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**Section 1:**  
Thematic: Welsh language development

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Two-thirds of English-medium secondary schools do not plan well enough to develop pupils' Welsh language skills. As a result, most pupils do not practise their Welsh often enough outside Welsh lessons and lack confidence in speaking the language. Planning for progression at important transition points between key stages is weak. This is an important shortcoming in the majority of schools across Wales.

The proportion of learners taking both A level Welsh first language and Welsh second language, in comparison to the take up of their respective GCSEs, has declined since 2011. Welsh Government targets for 2015 for both A level qualifications have not been met (Welsh Government, 2015b).

Too few Welsh-speaking learners continue their studies in Welsh or bilingually in further education colleges and in work-based learning. In the majority of further education colleges, leaders have not developed their plans well enough to increase and improve Welsh language provision. A shortage of Welsh-speaking staff is a significant obstacle to expanding Welsh-medium provision in the majority of colleges. Despite increased opportunities, many work-based learning providers do not do enough to encourage bilingual learners to undertake training or assessment through the medium of Welsh and the number of learners who undertake aspects of their training in Welsh is still very low.

Recruiting staff who are confident and capable of teaching their subjects through the medium of Welsh is a challenge across many areas of Wales. Attracting well-qualified Welsh specialists is a particular challenge for many English-medium secondary schools. Almost a quarter of teachers who are employed to teach Welsh are not trained to teach the subject.

In all three teacher education centres in Wales, Welsh language provision for English-medium trainee teachers is underdeveloped. The quality of training is too variable in all three centres. For much of the provision for secondary subjects, two of the three centres employ part-time staff to support trainees teaching through the medium of Welsh.

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Standards of Welsh in many English-medium secondary schools are improving, with the numbers achieving qualifications in Welsh at the end of key stage 4 increasing by over 12 percentage points between 2010 and 2016. During this period, a majority of pupils have gained their qualification in the GCSE Welsh second language short course.

Standards are excellent in a very few English-medium secondary schools. In these instances, schools develop pupils' understanding of the Welsh language and culture through a wide range of informal activities, as well as through a well-planned approach across the curriculum. A substantial proportion of curriculum time is allocated to Welsh language provision and pupils are encouraged by nearly all teachers to develop their use of Welsh in Welsh lessons and other subjects as well. Many pupils enter full course GCSE Welsh second language. However, in general, pupils do not practise their Welsh language skills enough outside of lessons or in more social settings.

From a low starting point, there has been an increase in the number of Welsh or bilingual learning activities in further education colleges in recent years. Welsh Government targets for the proportion of learning activities carried out by learners aged 16–19 through the medium of Welsh or bilingually have been met in schools, further education institutions and in work-based learning.

The Welsh Government's Welsh-language Sabbatical Scheme courses have made a positive contribution to improving the quality and capacity of Welsh-medium provision in local authorities across Wales. In most cases, the information gathered by local authorities about the linguistic skills of their teaching workforce has been used appropriately to inform continued professional development and training programmes. These are generally well tailored to improve practitioners' Welsh-medium teaching skills.

During the inspection cycle, standards in three-quarters of Welsh for Adults providers were judged good or better. These provided good teaching and all provided good or better learning experiences for their learners. The recently-established National Centre for Learning Welsh is developing its role well as a national voice for the sector and made progress in improving and harmonising approaches to curriculum development, data collection, professional development and assessment. The National Centre has focused on helping providers to increase provision in key target areas, in particular increasing intensive provision and better progression between levels.

The Welsh Government requires local authorities to develop local plans to deliver its national strategies for Welsh-medium education. Estyn reviewed the effectiveness of local authorities' Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs) in 2015 (Estyn, 2016a). We found that the WESPs are providing a useful framework for local authorities to plan their Welsh-medium education provision. In the small number of local authorities where good progress is made against targets, there is a strong commitment by strategic leaders, elected members and senior officers to support Welsh-medium education. In these local authorities, the emphasis placed on delivering the WESP is high and improving Welsh-medium provision is a strategic priority. Most local authorities take appropriate steps to promote and raise awareness of Welsh-medium education provision in their area.

**Treorchy  
Comprehensive  
School**

**Treorchy Comprehensive School** links Welsh language to heritage and culture to enrich and accelerate pupils' learning.

For more information read our **case study**.



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## Questions for providers:

- Do pupils display positive attitudes and enjoy learning Welsh?
- How well is Welsh taught? Are all Welsh teachers qualified to do so?
- Do pupils receive enough opportunities to develop their use of Welsh in a range of situations outside Welsh lessons?
- Are pupils making good progress in Welsh and in subjects through the medium of Welsh across the curriculum?
- Are pupils continuing to develop their Welsh language skills when they transfer between the different key stages and phases of statutory education?
- Does curriculum planning allow pupils to make and sustain good progress in Welsh?
- Do we plan strategically for the development of pupils' Welsh language skills across the curriculum?
- Do we have an accurate understanding of what is needed to raise standards and improve provision for Welsh?
- Do we have an ethos that promotes the Welsh language and the benefits of being bilingual?

## Questions for local authorities

- To what extent are the WESPs a strategic priority?
- To what extent are we working with providers to explain the benefits to pupils and parents of Welsh-medium education and of following courses through the medium of Welsh?
- To what extent are we working with providers to set targets to increase the proportion of pupils in key stage 4 who continue to study Welsh as a first language and follow specific subject areas through the medium of Welsh?

## Section 2:

Sector summaries: Non-school settings for children under five

In a growing number of settings, children experiment with an increasing range of ICT resources competently, but only a few children use the equipment confidently to help them learn. Over the cycle, standards in Welsh in English-medium settings have improved. Still, in too many settings, children's use of Welsh is limited to short adult-led sessions and standards of Welsh continue to be a frequent area for development. In around a third of Welsh-medium settings where we have reported on standards, inspectors have identified shortcomings in children developing spoken Welsh.

## Wellbeing

Over the inspection cycle, we have seen settings offer greater choice of activities and children becoming more confident in making decisions. For example, children regularly decide in which area of the setting they want to play and learn and which resources they will use. Many children develop positive attitudes towards learning, and persevere to complete tasks. In most settings, children understand the rules and follow the daily routine well. They develop valuable social skills, such as learning to take turns when watering flowers in an outdoor area.

Across the sector, many children now develop their self-help skills well, such as when they pour their own drinks and learn to put on outdoor clothes and aprons. Increasingly, children take on appropriate responsibilities, such as handing out plates at snack time and helping tidy up at the end of the session.

In the very few settings where wellbeing is adequate, too many children lose concentration, do not listen to or follow instructions, and have poor self-help and decision-making skills.

**Figure 2.3:**  
Percentages of judgements awarded for Quality Indicator 1.2: Standards of wellbeing  
(2016–2017)

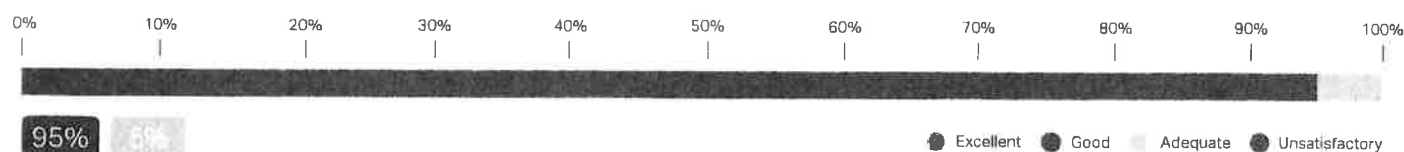
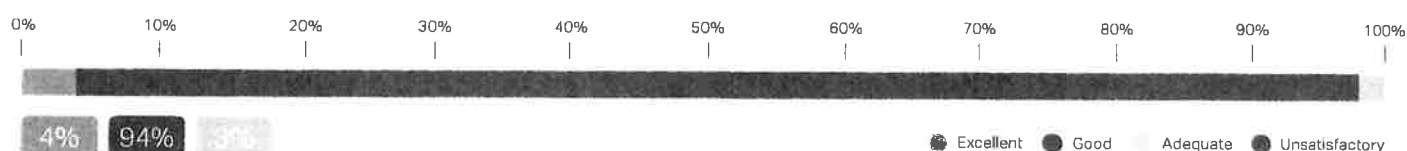


**Figure 2.4:**  
Percentages of judgements awarded for Quality Indicator 1.2: Standards of wellbeing  
(Inspection cycle 2010–2017)



**Section 2:**  
Sector summaries: Primary schools

Standards of Welsh in English-medium schools have not improved much over the inspection cycle. Around a third of schools received recommendations to improve standards of Welsh. In many schools, most pupils make good progress in the development of their skills during nursery and reception, but do not build on these skills as they move through the Foundation Phase and key stage 2. They rarely use Welsh outside of designated Welsh lessons and do not have the skills to respond to simple questions outside the context of a lesson.

## Wellbeing

Standards of wellbeing have been consistently good or better in seven-in-ten schools. In most schools, pupils behave well and treat each other and adults with respect. Most pupils understand the importance of healthy eating and regular exercise and make sensible choices about what they eat during snack time. Nearly all pupils co-operate well in lessons and around school and develop good life and social skills. When given the opportunity, many pupils have the skills to work independently. In the best schools, pupils take a significant role in planning what and how they learn. In a minority of schools, over-structured teacher-set tasks limit the development of pupils' ability to take responsibility for their own learning and this hinders the progress they make.

Over the inspection cycle, there has been a marked increase in opportunities for pupils to express their views on the work of their school. In addition to school councils and eco-committees, a wide range of other pupil groups now allow them to contribute to the work of the school. For example, more and more pupils in key stage 2 take part in lesson observations and make useful contributions to plans to improve pupil engagement. For example, learning 'sheriffs' seek the views of pupils on subjects such as reading and homework. In around a third of schools, adults direct the work of groups, such as the school council, too much and limit pupils' independence and the development of their leadership skills.

Attendance has improved in most schools. In 2010-2011, pupils' average attendance was 93.3% and this had risen to 94.9% in 2016-2017 (Welsh Government, 2017e).

**Figure 2.13:**  
Percentages of judgements awarded for Quality Indicator 1.2: Standards of wellbeing (2016-2017)

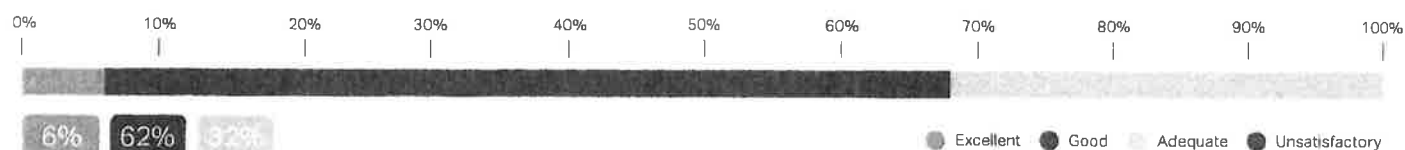
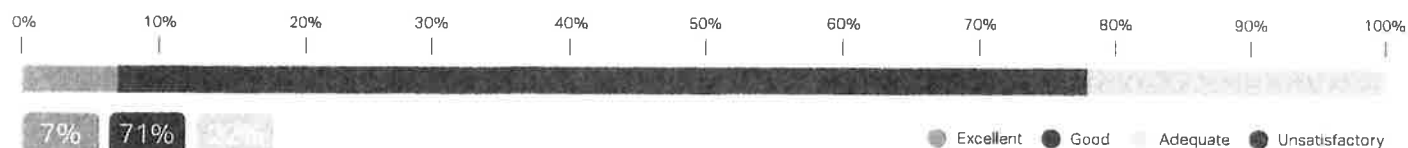


**Figure 2.14:**  
Percentages of judgements awarded for Quality Indicator 1.2: Standards of wellbeing (Inspection cycle 2010-2017)



**Section 2:**  
Sector summaries: Primary schools

There are shortcomings in curriculum provision in around a third of schools this year. This is higher than last year. In these schools, planning does not build systematically on pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across all areas of learning. There are limited opportunities to develop pupils' skills progressively or at the appropriate level when working across the curriculum, especially in numeracy and ICT. In around three-quarters of schools, delivery of the Foundation Phase is inconsistent and often becomes too formal, especially in Year 1 and Year 2. This limits pupils' ability to work independently and to make choices about their learning. In around six-in-ten English-medium schools, there is not enough focus on developing pupils' Welsh oracy skills in Welsh lessons, in other areas of the curriculum and during informal activities.

## Teaching

The quality of teaching has varied over the cycle, but is good or better in around seven-in-ten schools. Where teaching is good or better, teachers and teaching assistants work together well to create a positive working environment for all pupils and make learning fun. Teachers plan stimulating lessons that engage and challenge pupils of all abilities, for example by setting up an archaeological dig for pupils to discover artefacts relevant to a topic. They structure learning well and lessons proceed at a brisk pace. They use skilful questioning to promote pupils' understanding and intervene at appropriate times to provide effective support. Across the cycle, teachers have provided greater opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively.

Where there are shortcomings in teaching, teachers do not plan activities that meet the needs of all pupils appropriately, especially the more able. They do not have high enough expectations of pupils and learning is often over-directed and does not allow pupils enough opportunities to work independently or to challenge their own thinking.

Over the inspection cycle, in around seven-in-ten schools, teachers have implemented assessment for learning strategies, for example by ensuring that pupils know what they need to do to reach their learning goals. The quality of feedback to pupils has remained variable over the cycle. Around one-in-five schools receive recommendations to ensure that feedback provides pupils with clear guidance on how to improve their work.

### Ysgol Pencae

At **Ysgol Pencae**, pupils' Welsh and English skills are developed in order to ensure that they are fully bilingual by the time they attend secondary school. The school's older pupils are also given opportunities to learn French and Mandarin.

For more information please read our **case study**.



### Ysgol Gymraeg Aberystwyth

At **Ysgol Gymraeg Aberystwyth**, experienced teachers from the school worked with pupils, trainee teachers and local organisations to develop a series of activities on the theme of Welsh writer T.Llew Jones.

For more information please read our **case study**.



## Section 2:

### Sector summaries: Secondary schools

purposes. However, boys still tend to write much less than girls. In addition, weak spelling and punctuation, and careless spelling of familiar words, continue to feature in a minority of pupils' work. These pupils fail to proof read their work to improve its content and accuracy.

In many schools, pupils' data handling and interpretation skills are sound and they complete basic calculations competently. However, in a majority of schools, a majority of pupils' graphs and charts and their use of scale are not accurate enough. Pupils' ability to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum was weak at the end of the last inspection cycle, and remains an area for improvement in many schools, as does pupils' ability to apply their numeracy skills to real-life situations.

Most pupils are confident in their use of ICT programs for word processing, creating presentations and for basic spreadsheets. However, despite significant advancements in technology over the course of the cycle, pupils do not apply their ICT skills well across the curriculum and their ICT skills are usually limited to a narrow range of applications.

Standards in Welsh in English-medium schools and English streams in bilingual schools are low and pupils generally lack confidence and fluency when speaking the language. Generally, pupils do not practise their Welsh language skills enough outside of lessons or in social settings. Since 2010, in English-medium and bilingual schools there has been an increase in the number of pupils entered for the full course GCSE in Welsh. In 2011, around 20% of the cohort achieved C grade or above in the full course and this has risen to 31% by 2017. Slight improvements are also evident in the results for the short course.

Over the course of the cycle of inspection, the proportion of pupils gaining qualifications at key stage 4 has increased (see figure 2.23).

**Figure 2.23:**  
Percentage of pupils achieving headline key stage 4 indicators

| Indicator                                                                      | 2011<br>(15 year olds) | 2016<br>(Year 11 cohort) | 2017<br>(Year 11 cohort) |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Achieving the level 2 threshold including English and/or Welsh and mathematics | 50.1%                  | 60.3%                    | 54.6%                    |
| Achieving the level 2 threshold                                                | 67.3%                  | 84.0%                    | 67.0%                    |
| Achieving the level 1 threshold                                                | 90.3%                  | 95.3%                    | 94.4%                    |

Source: Welsh Government (2017f)

## Section 2:

Sector summaries: Secondary schools

The range of extra-curricular activities available to pupils has been a strength in many schools throughout the cycle of inspection. In the schools where more able pupils achieve highly, teachers plan lessons that enable them to fulfil their potential and provide enrichment experiences that broaden their horizons.

Provision for developing an understanding of Welsh culture and history has been a positive feature in schools throughout the cycle of inspection. However, weaknesses in the provision for the Welsh language in English-medium and bilingual schools, particularly outside of formal Welsh lessons, has been a recurring theme.

## Teaching

Around half of schools have good or better teaching. There have been fewer judgements of excellence for teaching than for any other indicator. Improving teaching is a recommendation for schools in a majority of inspection reports this year and over the whole cycle of inspection.

In the very few schools where teaching is excellent, teachers have a detailed knowledge of the abilities of individual pupils. They plan carefully-sequenced and challenging activities that enable all pupils to make rapid progress. The teachers have a secure understanding of where individual pupils are in terms of their learning and of their needs. They consider and select the most appropriate tasks and teaching methods and achieve an appropriate balance for the development of skills and subject knowledge. The schools have a clear and suitably ambitious vision as to what pupils should achieve.

In the most effective schools, teachers' feedback ensures that pupils understand their strengths and weaknesses in each subject. Where feedback is less effective, teachers write too much that is not precise enough or is overly congratulatory. In a majority of schools, teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to reflect and respond to feedback.

Over the cycle of inspection, schools' tracking systems have markedly improved. Most schools now have useful tracking systems that are used well by many staff. In a minority of schools, leaders do not make effective enough use of the findings from their tracking systems to plan timely support for individual pupils.

This year in almost two-in-ten schools, and over the cycle in almost one-in-ten schools, teaching is unsatisfactory. It is ineffective because of low expectations, activities that lack sufficient challenge, and weak planning to meet the needs of different pupils. When teachers do not check pupils' understanding and progress thoroughly enough, the pace of the learning is either too fast or too slow. In many cases, when teachers ask pupils to assess their own work or that of their peers they do not provide criteria so that pupils can give a clear idea of how to improve, and often it is not possible to see the benefits of these activities.

### Ysgol Bryngwyn School

Curriculum design at **Ysgol Bryngwyn School** is driven by learners' interests, aspirations and needs. This ensures that there is appropriate variety and opportunity for all.

For more information please read our **case study**.



### Y Pant Comprehensive School

At **Y Pant Comprehensive School**, teaching and learning have improved through an emphasis on reflective practice. The school has implemented a number of mechanisms for colleagues to share and reflect on what they do well.

For more information read the **case study**.

