

## WESP 14

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 Dyfodol i'r Iaith | Response from Dyfodol i'r Iaith



DYFODOL I'R IAITH

Llais i'r iaith

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### Dyfodol i'r iaith

Dyfodol i'r iaith is a non-partisan organisation that works for the benefit of the Welsh language. Its aim is to influence, by constitutional means, the substance and content of public policy and legislation in order to promote the growth and prosperity of the Welsh language in all policy areas. It will act for the benefit of Wales and its people, gaining support and respect for the language and ensuring that Welsh is a live issue on the political agenda.

Dyfodol i'r iaith welcomes this opportunity to comment on the urgent review of Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs).

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### COMMENTS ON WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLANS

1. We appreciate that the current plans cover a period of 10 years, which allows planning over the medium term. Nevertheless, we are of the opinion that to achieve the growth in Welsh-medium education predicted in *Cymraeg 2050*, the current WESPs need to be strengthened.

2. There remains a weakness in these 10-year plans:

The process of creating the Plans takes several years, and involves slowing down or delaying developments. While this is better than how it used to be, it can lead to a lack of ambition. The Education Minister recently announced that, as a result of the

WESPs, 22 new Welsh-medium schools are to be established. This averages out at one school per education authority, which represents unambitious growth.

3. The WESPs propose a 10-year target. We have argued (see our comments on the WESPs, August 2018) that the WESPs need to have short (five-year), medium (10-year) and long-term (20-year) targets. Situations that call for urgent action, where Welsh schools are overcrowded, also require attention.
4. There is a danger that the current 10-year WESPs contain short-term targets instead of more extensive mid-term and long-term targets.

To detail what will happen within the 10 years, WESPs need to state more clearly how Welsh in education is intended to be devolved over 20 years.

5. To ensure that the WESPs can be implemented effectively, other Government programmes, i.e. 21st century schools programmes, need to be co-planned, to ensure sufficient funding routes for Welsh language education growth.
6. The WESPs pertain to individual local authorities, but a clear level of collaboration between the counties is needed where local authorities are small, or where county boundaries are close to population centres in more than one county.
7. We are concerned that the WESPs for some counties do not provide a sufficiently detailed picture of those counties' real needs. In some counties, Welsh schools in certain areas are overcrowded, and the counties have not responded adequately. In some counties, Welsh-medium school provision is absent in certain areas. There are other examples where counties have relocated Welsh language schools to create larger schools, and this is depriving other areas of a Welsh-medium school.

We would therefore like to see the WESPs map the presence of Welsh-medium primary and secondary schools in their counties, and note the numbers and percentages for each ward in the county that attend Welsh-medium education, in order to identify where the spaces are.

As a result of this, the Plans need to provide Welsh-medium schools in more communities (instead of centralising in larger schools) and address additional provision more specifically where Welsh-medium schools are full.

8. The WESPs do not cover changes/developments in English-medium education in the various counties. These, e.g. in Neath Port Talbot, can pose a significant threat to the viability of Welsh-medium education.

The WESPs must, therefore, be an integral part of all statutory education planning in counties.

9. As stated in our August 2018 comments, the WESPs (and the Government) need to address different models of establishing Welsh-medium schools, using the existing school stock in urban areas. This would mean that different areas of counties would have more detailed targets set for them than is currently the case.

10. The WESPs need to identify the increased number of teaching staff and Welsh-language support staff needed for their plans to become reality. Ensuring sufficient staff will require collaboration between local authorities, the Welsh Government, the National Centre for Learning Welsh and language learning providers, and Initial Teacher Education providers, namely the relevant university and school partnerships. Statistics from the Education Workforce Council, and education workforce surveys, can furnish some information on the Welsh-language skills and training needs of the workforce, as well as information on workforce numbers and stability. (*Cymraeg 2050* predicts that the number of primary teachers will need to increase from 2,900 to 3,900 by 2031, and to 5,200 by 2050, with a corresponding increase in the secondary sector.)

11. The Government - and therefore the WESPs - need to follow an unwavering course in terms of targets, especially given that many Welsh in education targets have been missed in the past. *Cymraeg 2050* predicts that the number of seven-year-old learners needs to increase from 22 per cent (7,700) in 2015/16 to 30 per cent (10,500) by 2031, and to 40 per cent (14,000) by 2050.

This means doubling the number of Welsh-medium schools by 2050. There is no hint of this growth to be seen in the current WESPs.

12. We are not convinced that the prospective school categories will be effective; the WESPs need to ensure that schools do not fall into unsuitable categories. While there is currently one 3P category for Welsh-medium schools that teach everything (except English) to every pupil, another category 3 is needed for Welsh-medium schools where all pupils are taught 80 per cent (for instance) or more of the subjects through the medium of Welsh. Such a category could be suitable for ensuring that most schools in Gwynedd, and some Welsh-medium schools in other counties, do

not fall into a category that is less robust than their current one, with encouragement to move towards a 3P category.

13. In general, when planning education, we need to accept the principle that Welsh-medium education should not be less accessible than English-medium education, and the WESPs need to note this. Ensuring that Welsh-medium education is no less accessible than English-medium education requires that a Welsh-medium primary school be available in every community where there is an English one, or transport provision to Welsh schools needs to be more favourable.
14. One can foresee the WESPs being transferred to the Welsh Education Act, but the need for holistic education planning remains, across the sectors. There also remains the need for planning at community level, as well as at county and national level, with urgent, short-term, medium-term and long-term targets.

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