



A Level Welsh First Language

<p>Report title:</p> <p>A Level Welsh First Language</p>
<p>Report details</p> <p>Estyn was commissioned to provide an overview of standards, learners' attitudes, provision and leadership in relation to Welsh as a First Language A level.</p> <p>The report evaluates the quality of teaching and assessment, and curricular planning, in addition to the formal and informal learning experiences that contribute towards raising standards and improving learners' experiences in Key Stage 5.</p>
<p>Summary of main findings</p> <p>Standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Many A level Welsh learners make strong progress in their skills, knowledge and understanding. A few make limited progress, based on a lack of mastery of set texts and in written and spoken expression.• Many learners have the necessary confidence and grasp of Welsh. A few are not given adequate opportunities to develop oral skills outside school• In ten years, the percentage of candidates who gain A*/A and A*-C grades in the subject has remained fairly consistent. <p>Numbers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Although the number of pupils of Year 13 pupils that study A level Welsh First Language has decreased in 10 years, in 2018/2019 the percentage of pupils doing so is similar to the percentage in 2008/2009. <p>Attitudes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learners choose to continue to study Welsh A level because of enjoyment of the GCSE course, teacher influence, confidence in the subject due to home background, and the influence of relatives who have studied the subject.• The main reasons for Key Stage 4 learners not studying the A level course are career aspirations and a lack of enjoyment of the GCSE

Literature course.

- Most learners' attitudes towards Welsh are positive. Desire and confidence of a minority of learners to use Welsh fades during their secondary education.
- Most learners are aware of the employability value of bilingual skills. However, many choose to study their courses through the medium of English at Key Stage 5.

Teaching and learning experiences

- In most schools the quality of provision for teaching is at least good, and excellent in a minority, with teachers delivering the course creatively and planning lessons skilfully.
- In a few schools there is insufficient focus on challenging learners to attain the highest grades or on the pedagogy needed to teach A level texts and raise standards effectively.
- Most teachers provide rich experiences in order to nurture learners' pride in the Welsh language and Welsh culture.

Leadership, marketing and planning

- Most headteachers and leaders of Welsh departments have a clear, rich vision for Welsh and the best leaders have clear strategic plans.
- Many subject leaders provide rich opportunities for students to learn informally and formally about the A level course. However, they face challenges in relation to marketing Welsh A level and the many skills it offers to enhance employability.
- The methods for monitoring the targets set in Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs) to improve Welsh-medium education in their area vary greatly across local authorities.
- Leaders in a minority of bilingual schools face increasing challenges in strengthening the medium of teaching Welsh at Key Stage 4 and 5, though there are a number of successful examples.

Recommendations for schools and further education colleges:

Recommendation 1

Schools and further education colleges should:
Market A level Welsh First Language effectively in order to increase the number of learners that choose the subject

Recommendation 2

Schools and further education colleges should:
Develop effective methods of introducing the set and synoptic texts to learners in contemporary and original ways

Recommendation 3

Schools and further education colleges should:
Plan purposefully to increase the desire, resilience and confidence of secondary school learners to use the Welsh language, and work with external partners to promote this

Welsh Government response to recommendations 1-3:

Welsh Government supports the recommendations and will raise them in our engagement with schools and further education colleges, along with local authorities, regional consortia and other stakeholders.

Please see the response to Recommendation 6 below with regard to actions Welsh Government is taking to promote Welsh at A level.

Welsh Government funds the regional consortia to deliver professional learning and facilitate subject networks to support the delivery of A levels. Welsh Government will draw this recommendation to their attention to encourage sharing of practice.

Welsh Government will also continue to work with a range of external partners to establish and maintain positive practices to increase the use of Welsh, together with formal and informal opportunities for learners to use the language in order to strengthen learners' desire and confidence.

The current *Siarter Iaith* framework commits to:

- publish a toolkit for Welsh-medium secondary schools in order to embed young people's language practices and support the development of school-level projects to encourage informal language use among learners, and
- support Welsh-medium secondary schools to develop activities to encourage learners informal use of Welsh.

In addition, the Mentrau Iaith and Urdd work with schools and colleges to increase post-16 pupils' awareness of the importance of Welsh skills for their employability in future careers.

Recommendations for local authorities and regional consortia:

Recommendation 4

Local authorities and regional consortia should:
Provide networks in order to offer professional learning opportunities and share best practice in terms of teaching A level Welsh First Language

Recommendation 5

Local authorities and regional consortia should:

Track the proportions of learners at key stage 4 and 5 that pursue courses through the medium of Welsh, and set targets to increase this in line with the objectives of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP)

Welsh Government response to recommendations 4-5:

Welsh Government supports the recommendations and will raise them in our engagement with local authorities, regional consortia and other stakeholders.

As outlined above, Welsh Government funds the regional consortia to deliver professional learning and facilitate subject networks to support the delivery of A levels. Welsh Government will draw this recommendation to their attention to encourage sharing of practice.

As part of the new 10-year WESP arrangements, Local Authorities and relevant stakeholders will plan more purposefully and strategically in order to meet the targets within their WESP and those specified in *Cymraeg 2050*. Guidance will highlight the need for Local Authorities to prepare their plans in partnership with key education partners, through the county Welsh Education Forum and beyond.

Ensuring that stakeholders are involved in the planning process will result in improved communication between stakeholders and a better understanding from the outset of the agreed targets and the expectations on all stakeholders as part of the work. There will also be an increasing emphasis on strengthening the monitoring process as part of the WESP, with an expectation that local authorities and the local Welsh Education forums consistently monitor and scrutinise local provision and progress, with a clearer annual reporting process in place to monitor progress against each objective. This will be a significant advance which will support local authorities and regional consortia regarding the tracking and targeting recommended by Estyn.

Recommendation 6

Welsh Government should:

Provide a national marketing resource to promote A level Welsh First Language and the subject's employability skills

Welsh Government response: **Accept**

Welsh Government has developed a marketing campaign in partnership with a range of stakeholders to promote Welsh as an A level subject and its value for enhancing employability. The campaign has currently been suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and will be resumed once it is appropriate to do so. However, work has continued to develop national marketing resources for teachers to use and will be disseminated in due course. The campaign

forms part of wider marketing and communications activity to promote Welsh-medium and Welsh-language education, with consistent messages about the value of Welsh-medium education and of learning Welsh in English-medium settings,

Welsh Government has provided a total of £290,000 in 2019-20 and 2020-21 to support a programme of activities aimed at increasing the number of learners studying Welsh at A level and promoting a pathway into teaching Welsh as a subject. Further information can be found [on the Welsh Government website](#).

An all-Wales A level Welsh Stakeholder Group meets regularly to consider how to strengthen A level Welsh as a contemporary and attractive offer.

Recommendation 7

Welsh Government should:

Work with Qualifications Wales to ensure that the new Welsh GCSE qualifications to support the proposed curriculum offer texts that are more contemporary and more relevant to learners

Welsh Government response: **Accept**

Qualifications Wales continues to work with the Welsh Government and other partners and practitioners to develop qualifications to support the new Curriculum for Wales.

On 4 June, Qualifications Wales published the results of its first consultation exercise called *Qualified for the Future, The Future Range of Qualifications*. This stated that reformed GCSEs would form a central part of the offer.

The next phase of the consultation is due in December 2020. This exercise will consult in more detail on the qualifications that should form part of the offer for 16 year olds. This will include qualifications to support the teaching and learning Welsh. The consultation exercises at this point focus on qualifications to age 16. In due course the implications for A levels will also be considered.

Publication details.

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The report will be published on or after 17 June 2020 and may be accessed on the Estyn website: <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/>

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This document is also available in Welsh.



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