

A report on
Welsh Language Immersion Arrangements in
Vale of Glamorgan Council

Civic Offices
Holton Road
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Vale of Glamorgan
CF63 4RU

Date of inspection: March 2026

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh

About Vale of Glamorgan Council

Name of Provider	Vale of Glamorgan Council
Local authority	Vale of Glamorgan Council
Start date of inspection	16/03/2026

Context

The majority of the local authority's Welsh language immersion provision in the Vale of Glamorgan is delivered for primary-aged pupils at Ysgol Gymraeg Gwaun y Nant. The service is available to pupils from across the authority, although there is lower demand from schools located in the western part of the county. At the time of the inspection, between five and ten primary-aged pupils access the provision. The provision is led by one lead teacher and supported by a teaching assistant.

Pupils attending the provision are drawn from a number of Welsh-medium primary and all-age schools across the authority, including Ysgol Gymraeg Gwaun y Nant, Ysgol Gymraeg Dewi Sant, Ysgol Gymraeg Iolo Morganwg, Ysgol Gymraeg Pen y Garth, Ysgol Gymraeg Sant Baruc, Ysgol Gymraeg Sant Curig and Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Morgannwg.

The local authority has established a partnership with City of Cardiff local authority to provide Welsh language immersion support for secondary-aged pupils. This provision is commissioned from City of Cardiff local authority. Over the past two years, a very small number of pupils have accessed this service. At the time of the inspection, one pupil attends the provision at Ysgol Gymraeg Glan Ceubal.

Since September 2023, the authority has also provided a peripatetic service through a transition/progression teacher. This service supports Year 6 pupils who require additional support with their Welsh language skills, as well as pupils transitioning to Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Morgannwg who need continued support in Years 7 and 8. This work has contributed to reducing the number of pupils transferring from Welsh-medium primary schools to English-medium secondary education at the end of Year 6.

Summary

Leaders have a clear and purposeful vision for developing pupils' Welsh language skills within a supportive and inclusive environment. They communicate this vision well, working closely with staff, families and partner schools to promote a shared commitment to learning Welsh alongside supporting pupils' well-being. This helps to create a strong culture in which pupils feel welcomed and valued.

Staff foster a caring and inclusive community that supports pupils to feel safe and develop a strong sense of belonging. They place a consistent emphasis on pupils' emotional well-being and provide well-coordinated support as pupils join the provision, return to their home schools and move on to the next stage of their education. As a result, pupils settle quickly, build confidence and engage positively with their learning. Nearly all pupils behave well, show respect for others and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning.

Teaching is purposeful and engaging. Staff have high expectations and use a range of effective strategies to support pupils' language development. They model Welsh language skills effectively and provide regular opportunities for pupils to practise and apply language patterns in meaningful contexts. Most pupils make good progress in developing their Welsh language skills and grow in confidence in speaking and writing. In a few cases, activities do not challenge all pupils sufficiently or opportunities for them to think independently are not always consistent.

Leaders ensure that the curriculum is well structured and supports the progressive development of Welsh language skills. A wide range of enriching experiences, including visits and cultural activities, strengthens pupils' engagement and deepens their understanding of the Welsh language and its heritage.

Staff use assessment processes well to help them track pupils' progress and adapt teaching appropriately. Strong partnership working, particularly with schools and external agencies, supports effective transition and contributes to many pupils continuing their education through the medium of Welsh as they move on to secondary school.

Leaders have suitable arrangements for evaluating the work of the immersion provision and planning for improvement. Although they gather useful first-hand evidence, these processes do not always focus sharply enough on the impact of the provision on pupils' outcomes.

Recommendations

We have made one recommendation to help the local authority continue to improve:

- R1 Strengthen monitoring processes to ensure a sharper focus on the effect of provision on pupil outcomes

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

Leaders articulate a clear and purposeful strategic vision for the Welsh language immersion provision that aligns well with the priorities of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan. This vision places a strong emphasis on developing pupils' Welsh language skills within a welcoming, inclusive and engaging environment. Leaders share this vision effectively with staff, parents and partner schools, fostering a shared commitment to promoting the Welsh language and supporting pupils' well-being. As a result, the provision has created a strong culture that supports both Welsh language learning and pupils' emotional development.

Across the provision, staff nurture a supportive and inclusive environment in which pupils feel safe, valued and part of a close-knit community. Staff place a strong emphasis on pupils' emotional well-being. They support pupils well while they are in the immersion centre, when they return to their home schools, and as they move on to the next stage of their learning. These well-coordinated arrangements ensure that pupils settle quickly and develop confidence in their ability to learn Welsh. Nearly all pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning, behave respectfully and engage enthusiastically in activities. Their strong sense of belonging and mutual respect contributes to a calm and effective learning environment.

Staff develop warm, trusting and respectful working relationships with pupils. They know pupils well and have a secure understanding of their individual needs, including those with additional learning needs. This enables staff to provide bespoke and timely support that enables most pupils to overcome barriers to learning successfully. Pupils show high levels of care and empathy towards each other and support their peers effectively during collaborative activities, such as language games and role-play tasks. This strong peer support reinforces pupils' confidence and contributes well to the development of their independent learning skills.

Teaching across the provision is purposeful and engaging. Staff have high expectations of all pupils and deliver creative learning sessions that meet pupils' needs effectively. Staff employ a range of appropriate teaching strategies, including regular reinforcement of familiar language patterns and the provision of structured language scaffolds. Staff are effective language role models and share instructions and ask questions using clear and accurate vocabulary. Pupils respond positively and nearly all strive to use Welsh naturally and most make good progress in the development of their Welsh language skills over time.

Staff employ a range of questioning techniques that build effectively on pupils' prior learning and encourage them to extend their responses. They prompt pupils to explain their thinking and model language patterns carefully, which helps nearly all pupils to

respond appropriately and develop their oral skills with increasing confidence. Staff provide thoughtful opportunities for pupils to practise and apply these language patterns in meaningful contexts. For example, pupils take part in role-play activities linked to their reading, such as performing scripts and experiment with intonation to represent characters on World Book Day. These activities enable pupils to rehearse and embed language patterns successfully, supporting them to use Welsh more independently. In the best examples, pupils transfer these skills effectively into their written work, producing descriptive paragraphs using familiar language structures and vocabulary accurately. In a few instances, tasks do not challenge all pupils sufficiently or teaching is over-directed which, at times, limits opportunities for pupils to develop their independent learning skills.

Leaders and staff deliver a curriculum that provides a clear and structured framework for the progressive development of pupils' Welsh language skills. Staff introduce and revisit vocabulary and language patterns systematically, ensuring that pupils have regular opportunities to practise and apply their learning across a range of contexts. Suitable resources and engaging activities build purposefully on pupils' previous experiences. For example, pupils use visual prompts, such as short films of their own learning, to recall and extend their use of language when describing animals or recounting visits. This supports pupils to consolidate their understanding and apply their skills with increasing confidence. Over time, older pupils extend their use of language successfully, incorporating a wider range of vocabulary and phrases.

The provision offers a wide range of stimulating and authentic learning experiences that enrich pupils' understanding of the Welsh language and culture. Activities such as visits to local shops to practise conversational Welsh, role-play opportunities, musical experiences including harp sessions, and educational visits to locations such as St Fagans National Museum of History, enhance pupils' engagement and deepen their appreciation of Welsh heritage. These experiences contribute positively to pupils' motivation and support them to apply their language skills purposefully in real-life contexts.

Assessment arrangements are effective. Staff regularly assess pupils' responses and track their progress carefully, using this information to identify areas where pupils would benefit from additional support. This, in turn, supports staff to adapt teaching appropriately and ensures that most pupils make strong progress over time. Staff provide parents and carers with clear feedback on their children's progress, which strengthens the positive relationships with families. In addition, extension activities, such as the 'Pecyn Prysur', provide valuable opportunities for pupils to consolidate and practise their Welsh language skills beyond the formal programme, including during school holidays.

Transition arrangements are highly effective and are a notable strength of the provision. The work of the transition/progression teacher and the close collaboration with partner

schools ensure consistency in pupils' learning as they move to the next phase of their learning. This supports a high proportion of pupils to continue their education through the medium of Welsh from primary to secondary phases. This reflects the success of the provision in building pupils' confidence and commitment to Welsh-medium education.

Spotlight: Purposeful partnership working to support Welsh language immersion and transition

Leaders have worked diligently and proactively to establish a strong and purposeful network of partnerships that enhance the quality and impact of the Welsh immersion provision. They collaborate closely with a wide range of partners, including the educational psychology service, transition/progression teacher, admissions team, and staff from partner schools, such as ALN coordinators, to ensure a coherent and well-coordinated approach.

These partnerships are highly effective in supporting pupils' transition into and through the immersion provision. Information is shared systematically at an early stage, enabling staff to understand pupils' needs thoroughly and tailor support appropriately. This proactive approach ensures that most pupils settle quickly, develop confidence and engage positively with their learning. Close collaboration with external agencies also ensures that vulnerable pupils receive timely and effective support, particularly in relation to their well-being and emotional needs.

Partnership working extends beyond the formal programme. For example, the provision of resources such as the 'Pecyn Prysor' supports families to reinforce language patterns during school holidays, strengthening the link between home and school. As a result of this cohesive and purposeful partnership working, most pupils make strong progress in their Welsh language skills. Nearly all develop positive attitudes towards learning Welsh and transition smoothly between educational phases, building successfully on their prior experiences.

Leaders promote a strong culture of safeguarding, which is embedded across all aspects of the provision. Staff at all levels understand their responsibilities clearly and follow established procedures diligently to ensure pupils' safety and well-being. This contributes to the high levels of trust that pupils and families place in the provision.

Leaders have established appropriate arrangements for self-evaluation and improvement planning. They gather a suitable range of first-hand evidence, such as observations of teaching and learning, to identify a few strengths and areas for development. However, these processes are not yet fully developed and self-evaluation does not always focus sharply enough on the impact of the provision on pupil outcomes.

Arrangements for managing staff performance are generally suitable. Individual staff targets align appropriately with improvement priorities, and staff benefit from a range of purposeful professional learning opportunities that support their development. Leaders ensure that resources, including grant funding, are used appropriately to sustain and develop the provision over time.

As pupils progress through the provision, they develop increasing confidence and independence in their use of the Welsh language. They engage readily in both structured and informal situations and show a developing willingness to use the language. This, combined with the provision's strong emphasis on well-being and belonging, ensures that pupils are well prepared to continue their learning through the medium of Welsh. The consistent advocacy of leaders and staff for promoting the language and supporting pupils' individual needs contributes successfully to the sustained impact of the provision over time.

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/carer 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

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