

1. Improving workforce planning and support for practitioners for all phases of education
2. Ensuring a sufficient workforce for Welsh-medium education and teaching as a subject

Estyn supports the Welsh Government's vision of having a million Welsh speakers by 2050. Estyn also agrees with the Welsh Government's objective to create a workforce with the appropriate skills to educate through the medium of Welsh. In order to achieve this, the Welsh Government will have to 'significantly increase the number of teachers and early years' practitioners who are able to teach through the medium of Welsh, in order to educate more children and young people through the medium of Welsh' (Consultation on a Welsh Government draft strategy: a million Welsh speakers by 2050). As part of the strategic planning required to achieve this, it would be necessary to create interim targets to track progress towards the goal between now and 2050.

In September 2016, Estyn published a report on [Local authority Welsh in Education Strategic Plans](#). This report considers the impact of Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs) on improving planning for Welsh-medium education.

- Outcome 7 of the WESPs outlines how local authorities are expected to improve workforce planning and continuing professional development (CPD). One of the main findings of this report is that 'around a third of registered teachers in Wales are Welsh speakers, with slightly fewer able to teach through the medium of Welsh. The proportion of teachers joining the profession as newly qualified teachers (NQTs) who are Welsh speakers is marginally higher than this proportion, as is the proportion of NQTs who are able to teach through the medium of Welsh (Education Workforce Council, 2015).'
- The report also makes the following points with specific reference to workforce planning and continuing professional development:

- ‘All the local authorities [interviewed during the writing of the report] had undertaken a linguistic skills audit of their teaching workforce. In most cases, this information is used to inform appropriate continued professional development and training programmes which are well tailored to improve practitioners’ Welsh-medium teaching skills. However, local authorities and consortia do not evaluate the effectiveness of these programmes well enough, especially in terms of their impact on standards.’
- ‘Only a few local authorities use the evidence from the linguistic skills audit, when considering their school organisation projects and longer-term provision planning.’
- ‘Many local authorities have challenges in recruiting and retaining Welsh-speaking staff including teachers, school leaders, teaching support staff and auxiliary staff. They encounter particular challenges in recruiting Welsh-speaking teachers to specific subjects, such as the sciences. In a very few cases, schools have deployed non-specialist Welsh-speaking teachers rather than suitably qualified specialist Welsh teachers to teach Welsh as a second language.’
- ‘The Welsh Government’s Welsh-language Sabbatical Scheme (WLSS) courses have made a positive contribution to improving the quality and capacity of their Welsh-medium provision.’
- Outcome 5 focuses on performance in Welsh as a first language and Welsh as a second language across the key stages. With a view to these learners being a potential pool of Welsh-medium teachers in the future, the report provides the following information with regards to the teaching of Welsh as a subject:
 - ‘The proportion of learners taking both A level Welsh first language and A level Welsh second language, in comparison to the take up of their respective GCSEs, has declined since 2011. Welsh Government targets for 2015 for both A level qualifications have not been met. The number of entries for A level first language has fluctuated between around 250 and 300

since 2011. The number of entries for A level Welsh second language has declined substantially over the same period.'

- In this report Estyn quotes from an earlier report on [Linguistic progression and standards of Welsh in ten bilingual schools](#) (November 2014) noting that:
 - 'In order to provide a rich range of courses and provision through the medium of Welsh, there is a need for enough teaching and support staff who are proficient and confident to teach and support through the medium of Welsh. Recruitment difficulties are an obstacle to expanding Welsh provision in several schools and authorities. In 2012, only 13% of trainees who gained a post-graduate certificate in education were qualified to teach through the medium of Welsh. In some areas, the situation is more serious. For example, in 2012, only 4% of trainee teachers in biology and 2% of trainee teachers in modern foreign languages were able to speak Welsh.
 - Most schools offer beneficial training and support to teachers and assistants in order to develop their Welsh skills. In these schools, the Welsh department give valuable support to members of staff in formal sessions and informally. In a minority of schools, the local authority also offers training to staff in order to develop their proficiency and confidence in Welsh.
 - The majority of schools give teachers an opportunity to develop their language skills on sabbatical courses, in partnership with regional centres.'

In a thematic report that is about to be published, Estyn evaluates the impact of Welsh Government guidance on '**Effective management of school workforce attendance**' in primary schools' and considers how well primary schools, local authorities and regional consortia have implemented the guidance and the effect that it has had on the management of teacher and headteacher absence.

- The report finds that 'nearly all schools have experienced difficulty in arranging suitable cover for absent class teachers. In Welsh-medium

primary schools, schools are often restricted in the choice and quality of supply teachers available. This is due to a shortage in the number of Welsh-speaking supply teachers. This means that these schools occasionally compromise quality in order to use staff with Welsh-language skills. Very occasionally, the Welsh-language skills of supply staff deployed are not of a high enough standard to work in a Welsh-medium school.'

- This reiterates the findings of a report published by Estyn on [The impact of teacher absence](#) (Estyn, 2013). The report concluded that 'a few schools, particularly Welsh-medium schools and those located in rural or economically deprived areas, have difficulty finding suitable supply teachers'.

Appendix: Continuity and progression

- Ensuring Welsh medium education in early years is fundamentally important in this context. It is accepted that the earlier a child comes in to contact with the language, the more likely he or she is to become fluent. Maintaining continuity and progression is also critical and any strategic planning should seek to minimise the number of children who do not continue to develop their Welsh language skills to the best of their ability when they transfer across the key stages of education.
- The Estyn report on WESPs contains the following information about the lack of progression that learners, in general, make in developing their education through the medium of Welsh (Outcomes 1–4):
 - The proportion of Year 2 learners assessed through the medium of Welsh has remained at around 22% over the last five years. The Welsh Government target for 2015 of 25% has not been met. Since 2011, the proportion of Year 9 learners assessed in Welsh has increased slowly to around 18% in 2015. The Welsh Government target for 2015 of 19% has not been met. Across Wales, around 13% of learners who are in Welsh-medium education in Year 6 do not continue in Welsh-medium education in Year 9.
 - Between 2011 and 2015, there has been an overall decline in the proportion of learners who take two or five level 1 or level 2 GCSE subjects through the medium of Welsh (in addition to GCSE Welsh first language). The decline is steepest for learners taking five additional subjects. Welsh Government targets for 2015 for both these indicators have not been met.
 - Since 2011, the proportion of learning activities carried out by learners aged 16–19 through the medium of Welsh or bilingually has stayed generally static in schools, at around 21%. There is also a largely static picture in work-based learning, with the proportion remaining between 3 and 4%. In further education institutions, the proportion of learners studying in Welsh or bilingually has increased by around three percentage points to 8.5% in 2014. These Welsh Government targets for 2015 have

been met by schools, further education institutions and work-based learning providers.

- In order to facilitate an improvement in the above rates of progression for learners continuing to study through the medium of Welsh, the Estyn report recommends that local authorities should ensure that the WESPs are a strategic priority. They should also work with schools to explain the advantages to pupils and parents of Welsh-medium education and of following courses through the medium of Welsh. The report also recommends that the Welsh Government should ensure that the targets agreed in the WESPs reflect the aspirations in their Welsh-medium education strategy. They should also ensure that all local authorities place enough strategic importance on delivering the targets within the WESPs.