

**Number:** WG42763



Welsh Government  
Consultation Document

## Enabling Pathways

The period of learning leading to Progression Step 1

Date of issue: 21 May 2021  
Action required: Responses by 16 July 2021

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

# Enabling Pathways

## Overview

The Curriculum for Wales Framework was published on 28 January 2020. Before its publication, the Framework was subject to broad and extensive consultation. Feedback received signalled what specific, additional guidance schools and settings would require in order to successfully design and realise their own curriculum. Welsh Government committed to publishing:

- guidance for religion, values and ethics
- guidance for relationships and sexuality education
- guidance on careers and work-related experiences
- guidance to support practitioners working with learners at the beginning of the learning continuum
- a curriculum and assessment framework for funded non-maintained nursery settings to adopt
- guidance on developing a curriculum for those responsible for education other than at school
- guidance on British Sign Language.

This feedback phase welcomes your views on the additional Curriculum for Wales guidance for practitioners working with learners at the beginning of the learning continuum

The draft guidance has been developed by practitioners through a process of co-construction that has been supported by other experts. This feedback phase forms part of the co-construction process. It provides an opportunity for all practitioners and other stakeholders to offer input that will support the further development of the guidance.

This feedback phase will end on 16 July 2021 after which all responses will be considered and analysed independently, as well as by practitioners and others in the working groups. The draft guidance will then be refined in response to the feedback and will form part of an update to the Curriculum for Wales Framework in autumn 2021, to be used by schools and settings as a tool for curriculum planning, design and implementation.

## How to respond

Responses to this consultation should be e-mailed/  
posted to the address below to arrive by **16 July 2021**  
at the latest.

## Further information and related documents

**Large print, Braille and alternative language  
versions of this document are available on  
request.**

The Curriculum for Wales framework guidance is  
available at:

<https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales>

An easy read version is available at

<https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/a-new-curriculum-in-wales-easy-read/>

A children, young people and families guide is  
available at

<https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/a-new-curriculum-in-wales-a-guide-for-children-young-people-and-families/>

The consultation documents can be accessed from  
the Welsh Government's website at

[gov.wales/consultations](http://gov.wales/consultations)

## Contact details

For further information:

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The Welsh Government will be data controller for any personal data you provide as part of your response to the consultation. Welsh Ministers have statutory powers they will rely on to process this personal data which will enable them to make informed decisions about how they exercise their public functions. Any response you send us will be seen in full by Welsh Government staff dealing with the issues which this consultation is about or planning future consultations. Where the Welsh Government undertakes further analysis of consultation responses then this work may be commissioned to be carried out by an accredited third party (e.g. a research organisation or a consultancy company). Any such work will only be undertaken under contract. Welsh Government's standard terms and conditions for such contracts set out strict requirements for the processing and safekeeping of personal data.

In order to show that the consultation was carried out properly, the Welsh Government intends to publish a summary of the responses to this document. We may also publish responses in full. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the person or organisation who sent the response are published with the response. If you do not want your name or address published, please tell us this in writing when you send your response. We will then redact them before publishing.

You should also be aware of our responsibilities under Freedom of Information legislation

If your details are published as part of the consultation response then these published reports will be retained indefinitely. Any of your data held otherwise by Welsh Government will be kept for no more than three years.

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- to (in certain circumstances) data portability
- to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) who is our independent regulator for data protection.

For further details about the information the Welsh Government holds and its use, or if you want to exercise your rights under the GDPR, please see contact details below:

Data Protection Officer:  
Welsh Government  
Cathays Park  
Cardiff  
CF10 3NQ

e-mail: [Data.ProtectionOfficer@gov.wales](mailto:Data.ProtectionOfficer@gov.wales)

The contact details for the Information Commissioner's Office are:

Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF

Tel: 01625 545 745 or  
0303 123 1113

Website: <https://ico.org.uk/>

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# 1. Introduction

This Enabling Pathways guidance ('this guidance') has been developed to support practitioners in schools and settings in the planning, designing and implementing of an appropriate curriculum for learners who are in the period of learning leading to progression step 1 ('this period of learning').

This guidance forms part of the Curriculum for Wales framework, which has been developed to be [inclusive for all](#). It sets out the beginning of a learning journey, and practitioners may use it in its entirety or refer to specific aspects of it as appropriate.

The value of this period of learning should not be underestimated. It provides the firm foundation which all learners need to support development, at their own pace, towards realising the [four purposes](#) of the curriculum, which are that they become:

- ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives
- enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work
- ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world
- healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

## 2. What does this guidance contain?

This guidance focuses on the key principles that are essential for holistic and meaningful learning for all learners during this period. Fundamental to this are three 'enablers', described in this guidance as Enabling Adults, Enabling Experiences and Enabling Environments. These enablers are interrelated and interdependent and the interplay between them is integral to teaching and learning across the Curriculum for Wales. Curriculum design will need to ensure that the enablers provide consistent opportunities for the following key features of successful pedagogy:

- play and playful learning
- being outdoors
- observation
- authentic and purposeful learning.

An understanding of child development is also essential for planning, designing and implementing an appropriate curriculum, and this guidance explores further how this understanding should be applied to support progression for learners.

## 3. The role of the Enablers

The enablers described in this guidance are there to support all learners in this period of learning. Practitioners working with learners with ALN will also benefit from using this guidance to support one or more aspects of development.

Practitioners in schools and settings should use this guidance to explore the 'how' and 'why' of curriculum design for this period of learning. They should focus particularly on the quality and impact of the interplay between the three key enablers to inspire and challenge children and young people in their learning.

### 3.1 Enabling Adults

The role of the adult is integral to all learners' progress, but is particularly significant in this period of learning. It is the enabling adult who sets the expectation for learning by creating emotionally safe environments that support learners to begin to express and regulate their feelings and behaviours in positive ways. They are consistent in their care, and model compassion and kindness. They support learners to cope with uncertainty and change, preparing them to manage transitions and changes in daily routines.

To deepen their understanding of the developmental needs of learners, it is essential for adults to observe, notice and respond sensitively to those learners. They should make decisions about when and how to intervene to support the learners in constructing meaning. They should encourage and support learners to begin to work collaboratively to solve problems.

Enabling adults help and support learners to begin to recognise that others can have thoughts and feelings that are different from their own. They respond to learners' interests, likes and dislikes, and respect their preferences and choices, supporting them to have a voice and make decisions.

Enabling adults help make strong connections between the learner's home and wider community, strengthening the learner's sense of belonging through embracing past and present experiences. They value and respect inclusivity and learners' identity within society and the wider, multi-cultural Wales, and promote the unique identity of the Welsh language, culture and heritage of Wales. An enabling adult encourages learners to begin to make connections between languages, including English and Welsh, as well as alternative methods of communication.

Enabling adults are responsive, tuning into and interpreting learners' communication through actions, words and behaviours, and responding sensitively to support understanding. They develop learners' confidence in communicating with others by valuing their attempts to express thoughts, feelings, ideas and opinions. They show understanding that learning to communicate is a different process for every individual and that learners acquire and develop skills at different rates.

Enabling adults create an environment that is **communication rich**, modelling multiple ways of expression. They support learners' understanding through skilful interactions, expanding on learners' existing knowledge to support and encourage them in making connections with people, places and things. They model appropriate use of context-specific language and concepts.

It is essential for enabling adults to make effective cross-curricular connections to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum, drawing on learners' previous knowledge and experiences. They refine planning to maintain the quality of provision, making regular adaptations to meet the needs of all learners.

Enabling adults model a joyful approach to learning, using learners' curiosity as **teachable moments**. This will support learners to develop resilience, independence and confidence by encouraging them to take calculated risks and to challenge themselves.

## 3.2 Enabling Experiences

Enabling experiences should promote learners' independence, offering challenge and the opportunity to experience success along the learning journey. They should provide opportunities for deep-level involvement and uninterrupted active learning and be rooted in real-life, authentic situations.

Experiences can include learners' own choices or emerge from local or current interests. They should support holistic child development, helping learners to make connections between the areas of learning and experience and across the curriculum, enabling them to move towards the descriptions of learning at progression step 1. In realising the curriculum, practitioners can draw on the descriptions of learning to guide their planning and to help ensure breadth of learning linked to child development.

Enabling experiences are essential to supporting learners to develop social and communication skills. Learners need experiences that help them build emotional resilience and should be given time and support to recognise their feelings and the feelings of others. These experiences should be carefully planned to develop learners' attention and listening skills in a variety of contexts, in both the indoors and outdoors.

Enabling experiences will help learners to notice and develop their understanding of [symbolic representation](#), and support them to recognise that they carry meaning. There should be opportunities for learners to experiment with a range of mark-making instruments and materials across a range of contexts, as they begin to attribute meaning to their marks. Learners need practical experiences that encourage them to use simple mathematical vocabulary when exploring quantity, number, shape and pattern. Enabling experiences should support learners' cognitive development, for example, allowing opportunities for comparing, sorting and classifying living and non-living things. Learners need opportunities to explore and experiment with digital technology for a range of purposes.

All learners should have experiences that promote enjoyment in physical activity. Learners need regular access to a wide range of physical experiences indoors and outdoors, using a range of equipment and resources. They should have experiences that allow them to use a wide range of tools and equipment with increasing control.

These experiences will support learners in developing an awareness of their bodies and of co-ordination, core strength and balance, as well as gross and fine motor control. They will help learners to gauge and manage risk, supporting them to think, plan and make decisions about their movements and actions.

Enabling experiences should reflect and celebrate the bilingual nature of Wales and the diversity of culture in Wales. Learners should experience a wide range of stories, poems, songs and rhymes. Experience of different languages and cultures should be offered in sensitive and meaningful ways that give purpose to learning. These experiences can support learners to develop and broaden their understanding of the richness and diversity of Wales, past and present.

Experiences should provide multi-sensory opportunities to respond to and be inspired by the creativity of others and support learners to communicate and express themselves creatively. They should provide opportunities to make and choose from a range of materials with different properties, and encourage learners to develop their creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving skills.



Enabling experiences can support learners to find out about manufactured, digital and natural environments, and develop their appreciation of the world around them and the need to take care of it. They can support learners to develop an understanding of how things work, to actively solve problems and develop an awareness of causality. Learners should be able to explore how they and objects move in space and should hear language that describes and directs movement. Enabling experiences should encourage learners to notice, think about and comment on their immediate environment and local surroundings, including natural phenomena.

### **3.3 Enabling Environments**

The environment, indoors and outdoors, should be central to learners' authentic experiences. During this period of learning, exploration of the environment is a key driver for development. Through exploration of their environment, in the local community and beyond, learners begin to develop a sense of belonging and an appreciation of the world around them.

In realising their curriculum, practitioners should consider not only the physical spaces but also the emotional climate that support learners to achieve their potential. These enabling environments will provide for wide and varied experiences that allow learners to express themselves physically, creatively and imaginatively, and allow them to follow their interests, independently or with others.

Enabling environments should celebrate and value diversity and demonstrate inclusivity. They should be communication rich and focus on promoting emerging communication skills and developing them further, ensuring that learners have access to a broad range of resources to help build vocabulary and facilitate [concept development](#). An enabling environment will scaffold the development of learners' understanding of mathematical concepts, for example, through visual and practical opportunities for learners to experience number, shape and pattern in authentic contexts, both indoors and outdoors. Enabling environments should use digital media and a range of other resources to enhance learning in developmentally appropriate ways.

Enabling environments should offer opportunities for learners to experience a sense of awe and wonder; they should ignite curiosity about the living and non-living world, motivating them to explore, solve problems, develop their creativity and critical thinking skills. The environment should also offer time and space for both contemplation and reflection, as well as opportunities for learners to develop gross and fine motor skills, as they challenge themselves physically.

There should be flexibility and variety within the environment, offering risk and challenge, and supporting learners to develop resilience, confidence and independence. An enabling environment will also support mastery, by allowing frequent and extended opportunities to practise, rehearse and embed taught skills in a wide range of contexts.

## **4. Key features of successful pedagogy**

Effective, learner-centred [pedagogy](#), which is responsive, dynamic and embedded in strong relationships, is key to realising the Curriculum for Wales. Pedagogy will be successful, and learners supported in their progression, when the enablers provide consistent opportunities for the following key features:

## 4.1 Play and playful learning

Play is a fundamental right for all learners, as set out in Article 31 of the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#). Children have a strong desire to play. Through play and playful experiences, children are able to find ways to experience a range of emotions and learn about the world they inhabit with others.

For all learners, but especially in this period of learning, play is often something they take very seriously. It needs concentration and attention to detail and provides a vehicle through which children learn through perseverance and collaboration. Play is not only crucial to the way children become self-aware and the way in which they learn the rules of social behaviour, it is also fundamental to physical, intellectual and creative development.

Play is a valid process for children of all ages. Children's capacity for positive development will be inhibited if free access to a broad range of environments and play opportunities is limited. All children are entitled to respect for their own unique combination of qualities and capabilities. Play provides multiple opportunities for developing skills, it influences thinking and dispositions to learning, and supports feelings of self-worth and self-efficacy which impacts on confidence and independence.

Play and playful learning supports holistic development across the curriculum. It should be valued by all practitioners as both an end in itself, and as something that they should observe closely with the clear aim of seeing how it can enhance learning.

## 4.2 Being outdoors

Being outdoors is particularly important for learners in this period of learning. It supports social, emotional, spiritual and physical development and well-being. It should be the main location where learning takes place.

The outdoors provides opportunities to inspire awe and wonder, and allows learners to be themselves in open, relaxed and stimulating spaces. The outdoors provides rich and authentic opportunities to stimulate learners' senses through what they hear, touch, see and smell.

Learning outdoors can lead to high levels of well-being, confidence, and engagement. In an outdoor environment, learners can explore, practise and enhance their skills. To maximise the potential of being outdoors, learners need enabling adults who understand the importance and value of it.

Learners who are able to engage and connect with the natural world can build an empathy for the environment, showing an awareness of their potential impact on the living world. They can begin to practically explore the concept of sustainability. Exploring the outdoors provides opportunities for learners to develop a sense of place within their immediate surroundings, their locality, Wales and the wider world.

The scale of the outdoors gives scope for learners to develop an awareness of themselves in space, supporting the development of [proprioception](#). Outdoor environments can provide unique opportunities for learners to improve balance and co-ordination, develop [motor function](#) and explore their physical potential. Whilst exploring the outdoors, learners can develop their ability to assess and experience risk, helping to develop resilience and confidence.

A rich and diverse outdoor environment allows authentic opportunities for the development of [integral skills](#). The use of natural and open-ended resources enhances the development of imagination, creativity and curiosity.

### **4.3 Observation**

Observation should play a key role in the everyday practice of practitioners. Through it, they will gain a greater understanding of the needs, skills and progress of learners. It allows practitioners to identify the ways in which children and young people prefer to learn, and how best to motivate them to participate in the learning process. It can also identify those learners who might need extra support to help them reach their full potential.

Effective observations enable practitioners to plan appropriate provision that supports learners' involvement and enjoyment in their learning, as well as planning to support them in moving to the next stage of learning.

### **4.4 Authentic and purposeful learning**

Children and young people learn well when actively engaged in experiences that stimulate their interest, ignite imagination, inspire curiosity and promote positive dispositions. These experiences should encourage learners to investigate, explore, create and be active participants in their learning. Relevant and meaningful experiences that are rooted in real-life contexts will enable learners to make connections, apply knowledge and consolidate skills.

Real-life experiences can enable learners to take the lead in asking questions, identifying problems, taking risks and finding solutions. Creating opportunities for learners to apply what they are learning to real-life situations helps them understand the purpose of their learning and can enhance well-being, self-esteem and resilience. It encourages exploration and creativity and will support learners to develop an understanding of the world around them.

## **5. Child development and curriculum design**

Progression is at the heart of curriculum design. All learners in Wales have a right to be valued and well supported to make progress throughout their learning journey through experiences that are important and meaningful to them. This journey should meet individual needs and be at a pace that is appropriate to each individual learner.

In order to include all learners, regardless of their age, background, needs or ability, practitioners should consider progress from a holistic viewpoint by applying the principles of child development when they plan, design and implement the curriculum.

By following a well-planned and differentiated curriculum encompassing the four purposes, learners are empowered to develop the skills and knowledge to learn successfully and realise the four purposes. With skilful and sensitive support from those who know them well, learners become more engaged, capable and independent participants and contributors in the world around them. They become healthier and more confident to interact with a diverse range of people, places and experiences. This prepares them well for the next stage in their learning journey. Over time, at their own level and pace, learners build relationships,

develop skills for life and ignite personal interests that enable them to reach their full potential.

Practitioners should explore learners' motivations, aspirations and interests to develop an understanding of the needs of each individual, incorporating the voice of the learner in planning. Taking a [learner-centred](#) approach, working collaboratively with families and [other partners](#) involved in the learner's progress, can support holistic development.

Curriculum design should focus on enabling learners to navigate a wide range of familiar and unfamiliar experiences, to refine and apply skills and to broaden and deepen knowledge, allowing learners to make connections and transfer learning to new contexts. The focus of learning and teaching should include areas of child development: physical, social, emotional, communication and cognitive development. These are important to all younger learners and to those ALN learners who may have uneven developmental profiles.

The rate of acquisition of skills and knowledge will differ for all learners, as well as differing across an individual learner's progress. Practitioners should use observation and knowledge of child development to plan learning experiences that support and challenge all learners to develop towards realising the four purposes. As learners reach [milestones](#) within these areas of development, they should become more sophisticated in their ability to [self-reflect](#) and [self-regulate](#), and develop greater competency across a wider range of skills. They should acquire a greater breadth and depth of knowledge and become more able to use and apply what they have learned. Consequently, they should begin to make secure connections across the statements of what matters within the areas of learning and experience.

## Table of definitions

Communication rich	A communication-rich environment supports speaking and listening skills, emotional well-being, physical engagement and general engagement.
Teachable moments	Unexpected or unplanned events or experiences which offer opportunity for learning. They provide meaningful contexts for adults to introduce or expand on something of interest or curiosity to the learner.
Symbolic representation	The ability to depict ideas through the use of words, sounds, and objects during play.
Concept development	A process, linked to language development, which supports learners to gain an understanding of direction, location, position, number, quantity, sequence, attributes, dimension, size, and similarities and differences
Proprioception	Perception or awareness of the position and movement of the body.
Motor function	The ability to learn or demonstrate efficient control of voluntary postures and movement patterns.
Learner-centred	Placing the learner at the centre of learning, and allowing them to take responsibility for and make choices about what they will learn. The adult acts as the facilitator of learning.
Milestones	Developmental milestones are behaviours or physical skills seen in children as they grow and develop. Milestones are different for each age range. Developmental norms refer to the average age range in which a child may reach each milestone.
Self-reflect	Self-reflection is the process through which learners develop an understanding of who they are, what their values are, and why they think, feel and act the way they do.
Self-regulate	Self-regulation is a foundational skill of early childhood. As learners grow and are supported by adults, they learn how to manage emotions and behaviours.