

# Welsh Immersion Education - Strategies and approaches to support 3 to 11-year-old learners

This report is in response to a request for advice from the Welsh Government in the Education Minister's annual remit letter to Estyn for 2021-2022. As requested, it presents information about effective practice in immersion education. It encompasses immersion approaches in the foundation phase in Welsh-medium and bilingual non-maintained settings and primary schools, in addition to immersion approaches for latecomers to Welsh-medium education for 3 to 11-year-old learners. It reports on the findings from visits to a sample of providers across Wales.

Immersion education principles are relevant to the Welsh Government as using immersion methodology can help to contribute to the targets identified in 'Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers'. This was outlined specifically when it was stated that 'curriculum planning and pedagogy will be more informed by research and evidence about effective language teaching and learning, including approaches to language immersion' ([Welsh Government, 2017a](#)).

This report will identify best practice in relation to immersing learners in the Welsh language, while setting the context of the current use of language immersion in Wales. The report builds on work undertaken previously by Estyn, including the recent report [Welsh language acquisition](#) (Estyn, 2021) and the report [Welsh in key stage 2 and key stage 3 in Welsh-medium or bilingual schools](#) (Estyn, 2018).

# **CONTENTS**

## **Document details**

Copyright

Background

Main findings

Recommendations

Leadership

Provision

Learning and attitudes to learning

Appendix 1: Number and location of language immersion centres

Appendix 2 - national priorities

Appendix 3 - early immersion and late immersion in the education system in

Wales

Methods and evidence base

Glossary

References

# Document details

**Copyright**

**Background**

**Main findings**

**Recommendations**

**Leadership**

**Provision**

**Learning and attitudes to learning**

**Appendix 1: Number and location of language immersion centres**

**Appendix 2 - national priorities**

**Appendix 3 - early immersion and late immersion in the education system in Wales**

**Methods and evidence base**

**Glossary**

**References**

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# Background

## Use of the term ‘immersion education’

The term ‘immersion education’ was first used in Canada in the 1960s, according to Baker and Wright (2021), who refer to educational experiments with the aim of children becoming bilingual (and bi-cultural) in English and French. They suggest that ‘immersion education’ is an umbrella term. Although there is a common emphasis on presenting a new language (or target language), immersion education approaches can vary in several ways internationally. For example, there can be a difference in the percentage of teaching through the medium of the target language or the age at which the target language is introduced.

Considering ‘heritage language education’ can be helpful when considering the Welsh context. According to Baker and Wright (2021, p.237), this is a term that refers to a wide range of programmes that aim to provide an opportunity for learners to develop a higher level of proficiency in a minority language. ‘Heritage language education’ focuses on protecting and reviving minority languages, and it tends to target those who already speak that language. Redknapp (2006) and Lewis (2006, 2011) note that Welsh-medium schools often teach learners from Welsh and non-Welsh-speaking homes in the same class. This means that ‘immersion education’ and ‘heritage language education’ principles are often combined in classrooms in Wales. That is, immersion education in Wales is usually a combination of what has been recognised internationally as ‘immersion education’ and ‘heritage language education.’

The Welsh Government (2021a) published research on [‘Welsh-medium education through late immersion: mapping the provision in Wales’](#) in October 2021. It provides useful background information about immersion approaches for latecomers in 10 local authorities in Wales.

Outside academic circles, the terminology that is used to describe ‘immersion education’ varies. In our report on Welsh language acquisition, we describe Welsh language immersion as follows:

‘The immersion method is a way of working that focuses on using Welsh as the only medium of teaching and learning, by using practical and visual techniques

to support learners to develop vocabulary and syntax' (Estyn, 2021, p.63)

The Welsh Government describes Welsh language immersion by explaining:

'Schools providing Welsh-medium education use Welsh to deliver the curriculum. Learners in these schools come from a variety of linguistic backgrounds, some from homes where Welsh is spoken and others where Welsh is not spoken. Learners receiving their education through the medium of Welsh and who do not speak Welsh at home undergo a process of language immersion (the target language in this case is Welsh). All learners in Welsh-medium education are taught in the same classroom, whether or not they speak Welsh at home.

Examples of schools practising immersion can be found all over the world. The Canadian model for implementing immersion is widely documented. It shows that learners need to be taught fully through the target language for two to three years to ensure that language competence is developed sufficiently. Another language is then introduced.

This is the model we use in Wales. It means that learners are taught fully in Welsh up to and including the school year in which the majority of learners turn 7. After that, we introduce English as a subject, and to varying degrees as a medium of instruction. Welsh remains the predominant language of the classroom.' (Welsh Government, 2021b, p.5)

The Welsh Government recognises two main categories of immersion education that we will use for the remainder of this report:

The Welsh Government uses the term 'early immersion education' to refer to immersion education in the foundation phase (Welsh Government, 2021a, p.6). This includes learners' experiences in Welsh-medium non-maintained settings and schools. According to its definition of schools in the Welsh-medium category, learners are taught fully in Welsh until the end of the foundation phase in these providers. We will use the term '**early immersion**' for the remainder of this report.

The Welsh Government uses the term 'late immersion education' to refer to immersion education that targets 'latecomers' (or 'newcomers') to Welsh-medium education (although it recognises that academics use additional terms, such as 'mid immersion') (Welsh Government, 2021a, p.3-4). It defines 'latecomers' as 'children (aged 7 years or over) who do not speak Welsh but wish to access Welsh medium education after the end of the foundation phase. We will use the term **'late immersion'** for the remainder of this report.

This report considers 'early immersion' in Welsh-medium non-maintained settings and schools, and in Welsh streams in bilingual schools. When considering 'late immersion', this report outlines provision that is available to support 7 to 11-year-old learners. Such support can be provided in primary schools, language immersion centres, or as part of a transition programme with Welsh-medium secondary schools. Local authorities use several different terms to refer to these centres, including 'language immersion centres', 'Welsh language units' and 'Welsh immersion centres'. In this report, the term 'language immersion centres' is used, unless we are referring to a particular provider. Some local authorities provide late immersion support in key stage 3. However, we did not visit secondary schools as part of this thematic review.

Of the 22 local authorities in Wales, 10 maintain language immersion centres to provide an intensive 'late immersion' programme to latecomers. In the 10 authorities that maintain language immersion centres, there are a total of 21 centres. Many of these centres tend to be in the local authorities with a high proportion of Welsh speakers and, in some of these authorities, Welsh-medium and bilingual education is more common than English-medium education. They are often located in 'host' schools but they part of the local authority education service's provision. See [appendix 1](#) for a list of the language immersion centres in Wales in the autumn term, 2021. Welsh Government recently announced that it would fund language immersion centres in a number of local authorities that do not currently have provision (Welsh Government, 2021c).

**Figure 1: Location of language immersion centres in Wales**

## National priorities

**Figure 5. Graphic as static image with long description**



Immersion education intertwines with a number of national priorities. [Appendix 2](#) explains the relevance of the following documentation in immersion education.

- National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF) ([Welsh Government, 2013, p.2](#))
- [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#)
- [Successful Futures: Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales](#) (Donaldson, 2015).
- '[Cymraeg 2050 – A million Welsh speakers](#)' (Welsh Government, 2017a). 'Welsh-medium immersion education is our principal method of ensuring that children can develop their Welsh language skills, and for creating new speakers.' (p.21)
- '[Cymraeg 2050: our plan for 2021 to 2026](#)' (Welsh Government, 2021d)
- '[Our National Mission](#)' (Welsh Government, 2017b)'

- [Welsh language acquisition](#) (Estyn, 2021)

During the period in which we contacted local authorities, namely the autumn term 2021, nearly all were working towards preparing, or were already consulting on, their new Welsh in Education Strategic Plans. As a result, many authorities have revised their vision for Welsh immersion education recently and were continuing to adapt their plans in light of feedback from the consultations.

# Main findings

## Leadership

1. Immersion education is the primary method used by nearly all local authorities to create new Welsh speakers and develop learners' Welsh language skills. Leaders in non-maintained settings, Welsh-medium primary schools, bilingual schools, and language immersion centres prioritise immersion education effectively. They provide rich experiences for learners in an inclusive and Welsh learning environment. In the strongest examples, leaders plan purposefully to provide opportunities for learners to use the Welsh language in the provision, at home and in the community.
2. Most leaders in local authorities plan suitable strategies to enable practitioners to use early immersion methods as an integral part of foundation phase provision. Around half of the local authorities support latecomers into Welsh-medium education in language immersion centres. In the best examples, the authorities fund and arrange transport for latecomers to attend these centres. As provision for latecomers is so inconsistent across Wales, not all learners are given the same opportunities to access Welsh-medium education at an early enough stage. Overall, many authorities provide suitable information about immersion education to parents/carers.
3. Many local authorities have appropriate arrangements to self-evaluate and improve early immersion and late immersion provision. In a few authorities, processes for evaluating and setting improvement aims are unclear. In the best practice, authorities and consortia provide valuable opportunities for practitioners to develop their understanding of immersion principles and approaches and share effective practice. However, professional learning opportunities do not have a consistent enough impact on improving provision to support learners to acquire Welsh language skills through the immersion process.

## Provision

1. Nearly all practitioners support learners effectively by creating a supportive learning environment. Practitioners support learners to feel increasingly confident in trying to speak Welsh without fear of failure. In the strongest cases, they provide a variety of experiences that envelop learners in the

Welsh language. Where teaching is at its best, practitioners use a variety of techniques with a lively pace. They provide opportunities for learners to acquire vocabulary and practise syntactical patterns in whole class sessions, by responding to practitioners in small groups, and by talking in pairs.

2. Most practitioners nurture and develop learners' listening and speaking skills as a core part of language immersion provision. They support learners to acquire Welsh language skills by modelling polished language consistently and with clear pronunciation. However, a minority of practitioners do not introduce vocabulary and syntactical patterns purposefully enough to ensure continuity and progression when supporting learners to develop their speaking skills.
3. Many foundation phase practitioners develop learners' early reading skills effectively by introducing letters and the corresponding sounds in a fun and multisensory way. They stimulate the interest of young learners by reading stories and giving them access to a range of suitable materials. These practitioners provide valuable opportunities for learners to read increasingly challenging texts as they gain confidence during the early immersion period. Most practitioners who support latecomers plan beneficial activities for them to develop their reading skills, for example when learners read scripts.
4. Most practitioners provide beneficial writing activities as learners develop their skills. Practitioners develop learners' oral skills successfully which, in turn, has a positive effect on their writing skills. Practitioners ensure beneficial opportunities for learners to internalise the Welsh language before trying to write.
5. The most effective late immersion provision is offered through intensive programmes. This means that practitioners nurture learners' Welsh language skills in small groups for most of the time for an extended period. Most practitioners in language immersion centres provide highly successful immersion programmes that stimulate learners effectively. However, not all the resources that are used reflect and celebrate the diversity that exists in modern day Wales. On the whole, most learners are confident and proficient in their Welsh language skills at the end of the programmes.

## **Learning and attitudes to learning**

1. Nearly all learners demonstrate positive attitudes to learning Welsh during the immersion education process. They take part in sessions enthusiastically and take pride in the progress they make in developing the

confidence to speak Welsh. Most enjoy speaking Welsh inside and outside the classroom, for example when taking part in playground games. By doing so, they become active speakers and succeed in applying their skills with increasing independence.

2. Most learners in non-maintained settings and schools acquire Welsh language skills successfully through the early immersion process. They nurture their speaking and listening skills by building quickly on an awareness of key vocabulary. Following regular immersion support, most learners begin to speak Welsh with adults and peers with increasing confidence. They develop reading skills capably, and in turn they develop their writing skills appropriately by recalling vocabulary and syntactical patterns. As a result, most learners develop their Welsh language skills well, and this supports them to make further progress across the areas of learning in key stage 2.
3. Most learners who complete intensive late immersion programmes attain a suitable level of proficiency to succeed in Welsh-medium education. Most learners in language immersion centres develop listening and speaking skills consistently well. They make sound progress in their reading skills and by the end of the intensive late immersion programmes many write extended pieces in Welsh by using familiar vocabulary. In those cases where support is provided to latecomers through alternative arrangements at school, a majority make appropriate progress.

# Recommendations

## **Non-maintained settings and schools should:**

- R1 build on effective practice and plan a range of consistent activities that provide opportunities for learners to acquire vocabulary and syntactical patterns purposefully and coherently

## **Local authorities and regional consortia should:**

- R2 plan purposefully to ensure equal opportunities for all learners to access early and late immersion provision
- R3 evaluate immersion provision thoroughly, including tracking latecomers' progress consistently over time
- R4 strengthen and ensure consistency in the professional learning offer on the principles and methods of immersion education for all practitioners

## **The Welsh Government should:**

- R5 develop national guidelines on early immersion and late immersion, and commission a range of suitable resources for learners of all ages to support immersion education that celebrate the diversity of Wales
- R6 establish a national forum to promote the most effective immersion education practices, including promoting local arrangements to introduce vocabulary and syntactical patterns

# Leadership

## Leadership in local authorities and regions

Figure 5. Graphic as static image with long description



Most local authorities have appropriate plans to strengthen their provision for the Welsh language, with many referring specifically to immersion education. The majority of officers speak enthusiastically about their proposed plans to strengthen the Welsh language in education, for example when describing the content of their draft Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESP) and the planned use of the COVID-19 recovery funding that is available to support late immersion. However, it is too early to report comprehensively on the plans and their effect. In the cases where they provide a strong vision for the use of immersion education, this refers mainly to strengthening early immersion processes, which are already robust, expanding Welsh-medium provision in the non-maintained and primary sectors, or establishing language immersion centres to support latecomers. Where authorities are planning to establish new language immersion centres, on the whole, the arrangements are at a very early stage. A budget from the Welsh Government to support Welsh in education is allocated to authorities as part of the Education Improvement Grant.

A few local authorities have a language policy whereby all primary schools immerse learners in the Welsh language until the end of the foundation phase. In these cases, there are sound expectations in terms of immersion education.

Local authorities have different approaches to supporting latecomers to the Welsh language through late immersion provision. Where authorities maintain language immersion centres for learners who transfer from English-medium to Welsh-medium education later in their school career, their arrangements vary. Some local authorities have one centre that all Welsh-medium and bilingual schools can use, while others have language immersion centres that are established on the grounds of different schools. A very few local authorities have a dual system, where a language immersion centre is available in a particular area, while the remaining schools support latecomers within their own settings. On the whole, late immersion education provision is at its best when learners acquire Welsh via an intensive and structured programme, usually when learners attend a language immersion centre. As a result of inconsistent provision across Wales, not all learners are given the same opportunities to acquire Welsh language skills at an early enough stage when transferring to Welsh-medium education later in their school career.

### **Cameo - realising a vision by planning strategically to establish a Welsh Language Centre**

Denbighshire County Council has opened a new Welsh Language Centre as a result of purposeful remodelling across the authority. It decided to make use of an empty building on the grounds of Ysgol Glan Clwyd, which is the county's Welsh-medium secondary school. As part of the vision, key partners worked together consistently to develop plans to establish provision to promote the Welsh language skills of learners of all ages.

Within the new Welsh Language Centre, a Cylch Meithrin has been established. Through an arrangement with Mudiad Meithrin, post-16 learners at Ysgol Glan Clwyd receive valuable work experience opportunities by supporting young learners on the site.

The centre provides support for latecomers in key stage 2 through an intensive immersion programme. Provision to support latecomers in Year 7

and Year 8 at Ysgol Glan Clwyd is also situated at the centre.

Through an arrangement with Bangor University, Welsh Sabbatical courses are provided at the centre. A resource centre to promote the Welsh language is also situated on-site to ensure that the latest resources are accessible to the authority's teachers.

By developing the vision in purposeful plans, the authority uses the centre as a destination to provide a rich range of opportunities for learners of all ages to develop their Welsh language skills. This shows that all the authority's partners prioritise the Welsh language appropriately and have worked together successfully to realise their vision.

In language immersion centres, in most cases, day-to-day provision is led by a practitioner with specific lead responsibility, with the support of other teachers or learning assistants. However, management procedures vary substantially from one authority to another. For example, one authority delegates the responsibility for managing the language immersion centre to the headteacher of the host school. They are responsible for nearly all aspects of the centre, including managing the budget and providing human resources support, as appropriate. In another authority, lead teachers report directly to education officers who are responsible for different aspects of provision. In yet another authority, the lead teacher is managed by the authority's Welsh advisory team co-ordinator, who also provides other services to schools such as pre-centre and post-centre support. Overall, management processes are not robust enough, as they have often evolved over time, for example as the demand for immersion education has increased.

In a few language immersion centres, leaders refine their provision appropriately as a result of self-evaluation processes. For example, leaders develop resources that engage and hold the attention of boys as well as girls, to support them as they are immersed in the Welsh language. In the best practice, headteachers observe sessions jointly with the leaders of language centres regularly and emulate the style and self-evaluation timetable of the host school. On the whole, leaders trust in the expertise and experience of the practitioners at the language immersion centres. In many authorities, arrangements for self-evaluating provision at language immersion centres are too informal. As a result, leaders do

not evaluate provision purposefully enough or set suitable actions to improve teaching and learning rigorously enough.

On the whole, local authorities have different procedures for admitting latecomers to language immersion centres. For example, most provide places for learners in key stage 2, with a few offering provision from Year 1 onwards. Most only provide consistent access at the beginning of a specific stage in the programme, which is usually at the beginning of a new term, with a few providing access to learners later in the term, which means that they join after other learners have started the programme. On the whole, latecomers acquire the Welsh language more quickly by being given immediate access to provision in language immersion centres. However, this disrupts the flow and progression of the programmes which, in turn, has an effect on the progress of learners who have attended since the beginning of the term.

Nearly all local authorities that have a language immersion centre fund and organise transport for learners who attend the centre. Leaders identify clearly that this is an important consideration to ensure the commitment of parents/carers to choosing Welsh-medium education, and the success of the immersion process for their children. A very few authorities provide a service to neighbouring authorities by arrangement, which allows learners to access provision in language immersion centres.

Many local authorities refer to the language immersion centres appropriately in admission booklets. On the whole, they do not promote or publicise provision specifically, and information for parents/carers about the advantages of bilingualism and immersion principles is limited, overall. In many authorities where there is an increase in the demand for provision, these authorities do not forward-plan purposefully enough to meet the aspirations of parents/carers. As a result, plans to provide a late immersion service tend to be reactive rather than proactive.

### **Cameo - authority shares information with other partners**

Carmarthenshire County Council's Welsh Development Teacher Team provides beneficial information about immersion education through a

[relevant website](#). It prepares video clips to promote Welsh-medium education to parents/carers and provides support to those who do not speak Welsh. For example, in one clip, it offers possible activities for parents and their children, such as visiting a Welsh book shop or watching Welsh television programmes. In another clip, it explains the Welsh names of places in the local area. It provides a series of attractive presentations that explain the advantages of bilingualism and respond to frequently asked questions from parents/carers about Welsh-medium provision.

Another section of the website provides useful resources for teachers. For example, there is a series of board games to reinforce vocabulary, digital games, and instructions for playground games. Another section includes a series of monologues by actors playing the parts of historical characters from the local area as an appealing stimulus when presenting local stories to learners. There are also videos that provide beneficial information, for example by highlighting effective practice to develop learners' Welsh language skills.

By sharing information with parents/carers, the authority presents useful information about programmes that are provided by the language immersion centres. It also presents beneficial material about Welsh-medium education in video clips, which include contributions from other parents/carers who have already taken advantage of the provision for their children.

In around half of local authorities, there are advisory teachers who support the work of their language immersion centres. In the best practice, they provide a comprehensive service to learners, for example pre-centre and post-centre provision. They also provide beneficial professional learning opportunities and useful resources for practitioners. Overall, this support provides consistent provision across the authority to learners and practitioners alike.

A majority of local authorities provide valuable immersion programmes at the beginning of Year 7 for learners who are joining Welsh-medium schools for the first time at the beginning of their secondary education. In a few cases, learners attend the new secondary school for a period of around half a term before the summer holidays to receive Welsh lessons and experiences across the areas of learning through the medium of Welsh. As a result of these arrangements, learners gain confidence to speak Welsh with their new peers in a Welsh and

Welsh-speaking environment.

Some local authorities allocate funding for late immersion education provision directly to their Welsh-medium schools and Welsh streams in bilingual schools. The main aim of this approach is to allow those schools to employ additional support staff to support latecomers to integrate into their new Welsh learning environment. In the strongest examples, schools work closely with the authority to deliver an intensive programme for latecomers. However, where implementation methods are less purposeful, learners do not have access to regular or systematic support when acquiring new Welsh language skills. This hinders their progress and their ability to access suitable experiences across the areas of learning through the medium of Welsh.

A very few local authorities have peripatetic arrangements to support latecomers. Peripatetic arrangements usually provide beneficial experiences for learners in individual or small group sessions for a small proportion of the week. In a few cases, this can be as little as 45 minutes a week. As a result, this approach does not support learners to become immersed in the Welsh language effectively enough in a short period of time. It also does not provide frequent enough opportunities for them to gain confidence to speak Welsh increasingly spontaneously with their peers and practitioners.

A few local authorities provide useful professional learning opportunities for practitioners regularly to support and develop immersion education. For example, an education officer in one authority provides training for newly qualified teachers on the language policy and immersion principles. Another authority uses a service provided by the Welsh advisory team effectively to model immersion methods in mainstream classes so that practitioners can emulate these effective practices. In the best examples, practitioners in language immersion centres share their practices effectively with practitioners in schools. For example, they work with the local consortia to share information about international research on language immersion methods. By doing so, practitioners deepen their understanding of effective immersion approaches, which enriches learners' experiences when acquiring Welsh language skills. Overall, there are very few examples of regular professional learning opportunities on language immersion as part of an authority or regional strategy. As a result, although a few practitioners benefit from these opportunities, leaders do not plan purposefully to provide regular opportunities to equip the remaining practitioners as they develop their immersion practices.

### **Cameo - using international research to strengthen late immersion provision**

Practitioners in Cardiff Welsh Language Immersion Centre reflect on international research to refine their provision and immersion methods. As part of their professional learning, they have identified effective immersion principles that have a positive influence on practitioners' teaching methods as they support learners with their Welsh language skills.

Practitioners make effective use of aspects of the 'desuggestopaedia' principles (Lozanov, 2005). This includes creating a positive environment where learners feel comfortable and enjoy learning. They achieve this through a number of different strategies, which include creating attractive learning spaces with posters that outline Welsh vocabulary and syntactical patterns. They change these posters periodically so that they are as useful as possible for learners. They plan activities that enable learners to become engrossed in a different character when speaking Welsh, for example by acting the part of a grandfather deriving from stories from the intensive programme.

Practitioners also use aspects of the 'total physical response' method (Asher, 1969) consistently by using movements to correspond with key words while speaking. When new vocabulary is introduced to learners, practitioners encourage them to emulate them by making similar movements. Practitioners continue to use the movements throughout the programme to reinforce learners' understanding.

Following valuable professional learning opportunities, practitioners have the professional knowledge necessary to support learners highly effectively as international research is a solid foundation for their immersion methods.

Nearly all local authorities that maintain language immersion centres locate them on the grounds of Welsh-medium schools. In many cases, this has a positive effect on the host school. For example, practitioners at those schools are given beneficial opportunities to observe sessions by specialist teachers from the language immersion centres. In the best examples, language immersion centre practitioners lead on language introduction plans across the cluster schools. For example, they work with school practitioners to introduce vocabulary and syntactical patterns while learners interact in the outdoor area. Through frequent co-operation, this has a positive effect on learners' Welsh language skills and ensures consistency in learning experiences across the cluster.

### **Cameo - using the expertise of practitioners in language immersion centres to disseminate effective practice**

Practitioners at Anglesey Language Centre support schools by providing guidance, linguistic expertise, and resources. This equips teachers with the skills that they need to immerse learners effectively in the Welsh language.

Practitioners lead professional learning opportunities in areas with a high percentage of English speakers. For example, in the Holyhead catchment area, they have supported practitioners in schools to introduce appropriate vocabulary and syntactical patterns consistently throughout the cluster. Practitioners provide guidance on how to support learners' Welsh language skills through activities in the outdoor area. For example, they work with teachers in the cluster to create language mats based on nature and wildlife vocabulary and other common themes. This has a positive effect on many learners' linguistic standards.

Recently, practitioners have developed support further to share effective practices across the authority. They share short digital clips presenting approaches and ideas on purposeful immersion pedagogy to practitioners in schools. For example, they provide ideas on the use of language during registration and how to answer questions by choosing correctly from the different ways of saying yes and no. Clips refer to resources to support learning that are already available to them, such as specific language mats.

Practitioners at Anglesey Language Centre provide useful information and professional learning opportunities to develop newly qualified teachers' understanding of effective immersion approaches. These teachers are given beneficial opportunities to visit the centre, observe these approaches in practice, and receive a package of useful resources.

The support provided by practitioners at the language immersion centre makes a beneficial contribution to ensuring consistency in effective language immersion practices throughout the authority.

Many practitioners in language immersion centres or Welsh advisory teams forge helpful informal links with colleagues to share effective practices and immersion education resources. A minority refine their practice beneficially by discussing and comparing immersion approaches with specialists in other local authorities. Although these opportunities are useful as practitioners develop their language immersion methods further, this does not provide consistent opportunities for practitioners across all authorities. Overall, opportunities for specialist practitioners to have a positive influence on immersion provision nationally, and to share practices and resources, are limited.

The role of regional consortia in supporting local authorities and schools with immersion education varies. Generally, authorities lead strategically on planning immersion education provision, and, where relevant, consortia support the process to varying degrees. This variation contributes to a mixed picture in terms of supporting strategic planning to develop immersion education provision at a national level. This also shows that immersion education is not always prioritised sufficiently by authorities and consortia considering it is the main national approach to create new Welsh speakers.

Where co-operation is at its best, local authorities or regional consortia promote immersion education and provide specific professional learning opportunities to develop immersion education approaches. For example, one regional consortium works successfully with authorities to identify and establish 'fledgling centres', which are initial provision located in schools as the first step in a long-term process to promote Welsh immersion. Another consortium organises support from

other schools in the region to promote effective practices or provides distance learning sessions for newly qualified teachers.

### **Cameo - sharing language immersion practices regionally**

The Central South Consortium has commissioned staff from Cardiff Language Immersion Centre to work with the consortium's Welsh language officers to create a package of immersion resources. The resources provide beneficial guidance to schools that do not have access to a language immersion centre in their local authority. The package introduces specific vocabulary and syntactical patterns in turn to improve consistency in teaching.

The resources provide valuable opportunities for learners to use vocabulary and syntactical patterns daily in role-play situations, drama sessions or in the context of playing a game. Reading and writing activities focus on the same patterns. Language is modelled in useful sound clips to support less confident practitioners.

There is a pack of colourful cards, which include vocabulary and syntactical patterns by theme, including question and answer cards, flash cards, pictures for discussion and cards for playing oral games. For example, there is one unit of work relating to the park. Vocabulary such as 'siglen' (swing), 'ffrâm ddringo' (climbing frame), 'coed' (trees) and 'blodau' (flowers) is introduced, in addition to questions and appropriate responses such as 'oes pwll tywod yn y parc?' ('is there a sandpit in the park') and 'oes, mae pwll tywod yn y parc' ('yes, there is a sandpit in the park'). Another unit of work is based in a café, which provides many opportunities to introduce mathematical vocabulary relating to money, shapes, and fractions. For example, learners order 'a quarter of a pizza' and pay the correct amount of money. They introduce the past tense and days of the week by using the context of the café, for example by providing information such as 'cevais sglodion ddydd Llun' ('I had chips on Monday') or 'yfais sudd oren ddydd Mercher' ('I drank orange juice on Wednesday'). As a result, learners develop vocabulary and patterns in a structured manner and apply them with increasing success across the

areas of learning.

In the best practice, local authorities use their self-evaluation processes to identify where immersion education provision needs to be strengthened and prioritise developments effectively. For example, they identify groups of learners who do not attain the expected outcome at the end of the foundation phase and arrange for members of the Welsh advisory team to provide support to practitioners in those schools. Although the majority track the number of learners who transfer from Welsh-medium primary schools to Welsh-medium secondary schools, there are very few examples of tracking the progress of latecomers specifically. On the whole, authorities' processes for self-evaluating immersion education provision are not rigorous enough, for example by scrutinising effective practices or areas for improvement. In addition, self-evaluation procedures do result in specific enough information about the value for money of provision.

## **Leadership in non-maintained settings and primary schools**

Most leaders in non-maintained settings and Welsh-medium and bilingual schools implement their local authorities' expected linguistic policies appropriately. Leaders ensure that staff understand that the Welsh language is a core part of provision. They are supported appropriately by the committees of non-maintained settings and school governing bodies to promote the Welsh language. Overall, in these providers, the Welsh language is promoted consistently in a Welsh learning environment. A minority of leaders in non-maintained settings support practitioners who are less confident in speaking Welsh by using a resource that assists them to introduce vocabulary and syntactical patterns to learners in a systematic. In turn, this supports their own professional learning.

A majority of leaders plan purposefully to strengthen their immersion education

provision further in the context of the Curriculum for Wales. Many prioritise the development of learners' Welsh language skills consistently by incorporating the four purposes as an integral part of teaching and learning. For example, they support foundation phase practitioners to plan rich immersion activities that promote the use of the Welsh language. In the strongest practices, they provide valuable opportunities for learners to make choices about their learning while continuing to introduce vocabulary and syntactical patterns purposefully. They also provide beneficial opportunities to celebrate Welsh culture. As a result, they support learners to become increasingly ambitious and willing to learn independently in local, national, and international contexts.

### **Cameo - combining immersion education with preparations for the Curriculum for Wales**

Leaders at Ysgol Croes Atti, in Flintshire County Council, have established learning councils based on areas of learning and experience to raise the profile of the Curriculum for Wales at the school. During the process of establishing the councils, practitioners support immersion education at the school by providing valuable opportunities for learners to apply their Welsh language skills at home in partnership with parents/carers.

Practitioners provide opportunities for learners to express an interest in joining a leadership group that contributes towards developing specific areas of learning and experience across the school. For example, Year 2 learners submit applications to join the group by creative presentations at home in the form of a video. Learners identify which group is of the greatest interest to them, for example by providing a presentation on volcanoes as an application to be a member of the Science and Technology group. As a result, learners made effective use of their Welsh skills when preparing the presentation.

This approach supports learners and their parents/carers to engage with the areas of learning and experience in the Curriculum for Wales through the medium of Welsh. It also provides beneficial opportunities for learners to apply their speaking skills by supporting their immersion experience.

In the best practices, leaders promote learners' Welsh language skills effectively through the expressive arts. They identify the importance of prioritising speaking and listening skills as a key feature of immersion education and create beneficial opportunities for learners to develop their Welsh language skills through oral activities. For example, they support practitioners to provide inclusive opportunities for learners to take part in activities in the school and the local community. On the whole, these valuable opportunities contribute robustly to developing learners' confidence in using the Welsh language.

### **Cameo - planning strategically to weave immersion education into the expressive arts**

Leaders at Ysgol Gymraeg Caerffili in Caerphilly County Borough Council work with schools in the cluster to employ a creative practitioner to raise standards of Welsh oracy. The practitioner uses his creativity to improve learners' oral skills by using songs to practise syntactical patterns in an enjoyable way. For example, as learners have continued to play in bubbles during the COVID-19 pandemic, Year 5 learners have created a film describing and playing playground games to be shown to the youngest learners. As a result, foundation phase learners enjoy using the Welsh language in informal situations during break time.

The language co-ordinator has identified which syntactical patterns to target with each year group. For example, in order to target 'the language of play', fun sessions are provided to launch rockets into the air and throw sponge balls at numbers, while practising patterns such as 'fy nhro i yw hi nawr' ('it's my turn now').

The creative practitioner has provided a selection of songs, oral activities, raps, and short films to accompany the themes of each individual school within the cluster to support teachers to enrich learners' Welsh. Learners develop confidence and proficiency in the Welsh language successfully through expressive arts activities.

A few leaders are beginning to support practitioners purposefully to help colleagues to meet the expectation that is set out in the Curriculum for Wales that all learners should develop the ability to use the Welsh language. For example, in one dual-stream school, teachers in the Welsh stream promote exercises to introduce the Welsh language in English stream classes. Learners from the Welsh stream also prepare simple videos reciting tales for learners in the English stream to listen to in order to prepare their own performance. A very few leaders support teachers in English-medium schools by sharing effective approaches for introducing Welsh vocabulary and syntactical patterns to learners.

In a minority of schools, leaders provide purposeful opportunities for learners to develop their Welsh, English, and other foreign language skills in beneficial activities, for example by working with the secondary school. These opportunities enrich the experiences of latecomers as they develop their Welsh language skills. In a few cases, leaders provide valuable opportunities for latecomers to have a taste of other foreign languages as part of their transition arrangements to the secondary school.

Many leaders work together purposefully when supporting learners to transfer from one setting or stage to another, for example from a non-maintained setting to primary school. In the strongest cases, leaders encourage co-operation between practitioners to plan suitable progression when developing learners' Welsh language skills. For example, they agree on plans to introduce vocabulary and syntactical patterns consistently over time. Too often, co-operation between providers is superficial and does not lead to common practices. As a result, learners do not always make consistent progress when transferring to the new school or class.

Many leaders in non-maintained settings and schools have suitable self-evaluation processes that consider learners' standards of language and provision for the Welsh language. In the best practices, leaders evaluate immersion approaches as a key part of provision and prioritise areas for development effectively. For example, they introduce a specific plan when supporting practitioners to introduce vocabulary and syntactical patterns to learners in a structured manner. As a result, practitioners who are less confident Welsh-speakers model language with increasing confidence.

Many leaders in non-maintained settings and schools provide parents/carers with useful information about Welsh-medium education as they choose the language medium of their children's education. For example, non-maintained settings make use of a useful pamphlet that explains the principles of immersion education to parents, while schools show the resources that are used to develop learners' understanding of letter sounds to support the development of learners' reading skills.

In the strongest examples, leaders plan regular opportunities for families to be part of their children's linguistic journey. For example, they invite family members to 'coffee mornings' to play board games alongside their children through the medium of Welsh and organise opportunities for them to join a community choir where learners and adults sing together or encourage the 'Criw Cymraeg' to create useful resources for them. As learners move through the school, a few leaders provide information to parents/carers about ways to support them in developing and applying vocabulary and syntactical patterns across the areas of learning. Overall, the information that parents/carers receive about immersion education is inconsistent. As a result, parents/carers do not deepen their understanding of the benefits of the Welsh language and bilingualism as their children pursue Welsh-medium education.

### **Cameo - working with parents/carers to promote syntactical patterns**

Ysgol Gymraeg Y Trallwng, in Powys County Council, interacts with parents/carers in several ways, which include sending a weekly pamphlet home to promote specific syntactical patterns.

Practitioners introduce a range of vocabulary and syntactical patterns that are planned purposefully in everyday contexts, such as 'how to set the table' or 'discuss today's weather'. Leaders practise the patterns in a series of activities with the aim of using them at home by the end of the week. They learn these patterns by using familiar nursery rhymes or fun songs. Then, learners practise them by repeating the rhyme or song spontaneously in an area or corner of the classroom and beyond with increasing independence. Learners then record the syntactical patterns in

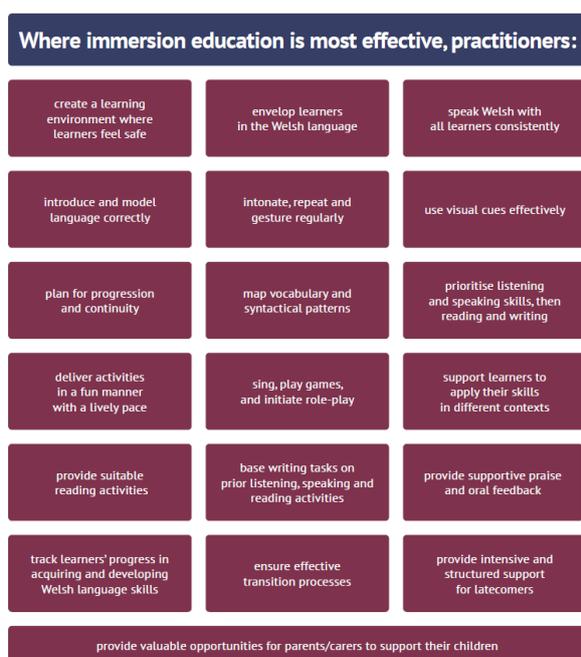
the form of a script and create a film to be used at home, before presenting it to parents/carers with the pamphlet. As a result, learners and parents use the Welsh language increasingly naturally at home. All members of the family hear correct vocabulary and syntactical patterns and can use them increasingly as a part of everyday life.

In the strongest practices, leaders maintain beneficial links with external partners to encourage foundation phase learners and latecomers alike to use the Welsh language outside the classroom. Leaders promote Urdd activities, such as weekly clubs, eisteddfodau, and residential camps. A few work closely with the local Welsh language initiatives such as 'mentrau iaith', to provide valuable opportunities for learners to apply their Welsh language skills in the community. For example, learners interview members of the community to learn about local history and then create digital presentations as part of their studies in the humanities area of learning and experience. A few leaders also promote beneficial opportunities for learners to join local performance groups that encourage learners to use the Welsh language. These experiences support learners' immersion experiences outside school which, in turn, deepens their understanding that the Welsh language is useful in the community.

# Provision

## General approaches to immersion

Figure 5. Graphic as static image with long description



The main features of effective language immersion are relevant to both early and late immersion provision. Although the context and age of learners are different, effective immersion education principles are consistent. For example, effective practitioners create a safe learning environment that envelops learners in the Welsh language. They prioritise listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in that order, with a clear emphasis placed on developing learners' oral skills. They introduce and model language correctly for learners, and intonate, repeat and gesture regularly to support them.

### Learning environment

The learning environment is an important part of immersion education provision. Most practitioners create a homely atmosphere where learners feel comfortable

and ready to learn. In the best practice, they are welcoming and inclusive spaces where learners are willing to speak Welsh without the fear of failure very soon after they start in the provision. Practitioners create attractive spaces that engage learners' interest and encourage them to use their imagination as they gain confidence to speak Welsh.

Practitioners use visual cues effectively, such as pictures and posters that include letters and appropriate vocabulary. Many practitioners refer regularly to a range of vocabulary and syntactical patterns that are displayed attractively inside and outside the classroom in order to support learners. As a result, learners use this information effectively while developing their skills successfully.

### **Language medium**

In nearly all Welsh-medium non-maintained settings and primary schools, and Welsh streams in bilingual schools, as part of early immersion provision, Welsh is the only language that is introduced formally in the foundation phase, although some schools begin to introduce some English at the end of this phase. Similarly, Welsh is the only language that is used formally as part of intense language programmes in language immersion centres. Speaking Welsh with all learners consistently is a central element of the immersion process. Many practitioners communicate by using very little English only where they need to ensure that a learner has understood an instruction or needs comfort.

A minority of practitioners use the 'sandwich' method in settings and schools at the beginning of learners' linguistic journey, particularly in the foundation phase. That is, they give an instruction in Welsh, then in English, then repeat it in Welsh once again. They reduce the use of English as soon as possible, doing so in a very short period of time. Overall, learners are immersed beneficially in the 'target language', namely Welsh.

Most practitioners model the Welsh language with suitable accuracy and clear pronunciation. They have a rich range of vocabulary and, in the strongest cases, converse naturally with learners and support them throughout the sessions. However, many leaders refer to difficulties in recruiting staff who are fluent and competent in the Welsh language, particularly in areas with relatively low numbers of Welsh speakers. In a few cases where practitioners' linguistic skills are weak, learning is not effective enough. For example, learners do not hear syntactical patterns being introduced correctly and consistently.

In language immersion centres, most practitioners model language correctly, with a great deal of purposeful repetition and regular opportunities for learners to hear and speak Welsh. When giving instructions, practitioners speak carefully and spend time pronouncing sounds clearly. They ask learners to guess the meaning of new vocabulary, such as 'cegin' ('kitchen'), before cooking, by using syntactical patterns with which learners are already familiar, such as "Mae'r ystafell ddosbarth yn edrych ychydig fel cegin heddiw - cegin - beth yw cegin?" ("The classroom looks a bit like a kitchen today - kitchen - what is a kitchen?"). They use a series of short, simple sentences with similar patterns skilfully, for example, when explaining: "Rydyn ni yn mynd i goginio cawl llyisiau" ("We're going to cook vegetable soup"), "Rydyn ni yn mynd i helpu" ("We're going to help"), "Rydyn ni yn mynd i roi cyfarwyddiadau" ("We're going to give instructions"). As a result, learners gain confidence quickly to emulate practitioners when speaking Welsh in different contexts.

### **Provision for skills**

Most practitioners provide valuable listening activities as a basis to develop the remainder of learners' Welsh language skills. By doing so, learners internalise and acquire vocabulary effectively. For example, in the foundation phase learners come to understand vocabulary relating to the day's main events quickly by singing songs like 'Mae'n amser twtio nawr' ('It's time to tidy up'). This in turn nurtures their confidence to develop their speaking skills at a rapid pace.

Many practitioners plan valuable opportunities for learners to practise their listening and speaking skills in different contexts. For example, practitioners introduce language purposefully by singing, rapping, and introducing rhymes, and by providing 'circle time' or 'on the mat' sessions. In settings and nursery and reception classes, many make skilful use of these sessions to practise songs with a specific purpose, for example by providing an opportunity to count to ten or when introducing parts of the body. Many practitioners use this time effectively to read stories. A majority of practitioners ignite learners' imagination by discussing what is implicit in the pictures and encouraging them to join in with familiar parts. The most effective practitioners dramatise and gesture creatively when conveying the meaning of simple words and instructions.

In the best practice, practitioners use a variety of techniques to introduce vocabulary and syntactical patterns to learners. For example, practitioners ask learners to respond to a question by emulating their voice levels, by whispering, speaking, and then shouting in order to create excitement when practising the

language together. They provide effective sessions in small groups for learners to listen and respond individually. They sing, play games, and provide opportunities for them to role-play which, in turn, reinforces the same consistent patterns as they collaborate with partners or in small groups. Regular opportunities to practise vocabulary and syntactical patterns in different contexts is a strong feature of effective immersion education.

Many practitioners use visual resources effectively to develop learners' listening and speaking skills. For example, practitioners provide beneficial opportunities for learners to respond to questions such as 'Beth wyt ti'n hoffi?' ('What do you like?') by selecting vocabulary that is displayed alongside corresponding pictures and including them in a phrase or a full sentence. Many practitioners use toys skilfully to prompt learners, for example by moving 'teddy' to different places in order to become familiar with prepositions. Learning is at its best when there is a lively pace to sessions in order to engage and hold learners' interest, and when regular opportunities are provided for them to contribute themselves. In the few cases where the pace of sessions is too slow, and where practitioners use a more monotonous voice without succeeding in igniting curiosity, learners do not always respond and develop their Welsh language skills to the best of their ability.

Many practitioners in non-maintained settings and schools use specific schemes to foster learners' awareness of the sounds that different letters represent in order to acquire early reading skills. As part of early immersion provision, many provide regular opportunities for learners to identify a letter, listen to the sound of the letter, and learn gestures or movements to accompany it as a reminder. They encourage learners to emulate these movements and pronounce the sound correctly. Most practitioners in language immersion centres adopt a similar approach to support those learners who require additional assistance to develop early reading skills.

In the strongest practice, practitioners provide opportunities for learners to apply their learning in areas both inside and outside the classroom in order to provide opportunities for them to practise their early reading skills in different contexts. Many practitioners make purposeful use of labels to introduce extended and familiar vocabulary to learners and ensure that a range of suitable books are available to learners. During their time in the foundation phase, many practitioners provide a wide range of opportunities for learners to read increasingly challenging text. For example, they provide valuable opportunities for learners to read suitable fictional and factual books, poetry, and simple instructions. In schools where standards of reading are strong, practitioners

support learners to discuss the text effectively in order to introduce new vocabulary and syntactical patterns and confirm their understanding of what they have read.

In language immersion centres, practitioners provide regular opportunities for learners to read new vocabulary and syntactical patterns, for example as learners read scripts that accompany the week's sub-theme. There is a lack of suitable reading resources that are graded appropriately with stimulating content that corresponds to the learners' ages. In a few cases, this hinders learners' progress in reading once they return to school or where they do not have access to a language immersion centre.

In non-maintained settings and schools, most practitioners provide valuable opportunities for learners to develop early writing skills. For example, they provide a range of writing tools such as felt pens, chalk, and crayons for learners to develop fine motor skills. They identify opportunities for learners to begin to write simple words when they are ready to do so, for example words that relate to the theme. In schools and language immersion centres, most practitioners provide valuable opportunities for learners to begin to create simple sentences. Many practitioners use scaffolds effectively to model correct syntactical patterns. As learners progress, the most effective practitioners know when to reduce support through the use of scaffolds. As a result, practitioners provide learners with beneficial opportunities to develop their writing skills freely and independently.

Most practitioners provide beneficial opportunities for learners to write at increasing length as they gain confidence in the Welsh language, often beginning by emulating vocabulary and syntactical patterns from story books or scripts. This is an effective immersion method, as learners internalise the language before they begin writing. For example, they write a series of sentences about different animals by using sentences such as "Fflamingo ydw i, mae gen i goesau tenau hir a gwddf pinc" ("I am a flamingo, I have long thin legs and a pink neck"). Where appropriate, practitioners model writing with a scaffold and suggest other useful adjectives.

Many practitioners provide parents/carers with useful information in order for them to be able to support their children at home. For example, practitioners hold workshops to explain their approach of introducing early reading skills at the beginning of the foundation phase. In the strongest cases, practitioners provide valuable opportunities for parents/carers to support their children to acquire

Welsh language skills throughout the early immersion stage. For example, practitioners share simple video clips that show themselves explaining a specific mathematical method, or where staff read a bedtime story that learners can enjoy with a parent/carer or independently.

### **Applying skills in different contexts**

Many practitioners prepare useful opportunities for learners to develop their listening and speaking skills in the different areas in the classroom and outdoors. In the best practice, practitioners talk alongside young learners and introduce vocabulary to them naturally. For example, they recreate a visit to a local farm by 'building a bus' when playing creatively in the outdoor area and take advantage of the opportunity to talk about what they have seen on the way to the farm. As learners progress through the foundation phase, the most effective practitioners encourage learners to apply specific vocabulary and syntactical patterns with increasing independence, for example as learners apply newly acquired language as they interact in a hair salon, a veterinary surgery and a nature hide.

#### **Cameo - using the Welsh language outside lessons**

Practitioners at Cylch Meithrin Pontrobert in Powys County Council encourage spontaneous play based on resources that inspire learners. During sessions, practitioners talk naturally with learners.

Practitioners use resources effectively by providing learners with cardboard tubes of different sizes. They facilitate learning skilfully by allowing learners to make decisions about what they would like to do with the tubes. Practitioners introduce language consistently so that learners' understanding and vocabulary develop as they experiment with the tubes. For example, practitioners draw the learners' attention to the properties of equipment, such as 'caled' ('hard') and 'meddal' ('soft') and discuss sounds by hitting the equipment with objects to create sounds with different pitches.

As the session continues, practitioners take advantage of opportunities to discuss new concepts and introduce vocabulary beneficially as learners

move and carry the tubes. For example, they discuss balancing with learners by using appropriate language. When learners decide to create park equipment with the tubes, such as a swing and a slide, practitioners identify opportunities to ask questions such as 'Wyt ti'n meddwl y bydd hwn yn dod lawr y llithren yn gyflym?' ('Do you think this will come down the slide quickly?') or 'Pa mor bell wyt ti'n meddwl eith hwn?' ('How far do you think this will go?').

Practitioners take advantage of every opportunity to develop learners' listening and speaking skills by introducing rich new vocabulary. As a result, they develop learners' Welsh speaking and listening skills highly effectively.

Later in the foundation phase, a majority of practitioners introduce new vocabulary and specific syntactical patterns purposefully. For example, they challenge learners to choose cards with pictures on them and respond to questions to practise 'gwelais i' ('I saw') and 'welais i ddim' ('I didn't see'). Practitioners use a voice recording device effectively so that learners hear instructions for tasks in independent learning activities. A majority provide valuable opportunities for learners to use headphones to listen to stories individually or in groups. As a result, learners hear the sounds of words being read by the voice of an adult who introduces new vocabulary and models correct Welsh syntactical patterns.

Most practitioners plan beneficial opportunities for learners to listen and speak in less formal situations, such as during snack time. This provides an opportunity for learners to ask for different fruit or discuss their favourite foods. A minority of practitioners in schools and language immersion centres lead play activities on the playground during play time. By leading fun games with learners of different ages joining in to play, learners are given valuable opportunities to speak Welsh. A few practitioners also plan purposeful opportunities for learners to speak Welsh over lunch, for example by posing a 'question of the day' such as 'Beth yw eich hoff raglen deledu?' ('What is your favourite television programme?') to promote discussion.

Many practitioners organise valuable opportunities for learners to hear and speak

Welsh in informal contexts. For example, they invite well-known characters from story books and television to come to talk and play games with learners or organise for actors to visit the provision to play the role of famous people who are associated with the theme. Many provide valuable immersion activities outside school hours to promote the use of the Welsh language, for example by holding 'adran yr Urdd' (Urdd youth club sessions) or working with Welsh language initiatives ('mentrau iaith'). As a result, learners enjoy speaking Welsh for a different purpose, such as taking part in sports activities, playing games and quizzes, and by practising to perform in festivals and eisteddfodau.

### **Cameo - enriching learners' Welsh experiences in English-medium schools**

Ysgol Bro Helyg, which is the only Welsh-medium school in Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, contributes to enriching learners' Welsh experiences in local English-medium schools through the expressive arts.

Many learners perform in a 'cân actol' presentation. This is a valuable opportunity for them to apply their Welsh oral skills in a fun manner. Where appropriate, the topic deepens learners' understanding of Welsh history and culture and creates a sense of pride in the Welsh language. For example, they perform a 'cân actol' that includes the history of Tryweryn and the 'Welsh Not.'

After gaining the confidence to perform successfully to the public, leaders provide an opportunity for learners to perform for other learners in local English-medium primary schools. Practitioners hold a workshop with learners in those English-medium schools to introduce relevant language so that they understand the content of the performance and discuss the Welsh language with them. Following the workshop, learners at Ysgol Bro Helyg perform to bring the knowledge and history to life for their peers. This has a positive effect on the listening and speaking skills of learners at both schools.

Most practitioners in language immersion centres make effective use of technology, for example by providing opportunities for learners to record video clips making use of green screen technology. Most practitioners in language immersion centres adapt resources creatively to obtain a suitable range. For example, they adapt games and create their own useful resources, such as language mats, as the resources are not available in Welsh originally. On the whole, there is a lack of resources to support teaching and learning as part of the late immersion process, including suitable multimedia resources. This hinders the ability of less confident practitioners to plan suitable activities for learners, particularly when they do not have access to a language immersion centre or specialist Welsh teachers.

### **Continuity and progression**

Where provision to develop listening and speaking skills is at its best, practitioners plan purposefully to ensure continuity and progression for learners to acquire Welsh language skills. Practitioners identify the vocabulary and syntactical patterns necessary for learners to become confident communicators. They introduce these words and patterns consistently and plan opportunities to revisit and build on previous learning. A minority of non-maintained settings make effective use of resources that assist practitioners to support their own language skills whilst planning suitable progression for their learners.

A majority of practitioners map vocabulary and syntactical patterns purposefully across the age range and incorporate them skilfully in learners' experiences. A majority provide daily sessions to practise vocabulary and syntactical patterns and provide opportunities for them to apply them successfully across the areas of learning. In a majority of cases, practitioners use a beneficial agreed plan to introduce syntactical patterns that is provided by the local authorities or regional consortia. Where practice is less effective, practitioners introduce vocabulary and syntactical patterns at random and introduce language that accompanies the theme, without considering seamless progression in learners' language learning experiences. A majority of practitioners plan activities that are of interest to learners, but do not consider their Welsh language development purposefully enough. As a result, not all learners develop vocabulary and syntactical patterns in a timely enough manner in developing their Welsh language skills over time.

Many non-maintained settings and schools have informal arrangements to discuss learners' Welsh language skills as they transfer from one provider or class

to another. In the strongest cases, practitioners agree on common approaches to develop learners' linguistic skills. For example, non-maintained settings and nursery and reception classes in schools use songs about different times of the day consistently or introduce the sounds of letters of the alphabet by using the same technique. A few practitioners share very beneficial information with the teachers who teach learners the following academic year. For example, they refer specifically to the vocabulary and syntactical patterns that learners have acquired.

## **Assessment**

When providing oral feedback to learners who are receiving early immersion provision, many practitioners give suitable praise when they first come to recognise and use vocabulary to build the confidence of learners. Practitioners repeat frequently and, where learners are beginning to respond in full sentences, they provide feedback by modelling the correct syntactical pattern sensitively after hearing the learner's attempt. Many use this technique skilfully, which is known as 'recasting', as described by Lyster and Ranta (1997, p.46-47). This is the process of re-forming a learner's response by omitting the mistake. As learners become increasingly confident in developing their Welsh language skills in the foundation phase, effective practitioners encourage learners to repeat the sentence correctly, in line with the learner's Welsh language development. They recognise the balance between praise and encouragement and set high expectations for learners. This develops learners' confidence effectively which, in turn, motivates them to speak Welsh spontaneously without the fear of making a mistake.

A majority of practitioners in non-maintained settings and schools use appropriate methods to track learners' progress in acquiring and developing their Welsh language skills. On the whole, practitioners use the information that is gathered suitably when planning activities across the areas of learning. However, they act on information that is often too vague to identify the next steps in learners' linguistic development. As a result, it is not always possible to track learners' Welsh language development effectively enough. For example, a minority of practitioners do not identify the successes and areas for improvement of learners and groups of learners, such as those who are more able, rigorously enough as they acquire vocabulary and syntactical patterns as part of the early immersion process.

### **Cameo - developing listening and speaking skills for learners from all linguistic backgrounds**

Practitioners at Cylch Meithrin Penparc, in Ceredigion County Council, plan valuable opportunities for learners to practise listening and speaking skills.

Practitioners provide beneficial plenary sessions, which provide an opportunity for all learners to respond to questions together and sing together. They also divide them into different groups to give learners an opportunity to respond to questions individually, by giving careful consideration to learners' linguistic development from their starting points. For example, when discussing fruit, they introduce more challenging vocabulary to one group of confident speakers, such as 'berllan' ('orchard') and 'amryliw' ('multicoloured'). They also ask questions that stretch learners beneficially, such as 'beth yw mwy nag un afal?' ('what is more than one apple?'). Other practitioners support learners who are new to the Welsh language to foster simpler vocabulary. For example, by focusing on the names and colours of different fruit and introducing adjectives, such as 'bach' ('small') and 'mawr' ('big').

Practitioners provide valuable opportunities for learners to meet their linguistic needs. They plan purposefully and decide on vocabulary and syntactical patterns to introduce through their themes. They take advantage of various opportunities for learners to use and apply the language they have acquired by being immersed further in activities in different areas within the inclusive provision. They enrich learners' experiences through visits in the local community, for example going for a walk to a nearby orchard.

Nearly all school headteachers and language immersion centre leaders are strongly supportive of the success of intensive programmes in language immersion centres. Most track learners' progress through an informal approach, for example by observing sessions and talking to learners. Very recently, a few

centres have adopted a tracking system that is similar to the English as an additional language service, by using the '5 stage model of Welsh as an additional second language' to assess learners three times during the course. This is a suitable medium for practitioners to track learners' language acquisition from stage A, which is defined as 'new to Welsh' to stage E, which is defined as 'fluent'. This strengthens practitioners' understanding of the next steps for the learner. For example, it sets useful expectations such as that 'Stage D' speakers 'can answer specific closed questions in lessons'. However, methods for assessing the progress of latecomers throughout their school career are inconsistent.

### **Provision for groups of learners**

On the whole, practitioners succeed in using the same language immersion methods for all learners, including those with additional learning needs. In the best practice, provision to support learners' Welsh language skills is discussed as part of the process of reviewing individual learners' needs, and the child contributes to the discussions. For example, practitioners organise Braille resources through the medium of Welsh for learners with visual impairments. Most learners with additional learning needs develop their Welsh language skills appropriately as part of the immersion process.

Nearly all practitioners provide suitable support for learners who speak very little, or no English at home. They do not adapt immersion education provision for learners who do not speak English as these learners usually develop their Welsh language skills suitably. Practitioners include them supportively in all activities and use the full range of valuable immersion approaches to promote their understanding of the Welsh language. However, a few local authorities organise support in separate sessions to target latecomers' English skills. There is very little evidence of practitioners who plan to develop multilingual skills beyond supporting learners who already speak an additional language at home.

## **Approaches to late immersion**

Late immersion programmes are most successful when they are delivered intensively with a definite structure and progression, for example as learners are immersed in the Welsh language by specialist practitioners throughout the day for a period of a term or more. Usually this approach is delivered in language immersion centres. In a minority of language immersion centres, learners return to the home school for a small proportion of the week, such as one day. This provides support learners to integrate socially with their friends in the home school. Where learners attend a language immersion centre for the whole week, they make sustained and continuous progress in acquiring Welsh skills.

Most practitioners who are situated in language immersion centres provide a programme that is planned purposefully and delivers, reinforces, and builds on vocabulary and syntactical patterns in a structured way. Practitioners recognise that developing listening and speaking skills is the foundation for learners as they acquire Welsh language skills successfully in a short period.

Where latecomers do not have access to a language immersion centre, provision that is planned for them varies, even within individual local authorities. In these cases, support for the learners is provided in their new school. Most practitioners provide an appropriate range of activities to support latecomers. In the strongest cases, practitioners receive support and assistance from specialist practitioners from the local authority. In a very few cases where late immersion methods are effective in this context, learners follow an immersion programme that is provided for a substantial proportion of the weekly timetable. Generally, this provision does not support learners effectively enough as they are immersed in the Welsh language.

A very few local authorities support latecomers appropriately by providing them with peripatetic support. In the best practice, these support sessions provide suitable opportunities for learners to foster and develop suitable vocabulary and syntactical patterns. Practitioners engage learners' enthusiasm and maintain appropriate links with class teachers and provide them with supplementary learning resources. However, this provision is only provided for a limited proportion of the timetable. As a result, this hinders learners from making consistent progress, as the programme does not provide regular enough opportunities for them to receive intensive and structured Welsh language support.

Many practitioners in the language immersion centres follow specific late immersion programmes. Many of the programmes are similar to each other in

terms of content and structure, although practitioners often refine and interpret the programme differently. Many of these programmes introduce learners to an imaginary world with characters that stimulate them using visual materials and engaging stories. Most practitioners enrich learners' experiences with relevant activities and resources that reinforce vocabulary and syntactical patterns. However, not all programmes and resources reflect and celebrate the diversity that exists in modern day Wales.

When communicating with learners, many practitioners use movements and gestures regularly and purposefully to reinforce specific vocabulary and syntactical patterns as part of an effective immersion approach. For example, they point to their ears each time they use the word 'gwrandewch' ('listen'), roll their hands each time they say 'ar ôl' ('after') or simulate writing a note when saying the word 'ysgrifennu' ('writing'). In the most effective examples, practitioners provide practical and visual experiences to engage learners' interest and reinforce the week's specific linguistic elements, for example by visiting the local park. These purposeful experiences provide valuable opportunities for learners to apply vocabulary and syntactical patterns in real-life contexts.

### **Cameo - varying the approach to practising vocabulary and syntactical patterns**

Practitioners at Maesincla Language Centre, in Gwynedd Council, use a number of approaches to practise and repeat vocabulary and syntactical patterns frequently. They vary activities in order to engage learners' interest. For example, practitioners provide opportunities to practise the language pattern 'Oes gen ti?' ('Have you got?') and the answers 'Oes, mae gen i' ('Yes, I have') or 'Nac oes, does gen i ddim' ('No, I have not'), in addition to vocabulary relating to the zoo.

Practitioners use different approaches to support the immersion process skilfully and move from one activity to another with an appropriate pace. For example, they begin by giving all learners an opportunity to ask a question and respond either individually or as a group. They support learners by displaying suitable vocabulary and syntactical patterns on a whiteboard.

Later in the session, practitioners provide valuable opportunities for learners to apply the same listening and speaking skills while playing board games, for example as a group plays a game with the aim of comparing cards with pictures of animals on them. This provides beneficial opportunities for learners to ask questions such as 'Oes gen ti eliffant?' ('Have you got an elephant?'), and the partner to respond appropriately. Learners rotate through a number of interesting activities that enable them to apply the same skills independently. For example, they practise scripts by imitating characters from the immersion programme, use computer software to match pictures and words, and search through a colourful dictionary for an animal that begins with each letter of the alphabet, and then write it down.

As learners engage in fun activities that reinforce the same vocabulary and patterns, they become increasingly confident speakers.

Most practitioners in language immersion centres provide valuable opportunities for learners to develop their Welsh language skills in other areas of learning. They provide a daily numeracy session, which is a valuable opportunity to introduce the main mathematical terms in Welsh, such as number, shapes, money, and time. Many reinforce learners' linguistic development by playing playground games and ball games. A majority deliver practical activities by providing opportunities for learners to discuss in Welsh, for example by planting watercress seeds.

Most practitioners in language immersion centres describe their own practice knowledgeably, for example by referring to the importance of modelling language consistently and introducing syntactical patterns purposefully. In the strongest cases, practitioners refer to international research that has a beneficial influence on their practice. However, many of these practitioners base their principles on what they have learned from experienced practitioners over time, rather than through purposeful professional learning opportunities.

In a very few local authorities, practitioners admit learners to language immersion centres as soon as they transfer to a Welsh-medium school. This provides a beneficial opportunity for latecomers to acquire Welsh language skills

immediately. In these cases, in a situation where the learner does not join the centre at the beginning of term, practitioners extend the period of provision for them. In most cases, where learners transfer to Welsh-medium education during the school term, they are required to wait until the beginning of the following term before they can access the language immersion centre. This means that the group that is already attending the centre can continue to receive uninterrupted intensive late immersion experiences.

In cases where learners wait for a space in a language immersion centre, the support that is available to them varies. In a few local authorities, members of the Welsh advisory team visit the learner in the new school on a weekly basis to support them with intervention sessions or provide suitable activities for the school's practitioners. However, in the majority of authorities, there is no specific provision that has been planned purposefully for latecomers in these cases. As a result, class teachers adapt provision for latecomers, as appropriate. In a few situations, this leads to practitioners increasing the use of English in the classroom for a period of time to support new learners.

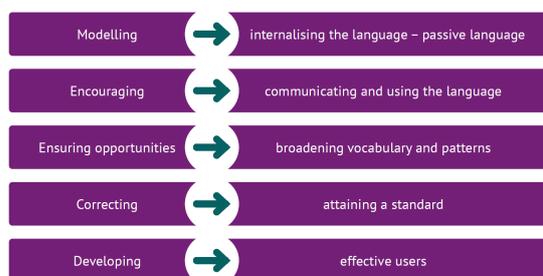
The majority of practitioners in language immersion centres provide valuable post-centre support for learners who have already attended the centre. In the best practice, this means that learners receive a weekly visit from a member of staff from the language immersion centre or the Welsh advisory team. They provide opportunities for learners to develop their Welsh language skills further by providing activities that reinforce learners' previous learning in different contexts. A few practitioners in schools provide purposeful opportunities for latecomers to join groups such as the 'Criw Cymraeg' when they return from the language immersion centre. As a result, learners continue to take pride in their new linguistic skills and regularly influence others to speak Welsh.

### **Cameo - cooperating as a team to support language immersion**

Conwy County Borough Council supports immersion education through a combination of provision from the Welsh Advisory Team and Conwy Welsh Language Centre. Members of the team have experience of working as teachers at Conwy Welsh Language Centre and, as a result, they have experience and a sound understanding to support practitioners and latecomers.

They summarise the immersion education process by referring to a useful 'oracy strand':

**Figure 5. Graphic as static image with long description**



Learners who are admitted to the local authority's Welsh-medium schools in the middle of the school term are supported by 'pre-centre' provision. Weekly sessions are held during the period before they attend Conwy Welsh Language Centre. Vocabulary and syntactical patterns are introduced beforehand, and practitioners from the home school support what has been introduced during the week.

Learners are supported by post-centre provision for a period of up to six weeks during the term after their intensive period at Conwy Welsh Language Centre. This is done through weekly face-to-face sessions or remotely through video-conferencing software. These activities ensure that learners have access to all areas of learning through the medium of Welsh.

The Welsh Advisory Team, which is part of the authority's education improvement service, leads and supports the education workforce by providing beneficial professional learning opportunities. They lead, share and/or model valuable immersion approaches with schoolteachers and assistants. For example, the Advisory Team works with the class teacher to provide opportunities to observe and emulate effective teaching and learning practices. As a result, teachers adapt their teaching methods to ensure that learners continue to make progress in their Welsh language

skills.

School leaders apply for specific support from the Welsh Advisory Team to respond to individual circumstances. For example, they provide support to plan immersion activities based on a specific book to accompany the theme of the 'Celts'.

Through this regular co-operation and support, practitioners provide activities in rich experiences that support learners effectively.

On the whole, practitioners in language immersion centres develop learners' Welsh language skills successfully. They equip learners with vocabulary and syntactical patterns that support them beneficially as they apply their Welsh language skills across the areas of learning. The intensive immersion approach supports learners robustly and provides effective opportunities for them to gain the confidence to speak Welsh which, in turn, supports their reading and writing skills soundly. As a result of the positive experience of most learners in the language immersion centres, they succeed in developing their Welsh language skills and their overall learning skills capably as they continue their education through the medium of Welsh.

# Learning and attitudes to learning

## Early immersion (learning and attitudes to learning)

Nearly all learners involved early immersion provision enjoy learning Welsh and become engrossed in activities where immersion education is provided in non-maintained settings and primary schools. They begin by listening to Welsh being modelled by adults and responding appropriately to instructions with gestures to support them. Most learners begin to join in with adults and other children with increasing confidence, for example by singing short songs and saying nursery rhymes. They begin to emulate practitioners by using key vocabulary suitably. During their time in the foundation phase, most learners become increasingly confident speakers.

In most non maintained settings and schools, many foundation phase learners follow instructions and respond appropriately to questions in sessions. As they progress through the phase, many develop extensive vocabulary and build sentences confidently with the support of practitioners. As a result of the immersion process, they speak Welsh increasingly naturally with staff, although the syntax may not always be correct. A minority of learners speak Welsh with their peers regularly in the classroom. Nearly all learners acquire the skills necessary to succeed in Welsh-medium education in key stage 2.

Most learners develop listening and speaking skills effectively. In settings and schools where standards of listening and speaking are strong, learners respond to a variety of prompts in sessions that are planned purposefully to promote and develop listening and speaking skills. Understanding first comes where learners make sense of vocabulary while re-using it. For example, they take part in familiar games and activities, and sing and rap in different contexts. This develops their understanding which, in turn, supports them to become increasingly confident speakers.

As practitioners introduce and re-visit a range of correct syntactical patterns, most learners emulate them correctly, and apply and assimilate them with increasing accuracy over time. From an early age, they begin to respond suitably to simple instructions, for example, 'Ewch i eistedd wrth y bwrdd coch' ('Go and sit at the red table'). They listen to practitioners in group sessions and respond

appropriately, for example by suggesting the title of a suitable song when asked 'Pa gân hoffet ti ganu?' ('What song would you like to sing?'). They respond to questions from practitioners with increasing independence when playing in the areas of provision both inside and outside the classroom.

### **Cameo - using Welsh language skills in the different areas of provision**

At Ysgol Mornant, in Flintshire County Council, learners develop listening and speaking skills successfully from an early age while playing and responding to activities in the different areas of the foundation phase. For example, learners in the nursery class develop listening and speaking skills around the sand pit.

These learners search for dinosaurs and stones in the sand enthusiastically. This hands-on activity sparks the learners' imagination and provides many opportunities for practitioners to introduce language. Assistants question them effectively and reinforce vocabulary as learners sort the toys. As a result, they respond positively to questions such as 'I ba flwch mae'r garreg yma'n mynd?' ('Which box does this stone go into?') and offer simple adjectives such as 'bach' ('small') and 'mawr' ('big'). Learners recall vocabulary that relates to the theme appropriately, for example by offering the word 'sgerbwd' to help a friend who was using the word 'skeleton'.

During their time in the foundation phase, most learners grow in confidence to speak Welsh in a rich variety of learning contexts. They use a range of vocabulary that accompanies the theme increasingly well, for example to describe the meaning of the word 'ffrwydro' ('explode') when discussing fireworks. By Year 1, many learners respond enthusiastically in full sentences with regular support from practitioners.

Many learners grow in confidence when discussing with their friends,

practitioners, and visitors during the early immersion stage. For example, they develop confidence by practising and performing in concerts and eisteddfodau, or by attending clubs that promote the use of the Welsh language. A minority make linguistic errors in terms of the accuracy of language when responding to questions and expressing themselves. On the whole, they have the confidence to speak and discuss, and often correct themselves or their peers. However, a minority of learners do not develop to become fluent enough speakers as practitioners do not provide frequent enough opportunities to speak Welsh in informal situations. As a result, a minority of learners tend to translate vocabulary and syntactical patterns from English to Welsh before pronouncing them.

Most learners make consistent progress in developing their reading skills. They come to recognise the sounds of different letters correctly before combining the sounds to read simple words. They join in with group activities to reinforce this knowledge, for example by singing songs about individual letters enthusiastically and making movements that are associated with them. They practise these skills beneficially in individual activities. For example, they look and refer to the shape of a letter that is hidden in a picture, choose a magnet that corresponds to the letter, and then pronounce the sound correctly. As a result, they recognise letters with increasing confidence and develop early reading skills successfully.

During the foundation phase, many learners develop their reading skills consistently over a period that is commensurate with their age. In settings and schools where standards of reading are strong, learners enjoy looking at a range of attractive books from an early age and show an increasing interest in the text. By the end of the foundation phase, most explain relevant details from texts confidently, for example when re-telling a story. Many learners apply their reading skills for a purpose successfully, for example when reading words that describe different animals, such as 'cigysydd' ('carnivore') and 'llysieuydd' ('herbivore') to solve a riddle in the style of 'who am I?'.

Many learners' writing skills in the foundation phase are sound. In non-maintained settings and nursery classes, learners begin to develop writing skills by experimenting and mark-making and produce suitable pieces of early writing. As they move through the phase, many learners record events appropriately with scaffolds and support from practitioners. For example, they write instructions in the context of their theme work or create shopping lists. By the end of the foundation phase, many write consistently for different purposes and communicate clearly and expressively.

Many learners develop their speaking and writing skills effectively, and this link is a key part of the immersion process. In the best practice, providers give learners valuable opportunities to apply vocabulary and syntactical patterns in drama and writing activities. For example, learners use vocabulary such as ‘anhygoel’ (‘unbelievable’), syntactical patterns such as ‘tawelwch llethol’ (‘overwhelming silence’) and idioms such as ‘ar ben ei ddigon’ (“in clover”) highly effectively. However, in the few cases where standards of writing are weak, learners have difficulty internalising the language as there are not frequent enough opportunities for them to practise and develop their speaking skills. This hinders their ability to write freely and with independent confidence.

Overall, learners from different groups make consistent progress by being immersed in the Welsh language. Nearly all learners with additional learning needs make suitable progress in line with the targets in their individual development plans. Learners who speak English as an additional language also acquire Welsh language skills to the same degree as their peers who speak English as their first language. On the whole, learners from Welsh-speaking and non-Welsh-speaking homes make consistent progress. However, in a few cases where practitioners’ expectations of learners are too low, more able learners do not make enough progress in acquiring the Welsh language.

## **Late immersion (learning and attitudes to learning)**

Nearly all learners take part in late immersion sessions enthusiastically. By the end of the intensive programmes in language immersion centres, most learners develop their skills successfully and with a suitable level of proficiency. As a result, most learners succeed in gaining access to a wider curriculum as they develop their Welsh language skills further in their home school. Overall, learners who receive less intensive intervention make slower progress.

By the end of key stage 2, most latecomers who have completed a successful period of late immersion make the same progress as their peers. In a few cases, where more able latecomers make highly robust progress, their oral Welsh skills have developed to be stronger than those of their peers.

In language immersion centres, most learners listen attentively and respond appropriately to practitioners as they introduce language in various activities.

Most gain confidence quickly and are keen to speak without the fear of failure. As a result, they follow simple instructions, begin to ask specific questions, and give suitable answers very quickly as they are immersed in the Welsh language.

Nearly all learners respond enthusiastically in whole-class sessions that target vocabulary and syntactical patterns by responding with increasing accuracy. A few reinforce new vocabulary by making purposeful use of movements. For example, they cross their arms to reinforce their dislike of different foods and give a response such as 'Mae'n gas gen i tsili a garlleg' ('I hate chilli and garlic').

Many learners listen to partners and respond appropriately, for example when describing their personal features. Nearly all recall different syntax successfully when playing a group game that gives everyone an opportunity to contribute by responding to a chain of questions and answers. For example, by asking 'Pryd wyt ti'n cael dy ben-blwydd?' ('When is your birthday?') or 'Ble wyt ti'n byw?' ('Where do you live?'). Many respond simply to additional questions, such as 'Beth yw enwau'r cŵn?' ('What are the dogs' names?') by giving a simple response rather than a complete sentence. They make use of memory aids that are displayed appropriately, for example by turning to check 'colour' vocabulary before giving details of a pet's colour. As a result, most learners become increasingly confident in applying their Welsh language skills to ask and respond to questions in different contexts.

By around the middle of the intensive immersion programme, for example within six weeks, most learners recall and act short scripts from the programme's story books, or scenarios based on different locations in the community. For example, they act the part of patients calling the reception at a doctor's surgery. The receptionist checks the patient's personal details and then offers an appointment at a particular time. As a result of the humour involved in many of the scripts, learners engage fully with their roles. For example, following a visit to a zoo, they act the parts of children arguing while travelling back on the bus after discovering that one of the children has brought a penguin home with them, adding to their enthusiasm. More able learners add extra details to the scene skilfully by using extended vocabulary with the support of practitioners.

Most learners develop reading skills successfully during their time in language immersion centres, in line with their starting points. The few who need additional support to recognise the sounds that are associated with different letters make appropriate progress, and the remainder read in different contexts with increasing confidence. They read familiar questions from the whiteboard to help

them to respond appropriately during whole-class sessions, for example when discussing Welsh heroes.

Most learners use reading skills effectively when working in pairs. For example, they read adjectives on a whiteboard and match them with English vocabulary or identify specific words in a digital wordsearch. They use their reading skills purposefully to play games, such as reading the names of sports on a bingo sheet. These beneficial opportunities encourage them to work together whilst using Welsh effectively.

Most learners develop their writing skills effectively during daily writing sessions, which derive from the vocabulary and syntactical patterns that they have learned recently. Around the beginning of the programme, they write a few key words correctly, for example when adding the names of vegetables to a recipe by filling the gaps. During this time, learners attempt to write without worrying about spelling perfectly on the first attempt, as practitioners support them purposefully.

As many learners make progress in their writing skills, they produce a series of sentences with a common pattern successfully. These are often structured carefully with support from practitioners by providing a suitable scaffold. By the end of the immersion programme, less use is made of ready-made examples, and most learners write freely using familiar patterns. Many continue to appreciate memory aids to remind them how to begin sentences appropriately or to provide rich vocabulary. They enable many learners to write extended pieces skilfully. For example, they take the role of a girl from the imaginary village in the immersion programme and write a statement to the police describing having seen a thief hiding in a cave on the beach. More able learners take advantage of opportunities to write more freely, by using dictionaries and support from practitioners to enrich their vocabulary.

Most learners who complete programmes in language immersion centres apply their skills confidently in activities across the areas of learning after returning to their home school. Nearly all use their Welsh language skills effectively to speak, read and write in various areas of learning. For example, they write a newspaper article about the tale of the flooding of Cantre'r Gwaelod. Nearly all learners succeed in applying their Welsh language skills in numeracy lessons and draw on previous learning successfully to understand and use appropriate vocabulary. For example, they measure the area of objects in the classroom.

Most learners who receive late immersion support internally in schools, or through a peripatetic service provided by the local authority, make appropriate progress. In a very few cases, learners make sound progress over time, for example when sessions are provided for half a day every day over an extended period by a practitioner who has been trained to follow a particular immersion programme. However, the progress made by learners corresponds to how often they receive intensive input, and to what degree the sessions build on previous learning. As a result, they do not gain confidence as quickly as those who complete intensive programmes in language immersion centres.

In cases where learners are educated in the Welsh-medium school while waiting for a place in a language immersion centre, the majority make limited progress as the input is not intensive enough. For example, they come to understand key vocabulary in instructions and a few simple greetings. A minority take advantage of structured provision in specific pre-centre programmes that are organised by the local authority, which enables them to develop an awareness and use of the Welsh language.

Where a post-centre support service is available to learners who have completed an intensive immersion programme, most learners continue to make strong progress. They continue to develop Welsh language skills at the appropriate level as specialist practitioners and class teachers work together to ensure the most suitable provision for learners. Many learners recall previous learning successfully and speak confidently where structured post-centre sessions are available to them.

Most learners who complete an immersion programme at the end of Year 6 before transferring to Welsh-medium secondary schools acquire Welsh language skills effectively. They develop the confidence to speak Welsh and develop their skills appropriately which, in turn, supports them to access activities across the areas of learning with the support of practitioners in Year 7.

Where latecomers make less progress, practitioners have access to fewer suitable resources to support them. In these cases, a majority of learners do not develop their skills effectively enough, for example by playing a wide range of games purposefully to practise language patterns. Learners who make slower progress receive limited access to suitable reading books and useful multimedia materials. In some cases, learners also make less progress as there are no qualified practitioners with the ability to model the Welsh language and a

relevant understanding of immersion methods available to support them.

On the whole, different groups of learners make similar progress to their peers in acquiring Welsh language skills through late immersion education. Boys and girls make similar progress to each other. Most learners with additional learning needs who attend language immersion centres cope appropriately with the immersion process. Nearly all learners who speak English as an additional language develop their Welsh language skills just as effectively as their peers by following an immersion programme in language immersion centres.

# Appendix 1: Number and location of language immersion centres

<b>Authority</b>	<b>Centres</b>
Anglesey	Moelfre Language Centre (Ysgol Gymunedol Moelfre) Cybi Language Centre (Ysgol Cybi)
Cardiff	Glan Ceubal Language Centre (Ysgol Glan Ceubal) Bro Ederm Language Centre (Secondary -Ysgol Bro Ederm)
Carmarthenshire	Griffith Jones Language Centre (Ysgol Griffith Jones) Bro Dinefwr Language Centre (Llandeilo) Maes y Gwendraeth Language Centre
Ceredigion	Canolfan y Felin (Felinfach) Canolfan y Castell (Aberteifi)
Conwy	Conwy Welsh Language Centre (Ysgol Dyffryn yr Enfys)
Denbighshire	Glan Clwyd Language Centre (Ysgol Glan Clwyd)
Gwynedd	Maesincla Language Centre (Ysgol Maesincla) Dolgellau Language Centre (Ysgol Bro Idris) Llangybi Language Centre (Ysgol Llangybi) Penrhyndeudraeth Language Centre (Ysgol Cefn Coch) Porthmadog Language Centre (Secondary - Ysgol Eifionydd)
Monmouthshire	Ysgol y Ffin, Chepstow
Newport	Bro Teyrnnon Language Centre (Ysgol Bro Teyrnnon)
Pembrokeshire	Y Preseli Language Centre (Ysgol y Preseli) Bro Gwaun Language Centre (Ysgol Bro Gwaun) Caer Elen Language Centre (Ysgol Caer Elen)

## Appendix 2 - national priorities

Immersion education intertwines with a number of national priorities.

In September 2013, Welsh Government introduced the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF). This was an attempt to contribute to the aim ‘that the children of Wales are able to develop excellent literacy and numeracy skills during their time in school.’ ([Welsh Government, 2013, p.2](#)). It was intended as a ‘curriculum planning tool for schools that will provide a continuum of development, clearly setting out annual expected outcomes in literacy and numeracy’. The supporting document relates the expectations in terms of the literacy framework to the immersion practice by explaining:

‘In Welsh-medium primary schools it is recognised that language and literacy skills acquisition in the early years may follow a different pattern. Immersion methodology will develop children’s Welsh language skills and by Key Stage 2 there will be increasing parity in the development of both Welsh and English literacy skills. As a consequence, in Reception to Year 3 inclusive, Welsh-medium schools will only be required to use the Welsh literacy component of the LNF (alongside numeracy). From Year 4 onwards we expect Welsh-medium schools to use both the English and Welsh components.’ (Welsh Government, 2013, p.10)

The Framework describes the expectations for learners who are acquiring new language skills by saying:

‘Learners for whom English or Welsh is an additional language are often accessing English/Welsh for the first time and will, therefore, require additional focused support to help them acquire appropriate literacy skills. Learners may initially demonstrate skills that are well below their age expectations in some aspects of the literacy components. Teachers should decide when it is appropriate to use the LNF as the basis of formative assessment for these learners and should not use the routes to literacy component for their formative assessment.’ (Welsh Government, 2013, p.12)

The [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) sets goals to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. This includes the goal of creating a ‘A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language’

(p.4). It describes this as ‘a society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation’ (p.4).

In his independent review of the curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales, [Successful Futures: Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales](#) (Donaldson, 2015), Professor Graham Donaldson called for a ‘renewed focus in schools on learning Welsh primarily as a means of communication, particularly oral communication and understanding’ (Donaldson, 2015, p.60). He also suggested that there should be a focus on ‘strengthening the language in primary schools in order to create solid foundations for learning in Welsh...’ (Donaldson, 2015, p.60).

In [‘Cymraeg 2050 – A million Welsh speakers’](#) (Welsh Government, 2017a), Welsh Government stated its long-term vision and national strategy to increase the number of Welsh speakers. The document makes it clear that immersion education is a key aspect of the strategy:

‘Welsh-medium immersion education is our principal method of ensuring that children can develop their Welsh language skills, and for creating new speakers.’ (Welsh Government, 2017a, p.21)

It reiterates the important role of immersion education in terms of achieving a million Welsh speakers in its plan [‘Cymraeg 2050: our plan for 2021 to 2026’](#) (Welsh Government, 2021d), by listing areas of action which include developing a ‘network to support immersion education through the medium of Welsh’, and expanding the ‘late Immersion Programme to ensure that all newcomers to the language have access to Welsh-medium education when they need it and wherever they are on their learning journey’ (Welsh Government, 2021c, p.12-13).

In its action plan for 2017-2021, [‘Our National Mission’](#) (Welsh Government, 2017b), the Welsh Government announced the aim to ‘develop a transformational approach to the learning, teaching and assessment of the Welsh language with the aim of ensuring that all learners will be able to use the Welsh language when they leave school’ (Welsh Government, 2017b, p.18). In its [update in October 2020](#), the Welsh Government (2020) referred specifically to immersion as a tool to help to achieve this aim by stating its intention to:

'Investigate immersion techniques currently used alongside the latest national and international academic research in order to support best practice in both Welsh-medium models and bilingual models.

'Consider the role of late language immersion centres in supporting the Welsh-medium sector and whether such support should be available in all local authorities.' (Welsh Government, 2020, p.28)

Our report on [Welsh language acquisition](#) (Estyn, 2021) provides two recommendations that relate specifically to immersion education:

'Local authorities and regional consortia should:

'R6 provide training to deepen practitioners' understanding of how learners acquire the Welsh language, and of effective language immersion methodology

The Welsh Government should:

'R7 develop national guidelines on language immersion in order to support teaching and learning in Welsh language acquisition' (Estyn, 2021, p.35)

In his [annual report for 2018-2019](#), Her Majesty's Chief Inspector in Wales explained that the use of immersion education in the Welsh-medium primary sector is a strength:

'Nearly all Welsh-medium settings and primary schools develop their learners' language skills effectively through immersion in Welsh across all areas of learning during the foundation phase, whatever the home language of the learners.' (Estyn, 2019, p.15)

Strong practice was identified in terms of late immersion education, with reference to provision in a few local authorities:

'A few local authorities have very effective provision for language immersion for learners joining Welsh-medium or bilingual schools with little or no prior Welsh. They offer opportunities for a new cohort of learners to develop their skills in Welsh and provide a sound linguistic basis for them to participate fully in

bilingual education and to take advantage of the experiences offered.' (Estyn, 2019, p.4)

# Appendix 3 - early immersion and late immersion in the education system in Wales

**Early immersion** means introducing and using the Welsh language as the only language of teaching (with very few exceptions) in the foundation phase in Welsh-medium and bilingual non-maintained settings and schools. In the best practice, this means that the Welsh language is introduced purposefully to learners in specific language sessions, in addition to providing frequent opportunities for them to acquire and apply their Welsh language skills through rich experiences both inside and outside the classroom.

**Late immersion** means provision for learners who join Welsh-medium schools or Welsh streams in bilingual schools who have not experienced a full period of early immersion in the Welsh language. These learners can be complete newcomers to the Welsh language or be re-engaging with Welsh-medium provision. In the strongest cases, late immersion provision is an intensive and structured programme.

Following periods of acquiring the Welsh language through effective immersion approaches, most learners gain suitable confidence and proficiency in the Welsh language to gain full access to all areas of learning. However, practitioners continue to support learners to develop their Welsh language skills after their early or late immersion periods have ended, whatever their linguistic background. Many immersion approaches are equally as relevant when supporting learners to enrich the Welsh language as they are to acquiring the Welsh language. For example,

practitioners continue to introduce vocabulary and syntactical patterns as they develop learners' Welsh language skills across the areas of learning.

# Methods and evidence base

# Glossary

<b>combine</b>	Combining individual phonemes to produce a grapheme or word
<b>continuous and enhanced provision</b>	Terms that describe aspects of provision in the foundation phase. Continuous provision refers to using resources that are available continuously in the indoor classroom or outdoors for learners to use independently. Enhanced provision refers to additional challenges or tasks that coincide with a topic or learners' interests. Learners will use these resources in addition to the usual resources in continuous provision.
<b>early immersion</b>	Early immersion means introducing and using the Welsh language as the only language of teaching (with very few exceptions) in the foundation phase in Welsh-medium and bilingual non-maintained settings and schools. In the best practice, this means that the Welsh language is introduced purposefully to learners in specific language sessions, in addition to providing frequent opportunities for them to acquire and apply their Welsh language skills through rich experiences both inside and outside the classroom.
<b>home school</b>	The new Welsh-medium school that the learner wishes to attend on a full-time basis following a period in a language immersion centre
<b>host school</b>	The school where the language immersion centre is located
<b>late immersion</b>	Late immersion means provision for learners who join Welsh-medium schools or Welsh streams in bilingual schools who have not experienced a full period of early immersion in the Welsh language. These learners can be complete newcomers to the Welsh language or re-engaging with Welsh-medium provision. In the strongest cases, late immersion provision is an intensive and structured programme.
<b>latecomers</b>	Learners (who are seven years old or above) who do not speak Welsh but wish to attend Welsh-medium education after the end of the foundation phase
<b>learning environment</b>	Where the teaching and learning takes place in the classroom and around the setting or school
<b>newcomers</b>	Another term for 'latecomers' (see above). In this report, we use the term 'latecomers'.
<b>non-maintained setting</b>	A setting that can be a private day nursery, playgroup or Cylch Meithrin with approved status that provides 10 hours a week of funded education over at least 3 days

<b>peripatetic arrangements</b>	Provision to support latecomers by arranging individual or small group support from a practitioner that visits the school in line with a timetable, for example weekly
<b>post-centre provision practitioners</b>	Provision to support latecomers once they have attended a language immersion centre A general term to describe adults that work with learners, for example teachers, assistants, and playgroup leaders
<b>pre-centre provision recast</b>	Provision to support latecomers during the interim period before they attend a language immersion centre A method of providing feedback to learners where the practitioner repeats the learner's sentence without the error
<b>sandwich</b>	A method of introducing a new language (for example, Welsh) by saying the sentence in Welsh (the new language), then in English (the home language), then in Welsh again
<b>syntactical patterns target language</b>	The structure of a sentence that includes words in a particular order The new language that learners acquire, which is Welsh in the context of this report

## Numbers - quantities and proportions

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%

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