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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Curriculum for Wales

Nursery education for 3 and 4 year olds:
A guide for parents and carers

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What is nursery education?

Nursery education is the time three and four year old children spend in education, either in a school or in a childcare setting funded by your local authority to deliver nursery education, before they enter statutory education.

This is a very important phase in your child's life. It lays the building blocks for their future learning and their physical, and emotional development. This is why nursery education is part of Curriculum for Wales.

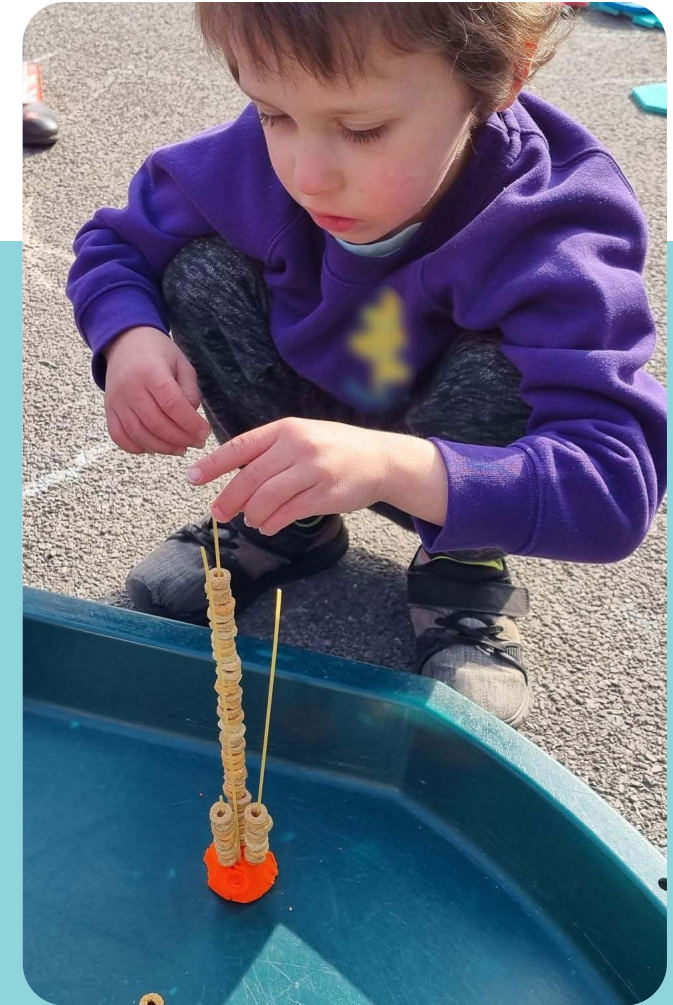
You can find more information on the provision available on your local authority website.



When will my child benefit from nursery education?

Local authorities must make a funded part time nursery education place available (a minimum of 10 hours a week) for three and four year olds, dependent on when their birthday falls. The table below shows when that place will be available for your child.

Child's birthday	When can my child receive a funded nursery place?
1 September to 31 December	The beginning of term on or after 1 January
1 January to 31 March	The beginning of term on or after 1 April
1 April to 31 August	The beginning of term on or after 1 September



How is nursery education delivered?

As part of Curriculum for Wales, the Welsh Government has published guidance to support schools in developing their own curriculum and a curriculum for childcare settings which deliver nursery education.

Child development is at the centre of all provision and will support children's learning and development whether they attend a school or funded non maintained nursery setting. Curriculum for Wales is designed to be inclusive for all our learners, including those with additional learning needs, and your child should receive the support they need to make progress in their learning journey.

This approach will also help ensure a smooth transition for your child from a setting to the school environment.

Take a look at the video for children attending nursery education to find out more:

Curriculum for Wales: Nursery education for 3 and 4 year olds - An introduction for parents and carers



What are the benefits of nursery education for my child?

Nursery education enables children to learn through play and takes place both indoors and outdoors. The curriculum ensures every child has the opportunity to be at the centre of their learning.

Your child's interests will be considered, and they will be encouraged to make choices about their learning while being supported by committed staff. Staff will support your child at every step of their learning. Learning experiences will be practical, fun and play based. This approach is known to develop positive attitudes to learning.



What is learning through play?

Play is how young children make sense of the world. This is a powerful vehicle for learning which helps support children's speech, language and communication skills, as well as their social and physical skills.

Your child will benefit from holistic and meaningful learning that supports their development. Enabling adults will provide engaging experiences in effective environments and will use their knowledge and observations of children to plan real experiences that are relevant to your child's interests which will support their development through a play based approach.

Play allows children to use their initiative, take risks and learn through trial and error without fear of failure. There are many types of play that your child will engage in and these might include role play, creative play, exploratory play and imaginative play.



Will my child learn to read and write?

Nursery education emphasises the importance of good communication skills. Your child will be encouraged to develop their speaking and listening skills through interactions with the adults in the school or setting as well as each other.

They will be introduced to the joy of stories and books and engage in songs, rhymes and word play. They will be encouraged to use mark making and drawing to communicate their thoughts and ideas. They will have access to a wide range of resources to use on a variety of surfaces such as chalk on the playground, paint and brushes and markers on paper.

As children develop their early reading and writing skills, they may begin to notice and recognise their own name, letters and numbers. The most important thing is that children are confident to make these marks and talk about them, and that they begin to notice signs and letters significant to them.



How can I find a nursery education place?

You can contact your local authority's Family Information Service which can give you information and support on childcare settings and schools in your area which provide part-time places for nursery education.

Here are some tips on choosing the right nursery place:

- Visit the childcare setting or school – many of them hold open days
- Read the latest Estyn inspection reports at www.estyn.gov.wales
- Visit the early years organisations' websites below to find further information on the settings they support
- Early Years Wales www.earlyyears.wales/en
- Mudiad Meithrin www.meithrin.cymru
- National Day Nurseries Association www.ndna.org.uk
- PACEY (Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years) www.pacey.org.uk

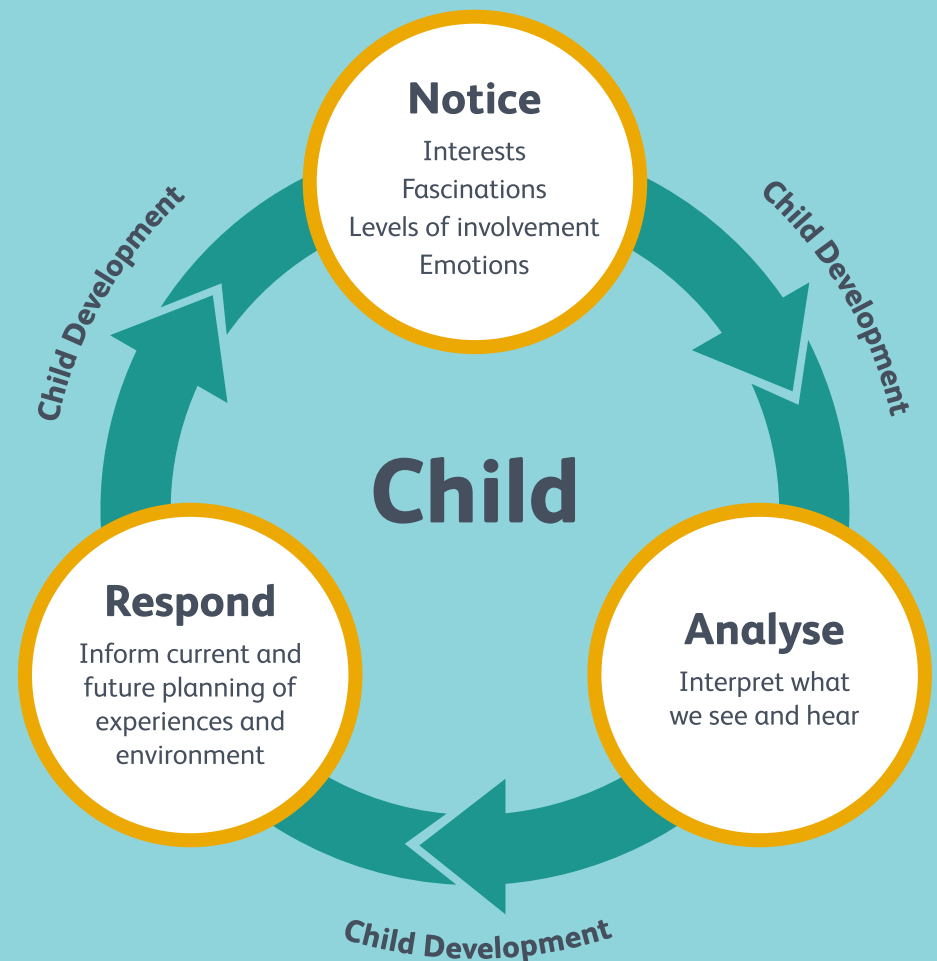


How will my child's needs and development be assessed?

Assessment plays an important role in supporting each child to make progress at their own pace, making sure they are supported and challenged when needed.

Assessment aims to find out what your child can do. It will be carried out by skilled practitioners observing your child at play. Ongoing assessment provides a greater understanding of your child's holistic development, including speech, language and communication skills, as well as their social and physical skills. Good quality assessment should identify children who may need extra support or challenge to help them reach their potential.

It is important to recognise that progress is unique to each child. You will receive information relevant to your child's progress during their time in nursery education. Further information on assessment will be available from the school or childcare setting you choose for your child's nursery education.



Where can I find information on other support available for my child?

We want you to be reassured that your child is receiving the best possible start in life.

The Childcare Offer for Wales provides up to 30 hours of government-funded early education and childcare to parents and carers of 3 and 4 year olds living in Wales. This is made up of a minimum of 10 hours early education and a maximum of 20 hours of funded childcare, but can vary between Local Authorities.

Parent and Carers will need to be employed or on a Higher or Further Education course to be eligible.

To check whether you and your child are eligible or to apply for the Childcare Offer go to www.gov.wales/get-30-hours-childcare-3-and-4-year-olds

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

The Welsh Government offers resources and advice via the **'Talk with Me'** programme which encourages you to support your child's speech, language and communication.

Flying Start provides support for children and families from disadvantaged areas across Wales who live in a Flying Start area. Children aged two to three are entitled to 12.5 hours of Flying Start childcare provision per week, 39 weeks of the year, in line with the school term. Eligible children can take up childcare places from the term after their second birthday until the term after their third birthday. For further information, you should contact your Local Authority.