

*Activities that promote
the Welsh language
within the education
setting.*

A collage of various symbols and icons representing Wales. The word "Wales" is written in large, red, stylized letters. Surrounding the text are several hand-drawn illustrations: a green map of Wales, a leek, a Welsh dragon on a green and white background, a white sheep, a brown football, a harp, a woman in traditional Welsh dress (red shawl, black skirt, white blouse, and black hat), a yellow flower, a green tree, a brown eagle, a stone castle, and a small green dragon. There are also some abstract shapes and patterns, including a heart-shaped knot and a series of connected circles.

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(Jigidi, 2020)

Rationale

This Essay will discuss the history and significance of Welsh culture and language. It will explore the origins of the Welsh language, its evolution, and its current status. Finally, the essay will examine the role of Welsh schools in promoting the language and culture and suggest ways to strengthen these efforts in the modern age.

Welsh is the oldest language in Britain dating back roughly four thousand years. The Welsh language originated from what is known as Indo-European language (BBC, 2025). Offa's dyke marked a boundary between English speakers in the east and Welsh speakers in the west. Forging the word Cymru which has been used to describe the Welsh people from as long ago as seventeenth century (Visit Wales, 2025). Old Welsh is term used for a form of the language which was used in the 6th to 9th century. The earliest written records of old Welsh have been found during this time; this included the historic "book of Aneirin" and the "book of Taliesin". Both historic artifacts gaining valuable insight into the language and culture of Wales in the early medieval times (WelshAntur Welsh, 2024).

The Welsh language is one that is vibrant and full of history, however the Welsh language has had to overcome many obstacles to try and maintain its cultural status. During the early 20th century, the Welsh language began to see the rise of English driven concepts dominating politics, education, and daily life. The Welsh language was on a steady decline seeing it at extinction level during the 1960's, only being confined to small suburban areas within older generations using the language (Angloshirts, 2025). During the 20th century, there was a steady increase around interest in heritage and cultural belonging. Established in 1993 the Welsh Language Act marked a turning point for Welsh citizens gaining back their own culture, heritage and identity giving Wales equality to English status giving the language and new lease of life (Angloshirts, 2025). The use of pop culture and media outlets has been a driving force in allowing this to happen. Outlets such as S4C which was first aired in 1982 have allowed for a more inclusive way of incorporating the Welsh culture and language back into the homes of Wales (See appendix A). Today S4C plays a significant role of Welsh culture and history with a diverse content of programmes aimed at a variety of ages. Aswell as contributing to the growth of Welsh cultural identity, S4C has also had a significant economic impact, supporting approximately 2,500 jobs in Wales and generating a sustainable financial for the Welsh economy (Wavehill, 2016). S4C still remains one of the only dedicated Welsh language broadcasters in the world, giving it a significant cultural importance and reinforcing the visibility and vitality of the Welsh language and its associated traditions (2030 strategy, 2025).

Curriculum

Education has been a key factor in reintroducing the Welsh language into children's daily lives and Welsh homes. In March 2014, the Welsh government asked that Professor Graham Donaldson would look at the curriculum and its design to ensure that children in Wales receive the highest quality education while also engaging with the nation's local heritage and cultural language. The new curriculum that Professor Graham Donaldson set out is made up of four purposes which are, *ambitious capable learner*, *ethical informed citizens*, *enterprising creative contributors*, *healthy confident individuals*. He also examined in depth the most effective ways that will integrate the Welsh language into the education system there will be a focus in schools on learning how to speak, understand and have a conversation in Welsh (Donaldson, 2015). It has also become compulsory in Wales as part of the curriculum to learn Welsh whilst in

education up to the age of sixteen. The curriculum for Wales places strong emphasis on bilingualism, stressing that all learners should have access to appropriate pathways for developing both Welsh and English speaking. This approach aims to unlock the rich and unique Welsh literature, history and culture. By applying the new curriculum, learners will be provided with opportunities to build their Welsh language skills and to use the language confidently across a range of contexts (Curriculum for Wales, 2025).

Policies

Most recently the Welsh government introduced the Welsh language and Education Act (2025), aimed at supporting the Cymraeg 2050 strategy, which seeks to create one million Welsh speakers by 2050. This initiative was introduced in July 2017 and aims to create a vibrant bilingual society where the Welsh language thrives (Gov.Wales.2025). This appears to come in action of the 2021 census that saw a dramatic decline in the Welsh language across Wales over past years (See appendix 2) (Welsh Government, 2022). The 2021 census reported a decline of 23,700 Welsh speakers across compared to the 2011 census. One factor impacting the decline of the Welsh language and bilingualism is the COVID-19 pandemic, a global crisis that has significant implications for Welsh speakers. This is due to many Welsh community groups being unable to have any form of contact. Additionally, educational settings were heavily affected, as children across the world including Wales were unable to attend school for several months (GOV.WALES, 2020). One of the most common reasons for this dramatic decline is that children and young people in Wales have stated that they are unable to obtain the skill of the Welsh language or bilingualism (ONS, 2022). Alongside the 2050 strategy and the Welsh language Act (1993) Wales supports another policy which is the Aloud policy which is charity supporting the ambition of one million Welsh speakers by 2050. Their aim is work alongside both policies to further the use of Welsh and bilingualism in Wales (Welsh language policy, 2024). It is important that all schools in Wales, not only Welsh medium schools, commit equal effort to supporting the growth of the Welsh language among children and young people. It is important for English medium schools to ensure that children can learn even the basic use of the Welsh language. This approach will foster the idea of bringing Welsh cultural and belonging together to the Welsh society (WelshAntur Welsh, 2024). An example of an English medium school implementing this approach can be seen in school A, which states in its learning policy that effective teaching and learning should actively support Welsh speaking. Stating that the use of the Welsh language is incidental by both adults and children(see Appendix C) (School A, 2024). It is vital for all schools in Wales to incorporate the Welsh language into their day-to-day school life so that it can also be incorporated into their day-to-day home life (Gov Wales, 2024).

Bilingualism in Wales

Including bilingualism is a crucial factor for many schools. An example of this would be the "Work for Welsh" scheme, implemented within a Welsh county to enhance the use of Welsh across various sectors. Which is aimed at enhancing the use of Welsh within a variety of sectors within the county (Local Authority A, 2017). This scheme has been recognised by Estyn as being impactful to the Welsh culture and community and is backed by the National centre for learning Welsh and funded £2.57m by the Welsh government (Sinclair, 2025). School A has put the scheme into action and has received the *Siarter Iaith* bronze award for enabling Welsh as a second language. School A ensures that children hold a close relationship with their Welsh heritage incorporating it into various areas of learning through out their school day (School A,

2025). The *Siarter Iaith* a framework that is set out to enhance the use of Welsh language in children and young people across Wales. It signifies encouraging positive attitudes in young Welsh speakers. The *Siarter Iaith* is available to all sectors, extending beyond education to include a wide range of workplaces (Hwb.gov Wales, 2025). Having the skill of being bilingual in Wales will enable opportunities for children who are exposed to both English and Welsh. It is proven that children who grow up using Welsh alongside English have a better chance academically. Individuals who grow up bilingual often find it easier to acquire additional languages, as bilingualism has been shown to enhance cognitive development and learning abilities. It is also a strong asset in pursuit of a career to be bilingual. This is because employers need bilingual speaker across Wales, bilingual speakers are on average paid 11% more. Aswell as expanding the percentage of Welsh speakers across Wales, it shows that being bilingual in Wales also has strong personal aspect (Local authority B, 2024).

The following section of this essay will examine two activities implemented in schools across Wales and critically analyse their effectiveness in promoting the Welsh language and cultural identity. Additionally, it will explore whether these activities can be linked to relevant theories to support their efficacy.

Activity one overview – Criw Cymraeg

Criw Cymraeg is a group of pupils selected to promote and enhance the use of Welsh language within their school setting. This can be implemented by organising given days to celebrate Welsh words or phrases such as Shwmae day. Aswell as weekly assemblies that take place within schools across Wales. Criw Cymraeg is a chance during the school week to celebrate the Welsh heritage together as whole community. The Criw Cymraeg assembly consists of working together learning Welsh songs, listening to Welsh stories and celebrating Ddraig yr Wythnos ("dragon of the week"). This is awarded for using Welsh words and phrases within the classroom throughout the school week. This is an encouraging factor to the children's weekly learning and encouraging the Welsh language for the children and young people within the education settings. This activity can be linked to Skinners Operant Condition Theory (Skinner, 1938) which links to the opportunity children must have to achieve the Ddraig yr wythnos by using appropriate Welsh language and phrases during their everyday school day and being rewarded by having the opportunity to stand up in front of their peers in the Criw Cymraeg assembly and be recognised for their contributions to the Welsh language in school. Giving children something to achieve each week. Children can track their weekly progression within their classroom using the Seren Cymraeg ("Welsh star") chart, which allows teachers to monitor participation and performance of Welsh speaking. This system also identifies the overall student of the week, who is awarded the *Ddraig yr Wythnos* ('Dragon of the Week'), thereby motivating engagement with the Welsh language. The aim of Criw Cymraeg is to promote Welsh ethos and encourage the Welsh language by children and young people in school. Also, to encourage Welsh words or phrases of the week and reward for the Welsh that has been recognised in the setting to encourage repetition (School B, 2024).

Activity two overview- St. Davids day

St Davids day is a significant day for Welsh people. It is a day that is celebrating across Wales especially in Welsh schools. It is a day that celebrates St David the patron saint of Wales on the 1st of March every year. Celebrations for St Davids day date back to the 12th century when the people of Wales would celebrate by having a feast in celebration of the achievements of St David (The boar, 2025). Teaching the younger generation about the historical and cultural impact of the patron St, David in Wales. There are many different traditions and festivities to celebrate for example, wearing symbols such as daffodils or leeks. Dressing up as a traditional Welsh lady, Welsh boy, or a Welsh dragon (See appendix E). Holding Welsh craft competitions, Eating Welsh cuisine and learning traditional Welsh dancing (FaithGiant, 2022). St Davids Day can be linked to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943), as it helps foster a sense of belonging. By celebrating this national figure, children and young people develop a stronger connection to their Welsh heritage, reinforcing their cultural identity and community connection (Mcloed, 2025). School A would hold a craft competition where different year groups would be given different task to design and create for example year 1/2 would be to draw or create a daffodil, year 3/4 would be to design or create a Welsh castle and year 5/6 would be to make a video or presentation about all things Welsh. This would then be judged, and the winners would be recognised during a special St. Davids day assembly where the children would have the chance to win a certificate and a Welsh dragon toy (School A, 2025). St. Davids day has always held a significance in Welsh society and is still as relevant and important t the people of Wales currently.

Evaluation Activity 1

It is evident that Criw Cymraeg is an effective way of encouraging the Welsh language within the school setting. It gives children a sense of achievement when they are rewarded and recognised for being seen to use Welsh language and phrases as part of their every day. It is evident that Skinner's operant conditioning theory (Skinner, 1948) is in practice for this activity as children are being recognised and rewarded for their achievements. A negative that this might have is that it could be the same children who could be the ones being recognised every week while others go without. Children are all different and some children may struggle with self confidence in trying to speak a second language. Also, some children that may be neurodivergent can also struggle with the concept of a second language if the school is an English-medium school. This may lead to those children feeling less than those who win the Ddraig yn wythnos each week. There may be another way for those children to feel they are achieving with their Welsh speaking (British Council, 2025).

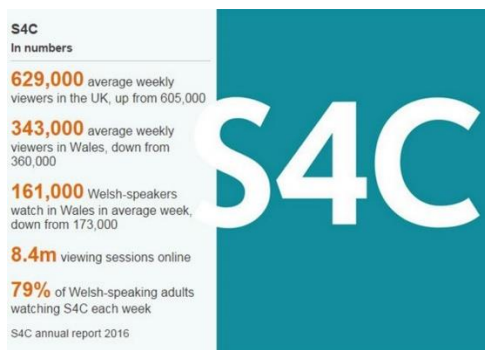
Evaluation Activity 2

St David's day is undoubtedly a significant and important day for the people of Wales. It shows the heritage and cultural belonging that the Welsh people still hold so close to their hearts. It is still seen as such a vibrant day to celebrate the patron St. David and the festivities that bring Welsh people together. This activity draws into Maslow's Hierarchy of needs theory (1943) bringing everyone together to celebrate the Welsh language and heritage. St David's day has been celebrated since the 12th century and is still as important and relevant across Wales now in the 21st century. It is a day, which is filled with fun, learning and belonging, especially within the education sector. Having policies in place to focus on the importance of cultural value is crucial in maintaining the cultural belonging for many people. This will enable Welsh people to maintain their identity, culture and heritage (Centre of Cultural Value, 2024). As St. David's day continues into future generations maintaining the knowledge and togetherness of this significant day will continue to grow a day which holds so much heart for the people of Wales.

It is evident that both activities discussed contribute to promoting bilingualism within the school settings. Evidence shows that many schools across Wales are English medium schools and primarily English speaking, yet they are making purposeful adjustments to incorporate Welsh into daily life for children. This is helping to revive and strengthen a language that has experienced significant decline. Encouraging bilingualism not only provides children and young people in Wales with enhanced future career opportunities but also fosters a stronger connection to their cultural heritage as Welsh speakers.

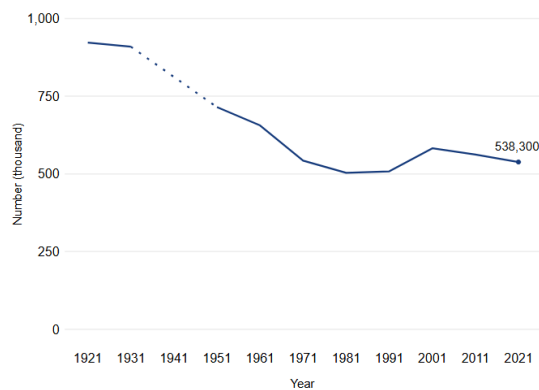
"To be born in Wales, not with a silver spoon in your mouth, but, with music in your blood and with poetry in your soul, is a privilege indeed" (Harries, 1967).

Appendices



Appendix A

(Thomas, 2017)



(Appendix B)

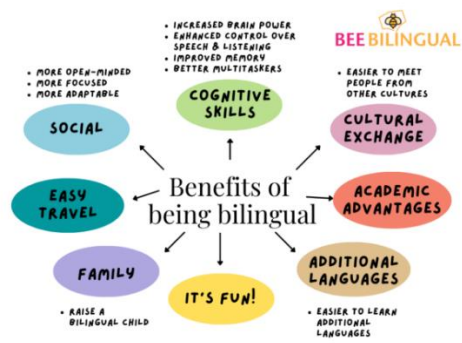
(Welsh government, 2022)

- knowledge/learning (i.e. introducing new vocabulary, pre-teaching, over
11. **Skilled Questioning:** Using effective questioning techniques to deepen understanding.
 12. **In-the-Moment Feedback:** Offering immediate feedback and guidance to support progression.
 13. **Welsh Language:** Incidental use of Welsh by both adults and children.
 14. **Challenge:** Providing tasks that are appropriately challenging.

(Appendix C)

(School A, 2024)

Appendices



(Appendix D)

(Bilingual, 2022)



(Appendix E)

(Asktheman, 2025)

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