



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION, DOCUMENT

# Developing pupils' Welsh reading skills from 10 to 14 years of age: government response

What we plan to do in response to Estyn's thematic report on Welsh reading skills across the curriculum.

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## Report details

The advice was commissioned by the Curriculum and Assessment Division to report on how well Welsh-medium and bilingual schools are developing pupils' Welsh reading skills across the curriculum in Year 6 through to Year 9. It considers how well pupils' reading skills are developing, provision within schools to develop reading and reading culture promoted by schools.

This report follows on from a report on [developing pupils' English reading skills from 10 to 14 years of age](#) published in May 2023.

## Summary of main findings

### Standards of pupils' reading

Estyn reports that the negative impact of the pandemic remains clear on the standard of pupils' Welsh reading skills, with a minority of pupils having lost the confidence to communicate and read in Welsh.

Many pupils have sound basic reading skills and when given the opportunity can find or locate information and retrieve it from texts appropriately. They skim successfully to find the main messages and key information and annotate the text purposefully. Many pupils read for understanding successfully and use basic reading strategies to find relevant information.

A higher proportion of Year 6 pupils are making good progress in developing their advanced reading skills than in Years 7 to 9. This is partly because of the challenges of co-ordinating the progressive development of reading skills consistently across the range of subjects and teachers in the secondary phase.

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Most pupils benefit from a range of opportunities to develop their basic and advanced reading skills within Welsh lessons or language sessions and within the humanities subjects. Opportunities outside these lessons are limited.

Many Year 6 pupils and a majority of secondary pupils read aloud confidently and fluently. They vary their tone of voice effectively to align with the requirements of the reading passages in question. In a few schools, pupils benefit from using a variety of strategies to increase their confidence when reading aloud, in addition to useful strategies to develop and enrich their vocabulary. Pupils in these schools are more willing to risk pronouncing and saying unfamiliar words and to read aloud independently.

## **Provision for developing pupils' reading skills**

Leaders in nearly all schools recognise the importance of prioritising the development of pupils' reading skills, but often this didn't translate into effective provision across the curriculum, particularly in the secondary sector.

Leaders in a minority of primary schools and a majority of secondary and all-age schools did not use a wide enough range of evidence to identify the exact aspects that need to be improved and plan relevant actions. Where leadership is at its best, leaders accurately identify strengths in terms of reading across the school, along with the features that need to be improved and this is clear in school development plans. These leaders evaluate the quality and effect of provision continuously and make changes, where appropriate.

Transition plans between primary and secondary schools are organised and structured carefully. Nearly all primary schools forward Year 6 pupils' results from standardised reading tests to the secondary schools however only a minority of secondary schools make use of these reading test results and conduct a range of additional basic tests on pupils moving from Year 6 to Year 7. Very few schools plan to develop pupils' reading skills in a structured way

from Year 6 to Year 7. The size of a cluster and the number of primary schools within the catchment area of more than one secondary school was found to be a barrier to this planning.

Immersion units and Welsh language centres develop the Welsh language skills of pupils who transfer from English-medium education at a late stage effectively. These pupils quickly develop as fluent speakers of the language who are able to study the whole curriculum through the medium of Welsh.

## Developing a reading culture

Many primary schools and a few secondary schools promote reading for pleasure successfully by delivering a variety of activities and valuable experiences for pupils. Pupils' opinions play an important part in guiding these activities and these schools listen to pupils and adapt activities to promote a reading culture.

In most primary schools, the learning environment includes stimulating and entertaining spaces where all groups of pupils can access reading books and comfortable places to enjoy them. There are attractive and purposeful reading areas which promote reading as an enjoyable activity.

Around half of the secondary schools have kept and updated their libraries to include a variety of paper and digital reading material. Where school library provision is at its most effective, it is a welcoming place, contains a good and varied depository, is supervised and used by a variety of classes and subjects daily. It is also home to homework clubs and is a haven for pupils to read and study during break and lunchtime.

Many primary schools and a minority of secondary schools provide numerous experiences for pupils to encourage them to read outside the classroom, however, due to budget constraints, these experiences have decreased with just

a few workshops being held and few authors visiting schools.

Feedback from a pupil survey found that Year 6 pupils showed the greatest enthusiasm towards reading and valued the interesting range of reading texts that are available to them in Welsh. Enthusiasm towards reading decreased among older pupils.

Many pupils demonstrated appropriate knowledge of Welsh authors however, they were more familiar with English authors as they usually read versions of their work that have been translated into Welsh. Most secondary-age pupils were of the opinion that there was not a wide enough range of Welsh books available compared to English, particularly non-fiction books.

Pupils had mixed feelings about the translations of English books. Half felt that translations of some of the main English novels were difficult to read, that the flow and imagination of the story was lost in translation, and that the vocabulary was also alien and unfamiliar. Half disagreed, stating they enjoy the translations because they are familiar with the story in English and are therefore more willing to read it in Welsh. Overall, most primary and secondary pupils preferred to read English books. The main reasons for this were the unfamiliar vocabulary and dialect and the lack of choice of interesting subjects in Welsh.

## Recommendations

### Recommendations for leaders in schools

#### Recommendation 1

Strengthen opportunities for pupils to develop a variety of reading skills, including advanced reading skills, in subjects across the curriculum in addition to

Welsh.

## **Recommendation 2**

Use a variety of self-evaluation activities to effectively monitor and evaluate pupils' reading skills to identify clearly which aspects of reading need to be improved or strengthened.

## **Recommendation 3**

Plan strategically and structure opportunities appropriately to increase pupils' interest, resilience and confidence when reading in Welsh.

## **Recommendations for local authorities**

### **Recommendation 4**

Facilitate transition arrangements between primary and secondary schools and remove any barriers to ensure that schools are able to work together beneficially to develop pupil's reading skills.

## **Welsh Government response**

The Welsh Government welcomes these recommendations as they support our expectations for schools to provide high quality leadership and teaching to enable all learners, no matter what their background, to have the reading and wider literacy skills they need to fulfil their potential.

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Literacy is at the heart of the Curriculum for Wales as a mandatory cross curricular skill. The Curriculum for Wales is critical in raising standards for all. We continue to work in collaboration with local authorities and other partners to ensure schools have the support they need to plan, embed and deliver these opportunities for their learners across all areas of the curriculum, and in the case of Welsh reading that includes opportunities outside of language and humanities lessons.

Last year we published our oracy and reading toolkit providing a package of support for schools to develop and embed their own whole-school approach to achieving high standards of oracy and reading in English and Welsh. It reinforces the importance of literacy and the benefits to be gained by the whole school community working together in a coordinated and sustained way.

We are supporting projects to trial and evaluate the effectiveness of targeted Welsh literacy and language interventions, such as Bangor's Research on the Instruction of Literacy with Language (RILL) which to date has demonstrated proven growth in learners' Welsh vocabulary (critical for oracy but also decoding and reading comprehension) and Welsh reading fluency. We are exploring further work to widen access to this intervention for benefit across Wales.

As set out in a recent [statement by the Cabinet Secretary for Education](#), we will work with local authorities and other partners over the next two years, building on what is already working well for literacy, to develop nationally available intensive support for the profession. This support will provide clear expectations for planning the progression of literacy for all and embedding the skills across all areas of the curriculum.

Alongside this to strengthen our expectations we will work with the system to review and refine the Literacy Framework to ensure it provides the level of detail schools need to plan opportunities, across all areas of the curriculum, throughout the continuum of learning. We will publish the revised framework as statutory guidance putting it on the same footing as the wider Curriculum for

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Wales guidance, strengthening its status with schools.

We will also establish clear national principles to support the teaching and learning of literacy, including being clear of the building blocks that support progression in literacy across age groups, and on approaches to assess learning and evaluate progress. We are working closely with Estyn in developing the approach to these work areas.

The Welsh Government guidance on **transition from primary to secondary schools** sets out the legal responsibilities around transition arrangements for all schools and is available alongside a range of **supporting materials** and **case studies** on establishing effective transition processes within and across schools. Further support on establishing processes for a **shared understanding of progression and effective cluster working** was published earlier this year. We will continue to work with local authorities to consider how we can further support transition arrangements between primary and secondary schools for the benefit of all learners.

## Recommendations for Welsh Government

### Recommendation 5

Create opportunities for Welsh authors to engage with schools and talk to pupils about the type of books they would like to read in Welsh.

### Recommendation 6

Work with partners such as 'Adnodd' to improve and increase the availability of Welsh-medium resources, including non-fiction books.

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## Welsh Government Response

The Welsh Government accepts these recommendations. We will continue to work with partners to explore opportunities for Welsh authors to engage with schools and improve the availability of Welsh-medium resources.

Over recent years we have gifted every school with a box of 50 books to supplement their libraries which for Welsh schools included a mix of bi-lingual, original Welsh and translated titles. Through the Rhyngom Project, due to complete next year, we are working to publish Welsh-medium resources celebrating the culture, people and history of Wales.

## Publication details

The report was published on 12 September and may be [accessed on the Estyn website](#).

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