

Level 3 Examiners' Report

Children's Care, Play, Learning and Development:
Practice and Theory

Unit 330 and Unit 331

January 2026

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Introduction

Our Principal Examiners' report provides valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. It has been written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and details how candidates have performed in each unit.

This report opens with a summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It then looks in detail at each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.¹

The information found in this report provides valuable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	WJEC offers an extensive programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 12 months after the examination.	Portal by WJEC or on the WJEC subject page
Grade boundary information	Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade. For unitised specifications grade boundaries are expressed on a Uniform Mark Scale (UMS). UMS grade boundaries remain the same every year as the range of UMS mark percentages allocated to a particular grade does not change. UMS grade boundaries are published at overall subject and unit level. For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the subject, rather than for each unit that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.	For unitised specifications click here: Results, Grade Boundaries and PRS (wjec.co.uk)

¹ Please note that where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

Exam Results Analysis	WJEC provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	Portal by WJEC
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	https://resources.wjec.co.uk/
Bank of Professional Learning materials	Access our bank of Professional Learning materials from previous events from our secure website and additional pre-recorded materials available in the public domain.	Portal by WJEC or on the WJEC subject page.
Become an examiner with WJEC.	We are always looking to recruit new examiners or moderators. These opportunities can provide you with valuable insight into the assessment process, enhance your skill set, increase your understanding of your subject and inform your teaching.	Become an Examiner WJEC

Contents

	Page
Executive summary	5
Unit 330: Principles and theories that influence children’s care, play, learning and development in the 21 st century in Wales	8
Unit 331: Investigating current issues in children’s care, play, learning and development in Wales	16
Supporting you – useful contacts and links	25

Executive Summary

Unit 330

This series of assessments for the Level 3 Children's Care, Play, Learning and Development qualification demonstrated overall strong candidate performance across Units, with most learners showing clear understanding of core theoretical concepts and the ability to apply knowledge to practical scenarios. The examination papers were accessible, closely aligned to the specification and Sample Assessment Materials, and generated confident responses from candidates in both online and paper formats.

Summary of Key Points

Across the Units, candidates showed particular strengths in key areas such as holistic development, diversity and inclusion, attachment theory, behaviour guidance, reflective practice, and knowledge of Welsh policy frameworks including *Flying Start* and *Wales – a Play Friendly Country*. Responses were generally well structured, with many candidates demonstrating maturity in written expression, effective use of command verbs, and a secure understanding of how theory underpins practice.

Overall Candidate Performance and Trends

A noticeable trend across the series was improved ability to integrate real placement experience to support explanations, particularly in questions relating to behaviour, ALN, and multi-agency practice. Many candidates demonstrated strong literacy skills and were able to articulate ideas clearly and coherently. High-tariff questions were often addressed with appropriate detail, and candidates used additional sheets when required, showing good time-management.

Performance Highlights and Issues

However, several recurring areas for improvement emerged. A small number of candidates relied on bullet points where extended responses were required, limiting marks. Some candidates demonstrated uncertainty around less commonly referenced theories, such as William Glasser's choice theory, which affected performance on linked two-part questions. A common issue was providing descriptions of services or processes (e.g. health screening), but not fully addressing the evaluative or reflective elements required to access higher mark bands.

Common Themes Across Literacy, Administration and Skills

In addition, several responses drifted from the specific focus of the question, especially where candidates wrote generically about themes such as play or behaviour rather than addressing the precise requirements. Centres should continue to reinforce the importance of reading questions carefully, understanding command verbs, and structuring responses to fully meet the demands of AO2 and AO3. Ensuring secure theoretical knowledge—beyond the most taught theorists—will also support higher performance across the series. Administrative and assessment processes ran smoothly overall, with very few issues reported. The accessibility of online and paper formats, available in both English and Welsh, supported wide participation. Literacy levels were generally strong, though a minority of candidates would benefit from further support with extended writing skills and clarity of expression.

Recommended Resources for Future Preparation

- Centres are encouraged to make full use of available resources, including past papers, exemplar responses, mark schemes, and the guidance within the Unit Specifications
- Regular practice with exam-style questions, especially those requiring discussion, evaluation and reflection, will strengthen AO3 performance.
- Embedding opportunities for learners to apply theory to real or simulated practice will also support deeper understanding and stronger examination outcomes.

Unit 331

The Extended Investigation requires candidates to independently research a contemporary issue within children's care, play, learning and development in Wales, selecting either Topic 1 (current and contemporary factors affecting children's health and well-being) or Topic 2 (the value of implementing engaging activities to support holistic development). Candidates must apply theory, legislation and practice-based understanding while demonstrating research, evaluation and reflective skills across six structured tasks.

Summary of Key Points

Most candidates selected Topic 1 and were able to explore a wide range of contemporary factors—such as family structure, financial hardship, mental health, social media, additional learning needs, self-image and young carers—and link these to holistic development. A smaller number chose Topic 2 and demonstrated secure understanding of the Curriculum for Wales and play-based, experiential learning. Higher-level responses consistently connected theoretical concepts to professional experience and demonstrated clear understanding of task requirements, including evidence-based research and reflective practice.

Overall Candidate Performance and Trends

Overall performance was strong, with many candidates producing well-rounded investigations supported by personal insight and workplace examples. Trends indicate improved ability to apply real-world practice to theoretical perspectives and increasing confidence in discussing children's rights, values, and principles underpinning professional practice. However, there were noticeable variations in research depth, consistency of referencing, and ability to sustain evaluative discussion. Several candidates produced centre-shaped work rather than fully individual investigations, limiting opportunities for personal choice and authentic reflection.

Performance Highlights and Issues

Candidates performed well when linking values and principles—such as communication, teamwork, inclusion and children's rights—to practical examples. Strong responses also demonstrated how legislation and frameworks in Wales directly influence planning and provision in settings. Task 6, which required reflection, was often highly achieved. Issues that emerged include: incomplete referencing, unclear source justification, reliance on quotations rather than discussion, insufficient viewpoint development, and in some cases, overuse of bullet points or tables, which restricted depth. Some candidates exceeded the permitted word count or did not clearly demarcate task boundaries, leading to unmarkable sections.

Common Themes Across Literacy, Administration and Skills

Key administrative themes included missing reference lists, absence of consistent Harvard referencing, unclear task labelling, and incomplete time allocation sheets. From a literacy perspective, many candidates wrote clearly and expressively, but others provided short statements rather than extended paragraphs. Skills-related themes include good use of reflection, but weaker evidence in academic research conventions and evaluative writing. Variability in understanding Wales-specific legislation and frameworks was also noted.

Key Areas for Improvement

- Improved referencing skills, including clear justification of sources.
- Stronger evaluative writing, especially in Tasks 3, 4 and 5.
- Ensuring all discussions remain focused on the chosen topic and selected focus areas.
- Clear task structure with appropriate labelling and consistent first-person reflective writing.
- Avoidance of copied text, bullet points, tables and proformas.
- Selecting fewer, more manageable focus areas for deeper exploration.

Recommended Resources for Future Preparation

Centres should draw on:

- Unit specifications and sample assessment materials.
- Exemplar investigations and marking guidance.
- Welsh Government guidance on the Curriculum for Wales, children's well-being, and statutory frameworks.
- Academic research skills resources, including guides to Harvard referencing and evaluating sources.
- Reflective practice models (e.g., Gibbs, Kolb) to strengthen evaluative responses.

CHILDREN'S CARE, PLAY, LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT: PRACTICE AND THEORY

Level 3

January 2026

UNIT 330: PRINCIPLES AND THEORIES THAT INFLUENCE CHILDREN'S CARE, PLAY, LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY IN WALES

Overview of the Unit

Level 3 Children's Care, Play, Learning and Development: Practice and Theory examination provides questions to address one or more assessment objective: from AO1, AO2 or AO3. The question types provided a range of lower and higher tariff questions across the content of the unit 300 specification. The questions test the candidate's ability to use their knowledge and understanding of the principles and theories of topics 1-5. The question types used in this paper are similar to those used in the Sample Assessment Materials (SAMs) paper, there were no unexpected questions, and the candidates responded well to the questions throughout the paper.

The unit 330 examination is aimed is to test the knowledge of theoretical learning and understanding and provide an opportunity to express the practical skills and experiences of candidates when responding the topic focused questions. Papers were completed on-line and on written paper versions and both versions were offered and accessed in the use of the English and Welsh language. The majority of questions were responded to in a clear and well-structured manner with good use of understanding of the command verbs. Some responses were written using bullet points where the response required was more detailed. The responses provided were generally detailed with a firm level of knowledge and understanding and the structure of the responses were well written and clear in the point the candidate was trying to convey. All questions were answered in the vast majority of papers online and on paper versions, and the style of the questions proved to be accessible without frequency in misunderstanding or any consistencies in lack of knowledge. The majority of candidates completed the paper with detailed responses, and the timing of the paper was gauged well. The responses provided were generally clear and some learners made use of the additional sheets available to further expand their responses when required. Overall, all questions set were attempted as candidates progressed through the on-line and written paper.

Comments on individual questions/sections

1. **Engaging in family activities within the home can have benefits for a child's development.**

Outline the benefits of activities in the home environment for a child's holistic development.

This 6-mark question provided an excellent introduction to this series paper on unit 330. Candidates were able to engage with the topic 1 question on supporting holistic development from 0-19 years. Candidates provided clarity of understanding in the areas of holistic development and the benefits of activities to support development. A greater emphasis on the role of the parents/carers was also explored by many whom were able to link the benefits of social and emotional attachments for positive learning experiences. There was also reference to the benefits of supporting children's mental health and providing emotional support in the home environment, often with a focus on children at times of vulnerability, children experienced with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and also children with Additional Learning Needs (ALN). This question enabled candidates to develop an outline of the benefits of activities in the home environment for a child's holistic development including opportunities for social and language development explored with family members, the freedom of learning at home, opportunities for learning outside in the garden, development of problem solving, and co-operation and resilience through games such as board games with family members. Many candidates outlined the significance of learning in the safety and freedom of the home with the support of family/carers, highlighting the development of a range of holistic skills and progression through a variety of milestones; for example, learning to share and learning about losing in a game which will support their social and emotional development in other relationships. Overall, this was a highly marked question, and candidates gained a good start to the exam.

2. **Current approaches in settings aim to recognise cultural differences.**

Discuss the value of recognising and celebrating diversity in practice.

Candidates were able to provide a clear and well written response to this 6-mark question that offered maturity and inclusivity in their approach. Candidates were frequently able to provide valuable discussions of recognising and celebrating diversity in practice. Many candidates referred to the importance of reducing negative stereotypes and assumptions related to religion and cultural traditions and emphasised the importance of encouraging open discussions and providing positive images and resources to support children's awareness of differences in culture. Candidates discussed the value of celebrating various religious or cultural significant events, educating compassion and awareness of valuing others, and the importance of experiencing diversity to support equality in schools, education settings and in the wider society. Many referred to the importance of recognising cultural differences as a positive lifelong change and to create an inclusive and equal society. Many candidates highlighted the value of fairness in society for those with disabilities and learning needs, and how resources and accessible environments need to reflect the diversity of needs. Many discussed supporting the understanding of how everyone is different to increase compassion and support. Overall, a highly awarded question which reflects a firm understanding of celebrating diversity, with a wide range of examples to reflect their experiences in their work placements.

3. Mary Ainsworth studied the theory of attachment and explored the concept of attachment figures through the ‘strange situation’ experiment.

(a) Summarise the ‘strange situation’ experiment.

This theory of attachment question required candidates to provide a summary of the ‘strange situation’ experiment conducted by Mary Ainsworth. The vast majority of candidates were able to provide a detailed account of the stages in which this experiment studied the concept of attachment, and the role of the main carer on a child’s emotional reactions to an episode of observed behaviour. Candidates frequently provided a step-by-step account of the process and stages involved with the parent/carer entering and leaving the room, and the stranger entering and leaving the room, while the child remains. Many candidates reflected on their knowledge of the child being in a room which was unfamiliar to them. Many highlighted that adult’s observed the child’s behaviour through a one-way mirror and they referred to the typical age group of the children involved in the experiment. Some candidates were able to access the higher bands for this 5-mark question, through providing a summary of the attachment types which Mary Ainsworth concluded as traits of attachment as part of her experiment. This showed a high level of understanding of the theory of attachment, and often further explored the concept of attachment figures through the ‘strange situation’ experiment.

(b) Discuss the value of the ‘strange situation’ study in understanding child attachment.

Candidates were able to follow on from Q3(a) into Q3(b) with further detail and reflect on the expression of Mary Ainsworth’s findings through the ‘strange situation’ study in understanding child attachment. Many candidates were able to provide a firm understanding of the importance of a secure base for a child’s positive social and emotional development, and the significance of adults supporting children and guiding them with consistency and routine in their daily experiences in the early years setting and school environment. In this 6-mark question candidates discussed the importance of encouraging communication and positive relationships and developing trust and comfort when needed. Many candidates discussed the importance of knowing children’s individual needs and supporting them through changes and transitions or new experiences; often highlighting that they may become emotional when feeling unsure or uncomfortable with change. There was a firm understanding of the value in encouraging and supporting children’s self-esteem and emotional well-being. Candidates were able to access high band marking through providing a good discussion of the value of the ‘strange situation’ study in understanding child attachment.

4. Actions, attitudes, and experiences can impact on a child's behaviour.

(a) Consider how different parenting styles can affect a child's behaviour.

This 8-mark question required candidates to discuss how varied actions, attitudes, and experiences that children have an impact on their behaviour and consider how different parenting styles can affect a child's behaviour. Candidates were frequently knowledgeable of the parenting styles, using terminology such as, authoritarian, permissive and uninvolved or terms with similar meaning or nature to express their understanding of the style and expectations in which varied styles can impact on children and affect their behaviour. Candidates were generally able to provide well rounded discussions of the positive effects of parenting styles based on clear boundaries, supporting a child's self-esteem, and having consistency and fairness. Candidates often provided clear responses of the negative aspects of parenting whereby children may be confused by adult responses, live in abusive environments or are treated unfairly with unclear expectations. Candidates were able to access a wide range of marks within this question and generally responded very well. The majority provided well rounded responses which met the question aims to consider different parenting style and the effects on children's behaviour. Many were able to refer to the parenting styles with clarity, often gaining higher band marks.

(b) Examine how childcare workers can support positive behaviour in the childcare setting.

Candidates were able to follow on their responses from Q4(a) within Q4(a) to provide a greater depth of knowledge and understanding of behaviour and examine the role of childcare workers and how their actions, attitudes and behaviours can impact on children's behaviour. This 10-mark question required candidates to express their knowledge and understanding of how childcare workers can support positive behaviour in the childcare setting. Candidates were able to reflect on the importance of positive role modelling and show children good traits of behaviour, such as; kindness, sharing, positive communication and the use of manners also the importance of having clear expectations was significant in many responses. Many candidates were able to examine the negative effects of adult behaviours on influencing children, and many referred to theorists such as Albert Bandura's social learning theory to examine the impact of children copying behaviour and how childcare workers would need to be positive influencers to support positive behaviours in children. Overall, a very good understanding shown with varying levels of depth and discussion within the responses.

5. Theories of behaviour development can be used to support children's behaviour.

(a) Outline William Glasser's theory of 'choice behaviour'.

This question required learners to be able to express an understanding of William Glasser's theory of 'choice behaviour'. Candidates were required to provide an outline for this 5-mark question. Many responses referred to the Glasser's theory as encouraging children to choose their own behaviour, and how children need to make choices to control their own behaviour, referring to how good choices produce good behaviour, and bad choices produce bad behaviour. Many candidates were clearly knowledgeable and had a firm understanding of Glasser's theory which relates to the child's drive for power, fun and freedom, survival, love and belonging as a basic need. Some candidates did not know Glasser's theory and did not respond or gave very brief responses. Overall, this question was a highly marked question, and many candidates gained high band marks for a good outline of William Glasser's theory

(b) Describe the value of childcare workers using Glasser's theory to support positive behaviour.

Candidates were generally able to respond to this question as a continuation of Q5(a), and many expressed a good description of the value of childcare workers using Glasser's theory to support positive behaviour. Candidates were able to describe how adults should support children to make good choices in their behaviour and provide consequences for bad behaviour. There was a good understanding shown of having rules and boundaries, also supporting children to understand expectations. Many highlighted the importance of meeting children's needs, such as fun, freedom and belonging and supporting a welcoming environment for all. Many responses reached the higher mark band of 6-marks, although some candidates were unsure of Glasser's theory and this was often reflected in a lack of understanding shown within Q5(a). Some responses provided sometimes drifted into alternative theorists, where the response required was solely based on William Glasser. Candidates were awarded across the mark bands for their responses.

6. The Welsh Government delivers a range of screening services to promote child health and well-being.

Reflect on the value of child health screening strategies and services in Wales.

This 8-mark question provided an opportunity for candidates to discuss screening services available in health care for children and to be able to reflect on the value of child health screening strategies and services that are available in Wales. The majority of candidates expressed knowledge and understanding of the types of screening services and explained what they are, although many did not express the value and how the services available in Wales can promote health and well-being for children.

Candidates with clear reflections on the value of child health screening explored how immunisations provide health protection for children and the community from diseases. Also reflecting on how screening services provide the detection of potential health concerns in babies and children, how screening offers the opportunity for the detection of genetic or chromosomal conditions and how screening services can identify health conditions, and enable opportunities for the choice of decisions about health needs to increase effective treatment. The responses provided generally provided clarity of the screening strategies, and many candidates provided an excellent reflection and were able to access the high band marks.

7. Henry struggles with focusing on activities, he shows negative behaviour and has been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

Explain how Henry's school can support his additional learning needs.

This question requires candidates to focus on a specific child's needs. Henry has been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and this 7-mark question requires an explanation of how the school can support his additional learning needs to help him as he struggles with focusing on activities. Candidates explained how Henry will need to need have short breaks in his day, such as having opportunities to move around the classroom. Many discussed how he could have support to go outside with supervision or a one-to-one support to walk around the school playground to help him focus with completing activities. There was significant emphasis on the importance of having a clear routine within candidate responses, as many referred to having a clear structure and plan of events during the day to support Henry with focusing, and having frequent changeover of activities to support concentration when needed. Many candidates were able to access higher marks through providing a range of responses to enable Henry to focus on activities. Frequently examples from work placement were offered to support the explanation which often added significant connections to the level of knowledge and understanding expressed.

8. Analyse the benefits of the health and education-based service provided through Flying Start settings.

This question required candidates to analyse the benefits that are provided through the health and education-based service provided through Flying Start settings. Candidates were clear in their understanding of the Flying Start nurseries and generally expressed a firm understanding of the value that the nurseries have for children and their parents/carers. Candidates highlighted the settings being provided in areas of deprivation in Wales, and the benefits for children's early years development and providing opportunities for parents to return to work. More detailed responses were seen where candidates were able to refer to a wide range of key areas which the Flying Start nurseries provide for children, such as; speech and language support through reading strategies and activities, and targeted support for early intervention where needed, also referring to the health visitor service to target families in need and the benefits of this support, supportive parenting programmes, and the benefits of enabling parents to develop parenting skills, personal skills and support the return to the workplace. Overall candidates provided varied levels of responses for this 10-mark question, with some providing a brief overview of the Flying Start setting while others provided greater detail and a firm understanding of the health and education-based services offered within the Flying Start settings.

9. Reflection and change of practice support positive outcomes for children.

Describe the purpose of personal reflection to meet children’s needs effectively.

Candidates were able to provide a clear and knowledgeable responses when relating to reflection. The majority of candidates described the purpose of personal reflection to meet children’s needs effectively in this 9-mark question through relating to practice and personal experiences. Many candidates discussed the impact of theorists Kolb and Gibbs, and used their studies as part of their explanation which highlighted sound knowledge and understanding on the topic area of reflection in practice. Candidates often described the purpose of learning through reflection and creating improvements for future practice. There were also many discussions relating to personal growth and self-improvement when reflecting, and the value of reflection in making positive change to support children, and to avoid repetition when activities or outcomes are not as expected. Candidates discussed many areas of the environment as part of reflection and focused on making improvements following observations of children’s play and learning experiences to ensure future outcomes are positive and supportive of children’s skills and needs. Overall, this was a highly marked question with clarity in the majority of responses.

10. Registered child minders and day care providers are required to meet the National Minimum Standards for Regulated Childcare for children up to the age of 12 years.

Outline the impact of the National Minimum Standards on children’s care, play, learning and development.

Candidates were generally very able in completing the expectations of this question. The question required an outline of the impact of the National Minimum Standards on children’s care, play, learning and development for children up to the age of 12 years. Candidates often provided an outline of the standards expected within the National Minimum Standards (NMS), and reflected on the importance of having quality daycare with qualified staff that is checked and regulated. Candidates outlined how day care settings must follow the standards in order to be able to stay open as a business as the suitability of the facilities and standard of care of the children is assessed. Candidates outlined the impact of having medication stored safely, health needs and nutrition needs being met as part of the set standards for quality provision. Overall candidates were able to access a range of marks with many accessing the higher band marks within this 6-mark question.

11. ‘Wales – a Play Friendly Country’ is a statutory guidance to ensure local authorities secure sufficient play opportunities for children.

Assess the impact of ‘Wales – a Play Friendly Country’ guidance on children in Wales.

This question prompted a good level of understanding of the play opportunities for children, as candidates were able to discuss the value of play and the importance of having play facilities and resources. Some candidates were a little off target with their responses and discussed play generally, although the majority were able to use the question to support their response. Candidates were frequently able to gain marks through assessing the impact of Wales – a Play Friendly Country’ guidance on children in Wales, achieving the higher mark bands in this 8-mark question.

Many illustrated knowledge and understanding of the significance of having age appropriate, secure and sufficient play facilities and play opportunities for children. Some emphasising the significance of the guidance placing a responsibility on local authorities to ensure that play opportunities and green spaces are available for children in their local communities. Many candidates discussed the importance of having accessible play areas to reduce barriers for children with specific needs and physical disabilities, and how play areas need to be accessible for all children in every community. A large proportion of candidates reflected on the significance of the United Nations on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and often made reference to specific articles to support their discussion. As this question was the last one in the paper many candidates may not have gained the highest of marks due to time constraints and fatigue, although generally the responses provided were well informed with relevant discussions of the importance of local communities having sufficient play opportunities and the impact this can have on children now and in the future.

CHILDREN'S CARE, PLAY, LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT: PRACTICE AND THEORY

Level 3

January 2026

UNIT 331: INVESTIGATING CURRENT ISSUES IN CHILDREN'S CARE, PLAY, LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN WALES

Overview of the Unit

Extended Investigation

The extended investigation of current issues in children's care, play, learning and development in Wales requires learners to investigate a contemporary issue for the sector selecting one of the following topics to research:

Topic 1

Current and contemporary factors affect the health and well-being of children.

Research a range of current and contemporary factors and their impact on development.

Topic 2

The statutory curriculum framework in Wales is used to inform planning to ensure children's holistic development in practice.

Research the value of implementing engaging activities to support holistic development in children.

Principal Examiner Summary

This unit requires candidates to demonstrate a secure understanding of the key concepts, values and issues that underpin children's care, play, learning and development, and to apply this knowledge when analysing evidence-based practice—both their own and that observed in settings. Candidates must research and evaluate relevant theories, legislation and practice, and reflect critically on how these influence professional approaches within children's services. Independent research is essential, and candidates are expected to draw on a wide range of credible sources to investigate their chosen topic and focus areas, gathering sufficient and reliable evidence to support the final investigation.

Most candidates selected Topic 1—current and contemporary factors that affect the health and well-being of children. Most were able to explore how these factors influence holistic development, drawing effectively on taught content from Unit 330 (topic 1, criteria 1.3). Strong investigations covered a wide range of relevant issues including family structure changes, financial pressures, mental health, social media, additional needs, self-image and the role of young carers. Higher-level responses demonstrated a personal, reflective approach and linked research to practical experience. These investigations were clearly structured, aligned with the required evidence areas, and showed a firm understanding of task expectations.

A smaller number selected Topic 2—implementing engaging activities through the statutory curriculum framework to support holistic development. These candidates generally demonstrated clear understanding of how the Curriculum for Wales informs planning, experiential learning and play-based approaches. Many utilised knowledge from Unit 330 topic 5 (criteria 5.2) and related theory to practical experience in childcare settings.

Overall, most candidates produced well-structured investigations with sound knowledge and thoughtful consideration of workplace practices. However, there were variations in research depth and inconsistency in referencing. Some candidates did not provide reference lists, while others relied on insufficiently evidenced sources. These differences strongly influenced grades, with higher marks awarded to candidates who clearly linked practice to theory and supported their work with well-selected research.

In several cases, centre-directed focus areas were evident. While this supported structure, it limited candidates' autonomy. Unit 331 is designed to enable personal choice, allowing candidates to explore a topic that reflects their experiences, interests and perspectives. Individual ownership is essential for demonstrating originality, reflective insight and meaningful engagement with the investigation.

Key Structural and Administrative Requirements

To ensure clarity, quality and adherence to assessment conditions, candidates must:

- Clearly state the title and chosen topic on the first page.
- Include centre number, candidate number and page numbers on every page.
- Label Tasks 1–6 accurately, as unlabelled work cannot be marked.
- Avoid internet use during the NEA examination period.
- Refrain from including hyperlinks, surveys or questionnaires.
- Ensure discussions of laws and frameworks relate specifically to Wales.
- Avoid using AI as a research source.
- Provide a complete Harvard-style reference list.
- Submit work as a Word document, not a PDF.
- Maintain an accurate timesheet, including breaks.
- Keep the word count under 5,500 words (excluding references/bibliography).
- Avoid copied text, bullet points, tables or proformas.
- Ensure all tasks link clearly to the chosen topic throughout the investigation.
- Write in the first person, drawing on personal experiences and viewpoints.
- Select only a small number of focus areas, allowing for depth and clarity.

These requirements support high-quality investigations and enable candidates to access the full range of marks available.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Task 1

Write an introduction to your extended investigation.

Outline:

- the main focus: areas you have chosen to research in relation to your selected topic
- why you have selected the topic and the focus areas; you may wish to refer to personal interest, taught content, sector engagement and work placement the methods of research that you have used
- sources used as part of investigating the topic and focus areas.

This task requires a clearly focused introduction to the extended investigation. The focus areas must be explicitly identified and directly aligned with the chosen topic. One or two key focus areas should be selected and justified, with reasons for choice linked to personal interest and/or practical experiences within a work or learning environment that have prompted further enquiry. Focus areas should remain limited in scope to allow for in-depth consideration and evaluation through a range of research methods across the investigation. Evidence of research activity, including the identification of selected reading materials and sources, must be clearly stated to support the direction and purpose of the investigation.

Tasks

Comments on tasks/questions relating to candidate performance/meeting assessment criteria

Task 1 generally presented a lack of clearly addressed evidence areas which contributed to lower marks for some candidates. References and sources of information were frequently missing, and in many cases the rationale for selecting the topic lacked sufficient detail. While the chosen topic was usually clearly stated in the opening section of the investigation, explanations for the choice were sometimes underdeveloped. Where reasons were provided, these were often linked to personal experience or a desire to extend knowledge through research, which were focused and provided clarity of personal interest, taught content and experiences which aim to support the investigation as a whole.

Candidates generally selected a limited and manageable number of focus areas for their investigation and were able to justify these choices clearly, outlining the learning they intended to gain through in-depth research. Many were also able to suggest thoughtful and relevant directions for further study.

Task marking

Comments on approaches to internal marking

Areas for improvements are needed in relation to evidencing and referencing sources. Although many candidates used a range of materials to support their research, there was limited explanation of why these sources were appropriate or how they supported the investigation. Stronger responses referenced specific legislation, textbooks, and websites and explained the relevance and value of these sources to the chosen topic, providing a clearer foundation for the investigation. However, many candidates did not clearly outline the sources used or justify their purpose, which reduced the clarity and direction of the research focus.

Task 2

Discuss how your selected topic and focus areas support children's care, play, learning and development.

Your evidence **must** include:

- how the focus areas support (positively or negatively) children's care, play learning and development
- a variety of viewpoints including your own and/or those of others
- appropriate examples from theory and/or practice to support your discussion
- how relevant theory/legislation or frameworks (as appropriate) have impacted on the topic and focus areas
- traceable references or quotes to support evidence.

Candidates are expected to demonstrate an understanding of relevant theory, frameworks, and/or legislation in relation to their chosen focus areas and to apply this knowledge to practice. Both positive and negative aspects should be explored, alongside the candidate's own viewpoint and consideration of alternative perspectives. This may include examples drawn from work placements and observed practice, which can be used to verify viewpoints. Appropriate and relevant theory, legislation, or frameworks must be integrated to support discussion, and sources should be referenced effectively and accurately throughout.

Tasks

Comments on tasks/questions relating to candidate performance/meeting assessment criteria

Task 2 showed limited development of different viewpoints. Most candidates were able to identify one or two focus areas and provide some relevant discussion points. The task allowed candidates to reflect on positive and negative aspects of their focus areas, and many used examples from practical experience to support their points. These reflections generally remained linked to the focus areas identified in Task 1. However, referencing was often unclear or missing, and sources were not consistently included. Some candidates relied too heavily on direct quotations, with large sections copied rather than discussed. Quotes should be used sparingly to support ideas. Some responses also used short, undeveloped statements instead of full paragraphs, which affected the flow and clarity of the task.

Task marking

Comments on approaches to internal marking

Areas for improvement include maintaining a clear focus on the topic question throughout the investigation. Task 2 showed limited development of different viewpoints, these could incorporate own opinion/viewpoints, professional opinion, research from books or the internet, videos of professional/expert discussion, or discussions with work-based staff. Some candidates were unfocused on their topic choice and could have explored further how current and contemporary factors affect the health and well-being of children through clear use of viewpoints and examples to support the discussion, while candidates who selected Topic 2, provided good discussions on the statutory curriculum framework in Wales to inform planning although further evidence of the change in legislations to support holistic development in practice would support this discussion with greater purpose and clarity.

Task 3

Evaluate how the values and principles that underpin your selected topic and chosen focus areas are used in practice to support children’s care, play, learning and development.

Your evidence **could** include reference to:

- effective communication
- teamwork and collaborative working
- equality/inclusion/diversity
- freedom to participate
- children’s rights being upheld
- professional skills or any other as appropriate.

This task focuses on evaluating a range of values and principles. Evaluation can be strengthened by drawing on knowledge from taught content and examples from practical experience. Candidates were generally able to consider a range of discussion points related to practice and included clear examples addressing key areas of evidence, such as the importance of effective communication, teamwork, and professional skills.

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Candidates were able to provide strong discussions around the focus areas, linking how a range of values and principles can support knowledge and understanding of topic 1; current and contemporary factors affecting the health and well-being of children and topic 2; the statutory curriculum framework in Wales to inform planning for holistic development in practice. This task provided an opportunity to reflect on work-based experiences and professional practice, and many candidates were able to present clear discussions that related effectively to the values and principles of their selected topic.

Discussions frequently included the following areas of evidence: Effective communication; candidates demonstrated how clear, appropriate, and sensitive communication with children, colleagues, and families supports holistic development, builds relationships, and ensures children’s needs are understood and met. Teamwork and collaborative working; many candidates highlighted the importance of working collaboratively with colleagues, other professionals, and families to plan and deliver activities that promote children’s care, learning, and well-being. Equality, inclusion, and diversity; candidates were able to discuss the need to provide inclusive environments where all children have access to opportunities and resources, regardless of background, ability, or personal circumstances. Children’s rights being upheld; candidates considered how principles such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child are embedded in practice. Discussions included ensuring children have a voice and respecting their choices. Professional skills: Many candidates reflected on the importance of professionalism, including adhering to ethical practice and the importance of following policies and procedures.

Overall, candidates demonstrated a firm understanding of the values and principles and were able to link these effectively to their chosen topic and focus areas. They explained how these principles support children’s care, play, learning, and development, and many included additional research relevant to their focus areas. Responses often drew on both work-based and personal experiences, showing knowledge of the professional practices and skills required when working with children.

Task marking

Comments on approaches to internal marking

Areas for improvement include providing more evaluative discussion on how the values and principles are applied in practice. Candidates could enhance their work by making evaluative judgements based on practical experiences, offering deeper insight and understanding of their selected topic and focus areas.

Task 4

Consider how relevant theories, legislation or frameworks (as appropriate) have influenced practice in children’s care, play, learning and development settings.

Evidence **must** include clear links to how the theories, legislation or frameworks have influenced practice in the settings you have experienced.

This task requires candidates to make clear links to relevant theory, legislation, and/or frameworks, particularly those applicable in Wales, as appropriate to their chosen topic focus. Candidates should demonstrate both depth and breadth of understanding by considering the strengths and weaknesses of practice. Evidence should be developed to show explicit connections to placement experiences. Candidates must discuss how legislation, frameworks, and/or theoretical perspectives have influenced current practice and contributed to changes in children’s settings, using their own reflections to interpret the impact on professional practice.

Tasks

Comments on tasks/questions relating to candidate performance/meeting assessment criteria

Candidates are required to consider how relevant theories, legislation, or frameworks have influenced practice in children’s care, play, learning, and development settings. Evidence should clearly show how these have impacted the candidate’s own experiences in settings they have observed or worked in. For example, candidates who selected topic; current and contemporary factors affecting the health and well-being of children were able to link Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory to situations they observed, explaining how family or community factors influenced children’s development in practice. Candidates also referred to safeguarding legislation to describe how they ensured children’s safety and rights were upheld during activities.

Candidates who selected topic 2; the value of implementing engaging activities to support holistic development in children demonstrated how the Curriculum for Wales influenced their planning and delivery of hands-on learning experiences. They reflected on how using frameworks, such as experiential learning or learning through play, supported children’s holistic development in their placement.

Candidates also described how applying professional skills, such as observation, assessment, and communication, helped them adapt activities to meet individual children's needs and promote inclusion. Overall, candidates were able to show how theory, legislation, and frameworks informed their practical decisions, influenced planning and activity delivery, and supported the care, play, learning, and development of children in real-world settings.

Task marking

Comments on approaches to internal marking

Areas for improvement include providing more depth in discussion. Many candidates reference a wide range of theories, legislation, or frameworks, but covering too many can prevent a thorough exploration of each one. Focusing on a smaller number of key references would allow for clearer links to practice and a more detailed discussion. On a positive note, candidates show good engagement with research and make thoughtful connections between theory and their own practical experiences. Referencing could also be improved, with clear in-text referencing and a complete reference list to properly show sources used.

Task 5

Assess how having knowledge of the selected topic and related theories and legislation can be used to bring about change in children's care, play, learning and development provision in the 21st century in Wales.

Your evidence **must**:

- Demonstrate an awareness of new and developing practice approaches
- Refer to a range of settings within the sector
- Make judgements that link practice with theory (topic focus, related theories and legislation)
- Make suggestions for future change that could be adopted in practice to support children's care, play, learning and development.

Evidence **must** refer to research undertaken and **must** relate to experiences in practice.

This task looks towards changes for the future based on the candidate's research and understanding of their chosen topic and focus areas. Candidates are required to consider the knowledge they have gained through the research of their topic and related focus areas and assess how the related theories and legislation can be used to bring about change in children's care, play, learning and development.

Tasks

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Task 5 was generally responded to positively, with candidates providing strong discussions linking their professional practice to theoretical understanding. For topic 1; current and contemporary factors affecting the health and well-being of children, candidates reflected on how research into factors such as mental health, family structure, or social media could influence strategies to support children's wellbeing.

For example, some candidates described how observing children experiencing stress in their placement led them to apply knowledge of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory to consider the wider impact of family and community factors, and suggested adjustments to routines or interventions to better support individual needs. Others referred to safeguarding legislation to explain how they would implement changes to protect children more effectively.

For topic 2; the value of implementing engaging activities to support holistic development in children, candidates discussed how frameworks such as the Curriculum for Wales and theories of experiential learning could be applied to improve planning and delivery of activities. For example, some candidates described adapting play-based learning tasks to meet the needs of children with additional learning requirements or using observation and assessment to evaluate the impact of engaging activities on holistic development. Others suggested how new legislation or updated guidance could inform changes to practice, such as promoting inclusion, participation, and children's rights during structured and free-play activities.

Candidates were able to express informed judgements, offering suggestions and opinions in a professional and reflective manner. Overall, responses demonstrated how research, theory, and legislation can influence practice and support improvements in children's care, play, learning, and development, with clear links to their chosen topic and focus areas.

Task marking

Comments on approaches to internal marking

Areas for improvement include providing more discussion on the benefits of new and future changes. Many candidates focus on current practices rather than considering how emerging legislation, frameworks, or research could enhance children's care, play, learning, and development. For topic 1, candidates could reflect on how factors such as mental health, digital influences, or family changes might shape future practice. For topic 2, candidates could consider how updated frameworks or innovative play strategies could improve learning experiences. Connecting these ideas to their own placement experiences would make reflections stronger and show how practice could be improved.

Task 6

Discuss how your research and learning will support your own individual practice moving forward.

Your evidence must include:

- a reflection of the value or benefits of what you have learnt as part of investigating this topic and focus areas
- what you would like to do, based on your findings, to improve your own future practice
- reference to any impact changes to your own practice could have on the practice of others

Candidates are required to reflect on their own personal learning of the topic and focus areas chosen. This reflection will bring together the varied discussions and viewpoints throughout the whole investigation. Candidates will be able to discuss the value or benefits of what they have learnt as part of investigating their chosen topic and focus areas. Candidates can discuss what they would like to do based on their findings to enable a better understanding of practice with the aim of improving their own future practice. Candidates will be required to refer to any impact changes will have to their own practice and the changes to the practice of others in the future.

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Candidates were able to reflect positively on their overall learning and effectively communicate the value of the knowledge they had gained. Many clearly discussed the benefits of their research and how it could enhance their own future practice while also supporting the practice of others. This task required candidates to link their investigation findings and learning to the development of their individual practice moving forward. Overall, the task was completed very well, with most candidates achieving high marks through thorough discussions that addressed all required evidence areas. Candidates demonstrated a strong understanding of their topic, met the criteria expectations, and provided clear, consistent, and reflective conclusions. Some candidates, however, included additional research in their conclusions, which is not required, as this section should focus solely on reflecting on the findings and learning from the investigation as a whole.

Overall, the responses provided were very positive and were reflected in a high level of achievement. Candidates generally demonstrated a strong understanding of the learning gained through their extensive research and were able to reflect on the skills developed during the focused investigation. Many candidates effectively discussed the importance of applying this new knowledge and research to future practice, clearly linking their reflections to their chosen topic areas and highlighting the potential positive impact on their professional practice.

Task marking

Comments on approaches to internal marking

Areas for improvement include giving more focus to the value and benefits of learning across the whole investigation and clearly reflecting on how this knowledge will support their professional growth and future practice, for example how this knowledge can be applied to future practice, supporting their development as professionals, contributing to a knowledgeable and experienced team, and assisting with further studies, such as university courses in teaching or childcare.

Supporting you

Useful contacts and links

Our friendly subject team is on hand to support you between 8.30am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

Tel: 02920 404264

Email: CCPLD@WJEC.co.uk

Qualification webpage: [Qualifications | Health and Care Learning Wales](#)

See other useful contacts here: [Contact us | Health and Care Learning Wales](#)

CPD Training / Professional Learning

Access our popular, free online CPD/PL courses to receive exam feedback and put questions to our subject team, and attend one of our face-to-face events, focused on enhancing teaching and learning, providing practical classroom ideas and developing understanding of marking and assessment.

Please find details for all our courses here: [Upcoming Training and Events | Health and Care Learning Wales](#) <https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/>

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