
Consultation Response

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Pwnc / Subject:	The Welsh Language Commissioner's 5-year Report on the Position of the Welsh Language from 2016-2020

Background information about Estyn

Estyn is the Office of Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales. As a Crown body, Estyn is independent of the Welsh Government.

Estyn's principal aim is to raise the standards and quality education and training in Wales. This is primarily set out in the Learning and Skills Act 2000 and the Education Act 2005. In exercising its functions, Estyn must give regard to the:

- Quality of education and training in Wales;
- Extent to which education and training meets the needs of learners;
- Educational standards achieved by education and training providers in Wales;
- Quality of leadership and management of those education and training providers;
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of learners; and,
- Contribution made to the well-being of learners.

Estyn's remit includes (but is not exclusive to) nurseries and non-maintained settings, primary schools, secondary schools, independent schools, pupil referrals units, further education, adult community learning, local government education services, work-based learning, and teacher education and training.

Estyn may give advice to the Assembly on any matter connected to education and training in Wales. To achieve excellence for learners, Estyn has set three strategic objectives:

- Provide accountability to service users on the quality and standards of education and training in Wales;
- Inform the development of national policy by the Welsh Government;
- Build capacity for improvement of the education and training system in Wales.

This response is not confidential.

The consultation questions are as follows:

- [your opinion on the previous 5-year report](#)

Estyn believes that the report is comprehensive and rigorous. As an organisation that complies with the Welsh Language Standards, we are able to use the information that is contained in them to refine our understanding of linguistic issues and, as a result, improve our corporate use of the Welsh language, both internally and externally.

In addition, as part of Estyn's work in raising standards and improving education and training in Wales, we feel that the report includes information that is very useful to that process.

For example, section 6.3 *Welsh in education* is relevant to Estyn's work. We note that 'young Welsh speakers are more likely to have learnt to speak Welsh at school than anywhere else' (*Welsh language use in Wales, 2013-15*) and 79% of Welsh speakers between 3 and 15 years old have learnt Welsh mainly at school. This emphasises the importance of our work in inspecting the standards of Welsh teaching and learning in our schools.

In terms of pedagogy and the effectiveness of methods of language acquisition, we note that the evidence in the report supports the importance of pre-statutory early years care. As many as 11 per cent of all Welsh speakers have learnt the language at nursery, with a fluency rate of 50 per cent amongst those speakers – this is significantly higher than the levels of fluency amongst those learning the language at primary school, secondary school or somewhere else other than at home.

Section 5.8 refers usefully to data on individuals' levels of language skills proficiency. The report suggests that there is a clear link between an individual's level of fluency and their ability to write in Welsh. That is, fluent Welsh speakers are far more likely to have good Welsh writing skills than non-fluent Welsh-speakers, and around nine in ten fluent Welsh speakers can write well in Welsh. Just under a quarter of non-fluent Welsh speakers said that they were able to write well in Welsh. This leads usefully to issues related to pedagogy and the appropriate emphasis that is needed on developing and/or prioritising oracy as a basis for other skills.

We feel that section 7.3 *Informal use of Welsh at school* draws valuable attention to this important issue. We inspect this kind of informal use during inspections across the sectors that we inspect. Recently, we have strengthened our inspection guidance in the post-16 sector to ensure that leaders plan effectively to increase informal opportunities to use the Welsh language, in addition to providing formal opportunities for learners to use the Welsh language in their studies.

Section 5.2 *Main findings* states 'Since 1981, there has been a sustained increase in the percentage of children and young people able to speak Welsh but it appears that a significant number of them lose their Welsh language skills after leaving school.'

Section 6.6 *Further education and work-based learning* acknowledges valuably that the 16-19 stage is critical in terms of language progression. It is noted that there is a lack of linguistic progression as young people leave school to learn in further education colleges and the workplace. Estyn's report, 'Welsh-medium and bilingual teaching and learning in further education, June 2017' looks at this in detail. It states clearly that 'too few Welsh-speaking learners continue their studies through the medium of Welsh or bilingually in further education colleges'. (See below for a link to that report).

- [what you would like to see in the next report](#)

On the whole, we believe that the content of the report is suitable and useful in terms of meeting a number of different purposes. In the next report, it would be beneficial if there was a way to cross-reference targets from Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers (Work programme 2017-21) with developments in different sectors, in order to assess the impact of those developments. For example, section 6.8 refers to the Welsh for Adults sector and the fact that data is incomplete. By the next report, complete data (2017-18) will be available for the first time in the sector, including attainment data. Data could be used to check whether the sector is achieving the target to 'increase the number of adults who become Welsh speakers' (p.24 Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers) and the assumption of 1,000 additional Welsh speakers every year (through the WfA sector) after 2011.

- [any relevant research or reports that you're responsible for that you would like us to consider](#)

Estyn publishes a number of thematic reports every year, a number of which are relevant to the Welsh language in terms of educational considerations and linguistic planning. We would like you to consider the following thematic reports:

1. Local authority Welsh in Education Strategic Plans, September 2016

<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/thematic-reports/local-authority-welsh-education-strategic-plans>

2. Welsh-medium and bilingual teaching and learning in further education, June 2017

<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/thematic-reports/welsh-medium-and-bilingual-teaching-and-learning-further-education>

3. A review of the work of the National Centre for Learning Welsh, June 2017

<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/thematic-reports/review-work-national-centre-learning-welsh>

4. Welsh in key stage 2 and key stage 3 in Welsh-medium or bilingual schools, May 2018

<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/thematic-reports/welsh-key-stage-2-and-key-stage-3-welsh-medium-or-bilingual-schools>

5. New qualifications, July 2018

<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/thematic-reports/new-qualifications>

- [what would make the report useful or relevant to you and your organisation](#)

We have already answered this question, to some extent, in our responses above. In terms of implementing the Standards, we believe that the Commissioner's office provides valuable opportunities for organisations to learn more about good practice and the latest developments in the field. We appreciate the fact that we are able to meet with officers from the Commissioner's office in order to discuss relevant issues. This enables us to monitor and improve our performance as an organisation that considers the Welsh language to be an integral part of its work and vision.