

Findings from the FP Stocktake Sept 2013 - March 2014: Policy Implications

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 International context: Wales has engaged in an ambitious quality improvement process introducing the Foundation Phase (FP) over the last ten years. Many of the processes and strategies introduced to support the implementation of the FP have been evidence based, and the underpinning pedagogy and practice within the FP are known to have a positive impact on teachers' and practitioners' practice and lead to improvements in the quality of provision for children and their families (Sylva et al, 2004). The focus on improving the lives of children and families in poverty through supporting the learning and teaching of young children is also well evidenced and is particularly important for Wales (Siraj-Blatchford and Sira-Blatchford, 2010; DfES, 2013a). However, for the implementation of the FP to be effective in Wales, it requires a fundamental change in culture within many of the maintained schools and non-maintained settings engaged with it, which will take time to embed (Mitchell and Cubey, 2003). UNESCO (2004) considered quality improvements of this type across the world and concluded that they not only require a strong lead from government with a robust long term vision but also require sufficiently motivated and well supported staff. Further they noted that the impact of an education policy may not be apparent until several years after its implementation. Finally they warned that one policy can never be viewed in isolation to other policies and trends.

1.2 Welsh context: The findings of this stocktake are in line with UNESCO's (2004) conclusions. The stocktake found that the implementation of the FP is variable within and between maintained schools and funded non-maintained settings, however there appears to be a general move in the right direction with this very complex change and process. In brief recommendations include the suggestion that government reaffirms its commitment to the FP together with further developments of more targeted support and training for staff. Specific recommendations have been made about support and training and these include ensuring that it suit its audiences, includes some guidelines on how the FP fits with other current policy directions, such as the introduction of the Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF), as well as broadens its remit to include all leaders (at consortia as well as maintained schools and non-maintained setting level), Key stage 2 staff and all non-maintained settings. Certain areas of practice need to be strengthened including leadership skills, reflective practice and understanding how children learn and develop. Teachers and practitioners need to understand the effects of disadvantage and the importance of the home learning environment and supporting transitions. A greater emphasis should be placed on linking theory and research to practice. Clear models and examples of practice within the FP across the sector need to be readily available and accessible. Effective implementation of the FP will undoubtedly take time to embed and would be supported by a long term strategic plan of ten years, this could be devised and monitored by an implementation group of key FP experts from across Wales.

1.3 Supporting Strategic planning for improvements: In order to gather a strategic planning group together and move it forward an initial scoping exercise to consider the remit and ensure that the right representatives are present would be advisable. The group may decide to appoint an outside expert for advice and to help steer the developments. As well as acting as a strategic planning group, the key FP experts from across Wales should be a conduit for all FP changes, planning and evaluations. As part of planning for improvement they should have a remit for communication and build a strategy to ensure that all FP staff and stakeholders are aware of the ten year strategic plan, how it is progressing and what that will mean for them in their unique position over time.

1.4. The recommendations: The recommendations impact on Wales and the FP at all levels including countrywide and consortia level strategic leads, head teachers, other leaders within maintained schools and non-maintained settings, class teachers, practitioners, advisors, inspectors and training institutions. The strategic planning group would be responsible for prioritising the recommendations (from the stocktake and other reviews and evaluations) and co-ordinate and monitor the changes.

Pages 5 to 9 outline the stocktake recommendations for the Welsh government, first ten short term recommendations are noted followed by the complete set of 23 recommendation. The recommendations in the complete set are presented in the order in which they appear in the following sections of the report. They link to the sections headed Findings and Recommendations where the rationale for effective practice, the context in Wales and identified issues are outlined and discussed before the specific recommendations are noted. At each level there are recommendations pertaining to training, these are easily recognised below as they are italicised.

Stocktake Recommendations for the Welsh Government:

Main short term priorities:

- **Appoint a strategic group of FP experts from across Wales to take a strategic and long term view of the FP. To devise a ten year plan to support the next steps in the implementation of the FP (taking forward chosen recommendations from current evaluations, reviews and this stocktake) and also developing a communication strategy for across Wales.**
- **Consider current inspection processes and procedures, including making some changes in legislation in order to bring together Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) and Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales (Estyn) inspections, to ensure that quality is comparable across the FP.**
- **Identify settings/schools of excellence to support continued professional development (CPD) and training of all staff. Look carefully at nursery schools to ensure that their expertise is not overlooked. Identify methods of sharing best practice between maintained schools and non-maintained settings and vice versa.**
- **Consider compulsory training for leaders' across the sector including strategic leaders in the Country, head teachers', advisory staff etc (especially in primary schools), leaders of non-maintained settings and services to support their understanding of the principles and practices of the Foundation Phase. The training should be bespoke to the audience taking account of their history and previous experiences and include research showing how effective implementation of the FP can support standards and impact on social and economic growth generally.**
- **Consider supporting progression and continuity throughout the FP by developing some additional guidance to the LNF on appropriate practice in language, literacy and numeracy for 3 and 4 year olds, ensuring this is appropriate for these children and fits with the FP philosophy.**
- **Continue to develop and then implement an assessment profile. Ensuring that this profile continues throughout the FP (ages 3-7) and that standardised outcomes are measured and moderated at the beginning and end of the phase.**

- **Ensure the FP co-ordinators in maintained schools have sufficient knowledge and experience to understand the principles and practices within the FP. In addition recommend that they are graded at a sufficient leadership level (such as members of the senior management team, deputy head etc) to make decisions and support change.**
- **Review the current adult to child ratio in reception classes. Currently it is 1:8, primary school staff, advisors and inspectors agreed that it could be increased to 1:10 without affecting quality. However, some schools may need to apply for an exception where, for example, they are situated in very rural areas or where they have a considerable number of children with additional needs such as SEN as it would not be practical to increase the ratio.**
- **Consider making it compulsory that a qualified Teacher should lead practice in all FP classes in maintained schools (including nursery classes).**
- **Clarify and define the role of the 10% teacher supporting non-maintained settings. Care should be taken to ensure all eligible non-maintained settings receive this support and that it is effective.**

Table 1. The complete set of Stocktake Recommendations for the Welsh Government (*notes: the Section corresponds to the section of the report where this recommendation is linked to evidence; all recommendations regarding training are italicised*):

No	Recommendation	Section
1	Appoint a strategic group of FP experts from across Wales to take a strategic and long term view of the FP. To devise a ten year plan to support the next steps in the implementation of the FP (taking forward chosen recommendations from current evaluations, reviews and this stocktake) and also developing a communication strategy for across Wales.	
2	Consider current inspection processes and procedures, including making some changes in legislation in order to bring together Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) and Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales (Estyn) inspections, to ensure that quality is comparable across the FP.	
3	Identify settings/schools of excellence to support continued professional development (CPD) and training of all staff. Look carefully at nursery schools to ensure that their expertise is not overlooked. Identify methods of sharing best practice between maintained schools and non-maintained settings and vice versa.	
4	<i>Compulsory training for leaders' across the sector (including strategic leaders in the Country) head teachers', advisory staff etc (especially in primary schools) and leaders of non-maintained settings and services to support their understanding of the principles and practices of the Foundation Phase. The training should be bespoke to the audience taking account of their history and previous experiences and include research showing how effective implementation of the FP can support standards and impact on social and economic growth generally.</i>	
5	<i>Ensure that all modules/training are underpinned by theory and research making clear the value of effective early education. Links between theory and practice need to be explicit.</i>	
6	<i>Develop training that emphasises and exemplifies the progression of skills across the FP. Models of effective implementation of the FP should be shared and evaluated across the entire age range. Ensure these models and examples are readily available for individual maintained schools and non-maintained settings to access (perhaps on line and/or to visit).</i>	
7	Consider all three year old children's entitlement to high quality early education and care regardless of the provision that they are in. Additional training (including mentoring from a qualified teacher) and resources may be needed in funded and unfunded non-maintained settings to ensure equity of experience.	

8	<i>Develop training that ensures all staff have a good understanding of how language, literacy and numeracy develop and how to support children's development across the FP.</i>	
9	<i>Develop training which includes clear guidance and examples of how the LNF fits within the FP.</i>	
10	Reconsider the scoring of the assessments at the end of the FP (year 2) and the areas assessed at the end of key stage two (year 6). In order to allow progression to be measured consider assessing: Language, literacy and communication skills, mathematics development and personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity in year 2 and English/Welsh, mathematics, personal and social development in year 6 and then scoring them separately so that like can be compared with like.	
11	Consider supporting progression and continuity throughout the FP by developing some additional guidance to the LNF on appropriate practice in language, literacy and numeracy for 3 and 4 year olds, ensuring this is appropriate for these children and fits with the FP philosophy.	
12	<i>Develop training that ensures all staff understand the research on the effects of disadvantage and the possible ways to close the achievement gap. Sharing good practice from those maintained schools and non-maintained settings where this is working well should be part of the training and so should research on supporting the home learning environment (HLE). Maintained schools could be asked to devote some of their Pupil Deprivation Grant (or similar) to support staff development here.</i>	
13	<i>Consider strengthening transition arrangements through training all staff involved in them together (staff from non-maintained settings, flying start, FP staff, keystage 2 staff etc). Training should include current research and theory together with practical examples of good transition practice.</i>	
14	Continue to develop and then implement an assessment profile. Ensuring that this profile continues throughout the FP (ages 3-7) and that standardised outcomes are measured and moderated at the beginning and end of the phase.	
15	<i>Develop specific bespoke training on leadership designed to support leaders across the sector, both within maintained schools and non-maintained settings.</i>	
16	Ensure the FP co-ordinators in maintained schools have sufficient knowledge and experience to understand the principles and practices within the FP. In addition recommend that they are graded at a sufficient leadership level (such as members of the	

	senior management team, deputy head etc) to make decisions and support change.	
17	Ensure that TAs benefit from CPD processes and support within maintained schools and that literacy and numeracy training is available for those that need it. Develop a career path for those practitioners working in the non-maintained settings and for TAs within maintained schools.	
18	Review the current adult to child ratio in reception classes. Currently it is 1:8, primary schools staff, advisors and inspectors agreed that it could be increased to 1:10 without affecting quality. However, some schools may need to apply for an exception where, for example, they are situated in very rural areas or where they have a considerable number of children with additional needs such as SEN as it would not be practical to increase the ratio.	
19	Promote closer working relationships between, for example, advisory staff and ITT providers and between ITT providers themselves to support consistency of initial teacher training and quality of teaching of NQTs. Identify maintained schools where the FP is implemented well for students to visit and/or for placements.	
20	Consider making it compulsory that a qualified Teacher should lead practice in all FP classes in maintained schools (including nursery classes).	
21	Clarify and define the role of the 10% teacher supporting non-maintained settings. Care should be taken to ensure all eligible non-maintained settings receive this support and that it is effective.	
22	Promote further training and qualifications of teachers within the FP to Masters Level. The course should include elements of learning that will support and improve practice in the FP and impact on leadership and effective deployment of TAs as well as support further understanding of the pedagogy, practice, critical thinking and evaluation skills.	
23	Review the level of support available to Foundation Phase provisions from local authority, consortia development staff, umbrella organisations as well as early years teachers to identify gaps and ensure equity	

2. Introduction

2.1 *Welsh policy*: Developing and supporting high quality early years experiences, for children aged 3-7 years, has been a Welsh Government imperative since the introduction of the new Foundation Phase (FP) in 2003 and following devolution in 1999. The FP was part of a major change and policy development implemented to 'get the best for Wales' (NAfW, 2001) and included a radical shift in policy and dedication of monies to the FP for children aged 3 to 7 years. This new direction and emphasis on the FP included the development of the FP Framework for children's learning for 3 and 7 years Wales (DCELLS, 2008), allowed for higher adult to child ratios (1:8 in early years settings and reception classes; 1:15 in years 1 and 2), additional resources for schools to develop outdoor learning environments, 10% qualified teacher time support in all funded non-maintained settings, new universal training modules, Training and Support Officers in each local authority, a carefully planned roll out of the Foundation Phase across Wales (which started with a pilot in 2004/5 and included all maintained schools and funded non-maintained settings by 2008/9). More recent policy developments include Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan (DfES, 2013) which shows the Welsh Government's continued commitment to the FP and outlines the current position with regards to the FP as well as other strategies designed to 'improve the life chances and outcomes of all children in Wales' (p3). It includes all children from pre-birth up until the day before their eighth birthday. One additional strategy which is particularly pertinent here is the vision and roll out of Flying Start for children 0-3, a means of preventing developmental delay and supporting children's educational chances on entry to school.

2.2 *National and International evidence base*: Wales made these evidence-based decisions and changes as both national and international research clearly demonstrated the importance of the quality of early childhood education and care (DfES, 2013a). Early experiences lay the foundation for all learning (Sylva et al., 2004; Allen, 2011), they can reduce inequalities linked to parental background and socio-economic status (West et al, 2010; Manning et al 2010) and they can have the most profound impact on economic growth and prosperity generally (Melhuish, 2004; Ho et al, 2010, Field, 2010; EIU, 2012). The specific aims of the Welsh Government included the desire to raise basic skills levels, overcome social disadvantage, promote the language and traditions of Wales and build a strong economically thriving community that embraced multiculturalism (NAfW, 2001).

2.3 *Monitoring effectiveness*: In order to monitor the effectiveness of the FP several evaluations have been commissioned. Some of these are complete such as

Monitoring and Evaluation of the Implementation of the Foundation Phase (MEEIFP) Project Across Wales- Final report of Years 1 Pilot (Siraj-Blatchford et al 2005), while others are ongoing such as The independent Evaluation of the Foundation phase in Wales by the Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data and methods (WISERD), The Regulation, Registration and Inspection Review (RR&IR) by Graham, and this rapid stocktake which was commissioned in September 2013 for six months and will assist in policy direction, as will the final reports of the National Evaluation by WISERD and the RR&IR.

2.4 Previous evaluation findings: This report builds upon the work of earlier and ongoing evaluations. Siraj-Blatchford et al (2005) evaluated the first year (2004-2005) of the implementation of the FP in the pilot maintained schools and non-maintained settings. They found that the quality of teaching and learning in maintained schools was higher than in the non-maintained settings, where practitioners were more likely to nurture children's intellectual development as well as their social-emotional wellbeing. This is a similar finding to other studies (e.g. Sylva et al, 2004) where the qualifications of practitioners, especially teachers, appears to be a determining factor for the quality of provision. As this was only the first year of implementation it was difficult to determine impact on standards, however stakeholder perceptions identified a number of positive findings linked to the FP. These included a positive impact on educational experiences for the children through better management and organisation (afforded by the reduction in ratios) and better opportunities for learning and an improved learning environment. They also reported that practitioners told them that the curriculum was more supportive of the children's learning as it was child centred and based on a play pedagogy of active, experiential learning. Siraj-Blatchford et al (2005) made a number of recommendations which will be discussed, where relevant, within the main body of this report. The independent Evaluation of the Foundation phase in Wales by the Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data and methods (WISERD), have produced a number of reports to date, but their evaluation is still ongoing and so further information together with recommendations will be forthcoming. To date they have produced two annual reports: Evaluating the Foundation Phase: Annual Report 2011/12 (Taylor et al, 2013) and Evaluating the Foundation Phase: the Outcomes of Foundation Phase Pupils (Report1) (Davies et al, 2013). They report mixed findings. On the one hand they report positive attitudes towards the FP by advisors who suggest training is key. Then a mixture of good and poor implementation which they suggest is linked to the roll out and to the decentralisation of support and training which was variable across LAs. They identify two key factors in success 1) the attitude of the head teacher and senior management and 2) the skills, qualifications and training of the teachers and teaching and learning assistants. In addition, they considered absenteeism again with mixed results, however they did detect a slight decline in absenteeism in schools in the final roll out of the FP. Finally, they found some tentative suggestions that standards in English, Maths and Science may have slightly improved. Their third report, Evaluating the

Foundation Phase: Policy Logic Model and Programme Theory (Maynard et al, 2012) is discussed in more detail in section 4.

3. The Stocktake Process

3.1 *The stocktake*: In September 2013 the Minister for Education and Skills announced that a stocktake of the implementation of the FP would take place over the following six months (September 2013 to March 2014). The stocktake was undertaken by Professor Iram Siraj with Denise Kingston, both from The Institute of Education, University of London. The scope of the stocktake was agreed and laid out in the Terms of Reference for the Foundation Phase Stocktake as follows:

- Understand how well the FP is being implemented across Wales
- Clarify how language development, literacy and numeracy skills are embedded across all AOLs in both maintained and funded non-maintained settings across the whole age range
- Gauge how well the FP addresses raising the quality of learning for children subject to socio-economic deprivation
- Establish how and when children enter the FP and how progression, particularly from Flying Start to the FP and then to KS 2, is or can be demonstrated
- Identify where there is variability in quality focussing on leadership, workforce and the experience of the child
- Establish how well the FP principles and requirements are embedded in ITT and on-going CPD
- Draw on and work alongside the on-going FP evaluation,
- Make recommendations for improvement.

The terms of reference for this stocktake were drawn widely and given the brief timescale the stocktake concentrated on those aspects that would be most likely to inform future policy. The stocktake focussed on the implementation of the FP and further considered the detail of how the FP supported individual children, their families and communities as well as aspects of leadership (including the standards agenda), qualifications, training and transitions.

3.2 *Stocktake consultations*: The stocktake gathered its evidence through a series of consultations and observations which are described in the table of stocktake evidence below.

Table 1: Stocktake consultations.

Method	Description	Number completed
1.Task and Finish group	Included representatives from across Wales including from ESTYN, CSSIW, Primary and nursery schools, settings, WPPA, DfES, consortia and local authorities, advisors, Flying Start.	3 meetings, 10 hours
2. Visits to good and excellent schools and settings	<p>Visits were made across North and South Wales and included Welsh Medium maintained schools and funded non-maintained settings. The following sectors were included:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Funded non-maintained settings serving 3-4 year olds, 2. Maintained schools serving 3-4 year olds (including those which are part of a primary school) 3. Maintained schools serving 5 -7 year olds <p>The visits included observations of practice and environments, interviews with leadership and key staff, samples of planning and other paper evidence.</p>	N=11
3.Focus groups	<p>Focus groups included leaders and other staff from good and excellent schools and setting across North and South Wales (including Welsh Medium schools and settings). Representatives from different LAs and consortia, advisory teachers, further education tutors involved in initial teacher training, childcare membership organisations (i.e. NDNA, WPPA, PACEY and CCW).</p> <p>The focus groups were organised to include personnel with particular interests in the following sectors:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Funded non-maintained settings serving 3-4 year olds, 2. Maintained schools serving 3-4 year olds (including those which are part of a primary school) 3. Maintained schools serving 5 -7 year olds 	N=67
4. Questionnaires	On-line questionnaires were distributed to the T and F group, to all visited schools and settings and all members of the focus groups. These were completed either individually or following discussion with colleagues as a composite response.	N=75

The stocktake had three main means of gathering information and validating findings and we are grateful to all of those individuals and organisations that took the time to talk to us, allow us to visit them and submit their views via the questionnaires. In particular, we owe a great deal to the professionalism and support given to the stocktake by the DfES, who were members of the Task and Finish group and

arranged meetings, visits and focus groups on our behalf. The Task and Finish group included stakeholders from across Wales (see Appendix 1 for a list of members) and acted as an expert group who supported the compilation of the questionnaires, each completed a questionnaire and validated the themes as they emerged, they were an indispensable source of evidence. We were privileged to be able to make visits to eleven maintained schools and non-maintained settings. These visits included discussions with leadership and key staff, observations within the Foundation Phase and of the physical environments, and a collection of additional materials such as prospectuses and planning. All of the maintained schools and most of the funded non-maintained settings subsequently completed questionnaires. Finally, but by no means least, we are grateful to all of those people that attended the focus groups. They were lively and informative and supported a wide ranging and up to date view of the current implementation of the FP. The focus groups supported validation of previous findings as well as allowed us to 'drill deeper' on certain issues that had emerged during the task and finish group meetings and/or during visits or previous focus groups. Many of the attendees from the focus groups also subsequently completed a questionnaire. While many of the questionnaires were completed individually others were composite responses e.g. from all school staff working in the FP, a network of funded non-maintained settings or members from regional forums etc. All stakeholders who attended the focus groups, the maintained schools, funded non-maintained settings and those who completed a questionnaire have not been named here in order to respect their confidentiality.

3.3 The findings and recommendations: The stocktake's findings and recommendations have been reported under the under the main headings agreed in the terms of reference. We begin with the bigger picture of the implementation of the FP and then continue to look at the specific issues around standards, disadvantage, transitions, leadership and qualifications and training. Although we visited and spoke to staff from both English medium and Welsh medium maintained schools and non-maintained settings and services we have not made any specific comments about Welsh medium maintained schools or non-maintained settings as this was not in our remit in addition as we do not speak Welsh we did not feel qualified to do so.

Within each section, paragraphs typically begin by outlining the international context followed by the Welsh context, a description of the effective implementation of the FP in relation to the section heading, then an ineffective implementation together with identified issues and finally a list of recommendations. The majority of the sections follow this format with the exception of section 4 which has a much wider remit than the other sections. It begins with an international focus considering effective early childhood care and education frameworks and then considers the Welsh FP framework (DCELLS2008). This is followed by a description of effective implementation of the FP and then a number of different issues. Each paragraph is sub-headed to provide a reference back to the discussions and issues which led to the recommendations.

4. Findings and recommendations: Understand how well the FP is being implemented across Wales

4.1 Effective Early Childhood Frameworks: Effective frameworks provide guidelines which help staff to clarify their pedagogical aims, provide a structure for the day, focus on assessment, planning and progression and support concentration on the important aspects of child development (Siraj-Blatchford, 2004). Key messages and guidance within frameworks, such as the Framework for children's learning for 3 to 7 year-olds in Wales (2008), are known to support quality across different forms of provision and for different groups of children as long as they are clear and well-articulated (OECD, 2006). A good framework should support schools and settings in equipping children with the knowledge and skills needed for the next educational phase and further learning and facilitate transitions between educational levels (UNESCO, 2004), while also allowing minor adaptations to suit the culture and variable needs across and within them (OECD, 2006).

4.2 The Welsh FP Framework: In Wales, the FP Framework (DCELLS, 2008) and associated guidance has been developed with consideration given to many other well established and valued early childhood education and care philosophies and practices across the world. Maynard et al (2012) in their evaluation report 'Evaluating the Foundation Phase: Policy Logic Model and Programme theory' carefully analysed similarities with other programmes such as Reggio Emilia' in Northern Italy, Te Whāriki in New Zealand, early years practice in Scandinavia and Developmentally Appropriate Practice found in HighScope settings in USA. They considered the pedagogy within the policy documents and training associated with the FP in detail and suggested that the FP is closely aligned to and included elements of different internationally respected and valued approaches to early childhood education and care.

4.3. Effective Implementation of the FP in Wales: Despite there being considerable variability across Wales the stocktake was able to visit and talk with teachers and practitioners from good and outstanding maintained schools and non-maintained settings both in South and North Wales (as determined by Estyn). The stocktake noted that in these maintained schools and non-maintained settings the principles of the FP were effectively put into practice, albeit in slightly different ways and on occasion with some variability across the ages. The practitioners working there had a clear view of what constituted an effective FP, they kept focus on standards, planned well and adjusted their pedagogy to suit the children and families. They also typically had the leader of the foundation phase in a position to make decisions and implement change, in schools this was often as part of the senior management team. Where the implementation was effective, improvements in children's outcomes were reported across the FP. Settings reported improvements in the areas of literacy,

numeracy and wellbeing. In schools, the impact appeared most distinct in years 1 and 2, the reasons given for this were that the pedagogy and practice had been in place for nursery and reception classes prior to the changes. One major impact reported was the children's attitude to learning, they were more independent and active. Boys in particular seemed to respond well to the FP, talking more and engaging more with their learning. The children generally appeared to have greater ownership and involvement in their learning. Interestingly these findings are similar to those reported in Estyn's recent annual report (Estyn, 2014)

4.4. Variability across the sector and inspection issues: The stocktake confirmed that there is considerable variability across Wales, and the impression that the quality of implementation of the FP appears to be of a higher standard in maintained schools, and nursery schools in particular, as compared to non-maintained settings remains (see Siral-Blatchford et al 2005). However, these claims were difficult to substantiate as the inspection processes (of Estyn and CSSIW) are very different and so real comparisons (like with like) were difficult to make. Unfortunately the recent Estyn annual report confirmed this difficulty (Estyn, 2014). Despite CSSIW and Estyn's attempts to bring inspections closer together it has not been possible due to underlying legislation and accompanying processes being so disparate. Having one joint inspection (involving both Estyn and CSSIW) that is delivered across the FP would be useful in the future to identify maintained schools and non-maintained settings of excellence as well as those that need support. It is important to be able to compare quality across the whole of the FP in order to plan for improvement. Another issue identified during the stocktake related to Estyn reports. They appear to be very generic, having a wider whole school approach, and given the recent changes in the FP in order to further support understandings of effective implementation of the FP it would be beneficial to have sections of their reports dedicated to FP practice. Finally, as mentioned above nursery schools in Wales have historically been seen to deliver the most effective implementation of the FP. However they are one form of FP provision that appears to have been negatively affected by recent changes. Reports suggest that of the original 42 nursery schools only 19 remain. This is difficult to justify and needs further consideration, at a time when Wales is looking for models of good practice, which would undoubtedly support the implementation of the FP, this appears to be a retrograde step.

4.5 Communication issue: Despite the Welsh Government's obvious continued commitment to the FP as expressed in their Early Years and Childcare plan (DfES, 2013) whilst gathering the evidence the stocktake found that many staff were concerned about the future of the FP and whether it was to continue. This appeared to be related to concerns that it was not yet being implemented effectively across the country in all schools and settings, that the baseline measure had been withdrawn and, most notably, the recent introduction and formality of the literacy and numeracy tests in year two which appeared to some to signal a governmental move away from the FP philosophy. The concern about the future of the FP led to concerns over the

continued funding for the FP and members of focus groups in particular commented on the need for this to be clarified. The funding was seen as crucial for strategic planning across the country, to support staffing within maintained schools and funded non-maintained settings and for continued development and delivery of training and support by consortia and LA staff. There also needed to be some clear guidance to ensure that accessing the funding was clear, transparent and equitable across the country. Finally, in relation to communication, although most people felt it was too early to comment on the change from LA to consortia leads, there was an unease regarding high level decision making as FP experts did not consider themselves to be in a position to have as strong a voice regarding strategic planning as previously.

4.6 Pedagogy vs outcomes issue: Maynard et al (2012) pointed to a few possible difficulties with the FP framework (DCELLS, 2008) including a tension between the play based pedagogy, underpinned by a strongly developmental approach, and the current very detailed statutory curriculum expectations especially in relation to the years 1 and 2 outcomes (in particular in the areas of literacy and numeracy) as they had not changed noticeably from those relating to the previous keystage1 outcomes. Interestingly this had also been recognised within Wales and a curriculum review is currently underway and in the FP particular attention is being given to the areas of learning of language, literacy and communication and mathematical development.

4.7 Capacity issue: The stocktake recognised other tensions in Wales, namely that successful implementation of the FP relies on all of the key players (including head and lead teachers/practitioners, class teachers, teaching assistants, nursery staff, governors, committee members, advisors and inspectors) understanding the principles and practices within a common and clear FP framework and then being able to put these into action. Clearly there is a capacity issue in terms of experienced and knowledgeable staff to implement the FP which is evidenced by the variability of practice across the country. This is due to the extension of the FP to age 7 and the increase in adults supporting the FP. The FP may be grounded on well-established principles and practices but unless all of the relevant staff understand and ‘sign-up’ to these it is unlikely to be implemented effectively. Where the implementation of the FP was poor there was a lack of a clear and agreed view of how to implement the FP or FP model. Generally, this appears to be an issue across Wales. As a result, individual maintained school and non-maintained setting leaders and head teachers often needed to guide the practice themselves. For some this has worked well, however for many who lack the theoretical and research knowledge and understanding which underpin the principles behind the FP this has been problematic. Misconceptions together with an inability to truly appreciate how young children learn, including notions of learning through play and experiential learning, resulted in many non-maintained settings and maintained schools ‘watering down’ effective early education practice. In maintained schools this led to a pendulum

effect. Where initially on implementing the FP, schools who did not understand how to structure the environment and support children in learning through play resulted in classrooms with a chaotic free-for-all play environment which did not work. As a result their confidence in the FP diminished and they 'swung back' back to their old more familiar and often more formal processes and environments, typically in an effort to maintain standards. For staff working with older children support should be given to ensure they understand how to structure children's experiences, opportunities and environment to support and enhance learning with the emphasis placed on experiential learning rather than play, as learning through play appears to be misunderstood.

4.8. Background and philosophy issue: Complications due to staff having different historical backgrounds and previous (often longstanding) approaches to teaching and learning need to be considered. Prior to the introduction of the FP staff working with 3 and 4 year olds in non-maintained settings and those working with 6 and 7 year olds in schools would typically see their roles very differently (Siraj-Blatchford, 2004; Katz, 2011). Their earlier focus would have been likely to be on either care or education (teaching to the National Curriculum) respectively. Siraj-Blatchford et al (2005) noted the importance of supporting both children's intellectual development as well as their socio-emotional wellbeing and that in maintained schools where teachers are present this happens more regularly, thus flagging an important issue in funded non-maintained settings. The play based pedagogy found in many non-maintained settings prior to the implementation of the FP was inadequate in supporting and extending children's learning as it rarely included planned play guided and enriched by adults. Then in the older age group, the stocktake noted reports of maintained schools who had not been able to successfully implement the FP returning to more formal and didactic methods of teaching (see above and the pendulum effect). This is not to say that the FP is likely to look the same for the entire FP age group, it should show a progression and is likely to involve more specific instruction and planned experiences with the older children while still maintaining the experiential learning element together with aspects of choice, challenge and problems to solve and areas of learning which support independent enquiry within the environment. However, moving towards the FP pedagogy is likely to involve many maintained schools and funded non-maintained settings in making a complete change in approach and practices and a fundamental shift in philosophy which needs to be reflected in the training and support they are given.

4.9 Making Improvements: In order to ensure effective implementation of the FP all staff need to know that the FP is here to stay. There needs to be a communication strategy developed that ensures all relevant stakeholders are aware of developments within the FP. In addition, all relevant stakeholders need a good understanding of the principles and practices of the FP as this is key to the successful learning and development of the children. This would include a working knowledge of experiential learning, planning and assessment to ensure progression

of skills across the FP and an appropriate balance between focussed and independent learning, developing a play based, experiential pedagogy and providing an enriched and interesting environment within, outside and beyond the classroom based on children's interests. Staff should feel confident in delivering the FP having a good understanding of child development and how children learn and develop. They need to be confident to critically reflect on their work and the implementation of the FP, interpreting the curriculum to suit their children and families and the culture within their schools/settings rather than merely implementing it (Munton et al, 2002). In order to accomplish this more and rigorous training will need to be developed across Wales (see below). In addition, finding, promoting and funding examples of exemplary practice in maintained schools and non-maintained settings to act as models and for others to visit would augment this learning.

Recommendations (*note: recommendations regarding training are italicised*):

1. Appoint a strategic group of FP experts from across Wales to take a strategic and long term view of the FP. To devise a ten year plan to support the next steps in the implementation of the FP (taking forward chosen recommendations from current evaluations, reviews and this stocktake) and also developing a communication strategy for across Wales.
2. Consider current inspection processes and procedures, including making some changes in legislation in order to bring together Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) and Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales (Estyn) inspections, to ensure that quality is comparable across the FP.
3. Identify settings/schools of excellence to support continued professional development (CPD) and training of all staff. Look carefully at nursery schools to ensure that their expertise is not overlooked. Identify methods of sharing best practice between maintained schools and non-maintained settings and vice versa.
4. *Compulsory training for leaders' across the sector (including strategic leaders in the Country) head teachers', advisory staff etc (especially in primary schools) and leaders of non-maintained settings and services to support their understanding of the principles and practices of the Foundation Phase. The training should be bespoke to the audience taking account of their history and previous experiences and include research showing how effective implementation of the FP can support standards and impact on social and economic growth generally.*

5. *Ensure that all modules/training are underpinned by theory and research making clear the value of effective early education. Links between theory and practice need to be explicit.*

6. *Develop training that emphasises and exemplifies the progression of skills across the FP. Models of effective implementation of the FP should be shared and evaluated across the entire age range. Ensure these models and examples are readily available for individual maintained schools and non-maintained settings to access (perhaps on line and/or to visit).*

7. Consider all three year old children's entitlement to high quality early education and care regardless of the provision that they are in. Additional training (including mentoring from a qualified teacher) and resources may be needed in funded and unfunded non-maintained settings to ensure equity of experience.

5. Findings and recommendations: Clarify how language development, literacy and numeracy skills are embedded across all AOLs

5.1 International Context: The importance of good foundations in language development, literacy and numeracy in order to support later learning is well documented (Sylva et al, 2004; Coghlan, 2009). Children's early communication skills and language development are regarded as the single best predictor of future cognitive development and school performance (Rosetti, 1996). Schools and settings that concentrate on language and communication are likely to make major advances in improvement priorities such as raising attainment, improving behaviour and narrowing the gap (Gross, 2013). Likewise literacy has also been shown to be beneficial for learning and school performance generally and that concentration here supports achievement across all curriculum subjects (Strickland and Riley-Ayres, 2006). There is a general consensus that mathematics, especially when viewed as the study of patterns, can be learnt from a very young age. For example, during play children often use abstract and numerical ideas (amount, size and shape) and that by capitalising on this and children's natural curiosity mathematical concepts, methods and language can be developed early in order to support later learning (National Research Council, 2009; Montague-Smith and Price, 2012).

5.2. Language, literacy and numeracy learning in the FP issues: In Wales the importance of language development, literacy and numeracy are well recognised within the FP framework (DCELLS, 2008) and with the more recent introduction of the Literacy and Numeracy Framework for 5 – 14 year olds (DfES, 2013b). However, the stocktake found that practice in supporting language, literacy and numeracy within the FP was not consistent and on occasion did not follow the FP principles. During meetings and focus groups attendees reported having observed the introduction of formal methods of teaching literacy before the children had developed sufficient spoken language and formal methods of teaching mathematics too, usually in a mistaken effort to raise standards. Ineffective deployment of staff and/or unclear guidance on how adults might support children's interactions, language development, emergent writing/numeracy and reading/writing/numeracy activities were noted as possible reasons for this. Staff need guidance on supporting speaking and listening skills, emergent literacy and numeracy, linking learning to interests and allowing children to understand the purpose and function of literacy and numeracy. Staff need guidance on how best to support language, literacy and numeracy development through both independent and focussed learning activities. They need to understand how to organise the environment to provide numerous opportunities for children to practice their language, literacy and numeracy at an appropriate level for them. In addition they need to feel confident to teach aspects of literacy and numeracy at the appropriate levels and to support parents/carers in developing their children's literacy and numeracy in the home learning environment. Unfortunately

where this has not been available some maintained schools and non-maintained settings have searched for additional guidance themselves which appears to have led to an entrepreneurial culture and the development and adoption of very structured schemes of work for language, literacy and numeracy. Further, on occasion these schemes of work are followed rigidly and delivered in a very mechanistic way without any adaptations made for individual children. NAEYC (2002) while considering the development of various curricula suggested that it is essential that they meet all children's needs and truly focus on the child and their development. They noted that in today's society we are living within communities that are culturally diverse with children from different backgrounds and home environments and acknowledged that these children may well have different needs which effective schools and settings would need to adapt to. Estyn (2013) noted this move towards the use of commercial schemes and questioned both their reliability and the concern that they might be followed without adaptation to individual needs and progress.

5.3 Standards issues in primary schools: Recently the government has introduced the Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF)(DfES, 2013b) and is currently reviewing the curriculum and assessments (DfES, 2013c). Primary school staff informed the stocktake that it was too early to evaluate the LNF impact. However, they noted that the outcome measures were not always in line with those within the FP Framework (DCELLS, 2008) and so work bringing these together needed to be done. The current curriculum and assessment reviews will no doubt look at such issues. Views about the literacy and numeracy tests which accompanied the framework were variable with some people feeling it was too early to consider their impact, while others were positive and yet others critical. Some reported the overly formal compulsory paper-based assessment process to be at odds with the FP philosophy. They suggested that this might lead to a reversion to formal ways of teaching in an effort to prepare children for the tests unless clear guidance was given. However, others who were implementing the FP effectively, recognised the necessity of measuring progress at the end of the FP and saw this as an appropriate time to assess children's achievements in a standardised way, they reported no particular changes in the delivery of the FP as a result of introducing the tests. The stocktake felt that the assessments would not unduly interfere with the pedagogy and practice within the FP as long as the tests occurred at the end of the phase, clear guidance was given and the FP was being well implemented in the first place. During the focus groups, particularly those that included primary school and advisory staff, discussion around assessment was a strong feature. Several colleagues queried whether the year two tests could be presented in a more child friendly way in order to minimise stress, they could, for example, be presented on tablets or ipads which is a familiar format for many children that is typically associated with games. A further concern related to the teacher assessments that follow the tests in year 2 to

show progression. Currently, the assessments at the end of year two (age 7) include the teachers in assessing the children in the following areas of learning: language, literacy and communication, mathematics development and personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity which many agreed were appropriate. However concern was voiced around the scoring as each child's scores for these areas of learning are totalled to make a composite score. As the composite scores include two very different constructs, with language, literacy and communication and mathematics development showing academic progress while personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity show socio-behavioural progress it was agreed that making a change and keeping them separate would avoid spurious comparisons. In addition, there was general agreement that these scores should act as a baseline measure to similar assessments made at the end of year six (age 11). This would allow the DfES to measure progress in mathematics, English or Welsh (dependant on first language) and social wellbeing across keystage 2. It would also flag the importance of social wellbeing, as well as literacy and numeracy, to all primary school staff.

5.4 Standards issues, 3 and 4 year olds: Staff from across the FP commented that as the literacy and numeracy framework starts at the age of 5 there is a possibility that there will be a top down pressure to introduce elements of the framework at earlier and younger ages across the FP. Others discussed the need to introduce a version of the framework, guidance on literacy and numeracy, that would be suitable for 3 and 4 year olds in order to avoid this and to ensure continuity across the FP. Such guidance would be likely to include staff encouraged to support children playing with words and sounds, songs and rhymes and developing their mathematical concepts as they arise naturally and meaningfully. However, they all emphasised the need for such an adapted framework to be suitable and appropriate to the needs of these younger children and in particular to the needs of the most vulnerable children. In many maintained schools and non-maintained settings with large intakes from areas of deprivation in Wales the children start the FP with little language, poor social-emotional development and lacking independence and self-help skills, such as toileting. In such cases it is imperative that education focuses on oracy and supporting personal and social development and care on self-help skills. Any additional guidance would therefore need to emphasise the individual assessment of the children's skills and abilities first to ensure that the education and care is appropriate and supports their learning and development, and allow enough flexibility to ensure that all children's needs are met. The literacy and numeracy learning outcomes, stipulated within the guidance/framework, that staff would be working towards would therefore not be annual as that would be too constraining. The literacy and numeracy guidance for 3 and 4 year olds should include only one set of learning outcomes that should be acquired by the end of their 4th year. It would also be unlikely to look like the current remediation guidance, included in the current LNF, for those children of five years and above who are falling behind their peers.

Recommendations (*note: recommendations regarding training are italicised*):

8. *Develop training that ensures all staff have a good understanding of how language, literacy and numeracy develop and how to support children's development across the FP.*
9. *Develop training which includes clear guidance and examples of how the LNF fits within the FP.*
10. Reconsider the scoring of the assessments at the end of the FP (year 2) and the areas assessed at the end of key stage two (year 6). In order to allow progression to be measured consider assessing: Language, literacy and communication skills, mathematics development and personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity in year 2 and English/Welsh, mathematics, personal and social development in year 6 and then scoring them separately so that like can be compared with like.
11. Consider supporting progression and continuity throughout the FP by developing some additional guidance to the LNF on appropriate practice in language, literacy and numeracy for 3 and 4 year olds, ensuring this is appropriate for these children and fits with the FP philosophy.

6. Findings and recommendations: Gauge how well the FP addresses raising the quality of learning for children subject to socio-economic deprivation

6.1 International context: It is well established that parent's socio-economic status (SES) and qualifications are significantly related to children's achievements and that poverty has the greatest influence on child outcomes in the 3 – 7 years age range (Coghlan et al, 2009; Siraj-Blatchford and Siraj-Blatchford, 2010). A continuing question for EPPSE was whether pre- and primary school experiences or children's early home learning environment (HLE) could reduce inequality. They found that both were important factors in closing the gap and improving achievements (Sylva et al, 2004).

6.2 Effective Implementation and understanding of disadvantage: In Wales many of the staff in the maintained schools and non-maintained settings were aware of the effects of disadvantage and worked hard to overcome them. They explained that effective implementation of the FP made this easier as it promoted team working within the school/setting and better relationships generally (including with external agencies) so that a whole school/setting approach could be developed. That the focus on the whole child within the FP meant that teaching was personalised and support was targeted to individual needs such as language development and personal, social development. The greater emphasis on creative teaching and the improved ratios allowed for enrichment activities such as trips and visitors to the maintained school and non-maintained settings and a greater opportunity to enhance the continuous provision to engage and excite the children and add to the cultural and social capital. Some maintained schools suggested that the experiential and playful nature of the curriculum appeared to be more accessible to parents (and some mentioned males in particular) than the previous formal curriculum and so they seemed happier to engage in learning with their children both in the school and at home. Finally, they reported that with the introduction of the FP they enjoyed better relationships with parents which in turn meant they were more likely to get involved with the school/setting and take advantage of any educational courses available within them.

6.3 Ineffective implementation and understanding of disadvantage: However, as previously explained, the implementation of the FP is not consistent across the country and there are still some issues with practitioners and teachers understanding the nature of disadvantage. The stocktake was informed that on occasion staff showed exclusionary attitudes, blamed parents/communities and had low expectations towards children and their families from areas of deprivation. While others, across both maintained schools and non-maintained settings, were failing to communicate and engage with parents. This was attributed to a lack of empathy and an inability to understand disadvantage and the need to address it within the FP.

Recommendations (note: recommendations regarding training are italicised):

- 12. Develop training that ensures all staff understand the research on the effects of disadvantage and the possible ways to close the achievement gap. Sharing good practice from those maintained schools and non-maintained settings where this is working well should be part of the training and so should research on supporting the home learning environment (HLE). Maintained schools could be asked to devote some of their Pupil Deprivation Grant (or similar) to support staff development here.*

7. Findings and recommendations: How children enter the FP and monitor/address transition and progression, from Flying Start to FP and then to KS 2

7.1 International context: Transitions are inevitable and natural occurrences within any child's life. There are a variety of types of transition including physical, life and psychological transitions (Kingston and Price, 2012). The focus for transitions here are the transitions into and out of the FP. For many children the beginning of the FP is their first major physical transition from home to a maintained school or non-maintained setting, while for others it may be the second as they have already attended a non-maintained setting such as Flying Start or an alternative non-maintained setting prior to the age of 3. Transitions are important and those that are part of a child's educational experience are designed to support children's ongoing learning and development, such as attending a FP school or setting or moving up to key stage 2. However, poorly managed transitions can be detrimental not only in the short term (as the child may feel anxious, bewildered, and uncomfortable) but also in the longer term as they impact on learning and development as well as their ability to cope with future transitions (Kingston and Price, 2012). Brooker (2008) reviewed research considering transition to maintained schools and estimated that 5 to 10 percent of children adapt poorly to school life and as a result continue to be at risk of school failure throughout their school careers. Fabian (2002) described three categories of change which are important to consider to support transitions. First physical changes, which include a new environment which is different in size, location, number of people etc; second, social change where the child's identity changes (as they become a playgroup attender or school child for instance) as does their social network and the people with whom they interact; and, third, philosophical changes where values, beliefs and approaches to education can be very different to those previously experienced. An additional category of change to consider here is the curriculum and whether it equips children with the knowledge and skills needed for further learning and so facilitates smooth transitions (UNESCO, 2004).

7.2 Welsh context: In Wales the stocktake found that transition processes varied between good links and transfer processes to none, many of the reasons can be extrapolated from information in section 4. However, some specific issues are worth mentioning here. First, in maintained schools and non-maintained settings where the implementation of the FP was effective it supported staff in understanding the theoretical background to learning through play and then allowed them to build on gains made in Flying start and other settings. Where the FP was well embedded and regarded, it supported all transitions as the children had developed good learning dispositions (such as concentration, perseverance and determination) and independence. In some maintained schools who embraced the philosophy of the FP, Key stage 2 practice was also adapted to be more active and experiential. The staff

set challenges for the children to solve using first hand experiential approaches in a similar but perhaps more abstract way than in earlier years. Their classrooms were also adapted to allow more choice and independence and outdoor learning.

7.3 Transition issues: Many maintained schools and non-maintained settings have developed their own processes for transferring information on transition however many people expressed the need for a continuous assessment tool so that information can be transferred between schools/settings in a recommended, familiar and helpful way. Some LAs have developed systems for tracking and transitions, however only some of these continue with the children into maintained schools as many maintained schools use alternative methods. Some maintained schools may not use the information from Flying Start and non-maintained settings at all. Having a continuous national assessment tool (and some people saw this spanning birth to the end of primary school but everyone agreed that it should at least span the FP) will require careful co-ordination as it would need to sit well with other initiatives including the current curriculum development. It should emphasise teacher and practitioner assessment and will require training in the use of observation as a way of measuring impact and children's progress, as well as supporting ongoing and future teaching and learning. It will require additional training to ensure that all relevant staff are familiar with it, that moderation is rigorous and to ensure all staff are equally competent. Non-maintained setting staff may require additional support/further qualifications to ensure that they are equipped to measure progress in this way.

Recommendations (*note: recommendations regarding training are italicised*):

13. *Consider strengthening transition arrangements through training all staff involved in them together (staff from non-maintained settings, flying start, FP staff, key stage 2 staff etc). Training should include current research and theory together with practical examples of good transition practice.*
14. Continue to develop and then implement an assessment profile. Ensuring that this profile continues throughout the FP (ages 3-7) and that standardised outcomes are measured and moderated at the beginning and end of the phase.

8. Identify where there is variability in quality focussing on leadership, workforce and the experience of the child.

8.1 International context, leadership: The quality of the leadership within schools and early education and care is known to have important effects on all aspects of the children's learning and development (Spillane, 2005; Siraj-Blatchford and Hallet, 2014). Effective leadership is particularly important in times of change, such as during the introduction of new policy so it is particularly pertinent in Wales with the introduction of the FP. For change to be successful it requires those involved to feel empowered and active in the process of change and also requires time for professional development, resource development and impact evaluation (Rodd, 2013; Lindon, 2010). Leaders are key in supporting their staff in understanding the underpinning policies, identifying any problems (and reframing these where necessary) and supporting implementation. Staff need time for discussion and to ask questions, they need to be able to critically reflect and find their own solutions. Leaders may need to support staff in reviewing their existing beliefs and assumptions especially if they hold a deficit view of children and families, encourage them to analyse and evaluate their own practice and challenge the way they interact with children and families (Shonkoff, 2010; Mitchell and Cubey, 2003).

8.2 Effective leadership in Wales: In Wales, the maintained schools with effective implementation of the FP appeared to have a number of common leadership aspects. First, the head teacher typically possessed excellent generic leadership and change management skills. Second, they recognised the need for leadership to have a clear understanding of the principles and practices within the FP. They were interested and researched the FP for themselves but also ensured that they appointed a FP co-ordinator with good knowledge and experience of the FP. Third, particularly if they took a distributive or collaborative approach to leadership, they ensured that the FP co-ordinator was in a strong position to lead and manage change, typically they were recognised as an important school leader such as a deputy head and were part of the senior management team. The head teachers had a whole school vision for the FP within their school and for many, the principles were applicable across the whole school. They were informed by data, knowing the strengths and areas for development within their school, but were not driven by it. The children (and their families) were placed at the centre of school life and learning and they trusted their staff, who worked as a team, to do the best for them. In non-maintained settings, leaders who had had training in leadership appeared to develop the best teams, support the children's learning, make good relationships with parents and had the best staff retention.

8.3 Ineffective leadership in Wales: Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, in her recent annual report noted that strong leadership is one of the key factors in making

improvements, but that the quality of leadership in maintained schools is still uneven. She suggested that in order to make improvements here schools should develop partnerships with other schools, parents, agencies and local authorities (Estyn, 2014). This exemplifies the need for leadership training within maintained schools. However leadership training is important across the sector (see recommendation 4 and section 4). Leadership training in non-maintained FP settings is not common, it is more common amongst Flying Start leaders who typically have qualifications at NVQ level 4 or above. Leadership training for class teachers is also rare. Yet both of these leaders are responsible for leading others and supporting the development of their teams. Building and supporting team working is known to improve practice and support colleagues in the workplace (Siraj-Blatchford and Hallett, 2014). Staff told the stocktake that in maintained schools where the FP was not valued the weakest teachers were placed in the younger children's classes as the FP was perceived to be an 'easy option'. In some maintained schools, the FP co-ordinator may not even teach within the FP and so have little understanding of the challenges within it. Or alternatively they could hold such a low management level that they had little power to make changes, influence practice with other staff or get involved in whole school decision making.

8.4 International and Welsh context re qualifications and ratios: Research consistently points to the importance of the well qualified staff to support the learning and development of children within the FP (Sylva et al 2004; Nutbrown, 2012). With the introduction of the FP, Wales increased the adult to child ratios which in turn resulted in an increase in the number of Teaching Assistants (TAs) in schools. Adult to child ratios are important to quality particularly with younger children, however there is nothing more important to quality than the quality of staff (Nutbrown, 2012). There remains a deal of controversy about the impact of reducing ratios and the value that TAs bring to children's learning (Blatchford et al, 2009; Education Endowment Toolkit, 2014). The Education Endowment Toolkit (2014) reports that generally TAs can make a difference to the management of a classroom but not to the learning and development of children unless this is specifically planned for and supported with effective training and critical reflection on lessons and learning. That the development of learning should never be entirely left to TAs and the deployment and effectiveness of TAs need to be evaluated within each school. Furthermore, and particularly pertinent here, it is the change in approach to teaching afforded by smaller classes rather than the reduction per se that makes the difference to children's achievements and behaviour.

8.5 Benefits of increased staffing in Wales: One effect of the introduction of the FP in Wales has been an increase in staffing and as a consequence less qualified staff have entered the FP workforce. In maintained schools this is typically the TAs who supported the new ratios and in non-maintained settings, where a number of staff have transferred into maintained schools, these are likely to be new people to the profession. This relates to the capacity issue discussed in section 4. In some

maintained schools the TAs are included in their CPD processes and enjoy targeted training and support. They are also fully involved with the planning, assessment and other processes within the FP. Specifically, within schools the increase in staffing has allowed the development of indoors and outdoors classrooms, and has led to more talk and interactions between the adults and children. It has also allowed for more opportunities to develop adult intensive activities such as developing role play areas, art and cooking activities. Some schools however suggested that a lowering of the adult to child ratios within reception classes to 1:10 would be possible without compromising quality.

8.6 Additional Staffing and ratio issues: In some maintained schools in Wales, TAs were not well supported or involved in the implementation of the FP, instead they were used to support classroom management and run remedial interventions with little change in teaching approach to before the increase in ratios. Such approaches were more common in maintained schools where the class teachers had not had the experience of leading a team or the necessary training and where the FP was not well understood or implemented. During the stocktake, some teachers reported anxieties that the introduction of the LNF may lead to more TAs being diverted to support intervention programmes while others reported that without TAs getting proper guidance on their role in supporting children's learning some children were becoming over reliant on adults. In addition, there were concerns that many TAs did not have sufficient literacy or numeracy skills to support the children's learning and finally that the higher qualified early years practitioners in non-maintained settings were transferring to work in maintained schools where the pay and conditions were better, lowering the quality in non-maintained settings. The change in ratios has had little positive impact on non-maintained settings, as their ratios have not been increased, however they report having lost staff and that staff retention is difficult especially following NVQ training and if they are Welsh speakers. During visits to maintained schools and focus groups the stocktake asked whether the ratios were correct at each of the ages. For reception classes most people agreed that the ratio could be increased to 1:10 so that the saved monies could be diverted into training and support.

Recommendations (*note: recommendations regarding training are italicised*):

15. *Develop specific bespoke training on leadership designed to support leaders across the sector, both within maintained schools and non-maintained settings.*
16. Ensure the FP co-ordinators in maintained schools have sufficient knowledge and experience to understand the principles and practices within the FP. In addition recommend that they are graded at a sufficient leadership level (such

as members of the senior management team, deputy head etc) to make decisions and support change.

17. Ensure that TAs benefit from CPD processes and support within maintained schools and that literacy and numeracy training is available for those that need it. Develop a career path for those practitioners working in the non-maintained settings and for TAs within maintained schools.

18. Review the current adult to child ratio in reception classes. Currently it is 1:8, primary schools staff, advisors and inspectors agreed that it could be increased to 1:10 without affecting quality. However, some schools may need to apply for an exception where, for example, they are situated in very rural areas or where they have a considerable number of children with additional needs such as SEN as it would not be practical to increase the ratio.

9. Findings and recommendations: Establish how well the FP principles and requirements are embedded in ITT and on-going CPD

9.1 Qualified Teacher Status and quality teaching: Qualified teachers have been shown to impact positively on the quality of teaching and learning with young children in a number of studies (Sylva et al, 2004; Siraj-Blatchford et al, 2005). Further, the quality of teaching is the most important determinant of children's outcomes (Barber and Mourshed, 2009). Teacher quality in turn is strongly related to the teachers' own educational experiences, including initial teacher training (Mussett, 2010). Mussett (2010) while considering the quality of teacher education across the world concluded that initial teacher training should include a balance of provision which supports teachers' content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and practical school experience. The importance of the quality and effectiveness of teachers is evident within Wales, see for example the recent review of initial teacher training (Tabberah, 2013).

9.2 Newly Qualified Teachers (NQT) issues: In Wales, teachers and advisors reported variable skills in NQTs in implementing the FP. They reported that NQTs were better prepared when they had had placements in maintained schools that implemented the FP well, where they could see the theory in practice. The Initial Teacher Training (ITT) providers reported different processes for supporting their student's understandings of the FP, and many explained how they were working to make them more robust. They all emphasised the importance of placement experiences in maintained schools where the FP was effectively implemented.

9.3 Qualified Teacher issues: In some nursery classes, where it is not statutory to have a qualified teacher, some maintained schools are not appointing teachers to lead practice. Research strongly suggests that graduate leaders support the quality of learning and teaching best (Sylva et al, 2004). In non-maintained settings access to the 10% teacher time is variable and then what the teachers do is also variable. Guidance to support and mentoring, including modelling good practice in the FP should be developed and a clear role for the 10% teaching time should be outlined. The teacher's role should be clearly demarked but they should also know who to contact regarding any practice of concern beyond the FP. Finally in order to enhance understanding of the FP and support leadership and management within the FP, FP teachers should consider postgraduate training at masters level.

9.4 *Continued Professional Development (CPD) and training*: Tatton (2005) suggested professional development of staff is the way to improve the quality of provision. As well as considering ITT, the stocktake also looked at training, one aspect of CPD. Training is defined here as professional development activities that occur outside the formal education system (Maxwell et al, 2005). Wales has developed a range of modules which were designed to be delivered across the country to support the implementation of the FP by LA and/or consortia personnel. Numerous studies have shown that training supports quality and more specifically children's learning and wellbeing (Burchinal et al, 2002; Funkkink and Lont, 2007). Siraj- Blatchford et al (2006) reported that early years provision was of a higher quality when the staff were well trained and qualified with a good understanding of child development and pedagogy. Funkkink and Lont (2007) reported that training can enhance practitioners' support of children's personal and social development as well as their involvement with the children and support for their language and physical developments through the provision of richer learning experiences. They suggested that training that supported practitioners' understanding of developmentally appropriate practice was particularly beneficial.

9.4 *Training issues*: The universal modules that were developed at the beginning of the implementation of the FP have been changed and augmented by individual LAs and consortia over the years. It is therefore difficult to establish whether there is a universal offer for training any more. However, the stocktake found that the differences and inequalities in training and their accessibility to all appropriate staff was concerning and that the level and content of the initial training at least was lacking (see section 4).

Recommendations (*note: recommendations regarding training are italicised*):

19. Promote closer working relationships between, for example, advisory staff and ITT providers and between ITT providers themselves to support consistency of initial teacher training and quality of teaching of NQTs. Identify maintained schools where the FP is implemented well for students to visit and/or for placements.
20. Consider making it compulsory that a qualified Teacher should lead practice in all FP classes in maintained schools (including nursery classes).
21. Clarify and define the role of the 10% teacher supporting non-maintained settings. Care should be taken to ensure all eligible non-maintained settings receive this support and that it is effective.

22. Promote further training and qualifications of teachers within the FP to Masters Level. The course should include elements of learning that will support and improve practice in the FP and impact on leadership and effective deployment of TAs as well as support further understanding of the pedagogy, practice, critical thinking and evaluation skills.
23. Review the level of support available to Foundation Phase provisions from local authority, consortia development staff, umbrella organisations as well as early years teachers to identify gaps and ensure equity

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Appendix 1

List of Task and Finish group membership