

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Education, Skills and Wellbeing Cabinet Board

23rd November 2023

**DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION,
LEISURE AND LIFELONG LEARNING
ANDREW THOMAS**

MATTER FOR INFORMATION

WARDS AFFECTED: All

WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2032

Purpose of report

1. To report on progress of Neath Port Talbot's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-2032.

Executive summary

2. Section 84 of The School Standards and Organisation Act 2013 requires Local Authorities to prepare a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP).
3. Neath Port Talbot's WESP details the plan to support and further develop Welsh language education in schools and in the wider communities and planning for future growth. The plan details how further development will be secured over the next 10 years, January 2022 - January 2032.
4. This report details the progress made in the first year of implementing the plan (Appendix A- Annual Review) and targets for the forthcoming year (Appendix B- Annual Plan) and the next 5 years (Appendix C- Five Year Plan).

Background

5. Section 84 of The School Standards and Organisation Act 2013 requires Local Authorities to prepare a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP). The WESP must contain proposals and targets to improve the:
 - Planning and standards of Welsh medium education and teaching; and
 - Report on progress made to meet the targets of the previous WESP.
6. Neath Port Talbot's WESP 2022-32, will be the cornerstone for the Council's vision for increasing and improving the planning of the provision of Welsh medium education in Neath Port Talbot, to enable all learners to develop their Welsh language skills and to use the language confidently in everyday life. It both complements and assists in facilitating the National vision for the Welsh language, to have 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050:

The year 2050: The Welsh language is thriving, the number of speakers has reached a million, and it is used in every aspect of life. Among those who do not speak Welsh there is goodwill and a sense of ownership towards the language and a recognition by all of its contribution to the culture, society, and economy of Wales. Our vision is to secure favourable circumstances throughout the country that support language acquisition and use of Welsh language skills. We want to see an increase in language transmission in the family, early introduction of Welsh to every child, an education system that provides Welsh language skills for all

Cymraeg 2050 – A million Welsh speakers (Welsh Government, 2017)

7. Welsh-medium education is an integral and essential part of the learning offer in Neath Port Talbot and all children should benefit from the opportunity to learn, appreciate and understand their lives through the medium of Welsh. This principle is underpinned by ensuring universal access to this provision across the county borough. Neath Port Talbot Council recognises that language and culture are critical parts of an individual's identity and is committed to promoting and celebrating Welsh language learning across all phases and sectors.

8. It is acknowledged that the statutory education system has a vital role to play in increasing the number of Welsh speakers. We must increase the number of school learners who have the opportunity to develop Welsh-language skills in school and the opportunity to use it in their everyday lives, significantly, to achieve our goals.
9. Neath Port Talbot's WESP details how we plan to support and further develop Welsh language education in schools and in the wider communities and how we plan for future growth. The plan details how we will secure further development over the next 10 years, January 2022 - January 2032.
10. The plan has been developed through close working with partners including Neath Port Talbot schools, Menter Iaith, RhAG, Mudiad Meithrin, Neath Port Talbot College, Academi Hywel Dda Swansea University, the Urdd and with Welsh Government.
11. It aligns itself to the national policy and guidance '*The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (Wales) Regulations 2019*', '*Cymraeg 2050*' and to the '*Education in Wales: Our National Mission, Action Plan 2017-21*'. The plan will reflect how the school system in Neath Port Talbot, including sixth forms, will move forward in the period until 2032 to ensure that the new curriculum is implemented effectively in our schools securing the opportunity and 'desire for learners to become increasingly bilingual with a strong grasp of other languages' (*Curriculum for Wales 2022*).
12. The overarching ten year target in Neath Port Talbot is to increase the number of Year 1 children taught through the medium of Welsh from 16.8% (252 pupils) in 2020/21 (PLASC 2021) to 31% (460 pupils) by 2032.
13. PLASC 2021 reception and second year nursery pupil numbers were 283 (18.7%) and 290 (21%) respectively, so over the short term, year 1 numbers and percentages are likely to increase.
14. Neath Port Talbot's WESP also contains information on mitigating any possible negative impacts on linguistically sensitive areas. This information is included as an appendix to the main WESP (Appendix D).

WESP Outcomes

15. The following outcomes are outlined in the WESP and address the broader aims outlined in Cymraeg 2050 and its implementation plan.

- More nursery children/3 year olds receive their education through the medium of Welsh
- More reception class children/ 5 year olds receive their education through the medium of Welsh
- More children continue to improve their Welsh language skills when transferring from one stage of their statutory education to another
- More learners study for assessed qualifications in Welsh (as a subject) and subjects through the medium of Welsh
- More opportunities for learners to use Welsh in different contexts in school.
- An increase in Welsh-medium education provision for learners with additional learning needs (in accordance with duties determined by the ALN Act
- Increase the number of teaching staff able to teach Welsh (as a subject) and teach through the medium of Welsh.

Summary of progress

16. Key achievements over the last year include the following.

- *Welsh-medium/ bilingual Childcare*- New Welsh-medium childcare facilities have opened or been expanded in YGG Treges, YGG Tyle'r Ynn, YGG Pontardawe and YGG Cwmllynfell. A further two setting will open imminently in YGG Trebannws and Neath Central. Work on a new-build Welsh-medium/ bilingual childcare facility in Blaendulais and Cwmafan are currently in progress and will be completed in Summer 2024, along with the opening of a new Childcare provision in Neath Central (new Leisure Centre) significantly increasing the current childcare places within these areas. As a result of the expansion and refurbishment of the childcare settings, an additional 94 places will have been created within the Local Authority.
- *New Welsh-medium school* - Ysgol Gymraeg Treges, a new Welsh-medium 3-11 primary school opened in January 2023 in the Neath Abbey area. Currently the school is open to Nursery and Reception pupils. Phase 2 of remodelling works is currently underway (kitchen refurbishment and 2 Foundation Phase classrooms).
- *Sustainable Schools Challenge*- The LA were successful in the Sustainable Schools Challenge and as a result a new Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Rhosafan will be built in the next 3 years. The project will demonstrate an exemplar commitment towards environmental sustainability and stakeholder engagement throughout all stages of the design, build and operation of a new build Welsh-medium school.

- *Immersion Provision*- 'Y Cwm' immersion unit, located in YGG Pontardawe, has been successfully established. It has provided Welsh language immersion and Welsh language 'catch-up' intervention for 3 cohorts of pupils (total of 49 pupils, 12 late-comers and 37 language intervention/ catch-up pupils) throughout the year. It currently employs one full-time teacher and a teaching assistant.
- *Welsh-medium Additional Learning Needs Provision/ DACC*- NPT have created a steering group for the development of inclusive Welsh medium education (Grŵp Lliwio Datblygiad Addysg cyfrwng Cymraeg Cynhwysfawr /DACC). The purpose of the group is to identify the provision and resources required within the Welsh Medium sector that will ensure an equitable offer for Welsh medium pupils and continuity in their journey in Welsh education, particularly during transition points. DACC are currently developing resources that will facilitate a consistent approach in identifying and supporting literacy difficulties in the medium of Welsh. School staff have been seconded for this work and will launch the resource with schools in Autumn term 2023.

Financial Impact

17. There are no financial implications linked to this report. However if implemented financial impacts could occur, for example an increase in the number of Welsh-medium schools is likely to lead to increased capital and revenue costs.
18. A Welsh-medium capital grant of £460,000 was awarded for the development of a Childcare provision and refurbishment of the ALN provision in YGG Trebannws. Phase 1 of the project (Childcare and Early Years classrooms) was completed in September 2022. Phase 2 of the project (ALN provision) was completed in September 2023.
19. A Welsh-medium capital grant of £550,000 was awarded for the development of Foundation Phase classrooms in YGG Tregales. Phase 1 of the project was completed in December 2022 (remodelling and refurbishment) and phase 2 of remodelling works is currently underway (kitchen and a further 2 classrooms).
20. A Welsh Government Immersion Grant of £300,000 was awarded to facilitate the running of the immersion centre from September 2022-March 2025. Additional costs of running the immersion centre may be identified in March 2025 and reports will be presented to members at the appropriate time for approval.

21. Applications for grant funding have been submitted to assist with additional capital and revenue costs for identified projects through the 21st century schools programme and these will be the subject of further reports.
22. Additional financial impacts may be identified through the course of the 10 year plan and reports will be presented to members at the appropriate time for approval.

Integrated Impact Assessment

23. An integrated impact assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its legislative duties (under the Equality Act 2010, the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.
24. The assessment has indicated positive impacts in relation to age, disability, race and sex; neutral impacts on the other protected characteristics and a positive impact on the development of the Welsh language. The WESP is a 10 year plan and will continue to be monitored during that period by the WESP forum members and annually by Welsh Government for any mitigating actions where necessary.
25. The Integrated Impact Assessment is attached to this report as Appendix E.

Valley Communities Impacts

26. There are likely to be positive impacts on valley communities as result of this report. During implementation it is likely that the WESP will create and provide opportunities and experiences for all learners and the wider community to use Welsh and be part of Welsh life in order to increase confidence in the Welsh language and to feel a sense of belonging. The WESP aims to promote community cohesion by creating opportunities to work together towards a common aim, developing the Welsh language. Specific actions within the WESP

promote community cohesion, for example, Menter Iaith's family activity sessions/ days e.g. fun days, singing sessions; The Urdd's Community Department providing arts opportunities and arranging activities to encourage and enable children and young people to socialise through the medium of Welsh outside the classroom; further development of Ty'r Gwrhyd's community groups, including Merched y Wawr, Cylch Darllen Cwm Tawe and papur bro *Llais*, and activities including regular book launches, small art exhibitions, cultural and literary events and creative activities for children and young people. These activities aim to forge good relationships between Welsh-medium and English-medium communities.

Workforce impacts

27. It is likely that there will be positive workforce impacts as a result of this report. WESP outcome 7 aims to increase the number of teaching staff able to teach Welsh (as a subject) and to teach through the medium of Welsh, which is likely to positively impact on the workforce. The opening of 3 new Welsh-medium schools within the 10 year period will also increase the number of staff teaching through the medium of Welsh within the Local Authority.

Legal impacts

28. The following legislation / regulations are aligned to this report:

- Section 84 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013.
- The WESP (Wales) Regulations 2019
- The WESP (Wales) (Amendment) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020

Risk Management Impacts

29. Failure to implement the WESP targets will mean that the Council will not be able to fulfil its legal obligations.

Consultation

30. Consultation on the WESP has already taken place, there is no requirement for further external consultation.

Recommendation

42. It is recommended that members note the content of the report on the progress of the WESP.

Appendices

Appendix A: Annual Review

Appendix B: Annual Plan

Appendix C: 5 Year Plan

Appendix D: Welsh in Education Strategic Plan

Appendix E: WESP IIA

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