



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Learn Welsh North West
Bangor University
Dean Street
Bangor
Gwynedd
LL57 1UT**

Date of inspection: November 2021

by

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and
Training in Wales**

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Learn Welsh North West

The Welsh for Adults sector was reorganised in 2016 with the establishment of the National Centre and a network of Wales-wide providers. Learn Welsh North West (LWNW) was established during this reorganisation and is located within the School of Arts, Culture and Language at Bangor University.

LWNW is the biggest provider in Wales with over 2,000 individual learners on average annually across the counties of Conwy, Gwynedd and Anglesey. It receives a core grant of £1,530,539 during 2021-2022 from the National Centre for Learning Welsh.

At the beginning of 2021-2022, there were 28 core staff employed, along with 47 staff on fixed-period appointments. The Director of LWNW is responsible for leading the provider strategically and operationally, and he is supported by a management team of 4 other managers, who are responsible for Learning and Teaching, Quality Control and Systems, Training, and Administration and Wellbeing, as well as a team of 5 area Tutor-Organisers who manage area teams of tutors.

There is a range of mainstream courses on offer, from Mynediad (Entry) to Hyfedredd (Proficiency), in the community and in the workplace, in addition to a programme of activities supporting learners across the three counties (Gwynedd, Anglesey and Conwy) which provide the opportunity for learners to practise their Welsh in informal and supportive contexts.

Summary

Learn Welsh North West is a close-knit, caring community with staff who are wholly committed to supporting all learners. Tutors ensure there is a supportive, positive and motivating environment where nearly everyone feels safe and contributes to lessons unafraid of making mistakes.

Many learners state that continuing to learn the language has been very beneficial to their mental health and wellbeing during the pandemic. Leaders and tutors have worked together tirelessly to plan and take concerted action to adapt the provision into online provision in a short period of time. They provide rich experiences within virtual classes and communities which helpfully support learners as they develop their confidence to speak Welsh. The provider offers a wide range of formal and informal learning activities which ensure clear progression pathways for learners to develop their language skills. This includes courses at all levels, as well as courses for workplaces.

Nearly all tutors foster extremely positive working relationships with learners and they plan and arrange learning activities creatively and ingeniously that effectively engage and maintain learners' interest. One of the notable features of the teaching is the way tutors adapt learning activities to include native language and the rich dialect of the communities of which the learners are members. This has a beneficial impact on learners' confidence to use Welsh with mother tongue speakers. Consequently, most learners use Welsh outside lessons. They are very eager to successfully integrate into the Welsh language community, be it when shopping, with neighbours or in the workplace. The learners themselves have been central to the continuation of learner support activities during the pandemic, by leading conversation sessions such as 'Peint a sgwrs' (A pint and a chat), and organising a choir for learners.

The provider has robust arrangements for identifying and responding to learners' additional learning needs (ALN). The provider has allocated a specific member of staff to attend to this, and liaises with them to offer every support to facilitate the learner experience.

The provider plays a prominent role in the area of national training. One of the provider's strengths is its collaboration with other departments in Bangor University in conducting research into different aspects of teaching and learning, for example supporting learners to develop and improve pronunciation. Another outstanding example is that in collaboration with the psychology department, guidelines were produced for use with reluctant Welsh speakers, to encourage them to gain confidence and become more active speakers.

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| Inspection area | Judgement |
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| Standards | Good |
| Wellbeing and attitudes to learning | Excellent |
| Teaching and learning experiences | Excellent |
| Care, support and guidance | Excellent |
| Leadership and management | Excellent |

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure all learners develop their oracy skills to the best of their ability
- R2 Continue to share effective practices in Welsh learning and acquisition regionally and nationally

What happens next

Estyn will invite the provider to prepare case studies on its work in relation to **research underpinning learning and teaching strategies** as well as a case study on the **formal and informal learning methods that enable learners to integrate into the Welsh language community**, for dissemination on the Estyn website.

Main findings

Standards: Good

Nearly all Learn Welsh North Wales learners, who have started or are continuing with their courses, contribute enthusiastically in the provision they are offered that has been predominantly online since the pandemic began.

Nearly all learners interact well with Welsh speaking visitors and are able to explain how the courses help them to fulfil their personal goals as learners. The clear desire to integrate into Welsh speaking communities and networks is a strong feature. Consequently, most learners use the language outside classes, not only by using resources or activities for learners, but also when interacting with Welsh speakers in everyday situations in their areas. These learners show a determination to become part of the area's Welsh speaking communities. They develop into independent learners who take maximum advantage of opportunities to improve and use their linguistic skills.

During the lessons, nearly all learners listen attentively and respond appropriately to oral prompts. Most recall prior learning well, acquiring new information and applying it to new scenarios. In line with their linguistic level, most learners speak Welsh spontaneously to their tutors and fellow learners, without reverting to English.

Many learners at entry and intermediate level make valuable progress in learning and using basic language patterns with a few making appropriate progress overall. Most learners, from intermediate level onwards, make strong progress in developing their oracy skills. By the time they reach the advanced levels, these learners are increasingly confident and fluent in Welsh and in the best cases they are able to hold mature and sophisticated discussions on a wide range of themes.

Most learners develop their reading skills valuably. In line with their level, they read aloud increasingly confidently and accurately. Many learners at entry and foundation levels make suitable progress when reading short sentences and simple dialogues. Most more experienced learners make sound progress in reading and discussing a wide range of factual and imaginary texts. In the best examples, learners at advanced and proficiency level read literary texts, such as the novel *Cariad Pur* and the poem *Eryri* by Ifor ap Glyn. They read with ease, demonstrating understanding of the content, main characters and atmosphere. They also read literary texts aloud meaningfully, with correct intonation overall when interpreting meaning and mood.

Many learners across the different levels develop effective writing skills. Entry level learners develop from simple tasks such as identifying the letters of the Welsh alphabet and filling gaps to activities that require personalised responses and diaries. In addition, these learners are able to rearrange sentences to create meaningful dialogues appropriately. Foundation level learners develop their writing skills further by using various positive and negative answers appropriately. They use emphatic sentences suitably and use conjunctions accurately to create comparative sentences. Many learners at intermediate level succeed in writing for wider purposes effectively, such as descriptive extracts and presentations for different social and professional

situations. They demonstrate increasing mastery of patterns and tenses including the conditional and imperfect tenses to vary syntax skilfully.

Many learners at advanced and proficiency level write with linguistic maturity and increasingly accurately to express a view and create effective extended pieces in various registers, using local dialect naturally and with ease. They create extended and thoughtful pieces, including fiction and future local newspaper articles, discussing local and controversial issues such as the environment and coastal erosion in a witty and creative manner. In the best examples, learners at these levels combine skills very expediently by expressing a view skilfully after listening to pieces of music or reading contemporary novels such as *Llyfr Glas Nebo*.

On average, over 2,000 learners enrol on the provider's courses annually. Numbers decreased during 2020-21 during the initial period of the pandemic. The provider has taken action to remedy the situation and the provider's data shows that numbers increased at the beginning of the 2021-22 academic year and that there was an increase in new beginner enrolments at entry level. Over a period of three years, many learners complete their courses and a majority move on to subsequent courses. Most learners attend their courses regularly, with attendance increasing since the introduction of remote learning during 2019-20.

WJEC did not hold the full Welsh for Adults examinations series during 2019-20 and 2020-21. Nonetheless, the number of eligible learners opting to sit Welsh for Adults examinations has increased over the past three years, with around half doing so. Nearly all succeed in gaining a qualification with many gaining distinction.

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| Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Excellent |
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Learn Welsh North West prioritises creating a sense of an inclusive learning community. Nearly all learners enjoy the breadth of the experience they have of learning Welsh and their enthusiasm and curiosity are apparent during lessons. The fact that the provision has continued throughout the pandemic leads to many learners emphatically stating that learning the language remotely has been very beneficial to their mental health and wellbeing during this period.

Nearly all feel safe and confident that the provision takes care of their wellbeing. Learners at all levels take beneficial advantage of the catch-up sessions tutors offer learners who have missed a class for various reasons. This has a positive impact on learners' progress.

There was a significant increase in the number of reading clubs to develop learners' linguistic skills during the pandemic. These clubs have a positive impact on learners' wellbeing and enjoyment. Nearly all those who are members of a reading club state that attending increases confidence and improves motivation. Moreover, the experiences broadens their vocabulary and reinforces their speaking, reading and pronunciation skills.

Nearly all learners resolutely express that the support they receive either in class, when working independently or when attending activities outside class is very effective. They feel strongly that the provider listens to their voice, via various learner voice processes, and responds to their views appropriately. For example, some

learners expressed that they felt uncomfortable working as a pair in “smaller classes” online with new people. Consequently, learners were placed in bigger groups to work at the beginning. Learners, particularly learners who have identified additional learning needs (ALN), appreciate attending a class tailored to their needs.

Nearly all learners show respect and support for other learners and as a result, they succeed in working purposefully with their fellow learners in lessons. The element of community in the class is obvious with learners happy to ask and answer questions according to the level, unafraid of making mistakes. Most interact naturally with each other in Welsh. They complete homework regularly and consistently learn independently outside lessons. Most learners demonstrate very high motivation and set themselves targets for using Welsh in the workplace, with family or in the community. Most appreciate being able to discuss their personal targets with the tutor and this in turn assists the learner in realising those ambitious targets. They focus well in lessons and persevere with the conversation in Welsh despite the challenges that arise from time to time when learning new vocabulary and patterns.

Most learners use Welsh outside lessons. They are very keen to integrate into the Welsh language community successfully. Despite pandemic-related frustrations, learners are eager to practise Welsh by attending various activities to support learners, online or face-to-face. They enjoy and benefit from attending various activities, for example an eisteddfod, Christmas fair, ‘cuppa and chat’ and learners’ clubs. A few learners work tirelessly to use the language at work, and at a community level. For example, they have been central to the continuation of learner support activities during the pandemic, by leading conversations sessions such as ‘Peint a sgwrs’ (A Pint and a chat) and organising a choir for learners. Many learners attend supplementary courses, using the National Centre for Learning Welsh’s online activities, social media sites, and various apps to successfully support their learning.

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| Teaching and learning experiences: Excellent |
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Leaders and tutors have worked together tirelessly to plan and take concerted action to adapt the provision into online provision in a short space of time. They provide rich experiences in classes and virtual communities that support learners beneficially as they develop their confidence in speaking Welsh. Leaders support tutors very successfully in providing an array of professional learning opportunities which enable them to deliver digital learning activities. Tutors share good practices effectively as team members and hold discussions about teaching and learning, and share new digital resources via various media such as the digital platform and area fora. This is appreciated by new tutors as they receive comprehensive training as part of the induction process as well as by experienced tutors. As a result of tutors’ enthusiastic cooperation and networking, they support learners consistently and supportively across the provision.

Nearly all tutors foster very positive working relationships with the learners and they plan and arrange learning activities creatively and inventively that effectively prompt and maintain learners’ interest. Tutors have high expectations of learners and motivate them to commit fully to developing their Welsh language skills. Tutors use programmes skilfully in creating digital games and quizzes that motivate learners to listen to and speak Welsh in a range of interesting contexts, for example as they discuss ‘how to live in a greener way’. Through tutors’ astute questioning and

sensitive support, learners embrace Welsh successfully as they converse increasingly spontaneously.

Most tutors vary learning techniques skilfully when adapting learning activities, for example when presenting new vocabulary and syntactic patterns using different methods. This has a positive impact on learners' progress as they interact diligently in various activities, for example as learners in different parts of the world discuss the sun setting outside their homes. This is organised effectively when presenting activities for learners as a whole class before splitting them into pairs and smaller groups via the digital platform. Tutors ensure learning is agile, which encourages learners to develop their oral skills consistently, which in turn has a positive impact on their reading and writing skills.

One of the provider's strengths is its collaboration with Bangor University in conducting research into different aspects of teaching and learning, for example supporting learners to develop and improve pronunciation. The fruits of the research are implemented effectively by tutors, impacting effectively on learners' speaking skills. Teaching and learning methods arising from such research are shared with the National Centre for Learning Welsh and enrich learners' experiences in other providers, for example as a basis for national qualification units for new tutors under the auspices of the provider.

One of the notable features of the teaching is the way tutors adapt learning activities to include native language and the rich dialect of the communities of which the learners are members. For example, words such as 'teisen' (for cake, 'cacen'), 'coelio' (for believe, 'credu'), 'isio' (for want, 'eisiau') and 'hercan' (for, hobble, 'hercian') are introduced, and interjections such as 'bechod' (for 'what a shame'), 'go wir?' (for 'really, honestly?') and 'faw!' (for 'no way, you're joking'), which deepen learners' Welsh oral experience as they develop their confidence in speaking with peers in their specific areas. Nearly all tutors support learners successfully as they provide oral and written feedback.

Most tutors use the individual plan within 'Using My Welsh' effectively to respond to learners' individual needs. ALN provision support for tutors provides training on dyslexia, dyspraxia and multi-sensory learning as part of the professional learning offer. This, along with constant support for tutors and learners alike, strengthens the provision in a supportive and inclusive environment.

Despite the pandemic, the provider offers a wide range of formal and informal learning activities which ensure a clear progression route for learners to develop their language skills. This includes courses at all levels as well as courses for workplaces, including Cymraeg Gwaith/Work Welsh programmes.

Many learners take part in various informal activities as they develop their Welsh language skills. For example, tutors encourage learners to take part in walks, visit local theatres and galleries, sing in a choir and participate in 'cuppa and chat' sessions to support them to speak Welsh in interesting contexts. Tutors foster learners' oral and reading skills skilfully when reading books in reading clubs. Learners from all corners of the globe attend these clubs online and enjoy discussing books' content along with questioning authors in 'ask the author' sessions. This provides rich opportunities for learners as they apply their Welsh language skills in

alternative contexts. In addition, in a majority of classes, tutors enrich learners' experiences of the Welsh language and pride of living in Wales beneficially by providing contemporary music by famous artists such as Bryn Terfel while learners complete short tasks. This deepens learners' experience of Welsh music and culture which, in turn, has a beneficial effect on their understanding of the Welsh language and benefits of being bilingual.

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| Care, support and guidance: Excellent |
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An outstanding feature of Learn Welsh North West is the way in which every member of this close-knit, caring community is fully committed to supporting every learner. Tutors ensure there is a supportive, positive and motivating atmosphere where nearly everyone feels safe and contributes to lessons unafraid of making mistakes. This basic aim leads to first class comprehensively supportive provision for all.

The provider offers a range of bespoke and useful information, online and in written form, to help prospective learners to select the course most relevant to them. With lessons having moved online since the pandemic, there is considerable flexibility available to enable learners to move between courses if the course is not suitable or if circumstances change. Consequently, local, national and international learners are aware from the outset how to get the most out of their Welsh lessons.

Learners' detailed and regular attendance tracking is an important feature of the provider's work. They contact any learner who has missed a few lessons to see what they can do to help. In addition, the provider arranges additional sessions as interventions, 'catch-up' sessions and digital training to ensure full access to all learners. Most tutors know their learners very well and consequently, they have a very robust knowledge of the individual needs of all learners in the groups they teach. A particular example of this is the valuable support and flexible arrangements offered to two key workers in a home for elderly people so that they could continue their learning and succeed despite the challenges.

Maintaining high levels of learner and staff wellbeing is central to the provider. Nearly all tutors have been trained in student and staff wellbeing. Based on this training, tutors have strategies to support them and signpost learners to specialist services within the university. A constructive and supportive relationship is created to ensure all learners receive suitable and inclusive support. For example, learners were encouraged during lockdown to go and take photos outdoors before discussing them in Welsh lessons. The support inside and outside lessons is an integral part of this caring learning community.

The provider has robust arrangements for identifying and responding to learners' ALN. The provider has allocated a dedicated member of staff to attend to this, and liaises with them to offer every support to facilitate the learner experience. For example, one-to-one follow-up sessions are arranged for learners with dyslexia so that they can join their classes fully and confidently. Tutors receive information about how to provide appropriately for these learners in their classes. The provider also benefits from being part of Bangor University to offer further support to learners with ALN.

There is also strong support for more able learners, via further courses, where pupils have an opportunity to delve into Welsh literature of all descriptions. This provision equips learners to use rich and sophisticated vocabulary in response to literary content and text style. This leads to skilful development of their skills, their knowledge and their understanding of Welsh literature.

Tutors are passionate about maintaining learners' interest, by offering regular and safe opportunities for learners to practise their Welsh outside class, using a wide range of informal learning activities and independent events. They arrange community events such as walks, 'Cuppa and a Chat' sessions at Palas Print's garden, and Dros y Bont Choir rehearsals to bolster learners' appetite to use their Welsh outside formal lessons. The provider works very closely with a number of partners such as local language initiatives, Merched y Wawr groups, rugby clubs and choirs to create opportunities for learners to use their Welsh naturally in their local communities.

The provider offers regular opportunities for learners to express their views formally and informally. Staff are always willing to listen, and distribute questionnaires in addition to the annual questionnaire from the National Centre for Learning Welsh. During the period of the pandemic, the provider collected learners' views on a regular basis to ensure their safety and satisfaction with working online.

The provider's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and are not a matter for concern.

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| Leadership and management: Excellent |
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Senior leaders have a very clear and robust vision for providing a service of the highest standard. There is a close and extremely effective working relationship between service directors and Bangor University Welsh Language Affairs Committee, and there are clear lines of support and accountability. The director reports in detail and on a regular basis on the provision's progress. The provider is included as a core part of the long-term strategy for the Welsh language within the university, and consequently, benefits from the expertise of different departments within the institution. This close relationship influences the provision very positively.

The director provides his colleagues with robust and caring leadership. He is passionate about ensuring the best possible provision. This passion has permeated across the institution, among leaders and tutors alike. The leadership team is a strong unit, with clear and sensible duties. They lead on different strategic elements and extremely effective distributed leadership ensures their specialisms are fully utilised. Their work has a far-reaching influence on the provision. In all aspects of their work, leaders focus on ensuring rich learning experiences to support learners' progress.

The provider has very detailed and comprehensive self-evaluation procedures, based on a wide and relevant range of evidence. They collect service users' views so that they can meet their needs effectively. The provider's self-evaluation is honest and comprehensive. Self-evaluation findings continuously feed in to detailed development and improvement plans, which include appropriate priorities, and quantitative targets where appropriate. Leaders evaluate progress regularly. For example, the document

identifies specific actions taken in response to a decline in numbers completing courses during the summer term in 2020.

The process of self-evaluation is ongoing during COVID-19. The fact that self-evaluation procedures were so firmly embedded before the pandemic hit has allowed the provider to continue its evaluation work and respond to the challenges of this recent, unprecedented period. Consequently, they have been able to adapt flexibly and swiftly. The adaptations, for example by way of identifying tutors' training needs for remote learning have entailed very significant changes and leaders have introduced them extremely effectively. As a result, new learners as well as learners continuing with their courses continue to make strong progress.

The provider offers staff a wide and beneficial range of professional learning experiences. The tutor-organisers responsible for tutors within different areas of the provision accurately identify individuals' development needs.

The provider shares information beneficially through the area fora and tutors can contribute to training areas. The provider supports staff to follow professional courses that assist them in improving learning and teaching standards and broaden their leadership skills. For example, members of the management team receive professional management training to build their expertise and support the wider team.

Ensuring the quality of teaching and learning is achieved via regular observations. Feedback is shared with tutors so that they can reflect on their practice. The provider has established innovative arrangements that allow staff to develop their observation skills through shadowing experienced observers at work and giving them feedback.

The provider plays a prominent role in national training. They have authored the national training programme for new tutors, entitled 'Dechrau Dysgu' (Starting to Learn). All tutors new to the field are now expected to gain this national qualification within a specified time. In addition, the provider has authored a level 6 qualification entitled 'Datblygu'r Dysgu' (Developing the Learning) which will provide valuable continuing professional learning opportunities to the sector's workforce.

The provider collaborates closely with different departments within the university. This provides beneficial opportunities for them to make the most of specific departments' expertise. For example, in collaboration with the psychology department, guidelines were produced for use with reluctant Welsh speakers, to encourage them to gain confidence and become more active speakers. The National Centre for Learning Welsh has part-funded the scheme and uses the guidelines as part of the Work Welsh scheme.

The provider has a good level of staff and leaders make sensible decisions based on long-term funding and learning needs, including to increase the number of full-time tutors over time. Their plans consider priorities set by the National Centre for Learning Welsh appropriately. The provider benefits significantly from being a central part of the university's procedures, for example, in receiving support from the finance and human resources departments, through the medium of Welsh. A member of the leadership team co-ordinates finance monitoring activities, under the director's leadership. Reporting and scrutiny procedures are robust. The close collaboration with the university means that the level of top-slicing has been maintained at 5%. This permits the provider to continue to invest in aspects such as training, and employ additional full-time tutors.

Evidence base of the report

Before the inspection, inspectors:

- analysed the outcomes from the learner questionnaire and considered the views of tutors and staff through their questionnaire responses

Yn ystod yr arolygiad, bu arolygwyr:

- met the head of the provider, a representative of the managing body/governing body, senior and middle managers (where appropriate) and tutors to evaluate the impact of the provider's work
- engaged with learners to discuss their work and hear their views about various aspects of their provider
- met with groups of learners, such as representatives of learner voice groups
- visited a broad sample of classes and conducted learning walks to observe learners in lessons and informal learning activities
- looked closely at the provider's self-evaluation processes
- considered the provider's improvement plans and looked at evidence to show how well the provider had moved forward with planned improvements
- scrutinised a range of the provider's documents, including information on learner progress, records of meetings of staff and the managing/governing body, information on learners' wellbeing, including the safeguarding of learners, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- reviewed the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the partnership and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.llyw.cymru)

Estyn evaluates a partnership's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

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| Excellent | Very strong, sustained performance and practice |
| Good | Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement |
| Adequate and needs improvement | Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement |
| Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement | Important weaknesses outweigh strengths |

The report was produced in accordance with Section 77 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000. Lluniwyd yr adroddiad hwn yn unol ag Adran 77 Deddf Dysgu a Sgiliau 2000.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

Publication Section
Estyn
Anchor Court, Keen Road
Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

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Publication date: 09/03/2022