

Cross-Party Group Minutes

Meeting Minutes:

Cross Party Group Title:	Wales International
Date of Meeting:	27/02/24
Location:	Senedd Cymru - Welsh Parliament, Cardiff Bay, Cardiff, CF99 1SN

In attendance:

Name:	Title:
Ruth Cocks	Director Wales – British Council Wales
Abigail Doyle	Project Support Officer – British Council Wales
Professor/Dr Claire Gorrara	Dean of Research and Innovation – College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Cardiff University
Lucy Jenkins	Project Director – MFL Mentoring Project
Kate Barber	Research student - School of English, Communication and Philosophy, Cardiff University
Tallulah Holley	Education Consultant and Researcher
Naomi Taylor	Subject Officer for German - WJEC
Claire Bellamy	MFL Subject Officer - WJEC
Victoria Ucele	Wales China Schools Project Manager - Cardiff Confucius Institute, Cardiff University
Dr Catherine Chabert	Reader in French, Executive Director of Confucius Institute – Cardiff University

Najma Hashi	Change Maker Support, Office of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales
Carlos Sanz Mingo	Senior Lecturer in Hispanic Studies and Translation Studies – Cardiff University
Sioned Harold	EAS Consortium
Elin Arfon	Research student – Cardiff School of Modern Languages, Cardiff University
Jeremy Jones	Founder member of the All-Wales Network of German Teachers
Dr Ian Collen	Director of Initial Teacher Education – Queen’s University Belfast
Brooke Webb	Heledd Fychan MS Senedd Staff
Niahm Salked	Plaid Cymru Senedd Staff
Gareth Llewellyn	Senedd staff Peredur Owen Griffiths
Alex Sims	Senedd Staff Jenny Rathbone
Gerard Pitt	Welsh Government
Anna Miller	Welsh Government
Kerry Bevan	PGCE Secondary Modern Foreign Languages Programme Leader – Cardiff Metropolitan University
Susana Galvan Hernandez	Executive Director – Taith
Nazaret Perez-Nieto	Senior Lecturer in Spanish – Cardiff University
Liz Wren-Owens	Dean of Postgraduate Education for the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Reader in Italian, and Translation Studies – Cardiff University

Bethan Mumford	Education and Mentoring Project Officer - Modern Foreign Languages Mentoring Project – Cardiff University
Bethan Spencer	Qualifications Manager – Cymwysterau Cymru/Qualifications Wales
Claire O’shea	Head of Partnership – Hub Cymru Africa
Elen Davies	Senior Journalist Reporter – BBC Cymru
Elham Gharib	Consultant Schools Global Programme – British Council
Glynn Downs	Chair - Global Futures Steering Group
Vicky Gough	Senior Consultant, Schools global programme – British Council
Rosalind Gould	Media and Campaigns Manager, UK – British Council
Dr Jayne Duff	Research Assistant, School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work – Queen’s University Belfast
Marina Saez Lecue	Project Support Officer - CSC
Aobh Mcanulty	Assistant Consultant – British Council
Jenni Tabea Rall	Project Co-ordinator for Educational Services – Goethe Institut
Heledd Fychan	Member of Senedd
Peredur Owen Griffiths	Member of Senedd
Rebecca Beckley	Region Co-ordinator Language Horizons Student Mentoring Project – Cardiff University

Apologies:

There were no apologies for this CPG meeting.

Summary of Meeting:

Chair's Welcome:

A brief introduction of the panel and a run-through of the agenda was given. There was no Welsh translation available for the meeting due to the logistics of room availability.

Presentation of Language Trends Wales Report by Dr Ian Collen:

Ian is the lead researcher on the Language Trends Wales Report, which started in 2015. He also works on the Language Trends England, Northern Ireland, and Scotland projects with his colleagues at Queen's University Belfast.

The Purpose of the Report is to monitor the trends of International Languages across schools (primary and secondary) and post-16 colleges in Wales to gather an idea of the state of International Language teaching and learning in the Nation. To gather data for the research, three surveys are sent to Welsh schools and colleges every year that the project runs.

The most recent report queried:

- What languages are being taught in primary schools.
- The readiness of schools to be able to teach International Languages.
- What International Engagement looks like in primary schools.
- What International Languages are being taught at KS3 and KS4, as well as the time allocated to these lessons.
- What the International Dimension of language learning looks like in schools.
- How the Curriculum for Wales has impacted International Language learning.
- What the statistics of post-16 engagement with languages look like.

Presentation of the Pupil's Voice from Dr Claire Gorarra and Lucy Jenkins:

Dr Claire Gorarra is the academic lead for the MFL Mentoring Project and Lucy is the Project Director of the MFL Mentoring Project. The purpose of MFL Mentoring is to engage pupils in schools with language learning by encouraging them to develop a multilingual mindset through mentoring by university students.

125 secondary schools and 10 universities across Wales are engaged in this project and 6000 students have been surveyed regarding which subjects they enjoy the most in school. It found that, out of 13 subjects, English falls 3rd, while International Languages fall 11th and Welsh language falls 13th.

Much of the project's work revolves around understanding why pupils don't engage with languages. They found students are curious about the diversity of languages but there are blocks to their learning paths (e.g. departmental cuts, more subjects to choose from, etc).

Presentation by Jeremy Jones:

Jeremy is the Founder of the All-Wales Network of German Teachers and carries out research into language learning with teachers.

The main points raised by Jeremy were that:

- It has been felt by secondary teachers that the new Curriculum for Wales does not support the teaching of International Languages.
- Primary schools feel as though they are not ready to teach International Languages, as they feel they do not have the time or the qualifications to do so.
- International Languages are in decline in secondary schools, particularly German. This has led to departmental cuts, meaning there is little or no engagement with languages from pupils.
- Qualified language teachers in secondary schools are leaving their roles, as they believe that the new Curriculum for Wales does not resolve the decline in the uptake of international languages.
- Jeremy highlighted that there is a need to campaign to promote the teaching of languages and requested that the Welsh Government engages more with schools and listens to school leaders regarding this subject.

Floor opened for discussion on Jeremy's points.

Matters raised were:

- Overall, language subjects are in decline and are at a higher risk of disappearing than other SHAPE subjects (Social Sciences, Humanities and the Arts for People and the Economy is a collective name for the social sciences, humanities, and the arts).
- Is the value of learning a language being explained by educational organisations and bodies to pupils? Do educational organisations understand what pupils consider 'valuable' about language learning and how language learning can be relevant to them? It was highlighted that learning a language is not only about travel, but it solidifies cultural relations and connections between countries and/or people.
- Brexit has negatively impacted the desire for language teaching and learning. It has meant that the value of learning a language is being lost due to disconnect with other cultures.
- Using bilingualism (e.g. Welsh and English) and the efforts Wales has made in this area to achieve multilingualism for Wales. We can learn from the efforts to promote Welsh learning to also promote International Language learning.

Next steps:

During the meeting, the members of the Senedd who attended were unable to answer questions directly. However, it was agreed that they will raise the points mentioned in the CPG in their meetings.

Heledd Fychan has agreed to write letter to Jeremy Miles outlining the matters discussed in the CPG.

A thanks was given to all attendees and attendees were encouraged to send links relating to their expertise to the Secretariat.

The meeting ended at 13:00.