



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

## **Response to the Estyn thematic review on local authority Welsh in education strategic plans**

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

**OGL**

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**Report title:**

Local authority Welsh in education strategic plans – September 2016

**Report details:**

This report follows the then Minister for Education and Skills' request that Estyn provides advice regarding the situation in relation to Welsh in Education Strategic Plans across Welsh Local Authorities.

This is the first report provided by Estyn on the planning of Welsh medium education.

**Summary of main findings:**

The main messages and findings arising from Estyn's report into the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans include :

- Many of the initial WESPs required extensive modifications when presented for Ministerial approval. This is partly because they were not aligned well enough with the Welsh Government's vision for Welsh-medium education.
- The partnership between local authorities and the Welsh Government in developing the WESPs, particularly in relation to setting targets, has been weak. The targets set by local authorities when aggregated do not align with many of the aspirations of Welsh Government's Welsh-medium education strategy.
- In a few local authorities, fora meetings are held too infrequently, roles and expected contributions of stakeholders are unclear, and proposed actions are not stated precisely enough or evaluated adequately.
- The categorisation of some schools providing Welsh medium education is causing some confusion and may not provide parents with the right information.
- Considerable variation in the emphasis given by local authorities to increasing the proportion of learners taking GCSE subjects through the medium of Welsh. Only a minority of local authorities see this as a priority.
- Partnership working between local authorities and regional consortia in relation to developing the WESPs is at a very early stage. The WESPs provide a useful framework to facilitate conversations between officers and to promote collaborative working within and between local authorities.

**Targets:**

Progress against the targets in Welsh Government's Welsh medium Education Strategy do vary considerably across the seven outcomes. The report does highlight these variances in some detail.

**Recommendations for Welsh Government and Response:**

**Recommendation 1** - ensure that the targets agreed in the WESPs reflect the aspirations in their Welsh-medium education strategy

Welsh Government will continue to both support and challenge Local Authorities in establishing robust yet realistic targets ensuring meaningful and achievable plans are established.

**Recommendation 2** - ensure that all local authorities place enough strategic importance on delivering the targets within the WESPs

The regular monitoring of targets established in the WESP will be key to achieving Welsh Government's vision for a million Welsh speakers by 2050. Therefore, actions to achieve targets must be monitored and reviewed at the appropriate level on a regular basis.

**Recommendation 3** - monitor the implementation of the WESPs rigorously

Welsh Government will continue to maintain regular dialogue with Local Authorities to ensure their plans are as robust and that actions are implemented. Welsh Government will provide support and advice where appropriate and necessary.

**Recommendations for Local Authorities and Welsh Government Response:**

**Recommendation 1** ensure that the WESPs are a strategic priority

**Recommendation 2** have systematic processes in place to measure the demand for Welsh-medium provision

**Recommendation 3** work with schools to explain the advantages to pupils and parents of Welsh-medium education and of following courses through the medium of Welsh

**Recommendation 4** work with schools to set targets to increase the proportion of pupils in key stage 4 who continue to study Welsh as a first language and follow specific subject areas through the medium of Welsh

**Recommendation 5** make effective use of their Welsh-medium education fora to help to develop their WESP and to monitor progress; evaluate their Welsh-medium additional learning needs provision to identify any gaps

**Welsh Government response:**

All Local Authorities have now been issued with refreshed and revised guidance for their 2017-2020 Welsh in Education Strategic plans. Creating stronger links and partnerships between Welsh Government and Local Authorities is now progressing well following meetings across all consortia regions to discuss how we plan Welsh medium education. Promoting the benefits of a Welsh medium education to local families and their communities will create the shift in moving towards increasing the number of children receiving a Welsh medium education. These actions and those set out in local authority plans, will contribute towards achieving Welsh Government's vision for a million Welsh speakers by 2050.

Welsh medium education fora will be instrumental in implementing changes through challenging any unambitious proposals and targets. They must however, ensure that plans are achievable and really make a difference to the Welsh language both locally and regionally. Though establishing a Welsh education forum is not enshrined in statute, ensuring the involvement of the main players in delivering and promoting the value of a Welsh language education can only benefit the ambitions of local authority in implementing their plans. Where this is not the case, there needs to be a valid rationale as to why this is not possible.

Measuring as well as creating the demand for a Welsh medium education will feed directly into any local authority's plans for capital investment. To meet any evidenced demand, sufficient capacity within schools delivering a Welsh curriculum will be necessary or an opportunity to explore the need for new schools. Any evidenced need should be explored within the context of schools organisation plans.

In some cases, providing opportunities for learners with additional learning needs requires local authorities to work together. Welsh Government expects to see detail regarding how local authorities propose to do this in their plans for 2017-2020.

During the launch of the consultation on Welsh Government draft strategy: a million Welsh speakers by 2050, the Minister for Lifelong Learning and the Welsh Language clearly stated that he will reject any plan that is not sufficiently ambitious and does not demonstrate the level of aspiration needed to ensure growth in Welsh-medium education.

**Publication details.**

The report was published on the 27 of September 2016 and is available on Estyn's website: <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/thematic-reports/local-authority-welsh-education-strategic-plans>