

MEETING	Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee
DATE	13 February 2025
TITLE	Education Language Policy – the engagement procedure
REASON TO SCRUTINISE	To receive an update on the engagement process in the context of the Education Language Policy
AUTHOR	Rhys Meredydd Glyn, Head of Gwynedd Immersion Education System
CABINET MEMBER	Cllr Dewi Jones

1. Why does it need to be scrutinised?

1.1 This report is presented in response to a request from members of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee to receive a report on the engagement process in the context of the new Education Language Policy.

2. What exactly needs to be scrutinised?

2.1 This report is intended to present information on the engagement process in the context of the new Education Language Policy, and then report on the findings of the engagement.

3. Summary of the Key Matters

3.1 This report summarises the engagement process in respect of the Education Language Policy.

4. Background / Context

4.1 Cyngor Gwynedd has a long history of pioneering in the field of Welsh and Bilingual education and this pioneering has ensured that Gwynedd's young people within the local authority's schools have received wide-ranging opportunities to become fluently bilingual.

4.2 Gwynedd now has the largest number of Welsh speakers of any local authority in Wales, and also has the highest percentage of young people receiving their education in Welsh and bilingually. But at the same time, the linguistic changes taking place in the county, as well as changes in terms of the Welsh Government's influence on education in Wales, make it timely for us to consider reviewing Cyngor Gwynedd's education language policy and have a discussion about which elements of the current policy are working well and where any reforms or changes need to be made.

- 4.3** In order to hold this discussion on Gwynedd's language education policy, a series of meetings were conducted across the authority with a wide range of stakeholders to discuss how the current policy could be improved and strengthened in the context of the 2021 census results and the Welsh Government's current linguistic and educational expectations.
- 4.4** A series of meetings were held across the three regions over a two-month period from October to December 2024. We spent time with a representation from amongst primary, secondary, special and lifelong school headteachers.

Primary Schools:

Arfon: Our Lady's School, Ysgol Hiracl, Ysgol Llandygal, Ysgol Llanllechid, Ysgol Rhosgadfan.

Dwyfor: Ysgol y Gorlan, Ysgol Treferyth, Ysgol Llanbedrog

Meirionnydd: Ysgol Cefn Coch, Ysgol, Talsarnau, Ysgol y Traeth

Special Schools: Ysgol Hafod Lon and Ysgol Pendalar

Secondary Schools:

Arfon: Ysgol Dyffryn Ogwen, Ysgol Brynrefail, Ysgol Tryfan and Ysgol Friars, Ysgol Dyffryn Nantlle

Dwyfor: Ysgol Botwnnog, Ysgol Eifionydd, Ysgol Glan y Môr

Meirionnydd: Ysgol y Moelwyn, Ysgol Ardudwy, Ysgol Tywyn

Lifelong Schools: Ysgol Bro Idris, Ysgol Godre'r Berwyn.

- 4.5** Pupils were also welcomed to the engagement meetings to discuss the language policy. Suitable and purposeful background documents were prepared for the age ranges of different learners. We also ensured that the voices of a cross-section of Gwynedd children and young people were listened to in the meetings. We selected children from schools in the Welsh language strongholds in Gwynedd, and also from the more Anglicized areas, including a school that is in the transitional category in terms of the school's Welsh-medium provision.

Primary School Learners: Ysgol Cymerau, Ysgol Bro Hedd Wyn and Ysgol Cae Top

Secondary School Learners: Ysgol Botwnnog, Ysgol y Moelwyn, Ysgol Dyffryn Ogwen and Ysgol Tywyn

Special School Learners: Ysgol Hafod Lon.

- 4.6** An engagement meeting was also held for the following representatives:

Language Organisations:

Cylch yr Iaith

Cymdeithas yr Iaith

Dyfodol yr Iaith

RHAG – Parents for Welsh Medium Education

4.7 We also welcomed representatives from the **Gwynedd Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee:**

Councillors: Jina Gwyrfai, Elwyn Jones, Beth Lawton, Richard Glyn Roberts and Rhys Tudur

4.8 The following Councillors were also welcomed, representing the **Language Committee:**

Councillors: Menna Baines, Meryl Roberts, Elfed Wyn ap Elwyn, Alan Jones Evans and Olaf Cai Larsen.

4.9 A meeting was also arranged with representatives from the **Gwynedd Governors' Forum** and also a meeting with the Welsh Language Commissioner's officers.

4.10 Documents were provided to set a context for the discussions, and those documents were distributed in advance to all the representatives (see the Appendices):

1. The Welsh Language and Education Bill
2. Gwynedd Schools Language Policy 2021
3. Article – Golwg 360 'Government should focus more on attitudes to language according to Bangor University research' – Meilyr Jones

5. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

5.1 The aim of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act places a well-being duty on public bodies which is aimed at delivering the seven well-being goals by following the five ways of working.

5.2 The Act places a well-being duty on the Council to carry out sustainable development work by working in cooperation with the 'sustainable development principle'. This means that the impact on people in the future must be considered when making decisions.

5.3 In terms of **collaborating and involving** others, we have already held engagement sessions between October and December 2024, see 4.4 to 4.9 for more information.

5.4 Conducting the engagement process recognises the need to amend the current language policy in light of recent developments including the 2021 census statistics. Acting now provides an opportunity to respond to the situation and try to **prevent** further slippage in the number of Welsh-speaking learners aged 3-15.

- 5.5** Ensuring that the children and young people of Gwynedd develop into confident, bilingual citizens improves opportunities for them educationally, economically, culturally and socially in the **long term** and enriches their experience of living and working through the medium of Welsh in Gwynedd.
- 5.6** Empowering the county's Education language Policy is a solid foundation for developing bilingual citizens and complies with the status of the Welsh language in the context of Public Bodies.

6. Impact on Equality Characteristics, the Welsh Language and the Socio-Economic Duty

- 6.1** An Equality Impact Assessment is not required in response to the engagement work relating to the Language Policy. However, we will be expected to produce an Equality Impact Assessment on any decisions made by the Council as part of formulating a new Education Language Policy. We will give consideration to all the comments received as part of the engagement and amend the Education Language Policy and the Equality Impact Assessment as appropriate according to the comments received.

7. Next Steps

- 7.1** Following the engagement process the officers of the Education Department are working with Meirion Prys Jones to produce a draft language policy that will incorporate Gwynedd's ambition and be influenced by all the observations from the engagement.
- 7.2** It is intended to present the draft along with a specific strategy to support the implementation of the policy on 10 April 2025 at the Education Scrutiny Committee before submitting it to the Cyngor Gwynedd Cabinet.

Appendices

1. The Welsh Language and Education Bill
2. The Gwynedd Schools Language Policy 2021
3. Article – Golwg 360 'Government should focus more on attitudes to language according to Bangor University research' – Meilyr Jones
4. Cyngor Gwynedd Language Policy – Meeting Context