# Concerns over teacher recruitment amid Welsh education policy changes



At a recent meeting of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee, Cyngor Gwynedd officials expressed concerns that phasing out English medium education could exacerbate the existing crisis in the recruitment and retention of teachers in the area. The discussion centred around the Draft Revised Education Language Policy, which outlines an ambitious goal for 70% of lessons in the county to be taught in Welsh.

Elise Poulter, the branch secretary of the National Education Union (NEU), highlighted the challenges that educators are currently facing in Gwynedd, noting that attracting teaching staff has become increasingly difficult, a sentiment echoed by national trends showing teachers leaving the profession "in droves".

Despite the predominant use of Welsh as the medium of instruction in most of Gwynedd's schools, certain institutions, including Ysgol Friars in Bangor, Our Lady's School, and Ysgol Uwchradd Tywyn, are undergoing a transition towards full Welsh medium education. During the meeting, Poulter raised concerns regarding the support available for teachers who are not currently proficient in Welsh, questioning whether there were sufficient courses or options for those wishing to up-skill in order to meet the new language policy demands.

Responding to these concerns, Rhys Meredydd Glyn, who authored the report and heads Gwynedd's Immersion Education System, indicated that the Welsh Government had initiated the National Centre for Learning Welsh, which the council is collaborating with. Glyn noted that this centre offers courses tailored to various levels, including specific training for teachers in particular subjects such as maths and physics and alternative learning formats combining in-person and self-study components. He reassured the committee that tutors would be assigned to specific schools or clusters to further support this initiative.

Glyn also mentioned that children from non-Welsh speaking backgrounds would be integrated into the Immersion Education System, although he acknowledged the "increasing pressure" on the programme to accommodate these new students. To aid in this transition, Gwynedd has acquired a grant from the Welsh Government, which is being match-funded by the council, alongside access to a national immersion network.

While Glyn outlined several initiatives to incentivise teacher training, Poulter maintained that these efforts might not suffice to reverse the trend of teacher attrition. "In teaching, we have a retention and recruitment crisis," she stated, highlighting the persistent difficulty in attracting candidates, especially for postgraduate teaching certificate (PGCE) programmes. She called for patience in reaching the council's language goals, emphasising the necessity to cultivate skilled teachers capable of delivering quality education in Welsh.

Councillor Dewi Jones concurred with Poulter's assessment, recognising that the recruitment of teachers remains a challenge across the board. He pointed out that achieving the proposed 70% Welsh medium instruction would require a gradual approach.

Following the meeting, Poulter commented to the Local Democracy Reporting Service, reaffirming that while the law protects non-Welsh speakers from dismissal, many teachers would welcome opportunities to learn Welsh. She advocated for reinstating a day-release programme that previously enabled staff to receive training while being compensated for their absence, which she believes is crucial for the policy's success.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)