

EDUCATION — WELSH MEDIUM · ALL YEARS

Addysg Cyfrwng Cymraeg

Welsh Medium Education — A Guide

Welsh Medium Education — key facts

1

Welsh Medium Education (WME)

Schools or classes where Welsh is the main medium of instruction — all subjects are taught in Welsh. Over a third of all Welsh primary pupils now attend WME schools.

2

Immersion model

Most WME schools use immersion — children who arrive speaking no Welsh are taught through Welsh from day one. Research shows bilingual children typically reach full competence in both languages within 3-4 years.

3

Welsh medium schools

Schools where Welsh is the sole or main medium of instruction. They exist in Welsh-speaking areas (Welsh heartland) and in English-speaking areas (designated WM schools in Cardiff, Newport, etc).

4

Dual stream schools

Schools with separate Welsh-medium and English-medium streams under the same roof. Common in south Wales. The two streams are generally kept separate for instruction.

5

English medium schools

Schools where English is the main teaching language. Welsh is taught as a subject (typically 1-2 hours per day). All Welsh school pupils must study Welsh.

6

Cylch meithrin

Welsh-language nursery/playgroup, usually run by Mudiad Meithrin. Feeds into Welsh-medium primary schools. Essential pathway for non-Welsh-speaking families choosing WME.



Welsh Medium Education works

The evidence on bilingual education

- **BILINGUAL ADVANTAGE:** research consistently shows bilingual children develop stronger executive function — better attention, task-switching, and problem-solving.
- **NO DISADVANTAGE:** studies in Wales show WME pupils achieve at the same level or better in English than EM school pupils — learning through Welsh does not harm English.
- **LANGUAGES ON TOP:** WME pupils finish school with Welsh and English as functional languages. Many then add Modern Foreign Languages on top.
- **IMMERSION TIMELINE:** most English-speaking children who start WME in Reception are functionally bilingual by Year 3-4.
- **DEMAND IS GROWING:** WME school places are in significant demand. The Welsh Government has set a target of 40% of 16-year-olds speaking Welsh by 2050. WME expansion is central to this.
- **FOR NEW TEACHERS:** teaching in a WME school as a non-Welsh speaker is possible in specialist English subject roles. Many WME schools are actively training Welsh language skills among staff.

