
Ymateb i Ymgynghoriad / Consultation Response

Enw / Name:	Claire Morgan
Rôl / Role:	Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales
E-bost / Email:	ChiefInspector@estyn.gov.uk
Rhif Ffôn / Tel No:	029 2044 6446
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Background information about Estyn

Estyn is the Office of Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales. As a Crown body, Estyn is independent of the Welsh Government.

Estyn's principal aim is to raise the standards and quality education and training in Wales. This is primarily set out in the Learning and Skills Act 2000 and the Education Act 2005. In exercising its functions, Estyn must give regard to the:

- Quality of education and training in Wales;
- Extent to which education and training meets the needs of learners;
- Educational standards achieved by education and training providers in Wales;
- Quality of leadership and management of those education and training providers;
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of learners; and,
- Contribution made to the well-being of learners.

Estyn's remit includes (but is not exclusive to) nurseries and non-maintained settings, primary schools, secondary schools, independent schools, pupil referrals units, further education, adult community learning, local government education services, work-based learning, and teacher education and training.

Estyn may give advice to the Assembly on any matter connected to education and training in Wales. To achieve excellence for learners, Estyn has set three strategic objectives:

- Provide accountability to service users on the quality and standards of education and training in Wales;
- Inform the development of national policy by the Welsh Government;
- Build capacity for improvement of the education and training system in Wales.

This response is not confidential.

Response

Introduction

This plan traces what the county has achieved in the past, in addition to its effect on learners' experiences as they pursue their journey through statutory education through the medium of Welsh. When planning goals to be achieved during the life of this plan, relevant ideas are included, alongside broad suggestions on the way in which provision can be expanded to have a positive effect on learners' Welsh experiences. For example, by using funding aimed specifically at developing or expanding Welsh-medium childcare and early years places that are co-located on the grounds of Welsh-medium primary schools. Previous plans have ensured stability rather than progress in the number of learners who follow their statutory education through the medium of Welsh. It is noted that 720 (26.9%) of Year 1 learners will receive their education through the medium of Welsh by 2032.

However, it appears that this Plan's aims are not ambitious enough to aim to achieve this target. For example, researching into various models of Welsh immersion classes is only an intention, rather than identifying purposeful provision clearly when sharing information and supporting parents/guardians to transfer their children to Welsh-medium education at different entry points to Welsh-medium education. It is also noted that the E-sgol scheme is mentioned as a means of extending Welsh provision, but the way in which it could be used actively in secondary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf is not included. In outcome 6, it is noted 'the Council will strive to deliver sufficient Additional Learning Needs (ALN) provision for learners that request it through the medium of Welsh, in addition to a large enough workforce with sufficient ability.' However, the aims are not ambitious enough, for example by noting wording such as 'strive to', to ensure inclusive provision that will meet the needs of ALN learners through the medium of Welsh.

In summary, within the plan, there are relevant aims and suitable suggestions for the way in which the Welsh Government target can be achieved by 2050. Working with different partners, such as the regional consortium, Mudiad Meithrin and the Urdd are consistent examples of this. However, the plan does not set out aims that are ambitious and purposeful enough to achieve this on a practical level.

Consultation questions

Our target, during the ten-year lifespan of this WESP, that has been set by the Welsh Government, is to:

Increase the percentage of year one learners in Welsh medium education by between 8.0% to 12.0% during the ten-year lifespan of this WESP. This equates to an increase from 506* year one learners in Welsh medium education to between 720 and 825 year one learners in Welsh medium education.

**This target is based on 2019/2020 PLASC data.*

This target is based on contributing to the overall long-term target, set out in Cymraeg 2050 – A Million Welsh Speakers of one million people in Wales being Welsh speakers by 2050.

As well as the target to increase the percentage of year one learners in Welsh medium education, the WESP includes seven outcomes or areas setting out how local authorities are expected to improve Welsh medium and Welsh language education in their locality. These outcomes are set by the Welsh Government. They are:

1. **Outcome 1: More nursery/three-year-old learners receive their education through the medium of Welsh.**
2. **Outcome 2: More reception/five-year-old learners receive their education through the medium of Welsh.**
3. **Outcome 3: More learners continue to improve their Welsh language skills when transferring from one stage of their statutory education to another.**
4. **Outcome 4: More learners study for assessed qualifications in Welsh (as a subject) and subjects through the medium of Welsh.**
5. **Outcome 5: More opportunities for learners to use Welsh in different contexts in school.**
6. **Outcome 6: An increase in the provision of Welsh medium education for learners with additional learning needs.**
7. **Outcome 7: Increase the number of teaching staff able to teach Welsh (as a subject) and through the medium of Welsh.**

We would like to hear your views on how the Council and its partners aim to achieve the WESP target and each of the seven outcomes.

Outcome	Please provide your views:
1	<p>Through this Plan, the authority recognises the need to develop its strategy further to achieve the target of 720 Year 1 learners receiving their education through the medium of Welsh by 2032. It provides examples of the previous plan’s shortcomings; for example, there is a reference to the reduction in the number of Cylchoedd Meithrin in the county and the reduction in the number of children between 2 and 4 years old who attend Cylchoedd Meithrin and, of course, this is a cause for concern. It is also noted that the number of learners who are educated in the county’s 17 Welsh-medium primary schools, which include two all-through schools and three dual-stream primary schools, has remained stable rather than increased in the three academic years up to 2020. Although the Council recognises the challenges, it is difficult to see how this Plan’s aims will address these purposefully enough to respond ambitiously enough to address this concern.</p> <p>The Wellbeing and Resilience Service’s pilot Health Programme was launched in October 2020 to provide better Health Visitor services by sharing information with parents/guardians. Promoting Welsh-medium education and learning Welsh are not currently a part of this programme, although it is noted that it would be possible. It is stated that the Council’s Early Years, Childcare and Play Partnership</p>

Outcome	Please provide your views:
	<p>Group, which has been re-established recently, would be able to promote the benefits to parents/guardians of Welsh-medium provision for their children as part of the strategy to aim to achieve the target by 2032. However, there is no purposeful plan to develop increasingly proactive monitoring procedures to engage purposefully with parents/guardians in promoting Welsh-medium education. Scrutinising further information to discover whether parents/guardians understanding that Welsh-medium education is available to them as an equal choice for their children would strengthen the aims of this Outcome further.</p> <p>Evidence is provided on the Council's recent assessments that scrutinise a range of data and information to better understand the childcare and early years settings that were available, alongside the needs of parents/guardians. Twenty-four recommendations deriving from that assessment were prioritised to try to expand provision, for example by 'trying to recruit staff' and 'exploring the demand for additional Welsh-medium childcare and early years places in the Rhondda Valley and Upper Cynon Valley areas'. This updated plan yields relevant information that strives to use the Childcare Offer Capital Grant Programme and the Welsh-medium Education Capital Grant Scheme to support the development of Welsh-medium childcare and early years settings. The Flying Start programme is considered to be a means of promoting Welsh-medium provision, with the aim that 25% of commissioned childcare provision will be provided through the medium of Welsh. Currently, around 19.1% (126) of learners who attend the Flying Start programme's childcare settings attend Welsh-medium childcare and early years settings. It is stated that professional learning through relevant Welsh-medium training will be provided for staff, but the Plan identifies aims rather than purposeful plans.</p> <p>It is noted that the county already works with Mudiad Meithrin to use the 'Croesi'r Bont' scheme and implement the 'Clebran' programme to support the use of Welsh in English-medium childcare and early years settings that are registered education providers. Within the first milestone of operating within the first five years, it is noted that the county will continue to work with Mudiad Meithrin to encourage parents/guardians to register for a Clwb Cwtsh course and increase the numbers who attend. However, there are no details in the plan about purposeful action when working with external partners. For example, it is stated that 'the Childcare Development Team will continue to promote and raise awareness of the Welsh-medium childcare and early years settings that are available to parents/guardians', but there is no operational strategy to achieve this.</p> <p>It is noted that seven projects will be completed within the first five years of this plan, namely supporting capital work by facilitating</p>

Outcome	Please provide your views:
	<p>growth in Welsh-medium education. This will be done by using funding that is aimed specifically towards developing or expanding Welsh-medium childcare and early years settings that are co-located on the grounds of Welsh-medium primary schools. It is anticipated that there will be a 65% increase in the number of spaces available to nursery age or 3-year-old learners by implementing this plan.</p> <p>The Council's current travel policy states that learners who attend their nearest Welsh-medium or bilingual school will receive free transport, in line with the Council's policy on walking distance and safe routes. Information about this policy is vague in terms of whether pupils receive free transport to Welsh and English-medium schools. There is no intention to review this measure in the short-term. As a result, this will support parents/guardians to fulfil their wish for free transport for their children when choosing a seamless Welsh-medium journey through statutory education for their child.</p> <p>There is a vague reference to funding through various grants to implement this Plan's aims, but no long-term investment has been agreed to support the desire to expand provision to reach the target of 720 (26.9%) of Year 1 learners receiving Welsh-medium education by 2032.</p>
2	<p>The Plan states that there are 17 Welsh-medium primary schools, including two all-through schools that provide Welsh-medium education, in addition to three dual-stream schools for children aged 3 to 11 years old in the county. It is noted that the number of pupils who attend Welsh and English-medium settings is stable, but that there has been an increase in the number of learners who attend Reception provision or who are 5 years old in Welsh-medium primary schools. Although the number of spaces available in each school is reviewed annually, and there are 19.6% or surplus places in Welsh-medium primary schools, the strategy of promoting Welsh education within this Plan is ambiguous.</p> <p>The Plan identifies the actions that have already been taken to respond to the demand for Welsh-medium education by providing more places for learners. However, it is noted through projected estimates that there is likely to be 28.1% of surplus places in Welsh-medium primary schools over the last five years. There is no outline of strategic planning, for example through the Strategic Group, that strives to reduce these surplus places or indeed, more specifically, to increase the number of learners attending Welsh-medium primary schools within the next five and ten years.</p> <p>The Plan sets out investment through funding from Band B of the Welsh Government 21st Century Schools and Colleges Programme and a Minor Capital Works Programme. For example, to respond to the demand in particular areas of the county, the intention is to revise the language medium of one school, provide an extension and a new</p>

Outcome	Please provide your views:
	<p>site for two schools, and provide a new dual-stream primary school that is an extension to an already established school. The Plan does not identify the immediate and long-term investment specifically when promoting developments to the provision of Welsh-medium education.</p> <p>The Plan states that the Council recognises the importance of Welsh immersion for learners who wish to transfer from English-medium education to Welsh-medium education, to encourage individuals to take up Welsh-medium education. There is no immersion centre provision within the county as schools receive support and funding directly to support learners to acquire the Welsh language at different times of their statutory education journey. However, there is no evaluation of this support when tracking the progress of latecomers as they develop their Welsh language skills, as they 'consider that this is working effectively'. Researching into various models of Welsh immersion classes is also only an aim. Investigating the possibility of working with neighbouring local authorities when providing immersion education would strengthen the aim within this Outcome.</p>
3	<p>The Plan states that there has been an increase of 30% in the number of learners who move from Cylchoedd Meithrin to Welsh-medium education between 2015-2016 and 2019-2020. The Plan states that there is a need to ensure that Welsh-medium childcare and early years settings are located on the grounds of Welsh-medium primary schools to promote wider access to Welsh-medium education, which has already been identified as part of Outcome 1.</p> <p>The County's mapping exercises also show that it appears that the transition rates for learners between key stages for Welsh-medium primary and secondary pupils are not a cause for concern, partly because pupils who attend the county's schools live outside the county borough. For example, pupils attend Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun because there is no Welsh-medium secondary provision in Merthyr Tydfil County Borough. It would be useful to include information about pupil transition rates within the authority to gain a clearer picture of the current situation. However, it is identified that pupil retention rates between key stage 4 and key stage 5 are a concern, but there is no specific plan to address this challenge. Of course, it must be considered that a number of pupils who attend this Welsh-medium secondary school live outside Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council.</p> <p>The Plan outlines that the Strategic Plan's Strategic Group will need to work with other partners, but there are no details about what they intend to achieve. Currently, the plan does not identify purposeful enough aims or a strategic plan to respond to the challenge of keeping learners in key stage 4 and key stage 5 in Welsh-medium education. The statistics that are identified as transition rates between each key</p>

Outcome	Please provide your views:
	<p>stage reflect the lack of challenge in this outcome in terms of helping to ensure a continuous route and linguistic progression for learners in Welsh-medium education in general.</p>
4	<p>The Plan states that the number of places that are available in each school is reviewed annually by the Council's Education Directorate and Inclusion Services. Currently, based on 2019-2020 PLASC data, there are 23.1% surplus places in Welsh-medium secondary schools, and this is predicted to rise to 24.1% during the next five academic years. However, there are a few secondary schools where more places are needed, therefore there are actions in place to address these issues. For example, it is outlined that different grants, including a Band B grant from the Council's ambitious 21st Century Schools and Colleges Programme, to include a range of projects worth a total of £160 million, will be used to respond to this. This includes a number of projects that propose to increase the number of places in Welsh-medium secondary schools.</p> <p>It is identified that all Welsh-medium secondary schools in the county work together, as well as other providers, including Coleg y Cymoedd, to provide education for GCSE, AS and A-Level qualifications through the medium of Welsh. However, they have not addressed the challenge that it is more difficult for learners to access such providers because of the geographic location of the secondary schools. The E-sgol scheme is mentioned, but the way in which it could be used actively in secondary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf has not been included. The Plan does not set out the range of subjects that are available through the medium of Welsh or provide a purposeful plan to broaden provision as part of the vision to support and enrich learners' educational experiences while studying Welsh as a subject or by studying subjects or other areas through the medium of Welsh. The Plan also does not address developing learners' second language Welsh skills in English-medium schools purposefully enough.</p> <p>The County has conducted a pilot of the Gatsby Good Career Benchmark Programme to develop a wider range of learning pathways for learners aged 14-19 when preparing for the world of work, training, and further education. This will be developed further in the future through the Gatsby Mentoring Model. However, there is no reference to increasing the number of learners who study for qualifications that are assessed through the medium of Welsh, or who follow their subjects through the medium of Welsh.</p>
5	<p>The Plan identifies the importance of the need to support learners, their parents/guardians, and the wider community to take part in a wide range of cultural, social, and sporting activities through the medium of Welsh. It is stated that it is important to achieve this in their primary and secondary school to improve their confidence and ensure</p>

Outcome	Please provide your views:
	<p>that they continue to be fluent in Welsh. We support the fact that the Welsh Language Charter and Cymraeg Campus activities are to be approved in schools, in addition to other proposed schemes such as the Urdd's Cymraeg Bob Dydd (Welsh Everyday) project to achieve this. The Plan currently identifies the aspiration that every school will achieve the Welsh Language Charter's aims by the end of the life of the Strategic Plan, which highlights the lack of ambition in the Council's intentions. Also, the Plan does not include any details about the way in which Rhondda Cynon Taf's Welsh Language Promotion Strategy will operate on a practical level to encourage and facilitate the growth of Welsh-medium education and the teaching of Welsh in the long term.</p> <p>The Cultural Services Team organises some Welsh language events for pupils with the Council's Youth Engagement and Participation Service and employs Welsh-speaking Youth Engagement Officers in different contexts to provide opportunities for learners to use their Welsh in less formal activities. It is stated that there will continue to be a Welsh-speaking Youth Engagement Officer in every Welsh-medium secondary school, in addition to in some English-medium secondary schools. This is an attempt to normalise the Welsh language and encourage learners to use it outside the classroom. No evidence is provided of the effect of current provision on wider opportunities for learners to use the Welsh language in informal situations. For example, there is no evidence that the Welsh language is represented appropriately in the county's Youth Forum. However, the Plan states that the Council will strengthen the existing links with the Urdd and the county's Welsh Language Initiative (Menter Iaith) to develop Welsh-medium provision in primary and secondary schools.</p> <p>The plan celebrates the fact that the County Borough will host the National Eisteddfod of Wales in 2024 and that this demonstrates the Council's commitment to contributing to the aim of a million Welsh speakers in Wales by 2050. It is trusted that there will be opportunities to promote the Welsh language and for learners to use the Welsh language in different contexts both inside and outside of school. It is too early for the Council to submit plans of the way in which it will take advantage of this and promote it among learners and their parents/guardians by promoting the Welsh language further as part of this outcome's aims. However, there is no information about purposeful plans for the way in which a national occasion such as this would be able to have a positive influence on learners' attitudes towards the Welsh language, in addition to the potential purposeful opportunities that would be beneficial to learners of all ages to use the Welsh language more proactively in a Welsh context.</p>
6	<p>The Plan identifies the current Additional Learning Needs (ALN) provision that is available to support the county's learners and identifies a funding allocation of £3.4 million of Additional Needs</p>

Outcome	Please provide your views:
	<p>Funding that is being invested to support ALN learners who attend primary and secondary schools in an inclusive manner. The Welsh Complex Needs Team, which provides peripatetic specialist support, which includes a Welsh-speaking specialist teacher and two learning support assistants, supports ALN learners through the medium of Welsh and provide learners with specialist support. The Council states that this inclusive service has been positive, but no evidence is provided to support this view.</p> <p>After scrutinising the number of exclusions and the increase in the number of applications for spaces for Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, the Plan identifies that provision for Learning Support Classes needs to be improved within the county. Following this, it was identified that different elements of provision need to be improved, for example by creating specialist learning support classes for Welsh-medium pupils in key stage 3 and key stage 4 with significant ALN. However, for various reasons, such as the effect of the pandemic on provision, these proposals have not yet been implemented. As a result, in September 2020, funding has been provided to establish in-house alternative provision in the county's Welsh-medium secondary schools to meet the needs of learners with social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties. The Plan does not identify how the Council intends to monitor and evaluate provision as a means of forward-planning provision purposefully in the short and medium term. Also, no strategic plan is included that provides a long-term vision to support learning with particular ALN in the county.</p> <p>The Council aims to develop a regional approach to supporting Welsh-medium provision and increase consistency and share best practice as part of developing Welsh-medium provision in line with the Regional ALN Transformation Plan 2020-2021. The Plan does not detail strategic plans for the way in which this will be implemented on a practical level or set out support for learners in the Welsh sector.</p> <p>Overall, the objectives of this outcome do not address ensuring inclusive or specialist provision for ALN learners who are pursuing their education through the medium of Welsh, overall. The vision does not ensure purposeful planning in supporting learners; for example, it is stated that 'the Council will strive to deliver sufficient ALN provision for learners who request it through the medium of Welsh, along with a workforce of adequate size and ability'. The aims are not ambitious enough to ensure inclusive provision that will meet the needs of ALN learners through the medium of Welsh.</p>
7	<p>The Plan identifies the County's current workforce situation, in addition to the responsibility of ensuring a Welsh-speaking workforce in early years settings and schools, for example that 17.3% of the school workforce have either fluent or fairly fluent Welsh language skills (level three, four or five Welsh skills). In addition, PLASC 2020</p>

Outcome	Please provide your views:
	<p>shows that 39% of the school workforce is able to speak Welsh to an intermediate, fluent or higher level. It is identified that 27.7% of the workforce teaches or works through the medium of Welsh, but 6.9% of the workforce are not doing so in their current jobs. Including more detailed information that responds to the aims of this outcome would be beneficial, for example whether the county scrutinises and responds proactively enough to challenges such as recruiting staff with robust Welsh language skills and ensuring inevitable progression as staff retire in the Welsh language sector.</p> <p>By implementing Welsh Government schemes and working with partners at a regional level, the County intends to implement strategies that include aims such as 'promoting a pathway to Welsh-medium education' and the 'Welsh Language Sabbatical Scheme', to aim to achieve the aims of this outcome. No details of purposeful and operational planning are included to achieve the targets that are set out in this Plan.</p> <p>The Plan states that co-operation between Welsh-medium secondary schools both inside and outside the county and Cardiff Metropolitan University is an example of collaboration by supporting 15 PGCE practitioners through the medium of Welsh in 2020-2021. It is also noted that the Urdd provides a range of opportunities for young people over the age of 17 to develop their career through the medium of Welsh, with the aim of strengthening links with the movement further in the future. No plans are provided that identify purposeful aims to ensure an increase in the county's workforce that is able to work with increasing confidence through the medium of Welsh.</p>

Under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duties, the Council has a legal duty to look at how its decisions impact on people because they may have particular characteristics.

How would the WESP affect you because of your:

Characteristic	How would the WESP affect you:
Gender	
Age	
Ethnicity	
Disability	
Sexuality	
Religion/Belief	
Gender identity	
Relationship status	
Pregnancy	
Preferred language	

With regards to the WESP and the impact it may have, please let us know if you feel it could impact opportunities for people to use and promote the Welsh language (positive or negative) and if in any way, it treats the Welsh language less favourably than the English language?

How positive effects could be increased, or negative effects be decreased?	
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Thank you for taking the time to provide us with feedback.