# Gwynedd councillors debate proposals to reshuffle schools' language policy



During a recent meeting of the education and economy scrutiny committee held on Thursday, April 10, councillors in Gwynedd expressed varied opinions regarding a proposal aimed at reshaping the language policy within county-run schools. The overarching goal, set by Cyngor Gwynedd, is to establish Welsh as the primary language of instruction across these schools. However, some councillors conveyed disappointment that the Draft Revised Education Language Policy does not push the agenda further, while others regarded it as a positive advancement for the Welsh language.

Earlier this month, the council introduced the initial phase of what is described as the most significant reformation of its Welsh-language education framework in more than forty years. This new policy proposes that 70% of subjects be taught in English initially, with a view to increasing this percentage over time through monitoring and support for schools. This initiative aligns with the Welsh Government's ambitious 'Welsh 2050: a Million Welsh Speakers' strategy, which aims to bolster the use of the Welsh language within the education system.

During the committee meeting, councillor Cllr Jones acknowledged that the transition may present challenges for some schools. He articulated the council's commitment to supporting educational institutions in meeting this ambition, emphasising the necessity for bilingualism: “We are more than prepared to support schools to meet that ambition. We don't want our children to leave schools without English, we need bilingualism.”

The proposal has prompted a wide array of responses from the public, as reflected in comments gathered by North Wales Live. Some individuals voiced concerns, recalling historical instances where Welsh was sidelined in favour of English, as evidenced by the comment from Jnrm, who noted the negative impact this had on parental language use during the 1950s and 1960s. He expressed hope that such a scenario would not repeat itself.

Others raised concerns about practical implications, with Topical23 commenting on the potential difficulties of recruiting teachers and predicting a decline in education standards due to the proposed changes. Furthermore, Iagollewjones suggested that Spanish, in addition to English, might be a more beneficial focus for pupils, while Puffinisland12 countered that learning Welsh does not inhibit the ability to acquire additional languages.

Some members of the community defended the importance of fostering a bilingual culture, with Llinos Haf Pritchard arguing that promoting Welsh is intrinsically linked to cultural heritage and identity. Similarly, Laura Mills shared her personal experience moving to Anglesey and seeing her children thrive as speakers of Welsh, highlighting the cognitive and social benefits associated with bilingualism.

The discussion on this matter is set against a backdrop of differing opinions on the role of the Welsh language in education and society as a whole, with residents encouraged to participate in the conversation about the future of language instruction in Gwynedd.

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

## References

* <https://democracy.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/documents/s44375/> - This document details the meeting of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee discussing Gwynedd's language policy, emphasizing the importance of Welsh as the primary language of instruction and bilingualism.
* <https://north.wales/news/gwynedd/welsh-to-become-principal-language-of-education-in-gwynedd-schools-54127.html> - Cyngor Gwynedd's plan to make Welsh the principal language of education in Gwynedd schools, phasing out English-medium streams, aligns with the broader language policy changes.
* <https://democracy.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=38786> - Gwynedd's Education Strategy 2023-2032 outlines objectives to strengthen Welsh-medium and bilingual education, ensuring children benefit from first-class educational opportunities in both Welsh and English.
* <https://north.wales/news/gwynedd/plan-to-phase-out-english-medium-schools-in-gwynedd-doesnt-go-far-enough-say-councillors-54408.html> - This article discusses councillors' views on the new policy, with some stating it does not go far enough in promoting Welsh language education, reflecting varied opinions within the community.
* <https://www.gov.wales/cymraeg-2050-welsh-language-strategy-action-plan-2023-2024-html> - The Welsh Government's 'Cymraeg 2050' strategy aims to increase Welsh language use and speakers by supporting educational initiatives, aligning with Gwynedd's policy objectives.
* <https://democracy.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/documents/s44375/ (Appendices)> - The appendices provide additional context on the engagement process, policy updates, and strategic planning for bilingual education in Gwynedd, supporting the comprehensive language policy changes discussed.
* <https://www.dailypost.co.uk/news/news-opinion/phasing-out-english-medium-schools-31410337> - Please view link - unable to able to access data