

Briefing Paper: Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) Update

Welsh Government Initiatives and Relevant Carmarthenshire Issues

Current Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (2017-21):

Following a recent Welsh Government announcement, the lifespan of current WESPs in Wales has been extended by one year. This means that the current strategy can continue to September 2022 at the latest.

The guiding principles and philosophy remain unchanged from the published strategy in pursuit of the vision for a bilingual Carmarthenshire-

https://www.sirgar.llyw.cymru/media/4226/fersiwn-olafgd4830_wesp_strategy5-cy.pdf

https://www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/media/4227/latest-versiongd4830_wesp_strategy5-en.pdf

The strategic objectives of the present Carmarthenshire WESP are well documented and include:

- Promoting the cognitive, economic, social, educational, health and community benefits of bilingualism.
- Aspiring to ensure that every pupil is completely bilingual (and multilingual) when leaving school so that they have the skills to operate as bilingual citizens in their communities, the workplace and beyond/worldwide.
- Moving all schools along the language continuum, commensurate to reaching achievable and stretching targets and in respect of each school's particular context
- The Carmarthenshire WESP is a Corporate Policy, as referenced in '*Moving Ahead in Carmarthenshire*' document, priority #31

- Notable milestones to date with the current WESP include:
 - Working with Mudiad Meithrin and pre-school education providers to track the progression from Nursery Groups to Welsh medium education
 - Maintaining and improving standards of pre-school providers through support and guidance from the Early Years Team.
 - Working in collaboration with partners to increase Welsh medium provision.
 - Working with English medium schools that are able to provide Welsh immersion at Foundation Phase
 - Ensuring appropriate communication with all stakeholders on the benefits of moving along the language continuum by supporting schools with meetings for parents and governors
 - Maintaining the ongoing sharing of information and understanding on the benefits of bilingualism across the county
 - Promoting and developing training and modelling of lessons through the Tîm Athrawon Datblygu'r Gymraeg (TADG) to ensure a high standard of Welsh medium provision. (see below)
 - Continuing to promote the Language Charters and other initiatives in order to develop the use of Welsh outside formal learning.
 - Continuing to provide Language Stations in targeted schools in Welsh History (specifically History of Carmarthenshire), extended writing, raising KS2 attainment levels from 4 to 5.

- New build in Ysgol Maes y Gwendraeth to become a state-of-the-art facility for Primary, Secondary and Adult learners.
 - Promoting and sharing good practice through training and videos
 - Offering schools guidance on ways of encouraging parents to support their children- 3 leaflets have been published to date: '*Welsh with your Kids. Give it go!*,' '*Homework? No problem,*' and '*Being Bilingual.*'
 - Creating a clear progression protocol to support schools from KS2 to KS3
 - Setting targets and support for 2A, 2B, 2C, EW and EM secondary schools to increase the numbers learning through the medium of Welsh. These figures to be appropriately challenging, but reasonable and achievable, with appropriate assistance.
 - A number of Primary Schools have progressed by developing their linguistic provision. In 2019: Rhys Pritchard (Dual Stream to Welsh Medium); Llys Hywel, Llangynnwr, Y Ddwylan and Griffith Jones (Dual stream to Welsh immersion model at Foundation Phase)
- Certain issues in the established development plan can be further assisted by the extra year granted.
 - Continue to implement the training model
 - Make further inroads into the provision for pupils with Additional Learning Needs
 - Refine the arrangements for pupils to attend the new Language Centre
 - Monitor and evaluate the policy
- Consultation on proposals to change linguistic designation
 - Permission to consult has been confirmed for the following schools:
 - Ysgol Llandybie / Y Blaenau - *proposal to re-designate the new school as Welsh medium*
 - Ysgol y Felin
 - *Formal consultation meetings have already been conducted with parents, staff, unions and governors*
 - *Dates: Both public consultations close on 16.7.21*
 - Training Model
 - During lockdown, 90 Secondary staff registered on language courses. 72 completed due to work pressures in the releasing of lockdown for schools.
 - Courses have been offered at Beginner, Foundation, Intermediate, Proficiency and Gloywi Levels. Staff have been afforded opportunities to combine personal linguistic improvement with the terminology and techniques required for the classroom. By attending these in-work courses, staff are able to quickly apply lessons learnt with pupils. Under lockdown conditions, these 2.5hour weekly lessons have operated successfully online.
 - Feedback from the courses have been very positive

- Officers are also exploring the interplay between the internal courses and the Welsh Government sponsored sabbatical course and also looking at post course aftercare
 - The sustainability of the course model is being considered, having been supported by internal and regional funding to date
 - A Welsh Language Audit was recently carried out for all staff. Some 758 responses have been received (at 8.3.21) to request enrolment for linguistic courses across all ability levels.
- Work of Tîm Athrawon Datblygu'r Gymraeg (TADG):
 - A Welsh support package for Foundation Phase has been produced.
 - Welsh support for teachers, teaching assistants, pupils and parents.
 - Weekly Teams lessons - the level of work will be tailored depending on level of ability and confidence. Lessons focus on language patterns and vocabulary needed for the classroom (see above)
 - Reinforcement of the work introduced on Teams on the classroom floor:
 - weekly face to face catchup sessions
 - providing resources to support the use of Welsh.
 - sharing good practice in the classroom
 - Foundation Phase resources for all schools including Welsh nursery rhymes and Carmarthenshire fables as well as numerous activities based on books both fact and fiction
 - Supporting Parents and Carers:
 - Resource pack for English speaking parents- ideas, resources and advice:
 - Ideas on ways to support their child with their Welsh
 - Basic Welsh vocabulary
 - Introduction/facts about the area
 - Information on apps, Welsh tv programmes and books.
 - Informal sessions on Teams sharing experiences and ideas.
 - Facebook- The TADG Facebook page is full of ideas, activities and resources for pupils of all ages and abilities including Micro lessons for Teachers and parents as well as competitions.
 - There are a wealth of resources for all ages on SharePoint including videos and lessons created using 'Castify'.
 - Latecomers - TADG have been successful in working with 70 latecomers across 31 schools during the pandemic, across all abilities, both at home and in the classroom through Teams.
 - Working jointly with Welsh for Adults, training packages with suitable language have been created in conjunction with TADG.

Welsh Government Curriculum Bill

The Bill will create new curriculum requirements for all learners aged 3 to 16 in maintained or funded non-maintained nursery education. It will replace the current national curriculum and basic curriculum. The Bill primarily replaces Part 7 of the Education Act 2002, which

sets out the current curriculum arrangements. These existing provisions are not flexible and responsive enough to stay in step with ongoing shifts in technology and developments in our society and economy.

Mandating Welsh at age 3

There is a proposal by Welsh Government to stipulate in the new Curriculum Bill that the introduction of Welsh will be compulsory from age 3, with English being compulsory from age 7. This is designed to:

- Permit current Welsh medium primary schools to carry on with the Welsh immersion model as per current arrangements. Schools deploying Welsh immersion have successfully ensured that pupils become bilingual by age 7 and fully bilingual (commensurate to age and ability) at age 11.
- The proposal facilitates for English medium primary schools to teach English from 3 years of age, as per current arrangements, irrespective that it is compulsory from age 7. The proposal will, however, require that English medium schools introduce Welsh to some degree or other at age 3. This is also consistent with the criteria for the new WESP, which requires more Foundation Phase pupils to learn Welsh.
- Implications for Carmarthenshire:
 - This can be viewed as a positive development as it will assist the strategic direction of the new WESP, as two criteria relate to increasing the number of pupils who learn through the medium of Welsh in the early years
 - There will be some training implications for Foundation Phase teachers in English primary schools. This can be proactively addressed by tailoring training to the statutory imperatives for the new WESP, its strategic direction locally and in deference to staff needs as identified by regular linguistic audits

Welsh as One Continuum

The Languages, literacy and communication Area of Learning and Experience for the new Welsh curriculum reference knowledge and skills in Welsh, English and international languages.

The interplay between languages is accentuated in documentation, seeking to promote bilingualism, multilingualism and plurilingualism. Languages are also mentioned as a key to social cohesion, thus promoting better local, national and global understanding.

The descriptions of learning also refer to the pace and depth of learning, where young learners will start with little or no language and move towards proficiency. The baseline that there will be varying proficiencies initially is addressed with a stress on the vital role of nurturing early literacy skills, moving from simple literal purpose to more abstract, implied, inferred and nuanced language use for complex purpose.

- For early language acquisition, specialised practitioners will refer to progression steps 1 and 2 of the specification, ensuring that linguistic development progresses at the required pace and in a carefully planned way.

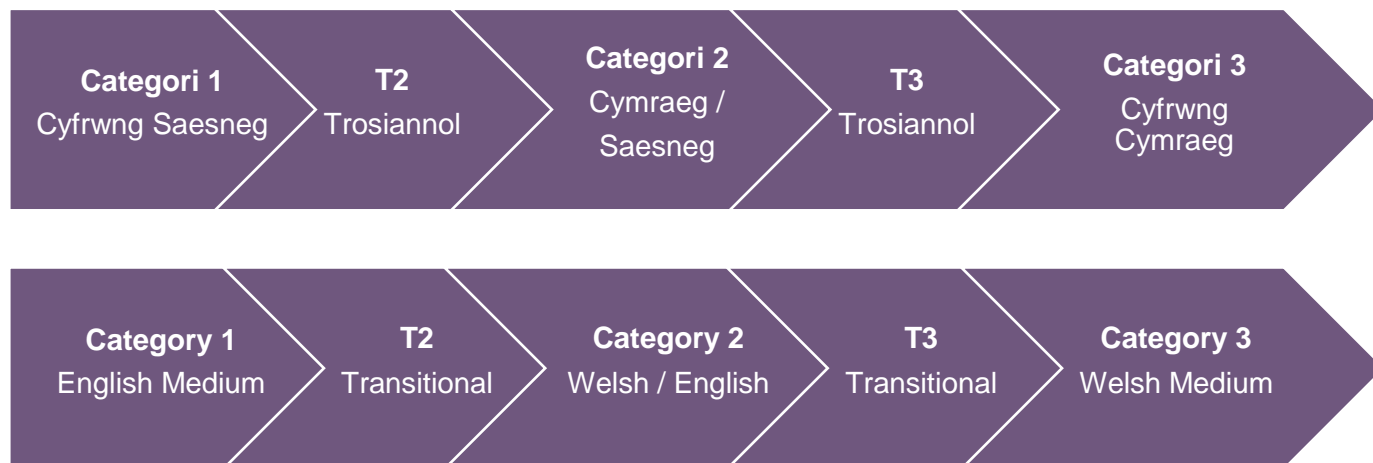
- In due course, Welsh Government are anticipated to release more information on Welsh on one continuum, by developing a framework which will read across to the Literacy framework and the new curriculum
- Implications for Carmarthenshire- synergies with new school curriculum will be carefully planned and officers, school leaders, practitioners and will need to work in unison to successfully implement parity of approaches to our two main languages. In time, with further information and staff training, the existing bar for teaching Welsh as a second language will be able to be raised, so that the one continuum is fully realised. This may take a few years' time, but we would anticipate further progress by mid-decade and beyond

New School Linguistic Categories (National Consultation)

Welsh Government are currently consulting on proposals to evolve the national school categorisation scheme. Further details are available via the following link: [ymgyngoriad; consultation](#)

We currently have around 12 different school categorisations between the primary and secondary sector, with many local variations having evolved organically over time. One aim of the new categorisation system is to simplify matters and provide additional clarity for parents and other stakeholders.

The new system envisages three main categories (1, 2 and 3) with two transitional categories (T2 and T3) to facilitate a developmental journey from one category to the next (see diagram):



The consultation period closes on 26.3.21. LA officers will formally respond, some of the main points being:

- Category 1- arguably doesn't fully reflect the situation experienced in our current English medium schools. Many have a pervading Welsh ethos and have made good progress with *Siarter Iaith*. Whereas the 1 category might be more pertinent for more Anglicised parts of Wales, the definition doesn't adequately capture the more nuanced situation within most of our English medium schools

- Category 3 - is a very broad category, which will subsume all current definitions from 1, 2A, 2B, 2C and 2D. It is felt that the new 3 designation will not fully encapsulate the provision demonstrated by our 1 and two 2A schools. There could be an argument to canvass for an enhanced 3 designation or a 3+
- In the primary phase, individual classes and streams can be given different designations within the same school (for instance, a 3 category in the Foundation Phase and a 2 designation at KS2). This facility is not currently proposed for the secondary sector, which will be given a single designation to cover the whole school. We are considering whether this is appropriate for our context in Carmarthenshire
- Nomenclature would merit consideration, so that the new categorisation system does not perpetuate a polarised and binary perception.
- Headteacher surgeries were conducted on 21.1.21 to canvass early thoughts regarding the new categorisation system and other related developmental matters. The meetings were very constructive in nature; perspectives gathered have been recorded and documented for informing future approaches.

New WESP

The new national WESP cycle will be focussed on, effectively, a decade-long strategy. The latest commencement date is September 2022. The strategy will then pave a way towards its conclusion in 2031.

The new National Criteria have been released and are as follows:

- **More nursery children (aged 3) following their education through the medium of Welsh**
- **More reception children (aged 5) following their education through the medium of Welsh**
- **More children improving language skills when transferring from one stage of their statutory education to another (progress with progression)**
- **More learners to study for qualifications in Welsh as a subject and subjects through the medium of Welsh**
- **Increase provision for learners with ALN, in line with the new ALN Act**
- **Increase the number of teachers able to teach Welsh and through the medium of Welsh**

The first two criteria are crucial for us in Carmarthenshire as they underpin our approach to early years' immersion education. We have adopted this pedagogical approach as a central facet of our policy, aiming to capitalise upon early linguistic development at a formative stage in a child's neural development, where the capacity for acquisition of language is at its most promising

Other criteria will be familiar, as having also featured in a similar form in the current WESP.

Cymraeg 2050 includes a target for increasing the proportion of each school year group receiving Welsh-medium education from 22% (based on 7,700 seven-year-old learners in 2015/16) to 30% by 2031 (about 10,500 in each year group)

Each Local Authority has been offered targets to achieve in the context of the new WESP. Targets set for Carmarthenshire by WG place the County in the most stretching category (*together with Conwy, Denbighshire, Powys, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire and Neath Port Talbot*). WG have requested that a 10-14% increase in the percentage of Year 1 children being taught through the medium of Welsh based on the 2019/20 baseline. Current trajectories would suggest that it may be possible to meet and exceed the target sets.

In terms of indicative content, it goes without saying that the strategy will be built around the criteria referenced above. It is also envisaged that there will be a perpetuation of existing fundamental principles already established in the current WESP. Rationally it is additionally relevant to base the starting point by building on progress made with the prior WESP.

The new WESP will also facilitate:

- Developing a new appropriately challenging vision, as befits a 10-year Welsh in Education Strategic Plan for Carmarthenshire in line with Welsh Government guidance.
- An Increase in the proportion of each school year group receiving Welsh medium education in accordance with Welsh Government's new designations.
- Consolidate and expand the provision for learners to access Welsh Medium Education in both Primary and Secondary sectors, through Canolfannau Iaith- with specific provision for latecomers and improving standards.
- Improve and increase the volume and standards of teachers that can teach Welsh and teach through the medium of Welsh.
- Increase capacity for adult learning in the workplace.

The proposed Carmarthenshire timescale for the WESP is anticipated to become available later on in the year. On current trajectories, it may transpire that the new WESP will be available for public perusal no later than September 2021. Welsh Government will require submission no later than January 31st, 2022 for full adoption in September 2022 at the latest.

In drafting the new WESP, there will be a clear role for the Education and Children Scrutiny Committee, likewise the Welsh in Education Forum. As part of the process, there will be an eight-week public consultation, with the fruits of canvassing stakeholders and public opinion being subsequently reported to Elected Members.

Other imminent Welsh Government Initiatives

It is anticipated that there will be a series of announcements by Welsh Government in relation to the bilingual agenda over the course of the next few months which will support the implementation of the new WESP.