

Research Briefing
**Welsh-medium education and
Welsh as a subject**

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Date: **August 2016**



National Assembly for Wales
Research Service

The National Assembly for Wales is the democratically elected body that represents the interests of Wales and its people, makes laws for Wales, agrees Welsh taxes and holds the Welsh Government to account.

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Date: **August 2016**

Paper Number: **16-048**

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Research Briefing

Welsh-medium education and Welsh as a subject

This paper provides an overview of Welsh-medium education provision in Wales. It explains the legal background to Welsh-medium education, and the language categories of schools. It includes relevant information about Welsh-medium special educational needs provision and also information about school transport. The paper also sets out Welsh Government policies relating to Welsh-medium education, including its Welsh-medium Education Strategy, the duty on local authorities to submit Welsh in Education Strategic Plans and its policies on Welsh second language provision. It concludes by looking at the Welsh Government's priorities for Welsh-medium education during the Fifth Assembly.

This paper provides a general overview of Welsh-medium education. It is not intended to provide advice relevant to individual cases.



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1. Introduction

It is the Welsh Government's policy that all pupils should study Welsh from ages 3-16, either first or second language. Approximately **16% of pupils attend Welsh-medium schools** and study Welsh as a first language. A **further 10%** attend bilingual, dual-medium, or English with significant Welsh provision (see further details on school language categories later in the paper). **Welsh Government statistics** show that in 2014, 22.2% of 7 year old learners were assessed through the medium of Welsh first language and 17.1% of 14 year olds were assessed in Welsh first language.

2. Welsh-medium education

2.1 The legal background

Section 9 of the Education Act 1996 states that local authorities must have regard to the general principle that pupils are to be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents so far as that is compatible with the provision of efficient instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure. **Section 86, 86A and 86B of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998** develop this principle and refer to 'education in accordance with parental wishes'. It requires local authorities to make arrangements to enable the parents of children in their area, and in the case of sixth form admissions, young people, to express a preference for a school and to give reasons for that preference. This may include the medium of provision. Where a parent or young person expresses a preference according to those arrangements, local authorities and governing bodies must comply with that preference subject to exceptions which are set out in the legislation.

The **Welsh Government's School Admission Code 2013** imposes requirements, on local authorities and admission authorities, regarding the discharge of their duties in respect of school admissions. It summarises these exceptions:

- Where compliance with the preference would prejudice the provision of efficient education or the efficient use of resources (including prejudice which might arise by reason of relevant measures required to be taken to ensure compliance with the infant class size limit);
- Where arrangements for entry to a school's sixth form are based wholly on selection by reference to ability or aptitude and compliance with the preference would be incompatible with selection under those arrangements; and
- Where a child has been permanently excluded from two or more schools and the latest exclusion took place within the last two years.

The code also states that there is a general prohibition on local authorities (as admission authorities) setting an oversubscription criteria which, in the case of Welsh-medium schools, includes the ability to speak Welsh.

The **School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013**, places a statutory duty on local authorities to assess the demand for Welsh-medium education in their area through their Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs).

2.2 Welsh-medium, bilingual and English-medium schools

Under **Section 105 (7) of the Education Act 2002** a 'Welsh-speaking' school is a school where

More than half of the following subjects are taught wholly or partly in Welsh –

(a) Religious education, and

(b) The subjects other than English and Welsh which are foundation subjects in relation to pupils at the school

The Welsh Government has published **guidance** (2007) which sets out the categories of schools in Wales according to the language used as the medium of instruction and the normal business of the school. These definitions have no basis in legislation, and have been devised to provide information to parents, local government and national government about the extent to which pupils are learning through the medium of Welsh.

Primary schools categories and descriptions

According to the 2007 guidance, primary schools fall into the following categories:

Welsh-medium

Pupils in the Foundation Phase are taught through the medium of Welsh and at least 70% of the teaching in Key Stage 2 is through the medium of Welsh. Welsh is the language of the day-to-day business of the school and is the language of communication with the pupils and for the school's administration.

Dual stream

Mainly Welsh-medium and mainly English-medium provision exist side-by-side. Both Welsh and English are used in the day-to-day business of the school and to communicate with pupils.

Transitional: Welsh-medium with significant use of English

Pupils in the Foundation Phase are taught through the medium of Welsh and both languages are used to teach at Key Stage 2, but with greater emphasis on Welsh, so that it is used to teach over 50%, and up to 70% of the curriculum. Welsh is the language of the day-to-day business of the school and a high priority is given to creating a Welsh ethos in the school.

Predominantly English-medium, with significant use of Welsh

Both the Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2 are taught in both languages, with greater emphasis on English. Welsh is used to teach between 20-50% of the overall curriculum. The day-to-day language of the school is determined by the school's linguistic context – both languages are used as languages of communication with the pupils and for the school's administration.

English-medium

The Foundation Phase is taught through the medium of English. English is also the main medium for Key Stage 2, but Welsh is taught as a second language, and some aspects of some subjects may be taught in Welsh. English is the language of the day-to-day business of the school, but some Welsh is used to communicate with pupils, with the aim of improving their capacity to use everyday Welsh.

Secondary schools categories and descriptions

Welsh-medium

All subjects apart from English are taught through the medium of Welsh. Welsh is the day-to-day language of the school, and is used as the language of communication with the pupils and for the school's administration.

Bilingual schools

This category has four sub-divisions according to the percentage of subjects taught through the medium of Welsh, and whether there is parallel provision in English.

- Type A: at least 80% of subjects apart from Welsh and English are taught only through the medium of Welsh to all pupils. One or two subjects are taught to some pupils in English or in both languages.
- Type B: at least 80% of subjects (excluding Welsh and English) are taught through the medium of Welsh, but are also taught through the medium of English.
- Type C: 50-79% of subjects (excluding Welsh and English) are taught through the medium of Welsh, but are also taught through the medium of English.
- Type Ch: all subjects, except Welsh and English, are taught to all pupils using both languages.

The day-to-day language of the school will be determined by its linguistic context. Both languages are used to communicate with pupils and for the school's administration, and a high priority is given to creating a Welsh ethos.

Predominantly English-medium, with significant use of Welsh

Both languages are used for teaching, with 20-49% of subjects taught through the medium of Welsh. All subjects would also normally be taught through the medium of English. Both languages are used for communication with the pupils and for the school's administration.

English-medium

Pupils are mainly taught through the medium of English, and Welsh is taught as a second language up to Key Stage 4. English is the day-to-day language of the school, but some Welsh is also used as a language of communication with the pupils, with the aim of improving their capacity to use everyday Welsh.

School statistics by language category

In 2014/15, there were 391 Welsh-medium primary schools in Wales, alongside 39 dual stream schools, 33 English schools with significant use of Welsh, and 862 English-medium schools. During the same period, there were 23 Welsh-medium secondary schools, 27 bilingual schools, 9 English schools with significant use of Welsh, and 148 English-medium secondary schools. Further information about the Welsh-medium, English-medium and bilingual schools in any given constituency can be found on the [StatsWales website](#).

2.3 Welsh-medium Education Strategy

The Welsh Government launched its **Welsh-medium Education Strategy (WMES)** in April 2010. It set out a new policy agreement with local authorities that required them to assess the demand for Welsh-medium education. This was later made a duty in the ***School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013***.

The strategy sets out six strategic aims and a number of objectives within them:

- To improve the planning of Welsh-medium provision in the pre-statutory and statutory phases of education, based on informed parental demand;
- To improve the planning of Welsh-medium provision in the post-14 phases of education and training, taking account of linguistic progression and continuing development of skills;
- To ensure that all learners develop their Welsh language skills to their full potential, and encourage sound linguistic progression from one phase of education and training to the next;
- To ensure a Welsh-medium education workforce that provides sufficient numbers of practitioners for all phases of education and training, with high-quality Welsh language skills and competence in teaching methodologies;
- To improve the central support mechanisms for Welsh-medium education and training; and
- To contribute to the acquisition and reinforcement of Welsh language skills in families and in the community.

Welsh-medium Education Strategy annual report and targets

The WMES includes national targets and the Welsh Government publishes an annual report to update on progress. Targets in local authority Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs) (further details below) are intended to support the delivery of the Welsh Government's overarching targets in the WMES.

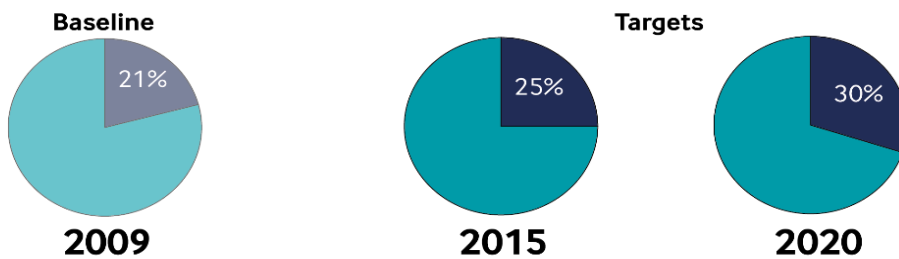
The Welsh Government's 2011 WESP guidelines include a requirement that local authorities report annually on the following WMES targets:

- 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.

The infographic shows the targets for seven year olds being taught through the medium of Welsh, alongside data on the percentage change by local authority between 2010 -2014.

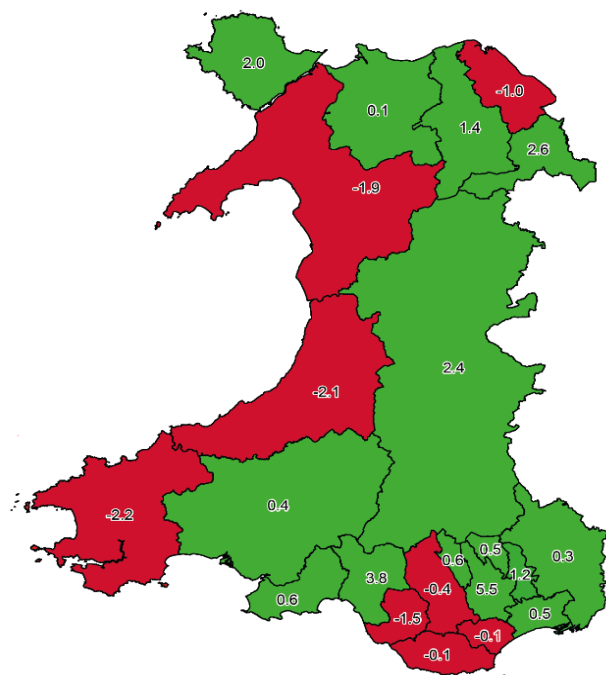
Outcome 1

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.



Percentage change against Outcome 1 by Local Authority 2010-2014

- Percentage increase compared to outcome 1
- Percentage decrease compared to outcome 1

Local Authorities with a percentage decrease against outcome 1 since the launch of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy will need to demonstrate in their 2015 revised WESP how they will address these downward trends.

Source: latest published [Welsh Government Welsh Medium Education Strategy Annual Report, July 2015](#)

Evaluation and next steps

In March 2016 the Welsh Government published [Welsh-medium Education Strategy: Next Steps](#), which outlined its three main objectives for developing Welsh-medium and Welsh language education over the following 12 months:

- The need to embed processes for planning Welsh-medium provision: strengthening strategic planning processes for all phases of education and training continues to be a priority;
- The need for improved workforce planning and support for practitioners: ensuring a sufficient workforce for Welsh-medium education and training is vital; and
- The need to ensure that young people have the confidence to use their Welsh language skills in all walks of life: education and training alone cannot guarantee that speakers become fluent in Welsh, or choose to use the language in their everyday lives.

This **Evaluation of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy** (March 2016) made 21 recommendations, including:

- The Welsh Government should publish a policy statement which confirms and reinforces its vision for the continuing growth of Welsh-medium education. This statement should emphasise the duty on all partners to plan proactively to increase Welsh-medium education provision;
- Senior leaders within Welsh Government should ensure that Welsh-medium education is considered as a core element throughout the process of planning and implementing education policies. This should include careful consideration of the likely contribution and impact of policies on the outcomes to which the Welsh Government has committed in the strategy;
- The Welsh Government should publish an annual monitoring report on the progress and effectiveness of the implementation of the WESPs. This report would be an opportunity to identify which authorities have succeeded in increasing Welsh-medium provision, and to challenge the authorities that have underperformed against their local targets; and
- The Welsh Government should conduct a further review of Welsh-medium provision for learners with additional learning needs. The review should explore examples of good practice at a local and regional level. The review should also consider the capacity of the Welsh-medium workforce in this field.

2.4 Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs)

The Welsh Government's Welsh-medium Education Strategy required local authorities to submit Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs), to measure demand for Welsh-medium education and outline their targets to the Welsh Government. The ***School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013*** placed WESPs on a statutory footing. Following the implementation of the Act, local authorities were required to produce their first statutory WESPs for the period 2014-2017. The Act placed a duty upon local authorities to consult on, produce and publish a WESP to be submitted for approval of, and monitoring by, Welsh Ministers. It provided for Welsh Ministers to make regulations about WESPs and subsequently the ***Welsh in Education Strategic Plan and Assessing Demand for Welsh Medium Education (Wales) Regulations 2013*** came into force on 31 December 2013. They make provision in relation to:

- Assessing the demand for Welsh-medium education;
- Duration of the WESP;
- Form and content of the WESP;
- Submission of the WESP to Welsh Ministers;
- Timing and manner of publication of the WESP;
- Consultation on the WESP; and
- Review of the WESP.

WESPs are three-year plans which are reviewed annually, and must set out:

- The local authority's proposals on how it will improve the planning of the provision of Welsh-medium education in its area, along with the standards of Welsh-medium education and the teaching of Welsh in its area;

- 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; and
- The progress made to meet the targets contained in the previous plan or previous revised plan.

Integral to these plans is the local authority’s assessment of the demand for Welsh-medium education in its area and what steps it will take to meet it.

Assembly Committee’s Inquiry into Welsh in Education Strategic Plans

In 2015, the National Assembly’s Children, Young People and Education Committee undertook an **Inquiry into Welsh in Education Strategic Plans** (WESPs). The Committee considered:

- Whether WESPs are contributing to the outcomes and targets set out in the Welsh Government’s Welsh-medium Education Strategy;
- Whether WESPs are delivering, 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 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); and
- Whether the outcomes of WESPs deliver equal outcomes for all pupils (for example, primary/secondary pupils, children from low-income households).

The Committee’s report raised a number of concerns about WESPs and their efficiency in promoting the use of the Welsh language. It stated:

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.

The then Minister for Education and Skills, Huw Lewis, recognised that not all Welsh Government national targets would be delivered, telling the Committee:

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.

The Committee made 17 recommendations, including:

- The Welsh Government must ensure that Welsh-medium Education Strategy targets are reflected in WESPs and be more robust in its approval of WESPs to ensure they reflect Welsh Government’s ambitions;
- The Welsh Government must clarify how it intends to work in partnership with local authorities to deliver its Welsh-medium Education Strategy;
- 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; and
- The 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.

In its response to the Committee’s recommendations, the Welsh Government stated:

Local authorities have had three 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.

The Government views the introduction of WESPs as an important component in creating the system necessary to improve both the planning for, and standards of, Welsh-medium education. 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, subsequently, the revised Plans has involved considerable modifications.

The **Welsh Government** accepted six recommendations, accepted a further six ‘in principle’ and rejected five recommendations. For further information see the Research Service’s blog on **How effective are Welsh in Education Strategic Plans?**

2.5 Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Welsh-medium provision

Local authorities, schools and others in the education sector must carry out their statutory duties to identify, assess and make provision for children’s special educational needs with regard to the **Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales**.

The Code of Practice includes guidance on how local authorities should make provision for SEN through the medium of Welsh:

[...] in so far as it is appropriate in the circumstances and reasonably practicable [services should be] delivered in Welsh and/or English according to the needs and wishes of the pupil and the parents. Services should be organised to facilitate this and should be equal in terms of quality and coverage to Welsh and English speakers alike. Parity of language provision should be delivered in all services and bodies should also ensure that they communicate with parents in the language of their choice [...] (para 1.7)

One of the strategic objectives of the Welsh Government's Welsh-medium Education Strategy is to develop improved planning of Welsh-medium education for learners with additional learning needs (ALN). The term additional learning needs (ALN) is often used interchangeably with special educational needs (SEN). The Welsh Government plans to legislate to formally replace SEN with ALN. For further information see the Research Service's blog on **Reforming the Special Educational Needs System (June 2016)**.

In December 2015, the National Assembly for Wales' Children Young People and Education Committee's report following the **Inquiry into Welsh in Education Strategic Plans** stated:

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.

The report recommended that the Welsh Government should 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.

The **Welsh Government accepted this recommendation**, stating:

The Welsh Government recognises the importance of supporting those with special educational needs (SEN) within Welsh-medium education. However, it is the responsibility of local authorities to ensure there is suitable educational provision for all learners including those with SEN who receive their education through the medium of Welsh [...]

Through our approach for the New Deal Pioneer Schools, we are ensuring our workforce will develop the knowledge and skills needed to better support all learners with SEN, including those within Welsh-medium education. In addition we are working with key stakeholders to develop a national workforce planning system for SEN specialist support services to improve the capacity of services to support learners and schools across Wales. This workforce planning system will take into consideration the Welsh language capacity of specialist support services.

In July 2015, the Welsh Government published the **Draft Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill** and followed this with an initial working draft of a proposed **Additional Learning Needs Code** in September 2015. The Draft Code states that:

[The] Welsh language is supported by the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011... Relevant bodies will have to ensure their services are delivered in accordance with relevant Welsh Standards... Local authorities are required to outline the Welsh language aspects of provision for learners with ALN in their statutory Welsh in Education Strategic Plans, which are submitted to Welsh Ministers for approval.

Following the publication of the Draft Bill and Draft Code, the National Assembly's Children, Young People and Education Committee undertook **pre-legislative scrutiny** of the proposed changes to the ALN system. The Committee's letter to the then Minister for Education and Skills, Huw Lewis, stated that:

A number of concerns were raised in written submissions to the Committee in relation to the draft Bill's general treatment of the Welsh language. Of particular concern is that there appears to be inadequate provision for improving Welsh-medium ALN services and the draft Bill fails to take account of the bilingual nature of Wales.

The Welsh language impact assessment, included within the draft Explanatory Memorandum, gives weight to the protection provided by the statutory Welsh language standards. However, the standards do not apply to schools, and the committee is concerned that the impact assessment could be misleading in this regard.

The impact assessment also refers to a number of points 'the draft Code is likely to include' but generally these are not included within the working draft Code that has been published. Stakeholders found the lack of reference to communicating with families in their preferred language in Chapter 4 of the draft Code, to be surprising and disappointing.

It will be important for future versions of the Bill and Code to address these concerns, ensuring the new ALN system fully accounts for the bilingual nature of Wales and meets the needs of children and young people with ALN who learn through the medium of Welsh.

The then Minister said in response that the Welsh Government noted the comments made during the pre-legislative scrutiny and would 'pay due regard' to these as the draft Bill and Code are further developed.

2.6 School transport to Welsh-medium provision

Local authorities must provide free home to school transport if a pupil lives either at, or further than, distances specified in the **Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008** from the nearest, suitable school. For primary school pupils this distance is two miles and for secondary school pupils, it is three miles.

The **Operational Guidance** (2014) accompanying the Measure states that neither the child nor parent's language preference has any bearing on whether a school is suitable. However, **Section 10 of the Measure** does place a duty on local authorities to 'promote access to education and training through the medium of Welsh'.

Many local authorities provide transport to pupils who are not owed a statutory duty under the Measure. This can include providing transport to post-16 education provision, Welsh-medium schools and faith schools. Such provision is made under **Section 6 of the Measure** which provides local authorities with the power to make any arrangements they think fit to facilitate the travel of learners to and from a place where they receive education or training. If the local authority does make use of their Section 6 powers, in accordance with **Section 9**, it must ensure that the policy applies to all learners in similar circumstances, living in the local authority's area.

3. Welsh as a subject

Following the introduction of the **Education Reform Act 1988**, Welsh was phased in as a compulsory subject for pupils aged 5-14 (Key Stages 1, 2 and 3) from 1990. From September 1999 onwards, Welsh also became compulsory at ages 14-16 (Key Stage 4). With the introduction of the **Foundation Phase** in 2011, Welsh or Welsh Language Development is also taught to all 3-7 year olds.

3.1 Core and foundation subjects

The National Curriculum for Wales is made up of core and foundation subjects, which are listed in the **Education Act 2002**.

- The **core subjects** for **Key Stages 1-3** are Mathematics; Science; English; and Welsh first language (in relation to Welsh-speaking schools, as stated in the *Education Act 2002*). The **foundation subjects** are Technology; Physical education; History; Geography; Art; Music; Welsh second language (if the school is not a Welsh-speaking school, as stated in the *Education Act 2002*); and for Key Stage 3, a Modern foreign language.
- The **core subjects** at **Key Stage 4** are Welsh first language; Mathematics; English; and Science. The **foundation subjects** are Physical education; and Welsh second language.

The Welsh Government prepares a programme of study for each subject, which includes the opportunities that learners should be given at each key stage, along with the knowledge, skills and understanding that pupils are expected to have at the end of a key stage. It is for schools to determine how they meet the requirements of the curriculum. There are no prescribed hours set for any specific subjects. Therefore, as with every other subject in the curriculum, the amount of time allocated to studying Welsh is a matter to be decided locally by schools.

3.2 GCSE Welsh

Although the study of Welsh first language or Welsh second language as a subject is compulsory, making a decision on the type of qualification is a matter for schools and is done at a local level. At present at Key Stage 4, schools register pupils either for a Welsh first language GCSE, Welsh second language GCSE (full course), Welsh second language GCSE (short course), or for no qualification at all. The Welsh Government's **One Language For All: Review of Welsh Second Language at Key Stages 3 and 4 (2013)** states that, although Welsh is a compulsory subject in the national curriculum, it is not compulsory to enter pupils to sit a GCSE examination or any other qualification (see section on Welsh second language).

The Welsh Government, in collaboration with the WJEC and other stakeholders, is in the process of developing a revised model for GCSE Welsh second language (full course) to be introduced in September 2017. The GCSE Welsh second language short course will be withdrawn once the revised full course model is introduced, with the last assessment opportunity for the short course being in summer 2018.

In July 2016, the **WJEC announced** that as a result of changes to GCSE, AS and A level specifications it will be receiving a grant of up to £1 million over two years (2016-18) from the Welsh Government to manage the provision of Welsh-medium resources to support these qualifications. The aim of the grant is to ensure that Welsh versions of resources to support WJEC qualifications are available to learners in Wales who want to study subjects through the medium of Welsh.

3.3 Welsh as a second language

The Welsh Second Language Review Group

In April 2012 the then Minister for Education and Skills, Leighton Andrews, agreed an action plan to address the fact that **'standards and attainment in Welsh second language education are lower than in other subjects'**. Within the action plan was a specific objective to review Welsh second language assessment and qualifications.

In July 2012 the Minister established the Welsh Second Language Review Group - to review Welsh second language provision at Key Stages 3 and 4. The group was asked to consider:

- How to provide a positive learning experience for Welsh second language learners in English-medium schools;
- How to raise the status of Welsh second language as a subject and remove barriers at a local, regional and national level;
- Whether qualifications (currently available and/or other possible forms of accreditation) are a lever or a barrier with regard to developing transferable Welsh language skills;
- How best to develop learners' Welsh language skills so that they are able to transfer their skills and use the language in the workplace, community and family; and
- How to address workforce planning issues to ensure that all secondary schools have the resources and capacity to provide quality Welsh second language provision.

One Language For All

The Group's report ***One Language For All – Review of Welsh Second Language at Key Stages 3 and 4 (2013)***, highlighted a number of issues that the Group felt needed to be addressed to improve standards in Welsh second language, including:

- Pupils do not continue to develop their Welsh skills well enough on transition to Key Stages 2 and 3;
- The time allocated to teaching the subject is not sufficient, and in some schools, the allocation is as little as one hour a fortnight;
- Many teachers in primary schools lack confidence and ability to teach Welsh second language;
- Too many pupils who follow the GCSE Welsh second language short course are entered for the foundation tier though they are capable of gaining A*- B grades which cannot be achieved in the foundation tier;
- In most schools there are not enough opportunities for pupils to hear and practise using the language beyond formal Welsh lessons; and
- In too many secondary schools, the subject is taught by non-specialist teachers who lack a thorough understanding of second language teaching methodology.

The report made a number of recommendations, including that the Welsh Government should:

- Ensure that Welsh second language continues to be a statutory subject within the National Curriculum and continues to be a compulsory subject for all pupils in Wales until the end of Key Stage 4;

- Give equal status to Welsh second language within the National Curriculum, ensuring that the subject has the same prominence as the core subjects in performance measures;
- Revise the Welsh programme of study, over a three to five year period, and use the National Literacy Framework for Welsh as a basis for a revised curriculum, including one continuum of learning for Welsh with clear expectations for pupils learning Welsh in English-medium, bilingual and Welsh-medium settings;
- Develop, within a three to five year timetable, a new full GCSE (or equivalent) qualification based on the revised curriculum and remove the short course GCSE; and
- Develop, in partnership with regional consortia, a national, regional and local training strategy to provide continuous professional development training to practitioners.

The **Welsh Government's response** to the report stated that it would ask Professor Donaldson to consider those recommendations relating to the curriculum as part of his independent review of the curriculum and assessment arrangements. All other recommendations were either accepted or accepted in principle by the then Education and Skills Minister, Huw Lewis.

The then Minister provided a **further update** on the progress made towards the implementation of these recommendations in October 2015, following the publication of Professor Donaldson's **Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales report – Successful Futures**.

The Minister stated that *Successful Futures* makes 10 recommendations relating to the Welsh language in the curriculum, and that these respond directly to the key recommendations made by the Welsh Second Language Review Group. All these recommendations have been accepted by the Minister, including that Welsh will remain compulsory in all schools up to the age of 16.

According to the then Minister, the new curriculum should see a renewed focus on learning Welsh primarily as a means of communication, particularly oral communication and understanding. Further, the Welsh Government intends to enhance the value attached to the Welsh language by strengthening the focus on its commercial value for the jobs market, the suggested cognitive benefits of bilingualism and its importance in enabling children and young people to have a good understanding of the cultural life of Wales in the past and the present.

4. The Fifth Assembly

Following the Assembly election in May 2016, and the allocation of roles within the Welsh Government's Cabinet, responsibility for the Welsh language has moved from the First Minister, Carwyn Jones, to Alun Davies, the Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language. In his statement in July 2016 setting out his priorities for the Welsh language over the coming year, Alun Davies stated:

I am also keen to revisit the process of planning for Welsh-medium education. My officials have already been in discussion with local authorities in order to refine the guidance on the preparation of Welsh in Education Strategic Plans for the next three years. The aim in this respect is to ensure that the plans would result in concrete and timely action in a way that leads to growth in Welsh-medium education.

I am also committed to implement the priorities for Welsh language education published in a statement in March this year. Work has already commenced on

designing a new curriculum for Wales which will include one continuum of learning for the Welsh language.

In addition, the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Kirsty Williams, **told the Children and Young People Committee** (page 25) in July 2016 that:

One of the challenges in providing really good, high-quality, Welsh-medium education is that continuum, so that parents, when they start that journey – and parents don't plan journeys in key stages – when they make that decision about where they're going to send their child to a nursery provision, they're doing so in the context of being able to see that journey. One of the reasons why, potentially, people, especially parents who are not Welsh-speaking themselves, sometimes maybe don't start on that journey is because of a lack of continuum [...]

More generally, in August 2016, the Welsh Government published a **consultation on a new Welsh Language Strategy** which includes a focus on six strategic areas, including education.