

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following the pioneering work of establishing the Gwynedd Primary Schools Welsh Language Charter to increase children's social use of the Welsh language, the time has now come to turn our attention to the secondary sector and plan the succession of our efforts in the primary sector.

In September 2013 a Working Group was established to look at Increasing the Social Use of the Welsh Language in the Secondary Sector and in March 2014 the Working Group commissioned *Trywydd* to carry out a survey of the Welsh language's position as a social language amongst the young people of Gwynedd secondary schools. This document reports on the work of this survey undertaken in the summer term of 2014. In terms of the commission in question, the work was divided as follows:

- Carry out a comprehensive survey of young people's current use of the Welsh language outside the classroom walls at the 14 secondary schools in Gwynedd, and ascertain the main factors which influence the language use of the young people;
- Plan and hold a workshop in order to obtain the input of the young people themselves to plan and develop succession to the Gwynedd Primary Schools Welsh Language Charter;
- Based on the results of the survey, create a series of pioneering proposals in order to have a positive influence on young people's social use of the Welsh language;
- Present proposals regarding how to measure the success of any plans implemented, that is, the increase in the use of the Welsh language compared with the current situation as a result of any intervention implemented.

In response to the requirements of the brief, visits were arranged to all secondary schools in Gwynedd for an entire day in order to carry out the whole-school survey. Broad and representative focus groups were arranged with all stakeholders of the schools, and an electronic quantitative questionnaire (through the Qwizdom machines) was carried out with the pupils of year 9 in every school. As well as the research days, additional meetings were held during the period with staff of Hunaniaith, Gwynedd Primary Schools Language Charter, community leaders in the county (the *Urdd*, YFC, the County Council's Youth Services Manager and the Leisure Centres) and the Gwynedd Council Increasing the Social Use of the Welsh Language Working Group.

The results vary greatly between the different schools and areas; however, seven main fields were identified for the county-level outcomes, as follows. The points are discussed in greater detail in the body of this report:

### *i) Defining the linguistic nature of the schools*

- There is uncertainty amongst stakeholders regarding the linguistic nature of the schools. Stakeholders are unclear as to whether they are natural Welsh Schools, Bilingual Schools or English Schools (in some cases).
- Some schools are very sensitive in terms of promoting the Welsh language for fear of alienating parents.

- There is a need for clarity on a county and school basis regarding the linguistic nature of the schools.

*ii) The way in which the schools promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language*

- There is a need to be clear regarding the advantages involved with Welsh / Bilingual education and they need to be shared clearly with parents and pupils.
- There is a need for more strategic planning and intentional action in terms of the use of the Welsh language outside the classroom.
- The strategy must encompass all stakeholders, but in particular the pupils themselves.

*iii) Language use and the Curriculum*

There are variances within the county's schools in terms of:

The language used in various situations:

- Welsh is the main / only language
- English is the main / only language
- Bilingualism in its various definitions

The language used by pupils to write during the lesson

- Who decides

What the policy and procedure are in the classroom conversations and discussions

- Teacher and individual pupils/group
- Pupil and pupil

Primary – Secondary succession

- Not every pupil who achieves Level 4 in Welsh follows a First Language Welsh course in Year 7.

*iv) The language use of pupils outside the classroom*

- The schools are a microcosm of the use made of the Welsh language in the communities around them, and that linguistic range is very broad.
- Not one school is in an entirely 'safe' situation in terms of the social use of the Welsh language in the long-term.
- One of the challenges is nurturing a feeling of Welsh identity and underlining that Welsh is a language for everyone in Gwynedd.
- Schools provide a wealth of extra-curricular activities; however; this varies across the County and the provision should be reinforced.

*v) The factors which influence the children's language use*

The main ones were identified as follows:

- the home / family
- friends and peers
- the local community
- their confidence in using language
- language practices (including the primary school)

*vi) Attitudes towards the Welsh language*

- Generally, pupils' attitudes towards the Welsh language are very positive. There have been individual examples of challenging attitudes towards the Welsh language (from amongst pupils and adults in a few schools).
- Schools have a general eagerness to move along the linguistic continuum in terms of encouraging social use of the Welsh language, although they are uncertain as to how to do so.

*vii) The Welsh language outside the school*

- 57% of pupils in the quantitative survey use their Welsh everyday outside school life in various contexts in Gwynedd.
- Youth Clubs and Leisure Centres heavily influence the young people, and attention must be drawn to the Welsh-medium provision in these places.
- The Welsh-medium community provision is not consistent across the County.

In order to do justice to the detail of the survey on a school level, brief reports were written for the 14 individual schools. The main themes of all the school surveys feed into the composite recommendations of this report on a county / education authority level and on a school level (Section 7). In order to support the qualitative findings, the full results of the composite quantitative statistics collected through the questionnaires with year 9 pupils are seen in Appendix 1.

Following the visits to the schools, a day-long workshop was arranged for the pupils in order to collect practical and strategic ideas regarding methods of having a positive influence on their language use. The pupils' response to the challenge of the Welsh language as well as their strategic ideas were inspiring and it should be ensured that such a model, led by pupils, is a core part of the Gwynedd social language strategy in the secondary sector.

Gwynedd Council must be praised for its decision to address this important matter and for doing so on an education authority and whole county level. With holistic planning, comprehensive and specifically targeted action can be ensured in order to see positive results which will continue to develop complete bilingual citizens in the future.