



REPORT TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE

24 FEBRUARY 2021

Report by: Alwyn Jones - GwE Assistant Director

Subject: Developing Accelerated Learning programmes for the Welsh language

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To seek approval from the Joint-Committee to develop Accelerated Learning programmes for those being educated through the medium of Welsh (First Language).

2.0 Background

2.1 The response to COVID-19 has affected our lives greatly. In this challenging context, there has been a profound effect on the education system and schools.

2.2 In the context of the Welsh language, Estyn's thematic report '*Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19*', published in January 2021, highlights the concern that pupils are losing their Welsh, especially those from non-Welsh speaking homes.

2.3 This problem is likely to be further exacerbated following the lockdown at the beginning of the spring term 2021 with schools returning to remote learning. The period has highlighted the need to have clear plans and strategies in place to equip teachers to ensure progression in our learners' speaking, listening, reading and writing skills through the medium of Welsh, across the ability and age range.

3.0 Considerations

3.1 There is an immediate need for 'Accelerated Learning' plans to target learners' Welsh language skills. There is some concern that learners could change medium from Welsh during this period, especially in the early years, because of their non-exposure to the language as per the normal arrangements, and inability to practise sufficiently at home.

3.2 Both languages need to be treated on an equitable footing, and effective accelerated learning programmes need to be in place to develop learners' Welsh reading and language skills that accommodate the needs of the age range, their ability and category of need.

3.3 Expectations as regards what can be achieved in the short-term will need to be managed, and schools and stakeholders should take the following into account:

- Schools are unlikely to have access to an adequate range of resources to deliver several catch-up programmes upon re-opening; therefore, a longer-term strategy will be needed to reinstate Welsh language skills fully.
- According to research, specific programmes have proved more successful than others are at improving core skills, which will need to be a consideration when developing similar programmes for Welsh.
- A baseline should be set as a starting point for analysing the scale of the issue and the types of interventions needed to reinstate Welsh language skills.
- Consideration should be given to the skills, understanding and capacity of staff to deliver any required programme or intervention; and
- The role of parents/carers in supporting learners to recover their language skills should be taken into account.

3.4 The professional development needs of staff, or the school's capacity, in terms of meeting learners' needs will need to be identified. Comprehensive and focused professional development will need to be ensured so that staff are well informed to effectively deliver the Welsh language accelerated learning programmes.

4.0 Recommendations

4.1 The Joint-Committee is asked to approve the content of the report and plans to develop Accelerated Learning programmes for those being educated through the medium of Welsh (First Language).

5.0 Financial Implications

5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

6.0 Equalities Impact

6.1 There are no new equalities implications arising from this report.

7.0 Personnel Implications

7.1 There are no new personnel implications arising from this report.

8.0 Consultation undertaken

8.1 Consultation with GwE Management Board.

OPINION OF STATUTORY OFFICERS

Monitoring Officer:

Nothing to add from a propriety perspective.

Statutory Finance Officer:

I note that part 5.1 of the report confirms that there are no financial implications arising from this report. Therefore, I assume that GwE will operate within its existing resources.