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Exploring Education Transitions for Pupils Aged 6 to 8 in Wales

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

Barn yr ymchwilydd a fynegir yn yr adroddiad hwn ac nid barn Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru o reidrwydd.

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Executive Summary

1. The Foundation Phase curriculum for all children aged three to seven was introduced through a phased roll-out, starting in 2004 with 42 pilot/early start schools, and full roll-out beginning with three year olds in the 2008/09 academic year. From the start of the 2011/12 academic year the new curriculum will achieve full roll-out, with all children aged three to seven years in education following the Foundation Phase approach to learning.
2. The shift to a more experiential learning approach offered by the Foundation Phase presents challenges at the point of transition to Key Stage 2 as children move from a Foundation Phase approach that focuses on developing skills, creativity and understanding to the more traditional subject and content-based approach that underpins the national curriculum at Key Stage 2.
3. In light of these challenges, the Welsh Assembly Government appointed SQW at the end of May 2010 to undertake research to explore the experiences of transitions in the early adopting Foundation Phase schools. The study was designed to inform future guidance for practitioners and schools ahead of the final phasing out of Key Stage 1 in August 2011.
4. There were two broad aims for the study:
 - to inform Welsh Assembly Government guidance for schools and Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2 practitioners as the curriculum is rolled out; and
 - to inform the Assembly Government's plans for the future evaluation of the Foundation Phase.
5. This study focuses on the experiences of the pilot and early start schools at the transition point from Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2. It considers the extent to which the transition experiences of their pupils differ from those experienced by pupils making the transition from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2.

6. The study comprised three main components: an initial review and update of the available literature on transition to inform the design of the research instruments; a series of face-to-face case studies in 14 schools (involving interviews with 44 practitioners and just over 140 pupils in pilot and early start schools and in a selection of schools that are yet to roll-out the Foundation Phase to children in year 2); and a survey of head teachers and Foundation Phase / Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 staff in all 42 pilot and early start schools and a matched sample of 42 non-Foundation Phase schools.
7. Evidence from the survey of practitioners and teachers and the interviews undertaken in schools suggests that:
 - most practitioners in the Foundation Phase, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 were familiar with the Foundation Phase approach;
 - the principles of the Foundation Phase learning appear, on the whole, to have been embraced by both practitioners and head teachers;
 - practitioners valued the training they had received, but identified the need for a greater emphasis on practical support;
 - approaches to implementing the Foundation Phase have varied and there are still some tensions around age and ability grouping of pupils and the preparation needed to help them meet the requirements of Key Stage 2.
8. It was generally felt by teachers and pupils that most children in both Foundation Phase and non-Foundation Phase schools found it relatively easy to adjust to their new environment and were excited at the prospect of moving into Year 3, but even so it was noted that children could generally be better prepared. Respondents from Foundation Phase pilot schools were more likely than those from non-Foundation Phase to report that children found it easier to make the transition than their peers from older cohorts, but they were unable to make a definitive link between the introduction of the Foundation Phase and improved transition for pupils. The operational mechanisms that support successful transition appeared

to be in place in both Foundation Phase and non-Foundation Phase schools, but the extent to which they operated and their perceived effectiveness varied.

9. The research has highlighted the practices which appeared to support and facilitate the management of a successful transition from Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2. These include:
 - **managing a transition between two philosophies** – where primary schools sought to adopt a single philosophy of learning to underpin the two phases of learning, staff found it easier to manage the transition;
 - **ensuring there is awareness and understanding of the nature and requirements of both the Foundation Phase approach and the Key Stage 2 curriculum** amongst practitioners and teachers in both learning phases;
 - **providing opportunities to gain practical experience** – staff highlighted the benefits of opportunities to gain experience of the two learning phases;
 - **facilitating flexibility in terms of classroom layout and teaching practice** to enable Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2 practitioners and teachers to adapt practice;
 - **supporting and promoting ongoing cross-phase communication** to maintain continued understanding of the alignment of the two learning phases and the effective monitoring of pupils' progress.
10. Arising from this there are actions and practices that can be put in place and supported at the level of the school, the local authority and the Welsh Assembly Government. These would help the implementation of an effective transition from the Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2, maximising the positive experiences and outcomes for both pupils and teachers.

Actions for schools

11. Heads and senior management in the school should lead the development of a single shared philosophy in line with the ethos of the Foundation Phase, supporting both smooth introduction of the Foundation Phase and management of the transition to Key Stage 2.
12. Schools need to ensure that staff across all phases (from Foundation Phase through to upper junior) are trained in Foundation Phase approaches. This training could be done through, for example:
 - formal or informal INSET sessions (though these have a cost implication);
 - classroom observations (though this is challenging in schools where there is insufficient classroom assistant support at Key Stage 2 to facilitate this approach without teacher cover);
 - visits to other schools (again, these have cost implications).
13. Schools need to try and use common classroom practices across the Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2, as these supported positive transitions.
14. Schools should consider taking advantage of the opportunity for their teachers and classroom practitioners to experiment with different techniques – and to fail without criticism.
15. Evidence from interviewees suggest that it may be beneficial to encourage the following practices in the school to facilitate increased opportunities for staff:
 - to meet and communicate with other practitioners within and across phases;
 - to share practice and resources;
 - to solve problems;

- to enable reflection and review of both the Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2 curricula.

Actions for local authorities

16. Local authorities can provide support and co-ordination to facilitate the sharing of practice and experience and the delivery of training and observation opportunities.
17. Schools highlighted the fact that delivering training across the school can be challenging and expensive and asked whether local authorities support schools by developing training to be delivered on INSET days or twilight sessions. Practitioners and teachers commented that they would welcome opportunities to visit other schools to observe practice and the local authority could be instrumental in facilitating this. Practitioners would welcome access to multi-media footage of practice or online forums/blogs where experience, concerns and issues could be shared; local authorities could have a role in supporting and developing this with a focus on issues identified locally.

Actions for Welsh Assembly Government and other partners

18. Most interviewees felt that existing guidance materials (Welsh Assembly Government, local authority and other) on the philosophy of the Foundation Phase were helpful. Guidance and resources on practical aspects of the Foundation Phase (including the physical aspects of classroom organisation and storage of resources¹) would be welcomed as would examples of effective Foundation Phase implementation, effective Key Stage 2 support, and effective classroom practice. Access to an online problem-solving forum with other practitioners would also be welcomed.
19. The need for a better alignment of initial teacher training with Foundation Phase practices was highlighted as one of the most important steps with

¹ This is partially covered in relation to outdoor activity in the Outdoor Handbook and in “First steps outside”
http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/earlyyearshome/foundation_phase/foundationphasepractitioners/outdoorlearning/?lang=en

regards to improving practice, including the transition to Key Stage 2. While continuous professional development (CPD) practices were applauded, staff were concerned about the lack of awareness of trainee and newly qualified primary and Early Years teachers.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Foundation Phase curriculum in Wales, for all children aged three to seven, has been introduced in a phased way. Now, as we enter the 2010/11 academic year, it includes all children up to five and six years old. From 2011/12, the new curriculum will achieve full roll-out, with all children aged three to seven years in education following the Foundation Phase approach to learning.
- 1.2 The shift to a more experiential learning approach presents challenges at the point of transition to Key Stage 2. This is because there is a fundamental difference in approach, with the Foundation Phase focusing on developing each child's skills and understanding, self-esteem and confidence, creativity and attitudes to learning, rather than adopting the more traditional subject-rooted approach that underpins the national curriculum at Key Stage 2 (and which underpinned much of the Key Stage 1 curriculum in the past). Anticipated challenges include those faced by teachers and practitioners in both the Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2, who may need to make significant changes to their teaching approaches. In addition, it is likely that the children who have experienced the Foundation Phase curriculum will exhibit different skills, attitudes and aspirations from previous cohorts of children who went through the previous Key Stage 1 curriculum.
- 1.3 SQW was appointed by the Welsh Assembly Government at the end of May 2010 to undertake this timely research to explore the transitions of pupils in the Foundation Phase pilot and early start schools. The study was designed to inform future guidance for practitioners and schools, ahead of the national adoption of the Foundation Phase curriculum and the final phasing out of Key Stage 1 in August 2011.

Aim of the study

- 1.4 There were two broad aims for the study:
 - to inform Welsh Assembly Government guidance for schools and Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2 practitioners as the curriculum is

rolled out to all institutions responsible for the education of pupils aged three to seven; and

- to inform the Assembly's plans for the future evaluation of the Foundation Phase.
- 1.5 The study builds upon the evaluation of the first two years of the Foundation Phase pilot undertaken by Siraj-Blatchford *et al* in 2006 and considers the school, teacher and pupil experience of transition from Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2 in the pilot and early start schools, compared with the experiences of those in schools who are still operating a transition from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2.

Approach

- 1.6 In 2004, 22 schools began delivering the Foundation Phase and, therefore, had experienced the transition of two cohorts of children from Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2 by the academic year 2009/2010.² This group are known as the pilot schools. A further 22 early start schools began delivering the Foundation Phase in 2007; at the time of the study only one cohort of pupils had experienced the transition from Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2. For the purpose of this report, all other schools will be referred to as non-Foundation Phase schools, even though most (if not all) were already implementing the Foundation Phase curriculum with their youngest pupils.
- 1.7 This study is a focused exploration of the experiences of the pilot and early start schools in relation to the challenges and benefits presented at the transition point from Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2. It considers the extent to which children's experiences of transition from Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2 differ from those experienced during transition from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2. It also seeks to provide support to the Welsh Assembly Government in relation to the future guidance and support required by practitioners and teachers as all schools implement the Foundation Phase fully in 2011/12.

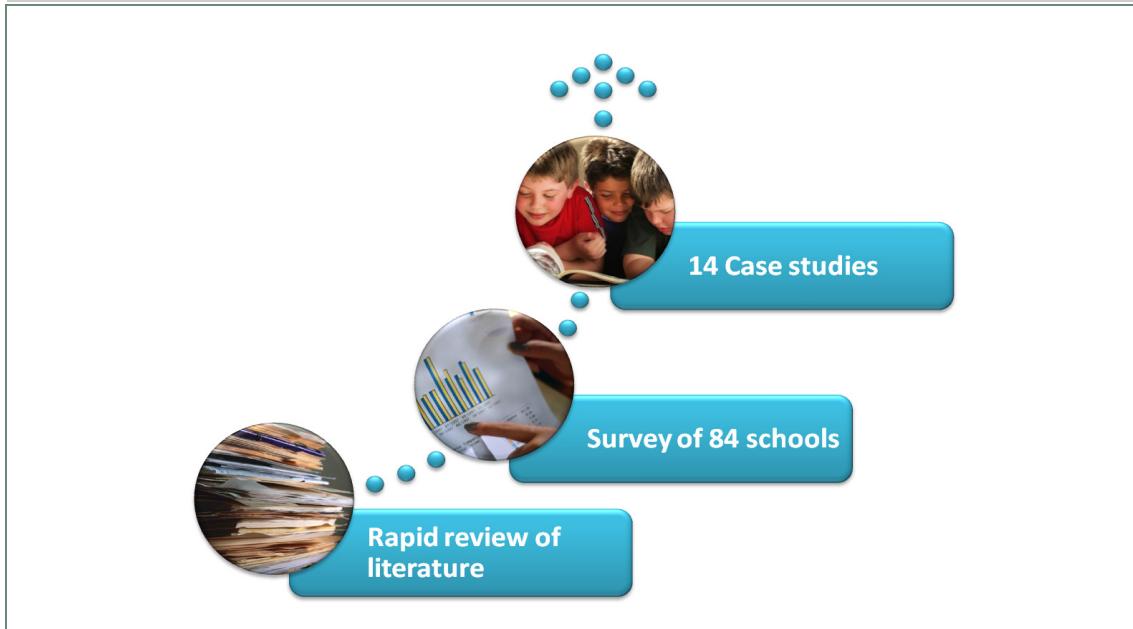
² This does not include any nursery schools or special schools who were omitted from the current study.

1.8 The study included three main components:

- an initial review and update of the available literature on transition in order to inform the design of the research instruments;
- a series of face-to-face case studies in schools, including both pilot/early start schools and a selection of schools which have yet to roll-out the Foundation Phase to children in Year 2;
- a survey of the head teachers and Foundation Phase/Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 staff in all early roll-out schools and in a sample of non-Foundation Phase schools.

1.9 Full details of the methods used in this study are included in a Methodological Annex (Annex 2)

Figure 1-1: Summary of approach



Source: SQW

1.10 The research was commissioned in late May 2010 and the fieldwork and postal survey administration were undertaken in the six week period leading up to the end of the summer term. The original intention had been to recruit 15 case-study schools, of which ten were to be Foundation Phase pilot schools and five were to be non-Foundation Phase schools drawn from a representative sample of schools provided by the Assembly Government. During this very busy term, the research team successfully

engaged 15 schools in the study. One of the recruited Foundation Phase pilot schools had to withdraw from the study at a late stage, due to other staff time commitments. This reduced the number of case studies completed to 14; these included seven pilot schools, two early start schools and five non-Foundation Phase schools (see Table 1-1).

- 1.11 It should be noted that the case-study schools do not reflect every characteristic of infant and junior schools in Wales – although the sample included rural and Welsh medium schools and some schools from disadvantaged areas, the sample was predominantly urban and less disadvantaged (with fewer than 25% of the school roll living in areas of high deprivation, for example). They do, however, reflect the broad characteristics of the pilot and early start schools and so are a good indication of the relative success of the implementation of the Foundation Phase to date.
- 1.12 Visits to the case-study schools included face-to-face interviews (in Welsh or English as appropriate) with 16 head teachers (some settings employed two head teachers, one for the infant school and one for the junior school), 15 Foundation Phase and three Key Stage 1 practitioners and 13 Key Stage 2 practitioners. In addition, 25 interactive group interviews took place with just over 140 children in Year 2 (12 groups) and Year 3 (13 groups). Two of the Year 3 groups included pupils from Year 4 and a further group interview took place with Year 1 pupils. The numbers of pupils in each group varied but were normally between six and eight. These group interviews also took place in Welsh or English (according to the medium of instruction in the school) and included a range of different group exercises designed to draw out, in particular, how children felt about the coming year (for Year 2 pupils) or what was different about Year 3 compared to Year 2 (for the Year 3 Key Stage (KS) 2 pupils).
- 1.13 Bilingual paper questionnaires were sent to 84 schools. These included the 42 Foundation Phase pilot and early start schools and a representative sample of 42 non-Foundation Phase schools drawn by the Welsh Assembly Government. Each school received one survey to be completed by the head teacher and two copies of a survey to be completed by the

Foundation Phase teacher or Key Stage 1 lead and a Key Stage 2 teacher.

Table 1-1: Characteristics of case study schools

		Early start schools	Pilot schools	Non-Foundation phase schools	All case study schools
Teaching medium	English Medium	2	5	3	10
	Welsh Medium	0	1	1	2
	Dual Stream	0	1	1	2
Location	Urban	2	5	5	12
	Rural	0	2	0	2
Proportion of pupils living in the 20% most deprived LSOAs (Lower Super Output Areas) ³	0-25%	1	5	5	11
	26-50%	0	0	0	0
	51-75%	0	1	0	1
	76-100%	1	1	0	2
Size of school	<15 pupils per year group	0	2	1	3
	15-30 pupils per year group	0	1	1	2
	>30 pupils per year group	2	4	3	9
Age mix of classes	All mixed age classes	0	2	1	3
	Majority mixed age classes	1	2	1	4
	Minority mixed age classes	0	2	1	3
	No mixed age classes	1	1	2	4

Source: SQW

³ Lower Layer in England and Wales Super Output Areas (SOAs) are a geographic hierarchy designed to improve the reporting of small area statistics. Unlike electoral wards, the SOA layers are of consistent size across the country and will not be subjected to regular boundary change. The 34,378 Lower Layer SOAs in England (32,482) and Wales (1,896) were built from groups of Output Areas (typically 4 to 6) and constrained by the boundaries of the Standard Table (ST) wards used for 2001 Census outputs. They have a minimum population of 1,000.

1.14 Given the late stage in the term and the short period during which the survey was live (between Monday 5th July and Friday 30th July 2010), the response rates were good, particularly from Foundation Phase schools (where responses from both practitioners and teachers exceeded 50%) and early start schools. Table 1-2 summarises the number and type of responses to the surveys.⁴

Table 1-2: Summary of responses to the survey of schools

	Responses	Number of surveys sent	Response rate
Head teacher survey			
Pilot schools	13	22	59%
Early start schools	10	20	50%
Non-Foundation Phase schools	17	42	40%
Unclassified	3		
Total	43	84	51%
Practitioner survey			
Pilot schools	25	44	57%
Early start schools	18	40	45%
Non-Foundation Phase schools	25	84	30%
Unclassified	3		
Total	71	168	42%

Source: SQW

Report Structure

1.15 This report is structured as follows:

- Section 2 provides a brief introduction to the Foundation Phase and explores the challenges it might present for transition to Key Stage 2.

⁴ Three schools returned surveys from which the identification code had been removed, either because they had photocopied the original paper questionnaire or printed out an email reminder but omitted the code.

It includes a discussion of practitioner awareness and understanding of the Phase and the ways in which it has been implemented.

- Section 3 looks at the experience of transition from Foundation Phase (and Key Stage 1) to Key Stage 2, from the perspectives of pupils and practitioners, and examines the extent to which schools have been able to put in place strategies that support both the socio-emotional aspects of transition and the organisational aspects of transition.
- Section 4 considers the practices that have been put in place that have led to more effective transition, and looks at the benefits and successes (as well as the challenges) that have emerged.
- Section 5 sets out our conclusions and recommendations for guidance and support for the national roll-out.

2 Awareness, understanding and implementation of the Foundation Phase

Summary

Evidence from survey and interview data suggests that:

- most practitioners in the Foundation Phase, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 were familiar with the Foundation Phase approach;
- the principles of the Foundation Phase learning appear to have been broadly embraced by both practitioners and head teachers;
- practitioners valued the training they had received but identified the need for a greater emphasis on practical support;
- approaches to implementing the Foundation Phase have varied and there are still some tensions around age and ability grouping of pupils and the requirements of the Key Stage 2 curriculum.

- 2.1 The Foundation Phase was introduced across Wales in 2008, as a new approach to learning for children from three to seven years of age. It combines what is generally referred to as Early Years Education (for three to five year-olds) and Key Stage 1 (five to seven year-olds) of the National Curriculum.
- 2.2 The previous focus on the subject-rooted basic and national curriculum has been transformed into a research-informed framework for learning that recognises the developmental needs of the child. It aims to promote independent, autonomous learners, with skills and understanding across seven Areas of Learning: language, literacy and communication skills; mathematical development; personal and social development, well-being and cultural diversity; physical development; creative development; Welsh language development; and knowledge and understanding of the world. Following the pedagogical approaches adopted both in Scandinavia and Reggio Emilia in Italy, it focuses on using experiential learning and play, both in the classroom and in the outdoor environment, to promote children's development.

2.3 In summary, the Foundation Phase is based on the principle that early years' provision should offer a sound foundation for future learning through a developmentally appropriate curriculum. It places great emphasis on children 'learning by doing'. Through the Foundation Phase, for example, it is anticipated that young children will be given more opportunities to gain first hand experiences through play and active involvement rather than by completing exercises in books. The focus is upon children being given time to develop their speaking and listening skills and to become confident in their reading and writing abilities. Greater emphasis is placed on helping children to understand how things work and on finding different ways to solve problems than on subject content.

What challenges might the Foundation Phase present to the transition to Key Stage 2?

2.4 Transition is a challenging time, with multiple elements influencing its success and failure to ensure a successful transition can lead to a delay in children's learning. In 2009, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) identified a number of factors that could lead to less successful transitions from Foundation Stage⁵ to Key Stage 1 and between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 in England. These factors are set out in Table 2-1.

Table 2-1: Factors leading to less successful Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1 and 2 transitions

Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1	Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Abrupt transitions to more formal teaching approaches, with less time for child-initiated activities, choice and play (Ofsted 2004; Sanders et al. 2005).• Staff in Year 1 may have less support from teaching assistants than their colleagues in Reception, and may not sufficiently recognise the anxieties of pupils and their parents/carers at this time (Sanders et al. 2005).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Different and heightened expectations on pupils, particularly regarding independent work.• Increased pressure to cover curriculum content; new and unfamiliar ways of working.• Less parental involvement.• The allocation of 'weaker' teachers to Year 3.

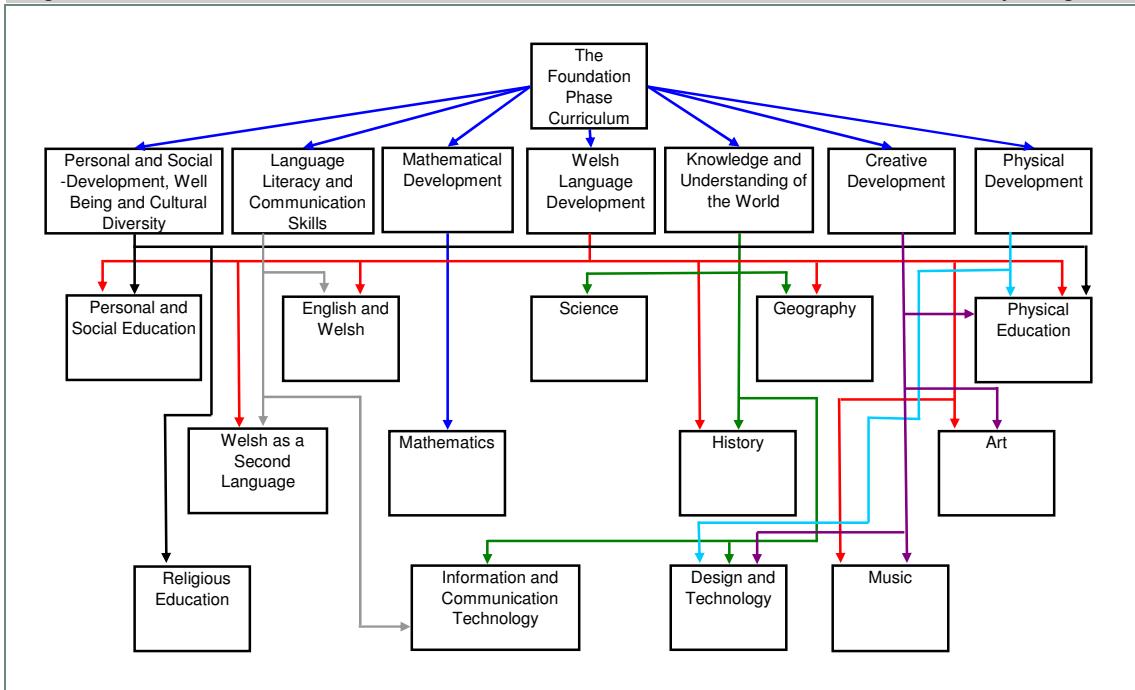
⁵ The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) sets standards for the development, learning and care of children from birth to five in England. All registered providers of Early Years care are required to use the EYFS statutory framework.

Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1	Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor transition planning, which does not identify underperforming pupils (Doddington et al., 2001).

Source: DCSF, 2009, Deprivation and Education: The evidence on pupils in England: Foundation Stage to Key Stage 4

- 2.5 There are some fundamental differences in relation to issues around transition in Wales, not least because there is no abrupt transition to formal teaching at Key Stage 1. Nonetheless, the issues identified in relation to the transition from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 could apply to the transition from Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2, in particular with regard to issues related to academic expectations, ways of working and curriculum content. Issues around expectations of independent working, however, seem less likely to emerge, as the Foundation Phase is premised on encouraging the development of autonomous learners. Perhaps a greater challenge is to map the Foundation Phase Outcomes to the subject areas of Key Stage 2.
- 2.6 Figure 2-1 sets out the anticipated links between the Foundation Phase and the Key Stage 2 National Curriculum, highlighting the relationship between the individual elements of the Foundation Phase Areas of Learning and the individual subjects that make up the Key Stage 2 curriculum. It demonstrates how the ‘creative development’ aspect of the Foundation Phase could link into activities such as music, art, design and technology and physical education, for example, while links are also apparent between knowledge and understanding of the world in the Foundation Phase and science, geography, history, design and technology and ICT at Key Stage 2.

Figure 2-1: Links between the Foundation Phase and the National Curriculum in Key Stage 2



Source: National Assembly for Wales: The Learning Country: The Foundation Phase – 3 to 7 years, p.26 edited to reflect the revised names of the Areas of Learning

- 2.7 While those curriculum links can be modelled, the change from developing subject knowledge in Key Stage 1 to developing autonomous learning skills in the Foundation Phase brings with it a more fundamental challenge for transition. Children progressing from the play-focused environment of the Foundation Phase will move into the more formal curriculum structure at Key Stage 2. Although children will have taken part in learning to promote academic skills (mathematics and literacy, for example), the model of learning and interaction they encounter in Key Stage 2, with the subject-based curriculum, may be very different. Even though children may be in the same school, transition from the Foundation Phase, in which children are encouraged to develop independent learning skills, to Key Stage 2, in which the pedagogical practice may be quite dissimilar to anything they had previously encountered, could be difficult and even, in the worst case scenario, lead to disaffection or disengagement (whether active or passive).
- 2.8 The role of teachers at Key Stage 2 in helping children to make that transition is, therefore, critical. In the early stages of the Foundation Phase introduction in Wales, Siraj-Blatchford et al (2005) commented on

inconsistencies in transition arrangements and in the training of staff during the early stages of the Foundation Phase. Unless teachers of children in this Key Stage develop an understanding of the educational experiences and academic and social skills developed by children over the four years from age three to age seven, and are able to adapt their pedagogical practice, they may not be able to build on these skills effectively, nor to capitalise on the learning acquired during the Foundation Phase, in order to promote speedy progression. In an earlier study of transition to primary schools in Scotland, Stephen and Cope (2003) had concluded: *It was clear that teachers saw transition to school as a one-way process in which children had to 'fit' into school, and did not see it as their task to respond to the diversity of children's preferences, previous experiences or background.*

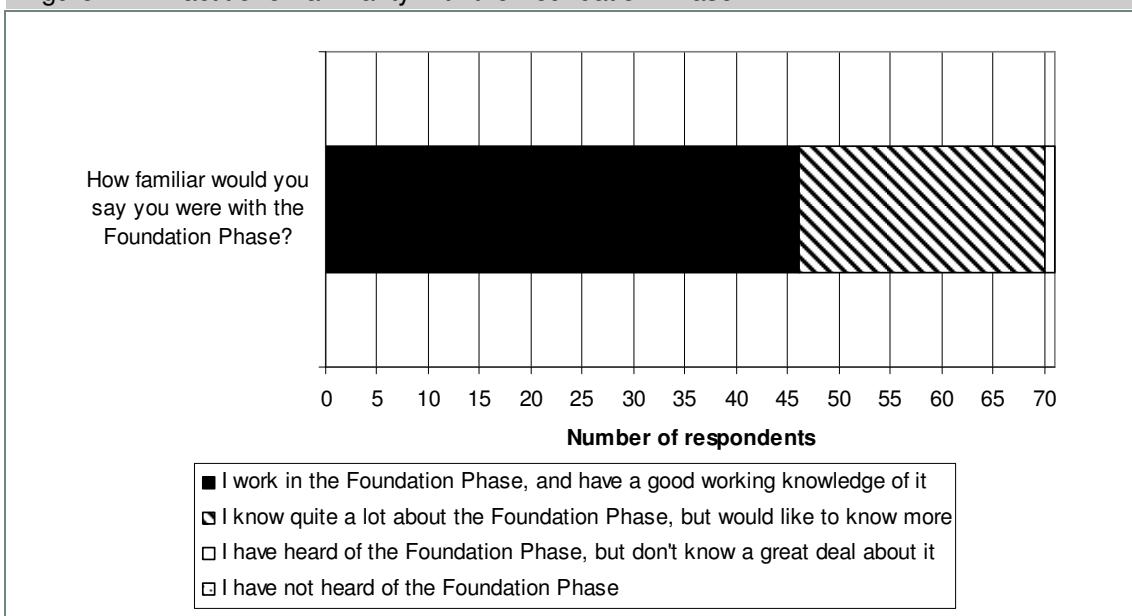
- 2.9 The Estyn report of 2005, written after the 41 (now 42) pilot and early start schools had introduced the Foundation Phase framework, suggested that many schools were '*already planning their whole-school approaches to teaching and learning to include this phase*', and that the Foundation Phase was '*starting to help young children develop better independent learning skills*'. At that stage, only one year after the pilot was launched in September 2004, they would not have had any evidence to assess the extent to which children's progress in independent learning skills translated into progress at Key Stage 2. Since that date, Estyn have continued to comment favourably on the implementation of the Foundation Phase in terms of the quality of practical activities, the level of challenge they offer to children, the commitment and knowledgeability of practitioners and the impact on children's attainment.⁶ They have not as yet, however, commented on the perceived impact of the Foundation Phase on transition and progression to Key Stage 2.

⁶ See, for example, the latest Estyn summary remit report (2010), which suggested that '*In the Foundation Phase, early indications suggest that more practical approaches are especially valuable in helping raise boys' standards of achievement in mathematics.*'
http://www.estyn.gov.uk/AR_2010/Estyn%20Remit%20Summaries.pdf

Awareness of the Foundation Phase

2.10 As detailed in Section 1 of this report, the study focused upon the Foundation Phase pilot schools and a representative sample of non-Foundation Phase schools in Wales. The results of the survey of schools provides a valuable insight into the level of awareness and understanding of the Foundation Phase amongst staff in pilot schools compared to the wider schools who are in the process of completing roll-out.

Figure 2-2: Practitioner familiarity with the Foundation Phase



Source: SQW N= 71

2.11 At this stage, prior to full roll-out, most practitioners in Foundation Phase, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 reported familiarity with the Foundation Phase (see Figure 2-2), with only one of the 71 respondents reporting not knowing 'a great deal' about it. Not surprisingly, the level of working knowledge was marginally greater in pilot and early start schools (30 of the 43 respondents from such schools worked in the Foundation Phase). Yet the proportion of non-Foundation Phase practitioners expressing this level of familiarity (14 out of 25 non-Foundation Phase respondents) was also very high, suggesting that the Estyn view that schools are already underway in preparing and introducing Foundation Phase is correct. Indeed, practitioners in the non-Foundation Phase schools also appeared comfortable with the approach, with the majority having gone a significant way towards full implementation of the curriculum.

- 2.12 Even so, around one third of all practitioner respondents (not all of whom were Key Stage 2 practitioners, who might be expected to be less well acquainted with the Foundation Phase Framework (curriculum)) said that they would like to know more, a view echoed in the case-study schools. The majority of Foundation Phase practitioners in pilot and early start schools said they had valued the training they had received from the local authority, which was said to have informed teachers about Foundation Phase philosophies. What practitioners in some pilot schools noted, however, was that they would like to know more about the numerous *practicalities* of implementing the Foundation Phase. This included simple logistic queries such as how should they set up the various areas of provision inside and outside the classroom and where and how they should store the additional teaching and learning resources needed. Some Foundation Phase practitioners commented that, at the outset of their introduction of the Foundation Phase, they had felt quite isolated and that a lack of practical guidance had led them to adopt a trial and error approach with regards to implementation. Of course the pilot and early start schools began delivering the Foundation Phase prior to the development and publication of the training and guidance which is now available but this observation does highlight the need for appropriate practical support and guidance.
- 2.13 Fewer Key Stage 2 teachers had received training from the local authority than their Foundation Phase counterparts, but said that they had been familiarised with the curriculum through lesson observations, cascaded training strategies and in-school informal support networks. This did not always mean that knowledge of the Foundation Phase was accurate, as one Key Stage 2 teacher warned, before applauding the informal sharing that nonetheless took place.

Staff here are very supportive, they do explain and if new documentation comes out they do share it with us - for their benefit and mine. (Key Stage 2 teacher)

2.14 Head teachers who responded to the survey were generally confident in the level of awareness amongst their Foundation Phase or Key Stage 1 staff, but were apparently less sanguine about the level of Key Stage 2 practitioner familiarity with the Foundation Phase than the practitioners themselves. Fifteen of the 25 respondent Key Stage 2 practitioners felt confident in their awareness, but 26 of the responding heads thought that their Key Stage 2 staff had ‘mixed levels of knowledge of the Foundation Phase’ or needed to know more. Head teachers in the case study schools appeared aware that Key Stage 2 teachers had not been trained in experiential learning practices to the same degree as Foundation Phase or Key Stage 1 teachers. One head teacher was of the opinion that their school lacked the resources necessary to train and support Key Stage 2 staff, which in turn had an impact on teachers’ abilities to continue elements of the Foundation Phase through into Key Stage 2.

Understanding of the Foundation Phase

2.15 Responses to the survey suggest that the principles of Foundation Phase learning have been broadly embraced by practitioners and head teachers, with survey respondents largely in agreement with the principles of Foundation Phase learning. They believed that the seven areas of learning provided a broad and balanced curriculum for all children, and reported that they were *‘comfortable with the notion of play-based learning’* and *‘happy working with children outside the classroom’*.

2.16 Head teachers, practitioners and teachers in the majority of case study schools agreed that Foundation Phase philosophies had been adopted and welcomed by practitioners – particularly those (generally more experienced practitioners and teachers) whose original training had focused on practices similar to those used in the Foundation Phase. Indeed, many Foundation Phase teachers reported that, prior to the pilot, they had used ‘active learning’ approaches in their classrooms. Given this, the move to the Foundation Phase was not thought to have required a major change in the ethos of many schools for children of this age. Foundation Phase teachers reported that they were particularly

enthusiastic about allowing children to direct their own learning, implementing topic-based learning and using the outdoor environment, all of which they felt would develop creative and independent learners.

- 2.17 Key Stage 2 teachers in each of the case study schools also seemed to have welcomed the Foundation Phase. Although there were some initial concerns that the Foundation Phase was focused primarily on play instead of learning, subsequent training and classroom observations were said to have dispelled their earlier misconceptions. In fact, most Key Stage 2 teachers to whom we spoke said they had made moves to implement some of the Foundation Phase philosophies and practices in their own classrooms.

I am more hands-on with the children myself really...we'll talk about the topic and the ideas that come up and I do tend to feed them into my planning anyway. (Key Stage 2 teacher)

Implementing the Foundation Phase

- 2.18 While Foundation Phase practitioners fully supported the notion of teaching according to children's developmental stage⁷ and head teachers agreed with it in principle, more than half (22 of the 43) of the respondent head teachers nonetheless agreed with the statement that '*the key factor determining what (and how) a child is taught should be their age*'. This, perhaps, highlights an ongoing and potential tension in implementing the Foundation Phase curriculum – between teaching children at a level that suits them individually and the practicalities of organising classrooms. Teaching by stage, rather than age, implies the need for mixed-age classes, for example, an approach which only a handful of the case-study schools had fully adopted. For instance, one pilot school had amalgamated the nursery though to year 2 classes into a single Foundation Phase unit therefore allowing ability grouping.

We need to look at the children as individuals and work from where they're at. (Foundation Phase teacher)

⁷ Respondents from non-Foundation Phase schools were marginally less sure about this.

- 2.19 In other pilot and early start schools, the range of approaches adopted varied. In some of these schools, classes were grouped by age, but where possible joint teaching took place based on pupils' needs. In others, ability grouping was not possible as for instance, when schools had large intakes of pupils; where separate English and Welsh medium classes were being delivered; or where the physical structure of the building did not allow this to take place. Where children remained in age-grouped classes, teachers reported structuring their classes around ability groups. Despite this, there was a general feeling amongst Foundation Phase teachers and Key Stage 1 teachers that children needed to reach a certain 'level' of ability before entering the juniors.
- 2.20 Nearly all of the Foundation Phase and Key Stage 1 practitioners said they had now been trained in experiential learning, though fewer Key Stage 2 teachers and classroom assistants had yet been through such training. Evidence from the case-study research supports these findings. The majority of Foundation Phase teachers noted that they and their classroom assistants had received training from the local authority. However, few Key Stage 2 teachers had yet to embark on training and said they had to rely on their Foundation Phase colleagues for information.
- 2.21 Practitioners strongly opposed the idea that children should sit quietly at their desks in a classroom. Yet, while head teachers were aware that their Foundation Phase and Key Stage 1 practitioners had been through the training, and agreed that staff were comfortable with the concept of play-based learning, more than half of them still believed that their staff preferred this traditional method of classroom management. This suggests that there may still be some disjuncture between perception and practice in schools, with practitioners moving forward (or thinking they were moving forward) faster than their head teachers may be aware.
- 2.22 Although some interviewees reported there may have been some initial scepticism around a play-based approach to teaching and learning, the majority of Foundation Phase practitioners and Key Stage 1 teachers were enthusiastic about the new curriculum approach. Indeed, the majority of

Key Stage 1 interviewees had made, or had begun to make adaptations, where necessary, to their teaching methods in order to facilitate implementation of the Foundation Phase. However, some practitioners believed that some areas of teaching and learning needed to remain more formal in order to ensure that basic skills are attained, and they were adapting their practice to support this.

The junior school were concerned about handwriting, so we've taken that on board this term and we've actually done handwriting. Not that we don't do handwriting, but we've done formal handwriting. (Head teacher)

- 2.23 Finally, there was general agreement that the Foundation Phase would lead to improved outcomes for children in relation to an improved ability to work with others, greater self-confidence and an ability to be independent learners, with nearly all respondents thinking that it would help some children (if not always all). In other areas, such as behaviour and academic achievement, feelings were slightly less strong, though were still positive (see Appendix 3). In one of the case-study schools, for example, staff reported that they had fewer behaviour problems since the introduction of the Foundation Phase and that improved behaviour facilitated a positive transition for children.

Parental involvement and views of the Foundation Phase

- 2.24 Most interviewees who expressed an opinion believed that parents had welcomed the Foundation Phase, although at least one head teacher identified initial parental concerns about the changed curriculum. Schools had adopted a variety of approaches to introducing the new approach, with some using formal parents' evenings and others preferring informal strategies, such as open door policies, feeling that parents were either intimidated by, or unwilling to attend, formal meetings. This was particularly the case in the more deprived schools that we visited, where such meetings were generally said not to be well attended.

- 2.25 One of the challenges schools had faced was convincing parents that play-based learning was not a ‘free-for-all’, but led to real developments in skills and understanding. Informal approaches appeared, in many cases, to be as successful as formal information-giving sessions in promoting parental awareness of this, even if schools were aware that they still had work to do to ensure a complete understanding of the Foundation Phase philosophy. In one disadvantaged urban school, for example, an open door policy, in which parents were welcomed into classrooms to see what their children were doing, was thought to have led to a significant increase in school attendance. In that instance, the pupils were said to be the best ambassadors for the school and for the Foundation Phase, as their enthusiasm for the work they were doing (including mathematics) reassured parents and gave them confidence that learning was taking place – even if it was not expressed through a neat and marked work book.
- 2.26 Interviewees were divided as to the extent to which engagement had changed since the introduction of the Foundation Phase. In some cases, schools thought that changes to the physical environment of schools had prompted parents to come into the school more often, if only out of curiosity and to see the facilities (or use them, in some cases). In others interviewees said that there had not been any notable changes in the general level of engagement with parents, other than for school trips (of which there were now more), as their relationships with parents had always been active. Some practitioners, by contrast, thought that the Foundation Phase had reduced the level of parental contact, since the greater availability of teaching assistants had led to a reduction in the need to recruit parents to help with projects or out of classroom activities.

Conclusion

- 2.27 To what extent is there evidence that the new approach has supported children’s progression to the next stage of education? Even though there were some concerns about the practical elements of implementing the Foundation Phase (and tensions were sometimes evident around the

structure and organisation of classroom groups), on the whole, survey respondents and interviewees in case-study schools were in favour of the Foundation Phase approach and positive about its impact on their classroom and on pupil development. Parents were thought to be in favour of the new curriculum, even where they had initial concerns about the amount of learning that would take place. What were the views of teachers and parents on the impact of the Foundation Phase on transition, however?

- 2.28 In the next chapter, we will explore in more detail the evidence around transition to Key Stage 2.

3 Making the transition

Summary

Data from the surveys and from interviews with practitioners and children in Years 2 and 3 suggest that:

- practitioners think that most children find it relatively easy to adjust to the expectations of their new environment, **but** feel that children could be better prepared;
- children in both Foundation Phase and non-Foundation Phase schools were excited by the thought of moving up to Year 3, rather than apprehensive about the prospect of the transition;
- children in Year 3 in Foundation Phase schools tended to have more regrets about leaving Year 2 than their counterparts, **but** did not appear to be unduly concerned, seeing the loss of some activities and facilities as part of growing up;
- a higher proportion of Foundation Phase respondents than non-Foundation Phase respondents thought that children found it easier to make the transition than their peers from older cohorts, **but** were unable to make a definitive link between the introduction of the Foundation Phase and improved transitions for pupils;
- there were few differences in relation to the socio-emotional elements of transition between children in the Foundation Phase and non-Foundation Phase schools;
- the operational mechanisms that support successful transition appeared to be in place in both Foundation Phase and non-Foundation Phase schools, **but** the extent to which they operated and their perceived effectiveness varied.

- 3.1 Survey findings suggest that in the majority of the responding schools, practitioners think that children find it relatively easy to adjust to the expectations of their new environment, a view shared by practitioners in both Foundation Phase and non-Foundation Phase case-study schools. Indeed, practitioners tended to think that parents/carers were more concerned about the transition than their children.
- 3.2 It was quite marked, however, that proportionately more Foundation Phase and Key Stage 1 survey respondents than Key Stage 2 respondents tended to be optimistic in their views about post-transition outcomes. Practitioners were not all certain that children were well prepared for the

transition to Key Stage 2, with two fifths of all survey respondents suggesting that preparation could be better. Indeed, this was particularly evident in Foundation Phase schools, where fewer Key Stage 2 respondents were sanguine about the level of preparedness for transition than their Foundation Phase counterparts.

- 3.3 Opinion was also divided as to whether children found it easier or harder than previous cohorts to settle into their new classes, although a higher proportion of all survey respondents from Foundation Phase schools (both pilot and early start) than non-Foundation Phase schools tended to think that children found the transition less difficult than their older peers. Parents were thought to be more alert to transition issues than in previous years, primarily because they were now more aware that the children were going through a transition.
- 3.4 Practitioners in the Foundation Phase case-study schools were unable to make a definitive link between the introduction of the Foundation Phase and improved transitions for pupils. However in a few cases, interviewees were of the opinion that children were more confident as a result of having been educated through the Foundation Phase curriculum and were therefore better able to manage the transition between the key stages. Practitioners in one school noted that there had been fewer behaviour problems since the introduction of the Foundation Phase (even though most survey respondents tended to think the opposite – see below) and suggested that improved behaviour facilitated a positive transition for children.
- 3.5 Clearly, this issue of the quality of transition is not straightforward. The survey findings suggest the need to explore why practitioners think that children who had been through the Foundation Phase might find it easier to make the transition, even though they were transferring into a very different curriculum model and might be expected to find the transition difficult. What, if anything, is easing that transition and why does transition in some schools appear to be working more effectively than others? One question that needs to be addressed, in particular, is which aspects of

preparation need to be improved in order to enhance the process for all pupils.

- 3.6 In a recent review of transition between key stages, Evans et al (2010) suggested that the research literature in this field discussed issues in relation to two main aspects: socio-emotional factors and organisational factors.
- **Socio-emotional factors** refer particularly to factors causing children to be anxious about the transition process. Issues such as adapting to new peer groups, teachers and new curriculum and academic expectations all fit into this category and have been explored in a number of studies and previous systematic literature reviews, including Galton *et al* (2003), Sanders *et al* (2005), Merry (2007), Evangelou *et al* (2008), and Shields (2009).
 - **Organisational factors** relate to practice within (and across) institutions and include issues around collaborative working and the sharing of practice, support and advice for transition and, of particular interest to us in relation to an examination of transition from the Foundation Phase, curriculum continuity. If there are failings in organisational support, the independent learning skills developed in the Foundation Phase will not be capitalised on following the transition to more formal learning in Key Stage 2.
- 3.7 These two factors provide a helpful overarching structure for looking at the findings from both the survey responses and the interviews with practitioners and pupils in the 14 case-study schools.

Socio-emotional factors

- 3.8 More than half of the survey respondents (head teachers and practitioners) suggested that socio-emotional factors were not a substantial barrier to successful transition in their school, a view shared by most of the case-study interviewees in both Foundation Phase and non-Foundation Phase schools. Children were generally thought to have found it easy to settle in with new classmates and to adjust to new practitioners, for example, while

the Year 2 children themselves appeared to be quite excited about the thought of making new friends, accessing new opportunities and even being taught by new teachers.

- 3.9 Overwhelmingly, the children tended to focus on the positive aspects of the transition and, for the majority of those interviewed, moving up into Year 3 and away from the infant school was seen as a big step and one that they were excited by, rather than apprehensive about. As one said: "*We'll be working more and learning more.*" This sentiment was shared by children whether they





attended Foundation Phase schools or Non-Foundation Phase schools. Alongside this, there were no significant differences between children who attended non-Foundation Phase schools and those who attended Foundation Phase schools in their expectations of the future or the transition experiences they identified.

- 3.10 The majority of negative comments (grouped under the 'sad' face in the third column in the school example shown here) came from Year 3 children in the Foundation Phase schools, who were reflecting back on the differences between Year 3 and Year 2. Most of their comments related to things they missed, particularly outdoor activities and pets (e.g. "We don't go down to the farm as much as



the year 2s and we don't have chicks"), school trips and creative activities (including a perceived lack of stickers). They tended to highlight subjects which they didn't enjoy (though these varied between the groups) and lamented the current lack of playtime compared to when they were in Year

2 (though this also partly reflected their perception that many of the learning activities they took part in during Year 2 were just playing). Although children identified these differences as being their ‘least favourite’ aspects of transition, they did not appear to be unduly concerned by them, seeing the loss of some activities and facilities as part of growing up.

- 3.11 For Year 2s looking forward to their move into Year 3, there were very few potential changes that appeared to worry the children, though some displayed some anxiety about the transition: some were “*a bit nervous*” or said “*I don’t want it to change too much*”. A few were concerned that they would have a different teacher and would miss their current teacher, a worry recognised by schools who ran, for example, ‘moving up days’ to enable children to spend time with their new teacher in the summer term prior to the new academic year. In one school, individual children spent two hours a week in their Key Stage 2 class to increase their familiarity with the organisation of the day and the expectations on their behaviour and activity.
- 3.12 Others worried about the older and bigger children they would meet in the junior school (for some this was on a different site), whilst a few were concerned about the harder work they would have to do. Children’s concerns about academic expectations were also recognised by staff, with some highlighting socio-emotional factors of concern to their pupils, including:
- new expectations in terms of learning (10 out of 71 practitioners and 8 out of 43 head teachers felt these were difficult for children to adjust to);
 - new expectations in terms of homework (9 out of 71 practitioners and 9 out of 43 head teachers said they thought children experienced such worries);
 - adjusting to expectations in terms of behaviour (8 out of 71 practitioners and 6 out of 43 head teachers thought that children would find these challenging).
- 3.13 What is interesting, however, is that proportionately fewer survey respondents from Foundation Phase schools than non-Foundation Phase

schools thought that children who were now in Year 3 or Year 4 had struggled to adjust to academic expectations (though the early start schools, with less experience of the transition, were less positive in this respect than the pilot schools). More of the Foundation Phase respondents thought that children struggled with expectations around behaviour (in contrast to the one case-study school where staff thought behaviour had improved – see above) a view also expressed by a number of the Key Stage 2 staff we interviewed, who said they had originally struggled with children who seemed to find it difficult to stay in one place for any length of time.

- 3.14 The findings suggest that few differences exist in relation to the socio-emotional elements of transition between children in the Foundation Phase and non-Foundation Phase schools. On the whole it would appear that schools have been equally effective in preparing children for making the move from infant to primary or from Year 2 to Year 3 whether the school is following the traditional curriculum or implementing the Foundation Phase. This is not surprising, in that supporting the emotional well-being of children through transition has been the focus of much attention in recent years. It implies, moreover, that helping with this aspect of transition may not need to be central to future Foundation Phase guidance materials because schools are already making progress in this area.

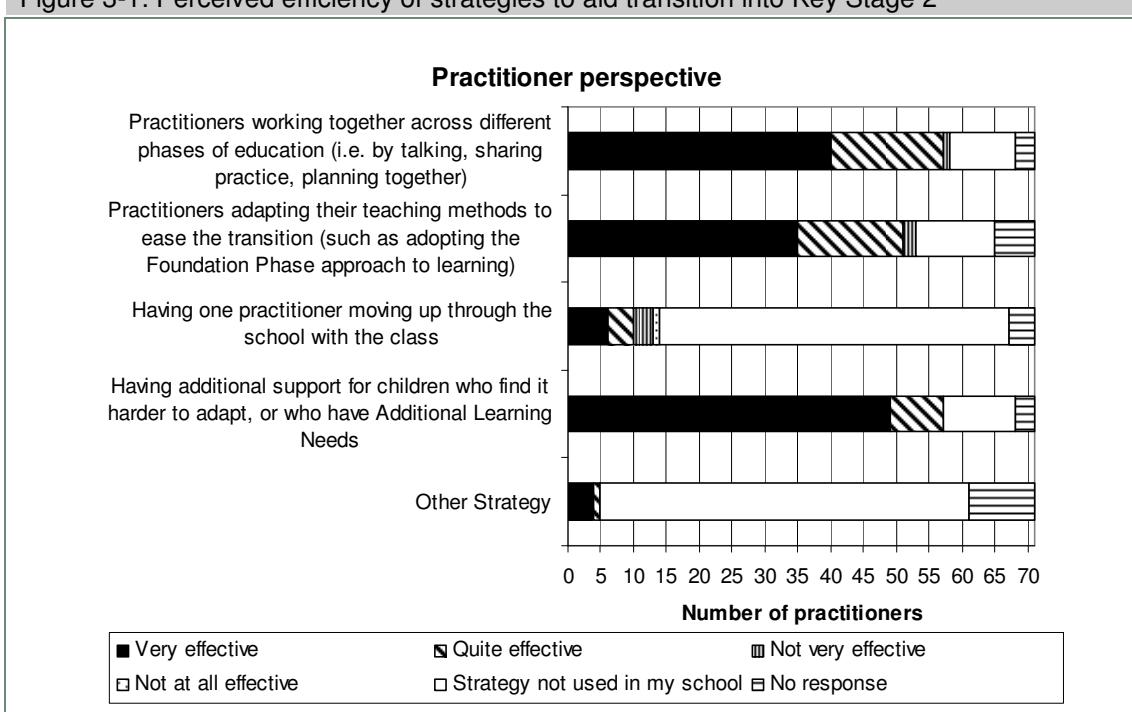
Organisational factors

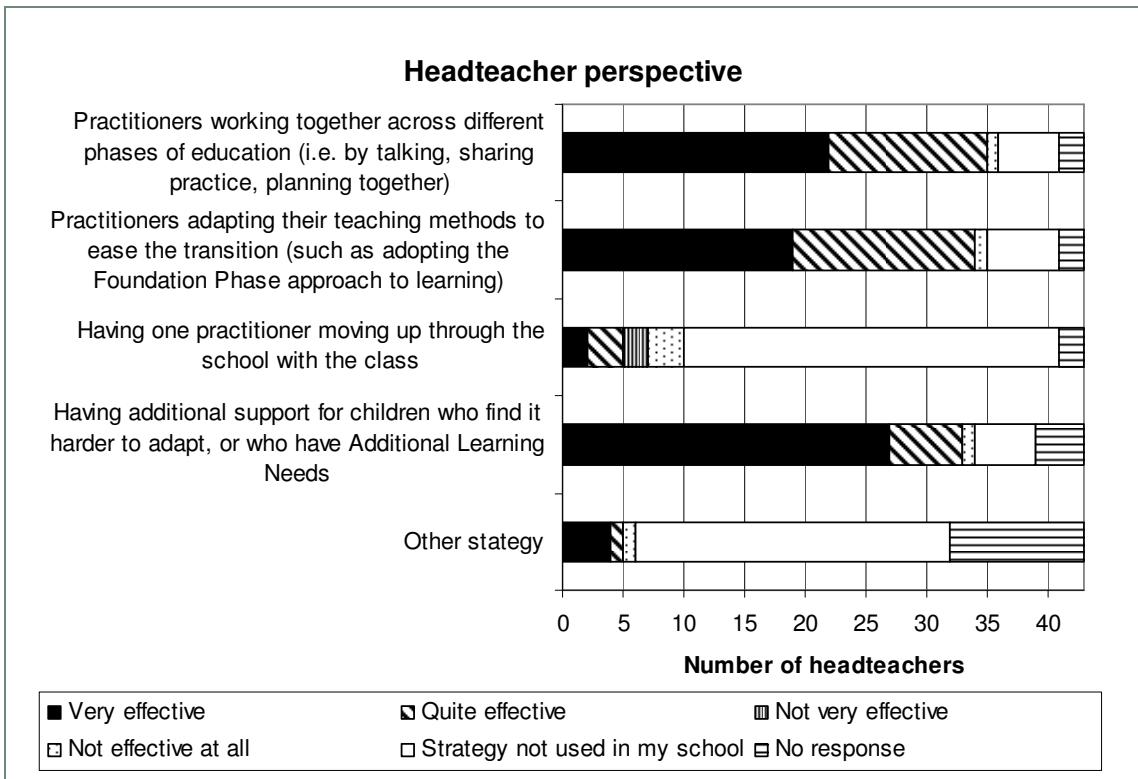
- 3.15 What is evident from much previous research, however, is that some elements of organisational support for transition have not always been addressed as well as the socio-emotional factors, whether in terms of structural issues (staff finding it difficult to work across phases, for example) or curriculum issues (particularly in relation to ensuring continuity and progression). Research suggests that the most effective strategies appear to revolve around:
- adapting teaching methods to ease the transition (*Siraj-Blatchford et al 2002*);

- practitioners working together across different phases of education (Rose 2009, Evans *et al* 2010);
- providing additional support for children who find it harder to adapt (Saunders *et al* 2005, Evans *et al* 2010).

3.16 From both survey and case study evidence, these mechanisms appeared to be in place in both Foundation Phase and non-Foundation Phase schools, although the extent to which they operated and their perceived effectiveness varied (see Figure 3-1). Foundation Phase and non-Foundation Phase respondents tended to agree on the effectiveness of adapting their teaching styles, but proportionately fewer respondents in non-Foundation Phase schools reported that this strategy was used in their school, presumably because the transition to Key Stage 2 was not yet seen as a pressing issue in their school.

Figure 3-1: Perceived efficiency of strategies to aid transition into Key Stage 2





Source: SQW survey of schools. N= 71

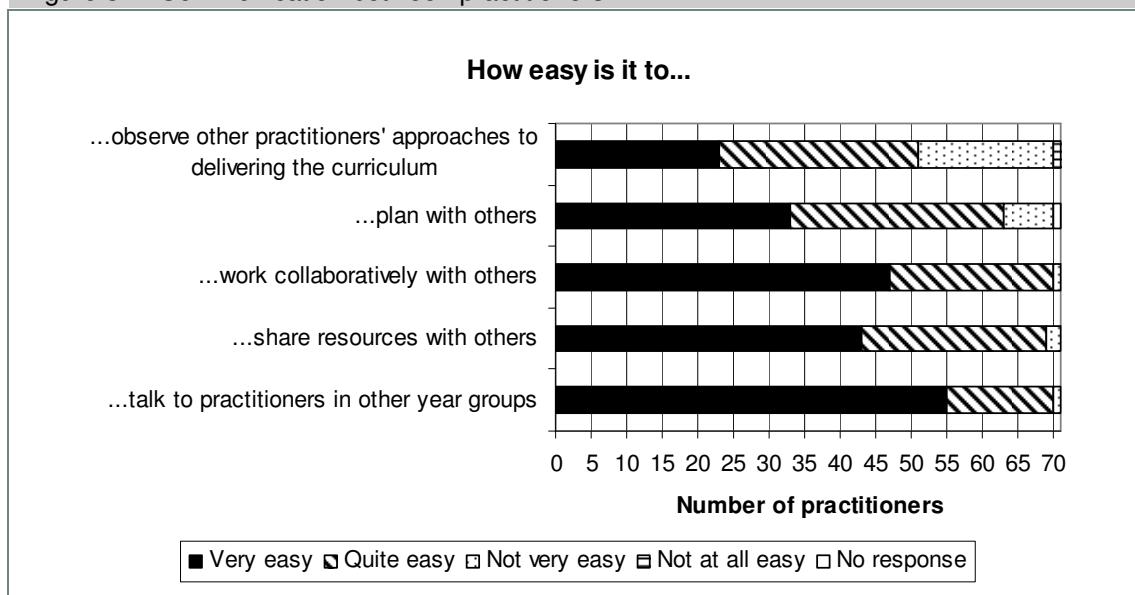
3.17 In addition, 67 of the 71 practitioner respondents agreed (30 of them strongly) that they had changed the way they taught over the last three years. They said they were motivated by a need to reflect changes in the skills and knowledge of the children (60 respondents) and to help children adapt more easily to different classrooms and practitioners (49 respondents). There were a number of common themes that ran through the changes in teaching method. These included adopting:

- a more practical teaching method, with greater use of the outdoors and a more active approach to learning;
- more group work, with learning through group sessions, lesson rotation and peer learning;
- a child initiated and led approach, particularly within early start and pilot schools, with “hooks and stimulus to engage the children.”

3.18 There were no observed differences between Foundation Phase and non-Foundation Phase schools in the extent to which they reported the ability to observe each other's practice, talk to teachers in other year groups or

share resources, but there were marked differences in the extent to which Foundation Phase practitioners (and particularly in pilot schools) felt they could work collaboratively with others. The responses suggest that collaborative working appears to have been easier in pilot schools. Most (21) of the 25 responding Foundation Phase pilot school practitioners found it 'very easy' to work collaboratively with others compared with just over half of the early start respondents (10 of the 18) and non-Foundation Phase respondents (14 of the 25) who answered in the same way.

Figure 3-2: Communication between practitioners



Source: SQW survey of schools N= 71

- 3.19 Finally, and for the most part, methods of communication between practitioners seem to be relatively good. Only one of the 71 responding practitioners said it was 'not very easy' to talk to practitioners in other year groups.

Conclusion

- 3.20 In exploring the factors that appeared to facilitate changed practice, better collaboration and improved communication, we identified five main influences, grouped around the extent to which practitioners across the phases had shared philosophies, understanding of the curriculum, classroom practice, communication strategies and a willingness to take risks and experiment. We will explore each of these further in Chapter 4.

4 Facilitating transition

Summary

Findings from the case studies suggest that interviewees believed that:

- strong senior leadership support was essential for the successful implementation of a shared philosophy on the Foundation Phase approach to teaching and learning;
- where Key Stage 2 teachers had a greater understanding of the Foundation Phase approach, more of them made appropriate adaptations to their teaching practices to facilitate transition for pupils;
- the adoption of common practices across phases, including structural changes (related to timetabling and classroom organisation) and similar approaches to learning activities and skills development aided transition for pupils;
- good cross-phase communication was essential, both in terms of easing the transition for pupils and in making sure that the pupils met the expectations of Key Stage 2 teachers;
- a reflective environment where practitioners and teachers could try out different approaches without fear of criticism was helpful in developing good practice.

- 4.1 Most of the evidence in this chapter emerged during the **case study** visits. Interviews with head teachers and practitioners (teachers and classroom assistants), in particular, highlighted the significant role played by individual school leaders in promoting the ethos and culture in which curriculum change and effective practice could take place. Interviewees also recognised the role of external influences, such as the introduction of Assessment for Learning (which facilitated the monitoring of progression) and the introduction of the 2008 Key Stage 2 curriculum⁸ and its thematic approach to teaching and learning, which had been used by some schools as the impetus to introduce a themed approach to learning across all phases.

⁸ ‘Making the most of learning – implementing the revised curriculum’ (Welsh Assembly Government 2008) provides guidance on how best to implement the revised curriculum from September 2008 onwards. The guidance can be found at:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/curriculuminwales/arevisedcurriculumforales/nationalcurriculum/makingthemostoflearningnc;/jsessionid=LrZSMnCGRvpvf3zRlq2JJ3Bhb16BJ2R9nnnsyn42XKyZQN3LrRzQ!320120316?lang=en>

The biggest change is a different approach to the curriculum, isn't it? But that should be reduced with the introduction of the new curriculum in Key Stage 2. That should iron out some of the issues. (Head teacher)

The development of a shared philosophy

- 4.2 Most interviewees, across Foundation Phase and non-Foundation Phase schools supported the curriculum approach advocated by the Foundation Phase and felt that it aligned to the philosophies already in place in their schools.

The school has always been an active learning-based school within the Key Stage 1 national curriculum anyway, because the teachers that were present in the class had the philosophy and belief that that was the best way children learn. (Foundation Phase teacher)

- 4.3 There was enthusiastic support for use of new teaching and learning styles amongst most interviewees. That said, there were some reservations, particularly amongst Key Stage 2 teachers in non-Foundation Phase schools. Some Foundation Phase practitioners also expressed concern that the play-based curriculum did not enable the development of basic skills to the same extent as more traditional methods, and felt that the reduction in more formal learning in the Foundation Phase had an impact on the attainment of necessary skills, for example literacy and numeracy.

The area I've found least developed is their number work, their maths, and that is an area where it does have to be taught formally.
(Key Stage 2 teacher)

- 4.4 Other Key Stage 2 teachers disagreed. As one commented, such negative views of pupils' skills meant that:

...they miss the point, they miss the point – because previously you might have children producing one or two pages of writing, but if you looked at it all in more depth, you would soon discover that they were doing little more than copying what the teacher had been doing. It looks very nice and impressive but the depth of

understanding and the depth of learning is not there. (Key Stage 2 teacher)

- 4.5 Interviewees (particularly head teachers) felt that resistance stemmed largely from a lack of understanding about the Foundation Phase and reported that concerns were generally mitigated through training and experience.

There is likely to be less resistance from staff if they know what the Foundation Phase is about. That's why we've tried to give all staff the same message about this is what the Foundation Phase is, this is how it is implemented and this is why we're doing it. (Head teacher)

- 4.6 Schools had adopted different approaches to engendering a shared philosophy and promoting the use of elements of Foundation Phase teaching in Key Stage 2 classrooms. Some focused their efforts at Key Stage 2 teachers directly, either through specific training activities or through shadowing programmes. Others focused on school governors as a way of allaying their concerns and of creating powerful advocates for the approach with Key Stage 2 teachers. The following vignettes provide examples of some of the ways that senior managers in schools sought to raise awareness of the benefits and outcomes of the Foundation Phase approach.

Shared philosophy, educating teachers...

In one pilot school, the Foundation Phase and its philosophies had been welcomed and embraced by both the head teacher and by Foundation Phase practitioners. Nonetheless, Key Stage 2 teachers, who welcomed the Foundation Phase in theory, were concerned that its approach might not ensure children gained the full set of basic skills.

In order to address this, and to ensure a philosophical alignment across the school, the head teacher adapted the school's internal training programme to better reflect Foundation Phase practices. Such adaptations entailed providing Key Stage 2 teachers with time to both observe and teach in the Foundation Phase. The provision of training and education was seen as the most effective way of challenging negative perceptions around the Foundation Phase.

Shared philosophy, educating governors...

In one early start infant school the head teacher reported that, initially, Key Stage 2 teachers in the junior school to which the children would progress were anxious about how the play-based Foundation Phase would affect basic skills attainment. In order to address this concern and to facilitate a shared understanding and philosophy with the junior school, the head teacher embarked on an educational programme for governors.

The programme sought to inform infant school governors, many of whom were also members of the junior school's governing body, about the Foundation Phase – its ethos and approach and how things worked in practice. The infant school head teacher delivered a presentation to the school's governors about the Foundation Phase and governors were then invited to observe Foundation Phase classes 'in action'. Their understanding and appreciation of the Foundation Phase was then passed onto Key Stage 2 teachers in the junior school, allaying some of their fears and concerns.

- 4.7 Ensuring a shared philosophy is not without cost, however. Providing training, or setting up a shadowing programme for Key Stage 2 teachers (as planned in one infant school, for example) incur costs in terms of time and staff cover. A number of the schools we visited anticipated challenges in finding the monies to fund this within existing budgets. Others said that it was not easy (or even possible) to support Foundation Phase practices in Key Stage 2, because school budgets did not cover the level of support (from teaching assistants and others) or physical re-organisation required to implement Foundation Phase practices with larger groups of children.

Promoting greater awareness and understanding of the Foundation Phase curriculum

- 4.8 The majority of interviewees in the case study schools recognised that practitioners needed to have a thorough understanding, not only of the rationale underpinning the Foundation Phase, but also of their colleagues' approaches to the curriculum and the teaching and learning strategies they deployed in order to facilitate a smooth transition for children.
- 4.9 Schools recognised a need for Key Stage 2 teachers to understand the type of teaching and learning approaches that children had experienced in the Foundation Phase, and the different skills and strengths they would be likely to possess. Some did this through looking at lesson plans and providing opportunities for classroom (or outdoor) observation, echoing the

activities identified in England in the Rose report (2009). One school, in particular, had adopted a more radical approach and trained all staff in the Foundation Phase approach, then enabled practitioners/teachers to follow their pupils through into Key Stage 2 (a practice currently adopted by only a minority of the survey respondent schools). This approach they considered as central to the success of the Foundation Phase in their school.

It is more of a movement across the school, rather than up or down the years. (Head teacher)

- 4.10 Where Key Stage 2 teachers had a greater understanding of the Foundation Phase approach, it appears that more of them made appropriate adaptations to their teaching practices. Indeed, one Key Stage 2 teacher (in a non-Foundation Phase school) reported that Foundation Phase training had helped her relax about a number of aspects of her teaching, such as formal recording children's work. She believed that she was now making more use of active learning approaches and topic-based teaching and learning. In another school, greater awareness of the Foundation Phase curriculum had led to a Key Stage 2 teacher using topics that aligned more closely with those covered by children in the Foundation Phase, ensuring continuity but avoiding repetition. More widely, Key Stage 2 practitioners in non-Foundation Phase schools anticipated that they would introduce more project and thematic work whilst still retaining formal teaching methods as the Foundation Phase was rolled out.
- 4.11 In other schools, however, a lack of Foundation Phase training and guidance and resources was thought to have limited the development of curriculum understanding for Key Stage 2 teachers.

I have not been involved in anything to do with the Foundation Phase; it is bits that I have picked up. When I had Foundation Phase kids in my class I did what I thought was Foundation Phase teaching, but I was not sure. Whatever the rest of the class was doing I adapted that

to a more practical and creative situation for those children. (Key Stage 2 teacher)

- 4.12 In summary, although Key Stage 2 staff had already made changes to their teaching, or anticipated making adaptations to their teaching, some schools felt that they needed more advice and guidance on how to do so. In particular, staff in one school drew attention to the challenges of interpreting Foundation Phase outcomes and aligning them with Key Stage 2 assessment methods and felt that more information and training around this was required.
- 4.13 It should be recognised that the challenges are not all one way, however. It was generally recognised that Foundation Phase teachers also needed to be aware of the curriculum for which they were preparing children to make the transition in Year 3. Indeed, some Key Stage 2 practitioners thought that Foundation Phase practitioners should adapt the teaching style to be more like Key Stage 2 during the final summer term of the Foundation Phase, so that the pupils were more used to it when they progressed to Year 3.
- 4.14 This was not a widely held view but in a number of schools, Foundation Phase teachers nonetheless recognised that children needed to reach a certain level by the end of Year 2, in order for them to be adequately prepared for Key Stage 2 (and for the new 2008 Key Stage 2 curriculum). One Foundation Phase teacher in a pilot school summarised the dilemma that many faced as a result:

The Foundation Phase is about teaching at the child's own level, and stage rather than age, but at the end of the day they've still got to be at a certain level by the end of Year 2, which you're striving to get them ready for. (Foundation Phase teacher)

Adopting common classroom practices

- 4.15 In order to aid transition, a number of case study schools had adopted common practices in the classroom or between year groups. Some of these involved structural changes (related to timetabling and classroom

organisation), others were related to activities and skill-based approaches, reflecting the ways of working and the skill sets that children brought with them from the Foundation Phase.

- 4.16 Some schools had introduced common timetables, with similar daily routines, or with formal and informal elements of the day, to minimise the extent of perceived disruption of the transition to Key Stage 2. Others had adopted some of the classroom organisation tools used in the Foundation Phase (activity tables, designated learning and play areas, outside spaces) to facilitate the ongoing development of autonomous learners and to ease progression to Key Stage 2.

When they start with me in Year 3, I've set up similar areas to what they have in the Foundation Phase. So, I've got a role play area, I've got a tray with sand in, a geography table and they're all linked to what they would have done in the Foundation Phase. (Key Stage 2 teacher)

- 4.17 Not all schools had been able to make physical changes, particularly when the Foundation Phase classes had already been moved into the only large classrooms with access to outside spaces. Some interviewees commented on the contrasts that children had noted and had expressed their disappointment with their Key Stage 2 classrooms (such as smaller classrooms, lack of immediate outdoor access, fewer toys and other resources). This echoed comments from a number of the Year 3 and Year 4 children we interviewed in the case-study schools, who particularly lamented the smaller number (or even lack) of animals with which they could play.
- 4.18 For the most part, however, it seemed that teachers were adapting their classroom practices, placing a greater emphasis on discussion around topics and the degree of child-led learning.

I am more hands-on with the children myself really...we'll talk about the topic and the ideas that come up I do tend to feed into my planning anyway. (Key Stage 2 teacher)

- 4.19 In some cases, there had been recognition of the different emphases in the Foundation Phase, which had been followed through into the Key Stage 2 curriculum in a variety of ways, including a stronger focus on personal and social development and learning.
- 4.20 The use of theme-based approaches and topics that align with those covered by children in the Foundation Phase was a further outcome of greater awareness of the Foundation Phase amongst Key Stage 2 teachers. Ensuring continuity and avoiding overlap was realised by the teachers working together across the two phases and by their recognition that the Key Stage 2 curriculum was also changing. As the head teacher in one school commented: '*The Key Stage 2 curriculum has changed...it's more investigative...*'.
- 4.21 Introducing such approaches was said to be restricted by the availability of support staff, however, with some Key Stage 2 teachers noting that they could only adopt similar teaching and learning approaches to those used in the Foundation Phase when they had external support (such as that provided by local authority support officers) or access to more teaching assistants in the classroom. Without such support, the amount of independent or small group work that can be undertaken was said to be limited. This concern about classroom support extended to many subject areas, with some Key Stage 2 teachers expressing reluctance to use practical activities in science and other hands-on subject areas, without the support of classroom assistants, who they felt were needed to deliver practical and active learning effectively and safely. One head, recognising this issue, was considering diverting funds to Key Stage 2 classes to enable them to deploy more teaching assistants.
- 4.22 Other schools had begun to change the ways in which they approached different activities at Key Stage 2, in order to encourage children to capitalise on the skills and problem solving abilities they had developed in the Foundation Phase. One school had introduced a 'Let's Think!' approach in mathematics, where children were encouraged to explain their thought processes, and to explore why they got things wrong - rather than

being concerned that they had got it wrong. Others used mathematics and language projects that continued over from the Foundation Phase into Key Stage 2, to ensure continuity and progression in skill development.

Facilitating communication

- 4.23 The case-study interviewees, like the survey respondents, were divided over the extent of good cross-phase and in-phase communication between Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2 teachers and classroom assistants. Practitioners frequently emphasised the importance of good staff communication, both in terms of the easing transition for pupils and in terms of making sure that pupils enter Key Stage 2 with skills that meet the expectations of the Key Stage 2 teachers.
- 4.24 Part of good communication was said to be the opportunity to be open and honest about what has been working, what has not been working and what needs to be revisited and addressed. Where this had been possible, practitioners emphasised the positive impact that it had had on curriculum development. Interviewees suggested that such communication was essential for the success of both the Foundation Phase and of transition for children.
- 4.25 Strategies used ranged from whole staff meetings (ensuring that all staff were aware of the issues), to planning meetings between Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2 practitioners at all levels, to informal discussions about specific items.

We have tried to make the child's development a complete story and continuously share pupil expectations and outcomes between all staff members. The aim is to have all staff continuously updated with knowledge, even on individual children. (Head teacher)

- 4.26 Barriers to good communication were identified by a number of interviewees, however, with a lack of time for Key Stage 2 teachers being singled out for most negative comment:

We could do with time away from the class... to speak to [the Key Stage 2 teacher] about the children she's about to receive. I think that would be really valuable'. (Foundation Phase teacher)

- 4.27 While the structure and staffing model for most Foundation Phase classrooms facilitated inter-staff communication, the more isolated nature of the Key Stage 2 classrooms and the more limited teaching assistant support available was thought to prevent the level of communication that some interviewees would have liked. This in turn was thought to have negative implications for transition, with limited time for Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2 teachers to discuss the respective strengths and weaknesses of children and best practice in each case to encourage their progression.
- 4.28 Fewer non-Foundation Phase practitioners identified communication issues, perhaps because the transition between the two phases is not quite so marked. In every instance where it arose, lack of time was mentioned as a significant factor.

Willingness to take risks: the trial and error approach to curriculum development

- 4.29 Many of the pilot and early start schools asserted that they had adopted a 'trial-and-error' approach to implementing the Foundation Phase. A handful of these schools felt that they had taken such an approach because of a lack of practical support and guidance and the limited number of pilot and early start schools available to liaise with. That said, staff were of the opinion that such an approach had been helpful and gave them confidence in their own ability to construct an appropriate curriculum (reflecting, in many ways, the philosophy of the Foundation Phase itself).
- 4.30 Senior staff in some of the pilot and early start schools were said to have promoted a reflective environment where practitioners and teachers could try out different approaches and hold honest and frank discussions about what had, and had not, worked (and why) without fear of criticism. Staff felt

that a trial and error approach would not be detrimental to the children they were teaching, as everything they did was itself monitored and measured.

Adopting a trial and error approach...

In one early start school, Foundation Phase teachers each set up the various areas of provision in two separate Foundation Phase classrooms. They soon found that one classroom was too small to house all the Foundation Phase areas and decided to amalgamate and open up the two classrooms and spread the areas of provision between them. The two practitioners then utilised this larger area for teaching their own Foundation Phase classes on a rota basis.

In addition, Key Stage 2 teachers from the junior school to which the children were progressing, highlighted a dip in Year 3 children's handwriting skills. The honest and open working relationship built between the two Foundation Phase teachers and the Key Stage 2 teachers, meant that this issue could be raised and acted upon. Foundation Phase teachers are now working to implement practices which will develop children's handwriting to the level required.

Unexpected outcomes

- 4.31 In discussing the implementation of the Foundation Phase, interviewees also identified a number of outcomes that they had not originally anticipated. In particular, a number of the Foundation Phase teachers drew attention to a significant change in their role from classroom teachers to a more managerial role, deciding on the work of a number of classroom assistants as well as the structure and organisation of their own teaching area (indoors and outdoors). While some actively embraced this role, others found it challenging, saying they had not received the necessary training to enact the role effectively.
- 4.32 Other practitioners highlighted the greater sense of 'team' they had experienced. While few practitioners said they received formal mentoring support, they felt much more able to have discussions with other teachers and classroom assistants in the school (as indicated in Chapter 2) and to seek the views of practitioners in their own phase as well as those working in different phases. In some instances this had led to combining classes or co-ordinating activities. While these experiments had not always met with success at this stage, interviewees remained positive about the possibilities for the future.

4.33 Other unexpected developments that staff identified included changes in the school culture (with greater flexibility of staffing and an enhanced status for classroom assistants), pedagogic changes (with a greater ability to adapt their teaching plans to fit the day's activities around a particular incident, or a child's interest).

Conclusion

- 4.34 Transition appears to have been supported by a more overt focus on some of the organisational elements of transition – a focus that has frequently taken a back seat to the emphasis on socio-emotional aspects in earlier efforts to improve the progression of pupils through Key Stages. Strong senior leadership support is seen as essential for the successful implementation of a shared philosophy on the Foundation Phase approach to teaching and learning, whilst training and awareness raising activities have facilitated a greater understanding of the Foundation Phase, adaptations to teaching practices, the adoption of common practices across phases, good cross-phase communication and the development of a more reflective classroom (and staffroom) environment.
- 4.35 In Chapter 5, we look at the implications of these findings for schools and for the Welsh Assembly Government.

5 Conclusions and recommendations - supporting the transition

- 5.1 Throughout this report we have highlighted the key learning and issues arising from the research. These are summarised below.

Awareness, understanding and implementation of the Foundation Phase:

- Most practitioners in the Foundation Phase, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 were familiar with the Foundation Phase approach.
- The principles of the Foundation Phase learning appear, on the whole, to have been embraced by both practitioners and head teachers.
- Practitioners valued the training they had received but identified a need for a greater emphasis on practical support, particularly in the early stages of establishing and rolling out the Foundation Phase in a school.
- Approaches to implementing the Foundation Phase have varied and there are still some tensions around age and ability grouping of pupils and preparing them for the requirements of the Key Stage 2 curriculum.

Making the transition

- Practitioners who took part in the research thought that most children found it relatively easy to adjust to the expectations of their new environment, but feel that, even so, children could be better prepared.
- Children in both Foundation Phase and non-Foundation Phase schools were more excited by the thought of moving up to Year 3 than apprehensive about the prospect of the transition.
- Children in Year 3 in Foundation Phase schools tended to have more regrets about leaving Year 2 than their counterparts, but did not

appear to be unduly concerned, seeing the loss of some of the Foundation Phase activities and facilities as part of growing up.

- A higher proportion of Foundation Phase practitioners than non-Foundation Phase practitioners thought that children found it easier to make the transition than their peers from older cohorts, but were unable to say that there was a definitive link between the introduction of the Foundation Phase and improved transitions for pupils.
- There were few differences in relation to the socio-emotional elements of transition (such as ability to settle, apprehensiveness and anxiety) between children in the Foundation Phase and non-Foundation Phase schools.
- The operational mechanisms that support successful transition appeared to be in place in both Foundation Phase and non-Foundation Phase schools but the extent to which they operated and their perceived effectiveness varied.

Facilitating transition

- Strong senior leadership support was essential for the successful implementation of a shared philosophy on the Foundation Phase approach to teaching and learning.
- Where Key Stage 2 teachers had a greater understanding of the Foundation Phase approach, more of them made appropriate adaptations to their teaching practices to facilitate transition for pupils.
- The adoption of common practices across phases, including structural changes (related to timetabling and classroom organisation) and similar approaches to learning activities and skills development, aided transition for pupils.
- Good cross-phase communication was essential, both in terms of easing the transition for pupils and in making sure that the pupils met the expectations of Key Stage 2 teachers.

- A reflective environment where practitioners and teachers could try out different approaches without fear of criticism was helpful in developing good practice.

Implications for future roll-out of the Foundation Phase

5.2 The findings summarised above are largely positive reflections on the roll-out of the Foundation Phase so far and the experiences of the pilot and early start schools with regards to managing the Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2 transition. The research has highlighted the practices which appeared to support and facilitate the management of a successful transition from Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2. These include:

- **managing a transition between two philosophies** – where primary schools sought to adopt a single philosophy of learning to underpin the two phases of learning, staff found it easier to manage the transition. Concerns were raised that this would be more challenging where different philosophies (between Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2) were at play;
- **ensuring there is awareness and understanding of the nature and requirements of both the Foundation Phase approach and the Key Stage 2 curriculum** amongst practitioners and teachers in both learning phases;
- **providing opportunities to gain practical experience** – staff highlighted the benefits of opportunities to gain experience of the two learning phases and singled out in particular Key Stage 2 teachers having the opportunity to observe the way Foundation Phase children are supported to lead their own learning;
- **facilitating flexibility in terms of classroom layout and teaching practice** to enable Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2 practitioners and teachers to adapt practice;

- **supporting and promoting ongoing cross-phase communication** to support continued understanding of the alignment of the two learning phases and effective monitoring of progress of pupils.
- 5.3 Arising from this, it is clear that there are actions and practices which can be put in place and supported at the level of the school, the local authority and the Welsh Assembly Government that could further support the implementation of an effective transition from the Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2, maximising the positive experiences and outcomes for both pupils and teachers.
- Actions for schools***
- 5.4 The findings from the surveys and interviews highlighted the crucial importance of whole-school awareness and understanding. Both Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2 practitioners need to understand what each other are doing and why. Key Stage 2 practitioners need to understand and be prepared for the different range of skills and practices children from Foundation Phase have and adopt. Foundation Phase practitioners need to be aware of the need to prepare children to take advantage of the Key Stage 2 curriculum. Underpinning this is the philosophy of learning adopted by the school. ***A single shared philosophy in line with the ethos of the Foundation Phase*** (promoting experiential learning and the development of skills and abilities rather than content knowledge) supports both smooth introduction of the Foundation Phase and management of the transition to Key Stage 2. Such a philosophy needs to be led by the head and senior management in the school.
- 5.5 In addition to the underlying philosophy, ***schools need to ensure that staff across all phases are trained in Foundation Phase approaches*** (from Foundation Phase through to upper junior) in order to understand the ways in which autonomous learners are being developed and to overcome any concerns about a play-based curriculum. This training could be done through, for example:

- formal or informal INSET sessions (though these have a cost implication);
- classroom observations (though this is challenging in schools where there is insufficient classroom assistant support at Key Stage 2 to facilitate this approach without teacher cover);
- visits to other schools (again, these have cost implications).

5.6 ***Schools need to try and use common classroom practices across the Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2 as these supported positive transitions.*** These practices could be as simple as using a similar learning log, adapted as children progress through the school, or changes to classroom layouts or changes to the timetable to allow more periods of ‘informal learning’ in Year 3.

5.7 Schools should consider taking advantage of the ***opportunity for their teachers and classroom practitioners to experiment with different techniques*** – and to fail without criticism. The opportunity to do this appeared to lead to greater confidence in their approach (and positive transitions to Key Stage 2). Evidence from interviewees suggest that it may be beneficial to encourage the following practices in the school to facilitate increased opportunities for staff:

- to meet and communicate with other practitioners within and across phases;
- to share practice and resources;
- to solve problems;
- to enable reflection and review of both the Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2 curricula.

Actions for local authorities

5.8 Local authorities have a key role to play in supporting schools to deliver their identified actions. In particular they can ***provide support and co-***

ordination to facilitate the sharing of practice and experience and the delivery of training and observation opportunities.

- 5.9 Schools highlighted the fact that delivering training across the school can be challenging and expensive – and asked whether local authorities support schools by developing training to be delivered on INSET days or twilight sessions? Practitioners and teachers commented that they would welcome opportunities to visit other schools to observe practice and the local authority could be instrumental in facilitating this. Practitioners would welcome access to multi-media footage of practice or online forums/blogs where experience, concerns and issues could be shared; local authorities could have a role in supporting and developing this with a focus on issues identified locally.

Actions for Welsh Assembly Government and other partners

- 5.10 Most interviewees felt that existing guidance materials (Welsh Assembly Government, local authority and other) on the philosophy of the Foundation Phase were helpful. Guidance and resources on practical aspects of the Foundation Phase (including the physical aspects of classroom organisation and storage of resources⁹) would be welcomed as would examples of effective Foundation Phase implementation, effective Key Stage 2 support, and effective classroom practice. Access to an online problem-solving forum with other practitioners would also be welcomed.
- 5.11 The need for a better alignment of initial teacher training with Foundation Phase practices was highlighted as one of the most important steps with regards to improving practice, including the transition to Key Stage 2. While continuous professional development (CPD) practices were applauded, staff were concerned about the lack of awareness of trainee and newly qualified primary and Early Years teachers.

⁹ This is partially covered in relation to outdoor activity in the Outdoor Handbook and in “First steps outside”
http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/earlyyearshome/foundation_phase/foundationphasepractitioners/outdoorlearning/?lang=en

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Annex 2 Methodological Appendix

- A.1 In this Annex we describe the methodology employed to explore the educational transitions of pupils aged six to eight in Wales. In 2004, 22¹⁰ schools – known as pilot schools – began delivering the Foundation Phase and have therefore experienced the transition of two cohorts of children from the Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2. A further 22 schools were early adopters (early start schools) and at the time of the study only one cohort of pupils had experienced the transition from the Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2.
- A.2 In order to answer the research questions posed at the outset of the study, the research phase of the commission comprised three core elements:
- an initial review of up to date and available literature;
 - a survey of head teachers and teachers in Foundation Phase schools and a sample of non-Foundation Phase schools;
 - a series of face-to-face case studies of Foundation Phase and non-Foundation Phase schools.
- A.3 Further detail on the methodology applied during each of these three phases is set out below.

Literature review

- A.4 The literature review was relatively small-scale, building on the comprehensive Siraj-Blatchford *et al* (2005) review of provision and effective practice in the early years (for children aged three to five), which explored transition issues to pre-school and to the then Key Stage 1 from the Foundation Phase. The review was designed to inform the design of the research instruments and provide information for any subsequent guidance materials to be prepared for the Welsh Assembly Government.
- A.5 The review drew on literature:
- published in the last five years (2006 to 2010);
 - published in English or Welsh;
 - that looked specifically at transition issues, particularly those for pupils aged seven to eight, for pupils moving from one curriculum or pedagogical style to another and at pedagogical and information issues for teachers and schools.

¹⁰ This does not include nursery schools or special schools who were omitted from the current study.

A.6 To narrow down the search, we drew on literature highlighted in Siraj-Blatchford *et al* (2005), and literature available from the IDOX Information Service. The structured key word searches used to locate documents on IDOX are set out in Table A-1.

Table A-1: IDOX search terms

- Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2
- Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2
- Year 2 to Year 3
- Learner experience Year 2
- Transition aged 7 to 8
- Pedagogical style (transition)
- Pedagogical transition
- Information transition
- Pedagogical transition issues (Key Stage 2)
- Information transition issues (Key Stage 2)
- Teacher transition issues
- Barriers to transition
- Transition good practice
- Foundation Phase transition
- Foundation Phase
- Transition between key stage
- Infant to primary
- Between year transition
- Transfer
- Continuity
- Progression
- Transition
- Transitions
- Transition education
- Transfer pupils
- Trajectories
- Transitional problems
- School adjustment
- School organisation
- Personal skills education
- Personal development
- Educational guidance

Source: SQW

- A.7 An analytical framework was drawn up to enable the literature to be reviewed in a template against research questions, which included the following:
- What changes are there in the learning environment from one stage of education to another (Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 or Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2)?
 - How do transition patterns compare between Foundation Phase and non-Foundation Phase groups?
 - What problems have been experienced with transition?
 - How were these problems resolved by practitioners?
- A.8 The information gathered informed the design of the case study and survey tools, and is reflected within the main body of this report.

School surveys

- A.9 The survey element of the research consisted of two surveys of the head teachers and Foundation Phase / Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 staff in all early roll-out schools and in a sample of non-Foundation Phase schools.

Survey sample

- A.10 The survey was sent to 42 pilot and early start schools, which was the effective population, after removing the three nursery schools and one special school that were omitted from the study. In addition to this, a comparator was created; 42 non-Foundation Phase schools. In order to ensure the non-Foundation Phase school sample was as pure as possible, non-Foundation Phase schools were drawn from a list of schools that had been Estyn inspected since September 2009. The rationale was that a recent inspection under the existing regime would mean that these schools would be operating within the Key Stage 1 framework, rather than moving into the full implementation of Foundation Phase across the age range.
- A.11 The non-Foundation Phase sample had criteria to ensure a range of contextual conditions, including:
- large and small school sizes;
 - Welsh or non-Welsh medium schools;
 - urban and rural schools;
 - schools with mixed age classes and no (or a minority of) mixed age classes;

- schools in areas with high and low levels of deprivation.

Survey implementation

- A.12 Bilingual paper questionnaires were sent to the 84 schools in the sample. Each school received one survey to be completed by the head teacher and two copies of a survey to be completed by the Foundation Phase teacher or Key Stage 1 lead and a Key Stage 2 teacher.
- A.13 The survey was live towards the end of the summer term, between Monday 5th July and Friday 30th July 2010. Forty-three head teachers completed the survey (a response rate of 51%), while 84 practitioners (42%) responded to the survey. The response rate was particularly good from Foundation Phase schools (where responses from both practitioners and teachers exceeded 50%) and early start schools. Table A-2 provides a summary of the survey respondents by type of school.

Survey analysis

- A.14 The overall analysis strategy for the surveys was developed during the design phase for the questionnaires, to ensure that all key questions were asked in a format that facilitated appropriate statistical analysis. Cross-tabulations were used to examine whether the survey findings varied across pilot, early start and non-Foundation Phase schools and according to the Key Stage of the practitioner. Although the number of responses limited the scope of the analysis, indicative variations are noted in the report.

Table A-2: Characteristics of surveyed schools

		School Survey Respondents	Sample Schools	All Schools in Wales	
		Head teacher respondents	Practitioner respondents		
Total number of schools		43	44	84	1,462
Type of school	Pilot	13%	34%	25%	2%
	Early start	23%	25%	24%	2%
	Non-Foundation Phase	40%	34%	50%	97%
	Unclassified	7%	7%	0%	0%
Teaching medium	English Medium	65%	61%	71%	67%
	Welsh Medium	14%	20%	21%	29%
	Dual Stream	12%	11%	7%	3%
	Unclassified	9%	7%	0%	0%
Location	Urban	70%	70%	79%	76%
	Rural	21%	23%	21%	24%
	Unclassified	9%	7%	0%	0
Proportion of pupils living in the 20% most deprived LSOAs (Lower Super Output Areas)	0-25%	53%	57%	61%	71%*
	26-50%	12%	9%	11%	14%*
	51-75%	12%	11%	13%	9%*
	76-100%	14%	16%	15%	7%*
	Unclassified	9%	7%	0%	0%*
Size of school	<15 pupils per year group	14%	16%	19%	35%**
	15-30 pupils per year group	35%	34%	27%	36%**
	>30 pupils per year group	42%	43%	54%	29%**
	Unclassified	9%	7%	0%	0%**

		School Survey Respondents		Sample Schools	All Schools in Wales
		Head teacher respondents	Practitioner respondents		
Age mix of classes	All mixed classes	age 21%	25%	25%	38%
	Majority mixed classes	age 21%	20%	24%	20%
	Minority mixed classes	age 21%	23%	29%	22%
	No mixed classes	age 28%	25%	23%	20%
	Unclassified	9%	7%	0%	0%

*based on 1,457 schools
 ** based on 1,412 schools

Source: SQW

School case studies

- A.15 The aim of conducting case study research in schools across Wales was to obtain an understanding of:
- the impact of the Foundation Phase on pupils, both during their first years in school up to Year 2 and on the transitions they make into Key Stage 2;
 - the changes (if any) that practitioners/teachers and teaching assistants believe that the introduction of the Foundation Phase has made to both their own pedagogy and to the outcomes of pupils;
 - the adaptations (if any) that practitioners/teachers in both the Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2 believe still need to be made in pedagogy and practice in order to prepare children for (and support them through) the transition to Key Stage 2.

Selection and recruitment of schools

- A.16 The sample of schools provided to the researchers by the Assembly Government sought to be representative of the population. As such selected schools:
- were a mix of pilot early start and non-Foundation Phase schools;

- operated using either Welsh, English and bilingual mediums;
 - had differing roll sizes;
 - operated either single or mixed age classes;
 - were situated in either rural or urban locations;
 - were situated in differing local authorities;
 - had differing levels of disadvantage.
- A.17 The research commission was taken in late May 2010 which provided six weeks up to the summer term to undertake the case study fieldwork. The original intention had been to recruit 15 case-study schools, of which ten were to be Foundation Phase pilot schools and five were to be non-Foundation Phase schools drawn from a representative sample of schools provided by the Assembly Government. During this very busy term, the research team successfully engaged 15 schools in the study. One of the recruited Foundation Phase pilot schools had to withdraw from the study at a late stage, however, due to other staff time commitments, so that the number of case studies was reduced to 14 case studies; these included seven pilot schools, two early start schools and five non-Foundation Phase schools. The final profile of case study schools is set out in Table A-3 below.

Table A-3: Characteristics of case study schools

		Early start schools	Pilot schools	Non-Foundation phase schools	All case study schools
Teaching medium	English Medium	2	5	3	10
	Welsh Medium	0	1	1	2
	Dual Stream	0	1	1	2
Location	Urban	2	5	5	12
	Rural	0	2	0	2
Proportion of pupils living in the 20% most deprived	0-25%	1	5	5	11
	26-50%	0	0	0	0
	51-75%	0	1	0	1

		Early start schools	Pilot schools	Non-Foundation phase schools	All case study schools
LSOAs (Lower Super Output Areas)	76-100%	1	1	0	2
Size school	<15 pupils per year group	0	2	1	3
	15-30 pupils per year group	0	1	1	2
	>30 pupils per year group	2	4	3	9
Age mix of classes	All mixed age classes	0	2	1	3
	Majority mixed age classes	1	2	1	4
	Minority mixed age classes	0	2	1	3
	No mixed age classes	1	1	2	4

Source: SQW

- A.18 Schools recruited as case studies were asked for their language preference for interviews. Where schools chose for interviews to be conducted in Welsh we drew on our Welsh speaking associates to support the interview programme. Finally, researchers visiting case study schools sought to complete all interviews and pupil group discussions on a single day in order to minimise the burden on schools.

Research methods

Interviews with head teachers and practitioners

- A.19 Each school visit included semi-structured interviews with the head teacher and up to four practitioners/teachers (and/or support staff) in English or Welsh as appropriate. The consultations with pilot and early start schools covered issues such as:
- the impact on the school of the Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2 transition and approaches adopted to manage this;

- the ethos of teaching across the Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2 transition;
- staffing structures and practical arrangements;
- the challenge of managing transition from experiential to subject based learning.

A.20 For non-Foundation Phase schools the interviews sought to explore:

- views on the Key Stage 1 curriculum and approach, and views on the Foundation Phase versus Key Stage 1;
- current transition (Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2) arrangements and experiences;
- the anticipated impact on the school of making the shift from Key Stage 1 to Foundation Phase and managing the Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2 transition;
- the ethos of teaching across the Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 transition, and changes anticipated for Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2;
- staffing structures and practical arrangements;
- the challenge of managing transition from experiential to subject-based learning;
- current and planned changes within the school.

A.21 To aid these interviews an aide memoire tailored to the school type (pilot and early start or non-Foundation Phase) and specific consultee (head teacher, Foundation Phase, Key Stage 1, Key Stage 2 or teaching assistant) was designed by the research team. Copies of these tools can be found in Appendix 4. The guide was informed by the initial literature review, scoping discussions with the client team and expert advice on transition issues from Christine Stephen. The aide memoire was agreed with the client group at the Assembly Government before the fieldwork began.

A.22 Where possible, interviews were conducted in a quiet location to facilitate discussions. However, this was not always possible due to head teachers, practitioners, teachers and teaching assistants' busy timetables so researchers were flexible on this point. Further, in some cases interviews took place on a one-to-one basis whilst in others practitioners, teachers and teaching assistants were interviewed together. Interviewing practitioners in groups allowed researchers to reduce the burden on school whilst consulting with as many staff as possible within practitioners' timetable constraints. All

consultations were digitally recorded to ensure accurate and comprehensive data collection although researchers also took notes.

- A.23 A total of 16 head teachers were consulted (some settings employed two head teachers, one for the infant school and one for the junior school) across the 14 case study schools. In addition to this, researchers conducted interviews with 15 Foundation Phase practitioners, three Key Stage 1 teachers and 13 Key Stage 2 teachers. A summary of the practitioners/teachers interviewed in each case study school can be found in Table A-4.

Table A-4: Numbers of staff and groups of pupils interviewed during case study visits

School Name	School type		Practitioners/Teachers consulted				Number of pupil groups interviewed			
	FP/No n-FP	Pilot / Early	Head/ Deputy	FP	KS1	KS2	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4
A	FP	Pilot	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0
B	FP	Pilot	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
C	FP	Pilot	1	5	0	2	0	1	1	0
D	FP	Early start	1	2	0	1	0	1	1	0
E	FP	Pilot	2	4	0	1	0	1	1	0
F	FP	Pilot	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0
G	FP	Early start	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	0
H	FP	Pilot	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1
I	FP	Pilot	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	0
J	Non-FP	N/A	2	1	0	2	0	1	1	0
K	Non-FP	N/A	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0
L	Non-FP	N/A	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0
M.	Non-FP	N/A	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0
N	Non-FP	N/A	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0
TOTAL			16	15	3	13	1	12	13	2

Source: SQW

Interactive group pupil interviews

- A.24 Interactive group interviews took place with just over 140 children in Year 2 and Year 3. The interviews covered issues such as:
- pupils' feelings about school;
 - the ways in which they work and learn;
 - for those in Year 2, the extent to which they feel confident about making the transition to Year 3;

- for those in Year 3, the extent to which they have enjoyed moving up to Key Stage 2.
- A.25 Again, development of the research tools was informed by the literature review, scoping discussions with the client team and expert advice around transition issues from Christine Stephen. The methods employed to interview groups of pupils included:
- an ice-breaker name badge making session;
 - an informal discussion to gain informed consent from pupils;
 - use of dolls and/or a talking ball to encourage conversation around how pupils feel about school and the ways in which they work and learn;
 - a post-it note session which encourage pupils to write about, draw and discuss their feelings about school.
- A.26 The team of researchers undertaking the fieldwork received training from the project director and manager and Christine Stephen in delivering and recording the pupil group discussions and using the tools developed. For instance, the research team were trained in the use of age-appropriate language and constructs and the use of suitable prompt materials and interactive strategies. This ensured consistency and quality in delivery. All group interviews were digitally recorded to ensure accuracy and completeness in data collection.
- A.27 Interactive group interviews were held with 25 groups in either English or Welsh, as appropriate. Of these 25 group interviews, 12 groups were in Year 2, 13 in Year 3 (three of which included pupils from Year 4) whilst a further group interview took place with Year 1 pupils. The number of pupils in each group was variable but ranged between six and eight children. Researchers visiting the case study schools requested that practitioners/teachers select a handful of pupils who were representative of those at the school to partake in the interactive group interviews.

Case study analysis

- A.28 Upon completing school case study visits, digital recordings and researchers notes were inputted into a bespoke analytical template for each case study school. This allowed analysis and triangulation of the various perspectives both within and between schools.

Annex 3 Survey Frequency Tables

Head teacher

About you

Q1. Job title	N	%
Head Teacher	39	91%
Deputy Head	1	2%
No response	3	7%
Total	43	100%

Q2. How long have you worked at this school?	N	%
Less than 1 year	3	7%
1-3 years	9	21%
4-6 years	6	14%
7-9 years	4	9%
10 years or longer	21	49%
Total	43	100%

Q3. How long have you been a teacher?	N	%
Less than 1 year	0	0%
1-3 years	0	0%
4-6 years	1	2%
6-10 years	0	0%
10-19 years	9	21%
20-29 years	14	33%
30-39 years	16	37%
40 years or longer	2	5%
No response	1	2%
Total	43	100%

Foundation Phase

Q4. How familiar would you say the 'Foundation Phase / KS1' and Key Stage 2 practitioners are with the Foundation Phase?

	Foundation Phase / KS1 practitioners	KS2 teachers
are using the Foundation Phase	39	39
know quite a lot about it	3	3
will have mixed levels of knowledge	1	1
have heard of the Foundation Phase	0	0
will not have heard of	0	0
No response	0	0
Total	43	43

Q5. When thinking about the practitioners in your school, to what extent would you agree or disagree with the following statements?	My staff are comfortable with the notion of play-based learning in school	Foundation Phase/Key Stage 1 practitioners in the school have been trained in using experiential learning				The seven areas of learning provide a broad and balanced curriculum for all children	The key factor determining what (and how) a child should be taught is their age	My staff prefer children to sit quietly at their desks in the classroom	Each child should be taught according to their developmental stage	I think that the curriculum should be based around subjects (i.e. Welsh, Maths Geography)	My practitioners are happy working with children outside of the classroom
		Key Stage 2 teachers in the school have been trained in using experiential learning	The seven areas of learning provide a broad and balanced curriculum for all children	The key factor determining what (and how) a child should be taught is their age	My staff prefer children to sit quietly at their desks in the classroom						
Strongly Agree	24	32	7	29	19	22	29	10	26		
Agree	15	9	13	13	3	0	13	2	13		
Neither Agree or Disagree	3	1	9	0	3	4	0	9	3		
Disagree	0	0	8	0	13	11	0	18	0		
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0	4	5	0	3	0		
Don't Know/Not Applicable	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0		
No response	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1		
Total	43	43	43	43	43	43	43	43	43		

Q6. How, if at all, do you think that the introduction of the Foundation Phase will change/has changed things for children in your school?

Foundation Phase will help...	...become more independent learners	...to work well with others	...to become better at problem solving	...to achieve more academically	...to be better behaved	...become more self confident
This is true for all children	28	31	21	15	20	29
This is true for some children	15	12	22	27	22	14
This is not true for any children	0	0	0	1	1	0
No response	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	43	43	43	43	43	43

Transition between Foundation Phase/KS1 → KS2

Q7. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about transition in your school?	Pupils moving into KS2 are prepared for the change in teaching and curriculum	Children find it easier to settle into their new class than previous cohorts/year groups	My staff have changed the way they teach in order to reflect changes in the skills/knowledge of the children moving from Foundation Phase/Key Stage 1	My Staff have changed the way they teach in order to help children adapt more easily to different classrooms and practitioners	My Staff have changed the way they teach in the last 3 years
Strongly Agree	5	5	19	14	23
Agree	19	13	18	21	13
Neither Agree or Disagree	7	16	1	4	3
Disagree	8	3	2	1	1
Strongly Disagree	0	1	0	1	0
Don't Know/Not Applicable	4	5	3	2	3
No response	0	0	0	0	0
Total	43	43	43	43	43

Q8. Generally, how easy do you think it is for pupils in your school to move from Foundation Phase/KS1 to KS2?	...adjust to the new curriculum at KS2	...adjust to a new teacher at KS2	...settle in with new classmates at KS2	...adjust to new expectations in behaviour	...adjust to new expectations in terms of learning	...adjust to new expectations in terms of homework
Very Easy	9	15	13	13	11	7
Quite Easy	14	17	20	14	13	13
Neither easy nor difficult	9	4	3	6	7	10
Quite difficult	6	2	1	6	8	8
Very difficult	1	1	0	0	0	1
Don't Know/Not Applicable	4	4	6	4	4	4
No response	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	43	43	43	43	43	43

Q9 How effective do you think the following strategies (if used in your school) are at helping children move into Key Stage 2?	Other strategy	Having additional support for children who find it harder to adapt, or who have Additional Learning Needs	Having one practitioner moving up through the school with the class	Practitioners adapting their teaching methods to ease the transition (such as adopting the Foundation Phase approach to learning)	Practitioners working together across different phases of education (i.e. by talking, sharing practice, planning together)
Very effective	4	27	2	19	22
Quite effective	1	6	3	15	13
Not very effective	0	0	2	0	0
Not effective at all	1	1	3	1	1
Strategy not used in my school	26	5	31	6	5
No response	11	4	2	2	2
Total	43	43	43	43	43

Q10a Have any of your staff attended training in the last four years to help them prepare/work with children moving from Year 2 to Year 3	N	%
Yes	21	49%
No	21	49%
Don't know	1	2%
Total	43	100%

Q10b. If yes, who provided the training	N	%
Local Authority	14	67%
School	6	29%
Other	0	0%
No response	1	5%
Total	21	100%

Q10c. Do you know whether they found the training helpful?	N	%
Very Helpful	10	48%
Quite Helpful	9	43%
Not Very Helpful	0	0%
Not At All Helpful	0	0%
Don't Know	2	10%
Not Applicable - no such training took place	0	0%
No response	0	0%
Total	21	100%

Practitioner

About you

Q1. Main role	N	%
Head of Foundation Phase	20	28%
Head of Key Stage 1	3	4%
Head of Key Stage 2	10	14%
Year 1 Teacher	2	3%
Year 1 Teaching Assistant	0	0%
Year 2 Teacher	10	14%
Year 2 Teaching Assistant	0	0%
Year 3 Teacher	11	15%
Year 3 Teaching Assistant	0	0%
No response	15	21%
Total	71	100%

Q2. How long have you worked at this school?	N	%
Less than 1 year	4	6%
1-3 years	9	13%
4-6 years	10	14%
7-9 years	9	13%
10 years or longer	39	55%
Total	71	100%

Q3. How long have you been a teacher or practitioner?	N	%
Less than 1 year	1	1%
1-3 years	5	7%
4-6 years	7	10%
7-9 years	5	7%
10-19 years	28	39%
20-29 years	15	21%
30-39 years	10	14%
Total	71	100%

Foundation Phase

Q4. How familiar would you say you were with the Foundation Phase?	N	%
I work in the Foundation Phase, and have a good working knowledge of it	46	65%
I know quite a lot about the Foundation Phase, but would like to know more	24	34%
I have heard of the Foundation Phase, but don't know a great deal about it	1	1%
I have not heard of the Foundation Phase	0	0%
Total	71	100%

Q5. To what extent would you agree or disagree that the following statements reflect your thoughts on teaching at your school?	I am comfortable with the notion of play-based learning	I have been trained in using experiential learning	The key factor determining what (and how) a child is taught should be their age	Each child should be taught according to their developmental stage	I prefer children to sit quietly at their desks in the classroom	I think that the curriculum should be based around subjects	The seven Areas of Learning provide a broad and balanced curriculum for all children	I am happy working with children outside the classroom
Strongly Agree	44	33	2	50	0	1	43	48
Agree	24	24	6	18	0	4	25	22
Neither Agree or Disagree	3	4	11	3	9	12	1	1
Disagree	0	6	25	0	20	33	1	
Strongly Disagree	0	1	26	0	42	21	0	0
Don't Know/Not Applicable	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
No response	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	
Total	71	71	71	71	71	71	71	71

Q6. How, if at all, do you think that the introduction of the Foundation Phase will change/has changed things for children in your school?

Foundation Phase will help children	...become independent learners	...be more able to work well with others	...be better at problem solving	...achieve more academically	...to be better behaved	...become more self confident
It will do this for all children	39	48	43	21	19	46
It will do this for some children	31	22	27	47	49	23
It won't do this for any children	0	0	0	1	1	1
No response	1	1	1	2	2	1
Total	71	71	71	71	71	71

Q7. Which of these statements best describes your pupils' attitudes towards different aspects of learning?	...using numbers	...speaking and listening	...reading and writing	...acquiring Welsh language skills	...working in pairs/groups	...playing sports	...being creative	...understanding different religions and cultures
Very Positive	22	35	15	18	35	28	41	20
Largely Positive	15	10	13	11	11	13	6	11
Very Mixed	9	7	14	23	5	5	5	15
Largely Negative	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Very Negative	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Don't Know/Not Applicable	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2
No response	23	17	25	16	19	23	17	22
Total	71	71	71	71	71	71	71	71

Transition between the Foundation Phase/KS1 → KS2

Q8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about transition in your school?	Pupils moving into KS2 are prepared for the change in teaching and curriculum	Children find it easier to settle into their new class than previous cohorts/year groups	I have changed the way I teach in order to reflect changes in the skills/knowledge of the children moving through the Foundation Phase/Key Stage 1	I have changed the way I teach in order to help children adapt more easily to different classrooms and teachers	I have changed the way I teach in the last 3 years
Strongly Agree	13	6	31	16	30
Agree	30	15	29	33	37
Neither Agree or Disagree	13	33	7	17	1
Disagree	10	9	0	2	0
Strongly Disagree	2	1	0	1	0
Don't Know/Not Applicable	1	4	0	0	1
No response	2	3	4	2	2
Total	71	71	71	71	71

Q10. Generally, how easy do you think it is for pupils in your school to move from Foundation Phase/KS1 to KS2

Children in my school find it easy to...	...adjust to the new curriculum at KS2	...adjust to a new teacher at KS2	...settle in with new classmates at KS2	...adjust to new expectations in behaviour	...adjust to new expectations in terms of learning	...adjust to new expectations in terms of homework
Very Easy	13	24	29	19	17	11
Quite Easy	28	34	26	26	27	32
Neither easy nor difficult	13	5	5	10	12	13
Quite difficult	11	2	0	8	9	9
Very difficult	1	0	0	0	1	0
Don't Know/Not Applicable	2	4	9	6	3	4
No response	3	2	2	2	2	2
Total	71	71	71	71	71	71

Q11. How easy is it to...	...talk to practitioners in other year groups	...share resources with others	...work collaboratively with others	...plan with others	...observe other practitioners' approaches to delivering the curriculum
Very easy	55	43	47	33	23
Quite easy	15	26	23	30	28
Not very easy	1	2	1	7	19
Not at all easy	0	0	0	0	1
No response	0	0	0	1	0
Total	71	71	71	71	71

Q12a. Have you attended training in the last four years to help you prepare/work with children moving from Year 2 to Year 3		
	N	%
Yes	18	25%
No	53	75%
Don't know	0	0%
Total	71	100%

Q12b. If yes, who provided the training	N	%
Local Authority	8	44%
School	5	28%
Other - Please Specify	3	17%
No response	2	11%
Total	18	100%

Q12c. Do you find the training helpful	N	%
Very helpful	12	67%
Quite helpful	4	22%
Not very helpful	1	6%
Not at all helpful	0	0%
Not applicable - no such training took place	0	0%
No response	1	6%
Total	18	100%

Q13. How effective do you think the following strategies (if used in your school) are at helping children move into Key Stage 2?	Other Strategy	Having additional support for children who find it harder to adapt, or who have Additional Learning Needs	Having one practitioner moving up through the school with the class	Practitioners adapting their teaching methods to ease the transition (such as adopting the Foundation Phase approach to learning)	Practitioners working together across different phases of education (i.e. by talking, sharing practice, planning together)
Very effective	4	49	6	35	40
Quite effective	1	8	4	16	17
Not very effective	0	0	3	2	1
Not at all effective	0	0	1	0	0
Strategy not used in my school	56	11	53	12	10
No response	10	3	4	6	3
Total	71	71	71	71	71