' they arrive with varied experiences of home, family, community and cultural life and will have attended many different forms of pre-school provision.

Pre-school to school transitional practices differ enormously. Many children and parents will have opportunities to visit their chosen school and become familiar with organisational and mechanical issues however the extent to which schools and prospective teachers engage with and learn about the children who will be in their class varies considerably. As Wilkinson et al (1999) points out, many pre-school practitioners feel that school teachers disregard their reports on individual children as they move to school. Similarly while the need for baseline assessment (on entry to Reception class) is understood by practitioners it raises challenges for transition between different types of provision. This is because the baseline is conducted by practitioners who can have very little prior knowledge or experience of children rather than the pre-school practitioners who know the most about the child's development and capabilities. Consequently assessments between the two parts of a child's early education experience can be disjointed (Fisher 2002).

Classroom practitioners also have strong feelings about transitional issues as Siraj-Blatchford et al. (2002) in the REPEY study have shown. Concerns exist around the common practice of schools taking one intake in the year rather than taking children into reception classes throughout the year, and also regarding the extent to which chronological age can be taken to indicate young children's development. However it is interesting to note that the single element of the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage (CGFS) considered most popular by practitioners in England was its emphasis on continuity across pre-school and into primary school. The Foundation Stage clearly improved the relationship between pre-schools and school and as the proposed Foundation Phase will operate in a similar way these benefits should also be experienced in Wales.

Siraj-Blatchford *et al.* (2003) in the EPPE project found that parents also had anxieties about transition and the difference in pedagogy and curriculum when their child entered Reception. Interestingly, parents didn't expect a different approach from Reception, but one that articulated well with nursery practice, and did not become formal too quickly. Again the new Foundation Phase may help alleviate these concerns as it places a greater emphasis on active learning and play in a less formal environment.

Transition at 5 from Foundation to KS1

The REPEY project (Siraj-Blatchford et al.2002) showed that there were still major concerns related to transition at the end of Reception, and from the foundation stage to Year 1 of the National Curriculum. These concerns related to difference in structure and teaching approach and the emphasis placed on children acquiring 'formal' skills in Year 1. In addition, similarly to concerns of Reception practitioners, Year 1 practitioners felt that chronological age could not be assumed to indicate young children's development and that some children might find it more difficult to adjust to a more formal environment. A number of these concerns are linked, as noted by Sanders et al (2005), to the challenges created by moving from a play-based curriculum to a more structured formal and subject based curriculum and the associated skills needed in order to be able to cope with this change. Ofsted (2004) also highlight that not enough thought had been given to the relationship between the areas of learning in the Foundation Stage and the subjects of the National Curriculum in Year 1. However it is interesting to note as highlighted in Sanders *et al.* report that:

Children's skills of independent learning, acquired during the Foundation Stage, were not always being capitalised upon in Year 1 (Sanders et al. 2005 pp v)

Another related aspect highlighted above that can be particularly problematic is the need for practitioners to try to dovetail the assessments of two different curricula; the Desirable Outcomes and then the National Curriculum as children move from Reception to Year 1. It is therefore significant that the proposed new Foundation Phase in Wales has the potential to overcome these problems as there will no longer be a change of curriculum, and the intention is that the more formal skills will be acquired more gradually throughout the Phase when children are developmentally ready. This is a strategy validated by findings from Sanders et al. research study which suggests that:

The best adaptation takes place where conditions are similar, communication is encouraged and the process of change takes place gradually over time. (Sanders et al. 2005, pp 131)

The aspect outlined in the above statement that remains crucial is the importance of communication between staff as a child progresses through the school and the need for communication with and the involvement of parents in their child's transition through school. Another DfES (2004) report focusing on transition from the Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1 in England noted that the effective school management of transition is essential in ensuring that there is no delay in children's learning.

4.4 Conclusion

Current pre-school provision in Wales for 3-5 year olds is delivered through a range of settings in both English and Welsh and much influential research demonstrates high quality pre-schooling is related to better intellectual and social/behavioural development for children. It is clear from this review of literature that key aspects of the proposed Foundation Phase in Wales are based on robust research, for example the value and importance of active learning and play for a child's development and collaboration with parents. However in light of this research further reflection is required particularly on ratios, qualifications and training as the effects of ratio cannot be extracted or examined in isolation from those of staff qualification, training, resources and pedagogical practices. Effective early education is thus built on the cohesion and rigour of the key elements discussed throughout the review of literature above. The Early Childhood research literature informed the design of this evaluation and is one context for considering the findings.

5. Quality

5.1 Observed Quality

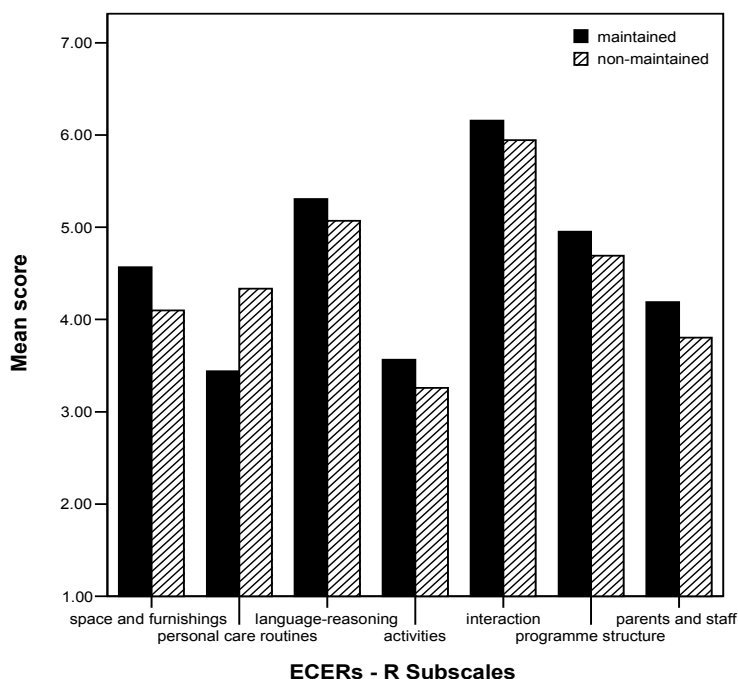
Research Questions related to the systematic observations of quality across the various settings:

1. What is the 'quality' profile across the sample in terms of the 'play-based, whole child' assessment of the ECERS-R, the 'curricular and pedagogical' assessment of the ECERS-E, and the 'emotional climate' assessment of the CIS?
2. Do settings that score high on the ECERS-E also score high on the ECERS-R? And is the converse true?
3. Do settings vary in the different aspects of quality according to their:
 - sector or type, e.g., maintained compared to non-maintained
 - Proportion of qualified teachers
4. Is literacy teaching different when it is delivered in Welsh or in English?
5. Do Welsh medium settings offer better teaching of 'Welsh culture' compared to English medium ones?

There are many ways to assess quality; inspectors and advisors have assessed the educational quality of Early Childhood settings for decades. Practitioners also assess quality daily, in their own practice and in the settings they regularly visit. Parents and children have strong views as well. In this section of the report, we assess quality along a range of dimensions using systematic observation carried out by trained researchers. They followed standardised procedures that have been used in England, Northern Ireland and elsewhere to enable comparison across different types of provision. This is just one view of quality, but one which uses a very objective yardstick. More importantly, however, the systematic profiles constructed here have been shown in previous research to relate to the **actual developmental progress** made by children between entry to pre-school and entry to school. This validates the systematic observations in a way not available in quality judgements made by other methods.

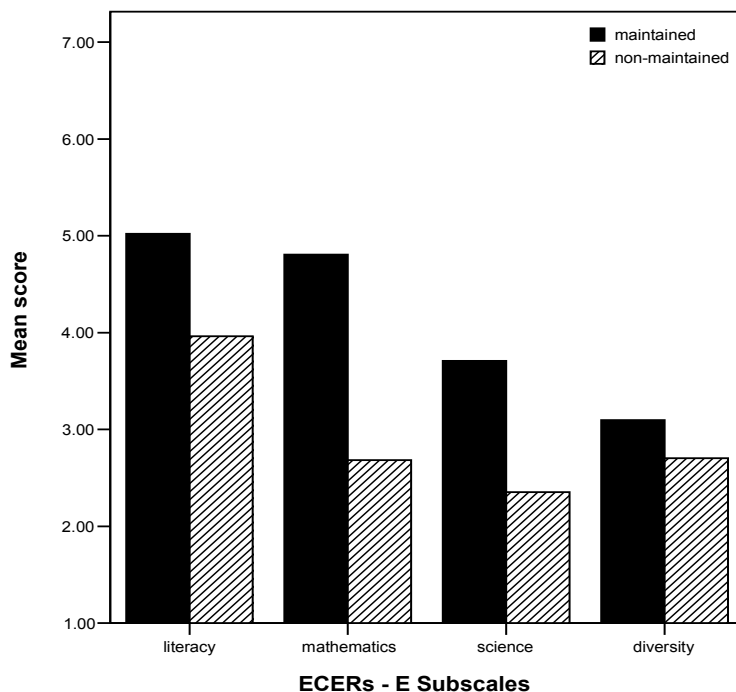
Quality scores (ECERS-R, ECERS-E and CIS) by maintained / non-maintained sector

Graph 1 - ECERS-R subscale scores by maintained/non-maintained



Graph 1 above shows the ‘play-based, whole child’ assessment of the ECERS-R scores in both the maintained and non-maintained sectors. The scale on the vertical axis shows the average score achieved in the ECERS-R – the lowest score possible is 1 and the highest is 7. The horizontal axis presents each of the seven ECERS-R subscales in turn. It can be seen that the only ECERS-R subscale with a significant difference across maintained and non-maintained settings is the ‘personal care routines’ subscale ($t= 2.91, p=0.006$), in which the non-maintained settings score higher. There is also a trend towards maintained settings scoring higher on the ‘space and furnishings’ subscale ($t= 1.80, p=0.08$). Pleasingly the graph suggests that settings in both sectors are scoring most highly in the two subscales ‘interaction’ and ‘language and reasoning’ because many research studies have shown these are related most to children’s learning.

Graph 2 - ECERS-E subscale scores by maintained/non-maintained



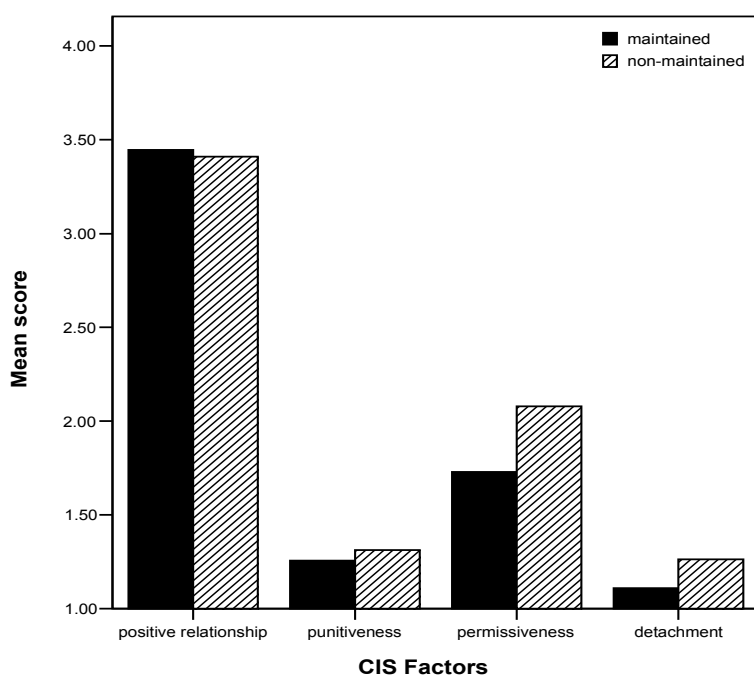
Graph 2 above shows the ‘curricular and pedagogical’ assessment of the ECERS-E scores in both the maintained and non-maintained sectors. The scale on the vertical axis shows the average score achieved in the ECERS-E – the lowest score possible is 1 and the highest 7. The horizontal axis presents each of the four ECERS-E subscales in turn. On the subscales of the ECERS-E, maintained settings score significantly higher on ‘literacy’ ($t= 4.79, p<0.001$), mathematics ($t= 5.60, p<0.001$) and science ($t= 4.26, p<0.001$). There is no significant difference between maintained and non-maintained settings on the ‘diversity’ subscale. It is important to note that those settings with a higher proportion of teachers with teacher qualifications score significantly higher on all subscales on the ECERS-E and that a significantly higher proportion of staff with teacher qualifications is found in maintained settings.

Analysis shows that those settings which score highly on the ECERS-E tend to score significantly higher on the ECERS-R than those settings which score lower on the ECERS-E (Mann-Whitney $U= 173, p=0.011$). The converse of this is not true. This suggests that those settings which have an emphasis on the more curricular aspects of quality (leading to high ECERS-E scores) also have high quality provision on the more play-based side. However, those settings which provide high quality play-based care (leading to high

ECERS-R scores) do not necessarily have a strong emphasis on the curricular facets of provision as measured by the ECERS-E.

As with REPEY (Siraj-Blatchford et al. 2002) findings this demonstrates the need for an approach in which cognitive skills complement social and care skills. It can be seen from the data that there is a tendency for some settings to promote care above cognition but not the other way around.

Graph 3 - CIS scores by maintained/non-maintained



Graph 3 above shows the ‘emotional climate’ assessment of the CIS scores in both the maintained and non-maintained sectors. Examples of the four CIS factors are:

Positive relationships

- Speaks warmly to the children
- Seems enthusiastic about the children’s activities and efforts

Punitiveness

- Speaks with irritation or hostility to the children (excessive impatience / intolerance)
- Punishes children without explanation

Permissiveness

- Exercises no control over the children (lack of order evident)
- Ignores children when they misbehave (tolerates anti-social / dangerous behaviour)

Detachment

- Seems distant or detached from the children (lack of interest in children)
- Spends considerable time in activity not involving interaction with the children

In relation to CIS it is better to score high on ‘positive relationships’ and low on ‘punitiveness’, ‘permissiveness’ and ‘detachment’. The scale on the vertical axis shows the average scores achieved in the CIS– the lowest score possible is 1 and the highest 4. The horizontal axis presents each of the four CIS factors in turn. Non-maintained settings score significantly higher on the ‘permissiveness’ (Mann-Whitney U= 156.5, p= 0.003) and ‘detachment’ (Mann-Whitney U= 193.5, p=0.01) factors of the CIS. It is important to note that those settings with a higher proportion of teachers with teacher qualifications score significantly lower on CIS measures of ‘permissiveness’ and ‘detachment’. There is no

significant difference in scores on the 'positive relationships' and 'punitiveness' factors however it is pleasing that both sectors are scoring high on 'positive relationships' and low on 'punitiveness'.

Quality scores (ECERS-R, ECERS-E and CIS) in relation to staff qualification

There is a significantly higher proportion of staff with teacher qualifications in maintained settings than in non-maintained settings ($t= 11.15, p<0.001$)

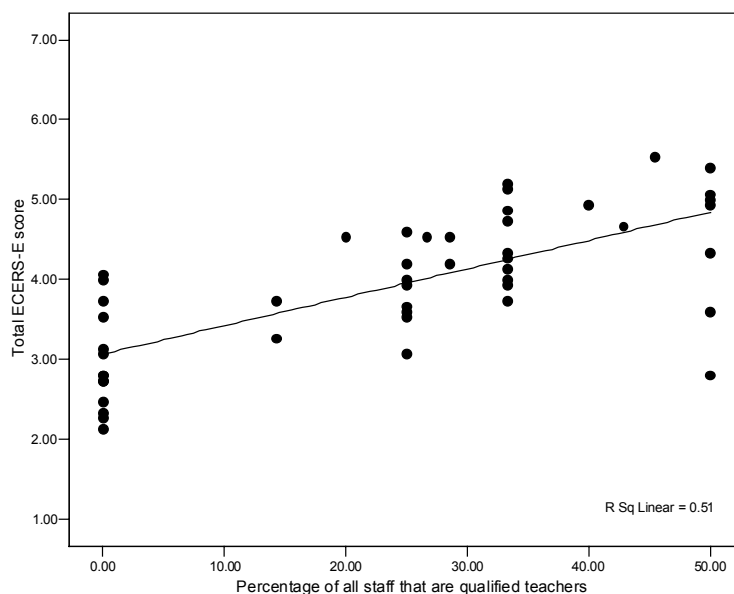
Table 5 below shows the correlations between the percent of staff who had teacher qualifications and the different quality scores their centre received. The total score on the curriculum and pedagogical quality assessment (ECERS-E) was closely related to the percent of teachers on the staff ($r = 0.71$, which is a highly significant correlation). Of the four curricular subscales which comprise the ECERS-E, the mathematics subscale had the highest correlation ($r = 0.69$) while the diversity subscale had the lowest ($r = 0.32$). For the Caregiver Interaction Scale (CIS) both permissiveness and detachment were negatively correlated with the percent of qualified teachers, which means that settings with a higher percent of teachers tended to have lower scores on detachment and permissiveness.

Table 5 Correlation between Quality measures and percent of staff with teacher qualifications

Key: *** highly significant ** very significant * significant

Subscale	r	significance
ECERS-E		
ECERS-E Total	R = 0.71	***
Literacy	R = 0.59	***
Maths	R = 0.69	***
Science	R = 0.57	***
Diversity	R = 0.31	*
CIS		
CIS Total	R = 0.30	*
Permissiveness	R = -0.32	*
Detachment	R = -0.43	**

Graph 4 - Mean ECERS-E score correlated with percentage of all staff with teaching qualifications

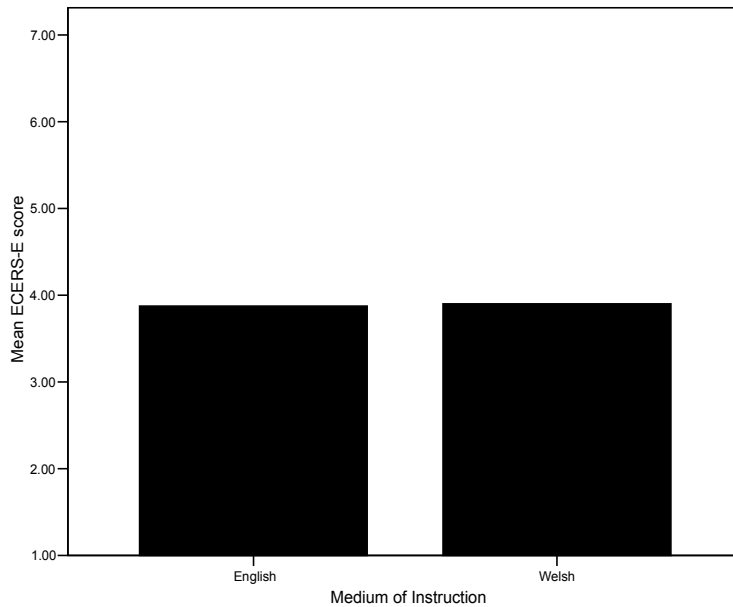


The data in Table 5 are plotted in Graph 4 above. Each setting is a dot on the graph, and the vertical axis shows the ECERS-E total score while the horizontal axis shows the

percentage of staff in each setting who are qualified teachers. This graph shows clearly that the settings with more teachers in them tend to have higher ECERS-E scores.

Quality of literacy teaching in Welsh and English medium settings

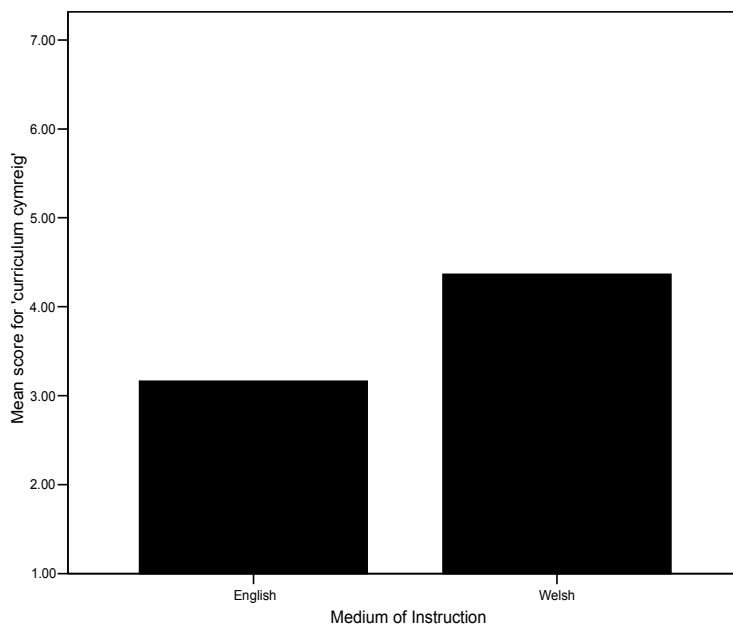
Graph 5 - Mean ECERS-E score by medium of instruction



As graph 5 above shows, the ECERS-E literacy subscale scores are similar for English and Welsh medium settings, with no significant difference in the quality as a result of the language of instruction.

Quality of 'Curriculum Cymreig' between Welsh and English medium settings

Graph 6 - Score on 'Curriculum Cymreig' by medium of instruction



As graph 6 above shows we compared the 'Curriculum Cymreig' subscale scores in both English and Welsh medium settings. Welsh medium settings score higher than English

medium settings in this subscale. This was to be expected, because in Welsh medium settings where the language is embedded it is not surprising to find higher levels of cultural awareness. However English medium settings need to work much harder to be able to raise their scores as they do not benefit from the same linguistic advantages.

5.2 Stakeholder perceptions on quality

Active learning and play

When asked about the Foundation Phase placing more emphasis on 'active learning and play' there was overwhelming support across all stakeholders with 95% of respondents from every group agreeing with the concept. Some LEA Directors of Education suggested that this type of curriculum is the most appropriate curriculum for young children and will contribute to raising quality and standards in education.

'active learning and play will lay the foundation for greater conceptual understanding and the acquisition of skills' (director 2)

'active learning and play is how children, particularly young children learn best. Research evidence indicates that experiential learning and good quality play opportunities are fundamental in raising standards' (director 4)

When asked what changes had been required to provide more active learning experiences there was a wide range of responses from both maintained and non-maintained sectors. This will have been determined by the existing accommodation and resources that each setting had before the pilot began. However respondents gave examples in the following categories:

- Improved Ratios (maintained sector only, as non-maintained was already 1:8)
- Improved Indoor Accommodation
- Improved Outdoor Accommodation
- Improved Resources and Equipment

Maintained sector

The practitioners from the maintained sector identified a number of changes which were closely corroborated by the head teachers of the schools. The governing bodies were less aware of changes that had already taken place but were more focused on what changes would be required in the future.

Eighty percent of practitioners identified changes that had been as a direct result of having additional adults in the setting. These included: increased use of the outdoor environment; more individual attention for children; more opportunities for small group activities and more simultaneous activities. In relation to indoor accommodation the biggest change was associated with re-evaluating and re-organising the use of available space. Outdoors, the biggest changes were associated with creating and developing an outdoor area. Finally in respect of resources and equipment eight to eleven pilot schools identified purchases on general resources, outdoor equipment and investigative and creative resources and three to four pilot schools identified purchases to support learning in role-play, multicultural understanding and bilingualism.

In addition to these changes head-teachers identified that staff training was needed in order to provide more active learning experiences with one head highlighting

'[more active learning experiences would require a] child development focus for teaching and therefore staff training was necessary' (head-teacher 2)

Non-Maintained sector

The picture in the non-maintained sector was not dissimilar to that in the maintained sector with similar changes in accommodation and resources. However in respect of resources and equipment 50% of non-maintained settings identified purchases on outdoor equipment and investigative and creative resources and three to four non-maintained settings identified purchases on general resources, role play, language, multicultural understanding and bilingualism.

Local Authority

The Early Years Advisors concurred with what the settings had said were the main changes necessary. However they seemed to be much more knowledgeable about what changes had taken place in the maintained sector compared with the non-maintained sector with only half commenting specifically on changes in the non-maintained sector. Very few of the EYDCPs have specific knowledge as to what changes have been necessary in the pilot settings in order to provide more active learning experiences.

It is interesting to note that in both sectors a majority of LEA staff felt they needed to place a considerable emphasis on creating, developing and resourcing the outdoor environment in order to promote more active learning experiences and a relatively small minority placed the focus on changing indoor staff practice and pedagogy. There might be a tendency to interpret 'active' more as physically active rather than in terms of experiential, manipulation of resources for cognitive development as well as physical.

ACCAC Draft Framework for Children's Learning

We asked how appropriate the ACCAC Draft Framework (DF) had been for planning and staff in both sectors gave responses, largely about planning and practice.

Maintained sector

Just over a quarter of schools said that the DF document had not altered curriculum content but had influenced practice in terms of style and approach with a greater emphasis on skills development and active learning experiences. Around 10% felt that it had either:

- influenced their understanding of Bilingualism and Multicultural Understanding
- guided their planning
- been generally very useful

Of concern is that half the practitioners felt that the ACCAC Draft Framework (2004) as a stand-alone document had had no influence on their practice. The reason given for this is that it is, in their perception, very similar to the early Desirable Outcomes (2000) document.

Non-Maintained sector

Just under a third of non-maintained settings said that the DF had guided their planning and a fifth felt it had influenced their understanding of the new 7th AOL.

A smaller percentage of practitioners in this sector shared the view of their maintained sector colleagues. It was surprisingly to learn that despite all pilot settings being given a copy of the Draft Framework 1 non-maintained practitioner had not seen or heard of the ACCAC Draft Framework and another didn't realise they could use it as it was in draft format.

The perception of Early Years Advisors on the DF was positive but they argued the layout and usability of the document needed to be better. There was a wide variation of opinion on the DF in the non-maintained sector Associations. One association reported that it was fully appropriate, another reported that it would be appropriate subject to them providing sufficient levels of support and explanation in terms of interpretation to their members, and

two associations perceived the DF as being very intimidating, not user friendly and requiring age/stage specific guidance.

Improved Ratios in Nursery and Reception Classes

Ratios were improved to 1:8 only in the maintained sector as the non-maintained sector was already operating with at least a 1:8 ratio or better.

When practitioners were asked whether they felt that the change in ratios had actually made a difference to the teaching and learning in the class an overwhelming majority (95%) said yes. This is clearly a popular change. The examples given fell into three main categories:

- Improved learning opportunities
- Improved classroom management and organisation
- Improved learning environment

11-15 school practitioners identified each of the following examples:

Improved learning opportunities	Improved classroom management and organisation	Improved learning environment
Improved language development	Enables staff to give more quality input and attention	Classroom atmosphere more calm, relaxed and flexible

6-10 school practitioners identified each of the following examples:

Improved learning opportunities	Improved classroom management and organisation	Improved learning environment
More time for talking and listening to children	More practical opportunities and experiences	Busier but less stressful atmosphere
-	More planning for activities and groups	Noisier, livelier, happier atmosphere
-	Pace is faster	-

3-5 school practitioners identified each of the following examples:

Improved learning opportunities	Improved classroom management and organisation	Improved learning environment
Children are progressing quicker in all AOLs	Easier to cater for / focus on wide developmental range	Children are more calm, relaxed and less stressed
-	Improved use of outdoor environment	Children are more confident and independent
-	Discipline easier to manage	Improved discipline
-	Easier for observations and assessment	

1-2 school practitioners identified each of the following examples: (not all examples cited)

Improved learning opportunities	Improved classroom management and organisation	Improved learning environment
Children are doing more work/play	More choice and free play. Less structured activities	Learning is more fun
Children have more developed social skills	More opportunity for small group work	Atmosphere is improved
More advanced number work is being achieved	Children experience a wider range of teaching / learning styles	-
Physical and fine motor skills are developing faster	More adults to set up, supervise and clear away	-
-	More time to teach children how to play	-
-	Planning and evaluations shared with the team	-
-	Early identification of SEN	-
-	More time to reinforce concepts	-

The majority of examples fall under the category of improved classroom management and organisation with practitioners identifying the least number of differences in relation to children's learning opportunities.

Practitioners Perceptions of Improved Quality in the Non-maintained sector

Just over a quarter commented that improving the ratios in the non-maintained sector to 1:6 would be beneficial in terms of quality because of the challenges often presented with 3+s being with a younger age group, for example, babies and/or toddlers.

Almost 70% perceived that the introduction of the Foundation Phase had made a positive difference to the educational experiences of their children. These fell into two main categories:

- Improved learning opportunities
- Improved classroom management and organisation

3-5 non-maintained practitioners identified each of the following examples:

Improved learning opportunities	Improved classroom management and organisation
Improved language development	Improved / revamped planning
Improved Welsh language development	Enables a wider range of free choice activities to be available

1-2 non-maintained practitioners identified each of the following examples:

Improved learning opportunities	Improved classroom management and organisation
Improved mathematical development	Enables more child initiated activities
Children are progressing quicker in all AOLs	More developmentally appropriate activities
Improved staffs thinking and knowledge	Working with children in different ways

Reasons for the disparity in the number of examples provided by the non-maintained sector compared with the maintained sector could be that the non-maintained sector did not see a change in adult:child ratio and that a large number of non-maintained practitioners felt that they were already providing a less formal and play based curriculum than the maintained sector at the start of the Foundation Phase pilot.

Perceived Strengths and Weaknesses of the Foundation Phase and associated implications for Quality

We asked all stakeholders what they felt the strengths and the weaknesses of the Foundation Phase had been.

No. identifying	Strengths	Weaknesses
All stakeholders	Curriculum based on play, active and experiential learning	Lack of guidance materials
	Child centred curriculum	Generally insufficient funding
	Improved ratios	
	Broader / holistic / more relevant curriculum	
4-6 stakeholders	Improved Language and Oracy skills (6)	Insufficient funding for accommodation and resources (5)
	Skills based and not content driven curriculum (5)	Difficulty recruiting well qualified staff (5)
		Lack of FP training (4)
2-3 stakeholders	More confident / independent learners (3)	Lack of training for <u>all</u> Foundation Phase pilot staff (2)
	Enables staff to cater for individual needs (3)	No assessment guidance (2)
	Overall philosophy (2)	
	Increased time for children (2)	
	More choice for children (2)	
	More fun / enjoyment (2)	

As can be seen from the strengths all the stakeholders questioned strongly support the Foundation Phase, believe it has many benefits and that the potential impact on quality could be high.

This is supported further when looking at the responses from Practitioners, Head-teachers, Governing bodies and Owner/managers to the question 'what has been easy and what has been difficult in meeting the requirements of the Foundation Phase'. All stakeholders said that 'building on existing practice' had been the easiest aspect of the first year of the pilot. This must be considered alongside the knowledge that in the maintained sector the most recent inspection report in almost 75% of pilot schools comments on the identified existing good-very good practice in the early years.

The difficulties identified were the same in both sectors with the exception of two:

- lack of the curriculum guidance
- lack of reassurance specifically from LEAs and Welsh Assembly Government
- recruiting well qualified staff (maintained sector only)
- meeting outdoor requirements in all weathers
- multicultural understanding
- bilingualism
- getting KS1 staff on board (maintained sector only)
- lack of training for all staff
- lack of funding

These difficulties suggest that quality may be compromised if they are not addressed. The majority of these difficulties can be resolved with a continued and increased emphasis on guidance and training during the implementation phases.

5.3 Quality Assurance

The MEEIFP Team could not look closely at Quality Assurance as we were aware that an independent team from Tribal PPI had been employed to look at quality assurance across all the childcare associations, Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin (MYM), Wales Pre-school Playgroup Association (Wales PPA) and the National Childminding Association (NCMA). In addition an expert from the Care Standards Inspectorate Wales (CSIW) advised the MEEIFP Team that there are no current plans to change their inspection arrangements for the non-maintained sector as a result of the Foundation Phase as the Foundation Phase is in its infancy.

An expert from ESTYN advised the MEEIFP Team that in respect of education inspection, both in schools and non-maintained settings that are funded to provide education for 3yr olds, ESTYN is planning to adapt the current Common Inspection Framework so that it will work effectively for inspection once the Foundation Phase is rolled out. It is intended that self-evaluation will continue to be central to the revised document. Currently the changes are planned to be in place for the start of the proposed national rollout in September 2006.

Summary

Observed quality

The main findings from using systematic observations, which have been shown to relate to actual developmental progress, are that:

- Both sectors score highly in the two ECERS-R subscales 'interaction' and 'language and reasoning' and score high on the CIS factor 'positive relationships' and appropriately low on the 'punitiveness' factor.
- Maintained settings:
 - score significantly higher on the literacy, mathematics and science subscales of the ECERS-E

- score significantly higher on Total ECERS-E
 - score significantly lower on the ‘permissiveness’ factor of the CIS
 - score significantly higher on a composite ‘sensitivity’ measure consisting of all C.I.S. subscales
- Non-maintained settings:
 - score significantly higher on the ‘personal care routines’ subscale of the ECERS-R
 - Settings with high scores on the curricular and pedagogical quality assessments (ECERS-E) tended to have high scores on the more general child centred assessments (ECERS-R). This shows that settings that nurtured children’s intellectual development tended to nurture social-emotional development as well. However the reverse was not true.
 - A significantly higher proportion of staff are qualified teachers in maintained settings compared to non-maintained settings
 - Those settings with a higher proportion of teachers score significantly higher on all subscales of the ECERS-E. Therefore there is a linear relationship between curriculum and pedagogical quality (ECERS-E) and number of staff with teacher qualifications in a setting.
 - Those settings with a higher proportion of teachers score significantly higher on CIS. Therefore there is a linear relationship between ‘emotional climate’ quality (CIS) and number of staff with teacher qualifications in a setting.
 - Surprisingly, settings with higher numbers of children for each staff member had higher quality scores (these ratios were only slightly higher); this was probably due to the fact that settings in the maintained sector which had more qualified teachers tended to have higher adult:child ratios as well.
 - Medium of instruction was not related to scores on the literacy subscale of the ECERS-E
 - Welsh medium schools score higher on the Curriculum Cymreig subscale than English medium settings

Current Standards

In the first year of the pilot it was difficult to determine any change in standards in the absence of any measure of children’s baseline attainment (this is not a study of child outcomes). We relied on the perceptions of stakeholders which were largely in relation to classroom management and organisation, the learning environment and learning opportunities as identified below. It is therefore too early in the pilot phase to provide reliable evidence on changes in standards. Even in the second year of the evaluation we will be relying largely on stakeholder perceptions.

Practitioners perceived expectations and findings on quality

The main findings from consulting stakeholders’ perceptions on quality are that:

- There is overwhelming support from all stakeholders for a greater emphasis on active learning and play.
- Practitioners report changes to: both indoor and outdoor accommodation and their use; resources and equipment and in the maintained sector staff ratios in order to promote more active learning experiences. However the majority of local authority

staff have placed a considerable emphasis on creating, developing and resourcing the outdoor environment sometimes at the expense of indoor staff practice and pedagogy.

- Practitioners report that the DF has had most impact on practice in terms of approach and style.
- Almost all practitioners report that improved ratios of 1:8 in the maintained sector have made a positive difference to the following:
 - classroom management and organisation
 - the learning environment
 - learning opportunitiesHowever the biggest impact was felt in organisation and management.
- More than two thirds of the non-maintained sector felt the introduction of the Foundation Phase had made a positive difference to educational experiences.

Practitioners identified the following:

The most prominent *strengths* of the first year of the Foundation Phase pilot implementation were identified as being:

- Curriculum based on play, active and experiential learning
- Child centred curriculum
- Broader / holistic / more relevant curriculum

The key *areas for improvement* in the first year of the Foundation Phase pilot implementation were identified as being:

- The need for clear guidance materials on AOLs and associated pedagogy
- Better planned and funded training
- Increased funding to improve management and resources

6. Curriculum and Pedagogy

The Foundation Phase is proposed to be a continuum of learning for children from the ages of 3 to 7. The new curriculum is based on the current Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning before Compulsory School Age ACCAC (2000) and links in with the Programmes of study and focus statements currently in the National Curriculum for KS1. It has seven areas of learning which are:

- personal and social development and well-being;
- language, literacy and communication;
- mathematical development;
- bilingual and multicultural understanding;
- knowledge and understanding of the world;
- physical development
- creative development

These are the same areas as in the Desirable Outcomes document with the addition of well-being to the Personal and Social Development AOL and the new AOL – Bilingualism and Multicultural Understanding. The Foundation Phase advocates children learn through first hand experiential activities and play and places a child's personal and social development and well-being at the heart of the curriculum.

A number of key questions were asked in respect of the proposed Foundation Phase curriculum and pedagogy and specifically the new AOL – Bilingualism and Multicultural Understanding as this was an area, identified during our piloting of instruments, that stakeholders wanted to comment on.

There was overwhelming support across all stakeholders with 90% of respondents from every group agreeing that the seven AOLs would provide a broad and balanced basis for young children's learning and development in the Foundation Phase. Around 75% of owner/managers agreed with the remainder choosing neutral. No comments were added to explain neutral choices. Similarly as we saw in Section 5 there was overwhelming support across all stakeholders with 95% of respondents from every group agreeing with the Foundation Phase placing more emphasis on 'active learning and play'.

A large number of respondents felt that the only AOL that had been difficult to introduce was Bilingualism and Multicultural Understanding. This was to be expected as the area is new and staff are less familiar with the content and have less training.

Maintained sector

The AOL - Bilingualism and Multicultural Understanding was identified by 86% of all practitioners, 81% of all head-teachers and 60% of all Governors.

Bilingualism

In English medium schools 73% practitioners, 86% head-teachers specifically identified Bilingualism.

Typical comments were:

'our children's language is very limited when they start at this school we need to develop English skills first' (practitioner 38)

'none of the staff have a good enough standard of Welsh' (practitioner 42)

'we are fearful of the expectations and lack confidence' (practitioner 19)

'we do not speak Welsh in this part of Wales' (head-teacher40)

'total Bilingualism is a very difficult area to introduce due to the nature of the language of the children and parents and also the training needs of all staff' (head-teacher 5)

Multicultural Understanding

Across all maintained settings 68% of practitioners and 59% of head-teachers specifically identified Multicultural Understanding.

Typical comments were:

'hard to find activities and ways of relating ideas to children who are so young' (practitioner 16)

'difficult to use children's experiences as a starting point without Welsh tokenism e.g. dragons and leeks' (practitioner 18)

'unsure how to approach multiculturalism' (practitioner 13)

'in rural areas children don't meet other cultures so there's more difficulty in finding a variety of interesting ways to introduce the subject' (head-teacher 8)

'staff need to gain knowledge from good quality training' (head-teacher 10/39)

Non-maintained sector

The AOL - Bilingualism and Multicultural Understanding was identified by 73% of practitioners and 57% of owner/managers.

Bilingualism

In English medium settings 53% practitioners, 33% owner/managers specifically identified Bilingualism.

Typical comments were similar to those from the maintained sector in addition to:

'difficult as no members of staff speak Welsh and training courses don't always cater for the kind of language we need' (practitioner 27)

'staff need support and skills to be more efficient in using Welsh throughout the setting as opposed to, only incidentally at planned times' (practitioner 31)

Multicultural Understanding

Across all non-maintained settings 42% of practitioners and 26% of owner/managers specifically identified Multicultural Understanding.

Similar comments were put forward to those from the maintained sector in addition to:

'we don't want to single children out if they are from other cultures' (practitioner 28)

The non-maintained sector generally perceived Bilingualism and Multicultural Understanding to be less difficult to introduce than the maintained sector, surprising given its new status. Less surprising is the finding that the non-maintained sector found Multicultural Understanding easier to introduce than the maintained sector as many non-maintained practitioners felt that this was already part of their existing practice. However, the ECERS ratings on diversity show that both sectors need considerably more work in this area as their mean scores were approximately 3.00 which is minimal.

Both sectors put forward a range of strategies they felt would make the introduction of Bilingualism and Multicultural Understanding easier, which are outlined in table 6 below.

Table 6 – Suggested strategies to support introduction of Bilingualism and Multicultural Understanding

Suggested strategies	Number of practitioners identifying each strategy for:	
	Bilingualism	Multicultural Understanding
Training	15	15
Resources for Early Years and KS1	13	7
ACCAC Guidance	7	4
Class/setting based training and support	1	5
Word banks for classroom areas and topics	2	-
Ideas for activities	1	-
Athrawon Bro support with realistic workloads	1	-
Time to develop skills	1	-
Opportunities to share ideas	-	4
Database set up of contacts/resources	-	2
Time off to collect / create resources		1
Sessions to raise parental awareness	-	1
Good practice recommendations	-	1

6.1 Framework and Guidance

The Qualification, Curriculum and Training Authority for Wales (ACCAC) was given the remit by the Welsh Assembly Government for producing the Foundation Phase Framework for Children's Learning and the associated AOLs and assessment guidance material. ACCAC produced the Draft Framework for Children's Learning (DF) in April 2004 and has continued to work on and produce the guidance materials for the AOLs and the assessment

documentation as part of their ongoing remit. The draft guidance on the seven AOLs has now been produced with the exception of Bilingualism. We are aware that ACCAC has experienced delays in this process as a result of the more unpredictable nature of working with individual writers. Using an in house team might have enabled ACCAC to keep to original schedules.

ACCAC established working groups to contribute to the production of the guidance material for all AOLs with representatives from the pilot settings on each working group in addition to Early Years Advisors and representatives from the childcare associations - MYM, NCMA and Wales PPA. Ten out of 22 pilot schools and 6/19 non-maintained settings are represented on the working groups. In some cases settings have representatives sitting on all working groups and in others representatives sitting on just one. See Table 7 below for details. In the majority of cases these were lead practitioners from non-maintained settings, Early Years and KS1 classes in addition to a smaller number of head-teachers and owner/managers.

Table 7 Number of pilot setting represented on each working group

AOL Working groups	Number of pilot settings represented on working groups				
	Schools	Non-maintained	Associations	AWEYA	Other
Personal, Social development and Well-being	5	3	3	1	0
Language, Literacy and Communication	5	3	1	0	3
Mathematical Development	4	0	3	1	1
Bilingualism	5	1	2	1	1
Multicultural Understanding	4	2	3	0	1
Knowledge and Understanding of the World	3	0	3	1	3
Physical Development	2	0	3	0	3
Creative Development	5	2	1	0	2

We asked the pilot settings involved with ACCAC whether the experience had influenced their settings in any way. Although just under half said that the experience had no influence on their setting, a smaller number of respondents said it had been a useful and valuable experience in terms of sharing and picking up good ideas, having contact with other pilot settings and promoting confidence. It was surprising to find that at least 10% of pilot settings said that they would have liked the opportunity to participate in the working groups but had either not received an invitation or had received an invitation but after the inclusion date had passed. This is of particular importance when some of those participating in working groups have reported very low pilot setting representation / attendance.

The MEEIFP Team has looked closely at the ACCAC Draft Framework for Children's Learning and will evaluate the guidance materials for the second report in 2006.

The Draft Framework for Children's Learning (2004), in comparison to its predecessor document, Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning before Compulsory School Age (2000) is a more comprehensive document, focusing on the curriculum and appropriate pedagogy for children from 3 to 7. It builds on the key principles of the earlier document, including the importance of; a developmentally appropriate curriculum; positive links with home; holistic development building on previous experiences; equality of opportunity and play and first hand experiences. It sets clear aims and objectives for the new curriculum. There is a new focus on skill development and providing associated opportunities necessary for children to become confident learners. For each area of learning there is a focus

statement, a context for learning and a detailed breakdown of the intended knowledge and understanding for the Phase.

Whilst acknowledging the draft status of the DF, as we reported in Section 5 practitioners felt that the DF had not altered curriculum content but had influenced practice in terms of style and approach with a greater emphasis on skills development and active learning experiences. The perception of Early Years Advisors on the DF was positive and acknowledged that the document was currently in draft form and would continue to be worked on. They highlighted that the layout and usability of the document needed further work. Similarly the majority of non-maintained sector Associations reported that the draft format and content of the DF would need further work in order to make it more accessible and user-friendly for their providers. The practitioner view seems to be due to their need for reassurance and their perception that the ACCAC guidance documents will contain more detail in respect of practice, pedagogy and progression.

We asked ‘whether the documentation and guidance material provided for the pilot settings had been appropriate?’¹ The practitioners, head-teachers and owner-managers were consistent in their views with a large majority of those who disagreed qualifying their answers with typical comments like:

‘we haven’t received any’ (head-teacher 38)

‘would have appreciated receiving guidance material prior to commencing the pilot’ (head-teacher 5)

‘it has been very difficult without any guidance on the Foundation Phase’ (owner/manager 34)

‘our concern is that when it comes it will be very different (to the DF) and have different expectations to what we’ve put into practice’ (practitioner 40)

The majority of Early Years Advisors and EYDCPs also expressed concern that no guidance materials had been received in the pilot settings as they approached the end of the first year of the pilot. Interestingly less than 10% of practitioners and head-teachers felt that the late arrival of guidance had been a benefit either in enabling practitioners’ flexibility or in allowing practitioners to feed into the production of the guidance materials. It is clear from the responses that the delay in receiving guidance material has overshadowed the fact that all pilot settings had received the Draft Framework prior to the start of the pilot.

Summary

There is overwhelming support for the FP curriculum and widespread agreement that the seven AOL provide a broad and balanced basis for children’s learning and development in addition to strong support for the increased emphasis on active learning and play. High numbers of all respondents felt that the new AOL – Bilingualism and Multicultural Understanding had been most difficult to introduce, which was to be expected as it had only just been introduced at the start of the Foundation Phase pilot. However it is interesting to note that the non-maintained sector reported less difficulty in introducing this AOL than the maintained sector. In respect of the work ACCAC has undertaken there was a very mixed response to the degree in which participation in the working groups had benefited the settings involved. Despite the Draft Framework being a more comprehensive document and Early Years Advisors generally feeling positive about its content, practitioners felt that it

¹ When the MEEIFP Team devised, piloted, sent out the questionnaires, and conducted the practitioner interviews we, along with the pilot settings, were still under the impression from ACCAC and Welsh Assembly Government that the pilot settings would be receiving the guidance documentation during the 1st year of the pilot.

contained little new information in respect of content but that it had impacted positively on practice in terms of approach and style. In addition the majority of the non-maintained sector Associations reported that in its current draft format the DF was not very user friendly for their memberships. However, according to the Welsh Assembly Government and ACCAC this is not surprising as the remit for the Draft Framework was to build on the existing Desirable Outcomes and Key Stage 1 programmes of study. There is general dissatisfaction in the pilot settings and at Local Authority level that the guidance materials were not produced/delivered during the first year of the pilot. This, coupled with a perceived lack of communication about the status of the guidance timetable, has caused considerable difficulty and created heightened apprehension and concern about next year's pilot rolling on into KS1.

7. Assessment

We are unable to evaluate or comment on the guidance materials for assessment as they are still in production and therefore not in use in the pilot settings during the first year of evaluation. These will be evaluated in more detail in 2005-2006. The research team asked the practitioners about current assessment arrangements.

Maintained sector

In the maintained sector a range of assessment procedures were in place in both Nursery and Reception classes. However the diversity of strategies used is considerable and there appears to be little uniformity in practice between LEAs, other than in the use of the Travelling Together profile (Conwy, Denbighshire Flintshire and Wrexham) and the ESIS Four counties profile (Bridgend, Caerphilly, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil). However it has not been possible in this evaluation to ascertain the degree of uniformity within schools in each LEA as there was only one school setting per LEA in the pilot. The apparent lack of uniformity raises challenges for transition in the Foundation Phase especially between the non-maintained and maintained sector (see Section 8 on Transition below).

The strategies used in both Nursery and Reception classes fell broadly into 3 categories: observing, assessing/testing, reporting/profiling. (not all examples cited)

Observing		Assessing/Testing		Reporting / Profiling	
Full team observations	15	Reception Baseline (county)	16	Annual report	10
Field notes	10	Nursery Baseline (county)	11	Record of achievement profile	9
Check lists with observational comment	7	Tick lists	5	AOL profiles	7
High-scope observation	1	Nursery Baseline (school devised)	2	Four counties profile ESIS	5
-		Reception Baseline (ACCAC / Sound learning)	2	Travelling Together profile	3
-		BVPS	2	Transition pen portraits	2

Non-maintained sector

Similarly in the non-maintained sector all pilot settings used some type of assessment procedure although the range was less diverse than in the maintained sector. Again there appears to be little uniformity between LEAs and there is a large disparity between depth and detail of assessment undertaken between settings. The strategies used again fell broadly into 3 categories: observing, assessing/testing, reporting/profiling.

Observing		Assessing/Testing		Reporting / Profiling	
Observations	6	Tick lists	8	AOL profiles	9
Field notes	3	Nursery Baseline (county)	5	Record of achievement books	5
Check lists with observational comment	3	Nursery Baseline (setting devised)	2	Annual report	5
		County Transition Assessment	1	General profile / assessment sheet	2

Summary

All pilot settings have assessment strategies in place although the variation is considerable. We are aware that most LEAs have developed their own assessment strategies and that variation is to be expected. However given that there will be a national Foundation Phase Curriculum which is consistent across the sector the variation across LEAs may cause problems when children move across LEAs and might not provide the consistency required from preschool to school. A number of settings in both sectors identified that they would like further guidance and support with assessment for the Foundation Phase. It would be important and advantageous for the assessment continuum currently being produced by ACCAC to be used in all Foundation Phase settings to aid and support issues of transition, especially as Welsh Assembly Government continues to support a diverse range of providers to implement the Foundation Phase within the under-fives sector.

8. Transition

Transitions will occur at many points in a child's educational journey within the Foundation Phase and may not be the same for any two children. Firstly there is the transition for many children from home to pre-school. Secondly all children experience transition as they start school, having either been at home or in a pre-school setting until this point. Then transition occurs as they progress to each new class and when they move to a different stage or school. Transition requires children to adjust to new environments, to develop relationships and interact with unfamiliar adults and peers, to grasp new rules and routines and to get used to new ways of working.

One key aspect of Foundation Phase is that it is intended to be a continuum of learning from 3 to 7 and that it includes both the maintained and non-maintained sectors providing education for the 3-5 year olds in a range of settings.

Head-teachers and owner/managers were asked about what transition arrangements were in place for children moving on to a different setting/class/school. Looking first at transitional arrangements between the non-maintained sector and the maintained sector there appears to be a very diverse array of procedures in place and in the majority of cases the responsibility appears to lie with the non-maintained sector setting. Head teachers corroborate this with the vast majority having no explicit arrangements for children joining or leaving their school. Just under half the non-maintained settings arranged some type of visit. Either children visit their new school or two-way visits are arranged with new teachers also visiting the children in their pre-school setting. Just over a fifth of settings engaged in the transfer of documents, charting assessment information and progress. However in half of these settings it was very ad hoc with the onus placed on parents to pass on information. Worryingly a number of owner-managers highlighted that in their experience documentation passed on was rarely used or valued by schools and four pilot settings did not have any transition arrangements in place.

When considering provision made in schools for internal transition within the Foundation Phase just under three-quarters of schools have established arrangements in place. A range of strategies were identified including: class swap days, collaboration between Early Years

and KS1 staff, teachers visiting their new class in their current environment (i.e. Reception teacher visiting her class for the following September in the Nursery), inset and using early years skills profiles.

In respect of transition from Foundation Phase to KS2 six of the pilot schools are already planning strategies for this, two of which are infant schools. This is of particular importance in respect to the responses from head-teachers, governors, Early Years Advisors, EYDCPs and Directors of Education to the question 'Do you agree the Foundation Phase will provide continuity for children going into KS2?'

The majority of respondents with the exception of LEA Directors agreed that the Foundation Phase would provide continuity for KS2. Just under half the Directors responded neutrally, qualifying their choice with comments like:

'without more detail about the curriculum and assessment continuum it is difficult to know' (director 4)

'the Foundation Phase will provide continuity if :

- Children reach the same levels as they currently do, which is predicted to happen
- Year 3 teachers are trained in the philosophy and pedagogy of the Foundation Phase.' (director 15)

'it will depend on the forthcoming curriculum review' (director 17)

'curriculum continuity will be difficult as pupils move from a skills based Foundation phase curriculum to the current subject/knowledge based KS2 curriculum' (director 21)

There was disagreement from 10% of EYDCPs, 15% of Directors, 20% of head-teachers and governors and 30% of Early Years Advisors. The main concerns were that the KS2 curriculum would need adapting/revising for continuity to be achieved and concern that without change to the KS2 curriculum how children would adapt once they moved on to KS2. Clearly, transition to KS2 will become an increasingly important issue as the rollout of the Foundation Phase progresses. It is pleasing therefore that ACCAC reports that the current proposed changes to the curriculum in Key-Stage 2 should support transition from the Foundation Phase to KS2.

Summary

Currently transition arrangements between the maintained and non-maintained sectors are inconsistent and arbitrary. Procedures exist for internal transition within the Foundation Phase in the majority of school settings and some head-teachers have already started to plan for transition from the Foundation Phase to KS2. Generally stakeholders are positive that the Foundation Phase will provide continuity for KS2. However a number are concerned that children will have difficulty in transferring from a largely skills and dispositions based FP curriculum to a content driven curriculum in KS2 and feel that KS2 staff will need training about the FP. However ACCAC reports the current proposed changes to the curriculum at KS2 should support the transition from the Foundation Phase to KS2.

9. Qualifications and Training

The range of qualifications held by staff working in the pilot settings varies enormously. All settings comply with the national minimum requirements. In maintained school settings all classes had at least one qualified teacher and the other staff qualifications varied from no

qualification to having an appropriate Level 3 NVQ or NNEB qualification. In the non-maintained sector qualifications again varied from no qualification to having an appropriate Level 3 NVQ or NNEB qualification.

As we reported in Section 5 a significantly higher proportion of staff are qualified teachers in the maintained sector. Those settings with a higher proportion of teachers had higher scores on both the ECERS-E (curricular and pedagogical quality) and on CIS ('emotional climate' quality). In addition settings with high scores on the curricular and pedagogical quality assessment (ECERS-E) tended to have high scores on the more general child centred assessment (ECERS-R). However, the reverse was not true.

In respect of training, the Welsh Assembly Government sees both the LEAs and the non-maintained sector associations as having a major role to play in developing relevant and associated policies and training to help meet the needs of the Foundation Phase. As is detailed in Section 11 on Funding and Resources, each maintained sector setting received £3000 and each non-maintained sector setting received £800 to spend on resources, management and training. Each LEA also received an additional £20,000 from the Welsh Assembly Government to spend on training for the Foundation Phase, however these funds were received in December 2004 and needed to be spent by the end of the financial year March 2005. The money was to be spent on providing Foundation Phase training, in the first instance for the pilot schools and then for the other schools in the authority. Welsh Assembly Government has outlined a number of key areas that the money could be spent on, which included child development and learning through play.

The Welsh Assembly Government also arranged two Foundation Phase Conferences in the first year of the pilot the purpose of which was to raise awareness of the Foundation Phase, meet with the pilot schools and settings and to share good practice from some LEAs. In addition the Welsh Assembly Government has been working since the start of the Foundation Phase pilot to produce a Foundation Phase DVD to highlight good and effective practice. This is due to be completed and available for training sometime in early 2006.

We asked practitioners, head-teachers and owner-managers whether they thought the support and training they had received to date had been appropriate for the pilot'.¹

Maintained sector

Practitioners

Fifty percent agreed and 50% disagreed. This striking variation suggests that there is a large disparity in what each of the 22 LEAs is providing for the maintained sector. The most typical comments are highlighted below:

'LEA training was excellent and the 2nd conference in Mold was excellent with good speakers' (practitioner 19)

'strongly agree but that is the school/Head Teacher's vision not anything we've received from Welsh Assembly Government or LEA necessarily' (practitioner 10/39)

'there has been very little to do with the Foundation Phase' (practitioner 36)

'no real support / training for us' (practitioner 48)

¹ The interviews and questionnaires were conducted and completed during April – June after the LEA needed to have spent their allocated £20,000 on training

Head-teachers

Nearly two-thirds of head-teachers disagreed with just over a quarter of head-teachers saying that no training at all had been received. Only 18% of head-teachers felt that their school had been supported by their LEA or Welsh Assembly Government during the pilot.

When asked specifically about Foundation Phase training for head-teachers many said that they were not aware of any and had not attended any other than the Welsh Assembly Government hosted Foundation Phase pilot conferences of which there were very mixed perceptions, in addition to the fact that they were not regarded as training per se. Welsh Assembly Government state that the conferences were not intended as training but as opportunities to share good practice from LEAs. However 50% of head-teachers said that they had attended information sharing meetings aimed at raising awareness of the Foundation Phase run by their LEA but again did not regard this as training. However, five head-teachers commented that their LEA had asked them to provide training for other schools within their authority. Although they did run training sessions they felt the expectation had added pressure to an already challenging first year of the pilot.

Governors

When asked specifically about Foundation Phase training for governors approximately half said they had received training, the majority of which had been received directly from the LEA and a small number had received training via their school and head-teacher.

Non-maintained sector

Practitioners

Just over half the non-maintained practitioners agreed that training and support they had received was appropriate for the pilot, however, more than a third disagreed. As with the maintained practitioners the variation again suggests that there is a large disparity in what each of the 22 LEAs is providing. Comments received were in agreement with those of the practitioners in the maintained sector.

Owner/managers

Just over a quarter of the owner/managers agreed with almost half disagreeing. Although many owner-managers are also lead practitioners there were a small number who would welcome specific training for their management committees.

Local Authority

We asked both Early Years Advisors and EYDCPs key questions on training. Firstly whether they felt appropriate support had been provided to enable settings to plan and provide Bilingualism as an AOL. Over three-quarters of both stakeholder groups disagreed. The key reasons identified for this were:

- the EY Advisors felt there was poor support by Welsh Assembly Government in this area
- confusion around what bilingualism actually is and the expectations being placed on pilot settings
- insufficient resources to support the non-maintained sector in this AOL
- confusion surrounding funding allocated to MYM for Welsh medium training

Secondly we asked whether they felt appropriate arrangements were in place to enable staff to attend Foundation Phase training. The majority of respondents from both stakeholder groups agreed for the maintained sector. However there was a much wider range of responses when considering the non-maintained sector with approximately a third of respondents choosing each category –agree, neutral and disagree. This would substantiate the views of the non-maintained sector who find it very difficult to attend training due to a lack of supply cover being available and insufficient funding to finance it even when it is.

Non-maintained Sector Associations

Senior representatives from the Associations were interviewed to get their perceptions of their role in the implementation of the Foundation Phase, particularly with regard to training their members. This included the Associations: Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin (MYM); National Childminding Association (NCMA); National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA Cymru) and Wales Pre-school Playgroups Association (Wales PPA), they reported that currently they did not have a specific role or remit but would welcome the opportunity to discuss a future role with the Welsh Assembly Government. Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin (MYM) felt they had a crucial role in respect of their remit to train new staff to work in the Welsh medium sector in order to meet the future staffing needs for the Foundation Phase across Wales.

As part of our evaluation we interviewed two training experts who have played pivotal roles in informing the Welsh Assembly Government on the current training situation and needs in Wales. Their work has focused on two distinct areas. Firstly training and development available within the Early Years and Foundation Phase sectors of Education and Care and secondly the scale of Welsh medium and bilingual early years provision currently available and issues relating to the development of Welsh medium and bilingual provision. Progress is being made in respect of training new staff and existing staff to deliver Welsh medium and bilingual provision with Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin having plans to train 300 new Welsh language staff to work in Welsh medium provision across Wales in an aim to expand the provision and Trinity College Carmarthen has plans in place to train 150 existing staff over 3 years on the newly developed 'Geiriau Bach' project which is a Level 4 course - Certificate of Higher Education in Bilingualism and Bilingual practice in the Early Years. However although the MEEIFP Team is aware that discussions around initial teacher education and training (ITET) and the development of a Sector Skills Council in Wales are currently taking place, to date there does not appear to be any clear policy on training strategies to address any of the major training needs that we have identified. As can be seen from the responses to interviews and questionnaires the training that we have come across to date although welcome is perceived as ad hoc and piecemeal.

Summary

The range of qualifications held by staff working in the pilot settings varies greatly. A significantly higher proportion of staff are teachers with teacher qualifications in the maintained settings. The quality observations have shown that those settings with a higher proportion of qualified teachers score significantly higher on the ECERS-E (the curricular and pedagogical quality assessment) and the CIS (the 'emotional climate' assessment).

In respect of training there appears to be a large disparity in Foundation Phase training provided by each of the 22 LEAs across both sectors and at all levels - practitioner, head-teacher, governor and owner/manager. The Local Authorities reported difficulties in supporting Bilingualism without a stronger steer from either ACCAC or the Welsh Assembly Government and without further clarification on the meaning and expectations of Bilingualism. In addition a third of the LEAs reported difficulties for the non-maintained sector in attending local training largely due to a lack of available supply cover and the associated expenses. The Welsh Assembly Government did however finance the schools/settings to attend the Foundation Phase conferences which they provided in addition to some training if it was available, through the £3000 and £800 the schools and settings respectively received for management, training and resources.

When MYM, NCMA, NDNA Cymru and Wales PPA senior representatives were interviewed about their role and responsibility for Foundation Phase training they reported that currently they did not have a specific role or remit but would welcome the opportunity to discuss a future role with the Welsh Assembly Government. Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin (MYM) felt they had a crucial role in respect of their remit to train new staff to work in the Welsh medium sector in order to meet the future staffing needs for the Foundation Phase across Wales.

10. Ratios

The ratios for the first year of the Foundation Phase pilot were 1:8 for all settings as the pilot was only operating in non-maintained pre-school settings and nursery and reception classes in the maintained sector. This was not a change for the non-maintained sector as existing CSIW regulations required a ratio of at least 1:8, however in the maintained sector prior to the Foundation Phase statutory ratios in:

- nursery schools were 1:10
- nursery classes were 1:13
- and in reception classes were 1:30

although many schools had more favourable ratios than these in operation especially in Reception classes.

As reported in Section 5 - Quality when asked about the appropriateness of the proposed adult:child ratios there was overwhelming support from both sectors. Respondents from the maintained sector commented:

‘it works – it’s been a good ratio we can work in small groups more often and children are progressing so much more quickly’ (practitioner 11)

‘skills acquired have been acquired faster. They [children] need to be listened to and can be listened to with 1:8 (practitioner 48)

However when the maintained sector was asked about the appropriateness of the proposed adult:child ratios for KS1, at 1:13, there was a split in opinion with 50% of respondents in agreement and 50% in disagreement. Of those who felt 1:13 was not appropriate 7/11 respondents felt 1:10 would be better and 2/11 felt that 1:13 was fine for Year 2 but 1:8 was needed for Year1. Main reasons given for suggesting lower ratios were:

‘older children will be more inquisitive and demanding not less’ (practitioner 18)

‘additional adults are needed to be able to split into smaller groups and provide active learning experiences especially when needing to consider health and safety’ (practitioner 41)

‘two adults in a classroom cannot facilitate indoor and outdoor classroom activities simultaneously and the type of curriculum being promoted’ (practitioner 46)

In addition practitioners in small schools with mixed classes felt that the 1:8 was a necessity for all children in that class.

As reported in Section 5 on Quality almost all practitioners report that improved ratios have made a positive difference to the following:

- classroom management and organisation
- the learning environment
- learning opportunities

However the biggest impact was felt in classroom organisation and management.

Around 60% of Early Years Advisors and EYDCPs reported that there had been difficulties recruiting and retaining suitably qualified staff. The principal reasons given for this were:

- shortage of suitably qualified and experienced Early Years staff in both the English and Welsh sectors
- uncertainty regarding job security
- shortage of staff who can work bilingually in the English sector
- rural location of schools

- no training colleges in the vicinity

These respondents also identified a number of concerns for the future of the Foundation Phase with regard to the proposed ratios particularly when the pilot is extended nationally. These include:

- shortage of suitably qualified and experienced staff
- quality of staff available
- shortage of Welsh speaking staff
- staff retention in the non-maintained sector

Possible solutions put forward included:

- improved training in child development and pedagogy both in colleges and through continuous professional development (CPD)
- improved pay to reflect responsibility of working with young children
- career progression opportunities
- national database created of qualified staff
- increased numbers of *high quality* training courses
- offering more permanent posts and fewer short term contracts
- closer working relationships with training establishments (e.g. universities, higher education establishments and tertiary colleges etc)

Summary

There is overwhelming support from both sectors for the 1:8 adult:child ratio for preschool, nursery and reception. All practitioners feel that the improved ratios in the maintained sector have made a positive difference to aspects of classroom management, environment and learning in their classrooms. In the non-maintained sector just over a quarter of practitioners felt that improving the ratios to 1:6 would be beneficial in terms of quality. There are very mixed feelings in the maintained sector in relation to the 1:13 ratio proposed for KS1 with 50% of respondents in agreement and 50% in disagreement feeling that lower ratios would be more appropriate. Around 60% of Early Years Advisors and EYDCPs reported that there had been difficulties in recruiting and then retaining suitably qualified staff in pilot settings. This was the case in both Welsh and English medium settings. Crucially it is important to reiterate that ratio benefits are confounded with qualifications and training. As highlighted in the findings on quality reported in Section 5 those settings with a higher number of qualified teachers scored significantly higher on both the curricular quality and emotional climate assessments. In addition settings with high scores on curricular quality assessments tended to have high scores on the more general child centred assessments. Analysis showed that higher quality, especially on the curricular and pedagogical quality assessment ECERS-E, was associated with a higher ratio of children to staff. This finding is probably due to the fact that settings in the maintained sector which had more qualified teachers tended to have slightly higher adult:child ratios as well.

11. Funding and Resources

During the first year of the pilot there were 3 funding streams for the Foundation Phase.

- Funding for settings for resources, management and training (maintained sector £3000 per setting and non-maintained sector £800 per setting). This funding was given to each setting irrespective of setting size, number of children or classes, number of staff or location.
- Funding for salaries of new staff employed in the maintained sector only to improve ratios to 1:8. (based on our discussions with pilot schools the funding formula does not appear to have been transparent or equitable for this stream at a national level)
- Funding of £20,000 from Welsh Assembly Government for each LEA to spend on training received December 2004 to be spent by March 2005.

Funding for Resources

Maintained sector

There was consistency across the practitioners, head-teachers and governors with just under half the respondents disagreeing that funding for resources had been appropriate. The remaining half was equally split between neutral and agree. The majority of schools that disagreed were schools with three or more Foundation Phase classes in the pilot. The 3 key reasons identified by those who disagreed were that funding was insufficient to:

- resource outdoor area (which staff feel has been promoted at conferences)
- cover all three aspects – resources, management and training
- cover an increased use of consumable resources which has resulted from the change in practice.

Importantly the schools that agreed and commented said that they had received *extra* funding from their authorities.

Non-maintained sector

There was a more equal spread of responses with equal numbers agreeing and disagreeing. Although some of the settings that agreed did so because they were pleased to have received £800, which is a sizeable amount of money for a childminder or small playgroup (less than 12 children and with low numbers of staff to train) or an already well-resourced setting.

The 3 key reasons identified by those who disagreed were that funding was:

- insufficient to cover all three aspects – resources, management and training
- inequitable with the maintained sector
- insufficient to enable settings to meet the FP requirements when housed in shared / old spaces sometimes without outdoor areas / facilities.

Local Authority / Associations

The majority of Early Years Advisors, non-maintained sector Associations and the vast majority EYDCPs disagreed, with the majority increasing slightly in respect of the non-maintained sector. This is interesting in view of the non-maintained sector findings where equally large numbers of settings agreed as disagreed.

Funding for Training

Some responses focused on both the funding their setting received to cover training needs (i.e. maintained sector £3000 non-maintained sector £800 to cover resources/management and training) and on the additional £20,000 that each LEA received to be spent on training between December 2004 and March 2005.

Maintained sector

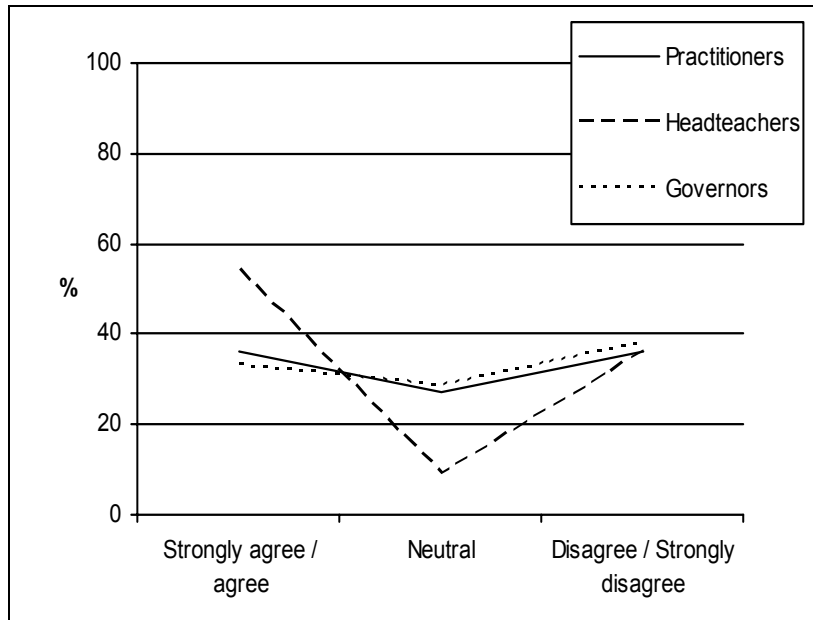
As Graph 7 below shows there is consistency in the views of practitioners and governors with just over a third agreeing. However approximately 50% of head-teachers agreed with the funding for training being appropriate. It may well be the case that the head-teachers are more well-informed about the funding for training however it is of interest that practitioners implementing the Foundation Phase feel that the funding for training is inadequate to meet their needs. It is also interesting that across all three stakeholders there is a remarkable consistency with just over a third disagreeing that the funding had been appropriate for training. The five main reasons given for this were:

- no training available from the LEA¹
- insufficient training received/ available

¹ The interviews and questionnaires were conducted and completed during April – June after the LEA needed to have spent their allocated £20,000 on training

- insufficient training for support staff
- no external training received only school based in house
- £3000 insufficient to cover 3 aspects – resources, management and training

Graph 7 - Line graph showing the maintained sector views on funding for training



Non-maintained sector

In the non-maintained sector comments from both practitioners and owner/managers were consistent with the majority disagreeing for two main reasons:

- £800 insufficient to cover 3 aspects – resources, management and training
- insufficient training received / available from any training provider

However just over a third of non-maintained sector settings said that they had either been given additional monies out of the additional £20,000 their LEA had received from the Welsh Assembly Government for training or that their LEA provided free training funded from this additional £20,000.

‘this is good we’ve had an extra £1500 for training from our LEA – but the original £800 would not have covered very much as we had to spend it on resources’ (practitioner 20)

‘spent a substantial amount of the £800 on training and we had £2500 from the LEA for training’ (practitioner 28)

‘free training was provided by the LEA so the £800 has been used for supply cover’ (practitioner 37)

‘LEA has provided a lot of training from 20K which we have been able to access free of charge or for a nominal fee’ (practitioner 27)

It appears clear from both maintained and the non-maintained sectors that that there is a lack of parity across the 22 LEAs in terms of how they used the additional funding which they received for training from Welsh Assembly Government. Consequently training availability and experiences varied considerably.

Local Authority / Associations

There was a very mixed response from the EYDCPs with no clear majority, however half the Early Years Advisors disagreed with funding being appropriate for training. In addition the non-maintained sector Associations reported that funding for training had been inadequate. The principal reason for disagreement was that funding for training should be part of a long-term plan and not just, as they perceived 'reactionary' or 'ad hoc'.

'Training should be incorporated into long-term planning and it is not useful to be given a grant when only 3 months remain in the financial year which results in reactive spending. Planning is vital' (EYDCP 16)

Funding for Staffing

Maintained sector

An overwhelming majority of over 80% of practitioners and head-teachers agreed that funding had been appropriate for staffing. Where there was disagreement it was in small schools where small and mixed classes meant additional staff were required for only part of the academic year which led to difficulties with continuity and recruitment of good calibre staff. Two head-teachers reported difficulties in recruiting suitably qualified and experienced staff on the allocated funding. Another two head-teachers reported that the funding was insufficient to cover full salary costs of Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) (e.g. insurance, pensions) and consequently their schools had needed to make up the short fall. Governors who disagreed did so for the same reasons identified by head-teachers. It is important to note that funding levels appear, and are perceived to have been inconsistent, with not all maintained settings receiving enough funding to employ staff with Level 3 or equivalent qualifications. The Welsh Assembly Government reports that this was as a result of LEAs having different funding regimes during the first 7 months of the pilot. Since April 2005 the level of funding for staffing in the pilot schools has been based on the specific needs/qualification requirements (Level 2 or Level 3) of each school within the pilot.

Non-maintained sector

Practitioners and owner-managers commented most frequently on the need for funding for staff cover and inequity of staff wages between the maintained and non-maintained sectors.

Local Authority / Associations

Around 50% of the Early Years Advisors and EYDCPs agreed with allocated funding for staffing. However the main concerns were that the funding was insufficient to recruit good calibre staff with appropriate qualifications and experience and that funding did not take account of full salary costs.

'the funding has not matched the level of qualifications and expertise needed' (Early Years Advisor 18)

'would prefer qualified Nursery nurses in Early Years not unqualified / untrained classroom assistants as the additional staff' (EYDCP 10)

The non-maintained sector settings did not receive any funding for staffing as they were already operating with ratios of 1:8 or better. Given this the non-maintained sector Associations reported that this situation was inequitable because of the large disparity in pay-scales between the maintained and non-maintained sectors for staff with equivalent qualifications.

Directors of Education views on Overall Resourcing for the 1st year of the pilot.

The key issues highlighted were:

- under funding for the non-maintained sector

- insufficient funding for training
- insufficient funding for the outdoor environment

Table 11 – Results on directors’ perceptions on overall resourcing for 1st year

Agree		Neutral		Disagree	
Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
9/20	45%	9/20	45%	2/20	10%

Arrangements for accessing funding

Maintained sector

Half or more practitioners, head-teachers and governors agreed that arrangements for accessing funding were effective. However the main reason for disagreement for over a fifth of respondents was that they experienced delays in receiving the funding from their LEAs. One maintained setting claimed they were unable to access the funding as their LEA retained control of the money and decided what it should be spent on.

Non-maintained sector

Just over a third of practitioners and owner/managers agreed that the arrangements for accessing the additional funding were effective. However more than half of settings experienced delays in receiving funding from their LEAs.

In two LEAs difficulties and delays in receiving the funding were identified by settings in both sectors.

Local Authority

Given the experiences of the non-maintained sector in particular it is surprising that a clear majority of Early Years Advisors and a smaller majority of EYDCPs agreed that effective arrangements were in place for accessing the funding. Only one LEA acknowledged the problems experienced by their non-maintained sector setting in receiving funding due to LEA procedures.

11.1 Space and Accommodation

No funding was received in the first year of the pilot specifically for altering current indoor and outdoor accommodation. However some LEAs have funded alterations and some pilot schools have used monies from their school budget and fundraising to make what they have perceived as necessary alterations. As can be seen from Section 5 on Quality both sectors identified that improvements had been necessary to both indoor and outdoor accommodation in order to provide more active learning experiences.

We asked Directors of Education whether the current indoor and outdoor accommodation in both sectors was appropriate for the implementation of the Foundation Phase.

Indoor Accommodation

Almost half disagreed that current indoor accommodation was appropriate, although they reported difficulties in specifying why without an in-depth audit being undertaken. In respect of the maintained sector there was a wide variation of comments with a number of respondents saying it was difficult to generalise and it would vary from school to school. Worryingly half the respondents with non-maintained sector settings in their authority did not make any reference to the non-maintained sector in their LEA. Those that did identified that the non-maintained sector would face difficulties.

‘non-maintained settings will struggle’ (director 2)

‘we have concerns relating to voluntary settings’ (director 15)

Outdoor Accommodation

Only one respondent agreed and more than half disagreed that current outdoor accommodation was appropriate. Again only a few respondents made any reference to the non-maintained sector. One statement that sums up the majority of opinion is:

‘in most settings considerable investment is required to ensure that the outdoor environments are conducive to the optimum development of children in the FP. Many lack opportunities for explorative and stimulated play and development’ (director 18)

It seems clear that more detailed information is needed regarding current indoor and outdoor accommodation to get a real sense of the national picture and its implications.

Summary

The vast majority of maintained sector responses were very positive about the funding received for staffing the new improved ratios. Settings in both sectors felt that the funding for both resourcing and training was insufficient partly because it had to be shared out between resources, management and training. In addition there was concern that funding was not related to the number of Foundation Phase children in the particular pilot setting. In respect of training there was concern about the lack of sufficient availability of training from the LEAs. More than half the non-maintained settings experienced delays in receiving funding from their LEAs. Directors of Education felt that more settings in the non-maintained sector rather than in the maintained sector do not currently have appropriate indoor accommodation for implementing the Foundation Phase. As for outdoor accommodation, the majority of Directors of Education felt that current outdoor accommodation in both sectors was generally not appropriate for implementing the Foundation Phase. Directors of Education felt they could not give specific details, as it was hard to generalise across all the maintained and non-maintained settings in each authority. They reported that there was a need for an in-depth audit of current accommodation provision in order to gain a clearer and more detailed picture of the current situation and future needs. One LEA has already begun this process with the maintained settings in their authority.

12. Organisation and management

12.1 Setting Level

Changes in roles/responsibilities of staff

Maintained sector

All lead practitioners (in schools where additional staff were recruited) reported that their role in class had changed. Their role had a much more significant managerial component as a result of having additional adults to manage. This was confirmed by head-teachers. Other changes in role were as a result of:

- needing to provide in house training and support for new staff
- increased planning and preparation for the activities of additional staff
- needing to show increased numbers of visitors around pilot classes
- increased active involvement with children
- re-allocation of subject responsibility

‘changes have been managing a team and organising staff. I feel happy about taking on additional role/responsibilities although at times it has been challenging due to inexperience of staff. Would benefit from training’ (practitioner 39)

‘it is much more of a management role and I need to train staff in house. It’s not easy and not what I wanted but it’s something you develop and improve in once you take it on. I would like time to carry out the new role and management training to feel more confident.’ (practitioner 13)

'the role of teachers has changed in terms of managing not just large groups of children but also managing the work and deployment of groups of adults. Teachers need training in this area.' (head-teacher 12/43)

Almost 70% of lead practitioners said they needed and would benefit from training in people management. This was supported by many head-teachers.

All lead practitioners in schools (where additional staff were recruited) also reported that the roles of other existing staff in the class had changed. A third specifically identified that the role of existing NNEBs had changed as they had become mentors and role models for newer members of staff. Roles have changed for support staff in the following ways:

- increased small group teaching
- greater involvement in observation and assessment
- greater involvement in planning and evaluating provision
- mentoring of new staff
- additional responsibilities
- responsibility for an AOL

'all the support staff have more responsibility although under teacher guidance. They are taking on teaching roles, planning and assessment observations. Staff quite like the new responsibilities and feel more valued. Staff need further training to support them with this' (practitioner 14)

'each new staff member has responsibility for a specific AOL. This is good for them, gives them status and improves confidence. Most staff are happy with this but they are given levels of responsibility in keeping with their experience. Staff would benefit from training' (practitioner 4)

Just over 10% reported difficulties where existing staff felt they had lost responsibility to newer members of staff and felt devalued. Half of practitioners and head-teachers felt that training would be useful in supporting staff through these changes in roles and responsibilities.

Non-maintained sector

Around 40% of lead practitioners reported that their role and the roles of other staff in their setting had changed. Main reasons for changes in role were:

- an increased need to manage staff
- more planning / paperwork required
- away from the setting more often - training or at meetings/pilot conferences
- more active in children's play/learning
- more involved in observations

The majority of non-maintained practitioners also felt they needed and would benefit from training in planning and people management.

Foundation Phase Coordination

Head-teachers were asked 'how they planned to coordinate the FP, including the seven AOLs to ensure continuity?' Generally there was great uncertainty with a small percentage admitting that they were unsure or did not know. Almost a quarter felt they needed to or had already appointed FP Coordinators who would report directly to the Senior Management Team and just over 10% felt that it would be important to work closely with KS2.

Particular difficulties facing the non-maintained sector

Over 75% of owner-managers felt that the main difficulties the non-maintained sector faced were:

- low staff wages
- general lack of support/guidance
- unavailable and inaccessible supply cover
- insufficient training
- nature of existing premises and outdoor facilities
- delays in receipt of funding

Key representative comments were:

'the non-maintained sector do not get the same level of support and guidance as schools from the LEA' (owner/manager 32)

'our concern is where will staff come from when schools have to increase their ratios very quickly? Our well trained staff will be 'poached' by schools and the LEA and rewarded with better pay, longer holidays, shorter hours and less responsibility. What will happen to non-maintained sector settings? Is this really about a true partnership between maintained and non-maintained providers?' (owner/manager 37)

Associations

The non-maintained sector Associations felt that as the Foundation Phase is still in its infancy a true partnership between both sectors has not yet been fully embedded and established and all stakeholders must remain committed to working towards this aim.

12.2 Local Authority / Non-maintained Sector Associations Level

Strategies/developments undertaken by Local Authority with respect to the FP

As can be seen from the grids below Local Authorities have a wide variety of strategies and developments to support the Foundation Phase. However it is clear that again there are wide disparities between what each Local Authority has actioned and who in the authority has knowledge of the initiatives. Surprisingly a third of EYDCPs reported currently not being aware of any strategies or developments being undertaken in their authority.

Identified by 5 or more of each stakeholder

Strategies / developments	Early Years Advisors	EYDCPs	Directors
Training and support	✓	✓	✓
School management briefings – head-teachers	✓	-	✓

Identified by 3 - 4 of each stakeholder

Strategies / developments	Early Years Advisors	EYDCPs	Directors
Attention in Education Strategic Plan	✓	✓	✓
Production of guidance and advice materials	✓	✓	-
Audit/review of existing provision under way	✓	✓	-
General information sharing / awareness raising sessions	-	✓	✓
FP Action Plan written	✓	-	-
School management briefings - governors	-	-	✓
Creation of a Foundation Phase task group	-	-	✓
Development of existing good practice	-	-	✓

Identified by 1 - 2 of each stakeholder (not all examples cited)

Strategies / developments	Early Years Advisors	EYDCPs	Directors
Staff appointed / redeployed to FP at LEA	✓	✓	✓
Networks established	✓	-	✓
Staff briefings at practitioner level in both sectors	✓	-	✓
Revisions of existing support material	✓	-	-
LEA Membership bought to Learning through Landscapes	✓	-	-
EYDCP development work for FP	-	✓	-
EYDCP reports to LEA education committee on FP	-	✓	-
Parents briefings	-	-	✓
LEA staff briefings	-	-	✓
EY Coordinator briefings	-	-	✓
Collaboration of LEAs	-	-	✓
Establishing LEA FP philosophy	-	-	✓
Development of outdoor classroom	-	-	✓

Involvement with pilot settings

Early Years Advisors

As can be seen from table 12 below the Early Years Advisors felt that they were actively involved with both sectors and appear to have worked in a more hands-on way with the non-maintained sector through the use of link and advisory teachers. What is interesting here is that these views contradict those of practitioners in terms of the support and training they received. The table below also raises questions in respect of training. It is surprising for instance that only half say they provided training when funding was provided for training in all LEAs. This may be explained by a mismatch in understanding and interpretation of what 'training' constitutes. However what is clear is that once again there seem to be inconsistencies between what each LEA is doing and the level of involvement the pilot settings receive.

Table 12 – LEA involvement with pilot settings

Type of involvement	Maintained	Non-maintained
Leadership, advice and support (often on request)	15	9
Visits (by both EY advisor and LEA EY advisory teachers)	8	15
Training	10	11
Arranged / attended networking for pilots	5	5
Close involvement (non-specific)	3	2
Using pilot as a training provider for other school/setting visits	2	1
Delivery of parents evenings / sessions	2	0

EYDCPs

Around 60% of EYDCPs said that they received regular reports on the pilots or that the FP pilots were a regular agenda item at meetings. 15% said that they had either visited the pilot settings or that the pilot settings had given a presentation. However it was surprising to find that a quarter of EYDCPs felt that they had no involvement with the pilot settings at all.

Strategies/developments undertaken by Non-maintained sector Associations with respect to the FP

The majority of non-maintained sector associations with members who are pilot settings have reported that to date they have not put in place any *additional* support structures for their pilot settings. They report that either this is not currently part of their remit or is currently beyond the capacity of their organisational infrastructure. Typical comments included from *all* Associations included:

'It's WAG's role to deal with and provide training for the pilot settings' (Association 1)

'We haven't received any additional funding to enable us to do this and we are heavily reliant on voluntary staff even at senior levels within our organisation.'
(Association 4)

However all Associations reported that they would welcome the opportunity to discuss their role in this area further with the Welsh Assembly Government.

12.3 National Level

Selection of pilot settings

We consulted with Welsh Assembly Government, Early Years Advisors and EYDCPs about the process of selection for the pilot settings. Around two thirds of both local authority stakeholders said that the settings had been short-listed against Welsh Assembly Government criteria and then put forward to Welsh Assembly Government for final selection. The remainder either said schools and settings had self nominated before Welsh Assembly Government made the final decision or were not clear on how the process had worked within their Authority, despite being sent guidelines from the Welsh Assembly Government. However many authorities clearly suggest that schools were submitted to Welsh Assembly Government on the basis of good Early Years practice and ESTYN reports. Also a small number of schools whilst delighted to be part of the pilot do not feel that they are representative for their authority. Only around a quarter of EYDCPs felt they had been actively involved in the selection process for the FP pilots. The sample includes all types of childcare and education providers, however, as the settings were not randomly selected by LEAs they cannot be considered *representative* of settings across Wales.

Welsh Assembly Government support and information sharing meetings for the pilot settings.

Having selected the pilot settings in early 2004 two members of the Foundation Phase Team from the Welsh Assembly Government visited each pilot schools / settings before the start of the pilot. Additionally in the summer term of 2004 the Foundation Phase Team hosted the first Foundation Phase Conference which was held in Carmarthen to which all pilot schools / settings were invited, the purpose of this conference was to meet with the pilot schools and settings and to share good practice from some LEAs.

During the summer of 2004 the Welsh Assembly Government produced information leaflets and booklets about the Foundation Phase which were sent out to libraries, surgeries etc., as well as to all pilot schools and settings to support them in informing parents about the Foundation Phase.

During November and December 2004 the Foundation Phase Team held another meeting to which all pilot schools / settings were invited. This meeting was held three times in different locations in Wales (Mold, Aberystwyth and Cardiff) to enable all the pilot settings to attend. These meetings were designed as an opportunity to share information with the pilot schools / settings and to address any issues that were arising out of the pilot process. In addition to these meetings the Foundation Phase Team also met with the All Wales Early Years Advisors (AWEYA) and key staff from the Associations (MYM, NCMA and WPPA) that have members involved in the pilot. Again the purpose of these meetings was to share information about the status of the Foundation Phase pilot.

In February 2005 the Foundation Phase Team hosted a second Foundation Phase Conference in Mold to which again all the pilot schools / settings were invited once again the purpose of this conference was to meet with the pilot schools and settings and to share good practice.

We are aware that currently (during the Autumn of 2005) one member of the Foundation Phase Team is again visiting all the pilot schools / settings to look at practise and discuss

how the pilot is proceeding. In addition the Foundation Phase Team has scheduled another meeting to be held in three different locations in Wales (Mold, Builth Wells and Cardiff) during November to which all the pilot schools / settings have once again been invited

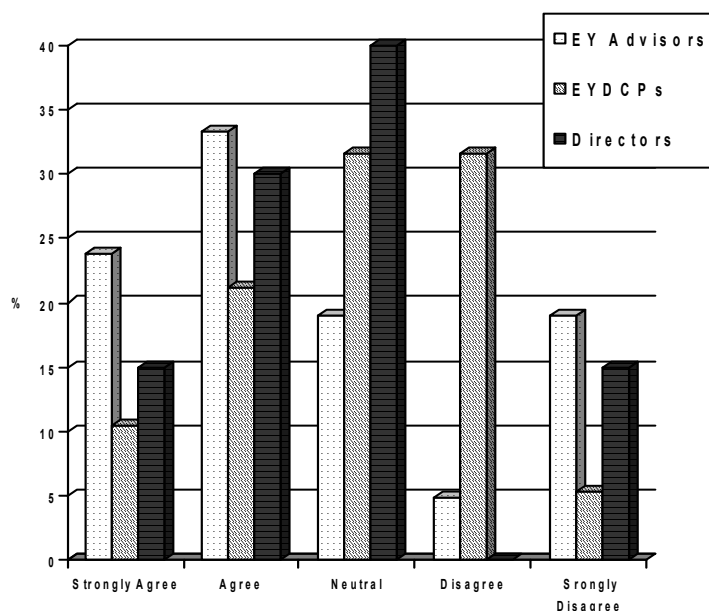
In addition to these visits and meetings the Foundation Phase Team has provided information on Foundation Phase developments to pilot settings, the wider education community and the general public via the Welsh Assembly Government website and presentations.

The evaluation reports on settings perceptions of these meetings in the section on qualifications and training.

National Rollout

We asked Early Years Advisors, EYDCPs and Directors of Education whether they felt that the proposed time frame for the national rollout of the FP by 2008 was realistic and achievable.

Graph 8 – EY Advisors, EYDCPs and Directors choices on National Rollout Question



As can be seen from Graph 8 above there is general support for the proposed timescale being achievable and realistic. However from most of the comments there is a forceful caveat that goes in tandem with agreement. This is highlighted in the typical comments outlined below.

‘could be achieved providing: -

- sufficient funding for staffing and resources is provided
- guidance material and assessment continuum are completed and available to schools/settings
- funding for training is adequate and available at an early stage to enable a planned programme to take place alongside implementation of the FP.’ (early years advisor 3)

‘the timescale for the implementation of the FP can be achieved if the structure is in place and adequate resources are identified and allocated to the LEA at the beginning of the financial year to enable LEA officers to plan strategically’ (EYDCP 20)

'timescale is achievable and realistic providing funding is available for staffing ratios, accommodation and outdoor improvements and training for staff particularly Year 1 and 2 teachers.' (director 4)

Where there is disagreement reasons identified include:

- insufficient funding
- training implications
- challenges in recruitment of staff
- nursery and reception classes are not ready / prepared for Sept 2006

However a small number of Early Years Advisors and EYDCPs who strongly agree feel that delay will create low morale and cynicism in schools.

'everyone will be disillusioned if there is a delay' (EYDCP 13)

'everyone is fired up and excited by proposed changes – any delay would be detrimental to staff and children' (early years advisor 18)

Communication and Information from Welsh Assembly Government

This question was added to the questionnaires at the request of the local authorities' three major stakeholders when the questionnaires were piloted. There was a wide range of responses from 'generally good' (director 22) to 'none received' (early years advisor 2).

Areas where respondents felt communication worked well were:

- E-mail communication
- Support from Welsh Assembly Government staff
- Leaflets and brochures
- Road shows
- General information on FP ethos
- Initial marketing of the FP concept/vision to school, settings and LEAs

Areas where respondents felt communication systems needed improving were:

- Regular and up-to-date information for all major stakeholders
- Regular communication on status of the guidance and associated materials
- Development of FP website as an information exchange and resource
- Inconsistent messages within and across stakeholder groups
- Communication with Early Years workforce and parents in Wales
- Detailed, clear and transparent information/guidance
- Awareness-raising with the wider public
- Transparency with progress made on the Welsh Assembly Government published FP action plan

About one third of LEA stakeholders addressed communication and the difficulties they perceived in communication with Welsh Assembly Government, some typical comments were:

'not enough information / guidance given generally - it would appear that there is an issue of capacity within Welsh Assembly Government' (EYDCP 18)

'the information so far is insufficient to implement the scheme fully' (Director 1)

'the Early Years workforce feel WAG is not communicating with them or parents' (Early Years Advisor 16)

Summary

Setting Level

All lead classroom practitioners have taken on more of a managerial role as a result of improved adult ratios and almost 70% felt they would benefit from training in people management. Roles have also changed for support staff in schools. In the non-maintained sector some lead practitioners feel they need support in planning and people management to contend with changes resulting from the Foundation Phase. Generally head-teachers are uncertain about how best to manage continuity across the primary school in respect of the seven AOLs. A large majority of owner-managers felt that the non-maintained sector continued to face existing difficulties in a number of areas: low staff wages; general lack of support/guidance; unavailable and inaccessible supply cover; insufficient training; nature of existing premises and outdoor facilities and delays in receipt of funding. The non-maintained sector Associations reported that as the Foundation Phase is still in its infancy a true partnership between both sectors has not yet been fully embedded and established and all stakeholders must remain committed to working towards this aim.

Local Authority / Non-maintained Sector Association Level

There are major inconsistencies between what strategies and developments are available to support the Foundation Phase, what each Local Authority is implementing and the level of involvement each pilot setting is receiving from their LEA. Early Years Advisors felt that they were actively involved with both sectors but these views contradict those of practitioners in terms of the support and training they feel they received. This may be explained by a mismatch in understanding and interpretation of what 'training' constitutes. However what is clear is that once again there seem to be inconsistencies between what each LEA is doing and the level of involvement the pilot settings receive. Around 60% of EYDCPs felt they were regularly informed of the progress of their pilot settings however a quarter of EYDCPs felt that they had no involvement with the pilot settings at all. The non-maintained sector Associations reported that they do not have the capacity or the responsibility to put in place additional strategies and developments to support and train their pilot settings or memberships for Foundation Phase, but would welcome the opportunity to discuss how this could be achieved with the Welsh Assembly Government.

National Level

The sample of pilot settings includes all types of childcare and education providers, however, as the settings were not randomly selected by LEAs they cannot be considered *representative* of settings across Wales. Since the pilot settings were selected the Welsh Assembly Government has arranged meetings and conferences to enable the pilot settings to meet with them in order to share information and discuss how the pilot has been progressing. General Local Authority opinion regarding the timescale of the national rollout is that it is realistic and achievable but only with the proviso of adequate resourcing, training and guidance in place. A number of aspects of Welsh Assembly Government communications systems regarding the FP are considered to be effective and efficient although there are areas requiring structural and communication improvements and development to aid the implementation process.

13. Parents

All pilot settings were sent leaflets and brochures from Welsh Assembly Government to distribute to parents before or at the start of the pilot. These materials gave readers an overview of what the Foundation Phase was about, whom it would affect and its key principles. Welsh Assembly Government has discussed the intention to launch a national advertising campaign via television in order to raise awareness but to date this has not happened and we are not aware of any specific or detailed plans for it to happen in the near future.

We asked practitioners, head-teachers and owner-managers ‘How parents had been informed about the implementation of the Foundation Phase in their setting?’

There was a wide variety of responses from the pilot settings in both sectors however the vast majority had used a range of strategies of which only one was distributing the leaflets to parents. The chart below shows the range of strategies used in both sectors.

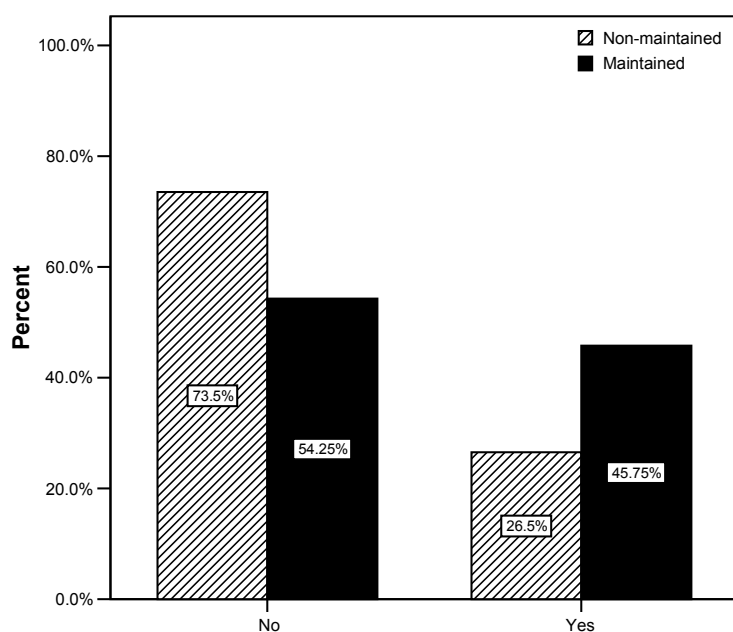
Strategy used	Maintained sector	Non-maintained sector
Welsh Assembly Government leaflets and brochures	22	18
Parents meeting led by setting staff	12	4
Informal chats	7	8
Parents meeting led by LEA and setting staff	6	2
Letters to parents	5	5
Newsletters	4	3
Displays	2	1
Induction meetings for new children / parents	1	1
Parents consultations / evenings	7	-
Open days / parent workshops	5	-
Showed parents power-point / school created video	4	-
Sharing Welsh Assembly Government consultation document with parents	2	-
Parents meeting led by Welsh Assembly Government representative	1	-
Parent questionnaire	1	-
Playgroup booklets	-	3
Parents committee	-	2
Newspaper article on setting / press clippings	-	2

A number of both maintained and non-maintained settings appear to have been particularly proactive in this area (these are: 2, 3, 13/44, 18/50, 19, 20, 22, 24, 28, 30, 35, 36, 37, 39/10, 48) in terms of the range of strategies employed to inform parents. However despite this the number of parents from these settings who have heard of the Foundation phase and know what it is varies enormously. The settings which appear to have been both proactive and successful in informing their parents were: 3, 13/44, 18/50, 24, 30, 35, 48.

In both sectors staff have offered suggestions for the next steps needed to be taken in order to further inform parents, the three strategies put forward most frequently were:

- Television advertising campaign
- Advertising in National and local press
- Distributing information through clinic and health visitors

Graph 9 - Parents responses to the question 'Have you heard about the Foundation Phase and do you know what it is?' in both the maintained and non-maintained sectors



As can be seen from Graph 9 above, of the 635 parents consulted in the pilot settings, over half in both sectors had not heard and did not know anything about the Foundation Phase. As can be seen the percentage is substantially higher for the non-maintained sector. Around 40% of all parents knew it was to do with learning through play but only 3% had an accurate and detailed knowledge of the Foundation Phase and gave comments like:

'Yes there are 7 areas of learning. Learning is play based. The outdoor classroom is used. There is a smaller adult: pupil ratio.' (parent 378)

'It's a pilot to amalgamate the current Early Years provision and Key Stage 1 of the national curriculum to create a new phase affecting pupils between 3-7 years. The scheme intends to give a 1:8 ratio of staff to pupils. Monitored by Welsh Assembly Government' (parent 173)

Many responses highlighted that there are a range of misconceptions about what the Foundation Phase is with typical comments including:

'I would understand it to be a foundation year giving the children a year to adapt to school life' (parent 11)

'It means children are not actually taught anything until the age of five' (parent 248)

'Presumably a new pre-school strategy' (parent 349)

'It's before KS1 like the Foundation Stage in England' (parent 430)

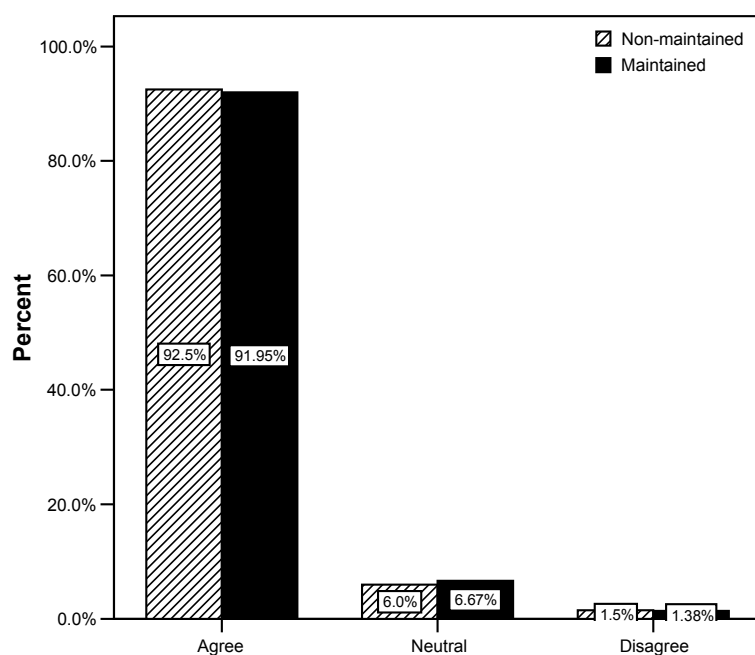
'They learn in a much larger classroom' (parent 614)

'A more relaxed way of teaching' (parent 481)

It is interesting to note that only around 5% mentioned having received the Welsh Assembly Government Foundation Phase leaflet or brochure with a few commenting that it was confusing and contained insufficient detail. It is clear that there is further work to be done at all levels in this area to inform parents of the changes in their children's education.

Parents views on active learning and play

Graph 10 - Parents views about whether children should learn and be taught more through play and hands-on activities in both the maintained and non-maintained sectors



Graph 10 above shows an overwhelming majority of parents agreed with their children learning and being taught more through active learning and play. Many felt it was a more appropriate way for young children to experience education and that it was better than the pressure that has been placed on young children in recent years. Typical comments include:

'this is how young children learn and it encourages exploration, observation, collaboration, imagination and so many of the learning skills that can be overlooked in more formal instruction' (parent 89)

'I feel that children need to have a good strong foundation in skills such as language and social interaction. Playing and problem-solving is how they learn these skills. Good language, communication and confidence with elders is a good basis for what follows' (parent 521)

'there is too much pressure on academic achievement at an early age and children should think that learning is fun and not a boring chore' (parent 331)

Where parents chose neutral or disagreed it was for three main reasons:

- Concern for how their children would cope in Year 1 and 2 where they considered that the learning and teaching would be much more formal.
- Children not learning the basics at a young age – reading, writing and maths
- Standards dropping

Typical comments include:

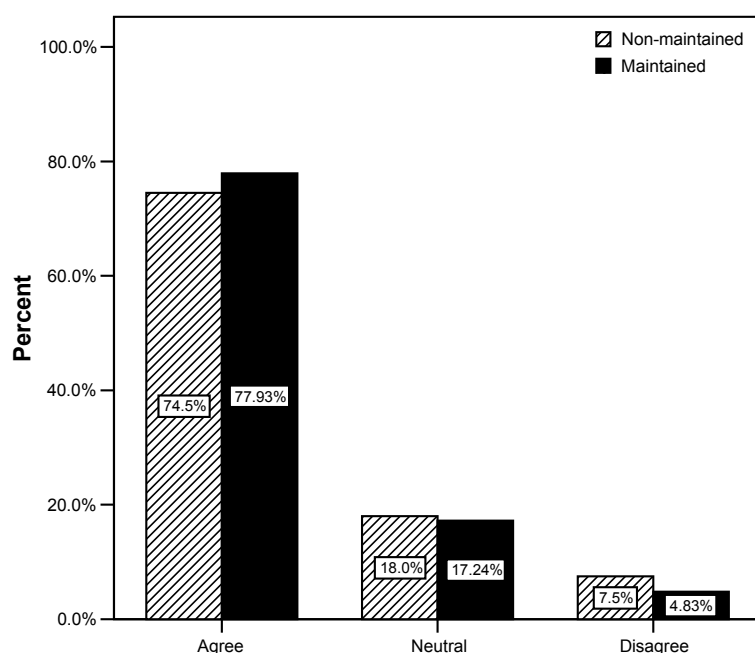
‘children learn most up to the age of 5, with this project they won’t be learning until they are 7yrs old. I think the children will be behind with the important things of reading and writing etc. I think they can play at home’ (parent 62)

‘anxious about the impact of [active learning and play] for older children in reception, year1 and year2’ (parent 387)

‘need to be reassured that basic skills such as reading, writing, arithmetic are covered and to same standards. I worry as it is at the pilot stage at moment our children could be disadvantaged if all is not well with programme’ (parent 633)

Bilingualism

Graph 11 - Parents views about whether children should learn and be taught Welsh from the age of three in both the maintained and non-maintained sectors



Graph 11 above shows a clear majority of parents from both sectors agreed that Welsh should be taught from the age of three. Parents felt this was important for three main reasons:

- The earlier a child learns a second language the easier it is to master
- Living in Wales it is important to be able to use the national language
- Welsh will benefit children with future employment prospects

Typical comments include:

‘this is probably the best way for children to learn another language, from an early age it is easiest to learn’ (parent 39)

‘I think that the children should have an understanding of the Welsh language as they live in Wales’ (parent 119)

'It's good to keep the Welsh language alive' (parent 321)

'because we are Welsh and it is good for the future and job opportunities' (parent 520)

Where parents chose neutral or disagreed it was for the following reasons:

- young children find it hard enough to learn English to a good standard
- parents who do not speak Welsh will not be able to support their children
- loss of parental choice
- other modern foreign languages would be more advantageous
- concern over the definition of bilingualism
- confusing for young children who are already bilingual/multilingual.

Importantly many of those who in principle agreed with the idea also voiced these reasons as concerns. Typical comments include:

'English is hard enough for little children so they need that first. Welsh is too much' (parent 184)

'hard because we don't speak Welsh at home. I can't support my child. (parent 208)

'If I had wanted my kids to learn through Welsh I would have sent them to Welsh school.' (parent 104)

'Welsh is only spoken in Wales and I think it would be better for the future if they learnt another language that is spoken in other countries.' (parent 412)

'the term bilingual implies an equal amount of English and Welsh. I'm not sure I want that much Welsh. Also how can teachers teach to this level?' (parent 499)

'My daughter is learning three languages, English, Urdu and Arabic. I don't want her to get too confused with a 4th language' (parent 285)

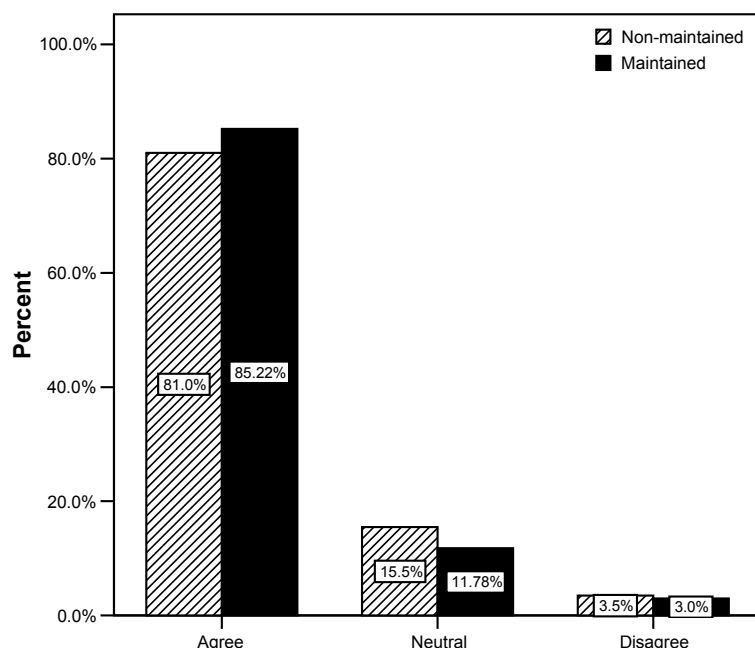
What is evident from these comments is that reflection on the views and concerns of parents is necessary in addition to supporting FP settings in delivering Bilingualism so all stakeholders feel more reassured and confident.

Multicultural Understanding (MCU)

Graph 12 below shows the vast majority of parents in both sectors agreed that children should be taught Multicultural Understanding. This was explained to parents as children being taught and learning more about 'Welshness' and other cultures. Parents felt this was important for 4 key reasons:

- we live in an increasingly culturally diverse society
- our culture and heritage should be promoted
- it could help to prevent racism and improve tolerance
- it will benefit children when they travel in the future

Graph 12 - Parents views about whether children should learn and be taught Multicultural Understanding in both the maintained and non-maintained sectors



Typical comments included:

‘as we live in such a multicultural society it can only help them understand other people. It could also help prevent racism.’ (parent 1)

‘its most important to know and learn about Wales and their nationality’ (parent 282)

‘I believe it is very important not only to learn about your own culture but also others so that you respect the difference and treat all people equally’ (parent 452)

‘more people travel abroad so it is useful to know about different cultures and more people are coming to live in Wales (parent 286)

This question raised many issues for parents although the numbers who chose neutral or disagreed were low. Concerns highlight that this area is challenging for our society and people often have strong opposing views. Areas where parents raised concerns or disagreed were:

- taking care not to place too much emphasis on other cultures
- children of this age were too young to be taught MCU
- if people from other cultures live in this country they should learn about our culture
- other cultures and traditions could be taught but not religions
- what ‘Welshness’ means
- care needed to prevent ‘Welshness’ being interpreted as Nationalism

Typical comments included:

‘there is too much learning about other cultures’ (parent 36)

‘3-7 is too young to start learning about other cultures’ (parent 528)

'people who come to live here should have to learn about our culture and fit in with us' (parent 77)

'don't want them to learn about other religions' (parent 163)

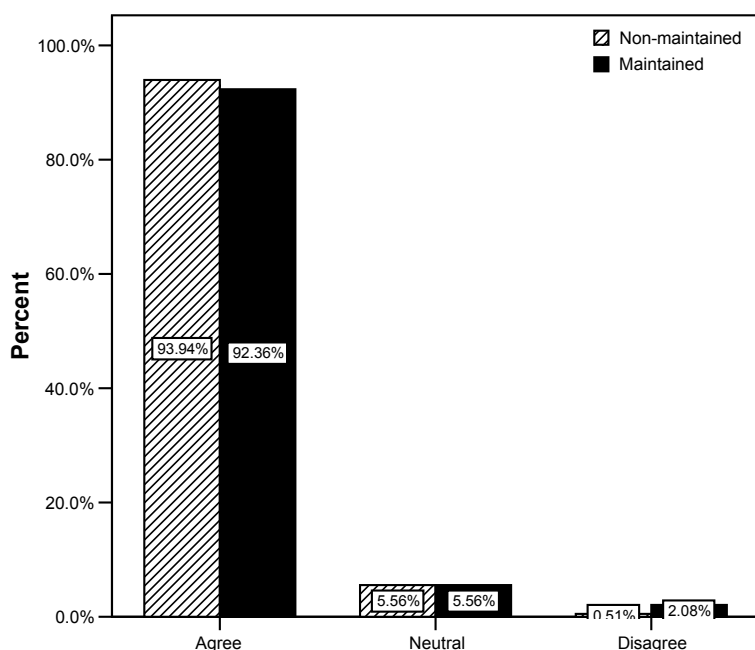
'This is a very contradictory question, Welsh nationalism versus liberalism. I don't agree with Welshness as racism doesn't need any help but teaching about other cultures is very important' (parent 563)

As with Bilingualism it is clear that Multicultural Understanding must be introduced sensitively so as to allay the concerns of parents and will require clear definitions and guidance of what these terms mean in an educational context for young children.

Proposed ratios

The final question we asked parents was how they felt about the proposed ratios being introduced with the Foundation Phase.

Graph 13 - Parents views about proposed Foundation Phase ratios in both the maintained and non-maintained sectors



As graph 13 shows there was overwhelming support for the proposed 1:8 (preschool, nursery and reception classes) and 1:13 (KS1) ratios. Parents felt that having additional adults in classes could only be beneficial and children would receive more attention, time and support which should raise attainment. Also parents felt the needs of their children could be catered for more easily with improved ratios enabling adults to work with small groups and talk to children about their learning more frequently. Typical comments included:

'children of this age can be very demanding. If those demands are not met with low pupil/teacher ratios development may be impaired or potentials not recognised. Additional adult presence can only be a good thing' (parent 128)

'one teacher isn't enough for all the children. Learn more with more adults. Good for teacher to have help too (parent 164)

'care and education of children is essential and important. We should give every opportunity to them and through employing more adults the children benefit in the long run' (parent 307)

'this is a good advancement as children of this age need lots of attention and support during their first years in school. This can only improve the teaching and hence the learning ability of all children concerned' (parent 417)

Interestingly around 6% of parents specifically felt that improved ratios would only be of benefit if additional staff were well qualified and appropriately trained for their positions. Typical comments included:

'the right adults are key. Must be trained appropriately. Calibre is so important' (parent 203)

'children will learn better in smaller groups and they have more teachers attention. As long as the additional staff are qualified e.g. NNEBs' (parent 338)

'fantastic, as long as they are well trained. Poorly trained adults can confuse children' (parent 562)

A number of parents also raised concerns over the lower ratios proposed for Years 1 and 2 with comments like:

'why isn't the ratio the same throughout the Infants? Surely older children need as much, if not more, adult support, as their inquisitiveness grows and they need questions answered' (parent 626)

'I think there is a big increase in the ratio from 1:8 to 1:13 by 1 year (parent 41)

Finally a small number of parents questioned whether there would be adequate funding to make this a reality across the country and whether there would be sufficient qualified staff available for recruitment.

Summary

Overall parents' responses were overwhelmingly positive to the key new components of the proposed Foundation Phase. There was most concern from a relatively low percentage of parents around the new AOL, Bilingualism and Multicultural Understanding, with parents needing further clarification as to what these terms mean and what will be covered in this new aspect of the curriculum. Worryingly despite many pilot settings being proactive and using a range of strategies in an attempt to inform their parents high numbers in both sectors had either not heard of the Foundation Phase or did not know what it was. Head-teachers and owner/managers feel strongly that a national advertising campaign is needed to raise awareness in parents and in the wider public domain.

14. Concluding Discussion and Recommendations

This section looks closely at the key issues, both strengths and areas where there is more work needed to ensure further effective implementation of the Foundation Phase. There is a generic list of recommendations in the Executive Summary and here we consider specifically how the implementation can be strengthened and made more effective.

The Foundation Phase is a major, national reform for Wales which is seen as a vital and necessary component in the drive to raise standards and improve the educational experiences of young people in Wales today and for the future. There is a good deal of interest and support for this from all stakeholders both in Wales and elsewhere, watching closely as the Foundation Phase implements its first pilot. As with any new initiative the implementation of the Foundation Phase will require high levels of change to assure success. All staff and policy makers support the vision and are committed to the Foundation Phase. Everyone has worked tremendously hard over the first year of the pilot in every sector. It was a brave step for Welsh Assembly Government to commit to an evaluation at the start of the pilot to inform and strengthen the implementation process.

Welsh Assembly Government

The Welsh Assembly Government has achieved a good deal to date on the Foundation Phase. Key strengths include the ethos and vision of the Foundation Phase, the broad and balanced curriculum with a skills and disposition bias and the emphasis on active learning experiences. There are however a number of areas where there is further work to be done. The Welsh Assembly Government needs to make clear their commitment to raising standards and the quality of educational provision by improving the qualifications and training of staff working within the Foundation Phase. Improved ratios alone are not the only factor in improving the quality of learning for young children. Staff need to be better qualified and trained to work with young children effectively and appropriately. A national training policy needs to be implemented to ensure that staff have the necessary expertise to undertake this work especially in the areas of how young children learn, pedagogy and practice. In addition appropriate training for practitioners and support staff working with children must support the Welsh Assembly Government's commitment to Bilingualism. We are fully aware that this vision might need to be achieved over some years.

Further reflection is also required on the expectations, breadth and balance of provision for Bilingualism (as proposed in the new AOL) for the youngest children, most urgently for those in areas of social and economic disadvantage and where there is a high incidence of EAL (where the acquisition of English might already be very challenging for minority ethnic children). Although unintentional, it has become clear through our data that Welsh Assembly Government and ACCAC need to work to the same aim in order to provide clear guidance and clarity on curriculum content, pedagogy, practice and assessment. Funding for Foundation Phase training, staffing and resourcing needs to be ring-fenced and appropriate to enable settings to implement and develop the Foundation Phase successfully. Finally Welsh Assembly Government communication systems need to be strengthened and developed, in particular with local authority early years staff and non-maintained sector Associations.

Local authority

Many local authorities have worked hard during the first year of the pilot to support the Foundation Phase and the first stages of implementation. There have been successes in different aspects of the implementation across Wales but all Local Authorities have more to do, especially if Welsh Assembly Government continues to support the existence of a diverse range of providers to implement the Foundation Phase within the under-fives sector. Most Local Authorities need to specifically address the non-maintained sector and afford it the opportunities and support to implement the Foundation Phase so as to achieve a more level playing field. Key areas for development at Local Authority level include: closer, more effective work with the pilot settings in supporting and developing curriculum; assessment and transition practices; improved explicit training opportunities for all key stakeholders and staff and improved systems and infrastructure to enable settings to receive their funding promptly. This requires a clearer role for early years advisors.

Maintained Sector

The maintained sector has shown resilience and determination during the first year of the FP pilot. It will need continued and enhanced support and guidance as the Foundation Phase rolls out into Year 1 and 2 classes. This is where there will need to be the biggest change in practice, particularly the pedagogical practices staff use, therefore practitioners will need to feel confident, secure and clear in the expectations being placed on them as the pilot progresses. This will require well-planned training, guidance and support. An area that will require further reflection for policy makers and the maintained sector is that a minority of schools, particularly in more privileged areas, feel that more formal learning and structure has worked well for them, their children and school standards (as assessed through ESTYN reports). Practitioners in these settings often believe that structure and formality is the antithesis to play rather than complementary.

Non-maintained sector

The non-maintained sector has been keen and committed to being a major player in the Foundation Phase, despite not enjoying the same advantages as the maintained sector. The non-maintained sector will need substantial support, guidance and training as it implements and develops the Foundation Phase in its settings. Collaboration and partnership with the umbrella associations MYM, Wales PPA, NCMA and NDNA Cymru has been established and must be embedded and built upon to achieve success. All associations would welcome the opportunity to further collaborate with the Welsh Assembly Government in order to provide more comprehensive support and training for their membership in respect of the Foundation Phase. Further reflection is necessary in respect of staff qualifications and ratios versus quality of provision if equality of opportunity and parity is to be achieved in children's care and education, whilst maintaining and strengthening options for parental choice.

Special or Particular Educational Needs

Further clarification is needed with respect to identification of SEN. Care must be taken that the advocacy of children developing at their own rate/pace does not undermine the process of early identification and support of children with special and particular educational needs.

Childminders

Care and reflection is necessary for policy makers when considering childminders taking on the Foundation Phase. With current statutory ratios, offering Foundation Phase places for 2½hr x 4days or 2hrs x 5days could conflict in some cases with opportunities to take other children for longer hours thereby having a detrimental impact on these small providers. The NCMA suggested that it may be advantageous for the continuing pilot phase to incorporate a whole childminding network into the pilot as opposed to a single childminder.

Terminology

A number of terms introduced with the Foundation Phase pilot have caused concern or confusion for many stakeholders. These terms need further consideration, clarification and revision by ACCAC and the Welsh Assembly Government. They are: play, free-play, structured play, active learning, choice, outdoor classroom, bilingualism and multicultural understanding.

At the end of the first year of the MEEIFP evaluation we suggest the period and timescale of national rollout needs to be carefully considered if the above issues are to be seriously addressed to ensure smooth transition across the Phase.

Recommendations

Curriculum, Pedagogy and Practice

- Pilot settings need ACCAC to deliver on outstanding curriculum guidance materials and associated guidance including assessment guidance *as soon as possible*.
- ACCAC and Welsh Assembly Government needs to review and improve communication strategies with all stakeholders in respect of the status of the guidance materials.
- Welsh Assembly Government with ACCAC need to consider how the assessment continuum can aid and support implementing a national assessment profile to be used in all Foundation Phase settings to aid and support issues of transition.
- Transition arrangements between the non-maintained sector and the maintained sector need to be improved and promoted by the EYDCPs with maintained settings taking more of a shared responsibility in order to best support children moving through the early stages of the Foundation Phase.
- Infant and Primary School head-teachers need to plan and train staff for more effective and improved transition procedures for children moving within the FP and from the FP into KS2.
- Further clarification is essential on the vision of Bilingualism in the FP. We understand from the Welsh Assembly Government that the Welsh Language Board is currently looking at the definition of Bilingualism..
- Head-teachers require LEA support and guidance to ensure effective continuity of the seven AOLs into KS2.
- School governing bodies need to take a more active role in decision making related to the Foundation Phase within their school.

Staffing and ratios

- Non-maintained settings would benefit from increased input from staff with teacher qualifications as proposed in the consultation document.
- Care should be taken to ensure that improving ratios does not take precedence over high quality training for staff working in schools and settings. Staff qualifications show a stronger relationship to quality of provision than ratios. This being the case the current policy on ratios further advantages the maintained sector when ratios are reduced to one adult to eight children as the maintained sector will be operating with the same ratios as the non-maintained sector but with more staff with higher levels of qualification. The Effective Provision of Pre-school Education research shows that provision which typically includes a ratio of one teacher to every nursery officer had higher quality and some higher child developmental outcomes. This means that ideally a greater input by teachers and qualified, NVQ level 3 staff is desirable to enhance quality and children's developmental outcomes.

Training

- A national training policy for the Foundation Phase needs to be put in place based on existing good LEA practice to ensure parity, equity and high standards across Wales. Currently LEAs and local councils decide on the funding available for training. As a long term goal, we recommend aiming for greater consistency across local authorities.

- Increased LEA training and guidance are required to support practitioners in introducing the new AOL – Bilingualism and Multicultural Understanding to enable the vision to become a reality.
- Early Years Advisors and all non-maintained sector Associations should work more closely with pilot settings and all other LEA settings to discuss assessment arrangements and implement effective and relevant strategies.
- Welsh Assembly Government, LEAs, EYDCPs and non-maintained sector Associations (MYM, NCMA, NDNA Cymru and Wales PPA) need to begin a dialogue on how best to provide effective training and support for the non-maintained sector.
- LEAs and local councils need to ensure effective systems are in place to enable the non-maintained sector to access and attend LEA Foundation Phase training.
- Training in people management will be required for all lead practitioners in Foundation Phase settings especially where improved ratios are implemented as this increases the number of adults they work with.
- As the Foundation Phase rolls out there will need to be sufficient numbers of newly trained teachers specifically trained about the Foundation Phase. This will require a Foundation Phase strategy for training which incorporates continuing professional development of teachers and initial teacher education. Planning for this will need to commence almost immediately in order to meet the requirements of the planned roll-out.

Funding and Resources

- Funding allocated to settings for resources, management and training should be considered per child head above an agreed initial amount for all settings regardless of type.
- Funding for staffing improved ratios needs to be considered in the light of evidence on quality in relation to staff qualifications. Higher ratios are desirable but not sufficient to raise quality in terms of children's learning, to do this training is necessary, particularly more specialist Foundation Phase trained teachers and NVQ 3 staff trained to the standards of the NNEB.
- Funding for training at LEA level needs to be planned, ring-fenced and allocated by Welsh Assembly Government in sufficient time for it to be utilised in the most effective way in each Authority.
- LEAs need to improve systems and infrastructure for allocating settings their funding on time particularly in the non-maintained sector.
- An audit of indoor and outdoor accommodation should be undertaken in each LEA to enable long term planning for improvements in order for settings to be able to develop the Foundation Phase effectively.

Overall implementation

- Effective and sustainable strategies are required to ensure adequate resourcing, training and guidance are available before national rollout commences without which quality and impact on children's learning may be compromised.

- The non-maintained sector may need more support and financing to ensure that the implementation is developed on a more level playing field.
- Local authorities and non-maintained Associations need a steer from Welsh Assembly Government in respect of their involvement with and training and support of both pilot settings and prospective FP settings to ensure greater parity across Wales.
- Effective communication systems established by Welsh Assembly Government need to be built on and developed to improve the implementation process. A review of whether current resources allocated at this level are sufficient needs to be undertaken.
- Prior to national rollout Welsh Assembly Government need to plan for and implement an awareness raising campaign in the public domain so that parents are well informed about the FP.

15. Glossary of Terms / Acronyms

This glossary seeks to explain concepts, terms and definitions which are used in this report

ACCAC

Qualification, Curriculum and Training Authority for Wales

AOL

Areas of Learning, these are the 7 areas identified in the Foundation Phase curriculum

Baseline Assessment

An assessment of a child's skills and abilities usually made by a teacher within the first seven weeks of starting in a Reception class of a Primary school. Areas covered include Language and Literacy, Maths and Personal and Social Development.

Basic skills

The ability to speak, read and write in Welsh or English and to use mathematics at a level necessary to function at work and in society.

CM

Cylch Meithrin – Welsh medium playgroup under the umbrella organisation of Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin. The aim of the cylch meithrin is to promote the education and development of children from two years of age to school age through Welsh medium immersion.

CYNNAL

CYNNAL provides educational support to two local education authorities, Gwynedd and Anglesey and their schools.

Caregiver Interaction Scale (CIS)

A rating scale consisting of 26 items completed by an observer of the interactions between caregivers and children. The items are grouped to produce 4 subscales: positive relationships, punitiveness, permissiveness and detachment. The CIS was developed by Jeffrey Arnett (1989).

- Positive relationships is a subscale made up of 10 items indicating warmth and enthusiasm in interaction with children by the caregiver.
- Punitiveness is a subscale made up of 8 items indicating harsh or over-controlling behaviour in interaction with children by the caregiver.
- Permissiveness is a subscale made up of 4 items indicating avoidance of discipline and control of children by the caregiver.
- Detachment is a subscale made up of 4 items indicating lack of involvement in interaction with children by the caregiver.

Childminders

Childminders look after children under five and school age children after hours and in the holidays. Childminders must be registered with the Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales (CSIW) and work to the National Standards for Childminding in Wales. Childminders are able to register as part of a network in their LEA to provide nursery education to 3- and 4-year-olds in the home.

Curriculum differentiation

The provision of differentiated curriculum experiences as a response to the identification of the specific needs of individual or small groups of children (See 'formative assessment').

Cwricwlwm Cymreig

The Cwricwlwm Cymreig is part of the National Curriculum that helps pupils to develop and apply knowledge and understanding of the cultural, economic, environmental, historical and linguistic characteristics of Wales.

DF

ACCAC's Draft Framework for Children's Learning (2004)

DfES

Department for Education and Skills, the UK central government department which commissioned the Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) and Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years (REPEY) research projects.

Day Nurseries

These take children under five for the whole working day. Children can attend on a part-time or full-time basis according to their parents' needs. They may be run by local authorities, voluntary organisations, private companies, individuals or employers. There must be at least one adult for every eight children and at least half of the staff must have a qualification recognised by ACCAC.

Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning

This document was first produced by ACCAC in 1996 and then revised in 2000. The document outlines the six areas of learning and experience that are intended to help children meet the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum at five years old. The areas are:

- language, literacy and communication;
- personal and social development;
- mathematical development;
- knowledge and understanding of the world;
- physical development
- creative development.

Direct teaching

These are pedagogical interactions which include simple questioning, explanation, description of the activity, didactic instruction, task management, reading to the target child, and organising and allocating tasks.

EAL

English as an additional language

ECERS-E: (Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale: Extension) Sylva, Siraj-Blatchford and Taggart (2003) Trentham Books

A rating scale of 4 subscales which assess pedagogy and the curriculum within the setting, including the areas of mathematics, science, literacy and diversity (whether staff plan to meet particular / individual needs).

ECERS-R (Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale: Revised) Harms, Clifford and Cryer (1998)

A rating scale consisting of seven sub-scales which provide an overview of the pre-school environment, covering aspects of the setting from furnishing to individuality of care and the quality of social interactions. The subscales are: Space and Furnishings, Personal Care Routines, Language-Reasoning, Activities, Interaction, Program Structure, Parents and Staff.

EPPE

The *Effective Provision for Pre-school Education* project, a 'value-added' longitudinal research study of the effects of early childhood provision on the developmental progress of 3000+ children in England (1997-2003).

ESIS

The Education and School Improvement Service was established in 1996 in South Wales to provide educational support to four local education authorities and their schools. This model of joint working has been continually developed to ensure that the full benefits of a co-operative enterprise accrue to the 400 plus schools across the four county boroughs and that the LEAs are both efficient and effective in their school improvement programmes. The four LEAs are Bridgend, Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Early Years

This term often refers to pre-reception years, or the under-fives. Increasingly used to refer to the under sevens by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)

This is a statutory body set up in each local authority to co-ordinate provision for children under five. This includes schools, playgroups and nurseries in the independent and voluntary sectors.

Early years education

Children may receive early education in a range of places or settings, such as nursery schools, reception classes in primary schools, pre-schools, playgroups, some day nurseries and childminders.

Estyn

Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales.

Formative assessment

The process whereby information is collected to identify the extent of children's learning, and subsequently applied in the provision of feedback and in adapting the curriculum and pedagogy to provide for their particular needs.

Foundation Phase (FP)

This is a Welsh Assembly Government initiative covering the early years and key stage 1 (children aged between three and seven). From September 2004, 41 settings are piloting the FP. It aims to provide a broad, balanced and rich curriculum under seven areas of learning to meet the different developmental needs of young children.

The seven areas of learning are:

- personal and social development and well-being;
- language, literacy and communication;
- mathematical development;
- bilingual and multicultural understanding;
- knowledge and understanding of the world;
- physical development
- creative development.

Foundation Stage

In England a stage of education for children from 3 years old to the end of Reception class with 6 areas of learning. The six areas of learning are:

- Personal, social and emotional development
- Communication, language and literacy
- Mathematical development

- Knowledge and understanding of the world
- Physical development
- Creative development

Governing Body (GB)

Every LEA maintained school has a governing body. It will include: parents elected by other parents at the school, teacher(s) elected by their colleagues, a governor elected by, and from, support staff (optional in small primary), local education authority governors, governors co-opted by other members of the governing body and the head teacher unless he or she chooses not to be. They may also include representatives from organisations such as the church, charitable trusts or business interests. Governors work as a team. They are responsible to parents, funders and the community for making sure the school provides a good quality education. They do this together with the head, who is responsible for the day-to-day management of the school. The governing body has a separate legal identity from individual governors. In some schools the governors are the employers.

INSET

In-service education and training

All teachers have access to INSET in schools, helping them to refine their teaching and management skills.

ITET

Initial teacher education and training

Instruction/Instructive

The term 'instruction' has been applied to include both direct (questioning, explaining etc) and indirect instructional behaviours (demonstrating, modelling) and intentions such as the encouragement of parental involvement and the provision of 'pedagogical framing (the context in which learning takes place)'.

Integrated Early Years Centres

These centres are being developed through Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships. They include a range of services, such as health visitor 'drop-in' services and family learning alongside nursery education. They are open throughout the year and provide flexible childcare hours as well as education.

Involvement

The concept of involvement that we have applied has been adapted from the work of Ferre Laevers (1994). The term is applied to adults *and* children who have focused their attention upon a shared activity and are persistent. They are 'intrinsically motivated, rarely distracted, and appear fascinated and absorbed' by their shared activity.

Key stages

The period of compulsory education is divided into the following four key stages.

- Key stage 1 for pupils aged 5 to 7.
- Key stage 2 for pupils aged 7 to 11.
- Key stage 3 for pupils aged 11 to 14.
- Key stage 4 for pupils aged 14 to 16.

Local Education Authority (LEA)

The term 'local education authority' (or LEA) describes a type of council which has responsibility for providing education to pupils of school age in its area. Their overall education remit also includes early years, the youth service and adult education. An LEA is responsible for promoting high standards of education. It is responsible for contributing to

the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community by ensuring that efficient primary and secondary education is provided and ensuring that there are enough primary and secondary places with adequate facilities to meet the needs of pupils living in the area.

Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin (MYM)

Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin was formed in 1971 to promote and support the education and development of children under five years of age through the medium of Welsh, in cylchoedd meithrin and cylchoedd Ti a Fi.

Maintained School

A school maintained by an LEA

Non-maintained Setting

A childcare setting approved by CSIW, which is not maintained by the State but charges fees for its services. Most non-maintained settings in Wales are affiliated to the umbrella associations, MYM, Wales PPA, NCMA and NDNA.

NCMA

National Childminding Association of England and Wales

NDNA Cymru

National Day Nurseries Association (Wales region).

This association represents private day nurseries in Wales

NS

Nursery School, whole schools catering for children 3-5 years old.

National Assembly for Wales (NAfW)

Government body in Wales that debates and approves legislation and holds the Welsh Assembly Government to account.

National Curriculum

Covers what pupils should be taught in state maintained schools. The National Curriculum aims to provide a balanced education for a child covering 11 subjects overall, and is divided into four Key Stages according to age.

Nursery Classes in State Primary Schools (NC)

These take children from the age of three or four and are open during school term time. They usually offer five half-day sessions a week. It is recommended that there should be one adult for every 13 children and staff are qualified teachers and assistants

Nursery Schools

These take children from the age of three to four and are open during school term time and normally offer five half-day sessions a week. It is recommended that there must be at least one adult for every 10 children. Staff are qualified teachers and nursery officers or assistants.

PDN

Private Day Nursery.

PIPS

Progress In Primary Schools

Pre-school playgroups

These generally take children between the ages of two and a half and five and most offer half-day sessions. Usually non-profit making and managed by volunteers and parents. There must be at least one adult for every eight children and at least half of the adults must be qualified leaders or assistants.

Pedagogy

Pedagogy: The practice (or the art, the science or the craft) of teaching.

Pedagogical content knowledge

Different pedagogic techniques are often required to make different forms of knowledge, skill and understanding accessible to young children. In teacher education the identification of appropriate strategies is often referred to as 'pedagogical content knowledge'. Requires knowledge of the 'subject' being taught and the child's level of learning.

Pedagogical interactions

Face to face interactions practitioners' engage in with children; they may take the form of cognitive or social/emotional interactions

Pedagogical strategies

Practices used by the educator to support learning, for instance, social interactions, assessment practices and procedures, the organisation of resources or management.

Q.T.S.

Qualified Teacher Status

Quality

Measures of pre-school centre quality collected through observational assessments (ECERS-R, ECERS-E and CIS) made by trained researchers. Quality can also be assessed through the triangulated perceptions of children, staff and parents. The MEEIFP Team has included perceptions of quality from all major stakeholders in this report.

Reception Classes in State Primary Schools (Rec)

These classes take children at four plus, some children begin with half-day sessions. Staff are qualified teachers and assistants.

SEN - Special Educational Needs.

This denotes any child that has been identified as having some form of educational need either as a result of learning difficulty or if they are deemed as particularly gifted. These children receive additional support either from within the school or outside agencies.

SPSS

Statistical data editor

Setting

The term refers to playgroups, cylchoedd meithrin, private day nurseries, childminders, nursery classes, nursery schools, integrated centres and reception classes.

Sustained shared thinking

An episode in which two or more individuals "work together" in an intellectual way to solve a problem, clarify a concept, evaluate activities, extend a narrative etc. Both parties must contribute to the thinking and it must develop and extend.

Welsh Assembly Government

The body that develops and implements policy in Wales via the civil service and a range of sponsored bodies.

Wales PPA

Wales Pre-school Playgroups Association

Welsh-medium school

A Welsh-medium school is a school that teaches more than half the subjects in Welsh.

ZAD (zone of actual development)

Refers to the cognitive levels at which a child is currently operating.

ZPD (zone of proximal development)

Refers to the higher cognitive levels which a child can achieve when supported by a practitioner or more knowledgeable other (the cognitive potential). See Appendix 3

1:1

One to one referring to a one adult and one child.

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WEB SITES

Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin

[http:// www.mym.co.uk](http://www.mym.co.uk)

Estyn

[http:// www.estyn.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk)

Welsh Language Board

<http://www.bwrdd-yr-iaith.org.uk>

Wales Preschool Playgroups Association

<http://www.walesppa.org/>

The Welsh Assembly Government's Training and Education website

<http://www.learning.wales.gov.uk/>

17. Appendices

Appendix A: Examples of ECERS-R, ECERS-E subscales

ECERS-R Example – Interaction subscale

Inadequate		Minimal		Good		Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Item 32. Staff-child interactions

1.1 Staff members are not responsive to or not involved with children (Ex. ignore children, staff seem distant or cold).

1.2 Interactions are unpleasant (Ex. voices sound strained and irritable).

1.3 Physical contact used principally for control (Ex. hurrying children along) or inappropriately (Ex. unwanted hugs or tickling).

3.1 Staff usually respond to children in a warm, supportive manner (Ex. Staff and children seem relaxed, voices cheerful, frequent smiling).

3.2 Few, if any, unpleasant interactions.

5.1 Staff show warmth through appropriate physical contact (Ex. Pat child on the back, return child's hug).

5.2 Staff show respect for children (Ex. listen attentively, make eye contact, treat children fairly, do not discriminate).

5.3 Staff respond sympathetically to help children who are upset, hurt, or angry.

7.1 Staff seem to enjoy being with the children.

7.2 Staff encourage the development of mutual respect between children and adults (Ex. staff wait until children finish asking questions before answering; encourage children in a polite way to listen when adults speak).

ECERS-E Example – Science subscale

Inadequate		Minimal		Good		Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Science Activities: Science processes: Food preparation

1.1 No preparation of food or drink is undertaken in front of children.

3.1 Food preparation is undertaken by adults in front of the children.

3.2 Some children can choose to participate in food preparation.

3.3 Staff discuss with the children routine food that has been prepared by adults, where appropriate, e.g. burnt toast or new biscuits or food brought in by children because of special events.

5.1 Food preparation/ cooking activities are provided regularly.

5.2 Most of the children have the opportunity to participate in food preparation.

5.3 The staff lead the discussion appropriate about the food involved and use terminology (EX. Melt, dissolve).

5.4 Children are encouraged to use more than one sense (feel, smell, taste) to explore raw ingredients.

7.1 A variety of cooking activities in which all children have the opportunity to take part are provided regularly.

7.2 The ingredients are attractive and the end result is reasonable and appreciated (Ex. Eaten by children, taken home).

7.3 The staff lead and encourage discussion on the process of food preparation such as what needs to be done to cause ingredients to set or melt.

7.4 Staff draw attention to changes in food and question children about it (Ex. What did it look like before, what does it look like now, what has happened to it).

Appendix B: ECERS-R, ECERS-E and CIS

Reliability and Validity of ECERS-R, ECERS-E and CIS

The MEEIFP Team needed an instrument to assess the quality of provision for 3-5 year olds in a range of settings in Wales participating in the Foundation Phase pilot scheme. This was initially for use as a baseline at the outset of the implementation of the Foundation Phase, an exciting new play-based approach to learning, which will eventually roll out to include all children aged 3-7 years. However the same instrument would also be used subsequently to make observations on changes in the quality of provision one year on. The ECERS instruments are not appropriate to be used and therefore were not used in the SEN school or with the Childminder.

Many studies all over the world have used the ECERS (prior to revision to ECERS-R), to describe education and care processes and it has proven to be reliable and valid with minor adaptations, suggesting that children from various backgrounds “require similar inputs for success in developmental areas valued in western industrialized countries.” (Harms et al. 2002)

The EPPE study validated the use of ECERS-R for the U.K. (Sammons et al. 2002). The ECERS-R was associated with the CIS, looking specifically at the relationship between staff and children, which is also a measure of setting quality, to give information on the construct validity of the ECERS-R. Correlations were found between average total ECERS-R scores and specific CIS subscales.

In addition the relationship between ECERS-R and ECERS-E has also been examined (Sylva et al. 1999) indicating a strong positive relationship between the two measures. Although the two instruments focus on different dimensions of the pre-school settings, they both measure a general construct of quality, and it is expected that centres obtaining a high score on the ECERS-R will also obtain a high score on the ECERS-E.

Other U.K. studies, which have used ECERS as an observational rating scale are: the Effective Pre-school Provision in Northern Ireland (EPPNI), which is part of EPPE and will provide data from 70 randomly selected centres, which may be usefully compared with the EPPE data (141 centres) from England; The Millennium Cohort Study (MCS), observing quality in 300 pre-school centres across England and the Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiative (NNI).

It can therefore be seen that the decision to use ECERS as an observational instrument for the MEEIFP project was based on extensive and sound research experience. Both ECERS-R and ECERS-E were used together with the CIS to ensure as broad and comprehensive an observational base as possible. It is however important to note that the MEEIFP data are not comparable with the English/Irish data because the MEEIFP project does not apply ECERS to a random sample of Welsh settings, but rather to a selected sample chosen to represent the range in types of provision across the 22 LEAs in Wales.

In order to establish inter-observer reliability the MEEIFP researchers underwent full training in the use of ECERS and CIS. They visited a range of settings to conduct reliability exercises, using a researcher from Oxford University as the ‘standard’, prior to the commencement of formal observations within the pilot settings. The reliability for the researchers was computed on the basis of;

- (a) Where each researcher scored exactly the same point on a scale
- (b) Kappa values – a statistic which measures the degree of agreement between two observers, while allowing for the level of a ‘chance’ agreement.

Reliability between the two researchers was consistently high, thereby justifying the use of the ECERS as an appropriate instrument for the MEEIFP project still further.

Use of ECERS-R, ECERS-E AND CIS

Questioning on Items

For some indicators on the scales, observation of specific activities as criteria for quality was not possible. In these circumstances, careful questioning of classroom practitioners was undertaken by the researchers in order to establish the occurrence and frequency of such activities.

Explanation of Terms

The ECERS format of subscales, items, and indicators has been maintained in all the suggested new additions, which should render them entirely complementary to the original scales.

Quantifying of terms in the new subscales has generally followed the explanations given in the original ECERS-R (Harms et al. 1998 p6) and ECERS-E (Sylva et al. 2003 p10). Also, because terms vary from item to item according to the context, a specific definition has been given on each page where appropriate, in order to facilitate scoring. In addition to this, specific examples or questions have been given where it was felt that this would be helpful.

It is important to bear in mind that in a setting teaching Welsh as a second language, in terms of frequency of use, as the document 'Iaith Pawb' (NAW 2003) suggests, with its vision of Wales as a bilingual nation, 50% is always the best possible outcome i.e. as frequently as English.

Appendix C: Welsh Medium Settings ECERS Subscale

Inadequate 1	2	Minimal 3	4	Good 5	6	Excellent 7
Item 1. Learning and Communication in Welsh medium immersion.						
1.1 English is used frequently instead of Welsh by adults.		3.1 Staff use English occasionally, instead of Welsh. NA Permitted		5.1 Staff use an occasional English word reinforced by Welsh to ensure children's understanding. NA Permitted		7.1 Welsh is the language of communication by staff for most of the day.
1.2 Children are not encouraged to express themselves in Welsh. NA Permitted		3.2 Children are encouraged to express themselves in Welsh regularly. NA Permitted		5.2 As well as being encouraged to use Welsh regularly, children are praised frequently for their attempts to use Welsh. NA Permitted		7.2 Children's use of Welsh is extended and developed by appropriate scaffolding.
1.3 Children rarely use Welsh independently and spontaneously with each other.		3.3 Children occasionally use Welsh independently and spontaneously with each other.		5.3 Children frequently use Welsh independently and spontaneously with each other.		7.3 Children use Welsh independently and spontaneously with each other for most of the time.
				5.4 Adults are sensitive to children's need to communicate during times of distress and use all communication strategies available*.		7.4 Children's understanding of concepts is supported and scaffolded fully, using all communication strategies available*.

3.1/5.1/1.2/3.2/5.2 – These are to be scored where some of the children are from English-speaking homes. NA is applicable where every child attending an observed setting is from a Welsh-speaking home.

1.3/3.3/5.3/7.3 – Rarely: less than 20%. Occasionally: 20-40%. Frequently: 40-60%. Most of the time: 60%+.

*All positive communication strategies to support the child are accepted, including non-verbal communication, body language and, where appropriate, use of the child's home language.

Inadequate		Minimal		Good		Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Item 2. Curriculum Cymreig.

1.1 No opportunities are taken to develop children’s awareness of the unique characteristics of their locality or of Wales as a country.

3.1 A few limited opportunities are used e.g. St David’s Day, the school Eisteddfod, Christmas (Sion Corn) to develop children’s awareness.

5.1 Opportunities are taken regularly to draw children’s attention to a variety of characteristics of their locality or of Wales e.g. music/songs, stories.

7.1 Children are given cross-curricular opportunities to enhance their experience of life in Wales, both in terms of their own locality and of Wales as a country e.g. customs, names, stories, legends, people, events.

3.2 Children are occasionally exposed to Welsh culture through music, songs and stories.

5.2 Children are regularly exposed to Welsh culture through experiences learning about famous Welsh people and customs.

7.2 Children are given frequent, lively and imaginative opportunities to enhance their experience of life in Wales.

Note: Appropriate questioning may be necessary to establish extent of opportunities offered.

3.1 A few: termly.

5.1 Regularly: weekly

7.1: Frequently: several times weekly

3.2 Occasionally: termly

5.2 Planning should show reference to famous people, customs etc.

Appendix D: Welsh in an English Medium Settings ECERS Subscale

English Medium Settings – Welsh Second Language

Inadequate		Minimal		Good		Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Item 1. 'Environmental Print': Letters And Words

1.1 No pictures with labels in Welsh are visible to the children.

3.1 A few labelled pictures and printed words in Welsh are visible to the children.

5.1 Many Welsh-labelled pictures and printed words are on view.

7.1 Discussion of environmental print in Welsh takes place.

Children are encouraged to recognise some common words in Welsh.*

7.2 Children are encouraged to recognise Welsh letters and some common words and/or phrases in Welsh in the environment.

*For example: Mam, Dad, Mamgu, Tadcu, cath, ci, pysgodyn, caffi, garej, cegin, tŷ bach.

Note – ratings should be made in comparison with the quantity of environmental print in English.

3.1/5.1- A few: 1-5. Many: 6 or more.

5.2 – Are children encouraged to spot Welsh language words they recognise in the environment?

7.1 – Are children encouraged to discuss the meaning of Welsh language words in the environment?

7.2 – Are children encouraged to spot Welsh language letters and words in the environment?

Inadequate 1	2	Minimal 3	4	Good 5	6	Excellent 7
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Item 2. Book and literacy areas – child initiated pre-reading activities.

If available, Welsh language books are unattractive and not of a suitable age level.

3.1 Some attractive Welsh language books are available of a suitable age level.

5.1 A variety of Welsh language books is available, some picture books, many with text and at a variety of levels.

7.1 A wide range of Welsh language books at many levels is available.

1.2 Adults do not encourage children to use Welsh language books.

3.2 Adults occasionally encourage children to use Welsh language books.

5.2 Adults encourage children to look at and use Welsh language books, talking about them in English.

7.2 Adults encourage children to look at and use Welsh language books, beginning to talk about them in Welsh.

5.2 Are children encouraged to look at Welsh language books as well as English language books?

Quantity of books – Inadequate: 5%. Some: 15%. A variety: 30%. A wide range: 50%.

Inadequate		Minimal		Good		Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Item 3. Adult reading with the children *

Adults never read Welsh language books to the children.

3.1 Adults occasionally read Welsh language books to the children.

5.1 Adults read Welsh language books to the children regularly.

7.1 Adults read Welsh language books to the children as often as English language books.

5.2 Children are encouraged to join in with repetitive words and phrases in Welsh language texts.

7.2 There is discussion about print and letters in Welsh books, as well as about content.

7.3 Welsh language support material is available to enable the children to engage with stories themselves e.g. tapes, displays.

*This is where an adult plans to read with a child or children, not where a child asks for or initiates the sharing of a book with an adult e.g. . story-time, 1:1 reading. See Item 2 for child- initiated activities.

3.1/5.1/7.1- Rarely: fortnightly. Regularly: weekly. As often as English: 2-3 times weekly.

7.1 - Note : Excellent can only ever be 50% of the time, therefore questions may need to be asked about story-time, 1:1 reading.

Inadequate
1

2

Minimal
3

4

Good
5

6

Excellent
7

Item 4. Sounds in words

No Welsh language rhymes or songs are spoken or sung.

3.1 Some Welsh language rhymes are spoken or sung by adults to children.

3.2 Children are occasionally encouraged to join in with speaking and/or singing Welsh language rhymes.

5.1 Welsh language rhymes are often spoken or sung by adults to children.

5.2 Children are frequently encouraged to join in with speaking and/or singing Welsh language rhymes.

5.3 Adults draw children's attention to rhyming components in Welsh language rhymes

7.1 Welsh language rhymes are spoken or sung to children as frequently as English rhymes.

7.2 Children are encouraged to join in with speaking and/or singing Welsh language rhymes as frequently as English language rhymes.

7.3 Attention is paid to syllabification of Welsh words through clapping games, jumping etc.

Note: Frequency of rhymes must be addressed in terms of 5 minute sessions, not individual rhymes.

Some/occasionally: once weekly. Often/frequently: twice weekly. As frequently as English: 3 times or more weekly.

3.1/5.1/7.1 – How often are Welsh language rhymes spoken or sung to the children?

Inadequate		Minimal		Good		Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Item 5. Talking and listening

No encouragement of children to speak Welsh to adults occurs.

3.1 Some use and understanding of words and simple sentences in Welsh is encouraged.

3.2 Adults use occasional incidental Welsh as part of the setting routine.*

5.1 Regular use and understanding of words and simple sentences in Welsh occurs in a range of contexts

5.2 Adults use regular incidental Welsh as part of the setting routine in a range of contexts.

7.1 Adults provide scaffolding for children's use of Welsh, that is, they accept and extend children's verbal contributions.

7.2 Adults use incidental Welsh as part of the setting routine in a variety of contexts as frequently as English.

7.3 Adults plan experiences incorporating Welsh vocabulary across the curriculum.

3.1 Some use: weekly. 5.1 Regular use: 2-3 times weekly.

3.2 Occasional: at least one day a week. 5.2 Regular: at least 2-3 times a week. 7.2 As frequently as English: daily.

7.3 Is simple Welsh vocabulary used across the curriculum?

*For example – registration, playtime, tidy-up time, snacktime, hometime.

Inadequate		Minimal		Good		Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Item 6. Bilingual language use during play and learning (both directed and child initiated) *

Adults do not use Welsh when talking to children about the play and learning they are involved in.	3.1 Adults occasionally use incidental Welsh when talking to children about the play and learning they are involved in.	5.1 Adults regularly use Welsh when talking to children about the play and learning they are involved in, reinforcing with English where necessary	7.1 Adults use Welsh as frequently as English when talking to children about the play and learning they are involved in.
	3.2 Adults plan for the occasional use of Welsh when talking to children about some of their play and learning.	5.2 Adults plan for the regular use of Welsh when talking to children about some of their play and learning.	7.2 Adults plan for the frequent use of Welsh when talking to children about some of their play and learning.
		5.3 Adults encourage children to respond to Welsh in either English or Welsh.	7.3 Adults encourage children to respond to Welsh in Welsh to where possible.

*Any activities involving individuals/groups/whole class, which are planned and/or child-initiated.

- 3.1 Occasionally: at least one day a fortnight.
- 5.1 Regularly: at least one day a week.
- 7.1 As frequently as English: at least 2-3 days a week.
- 3.2 Occasional: half termly
- 5.2 Regular: fortnightly
- 7.2 Frequent: weekly

Inadequate		Minimal		Good		Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Item 7. Curriculum Cymreig.

1.1 No opportunities are taken to develop children's awareness of the unique characteristics of their locality or of Wales as a country.

3.1 A few limited opportunities are used e.g. St David's Day, the school Eisteddfod, Christmas (Sion Corn) to develop children's awareness.

5.1 Opportunities are taken regularly to draw children's attention to a variety of characteristics of their locality or of Wales e.g. music/songs, stories.

7.1 Children are given cross-curricular opportunities to enhance their experience of life in Wales, both in terms of their own locality and of Wales as a country e.g. customs, names, stories, legends, people, events.

3.2 Children are occasionally exposed to Welsh culture through music, songs and stories.

5.2 Children are regularly exposed to Welsh culture through experiences learning about famous Welsh people and customs.

7.2 Children are given frequent, lively and imaginative opportunities to enhance their experience of life in Wales.

Note: Appropriate questioning may be necessary to establish extent of opportunities offered.

3.1 A few: termly.

5.1 Regularly: weekly

7.1: Frequently: several times weekly

3.2 Occasionally: termly

5.2 Planning should show reference to famous people, customs etc.

Appendix E: Parent Interview Questions

Question 1 Have you heard of the Foundation Phase and do you know what it is?

Question 2 In the Foundation Phase children will learn and be taught more through play and hands-on activities. Do you agree with this? Why is that?

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree 5

Question 3 In the Foundation Phase there will be a new area of learning called Bilingualism and Multicultural Understanding.

a) The Bilingualism means children will be taught and learning Welsh from the age of 3. How do you feel about this?

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree 5

b) The Multicultural Understanding will mean children will be taught and learn more about 'Welshness' and other cultures. How do you feel about this?

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree 5

Question 4 In the Foundation Phase more adults will be employed in the classroom to provide a ratio of 1adult to every 8 children who are aged 3-5. This will increase to 1:13 in Year 1 and 1:15 in Year 2. How do you feel about this? Why is that?

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree 5

Appendix F: Practitioner Interview Questions

1. Do you think the seven Areas of Learning provide a sufficiently broad and balanced basis for children's learning (and development) in the Foundation Phase 3-7?

Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree
5

2. The Foundation Phase places more emphasis on active learning and play. Do you agree with this?

Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree
5

3. Do you think the additional funding has been appropriate for resources for the pilot phase?

Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree
5

4. Do you think the additional funding has been appropriate for staffing for the pilot phase?

Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree
5

5. Do you think the additional funding has been appropriate for training requirements for the pilot phase?

Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree
5

6. Do you think effective arrangements have been in place for accessing the additional funding?

Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree
5

7. Do you think the training you have received to date has supported your work in the Foundation Phase?

Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree
5

8. Do you think the ACCAC Learning Framework has been appropriate when planning for the seven Areas of Learning?

Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree
5

9. Do you think the documentation and guidance material provided for the pilot settings has been appropriate?

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly disagree

Are there any additional comments you would like to make about the statements above?

10. Do you think that the proposed adult-child ratios are appropriate for:

Please circle

a) Preschool, Nursery and Reception	1:8	Yes	No
b) Year 1	1:13	Yes	No
c) Year 2	1:15	Yes	No

11. Do you think that any of the Areas of Learning have been more difficult to introduce than others? If yes please say why.

Yes	No
-----	----

12. What changes, e.g. in human and material resources, have been required in the school/setting in order to provide more active learning experiences?

13. Has your role changed in the school/setting during the pilot? If yes please explain how:

Yes	No
-----	----

14. Have the roles of other staff working with the Foundation Phase pilot group/class changed during the pilot? If yes please explain how:

15. Have you participated in any of the ACCAC working groups that are developing Guidance materials? If yes please indicate which group(s) and how this experience has influenced your setting.

Yes	No
-----	----

16. What were the adult child ratios before the pilot and what are the adult child ratios now for children within the Foundation Phase pilot age range 3-5? (Please do not include volunteers and support staff eg SEN support, EMAS etc) Please specify type of class/setting e.g. playgroup, private day nursery, nursery class, reception class, early years unit and mixed age class.

17. Please state how many of these staff are qualified teachers

18. Please complete grid below relating to qualifications of all other staff working with Foundation Phase pilot children.

Qualification	Full title of qualification	Number of staff
NNEB		
NVQ level 4		

(in early years)		
NVQ level 4 (non early years)		
NVQ level 3 (in early years)		
NVQ level 3 (non early years)		
NVQ level 2 (in early years)		
NVQ level 2 (non early years)		
NVQ level 1 (in early years)		
NVQ level 1 (non early years)		
Unqualified		
Other		

19. If your ratios have changed do you think it has made any difference to the teaching and learning in your class/group? Please provide some examples
20. How have parents been informed about the implementation of the Foundation Phase in your school/setting?
21. What documentation and guidance materials were provided for your school/setting and how have these influenced your practice?
22. What do you consider to be the strengths and weaknesses of the Foundation Phase?
23. What has been easy and what has been difficult in meeting the requirements of the Foundation Phase?
24. What are the current assessment arrangements e.g. Baseline scheme (please specify) or any informal or schematic methods for example observation or checklists?

Please add any other comments you would like to make.

The research Team would like to thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Appendix G: Questions from Stakeholder Questionnaires

In the original questionnaires a good deal of space was left for the respondents to write their answers.

Head-teacher Questions

1. Do you think the seven Areas of Learning provide a sufficiently broad and balanced basis for children's learning (and development) in the Foundation Phase 3-7?

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree 5

2. The Foundation Phase will provide continuity for children going into KS2? Do you agree with this?

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree 5

3. The Foundation Phase places more emphasis on active learning and play. Do you agree with this?

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree 5

4. Do you think the additional funding has been appropriate for resources for the pilot phase?

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree 5

5. Do you think the additional funding has been appropriate for staffing for the pilot phase?

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree 5

6. Do you think the additional funding has been appropriate for training requirements for the pilot phase?

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree 5

7. Do you think effective arrangements have been in place for accessing the additional funding?

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree 5

8. Do you think that the support and training has been appropriate for the pilot?

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree 5

9. Do you think the documentation and guidance materials provided for the pilot settings have been appropriate?

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree 5

Are there any additional comments you would like to make about the statements above?

10. Do you think that any Areas of Learning have been more difficult to introduce than others? If yes please say which one (s) and why.

Yes	No
-----	----

11. What changes, e.g. in human and material resources, have been required in the school in order to provide more active learning experiences?

12. How have parents been informed about the implementation of the Foundation Phase in your school?

13. What changes will be needed in the roles and responsibilities of staff at the school in order to organise and manage the Foundation Phase?

14. What training will be needed to enable staff to undertake these changes?

15. What transition arrangements do you have in place for children moving on to a different setting/school/class?

16. How will the school coordinate the Foundation Phase, including the seven Areas of Learning to ensure continuity?

17. What do you consider to be the strengths and weaknesses of the Foundation Phase?

18. What has been easy and what has been difficult in meeting the requirements of the Foundation Phase?

19. Has your school been involved in any of the working groups developing guidance materials with ACCAC? If yes please indicate which group(s) and how this experience has influenced your setting.

Yes	No
-----	----

20. Are you aware of any training for head teachers about the Foundation Phase? If so how did you learn about it and what have you attended?

21. Please add any other comments you would like to make.

The research Team would like to thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Governor Questions

1. Do you think the seven Areas of Learning provide a sufficiently broad and balanced basis for children’s learning (and development) in the Foundation Phase 3-7?

Strongly agree Strongly disagree
1 2 3 4 5

2. The Foundation Phase will provide continuity for children going into KS2? Do you agree with this?

Strongly agree Strongly disagree
1 2 3 4 5

3. The Foundation Phase places more emphasis on active learning and play. Do you agree with this?

Strongly agree Strongly disagree
1 2 3 4 5

4. Do you think the additional funding has been appropriate for resources for the pilot phase?

Strongly agree Strongly disagree
1 2 3 4 5

5. Do you think the additional funding has been appropriate for staffing for the pilot phase?

Strongly agree Strongly disagree
1 2 3 4 5

6. Do you think the additional funding has been appropriate for training requirements for the pilot phase?

Strongly agree Strongly disagree
1 2 3 4 5

7. Do you think effective arrangements have been in place for accessing the additional funding?

Strongly agree Strongly disagree
1 2 3 4 5

Are there any additional comments you would like to make about any of the statements above?

8. Do you think that any Areas of Learning have been more difficult to introduce than others? If yes please say which one (s) and why.

Yes	No
-----	----

9. What changes, e.g. in human and material resources, have been required in the school in order to provide more active learning experiences?
10. What do you consider to be the strengths and weaknesses of the Foundation Phase?
11. What has been easy and what has been difficult in meeting the requirements of the Foundation Phase?
12. Are you aware of any training for governors about the Foundation Phase? If so how did you learn about it and what have you attended?
13. Please add any other comments you would like to make.

The research Team would like to thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Owner-manager Questions

1. Do you think the seven Areas of Learning provide a sufficiently broad and balanced basis for children's learning (and development) in the Foundation Phase 3-7?

Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree
5

2. The Foundation Phase places more emphasis on active learning and play. Do you agree with this?

Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree
5

3. Do you think the additional funding has been appropriate for resources for the pilot phase?

Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree
5

4. Do you think the additional funding has been appropriate for staffing for the pilot phase?

Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree
5

5. Do you think the additional funding has been appropriate for training requirements for the pilot phase?

Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree
5

6. Do you think effective arrangements have been in place for accessing the additional funding?

Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree
5

7. Do you think that the support and training has been appropriate for the pilot?

Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree
5

8. Do you think the documentation and guidance materials provided for the pilot settings have been appropriate?

Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree
5

Are there any additional comments you would like to make about the statements above?

9. Do you think that any of the Areas of Learning have been more difficult to introduce than others? If yes please say why.

Yes	No
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10. What changes, e.g. in human and material resources, have been required in the school in order to provide more active learning experiences?

11. Has your setting been involved in any of the working groups developing guidance materials with ACCAC? If yes please indicate which group(s) and how this experience has influenced your setting.

Yes	No
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12. What additional support, documentation and training would you like to have?

13. How have parents been informed about the implementation of the Foundation Phase in your setting?

14. What transition arrangements do you have in place for children moving on to a different setting/school?

15. What do you consider to be the strengths and weaknesses of the Foundation Phase?

16. What has been easy and what has been difficult in meeting the requirements of the Foundation Phase?

17. Do you think there have been particular difficulties for non-maintained sector settings? If so, please outline.

Yes	No
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Please add any other comments you would like to make.

The research Team would like to thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Director of Education Questions

1. Do you think the seven Areas of Learning provide a sufficiently broad and balanced basis for children's learning (and development) in the Foundation Phase 3-7?

Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree
5

2. Do you think the FP will provide continuity for children going into Key Stage 2?

Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree
5

3. Do you agree with the requirements for a greater emphasis on more active learning and play?

Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree
5

4. Do you think the 1st year of the pilot phase (2004-2005) has been appropriately resourced?

Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree
5

5. Do you think the current, indoor accommodation in the maintained and non-maintained settings is appropriate for the implementation of the Foundation Phase?

Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree
5

6. Do you think the current, outdoor space and furnishings in the maintained and non-maintained settings is appropriate for the implementation of the Foundation Phase?

Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree
5

7. Do you think that the time frame proposed for the national roll out of the Foundation Phase (FP) by 2008 is achievable and realistic?

Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree
5

8. What strategies or developments have been undertaken in your local education authority with respect to the Foundation Phase?

9. In what ways has your local education authority supported the pilot settings in the:
(*please answer a and b*)
 - a) maintained sector?
 - b) non-maintained sector?

10. What are the main issues that have arisen in your authority with respect to the Foundation Phase in: (*please answer a and b*)
 - a) maintained settings?
 - b) non-maintained settings?

11. Do you have any comments about the information and communication you have received about the Foundation Phase from the Welsh Assembly?

12. What do you consider to be the strengths and weaknesses of the Foundation Phase?

Please add any other comments you would like to make.

The research Team would like to thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Early Years Advisor Questions

1. Do you think the seven Areas of Learning provide a sufficiently broad and balanced basis for children's learning (and development) in the Foundation Phase 3-7?

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree 5

2. Do you think the FP will provide continuity for children going into Key Stage 2?

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree 5

3. Do you agree with the requirements for a greater emphasis on more active learning and play?

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree 5

4. Do you think the additional funding has been appropriate for resources for the pilot phase?

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree 5

5. Do you think the additional funding has been appropriate for staffing for the pilot phase?

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree 5

6. Do you think the additional funding has been appropriate for training requirements for the pilot phase?

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree 5

7. Do you think effective arrangements have been in place for accessing the additional funding?

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree 5

8. Do you think appropriate support has been provided to enable settings to plan and provide for Bilingualism as an Area of Learning?

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree 5

9. Do you think appropriate arrangements (for example proximity of venue, supply cover, funding etc) are in place to enable staff to attend training (*please complete a and b*)

a) In schools?

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree 5

b) In the non-maintained sector?

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree 5

10. Do you think that the time frame proposed for the national roll out of the Foundation Phase (FP) by 2008 is achievable and realistic?

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree 5

Are there any additional comments you would like to make about the statements above?

11. What strategic policy decisions have been made in your local authority with respect to the Foundation Phase?

12. How were the Foundation Phase pilot settings selected in your authority?

13. What is your involvement with the pilot settings in the maintained and non-maintained sectors?

14. What changes, e.g. in human and material resources have been required in pilot settings ?

15. What are the main issues that have arisen in your authority with respect to the Foundation Phase in: (*please answer a and b*)

a) maintained settings?

b) non-maintained settings?

16. Have any difficulties been encountered in recruiting and retaining suitably qualified staff? If yes, how could this be improved or resolved?

Yes	No
-----	----

17. Do you think that any of the Areas of Learning have been more difficult to introduce than others? If yes please say why.

Yes	No
-----	----

18. What are your views on the guidance materials you have received so far? Please specify which AOLs you are referring to. If you have not received all the AOLs and wish to comment on the framework please do so.
19. Do you have any comments about the information and communication you have received about the Foundation Phase from the Welsh Assembly?
20. What do you consider to be the strengths and weaknesses of the Foundation Phase?

Please add any other comments you would like to make.

The research Team would like to thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

EYDCP Questions

1. Do you think the seven Areas of Learning provide a sufficiently broad and balanced basis for children's learning (and development) in the Foundation Phase 3-7?

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree 5

2. Do you think the FP will provide continuity for children going into Key Stage 2?

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree 5

3. Do you agree with the requirements for a greater emphasis on more active learning and play?

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree 5

4. Do you think the additional funding has been appropriate for resources for the pilot phase?

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree 5

5. Do you think the additional funding has been appropriate for staffing for the pilot phase?

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree 5

6. Do you think the additional funding has been appropriate for training requirements for the pilot phase?

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree 5

7. Do you think effective arrangements have been in place for accessing the additional funding?

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree 5

8. Do you think appropriate support has been provided to enable settings to plan and provide for Bilingualism as an Area of Learning?

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree 5

9. Do you think appropriate arrangements (for example proximity of venue, supply cover, funding etc) are in place to enable staff to attend training (*please complete a and b*)

a) In schools?

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree 5

b) In the non-maintained sector?

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree 5

10. Do you think that the time frame proposed for the national roll out of the Foundation Phase (FP) by 2008 is achievable and realistic?

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 Strongly disagree 5

Are there any additional comments you would like to make about the statements above?

11. What strategic policy decisions have been made in your local authority with respect to the Foundation Phase?

12. How were the Foundation Phase pilot settings selected in your authority?

13. What is your involvement with the pilot settings in the maintained and non-maintained sectors?

14. What changes, e.g. in human and material resources have been required in pilot settings ?

15. What are the main issues that have arisen in your authority with respect to the Foundation Phase in: (*please answer a and b*)

a) maintained settings?

b) non-maintained settings?

16. Have any difficulties been encountered in recruiting and retaining suitably qualified staff? If yes, how could this be improved or resolved?

Yes	No
-----	----

17. Do you think that any of the Areas of Learning have been more difficult to introduce than others? If yes please say why.

Yes	No
-----	----

18. What are your views on the guidance materials you have received so far? Please specify which AOLs you are referring to. If you have not received all the AOLs and wish to comment on the framework please do so.
19. Do you have any comments about the information and communication you have received about the Foundation Phase from the Welsh Assembly?
20. What do you consider to be the strengths and weaknesses of the Foundation Phase?

Please add any other comments you would like to make.

The research Team would like to thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Questions for Associations in respect of the Foundation Phase and their role in it's implementation and training.

- What involvement have your development officers had with your pilot settings during the 1st year of the pilot?
- What do you see your role as in terms of training for the Foundation Phase?
- Has the Welsh Assembly Government asked you to provide training for your members on the Foundation Phase? If yes, please explain how and what?
- What other strategies and developments have you provided for your members in order to support them through the Foundation Phase pilot process?
- Do you provide training on assessment arrangements and strategies? If so please can you explain your answer and give details.
- Do you think the ACCAC Draft Framework for Children's Learning provided for the pilot settings has been appropriate? Please explain your answer and give examples?
- Do you think the ACCAC Guidance material on the AOLs provided for the pilot settings has been appropriate?
- What direct and indirect communication strategies (eg a key person you speak with or the use of the website etc) exist between your association and the WAG? Explain?
- Is there anything else you'd like to say about the role of your Association and the FP?