

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales  
Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and Education  
Committee  
Ymchwiliad i Gynlluniau Strategol Cymraeg mewn Addysg | Inquiry into Welsh in  
Education Strategic Plans

WESP 14

Ymateb gan : Adran Dysgu Gydol Oes Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Wrexham  
Response from : Wrexham County Borough Council Lifelong Learning Department

**Question 1** – What are your views on 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?

As the plan is statutory, it provides more impetus in terms of its status and level of importance attached to the strategic priorities within the plan. A separate plan also ensures that priorities in this area are not lost within other plans.

The necessity of a Welsh in Education Forum, which meets at least termly and includes representation from all relevant major stakeholders, ensures that the Forum effectively contributes to the outcomes and targets set out in Wrexham’s Welsh in Education Strategic Plan and the Welsh Government’s overarching Welsh Medium Education Strategic Plan.

If you believe that WESPs are not contributing sufficiently, how do you think this could be resolved?

There is some disconnect in relation to the planning of Welsh medium provision and continuity. These points are explained more fully in responses to Q2 and Q4.

**Question 2** – What are your views on 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)?

If the authority demonstrates that there is a need for provision, the question is how do we fund it? Juggling demand requires careful management by the local authority, particularly when there are pockets of demand across Wrexham County Borough. Whilst some funding is available via the 21st Century Schools programme, the programme does not always marry with the need for provision

identified as a result of the WESP.

In addition, managing demand, parental and Member expectations can be a complex process. Parental assumptions and meeting parental preference owing to proximity of location (distance to nearest Welsh medium school) can cause issues, e.g. the assumption by parents that if their child has been in receipt of Welsh medium education in a pre-school setting or nursery, they will automatically be allocated a place in Reception at their local / the same Welsh medium school where their child attended nursery.

If you believe that WESPs are not, or don't have the potential, to deliver change, how do you think this could be resolved?

In order to meet the priorities contained within the WESP, there is a need to safeguard funding to ensure that the authority is able to realistically meet expected outcomes and targets.

**Question 3** – What are your views on the 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)?

The Wrexham WESP includes a number of measurable indicators and targets (set out at the beginning of each outcome) which are monitored and reviewed by the Forum at least three times a year.

Annual progress reports are also submitted to the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee.

We are in the process of developing annual Report Cards (one for Welsh first language and one Welsh second language) based on the Results Based Accountability (RBA) approach as a way of monitoring performance against high level strategic priorities contained within the plan.

If you believe there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?

We would question why the target under Outcome 1 relates to seven year old children and not five year old children (i.e. More seven-year-old children being taught through the medium of Welsh).

**Question 4** – What are your views on 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)

More work is needed to ensure effective interaction between the Welsh Government’s Welsh–medium education strategy and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools programme.

Changes to Banding in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme has created increased challenges, particularly given that the Banding timeline does not align with the WESP timeline. We have submitted a revised 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools SOP to address some of the challenges arising from local demand for Welsh–medium education, however the disconnect in timescales needs to be addressed at a strategic level within Welsh Government, to assist local authorities in the planning of school places in the Welsh–medium sector.

Welsh–medium nursery transport needs to have a ring–fenced budget due to the geographical location of some Welsh–medium schools that are spread out across the county. This would assist parents who have to travel long distances in order for their children to receive nursery education through the medium of Welsh.

If you believe there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?

21<sup>st</sup> Century funding needs to be ring–fenced nationally, in order to address the rising demand for school places, particularly in the Welsh–medium sector. A portion of funding needs to be ring–fenced nationally to address specific demand in local authorities such as Wrexham (as demonstrated by Welsh Government surveys).

There is a need for national alignment of the WESP and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme at a strategic level by Welsh Government.

**Question 5** – What are your views on whether the outcomes of WESPs deliver equal outcomes for all pupils, including for example, primary/secondary pupils or children from low income households.

We need to be asking for harder outcomes. The outcomes on page 24 of our WESP are our own thoughts of what success looks like. We have included literacy and numeracy measures in our plan (e.g. reading test data and targets) as additional measures of success.

If you believe that the outcome of WESPs do not deliver equal outcomes, how do you think this could be resolved?

There has been no reference to children from low income households previously from Welsh Government in relation to the WESP, therefore our plan does not explicitly refer to this.

Welsh Government needs to recognise literacy and numeracy in their WESP guidance and plans.

**Question 6** – If you had to make one recommendation to the Welsh Government from all the points you have made, what would that recommendation be?

Ensure that there is national alignment of the WESP and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme so that funding for this priority is ring-fenced and protected as much as possible (whilst recognising the pressures that Welsh Government and local authorities are facing to make further savings).

**Question 7** – Do you have any other comments or issues you wish to raise that have not been covered by the specific questions?

Already covered in responses to the questions.