

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN – 2017 TO 2020

UPDATE OF PROGRESS – DECEMBER 2020

INTRODUCTION

As requested by the Welsh Government (WG), this document provides an update on the actions outlined in Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's (RCTCBC's) Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) for the period between 2017 and 2020 as approved by the WG on the 15th of March 2018. The previous 2019 to 2020 update was due to be the last update for this WESP, however, due to Covid-19, the period of the WESP has been extended to cover the period 2020 to 2021. It has been requested that an update is submitted to the WG by no later than 20th December 2020.

Since RCTCBC's 2017 to 2020 WESP was initially prepared and submitted to the WG in 2016, there have been significant changes in the Welsh medium education sector at local and national levels. Changes have been mainly influenced by WG legislation, in particular the new Welsh in Education Action Plan – 2017 to 2021¹ and further implementation of the 21st Century Schools and Colleges Programme². The impact of these changes will not be fully evident in the County Borough of Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) until well beyond the duration of the current WESP. In addition, the WG has updated the regulations regarding WESPs. The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (Wales) Regulations 2019³ focus on four key proposals, the principal two being:

- Extending the duration of the WESP from its current three year implementation cycle to a ten year implementation cycle.
- Removal of the current duty on Local Authorities to plan their provision of Welsh medium education based on demand with the requirement that Local Authorities achieve targets set by the WG which aim to increase the percentage of year one learners in Welsh medium education over the duration of this WESP.

RCTCBC welcomes these proposals, but it is mindful that in order to deliver on any agreed targets, various influences must be aligned and external challenges addressed.

Notwithstanding the significant changes in the Welsh medium education sector at local and national levels, along with the complexities of the global Covid-19 pandemic, RCTCBC has continued to support the agreed actions as outlined in its current WESP, with the aim of increasing and improving its Welsh medium education provision and speakers.

As RCTCBC looks to the future, it wants to build on what it has achieved to date and make sure that every town and community in RCT is a great place to live, work and play. RCTCBC's ambition is for everyone to be as healthy, independent and prosperous as possible throughout their lives. Enabling access to a good education, developing skills and decent employment opportunities are all key priority areas.

¹ [Welsh in Education Action Plan – 2017 to 2021](#)

² [21st Century Schools and Colleges Programme](#)

³ [Welsh in Education Strategic Plan \(Wales\) Regulations 2019](#)

Integral to achieving these goals is ensuring there are good schools so all children and young people have access to great Welsh medium and Welsh language education. RCTCBC will deliver this by supporting children to have the best start in life and be ready for learning through an improved early years' system and childcare offer and by investing in new and significantly improved 21st Century Schools.

CURRENT POSITION

STATUTORY SCHOOL AGED LEARNERS WHO ACCESS THEIR EDUCATION THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF WELSH ACROSS THE FIVE LOCAL AUTHORITY AREAS THAT COMPRISE THE CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM JOINT EDUCATION SERVICE

The table that follows outlines the total percentage of statutory school aged learners (aged five to fifteen) who access their learning through Welsh medium primary, middle and secondary schools across each of the five Local Authority areas that comprise the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service (CSCJES) for the previous three academic years and is derived from the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC):

Total Percentage of Statutory School Aged Learners (Aged Five to Fifteen) who Access their Learning Through Welsh Medium Primary, Middle and Secondary Schools			
Local Authority	Total Percentage of Statutory School Aged Learners		
	2018	2019	2020
Bridgend County Borough Council	7.57%	7.46%	7.40%
Cardiff City Council	14.81%	15.05%	15.30%
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	7.33%	7.63%	7.72%
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	18.80%	18.90%	18.81%
Vale of Glamorgan Council	12.38%	12.69%	12.79%
Central South Consortium Joint Education Service	13.92%	14.08%	14.16%

The data demonstrates stability in the total percentage of statutory school aged learners (aged five to fifteen) who access their learning through Welsh medium primary, middle and secondary schools across each of the five Local Authority areas that comprise the CSCJES for the previous three academic years.

RCTCBC has the highest percentage statutory school aged learners (aged five to fifteen) who access their learning through Welsh medium primary, middle and secondary schools across each of the five Local Authority areas that comprise the CSCJES for the previous three academic years.

OUTCOME 1: MORE SEVEN YEAR OLD CHILDREN BEING TAUGHT THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF WELSH

PRIMARY SCHOOLS

RCTCBC has seventeen Welsh medium primary schools located throughout the County Borough to ease access. There are two all through schools for 3 to 19 year olds: Ysgol Garth Olwg and Ysgol Llanhari, three dual language primary schools for 3 to 11 year olds: Dolau Primary, Heolycelyn Primary and Penderyn Primary Schools and 12 primary schools for 3 to 11 year olds. All learners who attend these schools study all of their education through the medium of Welsh.

The table that follows outlines the total number of primary school aged learners attending schools in RCTCBC, split by English medium and Welsh medium for the previous three academic years and is derived from the PLASC:

Total Number of Primary School Aged Learners Attending Schools in RCTCBC Split by English Medium and Welsh Medium						
Category	Year					
	2017/2018		2018/2019		2019/2020	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Total Number of Learners Attending English Medium Primary Schools	18,241	80.95%	18,153	80.96%	18,078	81.07%
Total Number of Learners Attending Welsh Medium Primary Schools	4,291	19.04%	4,269	19.03%	4,220	18.93%
Total Number of Learners Attending Primary Schools	22,532		22,422		22,763	

The data demonstrates stability in the ratio split in primary school aged learners attending English and Welsh medium primary schools in RCTCBC for the previous three academic years.

The capacities of all school provision is kept under regular, annual review by RCTCBC's Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services using data obtained from PLASC, school forecasts, annual admission requests and live birth information from Cwm Taf University Health Board. Any increase in learner populations, particularly within Welsh medium provision, is closely monitored and, if the increase is sustained and clear within the catchment area of a particular school, consideration is given to making the required increase in capacity, by whatever means is most appropriate and most suited to that particular school.

The majority of the Welsh medium primary schools in the County Borough of RCT currently have surplus places. However, there are a number of primary schools where growth in capacity is needed. As such, action has or is currently being taken to address these issues. For example, RCTCBC:

- Has committed to invest £3.3 million at Ysgol Gynradd Gymreag Aberdar to provide a further 60 places.
- Has brought together the primary and secondary schools to form the new Ysgol Garth Olwg to become a 3 to 19 all through school, to enable the primary school to expand into the surplus space available in the secondary school.
- Dolau Primary School is currently being expanded as a result of planned housing development in the area – this new provision will provide 540 Welsh medium primary places.
- Penderyn Primary School will become a Welsh medium only provision in September 2021 increasing the capacity of the school.

Furthermore, RCTCBC has also committed to increasing the quality and availability of early years Welsh medium provision co-located on primary school sites by spending £3.5 million on:

- The creation of a new childcare facility at Ysgol Gynradd Gymreag Aberdar.
- The relocation of an existing childcare facility at Ysgol Llanhari from a former house to a new location on the school site.
- Significantly improving the facilities of an existing childcare facility at Ysgol Gynradd Gymreag Evan James.

YEAR TWO LEARNERS

The table that follows outlines the total number of primary school aged learners attending Welsh medium primary schools in RCTCBC, split by year group and Key Stage for the previous three academic years and is derived from the PLASC:

Total Number of Primary School Aged Learners Attending Welsh Medium Primary Schools in RCTCBC Split by Year Group and Key Stage				
Key Stage	Year Group	Year		
		2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020
Foundation Phase	Pre Nursery	73	24	27
	Pre Nursery Part Time	0	19	29
	Nursery	519	421	406
	Nursery Part Time	0	140	130
	Reception	554	517	565
	Reception Part Time	0	1	0
	Year One	530	537	506
	Year Two	543	516	534
Foundation Phase Total		2,219	2,015	2,038
Foundation Phase Part Time Total		0	160	159
Key Stage Two	Year Three	512	533	507
	Year Four	532	499	521
	Year Five	539	528	486
	Year Six	489	534	509
Key Stage Two Total		2,072	2,094	2,023
Primary School Total		4,291	4,269	4,220

The data demonstrates a slight decrease in the total number of primary school learners between the academic years 2017/2018 (4,291) to 2018/2019 (4,269) of 22 learners and between the academic years 2018/2019 (4,269) to 2019/2020 (4,220) of 49 learners.

The data also shows the number of seven year old (Year Two) learners who receive their education through the medium of Welsh. Between the academic years 2017/2018 (543) and 2019/2020 (516), the number of learners decreased by 27 (4.97%). However, between the academic years 2018/2019 (516) and 2019/2020 (534), the number of learners increased by 18 (+3.48%).

This is below the target set in the 2017 to 2020 WESP of 630 seven year old (Year Two) learners who receive their education through the medium of Welsh for the academic year 2019/2020.

OUTCOME 2: MORE LEARNERS CONTINUING TO IMPROVE THEIR LANGUAGE SKILLS ON TRANSFER FROM PRIMARY TO SECONDARY SCHOOL

SECONDARY SCHOOLS

RCTCBC has four Welsh medium secondary schools located throughout the County Borough to ease access. There are two all through schools for 3 to 19 year olds: Ysgol Garth Olwg and Ysgol Llanhari and two secondary schools for 11 to 19 years olds: Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda and Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun. Learners residing in the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil also access Welsh medium secondary school education at Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun. All learners who attend these schools study all of their education through the medium of Welsh.

The table that follows outlines the total number of secondary school aged learners attending schools in RCTCBC, split by English and Welsh medium for the previous three academic years and is derived from the PLASC:

Total Number of Secondary School Aged Learners Attending Schools in RCTCBC Split by English Medium and Welsh Medium						
Category	Year					
	2017/2018		2018/2019		2019/2020	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Total Number of Learners Attending English Medium Secondary Schools	12,550	80.65%	12,685	80.57%	12,868	80.37%
Total Number of Learners Attending Welsh Medium Secondary Schools	3,010	19.34%	3,058	19.42%	3,141	19.62%
Total Number of Learners Attending Secondary Schools	15,560		15,743		16,009	

The data demonstrates stability in the ratio split in secondary school aged learners attending English and Welsh medium secondary schools in RCTCBC for the previous three academic years.

As previously stated, the capacities of all school provision is kept under regular, annual review by RCTCBC's Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services using data obtained from PLASC, school forecasts, annual admission requests and live birth information from Cwm Taf University Health Board. Any increase in learner populations, particularly within Welsh medium provision, is closely monitored and, if the increase is sustained and clear within the catchment area of a particular school, consideration is given to making the required increase in capacity, by whatever means is most appropriate and most suited to that particular school.

The majority of the Welsh medium secondary schools in the County Borough of RCT have sufficient surplus places. However, there is one secondary school where growth in capacity is needed. As such, the following action is currently being taken to address this issue:

- RCTCBC's 21st Century Schools and Colleges Programme has bid for £12.16 million to increase the capacity of Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun from 1,040 learner places to 1,230 learner places. This will be achieved by adding additional teaching accommodation along with a new sports facilities to complement the recently completed 3G sports pitch. These additions will provide state of the art facilities for both Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun and the local community, increasing opportunities for wider participation. It is anticipated that the proposed new teaching accommodation will be completed in readiness for the 2022/2023 academic year.

YEAR NINE LEARNERS

The table that follows outlines the total number of secondary school aged learners attending Welsh medium secondary schools in RCTCBC, split by year group and Key Stage for the previous three academic years and is derived from the PLASC:

Total Number of Secondary School Aged Learners Attending Welsh Medium Secondary Schools in RCTCBC Split by Year Group and Key Stage				
Key Stage	Year Group	Year		
		2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020
Key Stage Three	Year Seven	545	577	588
	Year Eight	533	538	554
	Year Nine	504	527	523
Key Stage Three Total		1,582	1,642	1,665
Key Stage Four	Year Ten	491	496	513
	Year Eleven	434	485	489
Key Stage Three Total		925	981	1,002
Key Stage Five/Sixth Form	Year Twelve	300	241	289
	Year Thirteen	203	213	184
	Year Fourteen	0	1	1
Key Stage Five/Sixth Form Total		503	455	474
Secondary School Total		3,010	3,058	3,141

The data demonstrates an increase in the total number of secondary school learners between the academic years 2017/2018 (3,010) to 2018/2019 (3,058) of 48 learners and between the academic years 2018/2019 (3,058) to 2019/2020 (3,141) of 83 learners.

The data also shows the number of fourteen year old (Year Nine) learners who receive their education through the medium of Welsh. Between the academic years 2017/2018 (504) and 2019/2020 (527), the number of learners increased by 23 (+4.56%). However, between the academic years 2018/2019 (527) and 2019/2020 (523), the number of learners decreased by 4 (0.75%).

This is above the target set in the 2017 to 2020 WESP of 520 fourteen year old (Year Nine) learners who receive their education through the medium of Welsh for the academic year 2019/2020.

RETENTION RATES

The table that follows shows the transition from each Key Stage for the previous three years academic years in RCTCBC and is derived from the PLASC:

Transition From Each Key Stage for the Previous Three Years in RCTCBC			
Transition	Year		
	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020
Foundation Phase to Key Stage Two	97.71%	98.16%	98.26%
Key Stage Two to Key Stage Three	111.68%	113.91%	110.11%
Key Stage Three to Key Stage Four	95.53%	98.41%	97.34%
Key Stag Four to Key Stage Five	62.24%	55.53%	59.59%

An analysis of transition data indicates that transition of learners between Key Stages does not appear to be a significant problem in RCTCBC.

OUTCOME 3: MORE STUDENTS AGED 14-16 STUDYING FOR QUALIFICATIONS THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF WELSH

Please note that updated data is not provided on Outcome Three as the measures are no longer published by the Welsh Government. However, further updates can be seen in Appendix One – Update of Progress – December 2020.

OUTCOME 4: MORE STUDENTS AGED 14-19 IN STUDY SUBJECTS THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF WELSH, IN SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND WORK-BASED LEARNING

Please note that updated data is not provided on Outcome Four as the measures are no longer published by the Welsh Government. However, further updates can be seen in Appendix One – Update of Progress – December 2020.

OUTCOME 5: MORE STUDENTS WITH ADVANCED SKILLS IN WELSH

Please note that updated data is not provided on Outcome Five as the measures are no longer published by the Welsh Government. However, further updates can be seen in Appendix One – Update of Progress – December 2020.

OUTCOME 6: WELSH MEDIUM PROVISION FOR LEARNERS WITH ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS (ALN)

Considerable changes are planned in Wales in relation to the statutory provision required to meet the needs of learners with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Additional Learning Needs (ALN). The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018⁴ (The 2018 Act) was introduced in January 2018. The 2018 Act requires Local Authorities to keep the arrangements for supporting learners with SEN and ALN within their area under review and consider whether these are sufficient. This includes a statutory requirement to take all reasonable steps to create a bilingual system of support for learners with SEN and ALN. The 2018 Act will be supported by new regulations, including secondary legislation and a new statutory ALN Code (The New Code). The Draft ALN Code for Wales – December 2018⁵ (The Draft Code) is based on the following principles:

- Meeting the needs of learners with SEN and ALN should be part of a whole school approach to school improvement.
- Learners must be supported to participate in mainstream education and in the National Curriculum as fully as possible wherever this is feasible.

Until the anticipated implementation of The New Code in September 2021, Local Authorities are required to comply with the existing SEN Code of Practice for Wales 2002⁶ (The 2002 Code) to fulfil their statutory duties towards children with SEN and ALN.

In RCTCBC, a total of £3.4 million Additional Needs Funding (ANF) is available to mainstream primary and secondary schools to ensure statutory mainstream provision for learners is robust and to support mainstream inclusion for learners with severe and persistent needs.

For learners with more significant needs, who experience difficulties in coping with mainstream education, more specialist placements are required. RCTCBC has a range of specialist provisions which includes:

- 44 Learning Support Classes (LSC's).
- 2 Pupil Referral Units (PRU's).
- 4 Special Schools.

Placements within these specialist provisions are agreed by RCTCBC's Access and Inclusion Service Panels.

⁴ [The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal \(Wales\) Act](#)

⁵ [Draft ALN Code for Wales – December 2018](#)

⁶ [SEN Code of Practice for Wales 2002](#)

RCTCBC provides an excellent range of LSC provisions attached to mainstream primary and secondary schools. However, in light of the requirements of The 2018 Act, concerns regarding rising exclusions and an increase in requests for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) placements, it is felt necessary to enhance the current LSC provision to address the aforementioned issues. Additionally, schools are reporting increasing levels of learners with mental health and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties in mainstream contexts.

An analysis of data confirmed that:

- There is currently insufficient SEBD provision in the secondary sector.
- There is currently no discreet specialist provision for Welsh medium learners with significant additional learning needs.

RCTCBC currently spends in the region of £4.1 million annually on the provision of LSC's. There are currently approximately 362 learners accessing the 44 LSC provisions within the County Borough of RCT across a range of needs.

Currently Welsh medium learners with significant SEN and ALN who would meet the criteria for LSC provision are supported by a specialist peripatetic team – The Welsh Complex Needs Team. The Welsh Complex Needs Team, which includes a Welsh medium specialist teacher and two Learning Support Assistants, provides support through an inclusive delivery model whereby learners are provided with specialist support within their mainstream settings.

During the academic year 2019/2020 The Welsh Complex Needs Team supported 14 learners with an age range between eight (Year Three) and fourteen (Year Nine) of which:

- Eight attended Key Stage Two.
- Six attended Key Stage Three.

Data analysis suggests that learners accessing support from The Welsh Complex Needs Team are making progress that is comparable to that of their peers in English medium LSC's. An evaluation of the provision was undertaken in the Autumn Term of 2019 and showed that this inclusive model adopted in Welsh medium settings has been very positive.

However, it is concerning to note that due to a lack of Welsh medium LSC provision, one learner had to move from Welsh medium education to English medium education during the academic year 2018/2019, whilst two learners had to move from Welsh medium education to English medium education during the academic year 2019/2020 in order to access specialist LSC provision. Anecdotally, feedback from schools suggests that some parents/carers of children with SEN and ALN sometimes opt to send their children to an English medium primary school prior to transfer from Key Stage Two to Key Stage Three due to the lack of discrete specialist provision in Welsh medium secondary schools. It is therefore perceived that the number of children and young people with SEN and ALN in the Welsh medium schools may therefore be under represented for this reason.

In light of these findings, a report was approved by RCTCBC’s Cabinet on 17th December 2019⁷ which outlined proposals for change and sought to:

- Enhance the continuum of provision that effectively addresses the need for specialist SEBD provision within Key Stage Three and Key Stage Four.
- Create a specialist LSC provision for Welsh medium Key Stage Three and Key Stage Four learners with significant SEN and ALN.

The Cabinet report approved the commencement of a consultation on proposals to enhance LSC provision for Welsh medium Key Stage Three and Key Stage Four learners with SEBD by establishing a LSC at Ysgol Gymraeg Garth Olwg.

Due to the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic, these proposals were lapsed and as such on 25th June 2020, RCTCBC’s Cabinet ⁸agreed to progress with an amended proposal to extend an earlier pilot to fund mainstream secondary schools to establish their own alternative curriculum for learners with significant SEBD. As a result, in September 2020, funding was provided to Ysgol Gymraeg Garth Olwg to establish an in house, school based alternative provision that ensures learners presenting with SEBD can have their needs met within their local Welsh medium mainstream school.

OUTCOME 7: WORKFORCE PLANNING AND CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Welsh Language Commissioner’s Briefing Note: The Welsh Language and the Statutory Education Workforce in Wales⁹ published in August 2020, outlines the importance of ensuring sufficient numbers of Welsh medium teachers in reaching the vision of one million people in Wales being Welsh speakers by 2050 as set out in Cymraeg 2050. As such, the briefing note outlines a number of recommendations.

In order to create more Welsh speakers, our education system is dependent on its workforce and we must work to ensure we create a workforce with robust linguistic skills, able to inspire and motivate learners in Welsh medium education. In the year 2020, RCTCBC currently employs 12,457 people, of which 5,290 (42.4%) are school based staff. The data in the table that follows illustrates the number and percentage of staff who identify themselves as fluent or fairly fluent in Welsh and was correct as at 17th August 2020:

Number of Staff who Identify Themselves as Fluent or Fairly Fluent in Welsh							
Number of Welsh Employees with Welsh Language Skills	of with Language	Fluent (Welsh Language Level Four and Five)		Fairly Fluent (Welsh Language Level Three)		Total (Welsh Language Level Three, Four and Five)	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%

⁷ [Cabinet Report – 17th December 2019 – Review of Learning Support Class Provision for Learners with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties \(SEBD\) Significant Additional Learning Needs \(ALN\)](#)

⁸ [Cabinet Report – 25th June 2020 – Review of Learning Support Class Provision for Learners with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties \(SEBD\) Significant Additional Learning Needs \(ALN\)](#)

⁹ [Welsh Language Commissioner – Briefing Note – The Welsh Language and the Statutory Education Workforce in Wales – 6th August 2020.](#)

Category	Total Number of Staff						
All Staff	12,457	1,317	10.5%	318	2.5%	1,635	13.1%
School Based Staff	5,290	742	14.0%	175	3.3%	917	17.3%
Non-School Based Staff	7,167	575	8.0%	143	1.9%	718	10.0%

The table demonstrates that 1,635 (13.1%) of school based staff have fluent or fairly fluent Welsh language skills (Welsh Language Levels Three, Four and Five).

CONCLUSION

RCTCBC has the highest percentage statutory school aged learners (aged five to fifteen) who access their learning through Welsh medium primary, middle and secondary schools across each of the five Local Authority areas that comprise the CSCJES for the previous three academic years.

Data suggests that progress has been evident on some measures. There has been an increase in the number of seven year old (Year Two) learners who receive their education through the medium of Welsh between the academic years 2018/2019 (516) and 2019/2020 (534) of 18 learners (+3.48%). Whilst there has been a slight decrease in the number of fourteen year old (Year Nine) learners who receive their education through the medium of Welsh between the academic years 2018/2019 (527) and 2019/2020 (523) of 4 learners (0.75%).

Alongside this, an analysis of transition data indicates that transition of learners between Key Stages does not appear to be a significant problem in RCTCBC.

During the academic year 2019/2020 The Welsh Complex Needs Team supported 14 learners with an age range between eight (Year Three) and fourteen (Year Nine) of which:

- Eight attended Key Stage Two.
- Six attended Key Stage Three.

Data analysis suggests that learners accessing support from The Welsh Complex Needs Team are making progress that is comparable to that of their peers in English medium LSC's. An evaluation of the provision was undertaken in the Autumn Term of 2019 and showed that this inclusive model adopted in Welsh medium settings has been very positive.

RCTCBC remains committed to ensuring the availability of Welsh medium education, from the initial early years through to primary and secondary education then progressing through to higher and further education, for all learners whatever their learning need in

line with achieving the vision of one million people in Wales being Welsh speakers by 2050 as set out in Cymraeg 2050: A Million Welsh Speakers¹⁰ (Cymraeg 2050).□

¹⁰ [Cymraeg 2050 – A Million Welsh Speakers](#)