

CYNGOR GWYNEDD - Report to Cyngor Gwynedd Cabinet



Title of Item:	Gwynedd Education Language Policy
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Dewi Jones, Cabinet Member for Education
Relevant officer:	Siwan Llwyd Roberts.
Date of meeting:	16 December 2025

1. Decision sought

The purpose of this report is to invite the Cabinet to: -

- i. adopt a draft of Cyngor Gwynedd's Model Education Language Policy for Gwynedd schools so that it can be submitted for the purpose of public engagement. (Appendix 1)

2. The reason why the Cabinet needs to make the decision

2.1 Cabinet is asked to approve a draft of the Education Language Policy which has been drawn up following an extended process of engagement with stakeholders.

2.2 Approval of the draft is a key step in enabling the Council to undertake further public engagement before reporting back to Cabinet on the results of the engagement and asking Cabinet members for a decision on whether to adopt the Model Education Language Policy.

2.3 Subject to the adoption of the Model Education Language Policy, it would be submitted to all governing bodies for them to seek the views of their school community and then consider its adoption and implementation.

2.4 Cyngor Gwynedd's strong recommendation would be for every school to adopt the Cyngor Gwynedd Model Education Language Policy and implement it in full in September 2026.

3. Introduction and Rationale

3.1: Gwynedd's Education Language Policy is part of the Council's wider strategy to ensure that children and young people are given the opportunity to develop their language skills in Welsh and English.

3.2 It is timely to update Gwynedd's current Language Education Policy, to reflect the current linguistic situation in the county and to provide clear support for schools.

3.3: Under Education Legislation (2013), every local authority was required to agree on a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) with the Welsh Government - a plan that is operational for

ten years (2023 - 2033). The WESP sets out the main current principles associated with Cyngor Gwynedd's education language policies.

3.4: The Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers (Welsh Government) strategy was published in 2016. The strategy emphasises the importance of increasing the number of Welsh speakers and increasing daily use of the Welsh language. The strategy's aims align with the strategic aims that Cyngor Gwynedd has been promoting for several decades.

3.5: The Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021 notes that the Welsh language is a mandatory requirement.

3.6: Cyngor Gwynedd's education strategies are also expected to consider the following documents: *Our nation's mission: high standards and aspirations for all* (Welsh Government; 2023) and *School improvement guide: a framework for evaluation, improvement and accountability* (Welsh Government; 2024). In these documents, the local authorities and schools in Wales have a duty to plan appropriately for increasing the number of young people who can speak Welsh and who do so daily.

3.7: Although the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Act 2025, received Royal Assent on 7 July 2025, most statutory requirements are not yet in force. Over the next few years, as certain parts of the Act come into force it will impose statutory duties on schools, local authorities and the Welsh Government. Cyngor Gwynedd's intention is to be proactive, working with our schools to maintain and promote Welsh language education and to strengthen each school's commitment to ensuring that the Welsh language flourishes. We also want to ensure that our schools can meet the new requirements that will ensure that every pupil in Wales, by the end of their compulsory school period, develops as an independent user of the Welsh language.

3.8: Within the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Act 2025 the requirements relating to the categorisation of schools will be implemented gradually. The codes and regulations underpinning the statutory categorisation system are expected to be published by July 2027, with the new arrangements being fully implemented through the School Delivery Plans between 2029 and 2030. This will set statutory language categories for each school. No school may move back or lower its level of Welsh provision; rather the existing provision must be maintained or increased.

4.1 Background / Introduction

4.1.1 During 2024–2025 under the leadership of the Language Consultant, Meirion Prys Jones, Gwynedd Council held a series of comprehensive engagement sessions with key stakeholders - teachers, pupils and Language Forum members, representatives of Language organisations and Welsh Language Commissioner representatives - to steer the development of the Gwynedd Education Language Policy. The aim of the engagement was to ensure that a revised policy is introduced to reflect the current linguistic situation and the Council's ambition to strengthen Welsh language provision in schools

4.1.2 The feedback showed clear support for the Welsh language and for updating Gwynedd's Education Language Policy. It was noted that the current policy had been successful, particularly in the primary sector and in relation to the Immersion Education Regime, but that it now belonged to a period when the Welsh language was socially stronger. There were challenges in terms of consistency of implementation across the county, linguistic progression between periods, and clarity around expectations, as well as concerns about recruitment, training and accountability. The primary, secondary sectors, governors, elected members and the learners themselves highlighted the need for clearer action to strengthen Welsh language provision, ensure one strong county policy, and strategically plan over time to build capacity and ensure greater practical support for schools.

There was a strong consensus that change was needed building on the successes of the current policy and reforming it to reflect the current linguistic reality of the county. Stakeholders stressed the need for robust monitoring, an understandable categorisation system, and a clear context for any reform. They called for better progression between all educational stages up to the age of 16+, strengthening social use of Welsh, and including clearer provision on the role of parents, communities, and the pre-school sector. Reference was also made to the need to ensure that no school goes back along the linguistic continuum, and to develop realistic action plans supporting the expansion of Welsh education across the county.

4.1.3 On **13 February 2025**, the **Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee** accepted a report on the outcomes of the work. It was noted that the main findings were the need for a succinct, clear and robust language policy. Training needs, recruitment challenges and the need to closely examine the social use of the Welsh language were highlighted. It was agreed that the Gwynedd Education Language Policy should be a comprehensive policy including a strategy to try to positively influence parents to promote and encourage children to use the Welsh language in school and beyond. The need to strengthen the existing language policy was noted.

4.1.4 On **10 April 2025**, a revised draft policy was submitted by the Cabinet Member for Education to the **Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee**. Concerns were expressed about a lack of measurable ambition and concrete targets in the draft policy. Calls were made for clear progress targets and regular monitoring by appointed officials. It was resolved to apply to the Scrutiny Forum to prioritise resources for the formation of a Task and Finish group, with the brief to examine the wording of the Draft Education Language Policy to consider making suggestions to the Cabinet Member / Education Department, and report back to committee at the meeting of 19 June 2025.

4.1.5 On **2 June 2025**, the **Task and Finish Group** discussed amendments to the draft policy

4.1.6 On **19 June 2025**, the Task and Finish Group's recommendations were submitted to members of the **Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee**. A series of recommendations were introduced to sharpen and clarify the policy, set out clearer guidance on Welsh language provision in activities, use the Welsh Language and Education Bill 2025 definitions of Welsh-medium schools, express provision percentages, and expand on school progress plans. Questions were raised about transitional schools and the objectives surrounding English, and how to balance encouragement with persuasion, especially in the context of immersion. The

need for the policy to relate to the psychology of language and to ensure that parents and schools feel that they were part of the language journey, was expressed.

In response, officials explained that the new Act has not yet come into force, and that planning during a transitional period is needed. The Department for Education emphasised their commitment to the Welsh language but also the need to ensure a realistic, robust and practical approach across the county. There was a discussion on ALN, citing concerns about the omission of certain statutory references and the need for clear evidence on language and ALN. As a result, it was decided to note the work of the Task and Finish Group, acknowledging the lack of consensus on some changes, and to ask the Cabinet Member for Education to consider all comments when preparing the final policy.

4.2 Rationale and justification for recommending the decision

4.2.1 Having accepted the recommendation of the members of the Scrutiny Committee that the Cabinet Member for Education consider the range of comments submitted by Members in formulating the policy, the officers have produced a revised draft and Cabinet is invited to approve this draft of the Gwynedd Education Language Policy in order to present it as a model policy for the purpose of public engagement.

4.2.2 An **Equality Assessment** has been conducted, assessing the impact of Cyngor Gwynedd's proposed Education Language Policy on the county's population by complying with:

- Equality Act 2010
 - Socio-Economic Duty
 - Welsh Language Standards (2011 Measure)
 - Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015
 - Armed Forces Act 2021
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- The aims of the proposed Policy are to ensure that all pupils in Gwynedd, by the end of their statutory education, have sound skills in both Welsh and English. This will promote the prosperity of the Welsh language and maintain its community use; empowering pupils to live and work in a multilingual world; ensuring linguistic and social equity for all children.
 - A substantial series of engagement meetings were held between October and December 2024 and with learners of all ages in schools across the County; Headteachers of primary, secondary and special schools across Gwynedd; Language organisations: - Cylch yr Iaith, Cymdeithas yr Iaith, Dyfodol yr Iaith, Rhieni dros Addysg Gymraeg. Subject to the Cabinet's decision, further public engagement will take place.
 - **Impact Assessment**
Positive impact: No obvious negative impact on any of the protected features and a significant positive impact on the promotion of the Welsh language, equality of opportunity and community unity. Strengthen the use of Welsh in education and in the community. Increase employment opportunities by developing bilingual skills. Support confidence and a strong identity. Provide equal access for learners with additional needs (ALN).

- **Potential risks:** Pressure on schools to implement the policy in full. Ongoing training and adequate resources required.
There is no evidence of unequal impact or unlawful discrimination.
- **Equality and Socio-Economic Considerations.** The proposed policy eliminates discrimination by offering equal linguistic access for all. It promotes equal opportunities by increasing access to Welsh education and builds good relationships through school plans and a consistent Welsh ethos. It tackles socio-economic disadvantage through immersion schemes, support for families and access to Welsh language resources and technology.
- **Welsh Considerations.** The proposed policy operates in accordance with the Welsh Language Standards and prioritises Welsh as the main administrative and educational language. It ensures that Welsh is not treated less favourably than English; promotes the use of the language in the community, among young people and in the workplace; and strengthens the role of schools as centres of Welsh language and culture.

4.2.3 Contribution to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

- 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.
- The Act places a welfare duty on the Council to carry out sustainable development work by working in conjunction with the 'sustainable development principle'. This means that the impact on people in the future needs to be considered when making decisions.
- The proposed policy contributes to each of the **seven well-being goals**, including a more equal, resilient Wales with a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language.
It operates through the **five ways of working** - long-term, prevention, integration, collaboration and inclusion.

5. Next Steps and Timetable

- 5.1** Should Cabinet decide to support the recommendation set out in this report a period of engagement will be required. That engagement period is expected to take place between January 7th and February 25th, 2026.
- 5.2** Thereafter, a further report will be submitted to Cabinet to report back on the results of the engagement. Cabinet will then be required to consider the outcomes of the engagement, and decide whether to adopt the Model Education Language Policy
- 5.3** Following this, the Model Education Language Policy will be submitted to each governing body to seek the views of each school's community before considering its adoption and implementation in September 2026. Cyngor Gwynedd's strong recommendation would be

for all schools to adopt Gwynedd's Model Education Language Policy and implement it fully in September 2026.

The table below lists the next steps and an outline timeline for their implementation

Date	Actions
7 January 2026 – 25 February 2026	Conduct public engagement so that Cyngor Gwynedd can consider the responses when drawing up a further draft of the Model Education Language Policy.
May 2026	Report back to Cabinet on the results of engagement and ask Cabinet members for a decision on whether to adopt the Model Education Language Policy.
May – July 2026	Every Governing Body to seek the views of the school community on the content of the Model Education Language Policy before considering its adoption and implementation in September 2026.

6 Monitoring Officers

6.1 Chief Finance Officer

Nothing to add to the report from the perspective of financial propriety.

6.2 Monitoring Officer

There has been a lot of work and discussion on this proposed policy. It is an initial step in reviewing arrangements and proposing policy to governing bodies that would pave the way for the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Act 2025 to come into force on a large scale. The decision provides an opportunity to hold a period of engagement on the proposal and canvass views on the proposed Policy. It will be necessary to come back for a decision that will give Cabinet the opportunity to consider the responses and come to a final opinion

7. List of Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Gwynedd Education Language Policy 2025 (Draft)

Appendix 2 – Guide to Gwynedd Education Language Policy 2025 (Draft)

Appendix 3 – Equality Assessment – Assessing the Impact on the People of Gwynedd.