

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 03

Ymateb gan : Cyngor Sir y Fflint

Response from : Flintshire County Council

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?

In Flintshire the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan is taken very seriously and is making a noticeable contribution to enabling Flintshire County Council reach its targets in promoting Welsh Medium Education in a very anglicised authority.

This is because the Council has established a very effective Welsh in Education Forum where senior officers and representatives of key local partners meet on a regular basis to create the plan, monitor its outcomes and work in strong partnership to deliver its aims and objectives. A senior school improvement officer is responsible for the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan and there is strong collaboration between officers across the Education and Youth Portfolio to ensure its effective implementation. The Forum holds officers to account on the delivery of the plan.

This Forum is chaired by the Chief Officer for Education and Youth and/or the Lead Member for Education so it given a very high political priority

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

Where WESPs are not contributing sufficiently, it could be for a number of reasons but it is likely that the fundamental one would be a lack of leadership at a senior officer or political level to give it the status and resources it needs to be implemented effectively.

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)?

In Flintshire, in the context described in Question 1, the WESP has delivered changed at a Local Authority level. A parental survey in 2013 identified that there was a demand for Welsh medium education in the Deeside area of the county. Through the 21st Century modernisation programme, the council has been able to open a new Welsh medium provision in the Deeside area under the leadership of a nearby Welsh medium primary school. The Local Authority has provided 'start up' funding for this satellite centre with a view that it will become self-sufficient over time if parents actively choose it as an option for their children in the area. Early indications are good with pupil numbers starting at 11 in September 2014 with projected numbers of 24 for September 2015.

The development of the plan and the requirement to have a dedicated Welsh in Education Forum has been a significant step in improving the quality and range of partnership working in Flintshire between council officers and a range of organisations eg Twf, Mudiad Meithrin, Menter Iaith Sir y Fflint, Urdd Gobaith Cymru, Syfflag and Coleg Cambria. This has delivered quality Welsh in Education Plans which have been approved by Welsh Government, new Welsh medium pre-school and school aged provision and has increased the profile of Welsh medium education generally across the county.

The key to a successful WESP is strong local leadership and a genuine commitment to partnership working.

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

See answer to Question 2 & 3

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 arrangements for the target setting etc. appear to work as they stand. They cover the main areas as would be expected. It does need to be acknowledged by Welsh Government, however, that parental choice is the biggest factor in selecting which school their children attend and that despite the best efforts of the Local Authority, sometimes pupils do leave the Welsh medium sector for a variety of reasons eg dissatisfaction with the individual school, movement into the private sector, moving out of the area and back into England.

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

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; 21st Century Schools programme; A living language: a language for living – Moving forward policy statement; Flying Start; planning policy)

It is self evident that there should be effective interaction between Welsh in Education Strategic Planning and wider social and educational policy goals. There are challenges in achieving this for partners, local authorities/ consortia and the Welsh Government.

For example, in some areas there is an ongoing challenge to ensure that Welsh Medium education is accessible to all. Early years education and Flying Start strategies are key to making progress in this to ensure that all families know about and can take advantage of Welsh Medium learning opportunities.

In relation to school transport, the recent judicial review of Swansea's transport policy questioned the legal basis on which many authorities offer provision to Welsh Medium provision. This may have significant negative implications for the sector as Authorities review their compliance with the adjudication. It is an area where issues need careful consideration and review.

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

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.

The focus of the WESP is on all pupils regardless of phase of education or socio-economic background. The emphasis on raising standards of attainment through the curriculum, as measured by outcomes at the end of each phase and external examinations, applies to all learners. Monitoring the performance of pupils from

low income households could only be measured by breaking the data down in more detail to e-FSM and non-FSM pupils which adds to the workloads of Local Authorities in the time of financial austerity and diminishing resources so would probably not be welcomed.

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

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?

The WESP forums are a key driver and the quality of these is an areas worthy of exploration.

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