

This document provides a translation of correspondence received from Mentran Iaith Cymru

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i'r [Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg](#) ar [Bil y Gymraeg ac Addysg \(Cymru\)](#)

This response was submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) on the [Welsh Language and Education \(Wales\) Bill](#)

WLE 05

Ymateb gan: Mentrau Iaith Cymru

Response from: Mentrau Iaith Cymru

Written evidence from Mentrau Iaith Cymru to the Children, Young People and Education Committee (CYPE) regarding scrutiny of the Welsh Language and Education Bill: Comments on the general principles of the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill and the need for legislation to achieve the stated policy intent.

Part 1: Promotion and facilitation of use of the Welsh Language

1. Welsh language strategy targets: a million Welsh speakers and increase in use

1.1 Mentrau Iaith Cymru welcomes the statutory basis that this Bill will provide for targets to achieve a million speakers. We particularly welcome the statutory basis for targets relating to the use of the Welsh language. We know how important it is in the field of linguistic planning just to ensure use, let alone proficiency, and the Mentrau Iaith face a permanent battle to maintain community use of the Welsh language in order to ensure a living language for future generations. We hope that having a statutory basis to increase the use of Welsh will facilitate work on the ground and attract more resources and investment in our work.

1.2 Mentrau Iaith Cymru welcomes the provision in the Bill that would place a duty on Welsh Ministers to set, measure and report on the Welsh Language Strategy. We believe that this guidance needs to be accompanied by a clear narrative that emphasises the point that suitable levels of attainment in the Welsh language give the young people of Wales an equal opportunity to become bilingual. The Bill would not deprive young people of the choice of an English-medium education; instead, it would give all young people the opportunity to make choices regarding their future language use. The intention of the Bill is to enable young people to choose to use Welsh and English in the future, rather than deprive some of them of that choice. This narrative needs to permeate all Government dealings with local authorities and education practitioners, and it needs to form the basis of teacher education training, so that the entire workforce can take pride in the intention of this Bill. It also needs to be woven into the language of the Commissioner for Future Generations, as it aims to redress where young people's Welsh skills are inconsistent or have been denied and ensure the continuation of the language for future generations.

2. Reporting on targets in the Welsh language strategy

1.3 We welcome the direction in the Bill to set targets and measure progress in

the 'provision of Welsh language education', but we would emphasise the importance of measuring attainment rather than provision alone and measuring performance as well as process. We hope that the assessment arrangements referred to in Part 3, section 12 ensure that pupils' linguistic attainment is measured to ascertain whether schools are meeting their Welsh learning goals.

3. Calculating the number of Welsh speakers

1.4 While we welcome the provision in the Bill regarding calculating the number of Welsh speakers for the purpose of reporting on the Promotion and Facilitation Strategy targets, we are a little concerned about the lack of emphasis on measuring use, as the Bill elaborates on 'calculating the number of Welsh speakers', but not on calculating use.

4. Reviewing the Welsh language standards

4.1 We welcome the direction in the Bill to review the Standards with the aim of increasing their impact and contribution to achieving Strategy targets to promote the Welsh language. The Standards relating to the development of the workforce's Welsh language skills allow for a situation in which a public body would fulfil the requirements of the Standards by reporting on the Welsh language skills of the workforce without ensuring any progress from year to year. Often, our public workplaces fail to offer continuity or development to the Welsh language skills of the workforce as they miss an opportunity to employ their skills in their work, and they miss an opportunity to encourage informal use of Welsh in the workplace. This frequently undoes the good work of Welsh language education under the WESPs. In addition, with regard to local authorities, the Standard relating to Welsh Language Promotion Strategies in general in the county is inadequate. The bar needs to be raised in terms of increasing residents' use of the Welsh language. As well as practical projects, the Mentrau Iaith wish to offer language planning expertise to local authorities to fulfil the Promotion Standards requirements, but the Standards do not place sufficiently firm expectations on authorities to create positive activity on the ground that has been planned and endowed with suitable investment.

Part 2: Describing Welsh language ability

2.1 We welcome the intention to standardise the ability to use the Welsh language and the intention to draw up a code that includes specific characteristics. We trust that identifying types of users, and adopting common reference levels to describe those types, will be an effective means of harmonising the measurement of attainment for new speakers of all ages. Public bodies currently using different language levels will likely need help to secure a smooth transition to the new framework without too much delay. It will also be necessary to integrate the levels into recruitment processes and harmonise them with the requirements of the Standards on public bodies from the point of view of developing the workforce.

2.2 It would be good if the code contained a comment to help assessors recognise confidence in using Welsh within the skills framework, rather than just ability. We have experience of dealing with an independent speaker who has a relatively high level of understanding and speaking skills and is confident enough to use his skills. We also come

across extremely skilled speakers who doubt their ability and therefore miss opportunities to use Welsh regularly. Naturally, the first example would be much more useful to the workforce than the second and would also be more likely to pass the language on to the next generation.

Part 3: Welsh Language Education

9. School language categories, 10. Amount of provision and 11. The learning goals

3.1 We welcome the setting of clear categories in accordance with the amount of Welsh education provided and are especially pleased to see a learning goal for each category. This ensures clear accountability between the amount of provision and the quality and nature of the provision and is bound to trigger an increase in pupils' outcomes. We are confident that this will ensure progress and are extremely glad to see it specified that changing a school's category to provide less Welsh language education is not permitted. We agree with the learning goals for the categories and are confident that this arrangement will give parents and guardians a clear picture in terms of the expectation of a child's Welsh language ability from attending various schools.

We express our concern, however, that 'Main language - Welsh' is the highest category in the range. We know from the experience of recent years that the type of education that produces young people who are confident in their use of Welsh is Welsh-medium education in which the ethos of the school, including how it operates and is administered, is Welsh. These schools, which give pupils a holistic Welsh experience, provide spaces in which pupils can be immersed in the Welsh language. Our concern is that without a category higher than 'Main language – Welsh' in this Bill, there will be no incentive for schools to provide this type of education any longer. The danger is that a school that provides the specified percentage of Welsh-language learning for the highest category but does not provide a holistic experience of Welsh for the pupil would fall into the same category as a school that provides a space in which pupils are immersed in the Welsh language, with nothing to distinguish between the two types of school.

12. Assessing progress

3.4 We are extremely pleased that the Bill states that assessment arrangements made through the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act will be interwoven with the types of Welsh users and set as outcomes for the education system through the Bill. Ensuring that pupils' linguistic outcomes can be measured in a way that matches the learning goal of various categories is essential to the successful implementation of the aims of this Bill, and the aims of the Ministers' Welsh language promotion strategy.

14. School Welsh language education delivery plans and 15. Approval of the plans

3.5 We welcome the direction to governing bodies to draw up plans that state their intentions regarding their schools' Welsh language provision, and we welcome the requirement for the Local Authority to approve it, and that plans need to have regard to a local Welsh strategic plan in education. The correlation between the school plan and the

county plan regarding the Welsh language ensures a clear line of accountability which is likely to trigger improvements.

3.6 We are particularly pleased that there is a direction in the Bill for the plans to deliver on how schools will promote their Welsh ethos and culture and promote the use of Welsh within the school. The Mentrau Iaith can attest that this aspect of Welsh language experience is just as important for the pupil as the medium of education, and absolutely essential to the learning success to produce confident speakers.

17 Amending a plan to change school language category

3.7 We welcome the way in which the Bill makes it simpler for a school to change category through the school plans and are happy with the direction that would make it impossible to change to a lower category to reduce the pupils' Welsh learning attainment.

Part 4: Planning Welsh language education and learning

23. National Framework

4.1 We welcome the direction in the Bill for Welsh Ministers to draw up a National Framework that explains how education will contribute to the Welsh Language Strategy. Setting a National Framework will give local authorities and school governors alike a clear direction of the education system's contribution towards reaching the goal of a million speakers by 2050. We regret, however, that the proposed Bill does not specify the relationship between the National Framework and the target for increasing the definition of the Welsh language. Given that use of the Welsh language is important if it is to be passed down to future generations as a living language, Mentrau Iaith Cymru is of the opinion that the framework should include **(d) the use of Welsh** in addition to (a) Welsh education, (b) (lifelong) Welsh language learning, and (c) acquiring the Welsh language. The inclusion of a duty to have regard to the use of Welsh would recognise the correlation between learning the language and using it. In our opinion, this would increase the likelihood of this Bill successfully giving rise to a contribution to the Welsh Language Strategy. Given that the school plans and the county plans refer to the need to promote the use of Welsh, logic dictates that the National Framework should mirror the requirement in the other two plans.

4.2 We would assume that the Framework should also refer to the recommendations in the Commission Welsh-speaking Communities report, 'Empowering communities, strengthening the Welsh language', indicating the steps to be taken to ensure that Welsh language education in Wales contributes to the strengthening the language in those communities that are considered significant as they have a higher density of Welsh speakers.

4.3 We also believe that the Framework should specify an expectation on local authorities to explain how their plans to reorganise schools or establish new schools will contribute to the aim of the Welsh Language Strategy.

28 Local Welsh in education strategic plans

4.4 We enthusiastically welcome the direction in the local strategic plans to clarify how the local authority will promote and facilitate the use of Welsh in schools, but we strongly believe that the duty needs to extend beyond the school walls. A duty should be included for local authorities to create opportunities to use the Welsh language in school and in the community. People cannot be expected to learn Welsh without the linguistic spaces in which they can practice and sustain their skills – there is no point in the education system ensuring that young people have Welsh language skills if they cannot use them in the community.

4.5 To this end, a direction should be included for local authorities to intertwine their local strategies with their promotion strategies, as required under the Welsh Language Wales Measure. This would be the most effective way of ensuring enough opportunities for children and young people to use their Welsh outside of school and to continue using those skills after leaving school.

4.6 This particularly applies to areas with a higher density of Welsh speakers. As noted in the Commission for Welsh-speaking Communities report, 'Empowering communities, strengthening the Welsh language', 'The Commission recognises that there is an interrelationship between Welsh as a school language and Welsh as a language of the community. In communities where the school and the community reinforce each other linguistically, a positive environment is created for Welsh and for intergenerational language transmission.'

4.7 Mentrau Iaith Cymru is of the opinion that a local authority should be directed to consult on the local strategic plan with the local Menter Iaith in order to benefit from its expertise in community linguistic planning.

Part 5: National Institute for Learning Welsh

5.1 We welcome the intention to create such an institute and urge that it be instructed to forge an active relationship with community organisations that provide extra-curricular opportunities to use Welsh, to ensure that formal learning is reinforced with informal use and that learners can develop their Welsh language skills outside the classroom. Consideration should be given to having the organisation contribute financially to the activity of those bodies that provide Welsh community opportunities, so that they can reinforce the Institute's efforts to create proficient Welsh speakers who enjoy using their Welsh in their everyday lives.

Part 6: General

The financial implications of the Bill

6.1 It should be recognised that investing more extensively in organisations that provide informal opportunities to use Welsh would be central to the Bill's success. If the use of Welsh is not maintained, the outcome of creating proficient speakers who are confident in

their use of Welsh will not reach fruition. The budget should recognise the role played by Mentrau Iaith in:

- Promoting Welsh language education and its benefits,
- Offering linguistic expertise to ensure that LA promotion strategies intertwine with and reinforce the WESPs
- Providing a Welsh community context for Welsh education
- Extending school boundaries so that children and young people's *use* of Welsh strengthens their education
- Supporting schools in the provision of in-school opportunities to use Welsh (lunchtime clubs etc) in order to achieve their Welsh learning goals
- Supporting schools to ensure a Welsh language ethos and culture in which the language is used.