

MEETING	Language Committee
DATE	30th January 2024
TITLE	Education Department Report
PURPOSE	To present information about the department's contribution to the County's Language Policy
AUTHOR	Rhys Glyn- Head of Gwynedd's Welsh Language Immersion Education System

1. BACKGROUND

1.1. The purpose of this report is to present information to the Language Committee about the contribution of the Education Department to the Council's Language strategy.

1.2 The Education Department includes a range of services including schools.

1.3 As a Department, every effort is made to ensure that services are provided bilingually and contribute to the objectives of the county language strategy

1.5 The report highlights the activities and projects that have been carried out during the past year which raise the status of the Welsh language and ensure opportunities for children and young people to use the Welsh language in schools and in the community.

RESPONSE TO THE COMMITTEE'S QUESTIONS

Question 1. Boosting and promoting

How does your department go beyond offering services bilingually and contribute to the objectives of the county's language strategy (what activities and projects have been carried out during the year that raise the status of the Welsh language and ensure opportunities for people to use the Welsh language in the community)?

The Council's language strategy sets out priorities for promoting the Welsh language in five areas:

1. The language of the family,
2. The language of learning,
3. The language of work and services,
4. The language of the community
5. Research and Technology

The current strategy can be seen here:

<https://www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/cy/Cyngor/Dogfennau-Cyngor/Strategaethau-a-pholisiau/Cynllun-iaith/Cynllun-Hybu'r-Gymraeg-yng-Ngwynedd-2018-2023.pdf>

Reply:

All services in the Education Department implement all the priorities in the Council's Language strategy. Full consideration is given to them in the long-term plans and day to day work of the department to promote the Welsh language and provide a bilingual service within the county. Gwynedd schools continue to attach prestige and value to the Welsh language by encouraging more use of the Welsh language as a medium of learning and socialising by implementing the principles of the Welsh Language Charter and the Secondary Sector Strategy.

Under the guidance of the Catchment Language Co-ordinators and with the co-operation of GwE advisers, it is ensured that the Welsh Language Grant is spent on meeting staff's training needs in the context of the Welsh language and also on developing innovative projects in the Welsh language. All the activity and collaboration between the primary and secondary schools in relation to transition arrangements are a strength in the county. In each cluster purposeful opportunities were ensured for pupils to develop and use their Welsh-language skills in informal situations and there is abundant evidence showing the enthusiasm of the learners when conversing and developing their oral skills by interacting with other pupils in each of those clusters – including pupils from the secondary sector.

In the most challenging catchment areas, namely **Bangor and Tywyn**, additional input was given to transition activity. Workshops were organised based on the Urdd's 'Playing in Welsh' scheme for years 5 and 6 learners with the aim of creating sports ambassadors who would then set about training the younger learners (Infants) to play in Welsh. This project received extremely positive feedback from school staff and the children themselves. In addition, Science workshops were organised with the Sbarduno company with the intention of normalising the Welsh language within the field and fostering the confidence of the learners to study the field through the medium of Welsh. A creative workshop was also held for year 5 learners with artists at the Nyth in Bangor to encourage the learners to be creative and set about, with help, to create a production of their choice. This is a long-term project that will run over two years with an opportunity to share the production during the 2024 summer term with the children's parents and carers.

In the catchment area of **Ysgol Glan-y-Môr** a project was developed with Cwmni Tebot drama company, creating a script based on a story or legend that was important in the area. This was an opportunity for pupils to gain spoken confidence through drama and performance workshops, enabling them to get to know their local stories better. It was also an opportunity for the pupils to be proud of their square mile.

A place names project was pursued with **Botwnnog** catchment area schools. The pupils created an animation containing sound with Sioned Medi, linking the work of collecting the place names and interpreting them in digital form. Ed Holden visited each school to create rhythm and sounds to rap the place names.

In **Eifionydd**, Urdd leaders visited each school to raise awareness of the Eisteddfod. It was arranged for all pupils in years 3 to 6, and pupils in year 7 of Ysgol Eifionydd to be involved in the project. A years 6 and 7 transition day was organised using the 'World Cup' theme.

There was a fun session of Karaoke and learning song lyrics led by the music department, a session with a football commentator, a modern languages session, and a Welsh Songs disco to end the day. At **Ysgol Bro Idris Phase 2 and Phase 3**, a School Eisteddfod and Welsh Gig were held.

In order to raise the profile of the houses in the school and instil team spirit and a sense of belonging among the children, a competition was launched in the assembly to create a logo for each house by giving a presentation in the assembly so that they would understand the aim and the significance of belonging to a house. The Language Council decided to stage a gig by Bwncath

and arranged to have DJ Bustach present. Local schools were invited to join in the event. The assistants in the catchment area also received training to develop the use of informal language when presenting activities on the yard. One teacher from the secondary sector also attended the training. In addition, the 'Mewn Cymeriad' tour visited schools in the catchment area – 'Taith yr Iaith' (Journey of the Language), a workshop on Hedd Wyn for year 7 led by Siôn Emyr and a presentation on 'Welshness' by Ameer Davies-Rana.

In the **Moelwyn catchment**, a series of activities based on the theme of the World Cup were developed.

Various activities were organised in September with year 6 of the primary schools: football activities, creating flags to celebrate the World Cup and composing a song with Osian and Branwen Williams. The secondary school Art teacher spent periods in the primary schools to complete the flags. There was a Launch Day, and the song that was composed was performed.

In addition, a 'Taith yr Iaith' session was organised around the primary schools to present the history of the language by the Mewn Cymeriad drama company which promoted the history and development of the Welsh language.

In the **Tywyn catchment** area, 'Gloywi Iaith' (language refresher) was the theme and a 'Clocs-ffit' workshop was organised with Tudur Phillips. Catrin Toffoc also visited each school to work on correcting syntactic errors in a fun way through rhyme and song. In the secondary school the learners produced a podcast based on the local area.

Three schemes were developed at **Ysgol Godre'r Berwyn**.

Phase 1: Nursery Rhymes: Raise younger pupils' awareness of traditional nursery rhymes with a contemporary feel.

Phase 2 (Y. 5 and 6): Football commentating. Raising the profile of the Welsh language in the football world within the area – realising there is a place for the language among the fans, players, media and the industry.

Phase 2 (Y. 7-8 together with transition elements): Transition Podcast.

An opportunity for years 6 and 7 to work together to research, plan and create a podcast for prospective pupils in year 6. Marc Griffiths led on the production side.

Phase 3 + 6th form: Gig.

Bands within the school were keen to gain more performance experience and to raise their profile. The aim was to promote Welsh-language music from the locality and from further afield. We succeeded in creating a taste of a 'gig' atmosphere for the older pupils and made them want to attend more Welsh gigs in the future.

In the Bangor catchment area, the learners worked on creating a Podcast under the guidance of Cwmni'r Frân Wen. The podcast was interwoven with an interactive map created by Menter Iaith Bangor.

The **Ysgol Syr Hugh Owen** catchment area activities were based on a project entitled '*Ein Llais Ni*' to promote learners' Oracy skills. In the secondary school, Sixth Form pupils held walking tours led by Rhys Mwyn. The main objective of the walks was to educate the learners about the history of their area and encourage them to enjoy their square mile. In addition, artwork was created by using the names of the places seen on the walks.

In the **Dyffryn Ogwen and Brynrefail** catchment areas, Playground Language Training was organised for the staff of the entire catchment area. Workshops were held with the Welsh Whisperer to compose songs and anthems to express admiration for the area. In addition, a training session was organised with Andrew Walton on how to create a podcast.

In the **Ardudwy catchment** area, 'Language games' were organised and held so that the Primary/Secondary pupils familiarised themselves and got to know one another.

Information about Welsh Football History was shared by watching old clips. Then they set about writing a play and creating a still picture of the most memorable events in the history of Welsh football.

A note was written to Robert Page, the manager of the squad, to wish the team the best of luck. Creative activities were held – creating a Welsh Football Shirt in the form of origami. The learners were also given the opportunity to design a football Stadium and use the shirts as players. This evolved, leading to developing commentary and creating a film. An original anthem, 'Pob lwc Cymru', was composed and performed. To conclude a flurry of activity there was a chat on Teams with Nicky John, presenter of the programme 'Sgorio'.

Secondary Schools' Language Forums

Language Forums have been established in all secondary schools in Gwynedd to lead the work of the Secondary Sector Language Strategy within the schools, and each secondary school has self-evaluated the implementation of the Strategy and set their priorities for the academic year September 2023 to July 2024. The Strategy Coordinator will visit some of the Forums during the year.

Language Awareness sessions were held with year 9 learners in secondary schools within the county to raise awareness of the importance of bilingualism and the benefits that derive from being proficiently bilingual. Plans are also in place to hold sessions promoting year 7 pupils' pride in their Welshness. As part of activities that came about because of the Llŷn ac Eifionydd National Eisteddfod, 75 pupils from three Dwyfor secondary schools received training which enabled them to collaborate to produce films and animation that told stories about the lives of characters, the culture and history of the local area, highlighting the Welsh identity. The films were shown on the Eisteddfod field. A tour of Maes B was organised for secondary schools in the Eisteddfod catchment area and was extremely successful in raising these learners' awareness of the Eisteddfod.

An increase in the number of young people who choose to study and who gain qualifications or recognised accreditations through the medium of Welsh.

There were 1316 learners in the year 11 cohort in Gwynedd secondary schools in summer 2023. The data was gathered by each of the secondary schools individually.

OUTCOME 4 INDICATOR	PERCENTAGE
Percentage of year 11 pupils who study at least three KS4 subjects through the medium of Welsh as well as GCSE Welsh First Language	71.7%
Percentage of year 11 pupils who study at least five KS4 subjects through the medium of Welsh as well as GCSE Welsh First Language	67.8%
Percentage of year 11 pupils who sit the GCSE Welsh First Language exam	87.01%

The figures of pupils studying Welsh as a First Language up to A Level, locally and nationally, remain low. 42 A level students from Gwynedd secondary schools took the final qualification in Summer 2023 which is an increase from the 36 in 2022. This figure seems low, but when put in a national

context, it is highlighted that there were only 176 A Level Welsh First Language candidates across Wales in 2023 and Gwynedd candidates represented 23.9% of the national total.

It must also be noted that the schools' dedication to the qualification is very good with 6 out of 7 of the post-16 secondary schools providing Welsh as a First Language up to A level - and one student from the seventh school was also registered to sit the exam through a partnership arrangement.

More pupils continuing to improve their Welsh language skills when transferring from primary to secondary.

In Gwynedd we have a robust staffing structure to monitor linguistic progression in the primary and secondary including transition. We have a Language Charter Coordinator leading in the primary sector and a Language Strategy Coordinator responsible for the secondary sector. In addition, catchment area coordinators operate in each cluster. This staffing network ensures that we as an authority can track the linguistic development of our learners along the language continuum. This means that we can plan ahead to ensure that appropriate provision is in place to ensure progression so that our learners make appropriate progress when transferring from one sector to another.

The catchment area coordinators collaborate with each primary school to map learners' linguistic confidence at the end of year 2 and year 6 by collating teachers' assessments from the children's language cohorts. In addition, they will gather, collate and analyse 'Gwe iaith' (language web) data in the primary and secondary sectors in order to identify strengths and areas for improvement in the context of learners' social use of the Welsh language and their confidence and habits when using the Welsh language within the school.

The table below shows that 67% of Gwynedd primary school children transferring to secondary school in September are proficiently bilingual (cohort A+B). A large number of learners who fall into the C2 category are also bilingual but because of their home language, their English is stronger. The learners who fall into the C2 cohort are children who have arrived at the schools at the end of KS2 or learners with Additional Learning Needs. Ch cohort learners are also children with additional learning needs.

Year 6 Learners' Language Cohorts as they transfer to secondary school in September 2022		
Cohort	Description	Percentage
A	Pupils proficient in both languages	60%
B	Pupils stronger in Welsh than in English	7%
C1	Pupils stronger in English than in Welsh	28%
C2	Pupils with limited Welsh, e.g. latecomers	3%
Ch	Pupils limited in their use of both languages	2%

From the data gathered from the authority's secondary schools at the start of the summer term 2023, 78% of the cohort in year 7 follow 80% or more of their courses through the medium of Welsh. This data is very positive, however there are priorities within the Improvement Plans of all primary and secondary schools within the county to maintain, and in some establishments to increase, the provision especially in the three transitional schools. 50% of children in the Bangor

Cluster fall into the C1 cohort and 39% into the A cohort. This year's refresher and confidence recovery projects are taking place within the cluster targeting year 5 learners, to raise the learners' standards and confidence in the Welsh language.

Question 2. Policy and Standards Matters

- i. Staff language skills – number of Welsh speakers and learners within the department (latest Language Designations data).
- ii. Obstacles – Are there any obstacles that prevent you as a department from offering a full service in Welsh (i.e., acting on the requirements of the Welsh Language Policy and Welsh Language Standards)?
- iii. Praise and Complaints – Provide information about any praise or complaints the department has received during the year about Welsh/bilingual services.

Reply:

The data below summarises the current situation for all the staff in the Education Department regarding the County's Language Designations.

Total number of staff in the Education Department 3289

Staff completed the self-assessment 1546.

Staff not completed 1743.

Percentage of staff who have completed 46%

Percentage of staff who have not completed the assessment 54%

Analysis of staff assessments on the Language Designation Framework:

Proficiency Level 872

Advanced 359

Intermediate 108

Entry 104

Foundation 58

Number of staff who meet the language designations of their job 91.078%

Number of staff who do not meet the language designations of their job 8.93%

97.3% of primary teachers and 86.3% of secondary teachers are confident to teach through the medium of Welsh. Advantage was taken by the assistants of one of the transitional primary schools to have Welsh lessons by Canolfan Bedwyr as part of plans to respond to the Education Workforce's Language Skills Self-assessment data. One member of support staff followed an Entry Level course, and eight members of teaching staff followed an Intermediate/Advanced Level Language Refresher course. Members of staff also took advantage of Welsh courses run by Bangor University's Learn Welsh Northwest. Six enrolled on an Entry Level course, one on an Intermediate level mainstream course, and two on a Confidence Building course. Information is regularly shared

with our schools about the provision available to improve the Welsh-language skills of the workforce.

There are several references in this report to specific training for the staff of our schools in terms of teaching the Welsh language and teaching through the medium of Welsh. There are plans in terms of late immersion methods and there are dedicated plans for the three transitional schools – more detailed and intensive now in the two schools in Bangor. The staff of every school in Gwynedd – primary and secondary – have been asked again to complete a Self-assessment of Welsh in the Workplace to update our information and enable us to target training more effectively as we move forward. There has been a discussion this year on securing a provision that is more specific for Gwynedd from GwE and for the transitional schools as the sabbatical scheme is not taking hold nor is it entirely suitable for the county.

Praise and Complaints:

See below Estyn's judgement on the authority's Welsh-language provision – June 2023 Inspection.

The authority has a clear vision in terms of ensuring access to Welsh-medium education for pupils and young people in Gwynedd throughout their time in education. This is based on establishing a 'Welsh and bilingual education system which puts the needs of all of our learners at the heart of our provision'. Gwynedd's Welsh Language Policy, along with a range of other relevant policies, is a cornerstone of all the authority's work and ensures opportunities for pupils and young people to be confident bilingual learners. For example, the priorities of the 'Gwynedd Gymraeg' plan and the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) reflect suitable key aspirations and targets over the medium and long term. The Education Welsh Language Forum meets on a termly basis to monitor progress against the priorities and targets in the WESP and plan for improvement. This helps to ensure that leaders in the education department and elected members have a sound understanding of the priorities. The WESP sets a clear direction for developing the Welsh language across all sectors, which includes providing more opportunities for pupils and young people to learn and use the language confidently and as a normal part of everyday life. The plan identifies appropriate targets for this, which includes identifying challenges for the future. For example, it identifies the need to maintain and develop the Welsh language skills of the workforce by collaborating with a variety of strategic partners and external agencies. The authority has a good working relationship with external agencies and umbrella organisations such as Mudiad Meithrin. They work together to promote the Welsh language in the early years by ensuring access to education and care. 'Gwynedd Yfory' projects state the importance of working with stakeholders to ensure the best start for all children in the county. For example, the authority has established Welsh-medium Flying Start centres in specific areas to support children and families. Successful co-operation with partners helps to ensure that nearly all children who attend non-maintained settings transfer to Welsh-medium education in schools. Leaders and officers prioritise developing the Welsh language by investing in improving learning facilities. For example, they use the Gwynedd Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme to invest in new school buildings to provide early education and childcare through the medium of Welsh. They also use Welsh Government capital grants effectively to improve the quality of the Welsh language immersion centre buildings, in addition to building new settings to support primary and secondary pupils who are newcomers to the Welsh language. This also reduces the distance between pupils' homes and these centres and provides them with a good range of resources and facilities. Fairly recently, the authority revised its Immersion Education system to ensure that the language policy is inclusive and supports latecomers, including pupils who have English as an additional language, to acquire the Welsh language. Under the purposeful guidance of new leaders, the service offers beneficial provision for primary and secondary pupils in six settings across the authority. The intensive ten-week course supports pupils to acquire beneficial linguistic skills that enable them to join their peers in their local schools and use the language formally and informally within their communities. The service also provides useful support and guidance for teachers and teaching assistants to

develop pupils' Welsh language skills. For example, it has trained nearly all teachers and teaching assistants who work in foundation learning classes on good practice in terms of immersion methods. A very positive element of the Gwynedd Immersion Education System's work is the effective use of digital technology to enrich pupils' experiences and motivate them to learn Welsh in a fun way.

A clear priority is given to ensuring that provision and services for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) and their families are available through the medium of Welsh. All members of staff within the Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Service are fluent Welsh speakers and are able to provide bilingually. The authority also works effectively with other agencies, such as the Local Health Board, to ensure that specialist support is available in Welsh to meet the needs of ALN pupils and their families. The use of the Welsh language in informal situations in primary and secondary schools is encouraged appropriately through Welsh Language Charter activities. This contributes to improving pupils' Welsh language skills and Welshness, in addition to supporting cooperation between primary and secondary schools. The regional project, 'Ein Llais Ni', in cooperation with external partners such as Bangor University, helps to develop skills in teaching and learning oracy skills. Schools provide many GCSE subjects through the medium of Welsh and a large number of pupils sit an examination in GCSE Welsh first language. This reflects the authority's vision and policy to develop pupils who are fully bilingual and promotes the advantages of studying through the medium of Welsh. The authority has robust procedures to identify the linguistic skills of the workforce. This ensures that it identifies training needs and provides support as necessary. The partnership between the authority and other stakeholders, such as Bangor University and GwE, supports this work by providing specific courses for the full range of staff including teachers, learning assistants and administrative and catering staff.

Following the inspection, the authority's officers were asked to submit a case study to be shared nationally based on the range of valuable Welsh-medium resources that the authority's staff have developed. In response to the general shortage in this area, they have developed Welsh-language resources for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) and their families. This includes developing or adapting resources that are appropriate to the authority's context as well as securing translation rights for international resources. The staff of the immersion system have developed an innovative virtual resource to practise language patterns and vocabulary and dedicated podcasts on the benefits of learning Welsh.

Obstacles:

Access for some s Catering and Cleaning staff, also the Youth Service to digital tools to complete the language self-assessment.

Recruiting Catering and Cleaning staff.

Some managers have expressed that some of their staff lack confidence when indicating their linguistic level and tend to score themselves lower on the framework than what they are which has an impact on the reliability of the data.

Lack of data in general to meet some of the standards of the Welsh language.

Question 3. Development Opportunities

Do you have ideas about new ways we can promote the Welsh language in the county's communities – either in your own services or by collaborating with others?

Reply:

Development Opportunities:

Hold virtual training/mandatory meeting for managers to raise awareness of Welsh language standards and Language Designations.

Provide support to staff before they complete the language assessment. e.g., a short video or presentation to exemplify the language designations and their use.

Offering experiences through the Welsh language that give children positive experiences of using the language socially, multi-agency projects.

'Playing in Welsh'-Targeting Football Clubs- developing a Quality Mark scheme for clubs promoting the Welsh language.