

WESP 12

Cynlluniau Strategol Cymraeg mewn Addysg – y fframwaith deddfwriaethol sy'n cefnogi Darpariaeth Addysg Gymraeg |

Welsh in Education Strategic Plans – the legislative framework that supports Welsh-Medium Education Provision

Ymateb gan Cymdeithas yr Iaith | Response from Cymdeithas yr Iaith

Cyfieithiad I'r Saesneg gan Gomisiwn y Senedd English Translation by Senedd Commission

Cymdeithas yr Iaith's response to the consultation on Welsh in Education Strategic Plans - the legislative framework that supports Welsh-medium education provision

1. Cymdeithas yr Iaith is an organisation that campaigns non-violently for the Welsh language and all communities in Wales.
2. We believe that the effectiveness of the education system in creating new speakers is absolutely central and key to the Government's Welsh language strategy: we cannot afford not to deliver in this area. The fate of the Government's entire strategy is dependent on that.

In December 2015, the Children, Young People and Education Committee of the Fourth Senedd published its report on the 'Inquiry into Welsh in Education Strategic Plans'. Has the legislative framework for Welsh in Education Strategic Plans improved since then?

3. There is no doubt that the current education system is completely unsuitable to achieve the necessary growth in Welsh-medium education.

WESPs have failed to achieve the Government's national targets, and, at the current growth rates, it would take several centuries to attain Welsh-medium education for all. The system is not suitable for any positive purpose, let alone a target of one million Welsh speakers nor the aim of making Welsh the norm as the teaching medium of the system.

4. The 'one million Welsh speakers' language strategy and the education targets in "Welsh in education: action plan 2017 to 2021" highlight the unsuitability of the current system.
5. The Government wants to see:
 - 70% of children leaving school fluent in Welsh by 2050
 - 40% of children attending dedicated Welsh-medium education by 2050.
6. Those targets mean that there must be a system that proactively plans over a long period to expand and normalise Welsh-medium education, not one that depends on 'measuring demand' or directionless plans.

7. Welsh in Education Strategic Plans have not delivered, and a structure needs to be created that will lead to the normalisation and expansion of Welsh-medium education.
8. A system must be established that ensures proactive, purposeful, robust and long-term planning, as the current system has failed.
9. When evaluating the current Welsh system, we believe that it's important to consider the best examples from around the world. Looking at three territories that are relevant to the linguistic situation in Wales, it is clear that the legislation is much more robust regarding teaching in their native languages. Although there are differences between the legislation of these territories, it is clear that the aim of the system is to make the native language the norm of the teaching medium.
10. Catalunya:

Article 20 of the Catalan education law states:

"1. Catalan, as the native language of Catalunya, is also the language of education, at all levels and in all types of teaching.

2. Education institutions at all levels will make Catalan the regular medium of expressing teaching and administrative activities, both internally and externally."

11. Basque Country:

Article 15 of the law in the Basque Country states:

"The right of all students to be educated... in Basque... at the different educational levels is recognised.

To this end the Parliament and the Government will adopt those necessary measures which will lead to a progressive expansion of the bilingualism of the education system of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country."

12. Québec

The Charter of the French Language of Quebec states

"CHAPTER II

BASIC LANGUAGE RIGHTS

6. Every person that is eligible to receive an education in Québec has the right to receive that education in French.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LANGUAGE OF TEACHING

72. Teaching will be through the medium of French in nursery schools, and in primary and secondary schools, with the exceptions noted in this chapter.

13. Comparing this system with the international examples above, there appear to be a number of obvious deficiencies, including the following:

- There is no statutory right to Welsh-medium education;
- There is no long-term goal or objective in the primary legislation;
- There is no approach for ensuring mid-term planning or milestones on a 5–10-year timetable within the system;
- There is no expectation of progress;
- Plans are a clumsy and complex way of comparing with other legislative tools, such as the Welsh Language Standards, which set a template to ensure that councils act in accordance with them;
- There is no incentive for councils – whether financial or otherwise – to deliver on the plans' commitments

14. In order to transform the system within a few decades to a system like one of the above, the failed system of Welsh in Education Strategic Plans should be replaced with a system that sets clear, irreversible targets.

15. We believe that we need a system that adheres to the following principles:

- An ambitious and achievable Welsh language education planning goal and regime at a national, regional and local level
- Definitive measures in terms of workforce planning
- A clear and permanent financial incentive
- Sustainable national and local strategic plans
- Statutory support to ensure detailed planning
- A long-term strategic framework, and detailed short- and medium-term plans

16. Furthermore, it is necessary to act on the recommendations of Professor Sioned Davies' report, commissioned by the Welsh Government in 2013, *One language for all: A review of Welsh second language at key Stages 3 and 4*.

17. Specifically, there is a need to

- (i) remove 'Welsh Second Language' and replacing it with one qualification for all pupils (recommendation 6), and
- (ii) set "targets to increase the use of Welsh-medium learning across the curriculum in English-medium schools" (recommendation 15)

To what extent do Welsh in Education Strategic Plans contribute to the outcomes and targets set out in the Welsh Government's Welsh Language Strategy – [Cymraeg 2050](#)?

18. In 2019, Cymdeithas yr Iaith published year 1 targets that would need to be met in order to reach the goal of one Welsh million speakers by 2050. We will update the figures following the publication of the Census results, but we are concerned that the targets are not close to being reached, as they are at the moment.
19. The statistics and analysis of these are available here:
<https://cymdeithas.cymru/sites/default/files/Targedau%20Addysg%20Lleol2.pdf>
20. A target for year 1 is not sufficient in itself as it does not address the lack of progression, which is a huge problem in some counties and for the language nationally. Targets for other school years are essential to the success of the system.
21. Unless there are targets for older years, the Government will not be able to deliver on the promise of eliminating any current lack of progression in Welsh education. The current lack of progression affects 11% of pupils nationally, and young people are losing their grasp of the Welsh language due to the current system.
22. It could not be overemphasised how critical these targets are to the success of the Welsh language strategy 2050. The Government cannot take any risk in terms of failing to reach growth targets in the provision. We are concerned that there is no effort to plan based on modelling the probability that various targets will be met. For example, without significant immediate action to tackle the issue, it should be clear that there is a great deal of uncertainty about the Government's ability to reach its target of having half of the pupils in 'English-medium' education speaking Welsh. However, there is no recognition of this or clear proposals in the regulations or guidance to address the challenge.
23. The targets for the growth of Welsh-medium education for individual councils are too low for several reasons:
 - setting Welsh medium education growth targets that are so low means that the Government is completely dependent on achieving those targets so that half of the pupils who leave English-medium schools are Welsh speakers; there are no quantitative targets or a robust mechanism for achieving this ambitious target;
 - the current national targets assume that there will be no fall in the percentage of pupils receiving Welsh-medium education from one education phase to the next. Although tackling lack of progression is essential, it is unrealistic to assume that the current lack of progression will disappear completely, so the Government should set higher growth targets for younger ages to make up for the inevitable fall in older age groups.

24. Furthermore, there is a risk that WESPs are irrelevant to the areas where the Welsh language is strongest but faces huge challenges.
25. As they stand, they are not sufficient to improve the provision of a number of western councils, especially Gwynedd and Anglesey, as there are no quantitative targets or proposals for normalising Welsh as a medium of learning in all schools nor in terms of the percentage of older age groups receiving Welsh-medium education.
26. Therefore, it is necessary to set an expectation for all authorities, including Gwynedd and Anglesey, to make progress.
27. Incentives and clear enforcement are needed to ensure that local authorities achieve their targets and objectives;
28. The guidance should outline in detail the support and the new robust policy actions implemented by the Government and other agencies in order to assist and compel them to achieve the targets in the regulations.
29. Under the current primary legislation, namely the School Standards and Organisation Act 2013, the only power that the Government has to challenge the performance of councils regarding the expansion of Welsh-medium education is the under section 85 to reject the council's proposed plan and any amendment thereof. Beyond that, there are no statutory powers to encourage, compel or force change.
30. Having extended the period of WESPs to 10 years, the ability to intervene to ensure that councils reach their targets has been reduced, as there will be an opportunity to intervene once in a decade. 10 years is too long without a robust mechanism that ensures independent external accountability, clear incentives and ongoing action.
31. We therefore believe that Estyn and the Welsh Ministers need powers to intervene, as part of a mechanism to ensure the growth and normalisation of Welsh-medium education.
32. And after 5 years, Estyn should carry out a full formal inspection of each education authority's strategic plan to ensure that the targets are achieved. Such an inspection could lead to various results such as placing an authority in special measures.
33. We believe that it is absolutely essential that there are strong, robust and long-lasting incentives to ensure that authorities achieve the long-term goal and/or national targets.
34. There are some financial incentives that we prefer in order to ensure that local authorities achieve the long-term aim and national targets:
 - All 21st Century Schools' capital funding for new buildings should be earmarked to promote Welsh-medium education.

- No new school or educational setting should open that provides a lower percentage of education through the medium of Welsh than the education institutions in the local area, or with less than 50% of the education through the medium of Welsh anywhere in Wales.
35. In the meantime, before adopting the above policy, the current fund should be continued and increased, offering 100% of the capital funding for local authorities for specific Welsh language projects.
36. We further believe that the following may be considered in addition to or instead of the above:
- Where a local authority does not reach their statutory targets to expand and normalise Welsh-medium education, the revenue funding should be transferred to individual schools or consortia that show progress based on a strategic plan.
 - Continuing with a separate capital fund of sufficient size to meet the long-term targets/aim of the legislation.
 - Adopting a national rule such as that preferred by the former leader of Cardiff Council that only new schools that are designated Welsh-medium or 'bilingual' schools (that is 50%+ Welsh-medium) should be funded via capital.

What challenges lie ahead in the planning and development of Welsh-medium provision, ahead of a proposed Welsh Language Education Bill?

37. Planning the education workforce is absolutely essential to achieving all targets in terms of expanding and normalising Welsh-medium education. It is entirely possible to plan for significant growth if the appropriate steps are taken now to ensure success and if sufficiently robust measures are in place.
38. Around 6% of the whole workforce can speak Welsh but are not currently teaching through the medium of Welsh, and 80% of the students on initial teacher training courses have been pupils in schools in Wales.
39. The rapid review carried out by Aled Roberts on behalf of the Welsh Government in 2018 was damning about the situation at the time:

"Very few authorities plan their workforce strategically based on existing language skills and need. Language assessments should be essential, ensuring that policies for recruitment and training are clear and measurable.

"... . A description of the difficulties in recruiting staff rather than any strategic planning to address the problem seems to be more prevalent. ... We must ask ourselves, what purpose is there to plan for substantial growth for Welsh-medium and bilingual education during the next three years without urgent decisions being made to train more new teachers who speak Welsh. This is particularly the case within the secondary sector."

40. Little has changed and we believe that concrete measures are needed within the statutory system. Instead of short-term plans as the Government has recently announced, what is needed is:

- (i) Establishing statutory targets in order to increase the percentage of people training to become new teachers that will teach through the medium of Welsh;
- (ii) Ensuring that every single course in the sabbatical scheme aims to have every employee going on to teach through the medium of Welsh after the course, with a skills certificate as a guarantee;
- (iii) An intensive programme of differentiated on-the-job training in the workplace, including:
 - a) language awareness courses for newcomers to Wales;
 - b) a language refresher training programme for the 6% of teachers that can speak Welsh but do not currently teach in Welsh, leading to a competence certificate within a year;
 - c) differentiated training programmes to reinforce the ability of the majority to support use of Welsh across the curriculum, targeting those that are most confident and able in Welsh for more intensive programmes, including opportunities for periods of residential training - leading to gaining a skills certificate over a period of three years;
 - d) resurrecting and extending the athrawon bro programmes to inform the above plans, including establishing a network of mentors, school/area support groups.
 - e) Extending initial teacher training courses for up to an additional year to enable prospective teachers to learn Welsh and refresh their language skills

41. Cymdeithas's conclusions and recommendations on improving Welsh amongst the education workforce, following a seminar with specialists can be seen here:

<https://cymdeithas.cymru/dogfen/cynllunior-gweithlu-addysg-cyrraedd-miliwn-o-siaradwyr-Cymraeg>

42. Cymdeithas published the Education Workforce Competence Development Strategy earlier this year: https://cymdeithas.cymru/datblygu_gweithlu

43. The truth is that legislation is needed to improve areas such as the following:

- moving to a system of concrete local targets instead of local plans;
- enforcement and incentivisation powers in order to reach the targets;
- a legislative aim to replace measuring demand;
- setting duties regarding early years provision;
- imposing duties regarding post-16 education;
- free transport to Welsh-medium education settings;

- duties and changes regarding workforce planning.

44. We therefore believe that the proposed Welsh Language Education Act should:

- Establish a long-term goal in the legislation to plan for complete Welsh-medium education for all, by replacing 'demand measurement';
- Establish a system with clear financial incentives – both revenue and capital – and a clear formula to ensure that those targets are achieved via local authorities.
- Set targets for increasing the number and percentage of subjects taught through the medium of Welsh in schools that currently teach mainly in English, in accordance with the recommendation of Professor Sioned Davies' report;
- Establish a right to free transport to Welsh-medium schools and nurseries.
- Set a statutory target date for the provision of Welsh-medium only early years education and foundation phase across the whole of Wales.
- Establish and expand immersion centres in each county, with the aim of ensuring that they follow the same pattern as the system in Gwynedd, by making the centres part of statutory provision for local councils in their area
- Establish statutory targets in terms of increasing the percentage of people training to become new teachers to ensure an increase in the percentage that will teach through the medium of Welsh
- Establish the right to local pre-school education in Welsh and placing responsibility on local authorities to ensure that there is provision of Welsh-medium pre-school care and education in the county to prepare children for Welsh-medium statutory education
- Establish the right to study through the medium of Welsh in post-16 education, including university, in apprenticeships and in sixth form or college.
- Place a duty on local authorities and education consortia to strategically plan and provide professional learning programmes that will increase the number of education workers improving their Welsh skills. This should include recognition of the right of education workers to learn Welsh fluently at work.
- In order to transform the system within a few decades to a system similar to that of Catalunya, the current system of Welsh in Education Strategic Plans drawn up by local authorities should be replaced, which is a failed system, should be replaced with a system that sets clear, irreversible targets for the normalisation and expansion of Welsh-medium education in order to achieve the long-term goal by a definitive date(s)