
Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i'r [Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg](#) ar gyfer yr [ymchwiliad i recriwtio a chadw athrawon](#)

This response was submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) on the Inquiry into Teacher recruitment and retention

Ymateb gan: Comisiynydd y Gymraeg
Response from: Welsh Language Commissioner

Consultation: Teacher recruitment and retention

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the above consultation. The Welsh Government's *Cymraeg 2050* strategy underlines the importance of teachers who can teach through the medium of Welsh to the success of the strategy. We are responding to the consultation in that context and in the context of the essential role of Welsh-medium teachers to the success of the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill, which was passed in the Senedd on 13 May 2025.

The challenges of the current situation

Cymraeg 2050 and the Bill both present the Welsh Government's ambitious vision for the Welsh language in education. One of the objectives of *Cymraeg 2050* is to ensure that 40% of learners are in Welsh-medium education by 2050 and the Government has committed to consulting on raising that target to 50%. The intention of the Bill is to ensure that every pupil leaves school as an independent Welsh language user, regardless of whether the pupils attend Welsh-medium or English-medium schools. Welsh language acquisition rates in English-medium schools will have to be transformed in order to achieve the goal in that sector. As regards Welsh-medium schools, they are attended by around 23% of learners and this figure has barely changed for a decade. There is concern therefore about the likelihood of reaching the proportion of 30% by 2031 which is aimed for in the *Cymraeg 2050* trajectory. Missing that target would raise concerns about reaching the goal in 2050.

It is clear that one of the main challenges in terms of achieving the targets and objectives of the *Cymraeg 2050* strategy and the Bill will be to ensure an increasingly bilingual

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education workforce. The Government has set targets for increasing the number of



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teachers who can teach Welsh or teach through the medium of Welsh. However, the lack of sufficient progress in this context has been a concern for the Commissioner for years.¹

We understand from the correspondence published between the Committee and the Cabinet Secretary for Education that you share our concerns about recruiting teachers who can teach through the medium of Welsh. In its letter dated 24 June 2024 the Committee refers to the latest Welsh Government statistics, which show that 20% of first year students on Initial Teacher Education (ITE) courses in Wales can teach in Welsh. The Committee notes that it understands that the Government expects ITE partnerships to work towards accepting 30% of students who are preparing to teach through the medium of Welsh.

The *Cymraeg 2050* strategy sets targets to increase the number of teachers who can teach Welsh or teach through the medium of Welsh. By 2031 there is a target to ensure 3,900 primary teachers who can teach through the medium of Welsh and 4,100 secondary teachers who can teach through the medium of Welsh. In her letter to the Committee dated 9 September 2024 the Cabinet Secretary acknowledged that there was a substantial gap to be filled if these targets were to be reached in time. According to the [Cymraeg 2050 annual report](#) for 2023/24 there were 2,792 primary teachers and 2,549 secondary teachers who can teach through the medium of Welsh.

The [fifth report](#) of the Independent Welsh Pay Review Body (IWPRB) which was published in 2024 expresses concern about the difficulties in recruiting teachers, including Welsh-medium teachers, in some areas. The [School Workforce Census results](#) for November 2023 show that the average number of applications for Welsh-medium vacant posts was lower (4.5) compared with the applications for English-medium vacant posts (9.1). The IWPRB report also notes that the number of applications for vacant posts in secondary schools, in the subject area of Welsh as a first language, fell between January 2019 and December 2022. In her response to the Committee the Cabinet Secretary noted that the average number of applications for vacant posts in the subject area of Welsh fell between 2020/21 and 2022/23 and that that number was the lowest of 11 subject areas listed.

It should be noted that the Welsh Government recently published an update of the [data analysis](#) which was drawn up as part of the Welsh in Education Workforce Plan. This analysis contains extremely detailed information about the linguistic skills of the education workforce, including data about teacher training, Welsh language skills by subject, Welsh language skills by local authority and details about the Welsh language skills of support staff and additional learning needs staff. Although it is difficult to summarize this detailed statistical picture, it is fair to say that the statistics on the whole highlight that we face a significant challenge in terms of recruiting Welsh-medium teachers and ensuring that the Welsh language skills of the education workforce as a whole reflect the Government's policy objectives in relation to Welsh language education.

The Welsh language as a subject

¹ See our briefing note, [The Welsh language and the statutory education workforce in Wales](#), published in 2020.



In addition to the difficulties in recruiting teachers to teach the subject, there is considerable concern about the number of learners who choose to study A Level Welsh and A Level Welsh as a second language. In 2008/9 there were 304 learners studying Welsh as a first language and 489 studying Welsh as a second language. In 2022/23 the numbers fell to 176 studying Welsh as a first language and 112 studying Welsh as a second language. This does not bode well in the context of the objectives of *Cymraeg 2050*, the Welsh Language and Education Bill and the need to increase substantially the number of teachers who will be able to teach Welsh as a subject in the future.

Teachers have contacted the Commissioner to express their concern that the position of Welsh as a subject after GCSE has been fragile for some time and that the problem is worsening. It seems that part of the reason for this is that fewer centres offer Welsh as a subject and that there is a growing tendency for local authorities to offer Welsh language learning provision online rather than face-to-face provision. Studying online does not appear to be an attractive choice for the majority of learners, and the result is that the majority who were keen to study Welsh choose other subjects that are offered face to face at school.

In 2024 an [Evaluation of Schemes to Promote Welsh as a Subject](#) was published by IAITH. We believe that the recommendations of this evaluation need to be considered urgently, including specifically recommendation 4: 'Local Authorities should be enforced to ensure that A level Welsh and Welsh Second Language provision is available to all learners within their post-16 centres'. As the evaluation highlights, it is necessary to consider a range of different interventions in order to support the Welsh language as a subject, but attention is needed in the first place to ensure that the Welsh language is an easy and accessible choice for all learners.

The Welsh language skills of the workforce

The Cabinet Secretary says that the Government is making gradual progress with the Welsh in Education Workforce Plan published in 2022 but that a huge challenge remains. She notes the steps that the Government has taken to improve the recruitment rates of secondary teachers to Welsh-medium schools and support teachers to develop their Welsh language skills. She discusses collaboration with key partners, including the local authorities, the regional consortia and the National Centre for Learning Welsh to improve understanding of the Welsh language skills and training needs of the education workforce, in order to meet those needs. She also refers to working with partners such as the Education Workforce Council and the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to develop a career marketing strategy in Welsh-medium education.

We support these steps and encourage the Government, following the passing of the Welsh Language and Education Bill, to review the Welsh in Education Workforce Plan. As noted in [our response to the Committee's consultation on the Bill](#) in September 2024 interventions need to be developed and delivered on a much more substantial scale through a national and comprehensive education workforce strategy that reflects the



ambition of the Bill. At present, the strategy for creating a bilingual education workforce is not close to reflecting that, nor the *Cymraeg 2050* vision.

Trying to recruit and encourage more Welsh speakers into the teaching profession is one part of the answer, but in order to achieve the objectives of the Welsh Language and Education Bill we believe that it will be necessary to focus on formalizing and intensifying the strategies for developing the Welsh language skills of the future education workforce as a whole. In order for schools and pupils to move along a linguistic continuum, the education workforce will have to move along the continuum in the first place. The number of existing Welsh speakers and the number of Welsh speakers emanating from the current education system are not likely to lead to enough teachers to achieve the objectives of the Bill. Without substantial intervention, there is a danger that we will see an endless cycle where a shortage of teachers with Welsh language skills will be a continuous obstacle to ensuring an increase in the number of individuals who leave school able to speak Welsh and use the language.

It is revealing that The School Workforce Census results for November 2023 show that very little positive change has been seen over the last three years in the Welsh language skills levels of all teachers in Wales. The data also showed that there is still a high number of teachers in some local authorities who have no Welsh language skills or who have entry level skills. At an all-Wales level, there was an increase in the number of teachers who had no Welsh language skills or who had entry level skills and there was a decrease in the number of teachers who had skills at an intermediate level and at an advanced/proficient level.² It is clear that this statistical picture must be changed substantially if the Welsh Government's policy objectives are to be realised. The plans to support these teachers, and future teachers, to develop their Welsh language skills and to substantially increase the number who use the Welsh language when teaching, will have to be greatly intensified.

In a report in 2023 on the legislative framework that supports Welsh-medium education provision, the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee warned that a shortage of Welsh-medium teachers could undermine the *Cymraeg 2050* targets. It said that priority must be given to supporting the teaching workforce to upskill and made valuable recommendations on how to achieve that. The Stage 1 report of the Children, Young People and Education Committee on the Welsh Language and Education Bill also made a series of important recommendations regarding the development of an increasingly bilingual education workforce. We encourage the Government to proceed urgently to implement these recommendations.

As part of any strategy for creating a bilingual education workforce, it is critical to consider the importance of the pre-school sector and the post-statutory sector as well. *Cymraeg 2050* emphasizes the key contribution of Welsh-medium childcare to achieving the goal of the strategy and recognizes the need to develop the workforce in that sector. In the same way, the need for a substantial increase in the post-16 education workforce that can teach through the medium of Welsh is recognised. Our research into the experiences of post-16

² [Welsh in Education workforce plan: data analysis - 2024 update](#) – see table 3.1.



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learners in Welsh-medium or bilingual education, which was shared with the Committee, showed that a lack of Welsh-medium provision in some subject areas continues to prevent learners from studying subjects through the medium of Welsh. In order to assist all our learners to reach their potential from a linguistic point of view, all teachers in Wales should be encouraged to develop their Welsh language skills step by step and use Welsh increasingly as a medium of instruction. We have also called, in a policy paper published in 2023, for the development of the Welsh-medium additional learning needs workforce. A lack of specialist staff with the appropriate linguistic skills is a major challenge in that area.

The way forward

Following the passing of the Welsh Language and Education Bill, we believe that the momentum should be built on to promote a career in Welsh-medium education and establish a comprehensive Welsh language learning program which is an integral part of training as a teacher or teaching assistant in Wales. Developing Welsh language skills should be compulsory for all those training to teach in Wales, regardless of their linguistic skills at the start of their training, with assurance of support throughout their career.

We call on the Government to commit to establishing a five-year Welsh language training framework which would be a mandatory part of training and qualifying as a teacher in Wales. The framework would have the long-term aim of ensuring that all teachers are able to teach through the medium of Welsh. The training would start as a core part of every ITE course and continue as a required part of the induction and professional learning period of new teachers for the first four years of their career. The framework would need to plan a series of different Welsh language training routes tailored for trainees with different levels of proficiency in the Welsh language. It would be possible to set a long-term vision about how the expectations and training would be increased over time, in accordance with the expected timetable of the Welsh Language and Education Bill.

A change of mindset is needed. While recognizing the importance of recruiting new teachers with Welsh language skills, the figures show that the focus must be on developing the Welsh skills of the workforce as a whole. This should be done in a positive way, and rather than appearing to be a burden on teachers, it should be presented as a valuable opportunity for professional achievement.

I hope that the above comments will be of assistance to your consultation.

Yours faithfully,



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