

7 November 2016

Dear

As per my previous email, I am writing in response to your request, under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) to be provided with information on the following:

the empirical evidence that Estyn use to justify making the statement 'R3 work with schools to explain the advantages to pupils and parents of Welsh-medium education and of following courses through the medium of Welsh' in the thematic report 'Local authority Welsh in Education Strategic Plans'.

I have investigated the matter with the relevant team, who confirm the following. The report, 'Local authority Welsh in Education Strategic Plans' (September 2016) was compiled to monitor progress by local authorities regarding their statutory obligation to produce strategic plans for developing Welsh-medium education. These plans outline how the authorities aim to achieve the outcomes and targets in Welsh Government's Welsh-medium Education Strategy. Strategic objective 3.8 of this strategy outlines the requirement for local authorities, 'To work with partners to promote the benefits of Welsh-medium and Welsh-language learning'.

Estyn made a number of recommendations in the report including the one to which you refer. Recommendation 3 does not refer to or make a comparison between the performance of pupils in Welsh and English-medium schools. It emphasises the fact that local authorities should assist schools in conveying the aforementioned strategic aim to parents and pupils.

Estyn does not claim that either English or Welsh-medium education is superior to the other. However, Estyn believes that there are advantages for pupils in learning Welsh and becoming increasingly bilingual.

Such advantages include providing young people with the opportunity to appreciate diversity, expand their horizons, enrich their experiences of life and attain a skill that is desirable in the workplace.

The cognitive and even health benefits of being bilingual are well-documented in a considerable body of research. Bilingualism appears to be advantageous on certain thinking dimensions including creativity, divergent thinking, early metalinguistic awareness and communicative sensitivity. Bilingualism appears also to develop the ability to conceptualise in a more varied manner thus enabling flexible and critical thinking.

Estyn is of the opinion that to encourage the development of such benefits and skills are both advantageous and desirable for young people in Wales.

I hope that this information is helpful to you and if you require any further information please do not hesitate in contacting me. If you are not satisfied with the decision Estyn has taken regarding your request for information, you are entitled to request that we review the matter. Your request for a review should be addressed to the Feedback and Complaints Manager, and received no later than 20 working days after the date of this communication.

If you are still not satisfied, you also have a right to complain to the Information Commissioner, who can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House, Water Lane
Wilmslow
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SK9 5AF
Tel: 01625 545 745
Fax: 01624 524510
Email: enquiries@ico.gsi.gov.uk

Yn gywir / Yours sincerely

Robert Gairey

Swyddog Arweiniol Cyhoeddiadau / Lead Officer: Publications

Estyn

**Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi Dros Addysg A Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate For Education and Training in Wales**

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