

£1m to strengthen how Foundation Phase is delivered in Wales

The Foundation Phase encourages children to be creative and imaginative, making learning more enjoyable and effective. The funding will be used to develop a Foundation Phase Excellence Network, which will support the sharing of effective practice and work closely with the National Networks of Excellence in Science and Technology and Mathematics, which are already being developed.

Recent independent evaluations have shown that where Foundation Phase is being implemented well, it is raising the attainment of all children, but highlighted the need for greater consistency of delivery.

The new excellence network will:

- Help strengthen the links between schools, settings, consortia and local authorities to universities to develop research on professional learning for Foundation Phase practitioners.
- Use global and local evidence to develop nationally recognised Foundation Phase professional learning for staff.
- Support Pioneer Network Schools in the development of and professional learning for the new curriculum.
- Improve children's experiences of the Foundation Phase in settings and schools across Wales.

Minister for Life Long Learning Alun Davies said:

“The evidence shows that the Foundation Phase is working for our youngest pupils, with the majority achieving the expected results for their age.

“I want to make sure we build on this progress and continue to support our young people through their early years to make sure they have the best start in life. This investment will help us develop the skills of those who teach the foundation phase, create new training opportunities and ensure there is consistency across Wales.

Education Secretary Kirsty Williams said:

“The £1m for the Foundation Phase Excellence Network is part of our on-going investment to raise standards across our education system. We want to make sure our pupils have the skills and knowledge they need to succeed and thrive in the modern world.”

Professor Iram Siraj from the Institute of Education, London said,

“The Foundation Phase in Wales is leading in the UK in providing a curriculum and approach which provides true, seamless continuity in children’s learning from the early years to the middle of primary. We have seen a move away from over-formalised and over-controlled classrooms to spaces where experiential learning, enquiry and creativity is valued alongside literacy and numeracy.”

Professor David Egan, Cardiff Metropolitan University said,

“The Foundation Phase Excellence Network is a very welcome step to promoting the excellent learning and teaching practice which should be at the heart of the future development of the curriculum for 3-7 year olds.”

Professor Edward Melhuish, Professor of Human Development, Birkbeck, University of London said,

“The developments to the Foundation Phase have already brought improvements in early years provision for the children of Wales. The new investment in the Foundation Phase Excellence Network promises yet further improvements in professional development that will benefit all.”