Evaluating the Foundation Phase: Annual Report 2011/12

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Chris Taylor[1], Trisha Maynard[2], Rhys Davies[1], Sam Waldron[1], Mirain Rhys[1], Sally Power[1], Laurence Moore[1], David Blackaby[3] and Ian Plewis[4]
([1]Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods (WISERD), Cardiff University)
([2]Canterbury Christ Church University)
([3]Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods (WISERD), Swansea University)
([4]University of Manchester)

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

For further information please contact:
Name: Launa Anderson
Department: Knowledge and Analytical Services
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ
Tel: 029 2082 5274
Email: launa.anderson@wales.gsi.gov.uk

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Glossary of Acronyms

AWFPA	All Wales Foundation Phase Advisors group
BERA	British Educational Research Association
CD	Creative Development
CDAP	Child Development Assessment Profile
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DECIPHer	Centre for the Development and Evaluation of Complex Interventions for Public Health Improvement
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
Estyn	Estyn is the office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales
FP	Foundation Phase
FPAs	Foundation Phase Advisors
GTCW	General Teaching Council for Wales
HE	Higher Education
KS1	Key Stage 1 National Curriculum
KS2	Key Stage 2 National Curriculum
KUW	Knowledge and Understanding of the World
LLC	Language, Literacy and Communication Skills
MCS	Millennium Cohort Study
MD	Mathematical Development
NPD	National Pupil Database
PD	Physical Development
PLASC	Pupil Level Annual Schools Census
PSDWCD	Personal and Social Development, Well-Being and Cultural Diversity
PTR	Pupil Teacher Ratios
SEN	Special Educational Needs
TLA	Teaching and Learning Assistants
TSO	Training and Support Officers
WLD	Welsh Language Development
WISERD	Wales Institute of Social & Economic Research, Data & Methods

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction and Aims of Report

1. The Foundation Phase is a Welsh Government flagship policy of early years education (for 3 to 7-year old children) in Wales. Marking a radical departure from the more formal, competency-based approach associated with the previous Key Stage 1 National Curriculum, it advocates a developmental, experiential, play-based approach to teaching and learning. The policy has been progressively 'rolled out' over the last seven years so that by 2011/12 it included all 3 to 7-year-olds in Wales.

2. In April 2011 the Welsh Government, on behalf of Welsh Ministers, invited tenders for a three-year independent evaluation of the Foundation Phase. Following a competitive tender process, a multi-disciplinary team of researchers, led by Professor Chris Taylor from Cardiff University and the Wales Institute of Social & Economic Research, Data & Methods (WISERD), were appointed to undertake the evaluation in July 2011.

3. The three year evaluation (2011-2014) has four main aims, as outlined by the Welsh Government in its original research tender specification:

   - to evaluate how well the Foundation Phase is being implemented and highlight ways in which improvement can be made (the process evaluation)
   - to evaluate what impact the Foundation Phase has had to date (the outcome evaluation)
   - to assess the value for money of the Foundation Phase (the economic evaluation)
   - to put in place an evaluation framework for the future tracking of outputs and outcomes of the Foundation Phase (the evaluation framework).

4. This annual report sets out the work of the evaluation during its first year and provides a summary of the research and findings from Stage I of the evaluation design. It also outlines the approach and methodology of the evaluation.

Design and Methodology

5. The evaluation employs a stepped wedge design to exploit the sequential roll-out of the Foundation Phase across a number of different schools and settings at different time periods. In particular, much of the evaluation focuses on comparing successive cohorts of children who have been through three sets of school settings at different stages of the implementation (the Pilot Stage, the Early Start Stage and the Final Roll-out Stage). This allows us to compare clusters of children who received the Foundation Phase against control clusters of children who did not receive the Foundation Phase from within the same cohort. It also allows us to model the effect of time of the Foundation Phase on its effectiveness and model the effect of length of the Foundation Phase on effectiveness.

6. The evaluation utilises a wide range of data and evidence, both quantitative and qualitative, and based on primary data collection and using existing administrative data. Data is collected at a national level and at the level of 40 individual case study schools.

7. The main elements of the evaluation include: documentary analysis of Foundation Phase documentation that outline policy development, delivery and guidance materials for practitioners; interviews with Welsh Government policy officials and other key national stakeholders; a national survey of head teachers, centre managers and Foundation Phase lead practitioners; interviews with local authority personnel responsible for the implementation and delivery of the Foundation Phase; analysis of the National Pupil Database and Pupil Level Annual Schools Census; and Case Study visits – that include interviews with head teachers, teachers and Teaching and Learning Assistants (TLAs), classroom observations (from reception to Year 2 classes), parental questionnaire, and a survey of Year 2 children.

Organisation and Administration

8. Two advisory groups support the evaluation. The first, the Foundation Phase Evaluation Advisory group, is convened by the Welsh Government

and includes representatives from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), including colleagues responsible for the Foundation Phase, and colleagues from Knowledge and Analytical Services in the Welsh Government. This group also includes representatives from Estyn and local authorities.

9. The second advisory group, Evaluation Team Advisory Group, is independent of the Welsh Government and includes a number of head teachers, practitioners, representatives from the non-maintained sector, parents/carers and key academics from the HE sector.

Summary of Progress

10. During Stage I of the evaluation, a number of key outcomes have been produced. These include:

- Policy Logic Model and Programme Theory – this report is designed to aid the further design and progress of the evaluation, by identifying what might be termed the 'official discourse' of the Foundation Phase as outlined by the Welsh Government. This report outlines and describes the *context* for the introduction of the Foundation Phase, its *aims*, its educational *rationale* (including the underpinning theoretical *approach* and suggested *pedagogy)*, its *inputs* (including its *statutory curriculum*), its *processes and activities*, and its intended *outcomes*.

- Stakeholder Interviews (Welsh Government officials, Local Authority Foundation Phase Advisors, Training Support Officers) – in the first year this has primarily focussed on the original implementation of the Foundation Phase and the role of local authorities in its development and roll-out. This includes interviews with 19 Foundation Phase Advisors and 17 Training and Support Officers. These interviews have demonstrated general support for the Foundation Phase and its initial inception, as well as outlining the involvement of local authorities in its implementation. However, these also identified that there have been varying interpretations and attitudes towards the Foundation Phase amongst schools and head teachers, which, these stakeholders believe, is related to variation in the degree of successful implementation across local authorities. Concerns were also raised

about other possible contradictory or moderating educational policies by the Welsh Government that may lead to some perceived 'dilution' of the Foundation Phase potential benefits.

- Analysis of the National Pupil Database – this report is primarily concerned with a comparison of children who followed the Foundation Phase in its early inception (at either Pilot Stage or Early Start Stage schools) with other children who were still following the Key Stage 1 (KS1) National Curriculum at that time. Our analysis examines the relationship between the Foundation Phase and school attendance, teacher assessments at the end of the Foundation Phase or KS1, and teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 2 (KS2). This demonstrates the uneven distribution of pupil characteristics in the early Foundation Phase schools, which in turn helps to explain some of the apparent higher levels of school attendance and lower achievement of pupils in the early years of the Foundation Phase. After controlling for these issues we report a mixed picture for the Foundation Phase. On the one hand the presence of the Foundation Phase is associated with higher levels of unauthorised absence during Years 1 and 2 of schools, but on the other hand there is the suggestion that pupils from the Foundation Phase make greater progress from the Foundation Phase to KS2 assessments than similar pupils from KS1 to KS2 assessments.

11. The first year of the evaluation also involved the detailed development, sampling and piloting of research tools for the case study visits for Stage II of the evaluation.

12. Also throughout the first year of the evaluation we have been promoting the study through its own dedicated website www.wiserd.ac.uk/foundationphase, through attendance at the Welsh Government's Foundation Phase Conferences for head teachers and practitioners, giving regular updates at the meetings of the All Wales Foundation Phase Advisors group, and at a number of academic conferences.

1 Introduction to Evaluation

1.1. The Foundation Phase appears to mark a radical departure from the more formal, competency-based approach to early childhood education that has sometimes been associated with the National Curriculum. Drawing on evidence from good early years programmes in Scandinavia, Reggio Emilia and New Zealand (Te Whãriki) that indicate the adoption of an overly formal curriculum and extensive formal teaching before the age of six or seven can result in lower standards of attainment in the longer term, it promotes an experiential, play-based approach to learning for children aged 3 to 7-years-old. It emphasises the centrality of the child and the significance of children's wellbeing and advocates a balance of child-initiated and practitioner-directed (or practitioner-initiated) activities within stimulating indoor and outdoor environments.

1.2. In April 2011 the Welsh Government, on behalf of Welsh Ministers, invited tenders for a three-year independent evaluation of the Foundation Phase. Following a competitive tender process, a multi-disciplinary team of researchers led by Cardiff University and in conjunction with the Wales Institute of Social & Economic Research, Data & Methods (WISERD) were appointed to undertake the evaluation in July 2011. The cost of the evaluation is £986,500.

1.3. The research team of applicants included leading experts in their respective fields and from a number of different universities in Wales and England:
- Professor Chris Taylor (Director) (Cardiff University and WISERD)
- Professor Trisha Maynard (Co-director) (Canterbury Christ Church University)
- Professor Laurence Moore (Cardiff University and DECIPHer)
- Professor Sally Power (Cardiff University and WISERD)
- Professor David Blackaby (Swansea University and WISERD)

- Professor Ian Plewis (University of Manchester)
- Mr Rhys Davies (Cardiff University and WISERD)

1.4. The evaluation began in August 2011 and is due to be completed by July 2014.

1.5. The evaluation employs a stepped wedge design to exploit the sequential roll-out of the Foundation Phase across a number of different schools and settings at different time periods. In particular, much of the evaluation will focus on comparing successive cohorts of children who have been through three sets of school settings at different stages of the implementation: Pilot Stage settings (22 schools and 22 funded non-maintained settings began introducing the Foundation Phase in 2004/05, one of each type selected from each local authority in Wales), Early Start Stage settings (a further 22 schools and 22 funded non-maintained settings began introducing the Foundation Phase in 2006/07, one of each type from each local authority in areas where Flying Start was operating); and Final Roll-out Stage settings (all remaining schools and funded non-maintained settings began introducing the Foundation Phase in 2009/10). The evaluation also utilises a range of methods to ensure it captures as many aspects of the implementation, delivery and impacts of the Foundation Phase programme.

1.6. This first annual report outlines the evaluation design and methodology before reporting the work of the evaluation during its first year, for the period August 2011-July 2012. This also coincides with Stage I of the evaluation design. The report summarises the work that has been completed in that time and highlights the key findings during that period. More detail about different activities and findings can be found in other reports.

Aims and Objectives of the Evaluation

1.7. The three-year evaluation (2011-2014) has four main aims, as outlined by the Welsh Government in its original research tender specification:

- to evaluate how well the Foundation Phase is being implemented and highlight ways in which improvement can be made (the process evaluation)
- to evaluate what impact the Foundation Phase has had to date (the outcome evaluation)
- to assess the value for money of the Foundation Phase (the economic evaluation)
- to put in place an evaluation framework for the future tracking of outputs and outcomes of the Foundation Phase (the evaluation framework).

1.8. The *Process Evaluation* is primarily concerned with evaluating the implementation of the Foundation Phase. Using a stepped wedge design[1], we hope to evaluate a number of important processes and implementation 'effects' that will aid our understanding of the implementation of the initiative. This is important for three main reasons. First, previous evaluations of the Foundation Phase have highlighted the variability of implementation between settings, hence recognising the impact this will have on the findings from the Outcome Evaluation. Second, identifying processes or implementation 'effects' will help us understand better a number of the outcomes presented below. Third, and finally, it is precisely these kinds of findings that will assist us in offering recommendations to the Welsh Government in the delivery of the Foundation Phase across Wales and highlight areas of priority for future monitoring or evaluation (assisting us in the development of a future Evaluation Framework).

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[1] See Glossary for a definition of this methodological approach.

1.9. The *Outcome Evaluation* is primarily concerned with the outcomes or impacts of the Foundation Phase on the capabilities of children in the Foundation Phase. However, as has been discussed in 1.8, there will also be a number of outcomes due to the implementation of the Foundation Phase that can be considered as beneficial outcomes to the education system or schooling experience that extend beyond the confines of pupil achievement. These include changes to the organisation of staffing, the impact of school infrastructure, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) amongst teaching staff, etc. Similarly there are a wide range of outcome measures we will attempt to draw upon, reflecting as many of the Areas of Learning that the Foundation Phase intends to deliver. However, we outline here the general framework for statistical analysis that will be employed in the analysis of these outcome measures and identify the main comparisons from which we expect to identify any Foundation Phase 'effect' on children's disposition to learning, their wellbeing and their attainment. In all instances, we are not only interested in the differences in outcome measures but also the levels of variation (or inequalities) in outcomes.

1.10. The literature clearly points to the benefits of quality early years education in later educational attainment and skills development. Heckman (2008), for example, has shown that the returns to education are highest at primary school level, and particularly for disadvantaged children who do not receive large levels of parental investment early in life. However, it is important to attempt to assess the value for money of the Foundation Phase approach in particular in relation to the 'three Es' – Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness.

1.11. The *Economic Evaluation* – and assessing the 'value for money' of education in general – is particularly difficult as 'value' can be hard to define in this area. However, it is increasingly being recognised that in a world where the same equipment is available to all, it is the skills and resourcefulness of those operating that equipment that determines

economic success. The need for additional skills and better training is seen as essential to improving the long-term performance of Welsh businesses and the Welsh economy.

1.12. Consequently, the *Economic Evaluation* is probably the most difficult to undertake since there are no comparable early years programmes in Wales to undertake a full cost-benefit analysis. We hope to draw upon historical data (at national and/or local case study level) and intend to collect financial data from head teachers and centre managers. These will be used to produce a costs and consequences analysis[2], which will relate the apparent costs of the Foundation Phase to a range of outcomes. Although such analysis is not evaluative in the sense of informing technical or allocative efficiency, it is the most common form of economic study in such situations. Costs will be determined using standard economic methods, and based on, among other things, staffing costs and capital expenditure that are perceived to have been incurred since the introduction of the Foundation Phase. In contrast to the common assumptions about the additional costs of a new intervention or programme, we will purposefully seek to identify whether there may have been any cost savings (directly or indirectly) related to the Foundation Phase in other ways/areas, in order to determine a true net cost of the programme.

1.13. The final key output from the evaluation will be the development of an *Evaluation Framework* to support future evaluations of the Foundation Phase. This will allow for critical reflection of the immediate evaluation and our experiences of it. The evaluation framework will also be designed with sustainability and cost-effectiveness in mind. The evaluation framework is likely to be organised in the following way:

- Programme theory – this exercise will provide a comprehensive overview and mapping exercise of the Foundation Phase documentation and its specific aims in relation to the immediate

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[2] See Glossary for a definition of this methodological approach.

evaluation. In particular, this will provide a rationale about what can be evaluated and how frequently it will need to be evaluated/monitored.

- Monitoring Framework – proposals for the collection and analysis of routine data in relation to the programme theory of the Foundation Phase will be developed. This will be illustrated with examples from the immediate evaluation.

- Detailed Evaluation Framework – to complement the regular monitoring of the implementation and outcomes of the Foundation Phase, additional detailed evaluation studies are likely to be required. Again, this particular aspect of the evaluation framework will be mapped on to the programme theory outlined above and will include methodological proposals alongside practical examples for future evaluation.

1.14. It is expected that the evaluation will produce a range of outputs, produced at regular intervals, to disseminate the research and our findings to the Welsh Government, schools, practitioners and the wider public. These will be designed and written with different audiences in mind, and are expected to include:

- an evaluation website for the dissemination of findings and the engagement of interested individuals or stakeholders

- annual reports: including summaries and more detailed research reports

- reports on particular aspects of the Foundation Phase, including examples of good practice

- a typology of implementation based on case studies

- the development of a 'programme theory' underpinning the implementation of the Foundation Phase for the purpose of its evaluation and

- the production of an Evaluation Framework for the future monitoring and evaluation of the Foundation Phase in Wales.

1.15. A number of limitations to the evaluation are expected, due to the complexity of the Foundation Phase. For example, the evaluation has not been designed to specifically examine the impact of the Foundation Phase in different types of schools. In particular, we have made no provision here to include Special Schools in our case study settings. Instead, we intend to track children with special educational needs in mainstream schools.

1.16. Another limitation to the design of this evaluation, is that although comparisons can be made between settings in different local authorities of Wales using existing national data and from our interview data (possibly reflecting different support systems and approaches to implementation of the Foundation Phase in different authorities), we do not intend to make such comparisons in our case study settings. Instead, these are selected by the four different educational consortia regions of Wales to reflect their different geographies. Whilst the case study data may provide insights into the importance (or otherwise) of the local authorities in implementing the Foundation Phase, we do not propose to examine this systematically.

Design and Methodology

1.17. In developing the methodology and research design for this evaluation, a number of considerations relating to the implementation of the Foundation Phase were influential. These included the following characteristics:
- The Foundation Phase was rolled-out sequentially over time. In this evaluation we therefore distinguish between schools/settings at three phases of implementation (Figure 1).
- Initial settings (Pilot and Early Start) are regarded as self-selecting for the purpose of this evaluation. Therefore we will be observant of any Pilot 'effects' amongst these particular settings.
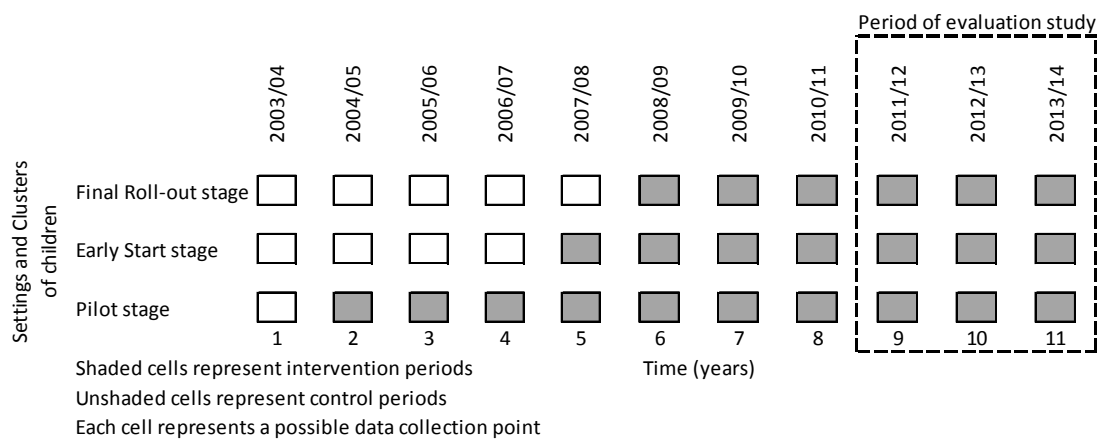
- Since this research incorporates a process evaluation and outcome evaluation, we are interested in the impact of the Foundation Phase on (i) the educational establishments that have implemented the Foundation Phase (the Settings) and (ii) on pupils who have been educated through the Foundation Phase (the Children).

- The impact of the Foundation Phase on children will largely be considered and analysed by the school they attend(ed) (the Clusters), although incorporating individual pupil level data. But with individual pupil data we will also be interested in variations in outcomes and experiences of children by other forms of aggregation (e.g. gender, socio-economic background, ethnicity, home geography, birth cohorts).

- Since the roll-out of the Foundation Phase was not random then neither is the allocation of particular Clusters of children (dependent on which school/setting they attended). Therefore we will be observant of any Cluster 'effects' amongst particular cohorts of children.

- The Foundation Phase is considered to be multi-level (e.g. children, families, classrooms, schools, local authorities) and hence will require multilevel modelling[3] as part of the evaluation to consider the inter-relationships between these factors that operate at these different levels.

- A further complication of the evaluation is that children may attend multiple settings during the Foundation Phase, particularly during the first year of the Foundation Phase (when children are aged 3 to 4-years-old they may have attended one or more pre-school settings and/or other forms of childcare). Although we propose to focus largely on maintained schools for the process evaluation, the outcome evaluation will consider the impact of different pre-school scenarios (maintained and non-maintained) on children's outcomes.

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[3] See Glossary for a definition of this methodological approach.

- An important feature of the Foundation Phase is to reduce inequalities in social and educational outcomes. Therefore the evaluation will be equally concerned with variations in implementation and outcomes as much as the 'mean' outcomes.

- The Foundation Phase is intended to lead to improvements in a wide range of Areas of Learning[4] and child development. This evaluation will therefore examine where possible the impact of the Foundation Phase in a wide range of ways based on all Areas of Learning in the Foundation Phase and not just on literacy and numeracy skills.

- The early evaluation of the Pilot Stage (Siraj-Blatchford *et al*. 2005, 2007) largely focussed on schools/settings. We believe that a full and complete evaluation of the Foundation Phase must also consider the role and views of other key stakeholders relating to the implementation, delivery and impact of the Foundation Phase. These include national policy-makers, local authority personnel, parents/carers and the children themselves.

Figure 1: Overview of Stepped Wedge Design for Evaluating the Foundation Phase

Shaded cells represent intervention periods
Unshaded cells represent control periods
Each cell represents a possible data collection point

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[4] Areas of Learning in the Foundation Phase are: Personal and Social Development, Well-Being and Cultural Diversity (PSDWCD); Language, Literacy and Communication Skills (LLC); Mathematical Development (MD); Welsh Language Development (WLD) (in English-medium schools and settings); Knowledge and Understanding of the World (KUW); Physical Development (PD); and Creative Development (CD).

1.18. The overarching structure of this evaluation follows a stepped wedge design (Brown and Lilford 2006; Hussey and Hughes 2007). This exploits the sequential roll-out of the Foundation Phase across a number of schools/settings at three different phases of implementation, referred to as Pilot, Early Start, and Final Roll-out settings (see Figure 1). This allows us to compare clusters of children who received the early introduction of the Foundation Phase against control clusters of children who did not follow the Foundation Phase from within the same cohort. This contributes to the outcome evaluation.

1.19. The stepped wedge design also allows us to model the effect of time of the Foundation Phase on its effectiveness and model the effect of length of roll-out on effectiveness. These aspects of the design will contribute to the process evaluation and the outcome evaluation. However, it must be noted that the order in which settings and children received the Foundation Phase at different stages of its introduction is not entirely clear and may not have been entirely random. Therefore, and of critical importance to the outcome evaluation, this approach will allow us to consider whether there has been a Pilot 'effect' (or Early Start 'effect'). This will help test the robustness of any comparison made between settings and children involved in the early phases of the Foundation Phase. Additional steps will also be taken in comparing settings and children to limit or consider the impact of contamination from Pilot clusters and other Control clusters.

1.20. The evaluation utilises a wide range of data and evidence, both quantitative and qualitative, and based on primary data collection and using existing data (administrative and other). Some of this data will be collected at a *national* level, but with more detailed data at the level of individual *case study* schools. Figure 2 outlines the main structure of the evaluation and its main elements for data collection. Chapter 3 provides more information about timings and the evaluation's programme of work and Chapter 4 provides detailed information about the sampling of case study settings.

1.21. Data will be collected in three stages during the course of the evaluation: Stage I (Jan 2011-Sept 2012); Stage II (Sept 2012-June 2013); and Stage III (Sept 2013-April 2014). It should be noted that the data collection requirements of Stage II and III are, at this point in the evaluation, only indicative and may change during the course of the evaluation.

Figure 2: Design and Main Elements of Evaluation
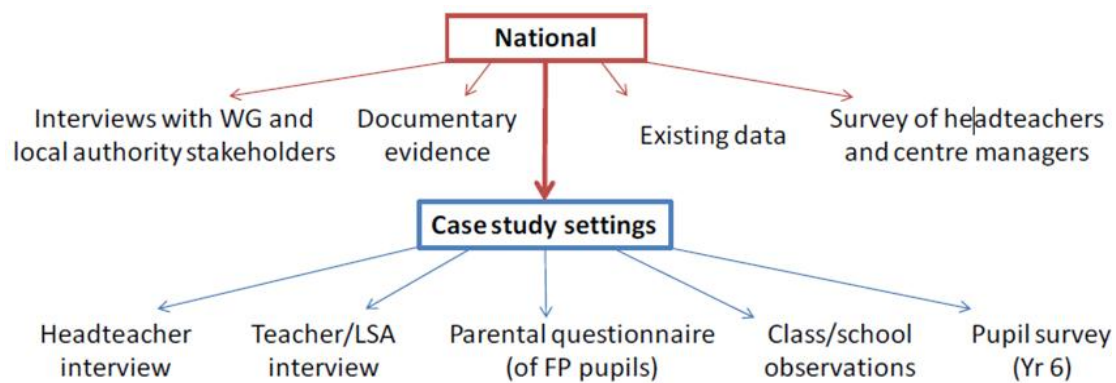
Stage I

1.22. Stage I of the evaluation has now largely been completed (see Chapter 4 for more details). However, what follows is an outline of the original design for Stage I of the evaluation.

1.23. *Documentary evidence relating to the design, delivery and implementation of the Foundation Phase*: This encompassed a wide range of materials, such as policy documents, guidance documents, training materials and curriculum materials. A theoretical framework was developed to analyse the extant documentation. This analysis has been primarily used to develop the initial Policy Logic Model and Programme Theory for the Foundation Phase (see Chapter 4 for more information).

1.24. *A national survey of head teachers, centre managers and Foundation Phase lead practitioners covering all Foundation Phase settings*: this

collected information on, and responses to, staff qualifications, staff-pupil ratios, use of classroom assistants, use of outdoor environments, stumbling blocks to implementation, financial expenditure, obstacles to implementation, attitudes towards the Foundation Phase. This survey was paper-based and was circulated to all head teachers and Foundation Phase lead practitioners in Wales in June 2012 (see Chapter 4 for more details).

1.25. *Interviews with key Welsh Government and local authority personnel*: this invited participants to discuss support for teachers, Welsh-medium provision in the Foundation Phase, monitoring and evaluation strategies, and data sharing. Many of these interviews were undertaken during the first year of the evaluation (see Chapter 4 for more details). This collection of interviews may be expanded to other educational organisations, such as Estyn, teacher training providers, and the GTCW, following initial findings. This will be explored during Stage II of the evaluation.

1.26. Another major part of the evaluation will be to collate and analyse existing data in relation to the implementation and possible impact of the Foundation Phase. The main sources of data are the Pupil Level Annual Schools Census (PLASC) and the National Pupil Database (NPD), obtained from the Welsh Government. In particular, this examines the following:

- Attendance data – this is being used to examine changes in the participation of children in primary schools. For example, we are looking for any indication that the Foundation Phase has helped to increase attendance in schools, possibly reflecting changes in attitudes towards education in the early years of their schooling. Changes in attendance may also indirectly reflect improvements in health and wellbeing amongst children that results from the Foundation Phase.

- Key Stage 1 teacher assessment data – this allows for a comparison between schools based on their respective phase of implementation.
- Key Stage 2 teacher assessment data – this allows for a comparison between schools based on their respective phase of implementation.

1.27. A summary of the analysis of this data is in Table 1. Initial analysis of PLASC/NPD data began in the Stage I of the evaluation, but is expected to continue throughout Stages II and III as data from subsequent cohorts of children becomes available (see Chapter 4 for more information).

1.28. In addition to data from the PLASC and NPD, the evaluation is also drawing upon data from the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS) – a UK-wide birth cohort study following children born in 2000/01. This includes an over-representative sample of children from Wales and from disadvantaged areas. Critically, the MCS contains approximately 100 children who attended Foundation Phase pilot schools between 2004 and 2006. Analysis of the MCS provides another opportunity to examine the potential impact of the Foundation Phase on cognitive development. It also provides an opportunity to examine the potential impact of the Foundation Phase on children's attitudes to learning and other social and emotional wellbeing indicators collected in the MCS.

Stage II and III

1.29. *Head teacher interviews in case study schools*: this will invite participants to provide more details relating to implementation of Foundation Phase and costs, perception of benefits (or otherwise), direct and indirect impacts on rest of school/setting, support for teachers and staff. These interviews will be undertaken during Stage II of the evaluation with head teachers in all the case study maintained school settings. As part of the tracking of children in the case study

schools we will retrospectively identify a number of maintained and funded non-maintained pre-school settings for which supplemental interviews will be undertaken with their corresponding Foundation Phase lead practitioners.

Table 1: Indicative List of Comparisons of Outcome Measures

Type of 'effect'	Outcome measure	Intervention Setting	Control Setting	Birth cohorts	Form of comparison
Pilot 'effect'	KS1 Teacher Assessments	Pilot settings	Final Roll-out settings	2004/05 - 2006/07	Direct
Pilot 'effect'	KS1 Teacher Assessments	Pilot settings	Early Start settings	2003/04 - 2006/07	Direct
Early start 'effect'	KS1 Teacher Assessments	Early Start settings	Final Roll-out settings	2004/05 - 2006/07	Direct
Pre-school 'effect'	CDAP	E.g. pre-school trajectories		2006/07	Within-group comparison
Time of implementation 'effect'	KS1 Teacher Assessments	Pilot settings	Final Roll-out settings	n/a	Indirect – match equivalent year of roll-out
Length of intervention 'effect'	KS1 Teacher Assessments	Pilot settings	Early Start settings	2003/04	Direct
Foundation Phase 'effect'	KS2 Teacher Assessments	Pilot settings	Final Roll-out settings	2000/01 - 2002/03	Direct (NB pilot 'effect')
Foundation Phase 'effect'	KS1 Teacher Assessments	Pilot settings	Final Roll-out settings	2000/01 - 2003/04	Direct (NB Pilot 'effect')
Foundation Phase 'effect'	Attendance data	Pilot settings	Final Roll-out settings	2000/01 - 2007/08	Direct
Foundation Phase 'effect'	KS1 Teacher Assessments	Phases of implementation		Prior to 2000/01 onwards	Indirect (NB Pilot and Cohort 'effects')
Foundation Phase 'effect'	KS2 Teacher Assessments	Phases of implementation		Prior to 2000/01 onwards	Indirect (NB Pilot and Cohort 'effects')
Foundation Phase 'effect'	Progress measures from KS1 to KS2	Pilot settings	Final Roll-out settings	2000/01 - 2002/03	Direct (NB pilot 'effect')
Foundation Phase 'effect'	KS1 Benchmarks	Foundation Phase settings in Wales	Matched settings in England	2000/01 – 2006/07	Direct (NB country 'effect')
Foundation Phase 'effect'	KS2 Benchmarks	Foundation Phase settings in Wales	Matched settings in England	2000/01 – 2002/03	Direct (NB country 'effect')
Foundation Phase 'effect'	Attendance data	Foundation Phase settings in Wales	Matched settings in England	2000/01 - 2007/08	Direct (NB country 'effect')

1.30. *Teacher/Teaching and Learning Assistants (TLAs) interviews in case study schools*: participants will be invited to discuss their knowledge of the Foundation Phase, training and development in delivery of the Foundation Phase, attitudes towards benefits (or otherwise) of the Foundation Phase, planning, assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress, roles of teachers and TLAs, experiences of delivering the Foundation Phase, perception of impact of the Foundation Phase. These interviews will be undertaken during Stage II of the evaluation, with possible follow-up interviews during Stage III of the evaluation.

1.31. *Parental questionnaire in case study settings*: this will ask parents/carers about their knowledge of the Foundation Phase, attitudes towards the Foundation Phase, and experiences of home-school relationships under the Foundation Phase. This questionnaire will be administered in paper form with an electronic option for completion. This will be circulated to all parents/carers with children in the Foundation Phase in the case study schools during the second year of the evaluation.

1.32. *Class/school observations in case study settings*: this will involve identifying the activities of the Foundation Phase, comparison of classrooms across different year groups (e.g. nursery, reception, Y1, Y2), use of indoor/outdoor environments, classroom layout, structure and organisation of the learning environment, role of teachers and TLAs. These observations (comprising the collection of both systematic and unsystematic data) will be undertaken during Stage II of the evaluation and will involve the participation of Foundation Phase children. These will take the form of 'snap-shot' observations: across a range of year groups, days of the week, times of the day, etc. (see Chapter 4 for more details). The focus of observations in Stage II will be (a) observing how the Foundation Phase is being implemented in classrooms/schools/settings, and (b) to collect indicators of social and emotional wellbeing from children. In Stage III we will revisit the case

study schools to undertake further class/school observations. These will primarily focus on (a) issues of transition into and out of the Foundation Phase, and (b) examples of good and bad practice.

1.33. As part of the tracking of children in the case study settings (see below), we will retrospectively identify a number of maintained and non-maintained pre-school settings for supplemental observations. These will be undertaken just once, during Stage II of the evaluation.

1.34. *Pupil survey*: this will be a short administered survey, designed specifically for Year 2 children aged 6/7 within each of the case study settings. This survey will be undertaken in Stage II of the evaluation. The survey will provide some indication of any differences in the attitudes and experiences of their primary education and education more broadly.

2   Organisation and Administration

2.1   The lead researcher and director of the evaluation is Professor Chris Taylor, based in the Wales Institute of Social & Economic Research, Data & Methods (WISERD) in Cardiff University. Professor Taylor is supported by the co-director, Professor Trisha Maynard (Canterbury Christ Church University). Alongside the director and co-director are a group of senior academics based at various universities in England and Wales that provide necessary support in their respective disciplines and fields of expertise as required. Their involvement in the evaluation is related to different aspects of the evaluation and hence their contribution to the evaluation when appropriate and at the request of the director and co-director.

2.2   A key component of this additional expertise is in the data analysis proposed to meet the aims of the evaluation. This is largely undertaken by Rhys Davies, based in WISERD (Cardiff University), and is supported by Professor David Blackaby (Swansea University) with his expertise in economics and Professor Ian Plewis (University of Manchester) with expertise in multilevel statistical modelling.

2.3   Other support from senior academics is provided by Professor Sally Power (Cardiff University) with expertise in education policy analysis, and Professor Laurence Moore (Centre for the Development and Evaluation of Complex Interventions for Public Health Improvement (DECIPHer, Cardiff University) with expertise in evaluation design.

2.4   The project is supported by a part-time administrator, who is responsible for arranging and providing minutes for all project meetings. They are also responsible for maintaining contact lists with key stakeholders, interested practitioners, schools and the Welsh Government. All data entry and transcription is primarily undertaken by the administrator although some of this work may be sub-contracted to other agencies when necessary and in full accordance with data

protection requirements. The administrator is also primarily responsible for the maintenance of the evaluation website (see below). They also undertake other administrative duties to support the researchers in the project.

2.5   For the evaluation, two additional research associates were appointed to provide further research expertise. They are largely responsible for the data collection – interviews with local authority personnel and case study visits to schools and funded non-maintained settings.

2.6   The research associates are centrally involved in the designing and development of data collection tools, although all decisions and final tools are made by the research team and then with final approval from the Welsh Government.

2.7   This process of approval, although requiring additional time, is necessary because the Welsh Government is the owner and the commissioner of this work and as such needs to sign-off and be aware of all aspects of the evaluation. But it is also designed to minimise the disruption to potential research participants working in the Foundation Phase.

2.8   The core project team of the Director, administrator and research associates are based together in Cardiff University. They meet together regularly on a fortnightly basis (and via teleconference for other members of the team outside Cardiff).

2.9   The director of the evaluation provides regular monthly updates to the contract manager for the evaluation at the Welsh Government, Launa Anderson. Regular communication during the first year has been enormously valuable in the development of the evaluation and its constituent research components.

2.10   The Welsh Government convenes and coordinates a Foundation Phase Evaluation Advisory group for the evaluation, with members of

the group from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), including colleagues responsible for the Foundation Phase, and colleagues from Knowledge and Analytical Services in the Welsh Government. The advisory group also includes representatives from Estyn and local authorities.

2.11 The terms and references for the Foundation Phase Evaluation Advisory group are:

- meet with the evaluation team to discuss the progress of the project and provide suggestions and information to assist them.
- monitor the timing of the project both in terms of ensuring that major milestones are on track and keeping members up-to-date of major dates of note such as when the baseline assessment data are available.
- provide technical advice and assistance.
- provide up-to-date information on the education and skills policy environment in Wales.
- provide advice and assistance from the perspective of the schools and the practitioners.
- provide a link between the evaluation and the governance of the Foundation Phase.
- review drafts of reports and research materials as appropriate.
- Ensure that learning from the Foundation Phase evaluation is taken forward in the relevant work areas.

2.12 The group is currently chaired by Jo-Anne Daniels (Chair), Deputy Director Curriculum, DfES, and has met with the evaluation team twice during the first year. This has provided an opportunity for the evaluation team to give an update on progress and to discuss its research tools and initial findings. Further meetings with the Welsh Government's Foundation Phase Evaluation Advisory group are intended at six monthly intervals for the remainder of the evaluation. Minutes from all meetings are provided by the Welsh Government and shared with members of the group.

Appointments

2.13 In the original proposal, the evaluators proposed to make two research associate appointments half-way through the first year of the evaluation. These would be to complement the skills and expertise of the senior research team, and have significant responsibility for the subsequent data collection. Both researchers would have significant research experience, have worked in schools and have completed a research doctorate in education or allied subject. At least one of the two research associates must also be a fluent Welsh speaker.

2.14 Following the recruitment process, two candidates were selected who demonstrated these and other required skills. Unfortunately the only suitable candidate with the necessary skills *and* Welsh language skills had not at that time completed their PhD. The decision was taken, following consultation with the Welsh Government, that we postpone the appointment of that candidate until September 2012 following the submission of their PhD. A third applicant was then appointed on a short-term basis to assist in the evaluation during the intervening months. Table 2 outlines these appointments.

Table 2: Research Associate Appointments

Name of researcher	Start date of appointment	End date of appointment
Dr Sam Waldron	February 2012	August 2014
Dr Robin Smith	January 2012	August 2012
Mirain Rhys	September 2012	August 2014

Evaluation Team Advisory Group

2.15 To support the development of the evaluation design, research methods and tools and the production of evaluation outputs, the evaluation team established its own Evaluation Team Advisory Group,

independent of the Welsh Government. The membership of this Group includes head teachers, practitioners, parents/carers, key stakeholders from the HE sector (including leading academic researchers and Initial Teacher Education providers), and representatives from the non-maintained sector. This Group is chaired by Professor Gareth Rees, Director of WISERD.

2.16   The terms of reference for this group were agreed at its first meeting and are:

- to advise the evaluation team on the implementation of the research evaluation
- to assist the evaluation team in the design of tools and procedures for collecting data
- to provide feedback on the analysis and findings from the evaluation
- to help steer the communication of findings from the evaluation to policy-makers, practitioners and other key stakeholders; and
- the Group may be asked to provide reports on the evaluation's progress.

2.17 The first meeting of the Evaluation Team Advisory Group was in January 2012 and met again in July 2012. This Group intends to meet twice a year throughout the course of the evaluation. Meetings of this Group are held in confidence, with minutes from the meetings only available to members of the Group[5]. Separate action points (where necessary) are produced and circulated to the Welsh Government for information.

2.18 This separate and additional advisory group has been particularly useful to the evaluation team in building strong relationships with practitioners in the Foundation Phase. Subsequently, the schools

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[5] A Welsh Government representative also attends these meetings as an observer.

represented by members of the Group have been used to pilot a number of bespoke data collection instruments for the evaluation.

Ethics

2.19 The lead researcher is a member of the British Educational Research Association (BERA), and the evaluation adheres to the BERA 2004 Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research and the BERA Charter for Good Practice in the Employment of Contract Researchers (2001). Prior ethical approval for all components of the evaluation is required within the Research Ethics Framework of Cardiff University and all researchers have been subject to an initial Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) check.

2.20 All aspects of the evaluation require ethical approval from the Cardiff University School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee that meets every month. Since many of the data collection tools for the evaluation have had to be developed and designed specifically for the Foundation Phase, ethical approval has been sought in stages, following final agreement (with the Welsh Government) about the design of the tools.

2.21 An initial request for ethical approval was made in February 2012 that covered Stage I of the research (see above). This included the head teacher and Foundation Phase lead practitioner national survey and interviews with policy officers and local authority practitioners supporting the Foundation Phase. This first request for ethical approval was approved in March 2012.

2.22 Towards the end of the first year (June 2012), a second request for ethical approval was sought for Stage II of the evaluation for the first round of case study visits during the second year of the evaluation. This included classroom observations and practitioner interviews. It also included procedures for obtaining consent from children and their

parents/carers in the case study settings. Approval for this stage of the evaluation was granted in July 2012.

2.23 In all instances of data collection, information sheets have been produced (in English and Welsh) informing potential participants about the evaluation and inviting them to participate. Supplemental consent forms or procedures are also provided. These ensure that all participants involved in the evaluation have given their informed consent to be involved. All participants are also informed that they may withdraw or decline from participating further and/or have their data removed from the evaluation.

2.24 For the case study classroom observations, separate consent will be sought from the parents/carers of the children. All parents/carers will receive information about the evaluation and how their child will be involved in the research. They are then given the opportunity to remove their child from the evaluation – informed opt-out consent. Opt-in consent was considered by the evaluation team, but given (a) all observations of children will be anonymous (the researchers will not record the name of the child) and any reporting of the observations will be aggregated (to classrooms and schools) and (b) there is significant potential disruption to the classroom in seeking complete opt-in consent, this was deemed unnecessary. The Research Ethics Committee agreed and approved the use of opt-out consent.

2.25 It is anticipated that further ethical approval for Stage III of the research, which might collect different kinds of data from case study settings (perhaps video recording) and that need alternative arrangements for seeking informed consent (and possibly requiring opt-in consent), will need to be sought.

2.26 Additional features of Stage II of the evaluation, such as a pupil survey, which are yet to be designed, will require separate and additional ethical approval as needed during the second year of the evaluation.

2.27 The team adheres to the ethical guidelines for research laid down by the Cardiff University Research Ethics Committee and BERA. All participating schools and respondents will be assured of confidentiality in the presentation of results. No staff will be named individually in reports, and where case study techniques are used particular care will be taken to avoid identification.

2.28 All work will be carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998. The analyses of pupil level data will be presented for cohorts and specific groups and anonymity and confidentiality of individual named data will be strictly observed. In relation to any quantitative data, paper and electronic records linking pupil and parent names to ID numbers will be held separately to the main data. Electronic records will be held on secure password-protected computer networks. Any paper records will be kept in locked filing cabinets in secure offices.

2.29 In accessing and analysing data from the National Pupil Database, the Welsh Government have provided anonymous individual pupil data with only variables that ensure identification of the individual pupil is not possible. Furthermore, the ID values for each of the records has been prepared only for the use of the evaluation, which ensures it is not possible to link datasets in use by the evaluation team with other National Pupil Database variables obtained for other research purposes.

Website

2.30 The Foundation Phase Evaluation has its own webpages on the WISERD website. The URL link for these pages is: www.wiserd.ac.uk/foundationphase.

2.31 The welcome page is available in English and Welsh and contains links to other parts of the evaluation website and how to contact the

evaluation team, which has its own email address:
fpevaluation@cardiff.ac.uk.

2.32 The evaluation's website contains information on the research team, the design of the evaluation, access to reports and publications (when they begin to be published), and other useful links and resources relating to the Foundation Phase.

2.33 The website also contains a discussion board where anyone may leave comments about the evaluation and/or the Foundation Phase. Although users of the discussion board must register to contribute comments, these can be left anonymously. Reference to the discussion board is made in all publicity material relating to the evaluation, but during the second year of the evaluation we expect to promote this facility, particularly to practitioners and parents/carers, more explicitly.

PhD Studentship

2.34 During the first year of the evaluation, the team were successful in competing for an ESRC-funded PhD research studentship. The studentship covers tuition fees and provides a stipend to the successful student for three years, starting in September 2012. This is a highly prestigious studentship that will be based in the all-Wales ESRC Doctoral Training Centre (the student will be registered and supervised in Cardiff University). This also means that the successful student will have access to recognised training and support and will have the opportunity to be part of other ESRC-funded initiatives during the course of the studentship.

2.35 Although the final aims and design for the doctoral research will be developed by the student themselves, the studentship is designed to complement and add value to the funded evaluation. There has been close cooperation between the evaluation team and the Welsh

Government in outlining the studentship, and this will continue as the doctoral research develops.

2.36 The ESRC studentship was advertised in January 2012 and following interviews the successful candidate, Alyson Lewis, was appointed in March 2012.

3 Programme of Work for Stage I

Summary of Progress

3.1 At the beginning of the evaluation, an indicative timeline of key activities was prepared (Table 3). This included data collection, data analysis and key milestones or outputs. All the activities indicatively listed for the first 12 months of the evaluation have largely been met. Further details about these research activities are provided in Chapter 4 of this report.

3.2 Initially, a policy logic model and an associated programme theory for the Foundation Phase were to be produced towards the end of the evaluation in order to meet its fourth aim: to develop an evaluation framework for the future monitoring and evaluation of the Foundation Phase. However, it was felt that conceptual and theoretical clarity in identifying the aims and rationale, in particular, was needed prior to the collection of new data. These aims and rationale for the Foundation Phase, as defined by the Welsh Government, were seen as critical for the rest of the evaluation because (a) of the complexity of the programme, and (b) the key finding from the initial pilot evaluation (Siraj-Blatchford *et al*. 2005) related to variations in interpretation and implementation of the Foundation Phase amongst the pilot settings.

3.3 However, from the outset of the evaluation it was evident that a more detailed and thorough analysis of the documentary evidence relating to the Foundation Phase was required. In agreement with the Welsh Government, it was decided that the evaluation needed to produce a policy logic model early in its development to aid the rest of the evaluation.

3.4 Although an initial review of all Welsh Government documentation relating to the Foundation Phase was to be undertaken during the first year, it was decided to undertake a more rigorous and systematic

analysis of the materials and resources. This review, led by the co-director, Professor Maynard, and with the support of a research assistant, Jennifer Clement, meant that the development of a number of key data collection tools, in particular the interview schedules with Welsh Government and local authority personnel and the national survey of head teachers and Foundation Phase lead practitioners, had to be delayed. This was to ensure that all questions relating to how the Foundation Phase is understood and implemented could be related appropriately to what we have described as the 'official' discourse of the Foundation Phase - distinct, for example, from what individuals working within the Foundation Phase think it is or what they think it ought to be. It is against this 'official' definition of the Foundation Phase (whether this was intended by original developers of the Foundation Phase or not) that we are continuing to evaluate it against.

3.5 A major consequence of this has been a significant delay in designing and approving the national survey of head teachers and Foundation Phase lead practitioners. Originally, this was meant to be completed within the first six months (i.e. February 2011), but it was not completed until June 2012. This meant that the initial circulation of the survey was not completed until July 2012. A consequence of this is that it has not been possible to undertake any analysis of the survey responses within the first year as initially planned.

3.6 However, the delay to the progress and analysis of the national survey does not have any significant repercussions on the rest of the evaluation. Instead, analysis of the survey responses will be undertaken during the second year of the evaluation alongside the case study components.

Child Development Assessment Profile (CDAP)

3.7 A further potential disruption to the progress of the evaluation was the decision by the Welsh Government to withdraw the mandatory use of

the Child Development Assessment Profile (CDAP) – the tool developed for practitioners in schools to undertake a baseline assessment of the children as they entered the Foundation Phase.

3.8   In the original proposal for the evaluation we said data from the CDAP, which was being used for the first time by all schools during 2011/12, would be used to help track different groups of children based on their prior abilities.

3.9   Given the timescale of the evaluation it was never going to be possible to analyse the 'progress' of children, from statutory school age (five years) to their later outcomes (e.g. End of Foundation Phase Assessments) – this would not have been possible to complete until after 2013/14, when this evaluation is due to finish.

3.10   Consequently, the decision to withdraw the mandatory use of the CDAP has minimal impacts on the evaluation. However, the evaluation team did outline what it perceived to be the implications of this decision to the Welsh Government. In particular, we highlighted that we would now have only limited opportunity to examine the use and implementation of an on-entry assessment tool, and provide empirical data on its value and importance to the Foundation Phase practitioners – although the decision to withdraw it reflects, to some extent, the rather negative views of the CDAP amongst some practitioners and teaching unions.

3.11   Secondly, this decision also means we will be unable to fully consider the role of an on-entry assessment tool in the development of an evaluation framework for the future monitoring and evaluation of the Foundation Phase.

3.12 Both these concerns, albeit fairly modest, were presented to and
discussed with the Welsh Government's Foundation Phase Advisory
Group[6].

Table 3: Indicative Timeline for Three-Year Evaluation

	Data Collection	Data Analysis	Key Milestones/Outputs
6 months	• Begin collating documentary evidence • National survey of head teachers and centre managers underway		• Evaluation website established
12 months	• Interviews with key Welsh Government and local authority personnel • Finalise sourcing of available existing data • Finalise sample of settings for case study data collection	• Baseline characteristics • Initial analysis of summary statistics	• Initial findings from national survey of head teachers and centre managers • **End of Year 1 Annual Report**
18 months	• Head teacher interviews in case study schools • Teacher interviews in case study schools • First sweep of classroom/school observations • Update existing data with additional data	• Primary and secondary analysis of outcome measures	• Initial findings from interviews with key Welsh Government and local authority personnel • Programme Theory for Foundation Phase finalised – to provide basis for analysis of outcomes and foundations of future Evaluation Framework

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[6] The development of a new Early Years Development and Assessment Framework (EYDAF) is currently underway. This will then be rolled out across Wales in the summer of 2014 and introduced on a statutory basis as the on-entry assessment for the Foundation Phase in September 2014.

24 months	• Second sweep of classroom/school observations • Parental questionnaire underway • Pupil survey underway • Update existing data with additional data	• Tertiary analysis of outcome measures • Multilevel modelling	• Initial findings from interviews with head teachers and teachers in case study settings • **End of Year 2 Annual Report**
30 months	• Third sweep of classroom/school observations • Additional observations and interviews in pre-school settings • Update existing data with additional data	• Longitudinal analysis	• Initial findings from parental questionnaire and pupil survey
36 months		• Refresh analyses using additional existing data and combined primary data	• **End of Evaluation Final Report** • **Evaluation Framework**

4   Research Activities

4.1   In this Chapter, we summarise the main research activities undertaken during the first year of the evaluation.

Documentary Analysis of Foundation Phase Materials and Guidance

4.2   As discussed in Chapter 3, the first research activity to be undertaken was a thorough documentary analysis of all Foundation Phase materials, documents and guidance published by the Welsh Government.

4.3   The aim of this was to develop an initial policy logic model for the Foundation Phase, primarily to aid the design and progress of the evaluation, by identifying what might be termed the 'official discourse' of the Foundation Phase as outlined by the Welsh Government.

4.4   This was achieved through an exploration of the extant documentation relating to the establishment, development and implementation of the Foundation Phase, published by the Welsh Government since devolution in 1999 and leading up to the beginning of the evaluation in 2011. The main policy document that underpinned this new early years curriculum is the Foundation Phase Framework (Welsh Assembly Government 2008), supported by a series of additional guidance documents.

4.5   In developing a policy logic model for the Foundation Phase, we attempted to outline and describe the *context* for the introduction of the Foundation Phase, its *aims*, its educational *rationale* (including the underpinning theoretical *approach* and suggested *pedagogy)*, its *inputs* (including its *statutory curriculum*), its *processes and activities*, and its intended *outcomes.*

4.6 A more detailed report outlining the process of analysis, the documents included in the analysis, the resulting policy logic model and associated programme theory, and the conclusions drawn from this work are published separately (Maynard *et al.* 2013).

Stakeholder Interviews (Welsh Government officials, Local Authority Foundation Phase Advisors, Training Support Officers)

4.7 The second main research activity during Stage I of the evaluation were interviews with:
- Welsh Government officials, responsible for leading the implementation of the Foundation Phase
- Local Authority Foundation Phase Advisors
- Local Authority Training and Support Officers (TSOs).

4.8 During February and March 2012, interviews were conducted with three participants who were centrally involved in the implementation of the Foundation Phase. The aim of these interviews was to provide a timeline for the design, implementation and roll-out of the Foundation Phase since its inception. All interviews were conducted face-to-face and were audio recorded.

4.9 Although the interviews were very productive in assisting us in recreating a timeline in the development of the Foundation Phase and in identifying what were considered to be the main current issues relating to the Foundation Phase, they did raise a number of sensitive issues about its development, both in terms of the policy-making process and in establishing the content of the Foundation Phase.

4.10 These interviews, therefore, raised important questions about how the Foundation Phase was first introduced. To some extent this may be reflected in the conclusions and questions that have been raised by the evaluation following the documentary analysis of the 'official' discourse of the Foundation Phase.

4.11 However, following discussion with the Welsh Government's Foundation Phase Evaluation Advisory Group, it was felt that the 'history' to the introduction and establishment of the Foundation Phase should not be of immediate concern to the evaluation unless it was found that issues relating to its current implementation and delivery could be related back to its policy origins. As a result, the evaluation team decided not to proceed with additional stakeholder interviews surrounding its inception. Instead future stakeholder interviews, which are likely to continue throughout the evaluation as and when appropriate, will focus on current issues or concerns about the Foundation Phase. Only if it can be demonstrated that the origins of any concerns that may exist now are related back to the policy-making process would we wish to return to this area of focus.

4.12 The next major set of interviews that have been conducted during the first year of the evaluation, have been with the Local Authority Foundation Phase Advisors (FPAs). There is a designated Foundation Phase advisor in each local authority, typically responsible for all early years education, although for some they can have additional educational duties and responsibilities. This group meets regularly through the All Wales Foundation Phase Advisors group (AWFPA).

4.13 The aim of these interviews was to gain an understanding of the role that these individuals have had in the delivery of the Foundation Phase and for their perceptions of the successes, challenges and future of the programme. These interviews were also designed to provide a representation or indication of their wider institutional context at the local authority level.

4.14 In total 19 FPAs were interviewed, representing 19 of the 22 local authorities in Wales. All interviews were conducted by phone and have been audio recorded, but not yet fully transcribed. Interviews lasted between 45 minutes to over two hours in length. Interviewees were asked a number of questions designed to elicit their personal

experiences and anecdotal evidence of the Foundation Phase relating to the programme as a whole, their relationship with the Welsh Government, the involvement of their respective local authority in the implementation of the Foundation Phase, and their support to practitioners working in the Foundation Phase.

4.15 In addition to the local authority Foundation Phase Advisors, 17 Training and Support Officers (TSOs) were interviewed. Each local authority receives funds from the Welsh Government to employ one TSO, usually a teacher seconded from within the local authority, to support the FPAs in the training and support of Foundation Phase practitioners in their authority.

4.16 Additional interviews have also been conducted with representatives from the National Child Minding Association (NCMA), the Wales Preschool Providers Association (WPPA) and Mudiad Meithrin.

4.17 Although detailed analysis of these interviews is still underway, and will continue to be developed as we collect other complementary data from schools, a number of key findings are starting to emerge. A more detailed report on these findings will be published at a later point in the evaluation but we provide a summary of the initial findings.

4.18 Almost all participants talked positively about the Foundation Phase, and many of the FPAs felt that it matched their ideas of 'good practice'. Indeed, FPAs talked positively about the initial inception of the Foundation Phase and felt that they had a good understanding of the 'vision' of the new curriculum and approach. Similarly, the FPAs and TSOs reported having been very proactive in developing the Foundation Phase in their respective local authorities – many even felt that they had taken innovative steps in its development. FPAs also reported that such developments were often in conjunction with practitioners in an attempt to avoid a top-down approach to its implementation.

4.19 However, FPAs and TSOs identified the need for effective and continuous communication with schools in helping to define and understand the Foundation Phase. Indeed, they all acknowledged the varying interpretations and attitudes of the Foundation Phase, and how that appeared to influence practice in schools and classrooms. They felt it was essential that schools and practitioners received clear and consistent messages about the Foundation Phase.

4.20 It became evident that 'successful' implementation of the Foundation Phase varied between local authorities. It was also noted that there had been relative differences in the successful implementation of the Foundation Phase between the maintained and non-maintained sectors. This appeared to be largely due to the relatively 'decentralised' approach to its implementation and support. They maintained, therefore, that the only real 'national' influences on practitioners were the initial training modules – which were generally well received. Consequently, this highlights the significance of the way in which the Foundation Phase has been *interpreted* by various professionals and practitioners. In particular, it was reported that 'play' – a key defining factor of the Foundation Phase according to FPAs – had been misinterpreted by practitioners. According to the FPAs, this was largely as a result of the use of the term in the original Foundation Phase documentation produced by the Welsh Government.

4.21 According to the participants two further key factors appeared to have influenced the success, or otherwise, in implementing the Foundation Phase. The first of these were the attitudes of head teachers and the senior management team of schools towards the Foundation Phase. It was felt that these attitudes were pivotal to the degree to which the Foundation Phase had been adopted in schools, a similar finding to a previous evaluation of the transitions from the Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2 (Morris and McCrindle 2010). Secondly, the skills, training and qualifications of newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and Teaching

and Learning Assistants (TLAs) were also deemed important to its implementation.

4.22 Generally, the most common area of support provided by the FPAs and TSOs to schools and practitioners, was in helping them to find a balance between 'child-initiated' and 'adult-directed' activities. The significance of the differences between these two pedagogical approaches has already been highlighted in our report on the policy logic model and programme theory for the Foundation Phase (Maynard *et al.* 2013).

4.23 Overall it was felt that the Foundation Phase has had a significant impact on practitioners in Wales; particularly in confirming what many already believed to be, existing, 'good practice'. There was also strong support for what advisors felt was a pedagogical approach that is sensitive to the developmental needs of children.

4.24 However, it was also acknowledged that there may now be an additional burden on teachers, particularly in the management of other adults in the classroom. This is a consequence of the growth in the number of TLAs resulting from the Welsh Government's support for new (higher) adult-to-child ratios in the Foundation Phase.

4.25 But the most repeated concern amongst FPAs was what they saw as more recent contradictory or moderating educational policies by the Welsh Government. For example, it was felt that the forthcoming Literacy and Numeracy Framework for Wales, and the apparent increasing importance of the standards agenda, was possibly 'diluting' or limiting the potential of the Foundation Phase. Although there was an implicit understanding that standards and achievement were already part of the Foundation Phase, the balance between this and the other aims of the Foundation Phase (e.g. broader social and emotional wellbeing amongst children in these early years) was increasingly difficult to maintain. Indeed, many FPAs reported that this was causing

practitioners to 'fall back' on formalised teaching and learning approaches, effectively abandoning the Foundation Phase for at least part of the school day.

Survey of Head Teachers and Foundation Phase Lead Practitioners

4.26 Another major feature of the first year of the evaluation was a national survey of head teachers and Foundation Phase lead practitioners in primary schools and other funded non-maintained settings. Originally the survey, available in English and Welsh, was to be designed, circulated and analysed during the first year of the evaluation. However, for reasons already discussed in Chapter 3, this has not been fully achieved. Instead, the survey was only circulated towards the end of June 2012 and early July 2012. This gave respondents only a limited time to complete the survey and return it to the evaluation team before the end of the 2011/12 school year and resulted in only a 15% response rate from schools and a slightly higher response rate from the funded non-maintained sector. Therefore, the survey was re-circulated to all non-respondents at the beginning of the 2012/13 school year in an attempt to increase the response rate. This increased the response rate to 25% at the time of writing. Analysis of the findings from the survey will be undertaken during Stage II of the evaluation.

4.27 Obviously, one of the main reasons for the initial low response rate was the timing of its circulation, both in terms of its proximity to the summer holidays but also because this is a busy time of the year for schools. Hopefully re-circulating the survey at the beginning of the Autumn Term may help to alleviate this problem. However, some head teachers have reported to us that we should expect a low response because of a general reluctance to participate in research, a position that is supposedly advocated by teaching unions. Despite this concern, we have not encountered any reluctance with schools where we already have a working relationship (e.g. schools represented on the Evaluation Team Advisory Group).

4.28 One of the reasons we delayed the circulation of the survey was that great care was taken to ensure the survey questions built upon the findings of the previous documentary analysis of Welsh Government materials and guidance on the Foundation Phase – the 'official' discourse for the Foundation Phase. In the survey we are keen to examine the way in which the Foundation Phase has been interpreted and understood by head teachers and key Foundation Phase practitioners, and relate these responses to the 'official' discourse.

4.29 The survey has also been designed to try and collect detailed information from schools that are not fully available from PLASC. In particular we are attempting to get a classroom-level breakdown of staff numbers in order to calculate accurate adult-to-child ratios for each school.

4.30 The survey also attempts to identify any differences in the attitudes of head teachers towards the Foundation Phase, and their reflections on the successes and challenges in its implementation.

4.31 The survey has a second section that is designed to be completed by someone with more day-to-day responsibilities for the delivery of the Foundation Phase (usually a Foundation Phase lead practitioner – who could also be the head teacher). These respondents are asked additional questions about the attitudes of practitioners in the schools in relation to the Foundation Phase, its implementation and its impact on themselves and their pupils. We are also hoping to gauge what kind of impact practitioners and head teachers believe the Foundation Phase has had (or not) on children and whether its impact has been unevenly distributed on different groups of children (e.g. boys or children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds). We are keen, then, to relate these perspectives with the data analysis we have begun (see below).

Data Analysis of PLASC/NPD

4.32 During the first year of the evaluation, we began an initial analysis of existing data from the Pupil Level Annual Schools Census (PLASC) and the National Pupil Database. All data has been obtained following the completion of a number of Data Access Agreements with the Welsh Government. Not only does this include information relating to the data and variables we have been given access to, but it also contains the conditions in which we can use and present this data. Prior to the commencement of the evaluation, we prepared a Data Management Plan that covers the measures in place to avoid unauthorised access to the data and how we will preserve anonymity of individuals in the data.

4.33 The initial analysis of data undertaken during the first year of the evaluation is due to be published in 2013. This report will contain greater details about the data being used, the techniques we have used to analyse the data, and these initial results. However, we provide a summary of the key features of this work below.

4.34 One of the first areas of work with the data was in identifying the Foundation Phase population. This is complicated due to the staggered roll-out of the Foundation Phase, and in terms of: (a) which schools were following the Foundation Phase (and not KS1 National Curriculum), (b) which year groups first started the Foundation Phase – in some stages of the roll-out this was all nursery and reception classes and in some stages of the roll-out it began first with just nursery aged children, and (c) issues of pupil mobility, school closure and school amalgamation.

4.35 Critically, much of our focus in this initial analysis has been in comparing the different schools involved in the three different stages of the Foundation Phase roll-out: the Pilot schools, the Early Start schools and the Final Roll-out schools. Much of the design of the evaluation is based on comparing the same cohorts of children, some of who

followed the Foundation Phase and some of who followed the KS1 National Curriculum. In order to ensure we are making 'fair' comparisons, we have had to identify any potential biases in the selection of schools for each of these stages and any differences in the characteristics of children in the respective schools. For example, it is very clear that schools involved in the Early Start stage tended to serve very disadvantaged communities and families – a result of the link being made in these schools to the Flying Start programme. However, the selection of the Pilot schools (quite a critical group for later analysis) was less clear, although it appears that, on average, these schools tended to have slightly more socio-economically disadvantaged pupils, but most importantly of all, appear to have been 'under-performing' schools prior to their introduction to the Foundation Phase. Further data will be obtained in the second year of the evaluation to examine this in more detail.

4.36 Another methodological issue that we have begun to address is how to compare Foundation Phase outcomes (the End of Foundation Phase Assessments undertaken with Year 2 children) and the KS1 National Curriculum outcomes (also undertaken by Year 2 children). Although the documentation suggests there is a direct link between the two assessments (in the areas of literacy and numeracy), it appears that there has been significant variation in the use of the Foundation Phase outcomes, and that their use has tended to be 'adjusted' over subsequent years as practitioners would appear to become more familiar with the assessments. However, these apparent 'fluctuations' make direct comparisons between KS1 and Foundation Phase outcomes not straightforward.

4.37 We also undertook some descriptive analysis of adult-to-pupil ratios in schools, although the quality and accuracy of this data is weaker than it is for other variables in the data. For example, we have not been able to examine adult-to-pupil ratios by year group, since many schools only report aggregated data or because of the complex ways in which adults

are 'attached' or shared across year groups and classrooms. A relatively large number of mixed age classrooms that tend to exist in small primary schools in Wales further complicate this.

4.38 Despite these methodological and analytical challenges we have begun to examine the apparent impact of the Foundation Phase on three outcome measures: absenteeism, Year 2 outcomes (when children are aged 6/7), and Year 6 outcomes (when children are aged 10/11).

4.39 The results of this are rather mixed. On the one hand it would appear that the presence of the Foundation Phase is associated with higher levels of unauthorised absence during Year 1 and Year 2 of school, but does find some evidence that the Foundation Phase is associated with improved KS2 outcomes. Although this analysis is only preliminary, and in the case of KS2 outcomes based on a very small number of children who attended Foundation Phase Pilot schools, the analysis does suggest that there have been no serious detrimental effects of the Foundation Phase on literacy and numeracy in the primary years. How this relates to the extent to which the Foundation Phase has been implemented in different schools will be a focus of later analyses.

4.40 Analysis of the data will continue in Stage II of the evaluation. This will include data from 2011/12, which will be the first year when every child aged 6/7 will have been assessed via the Foundation Phase (and KS1 curriculum and assessments will have been completely phased out). We will also request additional PLASC data for 2004/05 to 2011/12 for KS2 children (in Years 3 to 6) so we can accurately analyse KS2 outcomes.

4.41 Towards the end of the second year we will also be looking to combine this data with data collected in the national survey of head teachers.

Case Study Design

4.42 Stage II of the evaluation is largely dominated by data collection from a number of case study schools across Wales. In preparing for that important part of the evaluation we have been developing and refining the case study design. The specific proposals and tools to be used in the case study settings are to be piloted early in the second year of the evaluation and then approved by the Welsh Government. We expect then to begin visiting case study settings from November 2012 onwards.

4.43 Although the specifics of the case study design are not due to be completed until later, we did finalise the proposals for sampling case study settings during the first year of the evaluation. These were discussed and then approved with the Welsh Government Foundation Phase Evaluation Advisory Group.

4.44 The case study settings can be divided between maintained 'school settings' (reception, Year 1 and Year 2 groups) and maintained and non-maintained 'pre-school settings' (including nursery classes in infant/primary schools, nursery schools, and other funded non-maintained settings for 3-4 year olds).

4.45 The evaluation intends to collect data from at least 40 'school settings'. These have been chosen using stratified random sampling: stratified by (a) four educational consortia regions of Wales and (b) three stages of roll-out. In addition we established an *a priori* minimum target number of Welsh-medium schools to be included in these 40 schools. If the initial stratified random sampling did not generate the target number of Welsh-medium schools additional Welsh-medium schools would have been randomly included, increasing the overall number of case study 'school settings'.

4.46 Despite the decision to stratify the sample in various ways a key principle of the case study 'school setting' selection is that they have been randomly chosen. This is not necessarily to ensure our findings are generalisable to other schools – a common feature of randomisation. There is some benefit of this when we come to report the findings, but the number of case studies will be too small to make any such generalisations statistically significant. The decision to randomly select case study settings is to try and ensure we have 'spread' in the possible different ways in which the Foundation Phase has been implemented or delivered, with the main intention of generating a typology of implementation that can be used alongside the data analysis to see whether there is any relationship between the degree of implementation and attainment.

4.47 The alternative would have been to select case study settings on the basis of some prior knowledge – but this would have either been dependent on subjective knowledge amongst key stakeholders (which may have been incorrect upon further investigation) or based on some prior data analysis such as on outcomes (but they could have all been implementing the Foundation Phase in the same way). A key aim of the evaluation is to examine the way in which the Foundation Phase has been implemented, and the pilot evaluation suggested that this was varied. So unless there was some way of identifying, objectively, variations in implementation, randomly selecting settings appeared to be the most appropriate approach.

4.48 The approach to selecting case study 'school settings' is summarised in Table 4. The number of randomly selected Final Roll-out schools by consortia region is proportionate to the number of primary schools in each consortia region. Similarly the target number of Welsh-medium schools is proportionate to the total number of Welsh-medium primary schools in Wales. In the identification of Welsh-medium schools we are using the official designation according to the Welsh Government, but we are very aware that this may include a wide variety of different

forms and types of Welsh-medium schools, and this will be noted in our subsequent analysis.

Table 4: Selection of Case Study 'School Settings'

	Consortia Region			
	North[7]	South West & Mid[8]	Central South[9]	South East[10]
Pilot schools	5 schools randomly selected from across Wales			
Early Start schools	5 schools randomly selected from across Wales			
Final Roll-out schools	10	14	9	7
Welsh-medium schools	14 (target of 13 schools)			

4.49 Where schools are unavailable to participate in the evaluation, we will simply replace them with another randomly selected school matched to the original on the following criteria: stage of implementation; local authority; and/or medium of education.

4.50 The selection design outlined in Table 4 does mean that Pilot schools and Early Start schools are over-represented in the final sample. However, it was decided this was necessary for two reasons. First, over-representation of Pilot Stage schools in the evaluation is useful in comparing the progress made in schools that have been delivering the Foundation Phase for longer than elsewhere. The over-representation of these schools is also useful in allowing us to examine any apparent Pilot 'effects' in the data analysis. Second, oversampling Early Start settings, which tend to be located in disadvantaged areas, is useful in considering the impact of the Foundation Phase in such areas, and in comparing the progress made in schools that have been delivering the Foundation Phase slightly longer than elsewhere.

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[7] Anglesey, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd and Wrexham.
[8] Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire, Powys and Swansea.
[9] Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfill, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Vale of Glamorgan.
[10] Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen.

4.51 A different approach is taken in the sampling of case study 'pre-school settings'. The selection of these settings is entirely based on the sampling of the 'school settings' above. Two mechanisms are used to select such settings. If a case study 'school setting' has a nursery class, then they are automatically selected in to the sample. So, if all 40 case study school settings all had a nursery class/unit attached to the school, we would immediately have selected 40 pre-school settings. In addition to this we would also attempt to 'map' the various other pre-school settings used by children attending the case study 'school settings'. This will largely include non-maintained settings. From this mapping exercise we will then select additional funded non-maintained settings (and possibly non-funded non-maintained settings) to include in the data analysis. The precise number of case study 'pre-school settings' will depend on the final sample of case study 'school settings' and the mapping exercise.

5 Dissemination and Networking

5.1 During the first year of the evaluation, we have undertaken a number of activities to promote the evaluation and to encourage participation in our work. This work will develop substantially during the second year of the evaluation as we start publishing reports from the evaluation and begin visiting schools and settings.

5.2 Following the initial announcement of the evaluation by WISERD, Cardiff University and the Welsh Government, and the establishment of our evaluation website (see Figure 3), we have begun collating a communication list of individuals and organisations interested in the evaluation. As the evaluation begins reporting its findings this communication list will be used to promote the work. The evaluation website also provides updates and news relating to the research, and all the reports will also be made available in electronic format.

5.3 To aid in the communication of the evaluation we produced a two-page information sheet (in English and Welsh) that summarises the aims and design of the evaluation, including our contact details and links to the website (see Appendix A.).

5.4 Alongside the establishment of our Evaluation Team Advisory Group, containing practitioners and representatives from various organisations (see Chapter 2), and the Welsh Government's Foundation Phase Evaluation Advisory Group (see Chapter 2), we have also presented the work of the evaluation at two meetings of the All Wales Foundation Phase Advisors group, and have begun meetings with Estyn to discuss the case study fieldwork.

5.5 In addition, we have provided an introduction to the evaluation at two academic conferences. The first was the annual WISERD conference, held in Bangor during March 2012. The second presentation was at an international conference (A Child's World: Working Together For A

Better Future) at Aberystwyth in June 2012. These have been important conferences in allowing us to share the aims and design of the evaluation with other researchers in Wales and further afield.

5.6   During the evaluation we intend to organise a conference in Cardiff on the Foundation Phase that will attempt to bring together all those involved in undertaking research related to the Foundation Phase, including university academics, independent researchers and practitioners. This will also provide an important opportunity to present and discuss the first set of findings to emerge from the evaluation. Attendance at this conference is likely to be open to everyone who is interested in the Foundation Phase, including policy-makers, practitioners and other professionals working in the Foundation Phase.

5.7   During the second year of the evaluation, we expect to produce a number of research reports. These include a report on the initial data analysis undertaken during the first year of the evaluation, a report on the interviews with local authority Foundation Phase Advisors and Training and Support Officers, and a report on the national survey of head teachers and Foundation Phase lead practitioners. These reports will all be published in conjunction with the Welsh Government's Government Social Research series of research reports.

5.8   Similarly, as research reports are published and work begins in the case study settings, the evaluation team will look at developing additional materials for dissemination. This will include *brochures* that summarise the findings for practitioners of the Foundation Phase and a regular *newsletter* that provides an update on the progress of the evaluation for those interested or participating in the study (including schools and parents/carers).

Figure 3: Evaluation Website
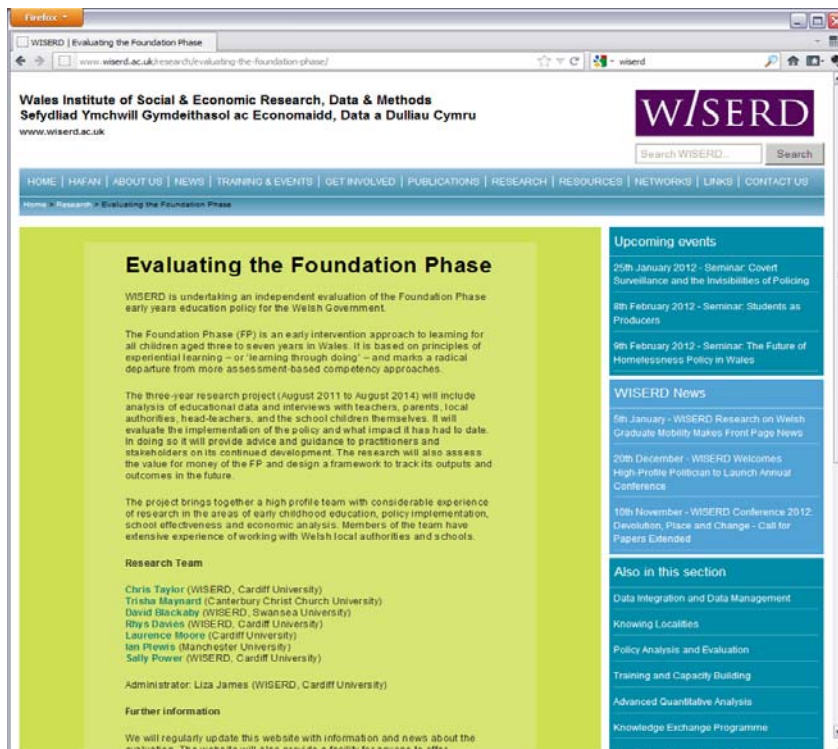
6 Next Steps: 2012/13

6.1 Table 3 provides the original three-year indicative timeline for the evaluation. Although, as noted previously, there have been some slight delays to the collection and analysis of some aspects of the evaluation, the schedule for research for the second year of the evaluation (Stage II) remains the same and on course.

6.2 Table 5 provides a more detailed programme of work for the second year of the evaluation (2012/13). This includes an indicative timeline for key milestones and outputs to be completed during this period.

6.3 Stage II of the evaluation will largely involve the first sweep of case study visits. This will include 40 school visits and a number of additional visits to funded non-maintained settings, as outlined in Chapter 1. These visits will include interviews with head teachers, Foundation Phase teachers and Foundation Phase Teaching and Learning Assistants (TLAs).

6.4 The visits will also include classroom observations of at least one class in each Foundation Phase year – nursery (if applicable), reception, Year 1 and Year 2. Observations in the latter three age groups will be conducted both in the morning and afternoon during the visit. Observations are designed to provide a snap-shot of how a Foundation Phase class/activity is being designed and delivered. Observations will largely be of the children in order to gauge (a) the pedagogic and curricula activities they are engaged in, (b) to measure their engagement with that activity or activities, and (c) to provide an indication of their wellbeing during that activity or activities.

6.5 In addition to the pupil observations, the researchers will make observations of the staff in each classroom to examine their role and relationship with the pupils.

6.6　These observations are designed to produce two main indicators for each school: (1) the extent and form of the Foundation Phase that is being implemented and delivered in each school; and (2) an indication of child wellbeing in each of the schools.

6.7　Lastly, each visit during Stage II of the evaluation will include a self-completion survey by Year 2 children. This survey will be designed to be similar to the age seven child survey of the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS). This will allow us to compare the attitudes and wellbeing of children in the Foundation Phase with the responses of children who completed the MCS survey in 2007/08.

6.8　During the second year of the evaluation, we expect to publish a series of research reports relating to different aspects of the evaluation, as outlined in Table 5.

6.9　We also expect to organise a conference in Cardiff inviting anyone involved in the Foundation Phase to share their research and experiences of it. This will be a one-day event hosted by WISERD and the evaluation team.

6.10　The evaluation team will also look to disseminate the findings from the evaluation to other academic international conferences. This is an important way for us to develop our understanding of the Foundation Phase and to provide critical appraisal of our conclusions amongst our academic peers.

Table 5: Indicative Detailed Programme of Work for 2012/13

2012/13

September 2012

Pilot data collection instruments for case study visits

Finalise case study sample

Resend national survey of schools/settings

October 2012

Finalise 'Policy Logic Model Report' for publication

Draft '2011/12 Annual Report'

Draft 'First Data Analysis Report'

Draft 'Local Authority Advisors Report'

Begin contacting 20 case study schools

November 2012

Complete 5 case study school visits

Finalise 'First Data Analysis Report' for publication

Publish 'Policy Logic Model Report'

Complete data entry from national survey of schools/settings

New PLASC/NPD data requests for Stage II

December 2012

Complete 7 case study school visits

Finalise '2011/12 Annual Report' for publication

Finalise 'Local Authority Advisors Report' for publication

Publish 'First Data Analysis Report'

Initial analysis of national survey responses

Receive new PLASC/NPD data from Welsh Government

January 2013

Contact remaining 20 case study visits

Complete 7 case study school visits

Call for papers for Foundation Phase Research Conference

Publish '2011/12 Annual Report'

Publish 'Local Authority Advisors Report'

Present initial findings from national survey of schools/settings to Welsh Government

Complete remaining stakeholder interviews

Begin analysis using new PLASC/NPD data

February 2013

Complete 7 case study school visits

Draft 'National Survey Report'

March 2013

Complete 7 case study school visits

Finalise 'National Survey Report' for publication

Present findings from initial analysis of updated PLASC/NPD data

April 2013

Select and contact additional funded non-maintained settings

Finalise programme for Foundation Phase Research Conference

May 2013

Complete 7 case study school visits

Publish 'National Survey Report'

Draft 'Second Data Analysis Report'

June 2013

Complete additional funded non-maintained setting visits

July 2013

Complete additional funded non-maintained setting visits

Foundation Phase Research Conference (Cardiff)

Begin analysis from Stage II case study visits

Finalise 'Second Data Analysis Report' for publication

August 2013

Finalise design and programme for Stage III of the evaluation

Draft parent's survey for Welsh Government approval

September 2013

Present initial findings from Stage II case study visits to Welsh Government

Draft '2012/13 Annual Report'

Present findings to the British Educational Research Association annual conference

Publish 'Second Data Analysis Report'

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Glossary of Key Terms

Costs and consequences analysis	This is a form of cost-effectiveness analysis that attempts to identify the gross and net costs of the intervention. In particular, it considers the cost-benefits of implementing the intervention against alternative interventions (or the status quo). It also considers the opportunity costs of implementing the intervention. With this approach no single aggregated cost-effectiveness ratio is determined. Instead a balance sheet of inputs (costs) and outcomes (benefits) is produced.
Multilevel modelling	This is a form of statistical analysis that utilises data that is organised at more than one level (i.e. nested data). For example, the units of analysis in a multilevel model could include data for individual pupils, the schools they attend, and the local authorities their schools belong to. Critically, multilevel models consider the residual components at each level in the hierarchy allowing the analysis to estimate observed and unobserved group effects.
Stepped wedge design	This is used in evaluations where an intervention is rolled-out sequentially to participants (either as individuals or clusters of individuals) over a number of time periods. Data is collected for each new group of participants as they receive the intervention and for those not receiving the intervention (the control groups). To determine the effectiveness of the intervention comparisons are made of data from the control section of the wedge with those in the intervention section at different points in time.

Appendix A. Information Sheet

Foundation Phase Evaluation

### An independent evaluation funded by the Welsh Government

The Foundation Phase is one of the Welsh Government's most exciting policies, marking a radical departure from the more assessment-driven competency-based approaches to early childhood education that have been adopted elsewhere. The policy has been progressively 'rolled out' over the last seven years so that next year it will include all 3-7 year olds in Wales. A thorough but sensitive evaluation is now essential to ensure that its implementation is progressing well and that it promotes effective learning for all children in Wales.

This evaluation brings together a high profile team with considerable experience of research in the areas of early childhood education, policy implementation, school effectiveness and economic analysis. Members of the team have extensive experience of working with Welsh local authorities and schools.

There are four main aims of the evaluation:

1. To evaluate how well the FP is being implemented and highlight ways in which improvement can be made (the *process evaluation*);
2. To evaluate what impact the FP has had to date (the *outcome evaluation*);
3. To assess the value for money of the FP (the *economic evaluation*);
4. To put in place an evaluation framework for the future tracking of outputs and outcomes of the FP (the *evaluation framework*).

The evaluation employs a stepped wedge design to exploit the sequential roll-out of the Foundation Phase across a number of different schools and settings at different time periods. In particular, much of the evaluation will focus on comparing successive cohorts of children who have been through three sets of school settings at different phases of the implementation: Pilot Settings, Early Start Settings and Final Roll-out Settings. The evaluation also utilises a range of methods to ensure it captures as many aspects of the implementation, delivery and impacts of the Foundation Phase programme.
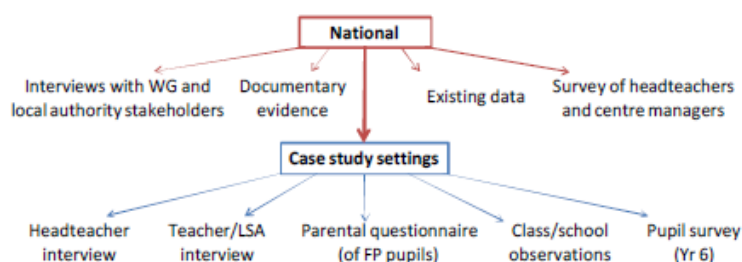
Key Features of the Evaluation

- A national survey of headteachers and centre managers
- Interviews with key policy makers in national and local government from across Wales
- Teacher interviews across different regions of Wales
- Forty in-depth and randomly selected case studies across different regions of Wales
- Series of snap-shot classroom/school observations across year groups and times of day
- Snap-shot observations in pre-school maintained and non-maintained settings
- A questionnaire of parents with children in the Foundation Phase
- A survey of Year 6 children to look for differences in attitudes towards education
- The analysis of attendance data to identify changes in engagement and childhood well-being
- Comparisons of Key Stage 1 and 2 teacher assessment data within Wales
- Comparison of attainment data between schools/settings in Wales with 'matched' schools/settings in England
- Longitudinal analysis of children's educational and social development
- Utilisation of PLASC and Pupil Attainment Data throughout the analysis

- Multi-level modelling of outcomes to improve the identification of cause-and-effect
- Tracking of vulnerable children, such as those in care or from single-parent households
- Tracking the trajectory of children from Flying Start into the Foundation Phase
- Costs and consequences analysis based on gross and net costs of implementation
- An evaluation website for the dissemination of findings and the engagement of interested individuals or stakeholders
- Annual reports: including summaries and more detailed research reports
- Reports on particular aspects of the Foundation Phase, including examples of good practice
- Typology of implementation based on case studies
- The development of a 'programme theory' underpinning the implementation of the Foundation Phase for the purpose of its evaluation
- The production of an Evaluation Framework for the future monitoring and evaluation of the Foundation Phase in Wales

For more information please contact:
WISERD
46 Park Place
Cardiff CF 10 3BB
Wales

Email. fpevaluation@cardiff.ac.uk
Tel. 029 2087 70940
Fax. 029 2087 6318
www.wiserd.ac.uk/foundationphase

WISERD   CARDIFF UNIVERSITY PRIFYSGOL CAERDYDD   Canterbury Christ Church University   Swansea University Prifysgol Abertawe   MANCHESTER 1824