

**A report on**  
**Welsh Language Immersion Arrangements in**

**Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council**

**Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council  
Civic Centre  
Castle Street  
Merthyr Tydfil  
CF47 8AN**

**Date of inspection: July 2025**

**by**

**Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education  
and Training in Wales**

**This report is also available in Welsh**

## About Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council

|                          |                                       |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Name of Provider         | Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council |
| Local authority          | Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council |
| Start date of inspection | 08/07/2025                            |

### Context

There are two Welsh-medium primary schools in Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council. Both Welsh-medium primary schools have immersion support within their schools for pupils who wish to transfer from an English-medium school to a Welsh-medium school. This provision is available to pupils up to the age of 11 and pupils will be supported to fully integrate into a Welsh-medium school.

The opening of the third Welsh-medium school will include provision for an immersion class to support latecomers to Welsh.

## Summary

Local authority leaders have a clear, long-term vision for Welsh language immersion that aligns with the priorities of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP). They are committed to strengthening provision and engage stakeholders well. However, they do not use self-evaluation and improvement processes effectively enough to steer the strategic development of late immersion provision over time.

Leaders promote the Welsh language successfully across schools in the authority. Their collaborative approach supports the development of pupils' and staff's language skills appropriately. They have created an inclusive ethos that supports pupils' well-being effectively. This is a key strength of the current immersion arrangements. Nearly all pupils feel safe, valued, and part of the school community, which supports their confidence and positive attitudes to learning Welsh.

Staff are effective language models and generally use appropriate immersion pedagogy. They vary teaching methods suitably and introduce vocabulary and sentence patterns well in immersion sessions. As a result, many pupils make suitable progress in developing their Welsh skills, particularly in speaking. However, staff do not always provide purposeful learning experiences that meet pupils' language acquisition needs consistently over time.

Although staff use information about pupil progress appropriately, they do not always apply it effectively enough to plan learning that is well matched to the needs of latecomers. As a result, pupils often lack sufficient confidence and fluency to use Welsh independently across all curriculum areas.

Leaders ensure that staff access professional learning to support well-being and national priorities. However, training opportunities to deepen understanding of immersion methodology are limited. This affects staff's ability to support language acquisition consistently.

Provision for pupils' well-being is a notable strength. Pupils behave well, collaborate positively, and engage enthusiastically in cultural and learning activities. Pupils with additional learning needs are supported effectively within the inclusive environment.

## Recommendations

We have made 2 recommendations to help the local authority continue to improve:

- R1 Strengthen self-evaluation processes at all levels to ensure high-quality immersion provision across the authority
- R2 Provide purposeful professional learning for leaders and staff to deepen their knowledge and understanding of effective immersion pedagogy and the impact on pupil progress

## What happens next

Following the publication of the inspection report, the local authority should update its plans to address the recommendations and to take account of shortcomings identified through the inspection process. The local authority should update its plans within three months of publication of the inspection report.

## Main evaluation

Local authority leaders have a clear long-term vision for Welsh language immersion arrangements and engage all stakeholders fully in line with the priorities of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP). They are committed to developing immersion arrangements across the authority. However, they do not use self-evaluation and planning for improvement processes purposefully enough to set a strategic direction for the development of the late immersion provision over time.

Leaders promote the development of the Welsh language across schools within the local authority, successfully. This collaborative approach is having a suitable impact on the development of both staff and pupils' Welsh language skills in schools.

Local authority leaders have developed a culture and inclusive ethos that supports the well-being and learning of pupils through appropriate distributed leadership responsibilities. Leaders have full autonomy to develop the provision in line with the needs of the pupils. They support pupils' well-being effectively within the schools' inclusive learning environments. This is a key driver for the current late immersion arrangements. Leaders and staff ensure that the provision offers a supportive and welcoming learning environment to nearly all pupils and ensures that they feel part of the schools' community. This is having a positive impact on pupils' well-being and attitudes to learning Welsh. However, the approach for Welsh language immersion arrangements is currently inconsistent across the local authority. Although leaders have an appropriate understanding of the progress made by late immersion pupils, they do not always fully evaluate the impact of teaching and learning on pupil progress well enough.

In general, within small group sessions, staff have an appropriate knowledge and understanding of effective immersion pedagogy for pupils who are new to the Welsh language as well as those receiving further support with their language acquisition. Overall, they are effective language models and support many pupils in making progress in their Welsh skills, particularly in their speaking skills. Through appropriate support, pupils speak the language more consistently and with increased confidence over time. Staff vary learning methods intentionally and use appropriate language acquisition methodology in intensive immersion sessions for latecomers. As a result, many pupils make appropriate progress in acquiring the Welsh language over time. Most listen attentively to presentations and follow instructions carefully and strive to succeed.

Staff use resources effectively to engage pupils' interest in their learning and vary the teaching methods to help them enjoy the process of learning a new language. During immersion activities, they question pupils skilfully and support them to listen and respond using appropriate vocabulary and sentence patterns. Staff encourage pupils to correct sentences sensitively and constructively, which in turn gives pupils the confidence to

communicate and converse in Welsh within these sessions. Most pupils are eager to learn Welsh and are willing to try speaking in both formal and informal contexts. In the best practice, they enjoy listening and attempt to communicate without fear of failure. In general, staff use information about pupil progress appropriately. However, teachers do not always use this information purposefully enough when planning learning activities for latecomers. In addition, they do not always provide purposeful learning experiences skilfully enough to meet pupils' language acquisition needs consistently over time. As a result, these pupils lack confidence and ability in their Welsh skills to fully access their learning across all areas.

Leaders ensure that staff access a range of professional learning opportunities to support with the development of national priorities, such as well-being. Although they promote a strong culture of teamwork and cohesion amongst staff, they do not always provide specific professional learning to develop staff's understanding of effective methodology for late immersion provision. As a result, they lack sufficient and secure knowledge and understanding of how latecomers make constructive progress in their skills as they acquire the Welsh language over time.

Staff support pupils' well-being effectively and this is a notable strength of the provision. As a result, pupils feel safe and nearly all show positive and supportive behaviour towards others. Nearly all pupils report that they feel safe and are aware of who to turn to if they are feeling sad or need support. They feel that they are treated fairly and that the immersion sessions offer an inclusive atmosphere to support their learning. Nearly all pupils are happy in the provision and show respect towards their peers and the staff who help them acquire the Welsh language. Most pupils are given opportunities to further develop their oracy skills in less formal situations, for example, through taking part in Eisteddfod activities. Pupils collaborate maturely and enthusiastically with each other when engaging in their learning activities, for example by playing games as a group to enrich correct linguistic structures. Pupils with additional learning needs are supported well within the provision. As a result of appropriate training, staff use positive and effective strategies that support the well-being and attitudes of students towards their learning.

Staff foster a positive working relationship with pupils. This supports pupils to learn purposefully by encouraging motivation and confidence to speak Welsh spontaneously as part of their learning and play.

### **Additional Information**

The provider's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not give any cause for concern.

The provider's arrangements for the management of the site do not give any cause for concern.

## **Evidence base of the report**

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carers and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers, staff, leaders and headteachers of pupils' registered schools through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors:

- observe teaching and other activities, including evidence gathered through learning walks
- meet pupils (past and present) to discuss their work and to gain their views on various aspects of the provider's work
- meet with staff, leaders, managers, headteachers of pupils' registered schools and others to evaluate the impact of the provider's work
- look closely at self-evaluation processes
- consider the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) / improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the local authority has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the management committee, information on pupils' well-being, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

## Appendix 1: Numbers – quantities and proportions

The report makes references to different quantities and proportions e.g. ‘most pupils...’ or ‘very few pupils...’. We use these terms to describe quantities and proportions as outlined in the table below:

|               |                          |
|---------------|--------------------------|
| nearly all =  | with very few exceptions |
| most =        | 90% or more              |
| many =        | 70% or more              |
| a majority =  | over 60%                 |
| half =        | 50%                      |
| around half = | close to 50%             |
| a minority =  | below 40%                |
| few =         | below 20%                |
| very few =    | less than 10%            |



## Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the local authority and from the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales))

The report was produced in accordance with Section 38 of the Education Act 1997.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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**This document has been translated by Trosol (English to Welsh).**