

Make GCSE Welsh Language compulsory in all schools

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 26 Mehefin 2019

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Research Briefing:

Petition number: P-05-888

Petition title: Make GCSE Welsh Language compulsory in all schools in Wales

Text of petition: Currently, Welsh Language is compulsory as either first or second language in all state schools in Wales. However, this does not apply to private schools, who do not have to follow the national curriculum. In many cases, pupils leave private schools not being able to speak a word of Welsh. If we are to progress with our language, and want to reach the government's target of 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050, we must give every child in Wales the chance to learn. We call on the Welsh Government to: –Make Welsh Second Language GCSE compulsory in all schools in Wales by law for the new curriculum in 2022.

Background

National curriculum

The National Curriculum in Wales is founded in the [Education Act 2002](#). This states that the National Curriculum only applies to **maintained** schools. Section 97 defines a 'maintained school' as:

- (a) any community, foundation or voluntary school maintained by a local education authority in Wales, or
- (b) except where otherwise stated, any community or foundation special school which is maintained by a local education authority in Wales and is not established in a hospital;

Welsh in the National Curriculum

Sections 105 and 106 of the 2002 Act make Welsh compulsory in the National Curriculum in both Welsh and English-medium schools until the end of Key Stage 4. As stated above, the National Curriculum is only applicable to maintained schools.

At Key Stage 4, schools register pupils for either first language or second language Welsh GCSE, or for **no qualification at all**. Although Welsh is a compulsory subject in the national curriculum, it is **not compulsory to enter learners to sit a GCSE or other qualification**. Although

the study of Welsh or Welsh second language is compulsory, **making a decision on a particular qualification is a matter for schools and is done at a local level.** However, the [Welsh Second Language subject Order](#) (PDF 2.21MB) (July 2015) states that there should be appropriate assessment and accreditation available to all learners.

Independent schools

All independent schools in Wales must be registered with the Welsh Government. [The Independent School Standards \(Wales\) Regulations 2003](#) made under the Education Act 2002 set out standards that all independent schools must satisfy as a condition of registration and also of remaining registered. These regulations include the quality of education provided by the school.

Paragraph 1(2) of the Schedule provides a number of **areas** (rather than subjects) that independent schools must include within their curriculum. [Welsh Government guidance](#) [PDF 469KB] states that the regulations are not intended to be prescriptive about the way a school organises its curriculum but schools should give pupils experience in the areas that are set out in the Minister for Education's letter to the Committee. One of these is 'linguistics'. Plans and schemes of work must illustrate how each area is to be woven into the school curriculum. In relation to 'linguistics' the guidance states:

this area is concerned with developing pupils' communication skills and increasing their command of language through listening, speaking, reading and writing. In all schools there must be lessons in written and spoken English or Welsh. Many schools will also teach other languages.

Welsh Government action

Welsh second language Review Group

[On 17 July 2012, the then Minister for Education and Skills, Leighton Andrews](#), announced that he would establish a Group to review Welsh second language, stating that standards and attainment in Welsh second language education were lower than in other subjects. The Group, chaired by Professor Sioned Davies, was asked to consider what changes should be made to the teaching and assessment of Welsh second language at Key Stages 3 and 4 to enable more learners to use the language in future employment and in the community.

The Review Group's report [One language for all: Review of Welsh second language at Key Stages 3 and 4](#) [PDF 191KB] (September 2013) made a number of recommendations, including that Welsh second language should continue to be a statutory subject within the National Curriculum and continue to be a compulsory subject for all pupils in Wales until the end of Key Stage 4. They also recommended that the Welsh Government should:

revise the Welsh programme of study, over a three to five year period, and use the National Literacy Framework for Welsh as a basis for a revised curriculum to include:

- one continuum of learning for Welsh with clear expectations for pupils learning Welsh in English–medium, bilingual and Welsh–medium settings; and
- guidance, support materials and training.

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 new curriculum for Wales

The report’s recommendations in relation to the curriculum were taken into consideration by Professor Graham Donaldson in his review of the national curriculum, [Successful Futures](#) [PDF 2MB] (February 2015). Professor Donaldson also recommended that the Welsh language should remain compulsory up to the age of 16 and also that there should be a renewed focus in schools on learning Welsh primarily as a means of communication, particularly oral communication and understanding.

On 28 January 2019, the Welsh Government published [Our National Mission: A Transformational Curriculum Proposals for a new legislative framework](#) [PDF 2MB]. The consultation sought views on proposals to legislate for the implementation of the new curriculum arrangements and not the detailed content of the new curriculum. The consultation closed on 25 March 2019. The consultation states that the intention is to include a provision for Welsh to be a compulsory element of the new curriculum for Wales for all learners of compulsory school age (3–16 years old). It states:

3.98 The requirements for Welsh, English and International Languages will be set out in the Languages, Literacy and Communications (LLC) AoLE for all learners. The proposed content of the LLC AoLE (including components currently referred to as What Matters Statements; Knowledge, Skills and Experiences; and Achievement Outcomes) will be set out in statutory guidance and will be based on one continuum for learning languages.

3.99 Within the new LLC AoLE, all learners will follow the same curriculum for learning Welsh along a continuum, thus removing the term Welsh first and second language and repealing the associated programmes of study. The LLC AoLE has been designed to recognise the varying pace of learning in English and Welsh medium schools.

The new Curriculum for Wales will only be a statutory requirement in maintained schools.

Cymraeg 2050

[Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers](#) [PDF 3MB] (2017) is the Welsh Government’s strategy for the promotion and facilitation of the use of the Welsh language. The strategy includes a number of targets in relation to education including:

- Increasing the proportion of learners who leave school able to speak Welsh;
- Increasing the proportion of learners in Welsh–medium education.

Increasing the number of teachers teaching Welsh or teaching through the medium of Welsh. 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.