



REVIEW OF THE *EVERYDAY WELSH* PROJECT

1. Background

- 1.1 This paper presents the findings of a study to assess the effectiveness of the *Everyday Welsh* project ('the project') funded by the Welsh Government and implemented by Urdd Gobaith Cymru. The aim of the project is to extend the use of Welsh outside the classroom in English-medium secondary schools.
- 1.2 The Urdd was commissioned to undertake two pilot projects between April 2012 and March 2013, comprising two strands of activity – work in schools to extend the use of Welsh outside the classroom, and intensive courses for Year 10 to Year 13 students. Following this pilot, the Welsh Government invited tenders to undertake further work. This time, the specification combined both elements of the project, aiming for continuity between the work in schools and the intensive courses. The Urdd were successful in their bid for the new contract.
- 1.3 This assessment has been undertaken as part of the evaluation of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy.
- 1.4 The project includes two elements, namely:
 - Supporting activities offered through the school, aimed at extending the use of Welsh amongst Welsh second language learners outside lessons. Some of these activities are held in the school (e.g. drama workshops) and others outside the school (e.g. trips and weekend courses).
 - Five-day intensive/residential courses for year 10 to year 13 learners studying GCSE Welsh second language or those who have chosen to study Welsh at A Level.
- 1.5 Ten schools across Wales participated in the project during 2012-2013. During 2013-2014, the number of schools participating in the first element of the project increased to 11. One school left the project and two new schools joined the project. Thirty-two learners attended the intensive/residential

courses during the same year.

Project aims

1.6 Element 1 – Extend the use of Welsh outside the classroom during activities arranged through the schools. The expected outcomes for this element of the project are as follows:

- increased confidence of GCSE, AS and A Level Welsh second language learners in their use of Welsh outside Welsh lessons;
- increased use of Welsh by GCSE, AS and A Level Welsh second language learners;
- GCSE, AS and A Level Welsh second language learners speaking in Welsh with other learners at school;
- an increase in the number of learners opting for the full Welsh GCSE second language course (where this choice is available) and an increase in the number of learners following AS and A Level Welsh second language courses.

1.7 Element 2 – Offer intensive/residential courses for year 10 to year 13 learners. The expected outcomes for this element of the project are as follows:

- increased interest amongst learners in following Welsh second language AS and A Level courses;
- an increase in the number of learners studying Welsh second language AS and A Level courses;
- increased confidence amongst learners in speaking Welsh outside Welsh lessons in school and outside school;
- increased use of Welsh amongst learners;
- learners communicating with others in Welsh in school and outside school;
- an improvement in Welsh second language GCSE, AS and A Level results.

The purpose of this study

- 1.8 The purpose of this study was to understand the influence of the project on:
- the linguistic outcomes for learners who participated in the project;
 - the attitude of learners towards speaking Welsh, their ability and their confidence to use the language socially outside the classroom and project activities;
 - the results of Welsh second language GCSE and A Level results in participating schools;
 - the decisions of learners to study A Level Welsh second language;
 - the policies and approaches of the schools in relation to increasing Welsh second language provision.
- 1.9 The study reviews the pilot phase of the project (2012 – 2013) and the period following this up until March 2014.

2. Description of the project

- 2.1 The aim of these projects from the outset was to hold informal activities in schools to encourage learners to use Welsh outside the classroom. The projects also provided the opportunity for some learners in these schools to attend intensive/residential courses at the Urdd camp at Glan-Ilyn in addition to the informal activities in school. The intention was that the intensive courses and activities would increase learners' confidence to use the language, leading to more learners choosing to follow Welsh second language as a full GCSE course (where such a choice was available) and to study it as an A Level subject (see also the expected project outcomes outlined above).

Selection of schools for the project

- 2.2 A sample of 10 schools was selected to participate in the pilot between 1 April 2012 and 31 March 2013. The only criterion set when selecting the schools was to ensure that they represented a cross-section of different areas in Wales. It was also decided to select schools with which the Urdd could work effectively. To ensure this, the Urdd decided to target schools with which it had been in regular contact in the past, selecting five schools in the south and five in the north.
- 2.3 It is important to note, therefore, that the schools selected for the project are not representative of all English-medium schools across Wales. It should also be borne in mind that the method used to select the schools could have influenced the outcomes of the project – it is possible that the schools selected were more willing to work with the Urdd and to support the project

activities than other schools may have been. There is no certainty, therefore, that the experiences of these schools, and the outcomes of the project, reflect the experiences that could have been expected with a wider or different group of schools.

- 2.4 The pilot ended in 2013 but the project has continued. During 2013 -14, one school left the project and another two joined. The schools participating in the project during 2012-14 are listed in Table 1 at the end of the report.

Activities held as part of Element 1 of the project

- 2.5 The 11 schools participating in the project are free to decide for themselves which activity /activities they wish to undertake to support and encourage the use of Welsh amongst learners outside the classroom. The methods used to select the activities vary between schools. In some schools, the choice is based on ideas put forward by a committee of pupils. In other schools, the teachers select the activities to be undertaken.
- 2.6 The Urdd has employed a coordinator to maintain contact with the schools, offering them support in arranging and facilitating the activities selected. Teachers across all the schools visited had high praise for the work of the coordinator. They believed that many of the successes of the project were largely due to the enthusiasm and the organisational skills of the coordinator. The type of school activities undertaken vary considerably. Examples include residential weekends, trips to see Welsh films or shows, sport and drama activities at the school as well as visits by guest speakers to discuss how they use the language in their everyday lives. After selecting an activity, each school is eligible to receive funding of up to a £1,000 to cover the costs of the activity.
- 2.7 The ages of the children participating in the activities vary. Some activities are held for year 7 and 8 learners, and others are aimed at older learners. The numbers participating also vary. Some activities (e.g. presentations or performances by visitors to the school) are held for all learners in that year. Other activities, such as trips, are aimed at relatively small groups of learners.

Activities held as part of Element 2 of the project

- 2.8 This element of the project is based on three residential courses during the year:
- Course 1 – year 11 learners only (revision for Welsh second language GCSE). This course is held during the Easter holidays;
 - Course 2 – learners in years 12 and 13 studying Welsh second language A Level. This course is held during the last week of term (mid July);

- Course 3 – year 10 learners only. This course is held during the first week of the summer holidays (end of July).
- 2.9 A number of activities are organised for the learners during the five-day courses. These are adapted according to the ability and ages of the learners, but in general every group attending the courses participates in the following type of activities:
- outdoor activities using Welsh vocabulary and terms;
 - informal classroom sessions with the tutor – a Welsh teacher from a local secondary school. During these sessions, the tutor uses terms learnt during the outdoor activity to compose poetry and other pieces of work associated with the Welsh second language school curriculum.

Additional observations on Element 1 and Element 2

- 2.10 Both elements of the project have placed an emphasis on providing the learners with opportunities to see, hear and use the language in natural contexts outside school. Examples include taking groups of learners out for food or shopping in communities where the Welsh language is used naturally. The aim is to show learners that Welsh is a living language, to encourage their use of the language outside school.
- 2.11 During the residential courses, the coordinator collects written feedback from the learners about the quality of the activities and the effect the course has had, in their opinion, on their language skills.
- 2.12 On the basis of the evidence collected as part of this review, it appears that consistent monitoring data of this nature is not collected from learners participating in school activities undertaken under Element 1 of the project.

3. Methodology

- 3.1 This study was undertaken between March and July 2014. The findings and the conclusions of the study are based on evidence collected during discussions with learners, teachers and organisers associated with the project. The study also considers data on trends in the numbers that have sat Welsh second language GCSE, AS and A Level examinations over the past decade, and the attainment of these learners.
- 3.2 During the study, Arad visited five of the 11 schools that participated in the project during the 2013-2014 academic year. This sample of five schools was selected on the basis of location and size of school. Three schools were visited in the south and two in the north (see Table 1 at the end of the report for a list of participating schools and the schools visited for this study). During the visits, discussions were held with groups of learners (36 in total across

the five schools) who had participated in activities under Element 1 of the project. Owing to the nature of the activities and the variations in the way the project is delivered across schools, it is not possible to state what proportion of all learners who participated in the project, across the 11 schools, is represented by these 36 learners. However, the qualitative data collected from them provides an overview of the activities in which learners across the schools participated.

- 3.3 Interviews were also conducted with 12 teachers and members of senior management teams (SMT) across the five schools. The head of the Welsh department, who was responsible for arranging the activities, was interviewed at each of the five schools. The Urdd officers noted that they usually maintain contact with one member of staff in each school, typically the head of the Welsh department. The five Welsh heads of department interviewed during the study represent nearly half the school staff that have had direct contact with the project. However, as the activities arranged in every school have varied, it should be recognised that it is likely that the experiences of individual schools are different. It is therefore possible that representatives from the schools that were not interviewed would have presented different evidence from the evidence presented in this report.
- 3.4 The research team also visited the Urdd camp at Glan-llyn, where the residential courses and intensive courses take place. The purpose of the visit was to observe examples of the course activities, talk to the learners, and interview the course tutor and coordinator. Discussions were also held with Welsh Government and Urdd officers responsible for undertaking and managing the project.
- 3.5 As part of the study, data on the numbers of learners and the results achieved by learners who studied Welsh second language as a GCSE, AS and A Level subject during the past decade was collected and analysed. Trends over time across the 11 schools can be compared with the same trends on a national level. However, it should be noted that the data available is based on a relatively small number of learners in each individual school. It is therefore difficult to reach firm conclusions about trends on the basis of the data.
- 3.6 It should also be noted that the choices made by learners in terms of studying Welsh, and the results achieved at GCSE, AS and A Level, cannot necessarily be attributed to the influence of specific interventions supported by this project. As noted in the Findings section below, the information collected about the experiences of learners does not enable us to measure systematically the influence of the project. In addition, there are many other factors – including teaching methods, the personal circumstances of learners, parental influence, their wish to study other subjects – that are likely

to influence the subject choices and attainment of individual learners.

- 3.7 The data does not enable us to consider the counterfactual either as it is not possible at present to compare the outcomes of the learners with a similar group of learners who have not participated in the activities.
- 3.8 This study therefore is largely dependent on qualitative data and on the perceptions and opinions of learners and practitioners regarding their experiences of the project. The evidence collected did not enable us to compare opinions before and after the activities.
- 3.9 Despite this, the evidence collected does enable us to reach conclusions about how the project is organised and delivered. The evidence also enables us to outline examples of the project's strengths and weaknesses.
- 3.10 The evidence refers to the influence that the project has on learners' attitudes towards Welsh in general and towards Welsh second language as a subject. The evidence also refers to the influence of the project on school policies in addition to some of the challenges faced by the schools and the project coordinators.

4. Findings

Learners' attitude towards Welsh and their willingness to speak Welsh

- 4.1 One observation made repeatedly during the school visits and the visit to the Urdd camp, was that learners across the schools do not have much opportunity to hear or use the language outside the classroom on a day-to-day basis. For these learners, the school is the main link that they have with the language. As noted earlier, the aim of the project is to provide learners with opportunities to see, hear and use the language outside school. During interviews, learners observed that such opportunities are useful and that hearing the language being spoken socially has been a revelation for them.
- 4.2 Several of the teachers and the Urdd officers managing the project referred to the fact that hearing the language being used socially introduces the learners to new Welsh words and expressions. The teachers were of the view that this extends the linguistic horizons of the learners. Many of the teachers were also of the opinion that practical activities (e.g. white water rafting and drama workshops in school, where the learners need to learn and use Welsh terms and expressions) provide the best opportunities for them to use the language and to expand their vocabulary outside the classroom. The teachers also mentioned that these activities create opportunities to use the terms learnt in class lessons, or as part of the tutor sessions on the residential courses. On the other hand, teachers noted that some activities

(e.g. ten-pin bowling trips, where the learners do not receive any training) do not provide learners with the same opportunities to use new Welsh expressions. In these instances learners tended to speak only English with each other.

- 4.3 According to many of the teachers interviewed, elements of the school-based activities appear to have a positive effect on the linguistic ability of those taking part. However, the scale of the interventions (i.e. hours and number of activities) is small compared to other factors which influence learners (e.g. the influence of individual teachers, selection of other subjects available).
- 4.4 From the evidence available, it appears that the five-day intensive / residential courses have more of an influence on the confidence and the linguistic ability of learners than activities under Element 1 of the project. It is possible that this is linked, to some extent, with the fact that more monitoring data is collected for Element 2 of the project.
- 4.5 Although teachers and Urdd officers could provide examples of learners making more use of the Welsh language during activities organised within Element 1 of the project, this is not an outcome that is regularly monitored or recorded. More consistent monitoring data, and therefore more evidence of influence, is collected for Element 2 of the project. However, neither element of the project monitors whether the participating learners speak more Welsh with each other and / or with others following their involvement in the activities or the intensive courses.

Influence on learners' choices in terms of studying Welsh second language, and their linguistic attainment

- 4.6 During the period 2005 – 2014, the number of learners who followed the full Welsh second language GCSE course in Wales has remained fairly constant. During the same period, the number of GCSE short course candidates has increased (an increase of over 30 per cent). The number of Welsh second language A Level candidates has decreased by 32 per cent across Wales during 2005 – 2014. The number of learners following the Welsh second language AS course remained fairly constant during 2005 – 2013. However, there was a large decrease in 2014, when the number of AS registrations were 28 per cent lower than in 2005.¹
- 4.7 In the case of the 11 schools participating in this project, there are no clear patterns that follow or run contrary to the national trends. The numbers following the full GCSE course and/or AS and A Level courses have increased in some schools during 2005 – 2014, whilst the numbers have decreased in other schools.

¹ Data source: Welsh Government Knowledge and Analytical Services.

- 4.8 The percentage of learners across Wales achieving an A*-C grade in the Welsh second language full GCSE course has increased from 68 per cent in 2005 to 77 per cent in 2014. During this period, a similar pattern can be seen in the results across the 11 schools (although the percentages achieving an A*-C grade across the 11 schools were higher than the national percentage on average (83 per cent on average across the 11 schools compared with 77 per cent nationally)).
- 4.9 The percentage of learners achieving an A*-C grade after following a Welsh second language short GCSE course across Wales has remained fairly low between 2005 and 2014 (between 45 and 48 per cent). Results across the 11 schools vary considerably: in one school, no learners have achieved an A*-C grade since 2005² whilst 76 per cent of the learners who followed the short course have achieved an A*-C grade since 2005 in another school. On average across the 11 schools, the percentage is similar to the national percentages (50 per cent).
- 4.10 The percentage of learners achieving an A*-C grade whilst following the AS and A Level course across Wales has also remained constant over the past decade (70 per cent on average for both qualifications). The trends across individual schools vary between years and between schools.
- 4.11 There is no clear pattern of an increase or a decrease in the number of learners across the 11 schools who have achieved an A*-C grade at AS, A Level and GCSE since the project began.
- 4.12 The inconsistency in the data trends reflects the limitations faced when analysing data for a relatively small number of learners in each school. In addition, the project has only been running since 2012, and therefore it is very likely that it is too early for clear trends to emerge. It must also be noted that there are many other influences that are likely to have a bearing on results and on the numbers of pupils studying Welsh second language AS and A Level, which are beyond the control of the project, for example parental influence, learner attitudes towards the subject, and the choices made by learners to study other subjects.
- 4.13 The project coordinator and the intensive/residential courses tutor collect feedback from participating learners to gather their views on the quality of the activities and the influence that the activities have had, in their opinion, on their Welsh language skills. However, this information by itself does not provide evidence that the courses influence the choices made by learners about studying Welsh second language at AS and A Level. Evidence on the outcomes of the project is not recorded regularly following the school

² It should be noted that the numbers that studied the short course at this school between 2005 and 2014 were small.

activities either.

- 4.14 In order to collect more robust evidence, learners participating in the activities would need to be asked more specific questions relating to their willingness to speak Welsh and to study Welsh second language at AS and A Level. Even then, it would have to be recognised that these also would be subjective opinions to a large degree.
- 4.15 The qualitative evidence collected for this study suggests that the project improves pupils' linguistic skills and their confidence in using the language. This in turn suggests that these improvements in pupils' linguistic skills could lead to an improvement in their achievement in Welsh second language at GCSE and A Level. However, as these outcomes are not consistently recorded as part of the project, there is no firm evidence to support this.
- 4.16 During the residential courses, the learners participate in sessions delivered by an experienced tutor. During the study, it was observed that these sessions are informal and fun for the learners, but at the same time, there is a clear focus and link with elements of the Welsh second language curriculum. This should also strengthen the linguistic ability of those attending, thus contributing to improved results and attainment in Welsh second language. However, there was no monitoring framework in place when this review was undertaken to confirm this.³ In order to show such evidence teachers and/or Urdd officers would need to record the Welsh language skills or ability and the predicted grades for individual learners before and after their participation in the project.

Influencing school policies

- 4.17 From the observations provided by many SMT members, it can be seen that the project supports school policies which aim to increase the use of Welsh across the school and ensure an increase in Welsh second language provision. In the schools where a high priority is given to policies such as these, members of the SMT considered the project to be valuable, strengthening the policy direction they were aiming for. In the schools where support for the Welsh language or Welsh second language as a subject was not very strong amongst the SMT, it was not clear that the project had much influence, if at all, on internal policies or attitudes.

Challenges

- 4.18 The majority of teachers noted that lack of time is the greatest challenge they face when trying to organise elements of the project. In some cases, teachers are not able to allocate sufficient time to gather ideas about the types of activities they would like to provide through the project. The

³ Such a framework has been introduced to the project monitoring process since this study was completed.

coordinator offers help in arranging activities, but some schools expect more advice than this, and expect guidance and further support from the Urdd to develop ideas regarding appropriate activities as well as support in arranging and providing them

- 4.19 In some cases, where the school has not put forward ideas for activities, the project coordinator has arranged activities on their behalf.
- 4.20 The attitude and the mindset of the school also influence the number of activities organised. In schools where the teachers and the SMT are enthusiastic about the project, clear ideas emerge about the types of activities they are keen to offer.
- 4.21 According to the project coordinator, one of the biggest challenges when organising residential courses is encouraging young people to attend. The individual courses provide places for up to 15 learners at a time. Schools do not always allow learners to take time off from school during term time to attend courses, and it is difficult to encourage learners to attend courses during school holidays. For individual learners, the decision to attend or not is often dependent on friends' decisions. In some cases, a last-minute decision by one learner not to attend can lead to many of their friends also deciding not to attend.
- 4.22 In order to ensure that sufficient numbers of pupils attend, course organisers occasionally offer schools other than the 11 participating in the project, the opportunity to attend the courses. As a result, some groups on the courses include learners that have not had any previous contact with the project i.e. through the activities held in schools. This suggests a lack of continuity or strong link between both elements of the project, i.e. the activities provided through the school and the five- day intensive courses. This was evident at times during the school visits. For example, not all teachers coordinating the school activities seemed to be aware of the intensive courses. According to the Welsh Government, the Urdd was asked to strengthen this aspect of the project after the first year. In addition, the school activities have not always been aimed at learners who are at an age when they can attend the intensive courses.
- 4.23 Although the intensive courses have been designed for learners in different school years, the challenge of securing sufficient numbers of learners to attend has, in some cases, resulted in learners from different school years and of varying linguistic abilities being grouped together. As a result, the coordinator and the tutor have to be flexible in the way they deliver the course. The tutor noted that they need to start the week with a number of ideas, and adapt these according to the ability, interests and attitudes of the learners. It was also noted by the tutor that there is a need to do this with every group, not only those which include learners of different ages.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The activities undertaken under both elements of this project offer learners the opportunity to use the Welsh language outside the classroom. Some activities also offer learners the opportunity to hear the language (for the first time in some cases) being used as part of everyday life. The learners themselves report that the activities increase their confidence in using Welsh, extending their vocabulary and their language skills. However, these outcomes are not recorded consistently following the activities, and therefore there is no firm evidence available to support this.
- 5.2 Examples were provided of the project activities influencing the confidence and ability of learners to use the language in the classroom. However, there is no evidence available to show whether the project encourages learners to speak Welsh with each other, or with others, outside the activities or following the intensive courses.
- 5.3 There is no firm evidence available either that the project encourages more learners to study Welsh second language at AS or A Level, or that it improves GCSE and A Level results in the subject.
- 5.4 The successes of the project thus far have been very dependent on the enthusiasm and the organisational skills of the coordinator. Teachers across all the schools visited praised the work of the coordinator highly. However, there was also recognition that it is difficult for one person to coordinate all the activities across the schools as well as organise the residential courses.
- 5.5 The success of the project is also dependent on the attitude and the mindset of the schools themselves. In schools where support for the Welsh language in general and for Welsh second language as a subject is strong amongst the senior management team, the project appears to have a positive effect on attitudes, use and the interest of learners in the language. In schools where the support for the language is not as strong, the project does not seem to have the same influence on the attitudes and interest of the learners.
- 5.6 It therefore appears that the project is more likely to achieve its expected outcomes if the school itself, and the SMT in particular, shows clear support for the language.
- 5.7 From the available evidence, it appears that the five-day residential / intensive courses have more influence on the confidence and linguistic ability of the learners than the activities under Element 1 of the project.
- 5.8 The organisers of the project considered Element 1 of the project (i.e. school activities) to be a way of leading or introducing learners towards Element 2 of the project (i.e. the intensive courses) in accordance with the agreement with the Welsh Government. It is not apparent, however, that schools make this link between both elements of the project. Some teachers who had

coordinated the school activities said they were not aware of the intensive courses. Other teachers considered the intensive courses as separate opportunities to the school activities.

- 5.9 On the whole, it seems that the project's influence is positive. However, the scale of the interventions (in terms of hours and the number of activities) is limited compared to the other factors which can influence the learners. There are limitations therefore to how influential the project can be.
- 5.10 In addition, as other factors can influence pupil experiences, it is difficult to attribute any change in learner participation or attainment to this project. It should also be recognised that the limited number of schools participating in the project brings with it limitations in terms of assessing the impact of the project.

Table 1: Schools participating in the Urdd project 2012 – 2014⁴

Cowbridge Comprehensive School* (**)
Cardiff High School
Llanishen High School
Radyr Comprehensive School*
Ysgol Bryn Elian
Ysgol Eirias*
Prestatyn High School
Castell Alun High School
Flint High School*
Ysgol Dinas Brân (**)
Caldicot School*
Hawthorn High School [x]

* schools visited during the study

(**) schools that joined the project in 2013 – after the pilot phase

[x] schools that left the project after the pilot phase

⁴ The project is continuing with the same schools.

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The views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government.

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