

MEETING	Services Scrutiny Committee
DATE	26 May 2016
TITLE	Welsh-Medium Education Investigation
PURPOSE	Provide a progress report on the actions
REPORT BY	Cllr Gareth Thomas Head of Education

BACKGROUND

The Welsh Education Scrutiny Investigation was established by the Services Scrutiny Committee to assess:

- how the Local Authority's Language Policy is implemented at individual schools,
- the extent to which the provision assists to promote use of Welsh socially by children and young people.

Recommendations have been made to improve consistency and quality of Welsh education provision within the catchment-areas now and in future.

Having received the report and recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee, the Education Department made arrangements for an independent specialist to conduct a study to deal mainly with the second recommendation, but that the task of defining the nature of the secondary schools language also includes an element of the first recommendation, what is exactly meant by teaching and bilingual learning where that is implemented - the findings of this study are key to implementing a substantial number of the other recommendations.

This work was scheduled to be done at the end of the 2015 Autumn term, but due to circumstances, it was not possible to conduct the work in the original time-table. There are arrangements in place for the work to be completed during the Autumn Term of 2016.

The work that has already been done in response to the recommendations is outlined below, as well as the work programme for 2016-17. It is noted that the matters already implemented, will remain operational in 2016-17.

IMPLEMENTATION AND PROGRESS THUS FAR

The Education Department has held training for assistants and support staff to promote and understand the Language Charter's requirements. The Language Charter ensures that all tiers of the school community i.e. pupils, parents, governors, are accountable/take action when promoting healthy attitude/increasing use of Welsh socially.

The pupils are involved in discussions on the Language Charter and language practices and it is ensured that pupils and parents have opportunities to understand and discuss the benefits of bilingualism, multilingualism and using Welsh. The voice of the child is strong in the process of promoting use of Welsh socially e.g. School Council members implement ideas to impact the wider community in use of Welsh.

The aim is to change attitudes/maintain healthy attitudes towards the language with every school responsible for presenting a pamphlet and presentation that conveys the message as to the value of speaking Welsh and the advantages of bilingualism. Every school has received a pamphlet, a

presentation and guidance on how to address parents on educational, economic, cultural matters that will lead to bilingual fluency.

Language Charter Professional Learning Communities have been established to collaborate on projects to raise awareness of and promote Welsh within the catchment-area.

Activities are held that focus on raising the profile and value of Welsh at schools.

The Primary Language Co-ordinators have received thorough training so that they are qualified to provide schools with guidance and support in their catchment-areas. Under them, the Charter monitoring work is implemented.

There is a strong element of training in the wake of the accreditation visits and an excellent opportunity for schools to share information and good practices. A report is completed on the attainment and development of every school towards achieving silver and gold award requirements annually.

Along with Welsh for Adults, close collaboration occurs between partnerships such as the Urdd, Cwmni Da and S4C and the aim is to strengthen support for schools when achieving the objective of increasing use of Welsh socially.

The Language Centres continue to provide intensive courses in Welsh for latecomers to enable them to assimilate into the bilingual community and fully participate in bilingual education experiences. This provision has a core role in assisting primary and secondary schools to implement the current Language Policy. The Education Department monitors the use of the Language Centres, ensuring that the schools fully makes use of them.

The appointment of a Post-care Teacher for the Gwynedd Primary Language Centres is quite a recent development, who has the responsibility for teaching Welsh to groups of latecomers, specifically involved in ensuring the post-care scheme for pupils who have attended the Language Centres. This ensures appropriate progression for pupils following their return to the schools and also ensures every school's accountability for implementing post-care scheme.

The LA implements a bilingual Language Policy at the schools, and the aim is to develop the individual's ability to communicate in Welsh and English. There is also an emphasis on ensuring language progression from one key stage to another. The post of Catchment-area Co-ordinator has a core role in this. The Language Co-ordinators are released for 10 days a year to support the catchment-area schools to implement the Language Policy. This provides robust arrangements to co-ordinate the language progression from the primary to the secondary in the catchment-area.