



Mi allwch ddarllen y ddogfen yma yn Gymraeg hefyd. Ewch nôl i'r dudalen we, a chliciwch ar y botwm iaith ar dop y dudalen.

Gwynedd Category 3 Secondary Schools Scrutiny Investigation Report

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FOREWORD BY THE CHAIR

The Welsh language is one of Gwynedd's treasures and education is one of the most important ways of ensuring that it is passed on from generation to generation. It is therefore vitally important that our schools act to immerse our young people in the language, to give them solid linguistic skills and create an ethos that promotes the use of the language in school and beyond.

There is great interest in Welsh-medium education among members of Cyngor Gwynedd's Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee and among other councillors. We are proud of the innovative work carried out in Gwynedd schools and the obvious commitment that the Education Authority and the staff in our schools have to Welsh-medium education. We also note the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP), which includes targets for increasing the number of learners who pursue their education through the medium of Welsh, in accordance with the Welsh Government's ambition to reach one million Welsh-speakers. Nevertheless, some concerns arise: the decline highlighted by the census in the number of Welsh-speakers in the county, especially among those of school age; the impact of the pandemic on young people and the disruption to their education, and concern that the targets and aspirations in the WESP may not be achieved.

This scrutiny investigation looks at the secondary sector, and the 12 schools (out of 14) that have been designated as Category 3, according to the Welsh Government's new linguistic categorisation system. Three of these were chosen, namely Ysgol Dyffryn Nantlle, Ysgol Eifionydd and Ysgol Godre'r Berwyn. Questionnaires were sent to these schools, their documentation was scrutinised and meetings were held with officers from the Education Department, before visiting the schools and speaking to the headteachers and staff, pupils and governors.

During the investigation, many encouraging aspects were identified as well as issues that raise concern and hinder the aim of increasing the numbers that receive Welsh-medium education. We have included recommendations and suggestions in the report, focusing on issues that the Education Department is able to achieve but also paying attention to issues where other bodies can take action and where Cyngor Gwynedd should try to persuade them.

I would like to thank everyone in the schools who have given of their time to welcome us and speak to us openly and eloquently about their educational experiences; the Cabinet Member and officers in the Education Department; the Corporate Support officers for their help with the work, and my fellow members.

Councillor Paul Rowlinson
Chair of Investigation

1. Recommendations

1. That the Education Authority makes annual requests to the schools for data on the language medium of their provision and checks the situation.
2. That the Education Authority sets specific targets to increase the Welsh-medium provision for all secondary schools which are compatible with the county targets, and monitors achievement.
3. That the Education Authority again asks the WJEC to publish every year how many candidates complete examination papers through the medium of Welsh and English for each subject. The figures should be published at national and county levels and individual school figures given to those schools.
4. That the Education Authority adapts the model Language Policy for schools, putting more emphasis on the Welsh language and making it clearer regarding what is meant by "bilingualism".
5. That the Education Authority unequivocally outlines its position in terms of dealing with appeals to requests rejected by schools to change the medium of learning to English for specific learners.
6. That the Education Authority develops and increases the collaboration with the two Category T3 schools in a way that will hasten their journey to become Category 3 schools.
7. That the Education Authority, in partnership with schools, finds new ways of promoting the benefit of studying through the medium of Welsh.
8. That the Education Authority strengthens the partnership with the *Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol*, and focuses on showing young people and parents that there is a wide range of Welsh-medium courses in higher and further education.
9. The Authority should provide more guidelines/training on how to educate latecomers who have no Welsh or English. The Education Authority should also consider using examples of learners' successes, promoting the advantages of Welsh-medium education. Similarly, the advantages of attending a Language Centre should be communicated to latecomers, reporting on specific learners' experience and conveying the perspective of their parents to show other parents the benefit of attending a Language Centre for their children.
10. That the Education Authority strengthens the linguistic provision/support for latecomers joining in years 10 or 11.
11. That the Education Authority collaborates with other organisations and the Gwynedd Language Initiative to increase the provision of Welsh-medium social activities for young people.

12. The Education Authority should promote the offer from the Welsh Government to provide free Welsh lessons for teachers who wish to develop their Welsh skills.
13. That the Education Authority promotes the opportunities/benefits that derive from teaching in the county to attract more Welsh-medium teachers to work in Gwynedd. It should also support the efforts to increase the number of bilingual teachers available for the whole of Wales.
14. That the Education Authority requests that Secondary Schools' Senior Management Teams pay specific attention to their Welsh-medium provision by regularly putting it on meeting agendas.
15. That the Education Authority requests that the Secondary Headteachers' Forum places the Welsh-medium provision as an item on the Forum's meeting agendas at least once a year.
16. The Welsh Government should tackle the lack of study resources in Welsh, especially on-line.
17. That the Education Authority holds discussions with GwE in relation to support on issues that are specific/unique to the County.

2. Purpose of the Scrutiny Investigation

- 2.1 The members of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee recognised the need to address the Welsh-medium provision in the County's Secondary Schools. We are proud of the innovative work that can be seen in Gwynedd schools and the commitment of the Education Authority and the staff in the schools to develop and present education through the medium of Welsh. The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) sets targets for increasing the number of learners who study through the medium of Welsh. The purpose of the investigation is to look at the current provision, consider what could prevent the Authority from achieving the targets and to make recommendations.
- 2.2 At the Committee's informal meeting on 8 December 2022, a draft brief was considered for the scrutiny investigation. The members of the Committee welcomed the intention to carry out an investigation and to do so in a constructive manner, making beneficial recommendations based on evidence.
- 2.3 The Scrutiny Forum (a meeting of scrutiny chairs and vice-chairs), has a role to advise on the prioritisation of scrutiny investigations within the context of the resources available. At the meeting of the Forum on 11 January 2023, consideration was given to the draft brief and the investigation was prioritised.
- 2.4 The investigation brief was adopted at the meeting of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee on 2 February 2023. The main question that the investigation addresses is:
- 'What is the Welsh-medium provision in our secondary schools and what plans are in place to increase the provision in Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 in Gwynedd?'
- 2.5 The investigation brief can be seen in **Appendix 1**. Twelve of the 14 secondary schools in the county are categorised in category 3, with the other two in category T3, i.e. Transitional 3 which are schools that do not yet meet category 3 criteria but are in the transitional process with plans to attain that category in due course. This investigation considers the category 3 schools only.

3. Background

- 3.1** A general principle that has been identified in terms of the medium of education in the Gwynedd Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-32 is:

"All the county's schools should operate in a way that contributes to the aims and objectives of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan, to increase and improve planning for Welsh-medium education provision."

The Strategic Review is included as **Appendix 2**.

- 3.2** One of the outcomes set out in the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan is:

"More learners studying for Welsh (as a subject) qualifications and subjects through the medium of Welsh".

- 3.3** A model Language Policy has been drawn up by the Education Authority with schools adapting it for use in the schools. It is the responsibility of school Governing Bodies to adopt a Language Policy for their school. See the model Language Policy in **Appendix 3**.

4. Methodology

4.1 The investigation considered how the Authority's Education Language Policy was being implemented in three category 3 secondary schools (one each from Arfon, Dwyfor and Meirionnydd). It was decided, at the Education Department's suggestion, to consider the following schools on the basis that post-16 considerations could be included in two out of the three schools, i.e.

- Ysgol Dyffryn Nantlle
- Ysgol Eifionydd
- Ysgol Godre'r Berwyn.

4.2 Four meetings of the Investigation were held between March 2023 and July 2023 where all members of the investigation were present. A visit to the three schools was also conducted. The meetings and visits enabled members of the investigation to gather evidence and the findings and recommendations were discussed.

4.3 In the first meeting, members familiarised themselves with the brief and the general context and the individual schools' context were set. The Model Language Policy for schools was considered and background information/data about the situation of the schools in question was presented by the Head of Gwynedd's Immersion Education System. The data can be seen in **Appendix 4**.

4.4 It was decided at the meeting:

- To contact the schools to receive a copy of their Language Policy and Development Plans.
- To organise another virtual meeting in order to draw up questions to ensure that all schools received the same questions. A questionnaire would not be sent out to the schools but some of the questions drawn up would be shared before the visit to ensure that answers were available when visiting.
- To find out when it would be convenient for members of the investigation to visit the schools for a whole day/a large part of a day.
- To hold face-to-face visits to the schools in order to obtain an awareness of the atmosphere and question individuals.

- That discussions took place with the individuals who had been listed in the brief, together with the Language Ability Tracking Officer (if relevant) and the Head of the Welsh Department in the schools.

4.5 In the subsequent meeting, consideration was given to the background data presented in the previous meeting together with data in relation to the schools' Welsh-medium provision. The additional data showed the situation of the schools' Welsh-medium provision across the Key Stages, including data in relation to vocational subjects. See the data in **Appendix 5**.

4.6 The Language Policy and School Development Plans of the three schools in question were considered before proceeding to draw up draft questions for the different factions in the schools and agreeing on dates to conduct the visits to the schools and which members would attend.

4.7 Following the meeting, the draft questions were refined and it was decided which questions should be sent in advance to the schools. A subsequent conversation was held to ensure that the questions would enable the members to obtain the necessary information in order to achieve in accordance with the investigation's brief. A copy of the questions is in **Appendix 6**.

4.8 Visits were conducted to the schools on the following dates with the members and officers noted present:

School	Date	Present
Ysgol Godre'r Berwyn	5 June 2023	Councillors Paul Rowlinson (Chair), Cai Larsen, Huw Rowlands and Rhys Tudur Bethan Adams, Lead Officer of the Investigation
Ysgol Dyffryn Nantlle	9 June 2023	Councillors Paul Rowlinson (Chair), Cai Larsen, Huw Rowlands and Rhys Tudur

		Bethan Adams, Lead Officer of the Investigation
Ysgol Eifionydd	15 June 2023	Councillors Paul Rowlinson (Chair), Beth Lawton and Rhys Tudur Llywela Haf Owain, Senior Language and Scrutiny Advisor

- 4.9** Details of the individuals who contributed to the discussions during the visits are included under the next heading, 'The Evidence considered' on page 11. The members of the investigation appreciate and are grateful for the time given to them and the information received.
- 4.10** A meeting of the investigation was held to discuss the responses to the questions sent in advance and the visits. The impressions of the members who were not present for a visit were discussed from the comments/responses received.
- 4.11** There was also a discussion on findings and draft recommendations arising from the work of the investigation.
- 4.12** Before reaching a conclusion regarding the final content of the draft report, a meeting was held with the Education Cabinet Member and officers of the Education Department.

5. The evidence considered

5.1 The Scrutiny Investigation Group considered evidence:

- By receiving a **presentation by officers of the Education Department on the general context, the Model Language Policy and the individual schools' context.**
- By **addressing background data on the schools** along with **data in relation to the Welsh-medium provision in the schools.**
- By **considering the Language Policies and School Development Plans** of the schools involved in the investigation.
- **Visiting the schools to discuss and hold focus groups.** A discussion was held with the following:

Ysgol Godre'r Berwyn Headteacher, Head of the Sixth Form and learners from years 9 and 10.

Ysgol Dyffryn Nantlle Headteacher, Assistant Headteacher, Curriculum Leader, Head Pupils, Sixth Form Pupils and members of the Language Forum along with Staff/Parent-governors.

Ysgol Eifionydd Headteacher, Language and Literacy Coordinator, Chair and Vice-chair of the Language Forum, Members of the School Council and learners who had attended a language centre.

- By **receiving a written response to questions sent in advance** by two schools.

6. Main findings

- 6.1** The information/data received about the Welsh-medium provision of the schools involved in the investigation was encouraging. It can be seen in Appendix 4 that 97.6% of KS3 learners in the three schools follow 80% or more of their courses through the medium of Welsh and that 87% study at least five subjects other than Welsh through the medium of Welsh. The commitment of the schools in question to encourage learners to study through the medium of Welsh and to act in accordance with their Language Policy was evident. The Language Policy of Gwynedd secondary schools is central to the provision in the schools.
- 6.2** Over the last few years, following the lockdown period, the schools saw an increase in the number of requests to change the medium of learning to English for specific learners. A tendency was seen for the number of requests to increase as the years went up. It was noted that some parents misinterpreted the Language Policy, believing that the term "bilingual" meant placing an equal emphasis on both languages as a learning medium.
- 6.3** The three schools try to ensure that every pupil studies each subject and sits each examination in Welsh. When requests are received to study through the medium of English, the schools refuse or try to persuade the parents to change their minds. One school said that it had to comply with the parent's wish; considerations could be conveyed to argue for the benefits of learning through the medium of Welsh but it could not be enforced. Concern was expressed about opening the floodgates by granting requests. The Education Department confirmed that this is not the case. The Language Policy allows schools to insist that learners study through the medium of Welsh. The Policy needs to be clarified on this matter.
- 6.4** COVID-19 has had an impact on learners' language skills and oracy. This should be borne in mind when assessing progress against the targets of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan.
- 6.5** With the advent of the Curriculum for Wales, it is not clear how learners' attainment will be measured. It was noted during discussions that some primary schools still use levels under the former curriculum as it is a useful yardstick. It was stated that it is easier to

persuade parents that their children continue to study through the medium of Welsh when information relating to levels is used. It is necessary to consider how learners' attainment in Welsh is measured with the Curriculum for Wales.

6.6 It is recognised that establishing a Language Forum in the schools is a positive step to include the voice of the learners. In one of the schools, learners in year 11 are responsible for the Language Forum. It was noted that the main aim of the Forum is to organise and hold activities that encourage pupils to speak Welsh. Getting learners to take ownership of organising activities and promoting the language is most welcome.

6.7 It was a concern that one school which had more than 75% Welsh-speaking households had a higher percentage indicating that they were confident in English compared to the percentage who were confident in Welsh.

6.8 When drawing up recommendations, the investigation identifies some matters that are within the control of the Education Authority and other matters where the Education Authority needs to attempt to persuade other organisations.

6.9 Matters within the control of the Education Authority

- The need to define bilingual education more clearly in the Language Policy – a lack of clarity creates communication problems with parents. Some interpret bilingualism to mean that there is a right to have an equal emphasis on both languages as a learning medium.
- The support given by the Education Authority to the schools when there is a challenge to the Language Policy as well as the uncertainty that schools have about their rights.
- The need to set specific targets to increase the Welsh-medium provision for all schools, targets which are compatible with the county targets. Otherwise, the county targets are just numbers on paper, without a plan to achieve them.
- The need to strengthen the partnership with the *Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol*, and focus on showing young people and parents that there is a wide range of Welsh-medium courses in higher education.
- That schools' Senior Management Teams be asked to pay attention to the Welsh-medium provision by regularly putting it on meeting agendas.

- Encourage collaboration/common standards between schools.
- As learners do not attend language centres after year 9 it brings more English into the oral medium of learning of those years.
- That there is a need to consider ways of adapting the relationship with GwE - especially in relation to having more scope to place the expectations of a particular county on the consortium.
- Consideration should be given to the relationship between Additional Learning Needs and studying in English.
- Working more intensively with specific schools to offer an increased Welsh-medium education.
- That statistics should be gathered, collated and monitored more thoroughly and consistently.

6.10 Matters where the Education Authority's influence is more limited

- Estyn's findings regarding the Welsh-medium provision.
- A lack of higher education courses in Welsh.
- A lack/cost of Welsh-medium resources.
- The decisions of the governing bodies of some schools.
- Learners wishing to attend universities in England.
- Not enough on-line resources in Welsh.
- External providers not using the Welsh language. A number of the courses they provide available in English only.
- The wishes of some parents.

7. Recommendations

Gwynedd is the foremost county in Wales in terms of Welsh-medium education. In order to continue on the journey, the Investigation has identified recommendations in order to increase the Welsh-medium provision in Gwynedd's secondary schools. Detailed below are the findings based on the evidence received during the investigation which have led to the formulation of the recommendations.

Data and Targets

The team would like to see solid data where it is possible to see how much education is delivered through the medium of Welsh in order to enable the Authority to measure progress. Data on the language medium of the specific schools' provision was received. As noted in paragraph 6.1 above, the data received about the Welsh-medium provision of the schools involved in the investigation was encouraging, but one Headteacher stated that the Authority had only recently started collecting the data.

One Headteacher emphasised the need to check the Welsh-medium provision for all secondary schools. The way schools report/interpret data could be different and not convey the true situation in a comparative way.

It is believed that by gathering, collating and monitoring statistics more thoroughly and consistently, secondary schools will be encouraged to increase their Welsh-medium provision.

Recommendation 1 - That the Education Authority makes annual requests to the schools for data on the language medium of their provision and checks the situation.

The schools that were part of the investigation are aware of the targets in the Gwynedd Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-32 (WESP).

It was noted that there was not much monitoring before the current WESP. Data had been requested in the months prior to the investigation. It became evident that targets were not

being set for schools to increase the Welsh-language provision by the Education Authority or GwE. It was noted that the Education Authority had recently made a request to all secondary schools to include at least one priority in their School Development Plan that relates to the Welsh language. It was explained that the schools were accountable to requests from the Education Authority and GwE.

It was expressed that schools responded to the priorities of the school Governors rather than the Education Authority. The members of the investigation are of the opinion that setting specific targets in terms of increasing the Welsh-language provision for all secondary schools and monitoring achievement would be a means of ensuring that the target identified in the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-32 is attained.

Recommendation 2 - That the Education Authority sets specific targets to increase the Welsh-medium provision for all secondary schools which are compatible with the county targets, and monitors achievement.

One measure of how much education is provided through the medium of Welsh is the number of learners who sit external examinations in Welsh. In two of the three schools, learners received only one examination paper while the other provided Welsh and English copies of the examination papers to the learners. In that school, some learners who had studied the subject through the medium of Welsh would decide to complete the English paper in the exam. Because of this, it is not possible to be sure how many learners complete an examination paper in Welsh.

The Headteacher added that the number of people asking for an English-medium examination paper has increased recently despite the learners having studied the subject through the medium of Welsh throughout their time at the school. As a result of this, the school asks everyone to confirm on paper in which language they wish to complete the examination in order to monitor the situation. However, it was noted that the only way to monitor the actual situation is to ask the WJEC for figures of the numbers who complete examination papers for each subject through the medium of Welsh and English. It was noted that this would provide hard and accurate data of the true situation. It was suggested that this would be an effective way of obtaining the county and national picture.

The members of the investigation agree with this viewpoint and are of the opinion that receiving data on the numbers of learners who complete examination papers for each subject through the medium of Welsh and English from the WJEC would be valuable.

The Authority noted that it had asked the WJEC for such data but that the WJEC had refused.

Recommendation 3 - That the Education Authority again asks the WJEC to publish every year how many candidates complete examination papers through the medium of Welsh and English for each subject. The figures should be published at national and county levels and individual school figures given to those schools.

Language Policy

A model Education Language Policy is provided by the Education Authority for schools (Appendix 3). One Headteacher noted that the school could not change the model Language Policy, only adapt it to suit the school. On the contrary in another school, it was noted during a conversation with staff and parent-governors, that the school's Language Policy is reviewed annually and that there was no need to change it as it is still suitable and continues to reflect the school's situation. The three schools were committed to acting in accordance with their Language Policy.

The Policy states that for pupils who are proficient in Welsh "it is expected that a vast proportion of their curriculum will be through the medium of Welsh" (page 4 of the policy) stating that their linguistic needs consist of a "bilingual education" (page 5 of the policy). Welsh is therefore the medium of education in the schools.

Over the last few years, however, the number of requests submitted to schools by parents to change the medium of learning to English for specific learners has increased. Before the lockdown period the schools received one or two requests to change the medium of learning but the numbers are higher since then. This clearly makes it more difficult to increase the numbers who study through the medium of Welsh and therefore this section of the report looks at the reasons why some pupils and their parents are not keen to receive a Welsh-medium education and what can be done to buck this trend.

Examples were received where the term 'bilingualism' in the Language Policy is misinterpreted. Some parents were under the mistaken impression that the policy meant a right to full bilingualism, with an equal emphasis on both languages. One Headteacher therefore noted that he did not totally agree with the emphasis on bilingualism in the model Language Policy.

The Headteacher elaborated that it would be advantageous to make the model Language Policy clearer and less ambiguous. The Headteacher was of the opinion that it would mean that everyone knew what the situation was from the start and that it would be a tool in terms of speaking to parents in relation to changing language.

It was noted that the Language Policy is referred to when encouraging/supporting learners to continue to study subjects through the medium of Welsh. It was explained that it was the Headteacher or Head of Year who deals with requests to change the subjects' medium of learning from Welsh, rather than the subject teacher at that school.

From the data of one school which had more than 75% speaking Welsh, it was noted that a higher percentage of children indicated that they were confident in English compared to the percentage who indicated that they were confident in Welsh. This is noted as a matter of concern and it is believed that the Policy should put more emphasis on the Welsh language so that children can be completely fluent in it.

The members of the investigation are of the opinion that defining bilingual education more clearly in the model Language Policy is necessary, as a lack of clarity creates communication problems with parents. The Education Authority is asked to reconsider the model Language Policy and adapt/strengthen it as necessary.

Recommendation 4 - That the Education Authority adapts the model Language Policy for schools, putting more emphasis on the Welsh language and making it clearer regarding what is meant by "bilingualism".

In the same way that clarity is needed in relation to the Language Policy, clarity and consistency is needed in the way complaints or appeals are dealt with in terms of changing the medium of learning to English. The need is seen for the Education Authority to provide

guidelines for the schools to use, as guidance from the Authority would benefit the schools. It would mean that there is no ambiguity if decisions are made based on the same principles. By acting consistently across the secondary schools it would reassure parents that all requests are treated fairly.

It was noted in one school that the Education Authority, in exceptions, decided that learners with additional learning needs study through the medium of English.

One Headteacher noted that the Education Authority needs to market the model Language Policy with parents as she feels that the school is rather on its own when arguing for and explaining the content of the Language Policy.

Reference was made to a request from parents for their child to transfer to one of the category T3 schools. It was explained that the learner is fluent in Welsh but as the father is non-Welsh speaking, he is of the opinion that he would be able to give his child more help. The application was refused as there was no place at that school but there is still concern that learners may apply to transfer because of the learning medium.

It was noted that the school had to go with the parent's wish in terms of changing the language medium for studying subjects. The considerations are explained but cannot be enforced. Concern was expressed about opening the floodgates by granting requests along with concerns that the requests are increasing and are greater than what has been seen in previous years.

One Headteacher noted that it would help if the Education Authority supported a school's point of view in a more confident way when requests are received to change the language of learning for specific learners. It was stated that the learners in question were able to sit an examination through the medium of Welsh. It was felt that the support for schools would give them confidence that they are providing the right answers rather than the parents leading. The Authority told the investigators that the language policy enables the schools to resist these requests but it is clear that the schools feel they need more support.

Recommendation 5 - That the Education Authority unequivocally outlines its position in terms of dealing with appeals to requests rejected by schools to

change the medium of learning to English for specific learners.

It was noted that the provision of the category T3 secondary schools (Ysgol Friars and Ysgol Tywyn) was a challenge because some learners are willing to travel a considerable distance to attend them due to the language medium of the provision. It was suggested that in order to realise the vision of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan these schools need to increase the numbers who study through the medium of Welsh every year. As category 3 schools already provide Welsh-medium education to a very high percentage of learners, this is the only way to attain the targets in the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan. An officer from the Education Department noted that firm plans are in place to do this.

This would help to prevent learners from excluding themselves from studying through the medium of Welsh by moving to another school.

Recommendation 6 - That the Education Authority develops and increases the collaboration with the two Category T3 schools in a way that will hasten their journey to become Category 3 schools.

Promoting the Benefits of Welsh-medium Education

The benefits of studying through the medium of Welsh should be conveyed to parents which mean that their children will have an additional skill with the ability to communicate in two languages when speaking and writing. As noted on the Welsh Government website on the web-page 'Continuing with Welsh-medium education':

“Across Wales more employers than ever before are looking for staff with bilingual skills

Just over a third of employers think Welsh language skills are important for their customer service, and over a quarter of employers think they would benefit from more Welsh language skills. Children’s bilingual skills develop best if used daily, and Welsh-

medium or bilingual education gives a child a daily opportunity to develop their language skills, becoming increasingly fluent and confident."¹

When speaking to pupils, it became apparent that some still have negative beliefs, namely:

- the belief that studying subjects through the medium of Welsh is a disadvantage when progressing to university, especially scientific/mathematical subjects, that the terms are very different. In reality, many of the terms are the same in both languages, with a different spelling; where there are differences, it is easy to learn terms in both languages at the same time
- the belief that non-Welsh speaking parents can help their children if they study through the medium of English but not through the medium of Welsh. In reality, the process where the learner explains the Welsh text to their parent and discusses it in English and then answers the question in Welsh often ensures a more thorough understanding and learning
- the belief among some parents and children that English is easier than Welsh in the sciences (see the Welsh-language Resources section on pages 32-34).

It was noted that some parents strongly feel that their children should study subjects through the medium of English from GCSE onwards and threaten to move their children from the school. It was stated that the situation is different when there is a request to change language in relation to learners with additional needs.

One school explained that they hold a fair for year 9 learners before they select their GCSE subjects where they convey the importance of the Welsh language. This is good practice and schools can consider taking advantage of the GCSE selection process as a good opportunity to promote study through the medium of Welsh.

In terms of learners' language choice in the sixth form at one of the schools, approximately two or three learners usually studied through the medium of English in the past but half the class now studies through the medium of English.

1 Welsh Government, Continuing with Welsh-medium education - <https://www.gov.wales/cymraeg-education/schools/continuing-with-welsh-medium-education> Viewed 01.08.2023

The data and information received in discussions as part of the investigation shows that the linguistic situation of these secondary schools has changed over the years. In one school, it was noted that there were 20 learners from non-Welsh backgrounds in year 7, although the indigenous children of the area preserved their Welshness. At another school, it was stated that 81% of learners spoke Welsh fluently with a quarter of the learners coming from non-Welsh speaking households. This reflects the linguistic nature of the areas in question.

Recommendation 7 - That the Education Authority, in partnership with schools, finds new ways of promoting the benefit of studying through the medium of Welsh.

Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol

Schools were enquired about their contact/relationship with the *Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol*. At one school, it was noted that the *Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol* visited occasionally and another school said that an officer from the *Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol* visited the school once a year.

A conversation with a cross-section of learners highlighted that provision in the universities was a factor that affects choices in terms of selecting a study language, especially in Key Stage 5. As courses were in English at university, it was stated that there was not much purpose to study through the medium of Welsh. It was noted that discussions in the sixth form were in Welsh with some completing essays in English and others in Welsh.

Provision available in colleges and universities influences learners, making them more likely to choose to study subjects through the medium of English. One learner studied the level 3 Engineering course in Coleg Menai and as the Pearson's examination board was more Anglicised, the resources were in English. He noted that he was comfortable studying in Welsh but hoped to follow a course at Swansea University in English and that there were considerations in terms of the international context.

Other examples are:

- A learner studying a subject in Coleg Menai and Ysgol Gyfun Llangefni with English-medium provision. The resources and past exam papers in English but personally more comfortable doing it in Welsh.
- A learner studying a photography course through the medium of English. Welsh provision available but a disadvantage to write in Welsh as it cannot be done in university.

There is a need to raise learners' awareness of the opportunities that are available to them and of the Welsh-medium provision in universities. It is believed that the *Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol* has a crucial role to promote the benefits of higher and further education through the medium of Welsh and to influence universities to increase their Welsh-medium provision.

Recommendation 8 - That the Education Authority strengthens the partnership with the *Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol*, and focuses on showing young people and parents that there is a wide range of Welsh-medium courses in higher and further education.

Latecomers

It is believed that there is also a need to convey to parents how beneficial it is for their children to attend language centres. Members of the investigation questioned learners who had attended the language centres and they were eager to find out what impact it had afterwards. At one school, some of these learners studied GSCE / A Level subjects through the medium of Welsh and others did not. It was noted that they did not study entirely through the medium of Welsh but they felt more a part of the school and felt comfortable to ask for help. They had more sense of belonging to the school after learning Welsh. Another school experience is that learners who had attended a language centre usually completed examinations in English. It was stated that there were positive aspects to attending a language centre. The decision to study through the medium of Welsh or not relied to an extent on when they had arrived at the school and also on the individual learner's decision. For example, siblings could arrive at the same time but then follow a totally different linguistic path.

Confirmation was received from one school that all latecomers attended a language centre. It was explained that it was sometimes difficult to persuade parents that their child should attend.

It was detailed that learners who had attended a language centre received additional support and they were provided with bilingual notes. It was noted that some learners coped better than others with some following a first language course and others staying in the same class but following a second language course.

At one school, it was reported that many non-Welsh-speaking pupils had attended a language centre and that they were strongly encouraged to take advantage of the opportunity. When the families of latecomers visit the school for the first time, it is explained to them that Welsh is used and promoted as the main language of the school although the school is a bilingual school. It was elaborated that pupils returned from the language centre to the school with the ability to speak and understand Welsh but they often did not have enough confidence to speak Welsh.

Concern was expressed that some pupils refuse the offer to attend a language centre and it seemed that this was an increasing trend. It was explained that some, including Ukrainians, had decided not to go as they were there for a short period but others who intended to remain in the area also refuse the offer. It was reiterated that there was a desire to see a procedure in place that forced everyone to attend the language centre but the Authority had no right to do so.

The Headteacher noted that the new pattern where pupils attend the language centre for four days per week and return to their school on the fifth day worked well as it gave pupils the opportunity to make friends and socialise with other pupils at the school. It appeared that pupils who spoke English in addition to another language when they attended the language centre found learning Welsh easier.

After returning to the school, learners follow a second language course with the senior classroom assistant. On some occasions, when there is a staff shortage, learners must join other classes for first language learners.

Learners who attended a secondary language centre noted that they did not speak Welsh on the school yard with their friends due to a lack of confidence. However, they said they were very proud of the opportunity received to learn Welsh and to learn about Welsh culture. The learners elaborated that attending the immersion centre had equipped them to be able to follow a conversation and lesson at school and to understand what was happening when others spoke Welsh. They were also open to use more Welsh in future.

Teachers need to develop a special skill when teaching a class that includes non-Welsh speakers. An example was provided at one of the schools where learners from Ukraine with no Welsh or English are taught. It was detailed that teachers use *Google Translate* in class to communicate with the learners and to explain the work they needed to complete. It was explained that there was no assistant for these learners with teachers adapting and nurturing a difficult skill. It was noted that it would be welcomed should good practice in such a situation be shared.

Recommendation 9 - The Authority should provide more guidelines/training on how to educate latecomers who have no Welsh or English. The Education Authority should also consider using examples of learners' successes, promoting the advantages of Welsh-medium education. Similarly, the advantages of attending a Language Centre should be communicated to latecomers, reporting on specific learners' experience and conveying the perspective of their parents to show other parents the benefit of attending a Language Centre for their children.

Only learners up to year 9 attend language centres in Gwynedd. It is recognised that it is not practical for latecomers joining a school in years 10 or 11 to attend a Language Centre for a period when studying for GCSE. Nevertheless, members of the investigation believe that linguistic provision/support is needed for these latecomers in some form. It was felt that the shortcoming in terms of presenting Welsh to them was a loss for the learners and prevented them from feeling like they belonged.

One Headteacher noted that spending a term at a language centre would make it easier for them to acquire the language. He elaborated that it was difficult to include English-speaking

learners when they arrived at the school in years 10 or 11 and make them feel part of the school.

When non-Welsh speaking learners arrived in years 10 and 11, he detailed that changing between both languages was inevitable. Teachers would give presentations in Welsh and then speak to the learners in question in English. It was noted that there were no assistants for these learners. Teachers require a special skill to adapt their teaching method in this manner.

It was noted at another school that consideration should be given to offer older secondary pupils also a place at language centres as some wished to learn Welsh.

Information/a session in terms of language awareness for latecomers in years 10 and 11 would be an option. By being more aware of the linguistic situation and the history behind the fight for the Welsh language, it could provide learners with a different perspective in terms of the language's importance. This, in turn, could enable other learners/teachers to practise their language robustness, by including the specific learners in Welsh conversations and explaining further if learners do not understand.

A sense of belonging is vitally important. By strengthening the linguistic provision/support for latecomers who join a school in years 10 or 11, something could be done about the increased use of English in the oral teaching medium of years 10 and above.

Recommendation 10 - That the Education Authority strengthens the linguistic provision/support for latecomers joining in years 10 or 11.

Ethos of the Schools and Social Activities

There is a strong Welsh ethos in the three schools that were visited, with assemblies and social activities conducted in Welsh. However, use of Welsh outside the class varies greatly between the three. It was seen in one school that the language of the school yard had used to be entirely in Welsh but a lot of English could now be heard. A number of children switched naturally from one language to the other. Another concern is the fact that a number

of parents, some of them former pupils, choose to speak English at home with their children although they can speak Welsh.

In another school, it was noted that the language of corridors was Welsh and English, half and half. It was noted in the third school that they were very fortunate socially, with learners communicating in Welsh in most instances but with some pockets more prone to change to speak English. It was stated that a skills day was held every half term where they take pride in the area's Welshness and culture. It was noted that the Curriculum for Wales places more emphasis on the Welsh language.

It was stated that activities are a more natural way of showing use of the Welsh language.

Evidence was received at one of the schools stating that they offered a number of social activities in Welsh. It was explained that it was more difficult in years 10 and 11 as teachers were reluctant to release learners for social activities as they were studying for exams. Responses to the voice of the learner questionnaire had highlighted that year 11 learners wished to have more social activities.

A parent-governor suggested that assimilating people who move into the area would be of benefit to reach the aim of the Gwynedd Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-32. It was elaborated that parents can be semi-detached from the community as they were non-Welsh speakers.

As Hunaniaith moves from the Council to become an independent Language Initiative, it was noted that work should be done on the "soft stuff" encouraging individuals to do things in Welsh. The need to hold more Welsh-medium social events was emphasised.

During a conversation with School Council members, reference was made to the fact that Welsh and English were used in the youth club and that the Welsh football team had helped to raise the profile and support the Welsh language. It was elaborated that COVID-19 had affected young people's use of Welsh especially given that the internet had played a key part in the lives of young people during this period.

The experience of one learner in year 10 highlighted an example of learning Welsh changing an individual's life. He noted that it had opened the door to a career in agriculture as well as a social life through the medium of Welsh. Young Farmers and friends had played a crucial role in terms of having the opportunity to use Welsh and increase his confidence. He noted that more Welsh-medium clubs were needed such as Young Farmers to ensure opportunities for young people to use Welsh outside the school.

It is noted in the Chair's foreword to the inquiry report into the legislative framework that supports Welsh-medium education provision from the Senedd's Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee:

"It is important to note...the integral role of organisations such as the Urdd and Mentrau Iaith in supporting the development and the delivery of Welsh language provision across Wales. Their work, in partnership with local authorities and schools, provide pupils with opportunities to use Welsh within school grounds but outside the classroom through sports and other activities. Ensuring continuous support and development of such provision is vital if the targets within Cymraeg 2050 are to be met."²

Promoting the long-term benefits that derive from studying through the medium of Welsh is essentially important but there is a need to promote the short-term benefits in terms of enjoying with friends and the sense of belonging.

The importance of ensuring that Welsh-medium activities are available in the community, where there is an opportunity for individuals to use Welsh naturally using everyday language, is emphasised. An opportunity is seen with the transfer of the Youth Service to the Education Department to strengthen the relationship with other organisations and the Gwynedd Language Initiative.

Recommendation 11 - That the Education Authority collaborates with other organisations and the Gwynedd Language Initiative to increase the provision of Welsh-medium social activities for young people.

2 The Senedd's Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee, Inquiry report into the legislative framework that supports Welsh-medium education provision May 2023. (<https://senedd.wales/media/r5sgnreu/cr-ld15837-e.pdf>), 6. Viewed 01.08.2023.

Building a Bilingual Workforce

An inquiry report into the legislative framework that supports Welsh-medium education provision was published by the Senedd's Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sports, and International Relations Committee in May 2023.

It was noted in the report:

"Building a bilingual workforce is one of the greatest challenges facing the Welsh Government and its key partners. We recognise that there are challenges recruiting teachers, in both Welsh and English, across the board. However, a shortage of Welsh-medium teachers could undermine Cymraeg 2050 and the targets within it."³

One school noted that they had been fortunate to successfully recruit Welsh-medium teachers to teach occupational courses. It was detailed that E-sgol, technology enabling students to join classes in other schools via video link was used in the sixth form. Reference was made to a psychology course provided last year through the medium of English with the lecturer located in Amsterdam.

It was added that it was challenge to recruit teachers, including those who spoke Welsh.

As an example of the impact of teachers who are less confident in Welsh, one learner noted that he enjoyed studying GCSE history and other subjects through the medium of Welsh but he was the only one out of ten learners in the history class who studied through the medium of Welsh. The Headteacher said that the teacher in question was on loan from another secondary school and tended to use English but a new teacher would be replacing him by September 2023.

3 The Senedd's Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee, Inquiry report into the legislative framework that supports Welsh-medium education provision May 2023. (<https://senedd.wales/media/r5sgnreu/cr-ld15837-e.pdf>), 54. Viewed 01.08.2023.

One Headteacher noted that she wanted learners to return to school as teachers. She believed that this would be a boost in terms of selling to learners at the school that good jobs are available where the Welsh language is used.

Recommendation 12 - The Education Authority should promote the offer from the Welsh Government to provide free Welsh lessons for teachers who wish to develop their Welsh skills.

Attracting Welsh-medium teachers to work in Gwynedd by promoting the benefits of working in the county and developing the Welsh skills of the current education workforce is necessary to reach the aim of having a highly-skilled bilingual education workforce. This is absolutely key if we are going to increase the Welsh-medium provision in the county's secondary schools.

Recommendation 13 - That the Education Authority promotes the opportunities/benefits that derive from teaching in the county to attract more Welsh-medium teachers to work in Gwynedd. It should also support the efforts to increase the number of bilingual teachers available for the whole of Wales.

Action by Schools

The Education Authority has made a request to the county's secondary schools to include at least one priority in the School Development Plan that relates to the Welsh language. One Headteacher noted that they had added the development of a Language Council to the School Development Plan. Teachers were given a presentation about the expectations in terms of the Welsh language. It was noted that a working group with representatives from different departments had been established to ensure that everyone responded to the requirements.

Assurance was received during a school visit that the Senior Management Team placed an emphasis on the Language Policy and that teachers were aware of the requirements.

By paying particular attention to a school's Welsh-medium provision at the senior management team meetings of every secondary school in the county, members of the

investigation believe that a specific focus placed on the provision would be of assistance to ensure progress in the Welsh-medium provision.

Recommendation 14 - That the Education Authority requests that Secondary Schools' Senior Management Teams pay specific attention to their Welsh-medium provision by regularly putting it on meeting agendas.

Similarly, it is believed that the Secondary Headteachers' Forum should discuss the Welsh-medium provision on a regular basis. This would be an opportunity to encourage collaboration and to reach an agreement on general standards between schools.

One Headteacher noted that more discussions and collaboration take place in the primary sector. Collaborating with other schools was not as effective in the secondary sector. Every school is on a journey as they progress to implement the Curriculum for Wales with the change of being less reliant on data, new teaching methods and preparing new resources. It was noted that there is no model to provide the curriculum and, therefore, it was a good thing that experimentation occurred but collaboration was difficult in the secondary sector.

It was stated that the Headteacher had little understanding in terms of the Welsh-medium provision of other secondary schools. It was detailed that there were alliances but individual schools had to look into a specific matter.

It is believed that it would also be an opportunity for schools to share good practice, such as holding a fair for year 9 learners before they select their GCSE subjects, conveying the importance of the Welsh language; learners taking ownership of organising activities and promoting the language; and how to make the Welsh language and our identity visible in the schools. Members of the investigation are of the opinion that a sense of belonging is vitally important. Members were very pleased to see materials around the schools that encourage pride in the Welsh language. One school had made a special effort to make the Welsh language and its identity completely visible with artistic murals of the area's celebrities on the school walls. They included poems and quotes that raised awareness of the area's identity and history and they were worth seeing.

Recommendation 15 - That the Education Authority requests that the Secondary Headteachers' Forum places the Welsh-medium provision as an item on the Forum's meeting agendas at least once a year.

The Secondary Headteachers' Forum determines what to discuss at their meetings but by placing an item at least once a year on the Forum's meeting agenda, it is believed that it would be an opportunity for the Education Authority to provide guidance and for Headteachers to share ideas about ways to increase Welsh-medium provision in both Category T3 and Category 3 secondary schools.

Welsh-language Resources

It is known that the lack of Welsh-language academic resources is a great barrier to the development of Welsh-medium education. It became apparent that the sciences and mathematics are subjects where more learners are choosing to study through the medium of English in Key Stages 4 and 5. Members of the investigation were told that a number of learners who want to proceed to study medicine and veterinary science in universities chose to study the sciences through the medium of English.

During discussions, a number of learners stated that they found it easier to study subjects through the medium of Welsh. Learners came from households with a mixture of linguistic situations, households with one non-Welsh speaking parent, two Welsh-speaking parents and two non-Welsh speaking parents.

It was noted at the schools that Welsh was the teaching language in lessons with teachers speaking English with specific learners. It was stated that specialist terms in scientific subjects were taught bilingually.

In one of the schools, approximately twelve learners in year 11 studied the sciences through the medium of English. It was noted that not quite as much Welsh-language resources were available; provision had improved but it was a challenge in terms of the sciences. It was noted that resources needed to be translated in a manner that made them understandable for learners.

In general, it was noted that sufficient high quality Welsh-language resources were available but, on some occasions, the translation was not as readable. The concern of some learners/parents was highlighted in terms of undertaking research work in Key Stage 5. It was explained that learners aiming towards attending Russell Group universities were competing with others and needed to prepare for interviews in English. It was difficult to persuade learners to study through the medium of Welsh as a result of this.

Attention was drawn to the fact that no Welsh-only science course was available at a university in Wales. It was noted that only one unit was available through the medium of Welsh in Bangor University.

At one of the schools, it was explained that Welsh and English notes were provided for less confident learners. It was stated that providing funding to pay for translating teachers' notes would save the teachers from having to translate them themselves.

When considering additional learning needs, it was noted that there was a perception that 'posh' and 'difficult words' were used in the sciences. It was stated that there were more syllables in Welsh and that sentences had more multi-clauses. Therefore, the learners required more reading ability. Research could be commissioned into the style of materials in the sciences and recommendations published in the guidelines for translators.

In terms of studying a GCSE history course, a learner in year 10 noted that he found it easier to study through the medium of Welsh but others found it easier to find information and study through the medium of English. More English resources for a history exam were available on *BBC Bitesize*.

In response to a question of what would make fluent speakers more willing to study through the medium of Welsh, it was noted that more Welsh-medium on-line information/resources would be beneficial.

A learner noted that there was more use of textbooks in the Sixth Form. It was detailed that *BBC Bitesize* resources were not available in Welsh for A Level and that they followed the English syllabus. Reference was made to the lack of Welsh-medium flash card provision and that the resources of AQA and OCR examination boards were in English.

This was reiterated in observations received in a conversation with staff/parent-governors. The need for core materials to be available in Welsh was noted. The materials available is one of the factors when selecting a medium of language. Attention was drawn to the fact that humanities books of the Curriculum for Wales' syllabus were only available in English at present despite the promises made. It was noted that it was a problem in other schools and that resources should be shared in terms of translation.

One learner studied all their GCSE subjects through the medium of Welsh with the exception of Biology and Chemistry. They elaborated that the reason for this was that on-line English resources went into more depth in these subjects.

In order to convince learners and parents of the benefits of studying through the medium of Welsh and to make it easier for learners, the lack of Welsh-medium study resources, especially on-line, needs to be addressed. Members of the investigation are of the opinion that it is necessary for the Welsh Government to ensure an appropriate level of Welsh resources by influencing providers or commissioning more Welsh resources.

Recommendation 16 - The Welsh Government should tackle the lack of study resources in Welsh, especially on-line.

GwE (North Wales Regional School Improvement Service)

During the discussions, it was stated that GwE provided for the north Wales region. It did not scrutinise specific matters unless there was a concern about them.

One Headteacher noted that the GwE provision for the region was "*one size fits all*".

Another Headteacher noted that GwE occasionally raised the matter in terms of increasing the Welsh-medium provision.

When the Education Authority or GwE visit, it was explained during a discussion in one school that observing lessons and scrutinising books showed the school's Welsh-medium provision.

Reference was made to the targets of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan and it was suggested that GwE should be requested to examine difficult/specific matters, as well as the strategic work.

Members of the investigation are of the opinion that ways of adapting the relationship with GwE should be considered. In particular, in relation to having more scope to set specific county expectations on the consortium.

Recommendation 17 - That the Education Authority holds discussions with GwE in relation to support on issues that are specific/unique to the County

8. Conclusion

8.1 It was a pleasure to witness the commitment of the three schools to introduce and develop Welsh-medium education and to speak to some of the staff, learners and governors. This report has identified good practice and also barriers to developments. We have made recommendations for the Education Authority and others and we greatly hope that these recommendations will be of assistance when planning and realising progress in the Welsh-medium provision of Gwynedd secondary schools.

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- School Council members, Ysgol Eifionydd
- Learners who had attended a language centre, Ysgol Eifionydd

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Investigation Brief

Appendix 2 - Gwynedd Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-32

Appendix 3 - Model Language Policy

Appendix 4 - The Background Data of the Investigation's Schools 2023

Appendix 5 - Data of the schools' Welsh-medium provision

Appendix 6 - Questions for the Schools