

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

Carmarthenshire County Council

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Date of inspection: June 2026

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh

About Carmarthenshire County Council

Name of Provider	Carmarthenshire County Council's Welsh Language Immersion Partnership
Local authority	Carmarthenshire County Council
Start date of inspection	29/06/2026

Context

There are two Welsh Language Immersion Centres operating in Carmarthenshire, namely Canolfan Gwên at Ysgol Gymraeg Maes y Gwendraeth and Canolfan Brianne at Ysgol Bro Dinefwr. Historically, provision relied heavily on a limited number of centres and access was challenging for some learners due to significant travel distances.

Canolfan Gwên opened at Ysgol Gymraeg Maes y Gwendraeth in 2022. The centre is located in a purpose-built building, independent from the secondary school, and provides three learning spaces, namely a secondary room, a primary room and a quiet room.

Canolfan Brianne opened at Ysgol Bro Dinefwr in November 2025. The centre is located in a classroom that has been adapted specifically to meet the needs of primary-age pupils who are newcomers to the language.

There are also arrangements underway to open a third Welsh language immersion centre on the grounds of Ysgol Gyfun y Strade to serve the Llanelli area, with provision to begin in 2027.

In addition to the permanent centres, the authority establishes temporary immersion centres in schools across the county, in line with local demand. Canolfan y Wiber was established during the summer term to respond to the increase in demand for language immersion provision.

Latecomer pupils from Year 2 to Year 6 attend the centres for a period of ten weeks, four days a week. Before the start of the programme, teachers from the centres visit pupils, their schools and their parents or guardians to support the transition process.

The authority also operates a cross-county arrangement with Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire local authorities to ensure appropriate provision for pupils who attend schools near the authority boundaries.

Summary

Local authority officers provide robust strategic leadership for late Welsh immersion arrangements. In a short period of time, they have expanded provision successfully, distributed responsibilities effectively and developed the ability of centre leaders to contribute to quality assurance processes and improve provision. However, leaders do not always evaluate the effect of provision systematically enough over time. Team leaders provide inspirational leadership and promote a strong culture of co-operation, sharing effective practice and continuous improvement.

The authority establishes effective partnerships with schools, other local authorities and external organisations that support the development of provision. Professional learning opportunities, including secondments, visits and sharing effective practice, strengthen the capacity of the workforce and contribute to improving the quality of the service.

Staff provide stimulating learning experiences which enable most pupils to develop their Welsh speaking and listening skills well. They plan activities and learning experiences that provide pupils with regular opportunities to use the Welsh language in meaningful contexts, in the classroom and in the community. These experiences develop pupils' confidence in using the language in everyday situations and strengthen their understanding of the value of Welsh as a living language. As a result, most pupils make sound progress, develop their confidence and use the Welsh language increasingly when communicating.

Staff identify pupils' needs well and provide appropriate assistance that supports their well-being and progress. Learning environments are welcoming and promote positive relationships between staff and pupils. Most pupils behave well and show positive attitudes to learning.

Leaders use partners' feedback effectively to evaluate and refine provision. However, the authority does not promote late immersion arrangements clearly enough as part of its admission processes. As a result, not all parents have access to the information necessary to make an informed decision about Welsh-medium education in a timely manner.

Recommendations

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

- R1 Promote Welsh language immersion arrangements clearly as part of the local authority's admission processes
- R2 Evaluate the effect of the Welsh language immersion arrangements systematically over time

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 officers provide robust strategic leadership for late Welsh language immersion arrangements. They convey a clear vision for language immersion which focuses on expanding access and nurturing pupils' linguistic confidence. In a short period of time, leaders have expanded provision significantly, distributed responsibilities effectively across the team and empowered centre leaders to contribute increasingly to quality assurance activities and develop provision. However, leaders do not always evaluate the effect of provision systematically enough over time.

Team leaders provide inspirational leadership and share successful language immersion pedagogic practices. Their passion for developing the Welsh language is evident in their work and they foster a sound culture of co-operation, innovation and continuous improvement.

Staff deliver a specific curriculum that supports most pupils to acquire Welsh speaking and listening skills successfully. A framework that has been developed jointly with local partners is used to introduce vocabulary and language patterns in a purposeful and clear sequence which enables pupils to build gradually on their learning. Learning activities provide stimulating contexts for using the Welsh language and ensure that practising and reinforcing the language is at the heart of provision. For example, role-play areas are used effectively, which are enriched to align with the focus of the current unit of work. Staff also adapt the content purposefully to respond to pupils' needs and interests. This contributes effectively to their motivation and the progress they make in acquiring the Welsh language.

During their time at the immersion centre, most pupils make sound progress in developing their Welsh speaking and listening skills. From an early stage in the immersion process, many acquire basic vocabulary and begin to use familiar language patterns to express their needs. As their confidence grows, most understand and respond appropriately to familiar instructions and questions, with many using correct syntax increasingly when communicating. Most behave well and engage purposefully with their learning. They treat each other and staff with respect and participate enthusiastically in activities that develop their language skills.

Staff are effective language models who use the Welsh language correctly, consistently and purposefully throughout the day. They forge positive working relationships and foster a supportive environment where pupils feel confident enough to use the Welsh language. Staff use a good range of late immersion methods to introduce and reinforce new vocabulary and syntax, ensuring that sessions are well paced and provide regular opportunities for pupils to practise and apply the language in meaningful contexts.

Spotlight: Enriching immersion provision by using meaningful real-life contexts

Staff use a framework of core language patterns as a basis for immersion provision and plan regular opportunities for pupils to apply the patterns in real-life contexts.

They work with local partners to create authentic experiences that provide a clear purpose for using the Welsh language. For example, pupils visit the secondary school's nature area to see the goats before designing posters and creative digital advertisements to sell them. Visits to the community and local businesses also provide them with opportunities to use the Welsh language independently, for example when ordering in a cafe.

As a result, pupils see the value of Welsh as an everyday language. They develop increasing confidence to use the language patterns in new situations and transfer their learning more effectively outside the classroom.

Learning environments are stimulating and support learning effectively. Staff work well together and have a thorough knowledge of pupils' needs. They make subtle and effective adaptations which enable pupils with specific needs to receive purposeful support in the classrooms. For example, staff organise a calm retreat within the class structure for pupils with specific needs and these are used effectively.

Staff question and observe effectively to track pupils' progress and to adapt activities in line with their needs. They provide a useful continuing support package for schools, although the effect of provision on pupils is inconsistent.

The offer and stimulating and relevant learning experiences contribute to fostering sound attitudes to learning among the pupils. Communication with parents and carers is consistently good and relevant information is shared with the school and home on a weekly basis. This includes information about the curriculum, language patterns and pupils' achievements.

Staff organise whole class sessions, group work and pair work and pupils co-operate and learn together happily. The offer meets the needs of pupils across the age range. Staff make purposeful adaptations to ensure that pupils' emotional needs are given the necessary attention. The system supports pupils to develop leadership skills and empathy, in addition to creating an inclusive and supportive ethos.

Day-to-day practical arrangements between the school and the immersion centres are well-organised and co-ordinated, with decisions driven by the well-being and safety needs of pupils. Staff at the centres are clear about their roles and follow a consistent and tight routine which, in turn, gives pupils, parents and carers confidence and reassurance. As a

result, pupils attend the centres happily, settle quickly and attendance is nearly always consistently good.

The authority develops productive partnerships with schools, other local authorities and external organisations. Professional learning opportunities, including secondments, visits to other centres and sharing of effective practice, strengthen the capacity of the workforce and support continuous improvement in the quality of teaching. As a result, there is a strong sense of partnership and common purpose among the team, and schools express increasing confidence in the quality and vision of the provision.

Spotlight: Developing the capacity of the workforce through professional learning opportunities

Leaders develop the capacity of the workforce purposefully by offering professional learning opportunities for teachers to join the immersion team for a specific period. These experiences enable practitioners to develop a deeper understanding of language acquisition pedagogy, work closely with experienced practitioners and practise effective late immersion methods. As a result, teachers return to their schools with increased expertise to support pupils who are latecomers and share their practice with colleagues. These arrangements also develop a sustainable flow of skilful practitioners, strengthen distributed leadership and increase the local authority's ability to expand immersion provision strategically.

Leaders use feedback from partners purposefully to refine provision and, as a result, schools express confidence in the quality of the service. The authority explains the benefits of immersion education through a series of useful videos. However, the local authority does not promote late immersion arrangements clearly enough as part of its admission processes or provide parents with comprehensive enough information about the provision and its benefits. As a result, not all parents have access to the information needed to make an informed decision about Welsh-medium education in a timely manner.

Additional information

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

The provider's arrangements for site management 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 school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales).

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

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