

Alun Davies AC/AM  
Gweinidog y Gymraeg a Dysgu Gydol Oes  
Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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Lynne Neagle AM  
Children, Young People and Education Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

9 November 2016

Dear Lynne,

Thank you for your correspondence requesting:-

- an update on progress following the publication of the previous Children, Young People and Education Committee's report on the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESP's).
- an update regarding the evaluation of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy (WMES), and
- a response to the recommendations made to Welsh Government following the Estyn review of Welsh in Education Strategic Plans published in September 2016.

Our response:-

### **Welsh in Education Strategic Plans – update**

You will know that following the National Assembly for Wales' Children, Young People and Education's Committee into the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans, there were 17 recommendations. Six were accepted in full by Welsh Government, seven accepted in principle and four were rejected.

The following provides an overview of actions taken over the last six months to progress those recommendations that were either accepted in full or in principle.

**Recommendation 1.** Welsh Government must ensure that WMES targets are reflected in WESPs and be more robust in its approval of WESPs to ensure they reflect Welsh Government's ambitions.

The WMES targets are the main focus in the revised planning guidance and the template for completion by Local Authorities in the 2017-2020 planning round. Local Authorities must state where they are now in terms of the national targets as well as noting their targets for the forthcoming three years. Any target that is not considered to be sufficiently robust or

stretching will be challenged. It must be noted that not all Local Authorities will be able to attain the national targets as the WMES targets for 2015 and 2020 represent milestones that may be aimed for on an all-Wales basis.

**Recommendation 2.** Welsh Government must clarify how it intends to work in partnership with local authorities to deliver its Welsh-medium Education Strategy.

Welsh Government officials met with all Local Authorities on a consortia basis to seek their views about the revised WESP template and guidance. Positive discussions were had to establish how we would work collaboratively and to work in partnership to explore opportunities for Welsh-medium education. Where possible, those views about how best to plan were fed through into the new planning documents. Since these meetings, Welsh Government officials have now increased the dialogue with Local Authorities through the provision of support and guidance.

Welsh Government officials have been attending some of the Welsh-medium education forums. This allows both parties to discuss how best to take forward the messages regarding the expansion and promotion of Welsh-medium education and to maximise collaboration and the sharing of information.

**Recommendation 3.** The Minister should clarify how the recommendations of the Donaldson review will address the variance in the linguistic outcomes of different types of provision.

Local Authorities seeking to move schools along the linguistic continuum increasing gradually the extent to which Welsh is used as a medium of instruction will need statutory proposals. While it is implicit in the Welsh-medium Education Strategy that such developments are to be welcomed in the context of WESPs, the real impetus for change must start at the local level including governors, parents, teachers and pupils. Discussion as to how Local Authorities can manage any plans within a planning context as well as an education opportunity is ongoing and will also need to involve Estyn.

**Recommendation 4.** The Minister should review and publish new guidance on definitions of provision and school's linguistic categorisation.

Work on this recommendation will commence in the New Year.

**Recommendation 8.** The Welsh Government should be clearer with local authorities about its expectations in relation to the promotion of growth of Welsh-medium education so that all local authorities buy into the Welsh Government's ambitions.

We are clear. Our draft strategy states that we aim to have a million Welsh speakers in Wales by 2050. We can not do this in isolation and we need to work in partnership with Local Authorities and other statutory and non statutory organisations to achieve this. This is why the planning of Welsh-medium education is so critical and that collaboration forms the core of our work.

Within the revised guidance for the 2017-2020 Welsh in Education Strategic Plans, the focus and emphasis within Outcome 1 (increasing the number of seven year olds assessed through the medium of Welsh) places emphasis on school organisation. This includes building new schools as well as ensuring there's a robust approach to measuring the demand for Welsh-medium education to evidence plans for investment. Ensuring sufficient child care provision must also link into any plans for expansion as well as ensuring a clear, high quality continuum of Welsh-medium provision at all levels.

**Recommendation 9.** Before the next iteration of WESPs, Welsh Government should review the processes for assessing demand to ensure they are more robust. Processes should include provision to consult with children and young people, in accordance with the UNCRC.

This work is ongoing and will be explored before the next iteration of the WESP's.

**Recommendation 10.** Welsh Government should develop and publish a strategy relating to the promotion and awareness of Welsh-medium education at a national and local level. The strategy should include tools that can be used and adapted by local authorities and schools.

This will be done through the WESP's as well as through providing guidance on measuring the demand for Welsh-medium education and guidance on the Welsh Education Forums. This guidance will form a suite of information and will also include examples of good practise currently used by Local Authorities so lessons may be shared and learnt.

**Recommendation 11.** Welsh Government should work with Local Government and stakeholders to strengthen the role of fora so that they are more effective. Fora should be open, representative and should report annually. This was accepted in principle.

Regional Welsh Government officials now attends virtually all fora meetings so that national, regional and local policy developments and new thinking may be explored more fully and shared at an early stage. Guidance/information about fora will be issued to all Local Authorities with an example of a draft constitution and a suggested membership (taking into account local variances such as economic developments) so that a consistency of approach may be adopted and implemented yet allowing for local/regional differences.

**Recommendation 12.** Welsh Government should clarify the role of regional consortia in relation to WESPs.

We have referred to the role of consortia in the revised guidance and according to the Local Authorities we have spoken to; there is no one size fits all here. In the north, Outcomes 4 and 5 will be explored at a regional level specifically within the context of Siarter Iaith, though a wholesale regional plan may not be available within this planning cycle.

**Recommendation 13.** The Minister should use the powers available to him under existing legislation to intervene where local authorities are failing to deliver their WESPs.

The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 states that Welsh Ministers must exercise the following in relation to Welsh in Education Strategic Plans, they have powers to:

- approve the Plan as submitted;
- approve with modifications; or
- to reject the Plan and prepare another one.

The Minister for the Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning has made it quite clear both in the launch of the draft strategy in the Eisteddfod and in his letter to Local Authorities with the new guidance that he 'would reject any plan that is not sufficiently ambitious and does not demonstrate the level of aspiration needed to ensure growth in Welsh-medium education.

**Recommendation 15.** Welsh Government to outline how it intends to ensure that transport arrangements for Welsh-medium and bilingual education support the delivery of its WMES targets. This was accepted in principle.

Work is ongoing with colleagues across Welsh Government to take this complex work forward. We will report when the information becomes available.

**Recommendation 16.** Welsh Government to outline how it will address Welsh-medium provision for pupils with additional learning needs and whether the forthcoming Additional Learning Needs Bill would be an appropriate vehicle to do so.

This work is being taken forward with colleagues working on the Additional Learning Needs Bill.

### **Welsh-medium Education Strategy April 2010 - update**

The Welsh-medium Education Strategy was published in April 2010. Welsh Government acknowledged that the vision for continued growth of Welsh-medium education and training in all sectors and age ranges in long term agenda, and published a five-year action plan for the elements that could be acted upon quickly.

The aim of the evaluation of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy was to measure the effectiveness and impact of the strategy during the initial five-year period of implementation. This took into account the extent to which it realised the aims, objectives and expected outcomes. The report, published on 10 March 2016 includes 21 recommendations.

To coincide with the evaluation report, we published a policy document (<http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/160309-next-steps-en-v2.pdf>) that will strengthen Welsh Government commitment and vision for continued growth of Welsh-medium education. The document also outlines the priorities and actions for years 2016-17 in response to the recommendations of the evaluation, the report of the previous Children, Young People's and Education Committee and other reports.

The Government is currently consulting on a draft Welsh language strategy with the aim of having a million speakers by 2050. The education system has an important role to play in achieving this goal and our objectives in relation to the future development of Welsh-medium education will be included in the final strategy to be published next spring.

### **Estyn – Local authority Welsh in Education Strategic Plans September 2016 - update**

There were six recommendations for Local Authorities and three recommendations for Welsh Government.

Those for Welsh Government include:

- R1 ensure that the targets agreed in the WESPs reflect the aspirations in their Welsh-medium education strategy;
- R2 ensure that all local authorities place enough strategic importance on delivering the targets within the WESPs; and
- R3 monitor the implementation of the WESPs rigorously.

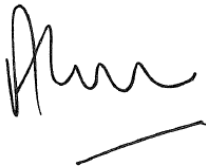
This is a reflective look at Welsh language planning as Welsh Government's targets for Welsh language education need revising in light of the target of a million Welsh speakers by 2050. There is a dedicated within Welsh Government that supports Local Authorities to develop their Welsh-medium provision, and, where necessary, will provide challenge should Local Authorities not demonstrate the level of ambition that I now expect.

Attendance by Welsh Government officials at Welsh Language Forums will ensure a detailed knowledge of plans for capital investment, changes to linguistic categories as well as identifying areas that need the greatest support with their plans for Welsh-medium education.

Work has commenced to look at the regulations that underpin the WESP's and to further strengthen where required and to make changes were appropriate.

According to Estyn, it seems that the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs) are providing a useful framework for local authorities to plan their Welsh-medium education provision. We know that the WESPs have the potential to support the delivery of Welsh Government's Welsh-medium education strategy; however, there is work to be done to challenge weak plans and unambitious targets. Our work will continue on strengthening our partnership working with Local Authorities both locally and regionally so we may maximise opportunities that collaboration and sharing ideas may bring.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alun', with a horizontal line underneath.

**Alun Davies AC/AM**

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