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Ref: P-04-528  
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Petitions Committee  
Bae Caerdydd  
Caerdydd  
CF99 1NA

Dear William Powell

**Petition P-04-528 All Primary Schools in Wales taught through the medium of Welsh.**

Firstly I'd like to thank everyone for their time and effort and getting involved in the discussions of the above petition. I've read through the responses and have some additional comments.

NUT: You paint a very positive picture that English medium primary school teachers have a good level and understanding of Welsh. Over the past year I have spoken to three primary schools teachers (two are friends of mine) and the level of Welsh they possess was non-existent. I tried to engage in the most basic Welsh conversation I could think of at the time and all I had back was blank faces. And these three teach Welsh as part of the curriculum in school. How can you have primary school teachers teaching a language they cannot speak, not even a little (I'm sure they are the minority)?

Regards to **parentally choice**, very few parents make a conscious effort, most don't know there is a choice or there are no other choices in their area, most just default to the closest school without a thought (if that school was Welsh they would choose it). Then on the other hand there are parents who want to make a conscious effort to send their children to a Welsh medium school but have little to no option of a Welsh medium education.

It is a post code lottery in Wales. You either live in an area where by default you will be a Welsh speaker; or live in an area where if your parents want to make a commitment and a lot of effort to transport you long distances to a Welsh school; or live in an area and by default you have to no option but English medium. On one hand you're concerned by people **not** wanting Welsh medium education but mention nothing about people who **do** but have no option. A rebalance is required.

You also mention 'growing organically' is the course of action. Yet this has been done since the 1960's, although the language has seen some successes in terms of numbers it is agreed that the language is struggling and at a cross road, heartland areas are losing speakers, it's less of a community language than ever before, and speakers in anglicized areas don't use it and lose it. So growing organically doesn't work.

Your comment how parents will support reading and listening. You obviously do not understand how bilingualism works or the benefits of it. All research shows that bilingual children do better in education not just in core subjects like maths and sciences but even English. Research has shown that the child of whose parents do not speak or read Welsh benefit enormously from interpreting Welsh to English to their parents and actually brings child and parents closer. Most parents who read with their children from a young age quickly pick up the Welsh require to read and listen. In Swansea we have two Welsh comprehensive schools which the majority of children come from English speaking homes. These two schools have some of the best results in the county, YG Gwyr is currently

ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> by the council and 1<sup>st</sup> by Walesonline's own ranking system (Also ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in Wales). So your argument about how parents will struggle with their children is invalid and the same old rubbish that was spouted off a few generations ago which helped put us in this situation.

Capacity: I acknowledge the issue which is why this isn't a short term project and just a proposal to build better ideas upon. That's why I'd like to see a clear strategy in place from the Welsh government. Is it not the Welsh governments aim to create a truly bilingual Wales? How else can you get there, the current strategy despite what everyone says, isn't working.

Huw Lewis: Just to comment on growing demand. Councils in Wales do nothing proactive; they simply meet the bare minimum and drag their feet to achieve that. Swansea council will do absolutely nothing until there is an emergency. They let Welsh primary schools fill up beyond capacity before reacting. RHAG frequently research into Welsh medium education and when I spoke with them they told it is the same old formula, increase provision = increase demand. They told me every time a new Welsh school is opened despite its location it quickly fills up. Instead of waiting to see demand the Welsh government needs to be proactive.

You quoted 'able to use the language with their families, in their communities and workplace.' I live in the community of, Killay, I have zero opportunity to use my Welsh or live in my language, should I move?

What I think is unacceptable is the fact that there are many villages and towns with zero provision of Welsh medium education. For example, my village Killay, Two primary schools both English. Village west of Killay, Dunvant, two primary schools both English. Village to the east, Sketty, two primary schools both English, village to the North West, Three crosses, 1 primary school, English. The whole of the Gower peninsular, number of Welsh Schools... Zero. Ask yourself if this is acceptable? Or Balanced? Or fair? What option does a child on the end of the Gower peninsular have?

My wife is from Tredegar, Blaenau Gwent, there are 6 primary schools, all English. The whole of Blaenau Gwent has 26 primary schools, 1 Welsh medium. Is this acceptable? What options do the parents of Blaenau Gwent have?

Perhaps all primary schools in Wales taught through the medium of Welsh is too difficult but a rebalance and equal opportunities for all are required! My wife and her sisters are all disappointed they never had the opportunity, and it's all down to where they were born.

Thank you again for your reading my letter and giving me the opportunity to respond.

Kind Regards,

Phillip/