

Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill

This document provides a translation of correspondence received from the National Centre for Learning Welsh

Children, Young People and Education Committee

Additional Evidence

The evidence session on 17 October 2024 touched on the plans that the National Centre for Learning Welsh has to support Welsh learning for the Education Workforce.

You enquired about potential methods for implementing a plan to support future Welsh learning for the Education Workforce.

The detail provided here is in addition to what the Committee heard during the evidence session.

Background

In the 2023 winter term, the Centre conducted a study of current opportunities for Welsh language learning and skills development for the Education Workforce. The study was based on an analysis of facts and interviews conducted by a wide range of partners, including the Education Workforce Council, Directors of Education and regional representatives.

The Centre presented the study, and the recommendations, to the Welsh Government's Department for Education at the start of 2024, receiving £500,000 of funding to provide a national programme for Welsh language teaching and development for the Education Workforce for the financial year 2024-25.

The Centre believes that opportunities to learn Welsh and develop Welsh language skills should be considered as a full part of the Professional Learning principle. Improving the Welsh language skills of the Education Workforce is a concrete way of implementing the requirements in the Curriculum for Wales and the Additional Learning Needs Code and a way of raising children and young people's Welsh Literacy standards.

Principles

In drawing up the proposal, a few core principles were decided upon:

- That the offer be available nationally to members of the Education Workforce in every school in Wales
- That an element of the proposal places a greater focus on working with schools/school clusters where linguistic change has been planned through the local authorities' Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPS)
- That the courses focus on learning methodology that could be implemented in a classroom, with the aim of positively influencing children and young people's progress in the Welsh language

- That all courses are based on the Centre's Learning Curriculum, which is aligned with the CEFR and is therefore meaningful in terms of schools and local authorities defining data regarding individuals' standards in Welsh as obtained through the Annual Census of the Education Workforce and the Language Competence Framework for education practitioners

Offer

In terms of content, the 2024-25 offer contains the following types of provision:

- Self-study with tutor support
- A range of courses for Foundation Learning Teaching Assistants
- A whole-school approach to everyday use of Welsh, and the creation of a Welsh-language ethos in schools
- Block learning courses
- Residential courses
- Courses for individual schools or school clusters
- Courses targeted at specific schools, in accordance with the local authority's WESP targets

The offer has also targeted the areas of growth that English-medium schools, in the main, would need for the future e.g. by providing a course on increasing the use of Welsh in Physical Education lessons in the English-medium secondary sector.

The above offer is available from Entry level (A1) up to Refresher level (C1).

The offer is entirely free of charge.

The offer has been presented to a range of stakeholders, and a meeting has been held with each local authority in order to identify needs and organise appropriate provision.

The Centre has also worked with Initial Teacher Training providers this year. In response to Estyn's thematic report on the provision to develop prospective teachers' language skills, the Centre has created a specific Learning Resource for the sector. The Resource meets the criteria to provide 35 hours of personal language skills development during the course and has been drawn up at all levels of the Learning Welsh curriculum (A1-C1). Securing a relationship with Welsh learning courses at the start of a career is an effective way of maintaining contact with prospective teachers to offer them more opportunities throughout their career.

Next steps

Initial response to the programme has been very positive, with over 800 members of the Education Workforce already registered for the courses since September 2024. The aim of the plan is to provide for up to 2,000 members of the Education Workforce by September 2025.

Summer 2025 will be an opportunity to evaluate the scheme's effectiveness in its first year, and for further reform to meet schools' requirements. Firm foundations have already been laid to allow the provision to be further developed into the future.

While the offer is free to the Education Workforce, schools face an increasing challenge in terms of releasing teachers and assistants from their duties for them to benefit from the offer. As the middle tier review progresses and new arrangements are developed, there will need

to be clarity that Local Authorities' Welsh in Education Grant element has sufficient funding to support staff release time.

The Centre is confident that further growth of the scheme is possible and that it thereby meets the needs of higher numbers from the Education Workforce, and in turn would achieve the goals of the WESPs and the Welsh Language and Education Bill (Wales).