



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

# How was school today?

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## Parents' and carers' guide to secondary school for children aged 11 to 14



**ADDYSG CYMRU  
EDUCATION WALES**  
cenhadaeth ein cenedl | our national mission

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Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

This document is also available in Welsh.

# Introduction

The Welsh Government believes that giving young learners a sound foundation for the future will benefit children and Wales as a whole in the long term.

Parents and carers have a vital role to play in helping their children to learn and, more importantly, to enjoy school and learning.

This guide will help explain what your child is learning in secondary school.

It will give you some ideas about how to help your child and where to get more information, and will explain how their progress will be measured and reported to you.

Children's education in Wales is divided into four sections or stages.

## Primary school

1

The Foundation Phase caters for children aged between 3 and 7.

2

Key Stage 2 is from 7 to 11 years old.

## Secondary school

3

Key Stage 3 is from 11 to 14 years old.

4

Key Stage 4 takes learners to the age of 16.

This guide describes the curriculum as it applies to children in secondary schools aged between 11 and 14 in Key Stage 3.

You can find information about the other phases of your child's learning at [hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales-2008/](http://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales-2008/)

## The curriculum

### What is my child learning?

Children in this age group follow the programmes of study set out in the national curriculum for Key Stage 3. Their education builds on the experiences and learning gained in primary school and prepares them for making decisions about courses they will follow later in their secondary education.

The curriculum in Key Stage 3 is designed around subjects and skills. It will provide a firm foundation in language, mathematics and science, giving your child the opportunity to achieve their best within a broad and balanced curriculum.

Supporting children to develop good literacy, numeracy and digital skills is at the core of learning in secondary schools.

We want all young people to have the right skills to support their future choices in learning and life.



Your child will follow a rich and varied curriculum designed to give them opportunities to learn about:

- English
- Welsh or Welsh second language
- mathematics
- science
- design and technology
- information and communication technology (ICT)
- a modern foreign language
- history
- geography
- music
- art and design
- physical education (PE).

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Children must also study religious education (RE) and all secondary schools have to provide some personal and social education (PSE), information on careers and the world of work (CWW) programme, and sex and relationships education. Each school decides the detail of what children will learn and how the school day is organised. They will take account of the requirements set out by the Welsh Government, and organise their own timetable.

Teachers draw up lesson plans and decide which teaching resources and approaches to use. It is up to the school to make sure that its curriculum meets the legal requirements.

Your child's school will be able to provide more information about the way they structure the curriculum, the skills your child will develop and the content your child will cover.

You can find more information about education and the curriculum in Wales at [gov.wales/education-skills](https://gov.wales/education-skills)

The curriculum for learners aged 3 to 16 in Wales is changing. From September 2022, starting with nursery to Year 7 initially, the curriculum will fulfill four purposes of education and be delivered through six Areas of Learning and Experience.

More information on the new curriculum can be found on our website at [gov.wales/new-school-curriculum-overview](https://gov.wales/new-school-curriculum-overview)





## What is the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework?

The National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF) was developed to help all learners develop excellent literacy and numeracy skills during their time at school. It provides continued development for 3- to 16-year-olds, clearly setting out expected yearly outcomes on literacy and numeracy.

All children are supported to develop sound literacy and numeracy skills. These skills are not just about learning English, Welsh and mathematics; they are about being able to use skills in different situations and across a wide range of activities.

Literacy describes a set of skills, including speaking, listening, reading and writing, which allow us to make sense of the world around us.

Numeracy describes the use of number, measuring and data skills, and the ability to identify and use these skills to solve problems.

The LNF identifies literacy and numeracy expectations for each year group and will help children develop literacy and numeracy skills through all subjects in the national curriculum and by using a wide range of activities.

## What is the Digital Competence Framework?

Our children are entering a fast-moving digital world. We want them to have the skills to be confident, creative and critical when they use technology.

Digital competence is one of three cross-curricular responsibilities, alongside literacy and numeracy, which will be applied across the curriculum for all children aged 3 to 16.

The Digital Competence Framework (DCF) encapsulates the skills that will help children thrive in an increasingly digital world. It has four strands of equal importance – Citizenship; Interacting and collaborating; Producing; and Data and computational thinking. The strands are then further sub-divided into elements as shown in the box on the right.

### Citizenship

- Identity, image and reputation
- Health and well-being
- Digital rights, licensing and ownership
- Online behaviour and cyberbullying

### Interacting and collaborating

- Communication
- Collaboration
- Storing and sharing

### Producing

- Planning, sourcing and searching
- Creating
- Evaluating and improving

### Data and computational thinking

- Problem solving and modelling
- Data and information literacy

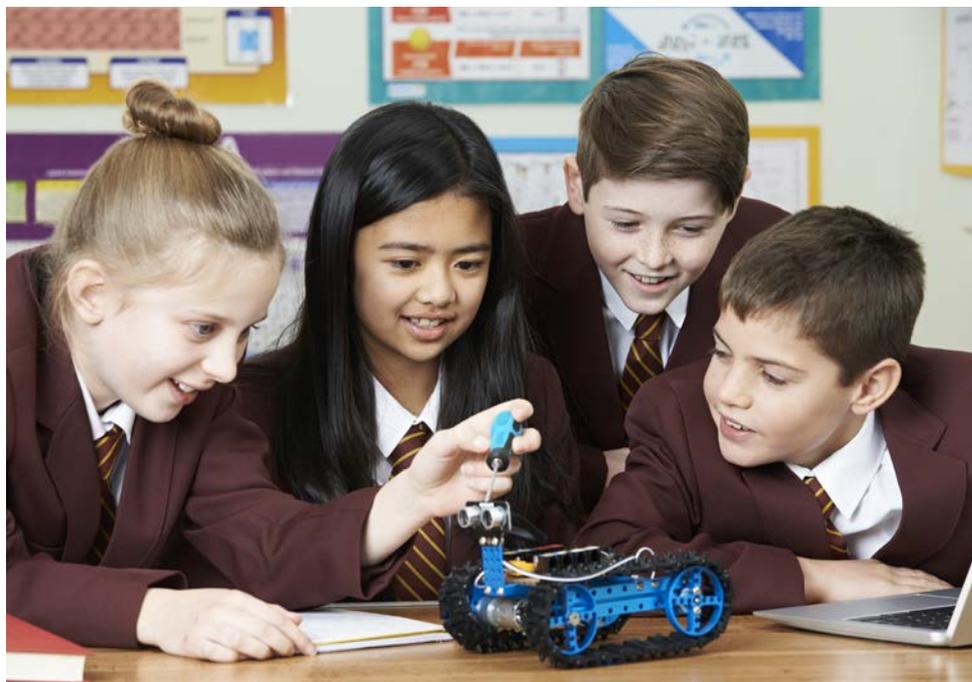


## Do children with special educational needs follow the national curriculum?

Most children, including those with special educational needs, will be able to follow the national curriculum. However, at times, a headteacher may decide that all or part of the national curriculum should not apply, temporarily, to a child with special educational needs. In very exceptional cases for some children, such as those with Statements of Special Educational Needs issued by the local authority, it may be decided that the national curriculum should not apply on a permanent basis. This is known as 'disapplication'.

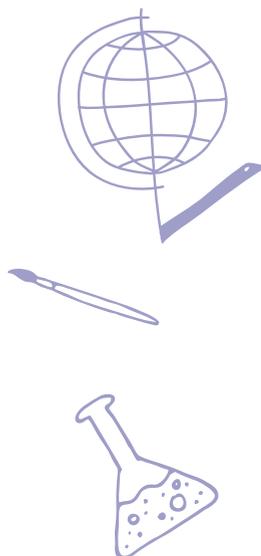
Find out more about what is provided for children with special educational needs by going to [gov.wales/additional-learning-needs-special-educational-needs](https://www.gov.wales/additional-learning-needs-special-educational-needs)





## Can I withdraw my child from the national curriculum?

There is no parental right to withdraw children from national curriculum subjects, or from the arrangements to assess children's progress in these subjects. However, you do have the right to withdraw your child from religious education and any sex and relationships education which may be provided.



## How is my child assessed?

Your child's teacher will use a variety of assessment techniques throughout the year as part of a combined approach to learning, teaching, planning and assessment. The teacher will assess what your child knows and can do and they will use this information to support your child's learning.

At the end of Key Stage 3, the teacher will decide which level best reflects your child's progress in each of the national curriculum subjects.



## What are the National Reading and Numeracy Tests?



The National Reading and Numeracy Tests, for all children in Years 2 to 9, help schools across Wales assess their learners' reading and numeracy skills and gain a clearer understanding of learners' development and progress. The information from the tests is used alongside other forms of assessment to allow teachers to plan learning and teaching in order to support skills development.

The Welsh Government is phasing in online personalised assessments to replace the paper-based tests. Numeracy (Procedural) is available online now. Reading will become available during this academic year followed by Numeracy (Reasoning) next academic year.

You can find more information about National Reading and Numeracy Tests and online personalised assessments at [hwb.gov.wales/draft-curriculum-for-wales-2022/reading-and-numeracy-assessments/](https://hwb.gov.wales/draft-curriculum-for-wales-2022/reading-and-numeracy-assessments/)



## How will I know how my child is getting on?

You will receive a written report about your child's progress at least once a year. You will also have the opportunity to meet with your child's teacher, but you can contact the school at any time to discuss your child's progress and how you can help your child to do even better.

Information from continuous teacher assessment will form part of the yearly report, along with information on how your child is progressing with literacy and numeracy across all subjects. The yearly report will also include feedback from your child's teacher about strengths and areas for improvement, attendance and achievements. The report will form the basis for a discussion about your child's learning needs and next steps.

At the end of Key Stage 3, your child's report will include a level for each national curriculum subject. This will give you information about your child's progress and level of achievement against national curriculum standards.

For more information about school reports see [gov.wales/education-skills](https://gov.wales/education-skills)

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## Health and well-being

### Well-being

It is very important that children are happy at school so they can learn and flourish. As part of the school community, you as parents and carers also have a role to play. Nurturing positive behaviour (in and out of school), encouraging your child to show kindness and respect to all members of the community, and making sure your child makes the most of their education by being in school are all ways of giving your child the best possible start in life.

If you think your child is struggling with mental health or well-being issues, you can raise that with their school. Most schools have a well-being lead that can help provide your child with extra support and resources when they need it.

### Social and emotional learning

Many schools use specific programmes to promote learners' emotional well-being, by developing their personal, emotional and social skills. Some programmes may be aimed at all learners, others may be for specific learners who, due to social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (or a combination of any of these), find school difficult and need extra support.

## Counselling

Counselling services are available to support children and young people aged 11–18. Within schools, counselling is used alongside the different approaches already in place to support the health, emotional and social needs of learners.

### Bullying

If your child is being bullied or is bullying you should discuss the matter with the school as soon as possible. For further help and support visit [gov.wales/bullying-school-guidance-parents-and-carers](https://gov.wales/bullying-school-guidance-parents-and-carers)

### Free school meals

If you receive certain benefits, your child may be eligible for free school meals as long as you meet certain eligibility conditions. If you feel you meet these conditions, you can collect a form from your child's school or apply to your local authority. If you claim free school meals for your child, the school can claim extra funding to provide further support to your child.

To find out if you are eligible, go to [www.gov.wales](https://www.gov.wales) and search for 'Free school meals'.

## How can I support my child's learning?

Parental involvement is vitally important in helping children to learn. You can help your child's learning by getting actively involved, not just at home but as part of your everyday lives together. Take an interest and talk about what topics they are following at school and try

to make sure they have a quiet place to study and do homework. You can also talk to the school about what your child is learning and what you can do at home to support this. Schools can also work together with families to help them support their children's learning.

### Ideas for learning together at home

- Encouraging your child to read, even for just 10 minutes a day, can make a real difference. Reading material can vary; encourage your child not just to read books and magazines but also websites, apps, games and so on.
- Keeping up to date with the news will help children develop their awareness of the local, national and world community. Try to encourage them to read the newspaper or web-based news once or twice a week.
- When going through household bills, discuss with them what the bill shows and the various options on how to pay. This is a valuable life skill.
- Involve children in planning trips, holidays or events and even in household tasks and DIY.
- Try and relate some of the family weekend activities to what they are currently being taught at school. It will help make learning more fun.
- Remember, activities that involve using the internet, games and sports all offer valuable and fun opportunities to apply skills and knowledge.
- Encourage your child to do their best with their homework and complete it on time.



## Who can I talk to if I have concerns?

If you have concerns, you should talk to your child's teacher first. If your child's school has a person chosen to be the first point of contact for concerns or complaints, you could also speak to this person.

If you are still concerned, you can raise your concern as a complaint. The school's policy on handling complaints will tell you how to do this.

## Need more information?

You can get more information from the following sources.

- Your school – speak to your child's teacher, the headteacher or a member of the governing body.
- Your local authority.
- By visiting our website at
- **gov.wales/education-skills**
- The Careers Wales website at **www.careerswales.com**



If your child has special educational needs and you need advice and information about matters relating to those needs, contact your local authority who will be able to direct you to their parent partnership service.



## A smooth move into Key Stage 4

In the last year of Key Stage 3 (Year 9), young people in secondary schools maintained by local authorities will be offered at least 25 choices of courses to study during their final two years of compulsory education (Years 10 and 11 – Key Stage 4). At least three of these will be vocational or more career-based or practical-based courses.

This allows young people to follow a broad and balanced curriculum and to choose courses that both interest and motivate them. This should help them to achieve good outcomes at the end of Key Stage 4.

The school will offer lots of information and support to young people and their parents or carers to help them make good decisions about their education.

Young people in Key Stage 4 will also have access to learner support services, including learning coaching, to help them overcome any barriers to their learning.

During Key Stage 4, young people will follow a curriculum including English, Welsh, mathematics and science. They will also have to continue to study physical education, religious education, personal and social education, and sex education, and to learn about careers and the world of work.

Most will also follow a choice of courses that lead to qualifications such as GCSEs or vocational qualifications relevant to particular sectors.

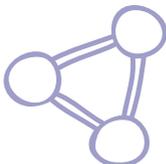


In September 2015, a new more rigorous Welsh Bacallaureate Qualification was introduced in schools and is available at Levels 1 and 2 in Key Stage 4. Learners have to complete a Skills Challenge Certificate and also achieve other external qualifications. The Skills Challenge Certificate is made up of three challenges and an individual project and has a clear focus on the following skills:

- Numeracy
- Literacy
- Digital literacy
- Critical thinking and problem solving
- Planning and organisation
- Creativity and innovation
- Personal effectiveness.

You can find full details of the revised Welsh Bacallaureate at [www.wjec.co.uk/qualifications/welsh-bacallaureate/welsh-bacc-from-2015](http://www.wjec.co.uk/qualifications/welsh-bacallaureate/welsh-bacc-from-2015)

For more information about qualifications in Wales, visit [www.qualificationswales.org](http://www.qualificationswales.org)



$$3 + 5 = 8$$



## Considering careers and the world of work in Key Stage 4

### What can my child expect?

Careers and the world of work is an important part of the school curriculum and in preparing young people for their future move into employment. Schools should make sure that young people have opportunities to learn about the world of work, the skills, knowledge and qualifications employers need, and the range of careers choices available.

Work-related learning is an important part of learning for young people aged 14 to 19. It gives them opportunities to improve their knowledge and understanding of, and the skills that they will need for, the world of work, as well as of enterprise and entrepreneurship.

This could include young people carrying out placements with an employer. Although there is no requirement on schools to provide work experience, many do.



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## Useful resources

This list of useful resources will help you as a parent/carer to gain more information to help you support the children in your life.

### **Bitesize**

The BBC's free online resource to help children in the UK with their school work.

**[www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize)**

### **ChildLine**

A 24-hour confidential service for children and young people in the UK dealing with any concerns from child abuse to drugs. (This website is only available in English.)

**[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)**

### **LoveReading4kids**

This site will help you to explore books that will excite children and help them to fall in love with reading. (This website is only available in English.)

**[www.lovereadings4kids.co.uk](http://www.lovereadings4kids.co.uk)**

### **Sumdog**

A site that offers games to make mathematics fun. They are all free to play, with the option to subscribe for extra features. (This website is only available in English.)

**[www.sumdog.com](http://www.sumdog.com)**

### **Education begins at home**

Gives helpful tips on how to help children with learning.

**[www.facebook.com/beginsathome](https://www.facebook.com/beginsathome)**

### **Apprenticeships in Wales**

Apprenticeships are vocational qualifications available in areas such as child development, construction, engineering and so on. To find out about apprenticeships in Wales, and why these programmes could be right for your child, go to

**[www.gov.wales](http://www.gov.wales)**

### **Free school meals**

To find out if you are eligible, search for 'Free school meals' online.

**[www.gov.wales](http://www.gov.wales)**

### **How is your child's school doing?**

A website that provides information on schools' performance across Wales.

**[mylocalschool.gov.wales](http://mylocalschool.gov.wales)**

### **Estyn**

Find out more about how your child's school is performing.

**[www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales)**

## **Education Workforce Council (EWC)**

EWC regulates education practitioners in Wales in the interests of learners, parents/carers, and the public. You can check online that teachers and support staff at your child's school are registered.

**[www.ewc.wales](http://www.ewc.wales)**

## **Meic**

A confidential helpline service for children and young people in Wales. From finding out what's going on in your local area to helping deal with bullying.

**[www.meiccymru.org](http://www.meiccymru.org)**

## **Careers Wales**

For information and advice about helping your child to make choices for their future career.

**[www.careerswales.com](http://www.careerswales.com)**

## **Welsh in Education Resources Branch, Welsh Government**

The Welsh in Education Resources Branch commissions Welsh and bilingual educational resources to support all national curriculum subjects. You can get resources in a digital format through Hwb at

**[hwb.gov.wales](http://hwb.gov.wales)** and those in a print format are available from **[www.gwales.com](http://www.gwales.com)**. For more information, please contact **[welshresources@gov.wales](mailto:welshresources@gov.wales)**

## **Hwb**

The National Digital Learning Platform and content repository provides access to a range of high-quality digital learning tools and thousands of high-quality digital classroom resources to support digital transformation in the classroom.

**[hwb.gov.wales](http://hwb.gov.wales)**

## **Creative Learning Zone**

A zone on Hwb with information and inspiration to help make creative skills an established part of the curriculum.

**[hwb.gov.wales/zones/creative-learning](http://hwb.gov.wales/zones/creative-learning)**

## **Online Safety Zone**

A zone on Hwb containing a range of resources and links to access support and guidance to help keep children safe online.

**[hwb.gov.wales/onlinesafety](http://hwb.gov.wales/onlinesafety)**

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## **Our national mission**

*Education in Wales: Our national mission, Action plan 2017–21* builds on *Qualified for Life*, which was published in 2014, and *Successful Futures* the 2015 review of the curriculum. Our national mission sets out how the school system will move forward between 2017 and 2021 securing implementation of the new curriculum with a focus on leadership, professional learning, and excellence and equity within a self-improving system. The action plan focuses on raising standards for all, reducing the attainment gap, and delivering an education system that is a source of national pride and public confidence.

**[gov.wales/our-national-mission-0](http://gov.wales/our-national-mission-0)**

## **Family and Community Engagement (FaCE) Toolkit**

This is a collection of resources for schools that encourage and support parents and carers to become effective partners in their child's learning and attainment. Search for 'Family and Community Engagement Toolkit' online.

**[gov.wales/family-and-community-engagement-face](http://gov.wales/family-and-community-engagement-face)**

## **The Fostering Network**

Established in 1974, this is the UK's leading charity for everyone involved in fostering, bringing together all those who provide, plan and deliver foster care. (This website is only available in English.)

**[www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk](http://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk)**

## **Children's Rights**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is a list of rights for all children and young people, no matter who they are or where they live. These rights are the things that they need to be safe, healthy and happy.

**[www.childrensrights.wales](http://www.childrensrights.wales)**

# Notes