

<b>Meeting</b>	Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee
<b>Title</b>	Gwynedd Primary Schools Welsh Language Charter
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	20 June 2019
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<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Councillor Cemlyn Rees Williams

## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1. In 2010, a Working Group was set up to look at increasing the social use of the Welsh language in response to the findings of research work commissioned into the social use of Welsh by children in Gwynedd primary school.
- 1.2 The Working Group was led by the Education Department and Hunaniaith. Its membership was formed from elected members and primary schools. The idea of establishing a Language Charter was developed from the discussions of this Working Group, and the Charter is by now implemented in all Gwynedd primary schools, and during the past few years, has been extended across north Wales and nationally with the support of the Welsh Government.
- 1.3 *The simple objective of the Language Charter is to provide a clear framework, which can be used to promote and increase the use of Welsh by children in a social context. In a nutshell, the Charter's aim is to encourage and inspire children to speak Welsh.*
- 1.4 The Language Charter exhorts participation from every member of the school community, and members of the school workforce and council, the pupils and their parents, school governors and the wider community are all encouraged to take full ownership of it.
- 1.5 The Language Charter, in its original form, was launched at a conference in Nant Gwrtheyrn in June 2011. Following that, the Language Charter was piloted in a limited number of schools, and then in the summer of 2013, a Language Charter Co-ordinator was appointed, and was then responsible for extending the Charter to the remaining primary schools in Gwynedd.

## **2. IMPLEMENTING THE LANGUAGE CHARTER**

- 2.1 Since the launch of the Language Charter, the guidance for schools was developed four times, without losing sight of the fundamental vision of making sure that the children of Gwynedd use the Welsh language socially.
- 2.2 The Education Department is responsible for a network of 13 Language Co-ordinators, which ensures that there is one point of contact to disseminate information, ensure appropriate guidance and support, as well as share Language Charter resources amongst the schools in their catchment area.
- 2.3 The Language Co-ordinators are also a key resource when ensuring the attainment of schools in the context of the Language Charter bronze, silver and gold awards.
- 2.4 On a yearly basis, the schools also receive £200 each to plan and hold activities to support the aim of the Language Charter. In Gwynedd, the schools now plan the use of this funding

as a catchment area, and below are some examples of the type of activities and resources created with the money given to support the aim of the Language Charter:

- Resources and guidance on how to play new playground games
- Catchment area raps created to reiterate language accuracy in a fun and modern way. The Welsh-medium raps and music is played through loudspeakers during break time in 3 catchment areas.
- A CD of songs and nursery rhymes created for pre-school, nursery and Foundation Phase. The songs are played on a daily basis in order to strengthen the oral language and reiterate accurate language patterns and enrich the vocabulary of pupils in the schools within one catchment area.
- The learners of every school in a catchment area have worked with a composer to compose a suitable and inspiring 'Language Charter' song, the song is played for the schools' parents and friends through social media, at meetings and at concerts.
- Create YouTube channels for catchment areas of learners holding question and answer sessions with famous Welsh people in order to raise awareness of Welsh 'celebrities'.

2.5 In addition, the Language Charter has led to holding:

- a number of activities e.g. Miri Mehefin, Hwyl Haf, Pared Gŵyl Ddewi;
- a number of training sessions e.g. language acquisition to the early years workforce, language skills for ancillary staff;
- performing workshops and composing workshops with contemporary Welsh bands
- the creation of Welsh medium tour guide working in collaboration with the Welsh Book Council

### **3. DEVELOPING THE GWE-IAITH**

3.1 One important step to measure the impact of implementing the Language Charter as well as all the relative activities was establishing the Gwe-iaith.

3.2 The Gwe-iaith was developed by the Council's IT Unit in partnership with the Education Department and Hunaniaith. The Gwe-iaith is an online questionnaire, which asks a series of questions to children in the context of the Welsh language. Every school operate the Gwe-iaith twice a year, in September in order to establish a baseline of children's use and attitudes towards the Welsh language at the beginning of the school year, and then the Gwe-iaith is operated again in June, in order to assess if there was been an increase in the use made of the Welsh language against the baseline that was established.

### **4. LANGUAGE CHARTER – TOWARDS THE FUTURE**

4.1 The Language Charter was established here in Gwynedd, and the Education Department and Gwynedd Council alike are proud of the success, as well as the effort and enthusiasm of all the stakeholders in our schools to realize the aim.

4.2 Following this success, and with the support of the Welsh Government, the Language Charter was extended to bilingual and Welsh medium schools across the north Wales region, and more recently, the Language Charter was extended to Welsh medium and bilingual schools throughout Wales.

- 4.3 The Welsh Government now funds a Language Charter Co-ordinator post in every regional education consortia across Wales, and the Welsh Government is looking to publish a single national framework which will reflect the Language Charter whilst bringing a number of other schemes in the same field together, such as *Cymraeg Campus* and *PCAI*.
- 4.4 In addition, it is a period of major changes in education at the moment, with the scale and extent of these changes on the school organization like never before: changes to the organisation of the schools inspectorate (Estyn), as well as considerable changes to the curriculum and organisation of our schools following Professor Donaldson's recommendations. These changes offer clear challenges and opportunities for the Language Charter as we look forward to the next phase in the life of the Language Charter.