



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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**Response to Estyn thematic review of
linguistic progression and standards of Welsh
in ten bilingual schools**

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Report title:

Linguistic progression and standards of Welsh in ten bilingual schools

Report details

The report was commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills to identify how the different organisational models in bilingual schools and teaching approaches affect standards in Welsh.

Summary of main findings.

Estyn found that:

Terms used for the different linguistic categories do not give a clear picture of the extent to which pupils are taught through the medium of Welsh or English or bilingually. Gwynedd, Anglesey, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire authorities have the highest proportions of pupils in key stage 4 studying Welsh and also have the biggest decrease in the number studying Welsh first language between key stages 2 and 4 over the last six years. In general, pupils who follow the most additional GCSE courses through the medium of Welsh have the best ability to discuss and write in Welsh.

Leaders in the few bilingual schools that ensure that a high proportion of pupils study additional subjects through the medium of Welsh have high expectations of pupils' ability to achieve well in those subjects. The bilingual schools visited are facing a challenge in recruiting staff who are confident and capable of teaching their subjects through the medium of Welsh. However, the training and support that are available at school or on sabbatical courses develop staff's Welsh linguistic skills effectively, on the whole.

There are shortcomings in Welsh-medium resources. The phraseology of Welsh-medium examination papers tends to be more complicated than in the corresponding English-medium papers. Not all teaching resources that exist on 'Hwb' are available in Welsh.

All local authorities in Wales are expected to plan to achieve the outcomes and targets of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy by delivering strategic plans for Welsh in education. However, there is considerable variation in the vision and expectations of local authorities in areas that have a high proportion of bilingual schools in terms of fostering effective linguistic progression and the need to expand Welsh-medium provision in order to raise standards in Welsh.

Recommendations

Bilingual schools should:

R1 set targets to increase the proportion of pupils in key stage 4 who continue to study Welsh as a first language and follow their courses through the medium of Welsh;

R2 expand the offer of qualifications available through the medium of Welsh;

R3 explain the advantages of following courses through the medium of Welsh to pupils and parents, and ensure that parents are included more in their children's education;

R4 co-operate with other schools to produce Welsh learning resources, and to discuss and share bilingual teaching strategies;

R5 ensure that developing pupils' Welsh skills is a whole-school priority and plan purposefully to promote the social use of Welsh;

R6 encourage teachers across subjects to promote pupils' use of Welsh in lessons and beyond; and

R7 ensure that teachers across subjects pay attention to the accuracy and quality of pupils' expression in Welsh.

Local authorities should:

R8 track, on a school by school basis, the proportion of pupils in key stage 4 who follow courses through the medium of Welsh and set targets to increase this in line with the objectives of the Welsh-medium education strategy; and

R9 assist schools in discussing, developing and sharing the most effective bilingual teaching strategies.

The Welsh Government should:

R10 ensure that high quality Welsh educational resources are available in all subjects on 'Hwb';

R11 raise awareness of the advantages of bilingualism and of continuing to study subjects through the medium of Welsh; and

R12 ensure that examination boards publish guidance documents and marking schemes for teachers in Welsh, and prepare questions in a clear phraseology in their Welsh-medium examination papers.

Response to the report

The Welsh Government welcomes this report and thanks Estyn for its work in appraising the situation regarding standards of Welsh in bilingual schools and the nature of linguistic progression. The report's conclusions support the thrust of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy in that learners will acquire improved Welsh-language skills depending on the level of exposure to the language. It follows, therefore, that the higher degree of Welsh-medium teaching, the greater the proficiency in the language. Progression from one key stage to another in terms of continuing to study Welsh First Language and subjects through the medium of Welsh is paramount to acquiring improved Welsh-language skills.

The benefits of Welsh-medium education for developing Welsh-language skills are encapsulated in the guidance for the preparation and submission of Welsh in Education Strategic Plans for approval by Welsh Ministers. These Plans provide the vehicle, therefore, for supporting schools and local authorities to consider the specific recommendations made by Estyn. The relevant local authorities, regional consortia and schools will need to appraise how best they can respond to these recommendations when they revise and update their Welsh in Education Strategic

Plans.

The Welsh Government, for its part, accepts the recommendations made with relation to the availability of Welsh-medium resources, marketing Welsh-medium education and ensuring consistency of examination terminology. These aspects are already being addressed and the recommendations will serve as an aid to measuring how suitable and effective these actions are.

Publication details:

The report is being published on or after 19 November 2014 and may be accessed on Estyn's website www.estyn.gov.uk