

Welsh language briefing

The population of Wales stands at just over 3 million, however only 562,000 Welsh citizens speak the Welsh language. ColegauCymru fully supports the Minister for Lifelong Learning with his vision for one million Welsh Speakers by 2050, and is dedicated to helping make Wales a truly bilingual nation.

Welsh in schools

There are 420 Welsh medium primary schools (66,612 pupils) and 49 Welsh medium secondary schools (34,986 pupils) in Wales, with the majority in Gwynedd with 92 and 13 respectively. Carmarthen and Anglesey follow closely behind. The number of teachers teaching either Welsh first language or other subjects through the medium of Welsh in primary, middle and secondary schools was 5,359, 66 fewer than at January 2016.

Welsh in post-16

12,620 students studied through either Welsh learning and assessment or bilingual learning and assessment in FE colleges in 2015/16. Providing opportunities for individuals to learn through the medium of Welsh in the PCET sector is a key priority in ensuring that the Welsh language skills of young people learned in our schools are maintained and developed for use in future employment.

Our vision is for an FE sector which is recognised for planning and providing a post-16 education and training system which provides clear and fair opportunities and progression routes for learners to study and learn in their chosen language. ColegauCymru believes that learners in the Welsh medium and English medium sectors should receive the same range and choice of learning opportunities.

As a sector that teaches and trains over 224,410 post-16 students across Welsh communities, it is an opportunity for colleges to play a key part in realising the ambition of a million Welsh speakers. In order to do this, there is a need to promote opportunities and work in partnership to open doors to difference ways of living, through socialising in Welsh. The colleges would like to collaborate and partner with organisations promoting the Welsh language in order to ensure that such opportunities are available across Wales. Post-compulsory education and training providers have a key role to play in sustaining learners' Welsh language skills to meet the growing need for a bilingual workforce.

All 12 colleges in Wales are presently engaged in the Work Welsh Pilot Project, running until the end of March 2018. The scheme funds language tutor(s) in every FE college in Wales to better their Welsh skills and increase confidence of the lecturer/staff involved with FE learners. 200 lecturers/support staff are taking advantage of this opportunity, and so far feedback has been positive. We will measure success by looking at the capability and confidence of the lecturers to lecture through the medium of Welsh at the end of the project.

1 Million Welsh speakers

In order to meet the Government's vision for 1 Million Welsh Speakers, there is a need to ensure there are enough Welsh speaking teachers who are confident enough to teach through the medium of Welsh. We must prepare now for the needs of the future, and ensure there will be enough Welsh speakers to fill future workforce job roles. In order for the Welsh

language to be at the forefront of any business/ project planning, it must be included in the plans of every organisation. ColegauCymru believes it must be made easier for children and adults to go from one stage of Welsh medium education to the next. That is from school, to FE, HE, and beyond to lifelong learning, and that Welsh is seen as an asset and skill that enriches lives.

The new Commission and Welsh Language Standards

The Welsh Language Standards explain how organisations are expected to use the Welsh language in different situations. The duties which come from the standards mean that organisations should not treat the Welsh language less favourably than the English language, together with promoting and facilitating the use of the Welsh language (making it easier for people to use in their day-to-day-life). The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 makes Welsh an official language in Wales.

ColegauCymru is subject to the standards and have operated under the standards regime since January 2017. FE colleges received their compliance notice in October 2017. There are wider opportunities for staff to use and receive services in Welsh. However, the measure has had little impact on the curriculum offer and of encouraging and promoting the language to our learners. It is therefore imperative within a college that the Welsh Language Strategy in Local Education strengthens Welsh opportunities to learners and staff.

Bilingualism at work

Since the publication of the Welsh Government's all-age Welsh Medium Education Strategy (WMES) in 2010 and the launch of ColegauCymru's National Strategy on Bilingualism in FE, colleges have increased their efforts to integrate bilingualism into operations. Providing linguistic progression routes into post-16 education and then onto further learning and/or work is essential towards reaching the Welsh Government's target of a million speakers by 2050. Welsh-medium or bilingual delivery had reached 8.5% in 2013/14 in the FE sector, up from a baseline of 6.2% in 2008/09 noted in the annual report on the WMES 2014/15. This area of development is crucial to ensure learner choice and a continuation of Welsh language skills learnt in compulsory education. However, workforce planning and increasing formal vocational and academic provision in colleges remains a challenge, so the sector welcomes the Cabinet Secretary of Education's announcement that the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol's remit is to extend and include working with FE.

FE member colleges and institutions

