



Arolygiaeth Ei Fawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on
The National Centre for Learning Welsh
College Road
Carmarthen
SA31 3EP

Date of inspection: April 2024

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

Context

On 1st August 2016, full responsibility for the Welsh for Adults sector was transferred to the National Centre for Learning Welsh (the Centre). The Centre is an arm's length body that is funded by Welsh Government and is based in the University of Wales Trinity St David.

The Centre restructured Welsh for Adults provision across Wales by establishing 11 Learn Welsh providers. The Centre funds these Learn Welsh providers to provide a Welsh for adults offer within their communities and, since 2018, Estyn has inspected all of these. Over time, the number of unique learners has increased with 33% more learners in 2022-2023 in comparison with the first national figures in 2017-2018. By 2022-2023, there were 16,905 unique learners. The number of learning activities has also increased significantly during the same period.

Since 2017, the Centre has received additional funding from Welsh Government for the Work Welsh programme, which aims to strengthen the bilingual skills of employees in the workplace. The scheme has provided its services to more than 1,000 employers and has also developed specific, tailored work sector schemes. These include:

- Health and Care
- Social Care
- Early Years Care and Education
- Sports

Since 2022, the Centre has also extended its work to provide Welsh learning services for young people aged 16-25. There is an additional grant for this work. The scheme also includes plans to upskill the workforce that provides training for children and young people, including the statutory education workforce, trainee teachers and the post-compulsory workforce. In 2024, the Centre has attracted an additional grant from Welsh Government's Education Department to lead on a national Welsh learning programme for the statutory education workforce and works closely with the sabbatical scheme to create one coherent programme.

Summary

The National Centre for Learning Welsh, in co-operation with Learn Welsh providers and other partners, ensures that there is a full range of courses across the levels that provide clear progression routes for learners. The learning programmes are planned and adapted purposefully to respond to the methods that best suit the aspirations and availability of learners, for example blended, residential and self-study courses within the mainstream provision and specific work sectors.

One of the Centre's notable developments is the increase in the rich range of specific-sector provision that supports learners to have easy access to lessons as a key part of their day-to-day work. Leaders also plan valuable opportunities for learners to use their oracy skills in numerous and varied activities outside formal lessons.

One of the Centre's notable qualities is the way in which leaders work together strategically to plan provision and opportunities to use the Welsh language through innovative collaboration with a range of valuable partners.

Over time, the National Centre for Learning Welsh is evolving from being a provider of Welsh for adults courses and activities only, to being a linguistic influencer. It is central to numerous initiatives to normalise the use of the language among learners and reluctant speakers of all ages, both in the community and within key sectors.

Managers aim ambitiously to ensure continuous improvement in line with their aspiration to evolve their processes for the benefit of learners' standards and well-being. They take robust action to manage the performance of Learn Welsh providers and are willing to make difficult decisions, when necessary, for the benefit of learners and to maintain the standard of provision.

The Centre manages its funding carefully and allocates capital to providers in line with clear priorities and detailed planning. Although the core grant has not increased since 2016, the Centre continues to ensure provision of a high standard and successful results in terms of the attainment of learners at all levels.

The aim of ensuring value for money is balanced with the aspiration to be inclusive. This means that the full cost of the course is kept as low as possible and most learners receive reduced fees or free lessons.

Recommendations

- R1 Continue to extend and share the expertise of the Learn Welsh sector in terms of pedagogy and second language acquisition to other relevant sectors to support Welsh Government's aim of reaching one million Welsh speakers by 2050

R2 Continue to innovate by facilitating linguistic planning activities that integrate new and reluctant speakers in initiatives to normalise the use of the Welsh language in their communities and at work

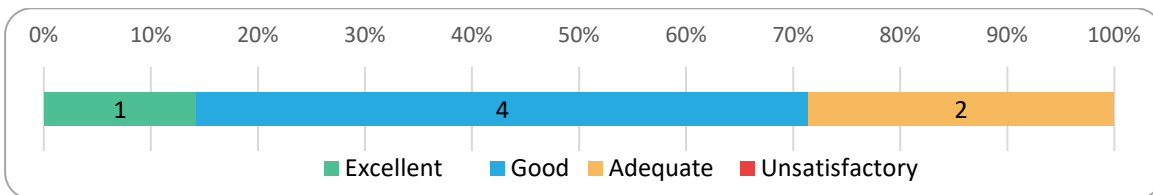
What happens next

Estyn will invite the provider to prepare a case study on its work in relation to expanding participation and ensuring that everyone in Wales has the opportunity to learn the language, whatever their background; in addition to another case study on how the Learn Welsh sector influences pedagogy and second language acquisition in other sectors in Wales and beyond, to be disseminated on Estyn's website.

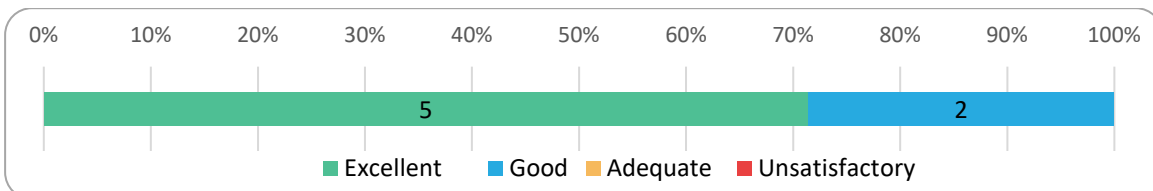
Main findings

Summary of the inspection outcomes of Learn Welsh Providers

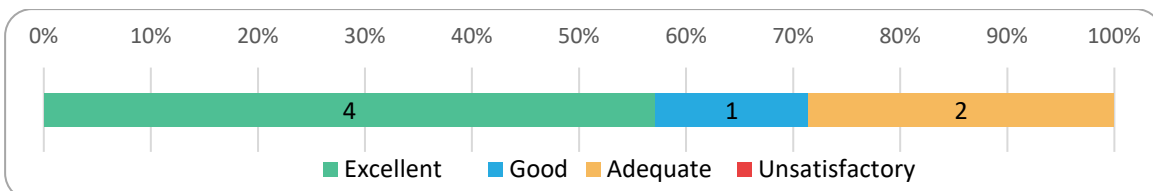
Standards



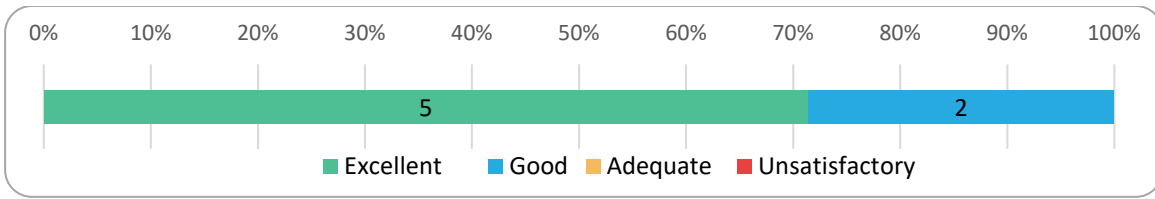
Well-being and attitudes to learning



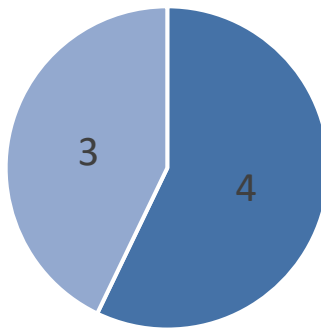
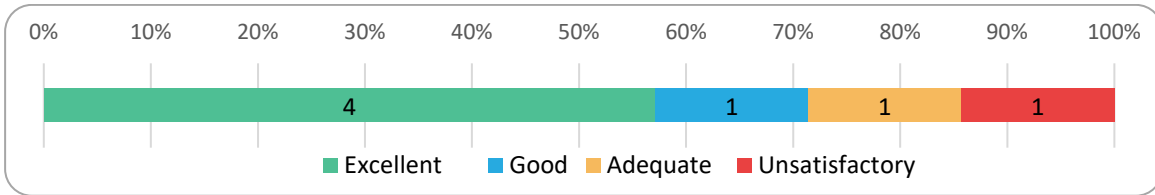
Teaching and learning experiences



Care, support and guidance



Leadership and management



- Good practice case study
- Good practice case study not requested

During the inspection cycle, all Learn Welsh providers were inspected. Since the Centre's last inspection in January 2021, seven of them have been inspected. This section summarises the inspection findings of the seven providers. All inspections since 2021 have included an element of observing online provision. Observation samples were chosen based on what was offered to learners to gain a balanced and meaningful impression of standards of teaching and learning.

Estyn does not favour any particular method or means of learning. We use the same criteria to evaluate teaching and learning whatever the medium of teaching and these principles were followed when inspecting the seven providers.

All inspection areas were good or better in five of the seven providers inspected. A majority of the inspection areas in two providers were adequate or below.

Many learners across the providers make very sound progress in developing all of their Welsh language skills. The clear strength of the sector is the way in which it produces new speakers who develop their oracy successfully wherever they are on the language continuum. They speak increasingly spontaneously with each other and their tutors and this has a positive effect on their progress.

Learners make the best progress on intensive courses when they are given an opportunity to immerse themselves fully in the language. These learners succeed in improving significantly in terms of fluency and confidence, whatever their level, in a short period of time.

Many learners are very keen to use their new skills outside their lessons and there are numerous examples of learners who attend events and join activities and societies with the specific aim of assimilating with Welsh networks as new speakers and to use the language with family, friends or in the workplace. This reflects the providers' efforts to organise and facilitate a host of activities for learners to practise their Welsh in informal and varied situations.

Overall, learners' attitudes to learning are extremely positive. The 'Well-being and attitudes to learning' inspection area was judged to be excellent in five of the seven providers. Most learners enjoy their learning very much and their enthusiasm is contagious.

Most tutors use the target language highly effectively during lessons and facilitate learning skilfully to motivate learners to use the Welsh language without the fear of making mistakes. One of the excellent features of the best teaching is how tutors adapt learning activities to include the native language and rich dialect of the communities to which learners belong.

Overall, tutors across the range of levels and sectors have high expectations of their learners. They believe in the ability of learners to become speakers and this belief nurtures learners' self-confidence. However, in the few providers where teaching and learning experiences were judged to be 'adequate and in need of improvement', a minority of tutors do not stretch learners sufficiently and their expectations of learners are not high enough. This, in turn, has a negative effect on learners' standards and their desire to take advantage of the valuable opportunities that are organised for them to use the Welsh language outside their lessons.

The relationship between nearly all tutors and their learners is supportive and close and, as a result, learners feel safe and are given appropriate additional support. The 'Care, support and guidance' inspection area is good or better in all providers, and excellent in five of them.

Leadership and management are good or better in many of the providers, with four being excellent in this aspect of their work. Overall, senior managers and leaders set a clear strategic direction that promotes the aims of objectives of the National Centre for Learning Welsh successfully. One provider was given a summative judgement of 'unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement' for leadership and management.

In the best cases, providers fulfil an extremely effective and important function within the wider services of their home institutions, and have a direct and positive influence on the linguistic developments of those institutions. Providers who model effective pedagogy have robust self-evaluation procedures that highlight strengths and areas for improvement clearly. This information leads to effective development and improvement plans, including professional learning, which targets areas for improvement purposefully. However, in providers with adequate or unsatisfactory

leadership, monitoring arrangements, the use of data and self-evaluation processes are not incisive or evaluative enough to address important areas for improvement. As a result, the professional learning offer is not purposeful enough to improve teaching and learning practices.

The purpose of the sector is to create new speakers and providers are clear about their strategic direction and the important contribution they make to the Welsh Government policy of reaching a million Welsh speakers by 2050.

Planning provision

One of the Centre's notable strengths is the way in which leaders have responded proactively and creatively in supporting providers to plan a wide and inclusive range of courses to meet the needs of learners. Effective use is made of the Learning Programme Guidelines to plan a programme on the digital platform that responds successfully to the learning trends of different learners. They use the core grant skilfully when planning programmes and, over time, leaders have used additional grants very successfully to provide a wider range of sectoral provision to engage and motivate learners in a wide range of leisure and work situations. These programmes, for example Work Welsh and Welsh at Home, have developed rapidly and are extremely valuable in meeting the needs of learners and employers alike. As a result, the Centre and providers work together diligently to plan a wide range of learning courses.

A full range of courses is provided across the levels which provide clear progression routes for learners to support them to continue with their language journey. Learning programmes are planned and adapted purposefully to respond to the aspirations and availability of learners, for example blended, residential and self-study courses within the mainstream and sectoral provision. The total number of learners who choose to learn on tutor-led intensive programmes has increased steadily over time. The Centre responds proactively to learners' wishes skilfully and ensures accessibility for them to learn, for example as it supports tutors to deliver lessons in community venues or when providing online lessons.

Mainstream lessons are an essential element of the Centre's work and learners in their communities are at the heart of the provision. Directors support managers beneficially and share valuable guidance as they devise the programmes. Through regular meetings, useful opportunities are provided to stakeholders to contribute to the Centre's plans as they respond to local and national priorities. A range of valuable evidence is used when evaluating programmes and these are reviewed and refined meaningfully.

One of the Centre's most notable developments is the rich range of sectoral provision that supports learners to have easy access to lessons, for example as a key part of their day-to-day work. The Work Welsh scheme has evolved quickly and meets the needs of learners and employers very beneficially. For example, in response to Welsh Government policy in the health sector, such as More Than Words, a tutor has been appointed in all health boards in Wales to support the health and care workforce to provide a service to patients through the medium of Welsh. Welsh at Home programmes and commissioned courses, such as Mudiad Meithrin's Clwb Cwtsh, have also developed as a valuable resource for parents and carers to access

lessons that give them a taste of the Welsh language. This, in turn, often inspires them to start using Welsh with children and to learn Welsh in mainstream lessons. Similarly, a partnership between Mudiad Meithrin and the Centre, called *Camau*, provides courses for the early years education and childcare workforce.

The Centre has given a specific priority to engaging with different groups of learners, for example learners who are identified as asylum seekers and refugees, through the use of the *Croeso i Bawb* scheme. Recently, an Anti-racism Plan has been introduced with the aim of attracting more learners from diverse backgrounds to attend Welsh lessons. The Centre gives generous price discounts to mainstream learners and, as a result, only a few learners pay the full fee. The company and advisory boards have also ratified a policy of offering free courses to people on specific benefits.

Through purposeful co-operation with key partners, the Centre plans strategically and coherently to reinforce each other's work, for example with Mudiad Meithrin and the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol. Most recently, provision to support young learners as part of the Onwards with Welsh provision has been introduced and has a strong effect on developing young people's attitudes to learning Welsh and supporting them to make progress in their skills.

The Centre is progressive in its use of research to shape provision. Research was commissioned on the achievements of school pupils who sit GCSE Welsh Second Language. The '*Adnabod y Seilliau*' report showed that GCSE pupils reach a level of A1-A2 on an internationally recognised framework (CEFR) by key stage 4. As a result, pupils at the end of key stage 3 in four secondary schools follow the Centre's Entry level curriculum for specific classes. Methodologies based on the language acquisition methods of the Welsh for Adults sector are presented to pupils, supporting them to sit a WJEC oral exam that is adapted to the context of young people. This is innovative in terms of developing the concept of creating a single language continuum for learners of all levels and ages. The Centre also continues to foster a beneficial relationship with youth organisations and services, such as the Urdd, and fund a tutor who provides training for staff.

Leaders plan beneficial opportunities jointly for learners to speak Welsh in activities outside formal lessons within their communities. For example, through valuable co-operation with Mentrau Iaith Welsh language initiatives, opportunities are provided for learners and reluctant speakers to speak Welsh in the community. Recently, a Learner Support Programme has been introduced to incorporate these activities. For example, the aim is to organise more national residential activities to support groups of learners to gain confidence and become active speakers, such as by organising a residential course in Carmarthen during the town's festival for learners aged between 21 and 25. Through these opportunities, including the valuable Siarad Scheme, learners gain the confidence to try speaking Welsh with fluent speakers, which contributes positively to the process of assimilating within their local society.

As the Centre's service has evolved, leaders have invested extensively in digital provision to support managers and learners. The digital platform has also enriched teaching and learning provision with a wide range of visual and interactive resources. These resources are extremely beneficial for tutors to use to vary learning methods.

The Centre continues to monitor that providers implement rigorous safety arrangements appropriately through policies and procedures for safeguarding learners. This has been developed further as provision for young people has been expanded.

Quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers

The successful performance of the Centre and most providers alike contributes firmly to achieving the targets in the Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers strategy. For example, the Centre has continued to increase the number of learners during the last three years and there has been an increase of 33% since 2017-2018, when the first national figures were published.

The chief executive has a clear focus on continuous improvement and a far-reaching vision. She has taken decisive steps to reorganise the staff structure and create new directorates that reflect the wider scope of the Centre's work. Together with provider managers, the Centre's senior officers ensure that learners are at the heart of everything they achieve. Aims and priorities are organised in a range of detailed policies and plans and communicated successfully to stakeholders. This ensures that all partners have a shared understanding of what is prioritised and implemented by them purposefully, with the aim of supporting learners to apply themselves and achieve to the best of their ability when learning Welsh. Leaders are confident in adapting and evolving any aspect of the service and operate creatively to innovate continuously. By doing so, they respond to gaps in provision, which leads to successful linguistic planning in all aspects of their work.

The partnership between the Centre and providers is sound. Regular communication and effective co-operation, for example when planning learning programmes, monitoring attendance and evaluating learners' progress, contribute effectively to offering comprehensive provision. Staff support providers to ensure that learners at different levels and on different types of courses make appropriate progress. They have an overview of all of the providers' activity and support and challenge managers as appropriate.

The high expectations of leaders and the sense of working together as members of a team ensure that a culture of developing the Centre further is fostered as an integral part of the vision. As a result, they contribute proactively when responding to challenges in relation to any aspect of provision.

Directors implement strategies skilfully within a marketing and communication strategy plan. Strategies based on research findings and the learners' voice are implemented effectively. For example, following market research into young people's reasons for learning Welsh, a multi-platform marketing campaign was created specifically to target young people aged 16-25. Appropriate and appealing platforms were used to target them, using suitable influencers to market the benefits of learning Welsh. As a result of this marketing campaign, a growth of 9% was seen in young people between 16-25 years old who attended Learn Welsh lessons in 2022-23.

By working with Adult Learning Wales, WSOL (Welsh for Speakers of Other Languages) courses have been introduced for ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) learners. Another specific grant has been provided to run Welsh courses

for refugees and asylum seekers. Learn Welsh units are also available in Cantonese, Syrian Arabic, Pashto, Farsi and Ukrainian. The Centre provides them with support to transition from these Welsh learning programmes to the Centre's mainstream courses.

Financial support for learners who are affected by poverty strives to ensure that there are no obstacles to learning Welsh for any member of society. For example, free childcare is provided for parents and carers who reach a benefit threshold in specific areas across Wales to support them to take part in Welsh language sessions. Through a special fund, the Centre provides money to purchase technical equipment, course books, travel and childcare costs and to contribute to the cost of staying on summer courses.

Leaders support managers and tutors skilfully to meet learners' specific needs. For example, they provide a range of beneficial professional learning opportunities for tutors through the *Academi* to support them in meeting learners' well-being and learning needs. This ensures that provision is accessible and inclusive.

One of the Centre's notable qualities is the way in which leaders work together strategically to plan provision through innovative collaboration with a range of valuable partners. Through coordinated planning, learners' experience of learning Welsh in a variety of interesting contexts is enriched as they take part in local and national activities that introduce them skilfully to the history and culture of Wales. For example, the Centre collaborates successfully to support young learners to learn Welsh and engage with Welsh music by providing information about Maes B and contemporary Welsh culture in schools and colleges as part of the National Eisteddfod's plans. Interesting Welsh lessons are organised for young learners with the aim of transforming their attitudes towards learning the language by using their Welsh in a visit to the Eisteddfod. Staff from the county council where the festival is being held this year and next year are also given the experience of attending a residential course at Learn Welsh Nant Gwrtheyrn to support them to work and speak Welsh during the week of the Eisteddfod.

In order to support learners' reading skills, the Centre continues to work successfully with the Books Council of Wales, who commission a series of '*Amdani*' books that help learners to enjoy reading interesting fiction books. Several learners have now authored books in the series.

The Centre has suitable procedures for monitoring sub-contracted provision, for example with organisations that provide for specific sectors.

The advisory board and company board fulfil a key role in providing useful support and advice on a wide range of issues. They challenge firmly and scrutinise the decisions of the Centre's managers. Members of both boards have valuable expertise and extensive experience which are of significant benefit to the Centre. For example, a member of the advisory board facilitated receiving advice and guidance for the Centre as it planned to create courses for physical education teachers in English-medium schools.

The advisory board has contributed usefully to developing qualitative approaches to analysing feedback from learners. They have also provided challenge and

meaningful input into discussions on changing the quality assurance structure and developing training through the *Academi*.

The company board scrutinises financial matters thoroughly, in addition to analysing data and discussing value for money. Overall, both boards contribute positively to management accountability and robust governance.

Self-evaluation and planning for improvement processes

Leaders and managers of the National Centre for Learning Welsh have a very thorough knowledge of their sector. They have a strong understanding of their providers' strengths and what needs to be improved. The sector's national quality framework is at the heart of the sector's quality activities. Although the current system succeeds in ensuring quality throughout the sector, managers aim ambitiously to ensure continuous improvement in line with their aspiration to evolve their processes for the benefit of learners' standards and well-being. As a result, they have revised the quality structure and created a new framework for themselves and providers, which will provide additional challenge in addition to reflecting the change in the Centre's range of work, including significant provision such as Work Welsh and Onwards with Welsh. They have added another valuable layer of scrutiny by establishing a quality panel with experienced external experts who scrutinise quality across all directorates and recommend changes where necessary.

The teaching and learning observation process is thorough and effective in terms of measuring standards across Learn Welsh providers. Staff who lead on quality provide valuable training for observers from all providers and standardise their work appropriately. They also observe the providers themselves and, when they have concerns about the quality of teaching and learning, undertake extensive observation at the specific provider, giving useful advice and support on how to improve. The Centre has responded to the challenge of two providers who did not meet the expected standard or uphold the sector's best practice appropriately. Managers take firm action to manage the performance of Learn Welsh providers and are willing to make difficult decisions, when necessary, for the benefit of learners and to maintain the standard of provision.

Leaders have also introduced a new data analysis plan, including a dashboard that summarises data usefully for managers of Learn Welsh providers. Having access to live, analysed data facilitates the use of data significantly to make planning and operational decisions based on valid and quantitative evidence. It is also extremely useful in enabling providers to track the history of learners and their learning activities since they registered with any Learn Welsh provision.

The views of key stakeholders play an important role in evaluation and planning for improvement processes. The Centre places learners at the heart of all of its work and listening to the learners' voice both locally and nationally is a clear strength throughout the sector. Learners' feedback through national questionnaires is very positive, on the whole. However, managers are keen to continue to improve on any aspects, where possible, by seeking opinions in focus groups on themes such as equality and diversity.

There are numerous examples of responding positively to the learners' voice, for example by including information about the history of the language in entry and foundation level course books and creating transcripts of Robin Radio listening activity scripts.

Learners' well-being is a priority for the Centre and this is reflected clearly in the inspections of individual providers. The Centre's leaders monitor the well-being and care of learners very carefully and provide appropriate training for the whole sector.

They also adopt positive practices themselves by giving the needs of all learners equal consideration, for example by providing more accessible listening activities for learners with hearing impairments by providing versions without background music.

Forging and maintaining innovative partnerships with the aim of improving the range of quality of provision available to learners is one of the Centre's obvious strengths. The Centre is proactive in creating opportunities for learners to become active fluent speakers. One notable example is the partnership with Mentrau Iaith Cymru and the 'Hapus i Siarad/Happy to Talk' scheme, which encourages businesses in a specific geographical area to display signs welcoming experienced and new speakers to use the Welsh language with them.

Over time, the National Centre for Learning Welsh is evolving from being a provider of Welsh courses and activities for learners only to being a linguistic influencer. It is central to numerous initiatives to normalise the use of the language among learners and reluctant speakers of all ages in the community and in key sectors. Partners consider the Centre to be the cornerstone of these innovative efforts and see it as advantageous that one organisation has the educational expertise and strategic vision necessary for successful linguistic planning.

The Centre's leaders respond very effectively to the inspection recommendations of individual Learn Welsh providers, in addition to the recommendations given to the Centre itself during the previous inspection of its work in 2021. The main recommendation of that inspection was to share the methodology for successful teaching and second language acquisition with other relevant sectors to support the Welsh Government's aim of achieving a million active Welsh speakers by 2050. That aim has now been embedded in the Centre's work, for example by reaching out to key sectors such as training for the education workforce.

The Centre also guides and monitors providers' progress carefully against their recommendations. Action plans are clear and purposeful and allocate responsibilities suitably with measurable targets and appropriate timescales. The effect of this is monitored and evaluated valuably. For example, in response to a recommendation for a provider to develop learners' reading and writing skills further, strategies and guidance have been introduced on how to incorporate more reading and writing tasks to enrich learning and challenge learners, in addition to professional development for tutors. Similarly, following a recommendation for a provider to ensure consistency in good practices to support learners to improve their pronunciation, national training units have been created for tutors and workshops have been held with university experts on Welsh pronunciation.

Since the Centre's last inspection, managers and leaders have strengthened their quality assurance and planning for improvement processes by being proactive as well as reactive. Their desire to ensure continuous improvement manifests itself in the high standards that can be seen in most provision and their willingness to identify and address any weaknesses in provision across Wales purposefully.

Professional learning

The National Centre for Learning Welsh organises and provides a comprehensive range of professional learning experiences for its workforce. Leaders identify the needs of the sector well through effective monitoring and scrutiny procedures and also listen carefully to the voice and views of providers. As a result, they provide an effective training offer which is valued by tutors and leads to high standards of teaching and success among learners.

Following a period of working entirely through distance learning, providers have resumed their systems for working face-to-face. These activities continue to increase annually, but the digital offer also continues to be very popular. The Centre has a strong grasp of this information and tailors training purposefully.

The Centre's central resource for professional learning, the '*Academi*' digital platform, is growing and evolving continuously. It is accessible to all members of staff in the sector and is an essential destination when considering the continuous professional development needs of tutors. All tutors are expected to attend at least one training session a year, with the system tracking tutors' progress on an interactive dashboard. The Centre reviews and adds to the resources regularly, ensuring that they are relevant and useful. An annual training programme attracts thousands of enrolments and tutors benefit from the wide range of resources that are available to them.

Tutors follow the '*Dechrau Dysgu*' course, which provides them with a firm basis to start a career. The national teaching qualification, which is at level 4, has a progression route since the last inspection, with additional units in the '*Academi*' providing a continuous professional development path for tutors.

Leaders have created a culture and ethos that supports the professional learning of all practitioners across the sector. A notable example of this are the engaging grammar sessions that are held on a weekly basis and are available virtually so that tutors can strengthen their understanding of grammatical rules and facilitate their role as proficient educators. This helps to create a sense of one national team that works cohesively for the benefit of learners of the Welsh language.

The Centre has a sound awareness of standards among all providers, which enables it to identify excellence which may have a positive influence throughout the sector. By working proactively with agreements and financial grants, it disseminates good practice efficiently and successfully. A particular example of this is the way in which leaders take advantage of the expertise of tutors at Nant Gwrtheyrn to deliver a professional learning training programme on effective immersion methods for tutors across the length and breadth of Wales.

In addition to disseminating good practice within the sector, the Centre also undertakes contemporary research effectively with international networks to ensure that it uses the latest information to share effective language learning practices.

Following research results, staff have created new scripts for the Robin Radio programme, including common vocabulary which, according to research, is difficult for learners to remember, so that learners can hear it in context regularly and, as a result, acquire it successfully. The Centre has also shared its expertise and influenced the field internationally, supporting other countries to create 'taster' courses to support the promotion of languages in their countries. These actions, along with the commitment of tutors to undertake the training, align with the Centre's vision to raise the sector's profile and create an attractive career path, to develop a qualified and purposeful workforce and to maintain exceptionally high performance.

The Centre measures the effectiveness of training regularly and reviews providers' achievement through observation, analysing the response of learners and the response of the workforce. It also tracks the attendance and completion rates and progression of all learners and links this back to individual tutors and courses.

The Centre's central and national performance management procedures are thorough and effective. The Centre's staff undertake the process positively to identify strengths and areas for development. By setting clear and measurable actions, in addition to suitable opportunities for training, such as leadership and management courses, leaders ensure that the workforce increases its knowledge, understanding and professional skills to support the Centre's work. There are a variety of processes to manage the performance of providers, with the Centre listening to the voices of tutors and learners regularly. They meet frequently to discuss providers' self-evaluations and respond proactively to the needs of the workforce. The Centre provides training for observers to ensure consistency in the process of ensuring the quality of teaching and learning across providers. The Centre's staff observe lessons regularly across all providers, which enables them to understand the strengths and areas for development in provision nationally which, in turn, contributes to providing purposeful and strategic professional learning.

Use of resources

The Centre manages its funding carefully and allocates capital to providers in line with clear priorities and detailed planning. Although the core grant has not increased since 2016, the Centre continues to ensure provision of a high standard and successful results in terms of learners' attainment at all levels.

The Centre is also responsible for managing and allocating additional grants to promote the learning of Welsh to specific groups of people, for example young people between the ages of 16 and 25 and the health and care workforce. It does this through a careful tendering process with Learn Welsh providers and other partners. The Centre manages expenditure prudently, and monitors and evaluates the impact of the work in line with the conditions of the grants.

The Centre's leaders are aware of the current costs of providers, programmes and training activities and review them regularly. They challenge themselves and provision leaders regularly to ensure value for money and take advantage of every

possible opportunity to make the most of every penny. Following a recent thorough review, and in response to the concerns of practitioners, a decision was made to increase the value of the learner within the funding formula in recognition of the increasing costs of running provisions. The aim of ensuring value for money is balanced by the aspiration to be as inclusive as possible and not exclude anyone due to the cost of courses. Leaders use their thorough knowledge of their budget to identify quickly and make the most of any instances of underspending or additional income, such as higher than expected sales of textbooks. For example, in response to variations in the budget, it was possible to re-open the Welsh at Home grant fund based on the success of the first round and the growing demand to support parents to learn Welsh.

Leaders consider the short-term needs of learners alongside the strategic, long-term needs of the Centre. They take proactive action when identifying opportunities to provide training and expertise in specific areas. For example, leaders prepared a study and a business case to increase the linguistic skills of the education workforce and presented it to the government. As a result, the Centre is now developing provision further.

The Centre invests sensibly in detailed advertising campaigns following thorough research, such as geo-targeting specific areas in Wales. The result of its marketing strategy is that 500,000 people have visited the Centre's website in a year. A notable example of this is the use of a social media platform which is popular with 16 to 25-year-olds to attract them to the website. This has led to a large increase in hits to the website and an increase in the number of young people enrolling on courses.

Officers support providers to consider their funding carefully and use venues sensibly. For example, they weigh up the costs of hiring buildings with an appropriate emphasis on holding classes in communities across Wales. Their national overview enables them to help providers with ideas for using venues in more cost-effective ways. Due to the Centre's thorough and careful scrutiny, providers stick to their budgets consistently. In the rare cases where overspending and underspending occurs, the Centre leads discussions with those providers about the reasons and provides potential solutions.

The Centre benefits from the close relationship with the University of Wales Trinity St David. The vision and dedication of the university's senior leaders towards the Centre's work and mission supports it to operate and grow successfully. In practice, it is part of corporate services procedures and adopts their audit and procurement policies. It also receives information technology and human resources support for its staff, which is a convenient and useful arrangement for the Centre.

The company board and advisory board play an important role in scrutinising the Centre's budget each term, among wider scrutiny responsibilities. They challenge and offer advice when discussing and analysing the annual action plan which is based on strategic planning, taking into account the resources that need to be allocated to achieve the Centre's priorities. The Centre's financial processes are robust and this is recognised annually by external auditors. In addition to the scrutiny

work of the company and advisory boards, the Centre reports to the government on a termly basis, providing detailed reports on its work and expenditure.

Evidence base of the report

Before the inspection, inspectors:

- analysed the outcomes from the learner questionnaire and considered the views of tutors and staff through their questionnaire responses
- scrutinised the inspection outcomes from Learn Welsh providers

During the inspection, inspectors:

- met with the chief executive, directors, the Centre's management team, representatives, the management/governing body and other senior leaders
- met with Learn Welsh providers and key partners
- looked closely at the provider's self-evaluation processes
- considered the provider's improvement plans and looked at evidence to show how well the provider had moved forward with planned improvements
- scrutinised a range of the provider's documents, including information on learners' progress, records of meetings of staff and the managing/governing body, information on learners' wellbeing, including the safeguarding of learners, and records of staff training and professional development

After the inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- reviewed 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
- invited the provider to ensure that the report was factually correct

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the provider and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

The report was produced in accordance with Section 77 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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