Leadership

Leadership in local authorities and regions

Where immersion education is most effective, leaders:

prioritise immersion education	implement a strong vision for immersion education	have high expectations	promote the Welsh language consistently
self-evaluate purposefully	plan strategically	promote immersion education to parents/carers	organise comprehensive provision for latecomers
organise intensive and structured immersion programmes	fund transport to language immersion centres	provide professional learning opportunities	promote effective practice
prioritise listening and speaking skills	encourage collaboration between practitioners	organise activities in the school and local community	maintain beneficial links with external partners

Most local authorities have appropriate plans to strengthen their provision for the Welsh language, with many referring specifically to immersion education. The majority of officers speak enthusiastically about their proposed plans to strengthen the Welsh language in education, for example when describing the content of their draft Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESP) and the planned use of the COVID-19 recovery funding that is available to support late immersion. However, it is too early to report comprehensively on the plans and their effect. In the cases where they provide a strong vision for the use of immersion education, this refers mainly to strengthening early immersion processes, which are already robust, expanding Welsh-medium provision in the non-maintained and primary sectors, or establishing language immersion centres to support latecomers. Where authorities are planning to establish new language immersion centres, on the whole, the arrangements are at a very early stage. A budget from the Welsh Government to support Welsh in education is allocated to authorities as part of the Education Improvement Grant.

A few local authorities have a language policy whereby all primary schools immerse learners in the Welsh language until the end of the foundation phase. In these cases, there are sound expectations in terms of immersion education.

Local authorities have different approaches to supporting latecomers to the Welsh language through late immersion provision. Where authorities maintain language immersion centres for learners who transfer from English-medium to Welsh-medium education later in their school career, their arrangements vary. Some local authorities have one centre that all Welsh-medium and bilingual schools can use, while others have language immersion centres that are established on the grounds of different schools. A very few local authorities have a dual system, where a language immersion centre is available in a particular area, while the remaining schools support latecomers within their own settings. On the whole, late immersion education provision is at its best when learners acquire Welsh via an intensive and structured programme, usually when learners attend a language immersion centre. As a result of inconsistent provision across Wales, not all learners are given the same opportunities to acquire Welsh language skills at an early enough stage when transferring to Welsh-medium education later in their school career.

Cameo – realising a vision by planning strategically to establish a Welsh Language Centre

Denbighshire County Council has opened a new Welsh Language Centre as a result of purposeful remodelling across the authority. It decided to make use of an empty building on the grounds of Ysgol Glan Clwyd, which is the county's Welsh-medium secondary school. As part of the vision, key partners worked together consistently to develop plans to establish provision to promote the Welsh language skills of learners of all ages.

Within the new Welsh Language Centre, a Cylch Meithrin has been established. Through an arrangement with Mudiad Meithrin, post-16 learners at Ysgol Glan Clwyd receive valuable work experience opportunities by supporting young learners on the site.

The centre provides support for latecomers in key stage 2 through an intensive immersion programme. Provision to support latecomers in Year 7

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and Year 8 at Ysgol Glan Clwyd is also situated at the centre.

Through an arrangement with Bangor University, Welsh Sabbatical courses are provided at the centre. A resource centre to promote the Welsh language is also situated on-site to ensure that the latest resources are accessible to the authority's teachers.

By developing the vision in purposeful plans, the authority uses the centre as a destination to provide a rich range of opportunities for learners of all ages to develop their Welsh language skills. This shows that all the authority's partners prioritise the Welsh language appropriately and have worked together successfully to realise their vision.

In language immersion centres, in most cases, day-to-day provision is led by a practitioner with specific lead responsibility, with the support of other teachers or learning assistants. However, management procedures vary substantially from one authority to another. For example, one authority delegates the responsibility for managing the language immersion centre to the headteacher of the host school. They are responsible for nearly all aspects of the centre, including managing the budget and providing human resources support, as appropriate. In another authority, lead teachers report directly to education officers who are responsible for different aspects of provision. In yet another authority, the lead teacher is managed by the authority's Welsh advisory team co-ordinator, who also provides other services to schools such as pre-centre and post-centre support. Overall, management processes are not robust enough, as they have often evolved over time, for example as the demand for immersion education has increased.

In a few language immersion centres, leaders refine their provision appropriately as a result of self-evaluation processes. For example, leaders develop resources that engage and hold the attention of boys as well as girls, to support them as they are immersed in the Welsh language. In the best practice, headteachers observe sessions jointly with the leaders of language centres regularly and emulate the style and self-evaluation timetable of the host school. On the whole, leaders trust in the expertise and experience of the practitioners at the language immersion centres. In many authorities, arrangements for self-evaluating provision at language immersion centres are too informal. As a result, leaders do

not evaluate provision purposefully enough or set suitable actions to improve teaching and learning rigorously enough.

On the whole, local authorities have different procedures for admitting latecomers to language immersion centres. For example, most provide places for learners in key stage 2, with a few offering provision from Year 1 onwards. Most only provide consistent access at the beginning of a specific stage in the programme, which is usually at the beginning of a new term, with a few providing access to learners later in the term, which means that they join after other learners have started the programme. On the whole, latecomers acquire the Welsh language more quickly by being given immediate access to provision in language immersion centres. However, this disrupts the flow and progression of the programmes which, in turn, has an effect on the progress of learners who have attended since the beginning of the term.

Nearly all local authorities that have a language immersion centre fund and organise transport for learners who attend the centre. Leaders identify clearly that this is an important consideration to ensure the commitment of parents/carers to choosing Welsh-medium education, and the success of the immersion process for their children. A very few authorities provide a service to neighbouring authorities by arrangement, which allows learners to access provision in language immersion centres.

Many local authorities refer to the language immersion centres appropriately in admission booklets. On the whole, they do not promote or publicise provision specifically, and information for parents/carers about the advantages of bilingualism and immersion principles is limited, overall. In many authorities where there is an increase in the demand for provision, these authorities do not forward-plan purposefully enough to meet the aspirations of parents/carers. As a result, plans to provide a late immersion service tend to be reactive rather than proactive.

Cameo – authority shares information with other partners

Carmarthenshire County Council's Welsh Development Teacher Team provides beneficial information about immersion education through a

relevant website. It prepares video clips to promote Welsh-medium education to parents/carers and provides support to those who do not speak Welsh. For example, in one clip, it offers possible activities for parents and their children, such as visiting a Welsh book shop or watching Welsh television programmes. In another clip, it explains the Welsh names of places in the local area. It provides a series of attractive presentations that explain the advantages of bilingualism and respond to frequently asked questions from parents/carers about Welsh-medium provision.

Another section of the website provides useful resources for teachers. For example, there is a series of board games to reinforce vocabulary, digital games, and instructions for playground games. Another section includes a series of monologues by actors playing the parts of historical characters from the local area as an appealing stimulus when presenting local stories to learners. There are also videos that provide beneficial information, for example by highlighting effective practice to develop learners' Welsh language skills.

By sharing information with parents/carers, the authority presents useful information about programmes that are provided by the language immersion centres. It also presents beneficial material about Welsh-medium education in video clips, which include contributions from other parents/carers who have already taken advantage of the provision for their children.

In around half of local authorities, there are advisory teachers who support the work of their language immersion centres. In the best practice, they provide a comprehensive service to learners, for example pre-centre and post-centre provision. They also provide beneficial professional learning opportunities and useful resources for practitioners. Overall, this support provides consistent provision across the authority to learners and practitioners alike.

A majority of local authorities provide valuable immersion programmes at the beginning of Year 7 for learners who are joining Welsh-medium schools for the first time at the beginning of their secondary education. In a few cases, learners attend the new secondary school for a period of around half a term before the summer holidays to receive Welsh lessons and experiences across the areas of learning through the medium of Welsh. As a result of these arrangements, learners gain confidence to speak Welsh with their new peers in a Welsh and

Welsh-speaking environment.

Some local authorities allocate funding for late immersion education provision directly to their Welsh-medium schools and Welsh streams in bilingual schools. The main aim of this approach is to allow those schools to employ additional support staff to support latecomers to integrate into their new Welsh learning environment. In the strongest examples, schools work closely with the authority to deliver an intensive programme for latecomers. However, where implementation methods are less purposeful, learners do not have access to regular or systematic support when acquiring new Welsh language skills. This hinders their progress and their ability to access suitable experiences across the areas of learning through the medium of Welsh.

A very few local authorities have peripatetic arrangements to support latecomers. Peripatetic arrangements usually provide beneficial experiences for learners in individual or small group sessions for a small proportion of the week. In a few cases, this can be as little as 45 minutes a week. As a result, this approach does not support learners to become immersed in the Welsh language effectively enough in a short period of time. It also does not provide frequent enough opportunities for them to gain confidence to speak Welsh increasingly spontaneously with their peers and practitioners.

A few local authorities provide useful professional learning opportunities for practitioners regularly to support and develop immersion education. For example, an education officer in one authority provides training for newly qualified teachers on the language policy and immersion principles. Another authority uses a service provided by the Welsh advisory team effectively to model immersion methods in mainstream classes so that practitioners can emulate these effective practices. In the best examples, practitioners in language immersion centres share their practices effectively with practitioners in schools. For example, they work with the local consortia to share information about international research on language immersion methods. By doing so, practitioners deepen their understanding of effective immersion approaches, which enriches learners' experiences when acquiring Welsh language skills. Overall, there are very few examples of regular professional learning opportunities on language immersion as part of an authority or regional strategy. As a result, although a few practitioners benefit from these opportunities, leaders do not plan purposefully to provide regular opportunities to equip the remaining practitioners as they develop their immersion practices.

Cameo – using international research to strengthen late immersion provision

Practitioners in Cardiff Welsh Language Immersion Centre reflect on international research to refine their provision and immersion methods. As part of their professional learning, they have identified effective immersion principles that have a positive influence on practitioners' teaching methods as they support learners with their Welsh language skills.

Practitioners make effective use of aspects of the 'desuggestopaedia' principles (Lozanov, 2005). This includes creating a positive environment where learners feel comfortable and enjoy learning. They achieve this through a number of different strategies, which include creating attractive learning spaces with posters that outline Welsh vocabulary and syntactical patterns. They change these posters periodically so that they are as useful as possible for learners. They plan activities that enable learners to become engrossed in a different character when speaking Welsh, for example by acting the part of a grandfather deriving from stories from the intensive programme.

Practitioners also use aspects of the 'total physical response' method (Asher, 1969) consistently by using movements to correspond with key words while speaking. When new vocabulary is introduced to learners, practitioners encourage them to emulate them by making similar movements. Practitioners continue to use the movements throughout the programme to reinforce learners' understanding.

Following valuable professional learning opportunities, practitioners have the professional knowledge necessary to support learners highly effectively as international research is a solid foundation for their immersion methods.

Nearly all local authorities that maintain language immersion centres locate them on the grounds of Welsh-medium schools. In many cases, this has a positive effect on the host school. For example, practitioners at those schools are given beneficial opportunities to observe sessions by specialist teachers from the language immersion centres. In the best examples, language immersion centre practitioners lead on language introduction plans across the cluster schools. For example, they work with school practitioners to introduce vocabulary and syntactical patterns while learners interact in the outdoor area. Through frequent co-operation, this has a positive effect on learners' Welsh language skills and ensures consistency in learning experiences across the cluster.

Cameo – using the expertise of practitioners in language immersion centres to disseminate effective practice

Practitioners at Anglesey Language Centre support schools by providing guidance, linguistic expertise, and resources. This equips teachers with the skills that they need to immerse learners effectively in the Welsh language.

Practitioners lead professional learning opportunities in areas with a high percentage of English speakers. For example, in the Holyhead catchment area, they have supported practitioners in schools to introduce appropriate vocabulary and syntactical patterns consistently throughout the cluster. Practitioners provide guidance on how to support learners' Welsh language skills through activities in the outdoor area. For example, they work with teachers in the cluster to create language mats based on nature and wildlife vocabulary and other common themes. This has a positive effect on many learners' linguistic standards.

Recently, practitioners have developed support further to share effective practices across the authority. They share short digital clips presenting approaches and ideas on purposeful immersion pedagogy to practitioners in schools. For example, they provide ideas on the use of language during registration and how to answer questions by choosing correctly from the different ways of saying yes and no. Clips refer to resources to support learning that are already available to them, such as specific language mats.

Practitioners at Anglesey Language Centre provide useful information and professional learning opportunities to develop newly qualified teachers' understanding of effective immersion approaches. These teachers are given beneficial opportunities to visit the centre, observe these approaches in practice, and receive a package of useful resources.

The support provided by practitioners at the language immersion centre makes a beneficial contribution to ensuring consistency in effective language immersion practices throughout the authority.

Many practitioners in language immersion centres or Welsh advisory teams forge helpful informal links with colleagues to share effective practices and immersion education resources. A minority refine their practice beneficially by discussing and comparing immersion approaches with specialists in other local authorities. Although these opportunities are useful as practitioners develop their language immersion methods further, this does not provide consistent opportunities for practitioners across all authorities. Overall, opportunities for specialist practitioners to have a positive influence on immersion provision nationally, and to share practices and resources, are limited.

The role of regional consortia in supporting local authorities and schools with immersion education varies. Generally, authorities lead strategically on planning immersion education provision, and, where relevant, consortia support the process to varying degrees. This variation contributes to a mixed picture in terms of supporting strategic planning to develop immersion education provision at a national level. This also shows that immersion education is not always prioritised sufficiently by authorities and consortia considering it is the main national approach to create new Welsh speakers.

Where co-operation is at its best, local authorities or regional consortia promote immersion education and provide specific professional learning opportunities to develop immersion education approaches. For example, one regional consortium works successfully with authorities to identify and establish 'fledgling centres', which are initial provision located in schools as the first step in a long-term process to promote Welsh immersion. Another consortium organises support from

other schools in the region to promote effective practices or provides distance learning sessions for newly qualified teachers.

Cameo – sharing language immersion practices regionally

The Central South Consortium has commissioned staff from Cardiff Language Immersion Centre to work with the consortium's Welsh language officers to create a package of immersion resources. The resources provide beneficial guidance to schools that do not have access to a language immersion centre in their local authority. The package introduces specific vocabulary and syntactical patterns in turn to improve consistency in teaching.

The resources provide valuable opportunities for learners to use vocabulary and syntactical patterns daily in role-play situations, drama sessions or in the context of playing a game. Reading and writing activities focus on the same patterns. Language is modelled in useful sound clips to support less confident practitioners.

There is a pack of colourful cards, which include vocabulary and syntactical patterns by theme, including question and answer cards, flash cards, pictures for discussion and cards for playing oral games. For example, there is one unit of work relating to the park. Vocabulary such as 'siglen' (swing), 'ffrâm ddringo' (climbing frame), 'coed' (trees) and 'blodau' (flowers) is introduced, in addition to questions and appropriate responses such as 'oes pwll tywod yn y parc?' ('is there a sandpit in the park') and 'oes, mae pwll tywod yn y parc' ('yes, there is a sandpit in the park'). Another unit of work is based in a café, which provides many opportunities to introduce mathematical vocabulary relating to money, shapes, and fractions. For example, learners order 'a quarter of a pizza' and pay the correct amount of money. They introduce the past tense and days of the week by using the context of the café, for example by providing information such as 'cefais sglodion ddydd Llun' ('I had chips on Monday') or 'yfais sudd oren ddydd Mercher' ('I drank orange juice on Wednesday'). As a result, learners develop vocabulary and patterns in a structured manner and apply them with increasing success across the

areas of learning.

In the best practice, local authorities use their self-evaluation processes to identify where immersion education provision needs to be strengthened and prioritise developments effectively. For example, they identify groups of learners who do not attain the expected outcome at the end of the foundation phase and arrange for members of the Welsh advisory team to provide support to practitioners in those schools. Although the majority track the number of learners who transfer from Welsh-medium primary schools to Welsh-medium secondary schools, there are very few examples of tracking the progress of latecomers specifically. On the whole, authorities' processes for self-evaluating immersion education provision are not rigorous enough, for example by scrutinising effective practices or areas for improvement. In addition, self-evaluation procedures do result in specific enough information about the value for money of provision.

Leadership in non-maintained settings and primary schools

Most leaders in non-maintained settings and Welsh-medium and bilingual schools implement their local authorities' expected linguistic policies appropriately. Leaders ensure that staff understand that the Welsh language is a core part of provision. They are supported appropriately by the committees of non-maintained settings and school governing bodies to promote the Welsh language. Overall, in these providers, the Welsh language is promoted consistently in a Welsh learning environment. A minority of leaders in non-maintained settings support practitioners who are less confident in speaking Welsh by using a resource that assists them to introduce vocabulary and syntactical patterns to learners in a systematic. In turn, this supports their own professional learning.

A majority of leaders plan purposefully to strengthen their immersion education

provision further in the context of the Curriculum for Wales. Many prioritise the development of learners' Welsh language skills consistently by incorporating the four purposes as an integral part of teaching and learning. For example, they support foundation phase practitioners to plan rich immersion activities that promote the use of the Welsh language. In the strongest practices, they provide valuable opportunities for learners to make choices about their learning while continuing to introduce vocabulary and syntactical patterns purposefully. They also provide beneficial opportunities to celebrate Welsh culture. As a result, they support learners to become increasingly ambitious and willing to learn independently in local, national, and international contexts.

Cameo – combining immersion education with preparations for the Curriculum for Wales

Leaders at Ysgol Croes Atti, in Flintshire County Council, have established learning councils based on areas of learning and experience to raise the profile of the Curriculum for Wales at the school. During the process of establishing the councils, practitioners support immersion education at the school by providing valuable opportunities for learners to apply their Welsh language skills at home in partnership with parents/carers.

Practitioners provide opportunities for learners to express an interest in joining a leadership group that contributes towards developing specific areas of learning and experience across the school. For example, Year 2 learners submit applications to join the group by creative presentations at home in the form of a video. Learners identify which group is of the greatest interest to them, for example by providing a presentation on volcanoes as an application to be a member or the Science and Technology group. As a result, learners made effective use of their Welsh skills when preparing the presentation.

This approach supports learners and their parents/carers to engage with the areas of learning and experience in the Curriculum for Wales through the medium of Welsh. It also provides beneficial opportunities for learners to apply their speaking skills by supporting their immersion experience.

In the best practices, leaders promote learners' Welsh language skills effectively through the expressive arts. They identify the importance of prioritising speaking and listening skills as a key feature of immersion education and create beneficial opportunities for learners to develop their Welsh language skills through oral activities. For example, they support practitioners to provide inclusive opportunities for learners to take part in activities in the school and the local community. On the whole, these valuable opportunities contribute robustly to developing learners' confidence in using the Welsh language.

Cameo – planning strategically to weave immersion education into the expressive arts

Leaders at Ysgol Gymraeg Caerffili in Caerphilly County Borough Council work with schools in the cluster to employ a creative practitioner to raise standards of Welsh oracy. The practitioner uses his creativity to improve learners' oral skills by using songs to practise syntactical patterns in an enjoyable way. For example, as learners have continued to play in bubbles during the COVID-19 pandemic, Year 5 learners have created a film describing and playing playground games to be shown to the youngest learners. As a result, foundation phase learners enjoy using the Welsh language in informal situations during break time.

The language co-ordinator has identified which syntactical patterns to target with each year group. For example, in order to target 'the language of play', fun sessions are provided to launch rockets into the air and throw sponge balls at numbers, while practising patterns such as 'fy nhro i yw hi nawr' ('it's my turn now').

The creative practitioner has provided a selection of songs, oral activities, raps, and short films to accompany the themes of each individual school within the cluster to support teachers to enrich learners' Welsh. Learners develop confidence and proficiency in the Welsh language successfully through expressive arts activities.

A few leaders are beginning to support practitioners purposefully to help colleagues to meet the expectation that is set out in the Curriculum for Wales that all learners should develop the ability to use the Welsh language. For example, in one dual-stream school, teachers in the Welsh stream promote exercises to introduce the Welsh language in English stream classes. Learners from the Welsh stream also prepare simple videos reciting tales for learners in the English stream to listen to in order to prepare their own performance. A very few leaders support teachers in English-medium schools by sharing effective approaches for introducing Welsh vocabulary and syntactical patterns to learners.

In a minority of schools, leaders provide purposeful opportunities for learners to develop their Welsh, English, and other foreign language skills in beneficial activities, for example by working with the secondary school. These opportunities enrich the experiences of latecomers as they develop their Welsh language skills. In a few cases, leaders provide valuable opportunities for latecomers to have a taste of other foreign languages as part of their transition arrangements to the secondary school.

Many leaders work together purposefully when supporting learners to transfer from one setting or stage to another, for example from a non-maintained setting to primary school. In the strongest cases, leaders encourage co-operation between practitioners to plan suitable progression when developing learners' Welsh language skills. For example, they agree on plans to introduce vocabulary and syntactical patterns consistently over time. Too often, co-operation between providers is superficial and does not lead to common practices. As a result, learners do not always make consistent progress when transferring to the new school or class.

Many leaders in non-maintained settings and schools have suitable self-evaluation processes that consider learners' standards of language and provision for the Welsh language. In the best practices, leaders evaluate immersion approaches as a key part of provision and prioritise areas for development effectively. For example, they introduce a specific plan when supporting practitioners to introduce vocabulary and syntactical patterns to learners in a structured manner. As a result, practitioners who are less confident Welsh-speakers model language with increasing confidence.

Many leaders in non-maintained settings and schools provide parents/carers with useful information about Welsh-medium education as they choose the language medium of their children's education. For example, non-maintained settings make use of a useful pamphlet that explains the principles of immersion education to parents, while schools show the resources that are used to develop learners' understanding of letter sounds to support the development of learners' reading skills.

In the strongest examples, leaders plan regular opportunities for families to be part of their children's linguistic journey. For example, they invite family members to 'coffee mornings' to play board games alongside their children through the medium of Welsh and organise opportunities for them to join a community choir where learners and adults sing together or encourage the 'Criw Cymraeg' to create useful resources for them. As learners move through the school, a few leaders provide information to parents/carers about ways to support them in developing and applying vocabulary and syntactical patterns across the areas of learning. Overall, the information that parents/carers receive about immersion education is inconsistent. As a result, parents/carers do not deepen their understanding of the benefits of the Welsh language and bilingualism as their children pursue Welsh-medium education.

Cameo – working with parents/carers to promote syntactical patterns

Ysgol Gymraeg Y Trallwng, in Powys County Council, interacts with parents/carers in several ways, which include sending a weekly pamphlet home to promote specific syntactical patterns.

Practitioners introduce a range of vocabulary and syntactical patterns that are planned purposefully in everyday contexts, such as 'how to set the table' or 'discuss today's weather'. Leaders practise the patterns in a series of activities with the aim of using them at home by the end of the week. They learn these patterns by using familiar nursery rhymes or fun songs. Then, learners practise them by repeating the rhyme or song spontaneously in an area or corner of the classroom and beyond with increasing independence. Learners then record the syntactical patterns in

the form of a script and create a film to be used at home, before presenting it to parents/carers with the pamphlet. As a result, learners and parents use the Welsh language increasingly naturally at home. All members of the family hear correct vocabulary and syntactical patterns and can use them increasingly as a part of everyday life.

In the strongest practices, leaders maintain beneficial links with external partners to encourage foundation phase learners and latecomers alike to use the Welsh language outside the classroom. Leaders promote Urdd activities, such as weekly clubs, eisteddfodau, and residential camps. A few work closely with the local Welsh language initiatives such as 'mentrau iaith', to provide valuable opportunities for learners to apply their Welsh language skills in the community. For example, learners interview members of the community to learn about local history and then create digital presentations as part of their studies in the humanities area of learning and experience. A few leaders also promote beneficial opportunities for learners to join local performance groups that encourage learners to use the Welsh language. These experiences support learners' immersion experiences outside school which, in turn, deepens their understanding that the Welsh language is useful in the community.