

Introduction

Aims

This supplementary guidance is aimed at supporting inspectors to:

- evaluate the extent to which leaders and managers plan strategically purposeful opportunities for pupils to develop their Welsh language skills in formal and informal situations and implement these plans effectively
- evaluate the extent and quality of the school's provision for the development of Welsh language communication skills in formal teaching activities and in informal situations
- evaluate how well the school teaches pupils about the advantages of learning Welsh and being bilingual
- where appropriate, inspectors should consider how well the proportion of teaching in Welsh matches the school's official language categorisation
- evaluate pupils' ability to speak and respond to spoken Welsh compared with pupils in schools in similar contexts and their starting points
- evaluate the progress pupils make in developing their communication skills in Welsh for their learning across the curriculum and in more informal contexts.

When inspecting literacy skills (Welsh) in Welsh-medium, bilingual and English-medium schools and PRUs, you should also refer to the supplementary guidance: [Supplementary guidance for the inspection of Welsh and English literacy in schools and PRUs](#) which can also be found on Estyn's website.

The revised Inspection Framework (September, 2021) sets a requirement for inspectors to evaluate and comment on the Welsh language in:

5.1 (Quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers, including the governing body),

3.1 (The breadth, balance and appropriateness of the curriculum), and in

1.1 (Standards and progress in learning and skills [listening and reading, speaking and writing]).

The report has been presented in this way as 5.1 incorporates the strategic vision of leaders for Welsh in their settings in addition to the self-evaluation processes, priorities and professional learning in order to support the teaching (3.1) and learning (1.1). In addition, inspectors are free to report on aspects related to Welsh that are linked to

inspection area 2 (Wellbeing and attitudes to learning) and inspection area 4 (Care, support and guidance).

Background

Increasing the number of Welsh speakers and the number of people who actively use the Welsh language in their daily lives are priorities for the Welsh Government. As well as achieving a million Welsh speakers by 2050, corresponding to nearly a third of the population, it aims to increase the proportion of the population that speak Welsh daily from 10% (in 2013–2015) to 20% by 2050.

The Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 action plan aims to increase the proportion of school pupils receiving Welsh-medium education to 40% by 2050, with an interim target of 30% by 2031. One of the aims of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act is to ensure 'a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language' (National Assembly for Wales, 2015, p.4). Following the principles of Qualified for Life (Welsh Government, 2015), Successful Futures acknowledges the importance of the Welsh language in the development of Wales 'as a bilingual nation with the strength and assurance to nurture both languages' (Donaldson, 2015, p.26). Furthermore, it states that schools should have a renewed focus 'on learning Welsh primarily as a means of communication, particularly oral communication and understanding' (Donaldson, 2015, p.115).

The Welsh in education: action plan 2017-21 identifies the aim to develop Welsh-medium provision and improve the teaching and learning of Welsh for all learner, and place these 'at the heart' of educational reform (Welsh Government, 2017b). The Education Minister states, 'Our National Mission is to raise standards, reduce the attainment gap and deliver an education system that is a source of national pride and public confidence' (Welsh Government, 2017a, p.3).

Welsh continues to be a mandatory element of the curriculum for all learners until they are 16 years old, and A curriculum for Wales – a curriculum for life (October 2015) identifies that it is a priority to 'ensure that all learners can develop their Welsh language skills and use the language confidently in different contexts'.

The advantages for learners of increasing their competence in the Welsh language and in being bilingual are well-established. They include:

- commercial value in the employment market and extending language skills for the workplace
- expanding their horizons and enriching their experiences of life in Wales and beyond

- the cognitive advantages of bilingualism[1]
- appreciation of diversity

When evaluating Welsh language outcomes and provision, it is essential that we always consider the school's linguistic context and what it does in order to ensure continuity and progression in its pupils' linguistic skills from their individual starting points.

In broad terms, schools can be classified according to their linguistic make-up[2] as follows:

- schools that teach mainly through the medium of Welsh
- English-medium schools
- streamed schools, which offer both Welsh-medium and English-medium provision to varying degrees

Section 84 of The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act introduced in 2013, requires each local authority to prepare and present a [Welsh in Education Strategic Plan](#) (WESP) to improve provision and standards with regards to Welsh medium education in schools. Each WESP must set out how the local authority will support the continued provision of Welsh-medium education. The next cycle of WESPs are to be presented by January 2022 and will be operational from September 2022.

All maintained schools, including special schools and pupil referral units, have a legal obligation to teach Welsh to all pupils of statutory school age other than a very few pupils whose statement of special educational needs (SEN) or individual development plan (IDP) for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) disapples them from learning Welsh.

There is no statutory requirement for independent schools to teach Welsh as a subject. When the school makes a positive decision not to provide for the teaching of Welsh or develop the Welsh dimension of the curriculum, the report should simply state: 'The school does not teach Welsh' or 'The school does not seek to develop the Cwricwlwm Cymreig'. In independent schools that teach Welsh or deliver Welsh-medium provision, inspectors should use the questions listed in the next section, as applicable. Inspectors should examine the school's policy on the Welsh language and evaluate how well the school is implementing that policy. They should also judge the extent to which the school contributes to the development of pupils' knowledge and understanding of the cultural, economic, environmental, historical and linguistic characteristics of Wales.

The Curriculum for Wales guidance (Welsh Government, 2020a) for Languages, Literacy and Communication sets out how the area of learning and experience supports the four purposes of the curriculum. As its main aim, it identifies supporting learning across the whole curriculum and enabling learners to gain knowledge and skills in Welsh, English

and international languages, as well as in literature (Welsh Government, 2020a, p.126). The importance of supporting 'learners to use Welsh confidently and appreciate its usefulness to communication in a bilingual Wales' (Welsh Government, 2020a, p.30) is also highlighted. As a result, developing learners who take pride in the Welsh language and use it with increasing confidence is at the heart of the national vision.

During the period of familiarisation and the adoption of the Curriculum for Wales in September 2022, we will adopt a pragmatic approach to the providers' work to plan, design and realise their curriculum in an appropriate and timely manner. Inspectors will give due regard to any published guidance on common or shared expectations. Due consideration will be given to the planning and delivery of developing pupils' listening and reading, and speaking and writing skills. Inspectors should consider the positive or negative effects of any arrangements in place to enable learners to develop their language and literacy skills by having access to enriched learning experiences overall in both formal and informal activities.

Inspectors should give careful consideration to the effect of any important areas for improvement relating to the questions overleaf on the judgement for the relevant quality indicator. When considering whether an area for development is important, inspectors should take into account the proportion of learners involved or affected by the shortcoming.

[1] Research in Canada has revealed that bilingualism enhances attention and cognitive control in children and older adults and, in 2007, highlighted the impact of bilingualism on delaying the onset of the symptoms of dementia.

[2] The Welsh Assembly Government publication 'Defining Schools According to Welsh-medium Provision' (Information document No: 023/2007, October 2007) sets out descriptions and categories of schools according to the amount of Welsh used in teaching and learning and in the day-to-day life of the school.