

Welsh language immersion arrangements in LAs

Provider Data

22

No. of providers

A request was received from Welsh Government to undertake core inspections of language immersion arrangements of local authorities from Autumn 2024. All language immersion arrangements in a local authority are inspected as part of one inspection (independent of the LGES core inspection).

Follow-up Data

There are currently no Welsh language immersion providers in follow-up.

Inspection activity

No. of core inspections: 3

Wrexham County Borough Council
Cyngor Gwynedd
Merthyr County Borough Council

Case studies

No. of case studies: 1

Links to case studies: [Wrexham case study](#)

Summary

On the whole, leaders had a clear vision for Welsh language immersion arrangements and adapted the provision to suit the local needs of their pupils successfully. They collaborated well with schools within the local authority to share good practice and improve pupils' Welsh language skills. Welsh language immersion provisions provided effective levels of care, support and guidance to pupils that impacted positively on their well-being and guided them in the next steps in their learning. Staff were positive language role models and used a variety of teaching strategies to engage pupils' interest and, as a result, many pupils made suitable progress in their Welsh oracy skills.

Teaching and learning

Where practice was at its strongest, staff promoted a vibrant learning community that motivated and equipped pupils to acquire the Welsh language successfully. Teachers built skilfully on language acquisition methods in engaging contexts. They planned systematically, providing opportunities to revisit and build on previous learning effectively. Staff responded purposefully to pupils' learning and adapted provision as necessary. However, in a minority of cases, staff did not always provide learning experiences skilfully enough to meet pupils' language acquisition needs consistently over time.

Many teachers used a good range of resources and effective multi-sensory teaching methods that

facilitated pupils' progress purposefully. As a result, many pupils, including those with additional learning needs and those who are affected by poverty, made suitable progress in their ability to understand and speak Welsh.

On the whole, staff had high expectations of pupils and were passionate about developing pupils' listening and speaking skills. In the best practice, staff used gestures and purposeful repetition in an engaging way so that pupils could emulate correct vocabulary and sentence patterns. Most staff used effective questioning methods to check pupils' understanding and deepen their learning. However, in a very few instances, staff questioning methods did not provide regular enough opportunities for pupils to deepen their learning.

Cyngor Gwynedd: Purposeful planning ensures continuity and progression in supporting pupils to acquire Welsh language skills in a modern context

Teachers co-operate successfully to create a new innovative scheme, called 'Aberwla'. This supports staff to build systematically on the key principles as pupils acquire the Welsh language. These resources support learning valuably, through providing rich learning experiences for pupils to use virtual resources to develop their Welsh language skills in a purposeful and inclusive context.

In nearly all provision, pupils had strong working relationships with adults. Staff established a nurturing learning environment and, as a result, pupils felt happy and safe within the small provisions. The supportive ethos of the provision contributed notably to pupils' confidence and their positive attitudes to their learning. Pupils enjoyed interacting with staff and peers within small groups whilst developing their Welsh oracy skills.

Well-being, care, support and guidance

Staff at the Welsh language immersion provisions provided effective levels of care, support and guidance to pupils that impacted positively on their well-being and the next steps in their learning. They had a comprehensive understanding of pupil needs and provided purposeful opportunities to nurture their well-being in a supportive environment. For example, staff's understanding of the impact of trauma on child development played a prominent role in planning meaningful experiences and meeting pupils' needs. As a result, pupils felt happy and safe and were willing to share any concerns with adults.

In the majority of provision, pupil transition and after care arrangements were effective. Pupils transitioned smoothly to the provision and to their schools by sharing relevant information. In the best examples, the immersion provision supported pupils in the next steps of their linguistic development appropriately, for example by sharing resources to support pupils as they returned to the mainstream classes. This had a positive effect on pupils' confidence as they acquired new linguistic skills.

Leading and improving

Overall, senior leaders in all local authorities had a clear vision for the arrangements of the Welsh

language provision in line with their Welsh in Education Strategic Plan. Where practice was at its strongest, the immersion arrangements were led by strong and inspiring leaders who ensured that staff had a comprehensive knowledge of pupils' well-being and learning needs.

In the best practice, leaders had created a positive culture and ethos to promote and support staff's professional learning. They encouraged staff to work collaboratively with partners to undertake active research, for example through researching effective language immersion and bilingualism practices. However, in a few cases, purposeful professional learning for leaders and staff was less developed. Across the three local authorities, there was effective co-operation between the Welsh immersion provision and local schools to support language teaching. This has had a positive effect on developing the Welsh language skills of staff and pupils across the local authorities.

Where improvement processes were strongest, leaders had a sound understanding of the strengths of the Welsh language immersion arrangements and areas for improvement. However, in nearly all local authorities, self-evaluation processes needed further refinement.

Overview of recommendations from inspections

In the 2024-2025 academic year, Estyn inspected the Welsh language immersion arrangements of three local authorities:

- All three local authorities were given a recommendation in relation to leading and improving and their self-evaluation processes
- One local authority was given a recommendation to provide purposeful professional learning on effective immersion pedagogy