

WELSH-MEDIUM EDUCATION FOR ALL ACT

A discussion paper by Cymdeithas yr Iaith

INTRODUCTION

It is indisputable that the present system for planning Welsh-medium education, and in particular the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs), has failed.

An historic and laudable Welsh-medium Education Strategy was published in 2010, but the Government's annual reports indicate that a number of the key outcomes are going in the wrong direction. The key targets of the strategy have been missed, and the lack of recruitment and planning of the workforce has reached crisis point.

Even where there is modest growth, Cymdeithas yr Iaith's analysis suggests that were present trends to continue, it would take hundreds of years at this rate for every 7 year old pupil to benefit from Welsh-medium education.

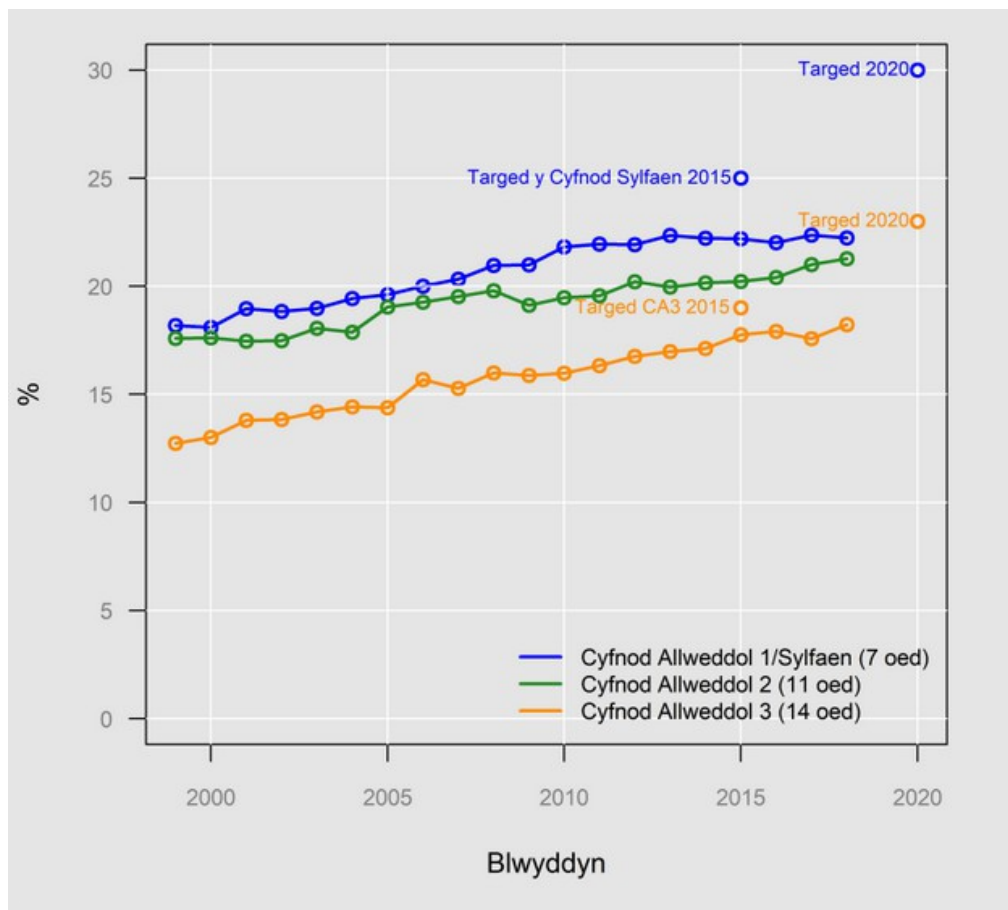


Diagram reproduced with permission from Statiaith

Translation of text:

Targed 2020 – 2020 Target

Targed y Cyfnod Sylfaenol 2015 – Target for Foundation Stage 2015

Targed CA3 – KS3 Target 2015

Cyfnod Allweddol 1/Sylfaen (7 oed) – Key Stage 1/Foundation (7 years)

Cyfnod Allweddol 2 (11 oed) – Key Stage 2 (11 years)

Cyfnod Allweddol 3 (14 oed) – Key Stage 3 (14 years)

The work of the Board led by Aled Roberts and the rapid review of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans have drawn attention to a number of defects in the current system. In response to the observations of the Cross Party Group on the Welsh Language in November 2018, the Cabinet Secretary for Education conceded that *"the process of reviewing the regulations has raised issues in the primary legislation (Schools Standards and Transport Act (Wales) 2013) that require attention."*

Opinion polls demonstrate strong support for the Welsh language among the public, and there is a strong feeling among a substantial portion of the population that they would wish to speak Welsh and for their children to speak Welsh too. In addition, the cross-party consensus in favour of the target of a million Welsh speakers necessitates a change in the legislative basis of the system for Welsh-medium education. In order to reach the million Welsh speakers target, Welsh-medium education must be expanded at a far more rapid rate than current trend. Statistical analysis commissioned by Cymdeithas yr Iaith shows that an annual increase of at least 2.5% in 7-year-olds in Welsh-medium education would be needed to reach the national target of a million Welsh speakers by the year 2050. That is a substantial change from the growth we have seen since 2000, which is around 0.24%, and the even lower rate we have seen since 2010, which is 0.05% a year.

It is therefore abundantly clear that additional measures are required to realise this vision, through a Welsh-Medium Education for All Act together with changes to other policies and budgets.

THE LEGISLATION

"Educational institutions at all levels will ensure that Catalan is the normal medium of educational activities and administration, internally and externally."

Article 20, Catalonia's Education Act

We believe that the Welsh-medium Education for All Act should be based on the following proposals:

- Establish a long-term aim in the legislation to plan for full Welsh-medium education for all, as is done in Catalonia, rather than *"measuring the demand"*.
- In order to transform the system in a few decades to one similar to that in Catalonia, the current system of Welsh in Education Strategic Plans drawn up by Local Authorities should be scrapped. It is obvious that this system has failed and should be replaced by a system that sets clear, irreversible targets to expand and normalise Welsh-medium education in order to reach the long-term goal by a defined date(s).

- There should be 5-year targets, and long-term 10-year targets, with firm and measurable milestones towards the expected outcomes, in the context of the more long-term legislative aim through both primary and secondary legislation. Local targets will be set in the context of reaching the national target.
- Establish a system which contains clear financial incentives – in revenue and capital spending - and a clear formula to ensure that those targets are achieved by local authorities. Those clear financial incentives should be within the mainstream funding rather than as a bonus.
- Note the duties of councils to explain the advantages of Welsh-medium education in all their work and the reasons for planning for Welsh-medium education for all as we move to a system akin to the Catalan model.
- Set targets for increasing the number and percentage of subjects which are taught through the medium of Welsh in schools which are currently mainly English-medium, in accordance with the proposal made in the report of Professor Sioned Davies.
- In order to ensure transparency and monitoring of progress towards achieving the set targets, we believe that consideration should be made to giving the powers and responsibility for inspection either to Estyn in order to be part of the wider accountability framework or to the Welsh Language Commissioner.
- The right to free transport to Welsh-medium schools and nurseries.
- A legal duty that Ministers and Local Authorities should follow the Schools Organisation Code to safeguard and strengthen small and rural schools, including a clear and timely appeals process.
- No new school nor educational institution should be opened with a lower proportion of Welsh-medium education than the other educational establishments in the area, nor less than 50% of education through the medium of Welsh.
- Set a statutory target date for providing all early years and foundation stage education in Welsh only throughout the country.

WORKFORCE PLANNING

The Welsh-medium Education for All Act, together with other measures, should achieve the following:

- Set statutory targets for those training to be teachers to ensure an increase in the proportion who will be teaching through the medium of Welsh.
- End all tuition fees for Initial Teacher Training courses, and extend the

financial support for those training to teach through the medium of Welsh.

- Extend Initial Teacher Training Courses up to an additional year to enable students to learn Welsh or follow courses to enhance their language skills.
- Ensure that the aim of all sabbatical courses is that beneficiaries should go on to teach through the medium of Welsh thereafter, with a skills certificate as a guarantee.
- Intensive continuing professional development training courses, tailored to the various needs of the workforce, including:
 - (a) language-awareness courses for newcomers to Wales
 - (b) a training programme to upgrade the linguistic skills of the 6% of teachers who are Welsh-speaking but do not currently teach through the medium of Welsh, leading to a proficiency certificate within a year
 - (c) differentiated training programmes to upgrade the skills of staff who are not currently fluent in Welsh in order to increase the use of Welsh across the curriculum, targeting those who have the greatest confidence and language ability for more intensive programmes, including opportunities for residential courses – leading to gaining a proficiency certificate within 3 years
 - (ch) restoring and expanding the system of peripatetic specialist Welsh teachers to lead the above plans, including a network of mentors and support groups for areas/schools.
- Establish a national campaign to urge more people to follow Teacher Training Courses in order to plug the gaps in the workforce.
- Together with other measures to tackle problems of the workload of teachers, the insufficient size of the workforce and teachers leaving the profession, school budgets should be increased through local authorities.
- Establish an Exchange Programme for Teachers with other countries, in particular those with minority languages, in order to (i) upgrade workforce skills (ii) benefit from the experience of other countries, and (iii) improve modern foreign language teaching. There should be a specific follow-up plan as part of this programme.
- Establish a 'Come back to Wales' plan for teachers currently working in other countries.
- Establish a programme with financial incentives to urge people to move from other work sectors to teach through the medium of Welsh, allowing people to work part-time and enabling retired people to teach through the medium of Welsh.
- Invest in 'Welsh for Adults' in order to ensure the provision of sufficient

teachers who can teach through the medium of Welsh as a top priority.

- A requirement that the ability to speak Welsh be an essential skill for all members of staff, including support staff, who work in a Welsh-medium school.

OTHER CHANGES

- Set up and extend Welsh language immersion centres in every county, with the aim of ensuring that they operate along the lines of the model in Gwynedd.
- Establish a national programme to raise awareness of the advantages of multi-lingual education.
- Restore the network of peripatetic Welsh-language teachers to support schools in their efforts to extend the provision of Welsh and to promote co-operation between schools.