

Number: WG42952



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Welsh Government
Consultation response

School categories according to Welsh-medium provision

Non-statutory guidance document December 2020

Date of issue: September 2021

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

School categories according to Welsh medium provision revised guidance

Audience	Education bodies involved or interested in Welsh in Education Strategic Plans, including, schools, local authorities, regional education consortia, teaching unions, ESTYN, awarding bodies, practitioners, public bodies and others with an interest.
Overview	This document summarises views on a consultation on proposed changes to the non-statutory guidance - School categories according to Welsh medium provision revised guidance
Action required	For information only
Further information	Enquiries about this document should be directed to: Welsh Language Division Education Directorate Welsh Government Cathays Park Cardiff Wales CF10 3NQ Email: UnedlaithGymraegWelshLanguageUnit@gov.wales



@WG_Education



Facebook/EducationWales

Additional copies	This document can be accessed from the Welsh Government's website at: www.gov.wales/consultations
--------------------------	---

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

Related documents	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) Arad: Consultation summary of responses (2021)
--------------------------	--

Contents

Introduction	2
Responses and overarching themes	3
Fewer categories but ones that are broader	4
Need for greater detail	4
More ambition, resources and incentives	6
Next steps	6

Introduction

The Welsh Government published a 15 week consultation, between 14 December and 26 March 2021, to seek views on the proposed changes to the non-statutory draft guidance - School categories according to Welsh-medium provision. The consultation requested views around new arrangements for categorising schools according to the amount of Welsh-medium provision in schools.

The draft guidance was based on the findings presented in the recent [review of school categories](#).

Prior to the consultation period, Welsh Government held two informal engagement sessions during February 2020 at Llandudno Junction and Carmarthen. 19 of the 22 local authorities were represented, as well as headteachers and SLT representation from all school categories.

The consultation asked a total of nine questions:

1. Do you agree with the need to revise the policy around school categories according to Welsh-medium provision?
2. Do the changes proposed encourage and support schools to increase the amount of Welsh-medium provision?
3. Are we achieving our policy aim of introducing school categories that are clearer for:
 - (a) parents/carers?
 - (b) local authorities?
 - (c) schools?
4. Do you agree with the use of numbering for categories?
5. Do you agree with having fewer categories but broader descriptions?
6. Do you agree with more focus on the linguistic outcomes descriptions for each category?
7. Do you agree with the introduction of sub-categories to facilitate transition?
8. In referring to percentages in the secondary categories, should we include:
 - (a) a minimum percentage only?
 - (b) a minimum and maximum percentage range?
9. Do we need to publish additional guidance tailored towards specific groups such as schools and parents/carers following the final publication of this guidance?

The Welsh Government received a total of 103 responses to this consultation:

- 73 were submitted through the online consultation;
- 30 were submitted via e-mail

The Welsh Government also received responses through two campaigns:

- 225 identical responses were submitted through one campaign; and
- two identical responses were submitted through the second campaign.

The responses received through the two above campaigns are included as two individual responses, one for each campaign.

The Welsh Government commissioned Arad Research to undertake the consultation analysis, the findings of which are set out in their report, '[Consultation – summary of responses](#)'.

Responses to individual questions as well as the key themes highlighted in Arad's report have been carefully considered by the Welsh Government. We would like to take this opportunity to express our thanks to everyone who has been involved in shaping this policy to date.

Responses and overarching themes

Our aim in reviewing this policy has always been about bringing clarity and unity to a system that has, even since it was first introduced in 2007, often divided opinion. To get closer to our wellbeing goal of Wales of 'a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language' we must enable more learners to have a meaningful and fulfilling experience in learning Welsh, one that provides enough exposure to the language to give it relevance and purpose in their everyday lives. We want more learners to leave school as Welsh speakers and we want any revised school language categorisation framework to support this ambition. The new Curriculum for Wales places emphasis on learner progression and a renewed focus on opportunities to learn about Welsh history, heritage, language and culture. Our *Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers* strategy provides the context and driver for change.

It is therefore reassuring that when asked for views around the Welsh Government's intention to review the categorising schools according to Welsh-medium provision policy, about two-thirds of respondents agreed with us. This gives us a clear mandate to continue our work in this area. We are also satisfied that there is general agreement with our proposals to organise schools into three categories in the primary and three categories in the secondary sector. The introduction of transitional sub-categories as a bridge between one category and another has also been broadly welcomed. In addition, the increased focus on linguistic outcomes for learners in each category has been well received.

These are all important indicators that we are heading in the right direction. However, we're mindful that responses were often split on issues regarding the numbering of categories (1-3) as well as distinguishing categories by a minimum percentage or percentage range of Welsh-medium provision. How we address these in the final guidance is still under consideration, however for the time being we will continue to refer to categories by number and descriptor.

What is clear from the responses is that we need to tailor the guidance to each of the three groups referred to in the consultation – parents, schools, and local authorities. For parents and carers in particular, we need to ensure that information around school categories according to Welsh-medium provision is presented and communicated in a more accessible way. Work is already underway to address this.

There are other areas in the proposed policy that have been identified as needing strengthening, and in some cases revised.

The key areas identified as needing further work include:

- The need to mitigate unintended consequences introduced by our proposal of **fewer categories but ones that are broader**. We do not want to drive behaviours which would mean fewer hours of Welsh-medium tuition.
- The **need for greater detail** in terms of linguistic outcomes, transitional sub-categories and timescales, monitoring arrangements, funding and nature of support available to schools to help them move between categories.

- The need for **more ambition, resources and incentives** to support schools to increase the amount of Welsh-medium provision they offer.

Fewer categories but ones that are broader

Arad's consultation analysis report allude to risks around broad categories being seen by some as an incentive to schools that already provide a high proportion of their provision in Welsh to reduce the amount of Welsh-medium provision offered or limit their ambition to increase it. Responses indicate that this is of most concern in the secondary school setting and for the proposed category 3 (Welsh-medium) in particular.

In areas with a high proportion of Welsh speakers and where the community language is often Welsh, learners are more exposed to opportunities to immerse themselves in the Welsh language and don't depend on the school alone to further their language acquisition. In other areas where the school often provides the only context for Welsh immersion, the need to ensure every opportunity is taken to expose learners to as many opportunities to use their Welsh in as many different contexts as possible during the school day is critical to its success. Variances which in the main reflect the community language, is not reflected in the expected outcome of the pupils' linguistic ability. Both models successfully create Welsh-speakers. However, we accept that differences in the two delivery models should be better addressed in the final guidance to ensure there are no unintended consequences.

It is for this reason that **we propose that Category 3 for the secondary sector is sectioned into 2 parts (or sub-categories)**. One that enables schools to identify as delivering a wide range of learning experiences through the medium of Welsh (e.g. between 60%-80% of learners undertaking 60% of their school activities through the medium of Welsh). The other that enables schools to identify as delivering all learning experiences through the medium of Welsh (e.g. between 90%-100% of learners undertaking 100% of their school activities through the medium of Welsh). Both models would still be categorised as category 3 Welsh-medium as the majority of the learning is through the medium of Welsh, although we are considering the introduction of sub-categories for the purposes of PLASC returns and to ensure there is no danger of reducing the Welsh-medium offer.

We will also strengthen one of the key principles in this policy that **schools should not offer less Welsh-medium provision in the future than has been done in the past**, and wherever possible, seek out opportunities to introduce more Welsh into their school environment.

In summary, we intend to:

- Review the Category 3 (secondary) descriptors in order to better distinguish between schools that:
 - 1) deliver a wide range of learning experiences in Welsh and
 - 2) those that deliver all of their learning experiences through the medium of Welsh.
 The remaining categories would broadly remain the same.
- Strengthen the principle that schools should not offer less Welsh-medium provision in the future than has been done in the past.

Need for greater detail

The mechanisms in place to help schools maintain and monitor their category descriptor and provide an accurate assessment of their school language category needs to be

strengthened in the final guidance. Schools and local authorities are still required to publish the language category of their school in their school or composite prospectus and we will expect all schools to work with their local authorities and vice versa to agree on the category that best fits their school language provision. We have also been making preparations to update PLASC with new codes and potentially sub-codes that automatically calculates the language category of the school based on data inputs.

More detail is needed around how this policy aligns with other education policies.

The framework for evaluation, improvement and accountability developed to support the introduction of the new curriculum is one such example. We will ensure that our guidance will provide steer on how schools could be using their School Improvement Plans to self-evaluate against their designated school language category. The final guidance will also outline how schools could plan for an increase in Welsh-medium provision by working together with their local authority, regional consortia, and other relevant bodies (e.g. voluntary sector bodies such as the Urdd, Mentrau Iaith, Mudiad Meithrin). Identifying the key actions, timescales and support needed to successfully increase the amount of Welsh provision over time will enable schools, local authorities, ESTYN and the Welsh Government through local authority Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs) to monitor progress against an agreed set of actions.

We will also strengthen **category descriptors in terms of linguistic outcomes, the transitional sub-categories and what the percentages in each category means in practice**. The category descriptors and linguistic outcome for learners will be updated to ensure clear alignment with the Curriculum for Wales guidance and any updates required since making the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021. Additional work has recently been undertaken to provide more direction around what a transitional sub-category entails and the maximum amount of time schools should remain in this category. We remain confident that this should be no longer than 10 years to coincide with the WESP cycle, although there will most certainly be cases where schools are able to progress and transition into a new category much earlier than that.

Much thought has been dedicated to identifying what the percentages in each category means in practice. Currently, the percentages are based on the percentage of the curriculum offered through the medium of Welsh in a school. We believe that this demonstrates only part of what schools and settings are able to offer in terms of their Welsh language provision. There are countless school based, authority wide, regional and national activities taking place that are not directly related to the curriculum but provide valuable opportunities to maximise learner exposure with the Welsh language across all schools and settings. Many of these exposure points in assemblies, registration, during lunchtime or after school clubs form part of a school's *Siarter Iaith* or *Cymraeg Campus* implementation plan but do not get the recognition they deserve, in our view, for the important contribution that they make in terms of language acquisition. We know that all Welsh-medium and bilingual primary schools are delivering the *Siarter Iaith* and approximately 60% of English medium primary schools are delivering *Cymraeg Campus*.

Consultation responses also refer to **the importance of creating a Welsh ethos in every school and setting** in Wales. We agree, and will be incorporating this into the final guidance.

It is for this reason that **we propose to calculate the category percentage descriptor based on the contact time** (which includes curricular/ as well as activities not directly related to the curriculum) offered to learners in Welsh. More work is needed to fully develop

this thinking and we intend to test this approach with education leads and school practitioners during this autumn term.

In summary, we will:

- Continue our work to ensure PLASC codes are updated to reflect the new categories.
- Ensure alignment with other education policies, such as the evaluation, improvement and accountability framework.
- Incorporate reference to creating a school ethos into all category descriptors.
- Provide more detail around linguistic outcomes and transitional sub-categories, as well as;
- Further develop our thinking around the idea of a school's provision of Welsh extending beyond curriculum time but to include the full breadth of Welsh language enrichment experiences within schools and settings, which is in line with the new curriculum.

More ambition, resources and incentives

We hope to dispel any concerns around the Welsh Government's ambition in delivering this revised policy by incorporating the above changes.

We're particularly keen to see how a broader approach to defining 'Welsh-medium provision' could open up new opportunities or revive incentives already in place to help consolidate learners' Welsh language skills. This ties in with comments made in Arad's consultation summary analysis which highlighted calls for greater focus on developing Welsh language oracy. Our *Cymraeg 2050* strategy is about creating new Welsh speakers who enjoy and are confident in using the language. We want our school language categories to reflect these important elements.

In parallel with our work in this area, there are plans to develop a non-statutory Framework for Welsh in English medium settings to support the progression described in Curriculum for Wales' Languages, Literacy and Communication Area of Learning and Experience. This will sit alongside the Literacy Framework available for Welsh in Welsh-medium and English in English medium schools and settings. Work is also underway to develop a 10 year workforce plan. This policy is also aligned with the implementation of local authority Welsh in Education Strategic Plans.

We want to see more schools adopting more ambitious and committed plans to increase the amount of Welsh-medium provision over the next 10 years. In partnership with their schools, we also want to see more local authorities setting out in their Welsh in Education Strategic Plans proposals to work with and support their schools along the language continuum by changing their school language category over a set period of time.

We need to drive forward education policy changes that promote the learning and use of Welsh. The education sector will continue to have an important role to play in creating learners that leave school bilingual in both Welsh and English.

Next steps

We will continue to refine the draft guidance as outlined above to reflect the consultation responses and where necessary, maintain an open dialogue with relevant partners to test alternative proposals.

When the final guidance document is published, we will also publish support materials, such as electronic factsheets, infographics etc. for use by schools and local authorities to support their communication of this policy to others, e.g. parents and school governing bodies.

The new non-statutory guidance on school categories according to Welsh-medium provision will be published on the Welsh Government website during the autumn term.

We would like to thank everyone who has taken time to advise and provide feedback and look forward to continuing working with you to finalise this important piece of work.

List of Respondents

Beryl Jones
Cardiff Council
Cardiff Welsh Education Forum
Carmarthenshire County Council
Carmarthenshire County Council Executive Board
Catholic Education Services
Ceredigion County Council
Chair - RhAG (Parents for Welsh-medium Education) Denbighshire
Chair of Governors, Ysgol Dafydd Llwyd, Newtown
Chair of the Board of Governors, Ysgol y Frenni
CYDAG
Cymdeithas yr Iaith - Carmarthen and Pembroke
Cymdeithas yr Iaith – Ceredigion
Cymdeithas yr Iaith – Education Group
Cymdeithas yr Iaith - Members
Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg - Gwynedd and Anglesey
Denbighshire County Council
Dr Cen Williams
Dyfodol i'r Iaith
Education Department, Gwynedd Council
Estyn

Flintshire County Council
Frongoch Junior School
Garry Lewis
Governing Body Ysgol Casmael Sir Benfro
Governors Consultative Committee, Powys County Council
Gwasanaeth Dysgu Cyngor a Fforwm Iaith Môn
Llanidloes High School
Llantwit School
Menter Iaith - Flint and Wrexham
Menter Iaith - Denbighshire
Morgan Dafydd
Mr A Jenkins
Mudiad Meithrin
Neil P
NEU Cymru
Pembrokeshire County Council
Philip Evans
RhAG (Parents for Welsh-medium Education)
Rhisiart ap Rhys
SEWC Regional School Improvement Group
Shadow Governing Body New 3-19 School, Crymych
The Governing Body, St Marks VA CIW Primary School
UCAC
V H
Vale of Glamorgan Council

Welsh Advisory Team – Conwy Council
Welsh Language Commissioner
Wrexham WESP Forum
Ysgol Bro Teifi - Assistant Head of Phase 1
Ysgol Bro Teifi - Assistant Headteacher
Ysgol Bro Teifi - Vice Chair of Governing Body
Ysgol Dyffryn Conwy
Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Plasmawr
Ysgol y Preseli