

Kirsty Williams MS
Minister for Education
Welsh Government

Dyddiad | Date: 21 October 2020

Pwnc | Subject: **Teaching of Welsh in English-medium schools**

Dear Kirsty,

The Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee recently scrutinised the Welsh Language Commissioner about his Annual Report.

During the session he raised concerns about the provision of Welsh language education in English-medium schools, which he feels is not receiving due attention.

“From what I see at the moment, and what I see in terms of the ongoing dialogue, there isn't much hope in terms of increasing the percentage in terms of fluency through the English-medium sector”.

He also called for greater ambition in terms of what is expected of pupils when they leave school. The Commissioner stated:

‘The reality ... of the situation is that the vast majority of the young people leaving our English-medium schools can only say 'bore da' or 'prynhawn da'. That's what we're looking at, and that is a disgrace within a nation that purports to be a bilingual nation’.

He called for an acknowledgement from the Welsh Government of the scale of the task of improving language teaching, and how it intends to change the status quo. Specifically, he called for:

- guidance on Welsh language education which addresses the delivery of the language continuum;
- a ‘clear strategy for the teaching of Welsh as a second language’; including
- a strategy for increasing the training for teachers of Welsh as a second language.



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He also called for a greater appreciation of the need to recruit significant numbers of teachers to deliver the aims of the Cymraeg 2050 strategy. He said:

'If Cymraeg 2050' does happen and we are hoping to get at least 50 per cent of those pupils in the English-medium sector fluent in Welsh by the time they get to 16, then we need far more action than we are currently seeing'.

Please can you respond to the Commissioner's calls for guidance and a strategy for the teaching of Welsh in English-medium schools?

Please can you let us know what plans are in place to recruit the required number of language teachers needed to deliver the Cymraeg 2050 objectives for pupils educated in English-medium schools?

In order to inform the work of the Committee I would be grateful if you could respond to these questions by 20 November.

Yours sincerely,



Helen Mary Jones

Chair of the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee





Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref

17 November 2020

Dear Helen Mary,

Thank you for your letter dated 21 October 2020.

I recently had a positive meeting with the Welsh Language Commissioner to discuss the briefing note that he published in August, and our plans going forward.

I am committed to ensuring that we maintain a focus on our plans and ambitions for increasing the Welsh-medium workforce and ability of all practitioners to develop their Welsh language skills during this unprecedented time.

I am acutely aware of the need to develop a short, medium and long-term strategic approach to address the shortage of Welsh-medium teachers, in order to meet the Cymraeg 2050 targets. We are already working on some short-term actions such as the primary – secondary conversion course. However, there is no quick solution and we need to work with a range of stakeholders, including schools, to co-construct the strategy, and mainstream developments to support the Welsh-medium sector within the wider ITE system and the development of our early career support package.

I am also keen to move the focus from setting blunt targets to using data and intelligence to inform a range of solutions that can facilitate an increase in the number of Welsh-medium teachers. We know what the overall Cymraeg 2050 targets are - which are based on learner population and are dependent on local authorities driving forward their Welsh in Education Strategic Plans to increase Welsh-medium provision. We also now have the first set of data from the School Workforce Annual Census (SWAC). We will be using this data and other intelligence from the system to support and facilitate the recruitment of Welsh-medium teachers through a range of programmes, rather than solely setting targets for ITE partnerships.

The work to develop this long-term strategy is being taken forward by my officials and I envisage that it will provide clarity on the roles of key partners and stakeholders in supporting us to deliver our plans.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Professional learning is key for how we will deliver the new curriculum. Welsh Government continues to invest over £6m in professional learning to support practitioners to develop their Welsh language skills and ability to teach Welsh and through the medium of Welsh. Officials are working with the regional consortia, sabbatical scheme providers and other stakeholders such as Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and the National Centre for Learning Welsh to develop a coherent career-long programme of Welsh language professional learning based on the national competency framework. As outlined above, the data that we now have from the SWAC will enable regions and local authorities to improve the planning of professional learning to ensure that we are targeting and supporting practitioners to develop their Welsh language skills in accordance with the professional standards for teaching and leadership.

Ensuring that all learners will be able to use the Welsh language when they leave school is important in our ongoing education reforms. The Curriculum for Wales guidance aims to give schools a robust framework, but without constraining their professional autonomy. By allowing schools this flexibility we are empowering them to take ownership and allowing them the freedom to design a curriculum that best meets the needs of their specific learners.

The detail within the Curriculum for Wales Framework specifically within the *What Matters Statements and Principles of Progression*, provide a clear statement of what we see as important in a broad and balanced education and sets out expectations for learners in terms of the progression of learners' Welsh language skills, including within English-medium settings. It would go against the ethos of the new curriculum to provide prescriptive content which is not tailored to local needs and does not respect teacher agency.

That's not to say I am not aware of the challenges faced by schools. But I think the best way to support schools, is to focus on how we support all parts of the system to deliver, rather than focussing on providing further guidance, which could overcrowd and confuse the landscape.

There are a number of actions we will be taking to support implementation, including the development of a curriculum implementation plan, which will outline our expectations for realising the Curriculum for Wales and how schools, strategic partners and the Welsh Government will all contribute to that; and the establishment of a National Network of practitioners and stakeholders to share understanding across the profession, gather intelligence and co-construct support and solutions to problems. Through these mechanisms we will work with partners to support schools to develop curricula that supports progression in Welsh, including how a Welsh language continuum can be achieved.

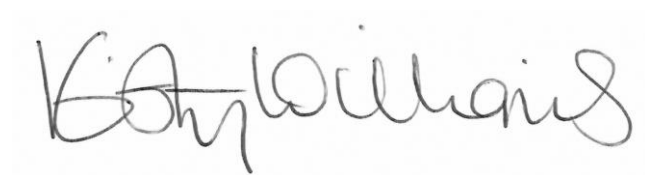
We will also be consulting on new arrangements around categorising schools according to their Welsh medium provision before Christmas.

A review of the current arrangements highlighted the need to implement changes. The ambiguity around school categorisation no longer supports commitments made in local authorities' Welsh in Education Strategic Plans to increase Welsh-medium provision within schools and to undertake the statutory process of changing a school's category. Bringing clarity to the arrangements will facilitate this process so that local authorities can reach the targets set out in their Welsh in Education Strategic Plans.

We expect all schools, whatever their category to develop their Welsh-medium provision according to the new curriculum. Although curriculum design and delivery is the responsibility of individual schools, it should be considered within the overarching policy of categorising schools according to Welsh-medium provision.

The new draft guidance on categorising schools according to Welsh medium provision will help schools achieve their curriculum's aims with regards to the delivery of Welsh.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kirsty Williams". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'K' and a long, sweeping tail.

Kirsty Williams AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education