

## 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)