

MEETING	LANGUAGE COMMITTEE
DATE	30 January 2023
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
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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 through all of the work done by the Department and schools, and we will highlight in this report the planning work that has been undertaken during the past year in response to new national requirements, and we will refer to the opportunities available to encourage progress in the use made of the Welsh language in formal and informal contexts in our schools, how our provision for latecomers is evolving to reflect the requirements of the Curriculum for Wales, and it acknowledges some of the challenges we are facing in specific fields.

One of the national changes that the Department has been preparing for over the past year is Welsh Government's new arrangements for school categorisation according to Welsh medium provision from September 2022. The change means that the number of categories has been reduced to three in the primary sector and three in the secondary sector. One intention with the new categorisation system is to encourage schools to increase their Welsh medium provision, and one of the core principles of the system is that no school should offer less Welsh medium provision in the future than was done in the past.

During the year, the Education Department planned and responded to the new system for the primary and secondary sector and completed that process with schools and Welsh Government during the summer term - to be implemented from September 2022 onwards. In October, the Department also held a training session for the elected members on this new categorisation system. Follow-up work will be done over the next year to ensure that the system develops and is embedded in order to achieve Gwynedd's ambition in this field.

Alongside the categorisation system, the Department has been preparing for the new Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP), which came into force on 1 September 2022. The WESP is a part of the long-term vision in Wales for *Cymraeg 2050*. In order to support the planning process, the plans have been arranged around seven outcomes which reflect a learner's learning journey and correspond with the policy fields of *Cymraeg 2050* and *Our National Mission*.

A full consultation on Gwynedd's new draft WESP was held in the autumn term of 2021, and following this, with the consultation ending before Christmas. After considering the observations of the consultation, the WESP was submitted before the Cabinet for approval in March 2022 and before the Language Committee at the beginning of the summer. It was approved in its final form by the Minister for the Welsh Language and Education on 24 June 2022.

As the WESP now becomes operational, Welsh Government and the minister will continue to monitor our progress and the steps we have taken annually. However, our aim in Gwynedd is for the WESP to be a live, ambitious document that reflects the unique situation of Gwynedd and steers our action in favour of Welsh medium education in the county.

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?
	<p>1. LANGUAGE OF THE FAMILY</p> <p>a) Increase in the number of Welsh-medium play opportunities for pre-school age children</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Gwynedd Cylchoedd Meithrin Data 2021-22:</p>

Area	Cylch Meithrin Numbers	Number / % of nursery three-year-old children transferring to Welsh-medium education	
Arfon	27	496	100%
Dwyfor	15	172	100%
Meirionnydd	19	186	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.

2. THE LANGUAGE OF LEARNING:

a) Schools that give prestige and value the Welsh language and encouraging more use of the Welsh language as a medium or 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, in all of our schools, have the appropriate linguistic skills in both Welsh and English. All of the county's education establishments are expected to reflect and reinforce the Language Policy in their administration, social life and pastoral arrangements, as well as in their 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 2022-23, 98.82% of learners will be 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, 2020-21, or 2021-22, 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%
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2018-19	Foundation Phase learners gaining Outcome 5+ in Welsh (teacher assessments)	78.8%
2018-19	KS2 learners gaining Level 4+ in Welsh First Language (teacher assessments)	86.9%
2018-19	KS3 learners gaining Level 5+ in 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 achieved grades A*-C in GCSE Welsh First Language.	70.7%

The Department is currently working with the secondary schools to secure definitive, reliable and current data in order to report on the Welsh language in more detail again, in response to the change in the KS2 and KS3 assessment process.

b) Language Centres

The Gwynedd Immersion Education System for 2023 and beyond has now been established and it will officially commence on 1 January 2023. The new staffing structure of the System is operational and a team of enthusiastic teachers and assistants are collaborating under the leadership of a Headteacher and Deputy. A Government capital investment to the value of £1.1 million has secured modern and fit-for-purpose buildings for the 21st Century in Ysgol Eifionydd in Porthmadog, and Ysgol Tryfan in Bangor with the construction work taking place in Tywyn and this centre is accommodated temporarily at Ysgol Bro Idris secondary school. Our new-look immersion service offers a provision for children from years 2 to 4 at the primary centres, whilst our primary-secondary transition centres offer courses for the older learners between years 5 and 9. Opening our doors to year 2 learners, who

are not necessarily latecomers to the county but have received early childhood education and spent time in the Foundation Phase here in Gwynedd is a significant step and places emphasis on those early immersion principles, which are key to ensure that we are on track to reach the Outcome 2 target of WESP. To this end, the staff at our centres have created and presented specific training for teachers and assistants in the Foundation Phase in order to share early immersion principles and acknowledge the linguistic complexity of a number of our existing Foundation Phase classes across the County.

To accompany the new structure of our System, we will begin to trial a new scheme at the Centres, entitled Aberwla. This is a scheme that has been created by Anni Llŷn, a local author, who has based her work on an imaginary village that is full of interesting locations and different characters. By meeting the characters and visiting the locations, the children will develop their vocabulary and language patterns in a structured way in order to ensure follow-up and continuation on the language continuum. To reinforce the patterns and vocabulary and to gain and motivate the learners' interest, we have managed, in collaboration with Animated Technologies, to create a virtual ABERWLA resource on a VR platform. This project has now been identified as innovative practice by Welsh Government and they have provided a further investment of £200,000 for us to complete all locations over the next 2 years, with the intention of sharing the resource nationally.

After completing the Primary Secondary Language Units' modernisation projects by the end of the 2022-2023 financial year, we will proceed to invest over £1.1m to reconcile capacity and improve the learning environment of the County's primary Language Centres.

Although the project's funding has been approved in principle by Welsh Government, there will be a need to submit a full business case before them in order to secure capital funding from the Welsh-medium Education Capital Grant in order to invest £1.1 million in our Language Centres for year 2-4 learners. The Centres at Maesincla, Llangybi and Dolgellau will receive this investment.

By means of this bid, the Education Department is eager to incorporate the requirements of the Curriculum for Wales, and offer cross-curricular experiences for all learners at the centres. It is also intended to ensure a strategic location for each of the immersion sites that will be a means to extend experiences and increase the opportunities for learners who are latecomers to use their Welsh outside the classroom by being located within convenient reach of facilities such as the Gwynedd Libraries, Byw'n Iach Centres, shops, clubs and social enterprises, this will be an opportunity to extend the learners' experiences as they benefit from experiences that bring the Welsh language to life. To this end, by means of the capital investment from the first phase and second phase, each of the Immersion Education System sites will be suitable to deliver the requirements of the Curriculum for Wales and offer cross-curricular experiences for all learners. Since it was established in the 1980s, the immersion provision in Gwynedd has been pioneering in the field, and the new-look System will consequently modernise the provision, the requirements of the Curriculum for Wales, as well as all capital investment and the best facilities, will continue to pioneer now and in the future.

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 Specifications

95.5% 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 Department has 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

82.8% of Education Department staff (excluding schools) have completed a Welsh language self-assessment. Currently, 17.2% 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. The Department will also need a purposeful campaign to engage with schools in order to get school staff to fill-in the self-assessment. Currently, 40.73% of school staff have completed the language self-assessment.

d) Annual Census of the Education Workforce

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 collaboration 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 schools' Language Policy and Safe Recruitment and Selection Policy ensures 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 school.
- 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 reflect and reinforce the Language Policy in their administration, social life and pastoral arrangements, as well as in their 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.
- The Outcome of the Welsh Language Skills Questionnaire cascaded with schools and action plans jointly drawn up with schools in response to the findings.
- A defect in the recording system on Hwb has proved to be a huge challenge when collecting and accessing the data - at the end of the Summer Term 2022 and in the Autumn Term 2022.

b) Welsh Language Cluster Plans:

- Re-defining the roles and work programmes of language coordinators in each catchment area in Gwynedd has ensured an effective way of planning activities which respond specifically to the outcomes of the 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, 5 and 7 of the WESP. After receiving the Welsh Language grant, schools have proceeded to put every plan into action and a series of specific training has been held to respond to the needs of the workforce.
- 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.
- Good practices are disseminated between the clusters at County Language Coordinator meetings.
- Some challenges have been experienced this year when checking the Welsh Language Grant Cluster Plans.

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

1. RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY

a) Support growth in the technology sector by promoting new developments and develop the skills of young people in the field.

b) More public and educational organisations using Welsh-medium software and technology.

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, had placed a suitable device to enable digital learning in the hands of every child. Enough *ipads* have been distributed to provide one to every four learners in the Foundation Phase, and enough *Chromebooks* have been distributed so that all learners in years 3 to 6 have one device each. Windows 10 devices have been

	<p>distributed to every pupil in years 7, 10 and 11, and every teacher in Gwynedd has received a quality device through the strategy, in the hope that this will fire their imagination and further motivate innovation and the effectiveness of the digital learning aspects 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>In the context of research, we are developing a VR virtual resource to support latecomers into the county to acquire the Welsh language. Research shows a significant increase in the number of children and young people who use games during their leisure time. However, in the past, concerns have arisen about the suitability of these games for young children and the negative influence on their well-being, considering the number of hours they spend on them. Having said that, recent research shows that there are cognitive advantages to the educational development of children by making appropriate use of games as an educational resource. To this end, we are currently developing the Aberwla VR virtual resource to normalise the Welsh language on the VR platform. This is an innovative project that received a warm reception and positive feedback from users of all ages, including the Minister for the Welsh Language, Jeremy Miles, on the Maes at the Tregaron National Eisteddfod of Wales.</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&I Service has a service level agreement with the Health Board's Speech and Language Therapy Service. This agreement is for the provision of Speech and Language Therapists that support learners within Mainstream Schools in Gwynedd and Anglesey. It is monitored on different levels (managerial and operational) in order to report to the ALN&I Management Board. Within this agreement, the service is</p>

	required to offer a bilingual provision for schools, but this can be very challenging in terms of recruiting bilingual Therapists and responding to the need promptly. We are working with the service to overcome the barriers surrounding this.
3.	<i>Are there any obstructions that prevent you as a department to offer a full service in Welsh?</i>
	<p>Recruitment Recruitment of secondary teachers in specific subjects is a national challenge but this challenge is intensified within the Welsh-medium education and in some specific areas of the county and it is a matter that causes concern to the Department and schools in general.</p> <p>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 the Welsh Government.</p> <p>Meetings 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 been calling for many years now for the Schoolcomms 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 are now pleased to note that the app is available bilingually, and although primary learners will not be required to pay for school dinners from September 2023 onwards, the app is used to pay for other activities held by schools, such as trips, etc., therefore the fact that the app is now available bilingually is very good news.</p>

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to:

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