



Comisiynydd y
Gymraeg
Welsh Language
Commissioner

Early Years, Children, Young People and Education Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
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Dear Chair,

Priorities for the Early Years, Children, Young People and Education Committee

Thank you very much for the opportunity to take part in the above consultation. The areas within the Committee's remit are central to creating new Welsh speakers and increasing opportunities to use the Welsh language.

The Cabinet Minister for Education and the Welsh Language has made it clear that expanding Welsh language provision in the early years and in further and higher education and ensuring a continuous and uninterrupted language and education pathway, are priorities. It is therefore essential that the Committee scrutinises the position of the Welsh language across all aspects of its work, including progress against commitments and targets contained in relevant strategies and legislation, as well as the commitments of the new Government.

I recently published a [5 year report on the situation of the Welsh](#) language, which highlights the importance of the education sector in creating confident Welsh speakers. The report provides a detailed analysis of the situation of the Welsh language in the early years, statutory and tertiary education sectors, and highlights the main priorities for the coming period.

Based on the main conclusions of the report I recommend that the Committee focus on the following five priority areas:

1. Expanding childcare and Welsh-medium early years provision

The evidence clearly shows that immersing children in the Welsh language as early as possible through care and education is one of the most effective ways of creating confident Welsh speakers. The Committee should scrutinise the progress made by the Welsh

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Government, local authorities and partners in expanding Welsh-medium childcare and early years provision, with a particular focus on:

- The Welsh Government's commitment to provide a free childcare offer to all children between the ages of 9 months and 4 years, and, as part of this, to support and expand Welsh-medium childcare
- The adequacy of Welsh-medium provision, the establishment of new provision, the support and encouragement to providers to move along the linguistic continuum, and the relationship of this to local authorities' Welsh in Education Strategic Plans
- The early years workforce, including the challenges of recruiting and retaining staff in the sector, and plans for developing the Welsh language skills of the workforce, for example through Welsh language training courses and apprenticeships, and as part of continuing professional development

2. Implementation of the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Act 2025

The implementation of the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Act 2025 will be a priority for the Welsh Government during this Parliament. The Committee has a key role in scrutinising the implementation of this significant Act, ensuring that it will result in more children and young people leaving the education system as confident Welsh speakers. In the short term the Committee should focus on:

- The development of the code for describing ability in Welsh and the duty placed on Welsh Ministers to draw up and publish a National Framework on Welsh Education and Learning Welsh.

In the medium term, the focus should be on:

- The role of local authorities in formulating and implementing Welsh in Education Strategic Plans, and on the role of schools in formulating and implementing Welsh language education delivery plans. The Committee has an important role in ensuring that the Act leads to schools, and therefore pupils, moving along a linguistic continuum. A key part of achieving this will be to ensure that the Act leads to the expansion of Welsh-medium education, and therefore that an increasing proportion of Welsh pupils attend Welsh-medium provision.

3. The importance of creating a bilingual education workforce

The Cabinet Minister for Education and the Welsh Language's statement on the Government's priorities states that no education system can succeed unless we support the workforce that makes it possible. It follows that the ambition of the Welsh Language and Education Act cannot be achieved without ensuring a significant increase in the number of education professionals able to work through the medium of Welsh. The Committee should therefore prioritise scrutiny of:



- The steps Welsh Ministers are taking to ensure an increasingly bilingual education workforce, which encompasses not only teachers, but also assistants, education professionals, the early years workforce and the post-16 workforce
- The role of national organisations such as the Education Workforce Council, Yr Athrofa, Dysgu, Medr and the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol in ensuring opportunities for the education workforce to develop their Welsh language skills in training, and as part of continuing professional development.

4. Key areas that support or hinder the growth of Welsh-medium education

While ensuring a bilingual education workforce is the most important factor in achieving the objectives of the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Act 2025, a number of other issues are also essential to support the growth of Welsh and bilingual education. The Committee should pay particular attention to the Welsh language when scrutinising the following:

- The qualifications system in Wales, with particular focus on vocational qualifications through the medium of Welsh
- Transport and accessibility of Welsh-medium education
- Provision of additional learning needs through the medium of Welsh, including the implementation of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018
- Implementing and supporting curriculum delivery

5. Ensure linguistic progression into tertiary education, skills and the world of work

One of the main challenges facing the Welsh language today is ensuring that young people retain their skills after leaving the statutory education system. The tertiary education sector bridges statutory education and the world of work and increasing opportunities for learners to maintain and develop their skills while continuing their education or training is important. Not only does it offer opportunities to build linguistic confidence, but it can also influence individuals' perception of the importance of the language in the context of the workplace in Wales. In this context we urge the Committee to focus on:

- The role of Medr in increasing the demand for, and participation in, learning and assessment through the medium of Welsh. As part of this, particular attention should be paid to the development of Medr's national plan for the Welsh language across the tertiary education sector, and to how Medr uses its regulatory and funding powers to ensure improvements in the way Welsh-medium tertiary education is planned and delivered



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- how the tertiary sector prioritises important areas for the Welsh language; aligning education, training and employment pathways and emphasising the value of Welsh as a skill for the workplace
- plans to increase the capacity of the Welsh-medium tertiary education workforce
- plans to expand Welsh-medium vocational qualifications
- working arrangements and strategic partnerships between post-16 organisations and schools

Although it may not necessarily be within the committee's remit, we would emphasise the importance of ensuring that children and young people who acquire Welsh through the education system have meaningful opportunities to use the language in community, cultural and sporting activities, as well as through technology and digital media. It is therefore crucial that issues relating to education and the Welsh language are considered within the context of wider Welsh language policy. In this context, we would encourage you to consider opportunities to collaborate and co-plan your work with the other relevant committees of the Senedd, and in particular the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language and Sport Committee.

I hope that the above comments will be of use as you plan the Committee's future work. I wish you every success in that work and would be happy to contribute to it.

Yours sincerely

Efa Gruffudd Jones

Welsh Language Commissioner