Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Nursery education for 3 and 4 year olds in Wales

Foundation Phase nursery: A guide for parents and carers

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

mae addysg
yn dechrau
yn y cartref
education
begins
at home

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

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Contents

What is Foundation Phase nursery? 4

When will my child benefit from funded Foundation Phase nursery? 5

What are the benefits of the Foundation Phase for my child? 6

Learning through play 7

What will my child learn? 8

How will my child learn and what type of activities will they be taking part in? 9

Will my child learn to read and write? 10

How can I find a Foundation Phase nursery place for my child? 11

Choosing a nursery setting or a school that delivers Foundation Phase nursery 11

Do children with special educational needs follow the Foundation Phase? 12

Where can I find further information on Foundation Phase nursery and early years education? 13

What is Foundation Phase nursery?

Foundation Phase nursery (also referred to as early education entitlement and funded early education) is a general term used to describe the time your child spends in the Foundation Phase during the ages of three and four. This is a very important phase in your child's life as it lays the building blocks for their future learning and is part of the current and future curriculum.

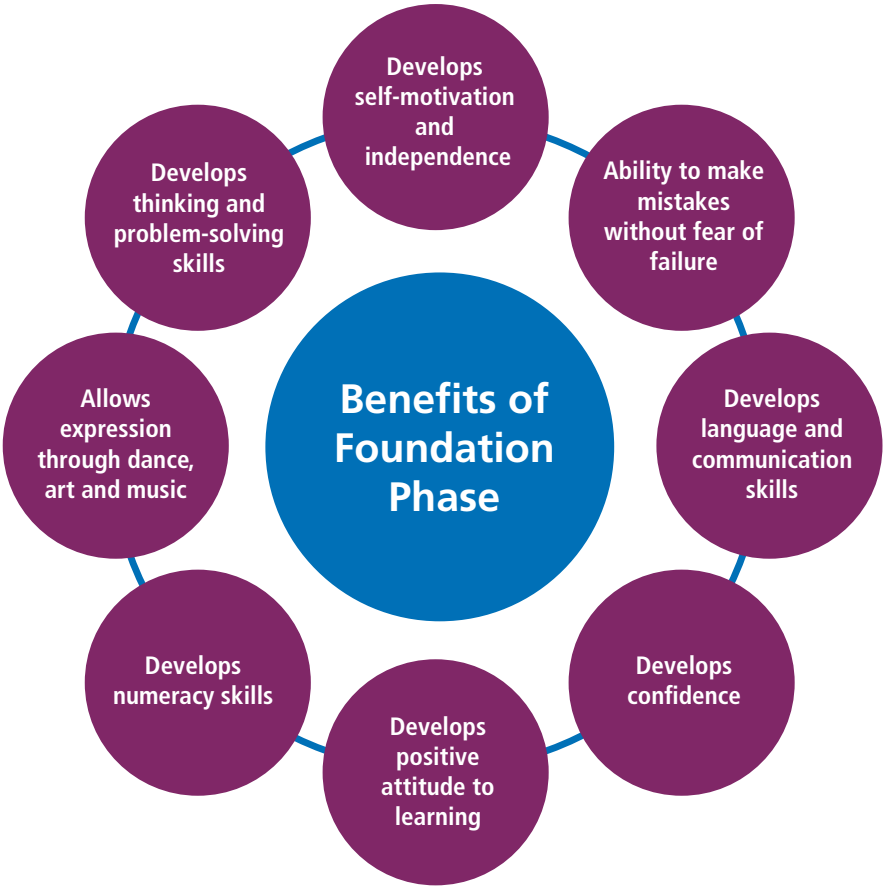
When will my child benefit from funded Foundation Phase nursery?

Your child is entitled to a minimum of 10 hours per week of funded, part-time, Foundation Phase nursery. This could be in a setting (which can be a nursery, funded playgroup or childminder) approved by your local authority or a school. Your child would start Foundation Phase nursery from the term following their third birthday.

Child's birthday	When can my child start Foundation Phase nursery?
1 September to 31 December	The beginning of term on or after 1 January
1 January to 31 March	The beginning of term on or after 1 April
1 April to 31 August	The beginning of term on or after 1 September

What are the benefits of the Foundation Phase for my child?

The Foundation Phase takes place both indoors and outdoors and allows children to learn through play. The curriculum gives every child the opportunity to be at the centre of their learning. Your child's interests will be taken into account and they will be encouraged to make choices about their learning. Qualified staff will be observing children, working with individuals, small groups, or at times the whole group to extend and develop the learning. This results in a learning experience which is practical, fun and full of hands-on activities which are known to develop positive attitudes to learning.



Learning through play

The Foundation Phase is built on the principles of learning through play. Research proves that play is essential to the educational development of all children, and evidence shows that learning through play is a powerful tool which can help children to develop and extend their language and communication skills. It allows children to use initiative, take risks and make mistakes without fear of failure. Play is how young children make sense of the world.

There are many forms of play that support the Foundation Phase curriculum. Examples include role play, construction play, creative play, exploratory play and imaginative play.

What will my child learn?

Your child will be developing skills, learning new things and demonstrating their understanding through the seven Areas of Learning (six if Welsh is the main language of the setting or school).

Notes

[1] This will be in English or Welsh depending on the language policy of the setting or school.

[2] This is not a requirement when settings or schools follow the Language, Literacy and Communication Skills Area of Learning through the medium of Welsh.

How will my child learn and what type of activities will they be taking part in?

Your child will be given opportunities to learn and understand through first-hand experiences and by helping to plan and take part in practical activities relevant to their stage of development. Being outdoors is an important part of the Foundation Phase, offering your child the chance to learn and discover through planned and spontaneous activities, developing both their physical and cognitive skills.

Your child will have fun learning through activities that can be messy, and they may not always come home as clean as you expect. But there are many benefits of learning through multisensory, creative activities. For example, your child may be encouraged to develop their mark-making skills by using runny mud-paint outdoors, which may splash on their clothing. While staff at the setting or school will provide protective clothing for messier activities and will encourage your child to wash themselves, there are bound to be splashes and smudges.

Will my child learn to read and write?

The Foundation Phase emphasises the importance of good reading and writing skills. However, it is important that children are not pushed into reading and writing too early. Very young children will be encouraged to develop pre-reading and pre-writing skills through language-development activities that help them understand sounds through games, making patterns, singing and stories. Pre-writing skills will be developed through making marks with tools and writing instruments on a variety of surfaces such as chalk on the playground or sticks in the mud, drawing, painting, threading, and other activities that develop their muscle control.

How can I find a Foundation Phase nursery place for my child?

You can contact your local authority Family Information Service (FIS) who can give you information and support on services ranging from childcare to a list of settings in your area which are registered to provide funded, part-time places in the Foundation Phase.

Choosing a nursery setting or a school that delivers Foundation Phase nursery

Here are some tips on choosing the right nursery place for your child.

1. Visit the setting or school – many of them hold open days.
2. Read the latest Estyn inspection reports at **estyn.gov.wales**.
3. Visit the My Local School website at **mylocalschool.gov.wales**
4. If your local authority offers the option of choosing a non maintained setting to access Foundation Phase nursery you may find it useful to visit the early years organisations' websites (see below) to find out more about the types of settings they support.
    - Mudiad Meithrin **www.meithrin.cymru**
    - National Day Nurseries Association **www.ndna.org.uk**
    - PACEY (Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years) **www.pacey.org.uk**
    - Early Years Wales **Earlyyears.wales**

Do children with special educational needs follow the Foundation Phase?

All children, including those with special educational needs (see note 3), will be able to follow the Foundation Phase curriculum.

Find out more about what is provided for children with special educational needs by going to **learning.gov.wales** and searching for 'Information for carers of young people'.

Note

[3] The term 'special educational needs' will change to 'additional learning needs', under the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018. There will be a gradual move to using this new term in the run-up to the new arrangements which will take effect from September 2020.

Where can I find further information on Foundation Phase nursery and early years education?

We want you to be totally reassured that your child is receiving the best possible start in life, so we are determined to give you all the information you need about early years education, including Foundation Phase nursery, and how your child's learning will develop.

Foundation Phase nursery

All children aged three and four are entitled to a minimum of 10 hours of Foundation Phase nursery per week from the term following their third birthday. This is open to all parents and carers of three- and four-year-olds in Wales.

You can find more information on your local authority website or on **beta.gov.wales/foundation-phase**.

Copies of the Foundation Phase documents should be available in public libraries or you can visit **beta.gov.wales/foundation-phase**.

Flying Start

Flying Start helps provide opportunities to children and families from disadvantaged areas across Wales. Children aged two to three are entitled to 12.5 hours of Flying Start provision per week from the term after their second birthday until the term after their third birthday.

To take part in the Flying Start programme you must live in a Flying Start area. The Family Information Service in your area should be able to provide you with further information.

Childcare Offer for Wales

The Childcare Offer for Wales is being tested in areas of some local authorities to make sure it works for parents and carers. It supports working parents and carers with the cost of childcare. Children aged three and four are eligible the term after their third birthday up until they enter full-time education (usually the September after their fourth birthday).

To take up the offer both parents or carers (or the lone parent or carer in a single-parent family) will need to earn the equivalent of 16 hours per week at National Minimum Wage or National Living Wage, depending on age, and earn no more than £100,000 per person each year.

You can find more information on **gov.wales/talkchildcare**.

Family Information Services

Family Information Services (FIS) provide free, impartial and up to date information, advice and guidance on a range of family topics including education.

You can find out more information on **gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/children-and-young-people/parenting-support-guidance/help/familyinformationservices/?lang=en**.