

How realistic is the goal of every pupil being an 'independent user' of the Welsh language by the time they complete compulsory education? How difficult will it be for mainly English language, partly Welsh language schools to support their pupils to become 'basic users', which is their goal in the first instance under the Bill?

We believe it is realistic for nearly all pupils to become independent users of the Welsh language by the time they complete statutory education. However, to do so, there is a need to ensure improvement and consistency in provision across Wales to ensure that we create Welsh speakers. Robust arrangements need to be in place to ensure that pupils make progress and are given appropriate progression opportunities throughout their time in statutory education. It must also be ensured that effective professional development is in place for teachers and assistants, and that leaders prioritise Welsh and set a clear vision for the language.

In our annual report last year, it was noted that 'Where the support and enthusiasm to develop learners' Welsh language skills was robust, leaders prioritised the Welsh language and set a clear vision and a strategic and purposeful improvement plan to develop provision. In settings with the most effective practice, leaders provided valuable professional learning opportunities and support for practitioners to develop their skills to support learners to acquire the Welsh language constructively over time. This fostered enthusiasm and confidence among practitioners, which had a positive effect on learners' readiness to speak and use the Welsh language spontaneously in a variety of situations. For example, schemes such as the Welsh Language Sabbatical Scheme played a key role in developing practitioners' Welsh language skills and their ability to teach through the medium of Welsh in some schools and clusters ([Welsh Government, 2021a](#)). In the best examples, we saw the effect of provision not only on individual teachers, but on how they used what they had learned to influence others. Most importantly, this had a positive effect on the teaching and standards of Welsh in these schools. Read about how St David's R.C. Primary School, Cwmbran [developed the Welsh language supported by purposeful professional learning](#).

In settings with less effective practice, leaders did not prioritise the Welsh language or promote the benefits of being bilingual and multilingual sufficiently. Often, they did not properly consider pupils' progress or provision for the Welsh language when self-evaluating and planning for improvement. Too often, they considered that using a very few Welsh greetings and words with pupils was sufficient and there was no plan to develop Welsh language provision beyond a few specific lessons. In addition, very little professional learning was provided to help staff develop their skills and confidence in using the Welsh language with pupils. It is a cause for concern that this situation has continued in some schools over a long period of time.'

You suggest in your written evidence that the wording of section 22(2)(b) could be strengthened so that local authorities would be required to “promote and encourage” late immersion education in Welsh, rather than only “providing information and advice” in relation to it. Could you elaborate on how necessary this is, in your opinion, bearing in mind that section 22(2)(a) already requires local authorities to “encourage demand” and “participation” in late immersion education in Welsh?

We believe that a duty should be placed on local authorities to promote late immersion provision to parents, carers and learners. We suggest strengthening the wording of ‘make arrangements to provide information and advice... to children of compulsory school age in its area and parents of children in its area’ in 22(2)(b)(i) and (ii) to promote and encourage. If we are to increase the use of the Welsh language within families, promoting and emphasising the importance of immersion to parents is necessary. See the following case studies:

[Effective immersion: supporting learners to make swift progress when supporting them to learn about and appreciate Welsh history and culture - Estyn \(gov.wales\)](#)

[Using the Welsh language: purposeful and unique extra-curricular activities that support learners to speak Welsh increasingly spontaneously on the Nant site and in the local community - Estyn \(gov.wales\)](#)

We feel it is crucial for authorities to promote and encourage immersion arrangements so that they can make the advantages of immersion clear to parents in developing their children’s Welsh language skills. This is stronger than ‘providing information and advice’ and places an expectation on Local Education Authorities to develop immersion work, consider immersion in its wider sense (e.g. when developing the skills of pupils in English-medium schools, developing pedagogy and preparing pupils for education in Welsh-medium schools).

You state in your evidence that you welcome the principle of centralising specialist support for lifelong learning of the Welsh language within a single body. Could you elaborate on your reason for this and why you state that this should include school education?

We agree strongly with the principle that specialist support for lifelong learning of the Welsh language, including school education, should be centralised within a single body, namely the ‘National Institute for Learning Welsh’. The aim here is to ‘support people to learn Welsh, and facilitate their progress, so that more people (of all ages) are learning the language’ 37 (1). Establishing the institute will enable experts from all sectors to come together to plan linguistically across all sectors, providing consistency in the journey of learners of all ages along the language continuum.

We have inspected the National Centre for Learning Welsh twice during the last inspection cycle. The National Centre has had a significant influence on the landscape of learning Welsh over recent years – in addition to maintaining and

extended good or better standards within the Welsh for adults sector, we have seen it, through partnerships with numerous partners, become a linguistic influencer. The Work Welsh scheme has evolved rapidly – for example in supporting government policy in the health sector (More than Words, a tutor has been appointed in every health board in Wales to support the workforce to provide a Welsh service to patients). They have worked with Mudiad Meithrin – Clwb Cwtsh and a wide range of other partners.

There is a need to build and expand on the expertise and work of the National Centre for Learning Welsh when establishing this body, which will be a powerhouse to disseminate good practices, raise the expectations of all sectors and ensure consistency in what is happening across statutory education sectors and, in fact, non-statutory sectors, for example adult learning. We believe that the role of the National Centre for Learning Welsh in its new form is key, not only in terms of training the education workforce but also in terms of improving the pedagogy of that workforce and the successful acquisition of a second language as a means of communication. The emphasis on oral communication rather than teaching as a subject with examinations is the main aim and a crucial one. Below are examples of what is currently available through the Centre.

[Learn Welsh Nant Gwrtheyrn Inspection Report 2023 \(gov.wales\)](#)

[Effective immersion: supporting learners to make swift progress when supporting them to learn about and appreciate Welsh history and culture - Estyn \(gov.wales\)](#)

[Using the Welsh language: purposeful and unique extra-curricular activities that support learners to speak Welsh increasingly spontaneously on the Nant site and in the local community - Estyn \(gov.wales\)](#)

The National Centre for Learning Welsh has expertise in language learning and acquisition and, during our inspections, we have noted that such expertise should be shared with other sectors. We have also published case studies on the way in which the Welsh for adults sector produces active Welsh speakers, for example:

[Effective support helps learners become fluent Welsh speakers - Estyn \(gov.wales\)](#)

[Turning learners into users of the Welsh language - Estyn \(gov.wales\)](#) in addition to providing valuable training for the education workforce:

[Increasing the number of Welsh speakers in the education workforce - Estyn \(gov.wales\)](#)

The Centre and the Welsh for adults sector are very familiar with the expectations and levels of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). As a result, it would be possible to consider and adapt the sector's national curriculum, which is based on the CEFR, as a basis for the language continuum in each sector. The National Centre is already responsible for Welsh language training for workforces

through Work Welsh programmes. We therefore believe that it would be logical to expand the function of the National Centre, by taking advantage of its experience and expertise, to create a body that would provide strategic and practical guidance across the education sectors. Please see the latest inspection report (April/May 24), which sets out how the role of the National Centre has evolved very quickly and it is an effective body. In establishing the Institute, there will be a need to ensure that roles and responsibilities are identified clearly, showing how the Institute is interwoven with any other relevant bodies.

We believe it is vital for learners of all ages to have opportunities to begin or continue their journey towards becoming active speakers. Creating a single language continuum, in addition to specific schemes, such as the new scheme to offer free courses to people aged 16-25, would provide truly equal opportunities for learners of all ages to do so. We also believe that lifelong education, including adult community learning partnerships, need to do much more than they are currently doing to provide equal opportunities for Welsh speakers, whether they are proficient learners or fluent Welsh speakers, to learn through the medium of Welsh and, as a result, improve and use their linguistic skills. We feel that there is a need to understand effective pedagogy in terms of teaching and acquiring Welsh as a second language, for example as seen in the Welsh for adults sector. The case study [Increasing the number of Welsh speakers in the education workforce - Estyn \(gov.wales\)](#) shows the type of work that has taken place and which has now grown to be an increasingly broad offer to the education workforce through the Welsh for Adults Learning Centre. There is another case study as a result of the Centre's inspection (not yet published), namely 'How the Learn Welsh sector influences pedagogy and language acquisition in other sectors in Wales and beyond.'

We appreciate seeing 'The Learning Welsh Institute may... give financial assistance to any Welsh language learning provider in relation to teaching or learning Welsh' 37 (3) (c). We believe strongly that money should not be an obstacle to learning the Welsh language for the people of Wales.

There will be a need to consider within the Bill whether Estyn has the appropriate powers to maintain and possibly extend its inspection work when the National Centre for Learning Welsh is abolished and the Institute is created.

Estyn supports the provisions in the Bill which set a continuum of Welsh language skills (based on the CEFR) on a statutory basis but has also called for a "comprehensive programme of professional development" for teachers and classroom assistants. Do the Bill and the Explanatory Memorandum provide the necessary assurance that this will be the case and how it could be strengthened?

In introducing a language continuum, we believe strongly that an intensive programme of professional development is needed. There is room to strengthen

expectations, for example in setting expectations for the immersion of new teachers into the system in Wales, by ensuring that teachers and assistants have the confidence and ability to develop pupils' Welsh language skills in line with the language continuum, to ensure that there is professional development to improve the teaching of Welsh e.g. the best pedagogy for introducing language.

We would like to see a decisive role for the Institute in leading on pedagogy and being at the heart of the professional development of the pre-, during and post-statutory education workforce – and accept that the pedagogy will need to be adjusted according to age/ability. This would support and enrich the concept of one continuum.