

Supplementary guidance

Inspecting attitudes to learning

September 2021

English language and literacy in settings and primary schools

English language and literacy in settings and primary schools

Recommendations

Non-maintained settings, nursery and primary schools should:

- R1 ensure that poverty and disadvantage are not barriers to learners developing secure language and literacy skills
- R2 develop a culture of reading that encourages and enthuses all learners, including boys and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to read for pleasure and provide opportunities to listen to adults reading aloud
- R3 develop explicitly learners' vocabulary knowledge so that it supports the development of their speaking, reading and writing skills

Primary schools should:

- R4 develop a clear strategy to support the effective teaching of reading, including addressing learners' decoding skills, vocabulary development and advanced reading skills
- R5 provide appropriately challenging and relevant opportunities to support the progressive development of learners' listening and speaking skills, particularly in key stage 2
- R6 support the development of learners' writing skills through the explicit teaching of sentence construction, punctuation and spelling, relevant opportunities to write and precise feedback to guide further improvement

Local authorities and regional consortia should:

- R7 provide high-quality professional learning that meets the individual needs of settings and schools, to ensure that all learners, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, improve their language and literacy skills

The Welsh Government should:

- R8 evaluate settings' and schools' use of targeted funding, such as the early years pupil development grant and the pupil development grant, to improve eligible learners' language and literacy skills

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Executive Summary

Learning and attitudes to learning

Welsh Government (2020b) Curriculum for Wales. **In settings and nursery classes, most children make strong progress and develop their language and literacy skills effectively.**

As learners move through primary school, most continue to this is tooltip make sound or better progress in their language development from their different starting points, including those with special educational needs . Most learners from all linguistic backgrounds who attend Welsh-medium schools and Welsh streams in bilingual providers develop their skills successfully and have a sound grasp of the Welsh language by the end of their time in primary school.

In a minority of schools, learners who are more able do not achieve as well as they could. In general, in English-medium schools, boys do not attain as well as girls and learners from disadvantaged backgrounds do not make sufficient progress in developing their language and literacy skills. Despite improvements in aspects of speaking, reading and writing, standards of language and literacy in primary schools are broadly similar to those we reported five years ago.

Where standards of listening and speaking are strong, most learners interact well with practitioners and each other. They internalise, speak and apply language with increasing confidence to communicate effectively in a variety of contexts. In a few schools, a minority of key stage 2 learners do not develop their listening and speaking skills well enough.

By the end of the foundation phase, many learners achieve suitable fluency and expression in their reading. While many learners in key stage 2 use an increasing range of strategies to develop their comprehension when reading independently, they do not always develop a broad enough range of advanced reading skills. In Welsh-medium providers, a majority of learners do not discuss books and anthologies that were written in Welsh originally confidently enough. In general, in both Welsh and English-medium schools, learners' enjoyment in reading declines during their time in primary school.

In schools where standards of listening, speaking and reading are strong, learners use these skills to influence their writing across the curriculum. They develop these skills in literacy-rich activities and apply them in all areas of learning. In many schools, writing remains the weakest of the four language skills. In around a half of primary schools,

learners' independent learning skills, especially in writing, remain areas for development.

In most settings and schools, learners have positive attitudes to developing language and literacy skills. Learners in Welsh-medium schools and in Welsh streams in bilingual providers appreciate the benefits of being proficient in both Welsh and English. Learning and attitudes to learning

Cameo example

- 22 Overall, providers report that they have heightened their focus on the wellbeing of learners and staff since the start of the pandemic. Many leaders describe how they have made a greater range of wellbeing resources available to learners and staff, especially through online platforms. These include information and activities on a wide range of mental health and emotional wellbeing issues such as coping with stress and anxiety, resilience, mindfulness, getting active, eating disorders, problems with sleep, alcohol and substance misuse and staying safe online.

Cameo: Developing and implementing a whole organisation approach to mental health and emotional wellbeing

Bridgend College has developed a whole college approach to mental health and emotional wellbeing which is founded on the simple principle of 'for us, by us'. Senior leaders have engaged extensively with learners, staff, trade union representatives and governors to identify specific gaps in existing support provision. This has enabled them to develop a clear and cohesive strategy which focuses on 'doing a small number of things, really well'.

The college brought together a cross-section of its key stakeholders in a mental health visioning day. By reflecting on what was working well as well as areas to improve, they identified six key strands. These include the value of parental or home engagement, and developing staff understanding of mental health issues. These strands were used as the starting point for developing a whole-college action plan. When describing their overall approach to emotional wellbeing, college leaders commented that fundamental to their approach is the view and belief 'that happy and well staff are much more likely to help learners be happy and well'.

Initiatives implemented so far include the introduction of learner engagement leads to support all aspects of learner engagement, including learner voice, student ambassadors and student governors. In addition, the college has appointed an active wellbeing lead to encourage learners and

staff to maintain and improve their mental health and emotional wellbeing through the benefits of physical activity. In February 2021, Bridgend College achieved a prestigious UK national award in recognition of its work on mental health and wellbeing.

- 23 All further education colleges shared their wellbeing strategies with Welsh Government and these were evaluated as part of our work for this report. Most college strategies outline a whole college approach towards learner and staff wellbeing, explain how this is promoted, direct staff and learners to additional support and explain how the college apply and evaluate different support interventions. However, a minority of college wellbeing strategies do not address issues related to substance misuse or explain fully what training pathways are available to help staff improve their understanding of mental health and wellbeing issues

Case study example

- 22 A few local authorities have implemented reorganisation involving partial consolidation of sixth form provision over recent years. Typically, this involves reducing the number of schools that have their own sixth forms and identifying or establishing a small number of centres where sixth form teaching will be hosted. Across Wales, 33% of secondary and all-age schools act as partner schools to such post-16 centres. Recent examples include partial consolidation of provision within Pembrokeshire, and consolidation of all English medium post-16 provision within the Torfaen local authority. In successful examples, arrangements have been put in place to limit the perceived negative impacts on the schools that lose their sixth forms. For example, school leaders and governors play an important and continuing role in helping to shape and quality assure the post-16 provision in the new centre to which their learners progress.

Case study 1: School involvement in oversight at Campus 6, Pembrokeshire

Following a formal consultation process, two school sixth forms in the north of Pembrokeshire at Ysgol Bro Gwaun and Ysgol Dewi Sant (now Ysgol Penrhyn Dewi) were closed with provision being consolidated at the newly built Campus 6 building at Pembrokeshire College. Members of both school communities were anxious at the prospect of losing their school sixth forms. At an early stage in the process, the local authority, together with college and school senior leaders, identified an opportunity to support the new centre. They recognised that a forum through which both schools and

their governing bodies retained the ability to monitor the progress and achievements of their former pupils would be advantageous to all parties.

They formed the A level Committee to provide a multi-stakeholder governance group to support and challenge the work of Campus 6. Membership of the group includes senior leaders and governors from both of the associated schools as well senior and middle leaders from the college. The group is chaired by the Director of Education of Pembrokeshire County Council, who is also a member of the college's corporation board.

Initially set up as a shadow committee during the final year of sixth form delivery at the two schools in 2017-2018, the committee is now firmly established and scrutinises the college's entire A level provision. The committee meets termly and has a wide remit encompassing: Learner progress and outcomes; curriculum offer and delivery; transition including advice and guidance; learner destinations; staffing and safeguarding.

The work of the committee has helped strengthen the relationship between the three providers involved, resulting in transparent and open dialogue that benefits the centre and its learners. Both schools maintain strong links with learners after they transition to Campus 6.

Headteacher, Ysgol Penrhyn Dewi

Former pupil at Ysgol Bro Gwaun and recent A level student and student governor at Pembrokeshire College.

- 23 As an alternative to consolidation of sixth form provision, the majority of schools have established shared provision arrangements at post-16. In these cases, school sixth forms, and in a minority of cases the local college, come together to agree on a suite of courses that they can offer to each other's learners. Such arrangements can be driven by local authorities or the schools and colleges themselves.

Recommendations Exemple

- R13 A few local authorities have implemented reorganisation involving partial consolidation of sixth form provision over recent years. Typically, this involves reducing the number of schools that have their own sixth forms and identifying or establishing a small number of centres where sixth form teaching will be hosted.

Across Wales, 33% of secondary and all-age schools act as partner schools to such post-16 centres. Recent examples include partial consolidation of provision within Pembrokeshire, and consolidation of all English medium post-16 provision within the Torfaen local authority. In successful examples, arrangements have been put in place to limit the perceived negative impacts on the schools that lose their sixth forms. For example, school leaders and governors play an important and continuing role in helping to shape and quality assure the post-16 provision in the new centre to which their learners progress.

- R14 As an alternative to consolidation of sixth form provision, the majority of schools have established shared provision arrangements at post-16. In these cases, school sixth forms, and in a minority of cases the local college, come together to agree on a suite of courses that they can offer to each other's learners. Such arrangements can be driven by local authorities or the schools and colleges themselves

Figure 1. Sample H5P bar chart for simple data

As learners move through primary school, most continue to make sound or better progress in their language development from their different starting points, including those with special educational needs. Most learners from all linguistic backgrounds who attend Welsh-medium schools and Welsh streams in bilingual providers develop their skills successfully and have a sound grasp of the Welsh language by the end of their time in primary school.

Figure 2. Sample H5P pie chart for simple data

As learners move through primary school, most continue to make sound or better progress in their language development from their different starting points, including those with special educational needs. Most learners from all linguistic backgrounds who attend Welsh-medium schools and Welsh streams in bilingual providers develop their skills successfully and have a sound grasp of the Welsh language by the end of their time in primary school.

Figure 3. Embedded Power BI chart sample

As learners move through primary school, most continue to make sound or better

progress in their language development from their different starting points, including those with special educational needs. Most learners from all linguistic backgrounds who attend Welsh-medium schools and Welsh streams in bilingual providers develop their skills successfully and have a sound grasp of the Welsh language by the end of their time in primary school.

Figure 4. Chart as simple static image with long description including table

Long description

Data table for the chart above.

Status	Value
No Sixth form at the school	33%
Co-operation	22%
Consortium	22%
Collaboration	14%
Independence	8%
Confederation	1%

As learners move through primary school, most continue to make sound or better progress in their language development from their different starting points, including those with special educational needs. Most learners from all linguistic backgrounds who attend Welsh-medium schools and Welsh streams in bilingual providers develop their skills successfully and have a sound grasp of the Welsh language by the end of their time in primary school.

Figure 5.Graphic as static image with long description



Long description

Data table for the chart above.

Status	Value
No Sixth form at the school	33%
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The learning environment and planning for learning

Many practitioners model language well to support the successful development of learners' speech and communication.

Settings and schools often create language and literacy-rich learning environments. Learners' language and literacy skills are often developed best in those schools and settings that adopt an integrated or carefully considered thematic approach. In preparing for A Curriculum for Wales (Welsh Government, 2020b) , many primary schools use a wide range of engaging real-life and imaginative contexts to develop or extend learners' language and literacy skills. Where language teaching is highly successful, teachers plan explicitly for learners' vocabulary knowledge, as a distinct aspect of language learning.

In a minority of schools, planning for learning is underdeveloped. For example, in English-medium settings or schools it is not informed well enough by evidence and research. In Welsh-medium settings and schools and Welsh streams in bilingual providers, planning does not support learners well enough as they move between classes and phases.

Where there are shortcomings in language teaching in both Welsh-medium and English-medium providers, staff do not recognise the importance of learners developing their vocabulary knowledge when planning for learning, or provide them with explicit opportunities to do so. This limits the progress that learners make, such as improving the quality of their writing in Welsh-medium provision and developing their reading comprehension in English-medium schools.

Teaching and assessment

In most schools, teachers ensure that learners have an appropriate understanding of what they will be learning in their language lessons. Many schools provide clear, helpful feedback to support learners in improving their language and literacy work.

Many practitioners are strong language role models who immerse learners in spoken and written language. In most Welsh-medium settings and schools and Welsh streams in bilingual providers, practitioners support learners successfully to be confident and proficient bilingual learners.

In a few English-medium settings and schools, teachers do not question learners carefully enough to scaffold and progress their language and literacy skills as well as they could.

In a few of Welsh-medium or bilingual providers, practitioners do not always understand how immersion practices support learners to acquire language. In a minority of providers, practitioners do not provide enough challenge for learners with a high level of Welsh.



Listening and speaking

Most settings and schools develop learners' listening and speaking skills successfully in the foundation phase.

Where appropriate, practitioners support learners' early understanding of language by modelling and demonstrating a gesture or movement that conveys the meaning of words.

- Many schools provide beneficial extra-curricular opportunities, including within the local community, for learners to develop their language skills.
- The most effective primary schools use rich and varied contexts, such as participating in the Urdd, to teach learners specifically how to listen and talk.
- Provision is usually less effective when listening and speaking are considered skills that support reading and writing, rather than as skills to be developed in their own right.

Effective support for learners and their families

In most providers, sound partnership working helps many learners to make good progress in their language and literacy skills.

Relationships with parents and carers are usually positive. Many schools' support for learners with specific language, literacy and communication needs is planned carefully and delivered consistently, so that learners benefit accordingly.

Nevertheless, a few schools do not always plan and review language support programmes for learners with weak language skills or additional learning needs carefully enough.

Most English-medium settings and schools work well with external agencies to access support or guidance to enhance vulnerable and disadvantaged learners' language skills. In a very few settings and schools serving the most socially disadvantaged areas, the support and guidance for learners' language and literacy development are excellent. Yet, only a minority of English-medium schools focus well enough on all the factors that influence children's language development. Despite the funding that has been available to address this, in a majority of schools, poverty and disadvantage remain barriers to learners developing secure language and literacy skills.

In a minority of schools, specialist practitioners in language immersion centres support latecomers to Welsh-medium education successfully by sharing immersion methods and relevant resources. In the best practice, leaders work with local Welsh language initiatives and other national organisations to encourage and provide opportunities for parents who do not speak Welsh to learn the language. In a minority of Welsh-medium and bilingual schools, provision does not always ensure that more able learners and those from Welsh-speaking homes make sufficient progress in their use of the Welsh language.

Reading

Most schools plan appropriately for progression in learners' reading development and they teach reading daily.

- There is often a strong focus on developing learners' prereading skills in nonmaintained settings and nursery classes, for example through songs, rhyme and music.,
- Fostering a love of reading and literature is a priority in schools that develop learners' language and literacy effectively. They develop successful whole-school

strategies for promoting reading for pleasure: reading to learners, providing opportunities for learners to read aloud, sharing complete novels with learners, and providing time for daily independent reading. Their teachers are advocates for reading.

- Many practitioners in Welsh-medium and bilingual providers develop learners' translanguaging skills effectively to support their reading across the curriculum.
- In those providers where learners do not develop their reading skills well enough, it is often because practitioners stick too rigidly to a reading scheme that stifles learners' enjoyment, or there is no whole school strategy to improve decoding skills, build vocabulary knowledge, or develop learners' responses to what they read.
- In a few English-medium schools, staff do not take sufficient account of learners' developmental stages and introduce phonics teaching too early. They do not encourage disadvantaged learners and their families to enjoy reading well enough.
- Shortcomings in supporting learners' reading include few opportunities for adults to role-model reading in key stage 2, including Welsh literature in Welsh-medium provision.



Writing

Many primary schools have improved the teaching of writing through consistent approaches to developing skills and a greater focus on grasping purpose and audience.

- Where writing is taught best, learners understand the conventions of form and genre, and of writing as a process. Increasingly, as they consider the new curriculum, teachers provide learners with a real reason to write and audience to write for.
- In a few schools, shortcomings in planning and the inconsistent use of teaching and learning strategies inhibit learners' writing development, for example in sentence construction, punctuation and spelling.
- In a few schools, the expectation of learners, including the more able, to write well

- in different, challenging forms is too low.
- Too often, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for learners to write freely using the range of writing skills that they already have. In general, the quality of extended writing opportunities and the expectation for learners to check, correct and re-draft their work

Introduction

Introduction 1

This report is in response to a request for advice from the Welsh Government in the Minister for Education's annual remit letter to Estyn for 2019-2020.

The report identifies how effectively English-medium settings and schools in Wales support and teach English language and literacy to learners aged three to eleven. The report does not consider language and literacy development for learners with English as an additional language specifically

The report will be of interest to teachers and headteachers, non-maintained setting practitioners and leaders, and officers in local authorities, regional consortia, and the Welsh Government. It will also be of interest to those working in initial teacher education. The report's findings will help settings and schools planning for the Languages, Literacy and Communication area of learning and experience in A Curriculum for Wales (Welsh Government, 2020b). The report provides short descriptions of effective practice ('vignettes') to illustrate how providers develop learners' skills and knowledge in listening, speaking, reading and writing. We elaborate upon these examples of successful practice in case studies published to accompany this report. These supplementary materials also include prompts to support professional learning activities.

Background

Foreword

The purpose of Estyn is to inspect quality and standards in education and training in Wales. Estyn is responsible for inspecting:

- nursery schools and settings that are maintained by, or receive funding from, local authorities
- primary schools
- secondary schools
- special schools
- pupil referral units
- all-age schools
- independent schools
- further education
- independent specialist colleges
- adult learning in the community
- local authority education services for children and young people
- teacher education and training
- Welsh for adults
- work-based learning
- learning in the justice sector

Estyn also:

- reports to Senedd Cymru and provides advice on quality and standards in education and training in Wales to the Welsh Government and others
- makes public good practice based on inspection evidence

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Test paragraph 2

Testing summary area

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Effective support for learners and their families

Fostering a culture of reading

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Teaching and assessment

Developing learners' listening and speaking skills

Developing learners' reading skills

Developing learners' vocabulary

Developing learners' writing skills

Effective support for learners and their families

Fostering a culture of reading

Material

Copyright material

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Glossary

special educational needs

It is a long established fact that a reader will be distracted by the readable content of a page when looking at its layout.

References

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