
Ymateb i Ymgynghoriad / Consultation Response

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Background information about Estyn

Estyn is the Office of Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales. As a Crown body, we are independent of the Welsh Government.

Our principal aim is to raise the standards and quality education and training in Wales. This is primarily set out in the Tertiary Education and Research Act 2022 and the Education Act 2005. In exercising its functions, we must give regard to the:

- Quality of education and training in Wales;
- Extent to which education and training meets the needs of learners;
- Educational standards achieved by education and training providers in Wales;
- Quality of leadership and management of those education and training providers;
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of learners; and,
- Contribution made to the well-being of learners.

Our remit includes (but is not exclusive to) nurseries and non-maintained settings, primary schools, all age schools, secondary schools, independent schools, pupil referrals units, further education, adult community learning, local government education services, work-based learning, and initial teacher training.

We may give advice to the Welsh Parliament on any matter connected to education and training in Wales. To achieve excellence for learners, we have set three strategic objectives:

- Provide accountability to service users on the quality and standards of education and training in Wales;
- Inform the development of national policy by the Welsh Government;
- Build capacity for improvement of the education and training system in Wales.

This response is not confidential.

Response

Consultation questions

What challenges does the decrease in the number of Welsh speakers pose for local authority provision of Welsh in Education Strategic Plans?

Providing Welsh-medium non-maintained education, primary schools and secondary schools and Welsh language immersion centres that are accessible locally to learners from various starting points in all sectors is crucial when considering fairness and equity.

Overall, co-operation between local authorities is scarce, for example in ensuring consistent education provision for additional learning needs through the medium of Welsh and in expanding and co-ordinating Welsh-medium courses for post-16 learners. Ensuring support for young people to develop their Welsh language skills with increasing confidence as they mature into adults is an integral part of the challenge.

Provision of an education support service for providers in relation to the Welsh language, and by officers who communicate confidently in Welsh about areas of learning and experience and other subjects by regional consortia or authorities, varies across Wales.

What challenges lie ahead in the planning and development of Welsh-medium education provision in light of the Census data, and more specifically, the challenge of ensuring pupils in the English-medium sector are fluent as they leave school?

In core inspections, there is an increase in the number of recommendations that inspectors give in relation to the Welsh language.

Overall, the methodology and teaching and learning methods of practitioners, such as early and late Welsh immersion methods, are ambiguous, particularly when considering the progress of pupils in the Welsh language in English-medium schools. The professional learning offer is not comprehensive and co-ordinated enough to meet the needs of practitioners with different levels of proficiency in teaching the Welsh language.

The [Guidance on school categories according to Welsh-medium provision](#) provides support for schools to transfer from one linguistic category to another. In a majority of authorities, plans do not refer to moving schools along the language continuum. In addition, overall, authorities face a challenge in providing opportunities for children and young people to use the Welsh language spontaneously in situations outside formal education hours.

It is challenging for local authorities to develop the Welsh language skills of pupils who receive their education in English-medium schools as they continue with their post-16 education, in order to strengthen the seamless provision while supporting

learners to further develop their Welsh language skills as a basis for them to use the language with increasing confidence and proficiency in the workplace and as part of their everyday lives.

The [Welsh in education workforce plan](#) outlines the challenge when considering the small number of leaders and practitioners who are able to teach through the medium of Welsh in all sectors. This is a concern when considering the proficiency level of practitioners who are subject specialists in the secondary sector as they teach through the medium of Welsh.

[Increasing the number of Welsh-speakers in the education workforce](#) is a case study that derives from an inspection of Welsh for Adults Ceredigion, Powys and Carmarthenshire. It outlines good practice as the provider's officers plan and deliver valuable professional learning opportunities for school practitioners.

What funding considerations might be needed in future to support the full development of the WESPs given the decrease in the number of Welsh speakers?

It is crucial that funding implications are considered to support the development of the aims of WESPs, for example by providing professional learning opportunities for practitioners and when refining the transport policy in line with the [School Organisation Code \(2018\)](#).

The financial challenge is also relevant in attracting and retaining practitioners who are specialists in the Welsh language while developing immersion provision for latecomers as they access Welsh-medium education later in their school career.