

Committee	Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report	Secondary Sector Language Strategy
Date of meeting	26 September 2017
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Relevant Cabinet Member	Councillor Gareth Thomas

1. BACKGROUND

This report is presented along with a draft version of the Gwynedd Secondary Sector Language Strategy at the behest of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee.

The report is required in order to address a number of questions provided in advance by committee members, and an attempt is made to address these questions in the order they appear in this pre-report.

2. TO WHAT EXTENT HAS THE SECONDARY SECTOR LANGUAGE STRATEGY ENSURED A CONTINUATION FROM THE PRIMARY SECTOR LANGUAGE CHARTER?

Since the launch of the Welsh Language Charter in Gwynedd, pioneering work has taken place in our primary schools to influence children's social use of Welsh.

In order to ensure firm succession for the Charter, the Secondary Sector Language Strategy was created which will provide clear guidance to our secondary schools about techniques for changing language habits and the different ways of influencing the social language of pupils within and outside the school.

Like the Primary Sector Language Charter, the Secondary Sector Language Strategy requires a contribution from every member of the school community - the school council, the pupils, the workforce, parents, governors and the wider community in order to ensure full ownership by all stakeholders of the school.

In the same way that primary schools are expected to draw up an action plan to respond to the requirements of the bronze, silver and gold Language Charter, every secondary school is expected to create an action plan responding to the Secondary Sector Language Strategy. To achieve this, during the summer term, Carys Lake visited the headteacher of every secondary school to discuss their action plans with them, and every school is currently in the process of presenting their action plans to Carys Lake.

Therefore, even though the plan implemented at secondary schools in order to influence social use of the Welsh language among young people is not a Language Charter, there are

comparable elements and expectations to be implemented between the Primary Sector Language Charter and the Secondary Sector Language Charter, that will ensure appropriate succession from primary to secondary schools.

3. WHAT IS THE INFORMATION FROM THE BASELINE DATA ON USE OF THE WELSH LANGUAGE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS?

The language web, an on-line questionnaire developed to measure children's social use of Welsh in primary schools, was piloted with Year 7 pupils at secondary schools in 2016. The purpose of the pilot was to see how practical it was to enable every Year 7 pupil to fill in the questionnaire and how much time and resources this would take.

Although a substantial number of Year 7 pupils have completed the language web, unfortunately, it is not possible to use the data gathered since the number of pupils who completed the language web questionnaire in September 2016 differs from the number of the pupils who completed the language web in March 2017. Consequently, it is not possible to carry out a comprehensive analysis of the data.

The Secondary Sector Language Strategy differs from the Primary Sector Language Charter as the Secondary Sector Strategy includes a curricular aspect as well as the young people's social use of Welsh. Consequently, the language web questionnaire has been adapted for the secondary sector in order to incorporate both these aspects, whilst simultaneously ensuring consistency with some of the questions to ensure that it is possible to track progress in the social use of Welsh from primary to secondary.

We will also be establishing a new baseline with the amended questionnaire in October 2017 to coincide with the start of the Secondary Sector Language Strategy implementation period.

4. WHAT IS THE STRATEGY'S AMBITION?

Gwynedd Council is fully committed to a system of progressive and excellent secondary schools that promote the Welsh language in all aspects of its work.

The aim of the Secondary Sector Language Strategy is to promote social use of Welsh among children and young people and to develop it as an effective medium for all aspects of a school's life and work.

The Strategy will be an effective planning tool, building on the success of the Primary Sector Language Charter, in order to lead to further progress in the social and curricular use of the Welsh language among pupils.

It supports the vision of the Gwynedd Language Strategy to ensure the prosperity of the Welsh language. Emphasising the Welsh language will ensure that the children of Gwynedd are bilingually proficient and confident and take pride in the additional value bestowed upon them from having two languages; that they are able to confidently use both languages, socially and professionally, once they leave school; and that they, eventually, pass on both languages to the next generation in Gwynedd.

5. HAS THE STRATEGY BEEN CREATED JOINTLY WITH SCHOOLS AND, IF SO, HOW WAS THIS ACHIEVED?

This Strategy was created under the guidance of Carys Lake, Leader of the Gwynedd Secondary Language Centre and with the co-operation of a working group of secondary headteachers and deputy headteachers and Gwynedd Council officers. The working group represented a range of secondary schools which vary in terms of geographical locations, size, background and language context, they are:

- Ysgol Brynrefail
- Ysgol Friars
- Ysgol Tryfan
- Ysgol Eifionydd
- Ysgol Glan y Môr
- Tywyn Secondary School
- Performance Management Officer, Education Department, Gwynedd Council
- Welsh Language Services Manager, Gwynedd Council

Valuable and enthusiastic input to the Strategy was secured by secondary learners of various linguistic backgrounds, including native Welsh speakers, fluent learners, and learners with a more basic proficiency. The visits of the Coordinator with groups of pupils was an opportunity to extricate all kinds of ideas. The infectious enthusiasm of these pupils left a particular impression.

A draft of the Secondary Sector Language Strategy was presented to the Secondary Sector Strategic Planning Group (every secondary headteacher and the Education Department was present) by the Head of Education and Secondary Sector Language Strategy Coordinator. There, the aims of the Strategy received support, and consequently the 14 secondary schools stated their commitment to act with the support of the Secondary Sector Language Strategy Coordinator.

6. HAS THE STRATEGY ADDRESSED MATTERS WHICH ARISE FROM THE WELSH LANGUAGE EDUCATION SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION?

The Secondary Sector Language Strategy focuses on the Welsh language and Education and encompasses curricular aspects as well as social use of the language. There are four main fields to which the Strategy attempts to respond:

- Welsh First Language
- Second Language Welsh
- The Welsh Language as a medium
- Social use of Welsh among young people

In January 2016, the Cabinet Member for Education submitted a progress report to the Services Scrutiny Committee against the recommendations of the Welsh Medium Education Scrutiny Investigation Report. A number of the recommendations in the report had already been completed by that time, but one recommendation pertaining to the Language Policy was ongoing.

This recommendation involved implementation, consistency and success of Gwynedd Council's Language Policy in the county's schools, based on a study of three specific areas, where the conclusion was reached that 'interpretation of the policy varied greatly and was dependent on the linguistic demography of the schools' catchment areas as well as the enthusiasm of teachers and head teachers for the Welsh language. It was also noted that 'there was neither consistency nor a general understanding of the requirements'.

Consequently, discussions were held with the headteachers of every secondary school in Gwynedd, in order to ensure clarity and consistency in the way they defined themselves (in accordance with the Welsh Government's linguistic categories). The schools' definitions have been included as an appendix to the Secondary Sector Language Strategy, and will be part of the way the Strategy is to be monitored by the Strategy's Coordinator and the Education Department.

To this end, it must be acknowledged that the context and reference for the Secondary Sector Language Strategy has been based on a number of key policy documents, among which is the Welsh-Medium Education Scrutiny Investigation Report, namely:

- Strategic Plan – Welsh in Education
- Welsh-Medium Education Scrutiny Investigation Report
- Alun Charles' Study Report
- Secondary Schools Language Practices Support Project (PCAI) - Welsh Government.
- Gwynedd Language Strategy
- Increasing the Social Use of the Welsh language Among the Children and Young People of Gwynedd's Secondary Schools, Trywydd Report
- Welsh Language 2050, Welsh Government
- A framework for increasing the use of Welsh among children and young people, Welsh Government
- Successful Future, Donaldson Review

7. OBSERVATIONS

Any additional comments or questions by members of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee on the Secondary Sector Language Strategy are welcomed.