

**National Assembly for Wales**  
Children, Young People and Education  
Committee

## Inquiry into Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs)

December 2015

Cynulliad  
Cenedlaethol  
Cymru

National  
Assembly for  
Wales



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# Children, Young People and Education Committee

The Committee was established on 22 June 2011 with a remit to examine legislation and hold the Welsh Government to account by scrutinising expenditure, administration and policy matters encompassing: the education, health and wellbeing of the children and young people of Wales, including their social care.

On 22 January 2014, the Assembly agreed to alter the remit of the Committee to include Higher Education. This subject will continue to be included in the remit of the Enterprise and Business Committee, with both committees looking at Higher Education from their particular perspectives. The Committee was previously known as the Children and Young People Committee.

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## Current Committee membership:



**Ann Jones (Chair)**  
Welsh Labour  
Vale of Clwyd



**Angela Burns**  
Welsh Conservatives  
Carmarthen West and South  
Pembrokeshire



**Keith Davies**  
Welsh Labour  
Llanelli



**Suzy Davies**  
Welsh Conservatives  
South Wales West



**John Griffiths**  
Welsh Labour  
Newport East



**Lynne Neagle**  
Welsh Labour  
Torfaen



**David Rees**  
Welsh Labour  
Aberavon



**Aled Roberts**  
Liberal Democrats  
North Wales



**Rhodri Glyn Thomas**  
Plaid Cymru  
Carmarthen East and Dinefwr



**Simon Thomas**  
Plaid Cymru  
Mid and West Wales

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The following Member was also a member of the Committee during this inquiry:



**Bethan Jenkins**  
Plaid Cymru  
South Wales West

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## Recommendations

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**Recommendation 1.** Welsh Government must ensure that WMES targets are reflected in WESPs and be more robust in its approval of WESPs to ensure they reflect Welsh Government's ambitions. *Page 21*

**Recommendation 2.** Welsh Government must clarify how it intends to work in partnership with local authorities to deliver its Welsh Medium Education Strategy. *Page 21*

**Recommendation 3.** The Minister should clarify how the recommendations of the Donaldson review will address the variance in the linguistic outcomes of different types of provision. *Page 22*

**Recommendation 4.** The Minister should review and publish new guidance on definitions of provision and school's linguistic categorisation. *Page 22*

**Recommendation 5.** The Minister should review the process for changing a school's category with the aim of simplifying it. *Page 22*

**Recommendation 6.** Welsh Government should hold discussions with local authorities about timescales and arrangements for publishing annual reports on the progress of WESPs. *Page 32*

**Recommendation 7.** Welsh Government should publish information relating to its role in the approval of WESPs, including details of its response to each Local Authority's WESP and, where appropriate, the reasons why a WESP was referred back to a Local Authority for modification and actions taken by a Local Authority as a result. *Page 32*

**Recommendation 8.** The Welsh Government should be clearer with local authorities about its expectations in relation to the promotion of growth of Welsh-medium education so that all local authorities buy into the Welsh Government's ambitions. *Page 32*

**Recommendation 9.** Before the next iteration of WESPs, Welsh Government should review the processes for assessing demand to ensure they are more robust. Processes should include provision to consult with children and young people, in accordance with the UNCRC. *Page 32*

**Recommendation 10.** Welsh Government should develop and publish a strategy relating to the promotion and awareness of Welsh-medium education at a national and local level. The strategy should include tools that can be used and adapted by local authorities and schools. *Page 41*

**Recommendation 11.** Welsh Government should work with Local Government and stakeholders to strengthen the role of fora so that they are more effective. Fora should be open, representative and should report annually. *Page 41*

**Recommendation 12.** Welsh Government should clarify the role of regional consortia in relation to WESPs. *Page 41*

**Recommendation 13.** The Minister should use the powers available to him under existing legislation to intervene where local authorities are failing to deliver their WESPs. *Page 42*

**Recommendation 14.** Welsh Government should outline the reasons for the deficit between the percentage of Welsh-medium places available under Flying Start and its target for 25 per cent of seven year olds to be taught through the medium of Welsh by 2015 (and 30 per cent by 2020). Welsh Government should explain how it will address the deficit. *Page 51*

**Recommendation 15.** Welsh Government to outline how it intends to ensure that transport arrangements for Welsh-medium and bilingual education support the delivery of its WMES targets . *Page 51*

**Recommendation 16.** Welsh Government to outline how it will address Welsh-medium provision for pupils with additional learning needs and whether the forthcoming Additional Learning Needs Bill would be an appropriate vehicle to do so. *Page 51*

**Recommendation 17.** Welsh Government should reconsider its Welsh-medium education strategies with a view to ensuring that the importance of post-16 education is reflected in them and in turn within local authority WESPs. *Page 52*



## Executive Summary

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1. Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs) have the potential to deliver a significant increase in the numbers of children and young people being taught and studying for qualifications through the medium of Welsh. When WESPs were introduced, stakeholders saw this potential and welcomed them. However, many of those stakeholders are disappointed by the lack of impact WESPs have had in practice. For them, the story of WESPs so far is one of a missed opportunity. More worryingly, there are growing concerns they are not fit for purpose.

### **How effectively do the Welsh-medium Education Strategy (WMES) and WESPs work together?**

*“We have already acknowledged in the last two Annual Reports on the Welsh-medium Education Strategy that we would be unlikely to meet all the 2015 targets. Against that background, it seems unlikely that those targets which will not be met in 2015 will also be met in 2020 without improved planning and action at local authority level.”*

Minister for Education and Skills

2. This statement by the Minister for Education and Skills illustrates a fundamental challenge for the WESP system. Welsh Government sets national strategies and targets for Welsh-medium education, but local authorities are responsible for translating those strategies into tangible outcomes at a local level. This creates complexities in terms of accountability.

3. The Minister recognises that Welsh Government’s targets cannot be delivered without local authorities, but nothing we heard during the inquiry suggested that Welsh Government and local authorities are working together sufficiently in order to achieve the targets in the Welsh Medium Education Strategy (WMES). It is unclear how Welsh Government intends to support the “improved planning and action” that is necessary to meet its targets.

4. There is an urgent need for better partnership working between Welsh Government and local authorities. When local authorities are failing, intervention by Ministers will be necessary, but the starting point must be improved partnership working. Without this, and a shared commitment to delivering targets, it is difficult to see how Welsh Government’s aspirations for Welsh-medium education will be delivered.

**Recommendation: Welsh Government must ensure that WMES targets are reflected in WESPs and be more robust in its approval of WESPs to ensure they reflect Welsh Government's ambitions.**

**Recommendation: Welsh Government must clarify how it intends to work in partnership with local authorities to deliver its Welsh Medium Education Strategy.**

***Linguistic outcomes, definitions and categorisation***

*"I think there are weaknesses, if we fixate ourselves on the idea that there are things called 'English-medium settings', 'bilingual settings' and 'Welsh-medium settings'. What really matters is: does the individual acquire the language skill?"*

Minister for Education and Skills

5. Clarity about what constitutes Welsh-medium education and securing the best linguistic outcomes for pupils were concerns for many contributors. We note the Minister's view, but it is clear that the nature of the language provision in a particular setting does have an impact on linguistic outcomes for pupils. More importantly, all of the different types of provision that are available, and any consequent impact on linguistic outcomes, must be absolutely clear to parents who are making decisions about their children's education. Local authorities must be more proactive in ensuring this information is available.

6. The Minister said these issues would be reconsidered in the light of the Donaldson review, but it is currently unclear how the implementation of this review will address them and provide solutions. Further, we share the concerns of contributors who cautioned against waiting several years for any new system to take effect – the lack of progress in increasing the number of pupils receiving Welsh-medium education is a problem that exists in the here and now and needs to be addressed.

7. We note the comments made by local authorities and others about the challenges they face in changing the language category of a school. Contributors believed that this complex process was creating an additional barrier to responding to the needs of communities. Welsh Government should work with local authorities to examine the length of time it takes to change the language category and ensure the process is as efficient as it can be.

**Recommendation: The Minister should clarify how the recommendations of the Donaldson review will address the variance in the linguistic outcomes of different types of provision.**

**Recommendation: The Minister should review and publish new guidance on definitions of provision and school's linguistic categorisation.**

**Recommendation: The Minister should review the process for changing a school's category, with the aim of simplifying it.**

**Are WESPs sufficiently effective in supporting the national strategy?**

8. Like several contributors, the Committee accepts it is probably too early to come to a definitive view about the impact and effectiveness of WESPs. However, the Welsh Language Commissioner's concerns that significant weaknesses are coming to light should not be ignored by Welsh Government and must be addressed.

### ***Transparency***

9. There was a perception among a number of contributors that the WESP system is not sufficiently transparent. It is difficult to assess if a WESP has been amended and, when amendments can be identified, it is impossible to know whether they were made in response to recommendations by Welsh Government or because the local authority itself had decided amendments were necessary. This should be addressed so that all changes and the reasons for them are clear to stakeholders.

10. To increase transparency and improve accountability, local authorities should publish an annual report outlining progress against the actions they are taking to meet the targets in their WESPs. The report should include details of any modifications made to a WESP, including whether they have been made as a result of recommendations by Welsh Government. Given that the WLGA/ADEW indicated that this would not be a burden on local authorities, the Committee anticipates it will happen voluntarily. If not, the Welsh Government should require local authorities to publish annual reports.

11. In the context of partnership working and to increase transparency, Welsh Government should also publish annually information reflecting its role in the process.

**Recommendation: Welsh Government should hold discussions with local authorities about timescales and arrangements for publishing annual reports on the progress of WESPs.**

**Recommendation: Welsh Government should publish information relating to its role in the approval of WESPs, including details of its response to each Local Authority's WESP and, where appropriate, the reasons why a WESP was referred back to a Local Authority for modification and actions taken by a Local Authority as a result.**

### ***Assessing demand for Welsh-medium education***

12. We understand assessing demand is complex and that a one-size-fits-all approach will not work. We note the Minister's comment that assessments have, so far, been "reasonably robust". However, several contributors, including local authorities, had doubts that current approaches are as reliable or as robust as they should be. Concerns were raised about the timings of assessments and the provision of inadequate information to parents, which meant they were not able to respond in a meaningful way. Further, it is difficult to understand how assessments with very low response rates can be used as the basis for effective planning.

13. Contributors pointed to the dual role local authorities have in both assessing the demand for Welsh-medium provision whilst also promoting its growth. There was a strong view that local authorities have struggled to fully grasp this dual role. This must be addressed.

**Recommendation: The Welsh Government should be clearer with local authorities about its expectations in relation to the promotion of growth of Welsh-medium education so that all local authorities buy into the Welsh Government's ambitions.**

**Recommendation: Before the next iteration of WESPs, Welsh Government should review the processes for assessing demand to ensure they are more robust. Processes should include provision to consult with children and young people, in accordance with the UNCRC.**

### **Are the roles and responsibilities clear in relation to WESPs?**

14. The Committee explored whether there was sufficient clarity about the roles and responsibilities of Welsh Government, local authorities, regional consortia and others in relation to WESPs.

### ***Promotion and awareness raising***

15. Promoting and raising awareness of Welsh-medium education was a key issue for many contributors to the inquiry. In the Committee's view, this must happen on a number of different levels if it is to be effective. The Welsh Government must take responsibility for promotion on a national level; local authorities should undertake promotional work on a local level that is tailored to their communities; finally, there is a role for schools to ensure they are engaging with the parents in their localities.

16. The Committee is not persuaded that the Welsh Government's promotional work on a national level has been effective and believes that it is vital that it raises its game in this regard.

17. Local Authorities must be more proactive in making meaningful information available to parents about the different types of provision in their localities. Without an understanding of what is available, parents are being put in a position where they are not able to make informed decisions about their children's education.

**Recommendation: Welsh Government should develop and publish a strategy relating to the promotion and awareness of Welsh-medium education at a national and local level. The strategy should include tools that can be used and adapted by local authorities and schools.**

### ***Welsh-medium education Fora***

18. All contributors to the inquiry believed that fora had the potential to play a vital role in the delivery of WESPs. However, there was a view that the potential is not being fulfilled because of a lack of consistency in terms of approach and membership. Contributors felt that Welsh Government could do more to assist local authorities in sharing good practice and in maximising the effectiveness of fora. This would be consistent with the principle of partnership working outlined earlier in this report. The Welsh Government should clarify the role of regional consortia in relation to WESPs.

19. The Committee believes that fora should be open and transparent and that members of the public should be able to attend their meetings if they so wish. Fora should also publish information on the work they have undertaken.

**Recommendation: Welsh Government should work with Local Government and stakeholders to strengthen the role of fora so that they**

**are more effective. Fora should be open, representative and should report annually.**

**Recommendation: Welsh Government should clarify the role of regional consortia in relation to WESPs.**

***Powers to intervene***

20. Some stakeholders felt strongly that the Minister should intervene where local authorities are not meeting the targets in their WESPs. It was recognised that such intervention should not be necessary if the WESP system is working correctly and delivering increased provision at a local level.

21. The Committee sought legal advice about whether the Welsh Ministers are able to intervene and take action if it was considered that a local authority was failing in its duty to prepare and implement WESPs correctly. The Committee was advised that the power for Welsh Ministers to intervene under section 21 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 could be used in relation to WESPs.

**Recommendation: The Minister should use the powers available to him under existing legislation to intervene where local authorities are failing to deliver their WESPs.**

**To what degree do WESPs reflect the range of Welsh Government policies relevant to Welsh-medium provision?**

22. The Committee considered whether Welsh Government's policies are being co-ordinated to deliver Welsh Government's aspirations for Welsh-medium education.

***Flying start***

23. We note the concerns raised by contributors about the lack of Flying Start/Dechrau'n Deg places through the medium of Welsh (or mixed provision) compared to the Welsh Government's targets for 7 year olds and believe this may have a significant impact on progression from childcare to Welsh-medium early-education provision. Children from low income families will be hardest hit by this lack of provision. Again, this is an example of a national strategy not being aligned with local delivery.

**Recommendation: Welsh Government should outline the reasons for the deficit between the percentage of Welsh-medium places available under**

**Flying Start and its target for 25 per cent of seven year olds to be taught through the medium of Welsh by 2015 (and 30 per cent by 2020). Welsh Government should explain how it will address the deficit.**

***School and learner transport***

24. Contributors had significant concerns about this issue, particularly around the introduction of travel fees for post-16 students to Welsh medium provision. The Committee acknowledges that this is a complex area, but it must be addressed by Welsh Government so that its learner transport policies are supporting, not undermining, the delivery of its Welsh medium education strategy. It may be that the Learner Travel Measure needs to be reconsidered, to ensure that legislation aligns with the objectives of WESPs and the WMES.

**Recommendation: Welsh Government to outline how it intends to ensure that transport arrangements for Welsh-medium and bilingual education support the delivery of its WMES targets.**

***Additional Learning Needs***

25. There appears to be significant gaps in provision for pupils with additional learning needs who wish to be educated through the medium of Welsh. There is also regional variation in levels of provision. Welsh Government should consider how to address these issues, including whether it may be appropriate to introduce regional organisation of additional learning needs provision.

**Recommendation: Welsh Government to outline how it will address Welsh-medium provision for pupils with additional learning needs and whether the forthcoming Additional Learning Needs Bill would be an appropriate vehicle to do so.**

***Further education – post-16.***

26. We agree that further education provision should be included in WESPs to strengthen the continuum from early years to further education provision. This may also help to address concerns relating to the capacity of a bilingual workforce.

**Recommendation: Welsh Government should reconsider its Welsh-medium education strategies with a view to ensuring that the importance of post-16 education is reflected in them and in turn within local authority WESPs.**

### ***Donaldson review***

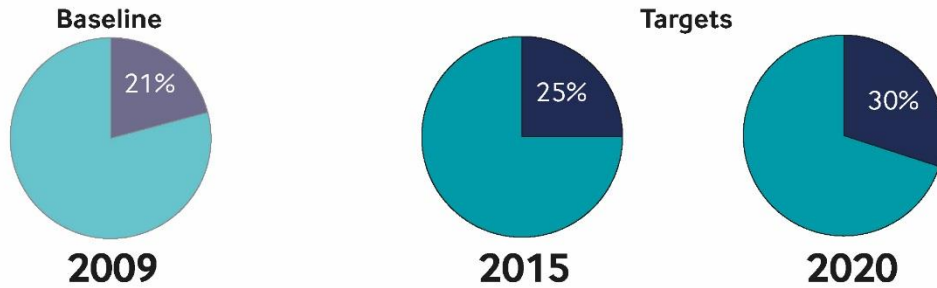
27. The Committee notes the Minister's view that the implementation of the Donaldson review will have significant implications for Welsh-medium education. However, the Committee believes that, in the meantime, the Minister must ensure that opportunities are not lost due to a focus on systems that will be implemented in several years' time. A loss of focus over the next three to five years will have a significant impact on Welsh Government's ability to fulfil its aspirations.



# Welsh-Medium Education Strategy (WMES) target

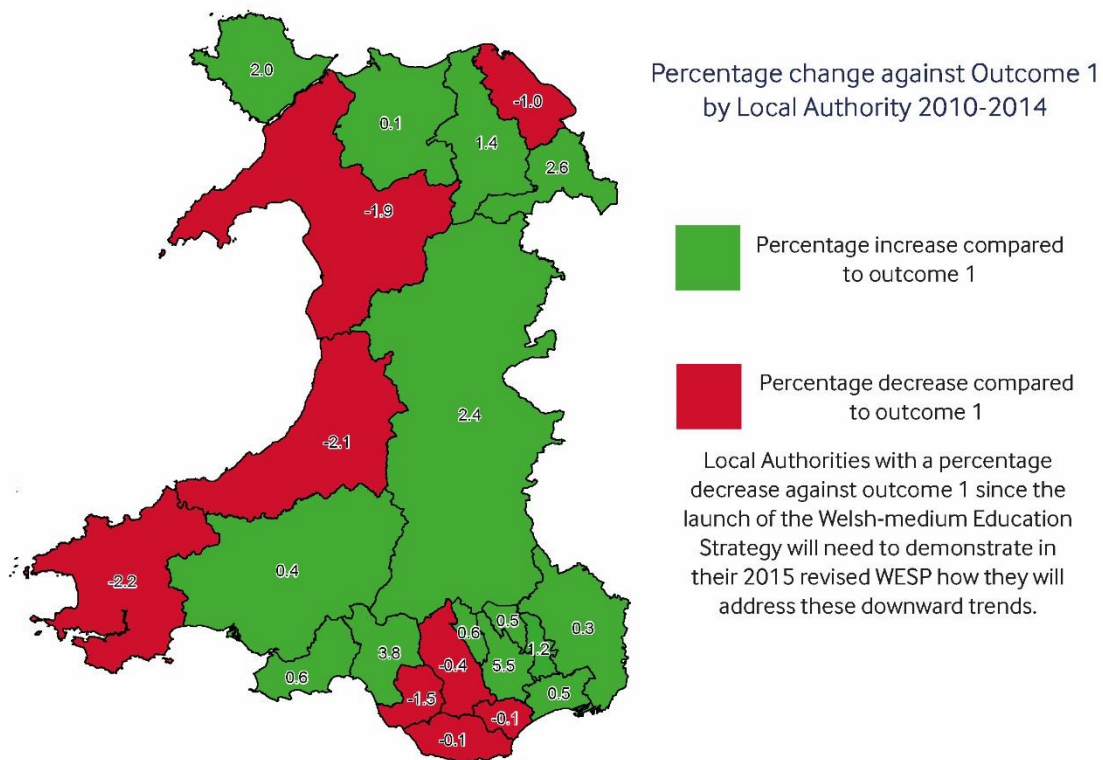
## Outcome 1

More seven year old learners being taught through the medium of Welsh



## Outcome Indicator 1

Percentage of Year 2 cohort assessed in Welsh first language.



Source: Welsh-medium Education Strategy: Annual report 2014-15, Welsh Government

# 1. How effectively do the Welsh-medium Education Strategy (WMES) and WESPs work together?

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*The Committee sought to establish whether Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs) are an effective tool to deliver the ambitions and targets in Welsh Government's Welsh-medium Education Strategy (WMES). The Committee explored whether there is sufficient alignment between the WMES and WESPs and the approach to target setting.<sup>1</sup>*

## **Alignment between the WMES and WESPs**

28. Mudiad Meithrin said they had welcomed both the WMES and the WESPs as tools for monitoring, planning and developing Welsh-medium education at national and local levels. However, little progress had been made since the strategy's introduction and WESPs are not making a "sufficient contribution to the outcomes and targets set out in the national plan"<sup>2</sup>. Rhieni Dros Addysg Gymraeg (RhAG) believed that the relationship between the WMES and individual WESPs is unclear; that there is a lack of correlation between the national policy driven by Welsh Government at a strategic level and implementation by local authorities at grass-roots level.<sup>3</sup>

29. The Welsh Language Commissioner believed that WESPs had the potential to ensure consistency and facilitate a more strategic approach. However, the Commissioner was not convinced that WESPs were achieving this at present and that "if the Government doesn't get to grips with that strategic objective in terms of WESPs now, then, it will be an incredible opportunity missed."<sup>4</sup>

30. Local authorities who contributed had differing views on the alignment of WESPs and the WMES. Vale of Glamorgan considered that "the strategic objectives in the Welsh-medium Education Plan of 2010 are not fully integrated into the WESP requirements"<sup>5</sup> and Carmarthenshire and ERW felt that WESPs were not contributing sufficiently to meeting the objectives or targets in the WMES. However, Gwynedd believed there is a clear link between the WMES and WESPs, saying that its WESP had enabled the local

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<sup>1</sup> A description of the background and policy context of WESPs is included at Annex B

<sup>2</sup> Written Evidence, WESP20

<sup>3</sup> Oral evidence, 2 July 2015, [Record of Proceedings](#).

<sup>4</sup> Oral evidence, 8 July 2015, [Record of Proceedings](#)

<sup>5</sup> Written Evidence, WESP15

authority to strengthen their procedures which, in turn, ensured they contributed to Welsh Government's national targets and strategic objectives.<sup>6</sup>

### **WMES and WESP targets**

31. The Committee explored whether targets set in individual local authority WESPs are sufficiently ambitious to achieve collectively the Welsh Government's national targets. Some evidence suggested that the individual targets were not ambitious enough and Welsh Government should be more prescriptive as to what appropriate local targets should be.

32. The Welsh Language Commissioner commented that statistics suggested that there had been no growth in Welsh-medium education over recent years, despite an increase in demand for education through the medium of Welsh.<sup>7</sup> The Commissioner believed that the current targets in the WESPs were not ambitious enough to realise the Welsh-medium Education Strategy.

33. For Pentan (Neath Port Talbot Welsh-medium School Cluster), the key weakness in the current system was the lack of accountability should targets not be met.<sup>8</sup> A number of contributors, including the Welsh Language Commissioner<sup>9</sup> and Dyfodol i'r Iaith<sup>10</sup> felt that Welsh Government should intervene when it becomes apparent that targets are not being met.

34. Contributors suggested improvements to the approach to target setting. WLGA/ADEW referred to the complexity of the current system for setting targets in areas with a range of linguistic provision in the secondary education sector, which could "create problems in those counties with schools that do not provide education through the medium of only one language – i.e. dual stream/bilingual schools"<sup>11</sup>. Vale of Glamorgan suggested "a more realistic approach to national target setting", which could involve regionalising targets, and would mean that Welsh Government's strategic objectives were better reflected in WESPs<sup>12</sup>. RhAG commented that the current system should include growth targets for each local authority.

35. Mudiad Meithrin felt that targets for childcare provision should be considered at both national and WESP level, as choices made by parents

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<sup>6</sup> Written Evidence, WESP29

<sup>7</sup> Written Evidence, WESP12

<sup>8</sup> Written Evidence, WESP39

<sup>9</sup> Oral evidence, 8 July 2015, [Record of Proceedings](#)

<sup>10</sup> Written Evidence, WESP05

<sup>11</sup> Written Evidence, WESP38

<sup>12</sup> Written Evidence, WESP15

about childcare provision were likely to impact on subsequent decisions about their children's education.

### **Linguistic outcomes, definitions and categorisation**

36. A number of contributors raised the issue of linguistic outcomes and the need to have clear definitions of what constitutes Welsh-medium or bilingual education. This is particularly important in the context of raising awareness amongst parents and of assessing demand. Mudiad Meithrin argued that without clear definitions "there is no way of ensuring that those who respond to an assessment have not confused the desire for the child to be bilingual (and to be able to use both languages as a natural outcome of Welsh-medium care) with the use of both languages in the care setting (which would run counter to the principles of immersion)."<sup>13</sup>

37. RhAG echoed this view, saying that there needs to be more honesty with parents about the potential linguistic outcomes of the different types of provisions (e.g. Welsh-medium and bilingual education). The Welsh Language Commissioner felt that a lack of clarity could impact on parental choice, noting that there is significant variability in how "bilingual" education is defined and interpreted.

38. RhAG referred to the interim guidance on the categorisation and designation of schools, which had been issued in 2007 and which was still being used by local authorities. They believed that the definitions relating to Welsh-medium education should be clarified and suggested that the guidance should be revised and reissued so as "to provide clear guidance and definitions to counties in terms of what's expected of them, and what they should then be providing."<sup>14</sup> This would result in local authorities being able to identify clearly the linguistic definition to be applied to a school and, consequently, parents' decisions would be better informed.

39. The Welsh Language Commissioner raised the issue of changing a school's language category, commenting on the length of time required to implement changes to the organisation of provision. She referred to the eight steps set out in the School Organisation Statutory Code (2013), which relate to making changes to the provision in schools, and suggested the process may be hindering local authorities' ability to introduce changes in a timely manner.

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<sup>13</sup> Written Evidence, WESP20

<sup>14</sup> Oral evidence, 2 July 2015, [Record of Proceedings](#)

40. Carmarthenshire Local Authority and ERW also commented on this issue, saying that the system for moving schools along the language continuum should be made easier.<sup>15</sup> Mentrau Iaith Cymru, Conwy and Ceredigion referred to the challenges of conversion of dual-stream schools to Welsh-medium schools. Mudiad Meithrin suggested that “a specific timetable should be set for any school that is labelled a 'Transitional School' by the education authority in order to set a clear target for effecting this change.”<sup>16</sup>

### **The Minister’s view**

41. The Minister acknowledged the importance of WESPs. However, their potential impact on the numbers of Welsh speakers should not be overstated:

“The WESP has usefulness. It gives us a structure. It gives us an annual conversation in a particular area. It gives parents something that they can clearly latch onto in terms of expressing their wants and their wishes, but it will not, of itself, deliver a bilingual nation. It’s not that grand a thing. It has its usefulness in terms of planning of school places, and that’s important.”<sup>17</sup>

42. In reference to the contribution of WESPs to the delivery of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy, the Minister stated:

“Local authorities have had 3 years in which to develop and refine their WESPs but the extent to which Ministerial approval has required modifications suggests that there is still some way to go before they are sufficiently embedded in local authority processes to contribute more effectively to the targets and outcomes of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy.”<sup>18</sup>

43. In reference to whether the Welsh Government targets contained in the Welsh-medium Education Strategy would be met, the Minister stated that:

“We have already acknowledged in the last two Annual Reports on the Welsh-medium Education Strategy that we would be unlikely to meet all the 2015 targets. Against that background, it seems unlikely that

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<sup>15</sup> Written Evidence, WESP36

<sup>16</sup> Written Evidence, WESP20

<sup>17</sup> Oral evidence, 8 July 2015, [Record of Proceedings](#)

<sup>18</sup> Written Evidence, WESP20

those targets which will not be met in 2015 will also be met in 2020 without improved planning and action at local authority level.

However, as reported in the Annual Report on the Welsh-medium Education Strategy last year progress has been made against some of the targets and that the 2015 target to increase the number of learners aged 16–19 studying subjects through the medium of Welsh in further education colleges and work-based learning was achieved.”<sup>19</sup>

44. The Minister felt that the outcomes of the Donaldson review of the curriculum in Wales will have an impact on approaches to the categorisation of schools, saying that the “distinction, actually, between Welsh-medium and English-medium is something that should have a question mark over it when it comes to the development of Donaldson.”<sup>20</sup> In relation to the different types of language provision, the Minister said:

“I think there are weaknesses, if we fixate ourselves on the idea that there are things called ‘English-medium settings’, ‘bilingual settings’ and ‘Welsh-medium settings’. What really matters is: does the individual acquire the language skill? To my mind, we need to reconfigure our thinking, as we work through Donaldson in that regard—that every Welsh child should have the opportunity to acquire the language. How best do we deliver that?”<sup>21</sup>

### **Committee’s View**

45. The Minister’s comments that Welsh Government targets will not be met without improved planning and action at local authority level illustrates a fundamental challenge for the WESP system. This statement by the Minister for Education and Skills illustrates a fundamental challenge for the WESP system. Welsh Government sets national strategies and targets for Welsh-medium education, but local authorities are responsible for translating those strategies into tangible outcomes at a local level. This creates complexities in terms of accountability.

46. The Minister recognises that Welsh Government’s targets cannot be delivered without local authorities, but nothing we heard during the inquiry suggested that Welsh Government and local authorities are working together sufficiently in order to achieve the targets in the Welsh Medium Education

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<sup>19</sup> Written Evidence, WESP20

<sup>20</sup> Oral evidence, 8 July 2015, [Record of Proceedings](#)

<sup>21</sup> *ibid*

Strategy (WMES). It is unclear how Welsh Government intends to support the “improved planning and action” that is necessary to meet its targets.

47. There is an urgent need for better partnership working between Welsh Government and local authorities. When local authorities are failing, intervention by Ministers will be necessary, but the starting point must be improved partnership working. Without this, and a shared commitment to delivering targets, it is difficult to see how Welsh Government’s aspirations for Welsh-medium education will be delivered.

**Recommendation: Welsh Government must ensure that WMES targets are reflected in WESPs and be more robust in its approval of WESPs to ensure they reflect Welsh Government’s ambitions.**

**Recommendation: Welsh Government must clarify how it intends to work in partnership with local authorities to deliver its Welsh Medium Education Strategy.**

#### ***Linguistic outcomes, definitions and categorisation***

48. Clarity about what constitutes Welsh-medium education and securing the best linguistic outcomes for pupils were concerns for many contributors. We note the Minister’s views on this issue, but it is clear that the nature of the language provision in a particular setting does have an impact on linguistic outcomes for pupils. More importantly, all of the different types of provision that are available, and any consequent impact on linguistic outcomes, must be absolutely clear to parents who are making decisions about their children’s education. Local authorities must be more proactive in ensuring this information is available.

49. The Minister said these issues would be reconsidered in the light of the Donaldson review, but it is currently unclear how the implementation of this review will address them and provide solutions. Further, we share the concerns of contributors who cautioned against waiting several years for any new system to take effect – the lack of progress in increasing the number of pupils receiving Welsh-medium education is a problem that exists in the here and now and needs to be addressed.

50. We note the comments made by local authorities and others about the challenges they face in changing the language category of a school. Contributors believed that this complex process was creating an additional barrier to responding to the needs of communities. Welsh Government should work with local authorities to examine the length of time it takes to

change the language category and ensure the process is as efficient as it can be.

**Recommendation: The Minister should clarify how the recommendations of the Donaldson review will address the variance in the linguistic outcomes of different types of provision.**

**Recommendation: The Minister should review and publish new guidance on definitions of provision and school's linguistic categorisation.**

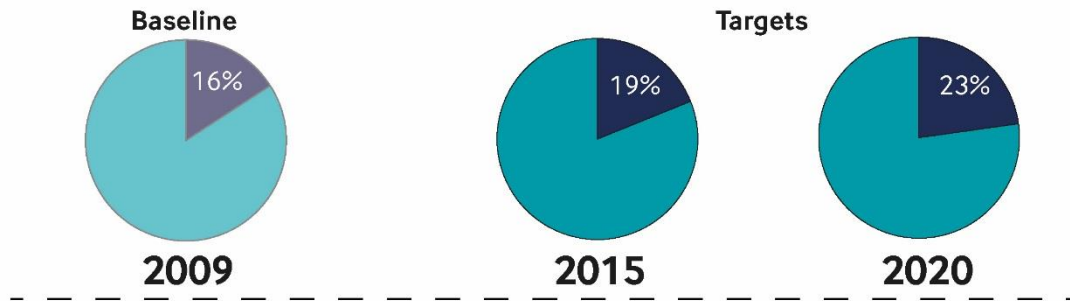
**Recommendation: The Minister should review the process for changing a school's category with the aim of simplifying it.**



# Welsh-Medium Education Strategy (WMES) target

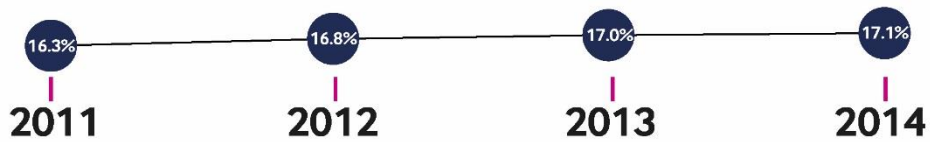
## Outcome 2

More learners continuing to improve their language skills on transfer from primary to secondary school

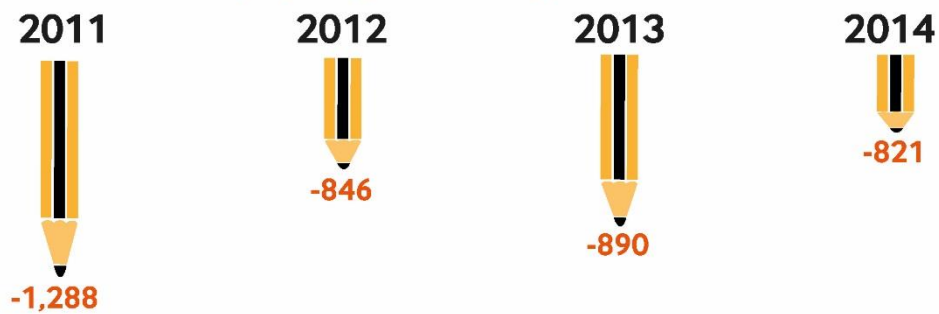


## Outcome Indicator 2

Percentage of 14 year olds assessed in the Welsh Language



Number of students in Wales not progressing Welsh learning from Year 6 to Year 9.



Source: Welsh-medium Education Strategy: Annual report 2014-15, Welsh Government

## 2. Are WESPs sufficiently effective in supporting the national strategy?

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*Under the current system, WESPs are produced for a three year period. Local authorities are required to review progress against their plans' targets annually and to submit revised plans to the Welsh Ministers for approval. The Committee explored whether WESPs are effective in supporting delivery of the national strategy; the barriers that may be hindering their effectiveness; and improvements that could be made.<sup>22</sup>*

### Effectiveness of WESPs

51. Contributors to the inquiry considered that, in principle, WESPs have the potential to be very effective mechanisms to support the provision of Welsh-medium education. However, several contributors questioned whether they were as effective in practice as they could be. RhAG said they had hoped that the WESPs would provide “an opportunity to see innovative and revolutionary planning that would really contribute to expanding and increasing the numbers of children within Welsh-medium education across Wales.”<sup>23</sup> However, they felt that the initial WESPs had fallen short.

52. The Welsh Language Commissioner was reticent to state that the system was not currently working, given it had only been in place for a short time. However, the Commissioner felt that “weaknesses are starting to emerge already.”<sup>24</sup> That concerns were being expressed so soon after the system’s introduction suggested there are problems that need to be addressed.<sup>25</sup>

53. For WLGA / ADEW, the system was “still in its formative stages” but it accepted that “it may have taken longer than we’d expected for authorities to grapple with what was required.”<sup>26</sup>

54. Carmarthenshire and the ERW consortium felt that WESPs should better reflect the WMES but recognised that it was difficult for local authorities to maintain focus on wider strategic objectives in the current financial climate. They felt that the strategy should take into account the range of different education provision across Wales and that one approach would not be suitable for all local authorities or consortia.<sup>27</sup> Blaenau Gwent felt that the

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<sup>22</sup> A description of the background and policy context of WESPs is included at Annex B

<sup>23</sup> Oral evidence, 2 July 2015, [Record of Proceedings](#).

<sup>24</sup> Oral evidence, 8 July 2015, [Record of Proceedings](#)

<sup>25</sup> Ibid

<sup>26</sup> Oral evidence, 2 July, [Record of Proceedings](#)

<sup>27</sup> Written Evidence, WESP36

WESP system would benefit from sharing good practice between local authorities, possibly through a national forum coordinated by Welsh Government.<sup>28</sup>

55. Conwy referred to the positive impact of WESPs and said theirs had been “essential at school level”, particularly to changing language categories and for secondary schools to develop school-level plans.<sup>29</sup>

### **Barriers to effectiveness**

56. The Committee received evidence from several contributors about specific issues they felt were preventing WESPs being as effective as they could be.

### ***Content of WESPs***

57. Local authorities commented on the complexity of the WESP document. Some suggested this meant it was unlikely to be read by parents and could be a barrier to effective consultation with stakeholders and the public.

58. WLGA/ADEW said that the requirements about what should be included in the WESP document are complex, because “of the different linguistic nature and educational structures across counties.”<sup>30</sup> They questioned whether using one template or format for all local authorities was appropriate and suggested that local authorities could use “existing local business planning arrangements supported by the council’s corporate structures”<sup>31</sup>.

### ***Assessing demand***

59. Contributors were clear that an accurate assessment of local demand for Welsh-medium education was vital for the effective operation of WESPs. However, many contributors raised concerns about whether demand was being assessed accurately and whether the process for assessment is robust. The Welsh Language Commissioner said:

“If Local Authorities are not fully aware of the volume of demand amongst parents for Welsh-medium education, it is difficult to

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<sup>28</sup> Written Evidence, WESP37

<sup>29</sup> Written Evidence, WESP24

<sup>30</sup> Written Evidence, WESP38

<sup>31</sup> *ibid*

understand how they can be sure that their plans to increase Welsh-medium education are ambitious enough.”<sup>32</sup>

60. RhAG stated that:

“We are aware that guidance has certainly been of assistance to some authorities to undertake the exercise of measuring demand. Some local authorities have kept slavishly to the questions that have been provided, because those were the questions that needed to be asked. We have seen examples of where local authorities have expanded and asked for more information, which is always a good thing, in order to get a picture that is a little clearer.”<sup>33</sup>

61. Contributors recognised the complexity of assessing demand in a meaningful way and suggested that demand could be influenced by several factors, including the location of schools, the quality of school buildings, and the type of provision that was available. Rhondda Cynon Taf expanded on this:

“In our experience forecasting demand for future provision based purely on parental questionnaires is not a reliable enough source of robust information because of poor response rates and the gap is too wide when compared to actual take up. More accurate forecasting is achieved when coupled with trends. In the current financial climate expanding existing schools or planning new builds is not a realistic option unless the evidence for demand is documented and robust.”<sup>34</sup>

62. Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council recognised that parental surveys alone may not be a robust tool to assess demand, due to the fact that response levels were very low. They confirmed that a 2014 survey had resulted in a 3% response rate.

63. Questions were also raised about the timing of some assessments, with an example given of a Local Authority which had conducted a survey of parents over the Christmas period.

64. A number of contributors recognised that the availability of information for parents could have an impact on demand for Welsh-medium education. The decision to send their child to a Welsh-medium school is a significant one for parents; some may be hearing about Welsh-medium education for

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<sup>32</sup> Written Evidence, WESP12

<sup>33</sup> Oral evidence, 2 July 2015, [Record of Proceedings](#)

<sup>34</sup> Written Evidence, WESP01

the first time. For those parents, RhAG felt that “receiving a letter through the post stating, ‘Have you thought of Welsh-medium education for your child?’, without any kind of information supporting that, to us, is totally pointless. There is a need to provide the context and a need to provide additional information.”<sup>35</sup>

65. The Welsh Language Commissioner felt that provision of information to parents was central to an effective assessment of demand and said that:

“I do think that the Government has a responsibility here to work hand in hand with local government—certainly on the part of the Government—to provide comprehensive information to parents on the benefits of bilingual education in the first instance, so that when the demand is assessed, it is demand based on evidence.”<sup>36</sup>

66. To address some of these problems, Mentrau Iaith Cymru suggested that a standardised system should be introduced to assess demand accurately. This was echoed by WLGA/ADEW, which said that it would be “beneficial for the Welsh Government to provide a system for measuring demand to address this challenge.”<sup>37</sup> They also suggested that more could be done to share good practice.

### ***Local authority “buy in” and funding***

67. Commenting on the Welsh Government’s aim that local authorities promote the growth of Welsh-medium provision in their areas rather than simply meeting existing demand, RhAG said that the majority of local authorities “have not really embraced the new way of thinking that was now expected of them”. WLGA/ADEW suggested that until Welsh Government made it clear to local authorities that they should prioritise Welsh-medium education, they would continue to use their limited resources to support existing national priorities, such as improving literacy and numeracy.

68. Some respondents suggested that funding could compromise the effectiveness of WESPs, including:

- The Welsh Government’s decision to incorporate the Welsh in Education Grant (WEG), meaning it is no longer ring-fenced.
- Whether local authorities were being provided with the necessary resources, support and guidance.

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<sup>35</sup> Oral evidence, 2 July 2015, [Record of Proceedings](#).

<sup>36</sup> Oral evidence, 8 July 2015, [Record of Proceedings](#)

<sup>37</sup> Written Evidence, WESP38

- That the impact of budget cuts could lead to local authorities making decisions which might have a detrimental effect on Welsh-medium education.

69. For RhAG, the current financial climate meant that local authorities had to take creative approaches to increase provision and referred to a number of initiatives which do not require significant capital investment, including the use of starter classes, and “changing the character of English medium schools or bilingual schools to become Welsh-medium schools”. They concluded that local authorities “need to be proactive and the counties themselves need to have the will to do it.”<sup>38</sup>

### *Transparency*

70. CYDAG suggested that consideration should be given to the quality and inclusivity of the processes involved in preparing the plan;<sup>39</sup> for RhAG the process for developing the plan, from submitting the annual document to an approved document, lacks clarity. They suggested that it is difficult to see what amendments had been suggested and whether they had been accepted or rejected. Furthermore, it would be useful to know the status of the Minister's annual feedback to each local authority.<sup>40</sup>

71. It was suggested that it would be beneficial for each Local Authority to publish an annual report on the impact of their WESP and progress against targets. RhAG felt that such a reporting mechanism “is key in terms of awareness among the main stakeholders, namely parents and families—that is, they are able to see at grass roots level what the plan is achieving or possibly not achieving at the moment.”<sup>41</sup>

72. In response to a question about whether such an arrangement would place an additional burden on local authorities, ADEW/WLGA commented:

“To be honest, there are no data there that we wouldn’t be collecting anyway as part of any other report. We have the standards report for Carmarthenshire each year—and a number of other counties do the same—which is presented to the scrutiny committee and the full council. It includes all data on all the authority’s work areas, and specifically on language, science and mathematics. So, the data are available. It would very easy for us to do that by updating our

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<sup>38</sup> Oral evidence, 2 July 2015, [Record of Proceedings](#).

<sup>39</sup> Written Evidence, WESP19

<sup>40</sup> Written Evidence, WESP28

<sup>41</sup> Oral evidence, 2 July 2015, [Record of Proceedings](#)

strategic plan regularly. It wouldn't be overly burdensome for us, as long as we don't get some template from Welsh Government that we would have to fill in. We would want to follow our own reporting process within Carmarthenshire"<sup>42</sup>

73. In their submission, Wrexham County Borough Council Lifelong Learning Department confirmed that annual progress reports are submitted to the Local Authority Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee.

74. Rhondda Cynon Taff suggested "it would be useful if WG could produce a position paper on every LA's performance over the 5 year life span of the WMES."<sup>43</sup>

### **The Minister's view**

75. The Minister recognised the importance of WESPs "as an important component in creating the system necessary to improve both the planning for, and standards of Welsh-medium education". The Minister added that:

"Whilst this mechanism has been accepted by local authorities, it is too early to judge the impact of the Plans, especially as the initial approval of WESPs and then the revised Plans has involved considerable modifications."<sup>44</sup>

76. The Minister highlighted that a strength of the WESP system was that "we have a publicly acknowledged iterative process for parents, interest groups and the local authority to work through what exactly is deliverable in a particular area and connect that to the parental demand. That now will be a feature annually of the democratic conversation in every part of Wales."<sup>45</sup>

77. In reference to the initial round, the Minister confirmed that 17 of the 22 WESPs had been referred by him back to local authorities for modification. The official accompanying the Minister stated that the main areas of concern had been that proposals to increase growth and to improve standards in Welsh-medium provision lacked ambition.

78. The Minister confirmed the Welsh Government's position in relation to potential improvements to the WESP system:

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<sup>42</sup> Oral evidence, 2 July 2015, [Record of Proceedings](#)

<sup>43</sup> Written Evidence, WESP01

<sup>44</sup> Written Evidence, WESP20

<sup>45</sup> Oral evidence, 8 July 2015, [Record of Proceedings](#)

“The current WESPs for the period 2014 to 2017 are the first statutory plans. Our intention is not to make any significant changes to the requirements in terms of content until the end of this period. Local authorities will be required to prepare new 3-year plans for the period 2018 to 2021. We shall be considering what changes to the guidelines which might be required in readiness for the next round of plans. Changes to the content of WESPs may also require amendments to the Regulations.”<sup>46</sup>

79. The Minister informed the Committee that all of those Local Authorities that were required to conduct an assessment of demand had done so. In reference to the process adopted by Local Authorities, he said that:

“As yet, as I say, it does seem as if the assessments of parental demand have been reasonably robust. My regulatory powers around assessments click in in 2017, and certainly when that happens, I think we will have been through a couple of iterations of the current WESP rounds, and a great deal more will be understood by everybody, I think, in terms of what constitutes a proper, thorough assessment of parental demand. I’ll be looking to be extremely rigorous in terms of regulating those assessments, but, as I say, since these are tri-annual requirements at least, then my regulatory powers don’t actually come into force until the first three years have gone by, which is 2017.”<sup>47</sup>

80. In written evidence, the Minister confirmed that he was satisfied that the WESP system was sufficiently transparent, saying that “Local authorities are required to consult about revised plans in accordance with statutory requirements and to publish the revised plans when they have been approved by Welsh Ministers.”<sup>48</sup> The Minister expanded on this when he appeared before the Committee:

“It should be absolutely transparent at local level exactly where the conversation has got to in terms of the developments around the WESP. This is a piece of local democracy. There’s a forum overseeing it, any member of the public or any parent, of course, can involve themselves in terms of finding out exactly where the local authority:

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<sup>46</sup> Written Evidence, WESP20

<sup>47</sup> Oral evidence, 8 July 2015, [Record of Proceedings](#)

<sup>48</sup> Written Evidence, WESP20



everyone can see a copy of the WESP, and so on. As I say, every three years there will be a refresh.”<sup>49</sup>

81. In reference to the possible publication by Local Authorities of an annual report relating to progress of its WESP, the Minister commented that:

“If a local authority wanted to issue an annual report, then of course it would be for them to do so. I don’t know that the national view of how we’re progressing in terms of the issues at stake that are covered by WESPs would be helped, really, by our having 22 annual reports. It would be an onerous thing, I think, to ask of local authorities as well, at a very difficult time.”<sup>50</sup>

### **Committee’s View**

82. Like several contributors, the Committee accepts it is probably too early to come to a definitive view about the impact and effectiveness of WESPs. However, the Welsh Language Commissioner’s concerns that significant weaknesses are coming to light should not be ignored by Welsh Government and must be addressed.

### ***Transparency***

83. There was a perception among a number of contributors that the WESP system is not sufficiently transparent. It is difficult to assess if a WESP has been amended and, when amendments can be identified, it is impossible to know whether they were made in response to recommendations by Welsh Government or because the local authority itself had decided amendments were necessary. This should be addressed so that all changes and the reasons for them are clear to stakeholders.

84. To increase transparency and improve accountability, local authorities should publish an annual report outlining progress against the actions they are taking to meet the targets in their WESPs. The report should include details of any modifications made to a WESP, including whether they have been made as a result of recommendations by Welsh Government. Given that the WLGA/ADEW indicated that this would not be a burden on local authorities, the Committee anticipates it will happen voluntarily. If not, the Welsh Government should require local authorities to publish annual reports.

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<sup>49</sup> Oral evidence, 8 July 2015, [Record of Proceedings](#)

<sup>50</sup> *ibid*

85. In the context of partnership working and to increase transparency, Welsh Government should also publish annually information reflecting its role in the process.

**Recommendation: Welsh Government should hold discussions with local authorities about timescales and arrangements for publishing annual reports on the progress of WESPs.**

**Recommendation: Welsh Government should publish information relating to its role in the approval of WESPs, including details of its response to each Local Authority's WESP and, where appropriate, the reasons why a WESP was referred back to a Local Authority for modification and actions taken by a Local Authority as a result.**

### ***Assessing demand for Welsh-medium education***

86. We understand assessing demand is complex and that a one-size-fits-all approach will not work. We note the Minister's comment that assessments have, so far, been "reasonably robust". However, several contributors, including local authorities, had doubts that current approaches are as reliable or as robust as they should be. Concerns were raised about the timings of assessments and the provision of inadequate information to parents, which meant they were not able to respond in a meaningful way. Further, it is difficult to understand how assessments with very low response rates can be used as the basis for effective planning.

87. Contributors pointed to the dual role local authorities have in both assessing the demand for Welsh-medium provision whilst also promoting its growth. There was a strong view that local authorities have struggled to fully grasp this dual role. This must be addressed.

**Recommendation: The Welsh Government should be clearer with local authorities about its expectations in relation to the promotion of growth of Welsh-medium education so that all local authorities buy into the Welsh Government's ambitions.**

**Recommendation: Before the next iteration of WESPs, Welsh Government should review the processes for assessing demand to ensure they are more robust. Processes should include provision to consult with children and young people, in accordance with the UNCRC.**

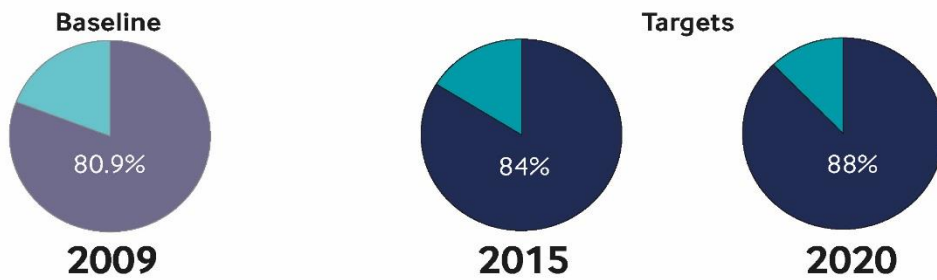
# Welsh-Medium Education Strategy (WMES) target

## Outcome 3

More learners studying for qualifications through the medium of Welsh

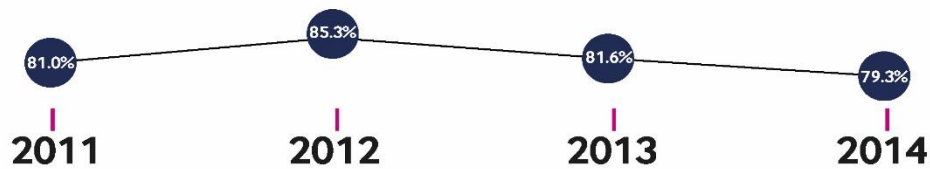
### Outcome 3a

Percentage of learners entered for GCSE Welsh First Language entered for at least **two further** Level 1 or 2 qualifications through the medium of Welsh.



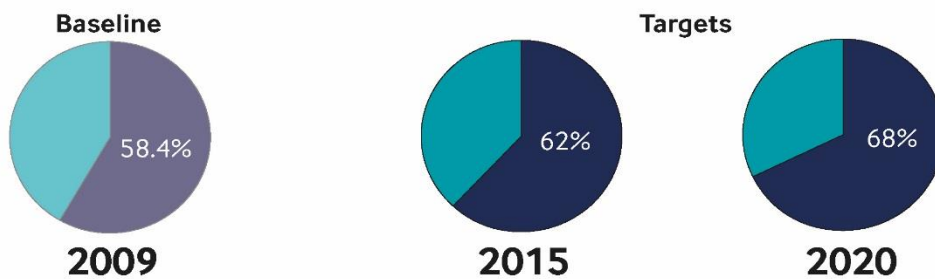
### Outcome Indicator 3a

At least two Welsh-medium subjects



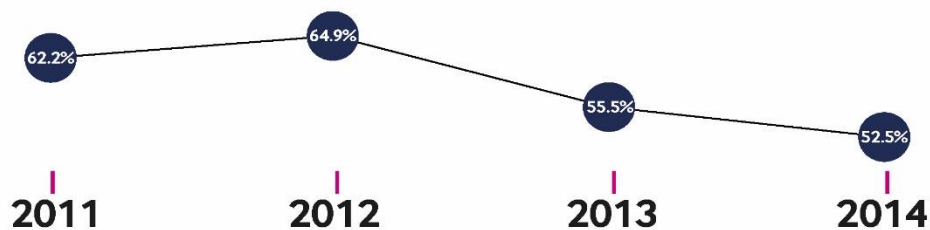
### Outcome 3b

Percentage of learners entered for GCSE Welsh First Language being entered for at least **five further** Level 1 or 2 qualifications through the medium of Welsh.



### Outcome Indicator 3b

At least five Welsh-medium subjects



Source: Welsh-medium Education Strategy: Annual report 2014-15, Welsh Government

### 3. Are the roles and responsibilities clear in relation to WESPs?

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*The Committee explored whether there was sufficient clarity about the roles and responsibilities of Welsh Government, local authorities, regional consortia and others in relation to WESPs. The Committee focused on political accountability; partnership working (and the role of Welsh Government in that partnership); promotion; and stakeholder involvement.<sup>51</sup>*

#### **Political accountability and the role of officers**

88. Several contributors raised concerns about political accountability at local authority level. Menter Bro Ogwr and Ysgol Gyfun Ystalyfera Cluster School suggested that local authority senior officials and political members should be more engaged in the process for developing and reviewing WESPs. RhAG believed that a greater sense of ownership of WESPs could result from more involvement from the elected member with responsibility for education and the local authority education scrutiny committees<sup>52</sup>

#### **Regional planning**

89. In RhAG's view, the respective roles of local authorities and regional consortia in relation to WESPs<sup>53</sup> lack clarity and transparency. The Vale of Glamorgan suggested that, while accountability for improving standards remains within the local authority, the reviewing, monitoring and reporting of standards in relation to education performance could be completed on a regional basis, as aspects of school improvement are commissioned regionally. They suggested that the WESP template could reflect the two distinct areas, with responsibility attributed accordingly.<sup>54</sup> This was reiterated by Rhondda Cynon Taf.

90. WLGA/ADEW referred to Carmarthenshire as an example of effective regional working. There, officers from six authorities, some of whom would normally be working alone, were working together as a team to share good practice.<sup>55</sup> In their view, a mechanism to share good practice at a strategic level was necessary to ensure consistency of content and expectation across

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<sup>51</sup> A description of the background and policy context of WESPs is included at Annex B

<sup>52</sup> Written Evidence, WESP28

<sup>53</sup> *ibid*

<sup>54</sup> Written Evidence, WESP15

<sup>55</sup> Oral evidence, 2 July 2015, [Record of Proceedings](#).

Wales. This “would also facilitate a closer relationship between the plans of different authorities/consortia.”<sup>56</sup>

### **The role of fora**

91. Welsh-medium education fora were seen as an important component in developing an effective WESP. Local authority representatives who contributed to the inquiry, in particular, felt that fora could be effective:

- Flintshire said that senior officers used the forum to plan and monitor outcomes;<sup>57</sup>
- Wrexham County Borough Council Lifelong Learning Department said its local forum contributes to the outcomes and targets set out in Wrexham’s WESP;<sup>58</sup>
- WLGA / ADEW made reference to the flexible membership of Carmarthenshire’s forum, which would be extended to different groups depending on the issues being considered;<sup>59</sup>
- Flintshire were of the view that “a genuine commitment to partnership working”<sup>60</sup> was key to a successful WESP. They felt that fora were a key driver and their quality “is an area worthy of exploration”<sup>61</sup>;
- Plaid Cymru Torfaen Council Group suggested that fora should be empowered to make arrangements for “target setting; monitoring; reviewing; reporting; approving; and ensuring compliance with delivering the requirements for WESPs.”<sup>62</sup> The contribution from Cyngor Gwynedd suggested that such an arrangement was already in place in Gwynedd.

92. However, several contributors raised concerns about the operation of fora:

- RhAG felt that, overall, the operation and effectiveness of fora was inconsistent – “[...] there are some counties where the forums haven’t met at all, or not often enough”<sup>63</sup>;
- CYDAG commented that “in the majority of cases, the preparation of the plans is an isolated process. Stakeholders are not fully included.

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<sup>56</sup> Written Evidence, WESP38

<sup>57</sup> Written Evidence, WESP03

<sup>58</sup> Written Evidence, WESP14

<sup>59</sup> Oral evidence, 2 July 2015, [Record of Proceedings](#)

<sup>60</sup> Written Evidence, WESP03

<sup>61</sup> *ibid*

<sup>62</sup> Written Evidence, WESP23

<sup>63</sup> Oral evidence, 2 July 2015, [Record of Proceedings](#)

Organisations are not aware of the scheme or its targets, or their own role in the implementation of the scheme”<sup>64</sup>;

- The Welsh Language Commissioner felt that fora could play an important role, but it was currently not clear what that role was, particularly in relation to regional consortia<sup>65</sup>.

93. Contributors felt that the role of fora could be strengthened. WLGA/ADEW said that fora were still in their formative stages and work should be undertaken to assess their effectiveness. They suggested that fora could be improved by “clearer guidance on how the WESP Forum is to be developed, with an opportunity afterwards for local interpretation.”<sup>66</sup> The need for guidance was echoed by RhAG, which believed that the role of stakeholders in the process was unclear, particularly whether they were consultees or whether they should have more input into the development of the WESPs. They called for the role of fora to be reviewed and believed they should be established on a “statutory basis” with “a more robust and proactive scrutiny and monitoring role.”<sup>67</sup>

### **Responsibility for promoting and raising awareness of Welsh-medium education**

94. Increasing awareness among non-Welsh speaking parents about the options available to them was an issue raised by many contributors. The Welsh Language Commissioner felt that the Welsh Government should take a strong role in promoting and raising awareness of Welsh-medium education at a national level:

“In having a strategy that sets targets in terms of Welsh-medium education and a bilingual Wales, it’s the Government that should initially be holding an exercise, pan-Wales, to raise public awareness on the benefits of bilingual education. Then, responsibility falls on local authorities to be part of that awareness raising pattern, but I don’t think we should expect schools to be taking on that burden directly themselves. They are certainly part of the picture, but the responsibility doesn’t fully fall on their shoulders.”<sup>68</sup>

95. RhAG believed that parents do not receive appropriate information about the options in their area for Welsh-medium education. This was

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<sup>64</sup> Written Evidence, WESP19

<sup>65</sup> Oral evidence, 8 July 2015, [Record of Proceedings](#)

<sup>66</sup> Written Evidence, WESP38

<sup>67</sup> Oral evidence, 2 July 2015, [Record of Proceedings](#)

<sup>68</sup> Oral evidence, 8 July 2015, [Record of Proceedings](#)

particularly the case when a new school is established or when new classes are opened.

96. RhAG stated that awareness of a recent Welsh Government promotional campaign about the benefits of bilingualism and Welsh-medium education was very low and there was little reference to how that campaign should form part of WESPs.<sup>69</sup> They also suggested that there is not sufficient emphasis at local authority level on promoting Welsh-medium education to stimulate growth.<sup>70</sup>

### **The role of the Welsh Government**

97. RhAG believed that, if WESPs are to succeed, there needs to be “genuine partnership between central and local government, where responsibilities lie on both sides”:

“Local authorities need to set clear and coordinated targets to meet demand and promote growth. Similarly, the Welsh Government needs to strengthen the planning system and implement a robust scrutiny and evaluation process; and if plans do not reach the expected standard, we would expect the Education Minister to use his powers to amend weak plans. There must be a clear message that non-compliance is not acceptable, in order to turn a national consensus and political will into serious implementation on the ground.”<sup>71</sup>

98. This was echoed by Menter Bro Ogwr<sup>72</sup>, which suggested that Welsh Government should have a greater involvement in the process, particularly around the setting of targets for local authorities and the development of WESPs.

99. Denbighshire County Council argued that there should be a “clearer scrutinising, reviewing, prioritising and monitoring role for each Strategic Group rather than the Welsh Government”<sup>73</sup> and suggested that the Welsh Government’s role should be to challenge each WESP’s performance against the strategic outcomes rather than scrutinising individual targets.

100. In relation to targets, the Welsh Language Commissioner felt that clear leadership was needed by Welsh Government, and “after challenging and setting the target, there is a need to ensure the implementation of that

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<sup>69</sup> Written Evidence, WESP28

<sup>70</sup> *ibid*

<sup>71</sup> *ibid*

<sup>72</sup> Written Evidence, WESP32

<sup>73</sup> Written Evidence, WESP21

target. It's not the target that's important, but achieving the target, and I don't see what the role of the Government is at that point."<sup>74</sup>

101. Pentan (Neath Port Talbot Welsh-medium School Cluster) also felt that there should be more accountability for local authorities who cannot clearly demonstrate that they were planning to meet targets and suggested that Welsh Government should take a stronger role in the monitoring process.<sup>75</sup>

102. WLGA/ADEW said they would welcome more assistance and support from Welsh Government and its officials, particularly when "parents challenge developments and decisions arising from WESP in local authorities. More often than not, the advice given harms the process and either slows down the change or forces the local authority to abandon it."<sup>76</sup>

### ***The Minister's ability to intervene***

103. The Welsh Language Commissioner described her vision for the role of the Minister as one where they could give guidance, directions and, if necessary, use enforcement powers. Such an approach would assist Welsh Government in addressing failures as they emerge.

104. However, the Commissioner believed there was a lack of clarity about the Minister's powers to intervene where a local authority is failing to meet the targets in its WESP. Furthermore, the current arrangements for enforcement are not robust enough:

"Intervention every three years isn't going to work—you're building on three years of failure then, or you are trying to respond to three years of failure. They need powers where they can intervene, and, if necessary, to use the powers of direction and enforcement. You're talking of special measures in other areas of education; this is also important. So, the national campaign of awareness raising among the public needs to be in place, and alongside that we need to strengthen that statutory monitoring element, which is in the Government's hands, to ensure that the WESPs are working. Because, at the end of the day, they are statutory plans—not a matter of discussion at a local level. This is the statutory tool that we have to secure Welsh-medium education."<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Oral evidence, 8 July 2015, [Record of Proceedings](#)

<sup>75</sup> Written Evidence, WESP39

<sup>76</sup> Written Evidence, WESP38

<sup>77</sup> Oral evidence, 8 July 2015, [Record of Proceedings](#)



105. RhAG recognised that, if the system is working effectively, Ministerial intervention will not be necessary. However, they suggested that clarity was needed from the Welsh Government about the intervention process, including how such an intervention might happen; the circumstances under which it might occur; and the effect or consequences of such an intervention.

### **The Minister's view**

106. The Minister described fora as “indispensable”<sup>78</sup> to the system. However, he noted that they “are not necessarily, though, in my view, the parental voice”<sup>79</sup> and emphasised the importance of engagement and consultation with parents at a local level.

107. In response to a question about concerns relating to fora reported to the Committee, the Minister said:

“The make-up of fora has been pretty much devolved to local authorities on the basis that the Welsh Government would trust them, as public bodies, to run these according to the restraint of public law and requirements around public law, and their requirement to act reasonably in terms of how these things are run. It shouldn't be for the Welsh Government to instruct local authorities how to run a forum properly; they should know.”<sup>80</sup>

108. The Minister believed there is a role for Welsh Government to undertake promotion of Welsh-medium education at a national level and confirmed that “information about the desirability and the educational worth of bilingual or Welsh-medium education is something we should continually push through in terms of public information”.<sup>81</sup> The Minister made reference to Welsh Government promotional campaigns which had consisted of:

“[...] information available to parents, whether in written form or online, and we've also had broadcast elements to that information campaign as well. We also developed three local campaigns in 2014-15 in Llanelli, Blaenau Gwent and Flintshire, working with partners

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<sup>78</sup> Oral evidence, 8 July 2015, [Record of Proceedings](#)

<sup>79</sup> [ibid](#)

<sup>80</sup> [ibid](#)

<sup>81</sup> [ibid](#)

and trying to find out what works best, really, at that local level—the partners were Twf, Mentrau Iaith Cymru and Mudiad Meithrin”.<sup>82</sup>

109. The Minister confirmed that, in terms of awareness raising at a local level, the Welsh Government had decided to “arm the schools themselves”:

“That is, the dialogue is supposed to happen between the school and its own community, really, and that is what will happen. We are going to develop some sort of toolkit for specific schools to work with their communities to explain the sort of experience that children have within their schools, and I think that’s the best method.

Subsequently, word spreads, if there is communication from the schools themselves about the provision. So, there’s no need for a person in the middle, such as Families First or Communities First or whatever, but people working in the field, and that is what we’ve decided as the way forward.”<sup>83</sup>

110. In relation to the extent the Welsh Government should involve itself in the operation of WESPs, the Minister said:

“I don’t think it is my place as the Minister to individually police these local democratic decisions down to the nth detail. There is a local democratic mandate here [...]”<sup>84</sup>

111. The Minister was unclear about his powers to intervene and the circumstances in which they might be used.

## **Committee’s View**

### ***Promotion and awareness raising***

112. Promoting and raising awareness of Welsh-medium education was a key issue for many contributors to the inquiry. In the Committee’s view, this must happen on a number of different levels if it is to be effective. The Welsh Government must take responsibility for promotion on a national level; local authorities should undertake promotional work on a local level that is tailored to their communities; finally, there is a role for schools to ensure they are engaging with the parents in their localities.

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<sup>82</sup> [Oral evidence, 8 July 2015, Record of Proceedings](#)

<sup>83</sup> [ibid](#)

<sup>84</sup> [ibid](#)

113. The Committee is not persuaded that the Welsh Government's promotional work on a national level has been effective and believes that it is vital that it raises its game in this regard.

114. Local Authorities must be more proactive in making meaningful information available to parents about the different types of provision in their localities. Without an understanding of what is available, parents are being put in a position where they are not able to make informed decisions about their children's education.

**Recommendation: Welsh Government should develop and publish a strategy relating to the promotion and awareness of Welsh-medium education at a national and local level. The strategy should include tools that can be used and adapted by local authorities and schools.**

#### ***Welsh-medium education Fora***

115. All contributors to the inquiry believed that fora had the potential to play a vital role in the delivery of WESPs. However, there was a view that the potential is not being fulfilled because of a lack of consistency in terms of approach and membership. Contributors felt that Welsh Government could do more to assist local authorities in sharing good practice and in maximising the effectiveness of fora. This would be consistent with the principle of partnership working outlined earlier in this report. The Welsh Government should clarify the role of regional consortia in relation to WESPs.

116. The Committee believes that fora should be open and transparent and that members of the public should be able to attend their meetings if they so wish. Fora should also publish information on the work they have undertaken.

**Recommendation: Welsh Government should work with Local Government and stakeholders to strengthen the role of fora so that they are more effective. Fora should be open, representative and should report annually.**

**Recommendation: Welsh Government should clarify the role of regional consortia in relation to WESPs.**

#### ***Powers to intervene***

117. Some stakeholders felt strongly that the Minister should intervene where local authorities are not meeting the targets in their WESPs. It was recognised that such intervention should not be necessary if the WESP

system is working correctly and delivering increased provision at a local level.

118. The Committee sought legal advice about whether the Welsh Ministers are able to intervene and take action if it was considered that a local authority was failing in its duty to prepare and implement WESPs correctly. The Committee was advised that the power for Welsh Ministers to intervene under section 21 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 could be used in relation to WESPs.

**Recommendation: The Minister should use the powers available to him under existing legislation to intervene where local authorities are failing to deliver their WESPs.**

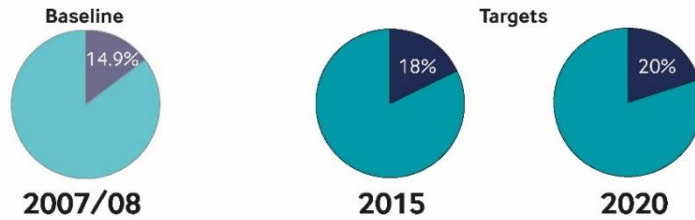
# Welsh-Medium Education Strategy (WMES) Target

## Outcome 4

More students aged 16-19 studying subjects through the medium of Welsh, in schools, colleges and work based learning.

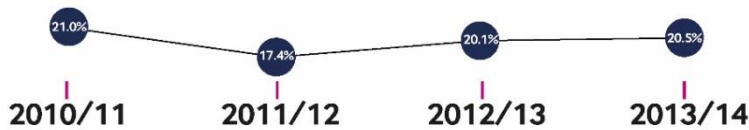
### Outcome: Schools (Welsh Medium and Bilingual)

Student learning activities by medium of delivery (LA26)\*



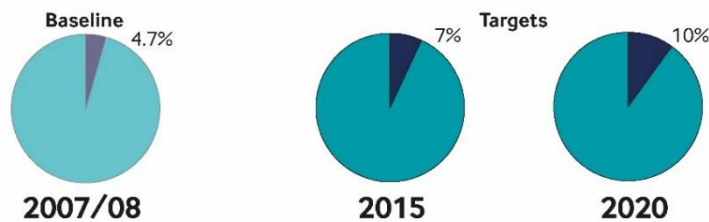
### Outcome Indicator: Schools (Welsh Medium and Bilingual)

Student learning activities by medium of delivery (LA26)\*



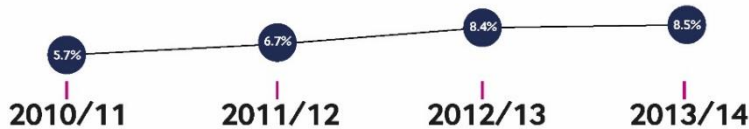
### Outcome: Further Education Institutions (Welsh Medium and Bilingual)

Student learning activities by medium of delivery (LA26)\*



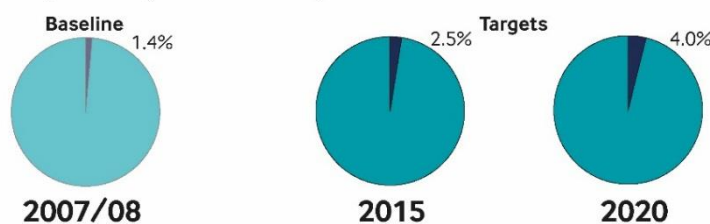
### Outcome Indicator: Further Education Institutions (Welsh Medium and Bilingual)

Student learning activities by medium of delivery (LA26)\*



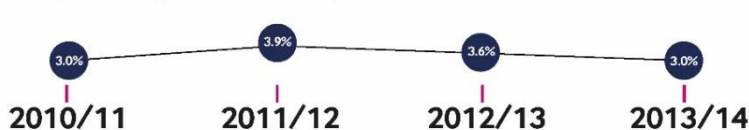
### Outcome: Work based learning (Welsh Medium and Bilingual)

Student learning activities by medium of delivery (LA26)\*



### Outcome Indicator: Work based learning (Welsh Medium and Bilingual)

Student learning activities by medium of delivery (LA26)\*



Source: Welsh-medium Education Strategy: Annual report 2014-15, Welsh Government

## 4. To what extent do WESPs reflect the range of Welsh Government policies relevant to Welsh-medium provision?

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*The Committee scrutinised how effectively policies are co-ordinated to deliver Welsh Government's aspirations for Welsh-medium education and the future of the Welsh language.*

119. Contributors emphasised the importance of a holistic approach to policy making and many were critical of what they perceived to be a lack of read across between the Welsh Medium Education Strategy (WMES), WESPs and a range of national policies. School transport and early years' provision were two of several examples provided to the Committee of policies which are not appropriately reflected or integrated within WESPs.

120. The Welsh Language Commissioner referred to a number of Welsh Government policy consultations which contained no reference to the WMES and explained that "[...] there is no element of cross-referencing between different Government policies. There is a Welsh-medium education strategy, which sits centrally, but that, then, doesn't feed out to other policies."<sup>85</sup>

121. RhAG suggested Welsh Government should undertake a comprehensive review of policies and strategies affecting Welsh-medium education<sup>86</sup>. Furthermore, a Welsh-medium education Bill was required to consolidate existing legislation and provide "unambiguous clarity and guidance."<sup>87</sup>

122. Some contributors felt that there was effective interaction with other Welsh Government policies. For Cyngor Gofal Cymru, WESPs had "made clear links with Flying Start and the wider early years' policy".<sup>88</sup> Denbighshire County Council explained:

"There are clear links in the WESP with 21st Century Schools Programme with capital investment in Welsh-medium education provision to respond to an increase in demand. Key outcomes in the WESP relates to sustaining and increasing the number of pupils learning through the medium of Welsh and continuing studying through the medium of Welsh. This assists the objective of "A living language: a language for living" of increasing the number with Welsh

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<sup>85</sup> Oral evidence, 8 July 2015, [Record of Proceedings](#)

<sup>86</sup> Written Evidence, WESP28

<sup>87</sup> *ibid*

<sup>88</sup> Written Evidence, WESP13

language skills in the workplace. There is also a link between increasing Meithrin provision and Flying Start.”<sup>89</sup>

123. Several contributors commented on the challenges of working with Welsh Government officials and questioned whether departments were working together effectively. The WLGA/ADEW felt that Government departments could work more closely:

“Working within regulations and responding to the requirements of different Welsh Government departments is difficult at times. It is not evident that every department attaches the same importance to the Welsh language when conveying or writing policies. The same could also be said of county council departments.

124. It would be good if all departments could cooperate for successful linguistic progression and support local authority officers who are responsible for implementing WESP recommendations.”<sup>90</sup>

125. CYDAG suggested that Welsh Government policies could be integrated more effectively through the appointment or designation of a “senior officer within the DfES with power to ensure that all civil servants within the DfES is fully aware of the plan, the strategy and all other policies relating to the language. This senior officer should be accountable for this core aspect of the Department’s work.”<sup>91</sup>

### **Flying Start**

126. Flying Start is one of the Welsh Government’s flagship programmes providing early years support to families with children younger than 4 years of age and targeted at the most deprived areas of Wales. The provision includes free part time childcare; enhanced health visiting; parenting support programmes: and language development and play skills. Much of the evidence in respect of WESPs focused on concerns that a lack of availability of Flying Start Welsh-medium provision is subsequently impacting on parent’s choice of language in early years and statutory education. This would have a disproportionate impact on children from low income households.

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<sup>89</sup> Written Evidence, WESP21

<sup>90</sup> Written Evidence, WESP38

<sup>91</sup> Written Evidence, WESP19

127. Mudiad Meithrin referred to the impact of the lack of Dechrau'n Deg / Flying Start spaces which suggested a lack of alignment between WESPs and Flying Start:

“Although Dechrau'n Deg/Flying Start is a childcare scheme, the disparity between the rates of children in Welsh-medium schemes (i.e. Dechrau'n Deg, not Flying Start) and the number of children in receipt of Welsh education in year 2 in primary school, suggests inadequate post-planning that could adversely affect the number of children attending Welsh-medium schools i.e. the numbers could be higher if more places were available or if there was more Dechrau'n Deg/Flying Start provision available.”<sup>92</sup>

128. RhAG echoed these concerns and believed they should be “rectified as a matter of urgency.” They went on to say that:

- “[...] more often than not, Flying Start locations will be the first point of exposure to early-years provision for an increasing number of families.”
- “[...] despite its best intentions” Flying Start had “militated against the expansion of Welsh-medium education.”
- “[...] the Welsh language is a marginal consideration rather than a core consideration as far as the programme’s vision is concerned.”
- “[...] there are significant deficiencies in the process of ensuring that disadvantaged families receive equal access to Flying Start provision through the medium of Welsh.”
- “[...] the provision of welsh-medium Flying Start places does not come close to the current percentages receiving a Welsh-medium education and that this pattern is repeated in around half of the counties of Wales.”

129. Mentrau Iaith Cymru shared the concerns about the progression routes from childcare to welsh-medium early provision:

“Flying Start is a laudable scheme, but there continues to be a lack of Welsh-medium provision in several areas and there is a danger that the route to Welsh-medium education is being undermined and

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<sup>92</sup> Written Evidence, WESP20



rendered inaccessible, which means that fewer children transfer to Welsh-medium education.”<sup>93</sup>

### **School and learner transport**

130. A significant number of contributors to the inquiry raised concerns that local authorities’ school and learner transport policies do not promote access to Welsh-medium education. Pressure on budgets is compounding the problem. Some contributors believed school transport policies can have a significant impact on the potential growth of Welsh-medium education and this should be better reflected in WESPs.

131. Some of the specific concerns related to local authorities reducing their discretionary provision for pupils living within statutory walking distances and the impact this may have on parents’ decisions about early years’ provision.<sup>94</sup> RhAG called for the Welsh Government to clarify how local authorities should fulfil their obligations to provide transport for learners and added:

“Clarity is also needed in terms of the steps that the Welsh Government will take if a local authority does not act accordingly. As the distance between homes and Welsh-medium schools is larger than the distance between homes and English-medium schools on

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<sup>93</sup> Written Evidence, WESP30

<sup>94</sup> Under the provisions of the *Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008*, local authorities have duties to assess the travel needs of learners in their area. They have a duty to make arrangements for free home to school transport for pupils living outside certain ‘walking distances’ to the nearest suitable school, three miles for pupils in secondary schools and two miles for primary schools. In cases where learners do not attend the nearest suitable school, local authorities may use their discretion to provide free transport to Welsh-medium schools regardless of the distance criteria in order to promote access to education and training through the medium of Welsh. Local authorities have a general duty to promote access to education and training through the medium of the Welsh language when exercising functions under the 2008 Learner Travel Measure, which should be outlined in their Welsh Education Strategy Plan (WESP).

The Welsh Government’s revised statutory [Learner Travel Operational Guidance](#), issued in July 2014, sets out how local authorities should meet their legal duties under the Measure. This guidance states: “Parents and learners may express a preference for a particular school, a particular type of language provision or faith school, but the Measure does not confer on those parents and learners any rights to free transport to their preferred school and or location, unless that school is determined by the local authority to be the learner’s nearest suitable school and the learner meets the distance criteria.”

average, local authorities would be expected to have a duty to provide transport to compensate for this disparity.”<sup>95</sup>

132. Mentrau Iaith Cymru shared this view and suggested “it is vitally important that robust guidelines and targets are produced to ensure open and equal access to Welsh-medium provision by amending transport and education measures.”

133. Several contributors made specific reference to transport fees for post 16 education. The Welsh Language Commissioner conducted a ‘Survey of transport for post-16 learners attending Welsh-medium or bilingual education.’<sup>96</sup> In the majority of local authorities responding to the survey, 50 per cent or more of post-16 learners attending Welsh-medium or bilingual education relied on transport. 8 of the 22 local authorities were currently charging those learners a transport fee ranging from £60 to £380. The report recognised that transport policies are either currently under review or are likely to be reviewed and concluded that:

“[...] it is unclear whether every authority recognises the long-term implications of changes to transport arrangements for Welsh-medium and bilingual education.”

### **Other issues**

134. Stakeholders raised concerns about the integration of other policies with the WMEs and WESPS, including:

- The extent to which the **21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme** is contributing to the objectives of the Welsh-medium education strategy and whether funding should be ring-fenced nationally to address demand for Welsh-medium provision;
- A lack of Welsh-language provision for pupils with **Additional Learning Needs (ALN)** and concerns that there are significant gaps in specific aspects, such as speech therapy, psychiatry, and dyslexia support. It was suggested that these issues could be addressed by Welsh Government’s ALN Bill.
- **Further Education** provision should form an intrinsic part of WESPs to create a Welsh-medium continuum from early years to FE provision. This would also support the development of a bilingual workforce. The Welsh Language Commissioner suggested that post-16 education was

‘part of the jigsaw that was entirely missing in terms of Welsh-medium provision.’

- That there should be a focus on the Welsh Government’s current Welsh-medium education strategy and WESPS over the next three to five years rather than waiting for the implications of the implementation of the **Donaldson Review** of the curriculum in Wales.

### **The Minister’s view**

135. The Minister recognised that there is “is always a challenge in creating a system such as the WESPs which will be able to reflect the current educational policy agenda and allow for the duties imposed to enable effective responses to policy imperatives.” The Minister described the WESPs as a mechanism that enables the drawing together of policy and operational strands:

“Local authorities in their WESPs are required to demonstrate how they use the information gleaned from Childcare Sufficiency Assessments to plan for expansion of Welsh-medium childcare in order to feed into Welsh-medium education. In this context, the planning and provision of Welsh-medium Flying Start places is vital. Local authorities are also required to indicate how they have built planning for additional Welsh-medium school places into their Strategic Outline Programme for 21st Century Schools Funding. Similarly, scrutiny of 21st Century Schools Funding submissions involved examining how they align with their Welsh in Education Strategic Plan. Local authorities are also required to show how they comply with the requirements of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008”.<sup>97</sup>

136. The Minister referred to the interaction between Welsh Government departments and Local Authorities and stated:

“In practice, we have seen some local authorities slow to engage with departments or teams who should be feeding into the preparation of the WESP. This has been reflected in the variability of the sections dealing with early years education indicating that the relevant officers have been involved to very different degrees. It has also been true of those officers dealing with learner transport matters. At times, submission for 21st Century Funding have included obsolete references as far as Welsh-medium education is concerned showing

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<sup>97</sup> Oral evidence, 8 July 2015, [Record of Proceedings](#)

that officers responsible for the WESP have not always liaised with those taking forward Capital Funding applications”.<sup>98</sup>

137. The Minister confirmed that early years’ provision was “absolutely integral to the formulation of a WESP” and each WESP should give a “strategic overview of how the pre-school settings feed into the system”. Early years’ provision is “where most traction can be gained in terms of boosting those numbers by the time they get to the age of seven”. He also informed the Committee that there had been a “measurable uplift in terms of the numbers of Flying Start places offered through the medium of Welsh”<sup>99</sup>

138. The Minister stated that the aim of WESPs was “to ensure that parents and pupils can have access to Welsh-medium provision within reasonable distance if that is their preference, irrespective of where they live or their particular economic circumstances”. In reference to learner transport, he said:

“[...] it’s certainly something that I know has exercised the minds of all 22 local authorities when they’ve been drawing up their WESPs, and we will need to return to this more than once, I suspect. At the higher end of the age range we’ve got that support that’s come from the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport for older young people, if you like, and we do still have the EMA here in Wales, which I know many young people use, primarily for transport costs post 16.”<sup>100</sup>

139. The Minister referred to pupils with additional learning needs and said that a specific outcome relating to additional needs had been included “so that, as far as possible, pupils with such needs are not deterred from choosing Welsh-medium education. Welsh-medium education is open to all. In essence, it is about enabling parents and pupils to make an informed choice. Whether they choose to enter the Welsh-medium sector or the English-medium sector, once they have made that choice we want them to have an education of high quality which enables them to reach their potential.”<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Written Evidence, WESP20

<sup>99</sup> [Oral evidence, 8 July 2015, Record of Proceedings](#)

<sup>100</sup> *ibid*

<sup>101</sup> Written Evidence, WESP20

## Committee's View

### *Flying start*

140. We note the concerns raised by contributors about the lack of Flying Start/Dechrau'n Deg places through the medium of Welsh (or mixed provision) compared to the Welsh Government's targets for 7 year olds and believe this may have a significant impact on progression from childcare to Welsh-medium early-education provision. Children from low income families will be hardest hit by this lack of provision. Again, this is an example of a national strategy not being aligned with local delivery.

**Recommendation: Welsh Government should outline the reasons for the deficit between the percentage of Welsh-medium places available under Flying Start and its target for 25 per cent of seven year olds to be taught through the medium of Welsh by 2015 (and 30 per cent by 2020). Welsh Government should explain how it will address the deficit.**

### *School and learner transport*

141. Contributors had significant concerns about this issue, particularly around the introduction of travel fees for post-16 students to Welsh medium provision. The Committee acknowledges that this is a complex area, but it must be addressed by Welsh Government so that its learner transport policies are supporting, not undermining, the delivery of its Welsh medium education strategy. It may be that the Learner Travel Measure needs to be reconsidered, to ensure that legislation aligns with the objectives of WESPs and the WMES.

**Recommendation: Welsh Government to outline how it intends to ensure that transport arrangements for Welsh-medium and bilingual education support the delivery of its WMES targets .**

### *Additional Learning Needs*

142. There appears to be significant gaps in provision for pupils with additional learning needs who wish to be educated through the medium of Welsh. There is also regional variation in levels of provision. Welsh Government should consider how to address these issues, including whether it may be appropriate to introduce regional organisation of additional learning needs provision.

**Recommendation: Welsh Government to outline how it will address Welsh-medium provision for pupils with additional learning needs and**

**whether the forthcoming Additional Learning Needs Bill would be an appropriate vehicle to do so.**

***Further education – post-16.***

143. We agree that further education provision should be included in WESPs to strengthen the continuum from early years to further education provision. This may also help to address concerns relating to the capacity of a bilingual workforce.

**Recommendation: Welsh Government should reconsider its Welsh-medium education strategies with a view to ensuring that the importance of post-16 education is reflected in them and in turn within local authority WESPs.**

***Donaldson review***

144. The Committee notes the Minister's view that the implementation of the Donaldson review will have significant implications for Welsh-medium education. However, the Committee believes that, in the meantime, the Minister must ensure that opportunities are not lost due to a focus on systems that will be implemented in several years' time. A loss of focus over the next three to five years will have a significant impact on Welsh Government's ability to fulfil its aspirations.

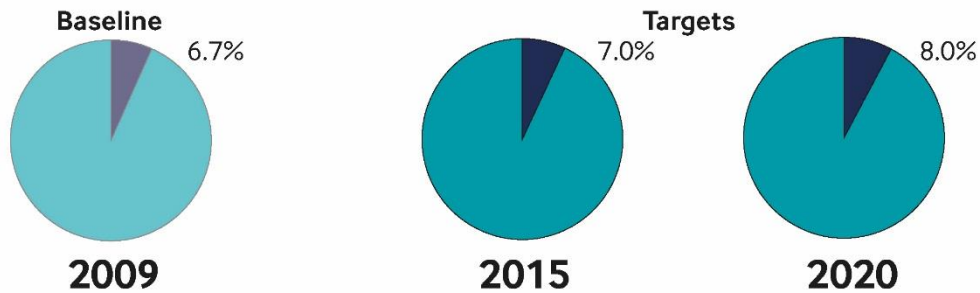
# Welsh-Medium Education Strategy Target

## Outcome 5

More students with higher level Welsh-language skills

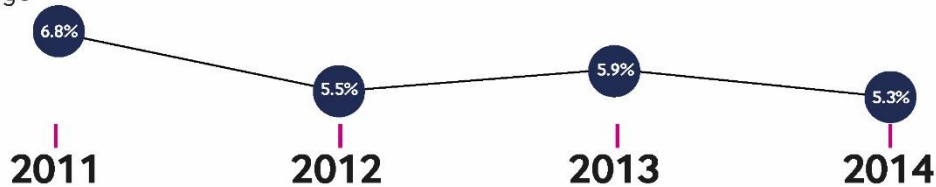
### Outcome 5a

Total A level Welsh **First Language** entries as a percentage of GCSE Welsh First Language entries, two years earlier.



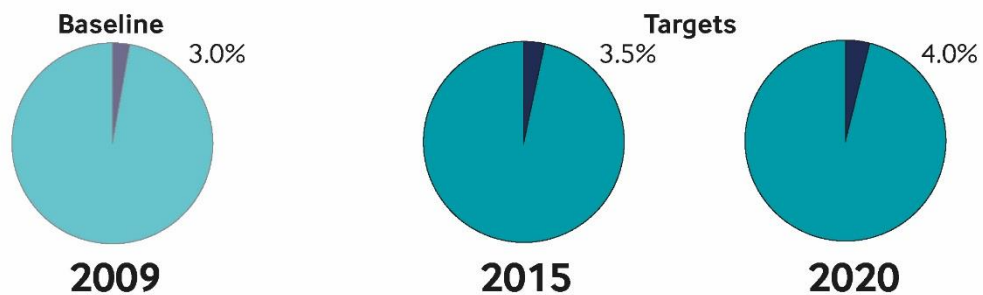
### Outcome indicator 5a

First Language



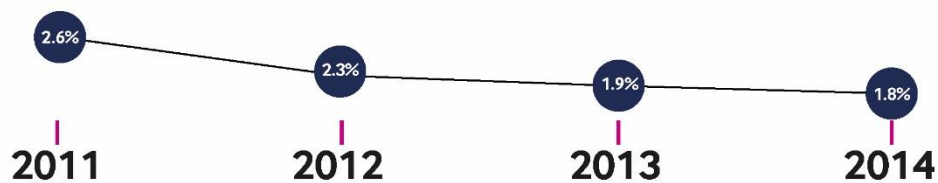
### Outcome 5b

Total A level Welsh **Second Language** entries as a percentage of full and short course GCSE Welsh second language entries, two years earlier.



### Outcome indicator 5b

Second Language



Source: Welsh-medium Education Strategy: Annual report 2014-15, Welsh Government

## **Annex A – The Committee’s Approach**

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### **Terms of Reference**

145. The terms of reference for the inquiry were to consider:

- Whether Welsh in Education Strategic Plans are contributing to the outcomes and targets set out in the Welsh Government’s overarching Welsh Medium Education Strategic Plan;
- Whether WESPs are (or have the potential) to deliver the required change at a local authority level (for example delivering provision to meet any increased demand for Welsh medium education);
- Arrangements for target setting; monitoring; reviewing; reporting; approving; and ensuring compliance with delivering the requirements for WESPs (and the role of the local authority and the Welsh Government in this regard);
- Whether WESPs evidence the effective interaction between the Welsh Government’s Welsh-medium education strategy and other relevant policies and legislation (for example school transport policy; 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools programme; A living language: a language for living – Moving forward policy statement; Flying Start; planning policy);
- Whether the outcomes of WESPs deliver equal outcomes for all pupils (for example primary/secondary pupils; children from low income households).

### **The Committee’s approach**

146. During its inquiry, the Committee heard evidence from:

- Rhieni dros Addysg Gymraeg (RhAG) – 2 July 2015
- Association of Directors of Education in Wales (ADEW) and Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) – 2 July 2015
- Minister for Education and Skills – 8 July 2015
- Welsh Language Commissioner – 8 July 2015

147. A call for evidence was also issued and the Committee received 41 written responses.



## **Annex B - Policy background and context**

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### ***Welsh-medium Education Strategy (WMEs)***

148. The Welsh Government published its Welsh-medium Education Strategy in April 2010. Its purpose is to improve planning for Welsh-medium education and raise standards. Its aim is to:

- improve the planning of Welsh-medium education at all ages (pre-statutory, statutory and post-14 phases of Welsh-medium provision);
- plan for an appropriate workforce;
- improve the central support mechanisms for Welsh-medium education and training; and
- contribute to the acquisition and reinforcement of Welsh-language skills in families and in the community.

149. The Strategy contains fixed five-year and indicative ten-year targets. Since 2010, Welsh Government has published an annual report detailing progress in meeting the targets.

### ***Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs)***

150. WESPs are mechanisms to enable the delivery of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy. They were initially introduced in 2012, and were prepared by local authorities and submitted to Welsh Ministers on a non-statutory basis. Due to their non-statutory status, Welsh Ministers had no formal role in their approval.

151. Part 4 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 (the Act) placed WESPs on a statutory basis. The Act defines a WESP as a plan which contains:

“(a) a local authority’s proposals on how it will carry out its education functions to —

- (i) improve the planning of the provision of education through the medium of Welsh (“Welsh-medium education”) in its area;
- (ii) improve the standards of Welsh-medium education and of the teaching of Welsh in its area;

(b) the local authority’s targets for improving the planning of the provision of Welsh-medium education in its area and for improving

the standards of that education and of the teaching of Welsh in its area;

(c) a report on the progress made to meet the targets contained in the previous plan or previous revised plan.”

152. The Act includes provisions relating to public consultation about the Plan, its submission to Welsh Ministers and the subsequent publication of the approved WESP. In accordance with the Act, Welsh Ministers may approve a plan as submitted, approve it with modifications, or reject it and prepare another plan which is to be treated as the authority’s approved plan. Where Welsh Ministers propose to modify or reject a plan they must consult the local authority.

153. The first statutory WESPs were submitted to Welsh Ministers in December 2013 and covered the period 2014 to 2017. 19 Plans were approved with modifications; three were approved as submitted.

154. As part of Estyn’s [remit for 2015-16](#), it will be examining the implementation of WESPs<sup>102</sup> and is likely to report in summer 2016.

***Welsh in Education Strategic Plans and Assessing Demand for Welsh-medium Education (Wales) Regulations 2013.***

155. The Welsh in Education Strategic Plans and Assessing Demand for Welsh-medium Education (Wales) Regulations 2013 contains provisions relating to the assessment of demand, the duration of a plan, its form and content, its submission to Welsh Ministers, the timing and manner of publication, further detail regarding consultation, and arrangements for the review of a plan. The Regulations also set out in more detail the matters to be dealt with in a plan.

156. The Regulations require a local authority, no later than 20 December every year, to review its progress against the targets in its approved Plan and submit any revised Plan for approval by Welsh Ministers. Revised plans may be approved as submitted or approved with modifications by Welsh Ministers. In 2014, 5 were approved as submitted and 17 with modifications.

157. In 2011 Welsh Government published [guidelines](#) which explained how local authorities should prepare and submit their WESPs.

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<sup>102</sup> This review will measure the appropriateness of the content of Local Authority WESPs and the effectiveness of the detailed actions in improving planning for Welsh-medium education and the standard of the teaching of Welsh, Welsh Second Language and the teaching of subjects through the medium of Welsh.

### ***WMES and WESP targets***

158. WESPs include targets that are intended to support the delivery of the Welsh Government's overarching targets in the Welsh-medium Education Strategy. Local authorities are required to report on the following WMES targets:

- more seven-year-old children being taught through the medium of Welsh as a percentage of the Year 2 cohort;
- more learners continuing to improve their language skills on transfer from primary school to secondary school;
- more learners studying for qualifications through the medium of Welsh;
- more learners aged 16-19 studying Welsh and subjects through the medium of Welsh; and
- more learners with improved skills in Welsh.

159. Local authorities also report on progress of:

- Standards of attainment in Welsh and Welsh Second Language;
- Welsh-medium provision for learners with additional learning needs; and
- Workforce planning and continuing professional development.

## Annex C - Written evidence

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The following people and organisations provided written evidence to the Committee. All written evidence can be viewed in full at:

<http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/mgConsultationDisplay.aspx?ID=179>

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Reference</b>
Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Authority	WESP 01
Ysgol Dyffryn Conwy	WESP 02
Flintshire County Council	WESP 03
Ceredigion Local Authority: Consultant Teacher – Literacy	WESP 04
Dyfodol i'r Iaith	WESP 05
Flintshire Governors' Association Representative	WESP 06
City and County of Swansea	WESP 07
Rhondda Cynon Taf Plaid Cymru Group	WESP 08
Association of Teachers and Lecturers Wales	WESP 09
Councillor Arfon Jones	WESP 10
Urdd Gobaith Cymru	WESP 11
Welsh Language Commissioner	WESP 12
Care Council for Wales	WESP 13
Wrexham County Borough Council Lifelong Learning Department	WESP 14
Vale of Glamorgan	WESP 15
Rosalyn Davies	WESP 16

Education Workforce Council	WESP 17
Cymdeithas yr Iaith's Education Campaign Group	WESP 18
CYDAG	WESP 19
Mudiad Meithrin	WESP 20
Denbighshire County Council	WESP 21
Bridgend County Borough Council	WESP 22
Plaid Cymru Torfaen Council Group	WESP 23
Conwy County Borough Council	WESP 24
Rhodri Davies	WESP 25
Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol	WESP 26
Carys Swain	WESP 27
Parents for Welsh Medium Education	WESP 28
Gwynedd Council	WESP 29
Mentrau Iaith Cymru	WESP 30
Norman Hudson	WESP 31
Menter Bro Ogwr	WESP 32
Ymgyrch TAG	WESP 33
J Jones	WESP 34
The Minister for Education and Skills – Welsh Government	WESP 35
Carmarthenshire Local Education Authority and ERW	WESP 36

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	WESP 37
Association of Directors of Education in Wales   Welsh Local Government Association	WESP 38
Pentan-Neath Port Talbot Welsh-medium School Cluster	WESP 39
Clwstwr Ysgolion Ysgol Gyfun Ystalyfera	WESP 40
UCAC (Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru)	WESP 41

## Annex D - Oral Evidence

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The following witnesses provided oral evidence to the Committee on the dates noted below. Transcripts of all oral evidence sessions can be viewed in full at:

<http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/ielssueDetails.aspx?Ild=12717&Opt=3>

<b>Date</b>	<b>Witness / Organisation</b>
02 July 2015	<p><b>Rhieni dros Addysg Gymraeg (RhAG)</b></p> <p>Elin Maher, Member of the Parents for Welsh Medium Education (RhAG) National Committee and local representative for Newport</p> <p>Ceri Owen, Director of Development - Parents for Welsh Medium Education (RhAG)</p> <p><b>Association of Directors of Education in Wales and Welsh Local Government Association</b></p> <p>Gareth Morgans, Chief Education Officer – Carmarthenshire</p> <p>Catrin Griffiths, Challenge Adviser with responsibility for Welsh</p>
08 July 2015	<p><b>Welsh Government</b></p> <p>Huw Lewis AM, Minister for Education and Skills</p> <p>Bethan Webb, Deputy Director - Welsh Language</p> <p>Gari Lewis, Head of Welsh in Education - Planning Branch</p> <p><b>Welsh Language Commissioner</b></p> <p>Meri Huws, Welsh Language Commissioner</p> <p>Dyfan Sion, Policy and Research Director</p> <p>Sioned Birchall, Policy and Research Officer</p>