

# Building Blocks:

**Inclusion in the Foundation Phase**

**A toolkit to support children's well-being  
and rights in the Foundation Phase**



# Building Blocks: Inclusion in the Foundation Phase

This toolkit has been published alongside our report [“Building Blocks: Inclusion in the Foundation Phase”](#). The report focuses on the experiences of children with Social Emotional Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) in the Foundation Phase.

## What did the report find?

There was an increase in the number of young children in the Foundation Phase being excluded from or at risk of being excluded from school due to SEBD.

We wanted to understand the extent of this problem in Wales and to know how schools and local authorities are responding to this issue in a way that is keeping children safe, providing them with appropriate assessment, and supporting and enabling them to have an education.

## Professionals’ views and strategies

During the project we spoke to education professionals and local authorities to better understand the current challenges Foundation Phase aged children with SEBD face. [“Building Blocks: Inclusion in the Foundation Phase”](#) outlines our findings and our recommendations to Welsh Government, Local Authorities, Consortia and Schools.

During the focus groups, teachers shared the strategies they used to support children.

This toolkit aims to highlight those strategies, and explore how they help children with SEBD and their peers.

While the focus groups discussed strategies for pupils with SEBD, these strategies are beneficial to all pupils in the Foundation Phase. For them to be successful, they should be used with all pupils in a consistent way.

The toolkit places the practical ideas within a children’s rights approach. Enabling children’s inclusion in education settings and supporting their wellbeing ensures that we are enabling them to access some of their fundamental human rights.

This toolkit has been created in partnership with  
Ysgol Bryn Teg and Gwent Community Psychology Team.

It also features interesting practice from a number  
of schools across Wales.



GIG  
CYMRU  
NHS  
WALES

Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol  
Aneurin Bevan  
University Health Board



Gwent  
Community  
Psychology



## Who is this toolkit for?

This toolkit has been made for professionals supporting children under the age of 7. But it's important to note that the strategies mentioned would be beneficial for Key Stage 2 pupils too.

This toolkit uses a rights based approach to wellbeing and is a practical guide for schools to ensure that staff have the opportunity to think about the best ways to support children within their setting.

The ideas in this toolkit support a whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing, as outlined in the Welsh Government's **draft framework guidance**. This guidance, due to be published next year, asks schools to review their school's strengths when it comes to their mental health and wellbeing offer and how they interact with outside supporting agencies, as well as a gap analysis. Schools will then need to come up with an action plan to address these gaps, before evaluating the effectiveness of measures put in place. Children and young people should be involved throughout this process. This toolkit should be seen as supporting the whole school approach guidance, building upon a range of good practice that schools already have in place.

The toolkit begins with a section on emotional well-being by Gwent Community Psychology Team. It's an important summary of a relationship-based approach and provides a foundation for understanding the practical tips and ideas that follow.

## How this toolkit works

The Children's Commissioner for Wales and her team worked with Swansea and Bangor Universities' Observatory for Children's Rights to outline a framework for implementing children's rights: [The Right Way: A Children's Rights Approach in Wales](#).

This approach can apply to any setting, from individual schools to health boards, local authorities and Welsh Government. This toolkit will guide you through the five principles of The Right Way: Embedding, Non-discrimination, Empowering, Participation and Accountability.

### Under each principle we will:

- Link to "Building Blocks: Inclusion in the Foundation Phase", which highlights the current challenges for children with SEBD in the Foundation Phase and the adults who support them,
- Provide an example of current interesting practice,
- Outline practical steps that you can use to support children in the Foundation Phase,
- Provide some prompting questions for school staff, these questions could be used as part of a planning session for staff.

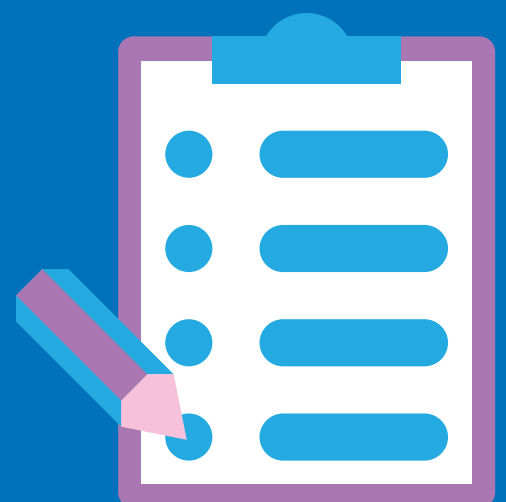
## Using the toolkit

At the end of this toolkit you will find a summary of ideas for supporting children in the Foundation Phase.

This summary of ideas could be used as a focal point for staff to consider approaches you could take as a school.

We have provided a template called "Menu for Change" for you to consider which strategies would be most beneficial for you to use.

We recommend that staff use the Menu for Change template on an individual basis as well as a whole setting.



# A relationships-based understanding of emotional well-being



The following information has been provided by Gwent Community Psychology Team.

**Emotional and psychological safety is not just the absence of harm but also the presence of connection and a secure bond with a caregiver. We are hardwired for this connection. We know that children who feel connected with their first teachers are more likely to enjoy belonging to their school, show kindness and sensitivity to those around them, work independently in the classroom because of confidence in the relationship with their teacher, and experience some protection against the impact of growing up in stressful environments (Cooper, Hoffman and Powell, 2017)**

Moving our thinking from ‘managing behaviour’ to ‘strengthening connection and the relationship’, shifts the focus from figuring out what to do with a behaviour to thinking about what that child’s need is, and what the behaviour is communicating within the relationship. We all need the freedom and confidence to explore our worlds. We also need to feel assured that we can come back for comfort and protection. We also need our caregivers to be ‘in charge’ in a kind way (Cooper, Hoffman and Powell, 2017).

As adults we need this too. We might check in with whoever is our ‘go to person’ throughout the day multiple times. At work we might go to the staff room for a quick debrief with a colleague or a cup of tea and a chat, or we might text or phone a significant other. We then feel able to continue. This is the equivalent of children coming back to you and asking you to check their work, touching your knee, smiling at you, climbing on your lap for a hug, asking for help with something they already know how to do, and then going off again to play or explore. We need to come back when things aren’t OK and we need help with our feelings, as well as when things are OK and we want to share that joy with someone.

Children may not always have the words to express what they need, and some children need to check back in much more frequently than others. In a classroom, this could be the child

who brings you a bit of rubbish when they know where the bin is (they’re coming back to you for connection), or the child who comes back to check their work after every word they write rather than waiting to check the sentence.

Equally, some children will struggle to connect and they may be the ‘invisible children’ or the children it is harder to hold in your mind (if I asked you to recall all the children in your class quickly, they might be toward the bottom of the list). This circle or ‘dance’ of connection and exploration is complicated by many things, including our own experiences as adults of growing up and as a parent, that might make children’s going off out into the world or coming back for connection more or less comfortable for us. For example, if you grew up with a parent who you felt emotionally close to, but was terrified of letting you go far from them, exploring would have felt hard for your parent and will feel hard for you, and when you’re children want to go out into the world, you might not realise why but you have a sense that it isn’t that safe unless you’re close by. Or you might have had a parent who struggled with emotional closeness and who was much more comfortable with supporting you to explore the world in an independent way. That might have left you feeling that you need to work harder to support the needs of children that are about connection, comfort and closeness, whereas supporting their exploration needs seems familiar and more comfortable.

Below is a table outlining some of the 'Big Asks' that we have of children, based on work by Louise Bomber around the needs of children who have experienced adversity (Know Me to Teach Me, 2020). Before we explore the table it is important to consider the broader circumstances in which a child, young person, teacher, class and/or school are in. All of us live in circumstances that either support or hinder our ability to access the things we need to have our emotional and physical needs meet. These are often called the **social determinants** of mental health and they include access to food, secure housing, education, skills, transport, work, money and resources, friends, community and family and fair and just access to opportunity (WHO, 2014). When children and families do not have access to the things they need, this has implications for wellbeing. Similarly, children and families may have good access to the things they need, but if their relationship needs are not met, this too has implications for wellbeing.

For some children, who may have experienced multiple adverse experiences, the field of trauma has shown us that to help children to learn, think and reflect, we need to intervene in a simple sequence: regulate; relate; reason; and repair. Regulate means supporting children to not to be in a flight, fight or freeze state. Relate is about building that connection on an emotional level to support feelings of safety, comfort, love and joy. Reason is to make time together to pause, reflect and consider what happened and why. Repair is coming together to put things right and taking responsibility for our roles in what happened (Bomber, 2020).

This four stage cycle operating across all the different layers of context that surround us. This process needs to be considered in our one to one interactions, in meetings with colleagues or families, in policy and our systems and in our culture. Just as children require these opportunities to learn, think and reflect, so do adults, and the various systems and processes that organize our world. We need policies and practice that create these capacities as well.



The Big Asks	What does the child need?	What can teaching staff do?	Examples of putting it into action (some of these examples are explained in the toolkit)
Toxic stress (Think ACEs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low stress environments</li> <li>• Increased sensory comfort</li> <li>• Co-regulation involving encouragement and comfort</li> </ul>	Support stress/ emotional regulation through 'being with' techniques and provide secure base relationship role modelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure base informed classrooms,</li> <li>• <a href="#">Bitw Bach</a>,</li> <li>• Flexible seating,</li> <li>• Emotional check-ins,</li> <li>• Classroom role,</li> <li>• 'Amser Fi',</li> <li>• Structured choice</li> </ul>
Full of fear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safe place</li> <li>• Co-regulation</li> <li>• Regular sensory breaks and sensory snacks</li> </ul>	Be compassionate and support stress regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure base informed classrooms,</li> <li>• visual timetable,</li> <li>• 'Amser fi',</li> <li>• Emotional check-ins,</li> <li>• <a href="#">Bitw Bach</a>,</li> </ul>
Blocked trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be kindly reminded where they are in time and place.</li> <li>• Grounding.</li> </ul>	Be playful, compassionate and support stress regulation. Increase signs of safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure base informed classrooms,</li> <li>• a 'go to person' that they feel safe with,</li> <li>• Emotional check-ins</li> </ul>
Feeling exposed and needing to hide	To be surrounded by gentleness and strength together – kind firmness	Support with soothing and comfort by 'being with' however small and insignificant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure base informed classrooms,</li> <li>• emotional check-ins,</li> <li>• classroom role,</li> <li>• structured choice</li> </ul>
Miscuing	Encouragement to test you out in regards to their needs and wants	Not to take things personally. Look for body rather than just verbal cues for what the child needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure base informed classrooms,</li> <li>• emotional check-ins,</li> <li>• a 'go to person' that they feel safe with</li> </ul>
Stuck in grief (too many significant 'goodbyes')	Compassion, patience, relentless care and understanding	'Relational proximity' from an empathic adult – emotional containment, soothing regulation, role modelling and comfort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure base informed classrooms,</li> <li>• a 'go to person' that they feel safe with,</li> <li>• Emotional check-ins,</li> <li>• classroom role,</li> <li>• structured choice.</li> </ul>

To achieve the above, you will often have to be responsive to the child's needs and creative with what you have available to you. Under the "Putting the principle into action" section you will find ideas of resources that others have found useful.

# Embedding Children's Rights



Children's rights should be at the core of whole school planning and delivery. This requires that all staff in the school, including associate and support staff, understand the UNCRC as a framework for the work of the school. Similarly, all governors need awareness of the principles and content of the UNCRC. School policies should be revisited to ensure that they are consistent with the principles of the UNCRC. There should be coordination across different areas of the school, and also with external services to ensure application of the principles and practice of a Children's Rights Approach. This will help ensure that the best interests of the child are a primary consideration in all decision-making concerning individual children and groups of children (as guaranteed by Article 3 of the UNCRC). It should be clear and transparent where children's rights have been taken into account.

## Our Findings

### During the project we held focus groups across Wales.

Education staff told us of the importance of introducing new policies to support children with Social, Emotional, Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD). They explained the changes they had made to behaviour and attachment policies, and the benefits they had seen from new up to date policies reflecting current knowledge and understanding about what works best for children with SEBD.

**"It's about connections and reviewing the policies – if it's not working take it out!"**

— Head teacher

### Replacing behaviour policy with relationships policy

Head teachers told us that they had replaced their behaviour policy with a relationship policy, recognising that moving from punishments to focussing on relationships between staff and children had great benefits when it came to managing behaviour. They also told us that focusing on relationships rather than behaviour, also meant thinking about peer to peer relationships using restorative justices as an approach.

We were told that relationship policies weren't there to 'control' or 'manage' behaviour, they were there to help staff to understand and reflect on their pupils' emotions and help pupils to develop as caring and responsible individuals. They explained that relationship policies involve thinking about building, maintaining and repairing relationships in schools and what this means for children, staff, families and external agencies. Teachers told us relationship policies also included developing emotional literacy for Foundation Phase children, using clear communication and praise.

**"...our school wouldn't function without this policy. Children helped us with the review. We looked at a typical day for a pupil and made changes to help with behaviour. For example, at breakfast we introduced lightly dimmed lights, blankets and comfy seating"**

— Head teacher

### Tredegarville Primary School – Policy Changes

#### Relationships and wellbeing

Tredegarville primary school replaced their behaviour policy with a relationship and well-being policy. They also have a trauma policy which outlines how they support children in their school.

The school aims to create a calm, safe, happy, vibrant, purposeful, inclusive and positive environment for all pupils. The relationship and well-being policy supports these aims. The policy is not about how the school 'controls' or 'manages' behaviour; it's about showing how seriously the staff at Tredegarville take the job of teaching and nurturing their children, and how they help them to understand and reflect on their emotions and develop as caring and responsible people.

#### Building, maintaining and repairing relationships

The policy involves a whole school approach to building, maintaining and (when needed) repairing relationships with everyone – children and adults. A consistent approach to restorative practice is an important part of this. A key aim of this policy is to 'connect before correct'. This includes ensuring that all staff interactions with children are socially engaging and not socially defensive, this is to decrease the likelihood of children relating and reacting defensively.

#### Not using harsh voices or shouting

Tredegarville has a whole school commitment to cease all use of harsh voices, shouting, put downs, criticism and shaming as they recognise that this can be damaging to children, especially children who have experienced trauma.

#### Learning words to discuss feelings

At Tredegarville primary school, they teach children the vocabulary they need to discuss their feelings and to reflect on their own needs and those of others. Each classroom develops a class charter at the start of each year, to build classrooms as communities who care about their needs and rights and those of others.

#### Children's rights

The school has linked their policies to children's rights, recognising that using the legal framework of the UNCRC puts emphasis on the obligation adults have to support all children.

You can view Tredegarville's relationship and trauma policy on their [website](#).

Below are examples of how you could put this principle into action. We recommend you use our [strategies one-pager and menu for change](#) to create a plan that works for your setting.

**Use this resource** - you could run a session with colleagues discussing the strategies and how you can implement them

**The Right Way** - Deliver 'The Right Way' [training](#) to staff to ensure they understand the importance of children's rights

**Policies** - Review, improve, and build on policies to ensure ethos and values of the school are shared from policy into action. Ensure that policies improve the offer and feel of school.

**Children's rights** - Link your school policies to children's rights for example Article 19: the right to be safe links with your safeguarding policy. This embeds the language of rights throughout the school.

**Targets** - Set achievable targets and measure impact of rights based approach

**Classroom Charter** - Work with pupils to create a class charter (you could use [Bitw Bach lesson plans](#) to support this)

**Right of the Month** - Use our "Right of the Month" [videos](#) to explore rights



# Questions for reflection

The following questions could be used in a whole staff meeting to encourage your staff team to think about the work they are already doing and the steps they need to take to embed children's rights and support children's well-being.

Do our Foundation Phase aged children know about their rights?

How can we introduce rights? How can we introduce a rights charter into each classroom?

What can we do to enhance children's understanding of their rights?

How do we currently measure well-being in the Foundation phase?

What targets for well-being are we setting within the Foundation Phase? How will we measure the impact?

What does a whole school approach look like in our school?

How does a whole school approach complement what we are already doing?

Do we need to review our behaviour/ relationships policy? Is it working?

How do we ensure that Foundation Phase aged children help review the policies?

How do we ensure that our policies are child focused?

Are our policies linked to children's rights? If not, how can we do it? (See 'Top Tip' for more ideas)

## TOP TIP

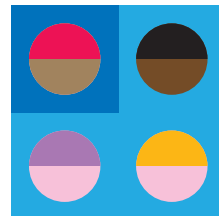
You can use our [symbol cards](#) to help staff link policies to children's rights.

Lay them out on flipchart paper and ask staff to think about how they make each right a reality in school.

For example:

Anti-bullying and safeguarding policy links to Article 19 – the right to feel safe

# Equality and non-discrimination



Equality is about ensuring that every child has an equal opportunity to make the most of their talents and develop to their fullest potential, and that no child has to endure poor life chances because of discrimination. Many children and young people in Wales face discrimination in education settings. Sometimes children face discrimination due to their identity, for example, children and young people can experience bullying due to disability or because they are a member of a minority ethnic community.

## Our Findings

**“Strategies have to be a whole school approach, but focus has to be on the learner, knowing your pupils and their relationships is important”**

— Teacher

During the focus groups it was clear to see that schools and teachers take an individual approach to Foundation Phase children and try a number of strategies to support children in their settings to ensure they are not discriminated against. This was also the case when they spoke about managing children’s behaviour, teachers told us about individual approaches to behaviour management including working with children’s families.

### Involving families

Teachers recognised the importance of involving families in their work, working with the family to understand the child’s needs. We heard examples of schools holding “family breakfasts”, family engagement officers running sessions for families and parents playing an active role in the children’s school life.

Teachers told us that “getting families to buy into new initiatives” was often the first step needed to support a child with Social, emotional, Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD), but they found that once families could see the difference it made to their child, they were often reluctant for their child to finish the strategy/ intervention.

## Interesting Practice from Around Wales

### Ysgol Bryn Teg: “Nurture Provision”

Following the success of a Key Stage 2 nurture provision (18 pupils successfully reintegrated from the KS2 nurture class to mainstream class), the school created a Foundation Phase nurture class. This is an afternoon provision for groups of between 6-10 pupils.

### Targets for pupils

The school uses a whole class and individual approach to well-being, targets for pupils are identified from the PASS survey (Pupils’ attitudes to self/school). Analysis of the PASS survey provides detail regarding scaffolding of support and provision for classes and individual pupils. Information from the survey is provided to class teachers to plan for whole class activities and small group interventions. The results also indicate the possibility of a nurture placement (further assessments, observations and discussions are also required at this point), the survey may also indicate the need to refer to outside agency involvement.

## Work with the educational psychology service

The school has developed strong partnerships with the education psychology service, gaining training to meet the needs of the children and the school as a whole. The school has continued to seek further training to meet pupils needs, this includes staff members being trained as ELSAs (Emotional Literacy Support Assistants) and BOXALL assessment training. The school has appointed staff that suit the school ethos and can effectively deliver what the pupils need to thrive and reach their full potential.

## Funds for the Foundation Phase

The school has been proactive in enabling funds to be allocated towards the Foundation Phase provision in order to ensure full inclusion and support positive behaviour. This has been achieved over a number of years, through staff restructures, and Governors being fully involved and passionate about all learners. The school has appointed two Level 3 Teaching Assistants to run the nurture provision, with both supporting many other class and small group interventions throughout the week.

## Better relationships

This provision has resulted in pupils having better relationships with staff and their peers. There is an overall improvement in behaviour, greater tolerance and acceptance, happier children and staff. The impact of the nurture class has also been reflected in the school's exclusion figures. Over 30 days of school were lost due to exclusion in the 2016/17 academic year. This has been reduced to single figure exclusions over the last three years.

**"I enjoy playing toys and painting."**

— Year 2 pupil

**"I like playing toys with my friends and playing playdoh"**

— Year 2 pupil

**"I enjoy snack time and playing toys with my friends"**

— Year 2 pupil

## Putting the principle into action

Below are examples of how you could put this principle into action. We recommend you use our [strategies one-pager and menu for change](#) to create a plan that works for your setting.

**Sam's Story** – an anti-bullying resource

**Here I am** - lessons focussing on identity

**'Say Hello'** - Greet each child at the school gates

**Support** - Targeted and individualised support for more vulnerable pupils this could include nurture/ satellite classes

**Families** – Involve families in school life:

- hold family breakfasts
- Family Friday events – an opportunity for children to show parents their work
- Encourage an open door policy – this could be started by having positive conversations with parents on the yard at the end of each day
- Work with family to identify support and take time to understand their needs
- Encourage families to join school life by holding formal courses such as BSL and food hygiene

# Questions for reflection

The following questions could be used in a whole staff meeting to encourage your staff team to think about the work they are already doing and the steps they need to take to embed children's rights and support children's well-being.

How do you ensure equity of opportunity for all children?

Could we make a small change to improve relationships?

How do we celebrate the differences of children in the Foundation Phase?

Do we have individualised plans to support children with SEBD? Could they be improved?

How do we encourage children to recognise/share their identities?

Are there any children in my class who take a step back from activities? What can I do to include them?

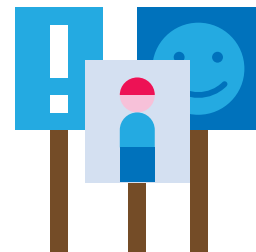
How do we include families in our school community?

## TOP TIP

Introduce children's rights at the start of each academic year with a well-being week. Ambassador schools hold well-being weeks to talk about children's rights in the first term. Well-being weeks can include:

- Creating classroom charters
- Talking about children's rights and why they are important
- Creating emotional check-ins with the children
- Introducing classroom initiatives like "worry dolls" or "calm down boxes"
- Working collaboratively with children to create a visual timetable (including children's artwork in the timetables)

# Empowering children



Human rights should empower children. Empowerment means enhancing children’s capabilities as individuals so they are better able to take advantage of rights, and to engage with, influence and hold accountable the people and organisations that affect their lives. Children should be able to make choices and to affect outcomes for themselves. Children should be given information to increase their understanding about their rights, and access to resources to enable them to make use of rights in their everyday lives. Empowerment changes the relationship between children and adults in education settings. It means adults handing over or sharing decision making with children. This principle applies equally to younger children and should be seen as an important contribution to the development of the child (guaranteed by Article 6 of the UNCRC).

## Our Findings

Teachers told us about the physical changes they make to their classrooms to ensure that children can use the space in a way that enables them to make their own choices and develops independence.

**“we took all the primary colours out of Foundation Phase and used natural colours – I do think it’s had an impact.”**

— Foundation Phase teacher

### Using neutral colours

Some teachers told us the most notable change they had made to Foundation Phase classrooms was to remove primary colours and move to neutral colours and natural materials to decorate their classrooms. We saw examples of this where schools had used neutral colours and materials such as cardboard and hessian for their displays. Teachers reported the benefit this change has had on children with Social, Emotional, Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) and the class as a whole, including reduced noise levels and increased concentration.

### Soft light and furniture

Teachers also told us about the benefits of “bringing the home into school with soft lighting and furniture”, describing how they had softened the lighting in and around their classrooms to offer some spaces of low stimulation for children. These spaces provide children with SEBD an opportunity to relax and calm down. One school offered blankets, cushions and other sensory items to go along with the soft lighting, while another school asked children to help them choose what should go into these spaces. Teachers told us that in some schools children can access these spaces throughout the day, and the spaces were used by all children in the school.

As well as providing spaces for children to use to regulate their emotions throughout the school day. Teachers also told us that a lot of their focus goes into supporting children with SEBD to recognise and understand their emotions.

**Ysgol Bryn Teg : “The Caterpillar and Challenge Grid”**

In Ysgol Bryn Teg they developed challenges and areas across the Foundation Phase that increased pupils’ independence and resilience. They used pupil voice to engage learners and developed opportunities for pupils to access the challenge areas to take ownership of their learning.

In Nursery and Reception, pupils choose activities and track which areas of the enhanced/ continuous provision they have accessed in the day by collecting pieces of the caterpillar.

Pupils in Year 1 & 2 have a challenge grid to complete and self-assess their progress over a fortnight.

**Nursery south Wales: “Choices Train”**

Children aged 3 and under are provided with an opportunity to make a choice each day using the “choices train”. Children are able to choose the activities they will take part in by selecting a picture that represents that activity and placing it in their “train”.

**Nursery south Wales: “bringing the home to our setting”**

This nursery setting followed the Curiosity Approach, they brought real life objects into their settings. Children had access to all the usual play opportunities while using familiar “real life” objects, for example art supplies are kept in a chest of drawers and role play areas are filled with pots, pans and china cups. The staff recognise the benefit these changes have had on the development of children in their setting. Not only can children aged 2+ freely choose their daily activities, they are doing it in a room filled with familiar objects. Staff have noticed a change in children’s behaviour and concentration, as well as their fine and gross motor skills playing with “real life” objects rather than plastic toy versions has given children the opportunity to master using these objects through their play.

**Bitw Bach resources** – Use our lesson plans to make sure that foundation phase children understand they have rights and develop the vocabulary to talk about feelings, views and safety.

**Visual timetables** – Teachers spoke of the benefit of using a visual weekly and daily timetable within their class. They noted that children with SEBD struggled with change in their classroom and a visual timetable helped explain when there would be a classroom visitor or a different teacher. Some children with SEBD were given individual timetables tailored to their needs. Teachers told us this helped children to regulate their emotions and understand what was happening during the school day.

You should include children in the design of the class timetable where possible.

9:00 - 9:10	9:10 - 10:15	10:15 - 10:30	10:30 - 10:50	10:50 - 12:00
 Registration	 Circle time	 Visit from Dilly	 Play time	 Forest school

**Flexible seating** – Flexible seating involves using a range of seats such as benches, beanbags, tyres or floor mats. This was described as beneficial to children with SEBD, allowing them to sit, kneel or stand in a way that is most comfortable for them. It enables them to rock, lean, wobble and relax in a way that they choose. Flexible seating replaces traditional seating arrangements and reduces the duration of sedentary periods of time.

**Emotional check-ins** – Emotional check-ins are a simple and effective tool asking children to move their name/ photograph to a picture representing the emotion they are feeling. Teachers told us they often used “emojis” or characters from the film “Inside Out” to represent the different emotions, as they were easily recognisable to children in the Foundation Phase. You can find a lesson about introducing this to children in our [Bitw Bach lessons](#).

**Giving children roles to play in the classroom** – teachers told us that they often allocated roles to children such as helper of the day and in smaller nurture groups children all played a role in the handing out of snacks.

**“Amser fi”** – giving children free time to choose an activity with peers

**Structured choice** – one school told us that children in their Foundation Phase are able to choose when they would like to drink their milk, children are given the responsibility to clear away after themselves. Nurseries in Swansea also provide children with water jugs or access to a water tap all day. Children are encouraged to help themselves to a drink when they are thirsty rather than at set drinks breaks. This is encouraging choice and their right to clean drinking water.

# Questions for reflection

The following questions could be used in a whole staff meeting to encourage your staff team to think about the work they are already doing and the steps they need to take to embed children's rights and support children's well-being.

Do all children in your setting understand their children's rights?

What more could we do to explain rights to Foundation phase children?

Do children have the opportunity to make choices about their learning? If not, what could we do to introduce that?

How do we explain children's rights to children's parents and carers?

How do we create the right circumstance for pupils to thrive? What else can we do?

## TOP TIP

Useful phrases and some ideas for supporting a child – Dr Nia Williams, Bangor University

Be supportive and acknowledge the situation:

- "I know this is hard"
- "I sometimes get scared too" - show that it's normal to feel scared.
- "Do you know that sometimes being scared is a good thing?" Explain to the child how being scared or anxious is a way of protecting them.
- "What can I do right now that will help you?"

Try reducing their stress by modelling stress-relief behaviours

- I'm going to take a deep breath. How about you copy me? (model deep breathing)
- How about we squeeze the stress ball?
- Let's stretch!

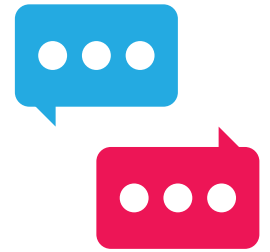
Use distractions

- Look at the clock and let me know when two minutes has gone
- Let's do some counting, how many red blocks can we see...
- Let's do something easy- You can practice something easy when a child is calm, it can be any task they like to do, because they've practiced this task when they are calm, that will help reduce their stress levels when using it during a time when they feel stressed.
- I wonder if you close your eyes you could picture calm (you then might want to describe a clam, safe place)

Practice mindfulness

Mindfulness is an effective way to improve well-being. You can practice mindfulness by getting children to notice various things such as placing a cold cloth on their hand, placing hands in water or sand and getting them to focus on how it feels. You can also ask them listen out to various noises such as a clock ticking, the wind or rain outside or give them various objects to hold. By drawing their attention to the here and now reduces any worrying thought they might have.

# Participation



Participation means listening to children and taking their views meaningfully into account. All children should be supported to freely express their opinion; they should be both heard and listened to. Their views should be taken seriously when decisions or actions are taken that affect their lives directly or indirectly (as guaranteed by Article 12 of the UNCRC).

Participation can take place in different forms, appropriate to different circumstances. Children should be supported to take part in decisions that contribute to the lives, shape the school and the communities they live in and wider society. Children's views will need to be taken into account and given due weight in light of their age and maturity, but young age or relative immaturity is no reason for discounting children's opinions or for giving them less attention in decision-making processes.

Children should be fully informed and given opportunities to be involved in decision making. It should be clear how children have influenced decisions and how their views have been taken into account, with feedback always given to the children who are involved in the process. Participation should not be understood as an end in itself, but as a process, which is safe, enabling and inclusive, and which supports dialogue between children and professionals.

## Our findings

Teachers recognised the importance of participation for children in the Foundation Phase, they told us that they felt that children with Social, Emotional, Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) sometimes needed more support to participate fully in school life. They attributed this to unmet needs, lack of communication and social skills, need for support with toileting, poverty and lack of routine and structure.

Teachers talked about nurturing children with SEBD to participate in school life, providing them with small working groups, quiet space and time to think and support from an adult when necessary.

During the focus groups there was a difference of opinion about how active a part Foundation Phase aged children play in their school. Some schools told us that their Foundation Phase children have an opportunity to play a major part of their pupil voice groups, sitting on school councils and contributing to ideas. Other schools didn't feel that Foundation Phase aged children played an active role in pupil voice groups. All teachers agreed that children with SEBD find it more difficult to play an active role in pupil voice groups and that there were steps that needed to be taken to ensure they could fully participate in school life.



### Ringland Primary School: "Collaborative approach to calm down activities"

Care, support and guidance are essential in supporting pupils in Ringland Primary. As a Rights Respecting school, pupil voice is integral to the work they do.

At Ringland primary school pupils know that their voice is: valued, listened to, and their views are taken seriously.

The school has worked with children to create 'reflective spaces'. These spaces provide the pupils with safe areas around the school where there is soft lighting, cushions, sand timers, weighted blankets and positive statements to encourage pupils to feel safe.

Inside each classroom there are dedicated 'calm down' areas for pupils to think and reflect, these spaces have boxes of resources to encourage children to talk about their feelings and books to read.

In addition to this, the school week begins with 'Mindful Monday' where the whole school from Nursery to Year 6 participates in supporting the pupil's emotional wellbeing using a variety of strategies from Peer (pre-COVID) / self-massage to Social, Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) activities – pupils are encouraged to discuss and participate in circle time activities with specific themes and to share expectations for the following week.

Pupils self-regulate their feelings each day by using a class thermometer and a five point scale, which encourages them to think about their emotional needs.

The school has recently created an 'outdoor space' for their more vulnerable pupils, this has improved the school grounds and wet weather gear has been provided so that this provision can remain a constant for pupils.

**Pupil voice** – School council and other pupil voice groups for Foundation Phase pupils. Providing pupils with resources to ensure they can participate fully in pupil voice groups. This could include symbols/ pictures to aid discussion or an adult to support children.

**Greeting at the door** – each child is greeted at the classroom door. They choose their own greeting including; handshakes, dances and high fives.

**Circle time** – using circle time to ask children their opinion on classroom based ideas like opinions on lessons/ activities, or the layout of your classroom

**Calm down boxes** – making areas/ resources like calm down boxes readily available for pupils throughout the day when they need them

**Mindfulness, yoga and glitter jars** – providing children the opportunity to transition from playtime back into the classroom

**Choosing activities for the class** - example from Ysgol Bryn Teg "[Caterpillar choices](#)" or the "[Choices Train](#)" from the nursery

**Weekly achievement assembly** – Celebrate the academic and value-based achievements of pupils each week, work as a staff team to ensure that no child is missed.

# Questions for reflection

The following questions could be used in a whole staff meeting to encourage your staff team to think about the work they are already doing and the steps they need to take to embed children's rights and support children's well-being.

.....  
**Do we give Foundation Phase children an opportunity to express themselves?**  
.....

.....  
**Do we ask the views of children in the Foundation Phase when we are making changes to the school?**  
.....

.....  
**How do we ensure that we have a consistent approach to participation across Foundation Phase?**  
.....

.....  
**How do we ensure that the voice of Foundation Phase children are heard throughout the school?**  
.....

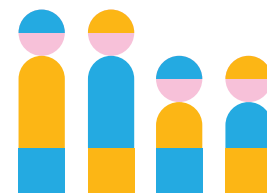
.....  
**Do Foundation Phase aged children engage with our school council? If not, what can we do to change that?**  
.....

## TOP TIP

**Know your rights –  
Hendre Infants School**

**The school council made their own version of our "Know Your Rights" posters. They wanted children in their school to be able to read and understand their rights so they drew pictures to go with each right.**

**Give your pupils the opportunity to take ownership over their rights work and make their own rights posters!**



All staff in education settings have responsibilities and take decisions and actions that impact on children. Children should be provided with information and given access to procedures which enable them to question and challenge decisions that have been taken in educational settings. For this to be effective education settings need to be transparent and provide reasons for their decisions and actions. Wherever possible these should be linked to children's rights. To obtain any right a child must know they are entitled to it and be able to actively claim it, including when making a complaint or challenging decisions and actions. Accountability means holding decision-makers to account, which requires information and data on performance against children's rights standards.

## Our findings

**“Giving the children the information they need so they can make informed decisions.”**

—Teacher

During the focus groups teachers recognised the importance of children with Social, emotional, Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) having the information they need to play an active part in their classroom, this includes the understanding of their own emotions, communication and social skills. Teachers outlined the ways that they provided children with information in their classroom including visual timetables and providing children with the language they need to express themselves.

However, during discussions, it became clear that children with SEBD were often left out of discussions about their behaviour and exclusions/ reduced timetables. Teachers recognised that they will always include families in these discussions but don't always include Foundation Phase aged children in those discussions.

## Interesting Practice from around Wales

### School Council south Wales: “We asked the Governors”

An infant school in south Wales has an active school council, all years in the Foundation Phase have the opportunity to feed into the work of the school council.

The council wanted to make changes to their playground. After consulting with children in all classes, the council worked with their teachers to look at the cost (and feasibility) of the equipment. The council then met with the Governors to explain the cost associated with the changes they wanted to make. The Governors agreed to fund the changes, asking pupils to come back and explain how the project went.

### Nursery Rhondda Cynon Taff: “Now we write it on the board”

Staff in a nursery in Rhondda Cynon Taff created a new system to ensure that their children were able to hold them to account.

Children at the nursery were frustrated that staff kept forgetting to follow through on activities that they had promised to do. Staff would often agree to do an activity at a later date or on another day and the busy nature of the setting meant that they would sometimes forget.

Staff agreed with children that they would write their promises on the board so that children could hold them to account and ensure that they followed through on those promises.

## Putting the principle into action

**Time with the head teacher** – this could be a circle time activity with the head teacher or a breakfast giving Foundation Phase aged pupils the opportunity to talk about their school experience.

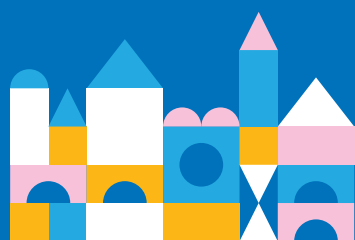
**You said we did** – this is a simple but effective tool for feedback. ‘You said, we did’ is a visual board which show children what you have done with their input. This tool would be a good way for Foundation Phase aged children to receive honest feedback from adults about issues they have been consulted on.

**Wishes tree** – a visual prompt can be used so pupils can have a paper leaf each and draw or write on it something they wish for at school, these can be discussed as a class and the teacher/helper can write on the other side of the leaf how this wish can be supported. It maybe the wishes can’t be supported e.g. I wish for a puppy in class or for chocolate every break time, but the wish can create a conversation for staff to talk about a range of rights e.g. Article 3 – we have to do what is in your best interests. Pupils can write their name on the leaf and add it to a virtual tree e.g. display board.

**If I were the boss of this school** – is a game you can play with foundation phase pupils to discuss how to improve the school, this can be done as a circle time activity or in small groups like ‘I went to the market and bought....’ the ideas can be scribed by the staff and shared with the KS2 pupils/head and the head could visit and say “I am the boss of this school and this is what I heard and this is what we could/can/can’t do”

## TOP TIP

“At Ysgol Bryn Teg each week we reward pupils who have gone “over and above” with a ‘Hot Chocolate with the Head’. This currently isn’t possible due to COVID-19 restrictions so we are sending these pupils home with the ingredients to make their own and enjoy their hot chocolate at home.”



### You Said

We want a new slide in the playground

We want to read to Dotty the dog more

### We did

The metal slide is too big for the climbing frame, but we have found a new green one.

We asked if Dotty can come in for two days a week so you will be able to read to her more often.

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# Questions for reflection

The following questions could be used in a whole staff meeting to encourage your staff team to think about the work they are already doing and the steps they need to take to embed children's rights and support children's well-being.

.....  
**Do we ask foundation phase children for feedback? What could that look like?**  
.....

**Do we explain why certain changes happen in school e.g. to make sure we keep you safe we have to clean in the classroom more regularly**  
.....

**How do we provide information to Foundation Phase aged children?  
For example, do Foundation Phase aged children know how to make a complaint in our school?**  
.....

**If a child suggests something – how do we let them know they've been listened to?**  
.....

**Can we do have more regular circle time for pupils to ask open questions about school?**  
.....

# What does Building Blocks: Inclusion in the Foundation Phase look like in our school?

Below we have summarised the practical suggestions you can take to implement a rights based approach to well-being, you can use this page as part of a staff planning session to consider the approaches you will take as classroom staff and a school. Use this document alongside the “Menu for Change”.

Principle	Classroom strategy	What can teaching staff do?
<b>Embedding Children’s Rights</b>	Classroom charter Right of the Month	<b>Staff training:</b> This resource <a href="#">The Right Way</a> Review policies and link to children’s rights Set targets to measure impact of rights
<b>Equality and non-discrimination</b>	<a href="#">Sam’s Story</a> <a href="#">Here I am</a> Involving families	Greet each child at the school gates Targeted and individualised support Involving families
<b>Empowering children</b>	<a href="#">Bitw Bach resources</a> Visual timetables Flexible seating Amser fi/ Having a choice Giving children roles to play	Emotional check-ins throughout each class
<b>Participation</b>	Greeting at the door Circle time Calm down boxes Mindfulness, yoga and glitter jars Choosing activities for the class	Pupil voice Weekly achievement assembly
<b>Accountability</b>	You said, we did Wishes tree If I were the boss of this school	Time with the head teacher You said, we did

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# Menu for change

This document can be used to plan on an individual, classroom and whole school level. Thinking of the strategies outlined in this document, identify which ones you will be taking forward using our three headings. You can revisit this document and add/change strategies to suit the needs of your pupils.

## Starter:

This is a strategy that you can implement with ease and quickly.

## Main:

This is a strategy which will take a bit more time to implement (a term).

## Dessert:

This is a strategy that will need more input from other members of your school.

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# The wider community

When supporting children with Social Emotional Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) it is important for you to remember that you are part of a wider community of support.

Ask for local authority support to map out services available, including voluntary sector. This is likely to include family support services, speech and language therapy, neurodevelopmental services, local authority safeguarding and behavioural support and support for looked after and adopted children.

If you feel not enough is being done to co-ordinate services for a child and their family, you could ask for a multi-disciplinary meeting to discuss the child's needs and the support available.

