

Title: All schools should be Welsh medium

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 9 Hydref 2018
Petitions Committee | 9 October 2018

Research Briefing:

Petition number: P05-834

Petition title: All Schools Should be Welsh Medium and Teach Welsh History

Text of petition: We the undersigned petition the Welsh Assembly and the Minister of Education for all schools in Wales to be Welsh medium schools so as to preserve the language of our forefathers. We also ask that all schools in Wales teach Welsh history and of those that helped forge this land.

It is a travesty that the majority of people in Wales cannot speak Welsh. What is worse than this, our history is being lost. Only the schools in the North and West where Welsh is predominantly spoken is our history preserved, a history that is written in the language. To preserve these we must make sure that our children are taught them and that the language is used everyday.

Welsh Government action

In April 2012, the then Minister for Education and Skills, Leighton Andrews, agreed an action plan to address the fact that 'standards and attainment in Welsh second language education are lower than in other subjects'.

In July 2012, the Minister established the Welsh Second Language Review Group to review Welsh second language provision at Key Stages 3 and 4. The Group's report, [One Language For All - Review of Welsh Second Language at Key Stages 3 and 4](#) (2013) recommended that the Welsh Government should revise the Welsh programme of study to include one continuum of learning for Welsh with clear expectations for pupils learning Welsh in English-medium, bilingual and Welsh-medium settings. As a consequence, the Welsh second language element of the Welsh programme of study would be removed along with the term Welsh second language.

The Review Group's recommendations were then considered as part of Professor Graham Donaldson's Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales.

Professor Donaldson's report, [Successful Futures](#) (February 2015), made 10 recommendations relating to the Welsh language in the curriculum. All were accepted by the Minister, including that Welsh will remain compulsory in all schools up to the age of 16.

On [27 June 2018](#), the Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning, Eluned Morgan gave an update on progress with the Welsh language continuum. She said:

I am most eager to ensure that we don't wait until the new curriculum is introduced, because I don't wish to lose another generation of children who won't have the opportunity to receive a good education in Welsh as a second language. And so we must improve on the status quo, because you can have 13 years of Welsh lessons and come out at the other end speaking very little Welsh.

The Minister also said that she had recently held a symposium involving experts the previous week to discuss the issues. She also acknowledged that:

One of our greatest problems, of course, is to ensure that we have sufficient good Welsh teachers and tutors.

The Welsh Government has published two research reports, [An overview of approaches to second language acquisition and instructional practices](#) (February 2018) and [Rapid evidence assessment: Effective second language teaching approaches and methods](#) (June 2018).

Welsh Government strategy – Cymraeg 2050 – A million Welsh speakers

The Welsh Government's vision is to see one million Welsh speakers by 2050. In [Cymraeg 2050 – A million Welsh speakers](#), it sets out the two main methods of achieving this aim: transmitting the Welsh language from one generation to the next; and developing and sustaining skills through education and training. To achieve their targets, the Welsh Government has set out the following 'transformational changes'. In relation to education:

- Make rapid progress to expand Welsh-medium early years provision by 150 nursery groups over the next decade to facilitate a seamless transition into Welsh-medium education.
- Increase the proportion of each school year group receiving Welsh-medium education from 22 per cent (based on 7,700 seven-year-old learners in 2015/16) to 30 per cent (about 10,500 in each year group) by 2031, and then 40 per cent (about 14,000 in each year group) by 2050.
- Transform how Welsh is taught to all learners in order that by 2050 at least 70 per cent of those learners report that they can speak Welsh by the time they leave school.
- Increase the number of primary teachers who can teach in Welsh from 2,900 to 3,900 by 2031 and 5,200 by 2050; increase the number of secondary teachers who can teach Welsh from 500 to 900 by 2031 and 1,200 by 2050; and increase the number of secondary teachers who can teach through the medium of Welsh from 1,800 to 3,200 by 2031 and 4,200 by 2050.

- Reform the post-16 Welsh-medium and bilingual education and skills offer to ensure that young people have the opportunity to continue developing bilingual skills to support a prosperous economy.

Statistics

In 2007, the Welsh Government published guidance, [Defining schools according to Welsh medium provision](#). This set out non-statutory definitions and categories of schools according to the language which is used as the medium of instruction and the normal business of the school.

There are different categories for primary and secondary schools. For primary schools there are five categories and seven for secondary schools. For statistical purposes, schools are categorised according to the amount of Welsh or English used in teaching. Broadly speaking, where there is more teaching through Welsh, the school is considered to be Welsh medium. Where English is the predominant language, this is considered to be English medium.

As at [January 2018](#), there were 404 Welsh-medium primary schools; 8 Welsh medium middle schools; and 47 Welsh medium secondary schools. This is 459 of a total of 1,521 maintained schools.

Welsh in Education Strategic Plans

Local authorities have a statutory duty to prepare and submit Welsh Education Strategic Plans (WESPs) to the Welsh Government for their consideration. The most recent WESPs covering the period 2017 to 2020.

WESPs are three-year plans which are reviewed annually, and must set out:

- The local authority's proposals on how it will improve the planning of the provision of Welsh-medium education in its area, along with the standards of Welsh-medium education and the teaching of Welsh in its area;
- The local authority's targets for improving the planning of the provision of Welsh-medium education in its area, and for improving the standards of that education, and of the teaching of Welsh in its area; and
- The progress made to meet the targets contained in the previous plan or previous revised plan.

Integral to these plans is the local authority's assessment of the demand for Welsh-medium education in its area and what steps it will take to meet it.

National Assembly for Wales action

Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee

In May 2017, the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee published their report on their [Inquiry into the Welsh Government's new Welsh Language Strategy](#). This was

included recommendations relating to workforce issues (the necessity for additional teachers and their recruitment and training); prioritisation of funding for early years; and free Welsh language tuition for parents.

Petitions Committee

The Petitions Committee has considered a petition, [P-05-799, Change the National Curriculum and teach Welsh history, from a Welsh perspective, in our Primary, Secondary and Sixth form Schools.](#)

The Committee has heard oral evidence from the Petitioner, Elfed Wyn Jones and Dr Elin Jones, chair of the Cwricwlwm Cymraeg, history and the story of Wales task and finish group and Kirsty Williams, Cabinet Secretary for Education.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.