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Evaluating the Foundation Phase

Final Report

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Evaluating the Foundation Phase: Final Report

**Chris Taylor¹, Mirain Rhys¹, Sam Waldron¹, Rhys Davies¹, Sally Power¹,
Trisha Maynard², Laurence Moore¹, David Blackaby³ and Ian Plewis⁴**

(¹Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods
(WISERD), Cardiff University)

(²Canterbury Christ Church University)

(³Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods
(WISERD), Swansea University)

(⁴University of Manchester)



Views expressed in this report are those of the researchers and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

For further information please contact:

Launa Anderson
Knowledge and Analytical Services
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ
Tel: 029 2082 5274

Email: launa.anderson@wales.gsi.gov.uk

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Glossary of Acronyms

3Es	Economy, efficiency and effectiveness
AWFPA	All Wales Foundation Phase Advisers group
BERA	British Educational Research Association
CD	Creative Development Area of Learning
DECIPHer	Centre for the Development and Evaluation of Complex Interventions for Public Health Improvement
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
Estyn	Estyn is the office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales
FP	Foundation Phase
FTE	Full-time Equivalent
GSR	Government Social Research
HE	Higher Education
KS1	Key Stage 1 National Curriculum
KS2	Key Stage 2 National Curriculum
KUW	Knowledge and Understanding of the World Area of Learning
LLC	Language, Literacy and Communication Skills Area of Learning
MCS	Millennium Cohort Study
MD	Mathematical Development Area of Learning
NPD	National Pupil Database
PD	Physical Development Area of Learning
PLASC	Pupil Level Annual Schools Census
PSDWCD	Personal & Social Development, Well-being & Cultural Diversity Area of Learning
SEN	Special Educational Needs
TSO	Training and Support Officer
VfM	Value for money
WISERD	Wales Institute of Social & Economic Research, Data & Methods
WLD	Welsh Language Development Area of Learning

Glossary of Key Terms

Active	Activity allowed child to be physically active (i.e. not sitting at desk/on floor).
Adult present/absent	With = adult close by child/group; Without = adult not close by child/group.
Assessment	Child being assessed by adult.
Carpet	Child was sitting on carpet.
Child/adult Directed	Activity was directed by either the child or the adult.
Child/adult Initiated	Activity was decided upon by either the child or the adult.
Co-construction	Adult was 'collaborating' with child.
Desk	Child was at desk.
Direct teaching	Adult teaching in traditional style (instructional).
Early Start schools and settings	These are the 22 schools and 22 funded non-maintained settings who introduced the Foundation Phase from 2006/07 in the second stage of its roll-out. These were selected because they were in Flying Start areas.
Exploring	Child was exploring/experimenting.
Final Roll-out schools and settings	These are the remaining schools and settings that introduced the Foundation Phase from 2009/10 that were not involved in the first two stages of its implementation (known as Pilot and Early Start schools and settings).
First-hand	Direct experience with learning objective.
Following adult instructions	Child was following adult instructions.
Involvement	Throughout the report we refer to pupil involvement. This was measured using the Leuven scale of involvement. This is largely a measure of physical involvement in learning that can be used in the observation of individual children.
Multilevel modelling	This is a form of statistical analysis that utilises data that is organised at more than one level (i.e. nested data). For example, the units of analysis in a multilevel model could include data for individual pupils, the schools they attend, and the local authorities their schools belong to. Critically, multilevel models consider the residual components at each level in the hierarchy allowing the analysis to estimate observed and unobserved group effects.
Observation	Child being observed by adult.

Open/closed questioning	Open = open-ended; Closed = could be answered in single word/phrase.
Outside	Child was outdoors.
Pack-away settings	This is where funded non-maintained settings do not have permanent premises for their teaching and learning space, meaning they have to 'pack-away' their resources at the end of each session/day.
Pedagogy	The method and practice of teaching.
Peer collaboration	The child collaborated with other children.
Pilot schools and settings	These are the 22 schools and 22 funded non-maintained settings that were chosen to pilot the Foundation Phase from 2004/05 onwards. They were central to the development of the later guidance and training materials published by the Welsh Government.
Practical	Hands-on/practical experience.
Reflection	Child was prompted by an adult to think about (review) what they have just done.
Scaffolding	Adult was helping the child learn how to complete the task (prompting).
Stepped wedge design	This is used in evaluations where an intervention is rolled-out sequentially to participants (either as individuals or clusters of individuals) over a number of time periods. Data is collected for each new group of participants as they receive the intervention and for those not receiving the intervention (the control groups). To determine the effectiveness of the intervention comparisons are made of data from the control section of the wedge with those in the intervention section at different points in time.
Sustained interaction	Adult was extending child's thinking via discussion (> 4 turns).
Wellbeing	Throughout the report we refer to pupil wellbeing. This was measured using the Leuven scale of wellbeing. This is largely a measure of physical wellbeing that can be used in the observation of individual children.
Whole-class/group/individual activity	Child was taking part in a whole-class, group or individual activity.
Workstation	Child was at workstation (could include use of desk, but added to).

Acknowledgements

The evaluation team would like to thank everyone who participated in, or contributed to, the evaluation. We are particularly grateful to the hundreds of head teachers, lead Foundation Phase practitioners in schools and Foundation Phase leads in funded non-maintained settings who responded to our national survey, all the Local Authority Foundation Phase Advisers and Training and Support Officers who kindly agreed to be interviewed, and the various stakeholders and organisations who also agreed to participate. But special thanks must go to the 51 schools and funded non-maintained settings who all warmly and openly allowed the evaluation team in to their schools, settings and classrooms. We are hugely indebted to all those practitioners and children who we observed and talked to during the course of our visits. To welcome relatively unknown researchers into classrooms and settings is a significant undertaking but clearly reflects an appreciation of the importance of research in this area. Additional thanks must also go to the hundreds of Year 2 pupils who participated in our pupil survey and to the 1,000+ parents and carers who completed our parent survey. The evaluation team would also like to thank members of its advisory groups for their valuable expertise in supporting and guiding the evaluation. A final thank you must go to Launa Anderson, the contract manager for the evaluation in the Welsh Government, who has managed the evaluation contract admirably, but who has also provided valuable input throughout the evaluation.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction and Aims of Report

1. This is the final report of the three-year independent evaluation of the Foundation Phase for the Welsh Government. In this report we present the main findings of the evaluation and discuss the implications of these. The report concludes with 29 recommendations.
2. The Foundation Phase is the statutory curriculum for all 3 to 7-year-olds in Wales, in both maintained and non-maintained settings. Marking a radical departure from the more formal, competency-based approach associated with the previous Key Stage 1 National Curriculum, it was designed to provide a developmental, experiential, play-based approach to teaching and learning. The policy has been progressively 'rolled-out' so that by 2011/12 it included all 3 to 7-year-olds in Wales.
3. In April 2011 the Welsh Government, on behalf of Welsh Ministers, invited tenders for a three-year independent evaluation of the Foundation Phase. Following a competitive tender process, a multidisciplinary team of researchers, led by Professor Chris Taylor from Cardiff University and the Wales Institute of Social & Economic Research, Data & Methods (WISERD), were appointed to undertake the evaluation in July 2011.
4. The three year evaluation (2011-2014) has four main aims, as outlined by the Welsh Government in its original research tender specification:
 - to evaluate how well the Foundation Phase is being implemented and highlight ways in which improvement can be made (the process evaluation);
 - to evaluate what impact the Foundation Phase has had to date (the outcome evaluation);
 - to assess the value for money of the Foundation Phase (the economic evaluation); and
 - to put in place an evaluation framework for the future tracking of; outputs and outcomes of the Foundation Phase (the evaluation framework).

5. Eighteen reports and research summaries from the evaluation have been published by the Welsh Government and are available from the following website: <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/evaluation-foundation-phase>. This includes two annual reports for 2011/12 (Taylor *et al.* 2013) and for 2012/13 (Taylor *et al.* 2014). These provide a record of progress, including details about the evaluation design. Other reports and summaries provide details on all the findings from the evaluation.
6. This final report presents the main findings from the evaluation. These are organised in four main chapters: the implementation of the Foundation Phase; Foundation Phase practice; the impact of the Foundation Phase; and an economic analysis of the Foundation Phase.
7. The final chapter discusses the implications of these findings with associated recommendations.

Methodology

8. The evaluation uses mixed methods and draws upon a wide range of quantitative and qualitative data from primary data collection and existing administrative data.
9. The main evaluation design is organised at two geographical scales: at a national level, and at the level of individual case study schools and funded non-maintained settings.
10. The main features of the evaluation design include:
 - content analysis of Foundation Phase documents and guidance materials;
 - the development of a Policy Logic Model and related Programme Theory;
 - a national survey of head teachers and funded non-maintained lead practitioners or centre managers;
 - analysis of national pupil data;
 - interviews with a wide range of Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2 practitioners;
 - systematic classroom/setting observations in 41 randomly selected schools and 10 funded non-maintained settings;

- a survey of parents/carers;
 - a survey of Year 2 pupils;
 - and focus group discussions with Foundation Phase pupils.
11. The main analytical approach follows a stepped wedge design. This exploits the sequential roll-out of the Foundation Phase across schools and funded non-maintained settings. This means it is possible to compare schools at different stages in their implementation of the Foundation Phase and compare the educational achievements of pupils according to whether they experienced the Foundation Phase or the Key Stage 1 National Curriculum.

Key Findings

12. Attending schools with greater use of Foundation Phase pedagogies is associated with a greater likelihood of achieving the Foundation Phase Indicator (FPI) after controlling for individual pupil and other school-level characteristics (including a measure of each school's prior effectiveness in Key Stage 1).
13. Schools with greater use of Foundation Phase pedagogies have greater levels of observed pupil involvement and pupil wellbeing during learning¹.
14. Pupils in the Foundation Phase are more likely to achieve Level 4 or above in Key Stage 2 English (based on the first three cohorts of over 1,500 pupils in Pilot schools who have since reached the end of Key Stage 2).
15. The Foundation Phase is associated with improved attainment for pupils eligible for free school meals but the evaluation has found no evidence to suggest it has made any observable impact so far on reducing inequalities² in attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (based on the first three cohorts of over 1,500 pupils in Pilot schools who have since reached the end of Key Stage 2).
16. The Foundation Phase is associated with improvements in overall school attendance³.

¹ Based on systematic data analysis of pupils in 41 case study schools.

² Of groups of pupils based on their gender, ethnicity or free school meal eligibility.

³ But not in Early Start schools.

17. The majority of practitioners and key stakeholders interviewed and surveyed think that the Foundation Phase is having a positive impact on children and learning (behaviour, wellbeing and attitudes to learning).
18. The majority of practitioners believe that the Foundation Phase has led to improvements in literacy (both English and Welsh) and numeracy.

Recommendations

19. The evaluation finds that the introduction of the Foundation Phase has led to overall improvements in children's educational achievement, wellbeing and involvement. Furthermore, these improvements have the potential to lead to even greater educational success as the children grow up.
20. The evaluation would therefore encourage the Welsh Government to continue to develop and enhance the Foundation Phase. It would also encourage all schools and funded non-maintained settings to do more to implement the Foundation Phase pedagogies and curricula.
21. In order to fulfil these ambitions the evaluation sets out 29 key recommendations. These recommendations apply to a number of stakeholders, including: the Welsh Government, Estyn, regional consortia, local authorities, head teachers, funded non-maintained setting managers, school governors and practitioners.

Recommendation 1: Practitioners and stakeholders should be made aware of the evaluation findings as a way of highlighting the overall positive view of the Foundation Phase as experienced by those implementing it, but also to highlight areas for further improvement or development.

Recommendation 2: Clear guidance is required from the Welsh Government that clarifies the importance of developmentally appropriate practice alongside a statutory curriculum and expected levels of achievement.

Recommendation 3: Parents and carers need to be given more information about the role of statutory literacy and numeracy assessments in Year 2 of the Foundation Phase alongside the emphasis on more first-hand, enjoyable and developmentally appropriate learning experiences for their children.

Recommendation 4: Practitioners need to be given practical advice about how to implement the Literacy and Numeracy Framework within the Foundation Phase. In particular, there needs to be more emphasis given to how literacy and numeracy can be taught in classrooms using a variety of different pedagogical approaches and how these different approaches can complement one another.

Recommendation 5: Specific attention (through training and guidance for practitioners) should be given on how to use Foundation Phase pedagogies in Year 1 and especially Year 2 classes.

Recommendation 6: Foundation Phase training modules should be revised in order to improve practitioners' understanding of the approaches and pedagogies now being emphasised (possibly based on the evaluation's twelve essential Foundation Phase pedagogical elements). In particular, training modules should be revised to ensure they:

- accommodate recent changes to education policies in Wales (including the Literacy and Numeracy Framework and the emphasis on mitigating the impact of poverty on educational achievement using additional resource such as the Pupil Deprivation Grant);
- include more exemplar materials to support understanding rather than just illustrating examples of best practice;
- are more structured and challenging.

Recommendation 7: Training and guidance materials need to place more emphasis on: observation and assessment; effective use of the outdoors⁴; delivery of enhanced provision; the roles of teachers and additional practitioners; as well as general child development topics.

Recommendation 8: Greater emphasis on the Foundation Phase should be given within Initial Teacher Education courses and other professional courses (including Masters' Level courses). This should include Foundation Phase curriculum and assessment, but particular attention needs to be given to Foundation Phase pedagogies.

⁴ In October 2014 the Welsh Government published further guidance for schools and early years settings to develop their outdoor practice and provision in the Foundation Phase (Welsh Government 2014a).

Recommendation 9: Consideration should be given to making participation in Foundation Phase training modules compulsory for all head teachers, Foundation Phase teachers and additional practitioners, and Foundation Phase lead practitioners in funded non-maintained settings.

Recommendation 10: Schools and Local Authorities should undertake greater monitoring of attendance in training events and activities. Practitioners should have and routinely maintain their own training and learning logs/records.

Recommendation 11: There needs to be more follow-up of training in the Foundation Phase. For example, Training Support Officers should routinely visit practitioners in their schools after their participation in training modules to support implementation.

Recommendation 12: Specific training should be provided for Key Stage 2 teachers to help with continuity and progression in the transition from Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2.

Recommendation 13: Specialist guidance and support for senior management staff in schools and funded non-maintained settings should also be made available, particularly in relation to staffing, infrastructure, transition from Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2 and tracking and monitoring.

Recommendation 14: Clarification is required on the progress and development of the Early Years Development and Assessment Framework and associated Foundation Phase Profile as well as any training opportunities associated with their implementation. Considerable support for Foundation Phase practitioners will be required to help them implement and then effectively utilise the new Framework in their Foundation Phase practice.

Recommendation 15: The Welsh Government should consider facilitating further research on the impact of the Foundation Phase on particular low achieving groups of pupils. Relatedly, more information needs to be provided to schools and funded non-maintained settings to inform their judgements and evaluations of pupils' progress through the Foundation Phase.

Recommendation 16: Funding should continue to be provided to ensure all schools and funded non-maintained settings can improve their Foundation Phase learning environments. Specific attention should be given to ensure there is continuous access between classrooms and the outdoors (where possible) and the development of more 'learning zones' indoors and outdoors.

Recommendation 17: Specific support should be provided to schools and funded non-maintained settings to assist them in redesigning and/or restructuring their classrooms and outdoor spaces. This may require access to specialist consultants in the design of learning environments.

Recommendation 18: Where schools and funded non-maintained settings are constrained in what building developments they can undertake, they should be allowed to use capital budgets more flexibly. For example, capital budgets could also be used to provide better transport provision, more mobile learning environments and to establish partnerships with other organisations that will encourage greater use of more varied outdoor learning environments.

Recommendation 19: Practitioners should be encouraged to use a variety of 'learning zones', both indoors and outdoors, more frequently. Exemplar materials should be developed for practitioners as a reference on how best to utilise these 'learning zones'.

Recommendation 20: Specific advice should be provided to practitioners to demonstrate how traditional disciplinary subjects, such as science, history and geography, can be embedded within existing Areas of Learning.

Recommendation 21: There should continue to be support for higher ratios of adults to children in the Foundation Phase, and there should continue to be recommended ratios by Year Group that reflect the developmental stages of young children. However, schools and funded non-maintained settings should be given autonomy as to how they use these additional practitioners across learning activities and across Year Groups. But with autonomy there should be greater transparency and monitoring to ensure funding for additional practitioners is spent on additional practitioners.

Recommendation 22: Examples of good practice should be developed that demonstrate how the delivery of Welsh Language Development (in English-medium schools) can be embedded across a variety of learning activities and that utilise a wider range of Foundation Phase pedagogies.

Recommendation 23: Clear guidance is required on the most effective method of Welsh language immersion in the Foundation Phase (depending on main language of instruction). There also needs to be further collaboration between researchers and practitioners as to how to identify and develop best practice that is inclusive of the Foundation Phase approach and pedagogical elements.

Recommendation 24: More attention should be given to the role of parents/carers and families in the delivery of the Foundation Phase. Examples of best practice for practitioners would be beneficial. Particular attention should be given to how parents/carers and families could contribute to the choice and design of learning activities.

Recommendation 25: The Welsh Government, local authorities, schools and funded non-maintained settings should provide more information to parents/carers on a regular basis, and offer more support to parents/carers and families to help them understand the principles of the Foundation Phase, how their child is progressing, and how they can support their learning at home.

Recommendation 26: The Welsh Government should undertake a follow-up process evaluation of the original 41 case study schools and 10 case study funded non-maintained settings in five years' time (i.e. after 2019/20).

Recommendation 27: The Welsh Government should undertake a second outcome evaluation of the Foundation Phase using educational outcomes from national administrative data (i.e. the National Pupil Database) after 2015/16.

Recommendation 28: The Welsh Government should undertake a third outcome evaluation of the Foundation Phase using educational outcomes from national administrative data (i.e. the National Pupil Database) after 2018/19.

Recommendation 29: Ongoing monitoring and measures of quality and standards for Foundation Phase schools and funded non-maintained settings should be congruent with the principles, pedagogies and curriculum of the Foundation Phase. For example, Estyn should consider using the twelve pedagogical elements in its inspections of the Foundation Phase.

1 Introduction to the Evaluation

- 1.1 The Foundation Phase is the statutory curriculum for all 3 to 7-year olds in Wales, in both maintained and funded non-maintained settings. Marking a radical departure from the more formal, competency-based approach associated with the previous Key Stage 1 National Curriculum, it was designed to provide a developmental, experiential, play-based approach to teaching and learning. Drawing on evidence from good early years programmes in Scandinavia, Reggio Emilia and New Zealand (Te Whāriki) that indicate the adoption of an overly formal curriculum and extensive formal teaching before the age of six or seven can result in lower standards of attainment in the longer term, it set out to provide an experiential, play-based approach to learning for children aged 3 to 7-years-old. The approach emphasises the centrality of the child and the significance of children's wellbeing and advocates a balance of child-initiated and practitioner-directed (or practitioner-initiated) activities within stimulating indoor and outdoor environments.
- 1.2 The Foundation Phase includes seven Areas of Learning: Personal and Social Development, Well-Being and Cultural Diversity (PSDWCD); Language, Literacy and Communication Skills (LLC); Mathematical Development (MD); Welsh Language Development (WLD) (in English-medium schools and settings); Knowledge and Understanding of the World (KUW); Physical Development (PD); and Creative Development (CD).
- 1.3 The Foundation Phase was implemented in three stages: the Pilot stage of 22 schools and 22 funded non-maintained settings in 2004/05; the Early Start stage of a further 22 schools and 22 funded non-maintained settings in 2006/07; and all remaining schools and funded non-maintained settings during the Final Roll-out stage in 2009/10.
- 1.4 In April 2011 the Welsh Government, on behalf of Welsh Ministers, invited tenders for a three-year independent evaluation of the

Foundation Phase. Following a competitive tender process, a multi-disciplinary team of researchers led by Cardiff University and in conjunction with the Wales Institute of Social & Economic Research, Data & Methods (WISERD) were appointed to undertake the evaluation in July 2011.

1.5 The research team includes leading experts in their respective fields and from a number of different universities in Wales and England:

- Professor Chris Taylor (Director) (Cardiff University and WISERD)
- Professor Trisha Maynard (Co-director) (Canterbury Christ Church University)
- Professor Laurence Moore (Cardiff University and DECIPHer)
- Professor Sally Power (Cardiff University and WISERD)
- Professor David Blackaby (Swansea University and WISERD)
- Professor Ian Plewis (University of Manchester)
- Mr Rhys Davies (Cardiff University and WISERD)
- Dr Sam Waldron (Cardiff University and WISERD)
- Dr Mirain Rhys (Cardiff University and WISERD)

1.6 The evaluation employs a stepped wedge design to exploit the sequential roll-out of the Foundation Phase across a number of different schools and settings at different time periods. In particular, much of the evaluation focuses on comparing successive cohorts of children who have been through three sets of school settings at different stages of the implementation: Pilot Stage settings, Early Start Stage settings and Final Roll-out Stage settings. The evaluation also utilises a range of methods to ensure it captures as many aspects of the implementation, delivery and impacts of the Foundation Phase programme as possible.

1.7 The first annual report (Taylor *et al.* 2013) outlined the evaluation design and methodology in detail and reported the work of the evaluation during its first year, for the period August 2011-July 2012.

This coincided with Stage I of the evaluation design. The report summarised the work that had been completed in that time and highlighted the key findings during that period.

1.8 The second annual report (Taylor *et al.* 2014) provided a technical update on the design and methodology of the evaluation as it progressed to Stage II of the evaluation design. A more detailed description of the methodologies and data collection tools employed in the evaluation is published as a separate Technical Report (Taylor *et al.* 2015a). This includes all the research tools used, including the observation schedules and survey instruments.

1.9 In this final report we present the main findings from the evaluation.

These findings are structured in the following way:

- i. Implementation of the Foundation Phase
- ii. Foundation Phase practice
- iii. The impact of the Foundation Phase
- iv. Foundation Phase outcomes

1.10 Most of the key findings have been published as separate Government Social Research (GSR) Summaries or GSR Reports, and the order of these largely correspond to the main structure of this report (Table 1). A full list of evaluation reports is outlined in Appendix A.

1.11 Throughout this report we are keen to stress the links between key findings and provide more evidence from the evaluation to support them. The report concludes by considering the future development of the Foundation Phase, including key recommendations and how the Foundation Phase should be evaluated and monitored into the future.

1.12 Finally, in the appendices we provide some exemplars from the evaluation of Foundation Phase practice to help practitioners in the development of their Foundation Phase practice. However, we are keen to stress that these should primarily be used to help practitioners

understand the principles and pedagogies of the Foundation Phase rather than as lesson plans to just be replicated.

Table 1. Evaluation Reports and Summaries (published by the Welsh Government*)

Theme	Report title	Number
Methodology	Annual Report 2011/12	43/2012
	Update and Technical Report 2012/13	16/2014
	Final Technical Report	<i>forthcoming</i>
Implementation	Policy Logic Model and Programme Theory	37/2012
	Key Findings on Management and Leadership	75/2014
	Key Findings on Training, Support and Guidance	54/2014
	Key Findings on Staffing	95/2014
	Key Findings on Children and Families	94/2014
Practice	Key Findings on Pedagogy and Understanding	43/2014
	Key Findings on the Environment (Indoor/Outdoor)	53/2014
	Key Findings on Welsh Language	76/2014
	Key Findings on Literacy and Numeracy	10/2015
Impact	Key Findings on Reported impacts	42/2014
	Key Findings on Child involvement and wellbeing	44/2014
	Key Findings on Transitions and assessment	74/2014
	Key Findings on Future Development of the Foundation Phase	09/2015
Outcomes	The Outcomes of Foundation Phase Pupils (Report 1)	43/2013
	The Outcomes of Foundation Phase Pupils up to 2011/12 (Report 2)	01/2015

* All currently available from this webpage: <http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/evaluation-foundation-phase/>

1.13 Before presenting the key findings we first introduce the evaluation and its overall design very briefly. Further details can be found in Taylor *et al.* (2013, 2014). This chapter then goes on to outline the Foundation Phase, including a revised policy logic model.

Aims and Objectives of the Evaluation

1.14 The three-year evaluation (2011-2014) had four main aims:

- to evaluate how well the Foundation Phase is being implemented and highlight ways in which improvement can be made (the process evaluation)
- to evaluate what impact the Foundation Phase has had to date (the outcome evaluation)
- to assess the value for money of the Foundation Phase (the economic evaluation)
- to put in place an evaluation framework for the future tracking of outputs and outcomes of the Foundation Phase (the evaluation framework).

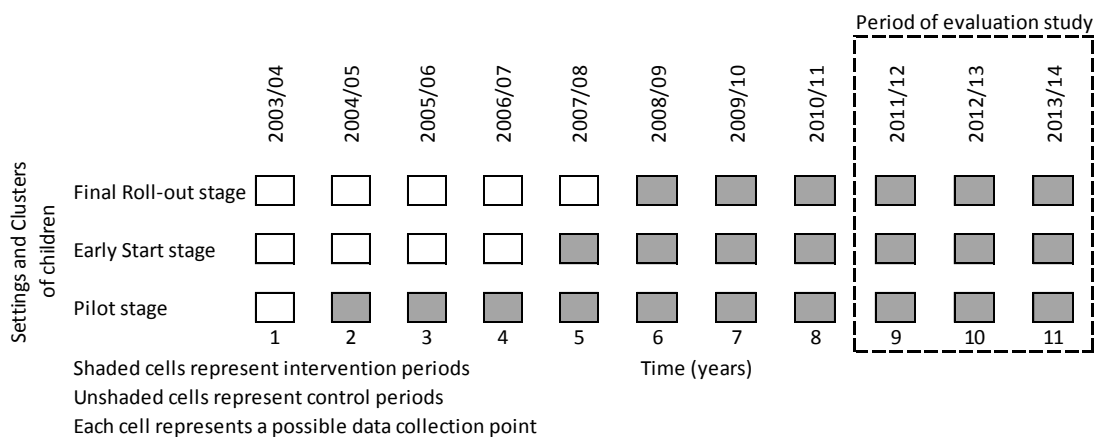
1.15 The *Process Evaluation* is primarily concerned with evaluating the implementation of the Foundation Phase. The *Outcome Evaluation* is primarily concerned with the outcomes or impacts of the Foundation Phase on the capabilities of children in the Foundation Phase. The *Economic Evaluation* undertakes a costs consequences analysis of the Foundation Phase. The final key output from the evaluation – the *Evaluation Framework* – is a proposal for how the Foundation Phase could be evaluated in the coming years.

1.16 Alongside published findings from the research the evaluation has also generated a number of other important outputs. These include an evaluation website, various presentations to a wide range of audiences, regular meetings with various stakeholders, and a three-year Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded doctoral research studentship to explore children's social and emotional wellbeing in the Foundation Phase in more detail (Taylor *et al.* 2014).

Design and Methodology

1.17 In developing the methodology and research design for this evaluation, a number of considerations relating to the implementation of the Foundation Phase were influential. The principal characteristic from which the evaluation has been designed is the way in which the Foundation Phase was rolled-out sequentially over time. In this evaluation we therefore distinguish between schools/settings at three phases of implementation (Figure 1). Other key characteristics of the Foundation Phase are outlined in Taylor *et al.* (2013).

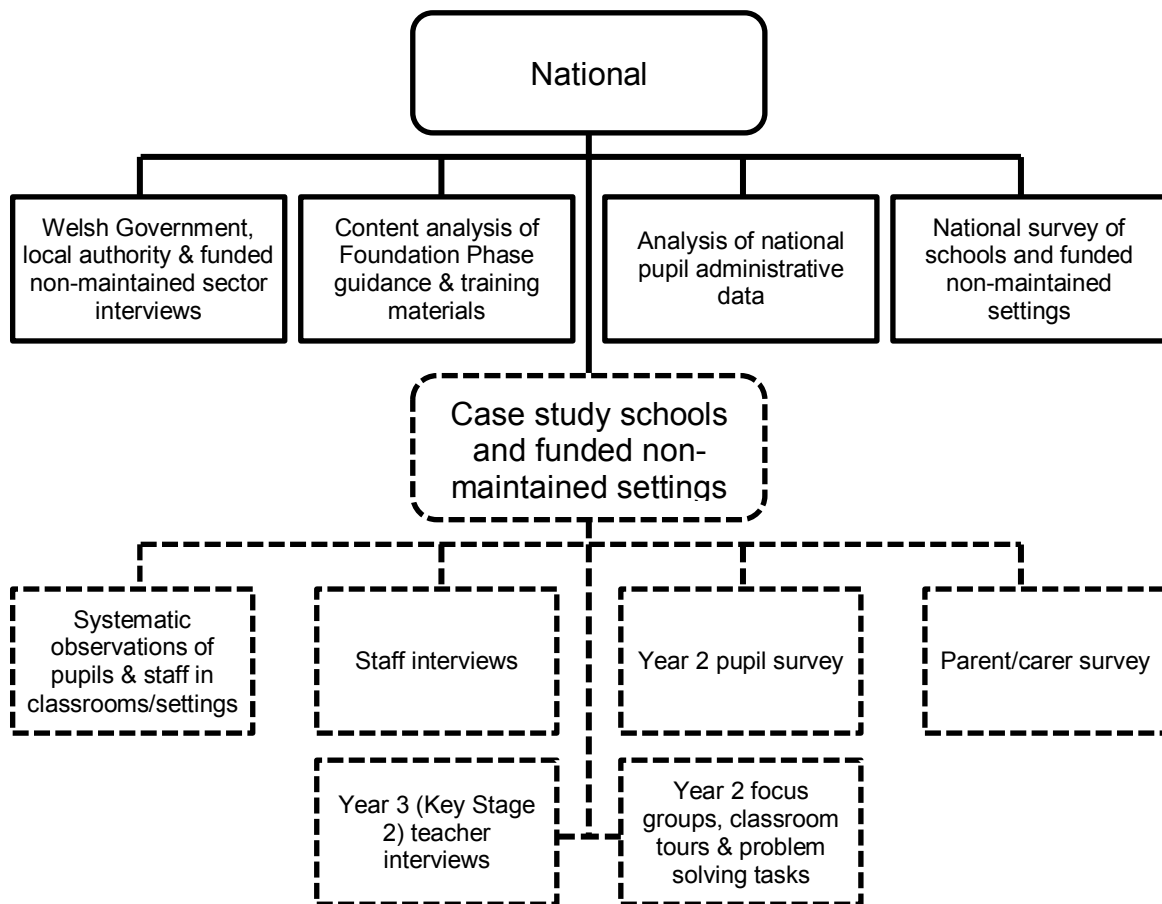
Figure 1: Overview of Stepped Wedge Design for Evaluating the Foundation Phase



1.18 The overarching structure of this evaluation follows a stepped wedge design (Brown and Lilford 2006; Hussey and Hughes 2007). This exploits the sequential roll-out of the Foundation Phase across a number of schools/settings at three different phases of implementation, referred to as Pilot, Early Start, and Final Roll-out settings (see Figure 1). This allows us to compare clusters of children who received the early introduction of the Foundation Phase against control clusters of children who did not follow the Foundation Phase from within the same cohort. This contributes to the outcome evaluation.

1.19 The evaluation utilises a wide range of data and evidence, both quantitative and qualitative, and is based on primary data collection and using existing data (administrative and other). This has been organised at two geographical scales: at a *national* level, and at the level of individual *case study* schools and settings (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Design and Main Elements of Evaluation



1.20 Data collection has been organised in three stages during the course of the evaluation: Stage I (January 2012-September 2012); Stage II (September 2012-June 2013); and Stage III (September 2013-April 2014).

1.21 Stage I of the evaluation involved:

- (a) documentary evidence relating to the design, delivery and implementation of the Foundation Phase: This encompassed a wide range of materials, such as policy documents, guidance documents, training materials and curriculum materials. A theoretical framework was developed to analyse the extant documentation. This analysis was primarily used to develop the initial Policy Logic Model and Programme Theory for the Foundation Phase evaluation (Maynard *et al.* 2013);
- (b) a national survey of head teachers, centre managers and Foundation Phase lead practitioners covering all Foundation Phase settings: this collected information on, and responses to, staff qualifications, staff-pupil ratios, use of classroom assistants, use of outdoor environments, stumbling blocks to implementation, financial expenditure, obstacles to implementation, attitudes towards the Foundation Phase;
- (c) interviews with key Welsh Government and local authority personnel: this invited participants to discuss support for teachers, Welsh-medium provision in the Foundation Phase, monitoring and evaluation strategies, and data sharing; and
- (d) an initial analysis of administrative educational data (Pupil Level Annual Schools Census (PLASC) and the National Pupil Database (NPD)): this considered the impact of the introduction of the Foundation Phase on attendance, teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 and the Foundation Phase, and teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 2.

1.22 Stage II of the evaluation involved the stratified random sampling of 41 case study schools and 10 funded non-maintained settings from across Wales. Between January and June 2013 the evaluation undertook:

- (a) repeated classroom observations;
 - (b) interviews with lead Foundation Phase practitioners, Foundation Phase teachers, additional practitioners and primary head teachers;
- and

(c) a survey of Year 2 pupils in each of the 41 case study schools.

1.23 Stage III of the evaluation involved:

(a) telephone interviews with Year 3 (KS2) teachers in most of the case study schools;

(b) a survey of Foundation Phase parents in the case study schools and settings; and

(c) the evaluation also revisited seven case study schools during 2013-14 (selected on the basis of how much the Foundation Phase appeared to have been implemented in the 41 case study schools in the previous year). During these follow-up visits the evaluation undertook focus groups, classroom tours and other problem-solving tasks with Foundation Phase pupils.

1.24 Table 2 provides a summary of the main data collection techniques employed in the three stages of the evaluation and the associated response sizes for each group.

1.25 The evaluation was designed to ensure we obtained multiple perspectives on the different aspects of the Foundation Phase. Sometimes this means we are asking similar questions to different people or stakeholders. Sometimes it means we are comparing what people (e.g. practitioners) say with what they do or with other 'objective' measures of the same outcome. This is commonly referred to as 'triangulation' in social science research.

1.26 Employing a considerable degree of 'triangulation' in an evaluation like this has three main benefits. The first is that it can help to verify and add further warrant to a particular finding. The second main benefit is that in combining these multiple perspectives a more detailed and nuanced understanding of the phenomenon or finding is likely. The third main benefit is where we find apparent contradictions between different sources of evidence. In this evaluation there are a number of very important occurrences of this. When such apparent contradictions

do arise it is important to note that this does not mean that one or the other source of evidence is 'wrong'. Instead, in trying to understand the contradiction or paradox we are often able to reveal new findings that would have otherwise been unobserved.

Table 2: Summary of Data Collection Techniques and Associated Response Rates

Respondents, Participants & Observations	Number*
Stage I	
National Survey of Schools	361 ^a
National Survey of Funded Non-Maintained Providers	243 ^b
Local Authority Foundation Phase Adviser Interviews	19
Local Authority Training and Support Officer Interviews	18
Non-Maintained Umbrella Organisation Interviews	4
Stage II	
Child Observations	3,343
Classrooms Observed	131
Sessions Observed	239
Practitioners Observed	824
Year 2 Pupil Survey	671 ^c
Head Teacher Interviews	41
Teacher Interviews	118
Lead FP Practitioner Interviews	37
Non-Maintained Leader Interviews	10
Non-Maintained Teaching & Learning Assistant Interviews	14
School Teaching & Learning Assistant Interviews	121
Stage III	
Parent/carer survey	1,008 ^d
Year 3 teacher interviews	16
Year 1 pupil-led tours (approx. 5 pupils per tour)	6
Year 2 pupil focus groups (approx. 4 pupils per group)	7

* This does not include any observations and participants from the piloting of the data collection tools

Response rates: ^a 26%; ^b 30%; ^c 100%; ^d approximately 15%.

1.27 It also means the evaluation has had to adopt a mixed methods design (Gorard and Taylor 2004), collecting a wide variety of different kinds of data – qualitative and quantitative.

- 1.28 Finally the evaluation has adhered to the BERA 2004 Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research and the BERA Charter for Good Practice in the Employment of Contract Researchers (2001). Prior ethical approval for all components of the evaluation was obtained from the Cardiff University Research Ethics Committee. All researchers have been subject to Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks, and all work has been carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.
- 1.29 It should be noted that all participating schools and respondents have been assured of confidentiality in the presentation of results. Therefore no staff or schools are named in any evaluation reports and descriptions of schools or settings have been kept minimal to avoid their identification. In accessing and analysing data from the National Pupil Database, the Welsh Government provided anonymous individual pupil data with only variables that ensure identification of the individual pupil is not possible and cannot be linked to other data that might identify the individual pupils.

Policy Logic Model

- 1.30 A detailed discussion of the development and underlying principles of the Foundation Phase has already been published (Maynard *et al.* 2013). In particular, this set out the programme theory and an initial policy logic model for the Foundation Phase based on analysis of Welsh Government documents and guidance materials and initial interviews with key stakeholders. In effect this described the Foundation Phase as it was *intended*, both in terms of how it should be implemented and what outcomes it was expected to achieve.
- 1.31 Importantly, this initial analysis suggested that the Foundation Phase resonates with a number of key elements of Developmentally

Appropriate Practice (DAP). In terms of its *approach*, the report concluded:

“...the approach underpinning the Foundation Phase is explicitly developmental with a clear focus on the individual child. Development is seen as essentially linear, although not tied to chronological age, and recognises individual variations in rate within and across all areas of development and learning. This approach broadly relates to a constructivist theory of learning.” (Maynard *et al.* 2013:v).

1.32 In terms of *pedagogy*, the report concluded:

“...aspects of suggested pedagogy also reflect constructivist theory although ideas resonating with sociocultural perspectives are emphasised – for example, a clear role is indicated for the practitioner in supporting children’s learning and development.” (Maynard *et al.* 2013:v).

1.33 However, the report also noted two key challenges that may face practitioners. The first is to make sense of the terminology used in and across the Foundation Phase documentation. Secondly, how the new pedagogy of the Foundation Phase can best be integrated within a detailed statutory curriculum and a statutory Literacy and Numeracy Framework (Welsh Government 2013a). During the course of the evaluation these two challenges appeared many times.

1.34 In light of the evaluation we are now able to revise the initial Policy Logic Model (see Maynard *et al.* 2013) based on further interpretation and findings. This is summarised in Figure 1. Whilst the context to the introduction of the Foundation Phase and its aims and objectives remain unchanged we note a couple of additional inputs, processes and activities.

1.35 In the Inputs of the Foundation Phase we identify the importance of twelve pedagogical elements for teaching and learning practice that we believe embody the principles and guidance of the Foundation Phase. These were identified by the evaluation team based on systematic analysis of Foundation Phase documentation and our previous expertise in early years education. These pedagogical elements were then ratified by other experts and stakeholders on the evaluation's Advisory groups. It is the presence of these twelve pedagogical elements that helps to define Foundation Phase practice (see chapter 3).

1.36 The twelve pedagogical elements to the Foundation Phase, as identified by the evaluation, are:

- a. Child choice/participation – children involved in initiating and directing their own learning;
- b. Exploration – children learning by exploring and experimenting;
- c. First-hand – children learning from first-hand and direct experiences;
- d. Practical – children learning from practical hands-on activities;
- e. Stage not age – children should be appropriately challenged and supported according to their stage (not age) of learning;
- f. Balance of continuous/enhanced/focussed activities – for the majority of learning there is an array of different activities constantly available that provides continuous learning provision, this is enhanced by the occasional provision of specific activities within continuous provision that provide enhanced learning (i.e. by scaffolding children's learning), and very occasionally focussed learning activities are provided to ensure particular learning tasks are achieved;
- g. Open questioning – questions to children invite open discursive responses rather than one-word closed responses;
- h. Reflection – children are prompted to think about their own learning experiences;

- i. Physical activity – children have the opportunity to move around whilst learning;
- j. Outdoor learning – learning takes place in indoor and outdoor learning environments;
- k. Observation of children – children’s learning should be monitored predominantly through regular observations;
- l. Learning zones – the learning environment offers a variety of different learning areas/activities for children to engage with.

1.37 Another addition to the Policy Logic Model under Processes and Activities is the effective delivery of Foundation Phase practice in classrooms. It is quite clear that the success or impact of the Foundation Phase is heavily dependent on whether the Foundation Phase is being ‘fully’ implemented across schools and classrooms. Hence the delivery and use of the Foundation Phase pedagogy in classrooms is central to its evaluation.

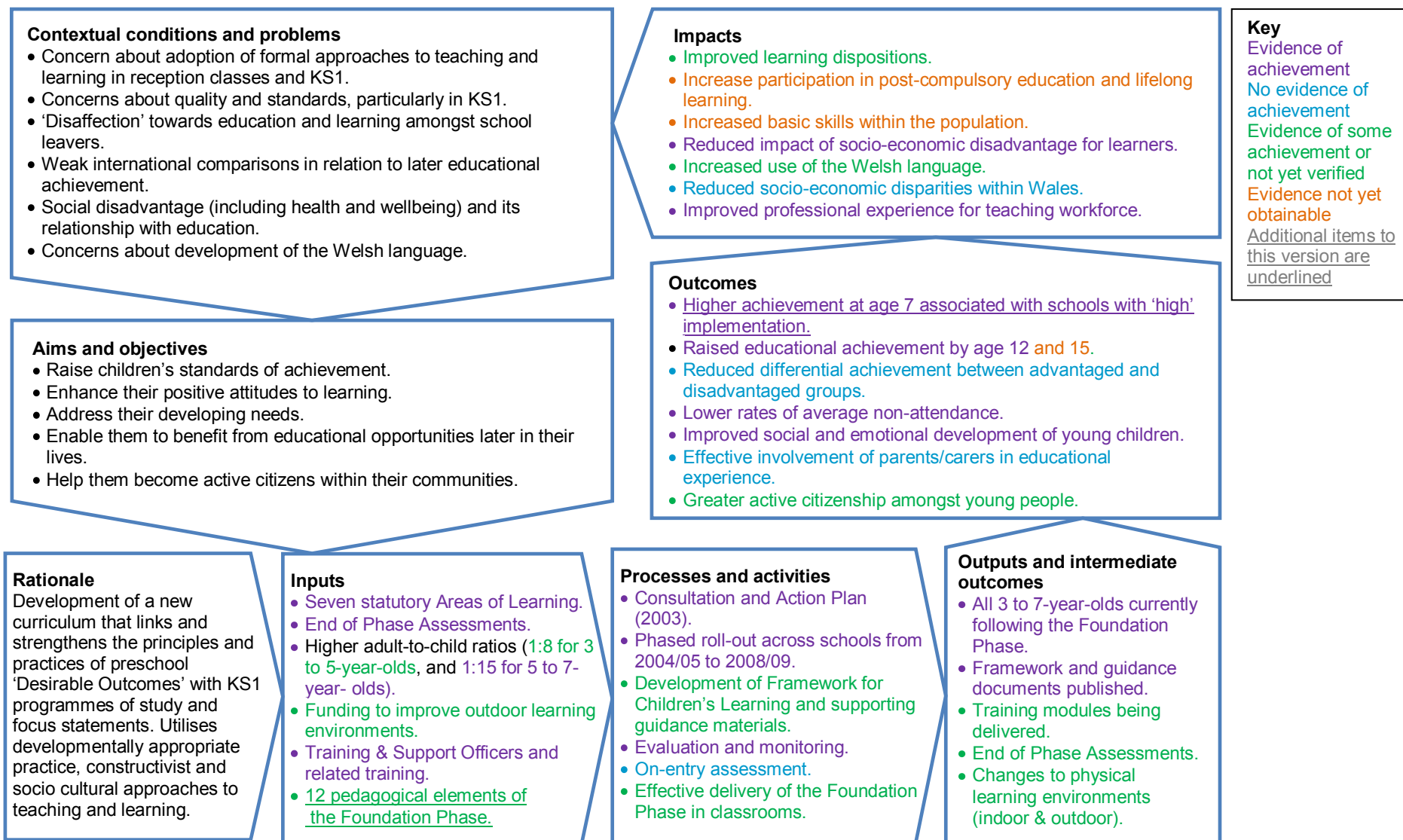
1.38 A further change is in relation to one of the main Outcomes, that is, whether we would expect to see improvements in the educational achievement of children at age seven. Previously, we noted that we would not expect to see any change in the achievement of children at age seven, reflecting a shift in emphasis to more developmentally appropriate practice and outcomes for three to seven year olds. However, the evaluation finds evidence that educational achievement at age seven can be improved in light of the ‘full’ implementation of the Foundation Phase as well as at age twelve (see chapter 4).

1.39 All the features in this revised Policy Logic Model have also been colour-coded to reflect the relative success to date in meeting the objectives of the Foundation Phase.

1.40 Items coloured **orange** reflect where it is not possible as yet to evaluate whether the outcomes have been met.

- 1.41 Items coloured **purple** indicate aspects of the Foundation Phase where there is evidence from the evaluation to suggest they have been achieved. Conversely items coloured **blue** are aspects where there is evidence that they have not been achieved. Items coloured **green** are those aspects of the Foundation Phase where there is either partial evidence about whether they have been achieved or not or where there is evidence that they have only been partially achieved.
- 1.42 New items that have been added to this revised Policy Logic Model are underlined.
- 1.43 This revised Policy Logic Model therefore provides a summary of the main findings from the evaluation. As can be seen most aspects of the Foundation Phase have been fully or partly met. But it also demonstrates areas of the Foundation Phase where there is still room for improvement. These findings are discussed in detail throughout the remainder of this report.

Figure 3: Policy Logic Model (Version 2) for Evaluating the Foundation Phase



2 Implementation of the Foundation Phase

- 2.1 This chapter focuses on the implementation of the Foundation Phase and considers the key findings relating to the introduction of the Foundation Phase, including the main inputs, processes and activities associated with its introduction. This includes how the Foundation Phase was initially received by local authorities, practitioners and parents. It then goes on to outline the main changes to the infrastructure of schools, such as staffing and the environment.
- 2.2 The chapter then presents the main findings in relation to the introduction of improved adult:child ratios, a key input of the Foundation Phase, before presenting the main findings in relation to the implementation of training, support and guidance. The chapter concludes with the identification of the main issues with regards to the implementation of the Foundation Phase.

How the Foundation Phase was Received

- 2.3 The overwhelming majority of practitioners and key stakeholders initially welcomed the introduction of the Foundation Phase, often with a sense of 'excitement' but also 'relief'. From the national survey 54% of head teachers, 59% of lead practitioners in schools and 42% of lead practitioners in funded non-maintained settings said they were 'looking forward to it'. Only 2% of staff surveyed said they were not looking forward to it. Furthermore, 97% of head teachers thought that their Foundation Phase practitioners welcomed its introduction.
- 2.4 However, a substantial proportion of those surveyed had some initial reservations about its introduction. In particular, head teachers generally reported less enthusiasm towards the Foundation Phase amongst their Key Stage 2 teaching staff, and 21% of head teachers said that some parents had some resistance to its introduction.

- 2.5 Nevertheless, it is important to note that the evaluation often finds that the views of Foundation Phase teachers differ significantly from their head teachers, reflecting differences of opinion in terms of educational priorities, pedagogical understanding and resourcing.
- 2.6 It is also the case that head teachers and practitioners in the Pilot schools were significantly more enthusiastic about its introduction than their peers in other schools. Fifty per cent of Pilot school head teachers surveyed said they were 'really looking forward to it' compared to 26% of head teachers in the Final Roll-out schools.
- 2.7 There are also differences in how the Foundation Phase was initially received in Welsh-medium schools, with 49% of these head teachers reporting reservations, compared to 39% of head teachers in English-medium schools. As the report will discuss later this reflects a general concern about Welsh language immersion within the context of a more child-centred and child-initiated pedagogical approach to learning.
- 2.8 During interviews Local Authority Early Years Advisers said they were generally very happy with how the Foundation Phase has been implemented in their areas, although they believe that the extent to which the Foundation Phase is being implemented between schools does vary quite significantly. They often associated this variation in implementation to the initial views and understanding of the Foundation Phase amongst practitioners in those schools and a fear amongst head teachers in particular that its introduction will lead to a decline in educational achievement in literacy and mathematics, at least for seven year olds,

"It was partly practitioners, but I think it was partly the challenge of the head teachers because they feared that standards were going to drop and of course everything is governed now by the scores and attainment. And the emphasis is on attainment from the Welsh

Government. And I think what they were seeing or what they were interpreting was that children were playing all day and there was a lack of understanding and a distinction between play, pure play, and active learning.” (Local Authority Early Years Adviser).

2.9 According to Local Authority Early Years Advisers, any concern amongst practitioners that the Foundation Phase could lead to a decline in the educational achievement of seven-year-olds, heightened following the introduction of the Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF) as a statutory curriculum requirement in September 2013 and, in particular, the introduction of statutory reading and numeracy tests in September 2014 for seven-year-olds in the Foundation Phase⁵.

2.10 However, when head teachers were asked about obstacles to the implementation of the Foundation Phase in their schools more than 60% of them said that funding and existing school infrastructure have been the two main difficulties to its implementation.

2.11 The overwhelming majority of head teachers (89%) said they are satisfied with the Foundation Phase; with 54% saying they were very satisfied. Although, as noted previously, 21% of head teachers said that some parents/carers expressed some resistance to the introduction of the Foundation Phase. This is likely to be a small number, however, since only 3% of parents/carers the evaluation surveyed said that they were dissatisfied with the Foundation Phase.

2.12 Parents/carers report considerable support for their children’s education to be ‘varied and interesting’, ‘explorative and investigative’ and ‘covering a broad range of skills’. More than 80% of parents/carers said they strongly supported these aspects. Parents/carers were slightly less supportive of, although still significantly positive towards, their children being able to ‘learn at

⁵ National statutory tests were introduced for all seven to fourteen-year-olds in Wales in 2012/13.

their own pace' or to have 'choice in their learning' (approximately 30% of parents/carers did not support these features).

2.13 Despite general support for the Foundation Phase and strong support for many of its key features and principles the evaluation finds that parents have not often been involved in its implementation or development. Only 20% of school head teachers and 18% of funded non-maintained lead practitioners indicated that parents/carers had a major role in the implementation of the Foundation Phase in their school or setting. Only in a minority of case study schools/settings does the evaluation find parents involved in activity planning sessions (see chapter 3).

2.14 Furthermore, interviews with Foundation Phase lead practitioners and head teachers indicate that, on the whole, parent-school relationships have not changed as a result of the introduction of the Foundation Phase.

Staffing and the Foundation Phase

2.15 One of the key elements of the Foundation Phase was the introduction of improved adult:child ratios for three to seven-year-olds – 1:8 for three to five-year-olds (i.e. funded non-maintained settings and Nursery and Reception classes/groups) and 1:15 for five to seven-year-olds (i.e. Year 1 and Year 2).

2.16 This required the recruitment of a significant number of additional practitioners as the Foundation Phase was rolled-out. By 2011/12 there were 15,923 practitioners working with children of Foundation Phase age in schools. The evaluation estimates that this nearly doubled the number of practitioners that were working in Key Stage 1 in 2004/05.

- 2.17 Despite concerns about the qualification levels of additional practitioners in early years education (e.g. see the Nutbrown Review 2012) the evaluation found that in the case study schools 81% of additional practitioners had an NVQ Level 3 or above qualification. By comparison this considerably exceeds the target of 70% of additional practitioners having Level 3 or above qualifications in the Early Years Foundation Stage in England by September 2015.
- 2.18 The qualification levels of practitioners in the case study funded non-maintained settings was generally lower than that of additional practitioners in schools – where 68% of additional practitioners there have at least an NVQ Level 3 qualification (although this is based on a very small sample)⁶.
- 2.19 In 2013/14 the Welsh Government allocated just over £92million for the employment of additional practitioners to help schools meet the recommended adult:child ratios. This revenue is allocated to local authorities based on their pupil population who then distribute it to schools using their own funding formulae.
- 2.20 Of those surveyed, 72% of head teachers and 79% of funded non-maintained setting lead practitioners said they did not have any difficulties in meeting the recommended adult:child ratios. Nine out of every ten head teachers who report that they had experienced obstacles in meeting the recommended adult:child ratios also cite funding issues as a major obstacle to the successful implementation of the Foundation Phase.
- 2.21 In interviews with case study school head teachers it is apparent that a majority do not think they have adequate additional funding from their Local authority to meet the recommended ratios. These head

⁶ Despite the relatively large proportion of Foundation Phase practitioners with high levels of qualifications it should be noted that there is actually very little evidence that higher levels of qualifications amongst additional practitioners (Sutton Trust 2011) or pre-school practitioners (Howes *et al.* 2008) is associated with improved pupil achievement.

teachers say they have to draw upon the rest of their school budget to fund the shortfall in staffing costs.

2.22 For a Reception class of thirty children this would typically mean there should be one qualified teacher and *at least* two additional practitioners. For a Year 2 class of thirty children this would typically mean there should be one qualified teacher and one additional practitioner.

2.23 Since the number of children in each classroom varies quite significantly and because this number is not always divisible by the ratios to a whole number (i.e. a single full-time adult) there is inevitably quite a large variation in the actual adult:child ratios that children across Wales experience. Furthermore, of all 144,839 pupils in the Foundation Phase in Wales (2011/12) 38% were in mixed age classrooms of pupils of any age between three and seven and 11% were in mixed age classrooms with pupils also in Key Stage 2.

2.24 According to national administrative data the average adult:child ratios in Foundation Phase schools varies from 9.0 for Nursery 2 classes to 13.1 for Year 2 classes (Table 3). For the older age groups, where there is comparable data, this is a considerable improvement in the average adult:child ratios observed in Key Stage 1 (2005).

2.25 The evaluation also asked head teachers to provide more detailed information about the adult and pupil composition for each of their Foundation Phase classrooms. The average adult:child ratios calculated by year group using this source of information produces similar results (Table 3).

2.26 Crucially, both sets of results show that, on average, the adult:child ratio for three to five-year-olds (i.e. Nursery and Reception) is not

being met, whereas the adult:child ratio for five to seven-year-olds (i.e. Year 1 and Year 2) is, on average, being exceeded.

Table 3. Average Adult:Child Ratios in Schools for the Foundation Phase (2012) and in Key Stage 1 (2005), by Year Group

Year Group	National Administrative Data		Survey of Head Teachers
	Foundation Phase (2012) ¹	Key Stage 1 (2005) ²	Foundation Phase (2012) ³
Nursery 2 class	9.0	n/a	8.9
Reception class	9.7	n/a	9.1
Year 1 class	12.8	19.3	13.4
Year 2 class	13.1	20.2	12.6
Mixed age class	9.8	15.4	10.9

1 – Based on data for 5,110 classes.

2 – Based on data for 2,079 classes.

3 – Based on data for 1,045 classes.

2.27 Using both sources of information it is also possible to estimate the percentage of schools that are meeting recommended ratios (Table 4). This shows that between 43% and 45% of schools are meeting the recommended ratios of 1:8 in their Reception classes and that between 87% and 90% of schools are meeting their recommended ratios of 1:15 for Year 2 classes.

Table 4. Percentage of Schools Estimated to be Meeting Recommended Ratios (2012)

Year Group	National Administrative Data	Survey of Head Teachers
Nursery classes (1:8 ratio)	48.7	64.0
Reception classes (1:8 ratio)	45.4	43.0
Year 1 classes (1:15 ratio)	90.5	92.5
Year 2 classes (1:15 ratio)	87.2	89.6

2.28 There is an obvious caveat to these results, in that they say very little about what adult:child ratios a pupil experiences on an hour-by-hour or day-to-day basis. For example, many of the evaluation case study

schools frequently grouped adults and pupils together quite creatively, both within classes and between classes (and year groups) (see Box 1 for an example of this). This often means that at any point in time the recommended ratio for pupils could sometimes be exceeded and sometimes falls below the recommended levels.

**Box 1. Example of Best Practice within the Foundation Phase:
Creative Use of Adult:Child Ratios**

School #24

Additional practitioners were often seen as a vital resource in the successful implementation of the Foundation Phase, especially when a mixture of continuous, enhanced and focussed activities was in place.

Generally, additional practitioners teamed up with the classroom teacher to implement focussed activities. These activities were generally with a small group of children, which would be rotated throughout the session along with a variety of continuous and enhanced activities in different areas of the classroom. Often, additional practitioners and/or teachers could take their small group to another space within the school to implement the focussed task; the hall and other multi-purpose learning environments were used as well as many outdoor spaces.

Two year groups switched between classrooms on a fortnightly rotation so that double the amount of thematic work and activities could be included in their curriculum. This allowed additional practitioners and teachers to be able to spend time with small groups in a wider learning environment. For example, the classroom's theme at the time of observation was nature and how things grow. In one classroom, there was a farm shop with real and pretend products. This area was used for a small group maths focussed task where the teacher and the children 'went shopping' for a list of items and developed mathematical skills like addition and giving the correct change. In the other classroom, there was a mini greenhouse where a small group could plant seeds with the additional practitioner. Because of the fortnightly rotation, children were able to follow the growth progress of their seed and record it on a growth chart with the aid of the additional practitioner.

2.29 Irrespective of whether or not individual schools are able to fully meet the recommended ratios, the presence of additional adults was very noticeable in schools and classrooms. Indeed, the vast majority of head teachers and teachers interviewed said that the improved ratios

have been *essential* to implementing the Foundation Phase curriculum and pedagogy.

- 2.30 As discussed in the next chapter this is also demonstrated in our classroom observations, both in terms of the particular roles and contributions that additional practitioners make, but also in ensuring that children can participate in small-group and experiential forms of learning with the support and guidance of an adult.
- 2.31 Other benefits of the improved adult:child ratios were also reported. These included giving practitioners the opportunity to participate in training or to undertake their own professional development without requiring additional cover within the classroom⁷. The impact of general staff absences also mitigated by the presence of more practitioners in the Foundation Phase.
- 2.32 In just over half of schools surveyed (54%) head teachers also reported having made significant structural changes to the organisation of their school management and senior staff. The most frequently cited example of this was the appointment of a Foundation Phase lead practitioner who had often also become a member of the school's senior management team or a school's deputy head teacher.
- 2.33 Relatedly, a small number of head teachers say they had appointed a Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) to the Foundation Phase to provide greater practitioner experience than many of the incumbent additional practitioners had.
- 2.34 It is notable that head teachers and other senior staff report that they were not given any specific guidance as school leaders as to how to implement the Foundation Phase in their school. In the case study schools, decisions as to how far to restructure the management

⁷ It was never made clear what additional funding schools did or should have received to provide teaching cover to enable practitioners to attend training in the Foundation Phase modules.

teams or reallocate experienced school staff to the early years is closely associated to their personal enthusiasm and interest in the Foundation Phase and may have led to some of the inconsistencies in implementation identified elsewhere in the evaluation.

Training and Support

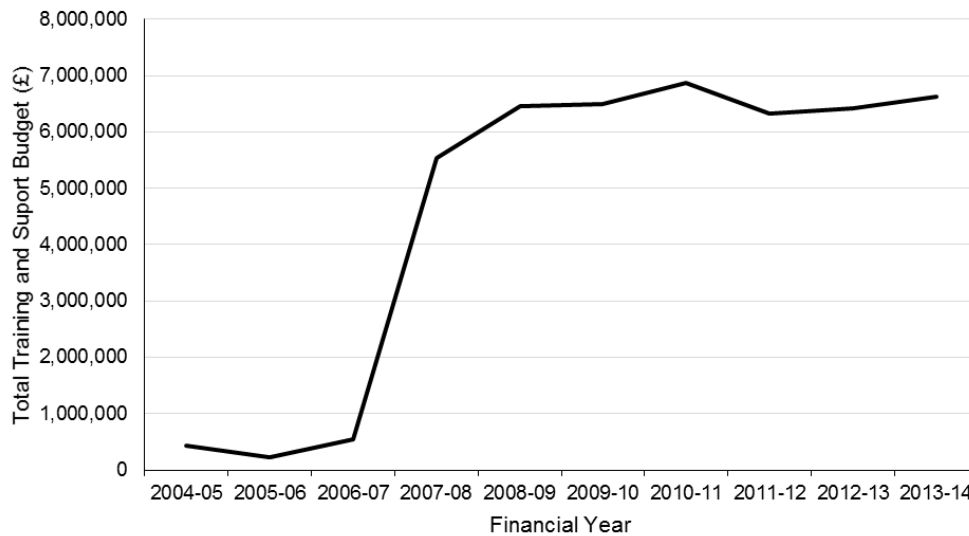
2.35 Another key element to the implementation of the Foundation Phase is in training and supporting Foundation Phase practitioners, primarily aimed at qualified teachers, additional practitioners and practitioners in funded non-maintained settings working in the Foundation Phase.

2.36 The range of training and support provided by the Welsh Government is extensive. It primarily includes the design and production of eight training modules (see Appendix B), guidance materials on each Area of Learning (see Appendix B), additional guidance materials (such as Learning Outdoors), the employment of a full-time Training and Support Officer (TSO) in each local authority and, in funded non-maintained settings, access to 0.1FTE Link Teacher to support children and practitioners in those settings. During the initial roll-out of the Foundation Phase the Welsh Government also organised annual conferences across Wales⁸.

2.37 Between 2004-05 and 2013-14 the Welsh Government spent just under £46million on training and support in the Foundation Phase. This increased substantially in 2007-08, coinciding with the final roll-out in the following year, and has remained relatively constant since (Figure 4).

⁸ It should be noted that the training modules and many of these resources were not available to Pilot and Early Start schools as they began implementing the Foundation Phase. This was evident in the lower rate of participation in training that the evaluation found amongst staff in Pilot and Early Start schools.

Figure 4. Foundation Phase Training and Support Budget, 2004-05 to 2013-14



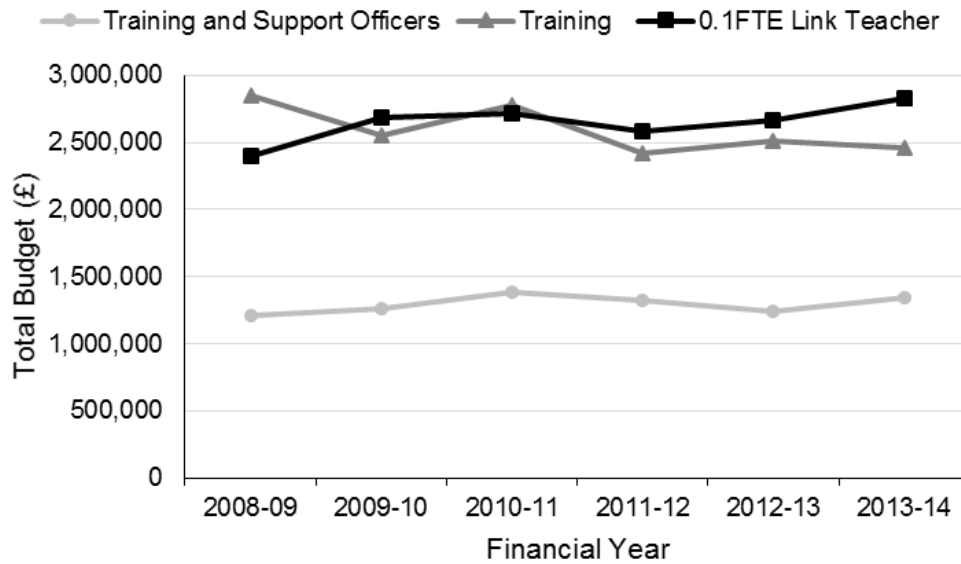
Source of data: Welsh Government

2.38 Figure 5 distinguishes between the costs of the Training and Support Officers (TSOs) and the 0.1FTE Link Teachers from the rest of the training budget. This shows that although the overall budget has remained relatively constant the increasing costs of the TSOs and to a lesser extent the Link Teachers has meant that the remaining budget for training has decreased by 14% over this time period.

2.39 Overall, Foundation Phase lead practitioners were very satisfied with the training and support provided to them (Figure 6 and Figure 7). Approximately 90% of lead practitioners in schools and funded non-maintained settings thought that the Welsh Government documentation and Local Authority training was 'useful' or 'very useful'.

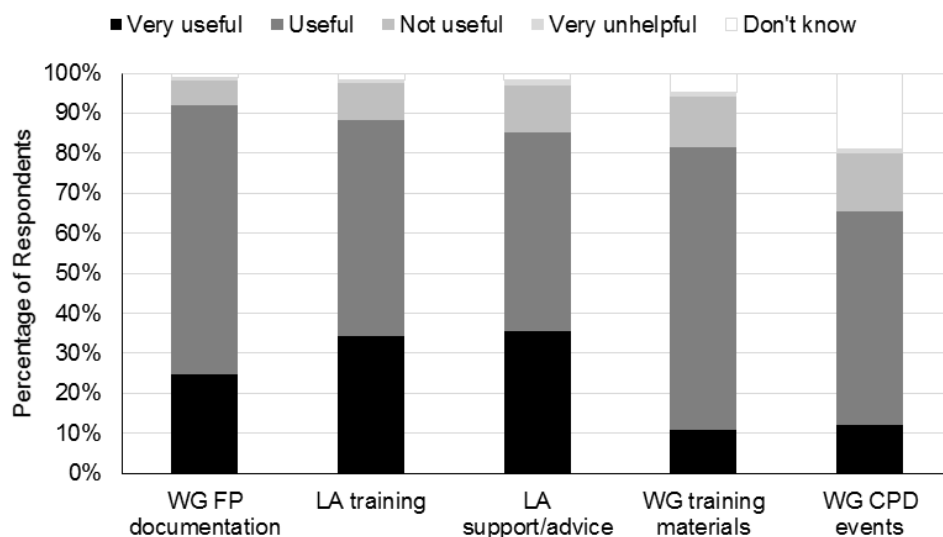
2.40 The majority also believed that the support and advice from Local Authorities and the Welsh Government training materials was also useful.

Figure 5. Distribution of Training and Support Budget, 2008-09 to 2013-14



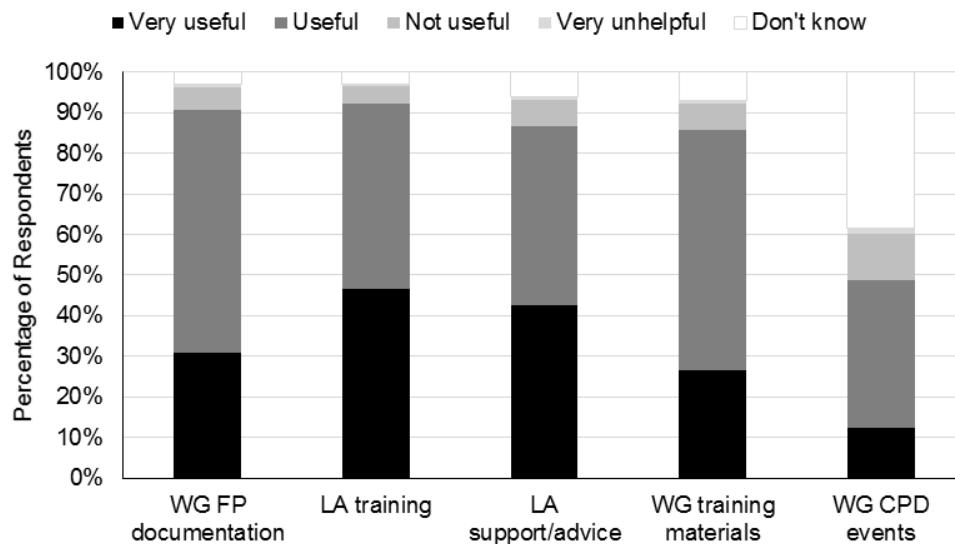
Source of data: Welsh Government

Figure 6. Reported Satisfaction of Training and Support by Foundation Phase Lead Practitioners in Schools*



* Valid number of responses ranged from 306 to 322. Where there is no Foundation Phase lead practitioner in the school the head teacher would have answered these questions.

Figure 7. Reported Satisfaction of Training and Support by Foundation Phase Lead Practitioners in Funded Non-Maintained Settings*



* Valid number of responses ranged from 219 to 237.

2.41 Relatively fewer respondents had a view about the Welsh Government continued professional development conferences, but out of those who did the majority thought they had been useful.

2.42 The eight Foundation Phase training modules were produced by the Welsh Government. But it is Local authorities, their Early Years Advisers and TSOs who are largely responsible for their delivery. Advisers and TSOs frequently said they tailor the training modules to (a) make the materials more accessible and (b) to meet the particular needs of their schools and funded non-maintained settings, practitioners and participants.

2.43 In the case study schools and funded non-maintained settings all practitioners were asked how many of the eight training modules they had completed. For some reason there has been an exceptionally low

take-up of the modules by teachers in Year 1⁹. But the evaluation found that approximately 50% of all other teachers and approximately 30% of all additional practitioners had completed all eight modules.

2.44 In the funded non-maintained case study settings the evaluation found that approximately 61% of all practitioners and 100% of lead practitioners/managers reported completing all eight modules.

2.45 The evaluation has noted previously (Maynard *et al.* 2013) that there were no targets set for the completion of these national training modules. Nor is there any nationally collated information on take-up. This could be very important if rates of participation in the training modules begin to decline.

2.46 There is general satisfaction with the training modules and guidance materials provided by the Welsh Government, for example,

“Very happy with the implementation when we first started the Foundation Phase. Training has always been informative, and support from Foundation Phase Advisors, etc., has been very good”
(Funded non-maintained lead practitioner survey response)

2.47 Responses to the national survey reveals that only 27% of school head teachers and 14% of funded non-maintained lead practitioners thought that training materials need to be changed, reflecting the general satisfaction with this. However, the minority of unsatisfied respondents were often very critical in their assessment of the guidance and training materials.

2.48 For example, this minority commented that the guidance documentation is too lengthy, that there are too many booklets, and they often arrived too late to allow practitioners the opportunity to

⁹ At the time of the survey. Of course, teachers may teach different year groups from one year to the next.

familiarise themselves with the materials or to incorporate into their practice,

“I think the support and materials provided were overwhelming. It rained Foundation Phase materials for months. One or two handbooks would be better” (Case study head teacher).

2.49 In interviews with staff in the case study schools and settings the reasons for this varied by type of practitioners. For example, teachers often referred to the vagueness of the guidance provided, particularly in terms of the terminology used throughout the documentation; a concern previously highlighted by the evaluation (Maynard *et al.* 2012). A very specific example of this relates to the understanding, importance and place of ‘play’ within the Foundation Phase guidance materials. Similar concerns about confusing terminology were highlighted in the pilot evaluation by Siraj-Blatchford *et al.* (2005).

2.50 Most Local Authority Early Years Advisers and some head teachers suggested that the ambiguity or confusion about key terms or pedagogical features of the Foundation Phase in these training and guidance materials is often the basis for why there appears to be considerable variation in the implementation of the Foundation Phase between settings, schools and classrooms.

2.51 Amongst practitioners in the case study schools and settings there is still a general feeling of anxiety, and that they feel unsure about their understanding and hence implementation of the Foundation Phase. There is a clear appeal for more structured, frequent and tailored guidance.

2.52 Head teachers, on the other hand, tended to concentrate their criticisms of the guidance materials on what they consider to be ‘mixed messages’ within the Foundation Phase and with other policy developments,

“Messages have been inconsistent from the Welsh Government which have meant mixed messages from the Local Authority. Training has changed throughout, and staff have been left confused and demoralised” (Case study school head teacher).

2.53 There is a strong association between this perspective and concerns expressed by many Local Authority Early Years Advisers, head teachers and practitioners about the renewed focus and prioritisation of basic skills through the introduction of the Literacy and Numeracy Framework. Many thought that the Foundation Phase training materials ought to reflect this renewed focus or at least demonstrate more explicitly how the principles and pedagogies of the Foundation Phase are commensurate with the Literacy and Numeracy Framework¹⁰.

2.54 The evaluation finds that this relates, to some extent, to the percentage of Foundation Phase practitioners in the case study schools who said they have participated in further or on-going training relating to the Foundation Phase. Whilst around 47% of teachers in Nursery or Reception classes continue to participate in such professional development only around 13% of teachers in Year 1 or Year 2 classes also do this. It is possible that this significantly lower rate of continued professional development in the Foundation Phase amongst teachers of older year groups highlights a shift in their priorities and attitudes, irrespective of whether that is necessary or intended.

2.55 Finally, the majority of Local Authority Early Years Advisers and the Foundation Phase Training and Support Officers (TSOs) report how helpful the 0.1FTE Link Teachers are in the non-maintained settings.

¹⁰ The Foundation Phase is already reflected in the Literacy and Numeracy Framework (Welsh Government 2013a). Despite this, respondents were either unaware of this or were having difficulty putting this guidance into practice.

In particular, they note that they provide much needed support to practitioners in those settings where they find it difficult to attend other training activities. Resources within the Foundation Phase Grant to cover the release of staff to attend training events appeared to have not been passed on to funded non-maintained settings.

2.56 Furthermore, some funded non-maintained lead practitioners say that the initial level of support they received from their local authority was generally not enough but that they greatly benefit from the 0.1FTE Link Teacher.

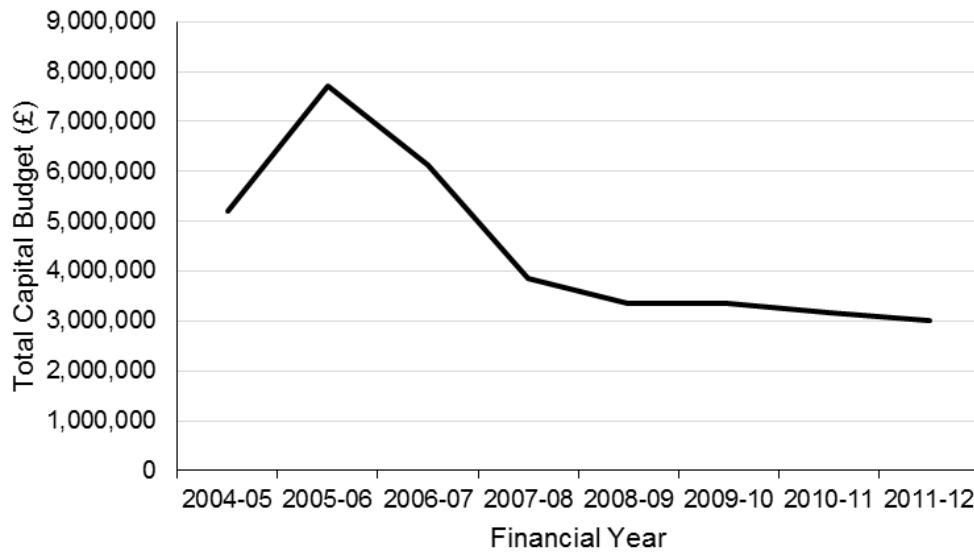
The School Environment

2.57 The final key element to the implementation of the Foundation Phase is not only a greater emphasis on using the outdoor environment in teaching and learning (see chapter 3) but also the additional resources for schools to develop their outdoor and indoor learning environments. The Welsh Government provided in total just under £36million of additional capital grants between 2004-05 and 2011-12¹¹ (Figure 8).

2.58 The Foundation Phase capital budget was made available to schools and funded non-maintained settings, generally for developing outdoor provision, access to the outdoors, fencing and other internal alterations.

¹¹ From 2012-13 the Capital Grant was transferred to the 21st Century School Grant. Although not exclusively for Foundation Phase capital developments further expenditure in this area is still possible.

Figure 8. Foundation Phase Capital Budget, 2004-05 to 2011-12



Source of data: Welsh Government

2.59 For case study schools and settings the four main ways they have changed their environments are:

- i. The creation of or increased number of 'learning zones' within classrooms;
- ii. Greater accessibility between classrooms and the outdoors;
- iii. The provision of more learning resources in the outdoor environment; and
- iv. Creating (more) all-weather outdoor environments.

2.60 Where accessibility between Foundation Phase classrooms and the outdoor environment has been structurally difficult this often meant schools had to undertake a major physical reorganisation of their schools.

2.61 Similarly, where some schools and settings are limited in the availability of outdoor space, changes to their environment is often substituted for ensuring that they have greater access to other community facilities (such as transport to forest schools or suitable

clothing for children so they can spend longer time off the school site).

2.62 When surveyed head teachers said that their schools have spent, on average, £15,000 on developing their indoor environment and £18,000 on developing their outdoor environments. Lead practitioners in funded non-maintained settings reported spending, on average, £3,000 on indoor environments and £3,500 on outdoor environments. In both types of settings there was a similar distribution of capital expenditure between indoor and outdoor developments.

2.63 There are approximately 1,300 primary schools and 750 funded non-maintained settings in Wales. If the survey is representative of all schools and settings this would suggest that the total capital expenditure is close to £43million in schools and close to £5million in funded non-maintained settings. In total it is estimated that £48million has been spent on capital developments – £12million more than was provided in additional funding by the Welsh Government¹².

2.64 Unlike the additional resource for staffing, the actual cost of changing the physical environment for schools and funded non-maintained settings would have been much harder to estimate. Although there has been guidance on how to make changes and improve outdoor spaces for learning and play, these were not referred to by head teachers or setting managers. Furthermore, there does not appear to have been any detailed guidance that was directly linked to the capital expenditure schools and settings received to improve their Foundation Phase learning environments.

2.65 Given the apparent short-fall in capital budgets noted and the uncertainty as to what changes to the environment were needed, it is

¹² Of course this is dependent on accurate information provided in the surveys and that respondents were representative of all schools and settings in Wales. However, we find no evidence of any systematic bias in the response to the survey based on school type, size, language, intake composition or location.

not surprising that this area of implementation tended to draw the most criticism, as these three head teachers demonstrate,

“Our school was not physically ready for the Foundation Phase – especially the outdoor area. There was a big cost implication to provide adequate outdoor space, kitchen facilities and storage. The extra funding for staffing ratios was just adequate and the extra grant for resources was very welcome – but not nearly enough to provide large equipment” (Case study school head teacher);

“Funding for outdoor areas is difficult in order to fulfil outdoor class provision, on top of staffing costs” (Case study school head teacher);
and

“The implementation of the Foundation Phase has worked well in our school. Issues which have arisen are to do with outdoor access, classroom sizes etc., i.e. the fabric of our school building, not the content of the Foundation Phase itself” (Case study school head teacher).

2.66 Similar concerns were raised in funded non-maintained settings,

“We are a private setting and it has been difficult to fund for certain resources as we have to purchase things ourselves. Garden (i.e. physical resources - bikes/climbing frames) are expensive, multicultural resources are also challenges.” (Case study funded non-maintained setting lead practitioner).

2.67 Nevertheless, almost all head teachers and 90% of funded non-maintained setting lead practitioners in the national survey say that that there has been some change to their indoor and outdoor environments. In particular, 69% of head teachers say that there has been a ‘large change’ to their outdoor environments, as this case study Welsh-medium school head teacher notes,

“...adjust the classrooms to create ‘Foundation Phase’ areas; buying essential resources to develop skills in the areas of learning. A lot of money was spent on developing the outdoor space for the Foundation Phase e.g. large physical equipment, playhouse, sand and water equipment and a climbing frame” (Case study school head teacher).

2.68 Funded non-maintained settings report there has been slightly less change to their indoor and outdoor environments, reflecting that many of these settings do not have ownership of their premises or have to share their premises with other users (e.g. ‘pack-away’ settings).

Issues with Implementation

2.69 Generally, head teachers and lead practitioners in funded non-maintained settings were very satisfied with the implementation of the Foundation Phase in their settings. On a score of between 1 (not satisfied) and 6 (completely satisfied) 70% of head teachers gave a score of 5 or 6. Only 3% of head teachers suggest a score of less than 3 for how satisfied they are with their school’s implementation of the Foundation Phase.

2.70 There is a strong association between how satisfied head teachers and lead practitioners in funded non-maintained settings are about their implementation and their enthusiasm for the Foundation Phase. Nevertheless only 9% of head teachers and funded non-maintained setting lead practitioners said they would change how the Foundation Phase was implemented in their settings.

2.71 This contrasts slightly to the levels of satisfaction with the guidance materials (or lack of them in some cases) produced by the Welsh Government. Here 40% of head teachers suggested that the support and materials produced by the Welsh Government need changing.

Twenty six per cent of head teachers also said they would like the Foundation Phase training to be changed.

- 2.72 Generally, lead practitioners in the funded non-maintained settings were more satisfied with the guidance materials and training they have received, but even here there is a notable minority (18%) who say they would like the Welsh Government guidance materials to be changed and 14% would like the training to be changed.
- 2.73 But the overwhelming concern with regards the implementation of the Foundation Phase relates to funding. 46% of lead practitioners in the funded non-maintained settings and 43% of school head teachers said that funding for the Foundation Phase had not been adequate.
- 2.74 In relation to adult:child ratios, the Foundation Phase marks a considerable improvement from its predecessor, even taking into account that the recommended adult:child ratios are not always being met and that there is some criticism of a lack of funding to meet the recommended ratios.
- 2.75 Instead, most concerns were about funding the cost of new learning resources and/or physical improvements to the learning environments (indoor and outdoor).
- 2.76 For some schools and funded non-maintained settings this issue relates to the constraints of their existing buildings and premises (e.g. listed Victorian school buildings, little outdoor space, shared premises). But for many others the dominant view is that they need more funding to create what they consider to be the appropriate learning environment and amount of learning resources for delivering the Foundation Phase effectively¹³.

¹³ The extent to which these concerns about funding levels are specifically about the Foundation Phase as opposed to general concerns about levels of educational funding in primary schools is difficult to disentangle.

- 2.77 Other issues relating to the implementation of the Foundation Phase include how prepared Pilot and Early Start schools, non-maintained settings and practitioners were in being able to deliver the Foundation Phase. Although Pilot schools and settings were integral to the development of many of these resources, many of those involved in the Early Start stage of the roll-out also felt they were underprepared.
- 2.78 Another issue relates to the amount of guidance head teachers, in particular, received to help them in the implementation of the Foundation Phase. It is noted by a wide range of stakeholders that there is no specific training module for head teachers.
- 2.79 Similarly, concerns are raised that few Year 3 teachers (or KS2 teachers generally) have participated in Foundation Phase training which may cause problems for the transition of pupils from the Foundation Phase into the Key Stage 2 National Curriculum (see chapter 4).
- 2.80 Another issue regarding implementation relates to the role of parents/carers in the Foundation Phase. Not only is the greater involvement of parents/carers in the education experience of young children one of the key aims of the Foundation Phase, the Foundation Phase Framework emphasises the importance of developing positive partnerships with parents/carers.
- 2.81 However, there is little evidence that parents were initially or continue to be involved in the implementation of the Foundation Phase. Indeed, Foundation Phase lead practitioners said that, on the whole, parent-school relationships remain unchanged since the introduction of the Foundation Phase.
- 2.82 The vast majority of parents/carers said they are satisfied with the Foundation Phase. However, the evaluation's survey of parents/carers found that around a third of parents/carers either did not know, or seem to have been misinformed about, what the

Foundation Phase is and what it tries to promote. Fourteen per cent of parents/carers also claim that they have not received any information about the Foundation Phase from any source, despite the Welsh Government publishing information on the Foundation Phase specifically for parents/carers¹⁴.

¹⁴ For example, the Welsh Government have published a 28-page guide for parents/carers entitled 'How is my child doing in the Foundation Phase? A guide for parents and carers' (2014).

3 Foundation Phase Practice

3.1 This chapter of the report focusses on the delivery or practice of the Foundation Phase, with a particular focus on how the Foundation Phase is being taught in schools and classrooms. It presents findings on changes in teaching practice, changes to the curriculum, the use of Foundation Phase pedagogies, the role of children, the role of parents, the use of the environment, and its particular contribution to the teaching and learning of the Welsh language, literacy and numeracy. The chapter concludes by identifying the main issues of Foundation Phase practice that result from the evaluation.

Changes in Teaching Practice

3.2 According to Local Authority Early Years Advisers older year groups (e.g. Year 2) experienced the least educational 'change' following the introduction of the Foundation Phase. Although older year groups have experienced some change, Local Authority Advisers believed that other pressures (e.g. transition into KS2, testing, higher ratios) have stunted any significant change in practice.

3.3 Changes to Reception classes are thought to be greater, with the majority of advisers stating there was an increase in experiential and participative activities, more freedom and outdoor activities and a less formal pedagogy.

3.4 However, this is in stark contrast to the perception amongst many Foundation Phase lead practitioners who thought that the Foundation Phase had led to the most change in Year 2 classes (65% said they are considerably different) and the least change in Nursery classes (46% said there are very little differences in these) (Table 5).

3.5 This view is also supported by interviews with Foundation Phase practitioners in schools, who thought that there was a clear contrast

in how different the Foundation Phase is, compared to KS1, in the older year groups. Conversely nursery practitioners often noted how similar the Foundation Phase is to what they were already implementing.

Table 5. Perceived Differences in the Delivery of the Foundation Phase Amongst Foundation Phase Lead Practitioners* (Compared to Key Stage 1 National Curriculum)

Setting	Age/year	Considerably different	% of valid responses		n (valid responses)
			Some differences	Very little difference	
FNM	Age 3	30.7	44.2	25.1	231
	Age 4	27.4	46.3	26.2	164
Schools	Nursery	9.3	45.2	45.6	270
	Reception	15.6	56.5	27.9	308
	Year 1	56.8	40.0	3.2	310
	Year 2	64.9	31.2	3.9	308

* Where there is no Foundation Phase lead practitioner in the school the head teacher would have answered these questions.

3.6 Also in contrast to the view of Local Authority Early Years Advisers, funded non-maintained lead practitioners tended to report more changes in their settings (for three and four-year-olds) than there was reported by school lead practitioners for Nursery classes in their schools. 31% and 9% respectively reported that there has been considerable differences to what was previously provided (Table 5).

3.7 Some non-maintained and nursery practitioners noted how some elements of their practice, e.g. observation and assessment, had become more formal since the implementation of the Foundation Phase, but that in general it was felt that the Foundation Phase is very similar to their existing early years practice.

3.8 These findings suggest that changes to practice have largely been dependent on individuals' decisions, attitudes and interpretations of

the Foundation Phase rather than broader structural or systematic factors.

Changes to the Curriculum

3.9 Over two-thirds of Foundation Phase lead practitioners in schools and funded non-maintained settings believed that the new curriculum of the Foundation Phase and associated Areas of Learning are an improvement on the previous Key Stage 1 National Curriculum.

3.10 Table 6 provides a breakdown of Foundation Phase lead practitioners in schools for each Area of Learning. Very similar results (not presented) are obtained for Foundation Phase lead practitioners in funded non-maintained settings when comparing against their Desirable Outcome predecessors.

Table 6. Perceptions of the Curriculum (by Foundation Phase Lead Practitioners in Schools)

Areas of Learning	% of valid responses amongst school				n (valid responses)
	Improvement from KS1 Significant	Some	No different from KS1	Worse than KS1	
PSDWCD	50.9	38.5	9.9	0.6	322
CD	38.7	44.9	15.2	1.2	323
PD	28.2	46.7	24.8	0.3	322
KUW	27.6	46.9	19.3	6.2	322
LLC	24.9	44.2	18.6	12.3	317
WLD	23.1	44.6	28.3	3.9	307
MD	19.4	47.3	21.9	11.3	319

PSDWCD – Personal & Social Development, Well-being & Cultural Diversity; CD – Creative Development; PD – Physical Development; KUW – Knowledge and Understanding of the World; LLC – Language, Literacy and Communication Skills; WLD – Welsh Language Development; MD – Mathematical Development.

3.11 One of the main curricula improvements due to the Foundation Phase is perceived to be in the area of Personal and Social Development, Wellbeing and Cultural Diversity, where 51% of Foundation Phase

lead practitioners said that this was a significant improvement. The least reported improvement was in Welsh Language Development, where 32% of respondents reported that the Foundation Phase is no different or worse.

3.12 The majority of Foundation Phase lead practitioners thought that the Foundation Phase has meant at least some improvement in the 'Language, Literacy and Communication' and 'Mathematical Development' Areas of Learning compared to their predecessors.

3.13 Despite practitioners generally seeing the new Areas of Learning as an improvement on Key Stage 1, around 34% stated that they believed some 'good' elements have been 'lost', namely the focus on science, history and geography.

3.14 Practitioners from funded non-maintained settings shared similar concerns regarding the lack of attention paid to writing, science and numeracy. But overall, in contrast to practitioners in schools, 88% stated they do not think anything 'good' had been 'lost' through the implementation of the Foundation Phase.

3.15 Overall, practitioners from schools and funded non-maintained settings reported that they felt the Foundation Phase is sometimes too broad, which could explain why they feel some of the more 'traditional' subjects had been 'lost' in the new curriculum.

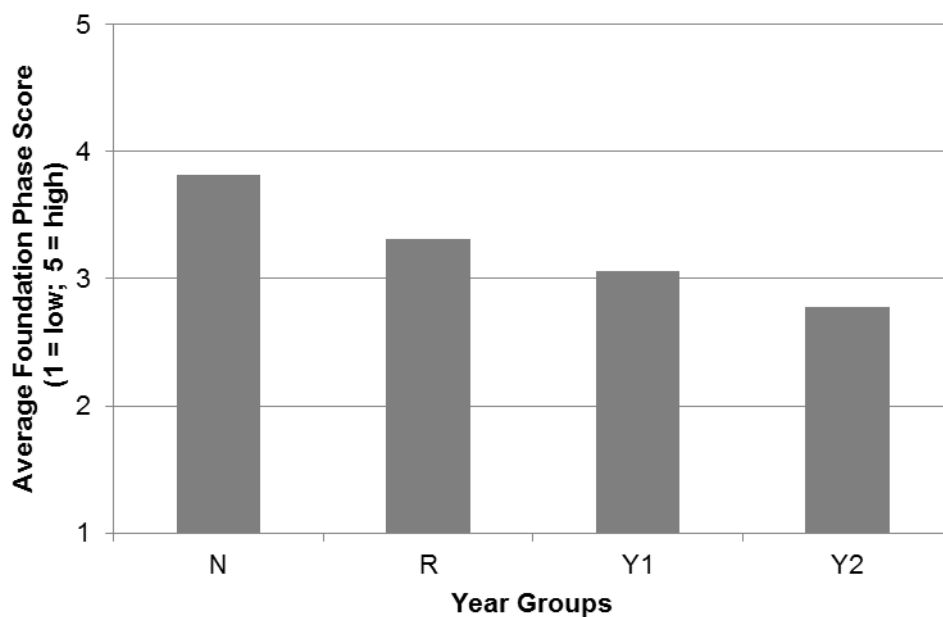
Use of Foundation Phase Pedagogies

3.16 The delivery of the Foundation Phase across case study schools does not significantly differ according to region of Wales, size of school (numbers on roll), rural or urban locality, or socio-economic status (based on the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals).

3.17 Generally, there is also little variation in how the Foundation Phase is delivered in English- and Welsh-medium schools and funded non-maintained settings.

3.18 However, case study observations revealed that Foundation Phase practice varied considerably across classes, year groups, schools and areas of learning. For example, Figure 9 shows the relationship between how much Foundation Phase pedagogies are used in classrooms and their year group¹⁵. This clearly shows that the Foundation Phase was significantly more likely to be used in younger year groups than older year groups.

Figure 9. Foundation Phase Practice in Schools, by Year Group



3.19 An example of a school that employs Foundation Phase pedagogies across all year groups is presented in Box 2.

¹⁵ For each observed classroom session a score is obtained that indicates the extent to which Foundation Phase pedagogies are being used.

Box 2. Example of Best Practice within the Foundation Phase:

Balance of Continuous, Enhanced and Focussed Activities

School #8

Although the school building is old, the learning environment afforded to the Foundation Phase in this school is large and open. Each teacher has a classroom that links to a shared central area.

For three afternoons a week, the Early Years unit (from Nursery to Year 2) implement the Foundation Phase in a carousel. Each practitioner is given a group (made up of a mixture of children from each year group), and the entire learning space (classrooms and central area), as well as overflow areas (e.g. the hall or the computer room) are utilised. Each adult is responsible for a different task, which they implement for each afternoon session (3 in total). The children are rotated once throughout the middle of the afternoon session (with each child completing each task by the end of the week).

There is a balance of focussed, enhanced and continuous tasks. Teachers normally concentrate on focussed assessment or development tasks based on literacy or numeracy, whilst additional practitioners concentrate on more thematic tasks. For example, the theme for the term was Wales, so there were *focussed tasks* where children could prepare and cook Welsh cakes or create their own folk dance. There were *enhanced tasks* where children could try and find pictures of matching sized leeks in the sand. Finally, there were *continuous activities* where children could role-play in the Welsh café.

Each Area of Learning is covered at least once and the types of activities are always developed by using 'talking tubs' with children before planning in a fortnightly cycle.

3.20 Generally, first-hand, practical pedagogies were observed frequently.

But as Local Authority Early Years Advisers have reported (see 3.2) the older the year group, the less often other Foundation Phase pedagogies were observed (e.g. child choice, physical activity, outdoor learning, continuous provision).

3.21 Overall, child choice, continuous/enhanced provision and outdoor learning were observed the least often, and only moderate physical activity, exploration and learning zone variety was observed.

- 3.22 Variation in practice can be partly explained by staff attitudes towards the Foundation Phase. In particular, there is a positive correlation between how favourable the head teacher and Foundation Phase lead practitioner is towards the Foundation Phase, and the extent to which it is being implemented.
- 3.23 There is also a correlation between the extent to which the Foundation Phase is being implemented in classrooms (as observed and measured by the evaluation team) and the presence of a greater number of additional practitioners in the classrooms (i.e. higher adult:child ratios).
- 3.24 The vast majority (78%) of activities recorded through classroom observations were adult-initiated. Discussions with practitioners suggested that some teachers were 'afraid' to let go of traditional formal pedagogies of KS1, fearing that the Foundation Phase might result in a dip in standards if they did.
- 3.25 Many schools said their approach to the Foundation Phase was 'evolving', particularly in Year 2 classes. This often involved (re)introducing formal literacy and numeracy sessions in the morning to ensure children are able to perform well in the recently introduced Year 2 reading and numeracy tests.
- 3.26 Overall, adult-led focussed provision was observed far more frequently than child-led continuous and enhanced provision, despite Foundation Phase guidance on this. Peer collaboration between children was observed more often during continuous and enhanced provision, and adult-child sustained interaction and co-construction was observed more often during enhanced provision.
- 3.27 In line with the less frequent use of Foundation Phase pedagogies in older year groups, the use of traditional desk-based whole-class teaching and focussed adult-initiated provision continues to be

prevalent in the older year groups. The only area of Foundation Phase pedagogy to increase across the year groups was reflection, often because teachers assumed older children were better able to review and reflect on their learning experiences.

The Role of Children in the Foundation Phase

3.28 One of the main aims of the Foundation Phase is that children should have ownership of their learning experiences through, for example, being involved in planning activities and having a more participative role in the classroom.

3.29 From case study observations, children were often involved in the day-to-day running of the Foundation Phase via daily roles/responsibilities and collaborative planning. For example, it was common to see children collecting hot dinner information and helping the teacher with the register. Staff were keen on such activities because they thought that it helped children to feel 'part of the process' and develop a sense of 'belonging' in the classroom.

3.30 Overall, adult-initiated learning was observed more often than child-initiated learning in the case study schools and settings. However, from discussions with children in Years 1 and 2, it is clear that the amount of child choice varied considerably from class to class and school to school. For example, some children spoke about choice as something that only happens when they finish their allocated work, whereas others spoke about regular times in the day called 'golden time' when they have the freedom to initiate and direct their learning (and 'play' as they often described it).

3.31 Analysis of the Year 1 classroom tour data indicates that set educational 'challenges' (often situated in different areas of the classroom's enhanced provision) can work well. Indeed, the data suggests that when children have sufficient time to engage with such

challenges they are knowledgeable about what is required of them and are enthusiastic about the activities.

3.32 Fifty-seven per cent of the teachers we observed reported making considerable efforts to involve children in their planning. For example, they let children decide on topics/themes and conduct mind-maps and talking tubs at the beginning of topics/themes to explore what direction children might like to take the theme (see Box 3 for an example of this).

Box 3. Example of Best Practice within the Foundation Phase: Pupil Involvement in Lesson Planning

School #13

At the end of each term in this school, children are given the chance to bring one thing from home which they would like to talk about. These items are all placed in the 'talking tub' and throughout the final week of term, time is set aside at the end of each day for a group of children to talk about their item. On the final day, the afternoon session is dedicated to this activity; the teacher groups the items into broad themes, and introduces a vote where the one with the highest number of votes becomes the theme for the following term. After the vote's result is announced, children are encouraged to think about what they would like to discover and learn about the particular theme that has been chosen.

For example, the winning theme for the observed class was 'Superheroes'. Children are split into small groups, each with an additional practitioner or teacher acting as scribe and are encouraged to create a mind-map of ideas about the theme on a large piece of paper. Some children listed all the superheroes they knew of, which the teacher later said could become their group names for the next term. Another group of children thought it would be good if they could create their own superheroes and write a profile on them as a writing exercise. Another group wanted the role-play area to include superhero costumes for dressing up, and another wanted to create different wall displays to represent different superpowers.

The teacher emphasised that the majority of the ideas gathered would be used in their planning for the following term. A child-centred theme was chosen to ensure that the class will be interested, and because the theme is matched to existing Areas of Learning and attainment goals the teacher could ensure that the children will also succeed academically.

- 3.33 Just over one fifth reported making consistent (but less elaborate/ meaningful) efforts to involve children in lesson planning. For example, following up children's ideas as and when they come up if possible. But conversely, the remaining quarter of teachers interviewed made little or no effort to involve children in lesson planning. Sometimes this is because they do not see much value in it, or because they find it difficult to find the time or ways in which it can fit into their pre-determined themes.
- 3.34 Funded non-maintained practitioners reported involving children the most in planning, whereas Nursery class practitioners reported involving children in planning the least (often stating they thought children were too young). Rates of involvement are similar in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 classes.
- 3.35 Many teachers stated that it was possible to fit the Foundation Phase skills and ranges around most themes and so welcomed children's interests into the classroom, whilst others felt they were constrained by a 'prescribed' curriculum.

The Role of Parents in the Foundation Phase

- 3.36 Parents/carers are rarely observed or said to be involved in the day-to-day running of the Foundation Phase. Only in a small minority of our case study schools did we see or hear about parent/carer volunteers. However, when this is happening, teaching staff are very positive about the role such volunteers can play in supporting classroom activities and children's learning. An example of this is given in Box 4.
- 3.37 In a minority of case study schools, some staff invited parents/carers to join the children and staff in setting themes/activities for the term ahead. However, on the whole, this was rare and Foundation Phase

lead practitioners are generally of the opinion that the relationships between the school and parents/carers have not changed much (if at all) as a result of the Foundation Phase despite Welsh Government guidance emphasising its importance.

3.38 Most schools either said that parent/carer relationships have always been difficult and remain so, or have always been good and remain so.

**Box 4. Example of Best Practice within the Foundation Phase:
Parental Engagement**

School #15

The current theme for Year 2 is Uganda. Previously that day, children had been responding to the register in Swahili rather than Welsh, as well as having a discussion with their teacher about a story about the daily lives of children in Uganda. This had then led to literacy and numeracy activities based on the topic.

Through an initial mind-map created at the beginning of the theme with the children's input, the suggestion of involving parents in thematic activities was pursued by the teacher. So, for the afternoon session, a parent was involved in showing groups of children how to knit. Children had picked up on how families in Uganda make a lot of their own clothing, and had wanted to know more.

As a result, letters were sent home with the children explaining the current theme, and parents/carers were able to express their interest and specify what type of activities they could implement. A video depicting the home life of a Ugandan child was shown at the start of the next afternoon session, and children had questions for the parents about knitting and creating clothes based on what they had seen. Each child had a pair of knitting needles and wool, and were given specific direction by the parents on how to stitch. There was a constant conversation between the children and the parents about how to stitch and the children were given the freedom to decide what they were knitting.

The activity was scheduled to continue weekly until the end of the theme, and by that time it was intended that each child would have a knitted section of wool which would form a classroom display.

The Use of the Environment in the Foundation Phase

- 3.39 As reported in the previous chapter, the implementation of the Foundation Phase has led to a significant change in the indoor and outdoor learning environments for many schools/settings.
- 3.40 Because of the emphasis on more first-hand, explorative and active activities, classrooms often adopted 'learning zones' to concentrate on different themes compared, for example, with a more traditional table and chairs set-up. There was also a considerable increase in the use of the outdoors as a learning platform.
- 3.41 Early years advisers and training support officers state that overall, they have seen more use of outdoor space since the implementation of the Foundation Phase. Some also mention that practitioners make better use of their space, that there is a general change in the learning environments, and that better resources are now available.
- 3.42 The evaluation observes that there are more 'learning zones' in mixed-age Foundation Phase classrooms than any other year group. The lowest proportion of 'learning zones' are recorded in Years 1 and 2. This result seems to mirror other findings reported (see para. 3.2 and Figure 9) that the pedagogy of older Foundation Phase year groups continues to remain more formal and didactic.
- 3.43 Case study observations revealed that the active use of numerous and varied 'learning zones' led to children being more likely to engage in participatory and exploratory activities (see Box 5 for an example of this).
- 3.44 There is also a strong correlation between the balance of continuous, enhanced and focussed activities and the availability of 'learning zones' within the classroom.

**Box 5. Example of Best Practice within the Foundation Phase:
Learning Zones**

School #18

A mixture of Reception and Year 1 children occupy one classroom in this school, where there is one teacher and one additional practitioner. So space is at a premium. The classroom is divided carefully into learning zones, and each zone is indicated by a clear label on the wall in a display accompanied by children's work. Some of the zones are physically divided; for example a dressing-up area and games area are separated by a bookcase containing teacher resources. The far left corner of the classroom is entirely occupied by a castle (the theme for the term) built and painted by the children for a new role-play area. The creative development area of the classroom is next to the role-play area, where tables and easels provide plenty of space for groups of children to paint, draw, and create. Nearby, there are discovery tables occupied by different castles for children to explore and a numeracy shop where children are able to count money and record their work.

There is an obvious difference between the more active activities here and the more prescriptive activities at the other side of the classroom, where there is a semi-circular table that is mainly used for focussed tasks with the teacher, and a carpet area for circle time. Here, there is also a reading corner and a drawing table. There is also an interactive whiteboard and the stage area in front of the whiteboard is used for many activities including show and tell.

Children can learn independently in each zone as there are set challenges to complete, including: creating a clay crown for the King or Queen of the castle in the creative area; or bring in an item from home which one might find in a castle for show and tell.

3.45 Although we observed that the majority of classrooms had at least four 'learning zones', the correlation analysis and case study observations (see Box 2 and exemplar vignettes in Appendix C) emphasise that what is of most importance is the way learning zones are used, not the mere presence of them.

3.46 It seems that pupils who experience more Foundation Phase pedagogies are more knowledgeable about what they are learning in the various learning zones. Whilst children who experience fewer

Foundation Phase pedagogies are often unsure about what they are learning in these different areas of their classrooms.

- 3.47 Classrooms that implement the Foundation Phase to a greater degree generally have more visually attractive environments where children's work is displayed and colourful material and resources are available.
- 3.48 The outdoor learning environment was rarely used as a continuous extension of the classroom, but more funded non-maintained settings used the outdoors compared to Year 1 and 2 classes.
- 3.49 When asked, practitioners often noted how outdoor learning opportunities are most often dependent on the weather. Despite this, children are observed engaging in more vigorous and dynamic activities when they are outdoors. There was also a higher percentage of child initiated and directed activities, and a better balanced use of focussed, continuous and enhanced provision (see Box 6 for an example of this).
- 3.50 Seventy-five per cent of practitioners reported using the outdoor learning environment at least two or three times a week, and 34% reported using it every day (although time of year impacts the frequency with which the outdoor learning environment is used).
- 3.51 Children were more likely to be observed outdoors with an additional practitioner, or alone, as opposed to being in the presence of a teacher. Of the 410 individual child observations recorded outdoors, 51% were with an additional practitioner, whereas only 17% were with a teacher. The remaining 32% were recorded as 'child acting without adult support'. This could reflect the perceived value of outdoor learning amongst teachers in particular.

3.52 Year 1 classroom tours revealed that children enjoy learning independently, and are more knowledgeable about their learning environment when given more opportunities and choice in a variety of interesting and rich 'learning zones'. The majority of children who participated in the Year 1 classroom tours said they rarely do any learning outside (although the tours were conducted in January, which might have impacted on the children's responses).

**Box 6. Example of Best Practice within the Foundation Phase:
Effective Use of the Outdoors**

School #31

Using the outdoors is a daily occurrence for the Year 1 classroom. Although the outdoor space is limited, the teacher ensures that the door from the classroom is always open and that the activities are relevant for any weather conditions.

After a brief introduction to the morning's activities, children are divided into groups and rotated throughout the session so that everyone has a chance to participate in a variety of activities (both indoors and out).

The outdoor space is divided in two, where there is a small covered concrete area filled with a variety of enhanced and continuous activities. The theme for the term is nature. Easels are mounted on to the fenced perimeter so children can paint flowers they see in the surrounding area. There is a discovery table where children can role-play with different zoo animals. Continuous activities include sand and water trunks, a drawing table and a play rug with cars. There is also a grassy area where an additional practitioner is helping a group of children plant seeds. At a wooden table area there is another group of children who have taken it upon themselves to search for bugs with a magnifying glass under the wooden stumps used for seats.

Often, the whole class takes advantage of the school's woodland area where they act out stories on the stage for their peers, and explore the pond and its surrounding area for different creatures to draw or photograph for their theme.

Welsh Language Development in the Foundation Phase

- 3.53 The 'Welsh Language Development' and the 'Language, Literacy and Communication Skills' areas of learning in English- and Welsh-medium schools and funded non-maintained settings respectively were observed to occur during both structured and more 'typical' Foundation Phase activities, such as first-hand, practical and active activities.
- 3.54 There was, however, a tendency for schools and funded non-maintained settings to develop children's Welsh language skills (in varying degrees dependent on age or language of instruction) in targeted morning circle time sessions, where songs and rhymes were used to practise their language skills¹⁶. In both English- and Welsh-medium schools and settings, these activities were aimed at enhancing children's vocabulary development, and were sometimes structured to focus on phonics.
- 3.55 There was a propensity for English-medium schools and funded non-maintained settings to develop children's Welsh language skills in isolation, whereas Welsh-medium schools and funded non-maintained settings adopted a more cross-curricular approach across all areas of learning.
- 3.56 A minority of local authority stakeholders and practitioners reported that the quality of additional practitioners' Welsh (of varying fluency dependent on the school's language of instruction) impacts on the successful implementation of the 'Welsh Language Development' (English-medium schools) and the 'Language, Literacy and Communication Skills' (Welsh-medium schools). However, the low number of responses seems to suggest a general satisfaction with

¹⁶ For example, this would typically include days of the week, months of the year, the weather and counting, as well as registration and dinner duties.

how Welsh language acquisition and development is being delivered and implemented within the Foundation Phase.

3.57 A high proportion of Welsh language interactions were observed for more typical Foundation Phase activities, such as first-hand, practical and active activities in both English- and Welsh-medium schools and settings (see Box 7 for an example of this). It is also noteworthy that a high proportion of Welsh language interactions are observed when no adults were present.

Box 7. Example of Best Practice within the Foundation Phase: Welsh Language Development

School #6

This school is located in a semi-rural area of Wales where a small proportion of children come from homes where Welsh is spoken. A mixture of both Year 1 and 2 children occupy the classroom, supported by a teacher and two additional practitioners.

The main aim of the session was Welsh language development. As well as a teacher-led focussed task, there were many enhanced and continuous activities. As Welsh language immersion is very important here, examples of children's work covered all available wall space, and key words for the term's theme were highlighted next to them. Every resource had a label, giving children a visual aid for its Welsh meaning and practitioners usually simultaneously translated key terms with children to ensure understanding.

In addition, the classroom had a daily Welsh language superhero. This individual was chosen in morning circle time by the teacher to wear a cape and take on the role of the 'Cymro Cryfa' (strongest Welshman) based on how they were seen to be promoting the Welsh language the previous day. A robing ceremony is held, akin to when the chair is awarded at the National Eisteddfod, and where the children sing the associated hymn, encouraging vocabulary development. The role of the Welsh language superhero is to intermittently scan the classroom for positive examples of Welsh language use among his or her peers and alert the teacher of such behaviour (which in turn reminds everyone to use their Welsh). Each positive example earns a 'tocyn iaith' (language token) for their team which is tallied up at the end of the week, and rewarded (e.g. with extra playtime).

- 3.58 A small number of local authority staff and school teachers reported that the more formal teaching of Welsh in English-medium schools seems to be beneficial, and saw language modelling within the Foundation Phase as difficult when children are learning independently.
- 3.59 A small number of local authority stakeholders and school teachers also reported that having a high percentage of children from non-Welsh speaking homes attending Welsh-medium education makes language immersion difficult, and the likelihood of children reverting to English more likely. However, as noted, the evaluation did not observe this very often, and instead observed children from non-Welsh speaking homes speaking Welsh with one another without the presence of an adult.
- 3.60 The way in which children are immersed¹⁷ in the Welsh language, as well as practitioners' and pupils' attitudes towards learning and developing Welsh language skills, varied across Welsh-medium schools. Some stakeholders suggested initial formal immersion would benefit the implementation of the Foundation Phase as children would develop better understanding of the Welsh language, which would mitigate future language immersion issues.

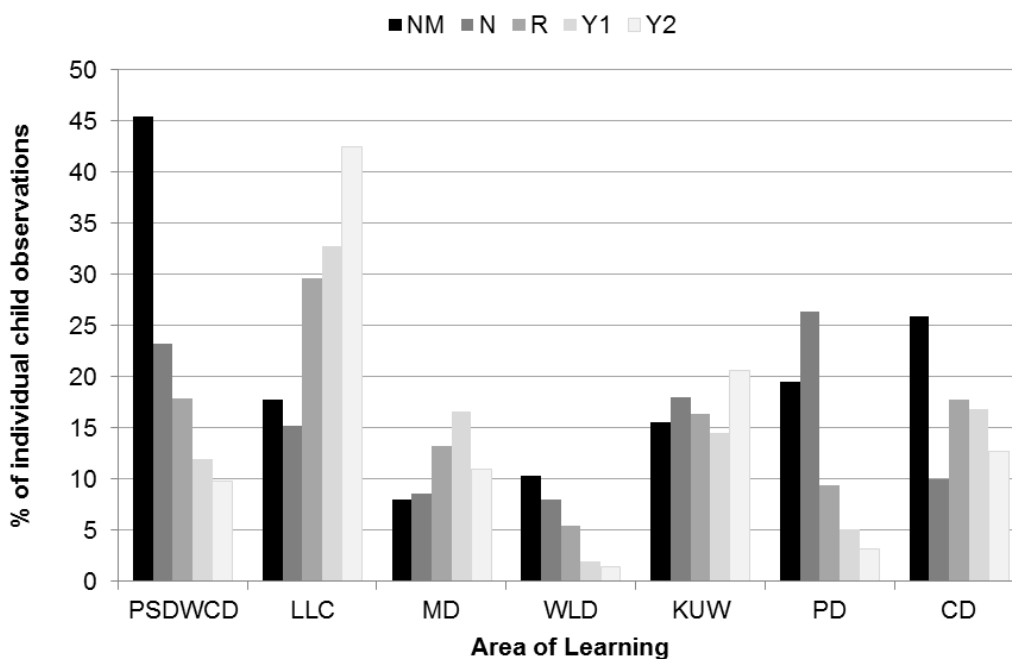
Literacy and Numeracy in the Foundation Phase

- 3.61 Overall, it seems that 'Language, Literacy and Communication' is more embedded in Foundation Phase activities than 'Mathematical Development', which usually takes more of an 'explicit' form in classrooms. For example, a 'Mathematical Development' activity might take the form of a challenge in an enhanced area, where the children measure the distance between various spaces in the

¹⁷ For example, only using Welsh, simultaneous translation, etc.

classroom using different rulers. However, as part of this explicit activity, children record the measurements on a clip-board, thus ensuring that elements of mathematical development, such as representing and communicating and associated literacy development, are an embedded part of the mathematical activity. This is demonstrated in Figure 10, which shows that ‘Language, Literacy and Communication’ is the most observed Area of Learning in the case study classes.

Figure 10. Frequency of Areas of Learning Observed, by Year Group



PSDWCD – Personal & Social Development, Well-being & Cultural Diversity; CD – Creative Development; PD – Physical Development; KUW – Knowledge and Understanding of the World; LLC – Language, Literacy and Communication Skills; WLD – Welsh Language Development; MD – Mathematical Development.

3.62 Although the implementation of both ‘Language, Literacy and Communication’ and ‘Mathematical Development’ Areas of Learning within the Foundation Phase varied across schools and classrooms, some trends still remain. For example, there was a higher percentage of observations where children were observed to be engaging in a literacy or numeracy activity in morning sessions, irrespective of how

much Foundation Phase pedagogies were used by the practitioners. Of all children observed engaging in LLC activities approximately 66% were in the morning. Of all children engaged in MD activities approximately 70% were in the morning. The majority of practitioners reported that children's levels of focus and concentration are at their highest in the mornings.

- 3.63 Although some practitioners noted that literacy and numeracy play an important part of all the Foundation Phase activities they do, the majority believe that in order to develop literacy and numeracy skills, some elements have to be taught in a more formal and didactic manner.
- 3.64 Many practitioners also noted that their Foundation Phase practices are often supported by prescriptive programmes specifically designed to encourage the development of literacy and/or numeracy skills. These include, but are not limited to, such programmes as 'Jolly Phonics', 'Big Maths', 'Big Writing' and 'Read Write Inc.'.
- 3.65 Local authority Early Years Advisers also reported that there has been a return to focussing on more formal teaching of literacy and numeracy (e.g. in the mornings), which they believed is in response to the pressure to raise standards. This, they said, might also reflect general misunderstandings about the Foundation Phase amongst practitioners.
- 3.66 In particular, it appears that teachers misunderstand the balance between structure and play as opposed to seeing this as a balance between continuous, enhanced and focussed provision. As a consequence teachers tend to draw upon a more structured and formal approach in order to avoid, as far as they understand it, a drop in literacy and numeracy standards.

- 3.67 Case study school analysis highlights that, compared to other areas of learning, 'Language, Literacy and Communication' and 'Mathematical Development' activities tended to be more structured and didactic in nature across all year groups. For example: adults were more likely to be present, initiating and/or directing activities; there was less child interaction; and there is a greater use of worksheets. In comparison, activities recorded under other Areas of Learning tended to be more child initiated, where an adult was less likely to be present and with more free movement for pupils.
- 3.68 It seems that classrooms where Foundation Phase pedagogies are being employed more also tend to utilise Foundation Phase pedagogies in the teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy. But classrooms where Foundation Phase pedagogies are used less often are more likely to continue to use formal and didactic approaches to the teaching and learning of these Areas of Learning.
- 3.69 Teachers that drew upon a larger range of Foundation Phase pedagogies, were more likely to use explorative, active and practical approaches in their delivery of literacy and numeracy. However, teachers who used fewer Foundation Phase pedagogies, and/or less often, took a more 'traditional' approach to teaching literacy and numeracy, using more desk-based, whole class activities.
- 3.70 From classroom observations, it seems that classrooms with more Foundation Phase pedagogies tended to include literacy and numeracy activities in a carousel of other activities within a session. Classrooms with less Foundation Phase pedagogies being used tended to concentrate on a literacy or numeracy task as the sole focus of a session, although even here there was often the chance for children to engage in more enhanced and continuous activities after completing the focussed task.

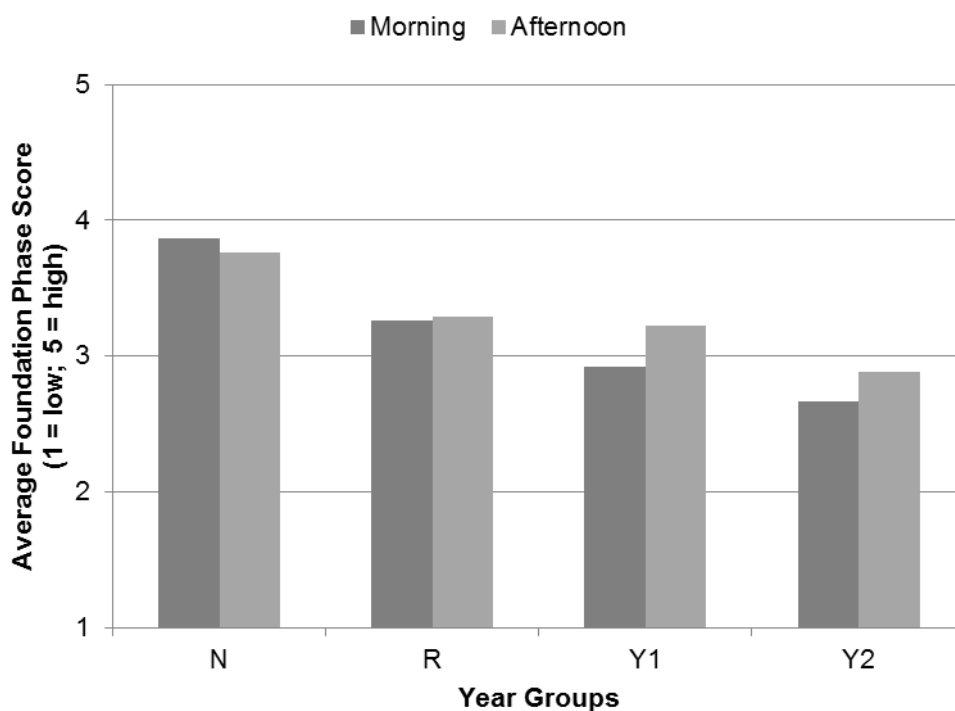
Issues with Foundation Phase Practice

- 3.71 In our observations practitioners were not often seen to be observing children, for example as a means to find out about their interests and monitor their progress. When this was observed it was seen more often during focussed rather than continuous or enhanced activities. Furthermore, this did not seem to vary across Foundation Phase year groups.
- 3.72 Staff in funded non-maintained settings were found to be observing children even less frequently than staff in schools.
- 3.73 A number of Local Authority Training and Support Officers noted that many schools and settings found it difficult to plan for child observations, with practitioners being unsure when and how this should be done, which could explain the low instances of observations observed.
- 3.74 Additional practitioners were often described by teachers as integral to the delivery of the Foundation Phase, especially for small group work. They were also observed using Foundation Phase pedagogies more often than teachers. Our observations also revealed that additional practitioners spent more of their time supporting enhanced and continuous provision than teachers did. Indeed, we observed that teachers spent 92% of their time supporting focussed activities only.
- 3.75 Classrooms with fewer children per adult were generally implementing Foundation Phase pedagogies to a greater degree. Interviews with local authority staff and school teachers suggested that the improved higher adult:child ratio provides a more tailored learning experience for each child. For example, practitioners are able to spend more time with fewer children, developing and/or enhancing their knowledge of particular topics. Further issues relating to staffing and ratios are discussed in chapter 2.

3.76 In some of our case study schools, the Foundation Phase was being delivered consistently across all Foundation Phase classrooms, whereas in other case study schools considerable variation was observed from one classroom to another.

3.77 There was also a tendency even within the same classroom to try and ‘mix’ pedagogical approaches during the day, such that the mornings tended to use more formal and didactic pedagogies (as discussed earlier in the delivery of literacy, numeracy and Welsh language development) and using more Foundation Phase pedagogies in the afternoons. Figure 11 shows the effect of this across all the case study classes – in Years 1 and 2 there was a tendency for more Foundation Phase pedagogies to be employed in the afternoon than in the morning¹⁸.

Figure 11. Use of Foundation Phase Pedagogies in the Morning and Afternoon, by Year Group



¹⁸ Observations of Nursery classrooms in the morning and afternoon are not comparable.

- 3.78 Teacher, head teacher and senior management attitudes towards the Foundation Phase can explain some of this variation in practice between classrooms and between schools. Other issues relating to training, support and guidance also appear to play a role in this variation (as also discussed in chapter 2).
- 3.79 Of all the elements of the Foundation Phase, the use of outdoor learning varies the most across classrooms and schools.
- 3.80 Although practitioners often stated a lack of direct outdoor access was an important barrier to using the outdoors as a continuous extension of the classroom, we found no relationship between this and the level of Foundation Phase implementation between classrooms. In other words some classrooms are seen to implement the Foundation Phase to a high degree despite not having any direct outdoor access.
- 3.81 Observational data also highlighted that children in older year groups were the least likely to access outdoor provision and more likely to spend time learning at desks.

4 The Impact of the Foundation Phase

4.1 This chapter of the report focuses on the impact of the Foundation Phase on pupils. It will present findings on a range of outcomes.

These include:

- i. Pupil involvement and wellbeing during learning (including attendance);
- ii. Transitions into Foundation Phase and to Key Stage 2;
- iii. Educational achievement at the end of Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2;
- iv. Literacy, numeracy and Welsh language development;
- v. Inequalities in educational achievement; and
- vi. Long-term impact of the Foundation Phase

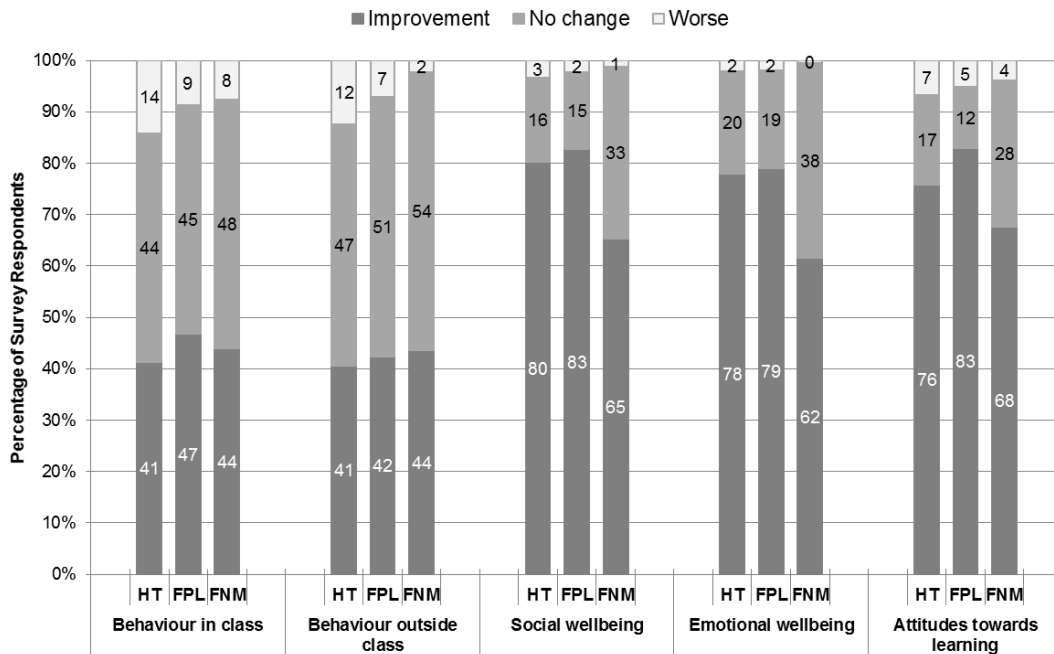
4.2 In this chapter we draw on a wide range of views, including the views of practitioners, children and their parents. We also draw upon our own observations of the Foundation Phase. However, a key part of this chapter is analysis of the National Pupil Database – some of which has been reported in more detail elsewhere (see Davies *et al.* 2013 and Taylor *et al.* 2015b).

Pupil Involvement and Wellbeing in the Foundation Phase

4.3 The vast majority of practitioners/key stakeholders interviewed and surveyed thought that the Foundation Phase was having a positive impact on children and learning. For example, 83% of Foundation Phase lead practitioners surveyed said they thought that children's attitudes towards learning had improved as a result of the Foundation Phase (Figure 12). Figure 12 also demonstrates that very few practitioners believed that the Foundation Phase is having a worse impact on pupil behaviour, wellbeing and attitudes to learning than its predecessor, the Key Stage 1 National Curriculum.

4.4 In particular, around three-quarters of Foundation Phase practitioners thought that the Foundation Phase is improving children’s social and emotional wellbeing and their attitudes to learning.

Figure 12. Perceived Impact of the Foundation Phase on Behaviour, Wellbeing and Attitudes to Learning



HT – Head teachers (n = 344); FPL – Foundation Phase lead practitioners (n = 256); FNM – Funded non-maintained lead practitioners (n = 241)

4.5 Whilst the majority of practitioners did not think the Foundation Phase was having much impact on children’s behaviour, either inside or outside the classroom, at least 40% of practitioners believed that this was improving.

4.6 In the case study schools and funded non-maintained settings, children were observed for their levels of wellbeing and involvement during learning using the Leuven Scales (Laevers 2005). We find that classroom sessions with higher levels of Foundation Phase pedagogies had a small but statistically significantly higher average level of children’s wellbeing and involvement (Figures 13 and 14 respectively). Furthermore, these relationships are found across all Foundation Phase year groups.

Figure 13. Relationship between Foundation Phase Pedagogies and Children’s Wellbeing¹⁹

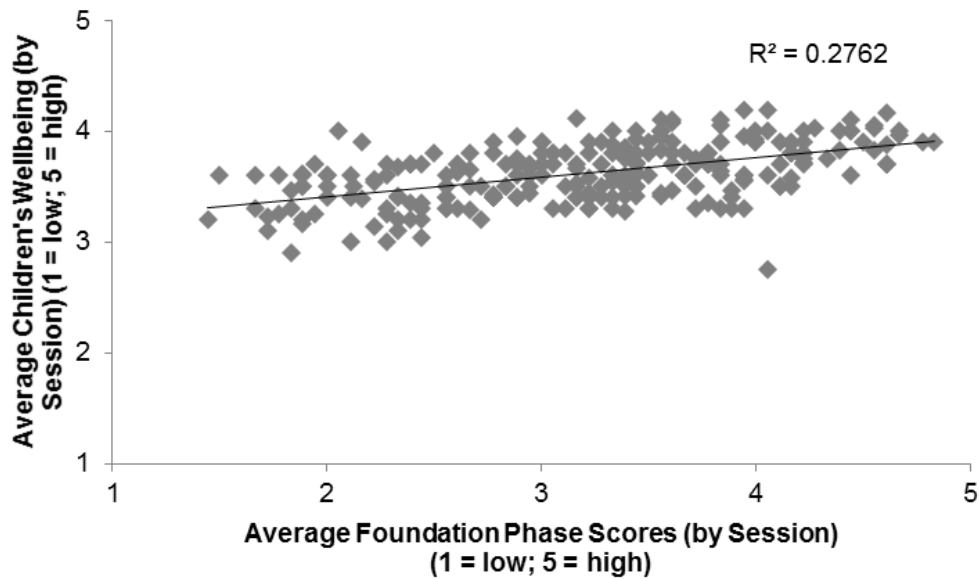
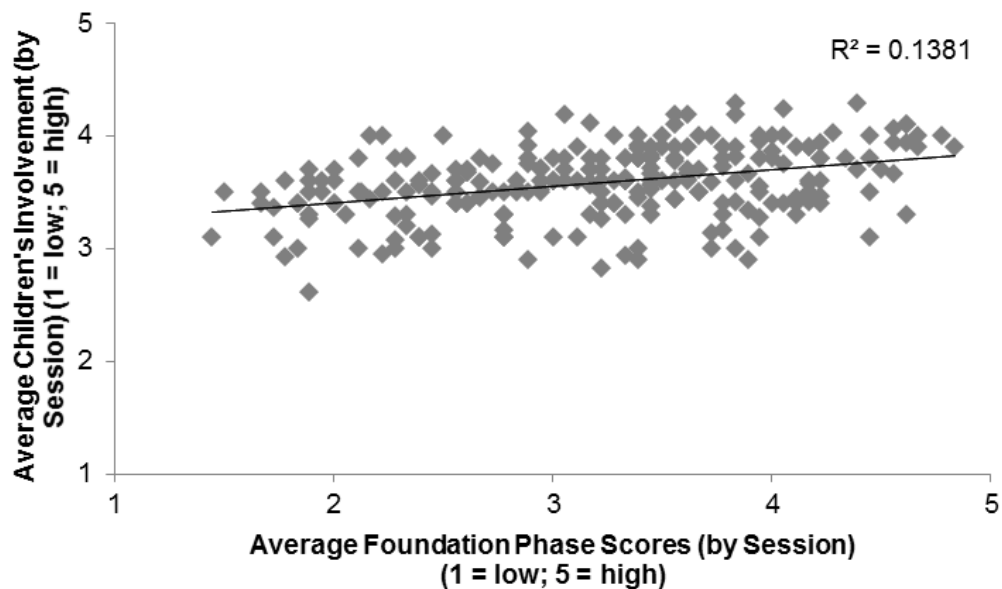


Figure 14. Relationship between Foundation Phase Pedagogies and Children’s Involvement



¹⁹ The R^2 values on Figures 13 and 14 are a measure of the relationship between two variables and are called the ‘coefficient of determination’ based on the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. This shows in Figure 13, for example, that 27.62% of the variation in average children’s wellbeing can be accounted for by the variation in Foundation Phase scores.

- 4.7 We also found that particular Foundation Phase pedagogies have a stronger association with children's levels of wellbeing and involvement than others. In particular child choice and physically active, explorative, first-hand pedagogies were associated with higher involvement and wellbeing. For example, child involvement was found to be, on average, 5% higher when children were physically active (as opposed to physically inactive).
- 4.8 Practical pedagogies, open questioning, peer collaboration and working in small groups was found to be statistically significantly associated with higher levels of pupil involvement but not necessarily higher levels of pupil wellbeing. Conversely, outdoor learning experiences were statistically significantly associated with higher levels of children's wellbeing but not necessarily higher levels of involvement.
- 4.9 However, it is also important to note that reflection (e.g. activity review) was associated with lower levels of child involvement and wellbeing. Interestingly we found that reflection normally took place at the end of a session and was often conducted on a whole-class basis.
- 4.10 When more traditional 'direct teaching' was observed, and when worksheets were being used, we observed statistically significant lower levels of child wellbeing, but not necessarily lower levels of child involvement.
- 4.11 The presence of a teacher (with or without an additional practitioner) was also associated with higher levels of involvement. Furthermore, child involvement was found to be, on average, 20% higher when associated with a warm (as opposed to cool) adult-child interaction.
- 4.12 But the presence of adults, or the nature of adult-child interactions, was not always associated with higher levels of child wellbeing.

- 4.13 Despite the observed associations between particular pedagogies and children's involvement and wellbeing, we found no meaningful associations with Year 2 children's own subjective attitudes towards school and learning and their subjective wellbeing²⁰.
- 4.14 However, the Year 2 focus group discussions suggested that there may be a positive relationship between observed Foundation Phase pedagogies and children's enthusiasm for learning. The more qualitative focus group method was perhaps better able to identify these associations.
- 4.15 We also found that Year 2 Foundation Phase pupils (surveyed in 2012/13) generally reported liking school more than Year 2 Key Stage 1 pupils surveyed in 2008 (also in Wales) as part of the Millennium Cohort Study.
- 4.16 However, the Year 2 Foundation Phase pupils were less positive about reading, and reported more behaviour problems and lower general life wellbeing when compared to their 2008 Millennium Cohort Study peers, although these findings should be treated with some caution given the time difference between these two surveys.
- 4.17 Many case study school practitioners and Local Authority Early Years Advisers and TSOs note that they thought the Foundation Phase was having a significant benefit on children's confidence. This is of course related to their wellbeing, and is generally said to be improving because children have more opportunities to try things out for themselves and make mistakes without fearing judgement by adults.
- 4.18 A number of practitioners and other stakeholders also mentioned that they thought the Foundation Phase is, if practiced correctly, is helping

²⁰ These children's subjective attitudes towards their learning and their wellbeing was captured from a self-completion survey of Year 2 children in each case study school.

to develop children's peer collaboration, problem solving and thinking skills. This was often attributed to the increased emphasis on explorative pedagogies, and continuous and enhanced 'must-do challenges'.

4.19 Practitioners often said that they thought the Foundation Phase was cultivating more independent learners. However, some teachers were concerned that some children are becoming overly dependent on the higher number of adults in the classroom.

4.20 Of all the Year 2 children surveyed, over half state that they liked reading (54%), writing (57%) and number work (58%) 'a lot'. There was no association found between children's enjoyment of these subjects and the extent to which the Foundation Phase pedagogies were being used in the Year 2 survey. However, children in classrooms drawing upon a larger range of Foundation Phase pedagogies were slightly more enthusiastic about their learning (which focussed on reading, writing and maths) compared to children in classrooms with less implementation of the Foundation Phase.

4.21 Unfortunately some of these more subjective outcomes are difficult to corroborate or difficult to provide a comparator. However, if dispositions to learning and wellbeing at school have improved we might expect to see some improvement in attendance at school.

4.22 Despite the general view amongst practitioners about the positive impact the Foundation Phase has had on children, most practitioners surveyed were unsure whether the Foundation Phase has had any impact on attendance, although more thought that it had got better than those who thought it had got worse.

4.23 However, as we have reported elsewhere (Davies *et al.* 2013, Taylor *et al.* 2015b), the available evidence to date suggests that the introduction of the Foundation Phase, at least among the majority of

Final Roll-out schools, is associated with an improvement in levels of pupils' overall attendance. This is measured in terms of the proportion of sessions pupils are in school, reduced levels of persistent absenteeism and a reduction in the incidence of unauthorised absence.

- 4.24 For example, after controlling for the characteristics of pupils and schools, pupils within the Foundation Phase are approximately 20% less likely to have an unauthorised absence overall.

Transitions into Foundation Phase and to Key Stage 2

- 4.25 The vast majority of funded non-maintained setting leaders, head teachers and parents/carers were happy with the transition arrangements into the Foundation Phase (from home, pre-nursery or a non-maintained setting). However, it was not clear whether the Foundation Phase has had any impact on this, although it is useful to note that transitions into the Foundation Phase were never raised as a concern or challenge in the national survey of head teachers and Foundation Phase lead practitioners.

- 4.26 Some head teachers, nursery teachers and Foundation Phase lead practitioners noted that children who experience some form of educational provision before reaching compulsory school age find it easier to adjust to school.

- 4.27 One of the original objectives of the Foundation Phase was to introduce a form of on-entry baseline assessment. Initially the Child Development Assessment Profile (CDAP) was introduced but within 12 months its statutory nature was removed following a rapid review of the tool by Professor Iram Siraj-Blatchford (2012) for the then Minister of Education and Skills, Leighton Andrews AM. This review concluded that the CDAP was too detailed, time-consuming, was not

useful for further tracking of pupil progress, lacked clear links to Foundation Phase Outcomes and its core purpose was weakly defined.

- 4.28 The dominant criticism of CDAP amongst practitioners in this evaluation was that it was too time-consuming and involved too much paperwork.
- 4.29 Despite these concerns the evaluation finds that 11% of schools were still using CDAP in full and 36% were using some elements of it. Only 36% say they are using some other on-entry assessment tool. The remaining 17% were unsure what on-entry assessment they are using.
- 4.30 Some head teachers were frustrated by the delay in replacing CDAP, and feel that the current inconsistencies in how schools are assessing baselines could actually be more damaging. It is important to also note that the withdrawal of CDAP has caused many school and funded non-maintained practitioners to doubt the Welsh Government's confidence in the Foundation Phase as an education policy.
- 4.31 A replacement for CDAP is currently being developed and piloted and is expected to be rolled out to schools in September 2015.
- 4.32 Many practitioners thought that any new on-entry baseline assessment should link explicitly to Foundation Phase outcomes, and some practitioners suggested that one system should be used to track continuous progression from the Foundation Phase right through primary (and perhaps secondary) school.
- 4.33 Many different methods are currently being used to track pupil progress, and practitioners expressed their frustration at the general lack of guidance on this.

- 4.34 However, the principle of an on-entry assessment tool is generally welcome. For example, some funded non-maintained setting leaders thought that the requirement to share baseline on-entry assessment data provided great potential for meaningful communication with schools (although this currently was not always being realised).
- 4.35 Another consequence of having not put in place a viable on-entry assessment tool, was that there is considerable uncertainty amongst practitioners about how best to track children's progress through the Foundation Phase. Indeed we found that case study schools are using a number of different tools for this, but none of which seem to closely link progress to Foundation Phase Outcomes.
- 4.36 In particular, Foundation Phase lead practitioners thought that one of the core Areas of Learning – Personal & Social Development, Well-being & Cultural Diversity – is particularly difficult to measure and track progress in, and that any efforts to do so are too subjective. Practitioners generally thought that it was correct to make this Area of Learning central to the Foundation Phase curriculum, but felt much more support was needed to measure it.
- 4.37 Despite observation being one of the core elements to Foundation Phase practice we found there are few instances of practitioner observation (9% of all pupil observations) or practitioner assessment (3% of all pupil observations)²¹. Perhaps unsurprisingly these tended to occur during activities with a focus on literacy or numeracy.
- 4.38 We also found that additional practitioners are more likely to be seen undertaking observation and assessment than teachers. Indeed, additional practitioners see this as an important development in their roles within the Foundation Phase and that it contributes to a greater 'whole-team ethos' within the classroom.

²¹ Of course, it is possible that practitioner observations and assessments are being tacitly or indirectly acquired, and hence it is difficult to actually 'observe' this taking place. However, if this is being undertaken tacitly or indirectly this does raise questions about how accurate and/or transparent they are.

- 4.39 In terms of the transition from the Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2 National Curriculum (KS2) 25% of Year 3 teachers interviewed in case study schools believed that the Foundation Phase is having a positive impact on preparing children for KS2. In particular, they cite improvements in independent learning, oracy skills, confidence, and peer collaboration, and have a greater desire to learn.
- 4.40 However, nearly one in five Year 3 teachers (19%) think that the Foundation Phase is having a negative impact in preparing children for KS2, whilst the remaining 56% majority of Year 3 teachers interviewed remain unsure or have mixed views about this.
- 4.41 Of particular concern amongst these Year 3 teachers is that children are overly dependent on having additional practitioners to support them, have reduced concentration levels and their presentation of work (e.g. writing) is worse. A small number of Year 3 teachers also thought that children's special educational needs are not being picked up as early, perhaps due to the lack of observational assessment.
- 4.42 However, different views about the transition from the Foundation Phase into KS2 may also depend on what KS2 teachers are doing to help that transition. For example, 44% of Year 3 teachers said that they are making changes to the way they teach the former Foundation Phase pupils. In particular, they say they use more practical activities, give children more choice and make sessions shorter.
- 4.43 Conversely, 31% of Year 3 teachers said that pedagogical changes are being made in Year 2 of the Foundation Phase to help prepare children for KS2. This includes, for example, requiring children to sit for longer, writing more and offering gradually less choice.
- 4.44 To some extent this is reflected in the findings about Foundation Phase practice reported in chapter 3. However, it is important to note

that some of the children in our focus groups said that they find the reduction in the use of Foundation Phase pedagogies as they grew up difficult to deal with. But equally, some children revealed that they enjoy the ‘additional challenges’ of ‘harder’ work (provided activities are still varied and interesting).

4.45 Given the level of concern or uncertainty about the transition into KS2 nearly two-thirds (62%) of Year 3 teachers interviewed were generally supportive of the Foundation Phase.

4.46 However, many Year 3 teachers suggested that unless the curriculum and teaching approaches used in KS2 also focus on positive learning dispositions any potential benefits of the Foundation Phase might be lost.

4.47 Parents/carers were also generally supportive of the transition from Foundation Phase to KS2. Eighty eight per cent of the parents/carers surveyed thought that their child settled well into Year 3 and 46% reported that their child’s enjoyment of learning had been sustained in KS2. A third (36%) believed that their child’s enjoyment had actually increased. Only 15% thought that it had decreased²².

Educational Achievement at Foundation Phase

4.48 The majority of teachers were satisfied with the End of Foundation Phase Outcome Assessments. However, as already noted, some Foundation Phase lead practitioners reported that the ‘Personal and Social Development, Well-being and Cultural Diversity’ Area of Learning is particularly difficult to measure and therefore assess.

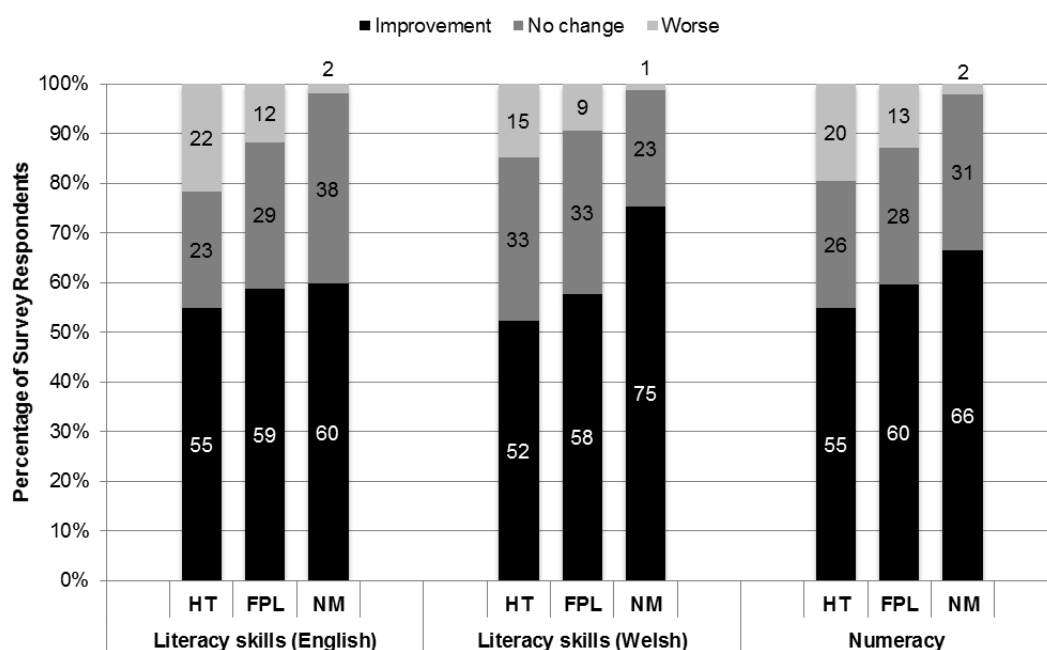
4.49 We also found that nearly one in five (18%) teachers were concerned about how to communicate the End of Foundation Phase Outcome Assessment results to parents/carers, and several highlighted issues

²² 3% were unsure whether their child was enjoying KS2 more or less than the Foundation Phase.

about mapping Foundation Phase outcomes onto Key Stage 2 'levels'.

- 4.50 Another issue that has been highlighted previously (Davies *et al.* 2013) is the extent to which levels of attainment in the Foundation Phase are commensurate with, and hence comparable against, levels of achievement in Key Stage 1.
- 4.51 The intention was that Level 2 in Key Stage 1 teacher assessments would be the equivalent of Outcome 5 in the Foundation Phase teacher assessments. However, in Pilot and Early Start schools in particular there was little consistency across the two assessment regimes. Although this does appear to have improved in the final roll-out schools it still means it is difficult to compare levels of achievement in the Foundation Phase compared to its KS1 predecessor.
- 4.52 Nevertheless, the majority of practitioners believed that there have been improvements in literacy (English and Welsh), particularly in children's oracy and communication skills, and numeracy (Figure 15), although a sizeable proportion of head teachers and funded non-maintained lead practitioners thought that there had been no change in levels of achievement.
- 4.53 Interestingly, head teachers and Foundation Phase lead practitioners in Welsh-medium schools were more likely to report that they had seen an improvement in children's Welsh literacy skills since the implementation of the Foundation Phase.

Figure 15. Perceived Impact of the Foundation Phase on Literacy and Numeracy



HT – Head teachers (n = 344); FPL – Foundation Phase lead practitioners (n = 256); FNM – Funded non-maintained lead practitioners (n = 241)

4.54 Perhaps of most concern is that about 20% of head teachers believed that literacy and numeracy levels were worse following the introduction of the Foundation Phase. Furthermore, some Foundation Phase lead practitioners thought that a misinterpretation of Foundation Phase guidance by some teachers has had led to a decline in literacy and numeracy standards because of too much emphasis on child choice at the expense of focussing on basic skills.

4.55 Despite concerns about how to assess a child's 'Personal and Social Development, Well-being and Cultural Diversity', many practitioners thought that standards in this area have also improved.

4.56 There was considerably less consensus amongst practitioners about the impact of the Foundation Phase in other Areas of Learning; i.e. in

‘Creative Development’, ‘Physical Development’ and ‘Knowledge and Understanding of the World’ Areas of Learning.

- 4.57 There were also mixed views about the impact of the Foundation Phase on ‘Welsh Language Development’ but 58% of Foundation Phase lead practitioners surveyed and 42% of those interviewed believed that the introduction of the Foundation Phase had led to an improvement in developing children's Welsh language skills in both English- and Welsh-medium schools.
- 4.58 Indeed, despite concerns about a possible tension between Welsh language development and the Foundation Phase, we found that incidental Welsh was prevalent in the majority of English-medium schools, and was still present verbally (e.g. at lunchtime) and non-verbally (e.g. on wall displays) around schools.
- 4.59 For the reasons already noted, it is not possible to confirm the perceived impact on pupil achievement at the end of the Foundation Phase compared to its predecessor, KS1. However, we are able to examine the relationship between levels of implementation of the Foundation Phase and pupil achievement. In other words, are pupils who attend schools that have implemented more of the principles and pedagogies of the Foundation Phase more likely to achieve higher teacher assessments compared to pupils in schools that have not implemented the Foundation Phase to the same degree?
- 4.60 This analysis can only be undertaken for just over 1,000 pupils who reached the end of the Foundation Phase in the 41 evaluation case study schools in 2011/12²³. However, the results of this suggest that after controlling for a number of key characteristics of the pupils and their schools, the greater the level of implementation of the

²³ This is because the evaluation only has information relating to the levels of Foundation Phase implementation in these 41 case study schools.

Foundation Phase in their school the more likely pupils are to achieve the Foundation Phase Indicator (FPI)²⁴.

- 4.61 Table 7 presents the results of three logistic binary regression analyses that attempt to estimate the likelihood that a pupil achieves the FPI. For each variable considered in the two sets of results the Odds Ratio is presented – that is the probability that a pupil with this characteristic achieved the FPI compared to other similar pupils but who do not have this particular characteristic (*italicised*).
- 4.62 If there is no difference in the likelihood of a pupil achieving the FPI compared to other children without that characteristic the odds ratio would be equal to 1.0. Any value below 1.0 suggests they are less likely to achieve the FPI, and a value of more than 1.0 suggests they are more likely to achieve the FPI.
- 4.63 The extent of Foundation Phase implementation is represented here by the Foundation Phase Score. This is based on a series of classroom observations in each of the case study schools. This is a standardised score so that the odds ratio relates to an increase in one standard deviation in the Foundation Phase Score. The Score is simply an indicator of the extent to which the Foundation Phase is being implemented in schools. Therefore, how much it varies between schools is not of importance here. Instead we are primarily interested in whether (a) an increase in the Foundation Phase Score (i.e. greater use of the Foundation Phase pedagogies) is associated with an increase or a decrease in the odds or probability that a pupil achieves the FPI and (b) whether these results are statistically significant.

²⁴ The Foundation Phase Indicator (FPI) is achieved if a pupil achieves Outcome 5 or above in the Language, Literacy and Communication (English or Welsh), Mathematical Development and Personal and Social Development, Well-Being and Cultural Diversity Areas of Learning.

Table 7. Estimating the Likelihood of Achieving the Foundation Phase Indicator (FPI), 2011/12

Binary Logistic Regression: FPI		Model A	Model B	Model C
Valid cases		1,091	1,065	794
Missing cases		10	26	297
Cox & Snell R Square		0.268	0.275	0.257
Variable		Exp (B) (Odds Ratios)		
Constant		16.55	20.60	28.58
Foundation Phase Score (standardised)			1.55***	1.67**
Prior school effectiveness (KS1, 2010/11)				4.38***
Gender	<i>Male</i>			
	Female	1.37	1.37	1.21
Free School Meals	<i>Non-FSM</i>			
	FSM	0.62*	0.61*	0.83
Ethnicity	<i>White British</i>			
	Not White British	0.76	0.76	0.72
SEN provision	<i>No SEN</i>			
	SEN	0.05***	0.05***	0.03***
Regional consortia	<i>North Wales</i>			
	South West & Mid Wales	0.56	0.54	0.52
	Central South Wales	0.75	0.65	0.50
	South East Wales	1.54	1.58	1.14
% of school pupils:				
eligible for free school meals		0.97***	0.97***	0.98*
with SEN provision		1.03***	1.03***	1.03**
not White British		1.00	1.00	1.00

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

4.64 The results for Model A in Table 7 provide the odds ratios of achieving the FPI without taking into account the Foundation Phase Score (i.e. variations in the level of implementation). So this demonstrates that pupils eligible for free school meals are significantly less likely (odds ratio = 0.62, p<0.052) to achieve the FPI than equivalent pupils not eligible for free school meals. FSM pupils are 38% less likely to achieve the FPI compared to non-FSM pupils.

- 4.65 Model B repeats the same analysis except it now includes the Foundation Phase Score for the school the pupil attended to represent the variation in implementation.
- 4.66 Of most importance is that an increase in the level of implementation is significantly associated with an increase in the probability that a pupil achieved the FPI in 2011/12 (highlighted in **bold**) (odds ratio = 1.55, $p < 0.001$). Indeed, the scale of this is quite considerable – the results suggest that some pupils are more than 50% more likely to achieve the FPI compared to similar pupils based on the extent to which the Foundation Phase has been implemented in their school²⁵.
- 4.67 Finally, Model C attempts to control for a school's prior effectiveness based on levels of achievement in KS1 for the previous cohort in 2010/11. The results of this analysis shows that schools that were previously more 'effective' than other schools continue to increase the likelihood that a pupil achieves the FPI. Indeed, further analysis reveals that schools that were previously deemed 'effective' are, on average, more likely to have implemented the Foundation Phase than schools who appear to have been less 'effective', at least within this small sample of schools.
- 4.68 Nevertheless, even after controlling for a school's previous 'effectiveness' (insofar as it is possible to do so) it still remains the case that pupils attending schools with relatively high levels of Foundation Phase implementation are still significantly more likely to achieve the FPI (odds ratio = 1.67, $p < 0.001$).
- 4.69 Further analysis reveals that variations in adult:child ratios between schools is not positively associated with an increase in the likelihood that a pupil achieves the FPI. In actual fact there is a small decrease in the probability, such that for every five fewer pupils per adult (i.e.

²⁵ An increase in the Foundation Phase score of one standard deviation is approximately equivalent to moving from an 'average' school to being a school in the top fifth of schools implementing the Foundation Phase.

higher improved adult:child ratios) across the Foundation Phase years in a school there is a 10% increase in the probability that a pupil will not achieve the FPI²⁶.

4.70 More detailed comparison of the relationships between the twelve different Foundation Phase pedagogical elements and educational achievement at the end of Foundation Phase suggests that it is the combination of different elements rather than any particular pedagogical element that is associated with improved outcomes for children. In other words it is the Foundation Phase as a whole which is contributing to this documented achievement.

4.71 However, we do find that children are twice as likely to reach expected levels (i.e. Foundation Phase Outcome 5 or above) in 'Language, Literacy and Communication' and 'Mathematical Development' if these Areas of Learning are taught with a relatively high degree of child choice and participation.

Educational Achievement at Key Stage 2

4.72 In terms of the medium-term impact of the Foundation Phase most Year 3 teachers interviewed were unsure whether the Foundation Phase has had or will have any impact on Key Stage 2 outcomes.

4.73 However, analysis of about the first 1,500 pupils who attended Foundation Phase pilot schools and who reached the end of Key Stage 2 (KS2) between 2008/09 and 2010/11 suggests that their levels of attainment at KS2 in English, mathematics and science is improved compared to the attainment of similar pupils who did not participate in the Foundation Phase (Taylor *et al.* 2015b).

²⁶ It is important to note that this does not mean the comparison of adult:child ratios between the Foundation Phase and its KS1 predecessor is negatively associated with educational achievement. It only compares between-school variation in adult:child ratios within the context of an overall improvement in adult:child ratios.

4.74 In English we estimate that after controlling for key individual characteristics of the pupils and the schools they attend, the proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 or above in KS2 increases by at least 5.5% points following the introduction of the Foundation Phase, and at least 3.5% point improvement in science. However, improvements in maths achievement in KS2 is much less noticeable (although still an improvement) – we estimate that 0.4% point more pupils achieve Level 4 or above in maths after participating in the Foundation Phase.

Inequalities in Educational Achievement

4.75 An implicit aim of the Foundation Phase and then later affirmed in *Building Resilient Communities* (Welsh Government 2013b) is to reduce inequalities in social and educational outcomes. For example, the Welsh Government established a target to narrow the gap in attainment levels between learners aged 7 eligible for free school meals and those that are not eligible for free school meals, who achieve the expected levels at the end of the Foundation Phase, as measured by the Foundation Phase Indicator, by 10 per cent by 2017 [from 18.3% in 2012]” (Welsh Government 2013b:14).

4.76 It has already been reported that there appears to have been some significant improvement in school attendance and persistent absenteeism following the introduction of the Foundation Phase. However, the evaluation finds little improvement in the differences in school attendance between pupils eligible for free school meals and all other pupils (Taylor *et al.* 2015b).

4.77 In terms of the impact of the Foundation Phase on inequalities in educational achievement around a half of head teachers (47%) and their Foundation Phase lead practitioners (54%) thought that it is helping to reduce inequalities in attainment. However, a large proportion (43% of head teachers and 38% of Foundation Phase lead

practitioners) did not think it is having any impact on reducing inequalities in achievement.

- 4.78 Although most survey respondents (e.g. 53% of Foundation Phase lead practitioners) thought that children living in poverty were benefiting from the Foundation Phase, there was considerable difference of opinion on this.
- 4.79 Some head teachers said that socio-economically disadvantaged children are benefitting from the Foundation Phase because it offers more experiential forms of learning that are particularly lacking at home. Similarly some believed it offers a more 'enjoyable' and 'low pressure' pedagogy that means children continue to engage with their learning despite falling behind their peers.
- 4.80 But conversely, there are other practitioners who thought the lack of structure and a more informal learning environment meant that socio-economically disadvantaged children are not developing their basic skills (literacy and numeracy), which in turn is disadvantaging their subsequent learning.
- 4.81 Head teachers, their Foundation Phase lead practitioners and funded non-maintained lead practitioners were also asked what impact they thought the Foundation Phase is having on other groups of children. The results for school Foundation Phase lead practitioners are summarised in Table 8 (very similar results are found for other groups of practitioners).
- 4.82 Boys, children with Special Educational Needs, children with English/Welsh as an Additional Language and summer-born children were all thought to be benefiting from the Foundation Phase. These groups were also highlighted by Local Authority Early Years Advisers, who thought the greater use of the outdoor environment and more active learning are particularly beneficial to boys.

Table 8. Perceived Impact of the Foundation Phase on Different Groups of Pupils (by School Foundation Phase Lead Practitioners)

	% of respondents		
	Disadvantaged	No change	Benefitted
Boys	6	9	85
SEN	6	16	78
First language not English/Welsh	4	34	62
Summer-born	3	35	62
Not being educated in first language	4	38	58
More able and talented	13	31	56
Girls	5	42	53
Living in poverty	2	45	53
BME (black minority ethnic)	2	59	39
Advantaged backgrounds	3	58	39

Based on 256 valid responses

4.83 Focus groups with practitioners working with children with special educational needs and/or who have additional language needs generally thought that, if implemented correctly, the Foundation Phase can have positive impact on these groups.

4.84 In particular, they identified the importance of a developmental approach to learning, greater flexibility in the curriculum and making the early years more child-centred, had significant benefits for SEN and EAL children. They also thought that the Foundation Phase encouraged a more engaging and multi-sensory pedagogy that these groups of children tend to require.

4.85 A number of SEN practitioners were also of the opinion that more mainstream schools are more willing to admit children on a part-time basis from special schools because Foundation Phase pedagogies can cater for their needs.

- 4.86 However, some SEN and EAL practitioners were more cautious, suggesting that some particular groups of SEN children, such as those with emotional and behavioural difficulties or with autism spectrum disorders, perhaps feel 'overwhelmed' by a perceived 'lack of structure' in their learning.
- 4.87 Another concern relates to a point made previously that some children with more minor SEN (i.e. where they do not get any formal additional support) are becoming more dependent on the higher number of adults in the classroom, which poses a challenge once they start Key Stage 2.
- 4.88 Analysis of the National Pupil Database (NPD) shows that the introduction of the Foundation Phase is not, to date, associated with any significant changes in the differences in educational outcomes between pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 based on their gender, their ethnicity or their eligibility for free school meals (an indicator of socio-economic disadvantage) (Davies *et al.* 2013, Taylor *et al.* 2015b).
- 4.89 For example, the evaluation estimates that girls were over 40% more likely than boys to achieve Level 4 or above in KS2 English before the Foundation Phase. But after the introduction of the Foundation Phase they are now nearly 75% more likely to achieve Level 4 or above compared to boys.
- 4.90 For pupils eligible for free school meals, the evaluation estimates that they are nearly 30% less likely to achieve Level 4 or above in KS2 English than other pupils. After the introduction of the Foundation Phase this differential remains the same.
- 4.91 However, this analysis is limited to a relatively small number of children who attended Foundation Phase Pilot schools early in its

implementation and who have reached the end of Key Stage 2²⁷. Furthermore, this analysis cannot take into account variations in the implementation of the Foundation Phase between schools, which as shown earlier, has been found to be associated with pupil attainment at the end of the Foundation Phase.

4.92 Despite this, it is worth noting that observed child involvement and wellbeing ratings in case study schools are generally higher for girls than for boys²⁸, even for schools with a high degree of Foundation Phase implementation. This would suggest that there is still a long way to go before the Foundation Phase can fully address differences in the educational experiences of boys and girls.

²⁷ Analysis of Key Stage 2 attainment has been presented elsewhere based on these small numbers of pupils. However, analysis of inequalities in attainment is based on even smaller sub-groups of pupils, hence the greater uncertainty about the validity of these results.

²⁸ It was not possible to look systematically at pupil involvement and wellbeing for other groups of children.

5 An Economic Evaluation of the Foundation Phase

- 5.1 This chapter of the report provides an economic evaluation of the Foundation Phase. In particular it outlines what new expenditure is associated with the Foundation Phase and how that compares with other interventions and the cost of primary years education generally. The chapter then estimates the possible long-term impact on later educational and labour market outcomes. This is important in helping to determine the total cost-benefits of introducing the Foundation Phase.
- 5.2 In terms of the economic literature on the benefits of education, Heckman is a great advocate of the benefits of early educational interventions, particularly on disadvantaged groups. He has found that early years educational investment, in particular, has the ability to promote efficiency and reduce inequality. The effectiveness of any early years interventions, however, are only likely to be sustained if succeeded by high quality learning programmes (Cunha and Heckman (2007) and Heckman (2007)).
- 5.3 Heckman also notes that a quality educational experience is more than just improvements in achievement tests, but would also include non-cognitive factors that are associated with later success in life, both in labour market and non-labour market areas. Socio-emotional skills (i.e. character skills, such as persistence, attentiveness, motivation, self-confidence, sociability, impulse control etc.), he suggests, are as important, if not more important, in determining lifetime success. These skills can also be influenced by education. These skills can be extremely important in determining employment, occupational attainment, wages, health, wellbeing, happiness and criminal activity.
- 5.4 Heckman states that remedial action can be taken later in life, but it will be much more costly and less effective. As a result he and others

find relatively high returns to educational investment, especially education in the early years and especially when directed at disadvantaged groups. UK evidence has also found children's all-round development can be boosted by early years experiences, (HM Treasury 2004 and Melhuish 2004).

- 5.5 Clearly attempting to capture and measure *all* the benefits of the Foundation Phase is extremely demanding. Some are fairly specific and short term, such as improving learning outcomes by age 7, others are extremely broad and long-term, such as increasing post-compulsory education and reducing socio-economic disparities within Wales. Given that many of these anticipated beneficial outcomes are not expected to transpire until well into the future, a comprehensive evaluation of all aspects of the Foundation Phase is not currently possible and are, therefore, the focus of recommendations for future evaluation of the Foundation Phase outlined in chapter 6.
- 5.6 However, as noted earlier by Heckman, skills beget skills and future educational attainment builds on earlier attainment. Therefore, estimates on how improvements in levels of attainment at age 7 could influence future GCSE performance is considered. In theory this analysis could be extended to likely improvements in participation rates at post-compulsory education such as FE and HE with associated improvements in wages and reduction in the probability of experiencing spells of unemployment. All of which could be assigned a monetary value. Attaching a monetary value to any associated improvement in individual wellbeing would be more problematic.
- 5.7 Therefore, given the very broad nature of some of the targeted Foundation Phase outcomes a full cost-benefit approach isn't realistic. Many of the benefits of the programme as well as being difficult to measure are also targeted to appear well into the future. Whilst measured future benefits could be appropriately discounted, this would suggest a degree of precision that isn't warranted.

- 5.8 Instead we undertake an indicative Cost-Consequence Analysis (CCA) which, unlike Cost Benefit Analysis, doesn't require discounting future costs and benefits so they can be measured in the same units. Rather it outlines that some cost and benefits are difficult to measure but shouldn't be ignored, given, they can be important feedback for policymakers. Such benefits may be noted by head teachers, teachers, parents, children, from focus groups and from evaluators' observations, and whilst difficult to attribute a monetary value, shouldn't be ignored.
- 5.9 To provide insight into these issues we also consider the Value for Money measure (VfM) for the Foundation Phase, and specifically the 3Es – economy (minimising the cost of resources), efficiency (how well inputs are converted into outputs) and effectiveness (the extent to which objectives are met) (DfID 2011).
- 5.10 However, making precise estimates for the economic benefits is very difficult, particularly in relation to impacts in the early years of a child's life, since the labour market benefits, for example, are some way off from the source of the initial benefit. Therefore assessing the value for money, or cost-benefits, of the Foundation Phase is particularly difficult and has a number of limitations. Nevertheless, it does provide an indicative idea of what the long-term impact of the Foundation Phase could be and how the benefits of this can be contrasted with the increased costs of the Foundation Phase.

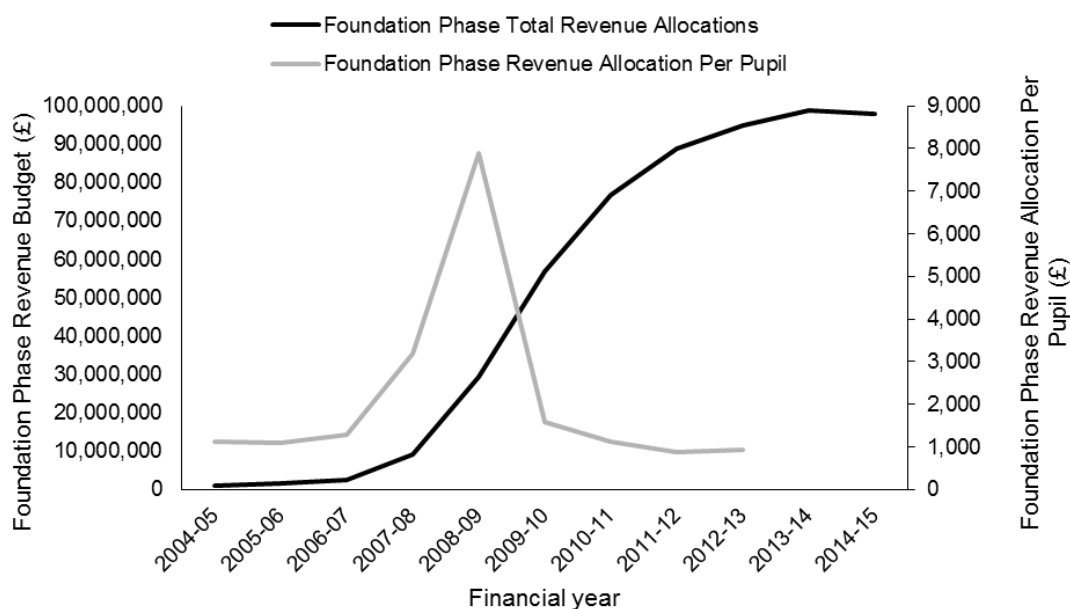
The Costs of the Foundation Phase

- 5.11 As outlined throughout the report there are three main areas of additional school expenditure associated with the introduction of the Foundation Phase. These are:
- i. Staffing;
 - ii. Training and support; and

iii. Capital development.

5.12 The total cost of the Foundation Phase (and the cost per pupil participating in the Foundation Phase) is illustrated in Figure 16²⁹. This shows that the total level of additional recurrent expenditure for the Foundation Phase is currently just under £100million. This is the equivalent of an additional £1,000 per pupil per year in the Foundation Phase.

Figure 16. Foundation Phase Revenue Allocations (total and per pupil), 2004-05 to 2011-12/2014-15



5.13 One way of putting these costs in to context is to compare the cost of the Foundation Phase with other related initiatives. For example, Sure Start in England cost £1,300 per eligible child per year in 2009-10 (Meadows 2011). Table 9 outlines the total recurrent costs of a

²⁹ It is important to note that budget allocations do not necessarily reflect what is spent (i.e. expenditure). The analysis in this chapter is based on Welsh Government budget allocations. However, in chapter 2 we suggested that the cost of capital development projects in schools could be exceeding the national budget allocation. However, it could be argued that any other sources of expenditure are already within the system; hence we are primarily concerned here with the additional costs. However, this does not suggest there are no opportunity costs that have not been possible to account for elsewhere in the education system.

number of other major educational initiatives. Clearly the Foundation Phase is a major 'intervention' in these terms.

Table 9. Summary of Education-related Grants in Wales

Grant	Established	Budget	No. of children	Approx. cost per child per year
School Effectiveness Grant	2011-12	£32.6M	452,000	£72
Pupil Deprivation Grant ¹	2012-13	£32.4M	70,000	£463
Foundation Phase Grant	2004-05	£95.0M	103,000 ²	£922

1 – The Pupil Deprivation Grant is delegated directly to schools.

2 – This excludes Nursery-aged children in the Foundation Phase.

5.14 However, to contrast the cost of the Foundation Phase with the costs of education prior to its introduction, the evaluation estimates that the total cost to the Welsh Government of primary years education for a child in Wales has increased from £25,241 to £28,019 per pupil (based on 2012-13). This is the equivalent of an 11% increase in the national costs of primary years education.

The Long-Term Benefits of the Foundation Phase

5.15 In order to determine the potential long-term benefits of the Foundation Phase the analysis uses observed improvements in KS2 achievement (for each of English, maths and science) (summarised in the previous chapter and in detail in Taylor *et al.* 2015b) to predict what impact these improvements at the end of primary school could have on later GCSE grades. We do this using the following steps:

- i. Recalculate the number of pupils who would have achieved Level 4 at KS2 if they had participated in the Foundation Phase;
- ii. Use previous proportions of Level 4 pupils who achieve GCSE grades to recalculate the total number of Level 4 pupils

achieving GCSE grades. This provides the lower boundary of estimates; and

- iii. The estimated upper boundary is calculated by estimating the revised number of pupils who achieve less than Level 4 at KS2 who then achieve GCSE grades (based on prior proportions) and adding this to the lower boundary.

5.16 The results of this are presented in Table 10. For example, it is estimated that with observed improvements in KS2 levels of achievement in English it could be expected to see between a 1.6 to 3.4 percentage point increase in the proportion of pupils achieving Grades C or above in English at GCSE (i.e. the difference in the Non-FP proportion and the lower and upper boundaries of the estimated FP proportions achieving these grades).

Table 10. Predicted Impact of the Foundation Phase on GCSE Grades (Using Adjusted Differentials)

GCSE	% Achieving A+		% Achieving C+		% Achieving G+	
	Non-FP	FP	Non-FP	FP	Non-FP	FP
English	16.9	18.0	66.8	68.4-70.2	99.3	88.3-99.4
Maths	15.7	15.8	61.7	60.2-61.9	98.0	84.1-98.0
Science	19.5	20.2-20.3	68.8	70.1-70.9	98.5	93.8-98.7

5.17 Inevitably it is very difficult to translate these educational improvements into economic benefits, not least because the benefits of the Foundation Phase may be universal (i.e. apply to all children in Wales). However, if it is assumed that the Foundation Phase could increase the proportion of pupils achieving GCSE grades C or above by between 1% – 4% points, this would be the equivalent of approximately 310-1,240 additional pupils each year reaching Level 2 thresholds.

5.18 According to analysis by the ONS (2011) the 2010 pay gap between adults with Level 2 qualifications compared to Level 1 qualifications was 7%, with a median hourly pay of £8.68 and £8.07 respectively. Based on the average number of hours actually worked in the UK (1,652 according to the OECD) this is the equivalent of an additional £1,008 per annum in earnings for those benefitting in their GCSE achievement. This is between £312,480 and £1,249,920 per year in total additional earnings for those benefitting from reaching Level 2 due to the introduction of the Foundation Phase.

5.19 Although these estimated additional earnings are significantly short of the recurrent annual cost of the Foundation Phase (between £95-99million) this does not take in to account (a) the accumulated earnings of those benefitting from the Foundation Phase, (b) additional earnings of other Foundation Phase pupils who may also have benefitted from the Foundation Phase, and (c) other economic benefits or savings also associated with increased earnings.

The Economy and Efficiency of the Foundation Phase

5.20 It is very difficult to estimate the efficiency of the Foundation Phase since this is a universal policy and there are no equivalent costed schemes to compare it with. Furthermore, as has been discussed already, it is very difficult to disentangle the costs of the Foundation Phase from the previous costs of primary years education, particularly in terms of its component parts. However, in this section we consider whether the Foundation Phase could have been implemented more efficiently without detrimentally affecting the benefits it has achieved.

5.21 As outlined previously the main expenditure of the Foundation Phase has been in staffing the new recommended adult:child ratios. In 2012/13 this accounted for 93% of the total Foundation Phase revenue, with the remaining 7% for training and support. It is unclear

how much of the benefits on educational outcomes outlined in the previous section are due to the improved adult:child ratios, the use of new pedagogies, the new curriculum, the new training and support provided (particularly in the funded non-maintained settings) or the 'effect' of capital developments associated with the Foundation Phase, etc. However, the evaluation does offer some insights into this.

5.22 The evaluation finds some evidence that the Foundation Phase is associated with improved educational outcomes, both in Key Stage 2 and at the end of the Foundation Phase. Crucially, the evaluation finds that pupils attending schools that apply Foundation Phase pedagogies are more likely to achieve the Foundation Phase Indicator at the age of 7 years, holding all other things constant. The evaluation also finds evidence to suggest that the Foundation Phase benefits significantly from low adult to child ratios. Not only are benefits seen in terms of levels of educational achievement, but also child involvement in learning, their wellbeing in classrooms and settings and in their attendance at school.

5.23 However, the evaluation also finds that less than half of schools meet the recommended adult:child ratios of 1:8 in Nursery and Reception classes. But the evaluation finds that the recommended adult:child ratios for Years 1 and 2 are generally being exceeded.

5.24 To what extent schools are 'redistributing' staff numbers away from 3-5 year olds and towards 5-7 year olds is unclear. To some extent differences in the adult:child ratios of these two age groups could be due to the arithmetic of allocating whole staff members to classrooms with a statutory maximum size of 30 pupils. In other words any classroom with less than 30 pupils will almost always have an adult:child ratio of less than 1:15. And the converse could be said for 3-5 year olds, where it is more likely that a classroom will have three

staff (a maximum ratio of 1:10) than have four staff members (a maximum ratio of 1:7.5).

5.25 The evaluation also finds numerous examples of where schools use their staff flexibly across classes and year groups. This is further complicated by the substantial proportion of Foundation Phase pupils in mixed age classes – for example, we find that 19% of practitioners working with children of Foundation Phase age also have children in their classes who are in Key Stage 2.

5.26 Furthermore, the evaluation estimates that there are currently 1,639 Additional Practitioners currently working in Reception classes. To meet the recommended ratios of 1:8 there would need to be 2,112 Additional Practitioners in this year group (an additional 473 adults)³⁰. If the recommended ratio were, for example, increased to 1:10 then we estimate there would need to be 1,528 Additional Practitioners. This would require 111 fewer adults, the equivalent of an 8% reduction in the number of Additional Practitioners, and only a 4.5% reduction in the total number of adults (including QTS teachers) working in Reception classes.

5.27 We can calculate the cost savings of a 1:10 ratio for 3-5 year olds in two ways. First, on the basis of what savings would be made if the recommended ratios for 3-5 year olds were being met, and second on the basis of current ratios for 3-5 year olds. On the former this would be the equivalent of approximately 19% in additional staff cost savings, but on the latter this would approximately 6% in additional staff cost savings³¹.

³⁰ These estimates are based on the 'golden child' calculation, such that one additional child above the recommended ratio would trigger the need for an additional adult. This would ensure that the recommended ratios are never exceeded.

³¹ These estimations are based on the assumptions that (a) the additional Foundation Phase staff costs are just for Additional Practitioners and that (b) approximately two thirds of additional staff costs are directed to 3-5 year olds.

- 5.28 The main limitation with these estimated savings is that there is little accurate information about how the allocated Foundation Phase Revenue for additional staff is currently spent within schools. Consequently it is not clear what the impact of reducing staff costs would be on the benefits outlined earlier. For example, if staff costs are being redistributed from 3-5 year olds to 5-7 year olds in schools, and that this redistribution of resource is an important factor in ensuring some or all of the benefits of the Foundation Phase are being realised, then reducing the overall staff costs could detrimentally affect the benefits that have been observed.
- 5.29 However, the evaluation offers another insight that may be useful here. Despite variations in adult:child ratios between schools, the evaluation finds no evidence that these variations are associated with differences in the levels of educational achievement of pupils at the end of the Foundation Phase, again after controlling for other factors. This would suggest modest changes in the adult:child ratios may not be detrimental on levels of children's achievements at age seven.
- 5.30 As outlined in the introduction to this section, there is still a paucity of evidence on evaluating the efficiency and benefits of staffing costs within the Foundation Phase. Indeed, there may be other more beneficial or more efficient ways of spending the Foundation Phase Revenue on staffing. This includes whether there would be some benefit redistributing staff costs to Year 3 classes, or whether it would be more beneficial to have higher adult:child ratios but more QTS teachers working with 3-7 year old pupils. The evidence on different staffing arrangements is very limited and often contradictory. For example, The Education Endowment Foundation reports there are educational benefits from small group teaching (Torgerson *et al.* 2014) but also reports that the presence of teaching assistants (or improved adult:child ratios) has no measurable impact on pupil attainment (Blatchford *et al.* 2004).

- 5.31 In terms of training and support the evaluation finds evidence that greater levels of training amongst staff is associated with greater use of Foundation Phase pedagogies in classrooms and settings, particularly in terms of more practical, physically active and outdoor activities. However, the evaluation also finds that only 66% of teachers and, even more crucially, 37% of school Additional Practitioners have completed all eight Welsh Government Foundation Phase training modules.
- 5.32 It could be argued then that if more practitioners undertook this training and were then more likely to employ Foundation Phase pedagogies in their practice, then levels of pupil achievement could improve more than has been currently observed. This would suggest that cost savings in training and support could be detrimental to any further benefits the Foundation Phase may have. Indeed, the evaluation recommends much greater attention be given to training and supporting practitioners in the Foundation Phase.
- 5.33 The third main area of costs in the Foundation Phase relate to capital expenditure. The evaluation has found that the use of a variety of learning zones and outdoor spaces encouraged pupils to be more engaged in participatory and exploratory activities and more likely to be physically active. In turn, pupils are then more likely to be involved in learning and have higher levels of wellbeing. And as already noted, there is evidence to suggest that schools and settings are spending more on capital developments to the Foundation Phase than has been allocated by the Welsh Government.
- 5.34 Of course, it is possible that estimates of expenditure are inflated. It is also possible that some of the capital expenditure has been spent on the maintenance of the physical environment that may have occurred without the introduction of the Foundation Phase. However, the evaluation recommends that further physical improvements are made

to indoor and outdoor learning environments in the Foundation Phase.

5.35 Given the Foundation Phase Capital Grant was transferred into the 21st Century School Grant from 2012/13 it is not clear whether further savings to capital expenditure in the Foundation Phase can actually be made by the Welsh Government. The evidence suggests that further resource may need to be provided in this area rather than less. The evaluation also proposes that capital expenditure be used more flexibly to encourage greater use of the outdoors, particularly in schools and settings that are constrained by the amount of outdoor space they have of their own.

5.36 Lastly, the evaluation finds no evidence that developments to indoor and outdoor environments have been redundant. It does find, however, that the use of the outdoors is perhaps not being maximised, even where improvements to outdoor learning environments have been made. This is particularly the case in terms of continuous access between indoor and outdoor learning environments. However, the evaluation recommends that greater use of a variety of learning environments should be encouraged for the benefits of learners, suggesting that expenditure in this area could not have been spent more efficiently.

Conclusions

5.37 In terms of the costs, evidence from the feedback from teachers, head teachers, pupil observations, and our analysis of national administrative data, suggest that there could have been savings in additional staffing costs, particularly in terms of increasing the adult:child ratios for 3-5 year olds.

5.38 There is also some evidence in the evaluation to suggest that modest savings in this area may not have much detrimental impact on levels

of pupil achievement. However, much of the justification for this is based on many schools and settings already not meeting the recommended adult:child ratios for 3-5 year olds.

- 5.39 There are some important consequences of this. First, it is not clear where or how the potential ‘underspend’ on meeting the recommended adult:child ratios for 3-5 year olds is being used. It could be the case that this resource is being redistributed to other parts of the Foundation Phase that in turn benefits pupil outcomes. Hence any overall reduction in funding may be detrimental.
- 5.40 It is certainly the case that some realignment of resourcing is possible – such as moving resources away from staffing to support and training. But it may be just as beneficial to encourage more autonomy and flexible use of existing staffing costs across the entire Foundation Phase and possibly into Year 3.
- 5.41 The evaluation finds little evidence that there could be past or future savings in relation to the other two areas of expenditure – training and capital developments. Indeed, here, the evaluation finds that, in the main, these areas may require additional resource rather than less.
- 5.42 Whilst no formal cost-benefit analysis was possible, given the substantial literature outlining the importance of early education attainment and associated high rates of return, the finding that the Foundation Phase has increased attainment levels, and that the possible accumulated labour market benefits could be substantially greater than its costs, would suggest the programme is cost effective, even without considering improvements in general wellbeing.
- 5.43 However, it is important to note that the evaluation is unable to consider whether these additional resources could have been used more effectively in other ways and in supporting other education policies.

6 Conclusions and Recommendations

- 6.1 The evaluation finds that the introduction of the Foundation Phase has led to overall improvements in children's educational achievement, wellbeing and involvement. Furthermore, these improvements have the potential to lead to even greater educational success as the children grow up.
- 6.2 The evaluation would therefore encourage the Welsh Government to continue to develop and enhance the Foundation Phase. It would also encourage all schools and funded non-maintained settings to do more to implement the Foundation Phase pedagogies and curricula.
- 6.3 In order to fulfil these ambitions the evaluation sets out 29 key recommendations. These recommendations apply to a number of stakeholders, including: the Welsh Government, Estyn, regional consortia, local authorities, head teachers, funded non-maintained setting managers, school governors and practitioners.
- 6.4 There continues to be widespread support for the Foundation Phase amongst practitioners and parents, particularly due to greater parity of esteem between skills/knowledge (e.g. Literacy/Numeracy) and Personal/Social Development. But given the nature of the Foundation Phase it is still very early to fully understand its impact, particularly in terms of the medium to longer-term educational and social benefits for pupils.

Recommendation 1: Practitioners and stakeholders should be made aware of the evaluation findings as a way of highlighting the overall positive view of the Foundation Phase as experienced by those implementing it, but also to highlight areas for further improvement or development.

- 6.5 There remains a tension and possible contradiction between the Foundation Phase and the recent introduction of the Literacy and Numeracy Framework and national assessments for Year 2 pupils in particular. On the one hand the Foundation Phase encourages experiential learning and developmentally appropriate practice. The guidance for the Literacy and Numeracy Framework also explicitly refers to teaching children by stage not age of development. However, it still sets out year-by-year expectation statements and involves national statutory assessments that produce an age-related score for each child, creating a philosophical and practical tension for many practitioners.
- 6.6 The evaluation previously noted that the approach to the Foundation Phase stresses that “[pupil] development is seen as essentially linear, although not tied to chronological age, and recognises individual variations in rate within and across all areas of development and learning. This approach broadly relates to a constructivist theory of learning.” (Maynard *et al.* 2013:v). However, further analysis of the guidance documents acknowledged that “the ‘skills and range’ statements of particular Areas of Learning are much more explicit in detailing subject-related content and children’s progression in relation to this.” (Maynard *et al.* 2013:vi). We concluded, therefore, that one of the main challenges facing Foundation Phase practitioners was how a new pedagogical approach that incorporates constructivist theories of learning could best be integrated with a detailed statutory curriculum.
- 6.7 It is certainly the case that the apparent tension between the Foundation Phase and the Literacy and Numeracy Framework exercises many practitioners (see also Hathway 2014). However, we would suggest that this tension was inherent in the design and development of the Foundation Phase (see Maynard *et al.* 2013), irrespective of the introduction of the Literacy and Numeracy Framework and statutory assessments.

6.8 It is more accurate, then, to ask whether (a) practitioners are aware that the Foundation Phase guidance requires some continuation of direct teaching, particularly in the areas of literacy and numeracy, and (b) whether the introduction of the Literacy and Numeracy Framework and statutory assessments now places, perhaps unintentionally, too much emphasis on the 'skills and range' of particular Areas of Learning, at the expense of 'learning to learn' and other Areas of Learning (particularly personal and social development and wellbeing).

Recommendation 2: Clear guidance is required from the Welsh Government that clarifies the importance of developmentally appropriate practice alongside a statutory curriculum and expected levels of achievement.

Recommendation 3: Parents and carers need to be given more information about the role of statutory literacy and numeracy assessments in Year 2 of the Foundation Phase alongside the emphasis on more first-hand, enjoyable and developmentally appropriate learning experiences for their children.

Recommendation 4: Practitioners need to be given practical advice about how to implement the Literacy and Numeracy Framework within the Foundation Phase. In particular, there needs to be more emphasis given to how literacy and numeracy can be taught in classrooms using a variety of different pedagogical approaches and how these different approaches can complement one another.

6.9 Related to this, the evaluation observes significant variation in the extent to which Foundation Phase pedagogies are practiced in classrooms with older age groups (i.e. Year 1 and particularly Year 2). The evaluation also notes that much of this variation existed prior to the full implementation of the Literacy and Numeracy Framework

and statutory assessments. We suggest this reflects a degree of uncertainty amongst practitioners about the appropriateness of the Foundation Phase approach in preparing pupils for Key Stage 2.

Recommendation 5: Specific attention (through training and guidance for practitioners) should be given on how to use the Foundation Phase pedagogies in Year 1 and especially Year 2 classes.

6.10 Similarly, there needs to be more clarity for practitioners on particular aspects of Foundation Phase guidance, including advice as to how and when to balance various elements of the Foundation Phase appropriately.

6.11 Particular areas of uncertainty or confusion relate to:

- 'Formal' and 'informal' teaching;
- 'Learning through play';
- Continuous, enhanced and focussed provision;
- Child-initiated, practitioner-initiated and practitioner-directed activities; and
- Observation.

Recommendation 6: Foundation Phase training modules should be revised in order to improve practitioners' understanding of the approaches and pedagogies now being emphasised (possibly based on the evaluation's twelve essential Foundation Phase pedagogical elements). In particular, training modules should be revised to ensure they:

- **accommodate recent changes to education policies in Wales (including the Literacy and Numeracy Framework and the emphasis on mitigating the impact of poverty on educational achievement using additional resource such as the Pupil Deprivation Grant);**

- include more exemplar materials to support understanding rather than just illustrating examples of best practice; and
- are more structured and challenging.

Recommendation 7: Training and guidance materials need to place more emphasis on: observation and assessment; effective use of the outdoors³²; delivery of enhanced provision; the roles of teachers and additional practitioners; as well as general child development topics.

Recommendation 8: Greater emphasis on the Foundation Phase should be given within Initial Teacher Education courses and other professional courses (including Masters' Level courses). This should include Foundation Phase curriculum and assessment, but particular attention needs to be given to Foundation Phase pedagogies.

6.12 The evaluation recognises the apparent benefits of completing the full suite of Foundation Phase training modules, but also notes the relatively low take-up of all modules amongst teachers and other practitioners.

Recommendation 9: Consideration should be given to making participation in Foundation Phase training modules compulsory for all head teachers, Foundation Phase teachers and additional practitioners, and Foundation Phase lead practitioners in funded non-maintained settings.

Recommendation 10: Schools and Local Authorities should undertake greater monitoring of attendance in training events and activities. Practitioners should have and routinely maintain their own training and learning logs/records.

³² In October 2014 the Welsh Government published further guidance for schools and early years settings to develop their outdoor practice and provision in the Foundation Phase (Welsh Government 2014a).

6.13 Whilst the evaluation finds that the 0.1FTE Link Teachers are highly valued amongst funded non-maintained settings to help them in their implementation and delivery of the Foundation Phase, it also notes that there are limited opportunities for further professional development for school practitioners after having attended Foundation Phase training modules.

Recommendation 11: There needs to be more follow-up of training in the Foundation Phase. For example, Training Support Officers should routinely visit practitioners in their schools after their participation in training modules to support implementation.

6.14 There remains considerable variability in the extent to which senior leaders are knowledgeable about, and supportive of, the Foundation Phase. This closely mirrors the extent to which Foundation Phase pedagogies are used and the extent to which the school environment has been adapted for the Foundation Phase.

6.15 Related to this are concerns about the transition from Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2 for pupils. The evaluation notes varying strategies and approaches to managing this transition, including tracking and monitoring of pupils through the Foundation Phase and into Key Stage 2. But the evaluation also finds there is currently little or no guidance on this transition for head teachers and Key Stage 2 practitioners.

Recommendation 12: Specific training should be provided for Key Stage 2 teachers to help with continuity and progression in the transition from Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2.

Recommendation 13: Specialist guidance and support for senior management staff in schools and funded non-maintained settings should also be made available, particularly in relation to staffing,

infrastructure, transition from Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2 and tracking and monitoring.

6.16 The evaluation finds there is great uncertainty amongst practitioners about the development of the new on-entry Early Years Development and Assessment Framework. In particular, it is not clear to what extent this may shape or even constrain Foundation Phase pedagogies.

Recommendation 14: Clarification is required on the progress and development of the Early Years Development and Assessment Framework and associated Foundation Phase Profile as well as any training opportunities associated with their implementation. Considerable support for Foundation Phase practitioners will be required to help them implement and then effectively utilise the new Framework in their Foundation Phase practice.

6.17 The Foundation Phase is not, to date, associated with any significant changes in the differences in educational outcomes between pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 based on their gender, their ethnicity or their eligibility for free school meals. Indeed, the evaluation finds evidence to suggest that some of these structural inequalities in attainment are actually worsening, not improving, as a result of the Foundation Phase.

6.18 This may not be that surprising given it is generally well accepted that focussed and targeted interventions are more appropriate for tackling educational inequalities than universal interventions such as the Foundation Phase (Kerr and West 2010).

6.19 However, the majority of practitioners believe that the Foundation Phase is having some impact on reducing inequalities in achievement, particularly on the achievement of boys and pupils eligible for free school meals.

- 6.20 One of the main stated aims of the Foundation Phase is to ‘reduce the differential achievement of advantaged and disadvantaged groups’ (see Outcomes in the Policy Logic Model in Figure 3). However, it is not entirely clear from the Programme Theory that lies behind the Foundation Phase why this new pedagogical approach would necessarily lead to any kind of significant reduction in differential achievement (see Maynard *et al.* 2013).
- 6.21 Furthermore, despite much rhetoric about the importance of more experiential forms of learning for boys, reducing the attainment differential between boys and girls is not a stated aim of the Foundation Phase.
- 6.22 Nevertheless, reducing the impact of socio-economic disadvantage on educational achievement remains one of the overarching aims of the Welsh Government (*Rewriting the Future*, Welsh Government 2014b). It is essential, therefore, that further investigation is needed into why the Foundation Phase may lead to growing disparities between particular groups of learners. But of even more importance is the need to understand why there is an apparent mismatch between the perceptions of practitioners and the analysis of educational outcomes.

Recommendation 15: The Welsh Government should consider facilitating further research on the impact of the Foundation Phase on particular low achieving groups of pupils. Relatedly, more information needs to be provided to schools and funded non-maintained settings to inform their judgements and evaluations of pupils’ progress through the Foundation Phase.

- 6.23 Funding for the development of outdoor space and adapting existing buildings was one of the main issues highlighted by stakeholders and practitioners/managers in schools and funded non-maintained settings. It was often noted that the Foundation Phase could not be

implemented to its fullest because of building constraints and a lack of funding for resources. The evaluation also estimates that actual expenditure on capital developments exceeds the budget available for this.

6.24 The evaluation also finds that the use of numerous and diverse 'learning zones', including the use of outdoor learning environments, is associated with high levels of Foundation Phase practice. The evaluation also highlights the effectiveness of using numerous and varied 'learning zones' in increasing the likelihood that children will engage in participatory and explorative activities, as well as ensuring there is a good balance of continuous, enhanced and focussed activities.

6.25 The evaluation also finds that children's wellbeing and involvement is greater when more elements of Foundation Phase pedagogies are being practiced. This is especially true for activities that encourage child choice, and that are physically active, explorative and first hand.

6.26 Spontaneous access between indoor and outdoor learning environments was rarely observed. But in some schools and funded non-maintained settings, particularly 'pack-away' settings, there are significant limits on how much indoor and outdoor spaces can be modified in order to provide stimulating and effective learning environments.

Recommendation 16: Funding should continue to be provided to ensure all schools and funded non-maintained settings can improve their Foundation Phase learning environments. Specific attention should be given to ensure there is continuous access between classrooms and the outdoors (where possible) and the development of more 'learning zones' indoors and outdoors.

Recommendation 17: Specific support should be provided to schools and funded non-maintained settings to assist them in redesigning and/or restructuring their classrooms and outdoor spaces. This may require access to specialist consultants in the design of learning environments.

Recommendation 18: Where schools and funded non-maintained settings are constrained in what building developments they can undertake, they should be allowed to use capital budgets more flexibly. For example, capital budgets could also be used to provide better transport provision, more mobile learning environments and to establish partnerships with other organisations that will encourage greater use of more varied outdoor learning environments.

Recommendation 19: Practitioners should be encouraged to use a variety of ‘learning zones’, both indoors and outdoors, more frequently. Exemplar materials should be developed for practitioners as a reference on how best to utilise these ‘learning zones’.

6.27 There is a concern that some more traditional disciplinary subjects, such as science, history and geography, have been ‘lost’ within the Foundation Phase curriculum.

Recommendation 20: Specific advice should be provided to practitioners to demonstrate how traditional disciplinary subjects, such as science, history and geography, can be embedded within existing Areas of Learning.

6.28 Practitioners frequently mentioned how essential the improved adult:child ratios were to the successful implementation of the Foundation Phase. Indeed, we observe numerous and significant benefits of additional practitioners in school classrooms in the delivery of Foundation Phase practice and in supporting the professional development of practitioners.

6.29 However, the evaluation finds that although the recommended ratio of 1:15 for Years 1 and 2 are generally being exceeded, the recommended ratio of 1:8 in Nursery and Reception is not generally being met. But the evaluation finds no evidence to suggest that schools that meet the recommended ratios have higher levels of educational achievement for pupils at age seven than schools with ratios just above the recommended levels. This would suggest that it is not essential for schools to always meet the stated recommended ratios.

6.30 The main concern relating to improved adult:child ratios is the impact on pupils of moving to Year 3 where the adult:child ratio can be as low as 1:30. Some schools attempt to ease this transition by using staff flexibly across Year groups and across the Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2.

Recommendation 21: There should continue to be support for higher ratios of adults to children in the Foundation Phase, and there should continue to be recommended ratios by Year Group that reflect the developmental stages of young children. However, schools and funded non-maintained settings should be given autonomy as to how they use these additional practitioners across learning activities and across Year Groups. But with autonomy there should be greater transparency and monitoring to ensure funding for additional practitioners is spent on additional practitioners.

6.31 Currently, the majority of Welsh language development activities (in English-medium schools) are delivered in targeted morning circle time sessions, where songs and rhymes are used to develop language skills.

6.32 The use of Welsh language immersion approaches and techniques (in Welsh-medium and Bilingual schools) can vary quite considerably

between schools. Furthermore, there is variation into the extent to which some of these approaches are commensurate with Foundation Phase pedagogies.

Recommendation 22: Examples of good practice should be developed that demonstrate how the delivery of Welsh Language Development (in English-medium schools) can be embedded across a variety of learning activities and that utilise a wider range of Foundation Phase pedagogies.

Recommendation 23: Clear guidance is required on the most effective method of Welsh language immersion in the Foundation Phase (depending on main language of instruction). There also needs to be further collaboration between researchers and practitioners as to how to identify and develop best practice that is inclusive of the Foundation Phase approach and pedagogical elements.

6.33 Parental engagement was an important feature of the underpinning principles of the Foundation Phase (Maynard *et al.* 2013) and hence the ‘effective involvement of parents/carers in a child’s educational experience’ was identified as one of the key outcomes for the Foundation Phase in the Policy Logic Model (Figure 3). However, the evaluation finds that parental engagement remains very limited and finds little evidence that this has improved as a result of the Foundation Phase.

6.34 Although parents/carers are, in the main, supportive of the Foundation Phase, practitioners are very wary about how comfortable parents/carers are with this new pedagogical approach in the early years. This also reflects the very high proportion of parents/carers who would have liked more information on the Foundation Phase.

Recommendation 24: More attention should be given to the role of parents/carers and families in the delivery of the Foundation Phase. Examples of best practice for practitioners would be beneficial. Particular attention should be given to how parents/carers and families could contribute to the choice and design of learning activities.

Recommendation 25: The Welsh Government, local authorities, schools and funded non-maintained settings should provide more information to parents/carers on a regular basis, and offer more support to parents/carers and families to help them understand the principles of the Foundation Phase, how their child is progressing, and how they can support their learning at home.

6.35 We have noted throughout that this is a relatively early evaluation on the Foundation Phase. Indeed, a couple of key outcomes for the Foundation Phase will not be known for many years (see Figure 2). As a result it is important that the Foundation Phase continues to be evaluated and monitored over time.

6.36 We therefore make a number of recommendations about the future evaluation of the Foundation Phase, specifically in the areas of practice and impact.

Recommendation 26: The Welsh Government should undertake a follow-up process evaluation of the original 41 case study schools and 10 case study funded non-maintained settings in five years' time (i.e. after 2019/20).

6.37 The main aim of this recommendation would be to consider whether the delivery of the twelve Foundation Phase pedagogical elements has been enhanced following further developments to the implementation of the Foundation Phase and changes to training, support and guidance.

6.38 This follow-up evaluation would also have three further objectives:

- the extent to which the relationships between Foundation Phase practice and pupil wellbeing and involvement are being sustained;
- how the Literacy and Numeracy Framework is being embedded within the Foundation Phase; and
- how the Early Years Development and Assessment Framework is being utilised by Foundation Phase practitioners.

6.39 Revisiting the original case study schools and settings and employing the same research tools as used in this evaluation would allow for direct comparison over time.

Recommendation 27: The Welsh Government should undertake a second outcome evaluation of the Foundation Phase using educational outcomes from national administrative data (i.e. the National Pupil Database) after 2015/16.

6.40 The main aim of this further outcome evaluation will be to consider the impact of the Foundation Phase on Key Stage 2 outcomes (i.e. when pupils are aged 10/11 years). 2015/16 will be the first year when *all* pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 will have been through the Foundation Phase. Analysis of the NPD at this stage would be able to consider the impact of the Foundation Phase by the end of Year 6 on all pupils.

6.41 In addition, this analysis of national administrative data will also provide the opportunity to retrospectively consider the impact of the Foundation Phase on further cohorts of pupils from the Pilot and Early Start schools (i.e. using outcomes from 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15). Their levels of attainment could be directly compared against pupils in other schools who will not have experienced the Foundation Phase.

6.42 This would also provide a good opportunity to consider the use of National Reading and Numeracy tests for pupils in Years 2 to 9 for measuring the impact of the Foundation Phase.

Recommendation 28: The Welsh Government should undertake a third outcome evaluation of the Foundation Phase using educational outcomes from national administrative data (i.e. the National Pupil Database) after 2018/19.

6.43 The principal aim of this third outcome evaluation would be to consider the long-term impact of the Foundation Phase. In particular whether there is any impact of the Foundation Phase on educational outcomes at the end of Key Stage 4 (i.e. GCSEs at age 15 years).

6.44 From 2015/16 there will be some pupils who experienced the Foundation Phase (initially in Pilot schools) who will reach the end of Key Stage 4. We recommend that this third outcome evaluation is undertaken three years later (i.e. after 2018/19). This would allow comparison in Key Stage 4 achievement of *three* cohorts of Pilot school pupils to be made against similar age pupils who did not attend Pilot schools.

6.45 This evaluation used the same three cohorts of Pilot school pupils to make early judgements about the impact of the Foundation Phase at the end of Key Stage 2. Analysis of these pupils' levels of achievement should also be able to provide a satisfactory early indication of the long-term impact of the Foundation Phase, thereby helping to address a further key outcome for the Foundation Phase (see Table 2).

6.46 Lastly, it is important that any statutory performance management of primary schools and funded non-maintained settings is congruent with the principles and practices of the Foundation Phase. This will

ensure that the intentions of the Foundation Phase are closely related to how the Foundation Phase is being assessed and monitored.

Recommendation 29: Ongoing monitoring and measures of quality and standards for Foundation Phase schools and funded non-maintained settings should be congruent with the principles, pedagogies and curriculum of the Foundation Phase. For example, Estyn should consider using the twelve pedagogical elements in its inspections of the Foundation Phase.

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Appendix A. Evaluation Reports and Summaries

- Davies, R., Taylor, C., Maynard, T., Rhys, M., Waldron, S., and Blackaby, D. (2013) *Evaluating the Foundation Phase: The Outcomes of Foundation Phase Pupils (Report 1)*, Social Research No. 43/2013, Cardiff: Welsh Government.
- Maynard, T., Taylor, C., Waldron, S., Rhys, M., Smith, R., Power, S. and Clement, J. (2013) *Evaluating the Foundation Phase: Policy Logic Model and Programme Theory*, Social Research No. 37/2012, Cardiff: Welsh Government.
- Rhys, M., Waldron, S. and Taylor, C. (2014) *Evaluating the Foundation Phase: Key findings on Welsh language*, Social Research Summary 76/2014, Cardiff: Welsh Government.
- Rhys, M., Waldron, S. and Taylor, C. (2014) *Evaluating the Foundation Phase: Key findings on training, support and guidance*, Social Research Summary 54/2014, Cardiff: Welsh Government.
- Rhys, M., Waldron, S. and Taylor, C. (2014) *Evaluating the Foundation Phase: Key findings on the environment (indoors and outdoors)*, Social Research Summary 53/2014, Cardiff: Welsh Government.
- Rhys, M., Waldron, S. and Taylor, C. (2014) *Evaluating the Foundation Phase: Key findings on literacy and numeracy*, Social Research Summary 10/2015, Cardiff: Welsh Government
- Taylor, C., Maynard, T., Davies, R., Waldron, S. Rhys, M., Power, S., Moore, L., Blackaby, D. and Plewis, I. (2013) *Evaluating the Foundation Phase: Annual Report 2011/12*, Social Research No. 43/2012, Cardiff: Welsh Government
- Taylor, C., Maynard, T., Davies, R., Waldron, S., Rhys, M., Power, S., Moore, L., Blackaby, D. and Plewis, I. (2014) *Evaluating the Foundation Phase: update and technical report 2012/13*, Social Research 16/2014, Cardiff: Welsh Government.
- Taylor, C., Waldron, S. and Rhys, M. (2014) *Evaluating the Foundation Phase: Key findings on management and leadership*, Social Research Summary 75/2014, Cardiff: Welsh Government.

- Taylor, C., Waldron, S. and Rhys, C. (2014) *Evaluating the Foundation Phase: Key findings on staffing, Social Research Summary 95/2014*, Cardiff: Welsh Government.
- Taylor, C., Davies, R., Rhys, M. and Waldron, S. (2015) *Evaluating the Foundation Phase: The Outcomes of Foundation Phase Pupils up to 2011/12 (Report 2), Social Research No. 01/2015*, Cardiff: Welsh Government.
- Taylor, C., Maynard, T., Davies, R., Waldron, S., Rhys, M., Power, S., Moore, L., Blackaby, D. and Plewis, I. (2015) *Evaluating the Foundation Phase: Technical Report, forthcoming*, Cardiff: Welsh Government.
- Waldron, S., Rhys, M. and Taylor, C. (2014) *Evaluating the Foundation Phase: Key findings on children and families, Social Research Summary 94/2014*, Cardiff: Welsh Government.
- Waldron, S., Rhys, M. and Taylor, C. (2014) *Evaluating the Foundation Phase: Key findings on transitions and assessment, Social Research Summary 74/2014*, Cardiff: Welsh Government.
- Waldron, S., Rhys, M. and Taylor, C. (2014) *Evaluating the Foundation Phase: Key findings on child involvement and wellbeing, Social Research Summary 44/2014*, Cardiff: Welsh Government.
- Waldron, S., Rhys, M. and Taylor, C. (2014) *Evaluating the Foundation Phase: Key findings on pedagogy and understanding, Social Research Summary 43/2014*, Cardiff: Welsh Government.
- Waldron, S., Rhys, M. and Taylor, C. (2014) *Evaluating the Foundation Phase: Key findings on reported impacts, Social Research Summary 42/2014*, Cardiff: Welsh Government.
- Waldron, S., Rhys, M. and Taylor, C. (2015) *Evaluating the Foundation Phase: Key findings on practitioner and stakeholder views on the future of the Foundation Phase, Social Research Summary 09/2015*, Cardiff: Welsh Government.

Appendix B. Welsh Government Training and Guidance Materials

Foundation Phase National Training Modules, organised into Training Packs:

1. Foundation Phase National Training Pack, Module 1: An introduction to the Foundation Phase, (2007). Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.
2. Foundation Phase National Training Pack, Module 2: Child Development, (2007). Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.
3. Foundation Phase National Training Pack, Module 3: Observing, Recording and Reporting, (2007). Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.
4. Foundation Phase National Training Pack, Module 3a: Wellbeing and levels of involvement, (2007). Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.
5. Foundation Phase National Training Pack, Module 4: Experiential learning in practice, (2007). Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.
6. Foundation Phase National Training Pack, Module 5: Additional Learning Needs, (2007). Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.
7. Foundation Phase National Training Pack, Module 5a: Early Intervention, (2007). Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.
8. Foundation Phase National Training Pack, Module 6: Outdoor Learning, (2007). Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.
9. Foundation Phase National Training Pack, Module 7: Leadership for learning, (2007). Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.
10. Foundation Phase National Training Pack, Module 8: Transition, (2007). Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

Guidance Materials on Foundation Phase Areas of Learning:

1. Physical Development (2008). Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

2. Mathematical Development (2008). Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.
3. Welsh Language Development (2008). Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.
4. Language, Literacy and Communication Skills (2008). Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.
5. Personal and Social Development, Well-Being and Cultural Diversity (2008). Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.
6. Knowledge and Understanding of the World (2008). Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.
7. Creative Development (2008). Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

Other Guidance Materials on the Foundation Phase:

1. End of Foundation Phase assessment: exemplifications of outcomes (2011). Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.
2. Foundation Phase Outdoor Learning Handbook (2009). Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.
3. Foundation Phase training and its impact on learning and teaching: an interim report (2010). Cardiff: Estyn.
4. Framework for Children's Learning for 3 to 7-year-olds, (2008). Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.
5. Further steps outdoors: making the most of your outdoor spaces (2014). Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, Cardiff: Welsh Government.

6. How is my child doing in the Foundation Phase? A guide for parents and carers (2014), Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, Cardiff: Welsh Government.
7. Learning and Teaching Pedagogy (2008). Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.
8. Observing Children (2008). Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.
9. Outdoor Learning: an evaluation of learning in the outdoors for children under five in the Foundation Phase (2011). Cardiff: Estyn.
10. Play and active learning: a toolkit for Foundation Phase practitioners (2009). Cardiff: Estyn.
11. Play/Active Learning: Overview for 3 to 7-year-olds (2008). Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.
12. The Foundation Phase in Practice: a toolkit for museums, archives and libraries (2012). Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, Cardiff: Welsh Government.

Appendix C. Foundation Phase Exemplar Vignettes

The following vignettes have been created from a number of Foundation Phase sessions observed during the evaluation and can be used to demonstrate how pedagogical elements of the Foundation Phase can be incorporated into a classroom. They are intended to be illustrative rather than prescriptive. The inclusion of individual vignettes for Funded Non-Maintained settings and individual year groups in schools are there so that practitioners can compare and contrast as well as to reflect the differences in child development and adult:child ratios.

The examples begin with a brief description of the activities involved, and the time allocated to them. The vignettes then go on to indicate where certain key elements of the Foundation Phase were seen to be executed, for example, how children were engaging in practical activities. (These 12 pedagogical elements were taken from the Foundation Phase documents provided by Welsh Government and used to form part of the observation schedule used in the evaluation).

Session objectives and Areas of Learning accessed during the sessions are described and key information on the adult:child ratio and staff duties are provided. There is also some information on the general model of the session and what activities were recorded to be continuous, enhanced and focussed. The last page is an example of a Foundation Phase classroom (including outdoor space) with a key to indicate which areas were linked to what type of activity.

The information has been specifically designed to be practical and comparative across year groups with the caveat that each classroom and setting are different, and the understanding that each situation varies in terms of space, outdoor provision, staff and resources.

Funded Non-Maintained Session Vignette

Description of a Funded Non-Maintained session observed to be implementing many Foundation Phase elements.

- Session starts with some time for the children to play in the various learning zones. Specific thematic activities are laid out in some areas, whilst continuous provision is available in others (e.g. building blocks, cars and trucks, reading corner). } 5 minutes Individual
- Circle time: practitioner introduces the session with some Welsh language development whilst initiating registration, then continues to introduce the theme for the session (Beach and Sea life) by reviewing with the children what they had done the previous day. The practitioner used iPads to show children some videos they took of activities from the previous day, and a Q&A session was had. } 10 minutes Whole Class
- Children were able to choose what area they wanted to start the session in, and were rotated throughout. A variety of enhanced thematic activities were on offer (dress-up beach scene, sea themed toys in the water/sand, drawing seaside pictures on whiteboards, ice-cream shop role play) as well continuous provision areas (sand (inside), story corner, watering plants) and focussed activities (snack time preparation, finger painting sea theme in the creative corner) } 40 minutes Groups
- The session ends with a story based on the theme, where children can relate what they did in the sessions to the narrative of the story. } 10 minutes Whole Class

Foundation Phase Elements

Participation: Children were able to spontaneously direct their learning, e.g. making mud cakes for the café, or dictate the snack time activities.

Thinking Skills: Children had to think of thematic questions for review of previous day's activities. Children could also think about questions to ask during story time on the carpet.

Exploration: After finding a spider, a group of children built a shelter for it. Children were able to explore the grassy area for mud cake ingredients.

Reflection: Previous day's activities shown on iPad with Q&A. Children could rate their enjoyment of the day's activities.

First-hand: Children took part in preparing snacks and drinks for snack time. Children watered the garden plants.

Active: Children played a game in the long grass by the outdoor stage, looking for wildlife and hiding. Children used bikes and trikes to travel

around the outdoor area.

Practical: Children could practice building a BBQ and campfire outdoors. Children could use their fingers for painting a seaside picture.

Outdoors: The climbing frame outdoors was used to create the ice-cream cafe role play. Children made use of the outdoor story corner for role playing.

Stage not age: A variety of different areas and activities were on offer catering for children at various stages of development.

Observation: APs observed children's progress in the snack time task. Post-it notes were used by APs to record children's performance on certain tasks and activities.

Continuous/Enhanced/Focussed: Mostly enhanced and continuous to reflect theme.

Learning Zones: A variety of areas available both indoor and out.

Session Objectives: Developing skills through play based on theme (Beach and Sea life).

Areas of Learning covered: Knowledge and Understanding of the World (various seaside themed role play), Personal and Social Development, Wellbeing and Cultural Diversity (preparing snacks and drinks), Creative development (finger painting in creative area), Physical Development (looking for snakes in the long grass), Language, Literacy and Communication (singing songs in circle time, reviewing previous day's activities with Q&A).

Use of staff: (1 Leader, 2 Additional Practitioners)

Group size: 4-6 children for focussed tasks, more varied in enhanced and continuous (overall classroom ratio 1:6).

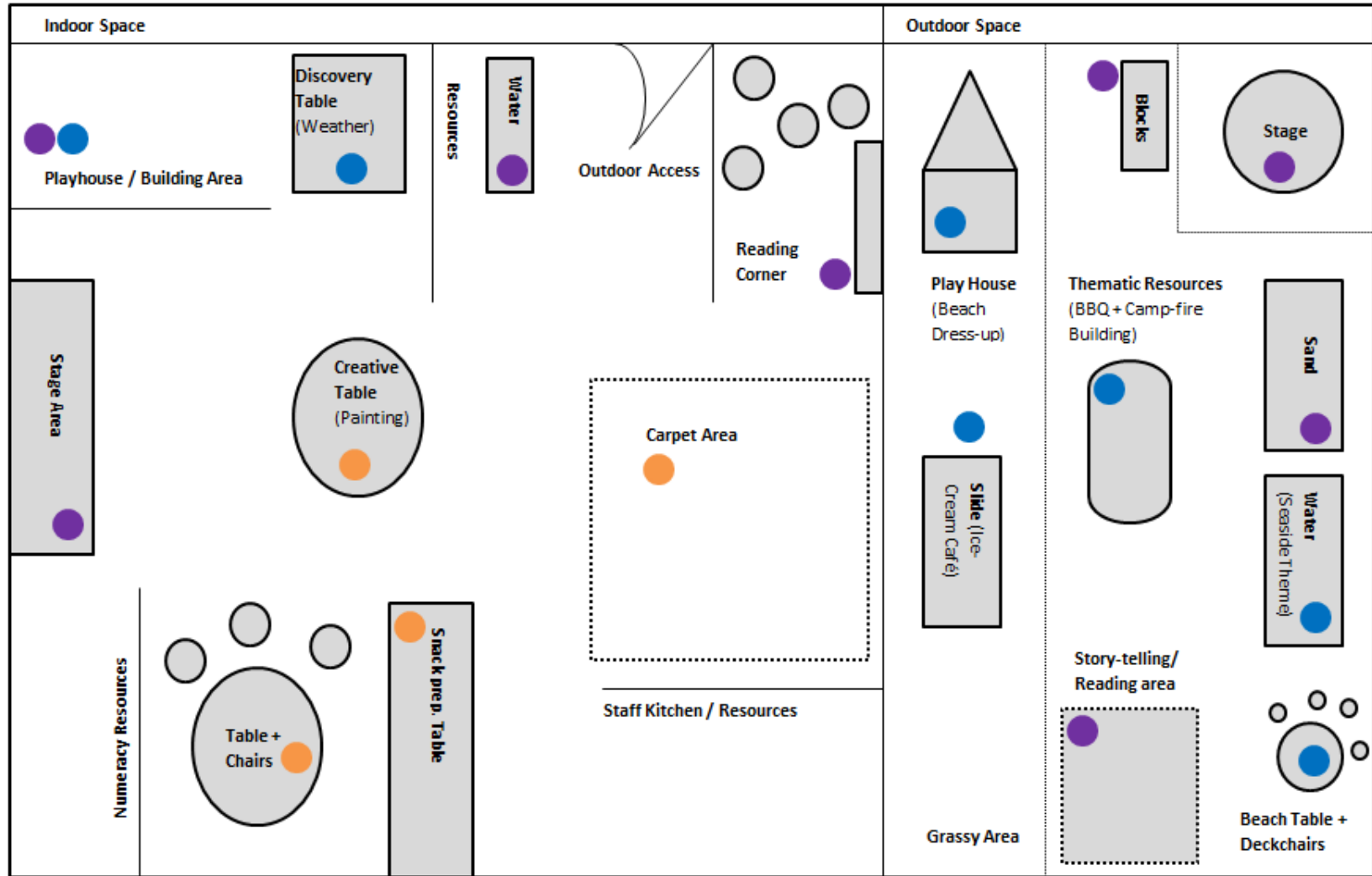
One assistant practitioner floated around the various learning zones, extending children's thinking and asking open questions about the tasks they were involved in (continuous and enhanced), whilst another assistant practitioner guided children on the finger painting activity (focussed). The session leader spent her time helping a rotation of children prepare snacks and drinks for the café (a sort of interactive snack time).

General Model: Children were able to choose activities when not instructed to take part in focussed tasks. Enhanced activities had been previously explained to children in circle time, and linked to their theme for the term. Continuous activities were also available for children to participate – both indoor and outdoor.

Activity Breakdown: (children rotated in focussed activities every 10 minutes or so) *Continuous:* Blocks, Lego, dressing-up, building area, book corner, sand, stage area(s); *Enhanced:* Discovery table (weather theme), ice-cream shop (role-play), seaside toys (in the water and sand); *Focussed:* Snack time preparation, finger painting, circle time.

Funded Non-Maintained Classroom Map Example

Key: Continuous (Purple dot), Enhanced (Blue dot), Focused (Orange dot)



Maintained Nursery Session Vignette

Description of a Nursery class session observed to be implementing many Foundation Phase elements.

- Three times a week, the Nursery and Reception classes combine resources and space to create a 'free-flow' shared environment with a mixture of child and adult led activities.
- Children are largely left to choose which activities they take part in, although the Nursery teacher and additional practitioners try to ensure children are experiencing the full range of options (including focussed activities from time-to-time).
- The children experience this way of working often and so are familiar with what is on offer and know how to interact effectively with the different continuous and enhanced resources (e.g. mark making on the whiteboard, ten fat sausages number activity). The activities on offer are rotated to provide new experiences on a regular basis.
- The children take ownership of several activities, such as watering the plants, and actively engage in the home and shop role plays (e.g. counting money, communicating and collaborating). This encourages peer collaboration.
- The Nursery teacher and additional practitioners spend significant time observing the children (during continuous, enhanced and focussed provision), facilitating playful learning and developing language, numeracy and thinking skills (e.g. via sustained adult-child interactions and co-construction). The teacher is not confined to the focussed activities.
- The children are familiar with the 'rules' determining how many can use each space at any one time.

Whole-class
50 minutes

Foundation Phase Elements

Participation: Children were free to choose which activity to engage with – some children chose to help each other complete the numeracy challenge. Children could decide to create their own activity based on their interests (e.g. reading a story they'd brought in).

Thinking Skills: Adults used open questioning in the focussed tasks and encouraged peer collaboration in the number role play area.

Exploration: Most continuous and enhanced activities allowed for experimentation, for example a group of children explored various ways of

transporting rain water and sand outdoors.

Reflection: Adults regularly asked children to explain what they were doing and reviewed children's activities with them at the end of the session.

First-hand: Children learnt from directly interacting with all resources, for example by practising their letter formation on the mini whiteboards, and using scissors to cut shapes.

Active: Children were able to move freely between the indoors and outdoors. Some children played on trikes outside, whilst others watered plants.

Practical: There were many creative and practical activities on offer (e.g. plant potting). Children could use the abacus to guide their numeracy activity.

Outdoors: There was permanent outdoor access because of the shelter provided. Some children chose to read books at the picnic tables.

Stage not age: A variety of different areas and activities were on offer catering for children at various stages of development.

Observation: Adults keep a record of observations made on a daily basis (linked to school's record keeping programme, e.g. Incerts).

Continuous/Enhanced/Focussed: Mostly enhanced and continuous.

Learning Zones: A lot of choice available between both classrooms.

Session Objectives: Children develop broad range of skills, confidence and social skills using variety of continuous, enhanced and focussed activities.

Areas of Learning covered: Language, Literacy and Communication (e.g. mark making); Numeracy (e.g. shop role play); Personal and Social Development, Well-being and Cultural Diversity (e.g. home role play).

Use of staff: (2 Practitioners (one for each year group), 6 Assistant Practitioners, 1 one-to-one)

Group size: 2-4 children for focussed tasks, group limits for continuous and enhanced areas of the classroom (e.g. dress-up) indicated with signs next to each area. (Overall classroom ratio 1:6)

The teachers and additional practitioners support different areas of the continuous and enhanced provision (on a rotation basis), with one or two adults also leading focussed activities whilst others engage with children in various areas of the classroom. All staff were involved in planning, and were therefore fully aware of the session aims and objectives. One staff member was facilitating outdoor activities at all times.

General Model: Children were given complete free reign of the learning environment, staff acted as facilitators. The majority of activities were continuous, with some enhanced and one or two focussed. There was free-flow between indoor and outdoor spaces and children were able to use the learning resources however they chose.

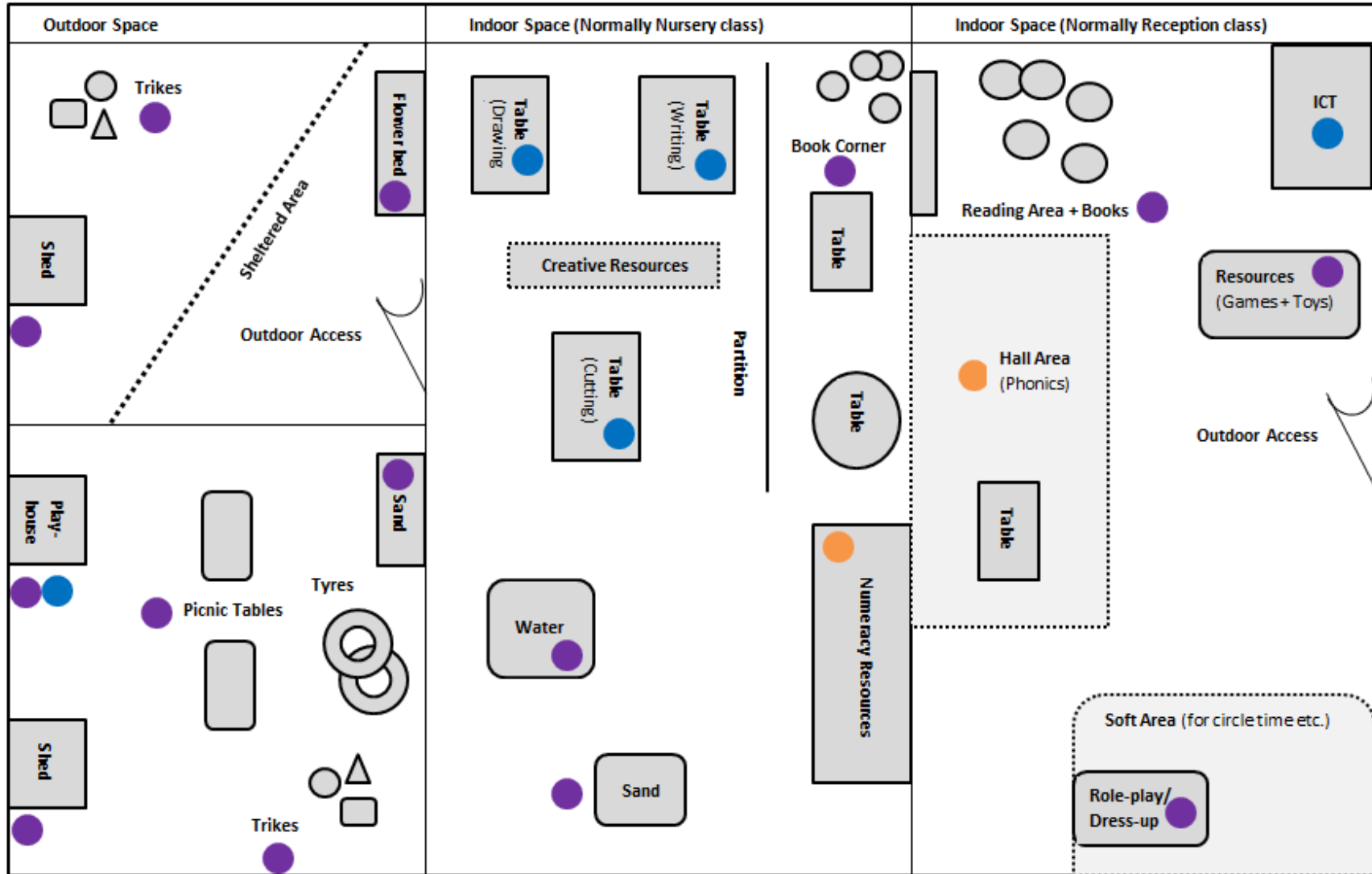
Activity Breakdown: (children were called to complete a focussed task, but were otherwise free to move from one activity to another in their own time)

Continuous: Trikes, Role-play, Sand, Water, Dress-up, Watering Plants, Toys, Books; *Enhanced:* Drawing, Writing, Cutting activity, ICT number activity,

Number-game role-play; *Focussed*: Phonics work, Abacus practice – counting (ten fat sausages).

Nursery Classroom Map Example

Key: Continuous (purple dot), Enhanced (blue dot), Focussed (orange dot)



Reception Session Vignette

Description of a Reception class session observed to be implementing many Foundation Phase elements.

- Session starts with a whole-class discussion about the classroom's theme: springtime (observation conducted in March). Teacher explains how one of the session's activities would involve a group going outside to look for signs of spring. She then proceeds to give the children a presentation on the interactive whiteboard about what animals give birth in the spring and what flowers are in bloom. The children and practitioner have a discussion about what they might find outside (Welsh language vocabulary introduced). } 10 Minutes Whole Class
- Children are then split into activity groups (which rotate throughout the session). Adults concentrate on delivering a variety of focussed activities (individual reading assessment, phonics game, maths books) whilst remaining children are free to choose from continuous and enhanced provision (specific 'challenges' are highlighted in each area of learning). } 40 Minutes Group
- Another assistant practitioner takes a group outside with clip-boards. The activity is focussed in nature (tick-sheets for identifying certain aspects of spring) but because of the vast space available, children are able to explore and be active – they choose where they want to look and can be creative in how they spot signs of spring. } 10 Minutes Whole Class
- The session comes to an end with the whole class participating in a Welsh language development session – songs and rhymes are used to practice the alphabet and develop body part vocabulary. } 10 Minutes Whole Class

Foundation Phase Elements

Participation: Children could direct their learning in a variety of learning zones with the addition of enhanced challenges in various parts of the classroom, e.g. following a challenge on creating a nest in the creative area.

Thinking Skills: Children were encouraged to discuss signs of spring throughout the session. Thinking skills were used when understanding and discussing mathematical constructs with the practitioner.

Exploration: Children could explore different outdoor areas for signs of spring. Children could explore how different objects float/sink in the water.

Reflection: Children reflected on their knowledge of mathematical constructs before the focussed activity. After completing a challenge, children had to

assess their own performance on the task with a tick-sheet.

First-hand: A preserved bird's nest was available for inspection by the children. Children could find, touch and then draw the buds on trees as evidence of spring.

Active: Children were able to use the outdoor space and move from one activity to another. The interactive whiteboard encouraged children to stand for drawing.

Practical: Children could create farm vehicles using blocks in the enhanced provision. When practising Welsh vocabulary, children had to imitate various words through movement in the circle time.

Outdoors: Children used the outdoor space to look for specific signs of spring – collecting various snippets of nature. Rotating groups could paint on the easels outside.

Stage not age: Children assessed their own individual progress on challenge tasks by ticking a sheet for completion.

Observation: Practitioners observed children's skills in focussed reading and numeracy tasks. Additional practitioners observed children's performance on the set challenges.

Continuous/Enhanced/Focussed: A good balance of all three.

Learning Zones: All available learning zones were utilized and activities were often rotated.

Session Objectives: To develop children's understanding of the world around them and engage them with nature as a part of their on-going theme.

Areas of Learning covered: Language, Literacy and Communication (reading assessment, phonics games, practicing Welsh vocabulary); Knowledge and Understanding of the World (signs of spring activity), Personal and Social Development Well-being and Cultural Diversity (role-play and peer collaboration); Creative development (creating bird nests and farm vehicles from various materials); Mathematical Development (focussed maths activity).

Use of staff: (1 Practitioner, 3 Additional Practitioners)

Group size: Maximum of 6 in each group with an adult, the rest of the classroom was free to choose enhanced/continuous provision. These groups were regularly rotated every 10 minutes (overall classroom ratio of 1:8).

The teacher and additional practitioners were each responsible for a group of children, where focussed (and sometimes enhanced) activities were administered. Sometimes, assistant practitioners moved around the different areas of learning, encouraging children to think and be creative in their decisions in enhanced and continuous provision, but children were generally free to choose and engaged in these tasks independently.

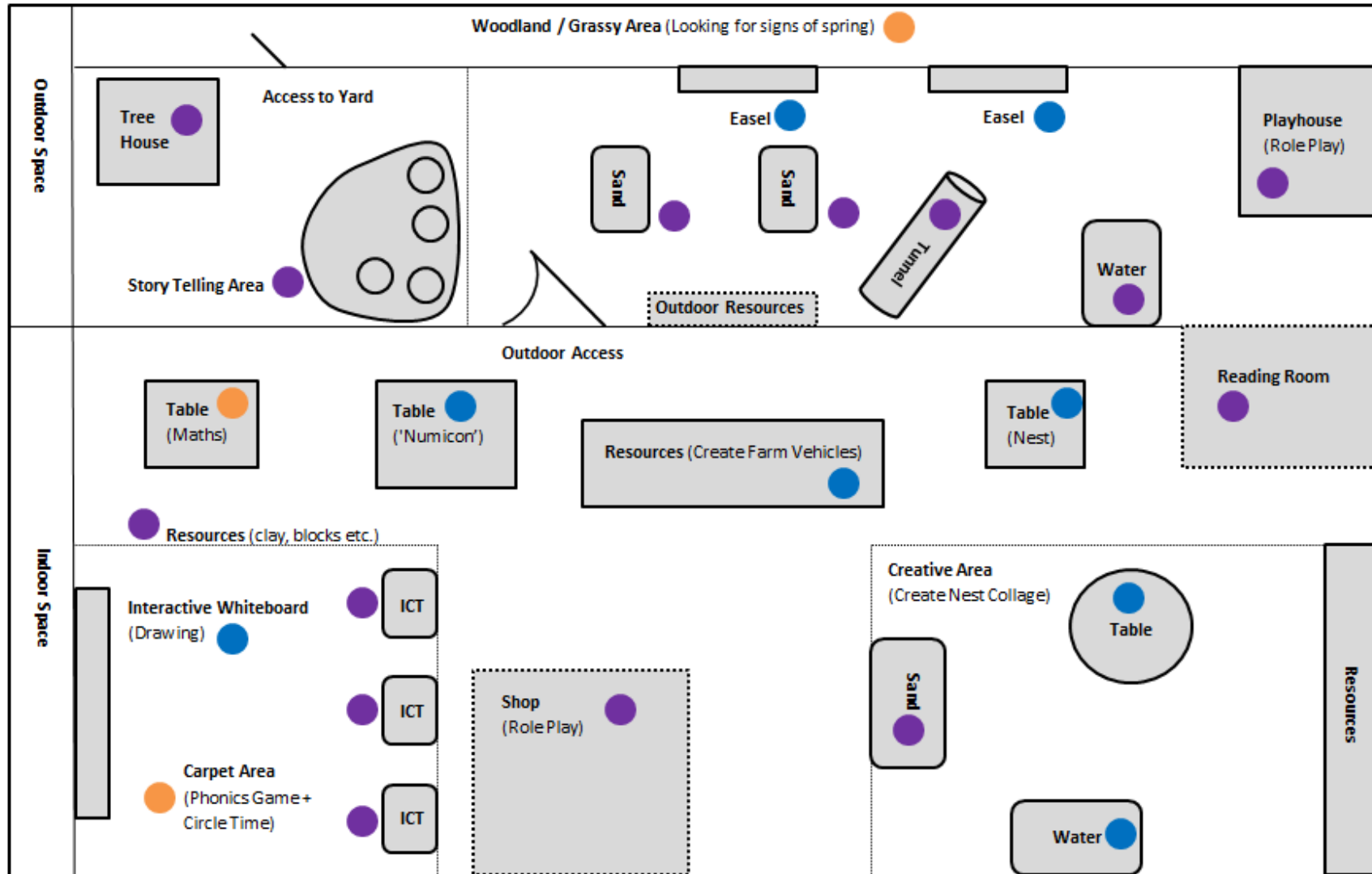
General Model: Children were able to choose activities when not instructed to take part in focussed tasks. Enhanced activities were part of an on-going theme and children could follow the instructions provided on the 'challenge

cards' in each area. Continuous activities were also available for children to participate – both indoor and outdoor.

Activity Breakdown: (children rotated in focussed activities every 10 minutes or so) *Continuous:* Sand, Water, Outside play area, Reading corner, Jigsaw, ICT, Drawing, Building blocks, Clay; *Enhanced:* Farm, Interactive Whiteboard, 'Numicon', Drawing creatures found in springtime, Creating nest; *Focussed:* Maths in workbooks, Searching for signs of spring, Phonics game (and circle time alphabet and vocabulary practice)

Reception Classroom Map Example

Key: Continuous (Purple dot), Enhanced (Blue dot), Focussed (Orange dot)



Year 1 Session Vignette

Description of a Year 1 class session observed to be implementing many Foundation Phase elements.

- The session began with 'silent reading' where each child would silently read a book whilst some children were called to members of staff for individual (teacher) or group (AP) reading assessments. Children were then gathered for a quick fire 'head maths' session where they practiced counting in 10s as a whole class and were asked to answer questions individually too.
- The teacher then explained what activities were available for the remainder of the session: children who were yet to finish a focussed literacy task from the morning session would be completing it with the teacher, the assistant practitioner would be planting seeds with another group, and a variety of continuous and enhanced activities were available for the remainder of the pupils – indoor and outdoor.

15
Minutes
Whole
Class

40
Minutes
Groups
and
Individual

Foundation Phase Elements

Participation: Children were free to choose their area of learning. Children's work was on a lot of the walls and they had also made some of the resources for the class (e.g. the role play area).

Thinking Skills: Children were encouraged to think through the process of planting seeds. The teacher encouraged children to use head maths to work out answers in the numeracy sessions.

Exploration: Children were able to explore the garden and look for bugs. There was a garden area open for children to explore individually.

Reflection: Children were often asked what they thought of the activities they were doing in the enhanced areas.

First-hand: Children were able to plant their own seeds and track their progress. There were baskets for children to decorate in the creative area.

Active: The outdoor space encouraged children to move freely between activities. The woodland area meant children could be physically active during the session.

Practical: Children could make and decorate paper flowers as part of the class theme. Easels were available so children could paint in the style of Van Gough.

Outdoors: The majority of activities were outdoors and children were able to access the space freely. Magnifying glasses were available for children to look for woodlice in the garden.

Stage not age: Similar outcomes were expected of all pupils, although

reading and maths activities were more structured.

Observation: Children's reading and numeracy progress were observed.

Continuous/Enhanced/Focussed: Session split with more focussed activities to start, and continuous and enhanced added for the bulk of the session.

Learning Zones: A variety of learning zones were available within the classroom, outdoor and outside the classroom where children could decide to participate in activities.

Session Objectives: To develop children's understanding of the world and how things grow, to practice basic skills in literacy and numeracy and to encourage children to choose and develop creative skills based on a theme.

Areas of Learning covered: Creative Development (painting, creating in the water and sand and making flowers/decorating baskets); Personal and Social Development Well-being and Cultural Diversity (peer collaboration); Knowledge and Understanding of the World (knowledge of nature and how plants grow); Language, Literacy and Communication (literacy and numeracy bursts to start, writing a thank you letter).

Use of staff: (1 Practitioner, 1 Additional Practitioners, 1 one to one and 1 volunteer)

Group size: Maximum of 3 in each group with an adult, the rest of the classroom was free to choose enhanced/ continuous provision (overall classroom ratio of 1:15, but 1:8 when extra adults included).

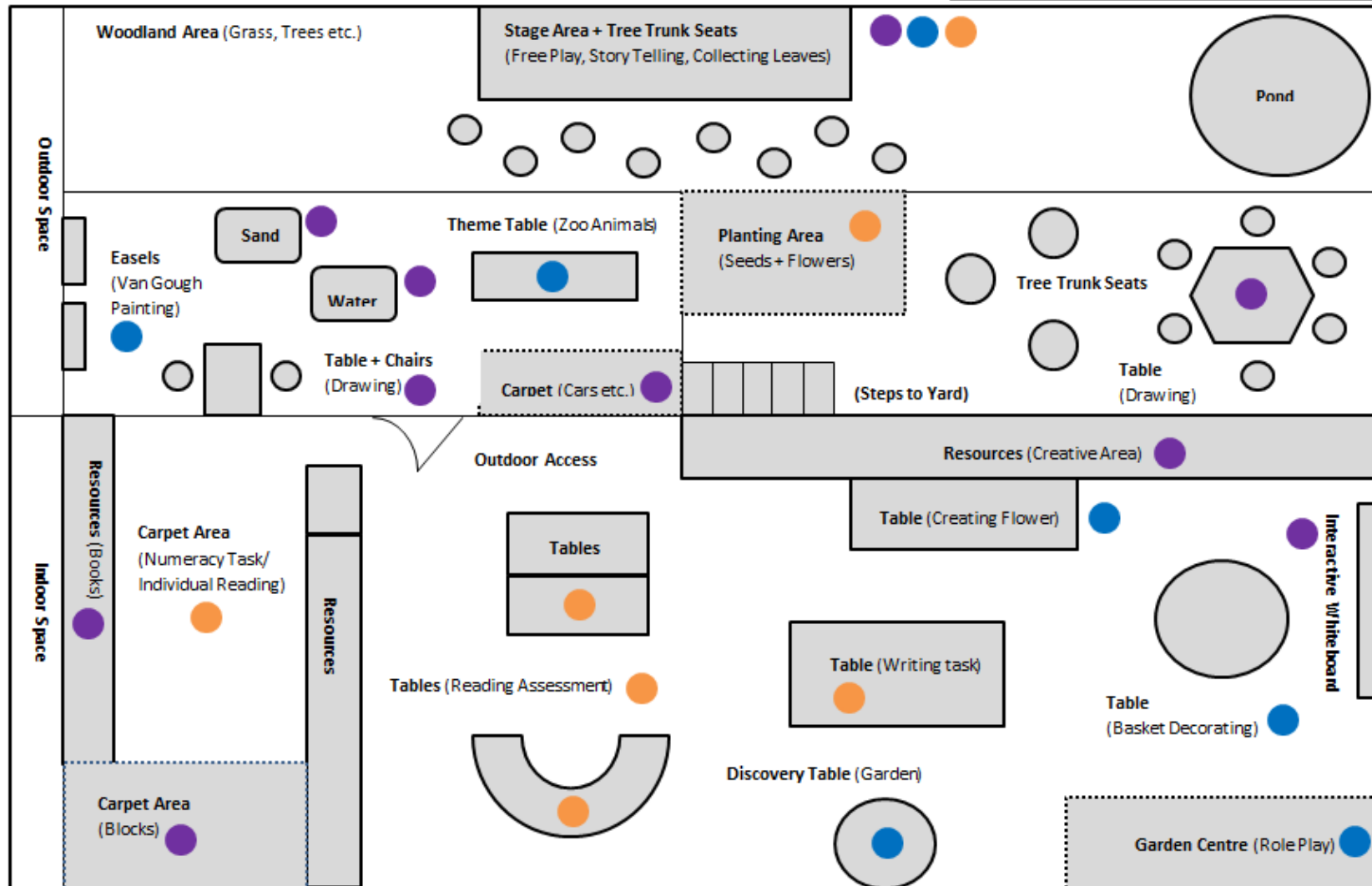
Teacher concentrated on a focussed activity whilst one assistant practitioner floated between continuous activities and one assistant practitioner worked with a group planting seeds.

General Model: There were a lot of different activities going on, but they all seemed to be separated – focussed activity was inside, whilst the majority of children participated in enhanced and continuous activities outdoors. Children were free to choose and move from one activity to the other and staff would rotate their groups within the session. The teacher used the outdoor space as an extension of the classroom, and children seemed to flow in and out freely and comfortably. Some children took it upon themselves to explore the garden area looking for bugs for example.

Activity Breakdown: (some rotation for focussed tasks, otherwise, children were free to move from one activity to the other at any time) *Continuous:* Reading individually, Water, Cars, Garden, Sand, Blocks, Interactive Whiteboard, Drawing; *Enhanced:* Thematic table (zoo animals), Making paper-tissue flowers, Decorating baskets, Painting in the style of Van Gough, Discovery Table (Garden instruments), Garden Centre Role Play; *Focussed:* Planting seeds, Reading assessment with practitioner, Numeracy practice (counting), Writing thank-you letters.

Year 1 Classroom Map Example

Key: Continuous (Purple dot), Enhanced (Blue dot), Focused (Orange dot)



Year 2 Session Vignette

Description of a Year 2 class session observed to be implementing many Foundation Phase elements.

- Children arrive in classroom to find four large boxes placed on separate tables. Each box has 'caution tape' wrapped around it and the interactive whiteboard has been utilised to produce a flashing 'danger' sign and sounding alarm.
 - The teacher and additional practitioner refuse to answer any questions for five minutes, thus building some excitement and encouraging the children to consider for themselves what might be happening.
 - The teacher then explains that someone must have placed these boxes in the classroom whilst she was drinking her tea at break-time. The teacher claims not to know what is in the boxes or why they are there. She asks the children to discuss this, move around the classroom looking at the different boxes, think about what might be in the boxes and write some ideas down on post-it notes. The children are then asked to stick their post-it notes on the whiteboard. (The additional practitioner provides general support to different groups of children.)
 - The teacher then shares with the class some of the different ideas written on the post-it notes and encourages further discussion.
 - The additional practitioner then opens one box at a time to show the children what the contents were.
 - Teacher then asks some children to continue some work started previously: learning about different plants whilst others start to think of what their crime scene story is.
 - Some children go outside supervised by additional practitioner and teacher to find different plants, then draw and write about them.
- 30 Minutes Whole Class
- 20 Minutes Whole Class

Foundation Phase Elements

Participation: Children could direct their thinking and writing for the crime scene. Children could choose which plants to study outdoors and partake in the dye experiment.

Thinking Skills: Children were encouraged to discuss ideas amongst peers and adults. The word recognition 'shout out' required children to think of previous strategies and words.

Exploration: Children could explore the crime scene boxes. Children could explore outdoors for various plants to study.

Reflection: Adults regularly encouraged children to reflect on what they were doing. A group review of the crime scene activity was encouraged at the end of the session.

First-hand: Children were able to cut out pictures for the plant growing cycle collage. Children could complete the interactive whiteboard activity.

Active: Children were able to move around classroom looking in each box and were able to be active outdoors.

Practical: The children could measure outdoors with Lego. Children could draw in the continuous provision.

Outdoors: Children were encouraged to draw/write about their own plant outside.

Stage not age: Children were free to write at their own level. Children could choose an appropriate reading book for themselves.

Observation: When children were exploring the boxes, practitioners were observing children's collaboration and questions. Both adults spent time watching children at work in the latter part of the session.

Continuous/Enhanced/Focussed: Mostly focussed and enhanced, with some continuous.

Learning Zones: Only some learning zones were used due to the focus on the crime scene at the start of the session.

Session Objectives: To encourage enthusiasm for, and practise of, writing by providing stimulating activity. To develop an understanding of different plants.

Areas of Learning covered: Language, Literacy and Communication (writing about box activity and plants); Knowledge and Understanding of the World (plant activity), Personal and Social Development Well-being and Cultural Diversity (peer collaboration and confidence).

Use of staff: (1 Practitioner, 2 Additional Practitioners)

Group size: Maximum of 4 in each group, each group had an activity (classroom ratio 1:10)

The teacher and additional practitioner worked together on each activity to ensure all children supported and provide regular adult-child interaction and observation. The additional practitioner is also involved in planning, and is therefore fully aware of the session aims and objectives.

General Model: All children were involved in the discussion at the start of the session which was the basis for some focussed tasks in the latter part of the session. Children were split into groups and did not rotate for the remainder of the session. A task was given to each group, with some groups working independently and others being supervised by practitioners who floated between focussed and enhanced tasks. If individuals were finished with their activity, they could partake in some continuous provision.

Activity Breakdown: (children were in specific groups for the whole session – box discussion with everyone to start, and then split into groups)

Continuous: Colouring, Reading corner, Role play (home and police station);
Enhanced: Discussion about what could be in the boxes, Seed planting, Plant growing cycle collage, measuring with Lego, Interactive whiteboard activity;
Focussed: Plant in water dye experiment, Writing sentences, Word recognition 'shout-out'.

Year 2 Classroom Map Example

