


CYNGOR GWYNEDD – Cyngor Gwynedd Cabinet Report



Title of Item:	Gwynedd Education Language Policy
Cabinet Member:	Cllr. Dewi Jones, Cabinet Member for Education
Relevant officer:	Siwan Llwyd Roberts.
Date of Meeting:	June 9th, 2026

1. Decision sought

The purpose of this report is to invite Cabinet to approve and adopt the Gwynedd Education Language Policy for its introduction as a Model Education Language Policy for schools to consider its adoption and implementation. (*Appendix 1*)

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

2.1 Cabinet is asked to approve a Model Education Language Policy which has been drawn up following an extended and comprehensive process of engagement.

2.2 A draft of a model Gwynedd Education Language Policy for Gwynedd schools came before Cabinet on 15 December 2025, and Cabinet was asked to adopt it for public engagement purposes. The engagement took place between January 7th and February 25th, 2026. The feedback received has been thoroughly reviewed and where appropriate has been incorporated into the formulation of the policy. Cabinet will now be asked to decide on the approval and adoption of the policy for Gwynedd schools.

2.3 Following the adoption of the Model Education Language Policy, the policy will be submitted to each governing body to consider its adoption and implementation.

2.4 Cyngor Gwynedd's strong recommendation is that all schools should adopt Cyngor Gwynedd's Model Education Language Policy and implement it in full by September 2026.

3. Introduction and Rationale

3.1: Gwynedd's Education Language Policy is part of a wider strategy by Cyngor Gwynedd, to ensure that Gwynedd's children and young people can develop sound language skills in both Welsh and English.

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

3.3: Under Education Legislation (2013), all local authorities are required to agree a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) with the Welsh Government. This scheme is in place for a

period of ten years (2023-2033) and outlines the main principles underpinning Cyngor Gwynedd's education language policies.

3.4: In 2016, the Welsh Government published the *Cymraeg 2050: Million Speakers* strategy which emphasises the importance of increasing the number of Welsh speakers and the daily use of Welsh. The objectives of the strategy are in line with the strategic aims that Cyngor Gwynedd Council has been promoting for several decades.

3.5: Under the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021 the Welsh language is a compulsory element of the curriculum.

3.6: Cyngor Gwynedd's education strategies are also expected to take into account the following documents: *Our nation's mission: high standards and aspirations for all* (Welsh Government; 2023) and *School improvement guidance: a framework for evaluation, accountability and improvement* (Welsh Government; 2024). In these documents, local authorities and schools in Wales are given a duty to plan effectively 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 act proactively by working with schools in the county to maintain and promote Welsh language education and to strengthen each school's commitment to ensuring that the Welsh language flourishes. In addition, Cyngor Gwynedd wants to ensure that Gwynedd's schools are in a robust position to respond to the new requirements which will ensure that every pupil in Wales, by the end of their compulsory education 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 will be allowed to move back or reduce its level of Welsh language provision; instead, the existing Welsh provision must be maintained or increased.

4.1 Background/ Introduction

4.1.1 During 2024–2025, Cyngor Gwynedd initiated a comprehensive process of reviewing and amending Gwynedd's Education Language Policy, with the aim of ensuring that the policy reflects the current linguistic reality of the county and responds to new legislative and strategic requirements. This work was part of Cyngor Gwynedd's wider ambition to strengthen Welsh language education and ensure that all children and young people develop strong bilingual skills.

4.1.2 Under the leadership of the Language Consultant, Meirion Prys Jones, an extensive series of engagement sessions were held with key stakeholders, including school headteachers, learners, governors, language organisations, Language Forums and representatives of the Welsh Language Commissioner. A clear consensus emerged that the current policy needed to be updated to respond to a change in the social situation of the Welsh language and to ensure greater consistency, clarity and accountability across schools in the county.

This feedback led to a report to the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee in February 2025, highlighting the need for a stronger, clearer and more ambitious policy. In April 2025, a revised draft of the policy was discussed by the Scrutiny Committee, with further calls for measurable targets, robust monitoring arrangements and greater clarity around the language expectations of schools

4.1.3 Subsequently, a Task and Finish Group was established to refine the draft policy. In June 2025 the group presented a series of recommendations relating to strengthening Welsh language provision, using the definitions of the Welsh Language and Education Bill 2025, and ensuring better linguistic progression across all educational stages. The need for a realistic and inclusive approach that would support schools, parents and learners throughout the transition period was also discussed.

4.1.4: In December 2025, a revised draft of Gwynedd's Education Language Policy was submitted to Cyngor Gwynedd's Cabinet, with a request for adoption as a Model Education Language Policy for public engagement purposes. The report emphasised that the policy was an important strategic step in preparing Gwynedd's schools for the implementation of the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Act 2025, and in realising the Welsh Language 2050 vision.

4.1.5: A formal period of public engagement was held over a period of six weeks between January 7 2026, and February 25, 2026.

Participants were given the opportunity to note what they supported, as well as the elements they had concerns or comments about, in relation to the content of the Model Education Language Policy. This was done in the context of the following categories, with the option to respond either to the policy as a whole or to the sections that were most relevant to the respondent.

- Pre-school
- Nursery to Year2
- Year 3 to Year 6
- Secondary
- Special Education
- Transitional Schools
- Immersion Provision

54 responses to the engagement document were received. (*Appendix 3*) There were some responses that focused on only one category and others responded to more than one category:

Participants were given the opportunity to identify in which role they were responding.

Role	Number
Parent	13
Governor	3
Member of school staff	3
Other	27
No answer given	5

3 responses were received from organisations.

The responses received show varying opinions. Significant support was expressed for Welsh-medium education with a minority expressing concerns about the implementation of the model policy.

In the opinion of some participants, Gwynedd Council should:

- strengthen support for learners who are less confident in their language skills.
- consider expanding immersion provision.
- address concerns about the educational development of pupils in the secondary sector.
- improve clarity in communicating the aims and principles of the Policy.

It is noted that the predominant considerations relate to the period of secondary education.

Overall, a strong consensus that the Welsh language is important to the future of Gwynedd was noted, and therefore the participants found that the Education Language Policy effectively supports Gwynedd pupils.

4.3 Rationale and justification for recommending the decision

4.3.1 The adoption of Gwynedd's Language Education Policy is essential to ensure that the county's education arrangements reflect legislative and strategic requirements as well as the linguistic needs of Gwynedd.

Under education legislation and the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2023–2033, Cyngor Gwynedd has a duty to intentionally plan for the development of pupils' Welsh and English skills and the expansion of daily use of Welsh. This aligns directly with the vision of the Welsh Government's strategy, *Cymraeg 2050* which emphasises the need to increase the number of confident Welsh speakers

In addition, the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021 makes the Welsh language a compulsory element of the curriculum for all learners in Wales and the Welsh Government's recent national guidance places firm expectations on local authorities and schools to plan effectively for increasing the number of young people who can use Welsh on a daily basis.

The need to adopt the policy is also timely due to the introduction of the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Act 2025. Although not all of the requirements of the Act are yet in force, it will impose new statutory duties on schools and local authorities over the coming years, including a new statutory system for categorising schools according to their Welsh provision which ensures that schools cannot reduce their Welsh language provision, but instead will have to maintain or strengthen it.

Therefore, the adoption of Gwynedd's Education Language Policy is a proactive and strategic step to:

- ensure compliance with national legislation and expectations;
- provide clear and consistent direction for the county's schools;
- protect and strengthen the Welsh language as a language of education and community in Gwynedd;
- prepare schools for the new requirements of the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Act 2025
- ensure that every pupil is given the opportunity to develop as a confident and independent user of both Welsh and English by the end of their compulsory education.

The revised Model Education Language Policy reflects the comments and views received during a lengthy, comprehensive and wide-ranging process of stakeholder engagement and Cabinet is invited to approve it. It will then be presented as a Model Education Language Policy for schools to consider adopting and implementing.

4.3.2 An Equality Assessment has been completed, assessing the impact of Gwynedd Council's Education Language Policy on the entire population of the county, complying with:

- Equality Act 2010
- Socio-Economic Duty
- Welsh Language Standards (2011 Measure)
- Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015
- Armed Forces Act 2021

The aims of the 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 and ensuring linguistic and social equity for all children.

A significant series of face-to-face engagement meetings were held between October and December 2024 and further public engagement between January 7 and February 25, 2026.

- **Impact Assessment**

Positive impact: There is no obvious negative impact on any of the protected features. Rather, a significant positive impact is predicted in terms of the promotion of the Welsh language, equality of opportunity and community solidarity. The policy will strengthen the use of the Welsh language within education and in the wider community, increase employment opportunities by fostering bilingual skills, and support the development of confidence and a strong identity among learners. In addition, it will ensure equal access for learners with additional learning needs (ALN).

- **Potential risks:** Full implementation of the policy could put additional pressure on schools, highlighting the need for ongoing training and providing adequate resources to

support the work. However, there is no evidence that the policy leads to an unequal effect or any form of unlawful discrimination.

- **Equality and Socio-Economic Considerations.** The policy contributes to the elimination of discrimination by ensuring equal linguistic access for all. It also promotes equal opportunities by expanding access to Welsh-medium education, while fostering positive relationships through school schemes and the Welsh ethos. The policy seeks to address socio-economic disadvantage by providing immersion schemes, support for families, and better access to Welsh language resources and technology.
- **Welsh Considerations.** The policy operates in accordance with the Welsh Language Standards and gives priority to Welsh as the main administrative and educational language. It ensures that the Welsh language is not treated less favourably than English and promotes the use of the language in the community, among young people and in the workplace. In addition, the policy reinforces the role of schools as key centres for the Welsh language and culture.

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

The policy contributes to all seven well-being goals, including creating a more equal and resilient Wales, with a vibrant culture where the Welsh language thrives. It also reflects the five ways of working through long-term and preventive action, whilst promoting integration, collaboration and inclusion in the planning and delivery of Welsh education.

5. Next Steps and Timetable

5.1 If Cabinet decides to support the recommendation presented in this report to approve and adopt the Gwynedd Education Language Policy, the policy would be presented as a Model Education Language Policy for schools to consider adopting and implementing. Cyngor Gwynedd's strong recommendation is that all schools should adopt Cyngor Gwynedd's Model Education Language Policy and fully implement it by September 2026.

6. Statutory Officers' Comments

6.1 Chief Finance Officer

"I have no objections to the decision sought from the perspective of financial propriety."

6.2 Monitoring Officer

There has been considerable work and consideration 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 coming into force fully. Following the engagement period, it gives the Cabinet the opportunity to agree a Model Policy that can be proposed to the school Governing Bodies. I am satisfied with the propriety of the decision sought.

7.Attachment List:

Appendix 1 – Gwynedd Education Language Policy 2026

Appendix 2 – Guide to Gwynedd's Language Education Policy 2026

Appendix 3 - Analysis of Public Engagement Outcomes January – February 2026

Appendix 4 – Integrated Impact Assessment.