

Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill

Summary of changes at Stage 2

April 2025



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The Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill is currently at Stage 3 of the Senedd's legislative process.

This research briefing explains how the Bill was amended at Stage 2. It should be read in conjunction with the transcripts and minutes of the **relevant Senedd proceedings**, as well as the **Bill Summary** published in September 2024.



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1. What has happened to the Bill to date?

The Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill was introduced into the **Senedd's legislative process** in July 2024.

The general principles of the Bill were scrutinised at Stage 1 by the Children, Young People and Education (CYPE) Committee, with the addition of two Members of the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee. The CYPE Committee published its **Stage 1 report** in December 2024. The **Finance** and the **Legislation, Justice and Constitution** Committees also reported on the Bill at Stage 1. The CYPE Committee's scrutiny found general support for the principles of the Bill but its report made a number of recommendations, for example relating to concerns it heard about the workforce capacity required to deliver it.

Senedd Research published an **article** ahead of the Senedd's **'Stage 1 debate' on 14 January 2025**. The Senedd voted in support of the general principles and the Bill proceeded to Stage 2.

The Bill was subject to amendment at Stage 2 in the CYPE Committee on **13 February** and **19 February** 2025. 157 amendments were considered and **93 were agreed**. The Senedd published an **updated version of the Bill** and the Welsh Government will issue a revised Explanatory Memorandum.

Further information can be found on Senedd Research's **resource page for the Bill**.

2. What does the Bill do?

The Bill is intended to provide for the **“integral” role** the education sector has in supporting the Welsh Government’s Welsh language strategy – **Cymraeg 2050**. It proposes changes to how statutory Welsh language education provision is planned and delivered. The aim is to ensure that all young people become independent Welsh language users by the time they reach the end of compulsory school age.

Schools will be categorised depending on how much Welsh language education they provide and all schools will be required to have a ‘Welsh language education delivery plan’. The Welsh Government will be required to produce a **‘National Framework for Welsh Language Education and Learning Welsh’**, seeking to bring a **“clear line of accountability”** at a national, local and school level for the planning of Welsh language education.

A new **‘National Institute for Learning Welsh’** (the ‘Learning Welsh Institute’) will be established with the aim of supporting people of all ages to learn Welsh and facilitate their progress. The Bill establishes a **standard method for describing Welsh language ability** based on the common reference levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. This will be set out further by a **Code** that the Welsh Government will have to prepare.

The Bill will also provide a **statutory basis for the ‘Cymraeg 2050’ target** of at least a million Welsh speakers by 2050.

We published a **summary of the Bill** and its provisions in September 2024 as the Senedd’s scrutiny got underway, as well as an **article** ahead of the ‘Stage 1’ debate on the Bill’s general principles in January 2025.

3. How was the Bill amended at Stage 2?

Of 157 amendments considered by the CYPE Committee during the Stage 2 proceedings, **93 were agreed**. 86 of these were Welsh Government amendments, proposed by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language, Mark Drakeford MS, and seven were from Plaid Cymru's Cefin Campbell MS. Amendments were considered in 'groups' as set out under the headings within this chapter.

Full details are available in the Committee minutes and transcripts of **13 February** and **19 February**, plus the '**Marshalled list of amendments**' and the '**Groupings of amendments**'. The Welsh Government also published 'Purpose and effect tables' for the two sets of amendments it tabled: **Amendments 1-71** and **Amendments 72-91**.

Welsh Language Strategy targets and the National Framework

The Committee agreed amendments 99 and 100 from Cefin Campbell MS. The Member's amendments sought to ensure that the statutory target of a million Welsh speakers by 2050 in the Bill does "not place a ceiling" on the "ambition". As such, the Bill was amended to ensure that the statutory target will be to reach "**at least**" a million Welsh speakers by 2050, making it clear that the target is not capped at one million.

Amendment 1 tabled by the Welsh Government makes it clear in the Bill that the Welsh Language Strategy must include targets to specifically **increase the number of pupils in Primarily Welsh Language schools**, increase the number of such schools and increase the provision of Welsh in other schools. These targets were to be included within the National Framework for local authorities to work towards in any case. However, the Bill has been amended to ensure the targets are now included within the Welsh Government's Welsh Language Strategy, and that the National Framework will set local targets that reflect national targets.

Calculating the number of Welsh speakers

The Welsh Government's amendments increase the age at which a person may decide for themselves (on the basis of self-assessment) whether or not they are a Welsh speaker from age 16 to 17. Up to this age, the decision will be made on the basis of self-assessment or by the child's parent or carer.

The Committee agreed amendment 103 tabled by Cefin Campbell, which

places additional duties on the Welsh Ministers to assess the number of pupils of compulsory school age receiving education within Primarily Welsh Language schools. This will therefore be included in the Welsh Government's five yearly report with an analysis of the situation of the Welsh language.

Interpretation of terms in the Bill

Amendments in this group clarified or revised the meaning of certain terms used in the Bill. They didn't substantially change the effect of the Bill's provisions. For example, "during school sessions" was added after "in a school" in the definition of "Welsh language education" to make clear that only provision during the usual school day counts as Welsh language education for the purposes of the Bill.

Provision about Welsh language nursery education

The CYPE Committee **reported at Stage 1** that early years education was relatively "missing" from the Bill. The Welsh Government's amendment 12 establishes and defines "Welsh language nursery education". Other amendments apply provisions such as amounts of Welsh language education and delivery plans to nursery years.

Promotion of Welsh language education and continuity in schools

Amendment 27 tabled by the Welsh Government replaces the duty in the Bill as introduced for the National Framework to set out how to promote education in both Primarily Welsh Language schools and Dual Language schools. The amendment means the duty is now to promote specifically Welsh language education in Primarily Welsh Language schools. The **Cabinet Secretary said** this is because attending such schools is the "fastest way of becoming a confident Welsh speaker". Amendment 47 does something similar in relation to what local authorities must promote in their local Welsh in education strategic plans (WESPs).

As a result of other Welsh Government amendments, the Bill now requires the National Framework to set out how to encourage continuity in teaching Welsh and education through the medium of Welsh between primary school and secondary school, in addition to between nursery education and school, and between school and tertiary education.

Education workforce

Amendment 38 tabled by the Cabinet Secretary inserted a new section (section 25 of the **Bill as amended at Stage 2**) requiring the National Framework to set out how the Welsh Government will ensure that training, professional development and support is available for education practitioners to improve their ability in Welsh. The National Framework must also include:

- an assessment of the number of education practitioners needed in each local authority to meet targets to increase uptake and provision of Welsh language education; and
- the steps the Welsh Government will take to ensure that the number of educational practitioners meets the need.

Another amendment (amendment 40) requires local authorities to provide the Welsh Government with any information needed to undertake that assessment.

Late immersion education in Welsh

Section 22(2) (of the Bill as introduced) required local authorities to encourage demand for late immersion education and participation in it. Two amendments (amendments 136 and 137) tabled by Cefin Campbell changed this so that local authorities must encourage an **increase** in demand and **increased** participation.

Welsh language education in tertiary education

In response to the **CYPE Committee's Stage 1 report** (recommendation 9), the Welsh Government brought forward amendments (amendments 23 and 72) to make it clear that tertiary education is covered by the National Framework.

Amendment 23 requires the Welsh Government to set out in the National Framework how it will implement the Welsh Language Strategy's proposals in relation to tertiary education. Amendment 72 defines "Welsh language provision in tertiary education" as the teaching of Welsh in tertiary education and tertiary education through the medium of Welsh.

The Bill already defines tertiary education with reference to section 144 of the **Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Act 2022**, as higher education, further education or training.

National Framework

The Bill requires the National Framework to set out how the Welsh Government will provide opportunities for persons of all ages to learn Welsh. Cefin Campbell's amendment 144 added "and to maintain and improve their Welsh language ability and usage" to this.

The Welsh Government's amendment 41 replaces subsections regarding the content, review and revision of the National Framework. It makes it clear that the Welsh Government, when reviewing the National Framework every five years, must update the steps it contains rather than only considering updating the steps. The Welsh Government will have to review the targets set by the National Framework and set new targets if it considers this necessary. The amendment also allows the Welsh Government to revise the National Framework without changing the period to which those steps apply, or to prepare a new Framework.

The Bill was also amended to add the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to the list of those whom the Welsh Government must consult when preparing or amending the National Framework.

Local Welsh in Education Strategic Plans

The Welsh Government's amendment 74 adds to the requirements placed on local authorities about what they must include in their local Welsh in education strategic plans (WESPs). This means local WESPs must set out how local authorities will promote and facilitate Welsh language education to children of compulsory school age who are not pupils in schools. This would include, for example, children who are Educated Otherwise Than At School (EOTAS).

Amendments 75 and 148 respectively add Medr (the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research) and Mudiad Meithrin to those whom local authorities must consult on a draft local WESP.

Appointment of Chief Executive of the National Institute

Amendments 90 and 91 clarify that the terms and conditions of the Learning Welsh Institute's Chief Executive, who will be appointed by the Welsh Government, may be set either by the Government or by applying the **TUPE regulations** if relevant.

Welsh language learning curriculum by the National Institute

Amendment 78 tabled by the Welsh Government ensures that the Welsh language learning curriculum developed by the Learning Welsh Institute for learners over compulsory school age is based on the common reference levels for describing Welsh language ability. The common reference levels are included in the Bill (see Schedule 1) and will eventually be set out in the Code prepared by the Welsh Ministers to describe Welsh language ability.

Application of Welsh Language Standards

Under the Bill as introduced, the Learning Welsh Institute will be required to comply with the Welsh Language Standards. Amendment 84 changes the reference to this in the relevant regulations for clarity.

General provisions

Amendment 88 responds to a **recommendation from the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee** that any regulations changing the number of members of the Learning Welsh Institute should be made under the **Senedd's affirmative procedure**. The **Welsh Government's response to the recommendation** (recommendation 15) confirmed it would table such an amendment.

Amendment 89 places an implementation date for provisions regarding the Learning Welsh Institute on the face of the Bill so that preparatory work can be undertaken in order for the Institute to be operational from 1 August 2027. Amendment 71 confirms that Schedule 1 (the common reference levels for Welsh language ability) comes into force two months after Royal Assent, the same time as section 5 of the Bill which refers to Schedule 1.

Technical amendments

There were other amendments to the Bill, which the Cabinet Secretary said were to ensure that the Bill's provisions work as intended. These are sometimes referred to as 'technical amendments'.

4. Other discussions at Stage 2

Amendments not agreed

43 of Plaid Cymru's amendments tabled by Cefin Campbell and 6 of the Welsh Conservatives' amendments tabled by Sam Kurtz MS were either defeated, or fell (due to another competing amendment having passed or a related amendment having not been agreed).

Two of the Cabinet Secretary's amendments were not agreed. These sought to delete workforce-related provisions regarding the National Framework in certain sections of the Bill so that all such provisions would be in one section.

Commitments given by the Cabinet Secretary

In resisting some tabled amendments, the Cabinet Secretary undertook to explore with Members how some of the aims of their tabled amendments could be met in revised amendments at Stage 3, or through other means. This was because he 'didn't disagree with the principles' behind amendments but 'couldn't support them in their existing form'. In some of these cases, the tabling Member did not put the amendment to the vote. Details of the discussions referred to below can be found in the CYPE Committee transcripts of **13 February** and **19 February** 2025.

- The Cabinet Secretary resisted amendment 101 from Cefin Campbell MS, which sought to include **"digital platforms"** in the areas where the Welsh Government's Welsh Language Strategy would have to set targets for increasing the use of Welsh. He said it was not clear what was meant exactly by 'digital platforms', and therefore formulating targets around this would not be easy. However, the Cabinet Secretary said he was happy to discuss with the Member whether such wording could be strengthened to make it clearer.
- Cefin Campbell MS tabled two 'probing amendments' – amendments 109 and 113 – which would have stated the **importance of Welsh medium education** on the face of the Bill. The Cabinet Secretary "agreed with the thrust" of such statements but did not believe "the text of the Bill is the best place for declaratory statements that don't have legal consequence". However, he offered to reflect them in the revised Explanatory Memorandum and in statements in the Siambr at Stage 3.
- Further 'probing amendments' tabled by Cefin Campbell MS – amendments 110 and 129 – sought to **place targets on the face of the Bill for the proportion of pupils attending Primarily Welsh Language schools to increase by 10**

percentage points every decade until it reaches 100% in the year 2100. This would mean Dual Language and Primarily English Language, partly Welsh schools wouldn't exist by 2100. The Cabinet Secretary said he could not support this as it was not Welsh Government policy. However, he said he was willing to look at the possibility of introducing an amendment at Stage 3 that sets a duty in 2050 to review which targets may be set beyond that date.

- The Bill requires the Welsh Government to make regulations specifying the amount of Welsh language education provision to be provided by each category of schools. There are no minimum amounts stated on the face of the Bill other than no less than 10% in Primarily English Language, partly Welsh schools. **The CYPE Committee's report called for greater clarity about the amount of Welsh-medium provision** to be provided within a Primarily Welsh Language school. In resisting amendments tabled by Cefin Campbell MS, the Cabinet Secretary said there “may be merits in stating what the **minimum requirement of Primarily Welsh Language schools is**” and there was potential to explore an amendment at Stage 3.
- The Cabinet Secretary also said he could look at an amendment at Stage 3 placing a **timescale** on when the Welsh Government would use regulation making powers to **uplift the Welsh language learning goals (the level of proficiency which pupils reach) of Dual Language and Primarily English Language, partly Welsh schools**. He suggested a date of no later than 31 December 2050, which was the timescale envisaged by Cefin Campbell's defeated amendments 119 and 120.
- Amendments 153, 154 and 155 from Cefin Campbell MS sought to require the **Learning Welsh Institute to assess the need for Welsh language teaching skills among the education workforce** in order to meet the Cymraeg 2050 targets, and to **provide relevant courses and other support** to the workforce. While resisting these amendments, the Cabinet Secretary said they had “merit” and that he would work with Cefin Campbell MS on amendments at Stage 3.
- Amendments 93 and 97 tabled by Sam Kurtz MS sought to require schools' Welsh language education delivery plans to set out how they will **support parents in engaging with and understanding Welsh language education**, and to require local authorities' local WESPs to assist schools in doing so. While resisting the amendments, the Cabinet Secretary said “it is crucial that we do enable parents to feel that they are supported in understanding their child's Welsh language learning journey”. He offered to work with Sam Kurtz to “get something on the face of the Bill during Stage 3” to that effect.
- Cefin Campbell MS tabled several amendments regarding **new schools and**

school reorganisation proposals. The aim of the Member's amendments was to "safeguard Welsh-medium provision" and protect against adverse impact on the growth of the Welsh language in an area. These amendments were resisted by the Cabinet Secretary, although he accepted the principle that certain school reorganisation proposals should, where reasonable, not lead to a reduction of Welsh language education provided to pupils. He said the Welsh Government was willing to discuss this matter with Cefin Campbell MS, "but with no guarantees of a Stage 3 amendment".

- The Cabinet Secretary resisted amendments regarding **Welsh language education qualifications**, with the main aim to replace 'Welsh as a second language' with a single Welsh language qualification. However, he said he was willing to discuss the alignment of Welsh language qualifications with the Code to describe Welsh language ability. The Cabinet Secretary also agreed to discuss further with Cefin Campbell MS how data on achievements in Welsh language qualifications could be a "useful indicator to show what progress schools are making towards meeting their Welsh language learning goals". However, he was clear that there were "no guarantees of any amendments at Stage 3".

5. What happens next?

The Bill is now at **Stage 3**, which means it will be subject to amendment in Plenary by all Members of the Senedd. This is scheduled to take place on **Tuesday 6 May**.

The Bill, in its final form, will then be subject to a vote on **Tuesday 13 May** on whether the Senedd should pass the legislation (Stage 4). Subject to that, following Royal Assent by the King, it will then become law and its provisions will commence as set out in the Bill/Act.