

Contents

What is my child learning?	4
What are reading and numeracy tests?	14
How can I support my child's learning?	16
How is my child assessed?	20
School reports	24
A smooth move into secondary school	26
Useful contacts	27

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The Welsh Government believes that giving young learners a sound foundation for the future will benefit children and Wales as a whole in the long term.

Parents and carers have a vital role to play in helping their children to learn and, more importantly, to enjoy school and learning.

This guide will help explain what your child is learning in primary school. It will give you some ideas about how to help your child and where to get more information and explain how their progress will be measured and reported to you.

Children's education in Wales is divided into four sections or stages.

Primary school

1

The Foundation Phase caters for children aged between 3 and 7.

2

Key Stage 2 is from 7 to 11 years.

Secondary school

3

Key Stage 3 is from 11 to 14 years.

4

Key Stage 4 takes learners to the age of 16.

This guide describes the curriculum as it applies to children in primary schools aged between 7 and 11 years in Key Stage 2.

You can find information about the other phases of your child's learning at www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills

What is my child learning?

Children aged between 7 and 11 years will follow programmes of study set out in the national curriculum for Key Stage 2. Their education will build on the experiences and learning gained in the Foundation Phase.

The curriculum in Key Stage 2 is designed around subjects and skills. It is designed to provide a firm foundation in language, mathematics and science, and will give learners the opportunity to achieve their best within a broad and balanced curriculum.

Providing good literacy and numeracy skills is at the core of learning for children in primary schools.

We want all children to be able to read, write and use numbers to support their future choices in learning and life.

Your child will follow a rich and varied curriculum designed to give them opportunities to learn about:

- English
- Welsh or Welsh second language
- mathematics
- science
- design and technology
- information and communication technology (ICT)
- history
- geography
- music
- art and design
- physical education (PE).

Each school decides the detail of what children learn and how the school day is organised, taking account of the requirements set out by the Welsh Government. They also organise their own time

Teachers draw up lesson plans and decide which teaching resources and approaches to use. It is up to the school to make sure that its curriculum meets the legal requirements.

Your child's school will be able to give you more information about the way they structure the curriculum and the skills your child will develop, as well as details of the content your child will cover.

You can find more information about education and the curriculum in Wales at www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills

English or Welsh

Children will take part in a programme of speaking and listening, reading and writing.

Children will become confident, clear and engaging speakers, working as individuals and as members of a group. They will have opportunities to take part in drama and role-play activities.

They will also develop as active and responsive listeners in a wide range of situations and will have the chance to experience a wide range of demanding texts, for enjoyment and information. The aim is to develop them into fluent and effective readers.

They will become competent writers, writing clearly in a range of forms and for a range of purposes. They will gain a growing understanding of the need to adapt their speech and writing to suit different purposes and audiences.

They will work with increasing accuracy and learn to reflect and evaluate their own and others' achievements.

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Welsh second language

Children will gain confidence speaking in Welsh working as individuals and as members of a group and using a range of vocabulary, phrases, sentences and questions.

They will have opportunities to take part in drama and role-play activities. Children will develop as active and responsive listeners and experience a wide range of texts, including authentic materials, as they develop as independent and effective readers.

They will write in response to a range of situations with a growing understanding of the need to speak and write in a way that is appropriate to the purpose and audience.

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Mathematics

Children will develop positive attitudes towards mathematics and extend their mathematical thinking through mathematics in the curriculum.

Children will learn about solving mathematical problems, communicating and reasoning mathematically in many different situations and using a range of mathematics processes. They will extend their use of the number system, moving from counting reliably to calculating.

Schools will encourage learners to try to tackle a problem using a mental method before using any other approach. They will use written methods of calculation appropriate to their level of understanding. They will also develop ways to estimate and then use these ways to check their calculations, both written and when using a calculator.

Children will explore a wide variety of shapes and their properties, use a range of units and practical equipment to measure with increasing accuracy, and collect, represent and interpret data for a number of purposes. They will learn to choose, discuss, explain and present their methods and reasoning using an increasing range of mathematical language, diagrams and charts.

Science

Science in the curriculum will help children to learn to relate their scientific skills, knowledge and understanding in everyday life.

Children will learn to recognise that they can evaluate scientific ideas by using information gathered from observations and measurements. Science should encourage them to be curious and creative and it should be interesting, enjoyable, relevant and challenging. Children will be given opportunities to initiate, explore and share ideas and extend, refine and use their skills, knowledge and understanding in new situations.

Design and technology

Schools will encourage children to be creative and think of new ideas when designing and making and combine these skills with knowledge and understanding to support their work in other subjects. Children will become aware of issues relating to sustainability and environment in the twenty-first century, as well as human achievements that have shaped the world.

Information and communication technology (ICT)

Schools will encourage children to consider the sort of information they need to support their tasks and activities and how they might find that information. They will do this by using an increasing range of ICT tools and resources to find, process and communicate relevant information from a number of safe and suitable sources.

History

Children will learn by questioning the ways of life of different people in periods of history. They will draw on important developments, events and people in their area, Wales and Britain. Children will have experiences that make history enjoyable, interesting and significant.

Music

Children will learn by being actively involved in performing, composing and appraising, and developing their sensitivity to, and understanding of, music. They will develop musical skills relating to controlling and presenting sound.

These skills include singing, playing instruments and practising as well as improvising, composing and arranging music.

Geography

Children will take part in practical activities and first-hand investigations in the classroom and outdoors. They will develop skills to gather and make sense of information, use maps, think creatively and share ideas through discussion.

Children will develop their interest in places and the world around them by studying their own Welsh neighbourhood, the world beyond, different environments and events in the news. They will also develop their understanding of what places are like and how and why they change.

Art and design

Art and design in the curriculum will stimulate creativity and imagination and challenge children to make informed judgements and practical decisions. This will allow them to communicate their ideas and feelings using visual, tactile and sensory language. They will achieve this by getting involved in the work of artists, craftworkers and designers, and through creative investigations and making their own work.

Art and design enriches our children as they explore, appreciate and enjoy art.

Physical education (PE)

Through adventurous activities, children will learn how to swim, be safe and feel confident in water and how to read a map or follow trails, so that it becomes safer to go further afield and explore the seashore and countryside.

Competitive activities will offer children the chance to gain games skills and play in a team, as well as how to run faster, jump higher and throw further.

Children will begin to understand that physical education is about learning how to feel healthy and stay fit while having fun.

What else will my child learn?

It is the responsibility of schools to plan and deliver a broad, balanced curriculum. Alongside the national curriculum, the subjects schools must also provide are religious education (RE) and personal and social education (PSE).

Primary schools do not have to provide sex education but they can provide a broader sex and relationships programme if the school governing body feel this is appropriate. However, they must have an up-to-date written sex education policy.

Literacy and numeracy

A new National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF) is being introduced on a statutory basis from September 2013 to support children aged 5 to 14 to develop their literacy and numeracy skills.

All children will be supported to develop sound literacy and numeracy skills. These skills are not just about learning English, Welsh and mathematics, they are about being able to use skills in different situations and across a wide range of activities.

Literacy describes a set of skills, including speaking, listening, reading and writing, which allow us to make sense of the world around us.

Numeracy is based on mathematical basics. Numeracy describes the set of skills needed to tackle real-world problems in a variety of situations by using numerical reasoning to plan how to solve the problem, and then carrying out the mathematical procedures to find the solution.

The Literacy and Numeracy Framework identifies annual literacy and numeracy expectations and will help children develop literacy and numeracy skills through all subjects in the national curriculum and by using a wide range of activities.

What are reading and numeracy tests?

National Tests

The best way to ensure that learners make good progress is to make sure that they never fall behind. This can only be achieved by regular monitoring and assessment of a learner's performance and that is why, from May 2013, all learners in Wales in year two through to year nine will sit tests in reading and numeracy.

The tests will last for about an hour and they are constructed in such a way that some learners will be able to sit them in "chunks".

This is especially important for younger learners and learners with additional learning needs. Depending on the requirements of individual learners, they can be delivered on a year group, class or small group basis.

Reading Tests

The reading tests will span two year groups (Yr 2 – Yr 3, Yr 4 – Yr 5, Yr 6 – Yr7 and Yr 8 – Yr 9). New tests will be developed for 2014 so no learner will sit the same test twice.

The tests will consist of a number of passages followed by short, closed response and multiple choice type questions. However, there will also be optional test materials made available to schools which they can use to further investigate learners' strengths and weaknesses.

Numeracy Tests

The numeracy test is split into two sections. One section assesses knowledge of numerical procedures such as addition, division and multiplication whilst the other, the reasoning test, assesses learners' ability to apply this knowledge to everyday problems.

In 2013 the numeracy test will assess procedural knowledge only. This will give teachers time to adjust their approach to the teaching of numeracy and will ensure that learners are familiar with the kind of tasks with which they will be presented when they come to sit the reasoning test for the first time in May 2014.

How can I support my child's learning?

Parental involvement is vitally important in helping children to learn. You can help your child's development and learning by getting actively involved, not just at home but in the garden, the park and the shops.

Ideas for learning together at home

- Spending time reading with your child, even just 10 minutes a day, can make a real difference. Choose reading material that they enjoy such as books, magazines, websites, packaging and leaflets – any text, anywhere.
- Look for opportunities in daily life to use numbers, whether it's at the shops, talking about the football scores, looking up the times of favourite TV programmes in the TV guide or using the bus or train timetable to plan a trip.
- Encourage your child to write and design things for a range of different purposes such as invitations, thank-you notes, e-mails, shopping or 'to do' lists.

- Talk about the text, words and numbers that you see around you.
- Encourage your child to talk about mathematics concepts such as how much, how big and how many.
- Look for shapes and patterns in everyday objects and the world around you.
- Talk about and involve your child in everyday tasks that involve literacy and numeracy – cooking, playing or watching sports, paying for the shop, planning a trip or playing a board game with the family or friends.
- Visit museums and galleries, if you have the chance, and use your local library where you'll find a lot of information, support, computer access and activities and events.

School attendance

Of course, the best way to support your child's learning is to make sure that they don't miss lessons. So, give your child the best possible start in life by making sure they attend school at all times.

Do children with special educational needs follow the national curriculum?

Most children, including those with additional learning needs, will be able to follow the national curriculum. However, at times, a headteacher may decide that all or part of the national curriculum should not apply, temporarily, to a child with special educational needs. In very exceptional cases for some children, such as those with Statements of Special Educational Needs issued by the local authority, it may be decided that the national curriculum should not apply on a permanent basis. This is known as 'disapplication'.

You can find out more about what is provided for children with additional needs at www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills

Can I withdraw my child from the national curriculum?

There is no parental right to withdraw learners from national curriculum subjects, or from the arrangements to assess learners' progress in these subjects. However, you do have the right to withdraw your child from religious education and any sex education which may be provided.

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How is my child assessed?

Each national curriculum subject has its own set of challenging targets which cover a series of steps, or levels, on a common national scale. Within each subject, your child's progress is assessed against national standards based on eight levels and Exceptional Performance (EP). This helps teachers to plan lessons according to age and ability, and helps to assess children's progress.

Teachers assess children's work from day to day, in all subjects and activities. In particular, they will assess progress in the core subjects of English, Welsh (either as a first or second language), mathematics and science, and when children reach the end of primary school and are about to move on to secondary school.

The teacher will decide which level on the national curriculum scale best reflects your child's progress in each of the core subjects. This assessment draws on all aspects of your child's work in school and in their homework.

How will I know how my child is getting on?

You will receive a written report about your child's progress at least once a year. You will also have the opportunity to meet your child's teacher.

Information from the national curriculum assessment will form part of the yearly report. The yearly report will also include feedback from your child's teacher about strengths and areas for improvement, attendance and achievements. The report will form the basis for a discussion about your child's learning needs and next steps.

At the end of primary school, your child's report will include a national curriculum level for each core subject. This will give you a 'snapshot' view of your child's progress and level of achievement against national curriculum standards.

The national curriculum levels chart

The report will also include some information about how the results for the whole school compare with local and national standards.

For more information about school reports see www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills

The national curriculum levels

National Curriculum Outcomes 1, 2 and 3

Teachers may report on progress for children who are working towards the first step on the national curriculum by using the three 'outcome' steps that come before achievement at Level 1.

National Curriculum Levels 1, 2 and 3

For some children, performance below the expected level may be a huge achievement.

National Curriculum Level 4

This is the expected level for children at the end of primary school – most but not all children will achieve this level.

National Curriculum Levels 5, 6, 7 and 8

Achievement at Level 5 or beyond shows they are achieving above average.

Exceptional Performance (EP)

Some children might be expected to achieve significantly above the expected level.

N – Not awarded a level

Very rarely, there are circumstances that prevent a school from having enough knowledge and evidence on which to base a teacher assessment.

D – Disapplied

In some circumstances the headteacher may decide that all or part of the national curriculum does not apply to an individual, for example because of a child's special educational needs.

It is important to remember that different children will achieve at different rates, but at the end of primary school most children are expected to achieve Level 4 on the national curriculum scale in each core subject.

For information about the national curriculum level descriptors visit www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills

Reading and numeracy test scoring and reporting

The tests will be marked in schools and learner raw scores will be converted to standardised scores and age-equivalent scores. The standardised score will show how your child's performance in the test compares to other children of the same age who have sat the test in Wales. The age-equivalent score will tell you whether your child's reading age (or equivalent for numeracy) is equivalent to, above or below their actual age, based on how he or she performed in the test. You will receive these scores in a report from your child's school.

The scores act as a guide to how your child is performing in reading and numeracy. Your child's teacher will give a fuller picture of his or her performance in these areas in the end of term report.

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School reports

Who is entitled to receive reports and other information from the school?

You are entitled to receive a copy of your child's report from the school. You are also entitled to receive a copy of the governors' annual report.

Divorced or separated parents and others who may have parental responsibility for a child are equally entitled to this information unless there is a court order which would prevent this.

For more information about parents/carers and parental responsibility visit www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills

Need more information?

You can get more information from the following sources.

- Your school – speak to your child's teacher, the headteacher or a member of the governing body.
- Your local authority.
- By visiting our website at www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills
www.wales.gov.uk/schoolsinfo4parents

Who can I talk to if I have concerns?

If you have concerns, you should talk to your child's teacher first. If your child's school has a person chosen to be the first point of contact for concerns or complaints, you could also speak to this person.

If you are still concerned, you can raise your concern as a complaint. The school's policy on handling complaints will tell you how to do this.

A smooth move into secondary school

Children generally move into secondary school the September before they become 12.

When your child is in the final year of primary school, the local authority will send you information setting out how to apply for a secondary school place. This usually happens during the first term of children's last year in primary school.

Schools in Wales must have a transition plan in place which sets out how they work with local secondary schools to make the move to secondary school as smooth as possible.

Arrangements between your child's school and the local secondary schools might include visits to the secondary school for children to have a look around and meet the main members of staff, information sessions, and visits from secondary school teachers to the primary school.

Useful contacts for parents of 7-11 year olds

This list of useful contacts will help you as a parent to gain more information to help you support the children in your lives.

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***Bitesize** is the BBC's free online resource to help children in the UK with their school work.
www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize

.....

***Childline** is a 24 hour confidential service for children and young people in the UK dealing with any concerns from child abuse to drugs.
www.childline.org.uk

.....

***Lovereading4kids** will help you to explore books that will excite them and help them to fall in love with reading.
www.lovereading4kids.co.uk

.....

***Sumdog** is a site that offers games to make mathematics fun. They are all free to play with the option to subscribe for extra features.
www.sumdog.com

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Change4life gives you ideas and recipes to help you and your family be healthier and happier.
www.change4lifewales.org.uk

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How is your child's school doing?

A website that provides information on schools' performance across Wales.
www.mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk

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***BBC Advice for parents**

From homework help to Special Educational Needs, find out how to help your child at school.
www.bbc.co.uk/schools/parents

.....

MEIC

Is the confidential helpline service for children and young people in Wales. From finding out what's going on in your local area to helping deal with bullying.
www.meiccymru.org

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Estyn

Find out more about how your child's school is performing.
www.estyn.gov.uk

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Free school meals

Find out if you are eligible. Go to www.wales.gov.uk go to Education and Skills and Schools section.

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* *Please note this website is only available in English.*

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