

MEETING	LANGUAGE COMMITTEE
DATE	25 January 2022
TITLE	Report of the Education Department's implementation of the Language Policy and Welsh Language Promotion Plan in Gwynedd
PURPOSE	Present information about the Education Department's contribution to the implementation of the Language Policy and Welsh Language Promotion Plan in Gwynedd
AUTHOR	Debbie Anne Williams Jones, Education Corporate Services Manager

1. BACKGROUND

This report has been prepared to present information to the Language Committee on the Education Department's contribution to the implementation of the Council's Language Policy and the Welsh Language Promotion Plan in Gwynedd.

The Council's Language Policy is embedded in all of the work of the Department and schools, and we will highlight in this report the opportunities that are available to develop language skills, foster confidence and promote the Welsh language, and acknowledge some challenges that are facing us in specific fields.

You will already be aware of the detailed work that we have achieved over the past year in preparation for the 10-year Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP). A period of public consultation on the draft WESP document has just ended before Christmas, and we will be considering the comments received during the consultation period and amending the WESP as we see fit before it is submitted for sign-off by the Cabinet and Welsh Government, so that it becomes an operational document by September 2022. Of course, the WESP is at the core of how we plan in the field of Welsh medium and bilingual education in Gwynedd, including social use of Welsh, promoting the advantages of the Welsh language and bilingualism, and supporting the language skills of the education workforce. Therefore, a close link is seen between this report and the WESP.

2. EDUCATION DEPARTMENT'S RESPONSE TO THE WELSH LANGUAGE PROMOTION PLAN IN GWYNEDD

1.	Can you highlight any projects within your department that contribute to one of the Council's language strategy priorities, namely the Welsh Language Promotion Plan for Gwynedd?
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1. LANGUAGE OF THE FAMILY

a) Increase in the number of Welsh-medium play opportunities for pre-school age children

The Education Department is collaborating with the Children and Families Department in the Early Years field. In line with the content of the WESP, it is ensured that all Early Years settings set a firm foundation for Welsh, ensuring that every child has a Welsh Language, Literacy and Communication skills assessment on admission and at the end of the part-time nursery education and at the end of the Foundation Phase. An appropriate provision to enable every pupil to develop bilingual proficiency must be ensured. Please see below our current situation in terms of the number of nursery children/three year olds educated through the medium of Welsh.

Gwynedd Cylch Meithrin Data 2018-19 (No data available for 2019-20 due to COVID):

Area	Cylch Meithrin Numbers	Number / % of nursery 3 year old children transferring to Welsh-medium education	
Arfon	28	834	99.3%
Dwyfor	18	301	100%
Meirionnydd	19	346	100%

In our 10-year WESP, we note our commitment to collaborate with one primary school in Bangor in order to increase their use of Welsh and their Welsh-medium provision, in accordance with the Council's Language Policy, which will lead to an increase in the % of nursery children in Arfon who transfer to Welsh-medium education.

b) Better understanding among parents of the value of transferring the Welsh language to children, and of the advantages of being multilingual.

Resources on the advantages of bilingualism shared with schools and available on Hwb Siarter Iaith for everyone's use.

2. THE LANGUAGE OF LEARNING

a) Schools that give prestige and value the Welsh language and encourage more use of the Welsh language as a medium of learning and socialising by continuing to implement the Language Charter and the Secondary Sector Language Strategy.

The aim of the Language Policy is to ensure that all the pupils within the county have the appropriate linguistic skills in both Welsh and English. All of the County's education establishments are expected to reinforce the Language Policy in their administration, social life and pastoral arrangements, as well as in the curricular provision. The Language Policy places an emphasis on immersing 0-7 year old learners in the Welsh language, ensuring that they only receive a Welsh assessment at the end of the Foundation Phase. In 2018-19, 98.5% of

learners were assessed in Welsh as a first language at the end of the Foundation Phase. In KS2, the aim is to continue to develop the pupils' grasp of Welsh, giving attention to the development of their skills in both languages.

b) More pupils continuing to improve their Welsh language skills when transferring from primary to secondary school and post compulsory education.

In secondary schools, every pupil who has attained the necessary level, namely level 3+ at the end of KS2, is expected to pursue Welsh and English as subjects until the end of Year 11. Secondary schools build upon the foundations set in the primary by ensuring that each pupil continues to develop skills in Welsh and in English. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, no data is available for 2019-20 and 2020-21, therefore, the 2018-19 data is the most up-to-date data we have regarding learners continuing to improve their Welsh language skills when transferring from one stage of their statutory education to another, as shown by the table below:

2018-19	Year 9 learners being assessed in the medium of Welsh (First Language)	84.5%
2018-19	Foundation Phase learners gaining Outcome 5+ in Welsh (teacher assessments)	78.8%
2018-19	KS2 Learners gaining Level 4+ Welsh First Language (teacher assessments)	86.9%
2018-19	KS3 Learners gaining Level 5+ Welsh First Language (teacher assessments)	91.9%
2018-19	KS3 Learners gaining Level 5+ in Welsh Second Language (teacher assessments)	77.1%

Similarly, the table below shows data from 2018-19 in relation to more learners studying for Welsh (as a subject) qualifications, and subjects studied through the medium of Welsh:

2018/19	Learners who register for GCSE Welsh (First Language) and who registered for at least two other qualifications in Welsh.	78.1%
2018/19	Learners who register for GCSE Welsh (First Language) who registered for at least five other qualifications at level 1 or level 2 in Welsh.	64.2%

2018/19	Learners at the end of Key Stage 4 who achieved grades A*-C in GCSE Welsh First Language.	70.7%
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c) The response to the impact of the pandemic on Welsh

Following an extended period of home learning, and the national concern expressed about the adverse impact of Covid on the Welsh language standards, we have gathered data via various questionnaires in order to obtain a better overview of the Welsh language skills of our children and young people.

The evidence from the questionnaires show that literacy skills is the greatest concern across the county, and every school has drawn up an action plan in response to the situation. The Secondary Language Strategy Coordinator and the Language Charter Coordinator has arranged a follow-up meeting with each school to discuss the report and facilitate any support they may need, whether this is obtained via Authority officers, Language Coordinators or GwE. There is an intention to re-send the questionnaire at the end of the academic year in order to measure the impact of any action. The Language Charter Coordinator and Secondary Language Strategy Coordinator are now supporting individual schools to implement their plans to develop literacy skills and raise learners' confidence in Welsh.

Also, financial support from Welsh Government via the regional consortia will enable schools to co-plan interventions at cluster level (primary and secondary) in order to strengthen learners' social use of Welsh, as well as respond to the language skill needs of the education workforce. We have been working closely with the county's language coordinators to ensure that Welsh Language Grant cluster schemes in each catchment area respond to the needs highlighted, such as raising confidence and developing learners' literacy skills in Welsh that were highlighted as a result of the pandemic.

d) Language Centres

As a result of the pandemic, Language Centre staff had to adapt and transform the way they provided support for latecomers to acquire the Welsh language. Language Centre staff were in fact the first to pilot live learning sessions during the Summer Term 2020, in order to maintain the spoken language of latecomers, and the custom of blended learning, namely the face-to-face and remote learning sessions continue to be a key part of the Language Centres' provision with the schools. To reiterate this new way of supporting latecomers, on 6 July 2021, the Cabinet approved a new vision for a modern immersion education system in Gwynedd, which places the learner at the centre as they and the county's latecomers are supported to acquire the Welsh language. This new vision also includes a capital investment of £1.1 million from Welsh Government for the purpose of establishing new immersion education sites in Bangor and Tywyn, as well as improving existing facilities at the Eifionydd site, Porthmadog.

It is hoped that the new-look immersion education system will come into force on 1 January 2023. We also received recent confirmation that the Department was successful with its grant application of £154,000 to realise two projects to modernise the immersion provision to

reflect the requirements of Curriculum for Wales and the Digital Education Strategy, and empower Gwynedd school practitioners in the principles and practices of language immersion.

3. THE LANGUAGE OF WORK AND SERVICES

a) Welsh Language Services

We are proud to report that all Education Department services are available through the medium of Welsh.

b) Language Designations

96.2% of Education Department staff (excluding schools) meet the language designation of their post. The Service Management Team is committed to support staff who want to learn or refresh their language skills to attend the variety of opportunities available to do this. The Language Designations principles and procedures are also included in Outcome 7 of WESP.

In an attempt to obtain consistency in terms of linguistic requirement expectations (Language Designations), for posts across all Council departments (including schools), the Education Officers have been working closely with Human Resources Officers, Democracy and Language Officers, and Learning and Development Officers on the work of determining our expectations in terms of linguistic requirements for the appointment of our schools' workforce. The Language Policy and School Safe Recruitment and Selection Policy make the linguistic requirement expectations of the Education Department clear to Headteachers and Chairs of Governing Bodies. It is expected for Welsh to be noted as an essential skill for every teaching post, with the exact level of linguistic skills needed to achieve the requirements of the post - speaking and listening, reading and comprehension, and writing - being clearly shown in the Person Specification when advertising. We have amended the Job Descriptions, Person Specifications, Language Policy and School Safe Recruitment and Selection Policy in our schools to ensure that they include a reference to the Language Designations. Consequently, when appointing to the education workforce, it is expected for the Language Designations to be included in every advertisement, in line with the Education Department's expectations.

c) Welsh Language Self-assessment

75.9% of Education Department staff (excluding schools) have completed a Welsh language self-assessment. Currently, 24.1% of central staff in the Education Department have not completed the self-assessment and the task of ensuring that current staff and new staff complete the self-assessment is continuous work.

d) Annual Census of the Education Workforce

We have given particular attention to supporting the language skills of our secondary schools' workforce in an attempt to facilitate the future of the Welsh-medium provision across the curriculum in Key Stages 3, 4 and 5 by trialling a Welsh Government Work Welsh for Teachers pilot with teaching staff in one secondary school in the county. Based on the latest Education Workforce Language Census, we are also targeting and supporting some schools across the county to ensure that they are able to respond to the linguistic needs of their staff by promoting access to opportunities to learn Welsh or increase their confidence in Welsh, as well as respond in full to the language policy of Gwynedd schools in terms of teaching medium and administrative language of the school.

In our Business Plan that accompanies our 10-year WESP, we note our commitment to work with specific schools in order to increase their use and provision of Welsh, in line with the Council's Language Policy, which will lead to an increase in the % of nursery children who will transfer to Welsh education, and an increase in the % of secondary pupils who will study subjects through the medium of Welsh and sit exams in Welsh at the end of Key Stages 4 and 5.

e) Language Policy and Safe Recruitment and Selection Policy

The main aim of schools' Language Policy and Safe Recruitment and Selection Policy is to ensure that Headteachers, school staff and Governors are aware of the expectations to use and promote Welsh in all parts of the operation of schools in the county, and ensure that the rights of the pupils and the school's extended family to use Welsh when associating with the school is always respected.

In implementing these policies, the school and governing body will ensure:

- that all pupils in the county possess appropriate linguistic skills in Welsh and English, and that this expectation is consistent across each of the schools.
- that there is an appropriate provision to enable every pupil to develop bilingual proficiency. In this context, schools are expected to continue to foster the skills of those pupils who are Welsh first language, and introduce Welsh to those who are Welsh-learners.
- that all of the County's education establishments are expected to reinforce the Language Policy in their administration, social life and pastoral arrangements, as well as in the curricular provision.
- that Welsh is noted as an essential skill for every teaching post, with the exact level of linguistic skills needed to achieve the requirements of the post - speaking and listening, reading and comprehension, and writing - being clearly shown in the Person Specification when advertising.

4. THE LANGUAGE OF THE COMMUNITY

a) Welsh Language Charter / Secondary Language Strategy:

- Support schools to implement the main priorities of the Welsh Language Charter/Secondary Language Charter.
- Every primary and secondary school completes the Language Web in order to set a baseline. Re-visit the questionnaire at the end of the educational year in order to experience the impact of any action.
- The Outcome of the Welsh Language Skills Questionnaire cascaded with schools and action plans jointly drawn up with schools in response to the findings.

b) Welsh Language Cluster Plans:

- We have re-defined the roles and work programmes of language coordinators in each catchment area in Gwynedd to ensure that they respond to the outcomes of Gwynedd WESP.
- All schools in every catchment area in Gwynedd have drawn up their cluster plans for Welsh in response and in order to aim towards achieving outcome 3 and 5 of the WESP. After receiving the Welsh Language grant in December, schools are now proceeding to put every plan into action.
- Language Charter Coordinator and Secondary Language Strategy verifies the Welsh Language Grant cluster plans to ensure that they correspond with the WESP outcomes, strengthening the collaboration between the primary and secondary, and responding to local needs that will give more opportunities to Gwynedd pupils to make social use of Welsh.

c) Modernising Education

As a part of the process of developing proposal(s) for the reorganisation of school(s), it is required for the authority, in accordance with the Schools Organisation Code (011/2018), to carry out an assessment of the impact that the proposal(s) will have on the Welsh language, the community and on equality. In order to carry out a comprehensive assessment of the impact of any proposal, as part of the consultation process, the authority is carrying out the following impact assessments:

- Assessment of the probable impact on the Quality and Standards of Education
- Assessment of the probable Impact on travel arrangements
- Assessment of the probable impact on the Community
- Language impact assessment
- Assessment against the Well-being Act, and
- Equality Assessment

	<p>In 2021, this process was carried out as the authority reviewed the future of Ysgol Abersoch as a result of the number of challenges facing the school. The Education Department will work on a cross-departmental basis, with Hunaniaith, the Economy and Community Department, as well as the local community to promote the Welsh language in the community in the village of Abersoch.</p>
	<p>1. RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY</p> <p>a) Support growth in the technology sector by promoting new developments and develop the skills of young people in the field.</p> <p>b) More public and educational organisations using Welsh-medium software and technology.</p> <p>What we are trying to achieve through the digital strategy is highly ambitious and is an indication of the way we prioritise our children's education here in Gwynedd. Put simply, the strategy, when implemented fully, will provide all children with a suitable device each to enable digital learning. Enough <i>ipads</i> have been distributed to provide one to every four learners in the Foundation Phase, and enough <i>Chromebooks</i> have been distributed so that all learners in years 3 to 6 have one device each. Windows 10 devices are also being prepared for all pupils in years 7, 10 and 11. Every teacher in Gwynedd will receive a standard device through the strategy over the coming months, with the hope that this will further spark imagination, ingenuity and effectiveness in aspects of digital learning across the sectors. Gwynedd will be one of the first authorities in Wales to do this, and it is something we can take pride in.</p> <p>Every device will be set-up in Welsh in the first place, where it is possible to do so. Nearly 10,000 devices will use Windows and Office 365 through the medium of Welsh.</p> <p>In addition, the strategy sets a long-term ambition to get more Welsh speakers into high value jobs in the digital field.</p>
<p>2.</p>	<p><i>If the department awards work externally on contract, can you refer to any good practice, either when imposing conditions or when monitoring in order to ensure compliance with the linguistic conditions?</i></p>
	<p>The Department includes language requirements on all of our 3rd party contracts and each contract is regularly monitored on behalf of the provider, between the Service Manager and the Manager. A number of Service Level Agreements are provided by various Council departments for our schools, such as building maintenance from the Housing and Property Department, land maintenance from the Environment Department, and business and administrative support for primary schools via a Service Level Agreement with the Schools Business Centre.</p> <p>The ALN and I service has a service level agreement with the Speech and Language Therapy Service within the Health Board. This agreement is for the provision of Speech and Language Therapists who support learners within Gwynedd and Anglesey mainstream schools. It is monitored at different levels (managerial and operational) to report to the ALN and I management Board. Within this agreement the service is required to</p>

provide bilingually for schools, but this can be very challenging in terms of recruiting bilingual therapists and responding to need in a timely manner. We are working with the service to overcome the barriers around this.

3. *Are there any obstacles that prevent you as a department from offering a full service in Welsh?*

Recruitment

Recruitment of secondary teachers in specific subjects in some areas of the county, who are proficient in Welsh, is a huge challenge and is a matter that causes concern to the Department and the schools affected.

The ALN&I service is experiencing difficulties with the recruitment of a workforce that is proficient in Welsh in specialist fields such as educational psychologists and counsellors, and we know that the current cohort that qualifies on the course to become educational psychologists are unlikely to lead to more educational psychologists for Gwynedd. Currently, the Department's educational psychologists are providing a service with fewer resources. In order to respond pro-actively to this situation, we are raising these matters in ALN discussions regularly at meetings with Welsh Government.

The Catering and Cleaning service has been key throughout the pandemic in order to ensure a safe environment for learners and staff at our schools, as well as ensure a school dinner provision. Staffing challenges in the context of long-term sickness, the impacts of Covid and recruitment difficulties affect this service on a daily basis, and there are challenges in ensuring a workforce that is proficient in Welsh in some areas of the county. In response, the service has taken advantage of the Welsh Government's Kickstart scheme to offer work placements from January onwards to people aged 16-24 years who receive Universal Credit and who are at risk of long-term unemployment. As part of the staff appointment pack, we ask every member of Catering and Cleaning service staff to complete a language assessment questionnaire in order to see their level of understanding in the language and whether they need assistance to improve their skills. The service will collaborate with Learning and Development to identify a suitable provision to improve the staff's language skills.

Currently, there are some examples of the service's staff choosing to follow on-line self-study units to improve their Welsh language skills.

We are also aware of recruitment difficulties in the Legal Unit of the Council, which has recently meant that an English only legal service is available to the Education Department, which presents obstacles for the Department in terms of sharing documentation, and being able to discuss legal issues in Welsh.

Meetings

	<p>Collaboration through the medium of Welsh with partners can be challenging in some fields. This includes national, regional and local meetings. The translation provision on Zoom is easy and effortless for those who require it, however, the Health Board, for example, have not been able to use this provision until very recently.</p> <p>Apps Schoolcomms The Education Department has calling for many years now for the Schoolscomms app to be available in Welsh, so that we can facilitate the ability of parents to use the app to pay for school dinners. We have not been able to promote the use of the app among parents as it was not available in Welsh. By now, and with our assistance to translate the app, the Schoolscomms app is now available in Welsh.</p>
4.	<p><i>Do you have ideas about new ways we can promote the Welsh language in the county's communities - either in your own services or by collaborating with others?</i></p>
	<p>As you know, the WESP is a 10 year statutory document for the Local Authority, and one of the obstacles to our ability to implement our vision and commitments in our new WESP, is that the Authority does not receive funding from the Welsh Government to help us implement and achieve the desired outcomes.</p>

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to:

- ask any questions or make observations on the content of the report.