

Report to	Performance Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting	26th September 2024
Lead Member / Officer	Councillor Diane King, Lead Member for Children and Young People / Councillor Emrys Wynne, Lead Member for Welsh Language, Culture and Heritage
Head of Service	Geraint Davies, Head of Education
Report author	Marc Lloyd Jones, WESP Development Officer
Title	WESP Transformation

1. What is the report about?

- 1.1. To report on the progress made to date in delivering the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) in all of the county's schools in line with the Welsh Government's vision for Welsh language provision

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1. The report was requested by the Committee following discussion on a progress report in September 2023 in respect of the Delivery of Welsh Medium Provision.

3. What are the Recommendations?

- 3.1. Scrutiny are invited to discuss the details of the report and to identify any issues that it may seek further updates on to ensure that the Council is progressing the actions of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan.

4. Report details

- 4.1. The Council has a ten-year vision for increasing and improving the planning of the provision of Welsh-medium education in our area. This is articulated in the Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP). By September 2032 it is our

aspiration that 40% of all seven year old pupils will attend Welsh Medium Education.

- 4.2. To achieve this vision the Plan sets out seven outcomes which will contribute towards this aspiration. The Council is required to submit an annual report to Welsh Government on the progress against this Plan and a summary of progress is provided as Appendix 1.
- 4.3. The main progress against the plan includes a clear vision and support to develop projects; a dedicated Welsh Language Support Team provide excellent support and guidance to school staff in Denbighshire; information highlighting the benefits of bilingualism and Welsh medium education is on DCC website; 6 English medium primary schools have changed their language category and become T2 schools, committed (over a period of ten years) to increase the amount of Welsh taught at school with an aspiration of teaching 50% of lessons through the medium of Welsh. The number of latecomers to Welsh medium education and receiving specialised support is increasing; close collaboration with Welsh Advisory Team in Conwy CC is in place to share good practice and this is developing well.
- 4.4. Officers have created 'Sglein ar Lein' <https://sites.google.com/hwbcymru.net/sgleinarlein/hafan> , a website hosted via Hwb containing teaching resources for all school staff to develop Welsh speaking and listening skills and to encourage the social use of the Welsh language; This has been shared with all schools following launch at the Headteachers' Conference in June 2024.
- 4.5. A Cymraeg Campus framework for Denbighshire secondary schools (English medium) has been created and well received, leading to an increase in the use of Welsh at these schools. Welsh Government have shown a very keen interest in this work.
- 4.6. The main area of concern is a reduction in the percentage of learners who received education through the medium of Welsh in year 2 during 2023-24. During and after the pandemic, the number of pupils in two of our largest Welsh medium primary schools dropped significantly. This reduction saw the number of pupils receiving Welsh medium education in Year 2 drop from 28% in the WESP plan in September 2020 to 26.3% in September 2023. Numbers in these two schools,

however, are beginning to return to pre-COVID values. There is also an increased number of children attending Welsh-medium pre-school settings with a near 100% transitioning to Welsh medium primary schools. Financial stresses in all schools mean that delivering more Welsh may be challenging. There is also a national shortage of staff who speak Welsh and specialise in Welsh as a subject in addition to a national shortage in Welsh learning materials and resources. Officers work closely with schools to ensure effective support is available to meet these challenges and to ensure that Welsh is not impacted by these factors.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027: The Denbighshire We Want?

5.1. A learning and growing Denbighshire – Implementing the WESP supports the aim to promote the learning and development of our children and young people and supporting schools to deliver against new standards and national guidelines. Denbighshire’s WESP sets out targets to achieve growth in Welsh medium education and improve the standards of Welsh language teaching.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

6.1. Since the change in funding arrangements from Welsh Government for this financial year, the Cymraeg 2050 element of the Local Authority Education Grant is a total of £383,195. This funding is shared between the regional school improvement service and the local authority’s Welsh teams. The funding retained by the authority has been used to maintain the capacity of the advisory and immersion staff to allow the plan to progress.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

7.1. As this is an update report to the Scrutiny Committee, a Wellbeing Impact Assessment has not been completed. The Impact Assessment which was completed when the Plan was approved in January 2022 identified that the WESP had the potential to positively impact on a Denbighshire of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language, cohesive communities, a more equal Denbighshire and a more prosperous Denbighshire.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

- 8.1. The WESP Coordinator regularly reports progress to the Welsh in Education Strategic Group. The membership of this groups includes a range of stakeholders, including Councillors, whom Denbighshire work with to promote development of the Welsh Language. An annual report is also written and submitted to Welsh Government, who scrutinise it and return any recommendations or suggestions.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

- 9.1 The Council is facing significant financial challenges at present that will impact on the capacity to deliver services, projects and corporate priorities. As the Council works through the impacts the overall financial position needs to be kept in mind when discussing all reports going forward. The direct funding for this initiative currently coming from WG Grant is welcomed.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

- 10.1. Strong retention of pupils in Welsh Medium schools throughout their education is key to delivery of the plan, together with the expansion of provision either via re designation of the language category of schools or the development of new Welsh-medium schools where appropriate. Financial pressures impact on professional development at schools and on their capacity to move along the language continuum and increase Welsh provision at their setting. A general lack of Welsh medium resources and Welsh speaking staff can impact progress.

11. Power to make the decision

- 11.1. The requirement to produce a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan ensures compliance with the provisions in relation to the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESP) in the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 ('the Act') and the regulations made under it.
- 11.2. Scrutiny's powers in relation to the above are set out in Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 and Section 7 of the Council's Constitution.