

## **Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru I National Assembly for Wales**

### **Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg I Children, Young People and Education**

#### **Committee Hynt y gwaith gan Lywodraeth Cymru wrth ddatblygu Cwricwlwm newydd Cymru I Welsh Government's progress in developing the new Curriculum for Wales**

#### **CR 26**

#### **Ymateb gan: Comisiynydd y Gymraeg Response from: Welsh Language Commissioner**

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the Welsh Government's progress in developing the new curriculum for Wales. My response will focus on Welsh language issues relating to the new curriculum for Wales, and in particular the relationship between the new curriculum and the Welsh Government's *Cymraeg 2050* strategy.

## **1. Initial representations**

In general, I welcome the recommendations made in the Donaldson report in relation to the Welsh language. The report concludes that the Welsh language should remain compulsory up to the age of 16 and that there should be a renewed focus in schools on learning Welsh primarily as a means of communication, particularly oral communication and understanding. The report suggests that the Welsh language should be considered as a skill which needs to be developed and practised across the curriculum in order to ensure that it is seen as a natural means of communication. Professor Donaldson also highlights that Welsh language qualifications should be realigned at 16 with the proposed focus on speaking and listening and application in the workplace. Not only does the report underline the role of the curriculum in terms of creating Welsh speakers, but also that the curriculum needs to be rooted in Welsh culture and history, in order to develop a sense of ownership of the language as a key aspect of the nation's unique identity

Though Donaldson's vision is positive, I am concerned about how exactly this vision will be achieved during the process of planning and delivering the new curriculum. Part of the problem is a lack of clarity and information. Beyond generalised and abstract descriptions of the nature of the new curriculum, there

little detail in terms of the nature nor content of the curriculum in relation to the Welsh language. This is understandable, given the approach to developing the new curriculum, where there is a clear emphasis on the role of pioneering schools in shaping and producing the curriculum based on Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLEs).

Therefore, the representations made here are based on an incomplete and, at times, ambiguous picture, of what is trying to be achieved in terms of the Welsh language within the new curriculum. I therefore consider this paper an opportunity to share evidence and contribute to the discussion on the process of producing and shaping the new curriculum in terms of the Welsh language.

## 2. Policy context

Although *Education in Wales: Our National Mission (2017-21)* is the Welsh Government's action plan for education, *Cymraeg 2050* is the strategy which provides the vision and direction for the education sector in terms of the Welsh language.

The Welsh Government's *Cymraeg 2050* strategy includes two ambitious objectives:

- To increase the number of Welsh speakers from 562,000 (2011 Census) to 1 million by 2050.
- To increase the percentage of the population that speaks Welsh daily from 10% (in 2013-15) to 20% by 2050.

*Cymraeg 2050* provides an action plan for the role of the education sector in increasing the number of Welsh speakers. Furthermore, there are a number of specific targets in relation to the education sector's contribution on the journey towards a million Welsh speakers by 2050. These actions and targets are supported and developed further in the *Welsh in Education Action Plan 2017-21* and also the *Cymraeg 2050 Action Plan (2018-19)*.

The strategy and accompanying action plans outline a vast number of actions. However, it appears that there are three work streams inherent to the rest of the education strategy:

- Increasing the number of those receiving Welsh medium education
- Delivering a new curriculum for Wales and transforming the way that Welsh is taught in English medium schools

- Increasing the number of teachers able to teach through the medium of Welsh and able to teach Welsh as a subject

Although expanding Welsh medium education is a crucial part of the *Cymraeg 2050* strategy, the Welsh Government emphasises that the English medium education sector has a crucial role to play in terms of creating Welsh speakers. Very few pupils in the English medium education sector currently develop a sufficient level of Welsh language skills to be able to use Welsh in a meaningful way outside the classroom. The Welsh Government is very clear that they wish to see this situation transformed.

The trajectory to a million Welsh speakers is based on the fact that an increasing number of individuals leaving English medium education will identify themselves as being Welsh speakers. In 2031 for example it is predicted that 35% of students leaving English medium education will identify themselves as being Welsh speakers. In 2050, this figure is predicted to rise to 50%.

**Figure 1: The trajectory to a million Welsh speakers and the role of the education sector.** Adapted from the Welsh Government's *Welsh in Education Action Plan 2017-21*

Number of Welsh Speakers	2017 570,000	2021 600,000	2026 630,000	2031 680,000	2036 750,000	2041 830,000	2046 920,000	2050 1,000,000
<b>How the education sector will contribute to the above targets</b>								
<b>Increase the number who receive Welsh medium education</b>	22% 7,700	24% 8,400		30% 10,500				40% 14,000
<b>Increase the number who leave school as Welsh speakers</b>	Introduce the new curriculum for Wales			55% (19,000)	All learners			70% (24,500)
				35% (8,500)	English medium sector			50% (10,500)
<b>Primary teachers who teach through the medium of Welsh</b>	2,900	3,100		3,900				5,200
<b>Secondary teachers who teach through the medium of Welsh</b>	1,800	2,200		3,200				4,200
<b>Secondary teachers who teach Welsh as a subject</b>	500	600		900				1,200

According to the Welsh Government's plans and strategies, the delivery of a new curriculum for Wales will provide the impetus for changing the way in which the Welsh language is taught in English medium schools. A key aspect of delivering the curriculum will be the removal of the Welsh second language qualification, and the development of one language continuum for teaching the Welsh language across schools in Wales.

### 3. Historical context

The Welsh language has been a statutory subject within the Welsh curriculum in Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 since 1990, and in Key Stage 4 since 1999.

Although studying Welsh is compulsory, the curriculum followed by pupils differs significantly, and the time allocated to studying the subject varies a great deal from school to school. In general, individuals will either follow a Welsh first language or Welsh second language qualification. There is also great disparity in terms of the language used to teach the rest of the curriculum, which is extremely significant in terms of the linguistic outcomes learners are likely to achieve. The majority of students in Welsh medium education follow a Welsh first language qualification. The majority of students in English medium education follow a Welsh second language qualification. The situation is more complex and diverse for pupils attending bilingual schools, in terms of which Welsh language qualification is followed and also the language used to teach the rest of the curriculum.

Figure 2: linguistic categories for primary schools in Wales (based on PLASC data).

School Category	Description	Number of schools 2017/18	% of pupils 2017/18
Welsh medium primary school	At least 70% of teaching through the medium of Welsh with students expected to transition to Welsh medium secondary education	368 29%	21%
Dual stream primary school	Two kinds of provision existing side by side, one Welsh medium stream and one English medium stream	32 2.5%	3%
Transitional primary school	A provisional category in most cases where 50- 70% of the learning is in Welsh and it is expected that the majority of pupils will attend English medium secondary education	4 <1%	<1%
Predominantly English medium primary school	The Welsh language is used for 20-50% of teaching time and it is expected that the majority will attend English medium secondary education	33 2.5%	2%
English medium primary school	The English language is used to teach the curriculum and the Welsh language is taught as a second language. Pupils are expected to transition to English medium secondary education	824 65%	74%

**Figure 3:** linguistic categories for secondary schools in Wales (based on PLASC data).

School Category	Description	Number of schools 2018/17	% of pupils 2018/17
<b>Welsh medium secondary school</b>	All subjects (apart from English) are taught through the medium of Welsh	18 (9%)	8.7%
<b>Bilingual secondary school</b>	<b>2A</b> at least 80% of subjects are available in Welsh only	15 (8%)	4.5%
	<b>2B</b> at least 80% of subjects are available in Welsh, but are also available in English	10 (5%)	5%
	<b>2C</b> 50-79% are in Welsh, but are also available in English	4 (2%)	1.4%
	<b>2CH</b> all subjects are taught to all pupils using either language	-	-
<b>English medium secondary school but with significant use of Welsh</b>	20-49% of subjects are available through the medium of Welsh, but all subjects are also taught through the medium of English.	8 (4%)	4.1%
<b>English medium secondary school</b>	The curriculum is mainly in English with Welsh taught as a second language	140 (72%)	76.2%

Part of the complexity with the term 'bilingual education' is that it is often used for varying purposes and to refer to a wide range of education programmes with different linguistic objectives. It should be noted that not all types of bilingual education necessarily produce bilingual learners.

In Key Stage 4 pupils either choose to study a Welsh first language qualification, or a Welsh second language qualification. In the past Welsh second language pupils have been given the further option of following a full or short course, and also following an applied version of these courses.

Around 80% of pupils in Wales choosing to sit a Welsh language GCSE examination choose one of the Welsh second language options. Of those, more pupils always choose the short Welsh second language course than the full course.

Historically, attainment levels for Welsh second language pupils have been low compared with other subjects.

Welsh second language is not a core subject within the National Curriculum for Wales, therefore attainment levels in this subject are not considered as important as attainment levels in other core subjects as part of schools' performance

measures. This is likely to be part of the reason why a significant number of pupils in Wales do not gain any Welsh language qualifications.

Figure 4: Percentage of pupils in year 2 and 9 who are assessed in Welsh (first language) as part of teachers assessments (data from the Welsh Government's annual report on the Welsh Language Strategy 2012-17).

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Year 2	21%	21.8%	21.9%	21.9%	22.4%	22.2%	22.2%	22%
Year 9	15.9%	16%	16.3%	16.8%	17%	17.1%	17.8%	17.9

Figure 5: Percentage of pupils entered for different kinds of Welsh language examinations in Key Stage 4 between 2010-17 (based on WJEC examination data). These figures do not account for the significant number of individuals who did not sit a Welsh exam at all.

	Welsh first language	Welsh second language	Applied Welsh second language (full course)	Welsh second language (short course)	Applied Welsh second language (short course)
2010	19%	26%	10%	36%	9%
2011	19%	25%	10%	35%	11%
2012	18%	28%	6%	35%	13%
2013	18%	27%	6%	37%	11%
2014	18%	26%	8%	37%	11%
2015	18%	29%	8%	35%	10%
2016	17%	28%	8%	38%	9%
2017	21%	31%	9%	35%	5%

Figure 6: Percentage of pupils achieving A\* to C in Welsh second language GCSE 2010- 17 (based on WJEC examination data).

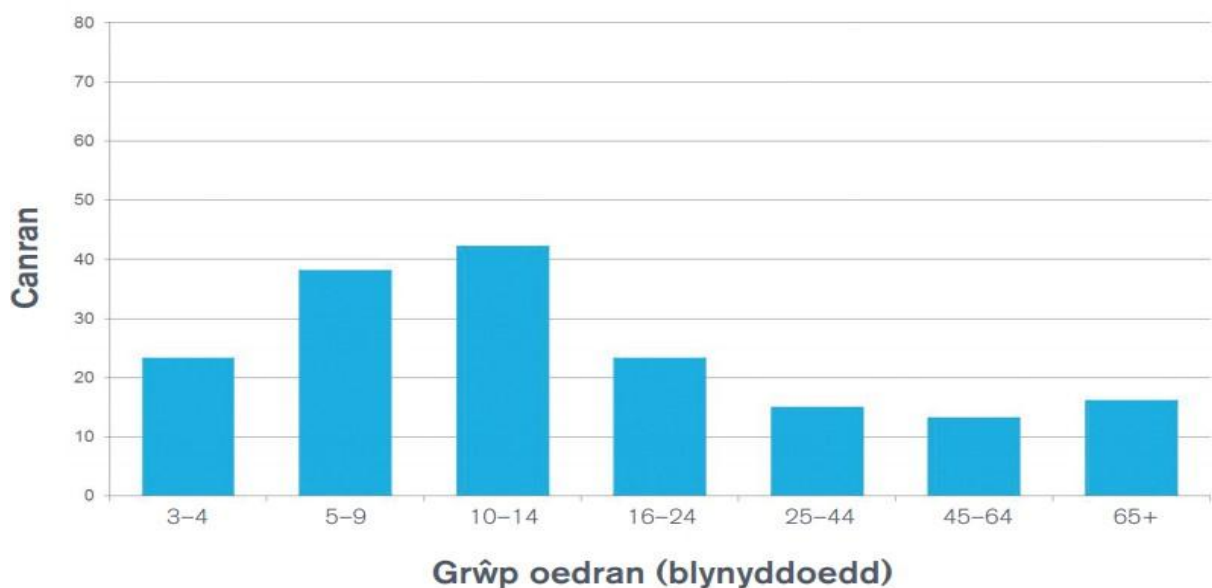
	Welsh second language	Applied Welsh second language (full course)	Welsh second language (short course)	Applied Welsh second language (short course)
2010	73.8	70.3	49.4	40.9
2011	73.8	66.3	49.2	45.5
2012	74.1	72.2	49.5	50.0
2013	76.6	78.3	49.5	52.5
2014	76.5	81.7	52.3	44.4
2015	78.5	82.9	51.8	48.0
2016	78.8	82.0	52.6	50.0
2017	79.8	80.3	54.2	60.8

Various reports are highly critical of the extent to which following a Welsh second language course is an effective means of creating fluent Welsh speakers. Professor

Sioned Davies' (2013) review states that it is 'the eleventh hour for Welsh second language', as only very small numbers of those studying Welsh second language develop a sufficient level of Welsh language skills to use the language outside the classroom. An independent report from Robert Hill (2013) draws similar conclusions by noting that pupils are making excellent progress in acquiring Welsh second language skills in fewer than one in ten schools. Estyn's 2017-18 Annual Report concludes that 'only in around a quarter of English medium schools do pupils continue to develop their Welsh language skills when transferring from primary to secondary schools, and that in the rest of the schools 'pupils do not develop their Welsh speaking skills well enough in Welsh lessons or in other contexts...and do not have the confidence to attempt to speak Welsh.'

Evidence gathered from 2011 Census data supports these expert conclusions. Although the Welsh language has been a statutory subject across all key stages in Wales since 1999, and that therefore the vast majority of those aged 16-24 have followed a curriculum where the Welsh language is compulsory, only 22% state that they can speak Welsh.

Figure 7: Percentage of the Welsh population able to speak Welsh according to age (as reported in the 2011 census).



Although it is not possible to know exactly in which language the 22% was taught, the fact that this figure is very close to the number who have received Welsh medium education, or who have followed the Welsh first language route, suggests that very few Welsh second language learners consider themselves to be Welsh speakers in the long-term.

Despite the numbers for the 10-14 age group being much higher, there are questions about the extent to which these numbers reflect real language gains. That is, either a vast number of these individuals lose the ability to use the Welsh language after leaving school, or the data is unreliable in the first place (for example, due to those responsible for responding to the census overestimating the Welsh language skills of their children).

The above statistics and expert evidence suggest that the English medium sector plays a very limited role in terms of creating Welsh speakers. It appears that around 80% of pupils in Wales are subject to a curriculum and Welsh language teaching arrangements which, in essence, do not lead to bilingualism.

These conclusions in relation to Wales also reflect evidence from international academic literature on education models which lead to bilingualism. International research has produced very robust evidence regarding the success of immersive education as a model which allows children to become fluent in a minority language, without any negative impact on their attainment in the majority language, nor on their performance across the rest of the curriculum. The evidence also strongly suggests that teaching a minority language as a second language is unlikely to lead to bilingualism.

Although academic research on bilingual education can be complex, the overall message is relatively straightforward. If bilingualism is a goal for the education sector in Wales (as is outlined throughout the *Cymraeg 2050* strategy), then it is an education programme where the Welsh language is used as a medium of learning for a significant part of the curriculum which is likely to create truly bilingual individuals. Ensuring the intensity of Welsh medium input is a fundamental consideration when planning language provision across the curriculum. In this context, the social and linguistic context in Wales must be considered, where the Welsh language is a minority language, and the English language dominates popular culture and global media. As the situation between the Welsh language (the minority language) and the English language (the majority language) in Wales does not constitute a level playing field, it is accepted, especially in the case of younger pupils, that the proportion of education delivered through the medium of Welsh needs to be higher than that delivered in English.

## 4. Questions and concerns in relation to developing the new curriculum

### 4. 1. The curriculum in Welsh medium schools

The implications of Donaldson's recommendations for the Welsh language curriculum in Welsh medium schools is unclear. It appears that a variety of recommendations involving the Welsh language have been written from the perspective of English medium schools, and there is little consideration given to the significant differences which exist between schools in Wales.

One of the main recommendations found in the Donaldson report is that there should be a 'renewed focus in schools on learning Welsh primarily as a means of communication, particularly oral communication and understanding'. This seems reasonable enough in terms of English medium schools, but where does this leave the Welsh medium sector? The majority of pupils in the Welsh medium sector are fluent and understand spoken Welsh by the end of their first year of statutory education. Donaldson also highlights the fact that the Welsh language needs to be considered as a skill which needs to be developed and practised across the curriculum. This is, of course, the essence of Welsh medium education, therefore it is difficult to see how these recommendations relate to this sector.

Donaldson also recommends realigning Welsh language qualifications at 16 with the proposed focus on speaking and listening and application in the workplace. Once again, these recommendations make sense in the context of English medium education, but these would be extremely low expectations for students in Welsh medium education.

#### *Questions for the committee to consider:*

- Although the concept of a language continuum suggests that the boundaries between different education sectors in Wales need softening, it is clear that the new curriculum (in the short-term at least) needs to reflect the fundamental differences which exist between Welsh medium and English medium schools. How will the practicalities of teaching Welsh, and the rest of the new curriculum, vary between Welsh medium, English medium and bilingual schools?
- How can one curriculum with one language continuum set suitable expectations and learning outcomes for pupils in the Welsh medium and English medium sectors? Is this logically possible and is it desirable?

## The curriculum in English medium schools

We completely agree with the Welsh Government about the importance of changing the status quo, whereby the majority of pupils in Wales follow an education programme which does not lead to bilingualism. Not only does it concern social inequality, but it is also abundantly clear that the *Cymraeg 2050* vision will not be achieved unless there is some radical rethinking.

One aspect of the Welsh Government's strategy to transform the status quo involves increasing the number of pupils receiving Welsh medium or bilingual education. Another aspect of the strategy is to change the language outcomes of those pupils in the English medium sector. In this context, the Welsh Government's *Cymraeg 2050* strategy requires moving from a situation whereby the English medium sector contributes very little in terms of creating fluent and confident Welsh speakers, to a situation whereby 50% of pupils within the sector state that they can speak Welsh at the end of their education. Considering the evidence presented above (part 3 specifically) it is clear that far-reaching changes are needed in order to achieve this.

What is not currently clear from the Welsh Government's plans and strategies is how exactly this will be achieved. The Welsh Government states that it is the new curriculum, the removal of Welsh second language qualifications, and the introduction of one language continuum for teaching and learning Welsh that will ultimately drive the required reforms to the English medium education sector. Such statements, however, do not explain what exactly these changes will be. That is, a commitment to removing Welsh second language qualifications and developing one continuum for describing and assessing pupils' language skills is not tantamount to explaining how standards will be improved in these skills in the first place. At present, it is very difficult to identify the significant reforms which will transform the language outcomes of pupils in the English medium education sector.

The main factor responsible for the lack of progress in relation to the Welsh language skills of pupils in the English medium sector is the fact that they follow an English medium education model which does not, in essence, and as evidenced by Welsh and international research, create bilingual individuals. Although the Welsh Government is keen to remove the linguistic outcomes of a Welsh second language curriculum, it is unclear if they are committing to changing the educational and structural landscape which leads to these outcomes in the first place. Given the socio-linguistic situation in Wales today, it is difficult to see how any changes to the curriculum, qualifications, or modes of learning within an 'English medium' education model will lead to the outcomes

predicted in the Welsh Government's *Cymraeg 2050* strategy. This is especially true given that the *Cymraeg 2050* vision encompasses the use and vitality of the language, as well as the numbers able to speak Welsh.

At times it seems that the Welsh Government considers such significant changes a part of the process of removing Welsh second language qualifications and delivering the new curriculum and continuum. For example, the *Cymraeg 2050 Action Plan 2018-19* states the intention to review the process for increasing the proportion of Welsh-medium teaching and learning in schools. In addition, the Welsh Government commissioned two pieces of research on effective means of teaching Welsh second language with the specific aim of steering the work of reforming the curriculum in terms of the Welsh language. Both pieces of research suggest that the most effective way of creating bilingual speakers in a minority language context is to use Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). Although there are significant variations in terms of the nature of CLIL and its arrangements in different contexts, this approach is based on immersive education. That is, CLIL is based on the principle that the target language (Welsh in the case of Wales) needs to be used as the medium of learning for a significant proportion of the curriculum, which has advantages in terms of acquiring a second language and also developing understanding of the subject in question. Implementing these recommendations would, to all intents and purposes, mean changing schools' language medium. Adopting a CLIL approach would mean that much of the curriculum would be taught through the medium of Welsh which would mean moving from an English medium model to a bilingual education model.

There are also a number of actions relating to the development of Welsh language skills within the existing workforce which would, of course, be necessary in order to deliver a bilingual curriculum.

### Questions for the committee to consider:

- According to the Welsh Government's trajectory to a million Welsh speakers, in 2031 the English medium sector will create 8,500 Welsh speakers per school year, and in 2050 will create 10,500 per school year. What is the extent of the changes required in the English medium sector in order to meet these targets, bearing in mind that the sector's current contribution to creating Welsh speakers is very limited?
- What is the Welsh Government's vision in terms of the nature and language medium of the curriculum in English medium schools in the future?

- How will the curriculum and language continuum facilitate the changes which are needed?
- If the Welsh Government intends to introduce a phased approach to increasing the proportion of the curriculum taught through the medium of Welsh, then what is the strategy for driving these changes? Unlike the detailed plans on widening Welsh medium and bilingual education, it is not clear whether a strategy exists for implementing such far-reaching changes to the English medium education sector.

## The curriculum and the workforce

Despite some ambiguity surrounding the nature of the new curriculum in terms of the Welsh language, it is clear that one crucial element of successful reform is ensuring that there are enough teachers able to teach through the medium of Welsh. This appears to reflect a more general principle in relation to the importance of teachers to Donaldson's entire vision.

The *Cymraeg 2050* strategy includes specific targets for increasing the number of teachers able to teach Welsh, and teach through the medium of Welsh.

Figure 8: Number of Welsh medium teachers in the primary and secondary sector from 2010 to 2018 and the targets set out in *Cymraeg 2050* for Welsh medium teachers

	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	2021	2031	2050
Welsh medium primary teachers	2,812	2,872	2,869	2,934	2,891	2,867	2,853	2,827	3,100	3,900	5,200
Welsh medium secondary teachers	1,848	1,779	1,870	1,851	1,751	1,659	1,664	1,772	2,200	3,200	4,200

Figure 9: Number of students completing Initial Teacher Education courses in Wales, based on HESA's Student Record

		12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17
Primary school	Trained to teach in Welsh	160	150	145	145	115
	Not trained to teach in Welsh	510	520	480	495	525
Secondary school	Trained to teach in Welsh	100	145	115	80	80
	Not trained to teach in Welsh	705	610	570	450	425

The *Cymraeg 2050 Action Plan (2018-19)* and the *Welsh in Education Action Plan 2017-2021* include a variety of specific actions to increase the number of teachers able to teach through the medium of Welsh. For example, the *Welsh in Education Action Plan 2017-21* includes plans to:

- Work with regional consortia and the EWC, using all available data sources, to develop a full picture of practitioners' Welsh language skills and ability to teach through the medium of Welsh.
- Develop workforce planning for increasing Welsh language and Welsh-medium teachers and support staff by 2021 to include the role of ITE, Graduate Teacher Programme, incentives, supply teachers and professional learning.
- Ensure that future ITE programmes foster student teachers' appreciation of the Welsh language and provide opportunities for them to develop their proficiency in Welsh and expertise to teach through the medium of Welsh as part of their initial training.
- Evaluate the impact of the Welsh language Sabbatical Scheme.

We also know that the Welsh Government has increased the financial incentive available through the Welsh Medium Improvement Scheme for students wishing to train to teach through the medium of Welsh in secondary schools.

Despite the existence of various schemes, it is unclear whether these will lead to the increase in Welsh medium teachers needed in order to deliver the *Cymraeg 2050* strategy. This is particularly true considering the lack of progress seen during the previous Welsh Medium Education Strategy (2010-2017). Despite one of the objectives of that strategy being to build the capacity and skills of the Welsh medium workforce to ensure a sufficient supply of teachers to support the growth of Welsh medium education, no meaningful progress was seen as a result of this strategy (see figure 7).

These concerns are reiterated by a recent Welsh Government publication – '*Evaluation of Welsh-medium Provision in Initial Teacher Training*'. The report highlights the severity of the current situation within Welsh medium secondary education specifically. The report states that a number of secondary schools find it difficult filling teacher vacancies, and that some schools have to appoint non-Welsh speaking members of staff or those with very poor Welsh, noting that 'it's better for us to have somebody, than not at all'. The report states that some secondary schools draw upon the good will of teachers who have recently retired

as a 'stop gap' solution to their recruitment difficulties and that it is quite common to move existing teachers to teach a shortage subject.

The report concludes that Welsh medium ITT provision needs to almost double the number of trainees trained each year in order to meet 2031 targets in terms of the number of Welsh medium teachers. This does not account for those likely to leave the profession over the next thirteen years, nor the increasing number of Welsh medium teachers that will be needed within the English medium sector following changes to the national curriculum. There are no clear targets currently set for accredited ITT partnerships in terms of the number of Welsh medium trainees they should be aiming to recruit each year in order to meet *Cymraeg 2050* targets.

### Questions for the committee to consider:

Do the Welsh Government's current plans for the Welsh medium education workforce reflect the severity of the current situation, and the extent of the challenge faced in meeting *Cymraeg 2050* objectives?

Is there a significant risk that a lack of Welsh medium teachers could undermine a fundamental part of the *Cymraeg 2050* strategy, and also Welsh language objectives which are part of the new curriculum for Wales?

Should the Welsh Government be considering more radical plans in order to address the challenges which exist in this context? For example, to what extent does the Welsh Government plan to implement recommendations from the recent report on Welsh medium ITT provision in full?

I hope these comments will prove useful as you scrutinise the development of the new curriculum for Wales.

Meri Huws  
Welsh Language Commissioner