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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Welsh Government
Consultation Document

School categories according to Welsh-medium provision

Non-statutory guidance document December 2020

Date of issue: 14 December 2020
Action required: Responses by 26 March 2021

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
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School categories according to Welsh medium provision revised guidance

Overview

We are consulting on a non-statutory guidance document, the purpose of which is to set out new arrangements for categorising schools according to the amount of Welsh medium provision in the school. The categories will be used to collect information on provision nationally and should be used locally by local authorities and schools to inform parents/carers about the types of school and provision available locally.

The new arrangements for categorising schools according to Welsh medium provision should assist local authorities and schools plan their Welsh-medium education provision in such a way that supports and prepares the way for our new Curriculum for Wales as well as our national goal of one million Welsh speakers, as set out in Cymraeg 2050. Local authorities' role in supporting the education targets in Cymraeg 2050 will be set out in their individual statutory Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs).

How to respond

Responses to this consultation should be e-mailed/posted to the address below to arrive by 26 March 2021 at the latest.

Further information and related documents

Large print, Braille and alternative language versions of this document are available on request.

Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh Speakers Strategy (2017)
Rapid Review of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans 2017-20, (2017)
Improving the Planning of Welsh-Medium Education – Recommendations of the Welsh in Education Strategic Advisory Board (2019)
Defining school according to Welsh medium provision (2007)
The Independent Review Report to re-define schools according to their Welsh-medium education provision (2020)

The consultation documents can be accessed from the Welsh Government's website at gov.wales/consultations

Contact details For further information:

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In order to show that the consultation was carried out properly, the Welsh Government intends to publish a summary of the responses to this document. We may also publish responses in full. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the person or organisation who sent the response are published with the response. If you do not want your name or address published, please tell us this in writing when you send your response. We will then redact them before publishing.

You should also be aware of our responsibilities under Freedom of Information legislation

If your details are published as part of the consultation response then these published reports will be retained indefinitely. Any of your data held otherwise by Welsh Government will be kept for no more than three years.

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For further details about the information the Welsh Government holds and its use, or if you want to exercise your rights under the GDPR, please see contact details below:

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Cathays Park
CARDIFF
CF10 3NQ

e-mail: Data.ProtectionOfficer@gov.wales

The contact details for the Information Commissioner's Office are:

Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Tel: 01625 545 745 or
0303 123 1113

Website: <https://ico.org.uk/>

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1. The context to this consultation

With the introduction of the new Curriculum for Wales and introduction of 10-year Welsh in Education Strategic Plans, it felt timely to revisit the guidance around categorisation of schools according to Welsh language provision to ensure alignment. The new proposals are set out in the attached draft guidance.

An important principle in reviewing the arrangements for categorising schools was to ensure that information around the type of school models found in Wales could be made clearer to parents/carers. In doing so, parents/carers would be better placed to make more confident and informed decisions (if there is a choice) when choosing their child's education pathway.

For schools and local authorities, these proposed new arrangements put in place a system that is aimed at simplifying the current school linguistic categories as well as motivating and encouraging schools to increase the amount of Welsh taught. To this end, we have constructed categories that offer a developmental pathway for primary and secondary schools wishing to increase the amount of Welsh taught at their school, enabling an easier transition from one category to the next.

Categorising schools in this way is not a new concept. The Welsh Government non-statutory guidance, *Defining schools according to Welsh medium provision*¹ published in 2007 laid down those early foundations that enabled Welsh Government, local authorities, schools, education bodies, parents and carers to adopt a common framework for defining, documenting and discussing Welsh-medium schools, English-medium schools and schools providing education through the medium of both languages to varying degrees. Currently, there are 5 categories of primary schools and 4 categories (with an additional 4 sub-categories) of secondary schools each delivering varying degrees of the curriculum through the medium of Welsh. The current categories, however, are often been misinterpreted causing unnecessary confusion for parents/ carers.

This ambiguity around school categories does not always encourage schools to move along a language continuum or support the commitments made in local authorities' Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs) to increase Welsh-medium provision within schools. More importantly, it does not always provide parents and carers with clear information around the amount of Welsh medium provision at schools in their area for them to make an informed choice for their child. With the introduction of a new Curriculum for Wales and a new WESP cycle on the horizon, reviewing the arrangements around school categorisation is timely.

In this guidance we want to achieve the following:

- Establish a national pattern of provision that is clear to parents/carers and consistent across Wales
- Better define the structures that provide different models of Welsh-medium and education delivered using both languages and set out categories that;
 - Encourage schools to think again about their relationship with the Welsh language and how that relationship can be developed for the benefit of learners

¹ <https://gov.wales/defining-schools-according-welsh-medium-provision>

- Ensure the best support for schools and local authorities in developing Welsh-medium provision
- Use best practice models from around Wales and further afield such as E-sgol, immersion centres and the sabbatical scheme, to encourage and inspire others to increase their provision of Welsh
- Support the work of local authorities in proposing pilot and innovative schemes as part of their new WESPs

The draft guidance consulted on here will replace the 2007 '*Defining schools according to Welsh medium provision*' guidance. It will remain non-statutory for the time being while we continue to scope options to place school language categories on a firmer statutory footing.

2. Our reasoning around introducing this guidance

At the beginning of the last century, Wales had a population of two million and around one million people in Wales spoke Welsh. Over the last century, the Welsh language lost ground during the two world wars, and by the beginning of this millennium, only around 20% of the population noted that they could speak Welsh, i.e. around 600,000 people out of a population of 3 million. Despite this, a significant percentage of the population continue to speak Welsh today all across Wales, including a significant percentage of young people that speak Welsh daily.

Some areas with a lower percentage of Welsh speakers have seen an increase in the number of Welsh speakers over recent years, following the growth of Welsh-medium education and mobility trends which see people moving from rural areas to urban areas – and from the north and west to the south-east. The patterns of Welsh-medium education and provision delivered through both Welsh and English throughout Wales vary from area to area, and from primary school to secondary school. A number of these differences reflect patterns of language usage in the wider community and others reflect differences in the way in which policies are implemented. Although the education system needs to be sufficiently flexible to reflect the linguistic characteristics of different areas of Wales, it is important that we ensure that education is planned and provided on the basis of a clear understanding of learners' linguistic outcomes.

We are also have a new curriculum that places greater emphasis on building Welsh language skills across the whole education system. In addition, we are working within a revised statutory system that now places an expectation on local authorities to plan for an increase in Welsh-medium education through the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans. New regulations came into force in January 2020 which sets a higher expectation on local authorities to plan for this growth with greater ambition and pace. To support this work, other policy areas impacting a local authority's response to this new level of expectation requires alignment. Categorising schools according to their Welsh medium provision is one such policy area. For many local authorities the new categories introduced by this guidance will be the driver for reaching their individual WESP targets.

This was identified in the rapid review of WESPs undertaken in 2017 and also in the summery report (*'Improving the Planning of Welsh-Medium Education – Recommendations of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans Advisory Board²,2019*) by the independent Advisory Board set up to take forward the recommendations made in the rapid review. These reports emphasised the need to substantially revise the current arrangements for

² <https://gov.wales/improving-planning-welsh-medium-education>

categorising schools based on their provision of Welsh. This is consistent also with targets set out in both the Cymraeg 2050 work plan and Welsh in Education action plan 2017-21.

In response to this, the Minister for Education called for a review of the current definitions and categories of schools in Wales according to the medium of instruction at the school.

An expert panel of Welsh language and education specialists were commissioned, led by former Chief Executive of the Welsh language Board, Meirion Prys Jones, to review the current categories of schools according to Welsh medium provision and to present Welsh Government with recommendations for improving efficiency and consistency of school language categories. Their report was received in December 2019 and we would like to take this opportunity to thank all those involved in the review for their work. The final report can be found [here](#).

It had been intended to consult on the proposed draft guidance earlier in the year however the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic led to this consultation being put on hold until now.

3. Review into school language categories

The review into current school categories according to Welsh medium provision considered the challenges around the current arrangements, and presented new options for improving efficiency and consistent use of school language categories.

In addition to their desk based research and analysis of PLASC data, the review panel met and considered the views of local education authority directors and staff; headteachers, and other education bodies. Discussions also took place between education officials from the Basque country which gave a valuable insight into school category arrangements in a country that shares similar linguistic characteristics to ours in Wales.

As a result of these discussions, the review panel set to work based on the following key principles:

- To provide definitions that can be used to describe the linguistic situation of each maintained school in Wales
- To set definitions that are simple and clear
- To introduce definitions that would ensure parents, governors, teachers, headteachers and local authorities could easily understand the nature of the provision provided by or for the
- To set definitions that would help to develop Welsh-medium provision using both languages in the education system and facilitate schools' progress along their linguistic journey
- When creating local policies, to ensure local authorities consider the new structure as an asset to their planning processes and easy to adopt
- In terms of population mobility, to provide a set of consistent definitions across Wales in order to make it much easier to ensure appropriate continuity for people who move within Wales or from outside Wales
- To provide new definitions that are easier to understand when explaining the unique characteristics of Wales to new parents and the general public
- To set simple definitions that explain provision clearly using a limited number of categories and therefore gain commitment for the new structure

- To create a new arrangement that would facilitate the process of moving a school from one category to another and allow the success of the different categories to be measured

This process included:

- Evaluating the existing definitions and identifying their strengths and weaknesses
- Analysing PLASC data to see whether different types of primary and secondary schools tend to cluster together when using the same language criteria
- Seeking the views of academics specialising in language planning, WLGA, Estyn and local authorities on possible category grouping options
- Discussions with Welsh Government staff involved in wider education reforms, including the development of the new curriculum and how this work could be aligned
- Consideration of how language communities outside Wales have dealt with school categorisation where bilingualism and multilingualism is an important factor

Specific consideration was given to the following:

- The number of categories, using PLASC analysis for all schools in Wales
- The terminology used to describe the new categories – letters or numbers
- Introducing transitional sub categories to bridge between categories
- The differences between the primary and secondary sector categories
- Characteristics of categories for two or more schools/streams
- The need to have input and output models for the primary and secondary sector
- The use of percentages to determine the hours of learning necessary to distinguish between categories
- The possibility of schools, and streams within schools to be included in more than one category

Some of the review's key findings included:

3.1 Organising schools in Wales into three categories distinguished by their provision and by their ambition regarding their learners' bilingual skills. Numbers should be used as headings for these categories, namely 1, 2 and 3, and accompanied by an explanatory paragraph providing an opportunity to explain the parameters of the provision to parents and what they could expect their child to accomplish linguistically.

3.2 Even though the same number of categories are recommended for both sectors, they do not correspond entirely as the structure of the educational provision and the pattern of progression are slightly different in each sector. Having only three categories would mean that the provision would be easier to explain and easier for parents and school governors to understand. This also takes into consideration the analysis of PLASC data which shows that schools in Wales broadly fall into three groups.

3.3 In primary schools, the provision itself would be categorised rather than the whole school. There could, therefore, be more than one category in a school. A school that provides English medium education in one stream and Welsh medium provision in another stream, could be category 1 and category 3. An understanding of the categories would ensure that the provision offered is clear to parents. A situation could also develop where dual stream schools offer an English/Welsh stream and a Welsh medium stream.

3.4 In the secondary sector, schools should be categorised as whole institutions.

- 3.5 Schools should be given the opportunity to enter into a transition period as they move from new category to another. This would allow schools to grow their Welsh language provision over an extended period.
- 3.6 That systemic changes resulting from the school categorisation process should reflect the content of each local authority's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP).
- 3.7 One of the core principles should be that schools may not offer less Welsh language provision than was offered in the past.
- 3.8 Linked to these definitions, and aligned with them, are the new developments regarding the New Curriculum for Wales and the concept of being able to assess pupils' language development using a single language continuum.

To test the findings of the review, two informal engagement sessions took place during February 2020 at Llandudno Junction and Carmarthen. 19 of the 22 local authorities were represented, as well as head teacher/SLT representation from all school categories.

4. The Guidance

This consultation seeks to gather views on whether the draft guidance provides clarity and direction around school categories according to Welsh medium provision. The draft guidance has been based on the findings presented in the recent review of school categories.

The guidance has been divided into three parts.

- **Part 1** sets out the context for categorising schools according to Welsh medium provision. This includes a brief history into the growth of Welsh-medium education, the similarities and differences not only across Wales but internationally, and how this has a bearing on how we propose to revise and repurpose the original categories so that they sit comfortably with our aspirations for education in Wales.
- **Part 2** outlines the main changes which include reducing the overall number of categories to 6; introducing closer alignment between the primary and secondary categories, but provide clarity around the differences between the two sectors; flexibility within categories; facilitating a more seamless journey from one category to another through the transitional sub-categories.
- **Part 3** details the process and timetable for transitioning from the old to the new arrangements. This part also addresses matters that are likely to be raised during implementation of the policy. These include matters such as what happens if a school or a local authority are not in agreement on which category the school should be placed in.

5. The next steps

The final publication of this draft guidance is the first step in moving towards the new arrangements, and providing an overarching national framework for local authorities and schools. There are a number of steps we will need to take in between publishing the final

guidance and the start of its implementation. We will want to work closely with stakeholders during this period to offer further support and clarity so that local authorities and schools are in the best possible position to move forward with the new arrangements. We will do this by engaging with local authorities and schools on an individual local authority basis, as well as a regional and national basis. This will ensure that stakeholders can share good practice and support through this process.

We are also considering whether developing a series of additional guidance is needed, tailored more specifically to the needs of schools and parents /carers. This could include guidance for schools on how an increase in Welsh language provision might look on a more practical level, as well as resources tailored for parents/carers to better communicate the changes and what it all means for their child. We would welcome your views on this.

6. Consultation questions

Question 1 – Do you agree with the need to revise the policy around school categories according to Welsh-medium provision?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Any additional comments:

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Question 2 – Do the changes proposed encourage and support schools to increase the amount of Welsh-medium provision?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Any additional comments

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Question 3 – Are we achieving our policy aim of introducing school categories that are clearer for:

(a) parents/carers?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>
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(b) local authorities?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>
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(c) schools?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Any additional comments

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Question 4 – Do you agree with:

(a) the use of numbering for categories?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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(b) having fewer categories but broader descriptions?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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(c) more focus on the linguistic outcomes descriptions for each category?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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(d) the introduction of sub-categories to facilitate transition?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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(e) the different approaches to categorising primary and secondary school provision?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Any additional comments

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Question 5 – In referring to percentages in the secondary categories, should we include a:

(a) a minimum percentage only?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>
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or

(b) a minimum **and** maximum percentage range?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Any additional comments

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Question 6 – Do we need to publish additional guidance tailored towards specific groups such as schools and parents/carers following the final publication of this guidance?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Any additional comments

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Question 7 – We would like to know your views on the effects that the school categories according to Welsh-medium provision guidance would have on the Welsh language, specifically on:

- i) opportunities for people to use Welsh
- ii) treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

Supporting comments

Question 8 – Please also explain how you believe the proposed policy could be formulated or changed so as to have:

- i) positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language
- ii) no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

Supporting comments

Question 9 – We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.

Responses to consultations are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please tick here: