

The Welsh language

High quality Welsh language provision within each of the education sectors is key to achieving the Welsh Government's target of a million, confident Welsh speakers by 2050. Although we have reported shortcomings in the provision for learning Welsh in a number of annual reports over time, we have identified pockets of effective practice across a range of sectors. This report identifies some of the shortcomings we have continued to see and also provides a snapshot of the effective practice observed.

In many English-medium non-maintained settings, practitioners developed children's use of the Welsh language successfully by introducing new vocabulary regularly and actively encouraging children to respond by using Welsh words and simple sentences. They used repetitive songs and encouraged children to join in the fun of singing. Practitioners also gave simple instructions in Welsh, greeted children and praised them when they do well. In Welsh-medium settings, most practitioners planned for the development of children's Welsh effectively by immersing children in the language continuously.

Most of the recommendations in Welsh-medium primary schools were related to improving pupils' speaking skills. Leaders at Ysgol Gynradd Brynman identified that very few children starting the nursery class had any Welsh language skills. They also identified that a minority of pupils across the school had lost confidence in speaking Welsh during the pandemic. To address this, they implemented a variety of practical strategies to [motivate pupils to speak Welsh | Estyn \(gov.wales\)](#) to support all pupils to become fully bilingual by the time they leave school.

There were recommendations for a minority of English-medium primary schools to improve pupils' Welsh language skills, including provision for developing these skills over time. We found that teachers' understanding of language teaching pedagogy was limited; for example, there was not enough focus on applying speaking and listening skills. Pupils' overreliance on language frames hindered their progress, limiting their opportunities to practise listening and speaking skills independently. Leaders of Undy C.P. School saw the need to improve oracy across the school and promote the use of the Welsh language outside the classroom. They succeeded in developing pupils' skills across formal and informal situations and instilled pride in being Welsh and able to speak the Welsh language: [promoting enthusiasm for using the Welsh language | Estyn \(gov.wales\)](#).

Teachers' limited understanding of effective language teaching continues in English-medium secondary schools. In many of these, practitioners did not have the knowledge and understanding of effective pedagogy to support pupils to consolidate and build on existing language skills. As a result, pupils made limited progress. In the few schools with effective practice, suitable professional learning strengthened practitioners' understanding of pupils' language development over time. Cefn Hengoed Community School developed and strengthened its pupils' Welsh and bilingual skills by providing high quality professional learning to develop staff skills. As a result, sound pedagogy was seen in Welsh lessons to develop pupils' skills, in addition to ensuring opportunities for pupils to use the language outside the Welsh classroom: [The planning and co-ordination for the progressive development of](#)

[pupils' skills | Estyn \(gov.wales\)](#).

In many English-medium secondary schools, there were not enough opportunities for pupils to speak in Welsh outside lessons, particularly as pupils progressed through the school. Pen-y-Dre High School has worked strategically to place the Welsh language at the centre of school life; they have succeeded in creating an environment where using the Welsh language is the norm every day: [Creating a strong culture and appreciation of Welsh language and heritage - Estyn \(gov.wales\)](#). In the very few schools with the strongest practice, leaders focused specifically within quality assurance processes on improving Welsh. This ensured a whole-school approach to improvement planning for the Welsh language.

In our thematic report: [Developing pupils' Welsh reading skills from 10-14 years of age | Estyn \(gov.wales\)](#) we evaluated how well Welsh and bilingual schools develop pupils' Welsh reading skills across the curriculum. The report outlines a number of strengths and areas that need to be addressed. In addition to the examples of good practice in schools, we have included specific guidelines to help schools strengthen their practices in developing pupils' reading skills.

There are strong and notable features in the bilingual teaching and learning on the main campuses of the only further education provider we inspected. However, overall across the sector, opportunities to learn through the medium of Welsh on vocational courses and in work-based learning were much more limited. There have been too few opportunities for post-16 learners to continue to study and be assessed for qualifications through the medium of Welsh. Very few further education vocational or apprenticeship learners who speak Welsh produced written work in Welsh. Providers did not do enough to ensure that learners benefit from taking part in even a small part of their work through the medium of Welsh.

Most Adult Community Learning partnerships did not provide enough sessions in Welsh or bilingually to meet the needs and aspirations of Welsh-speaking learners. On the whole, there were not enough opportunities for Welsh-speaking learners to improve their skills meaningfully through the medium of Welsh.

The way in which ITE partnerships acted to support the development of the Welsh language has been inconsistent. While there has been an attempt to provide appropriate sessions to improve students' Welsh language skills, they have not been consistent or specific enough to help students consider how to develop the Welsh language in practice with pupils in the classroom. The small numbers of trainee teachers on ITE courses, particularly those who are able to work through the medium of Welsh, is a cause for concern.

In terms of Welsh for Adults provision, highly effective practices were seen on residential courses at the national residential centre at Nant Gwrtheyrn, which provided additional rich learning experiences outside formal classes. This means that learners are equipped to use their Welsh language skills outside their courses within the local Welsh-speaking community: [Using the Welsh language: purposeful and unique extra-curricular activities that support learners to speak Welsh increasingly spontaneously on the Nant site and in the local community | Estyn \(gov.wales\)](#). There is more on the immersion experiences and interventions to support learners in the following case study: [Effective immersion: supporting learners to make swift progress when supporting them to learn about and appreciate Welsh history and culture | Estyn \(gov.wales\)](#).

All Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESP) have now been approved across all local authorities.

Ceredigion local authority, for example, had a clear vision for ensuring that pupils are ultimately confident bilingual pupils. The authority has already identified the linguistic categorisation of their schools and has equipped the authority's staff to support practitioners in schools to develop the Welsh language. Gwynedd and Anglesey local authorities worked together to [develop Welsh-medium resources for pupils with additional learning needs \(ALN\) and their families, and for language immersion – Estyn \(gov.wales\)](#). Immersion education is the main method of nearly all local authorities for creating new Welsh speakers and developing learners' Welsh language skills. There is an effective example of this in the [recent pilot inspection in Newport](#) where leaders have developed a strong working relationship with various stakeholders to develop the objectives of the WESP effectively. However, some authorities continued to be slow in implementing their WESPs. They were in the early stages of implementing these plans and, on the whole, co-operation across authorities has been limited. In a minority of local authorities, recruiting staff, including teachers who teach through the medium of Welsh, was identified as one of the main challenges in terms of their provision for Welsh-medium education.

Use of the Welsh language is a strength in the pupil referral unit (PRU) at the Nant-y-Bryniau education centre, which is a unit that provides education for pupils with severe and complex mental health needs. Here, staff are supported well to develop their use of the Welsh language and, as a result, all staff are either fluent in Welsh or are confident learners who are able to use the Welsh language appropriately during teaching periods and informal discussions: Developing Welsh provision across the PRU (to be published). However, in PRUs overall the development of learners Welsh language skills remains variable.

Leaders who demonstrated a clear strategic vision and appropriate prioritisation of Welsh is a notable feature across the most successful providers in all sectors. Successful leaders have invested in training for staff at all levels, they apply a keen focus on pedagogy and recognise the need for opportunities to practise skills outside formal learning.