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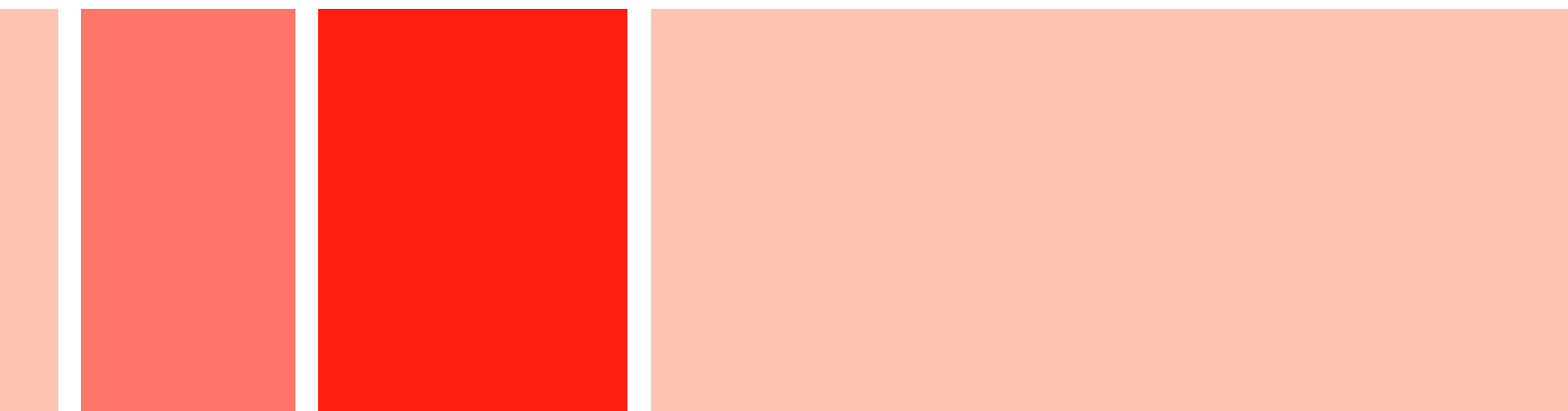
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Evaluation of the Immersion and Intensive Language Teaching Pilot Projects - Final Evaluation Report



Evaluation of the Immersion and Intensive Language Teaching Pilot Projects

Final Evaluation Report

OldBell3 and Dateb

Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 Background

1.1.1 This is the final report of an evaluation of the Immersion and Intensive Language Teaching Pilots Project undertaken between August 2007 and October 2008. It presents an assessment of the Project's effectiveness and effects and makes recommendations for its future development.

1.2 Introduction

1.2.1 The Immersion and Intensive Language Teaching Pilots Project was developed by the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) and the Welsh Language Board (WLB) in order to assess the effectiveness of various approaches to:

- creating new access points into Welsh medium education;
- opening up access to a greater range of subjects through the medium of Welsh at school;
- addressing the drift from first to second language Welsh during the transition from primary to secondary school;
- increasing the availability of appropriate Welsh medium teaching and learning resources.

1.2.2 The Project, which was entirely consistent with WAG policy, was influenced by international best practice and experts from the field of education in Wales. It involved the establishment and support of 'pilots' at two primary schools and thirteen secondary schools (together with their 115 feeder primaries). The secondary schools involved fell into three broad categories, reflecting the extent of their involvement in the delivery of Welsh medium

education. In all, 812 pupils were touched by the Project at a total cost of £1.4 millions over six years.

1.2.3 The two primary school centred pilots differed markedly from one another and from those delivered by secondary schools and they have not been a major consideration of the evaluation. Nor have three pilots run by predominantly English medium schools, which were discontinued after two years when it became clear that they were not likely to meet WAG's ambition of opening access to Welsh medium education. Thus, the focus of this evaluation has been upon pilots run by Welsh medium and bilingual secondary schools.

1.2.4 Most, though not all, secondary school pilots involved pupils participating in a five or six week period of 'intensive' language teaching towards the end of their time in primary school (Year 6). These intensive language training courses were generally delivered at participating secondary schools, and involved pupils in a range of activities designed to develop their Welsh language skills and to prepare them for a Welsh medium or bilingual secondary education.

1.2.5 The way in which participating schools dealt with pupils upon their progression into secondary education proper (Year 7) differed slightly. Some established discrete classes of 'immersion' pupils for at least the first year, and others integrated participating pupils into mainstream classes from the outset. A common feature of most pilots was the additional support provided to immersion pupils, including for example additional Welsh lessons, help with homework and support during subject lessons. Most schools sought to integrate immersion pupils into mainstream classes by Year 9 at the latest.

1.2.6 The Project has also involved putting on training for different groups of practitioners involved in the delivery of pilots, including Head Teachers, Pilot

Coordinators and subject teachers. The nature of the training delivered has, however, evolved over the period of the Project, with greater emphasis being put upon active learning on practitioners' part and on engaging subject teachers in researching and sharing what works best.

1.3 Findings

1.3.1 Schools involved in the Project demonstrated a high level of commitment to the promotion of bilingualism and to the welfare of the pupils involved in pilots.

1.3.2 The extent to which pupils participating in pilots had been exposed to the Welsh language beforehand varied significantly, with those entering Welsh medium schools in particular generally having a fairly shallow knowledge of the language. Pupils and their parents regarded pilots as a means of learning Welsh and of gaining access to participating schools, sometimes in preference to other local options. In that sense, the Project has certainly succeeded in providing a second entry point into Welsh medium education for several young people.

1.3.3 The periods of intensive language teaching at the end of Year 6 helped develop pupils' Welsh language skills markedly, although many pupils still had a comparatively weak command of the language, thus highlighting the need for ongoing support into Year 7 and beyond. Participating in periods of intensive language teaching also enabled pupils to form friendships with pupils in the same situation as themselves, to become familiar with secondary school settings and to develop confidence in their ability to cope with a Welsh medium/bilingual education.

1.3.4 Assessments of a sample of Year 7 pupils' language levels undertaken by the WLB for the first time in June 2008 pointed to the continued development of their Welsh language skills, although most still fell slightly

short of what is expected of mainstream pupils. This suggests the need for ongoing support into Year 8, although teachers were clear that the vast majority of immersion pupils are able to cope as well as their peers with a Welsh medium education by the time they get to Year 9. Indeed, the limited data available which allows comparison suggest that immersion pupils do slightly better during in terms of achievement and progression at the end of Key Stage 3 in all three (non Welsh) core subjects than their whole year groups.

1.3.5 Immersion pupils were also generally thought to be more enthusiastic about the Welsh language than their peers on the whole. This did not generally translate into much use of Welsh outside the school setting, however, very often because of a lack of opportunity to speak Welsh in predominantly English speaking communities. This pointed to the need for extra curricular activities designed to encourage and reinforce pupils' use of Welsh outside school. Indeed, it was thought that many mainstream pupils, who also live in communities where little Welsh is spoken, could equally benefit from such extra curricular opportunities.

1.3.6 Pilots were thought to have brought participating schools wider benefits, including:

- Helping to reinforce schools' commitment to Welsh medium education;
- Normalising the use of Welsh in schools;
- Enabling the integrity of Welsh medium classes to be maintained;
- Helping teachers to review their teaching practice (in order to accommodate pupils with weaker language skills);

1.3.7 Pilots enabled some schools, and more particularly Welsh medium schools, to attract pupils who would otherwise have gone elsewhere and, thus, arguably to secure additional mainstream 'formula' funding. Despite this, however, it is unlikely that intensive and immersion language teaching approaches would be sustainable in the absence of on-going Project

funding. On this basis, we argue that the basis upon which immersion language teaching approaches are planned, piloted and funded should be revised to allow a longer term perspective to be taken. This will have implications for the way in which the Project as a whole is funded too.

1.3.8 There is also a need to take a longer term approach to measuring and demonstrating the effects of the Project upon participating pupils. The Welsh Language Board has developed a mechanism for assessing pupils' language levels and development, and this has been used (at different stages in its development) since 2005 to measure the progress made by participants in intensive language learning periods at the end of Year 6. It was used to assess the language levels and distance travelled by a sample of Year 7 pupils for the first time in 2008, thus building in, for the first time, a longitudinal aspect to pupil assessment. We believe that this should become a core part of the project, along with the ongoing monitoring of Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 teacher assessment data for participating pupils and their whole year groups.

1.3.9 An important ongoing development is the discussion of the concept of language "*threshold*". Work currently being done by an Expert Adviser retained by the Welsh Language Board should provide a clearer insight into the point at which pupils acquire the subject related cognitive skills required to assimilate effectively into mainstream classes.

1.3.10 Practitioners who have benefited from training put on under the auspices of the Project were overwhelmingly positive about their experience, and in particular about having the opportunity to exchange experiences with practitioners from other schools.

1.4 Recommendations

1.4.1 This report concludes by making a total of 14 recommendations, 13 of which are predicated upon a recommendation that the Project should be extended for a period of three years to allow time for sufficient data to become available about pupil progression to enable informed judgements to be made. The remaining 13 recommendations revolve around the need to:

- Set out clearly the Project's ambitions and the nature of activities to be supported;
- Improve planning and funding arrangements;
- Consider methods for funding pilots and embedding immersion approaches;
- Revise the system for awarding grant funding to schools;
- Develop systems for assessing and tracking pupils' linguistic and curricular development, including the concept of language "*threshold*";
- Develop data management systems;
- Develop practitioners' skills;
- Develop of teaching and learning materials.

2. Introduction

2.1 Old Bell 3, in association with Dateb, was commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) to undertake an evaluation of the Immersion and Intensive Language Teaching Pilots Project. This evaluation was undertaken between August 2007 and October 2008.

2.2 In this report we:

- Recall the overall aim and objectives of the evaluation (section 2)
- Describe the methodology used to undertake the evaluation (section 3)
- Set out the background to the Project (section 4)
- Discuss the progress made in implementing the Project (section 5)
- Discuss the effects of the Project thus far (section 6)
- Present our conclusions about the Project (section 7)
- Present our recommendations (section 8)

3. Aims and Objectives

3.1 The Welsh Assembly Government's specification set out clearly the aim and objectives for the evaluation.

3.2 The study aim was *“to assess the effectiveness and impact of the immersion and intensive language teaching pilot projects, whilst making recommendations on the practicability of extending provision to other parts of Wales”*

3.3 The objectives for the evaluation are to:

- Assess the extent to which the overall aims and objectives of the pilots have been met;
- Review the overall management and implementation of the pilots;
- Establish models of good practice that can be used to inform future policy;
- Explore the contribution of the pilots to improvements in individual standards of linguistic progress;
- Determine the contribution of the pilots to improvements in individual standards of linguistic progress, including the identification of the factors which promote or inhibit progress;
- Assess the impact of the pilots on participating pupils' curricular development;
- Determine the impact of the pilots on the organisation and ethos of the schools;
- Identify the key strengths of the pilots and any constraints/issues that may have impeded their effectiveness;
- Assess the value for money of the pilots, particularly in terms of its contribution to improvements in individual standards of linguistic skills in schools in Wales and on long-term capacity building in Welsh language provision;

- Provide recommendations as to how the Welsh Assembly Government, the Welsh Language Board, LEAs and schools can best build upon the immersion and intensive language teaching pilots, drawing upon best practice, lessons learnt from the initiative and where appropriate, other similar schemes and within the context of international evidence on how linguistic skills can be improved;
 - Consider the effectiveness of the role played by the Welsh Assembly Government and the Welsh Language Board in supporting the immersion and intensive language teaching pilots;
 - Identify the contribution(s) which the Project has made to the vision and targets of Iaith Pawb, the Assembly Government's action plan for a bilingual Wales.
- 3.4 Initially, the study was also to review best practice models and approaches in other parts of the world as a basis for comparison, but the Evaluation Steering Group felt that this would not be necessary, given the work already done by an Expert Adviser retained by the Welsh Language Board to advise the Project's development.
- 3.5 However, the Evaluation Steering Group asked that the study consider practitioners' perceptions of the quality and utility of the training received in connection with pilots.
- 3.6 In the interest of clarity, the term 'pilot' is used to refer to activities undertaken within schools, whereas the term 'project' refers to the activities undertaken by and funded by the Welsh Language Board, including individual pilots.

4. Methodology

4.1 The work was divided six key elements:

4.4 Inception

4.5 Critique of Project and Programme Design

4.6 Development of Evaluation Framework and Detailed Fieldwork Plan

4.7 Interim Review

4.8 Interim Evaluation

4.9 Longitudinal Study of 2006/07 Participants

4.2 In the following sections, we set out the purpose of each element of the work and describe the activities undertaken.

4.3 We acknowledge the assistance received from the Welsh Language Board and from the schools which kindly contributed to our work.

4.4 Inception

The purpose of this stage was:

- To clarify details of our proposal with WAG's Project Manager and the Evaluation Steering Group;
- To gather relevant background information and data.

This involved:

- Meeting with WAG's Project Manager and the Evaluation Steering Group to discuss our proposal;
- Receiving and cataloguing a range of documents;
- Agreeing a detailed project plan with the Project Manager and Evaluation Steering Group.

4.5 Critique of Project and Programme Design

The purpose of this stage was:

- To ensure a clear understanding of the policy background to the Immersion and Intensive Language Teaching Pilot Projects, individually and collectively;
- To assess the extent to which the design of the Pilot Projects was informed by existing intelligence;
- To assess the relevance and appropriateness of the Immersion and Intensive Language Teaching Pilot Projects' aims and their related objectives, targets and performance indicators;
- To describe the different models developed and piloted and to set out the time-lines involved in each one;
- To assess the appropriateness of the arrangements put on place for the management and implementation of the Pilot Projects;
- To derive reliable data on progress to date in terms of activities and outcomes.

This involved:

- Undertaking a review of the policy documents and other evidence used to inform the development of the Immersion and Intensive Language Teaching Pilot Projects;
- Reviewing Steering Group and other Welsh Assembly Government/Welsh Language Board internal papers;
- Reviewing papers relating to each Pilot Project and producing internal school/pilot project level synthesis papers;
- Mapping the administrative and management systems employed, including the relationship between WAG and the Welsh Language Board and between the Welsh Language Board and stakeholders involved in the delivery of individual Pilot Projects;
- Undertaking face to face discussions with stakeholders from the Welsh Assembly Government and the Welsh Language Board;
- Synthesising the findings of our review of documents and discussions with key stakeholders into a stand-alone internal working paper.

4.6 Development of Evaluation Framework and Detailed Fieldwork Plan

The purpose of this stage was:

- To develop a Programme Logic Model based Evaluation Framework which would enable the examination of processes, externalities, outputs, outcomes and impacts;
- To set out the data (both primary and secondary) required to populate the framework;
- To outline the methods to be employed in gathering primary data (including the role of subsequent stages of the evaluation);
- To define a clear plan for undertaking fieldwork;
- To define a clear timetable for gathering, collating, analysing and reporting information;
- To establish a baseline from which progress could be assessed.

This involved:

- Developing a paper outlining a proposed Evaluation Framework, together with its underpinning logic;
- Discussing the proposed Evaluation Framework with WAG's Evaluation Project Manager and the Evaluation Steering Group;
- Refining the Evaluation Framework and securing the Evaluation Steering Group's agreement to the adoption of the refined Evaluation Framework;
- Presenting the refined Evaluation Framework to the Immersion and Intensive Language Teaching Pilot Projects Steering Group;
- Developing a detailed project plan for subsequent elements of the evaluation;
- Drafting an Evaluation Framework and Detailed Evaluation Plan report.

4.7 Interim Review

The purpose of this stage was:

- To assess the progress made to date in implementing Pilot Projects;
- To test the realism of the research team's expectations surrounding the provision of data

This involved:

- Revisiting the Pilot Project level synthesis papers already produced;
- Developing a topic guide to steer discussions with Coordinators;
- Undertaking discussions with the Pilot Project Coordinators, former Co-ordinators and/or Head Teachers of 14 schools which ran Pilot Projects at some time between 2004 and 2007;
- Synthesising the findings of our review of datasets, reports and discussions;
- Discussing the emerging findings of our review with the Pilot Project Manger.

4.8 Interim Evaluation

The purpose of this stage was:

- To assess the effects of pilot projects upon pupils' linguistic skills as they progress from primary and through secondary education;
- To assess the effects of pilot projects upon pupils' confidence in using Welsh as a medium for learning as they progress through secondary education;
- To assess the effects of pilot projects upon pupils' enjoyment of and enthusiasm for Welsh medium learning as they progress through secondary education;
- To assess the effects of pilot projects upon the progress made by pupils in secondary education;

- To ascertain parents' views of the effects of pilot projects upon the progress made by their children in school;
- To explore the factors which promote or inhibit linguistic improvement and educational progression among participating pupils;
- To assess the effects of pilot projects upon participating schools;
- To compare and contrast the effects of the different models of immersion and intensive language teaching piloted.

This involved:

- Analysing the very limited data relating to participating pupils' linguistic progression provided to the research team by the Welsh Language Board;
- Analysing Key Stage 2 and 3 attainment data received from two schools;
- Developing research instruments, based on the Evaluation Framework to guide discussions with head teachers, teachers, pupils, parents and other stakeholders;
- Conducting a survey of Year 9 pupils at three schools who participated in immersion and intensive teaching pilot projects between 2004/05 and 2007/08;
- Undertaking face to face interviews with Project Coordinators and/or head teachers at these three schools;
- Conducting group discussions with up to teaching staff at each of these three schools;
- Conducting group discussions with a sample of Year 9 immersion pupils at each of these three schools;
- Undertaking a telephone survey of a sample of Year 9 immersion pupils' parents from two of these schools¹;

¹ The third school was reluctant for us to speak to pupils' parents and it was agreed with the Evaluation Project Manager that we should refrain from doing so.

- Synthesising the findings of our pupil survey, our survey of parents and our discussions with various stakeholders;
- Holding a team meeting to discuss findings;
- Drafting an Interim Report;
- Discussing the Interim Report with representatives from the Welsh Language Board and the Evaluation Project Manager.

4.9 Longitudinal Study of 2006/07 Participants

The purpose of this stage was:

- To assess the effects of pilot projects upon pupils' linguistic skills as they progress from primary into secondary education;
- To assess the effects of pilot projects upon pupils' confidence in using Welsh as a medium for learning as they make the transition into secondary education;
- To assess the effects of pilot projects upon pupils' enjoyment of, and enthusiasm for, Welsh medium learning as they make the transition into secondary education;
- To explore the factors which enable and hinder pupils' linguistic and wider educational progression;
- To compare and contrast the effects of the different models of immersion and intensive language teaching piloted during the transition from primary to secondary education.

This involved:

- Analysing the limited data relating to participating pupils' linguistic standards provided to the research team by the Welsh Language Board;
- Conducting a survey of Year 7 pupils at eight schools during the first half of the Autumn term 2007/08;

- Conducting a further survey of the same cohort of Year 7 pupils at seven schools during the second half of the 2007/08 Spring term²;
- Conducting group discussions with a sample of Year 7 immersion pupils from six participating schools to explore further issues highlighted by the surveys referred to above during the Summer term 2008³;
- Undertaking a telephone survey of a sample of Year 7 immersion pupils' parents from two schools⁴;
- Undertaking face to face interviews with Pilot Project Coordinators and/or Head Teachers at five participating secondary schools;
- Conducting face to face discussions with teaching staff from five participating secondary schools;
- Synthesising the findings of our pupil survey and our discussions with stakeholders;
- Drafting this Final Report.

4.12 This methodology was based firmly upon that set out in the original evaluation project specification, which was drawn up by WAG in consultation with the WLB. However, during the course of the study, some stakeholders, including the WLB, have expressed concerns about the efficacy of the approach taken. Particular concerns expressed revolved around:

- The degree to which fair comparisons could be drawn between schools which serve diverse socio-linguistic communities;
- The extent to which statistically robust evidence and meaningful conclusions could be drawn about the impact of the pilots upon participating pupils' curricular development in the absence of a

² Staff sickness prevented one school from organising the second survey of pupils.

³ Staff sickness prevented one school from organising a discussion with pupils, whilst another school preferred not to do so.

⁴ The remaining six schools failed to provide parents' contact details.

matched sample of pupils pursuing their education through the medium of English (i.e. a 'policy off' control group);

- The extent to which relatively young and inexperienced pupils' assessment of their own development and their expectations for the future could be relied upon;
- The degree of reliance that could be placed upon pupils' own perception of the counterfactual, given that they have no experience of any other forms of secondary education;
- The extent to which statistical information gathered from pupil surveys could be relied upon to allow comparisons to be drawn between different pilots, in light of the very small numbers of pupils participating in individual pilots;
- The usefulness of including a longitudinal element within an evaluation project lasting just over 12 months.

4.13 Whilst the Evaluation Steering Group accepted the validity of these concerns, it also recognised that addressing them would require a significantly larger and more costly evaluation exercise. It was accepted that the findings of this study would be impressionistic rather than statistically reliable.

4.14 It is also worth noting that considerably less pupil level data has been available than had been expected at the inception stage. This clearly hinders our ability to address two key evaluation objectives:

- To *“determine the contribution of the pilots to improvements in individual standards of linguistic progress”*; and
- To *“assess the impact of the pilots on participating pupils' curricular development”*.

4.15 This issue is, however addressed further in Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

5. Introduction to the Immersion and Intensive Language Teaching Pilot Projects

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 In this section we present:

- A description of the policy context for the of Immersion and Intensive Language Teaching Pilots Project (section 4.2)
- A discussion of the design and development of the Project (section 4.3)
- A discussion of the approach taken to measuring the effects of pilots (section 4.4)
- A description of the approach taken to funding the Project (section 4.5)
- A brief critique of the approach taken (section 4.6)

5.2 Policy Context for the Project

laith Pawb

5.2.1 The context for the development of the Welsh Immersion and Intensive Language Teaching (WIILT) Pilot Project is outlined and reinforced in *laith Pawb*, the Welsh Assembly Government's National Action Plan for a bilingual Wales, albeit that the Project concept was, in reality, developed in advance of *laith Pawb*.

5.2.2 Published in November 2003, *laith Pawb* outlines the Welsh Assembly Government's goal of creating a sustained increase in both the number and percentage of people able to speak Welsh. Its headline target (which remains a central objective for Welsh Assembly Government policy) is to increase the percentage of people in Wales able to speak Welsh by 5 percentage points (from the census 2001 figure) by 2011.

5.2.3 Iaith Pawb put in place a strategic plan from which the Assembly Government has gone on to implement a wide range of interventions and programmes with the aim of achieving this headline goal. A key part of the plan has been to focus activities relating to children and young people through the education system in Wales. Iaith Pawb stresses that:

“We [the Welsh Assembly Government] want to sustain the growth of the language which has been achieved over the past two decades among school-age children, improve the rate of language transfer from Welsh-speaking parents to their children and encourage those who have used or acquired the language at school to retain and use it once they have left”.

5.2.4 The strategy goes on to say that, in partnership with local government, the Welsh Language Board and others, its intention is to focus on:

- encouraging individuals to learn and use the Welsh language;
- extending access to Welsh medium education with initial emphasis on early years and post-16 sectors;
- empowering individuals to make a genuine choice as to the language, or languages, through which they wish to live their lives;
- giving an entitlement for all young people to a range of support services in the language of their choice;
- actively promoting the benefits of bilingualism.

5.2.5 At the time it was published, Iaith Pawb recognised that whilst the availability of education through the medium of Welsh had increased and improved over recent years (with for example the opening of several new Welsh medium schools), more needed to be done to enable pupils to enter Welsh medium provision at a later stage in their education:

“The availability of education through the medium of Welsh has increased steadily in recent years. It is a trend which the Welsh Assembly

Government wishes to encourage. The essential role of education through the medium of Welsh and language immersion methodologies in the process of developing strong bilingual skills among pupils is acknowledged”.

“The Assembly Government remains concerned about the relatively few entry points into Welsh medium education. For the most part, choices are exercised either at age 3 at entry into nursery, or at age 5 at entry into primary school. In practice, once a parent or pupil has opted for the English-medium sector at one of these entry points there is almost no opportunity in most LEA areas to switch into the Welsh-medium sector (or to study some subjects through the medium of Welsh in an English-medium or bilingual setting). Using the Canadian Intensive Core French provision as a prompt [see later], we propose to establish pilot projects which will provide opportunities for pupils at the upper end of primary school to study Welsh intensively for a set period (allied to a compacted curriculum as necessary). This should enable many more pupils to move into the Welsh-medium sector or study more subjects through the medium of Welsh in other settings than would otherwise have been the case”.

The Learning Country: Vision into Action

5.2.6 In addition to *Iaith Pawb*, Welsh Assembly Government policies on Education, Learning and Skills also highlight the importance of bilingual education. In October 2006, the then Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills published ***The Learning Country: Vision into Action***, the Welsh Assembly Government's strategic plan for education, lifelong learning and skills in Wales until 2010.

5.2.7 This document represents the second stage in The Learning Country programme that began in 2001 and specifically deals with promotion of the

Welsh language in an educational context and at the time it was published, committed the Assembly Government to, inter alia:

- *“Extend immersion and intensive language teaching pilot projects which will give pupils access to a greater range of subjects through the medium of Welsh;*
- *Develop targeted measures to address the challenges associated with issues of linguistic continuity;*
- *Continue to support the development of Welsh-medium and bilingual classroom resources;*
- *Address the drift from Welsh first language to Welsh second language in the transition from primary to secondary school”.*

One Wales

5.2.8 In addition to these two important policies, the **One Wales** Document, which provides the strategic agenda for the Coalition Welsh Assembly Government from July 2007 suggests that bi-lingual education will remain a key policy priority. One Wales points towards a number of likely commitments which seem relevant to the Project. These include intentions to create:

“A new policy agreement with Local Education Authorities to require them to assess the demand for Welsh-medium education, including surveying parental wishes, and to produce a resulting School Organisation Plan, setting out clear steps to meet need”;

and

“A national Welsh-medium Education Strategy to develop effective provision from nursery through to further and higher education backed up by an implementation programme”.

5.2.9 Clearly, these two final points reinforce the political endorsement given to Welsh medium education. In the meantime, however, the key policy documents appertaining to the Project point to the following two ambitions:

- Creating new access points into Welsh medium education;
- Opening up access to a greater range of subjects through the medium of Welsh.

5.2.10 In addition the Project helps to contribute towards the following goals within some of the pilot settings:

- Addressing the drift from first to second language Welsh during the transition from primary to secondary school;
- Increasing the availability of appropriate Welsh medium teaching and learning materials.

5.3 The Design and Development of the Project

The Canadian Influence

5.3.1 In September 2001, the then Welsh Assembly Government Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning led a delegation to Newfoundland and Labrador and New Brunswick in Canada to learn about various immersion and intensive language teaching models used there to teach French. The intention was to explore possibilities of developing and implementing one or more of these models in Wales with a view to extending the work of teaching Welsh as a second language.

5.3.2 During their visit, the delegation learnt about different immersion and intensive language teaching programmes and approaches including:

- *Core French*: to develop language knowledge, basic communication skills and an appreciation of French culture for students who wish to study French as a subject within the curriculum.

- *Expanded Core French*: a programme consisting of accelerated Core French courses and courses in other subjects (usually in the field of social sciences) taught in French.
- *Intensive Core French*: a programme of intensive period of study of French which enables the student to receive 3 or 4 times the number of hours of instruction normally devoted to French.
- *French Immersion*: a full immersion programme where students follow the same curriculum as those in the English language programme but French is the medium of instruction and the means of communication. The programme is designed to provide non-francophone children with a high degree of proficiency in French.

5.3.3 In a report of the visit⁵, the Ministerial delegation concluded that “*the Intensive Core French programme...offered a way of securing what does not exist (with very limited exception) in Wales, which is a second entry point into Welsh-medium education for pupils whose parents opted for an English-medium school at the usual entry point – age 5*”. The report’s conclusions went on to suggest that “*The possibility of adapting the Intensive French model for this purpose should be examined further, with a view to establishing a pilot project to test its wider feasibility*” and that “*the most appropriate point at which to implement a pilot would be with Welsh Second Language pupils in Year 6 – the final year of primary school - with a view to enabling those pupils to achieve a range of outcomes, including:*

- *making the transition into a Welsh-medium secondary school;*

⁵ *Immersion Education and Intensive Language Teaching: A Report of a Visit to Newfoundland and Labrador and New Brunswick (16-21 September 2001).*

- *studying more subjects through the medium of Welsh in a bilingual or predominantly English-medium secondary school setting than would otherwise have been the case; or*
- *achieving a sufficiently strong base of linguistic proficiency so as to be able to participate in a much wider range of Welsh language educational and social activities, in and outside, school”.*

The Expert Group

5.3.4 An expert group⁶ was established (under the Chairmanship of the Welsh Language Board) to lead on the development phases of the Project. One of the early tasks given to this group was to consider the evidence gathered by the Ministerial delegation and to examine firstly, what benefits would ensue from the application of such a model(s) in the Welsh context and secondly, whether this experimental model or similar models would be suitable for development in Wales.

5.3.5 As well as the report of the Ministerial delegation, the expert group discussed the merits and practicalities of adopting other potential models, two which had already been trialled in Wales. For example, consideration was given to the experience of running “*Latecomer Centres*” in certain areas of Wales and to a study into a pre-existing ‘immersion’ scheme at Ysgol Maes Garmon in Mold⁷.

⁶ The Members of the expert group were: Meirion Prys Jones (BYIG), Keith Davies, (NafW), John Valentine Williams (ACCAC), Dr Cen Williams (Canolfan Bedwyr), Dr Geraint Jones (Canolfan Bedwyr), Hywel Jones (Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin), Andrea Miller (BYIG), Brinley Jones (Swansea University), Dyfrig Davies (Welsh Advisor, Carmarthenshire), Ann Keane (ESTYN), Rhiannon Lloyd (ESTYN), Iolo Dafydd (ESTYN), Eirlys Jones, Centre for Latecomers, Ynys Mon), Iwan Guy (Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Ogwr), Gerwyn Williams (Ysgol Gwaelod y Garth), the late Euryrn Williams (Ysgol Maes Garmon), Bethan Guilfoyle, (Welsh Language Board).

⁷ Williams, C. (2002) *A Language gained: A Study of Language Immersion at 11-16 Years of Age*, School of Education, University of Wales Bangor

Conceptual Models

5.3.6 In an undated paper responding to the Welsh Assembly Government's brief to them, the expert group recommended that the pilot projects should be run on the basis of four conceptual models, those being:

Model Description

1 Year 6 course, running from mid May to mid July

Contact hours with Welsh – 200 hours

Potentially combined with a model where pupils would embark on an intensive learning course in Year 7 and set up as a joint project between secondary and primary schools.

It was recommended that piloting should be done in two different types of school, one in an area where Welsh is widely spoken and one in an area where English is the predominant language

2 A model with 3 options for the start stage:

i. Start of year 3 or 4 (September to July) – 350 Contact hours

ii. Start of year 5 (September to May) - 300 Contact hours

iii. Start of year 5 (September to December) – 300 Contact hours

It was suggested that this model could be combined with schemes that operate in secondary schools where some subjects are taught through the medium of Welsh following a period of intensive Welsh learning in the primary schools.

It was recommended that this model be piloted at primary schools which run separate Welsh and English streams, at English medium primary schools in Welsh speaking areas and within project specific classes at Welsh medium primary schools

3 Immersion education units

Central units similar to the Centres for Latecomers could be set up throughout east Wales. These units would provide intense Welsh immersion education for children whose parents wish them to go to Welsh-medium schools at age 7+

4 Year 6 course, running from mid September to December

Contact hours with Welsh – 300 hours

5.3.7 The paper went on to recommend that Model 1 *“should be trialled in several different schools”* and that it would be appropriate to experiment with Model 2 *“in areas where Welsh is still used within the community, or in Welsh/English schools”*. It was also recommended that in relation to Model 3, *“one of these Centres [i.e. an Immersion Education Unit] should be set up in order to assess parents’ possible response”* and that *“in order to ensure continuity for any provision offered...that the LEA’s Peripatetic Welsh Teaching Service [Athrawon Bro] should be linked with any pilot scheme”*.

5.3.8 The expert group’s recommendations were considered by the Minister in November 2002, leading to decisions to:

- Pursue Model 1;
- Pursue derivatives of Model 2;
- *“Postpone any pilots involving the establishment of latecomer centres for the time being”* (Model 3), although the possibility of revisiting this option was kept open;
- Dismiss Model 4 because it was likely to interfere with preparations for Key Stage 3 Standard Assessment Tests (SATs)⁸;

⁸ Standard Assessment Tests have since been abolished in Wales

- Locate the first phase of pilot projects *“in areas where language gain in school could be supported by the presence of some degree of Welsh spoken in the surrounding community”*;
- Ask the Welsh Language Board to take forward a series of pilots, *“supported by a small steering group comprised of representatives from ACCAC, Estyn and SPD”*;
- Send a Ministerial letter *“to schools in the areas considered to be most receptive to establishing pilot projects”*;
- Submit a *“progress report to the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee”*.

Appointing the Welsh Language Board

5.3.9 In December 2002⁹, the Welsh Language Board was formally invited by the Welsh Assembly Government to lead the establishment of a Project under which a series of pilots would be run from September 2003. The ‘priorities’ set out for the Project were

To define the Project in more detail, including:

- Assessing the learning materials already in existence to support intensive language learning across different age groups and in each model to be piloted;
- Identify and fill gaps in provision;
- Assess the training needs of teachers who will be delivering immersion projects and developing a strategy for addressing those needs;
- Assess how much central support is needed and who is best placed to offer that;
- To establish pilot projects, including:
 - Assessing primary and (potential partner) secondary schools’ interest in running pilot projects;

⁹ Letter of 17 December from Keith Davies to John Walter Jones (then CEO of BIG)

- Identifying areas where pilot projects stand a reasonable chance of succeeding;
- Finding specific schools which could be invited to get involved;
- Discussing detailed plans with teachers, head-teachers, boards of governors and Local Education Authorities;
- To establish monitoring and evaluation arrangements, including:
 - Establishing a steering group to include representatives from the Welsh Language Board, the Standards and Performance Division [of WAG], ACCAC and Estyn;
 - Establishing a mechanism for providing participating schools with ongoing support;
 - Arranging a formal evaluation by Estyn or another [external] organisation.

5.3.10 It is notable that the priorities which WAG set for the development period made no reference to providing evidence of the relative effects or effectiveness of different models, but rather focused upon process measures.

5.3.11 Following budgetary discussions between December 2002 and April 2003¹⁰, the Welsh Language Board formally agreed to lead the Project¹¹.

5.3.12 The Project's first Director was appointed in September 2003 and Dr Cen Williams was retained as an Expert Adviser to the Steering Group. In May 2003, a paper outlining various issues to be taken into consideration in designing pilot projects was produced for the Steering Group's consideration¹². The paper drew upon published research into immersion programmes and identified the eight "core" and ten "variable" characteristics of immersion programmes operating in the United States of

¹⁰ Letters of 20 December 2002 and 7 March 2003 from Keith Davies (WAG) to Meirion Prys Jones and John Walter Jones (WLB) respectively

¹¹ Letter of 15 April 2003 from Meirion Prys Jones (WLB) to Keith Davies (WAG)

¹² Williams, C. (May 2003) Addysg Drochi: Ystyriaethau, Papur Trafod ar Addysg Drochi

America and setting out issues that needed to be taken into account in developing pilot intensive/immersion projects in Wales.

5.3.13 A year later a second synthesis of international literature surrounding the teaching of and through second languages was produced by the Expert Adviser¹³ for the Steering Group's consideration. The paper pointed to the need to *"decide early on in the life of the project what its aim is in relation to each of the different models"* It went on to suggest that at its simplest level, the aim of the Project is to *"to offer immersion situations and a mastery of Welsh to enable:*

- *[pupils to] remain in Welsh medium education*
- *[pupils to] remain in bilingual education*
- *[pupils to] remain in Welsh medium education in the short term and then progress into bilingual education".*

5.3.14 Whilst language immersion theory and reviews of relevant international literature helped shape the Project, it is clear that its development was also influenced by other considerations such as:

- the need to 'recruit' suitable schools to deliver pilots within a relatively short space of time;
- lessons learnt from the delivery of early pilots;
- the views of schools engaged in the Project about what was likely to work within their own context;
- practical 'local' factors and limitations within schools such as the lack of Welsh language teachers.

5.3.15 Some of the lessons learnt from the delivery of early pilots are discussed in detail in an end of year report produced in October 2004¹⁴ by the Welsh

¹³ Williams, C. (Haf 2004) Trochi – Theori: Ystyriaethau cychwynnol a syniadau pellach i'w hystyried

¹⁴ "Prosiect Trochi ac Addysgu'r Gymraeg Trwy Ddulliau Dwys: Adroddiad Diwedd Blwyddyn 2003-2004", Welsh Language Board Report, October 2004

Language Board. The report discusses the various approaches (or “models”) adopted within different pilots during the first year and presents some broad conclusions about their relative effectiveness, most notably that:

- The Welsh language skills of pupils undergoing periods of intensive language teaching in Year 6 improved markedly;
- Attempts to engage pupils in language learning activities during school holidays were generally unsuccessful;
- The effectiveness of planning pupils’ Welsh medium education in Year 7 varied from pilot to pilot; Some schools were more successful than others in teaching through the medium of Welsh in Year 7, not least because varying levels of Welsh language skills among teachers;
- Visits to participating schools in relation to the pilots by various stakeholders had become burdensome.

5.3.16 On the basis of these conclusions the report goes on to present a number of recommendations, some of which were later taken on board to shape the Project from 2005 onwards.

5.3.17 By June 2007, the models described in 2003 had evolved into¹⁵:

| Model | Description |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Intensive period at the end of Key Stage 2 (5-6 weeks) and then support for two years via specific provision during Key Stage 3, before assimilation into ‘mainstream’ Welsh language provision in (the selected group of) Welsh medium secondary schools. |
| 2 | Intensive period at the end of Key Stage 2 (5-6 weeks) and then transfer to Welsh medium education (in some subjects) |

¹⁵ Welsh Language Board Interim Report of June 2007, p7

on starting secondary education in traditional bi-lingual schools.

- 3 A period of activity during KS2 (years 3, 4 and 5) with follow-on internally within the primary school, but with no purposefully planned progression into Welsh medium secondary schools or Welsh medium provision at bilingual secondary schools.

Project Aims and Objectives

5.3.18 Steering Group papers suggest that the overall aim of the project was clear but that understanding of the type of action and activities required to achieve that aim evolved over time as pilots experimented with different approaches - *“it was agreed that the original language development paths had been clear, but that the situation had become clouded as different school situations emerged”*¹⁶. In reality, the pilots supported during the Project’s early days varied considerably and it became clear that some participating schools were simply not in a position to realise the Project’s ambitions, albeit that the activities they undertook may well have had beneficial effects in terms of improving participating pupils’ Welsh language skills.

5.3.19 Whilst experimentation is clearly an important facet of any Project comprising a series of pilot activities, the National Assembly’s Internal Audit Services commented that *“greater attention needs to be focused towards the consideration of the long-term goals of the project and the*

¹⁶ Minutes of the Steering Group Meeting held on 5 October 2005, item 6.2:

*planning necessary for the achievement of these goals*¹⁷. The report went on to say that “we would expect the longer-term aims to cover two areas:

- *Firstly, the specific long-term aims of the scheme. What is the ultimate aim of the scheme? Are these piloted teaching methods to be mainstreamed? How is this to be financially supported?*
- *Secondly, and following on from the first, the long-term strategic planning and consideration of how the long-term aims will be achieved. The scheme was set-up for an initial period of three years. However, funding the post 2005-06 financial year has yet to be approved and there are no long-term plans with key milestones in place to ensure the achievement of long-term goals*¹⁸.

5.3.20 The Practitioner Development Division of DCELLS’ response to the internal audit report indicated an acceptance of the findings, stating that:

- *“Long-term planning considerations should form part of the strategic role performed by the management team;*
- *Going forward, long-term objectives and planning should feature as a regular agenda item for Steering Group meetings;*
- *Need to ensure that there are sufficient budgets in place post the 2006/07 financial year to allow for the continuation of this scheme*¹⁹.

5.3.21 It is notable that whilst the management team clearly has the long-term future of the Scheme in mind, long-term objectives, planning and budgeting have not, hitherto, featured as a regular agenda item at Steering Group meetings.

¹⁷ National Assembly for Wales Internal Audit Services (2006) Report on the Immersion and Intensive Language Teaching Pilot Projects, Reference Number 1095, p2

¹⁸ Ibid, p4

¹⁹ Ibid, p8

5.3.22 The Steering Group agreed upon the following specific aims for the Project in October 2006²⁰ and these aims were echoed in the Project's 2007 Interim Report²¹:

- To facilitate linguistic development by enabling pupils to pursue a Welsh medium education and demonstrate how and when that [linguistic development] happens;
- Determine the most appropriate and effective type of support in terms of facilitating linguistic development and support the implementation of such approaches.

5.3.23 These aims lean far more overtly towards the Project's exploratory or pilot nature than do the ambitions implied in policy documents. Steering Group papers also point to an emerging consensus about the purpose and nature of the Project. In particular, the papers suggest:

- A recognition that the five or six week period of intensive teaching at the end of Key Stage 2 is the first part of a longer journey, rather than the mainstay of the Project, as it was regarded during the early days;
- A shift towards targeting pilot projects upon "*schools of strategic importance*" and a growing reluctance to engage with schools that do not overtly possess the wherewithal to contribute to the Project's ambitions of extending opportunities to participate in Welsh medium education;
- A conscious decision to withdraw support for projects that merely led to pupils sitting Second Language Welsh GCSEs one or two years sooner than would otherwise have been the case, without leading to their studying other subjects through the medium of Welsh;
- The emergence of the concept of a linguistic "*threshold*" which learners must reach and cross in order to benefit fully from a Welsh medium secondary education;

²⁰ Minutes of the Steering Group Meeting held on 2 October 2006, item 6.3

²¹ Page 15

- A focus upon the way in which pilot projects are funded;
- An emerging concern about the “*sustainability*” of provision established through pilot projects;
- An ongoing concern with measuring the success of pilot projects.

5.3.24 This honing of the Project’s ambitions resulted in the discontinuation of some pilots and the closer targeting of new pilots upon schools which have the capacity to deliver and support Welsh medium education. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

5.4 Measuring Success

5.4.1 A significant amount of Steering Group and project staff time has been given over to discussing, developing and implementing systems to measure the effects of pilot projects. During the Project’s early days, the focus was primarily upon projects’ effects upon participating pupils’ language skills at the beginning and end of the five or six week intensive teaching courses piloted. Pupil testing exercises carried out in 2005, 2006 and 2007 enabled an assessment framework based on Welsh as a Second Language within the National Curriculum to be developed and honed. As the Project progressed, the Steering Group’s attention turned to methods of assessing participating pupils’ ongoing linguistic development and their capacity to pursue a range of subjects through the medium of Welsh²².

5.4.2 In addition to measures of participating pupils’ Welsh language skills levels, the Steering Group discussed a number of other potential indicators of individual projects’ effects and effectiveness. These include:

²² See for example the Minutes of the Steering Group’s Meeting of 24 May 2006, items 5.1 – 5.3

- The number/proportion of pupils who had been through intensive language training during Key Stage 2 who subsequently opted for Welsh medium secondary education;
- The number/proportion of pupils choosing to study more subjects through the medium of Welsh at secondary school than they otherwise would have as a result of participation in the pilot projects;
- The point at which pupils are ready to be assimilated into ‘mainstream’ Welsh medium classes;
- The extent to which pupils participate in Welsh medium educational and social activities, both within and outside school;
- Pupils’ attainment levels at Key Stage 2 in the core subjects of English, Mathematics and Science;
- Pupils’ attainment levels at Key Stage 3 in the core subjects of English, Mathematics, Science as well as Welsh;
- Pupils’ attainment levels at GCSE in the core subjects of English, Mathematics and Science as well as Welsh;
- Teachers’ subjective assessments of pupils’ development, although it was recognised that it might be necessary to provide teachers with tools to undertake such assessments in a consistent fashion.

5.4.3 The paper presented to the Steering Group by the Expert Adviser in 2003 referred to the tendency of foregoing research to focus upon the outcomes of immersion projects at the expense of processes involved in their development and delivery. The paper then went on to discuss four aspects of the Project which it should be possible to monitor. These four areas embrace the activities supported by the Project and are specifically reflected in the Evaluation Framework designed to guide this study as well as the ongoing monitoring of the Project. The four areas are:

- Materials
- Pupils²³

²³ Or more accurately, in Chamont and O’Malley’s terms, the curriculum

- Teachers
- Parents

5.4.4 In terms of wider issues, the paper points to a number of factors which might be thought critical to immersion Projects' success, including:

- Head-teachers' ownership of and commitment to bilingualism (or, more accurately perhaps, Welsh medium education) as well as pupil attainment;
- Head-teachers' ownership of, commitment to and engagement in immersion/ intensive language teaching Projects;
- An organised and supportive school environment;
- Parents' understanding of and buy-in to the rationale and components of the Project;
- Parents' commitment to learning Welsh themselves;
- Local Education Authorities' buy-in and support of the Project;

5.4.5 The June 2007 Interim Report points to difficulties of measuring the effects of the Project and more specifically of judging the relative success of different types of pilot projects, largely due to variances in approach (at a school level) within each of the models piloted and to differences in terms of participating pupils' Welsh language proficiency upon joining pilot projects.

5.4.6 The Estyn (2006) inspection report²⁴ does, however, present some conclusions about the relative success or otherwise of different approaches adopted by the pilot projects. Based upon visits to participating primary and secondary schools during 2004 and 2005 as well as discussions with relevant stakeholders and assessments of pupils' Welsh language skill levels, Estyn concludes that overall *"the vast majority*

²⁴ "A report on Welsh immersion and intensive language teaching pilot projects in schools", Estyn, (February 2006)

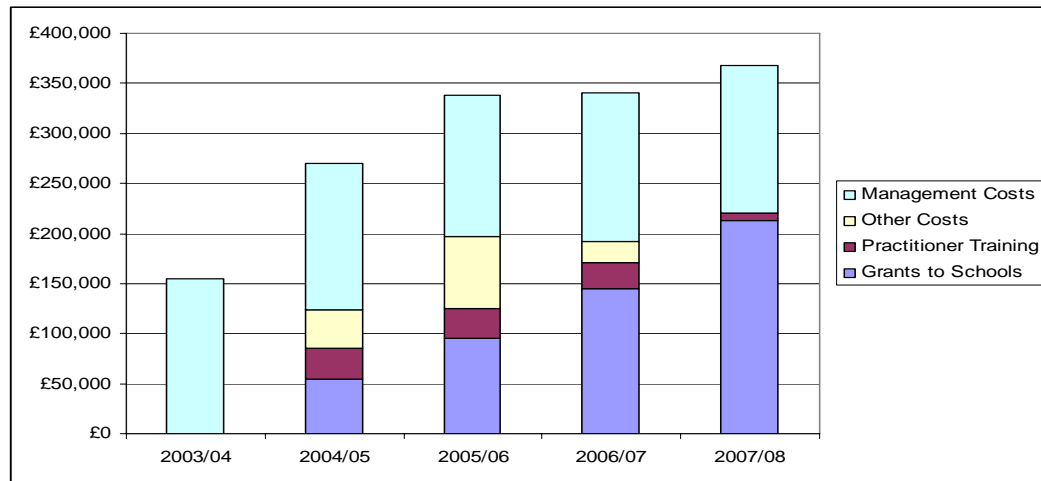
of pupils on all these immersion pilots [during 2004-5 and 2005-6] have made significant gains in their language skills and their knowledge and understanding of Welsh.” It found that whilst very few pupils who started the project were at the expected level 4 at the end of Key Stage 2 in Welsh as a second language “by the end of the summer 2004 pilots most pupils were at this level”.

5.4.7 The Estyn report goes on to state that the most successful pilots were those offering pupils higher levels of contact with the Welsh language in Year 7, following the period of intensive language teaching.

5.5 Method of Funding the Project

5.5.1 Figure 3.1 below shows the total level of funding allocated to the Project since its inception and the distribution of that funding across different budget headings for each year. It shows clearly a steady increase in the value of budgets allocated to school pilot projects and a steady decline in the much smaller budgets allocated to staff training. There has also been a reduction over time in the budgets allocated to other activities such as external evaluation, off-course activities and the development of materials. Project management costs have remained fairly constant throughout the Project’s life, but have clearly come to represent a smaller proportion of total expenditure as the Project has gathered momentum.

Figure 5.1 Funding Allocated to the Project by Financial Year



Source: Welsh Language Board management reports

5.5.2 The Project was initially funded for a three year period (from 2003/04 to 2005/06), whilst budgets for 2006/07 and 2007/08 were allocated on an annual basis. During the latter two years, WAG funding decisions were fairly late in the day being communicated to the WLB, which made it difficult for the WLB to plan ahead with any degree of certainty or to make any firm commitment to schools²⁵. It is arguable that the system of annual funding may hinder the expression of a clear vision and strategy for the Project (see item 3.3.18 above) and preclude any genuine strategic dialogue between the WLB and schools.

5.5.3 The National Assembly's 2006 Internal Audit Services report indicated that *"applications for funding are effectively managed and appraised"* and although the *"format and quality of the applications varied considerably as did the level of funding awarded"* in the Project's early days, *"the need for developing tighter requirements and procedures has been recognised as evidenced by the development of a standard application form and the drafting of a funding policy, application guidance and the introduction of*

²⁵ See for example Minutes of the Steering Group's Meeting of 24 March 2006, item 4.3 and Minutes of the Steering Group's Meeting of 23 January 2007, item 4.1

*funding limits*²⁶. Despite these improvements, however, there is little evidence to suggest that the sustainability of pilot projects is given due consideration. Whilst the application form and its accompanying guidance talk of planned progression routes for pupils, the focus is firmly upon an initial period of intensive language teaching and upon support for pupils during their first year in secondary education. Schools are not asked to set out how progress will be maintained into subsequent academic years (i.e. as participating pupils move from year 7 into years 8 and 9) and nor are they asked how they plan to support subsequent cohorts of pupils, although there may be an implicit assumption that they will use a combination of grant funding received for subsequent cohorts of immersion pupils and schools' own resources to do so. In essence, the grant system, as it stands, does not require schools to consider the longer term sustainability of their pilot projects, which is clearly a key consideration if the Project is to demonstrate the relative effects and effectiveness of individual pilot projects.

5.6 Conclusion: Critique of the Approach Taken

5.6.1 This Project is entirely in keeping with the ambition of the National Assembly for Wales to increase the numbers of Welsh speakers and extend the use made of the Welsh language. Indeed, the Project is expressly identified in *Iaith Pawb* and in *Learning Country: Vision into Action* as a key component of the National Assembly's efforts to reinvigorate the Welsh language.

5.6.2 Key stakeholders were involved in discussions about the establishment of the Project from the outset, which led to a shared understanding of its overarching ambitions. However, this shared understanding meant that

²⁶ National Assembly for Wales Internal Audit Services (2006) Report on the Immersion and Intensive Language Teaching Pilot Projects, Reference Number 1095, p6

the letters commissioning the Welsh Language Board to set up and manage a Project of pilot projects may not have been sufficiently clear about the nature of the outputs sought. Whilst the actions to be taken by the WLB were set out very clearly, no mention was made of the need for pilot projects to provide evidence of the effects or effectiveness of different models adopted, albeit that the need to do so may have been implicitly understood by both sides.

5.6.3 The Project was shaped by lessons learnt during a Ministerial delegation to Canada as well as by language immersion theory, some of which was itself rooted in Welsh experience. However, it was also influenced by practical considerations such as the need to engage schools in the delivery of pilot projects within a relatively short space of time, and this meant that some lessons from the literature were not reflected fully in the some of the pilot projects developed.

5.6.4 As the Project has developed, there has been a growing emphasis on defining and measuring success. The Steering Group recognises the limitations of the data currently available surrounding individual projects' achievements, but the Steering Group papers suggest an increasing degree of clarity in terms of success measures and testify to ongoing work on the development of assessment and measurement systems.

5.6.5 The Project was initially funded by WAG for a three year period, but is now funded on an annual basis. This system of annual funding is reflected in the approach taken by the WLB in awarding grants to schools to run pilot projects. It is arguable that this short term approach precludes a sufficiently strategic view and approach being taken to the Project's implementation.

6. Progress to Date

6.1 In this chapter we provide:

- Details of the schools involved in the Project and a brief discussion of the activities that they have undertaken (section 5.2);
- An outline of the pupils who have participated in pilot projects thus far (section 5.3);
- An analysis of Project expenditure (section 5.6);
- A description of the arrangements put in place to develop and manage the Project (section 5.5).

6.2 Participating Schools

The Characteristics of Participating Schools

6.2.1 In total, thirteen secondary schools (together with their 115 feeder primaries) and a further two primary schools have been involved in running Immersion and Intensive Language Teaching Pilots since the Project's inception five years ago. Table 5.1 below shows the schools involved in running pilot projects in each of the years since the Project's launch.

6.2.2 Five of the secondary schools which have been involved in the Project are designated Welsh medium schools, a further five might be described as traditional bilingual schools²⁷ and the remaining three are primarily English medium schools, albeit that Welsh is taught as a second language at these schools.

²⁷ Bilingual schools are ones at which a percentage of the curriculum is taught through the medium of Welsh and where there may be parallel English medium provision. A full definition is given in WAG's publication *Defining schools according to Welsh medium provision*, October 2007

Table 6.1: Schools Leading Pilot Projects since the Project's Launch (by academic year)

| | 2003/04 | 2004/05 | 2005/06 | 2006/07 | 2007/08 | Years Involved |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------------|
| Secondary School Led Projects | | | | | | |
| Aberaeron | | | | | | 0 ²⁸ |
| Bodedern | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 4 |
| Bro Ddyfi | | | | | ✓ | 1 |
| Bro Gwaun | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 3 |
| Brynhafryd | ✓ | ✓ | | | | 2 |
| Coedcae | | | ✓ | | | 1 |
| Creuddyn | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 3 |
| Glan Clwyd | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 4 |
| Grango | | ✓ | | | | 1 |
| Maes Garmon | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 5 |
| Morgan Llwyd | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 3 |
| Porth | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | 4 |
| Tryfan | | | | ✓ | ✓ | 2 |
| Number of Projects | 3²⁹ | 6 | 8 | 7 | 9 | |
| Primary School Led Projects | | | | | | |
| Glan Conwy | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 4 |
| Plascrug | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 3 |
| Number of Projects | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | |

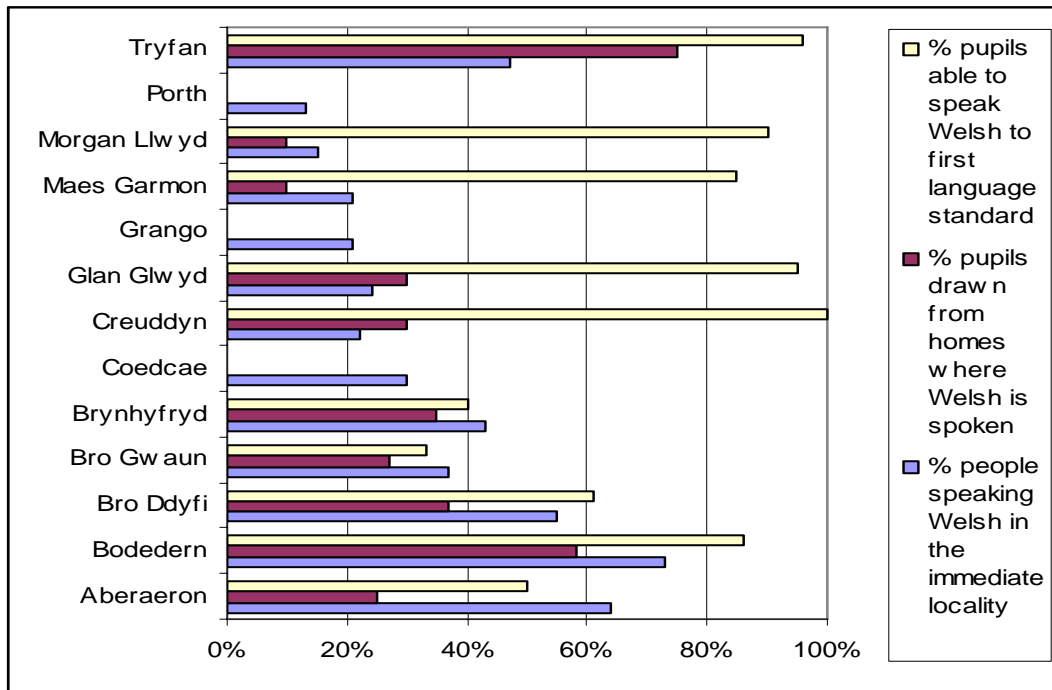
Source: Welsh Language Board management reports

6.2.3 Each of these schools is distinctive, their natures being shaped by the socio linguistic profile of the communities they serve as well as their language related designation. Figure 5.1 illustrates clearly the differing degree to which the Welsh language is used within the communities in which individual schools are located, the extent to which Welsh is used within pupils' homes and the extent to which pupils at each school are able to speak Welsh.

²⁸ Aberaeron had intended to run a pilot form 2007/08, but has postponed its plans until the summer of 2008

²⁹ These pilots involved activities with pupils at these three schools' feeder primaries rather than with pupils of the schools themselves, albeit that the hope was that participating pupils would opt for these schools in Year 7

Figure 6.1: The Linguistic Profile of Communities, Homes and Pupils in Participating Secondary Schools³⁰



6.2.4 Figure 6.2 shows that:

- In just over half the schools (7/13), a greater proportion of pupils are able to speak Welsh than is the case for the population as a whole within the communities served by those schools;
- On the whole, the linguistic profile of pupils at traditional bilingual schools reflects the linguistic profile of the communities from which they are drawn;
- A far higher proportion of pupils in designated Welsh medium schools are able to speak Welsh than is the case among the local population as a whole;
- On the whole, a higher proportion of pupils at Welsh medium schools speak Welsh than is the case within bilingual schools;

³⁰ School level data have been derived from individual schools' latest Estyn Inspection Reports, whilst data about the proportion of people speaking Welsh in schools' immediate localities have been derived from 2001 Census data (Office for National Statistics, Table WLP01) e.g. for Tryfan, the data for Bangor were used and for Creuddyn, the data for Llandudno were used.

- However, with one exception, the overwhelming majority of pupils at Welsh medium schools come from homes where no Welsh is spoken.

6.2.5 It is worth noting that all the designated Welsh medium schools involved in running pilot projects are located near English medium or bilingual schools which offer pupils a viable alternative. Similarly, the predominantly English medium schools are all within reach of Welsh medium schools. However, the majority of the traditional bilingual schools involved in the Project are more spatially isolated and, therefore, serve whole communities, where pupils have less choice between schools in reality, albeit that they can choose the language through which they study other subjects within those schools.

6.2.6 One primary school involved in the Project is classified as an English medium school and prior to its involvement in the Project, all lessons were delivered through the medium of English and pupils studied Welsh as a second language. The other primary school is classified as a bilingual school and although most pupils studied Welsh as a second language some were assessed in Welsh as a first language at the end of Year 6.

6.2.7 Although located in Welsh speaking communities, where over a third of the population speak Welsh, almost all of the primary school pupils came from non-Welsh speaking families.

Participating Schools' Motivation for Running Pilot Projects

6.2.8 Overwhelmingly, participating schools had the development of bilingualism at the heart of their involvement with the Project – “*we have a responsibility for raising a new bilingual generation*”. Several commentators referred to the ambitions set out in *Iaith Pawb* and saw their

pilot projects as a means of contributing towards those ambitions. Reasons given for getting involved in the Project included:

- Providing pupils with a second entry point into Welsh medium education. This was as much of a driver for participating primary schools as it was for secondary schools;
- Encouraging more pupils to undertake their secondary education through the medium of Welsh;
- Preventing pupils who received a Welsh medium primary education from opting for an English medium secondary education;
- Increasing the proportion of learning undertaken through the medium of Welsh by certain groups of pupils;
- Addressing an ongoing decline in numbers choosing to study subjects through the medium of Welsh;
- Creating a more Welsh ethos within the school community;
- Enabling pupils to pursue Welsh as a first language;
- Raising attainment levels among pupils studying Welsh as a second language;
- In the case of one LEA, it saw the pilot as a means of improving the standard of Welsh as a second language at Key Stage 2 within a primary school which had a particularly poor record in this respect.

6.2.9 One contributor also spoke of a warming of attitudes towards Welsh medium education locally, driven in part by the appointment of sympathetic staff within both the secondary school in question and its feeder primary schools.

6.2.10 It was acknowledged that the Project potentially provided participating schools, and particularly Welsh medium schools, with a means of attracting pupils who would probably otherwise opt for alternative secondary schools in the locality. Set against a backcloth of falling school rolls and declining school funding in many areas this was clearly an

attractive proposition, but it was not at the forefront of schools' thinking in sponsoring pilot projects. In a sense, boosting the schools' roll was a fortuitous by-product of pilots.

The Role of the Local Education Authority

6.2.11 Local Education Authorities were instrumental in the establishment of some pilots, seeing the Project as a means of addressing priorities set out in their Single Education Plans and Welsh Medium Education Schemes: indeed, at least three pilots were identified by LEAs in the first place. LEAs contributed towards the development and implementation of pilots in several ways, but crucially in some cases, they provided the strategic backing which legitimised pilots and helped to dissipate sensitivities among 'competitor' schools. Schools also appreciated the on-going support which LEAs provided, including:

- Making available the services of Athrawon Bro to teach on intensive language training courses;
- Meeting the costs of transporting pupils to participating secondary schools for intensive language teaching courses;
- Promoting pilots to primary schools;
- Disseminating information about pilots to parents;
- Monitoring progress and advising participating schools where necessary.

6.2.12 Although all LEAs were thought to have been supportive of pilots, they were not perceived to have been equally proactive in driving them forward. Representatives from one school suggested that their LEA had been less engaged in discussions than it might have been, partly for fear of an adverse reaction from other secondary schools and partly for fear of the consequences of stimulating demand for Welsh medium education upon a

local learning infrastructure which is not equipped to deal with a significant increase in demand.

Role of the Welsh Language Board

6.2.13 The Welsh Language Board was influential in the design, development and implementation of some pilots. Activities undertaken by WLB staff included:

- Discussing what the pilots would entail for the schools and advising them on possible approaches;
- Attending and participating in events to promote pilot projects to school governors, feeder primary schools and parents;
- Making available teaching and learning materials, although schools tended to develop their own as they became more experienced;
- Providing ongoing support and advice for teaching staff.

6.2.14 It is notable that only one pilot was developed in the south east of Wales and that no Welsh medium school based pilots were developed in south or mid Wales. This is not for lack of trying, however. Minutes of Steering Group meetings indicate that both WAG's Performance and Improvement Division and the Project Team have invested considerable effort in courting several schools (such as Ysgol Bro Morgannwg, Ysgol y Cymer, Ysgol Llanhariand Ysgol Maes y Dderwen in south Wales) as well as holding meetings with LEAs such as Neath Port Talbot and Powys. In doing this, the Project Team considered whether any new schools brought into the Project would be in a position to add new knowledge about the effectiveness of different approaches to intensive and immersion language training. Thus far, none of these schools have taken up the opportunity, partly because they are operating at or near capacity (particularly Welsh medium schools in the south east of Wales) and do not, therefore, have

scope to accommodate more pupils and partly because it was not thought that LEA policy would support them.

Project Application Forms

6.2.15 It is notable that the WLB's grant application form does not ask schools to set out their aims or objectives in sponsoring pilots, or to set measurable targets or milestones. This means that there is no obvious yard-stick against which the progress of individual pilots can be monitored and reported. That is not to say that progress is not monitored, of course: indeed, matters such as pupils' linguistic progress and their assimilation into mainstream classes are discussed at length during progress meetings between the Welsh Language Board and individual schools. Information stemming from these meetings is presented in the Project Manager's reports to the Steering Group, but these reports are not able to compare achievements to targets and have hitherto lacked consistency and comparability over time.

6.2.16 Pilot grants are awarded for one year only and applicant schools are asked only to set out:

- The basis upon which pupils will be selected for participation in pilots (thus focusing considerations upon pupils making the transition into Year 7 rather than pupils higher up the school);
- Arrangements for liaising with primary schools and parents;
- Arrangements for an initial intensive language teaching period;
- Arrangements to ensure pupils' smooth transition into secondary school;
- Expected "*outcomes in terms of linguistic improvement*", but with the implication that this relates to progression during Year 7;
- The involvement of the relevant LEA, including any financial contribution to be made;
- Arrangements for pilot related teacher training and preparation;

- Administrative arrangements;
- Pilot related costs.

6.2.17 The application form does not explore how activities kick started by Project funding will be sustained over the longer term or how participating pupils will be supported in subsequent school years. Thus far, schools have participated in the implicit expectation that further grant funding will be forthcoming to sustain ongoing activity, although it was argued that schools need greater security to enable them to plan ahead and to make commitments to prospective pupils and their parents at an early a stage as possible.

Activities Undertaken by Individual Schools

6.2.18 Each school chose to develop and implement its pilot in a slightly different way. However, with some exceptions, there are a number of common features to the approaches taken by secondary schools:

- Every participating school assigned responsibility for managing its pilot to a designated individual;
- The majority of schools do not select pupils to participate in pilots on the basis of overall ability, the exceptions being two English medium schools;
- The majority of schools select pupils to participate according to their linguistic ability. However, the criteria applied differ from one situation to the next. By and large, traditional bilingual schools involved in the project demand that prospective pupils have some knowledge of Welsh, primarily because they tend to assimilate pupils into mainstream Welsh medium education at a fairly early stage and only offer some ongoing support with the language. On the other hand, Welsh medium schools, many of which are located in predominantly English speaking communities, target their pilots at pupils with little or

no knowledge of Welsh. Participating pupils are initially allocated to discrete classes, pursue a slightly altered curriculum and receive a significant amount of support with language during their early years in secondary education;

- Some schools were conscious of a danger of compromising the linguistic characters of their communities by taking on too large a group of non-Welsh speaking pupils. In essence, it was thought that increasing the proportion of learners within the school population would lead natural Welsh speaking pupils and teachers to resort more readily to English;
- The majority of pilots involve a five or six week period of intensive language teaching for participating pupils during their final term in Year 6. There are two exceptions to this, one of which delivers a fortnight's intensive language training at the end of Year 6 and continues with the provision during Year 7. The other targets pupils from non Welsh speaking homes who have been through bilingual primary education and, therefore have a reasonable grasp of the Welsh language already. It was necessary for the second school to adopt this approach because some of its smaller feeder primary schools were reluctant to release year 6 pupils because doing so might disrupt the functioning of their close knit multiple year groups;
- Most of the intensive language teaching courses are run in the sponsoring secondary school, thus giving participating pupils a foretaste of what is to come as they embark upon Year 7. These courses are seen in some schools as a means of developing a group identity and a sense of comradeship among participating pupils. There was one exception to this, which relied instead on a cluster of feeder primary schools to provide pupils with intensive Welsh language teaching at the end of Year 6;
- Most intensive language teaching courses involve some input from Athrawon Bro;

- Most intensive language teaching courses involve out of school activities designed to maintain pupils' interest and to build their confidence in using the Welsh language outside formal classroom settings;
- In a small majority of pilots, participating pupils are assigned to distinctive "*immersion*" classes in Year 7, some of which also survive into Year 8. There were three exceptions to this;
- In most schools, it is expected that participating pupils will be assimilated within Welsh medium classes for most if not all subjects by the beginning of Year 9. The three exceptions were schools which established their pilots in order to improve participating pupils' attainment in Welsh as a second language, rather than in to enable pupils to study other subjects through the medium of Welsh;
- A majority of teachers at most participating schools are able to speak and teach through the medium of Welsh. This was not the case in three schools, however.

6.2.19 Individual pilots have other noteworthy features:

- Three pilot projects involve an element of pre-intensive period preparation in the shape of additional Welsh lessons, generally during the spring and summer terms of Year 6. In one case, the WLB paid a member of the school staff to deliver courses out of school hours to parents as well as prospective participating pupils. Another school adopted a similar approach in 2007, using support received from the National Eisteddfod to deliver Welsh classes to the parents of prospective pupils;
- In some schools, the introduction of French within the curriculum is delayed for half a term, one or two terms to enable participating pupils to receive additional Welsh language lessons;
- Year 7 pupils participating in four pilots are allocated "*buddies*" in the form of older pupils from their respective schools;

- One secondary school drew on external cultural inputs from visiting poets during the intensive period of teaching, whilst a primary school enlisted the services of a local drama production company;
- Some schools provide participating pupils from non Welsh speaking families with additional support with their homework. This is designed as much to address parental worries as it is pupils' needs;
- One pilot involved representatives from Trinity College, Carmarthen in the delivery of the intensive language teaching element, potentially providing an added learning dimension to the Project;
- One LEA had issued certificates to pupils upon completion of the intensive language courses, which it was claimed had been well received by pupils and parents.

6.2.20 The activities undertaken under one primary school pilot reflect in large part the kinds of approaches taken within secondary school led pilots. The pilot involves an intensive language teaching period during the second half of the summer term in Year 5 and then the teaching of 20% of the curriculum through the medium of Welsh during Year 6. The intensive courses entail the study of particular topics through the medium of Welsh as well as visits to a local Welsh medium secondary school.

6.2.21 The second primary school based pilot is rather different in nature in that it starts by targeting pupils in Year 3 and gradually increasing the proportion of the Key Stage 2 curriculum delivered through the medium of Welsh, until about 80% of the teaching in Year 5 is delivered in Welsh. In delivering its pilot, this school faces the additional challenge of working with mixed age classes on top of accommodating pupils of different general and linguistic abilities.

6.2.22 In contrast to most secondary school pilots, there is no selection of pupils onto primary school pilots as all pupils in the respective years are involved.

6.2.23 In its 2006 Inspection Report Estyn observed that success in learning Welsh through the pilots had been dependent on a number of factors including the need for:

- Fluent teachers who are good role models for the Welsh language and who make learning fun;
- Pace and variety in the teaching and learning;
- Continuity and progress in Welsh-medium learning across the curriculum at secondary level;
- Good targeted support to schools from LEAs;
- Good liaison between all agencies; and
- Close links between schools and parents.

6.2.24 Based on our research, we would concur that these are indeed important elements in the success of the Project

Pupil Engagement and Recruitment

6.2.25 The approaches taken by secondary schools to promoting pilots and 'recruiting' pupils involved liaison with primary schools and the parents of prospective pupils. Generally this built upon pre-existing arrangements, including:

- Meetings between participating secondary school head teachers/senior staff and representatives from their 'feeder' primary schools;
- Meetings with the parents of pupils at 'targeted' primary schools;
- Letters and/or information packs issued to the parents of Year 6 (and in some cases Year 5) pupils via primary schools. Two schools included promotional DVDs in their information packs, featuring

vignettes of the head teacher, parents and pupils of various ages talking about their experiences of earlier immersion projects;

- Open evenings for prospective pupils and their parents at secondary schools;
- One school promoted the project to parents as the natural next step for the children to take.

6.2.26 The process of engaging primary schools appears to have been easier in some areas than in others. Some participating secondary schools reported that primary schools in their areas are “loyal” to specific secondary schools, which one commentator argued was reinforced by LEA admission policies. This, it was suspected, led to information about pilots not always reaching the parents of prospective pupils, or at least, to pilots not being promoted in a fair and unbiased way.

6.2.27 Some participating secondary schools targeted particular feeder primaries, whereas others adopted a blanket approach. One secondary school was precluded by its LEA from promoting the pilot to parents until they had selected that particular school for their children. This was done to avoid any distortative effects the pilot might have upon the local ‘market’.

6.2.28 One commentator observed that the enthusiasm demonstrated by participating pupils upon their return to their respective primary schools for the last week or two of the summer term was helping to address primary schools’ misgivings about the Project. However, a number of contributors felt that more could be done to promote the existence and success of pilots in their schools’ immediate catchment areas and more widely.

6.2.29 Recruitment was a less obvious feature of primary school led pilots, although one participating school had been careful to ‘sell’ the Project very informally to parents (parents were informed that pupils would receive

additional Welsh lessons) on the basis that this would avoid parental concerns emanating from negative attitudes towards Welsh medium education.

6.2.30 School representatives thought that the motives of parents and pupils in participating in pilots varied. In some instances it was thought that parents recognised the value of bilingualism, not least for their children's future career prospects, whilst in other cases parents were thought to see pilots as a means of getting their children into better schools, or in some cases, smaller classes. Interviews with parents revealed a greater emphasis upon the value of bilingualism as opposed to school-related factors as the main reasons for getting involved with many emphasising an *“extra skill”* and *“better career”* as key reasons for participating. Interestingly, however, a few parents also stressed the importance of community integration for their child and saw the project as one way of achieving this.

Pilots which Have Been Discontinued

6.2.31 Four of the fifteen pilots launched have been discontinued. Three were centred on English medium schools and, in reality, their aspirations were limited to improving attainment levels among pupils studying Welsh as a second language, rather than extending participation in Welsh medium education. The fourth project to be discontinued was sponsored by a traditional bilingual school.

6.2.32 One of the three English medium schools in question concluded that it could not sustain its pilot project, whilst the other two projects were drawn to a close at the Steering Group's bidding, following Estyn's conclusion that *“this model does not fulfil the aspirations and vision of Iaith Pawb for this project because of the lack of support it offers for continuity”* and recommendations made by the Project Manager. It is clear that the

Steering Group's thinking about the purpose of pilots has become clearer during the life of the Project.

6.2.33 In one case, the pilot was discontinued, despite protracted discussions between the school, a WAG officer and the Project team, because the school was unable to provide satisfactory progression routes for pupils who had participated in intensive language courses run by six of its feeder primary schools. Despite this, however, the Steering Group still regarded the school in question as a "*strategically important*" school in the context of the Project's ambitions and would be keen to see a workable pilot developed in the area.

6.2.34 Whilst on the one hand, the Steering Group has been prepared as the Project's aims became clearer to bring pilots that did not accord with the Project's aspirations to a close, it was also keen on the other to extend the coverage of the Project. The Interim Report concludes by recommending, inter alia, that new primary school pilots exploring different approaches to those currently being run should be sought. It also recommends that effort should be put into engaging Welsh medium schools from south Wales in running pilots.

6.3 Profile of Pupils Benefiting from Pilots

Numbers of Participating Pupils

6.3.1 Tables 5.2 to 5.4 below set out the numbers of pupils who benefited from support under pilots in each of the years since the Project was first launched. The data is presented according to year group, illustrating clearly the ongoing commitment made by schools in embarking upon pilots. The tables show a gradual increase in the numbers of pupils benefiting over the four year period, peaking during 2007/08 as nine pilots were implemented in that year.

6.3.2 One might expect the number of Year 6 pupils participating in pilots during one academic to equate to the number of Year 7 pupils in the following year and Year 8 pupils in the year following that. In reality, however, there has been a drop in the overall number of pupils involved in the Project from one year to the next, due to the discontinuation of some schools' pilots and to some pupils opting out of the Project for various reasons.

Table 6.2: Year 6 Pupils Participating in Pilots (by academic year)

| | 2003/04 | 2004/05 | 2005/06 | 2006/07 | 2007/08 |
|-----------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Aberaeron | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 17 |
| Bodedern | 0 | 19 | 22 | 21 | 30 |
| Bro Ddyfi | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12 |
| Bro Gwaun | 0 | 0 | 32 | 32 | 29 |
| Brynhyfyd | 49 | 51 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Coedcae | 0 | 0 | 29 | 0 | 0 |
| Creuddyn | 0 | 0 | 21 | 44 | 37 |
| Glan Clwyd | 0 | 17 | 14 | 16 | 31 |
| Grango | 0 | 40 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Maes Garmon | 24 | 14 | 10 | 12 | 16 |
| Morgan Llwyd | 0 | 0 | 7 | 13 | 9 |
| Porth | 40 | 30 | 30 | 0 | 0 |
| Tryfan | 0 | 0 | 0 | 18 | 26 |
| Total Pupils each Yr | 113 | 171 | 165 | 156 | 207 |
| Cumulative | 113 | 284 | 449 | 605 | 812 |

Source: Welsh Language Board

Table 6.3: Year 7 Pupils Receiving Ongoing Support Under Pilot Projects (by academic year)

| | 2004/05 | 2005/06 | 2006/07 | 2007/08 |
|-----------------------------|-----------|------------|------------|------------------|
| Aberaeron | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Bodedern | 0 | 19 | 20 | 20 |
| Bro Ddyfi | 0 | 0 | 0 | 11 ³¹ |
| Bro Gwaun | 0 | 0 | 23 | 27 |
| Brynhafryd ³² | 49 | 51 | 0 | 0 |
| Coedcae ³³ | 0 | 0 | 29 | 0 |
| Creuddyn | 0 | 0 | 17 | 34 |
| Glan Clwyd | 0 | 14 | 14 | 16 |
| Grango ³⁴ | 0 | 37 | 0 | 0 |
| Maes Garmon | 24 | 14 | 10 | 12 |
| Morgan Llwyd | 0 | 0 | 6 | 13 |
| Porth ³⁵ | 13 | 30 | 30 | 0 |
| Tryfan | 0 | 0 | 0 | 18 |
| Total Pupils each Yr | 86 | 165 | 149 | 151 |
| Cumulative | 86 | 251 | 400 | 551 |

Source: Welsh Language Board

Table 6.4: Year 8 Pupils Receiving Ongoing Support Under Pilot Projects (by academic year)

| | 2005/06 | 2006/07 | 2007/08 |
|-----------------------------|-----------|------------|------------|
| Aberaeron | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Bodedern | 0 | 19 | 20 |
| Bro Ddyfi | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Bro Gwaun | 0 | 0 | 23 |
| Brynhafryd | 49 | 0 | 0 |
| Coedcae ³⁶ | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Creuddyn | 0 | 0 | 10 |
| Glan Clwyd | 0 | 13 | 14 |
| Grango | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Maes Garmon | 24 | 14 | 10 |
| Morgan Llwyd | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| Porth | 13 | 30 | 0 |
| Tryfan | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total Pupils each Yr | 86 | 76 | 83 |
| Cumulative | 86 | 162 | 245 |

Source: Welsh Language Board

³¹ Ten pupils are currently in this class

³² Pupils were placed in two English medium classes upon entering Year 7, but in order to maintain momentum, they were assigned a Welsh speaking class tutor

³³ Upon entering Year 7, Coedcae pupils were maintained within a discrete class. However, the school's pilot was discontinued during 2006/07 when the first tranche of pupils were in Year 7

³⁴ Grango school was involved with the project for one year only and pupils were placed across a number of Year 7 classes on entering secondary school

³⁵ Pupils at Porth school were placed across seven Year 7 classes on joining the school

³⁶ Coedcae School discontinued its pilot when the first tranche of pupils were in Year 7

6.4 Project Costs

6.4.1 Table 5.5 below shows the value of grant aid awarded to each participating school since the launch of the Project. Funding is awarded to schools on a financial rather than an academic year basis and the data presented here relates to financial years³⁷.

6.4.2 Typically, Project funding is used to meet the costs of employing pilot project coordinators, the costs of other practitioners' time whilst teaching on intensive language learning courses, the costs of supply staff to allow practitioners time to prepare, time to attend Project related training and time to develop learning materials. In some cases, these grant awards are augmented by LEA contributions, generally in the shape of Athrawon Bro time and the transportation of participating Year 6 pupils to secondary schools running pilots.

6.4.3 In the Project's early days (before 2007), the section of the grant application form dealing with costs did not differentiate clearly between costs associated with periods of 'intensive' language learning put on for Year 6 pupils (in most cases) and the costs of providing on-going 'immersion' support to pupils in secondary school. This was addressed in 2007, when a specific question was added about staff costs relating to "*follow-up provision in Key Stage 3*".

6.4.4 However, schools are only funded for one year and, by implication, the "*follow-up provision*" costs referred to can only be those relating to the provision of on-going support to pupils whilst in Year 7. In essence, schools are asked to launch pilots in the implicit expectation that further

³⁷ This means that the costs activities undertaken towards the end of the academic year will be met by funding attached to the subsequent financial year, for example, activities undertaken by Year 6 pupils in June 2004 (during the 2003/04 academic year which ran from September 2003 to August 2004) were funded by budgets allocated for the 2004/05 financial year, which ran from April 2004 to March 2005)

grant funding will be forthcoming to sustain ongoing activity into Years 8 and 9, or that they can meet the costs of providing on-going support from their own resources. It is, of course arguable that pilots enable some schools, and more particularly Welsh medium schools, to attract additional pupils and, thus, to secure additional mainstream 'formula' funding, which might contribute towards the marginal costs of providing on-going support.

6.4.5 The design of the application form might have contributed to the significant differences in the value of grant sought by different schools, with some confining their applications to funding to support periods of 'intensive' language teaching, whilst others sought funding to support pupils' ongoing development during Year 7. This led to wide variations in the apparent grant paid per pupil to participating secondary schools. Over the Project's life, the average cost/grant paid per pupil has been £469, but the cost per pupil at individual schools has ranged from as little as £275 to over £2,000. Whilst it might be possible to explain some of these differences in terms of the make-up of individual pilots (e.g. the nature of intensive provision (if any) included, the level of support in secondary school etc), this does not tell the whole story.

Table 6.5: Value of Grant Aid to Schools Since the Project's Launch

| | 2004/05 | 2005/06 | 2006/07 | 2007/08 | Total Investment in Individual Schools |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------------------------|
| Secondary School Led Projects | | | | | |
| Aberaeron | | | | £28,380 | £28,380 |
| Bodedern | | £4,350 | £13,000 | £7,950 | £25,300 |
| Bro Ddyfi | | | | £25,590 | £25,590 |
| Bro Gwaun | | | £11,000 | £10,930 | £21,930 |
| Brynhyfryd | £5,625 | £3,775 | | | £9,400 |
| Coedcae | | £10,000 | | | £10,000 |
| Creuddyn | | | £16,000 | £29,040 | £45,040 |
| Glan Clwyd | | £25,597 | £16,000 | £22,140 | £63,737 |
| Grango | | | | | £0 |
| Maes Garmon | £3,475 | £8,399 | £13,000 | £10,000 | £34,874 |
| Morgan Llwyd | | | £21,000 | £29,190 | £50,190 |
| Porth | £8,750 | £15,776 | £8,350 | | £32,876 |
| Tryfan | | | £5,000 | £28,840 | £33,840 |
| Primary School Led Projects | | | | | |
| Glan Conwy | 1875 | 30,000 | 26,750 | 18,272 | £76,897 |
| Plascrug | | 5000 | 5000 | 4750 | £14,750 |
| Total Annual Investment in Pilot Projects | £19,725 | £102,897 | £135,100 | £215,082 | |

Source: Welsh Language Board

6.4.4 An analysis of other Project related costs is given in Table 5.6.

Table 6.6: Other Project Related Costs Incurred Since the Project's Launch

| | 2003/04 | 2004/05 | 2005/06 | 2006/07 ³⁸ | 2007/08 |
|-----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Project Team Costs | £155,000 | £146,525 | £141,500 | £147,500 | £147,000 |
| Practitioner Training | | £30,000 | £30,000 | £25,400 | £8,400 |
| Materials Development | | £38,900 | £71,500 | £22,000 | |
| Total Costs | £155,000 | £215,425 | £243,000 | £194,900 | £155,400 |

Source: Welsh Language Board

6.4.5 In the Project's early days, there were recurrent 'under-spends' against the funding available, primarily because it took longer to get pilot projects up and running than had been anticipated. WAG afforded the WLB some flexibility by allowing some funding to be carried over from one year to the

³⁸ Budgeted figures

next, although it was made clear that such flexibility could not be expected in future years.

6.5 Project Development and Management

Role of the Welsh Assembly Government

6.5.1 The project is overseen by the Welsh Assembly Government. Initially the project fell within the purview of the Performance and Improvement Division of the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, but in the wake of an internal reorganisation in early 2008, responsibility was transferred to the Welsh Language Development Unit within the Learning and Development Division. Responsibility for its implementation rests with the Welsh Language Board, under the guidance of a Steering Group which comprises representatives from WAG (initially the Performance and Improvement Division and latterly the Learning and Development Division), ESTYN, ACCAC and the WLB itself. The National Assembly's Internal Audit Services commented that *"despite not having formal roles and responsibilities in place for the WLB, the regular liaising between the WLB, the Assembly's Performance and Improvement Division and the Steering Group ensures that all the work to be performed by the WLB is fully discussed with progress subsequently reported on a quarterly basis"*. It goes on to say that the Project was afforded flexibility in its early days, adding that *"as the scheme now matures so too does the role of the management team. Later progress reports evidence a far more strategic role being undertaken by the WLB with the project management team looking at strengthening existing practices and highlighting emerging issues for consideration by the Steering Group"*³⁹. This view was supported by our review of minutes of Steering Group meetings.

6.5.2 The Report did, however, point out that *"one key risk to include here is the current involvement of just one Assembly Officer from the Performance and*

³⁹ National Assembly for Wales Internal Audit Services (2006) Report on the Immersion and Intensive Language Teaching Pilot Projects, Reference Number 1095, p4

*Improvement Division, in the co-ordination of this project*⁴⁰. This suggests that ownership of the Project may not be as widespread within the Welsh Assembly Government as might be expected. The transfer of responsibility for the project to the newly established Welsh Language Development Unit should help to overcome this perceived weakness.

- 6.5.3 Allied to this, there has also been Ministerial change within the Welsh Assembly Government, and it is notable that the new Minister voiced her support for the Project's aims and objectives at an Institute of Welsh Affairs conference held in October 2007. It is expected that this report will help to provide key stakeholders, including the Minister, with a useful insight into the Project's achievements. However the Steering Group is also aware of the need to provide evidence of "*what works and in what circumstances*" in order to shape future policy.

Role of the Welsh Language Board

- 6.5.4 Within the Welsh Language Board, the Project falls within the purview of the Pre 16 Education and Training Unit and responsibility for its implementation vests in a part-time Project Director⁴¹. The part-time Project Director is supported by one full time and one part time Project Officer⁴², one of whom fulfilled the Project Director role prior to the appointment of the present incumbent in 2005. Each Project Officer works with designated pilot projects, as well as performing some central functions. Each member of the Project team is an experienced teacher, which means that they have a practical understanding of the implications of running pilots for schools.

School Engagement

- 6.5.5 Work on engaging schools started in earnest in late 2003/early 2004 when the then Project Director and colleagues from the WLB held a series of meetings with

⁴⁰ Ibid, p7

⁴¹ The Project Director's role has changed since the time of writing

⁴² This individual has since left the Welsh Language Board's employ, leaving only one Project Officer

representatives from three secondary schools, their 'feeder' primary schools, their respective LEAs, advisory services, Athrawon Bro and, in one case, the parents of prospective pupils. The 2003-04 Year End Report indicates that the *"meetings could be arduous at times"* because schools and LEAs' expectations could be unrealistic and the report noted the care that was taken to set out the aims of the Project in a consistent fashion during these meetings. However, stakeholders involved in the establishment of one pilot commented that the WLB had not been clear about the purpose of the Project in the early days and this had led to the development of a pilot which it was later decided did not meet with the Project's aims. This did not necessarily accord with the Project team's recollection of events, in that it perceived that the LEA involved in the establishment of that particular pilot had had its own ambition for the pilot which did not entirely chime with that of the Project, albeit that its aims were laudable in their own right.

- 6.5.6 One of the schools targeted in the first year had long experience of running immersion schemes and the decision to involve it in the Project was based on the belief that it would be in a good position to enhance its existing immersion scheme and that other schools could learn from its previous experience.
- 6.5.7 The Project Team continued to promote the Project, both through direct contact with individual schools and through discussions with representative bodies such as CYDAG⁴³. Minutes of Steering Group meetings would suggest that the Head of WAG's Performance and Improvement Division also had a close involvement in discussions with some schools prior to the appointment of the present Project Director, although the level of involvement appears to have waned somewhat since then. Indeed, the Interim Report suggests that the involvement of the Performance and Improvement Division in interacting with schools has led to confusion among some about the relative roles of WAG and the WLB in the Project's management.
- 6.5.8 In its 2006 Inspection Report, Estyn commented that the active promotion of the Project helped to *"establish projects in a variety of schools in both North and*

⁴³ CYDAG is an association of Welsh medium schools, both primary and secondary

South Wales". It went on to say that "*much remains to be done to raise the awareness of schools, parents and pupils about the potential of transferring between English and Welsh-medium education*", adding that "*project leaders also need to raise the awareness of all Welsh-medium secondary schools in Wales of the potential for establishing a class of pupils to transfer from English-medium primary schools to Welsh-medium education in Year 7*". This sentiment was echoed during the research team's discussions with a number of stakeholders.

Mapping and Developing Learning Resources

- 6.5.9 In early 2004, the WLB commissioned the development of a teaching/learning resource pack for the period of intensive language teaching. The 2003-04 Year End Report indicates that the pack drew upon materials previously developed by Athrawon Bro, thus building upon materials used at Key Stage 2 with many participating pupils, whilst also being capable of adaptation to incorporate local features. In addition to this, each participating school was allocated a small amount of grant funding to enable practitioners to develop/adapt materials to suit each pilot project. Despite this, however, the 2007 Interim Report indicates that appropriate materials are still in short supply, which means that practitioners continue to have to devote a considerable amount of time to resource development.
- 6.5.10 In 2006, the WLB commissioned further work to map suitable materials which already exist. The purpose of doing this was to provide practitioners involved in the Project with a catalogue of materials available to them. However, the Steering Group noted that the availability (or lack thereof) of teaching/learning materials appropriate for "*middle ground*" learners who fall between the "*mother-tongue and second language Welsh categories*" should be considered as part of the forthcoming consultation on the National Curriculum and as part WAG's wider resource procurement process. The Steering Group was reluctant to be drawn into commissioning resources as this remit lies with the WAG (previously ACCAC), although it is more than happy to feed intelligence about the kinds of resources needed into the commissioning process.

Language Level Assessment Systems

6.5.11 As was noted in Chapter 3 of this report, a significant amount of Steering Group and Project staff time has been given over to discussing, developing and implementing systems to measure the effects of pilot projects upon pupils' linguistic development. Considerations in pursuing this work have included:

- The absence of arrangements for assessing the level of learners' Welsh language skills at the end of Key Stage 2, in contrast to 'mother tongue' speakers, the level of whose Welsh is assessed as a 'core subject';
- The need for an assessment continuum leading from 'Welsh second language' into 'mother-tongue';
- The extent to which teachers can realistically be expected to get involved in the assessment process, and in the case of teachers on intensive courses who are not familiar with participating pupils, the efficacy of their assessing pupils;

6.5.12 The primary focus of this work has been upon developing a means of assessing the level of pupils' Welsh language skills upon joining intensive language learning courses and again upon completion. Pupil testing exercises carried out in 2005, 2006 and 2007 enabled an assessment framework to be developed and honed. The assessment framework used in 2007 provided for the measurement of pupils on a five point scale against four criteria:

- Understanding of the written and spoken language;
- Grasp of language patterns (which was divided into 'range' and 'correctness' sub-categories), in terms of both the written and spoken language;
- Confidence of oracy;
- Effort.

6.5.13 It was possible to assess the language levels of a sample of pupils participating in intensive language training courses during the summer term 2007, and in the case of two schools which did not run six week intensive courses, during the following autumn term. The framework was used to assess the language levels of Year 7 pupils for the first time at the end of the 2007/08 academic year.

6.5.14 the complexity and potential magnitude of understanding and comparing the relative effects of different approaches upon participating pupils' linguistic and curricular development came to the fore in 2006, following the appointment of a new Project Director, when the Steering Group's discussion turned to the need to identify the point at which pupils reach a "threshold" beyond which they are able to cope with a range of subjects through the medium of Welsh, and the need for an assessment system which would capture evidence of pupils crossing that "threshold"⁴⁴. Indeed, it was argued during our fieldwork that "this is a field that merits specific research to track pupils" as they progress within secondary education. It was argued that attention should be given to criteria in addition to those considered at the beginning and end of intensive language teaching courses (as discussed above), including, for example:

- The ability to grasp subject specific concepts through the medium of Welsh;
- The ability to use subject specific terminology;
- The ability to cope with learning resources designed for mother-tongue speakers;
- The ability to use appropriate language registers.

6.5.16 To this end, the Expert Adviser retained by the WLB has been exploring with Head Teachers, the kinds of indicators that might characterise pupils who have "crossed the threshold". It was hoped that a draft assessment framework for this group could be developed for 'piloting' within the 2008/09 academic year.

⁴⁴ See Minutes of the Steering Group Meeting, 24 May 2006, Item 5

7. The Effects of Pilot Projects

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 In this chapter we present the findings of our surveys and our discussions with stakeholders. The chapter is informed by:

- A survey of 132 Year 7 pupils from eight schools. The survey was undertaken some 8-10 weeks into the autumn term of pupils' first year in secondary education;
- A further survey of Year 7 pupils during the summer term. This survey yielded responses from 108 pupils from eight schools;
- A paper based survey of 45 Year 9 pupils at three schools, undertaken towards the end of the autumn term;
- Focus group discussions with 20 Year 9 pupils from three schools, undertaken in the spring term;
- Focus group discussions with 45 Year 7 pupils from six schools undertaken during the summer term;
- Discussions with 23 subject teachers from 8 schools, undertaken in the spring and summer terms;
- A telephone survey of 17 participating pupils' parents;
- Discussions with WLB staff and the Expert Adviser retained by the WLB.

7.1.2 We sought to ensure that our survey instruments were fit for purpose in terms of their appropriateness and comprehensibility to target pupils by inviting participating schools, the WLB and the Performance and Improvement Division of WAG to comment on draft instruments. The WLB and some schools had concerns about pupils' capacity to understand and respond appropriately to some areas of enquiry, but it was agreed that the surveys could proceed on condition that schools would have the opportunity to comment on the evaluation report before its publication. Both surveys of Year 7 pupils were administered using bilingual questionnaires to ensure that respondents with limited

experience of the Welsh language could understand and respond appropriately to the questions.

7.1.3 Our original intention was to administer all the surveys electronically using interactive web-based questionnaires, but problems associated with schools' firewalls meant that we were obliged to resort to paper questionnaires for the first survey of participating Year 7 pupils at two schools. The two schools in question were also involved in our survey of Year 9 pupils and it was, therefore decided to administer that survey using paper based questionnaires only.

7.1.4 Tables 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3 below show the numbers and proportions of Year 7 and Year 9 pupils completing each of our surveys.

7.1.5 In presenting the findings of our surveys, we would emphasise that, although a high response rate was achieved to both Year 7 and Year 9 surveys, the pupil population was relatively small and survey findings will, therefore, need to be treated with a degree of caution. The year 9 population in particular was very small and cannot be relied upon for anything other than impressionistic purposes.

Table 7.1: Number of Year 7 Pupils who Responded to the First Survey

| School | Number returned | As % of sample | Number in project ⁴⁵ | Response rate |
|--------------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------------------------|---------------|
| Ysgol Bodedern | 16 | 12% | 20 | 80% |
| Ysgol Bro Ddyfi | 8 | 7% | 11 ⁴⁶ | 73% |
| Ysgol Bro Gwaun | 26 | 20% | 27 | 96% |
| Ysgol Glan Clwyd | 16 | 12% | 16 | 100% |
| Ysgol y Creuddyn | 32 | 24% | 34 | 94% |
| Ysgol Maes Garmon | 11 | 8% | 12 | 92% |
| Ysgol Morgan Llwyd | 12 | 9% | 13 | 92% |
| Ysgol Tryfan | 11 | 8% | 18 | 61% |
| Total | 132 | 100% | 151 | 87% |

⁴⁵ Data supplied by the Welsh Language Board

⁴⁶ Only 10 pupils are currently in this class

Table 7.2: Number of Year 7 Pupils who Responded to the Second Survey

| School | Number returned | As % of sample | Number in project ⁴⁷ | Response rate |
|--------------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------------------------|---------------|
| Ysgol Bodedern | 15 | 14% | 20 | 75% |
| Ysgol Bro Ddyfi | 10 | 9% | 11 ⁴⁸ | 100% |
| Ysgol Bro Gwaun | 20 | 19% | 27 | 74% |
| Ysgol Glan Clwyd | 13 | 12% | 16 | 81% |
| Ysgol y Creuddyn | 26 | 24% | 34 | 76% |
| Ysgol Maes Garmon | 0 ⁴⁹ | 0% | 12 | 0% |
| Ysgol Morgan Llwyd | 12 | 11% | 13 | 92% |
| Ysgol Tryfan | 12 | 11% | 18 | 67% |
| Total | 108 | 100% | 151 | 71% |

Table 7.3: Number of Year 9 Pupils who Responded to the Survey

| School | Number returned | As % of sample | Number in project ⁵⁰ | Response rate |
|-------------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------------------------|---------------|
| Ysgol Bodedern | 13 | 28.9% | 19 | 68% |
| Ysgol Glan Clwyd | 13 | 28.9% | 13 | 100% |
| Ysgol Maes Garmon | 19 | 42.2% | 20 | 95% |
| Total | 45 | 100.0% | 52 | 87% |

7.1.6 We present our findings in terms of:

- Pupils' experience of the Welsh language prior to participation (section 6.2);
- Pupils' route to involvement with pilot projects (section 6.3);
- Pupils' impression of intensive language teaching periods (section 6.4);
- Pupils' transition into secondary education (section 6.5);

⁴⁷ Data supplied by the Welsh Language Board

⁴⁸ Only 10 pupils are currently in this class

⁴⁹ The immersion pilot coordinator at Ysgol Maes Garmon was taken ill during the summer term and it was, therefore, not possible to arrange for Year 7 pupils to respond to the second survey

⁵⁰ Data supplied by the Welsh Language Board

- Approaches to teaching other subjects through the medium of Welsh (section 6.7);
- Pupils' use of Welsh in secondary education (section 6.6);
- Pupils' use of Welsh outside education in the wake of participation (section 6.8);
- Pupils' language levels (section 6.9)
- Pupils' attainment in subjects (section 6.10);
- The effects of pilots upon schools (section 6.11)
- Learning resources (section 6.12);
- Practitioner training (section 6.13).

7.1.8 Given that our sample sizes were relatively small, school level data are presented in anonymised form throughout this section.

7.2 Pupils' Experience of the Welsh Language Prior to Participation

7.2.1 The surveys explored the experience pupils had of the Welsh language before participating in pilot projects. This included their exposure to Welsh at primary school and the use they made of the language with friends and at home.

7.2.2 Roughly a third of Year 7 and a quarter of Year 9 survey respondents claimed that one or other of their parents spoke Welsh, and a slightly higher proportion claimed that they had a grandparent who spoke the language. However, focus group discussions with both Year 7 and Year 9 pupils revealed that some of these 'Welsh speaking' parents were themselves learners, for example, "*doing the Wlpan course*", and that less Welsh was actually spoken in pupils' homes than might be implied by respondents' claims about their parents' linguistic abilities. Telephone interviews with parents confirmed this, with a number of non Welsh speaking parents claiming to have either recently completed, or to be currently participating in Welsh lessons. As might be expected, proportionally fewer pupils at schools located in predominantly English

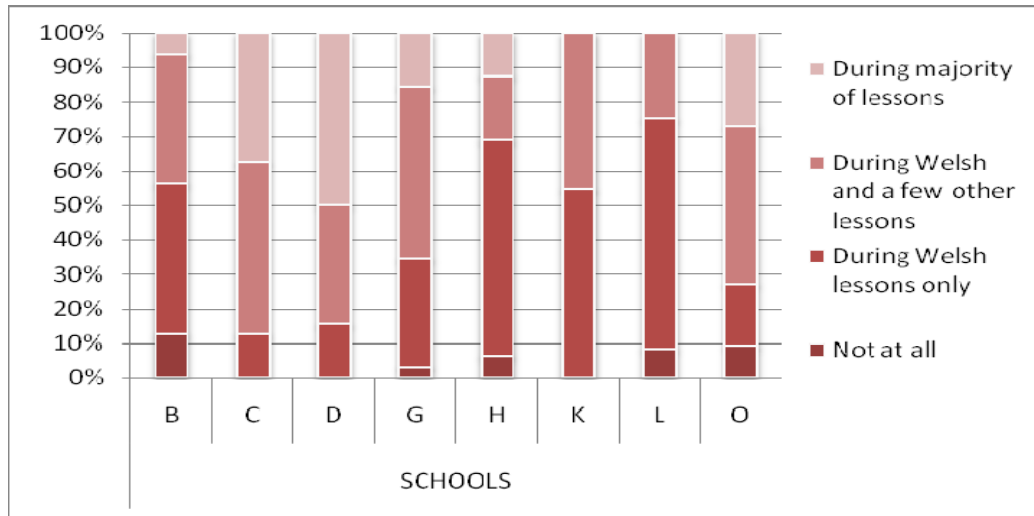
speaking areas claimed to have a Welsh speaking parent or grandparent.

7.2.3 Whilst nearly all Year 7 pupils had come into contact with the Welsh language at primary school (95.5% or 126 of respondents to our first survey of Year 7 pupils), the degree to which they were exposed to it varied significantly. Figure 7.1 illustrates the extent to which pupils at each participating secondary school came into contact with the Welsh language during lessons whilst they were at primary school. Pupils now attending designated Welsh medium secondary schools were less likely to have come into contact with the language outside Welsh lessons whilst at primary school, although this was most pronounced among pupils attending schools in areas where English is the predominant language and, indeed, where English medium (as opposed to bilingual) primary schools exist.

7.2.4 Our focus group discussions with both Year 7 and Year 9 pupils at these schools further suggested that the Welsh they learnt whilst at primary school was limited – *“a little bit ... as a treat”* - and fairly superficial – *“one lesson a week and only things like ‘good morning and how are you’ ”* – with Welsh lessons being delivered by Athrawon Bro in some instances because *“none of our teachers spoke Welsh”*. Interviews undertaken with parents also revealed a mixed response about the use of Welsh whilst at primary school with the majority of parents noting that their children had been exposed to *“some”* Welsh, although of course, few of these parents were in a position to comment upon the depth of that exposure.

7.2.5 In the case of two other Welsh medium secondary schools, a small majority of pupils claimed to have used Welsh in some or most non Welsh (as a subject) lessons. However, focus group discussions with pupils at these schools suggested that the use of Welsh in the classroom was incidental and that the bulk of their primary education was conducted through the medium of English.

Figure 7.1: Use Made of the Welsh Language by Participating Year 7 Pupils whilst at Primary School



7.2.6 At the other end of the spectrum, pupils at bilingual schools generally claimed to have used the language during some or most of their non Welsh language lessons. This reflects one bilingual schools' targeting of pupils from non-Welsh speaking homes, but who had undertaken part of their primary education through the medium of Welsh, and the targeting by another of pupils from homes where some Welsh is spoken, but who are not themselves comfortable users of the language. Pupils at a third bilingual school were less likely to say that they had used much Welsh outside Welsh language lessons. This reflects in part at least, the fact that several immersion pupils were drawn from feeder primary schools, which whilst aspiring to bilingualism, serve predominantly English speaking communities and, in one feeder primary school's case, makes provision for a predominantly English medium education for some pupils.

7.2.7 The use made of Welsh outside the classroom followed similar patterns, with those now attending Welsh medium secondary schools being considerably less likely to have spoken any Welsh to friends or family prior to joining pilot projects, largely reflecting the linguistic profiles of the communities in which they lived.

7.3 Pupils' Route to Involvement with Pilot Projects

7.3.1 The survey asked Year 7 pupils who it was that decided they should participate in pilot projects and which aspects of their Welsh language they hoped to improve as a result of participation. Focus group discussions with Year 9 pupils explored further their motivation for participating in pilot projects.

7.3.2 Almost 70% of respondents to the survey of Year 7 pupils claimed to have decided to join pilot projects themselves, albeit that 40% said that their parents had also had a hand in making the decision. Parents supported this claim with several mentioning that their children had decided to take part in pilots, but that they had supported their children's decisions in the belief that it would lead to their being happier at secondary school.

7.3.3 Parents claimed to have received information about pilots both via their children's primary schools and directly from participating secondary schools. Overall, though, staff at feeder primary schools seemed to have had little influence on pupils' decisions and particularly so the decisions of pupils participating in pilot projects run by three Welsh medium schools. Whilst this may well reflect primary school staff's impartiality, it is also possible that it points to a lack of appreciation among staff at feeder primary schools that pilot projects represent a second entry point to Welsh medium education, or possibly to a lack of credence among primary school staff in the potential benefits of a Welsh medium education. Teachers at feeder primary schools to two bilingual secondary schools⁵¹ running pilots seemed to have played a greater part in influencing pupils' participation in those pilots, though parents were adamant that *"there was never any pressure"* to get involved.

⁵¹ Pupils at a third bilingual school did not respond to questions relating to participation in intensive language learning periods, an element of which explored pupils' motivation in joining pilot projects

7.3.4 The majority of parents had visited the schools in question before making firm decisions about their children's secondary education. One parent commented that the opportunity to meet the parents of children who had participated in previous years' immersion pilots had been of real value to her - *"this put any concerns we had to rest and we could ask them questions and saw from them that [name of child] could do this"*. Parents' motives in supporting their children's' participation in immersion pilots included:

- Enabling their children to *"carry on with Welsh education" and "to have a second language"*;
- Regarding the ability to speak Welsh as *"an extra skill"* which would *"give him a head start"* and lead to a potentially *"better career"*;
- Helping *"to integrate [the child] into the community"*;
- School related factors such as *"good facilities at school"* and the *"school made us feel at ease"*.

7.3.5 Broadly speaking, comments made by both Year 7 and Year 9 pupils during focus group discussions echoed the findings of our surveys of Year 7 pupils and of parents, albeit that their decisions also seem to have been influenced by knowing people attending participating schools or by having siblings at particular schools. Comments made by focus group participants about how it was decided that they should participate in immersion courses and progress to schools running pilot projects included:

- *"I liked the school when I came to have a look around"*;
- *"My mum decided ... but I was very happy to go along with it ... Dad wasn't keen at all ... he's English ... but he's very happy about it now"*;
- *"My parents wanted me to learn Welsh"*;
- *"My friend from next door came to the school as a learner"*;
- *"I know people in Year 9 and they told me this was a really good school"*;

- *“I have family in this school in the 6th form and in Years 9 and 8 and I wanted to do my education in Welsh ... it was quite an easy decision really”.*

7.3.6 Overwhelmingly, Year 7 pupils hoped to improve their spoken (83%) Welsh, their reading (77%) and their writing skills (76%) as a result of participating in pilot projects. Over two thirds (69%) also hoped to become more confident users of the language. Participants in both Year 7 and Year 9 focus group discussions echoed these sentiments, making the following comments:

- *“I saw it as a chance to be fluent within two years. I wanted to learn Welsh”;*
- *“It was a chance to learn a new language”;*
- *“It’s good for the future ... it’s cool to speak two languages”;*
- *“I wanted to learn more about Wales and Welsh”;*
- *“I think that speaking the language of the country makes you more Welsh”.*

7.3.7 Both Year 7 and Year 9 focus group participants identified a handful of other reasons for participating in pilot projects and opting for schools running pilot projects, albeit that some of these benefits may well have been identified post hoc. Reasons given included:

- *“Because my friend from primary school was coming on it”;*
- *It was a way of “getting new friends from all over [the county] and not just [the town]”;*
- *“This is a small school and everyone knows each other ... and it’s easier to get into sports teams here”;*
- *“This school has good marks in exams, so my mother wanted me to come here”;*
- *“I wanted to come because I sing and this school has a good choir”.*

7.3.8 A number of focus group participants as well as parents pointed to the potential career benefits of learning Welsh, although rather

interestingly, Year 7 pupils more readily identified job related reasons for learning Welsh. Comments made included:

- *“I decided myself that it would be the best thing to do and that it will help me get work in Wales”;*
- *“I want to be a fireman and it’s better if you can speak Welsh”;*
- *“I want to be a lawyer and Welsh is important”;*
- *“If you live in Wales, you have a better chance of getting a good job if you speak Welsh ... that and I just wanted to speak Welsh really”.*

7.3.9 Some Year 7 and Year 9 pupils at two Welsh medium schools claimed that their decision to participate in pilot projects had been influenced by a desire to get into those schools as opposed to other local options. Comments made by pupils included:

- *“Mum and Dad wanted me to come here ... and I went to have a look around [alternative school] ... I didn’t like it ... the people who go there are Chavs”;*
- *“The lessons here were better because there were only about 20 others in the class ... if I’d gone to [alternative school], there would have been about 38 in a class”;*
- *“I didn’t want to have to go to [alternative school]”;*
- *“The alternative ... [alternative school] is very big”.*

7.3.10 One parent also claimed that an alternative local school *“wouldn’t have been right for him”* and that she saw her son’s participation in an immersion pilot as a means of *“stretching him ... he was ahead of his class at primary school ... I knew he had it in him to cope with another language”*. She added that she *“liked the idea”* of the school in question, not least because *“it’s strict”* and it *“gets good grades”*.

7.3.11 On the whole, both pupils and parents felt that they had been given sufficient information about pilots before making the decision to join, and most focus group participants were clear that they had made the right decision in opting for the schools they had chosen – *“it’s a brilliant*

school". The only regret which some pupils had was that opting for Welsh medium schools had parted them from friends:

- *"I had to leave all my best friends";*
- *"We came here in singles rather than in groups";*
- *"It has been difficult to leave friends";*
- *"It was only me and one other that came here [from the primary school]"*.

7.4 Pupils' Impression of Intensive Language Learning Experiences

7.4.1 The survey asked Year 7 pupils about the kinds of activities which they undertook during their periods of intensive language learning, what aspects of the experiences they found most useful, the extent to which they enjoyed the experience and the effect which participation had upon their confidence in using the Welsh language.

7.4.2 Activities undertaken by pupils during intensive language learning periods included going on trips, attending residential courses, participating in sporting activities and games, performing dramas, learning to sing in Welsh and participating in arts and crafts activities, including in some cases, producing a *"community paper"*.

7.4.3 All respondents to the Year 7 survey claimed to have become more confident users of Welsh as a result of participation in intensive language learning periods.

7.4.4 Survey respondents pointed to formal and informal aspects of these activities which they felt had helped them to develop their Welsh language skills, including:

- Being introduced to vocabulary, language patterns and rules - *"using a Welsh dictionary"*, learning about the *"past tense"* and *"times and dates"* in Welsh;

- Drilling and repetition - *“I think that the way that our teacher went over things so that we could understand and that we didn't get confused”* was good;
- The opportunity to practice speaking Welsh to teachers, friends and older pupils at the schools - *“we did a lot more conversations so that improved my Welsh”* and *“all the Year 7 and Year 8 Welsh speakers and learners who help me by trying to speak Welsh to me too”*;
- Studying other subjects through Welsh - *“we did a taster of different classes every day and you learn words in every lesson”*;
- Playing games in Welsh - *“playing Welsh games and having all the teachers speaking Welsh so I can pick it up”*;
- Using Welsh in informal situations - *“when we went on our residential trip to Glan Llyn I learned much more Welsh than I knew”*.

7.4.5 The majority of respondents to the Year 7 survey claimed to have enjoyed their intensive language learning periods, although those from Welsh medium schools were slightly more likely to have enjoyed their experiences *“very much”*.

7.4.6 Participants in Year 9 pupil focus groups also claimed to have enjoyed their intensive language learning periods, particularly trips and craft and play activities, albeit that some found the experience *“a bit scary”*. There was also a widespread consensus that *“it was good to get used to the school and know our way about”* and the experience also provided an opportunity to make friends with other pupils who would be starting secondary school proper with them.

7.4.7 The overwhelming majority of parents interviewed believed that their children had enjoyed the intensive language learning period: one commented *“he loved it”* and another *“he only had positive things to say”*. Several parents were aware that the course had been based upon *“fun activities”* and that as a result the child *“wasn't even aware of*

how much he was learning". It was clear, however, that different pupils found the course more or less challenging, depending upon their previous experience of Welsh and their ability.

7.4.8 From the parents' perspective the benefits and value of their children attending the intensive language learning period were fairly consistent and included:

- Engendering confidence among pupils in their Welsh language skills - *"it boosted her confidence incredibly"*;
- Proving to pupils and their parents that the pupil was capable of coping with a Welsh medium education - *"that she was able enough to do things through the Welsh medium"*;
- Familiarising pupils with the school and teachers *"she knew her way around the school and what to expect"*;
- Providing pupils with an *"ice breaker with kids in the same boat"* and enabling them to develop new friendships before actually starting secondary school - *"she buddied up with somebody on the bus each morning ... this was the only thing [name of child] was worried about"*.
- *Preparing pupils for the start of Year 7 - "she was confident and excited to start school"*.

7.5 The Transition into Secondary Education

7.5.1 The survey sought to establish how likely Year 7 pupils would have been to progress into participating Welsh medium secondary schools, or to opt for a Welsh medium education within bilingual schools, had the opportunity to participate in intensive language learning and immersion pilots not been available to them. It also explored the fears that pupils had in entering Welsh medium secondary education.

7.5.2 On the whole, participants in both Year 7 and Year 9 focus groups felt that they had made the right decision in opting for the pilot projects and

the secondary schools they had chosen – *“if I did it again, I wouldn’t do anything differently”*.

7.5.3 Roughly one third of Year 7 respondents from bilingual schools said that they would have opted for a different school if the opportunities offered by pilot projects had not been available. Of those who would have opted for the same school in any event, most would have progressed into bilingual streams rather than Welsh medium ones and, in reality, undertaken much of their learning through the medium of English. A greater proportion of respondents from one bilingual school thought that they would have gone elsewhere, reflecting the proximity of another predominantly English medium school a short distance away. Year 9 pupils at the same school thought it more likely that they would have studied through the medium of English were it not for the pilot project, even if they had opted for the school in question.

7.5.4 A minority of pupils from three Welsh medium schools thought that they would have opted for the schools they chose in the absence of pilot projects, whilst over half the respondents from two other Welsh medium schools thought that they would have gone to those schools anyway, possibly reflecting in one school’s case at least, a long standing tradition of delivering immersion provision. By contrast, only a small minority of Year 9 pupils from one of these schools responding to our survey said that they would have opted for the Welsh medium school they chose, possibly suggesting that they were, with the benefit of experience, more realistic about the challenges of coping with a Welsh medium education in the absence of additional support.

7.5.5 The parents of pupils at Welsh medium schools also tended to think that their children would have not have gone to the schools they chose in the absence of immersion pilots, whilst the parents of pupils at bilingual schools generally felt that their children would have found it difficult to cope with a Welsh medium education without the additional support provided by the schools concerned.

7.5.6 More than three quarters of Year 7 respondents had been nervous about studying Welsh and/or studying through the medium of Welsh. This was less pronounced among pupils attending two bilingual schools, however, possibly because a greater proportion of these respondents had been exposed to the Welsh language and Welsh medium education at primary school. The majority of pupils at a third bilingual school claimed to have had some qualms whilst by contrast, less than half the pupils attending one Welsh medium school did, despite the fact that, as already shown in Figure 6.1 above, most respondents had limited experience of learning through the medium of Welsh beforehand.

7.5.7 Pupils' main concern was not being able to do their homework, which is not surprising, given that a large proportion of respondents did not have Welsh speaking parents to help them. They were also nervous that they might not be able to understand teachers, which ties in to disquiet about not being able to keep up in lessons. Other issues which individual respondents identified were *"speaking Welsh all the time with my friends"*, struggling to *"speak back in the right way"* and struggling to *"do my exams in Welsh"*. It is, of course arguable that despite the best efforts of schools to manage pupils' transition from the primary to the secondary sector, a degree of nervousness and, indeed, excitement is inevitable among all pupils and not merely those participating in immersion pilots.

7.5.8 Participants in Year 9 focus groups also admitted to being unsure about the prospect of entering Welsh medium education. Comments made included:

- *"I was unsure about learning Welsh ... whether I'd be able to do it ... but it's turned out OK in the end";*
- *"I was unsure to start with about homework ... how much help I'd be able to get from my parents".*

7.5.9 Participants in two Year 9 focus group discussions also pointed out that moving into Welsh medium schools meant that they had been separated from their circle of primary school friends in making the transition – *“it was only me and one other that came here”*. Having said that, contributors generally felt that the intensive language learning period at the end of Year 6 had been very helpful in enabling them to become acquainted with other pupils in the same boat as themselves – *“yes, it was a big change ... but you make new friends very quickly”*.

7.5.10 Most parents claimed to have had some qualms about their children moving into Welsh medium secondary education, but that these had been short lived, generally thanks to reassuring dialogue with staff, often Head Teachers, at participating schools. Parents’ concerns mainly related to whether their children would be able to keep up with their peers, whether they would cope with the work, whether they would ask for help when they needed it and how they would cope with homework (especially at GCSE level) without parental support. Having been reassured by participating school staff, parents had generally found the decision to support their children’s participation in immersion pilots fairly easy to make and some commented that, with the benefit of experience, their concerns had been *“unfounded as there haven’t been any problems”*.

7.6 Approaches to Teaching other Subjects through the Medium of Welsh

7.6.1 Each of the schools running immersion pilots took a slightly different approach to teaching and supporting immersion pupils, reflecting wider arrangements within individual establishments, the slightly differing philosophies towards immersion adopted by particular schools and the level of immersion pupils’ Welsh language skills upon entry.

7.6.2 During Year 7, most schools offered immersion pupils additional Welsh lessons, although the approach to freeing up time to accommodate this differed in that some schools deferred the introduction of subjects such as modern foreign languages whilst others delivered fewer lessons in certain subjects.

7.6.3 At first, immersion pupils were generally taught using a mixture of Welsh and English, though the use of English was phased out gradually over the first year or so, until lessons were taught entirely through the medium of Welsh by the end of Year 8. In supporting immersion pupils' language development, subject teachers employed strategies such as:

- Building up strong relationships between teachers and immersion pupils from the outset through, for example, key teachers accompanying immersion pupils on various out of school activities;
- Introducing key words in Welsh at the beginning of lessons and revisiting them at the end;
- Using parallel Welsh and English text books, with an increasing emphasis upon using the Welsh version as time progresses;
- Making use of bilingual resources (e.g. aide memoirs of mathematical terminology or lesson specific booklets which follow the curriculum), which in many instances had been produced by individual teachers during time allocated to them to do so as part of pilot projects;
- Reinforcing new vocabulary/terminology through the use of pictures in whiteboard presentations;
- Displaying key words/terms on the walls of classrooms to provide pupils with easily accessible mnemonics;
- "*Gesturing and pulling faces*" in order to reinforce that being said;
- Closing lessons with a series of questions which demanded linguistically simple responses, but reinforced vocabulary introduced during lessons as well as vocabulary with which pupils should already be familiar;

- Being *“careful about the type of homework”* that was given in the early stages of immersion;
- Reminding pupils of key terminology in advance of examinations;
- Providing additional support to immersion pupils on a one-to-one basis, *“usually related to understanding”*. One practitioner commented that *“some will come to us to ask ... but it’s important that we go to them ... it works both ways”*;
- Encouraging mainstream pupils to support immersion pupils as they were integrated into mainstream classes;
- Moving immersion pupils to sit with different people in class so that they got a range of experiences;
- Consciously reviewing immersion pupils’ performance more frequently than other pupils’;
- Building up relationships with immersion pupils’ parents, particularly during the six week intensive language learning period at the end of Year 6.

7.6.4 A recurring theme among teachers at some Welsh medium schools was that, in reality, the needs of immersion pupils do not differ too much from those of some mainstream pupils - *“a high proportion of other [mainstream] pupils come from non Welsh speaking homes. The only difference is that they were able to start education through Welsh earlier on by going to a Welsh primary. In that sense, the home environment is really no different for some of these immersion pupils than it is for some mainstream pupils”*. To some extent, this meant that teachers at participating schools were already aware of the need to adapt the language used according to pupils’ language levels. However, teaching immersion pupils did require them to go further, to the extent that some saw themselves as quasi-language teachers - *“sometimes I feel as if I’m drilling pupils in these terms ... effectively teaching them a second language ... but [subject] comes first”*. Subject teachers at one school commented on the usefulness of guidance on syntax and the vocabulary to be used which the immersion pilot Co-ordinator, her predecessor and one of the Local Education Authority’s

Athrawon Bro had produced. Indeed, it was thought that this might be a useful resource for other schools to use.

7.6.5 An obvious difference between pilots was the point at which immersion pupils were integrated into mainstream classes. One school stood out from the others in that it assimilated immersion pupils into mainstream classes from the beginning of Year 7, playing down the immersion approach – *“we make a point not to make a show of it”* – in order to naturalise the use of Welsh in the classroom.

7.6.6 However, most schools had established separate registration classes for pilot project participants upon their arrival in Year 7. On the whole, these classes were smaller than mainstream classes, which afforded immersion pupils a significant level of additional support as they got to grips with learning Welsh and learning through the medium of Welsh. Pilot coordinators tended to serve as form teachers for discrete immersion classes and a key part of their role was either to accompany immersion pupils to subject lessons in order to provide them with language related support, or to work closely with subject teachers to ensure that lessons and learning materials were suitable for immersion pupils and to pick up on additional support needs which individual pupils might have. In some schools, it was clear that pilot coordinators formed a strong bond with immersion pupils and strove to create a *“homely”* environment, more akin to primary school settings, within immersion class form rooms as a means to putting immersion pupils at ease and *“giving them confidence to cope with a Welsh medium education”*.

7.6.7 Pupils at all participating schools were taught Physical Education alongside their peers from the beginning of Year 7, without obvious additional support from coordinators. The point at which pupils were assimilated into mainstream classes in other subjects varied from school to school, though most sought to integrate pupils for *“practical”* subjects such as Art and Design and Technology either during Year 7

or at least by the start of Year 8, with the aim of assimilating pupils fully for all subjects by the beginning of Year 9. Immersion pupils were not necessarily assimilated en bloc: some pupils were moved into mainstream sets for certain subjects earlier than others in order to stretch pupils with a flair for particular subjects, whilst also continuing to provide the additional support necessary to others.

7.6.8 Of course, only five schools had been running pilot projects long enough to have experience of immersion pupils in Year 8, and only three schools had experience of Year 9 immersion pupils. Whilst the pilots that had been running for three years or more had generally settled down into established patterns of delivery, schools running newer pilots were still learning from experience and adapting their approaches from one year to the next. One school, for example, had integrated its first group of immersion pupils into a mainstream class from the beginning of Year 7, but had established a discrete registration group for its second cohort of immersion pupils the following year. The school in question was in the throes of discussing the relative merits of these two approaches in order to adapt the approach taken with 2008/09 Year 7 immersion pupils. The emerging view was that the school should assimilate immersion pupils within mainstream classes sooner rather than later in order that they “*see and accept Welsh as the language of the classroom*”, recognising that it can be “*difficult to get them to use Welsh as an [discrete] immersion group*” rather than as part of a class where Welsh is used more naturally. Interestingly, this view contrasted with that at another school, which having come to the end of its first year of piloting, felt that immersion pupils should remain part of a separate, supported registration group in Year 8 and possibly into Year 9, for fear that their premature assimilation into mainstream classes might “*undermine what’s been achieved already*” and in order to maintain momentum until the end of Key Stage 3 in the “*hope that they’ll choose to follow subjects in Welsh for GCSE ... Daearyddiaeth instead of Geography*”.

7.6.9 This clearly points to the experimental and emergent nature of pilots and, indeed, even among schools with longer established pilots, there seemed to be some scope for adaptation and improvement. For example, teachers at one school which had been running pilots for more than three years felt that there might be merit in assimilating immersion pupils sooner than it hitherto had been doing, not least in order to socialise immersion pupils within their mainstream peer group at an early stage - *“basically, they have to go through it all again in Year 9 ... it really is almost like going to a new school over again”* – and providing immersion pupils with a sense of what is expected within the mainstream *“it would be a help for them to see the high standards ... they don’t get the full experience until Year 9”*. This view was echoed by pupils participating in a focus group who clearly had an appetite for rather more rapid ‘mainstreaming’– *“a few more lessons with the main groups would be good [i.e. in Years 7 and 8] ... to help us be able to make friends and prepare us for when we go into the full year in Year 9”* and *“I think we could join the others earlier in the modern languages like French ... we were doing exactly the same things as them but we were still a separate group”*. Clearly, careful consideration would need to be given to individual pupils’ language skills and support needs before any wholesale shift to the earlier mainstreaming of pupils could take place.

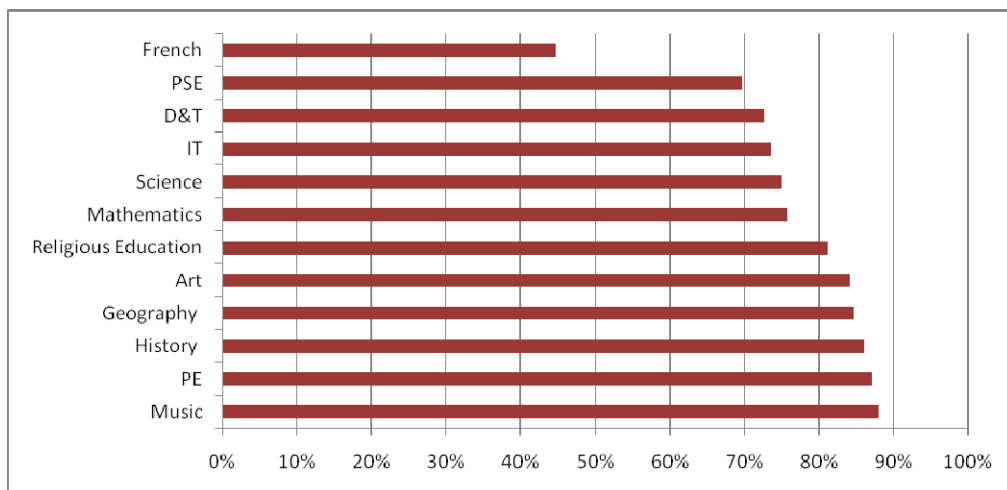
7.7 The Use of Welsh in Secondary Education

7.7.1 Our surveys asked Year 7 pupils which subjects they were studying through the medium of Welsh and the extent to which they enjoyed doing so. They also explored the kinds of additional support which pupils received to help them cope with Welsh medium schoolwork and what aspects of that help was most useful to them.

7.7.2 Figure 7.2 shows the proportion of Year 7 pupils claiming to study particular subjects through the medium of Welsh. It is, perhaps, a little

surprising that language intensive humanity subjects (Geography, History and Religious Education) are among those which the highest proportions of pupils claim to be studying through Welsh, whilst fewer respondents claimed to be using Welsh for less language intensive subjects such as Design and Technology and IT. In reality, of course, teachers generally use a mixture of Welsh and English in teaching Year 7 immersion pupils and the claims made are more likely to reflect pupils' perceptions of the dominant language in any given classroom. Focus group discussions with Year 7 pupils towards the end of their first year at secondary school suggested that by then, Welsh was perceived as the language of the classroom.

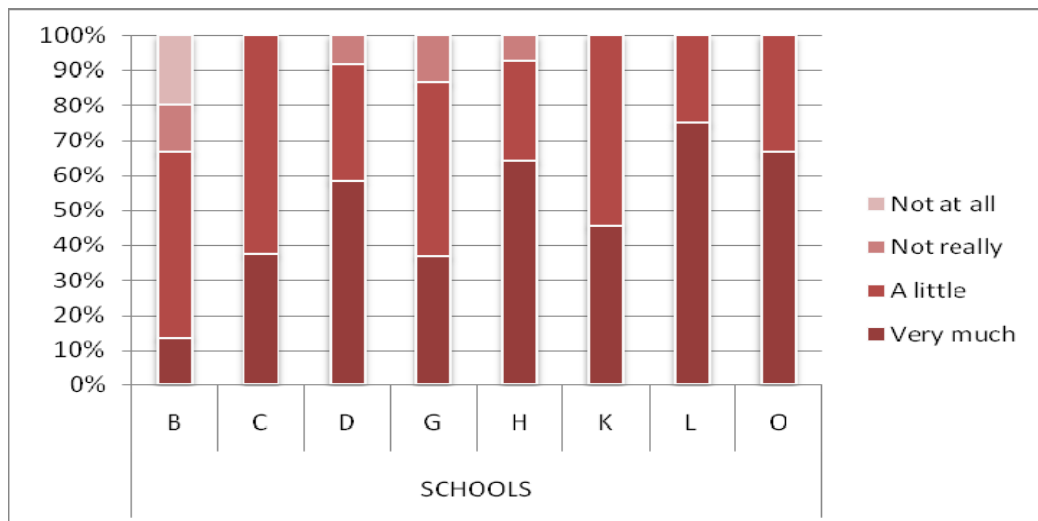
Figure 7.2: Proportion of Year 7 Pupils Studying Particular Subjects through the Medium of Welsh



7.7.3 It is also notable that three schools defer teaching French/Modern Foreign Languages to enable pupils to concentrate on developing their Welsh language skills first. This means that the fact that fewer than 50% of respondents claimed to be studying French through the medium of Welsh does not indicate that French is being taught to them through English: it merely indicates that some pupils were not studying French at all at the time of the survey.

7.7.4 As illustrated by Figure 7.3, the vast majority (93%) of Year 7 survey respondents said that they were enjoying studying these subjects in Welsh, although pupils at two bilingual schools seemed marginally less enamoured with the experience, than their counterparts elsewhere.

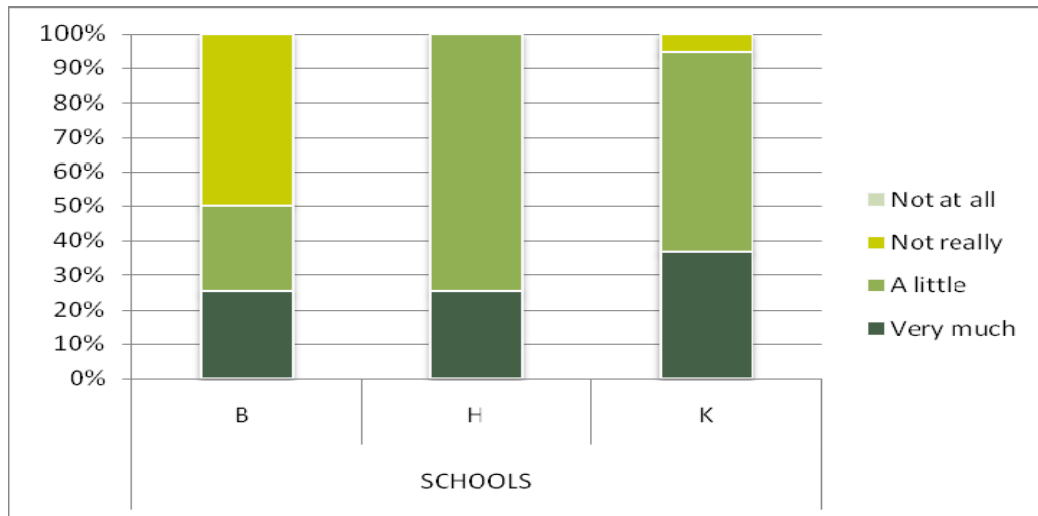
Figure 7.3: Year 7 Pupils Enjoyment of Studying through Welsh⁵²



7.7.5 Figure 7.4 shows that some 80% of respondents to our survey of Year 9 pupils also enjoyed learning through the medium of Welsh, although their enthusiasm was, as might be expected as the novelty wore off after three years in secondary education, a little more tempered. Of course, a degree of caution needs to be exercised in interpreting these findings in that it is possible that some respondents would have responded in the same manner had they been studying in English.

⁵² These data were drawn from the second survey of Year 7 pupils

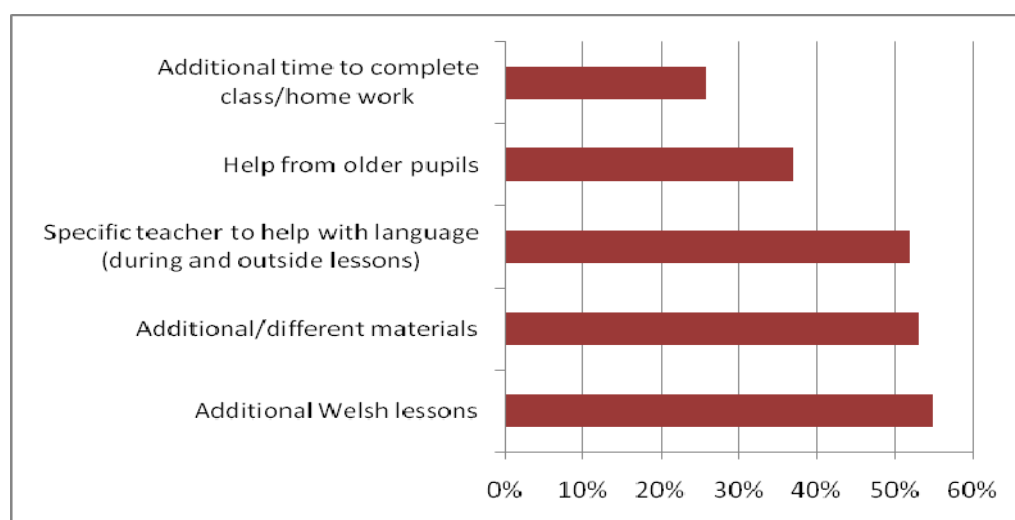
Figure 7.4: Year 9 Pupils Enjoyment of Studying through Welsh



7.7.6 Pupils at one bilingual school were again less enthusiastic than their counterparts at other schools, and it is notable that some 50% of them claimed not to really enjoy studying through the medium of Welsh very much. Discussions with a small group of Year 9 pupils from this school suggested that immersion pupils may not have been as firmly wedded to the concept of a Welsh medium education as their counterparts at other schools. The reasons behind this relative ambivalence were not entirely clear, but may have owed something to the low key approach which the school had adopted to immersion: pupils' linguistic achievements were not celebrated to the same degree as they were in other schools, and pupils may not, therefore, have been quite as inspired by the immersion experience as their counterparts elsewhere. Indeed, it is notable that all focus group participants said that they were happy at the school and none felt that they had made the wrong decision in opting for that particular establishment, thus confuting any suggestion of dissatisfaction with the school more generally. There may be some merit in exploring further the reasons behind this apparent anomaly in that it could provide important lessons both for the school in question and for other schools considering the introduction of immersion pilots.

7.7.7 Figure 7.5 below shows the proportion of Year 7 pupils claiming to receive various types of additional support to help them cope with a Welsh medium education. Survey respondents were most likely to say that they received additional Welsh lessons and several made the point that these additional lessons were particularly useful – *“I think that having additional Welsh lessons in small groups is good for us”* – a theme that was developed further by one pupil during a focus group discussions when he commented that *“we’re [immersion pupils] catching up with the others now”* because of the additional Welsh language lessons provided. Pupils at bilingual schools were less likely to recognise that they received additional Welsh language lessons, possibly reflecting a perception that they were part of the standard offer at those schools.

Figure 7.5: Proportion of Year 7 Pupils Saying that they Received Additional Support to Come to Terms Welsh Medium Education



7.7.8 Rather surprisingly, only a little over half of Year 7 respondents recognised that they received additional help with language issues from a specific teacher, possibly reflecting a lack of appreciation of the dual role played by some pilot coordinators in terms of teaching immersion groups Welsh as a subject as well as accompanying them to or supporting them with the use of Welsh in other lessons. This aspect of

support was clearly valued by survey respondents – *“the most useful thing is Miss [teacher’s name] helping us with Welsh in our subjects”*.

7.7.9 Other comments made by respondents to the Year 7 survey reinforced further the importance attached to support provided, whether or not it was acknowledged as something additional or peculiar to immersion pupils. The comments made highlight the key role played by teaching staff in nurturing pupils’ language skills and building their confidence to use Welsh:

- *“The teachers know we’re learners”*
- Teachers *“explain things in Welsh and English”*;
- *“If we get something wrong and say [that we do not understand] she doesn’t shout, she just helps”*;
- *“Knowing that a teacher was always be there if you were stuck with something they could always help”*;
- Allowing pupils who are struggling to submit homework in English so as not to undermine pupils’ confidence in particular subjects;
- *“In choir the teacher speaks only Welsh ... that helps a lot”*.

7.7.10 Comments made by Year 7 respondents also pointed to the importance of specific types of support, including extra curricular activities:

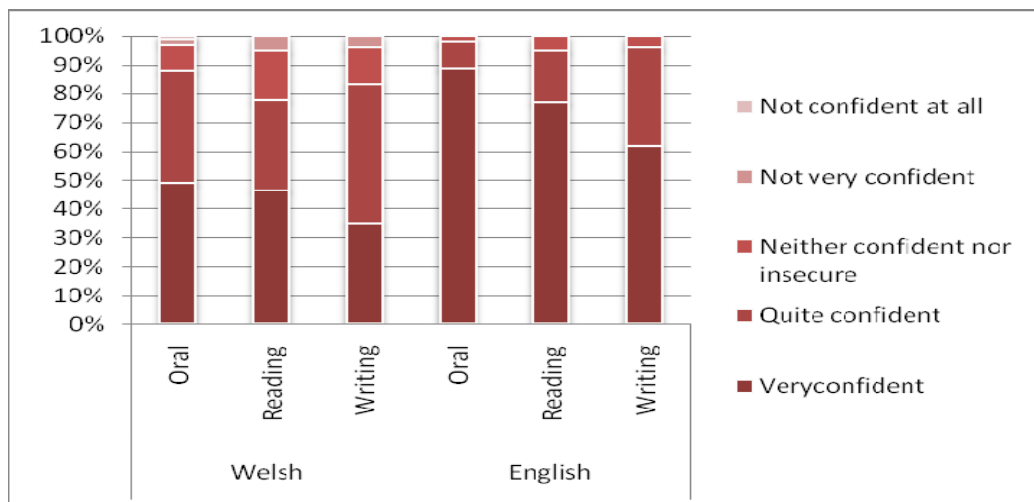
- *“Acting things out in the class helps me to remember things ... and it’s fun”*;
- *“Help with spelling”*
- *“The mutations table”*;
- *“The past tense”*;
- *“Reading with [pupils from] Year 11”*;
- *“Homework club”*;
- *“Writing scripts ... because I use my new language to write scripts”*
- And, of course, *“trips”!*

7.7.11 Respondents to the first survey of Year 7 pupils pointed to the importance of *“making friends”* early on in the immersion process and one rather perceptively observed that *“I think that having fun helped a*

lot with getting a positive view of speaking “Welsh”. Respondents to the second survey of Year 7 pupils also highlighted the importance of playing “games in the classroom” and having the opportunity to “speak Welsh with friends and the teacher” in order to develop their language skills.

7.7.12 We asked Year 7 and Year 9 pupils how confident they were in their Welsh and English language skills. Year 7 pupils (who were surveyed at the end of their first year at secondary school) claimed a remarkable level of confidence in their skills with 88% saying that they were either very or quite confident in speaking Welsh and only slightly lower proportions expressing similar level of confidence in their reading (77%) and writing (83%) skills. Year 9 pupils were a little more tempered in their responses, although over 50% of respondents said that they were either very or quite confident in speaking Welsh and some 70% said that they were very or quite confident in reading and writing Welsh.

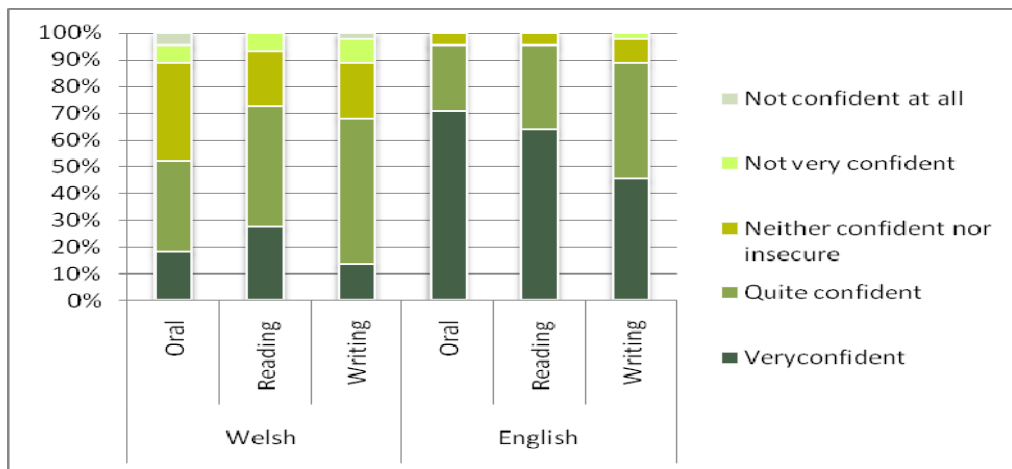
Figure 7.6: Year 7 Pupils’ Confidence in their Language Skills



7.7.13 Whilst Year 7 pupils appear to be more confident overall than Year 9 pupils, this probably reflects, to a degree at least, the very high levels of support which Year 7 pupils receive during their first year in secondary education and a more mature assessment of their skill level

by Year 9 pupils, in light of their greater experience. Whilst it would be dangerous to draw conclusions about possible trends in participating pupils' levels of confidence from the rather simplistic snapshot provided by this study, schools running immersion pilots may wish to consider what happens to participating pupils' confidence levels over time and what effects any changes thereto might have upon pupils' educational experience.

Figure 7.7: Year 9 Pupils' Confidence in their Language Skills



7.7.14 Not surprisingly, given the numbers of Welsh language learners involved in pilots, respondents to both Year 7 and Year 9 surveys were considerably more confident in their English oral, reading and writing skills. However, some contributors to Year 9 focus group discussions claimed that their Welsh language skills were superior to those of some their (mainstream) classmates – *“we use better language patterns when we answer in class ... others just use slang and stuff ... or they add ‘io’ to the end of words to make them sound Welsh”* – suggesting that the confidence they had was well founded and fairly solid.

7.7.15 Parents were overwhelmingly happy with the progress made by their children in the Welsh language, albeit that most were not in a position to judge their children's Welsh language skills for themselves. Some parents found it very difficult to believe that their children could have

achieved so much in so little time and the comments made by parents included:

- *“His Welsh is excellent and his report is great and he’s in the top set in Welsh”;*
- *“He’s made excellent progress - it comes naturally to him now”;*
- *“He’s like a sponge and absorbs everything – I can’t believe his progress”;*
- *“A year ago she couldn’t read in Welsh at all and now she is doing very well indeed”.*
- *“She was conversing with my Manager in Welsh the other day and had no problem”;*
- *“I have seen her converse with the Head Teacher of her primary school and he said that her Welsh was excellent”;*

7.7.16 As discussed earlier, the overwhelming majority of respondents to our second survey of Year 7 pupils claimed that they enjoyed learning through the medium of Welsh and, although more tempered in their responses, the majority of Year 9 pupils also enjoyed doing so. Our focus group discussions with both Year 7 and Year 9 pupils bore this out, but also highlighted a few points worthy of consideration.

7.7.17 Some contributors to Year 7 focus groups felt that learning Welsh had helped them to pick up Modern Foreign Languages more easily. Indeed, there was a sense whereby some contributors’ success in learning Welsh seemed to have helped instil a belief in them that they were *“good at languages”*, thus enthusing them to learn others. Other contributors were more circumspect, however and argued that learning a Modern Foreign Language alongside Welsh was more difficult than learning one language at a time would be. Indeed, one respondent to the Year 7 survey commented that *“I don’t quite know whether the French teacher is speaking to me in French or in Welsh ... it’s difficult to know for sure”*.

7.7.18 Contributors to Year 7 focus groups were more likely than their Year 9 counterparts to claim that humanities subjects were more difficult to tackle in Welsh. Here, Year 7 contributors spoke of being confused by having to relearn terminology which they had previously come across in English, *“like bwa hir”* and *“the names of places”*. In other cases, they claimed to find entirely new terms difficult to remember - *“the different religions are really hard to learn in Welsh ... there are loads of them and I get really confused”*, although it is arguable, of course, that pupils in mainstream classes would face the same challenges when presented with new terms.

7.7.20 A number of contributors from both cohorts also thought that Maths and Science were more challenging in Welsh, although it was not altogether clear whether the difficulties those individuals experienced related more to problems with the concepts underpinning these subjects as opposed to linguistic difficulties per se. Indeed, one particularly perceptive Year 7 focus group contributor commented that *“we’ve already been settled in Maths ... in Maths you learn Maths full stop ... the Welsh doesn’t make it harder”*. It is worth noting that, like immersion pupils in general, participants in focus group discussions were of varying levels of ability. Furthermore, as will be seen in section 7.9, immersion pupils appear to fare marginally better than their whole year groups in Mathematics and Science, both in terms of achievement and ‘distance travelled’ at Key Stage 3.

7.7.21 There was a sense within both Year 7 and Year 9 focus group discussions that pupils’ perceptions of individual teachers played an important part in colouring their view of the ease with which particular subjects could be learnt through the medium of Welsh.

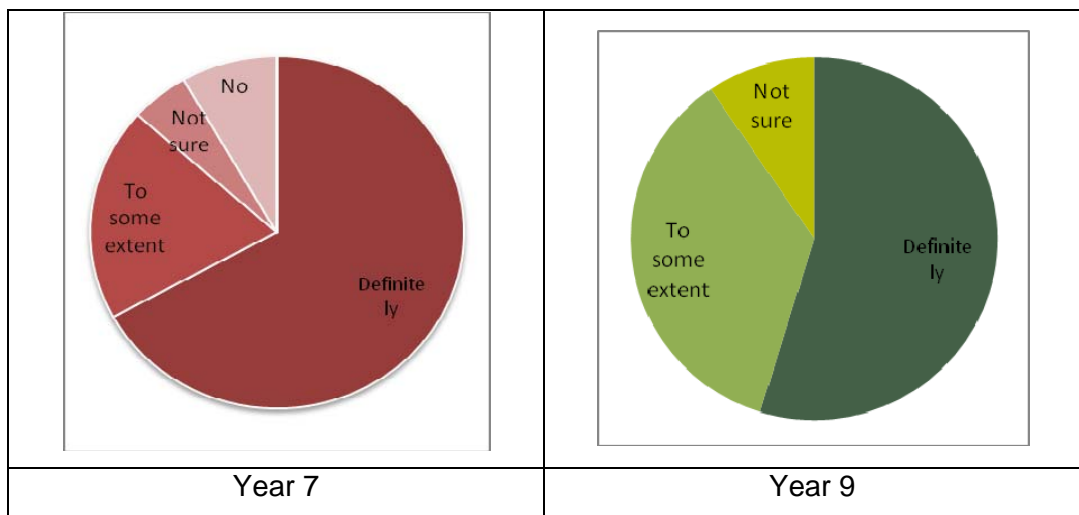
7.7.22 The vast majority (83%) of respondents to our survey of Year 7 pupils said that they had no real worries about studying through the medium of Welsh, although some did express concerns about their ability to understand things, particularly in test and examination settings. Allied

to this, just under 50% of Year 7 pupils thought that they might fare better if they studied some subjects through the medium of English, though it is notable that pupils at two bilingual schools were considerably more liable to express that view. Just over 50% the respondents to our survey of Year 9 pupils also felt that they might have done better in some subjects, and more particularly Science, had they studied through the medium of English. To some extent, these sentiments were echoed during focus group discussions, with Science again being identified as the trickiest subject to study through the medium of Welsh. However, focus group contributors did seem a little less convinced that they would have done better had they studied in English – *“at the start I thought this a bit ... but my grades have picked up so I’m quite happy now”*. Another argued that he could not say with any certainty whether it was easier or more difficult to learn through the medium of Welsh because he had no experience of studying at a secondary level through the medium of English. In the same vein, it is of course impossible to know whether studying through the medium of English would have made any material difference to their academic performance in reality. However, it is notable that although almost 50% of pupils thought that they might do better if they were to study in English, only 17% of them expressed any concerns about pursuing their education through the medium of Welsh.

7.7.23 Parents also found it difficult to say whether their children would have done any better or any worse had they studied in English, though they tended to feel that it made no difference - *“I’m not sure ... I think that children that are bright will get on whatever the language”*. A handful of parents argued that their children might have fared worse had they opted for an English medium education because studying in Welsh had stretched them and engendered *“a better work ethic because he’s had to work harder and study more”*. Some parents also pointed to non-academic benefits to their children as a result of opting for immersion pilots – *“he’s at the right school ... he might not have followed the right path somewhere else”*.

7.7.24 Figure 7.8 shows that the extent to which respondents to both the Year 7 and Year 9 surveys felt that they had made the right decision in opting to pursue their secondary education through the medium of Welsh. In both cases it shows that the majority of pupils are content with the choice they made, albeit that a small minority in both cases feels otherwise. All the parents interviewed also felt that their children and they had made the right decision.

Figure 7.8: Pupils’ Assessment of Whether They Had Made the Right Decision in Opting for Welsh Medium Secondary Education



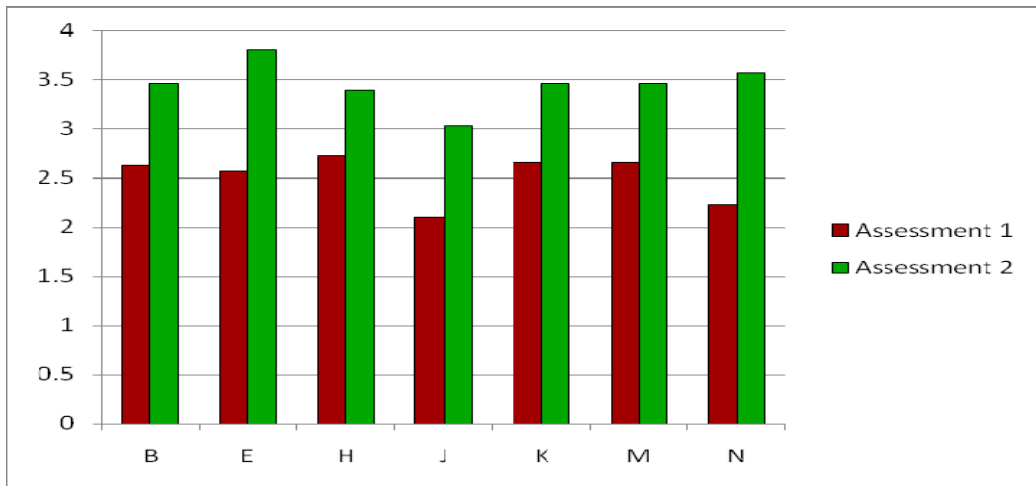
7.7.25 Several participants in Year 9 focus group discussions commented that they had siblings at the same school and one contributor claimed that his parents had opted to send his younger brother to a Welsh medium primary school in preparation for a Welsh medium secondary education.

7.8 Changes in Participating Pupils’ Language Levels

7.8.1 From the outset, the WLB has sought to assess pupils’ language levels upon entry to pilot projects and at the end of their participation in (generally six week) periods of intensive language learning. Figure 7.9 compares the composite scores achieved by 2007/08 Year 9 pupils in

Welsh language tests at the start and then at the end of their participation in five or six week intensive language training courses run as part of pilot projects in 2005⁵³. It shows a marked improvement in the Welsh language skills of pupils participating in every pilot project within a very short space of time⁵⁴. However, the skills levels of many pupils remained low, thus highlighting the need for ongoing support to help participating pupils maintain momentum as they made the transition into Year 7 and beyond.

Figure 7.9: Pupils’ Composite Language Level Test Scores Upon Starting and Completing Intensive Language Learning Courses in 2005



Source: Welsh Language Board

7.8.2 At first, all participating pupils’ language levels were assessed, but as the project gained momentum and pupil numbers increased, it became impractical to assess all pupils and from 2005, the WLB assessed the skills of a sample of pupils participating in each pilot.

7.8.3 Following discussions with the evaluation team, the WLB went a step further in 2008 by assessing the language skills of a sample of Year 7

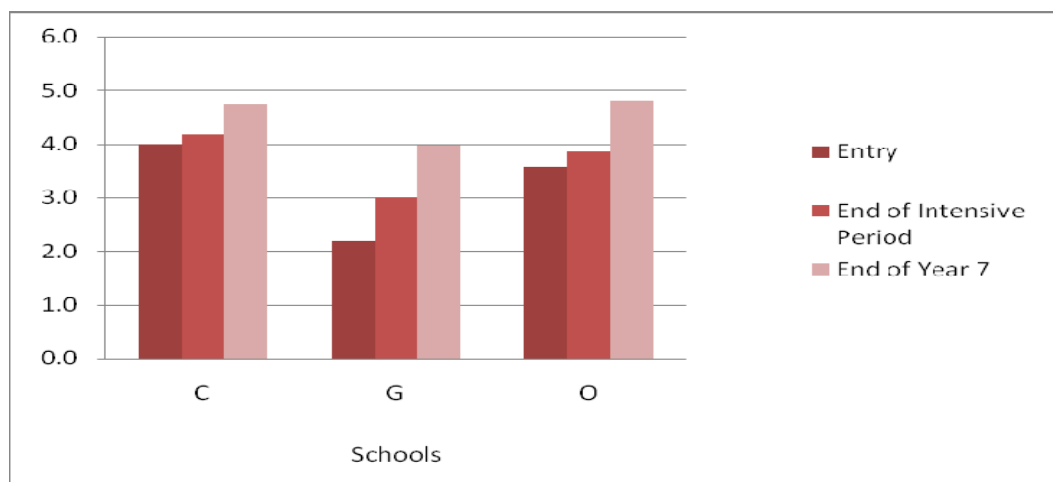
⁵³ This was the only occasion upon which the National Curriculum Key Stage 2 second language Welsh assessment criteria were used to assess pupils participating in pilots

⁵⁴ Albeit that the overall standard of participating pupils’ Welsh language skills seems disappointingly low in view of the fact that the majority had studied Welsh as a second language for several years at primary school

pupils, providing for the first time a tangible longitudinal view of some participating pupils' linguistic development. The assessments undertaken explored pupils' verbal, reading and writing skills. The assessment of pupils' verbal competence involved measuring pupils' understanding, their grip on syntax and their apparent confidence in using Welsh. The assessment framework used by the WLB also allowed for pupils' attitudes towards learning and using the language to be considered, but pupils were not scored against this dimension because the WLB's assessor was clearly not in a position to make judgements about pupils' attitudes or application during one meeting.

7.8.4 Figure 7.10 below shows the average scores achieved by pupils at three schools in respect of their verbal competence upon entry to pilots, at the end of their participation in intensive language learning periods and at the end of Year 7. Whilst Figure 6.13 is based on a relatively small sample of pupils assessed at each of the three points in question, it gives a clear indication of pupils' linguistic progression over a 12 month period.

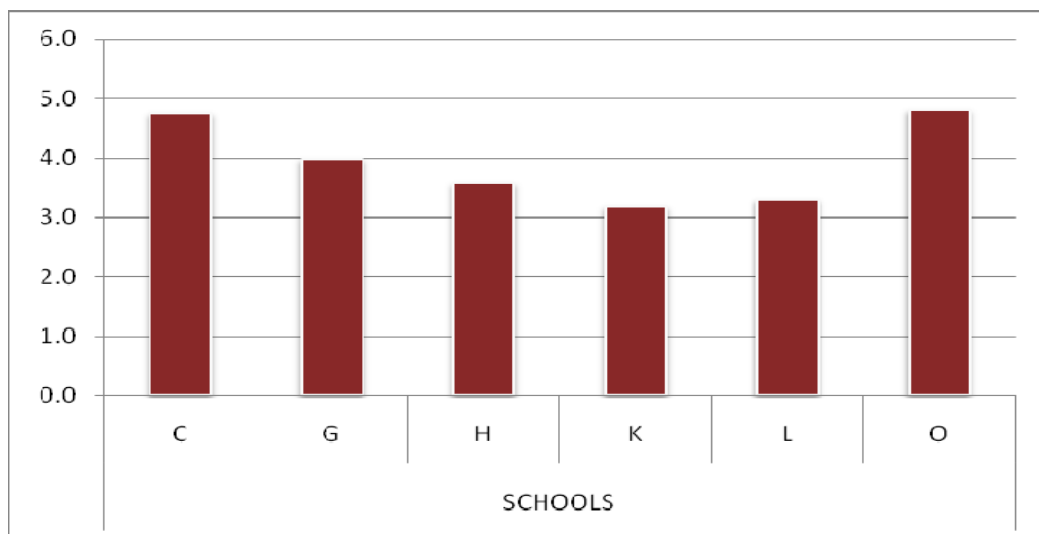
Figure 7.10: Pupils' Average Scores in Verbal Language Assessment Tests Administered to 2007/08 Year 7 Pupils at Three Points in Time⁵⁵



⁵⁵ These averages are based upon the assessment tests/framework developed by the Welsh Language Board for the purposes of the project and not upon National Curriculum assessment criteria. This means that these data are not comparable with those shown in Figure 7.9.

7.8.5 Figure 7.11 also suggests that there was a significant variation in the language skills levels of pupils at each of the three schools in question at each of the measurement points, although the gap in pupils' skills levels appears to have closed somewhat by the end of their first year at secondary school. Figure 6.14 shows the average verbal skills levels of Year 7 pupils at six schools where assessment took place during the summer term 2008, which again shows that the average language levels of participating pupils varies between schools, with pupils' language levels generally reflecting the relative strength of the Welsh language in the communities served by individual schools. On the whole, pupils' writing and reading skills were slightly lower than their oral skills.

Figure 7.11: Pupils' Average Scores in Verbal Language Assessment Tests at the End of Year 7

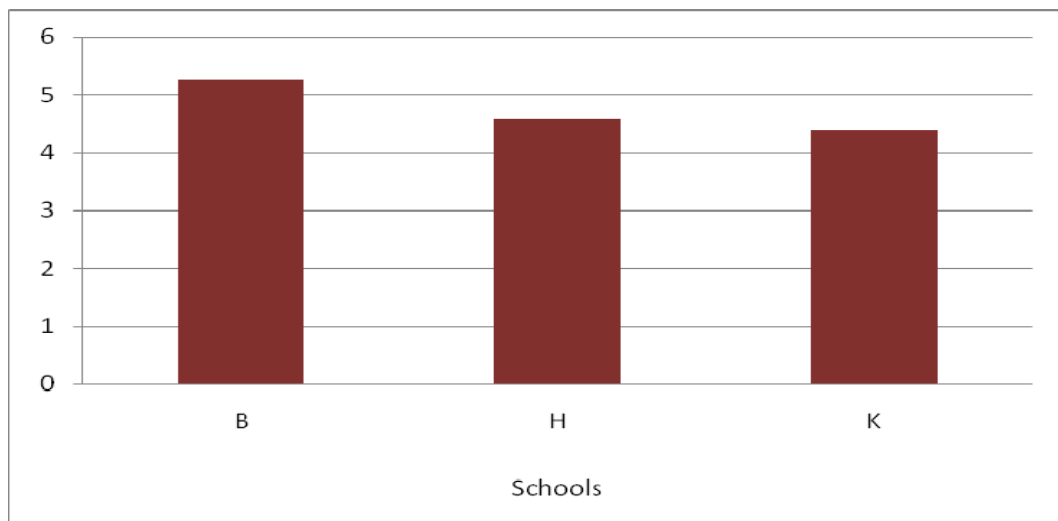


7.8.6 There was a widespread consensus among teachers at the three schools that have immersion pupils in Year 9, that by the time pupils reach that stage, their Welsh language skills are fairly well developed and that it can be difficult to differentiate them from their 'mainstream' contemporaries - *"you tend to forget who the immersion pupils are"*. Indeed, it was argued that *"the linguistic ability of some of the immersion pupils is actually better than some of our regular pupils by*

Year 9” and that immersion pupils tend to be more correct in their use of Welsh than some of their contemporaries who learnt the language at home or from an early stage at school. This was put down to the extra language support which immersion pupils receive, but also to their being “*keener because they’ve learned the language later on*”.

7.8.7 Figure 7.12 below shows immersion pupils’ average teacher assessment scores in Welsh as a first language at the end of Key Stage 3⁵⁶. It shows that, on average, immersion pupils at one school have reached the benchmark Level 5, whilst those at the other two schools have Welsh language skills above Level 4. It is notable that these two schools serve communities in which English is the predominant language

Figure 7.12: Immersion Pupils’ Average Scores at Key Stage 3⁵⁷



7.8.8 Of course, not all pupils progress to the same degree or at the same pace: according to one commentator “*teachers have to be aware that each pupil progresses at different times ... and they often stand still for a period before moving on*”. Inevitably, some pupils do not progress as they should, and close observation of pupils during Year 7 had enabled

⁵⁶ At this stage, these data are only available for the three schools which have been running immersion pilots long enough for pupils to have progressed to the end of Key Stage 3.

⁵⁷ These data are based on National Curriculum assessment criteria and not those of the WLB

one school to enter into discussions with parents about the suitability of Welsh immersion for their children. In essence, the few pupils who will not be well served by Welsh language immersion are winnowed out and transferred to more suitable schools/streams before pupils get to Year 9 – *“or if the attitude isn’t right, we meet with parents fairly swiftly and force decisions”*.

7.8.9 Whilst teachers thought that after two to three years immersion pupils cope as well as any other pupils with school work and school life more generally - *“the language doesn’t present them with a problem by Year 9 ... it’s not held them back in any way ... they come to us as learners ... and use both languages to start ... that reduces over time”* and by Year 9 *“there’s a huge difference”* - some were also conscious that many immersion pupils only hear and use Welsh in school - *“we give these children the tools to use the Welsh language ... but they don’t have the opportunity to practice or use it enough in society”*. On this basis, they argued that additional extra-curricular language development activities should be put on to *“keep their Welsh topped up”*, especially during summer holidays, when pupils may not encounter the Welsh language for up to six weeks.

7.9 Pupils’ Attainment in Subjects

7.9.1 In this section we examine immersion pupils’ attainment in other subjects, having pursued their secondary education through the medium of Welsh. This we do by looking at immersion pupils’ attainment levels in each of the core subjects within the National Curriculum⁵⁸ at Key Stages 2 and 3. We focus upon these measures because they provide the only data which are readily and consistently available across all pupils at all schools.

7.9.2 That is not to say, of course, that participating schools do not gather other information. Indeed, most have well developed information

⁵⁸ Maths, Science and English

systems, which are typically used to establish a baseline in terms of individual pupils' abilities and aptitudes, to set targets for pupils' attainment and to record achievements as pupils progress through school. Individual schools make use of a range of tests and assessment tools, such as for example, MidYIS⁵⁹ and CATs⁶⁰, to enhance teachers' understanding of individual pupils' capabilities and educational needs. Some also use 'traffic light' type approaches to identify pupils most in need of support, thus enabling schools to react swiftly when pupils fall behind. However, these data are not held in a consistent and comparable form across schools and do not, therefore, lend themselves to the purpose of evaluating the Immersion Project as a whole. Moreover, there would be little merit at a Project level in reviewing data too frequently and the comparatively long wave SATs assessments should provide an acceptable benchmark for the Immersion Project as a whole.

7.9.3 In accepting SATs assessment results as the best fit measure of immersion pupils' curricular progress, however, we note a perception among many secondary school teachers that Key Stage 2 assessments often seem inflated – *“they [pupils] were generally at least one grade lower arriving here in reality”*. The knock on effect of this, of course, is that pupils appear to make less progress during Key Stage 3 than they do make in reality.

7.9.4 Hitherto, the WLB has not asked schools to provide data about pupil progression, and it is notable that a number of participating schools have found it difficult to provide data for the purpose of this evaluation. Given that only three schools have, at this stage, been running pilots long enough for immersion pupils to have reached the end of Key Stage 3, this is not a cause for undue concern, but we believe that data

⁵⁹ The Middle Years Information System, which is designed to measure pupils' ability and aptitude for learning. The tests are comprised of Vocabulary, Maths, Non-verbal and Skills sections.

⁶⁰ The Cognitive Abilities Test measures the three principal areas of reasoning - verbal, non-verbal and numerical - as well as an element of spatial ability,

will need to be made available on an annual basis if the Immersion Project is to continue into the future.

7.9.5 We were able to secure Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 data in respect of participating pupils as well as average scores for whole year groups from two participating schools. Figures 6.13 and Figure 6.14 show the average scores achieved by immersion pupils as well as their whole year groups in each of the core subjects.

7.9.6 In school H, immersion pupils appear to have made more rapid progress in every subject than their whole year group, whilst at school L, immersion pupils seem to have made more rapid progress in English, but to have progressed slightly less than their whole year group in Maths and Science. At both schools, immersion pupils reach the benchmark Level 5 in all subjects, the exception being Science at School L, where the whole year group also falls marginally short of the expected level.

Figure 7.13: Immersion Pupils' and Whole Year Average Scores in Each of the Core Subjects at Key Stages 2 and 3 at School H

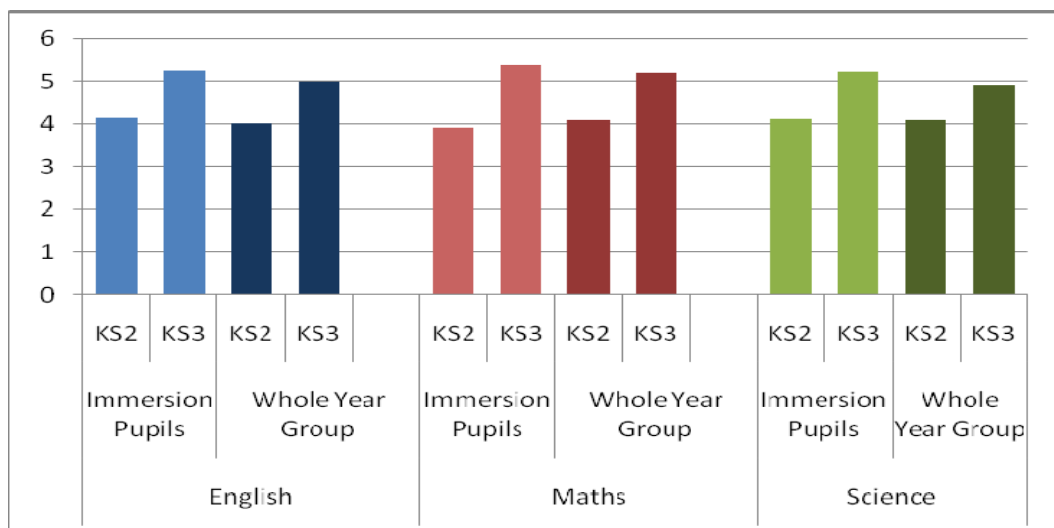
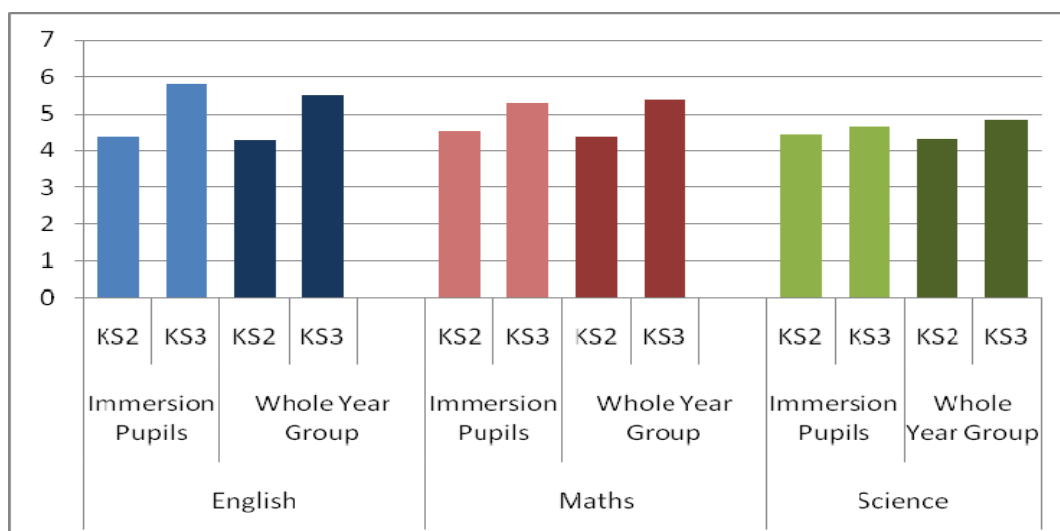


Figure 7.14: Immersion Pupils' and Whole Year Average Scores in Each of the Core Subjects at Key Stages 2 and 3 at School K⁶¹



7.9.7 Clearly, it is not possible to use one year's data from two schools to provide anything but a rough impression of the effect which participating in immersion pilots has upon pupils' curricular development. However, the data as they stand paint a fairly favourable picture, although the data from one school may give credence to pupils' arguments that studying Science and, to a lesser extent Maths, through the medium of Welsh presents a greater challenge to immersion pupils, at least in the first three years of secondary education.

7.9.8 However, there was a strong consensus among teachers that learning through the medium of Welsh has a neutral impact upon pupils' attainment in other subjects. Comments included:

- *"If you ask me can they [immersion pupils] perform to their full potential ... I'd say yes, definitely ... they are not being held back in any way";*
- *"In my subject much of it is oral and terms are introduced bi-lingually so it does not have an effect ... the ideas are developed and expressed in Welsh";*

⁶¹ These data relate to the 2006/07 Year 9 cohort

- *“The fact that they were learners has not held them back at all in terms of their academic abilities, for example, in terms of their sets ... ability is ability ... and they are in the sets they’d be in anyway”;*
- *“To be honest, the fact that they do it in two languages ... it’s like they learn the language sub-consciously ... they’re so focused on what they’re learning in the subject ... it doesn’t matter what language a new term is introduced in”;*
- *“It’s mostly numbers and letters, so they don’t need much language ... and if they’re in set 3, they’d probably be in set 3 anyway”.*

7.9.9 Rather ironically, one Mathematics teacher argued that some pupils might be disadvantaged as a result of being allocated to a discrete immersion group rather than being setted with pupils of similar ability.

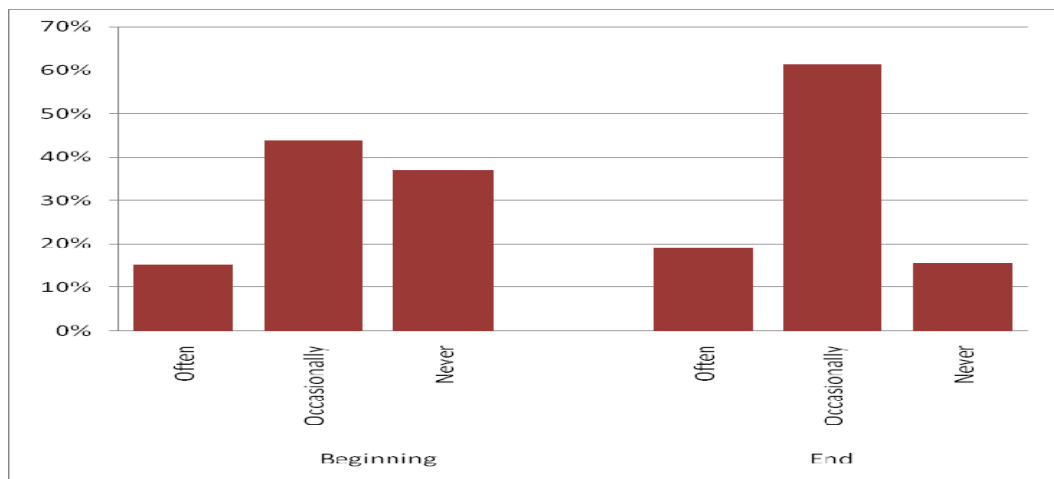
7.9.10 Some teachers acknowledged that more language intensive, terminology laden subjects, notably Science, History and Geography, could be problematic for some immersion pupils, but that these subjects could be equally challenging for some mainstream pupils - *“most people know the term gravity, but how many can remember the Welsh word for it ... I find that remembering the terms is difficult for all of the pupils”*. There was a recognition that pupils probably have to work harder during the early stages of immersion, but it was argued that *“most cope very well”*. One teacher commented that *“in year 9, the fact that immersion pupils are in the main group doesn’t hold the lesson back in any way”*.

7.10 The Use of Welsh outside Education in the Wake of Participation

7.10.1 Our surveys asked Year 7 pupils how much use they made of the Welsh language outside the classroom and whether they took part in particular Welsh language related extra curricular activities.

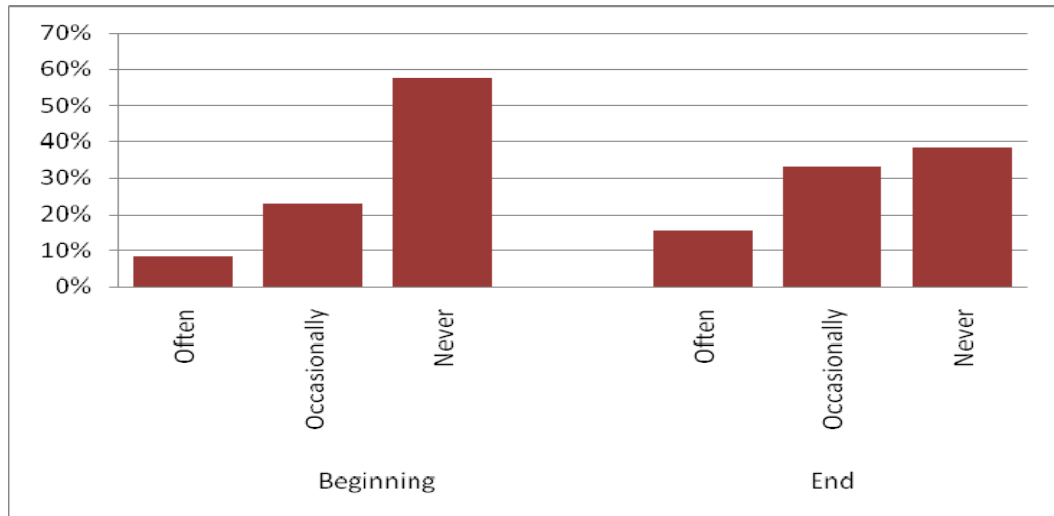
7.10.2 Figure 7.15 shows the proportion of pupils claiming to speak Welsh to friends within school at the beginning and towards the end of Year 7. It shows a small growth in the proportion of pupils claiming to speak Welsh to their peers often, but a far more substantial growth in the proportion claiming to speak Welsh with friends occasionally and a corresponding decline in the proportion claiming to make no use at all of the language with friends. It is notable also that proportionally more Year 7 pupils claimed to make some use of Welsh with school friends having progressed to secondary school than they did at primary school.

Figure 7.15: The Use Made of Welsh by Year 7 Pupils with Friends in School



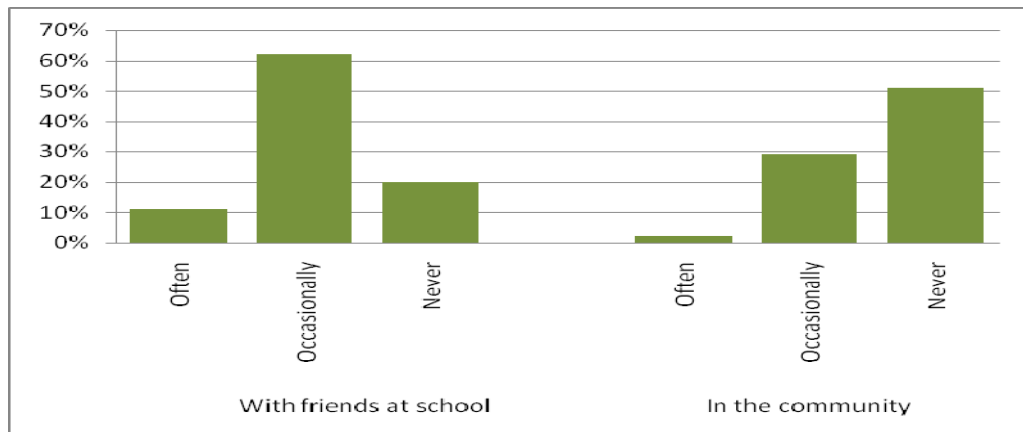
7.10.3 Similarly, Figure 7.16, which shows the proportions of Year 7 pupils claiming to speak Welsh in the community at the beginning and end of the academic year, points to a greater use of the language outside school settings.

Figure 7.16: The Use Made of Welsh by Year 7 Pupils in the Community



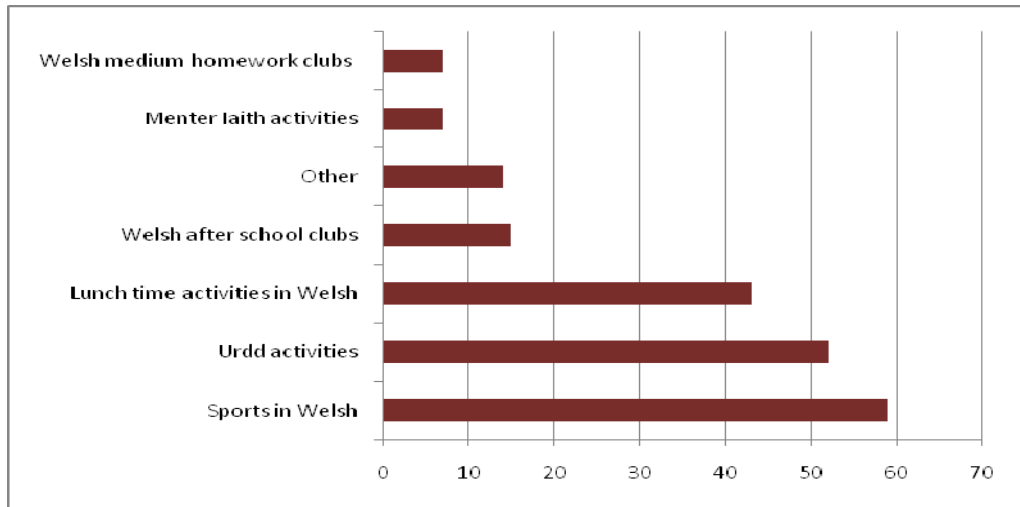
7.10.4 Figure 7.17 shows that proportionally fewer respondents to our survey of Year 9 pupils claimed to make frequent use of Welsh in either setting, though a higher proportion said that they spoke Welsh on an occasional basis, most particularly to friends at school. These findings were reinforced during focus group discussions, albeit that some contributors claimed to speak a mixture of Welsh and English with friends and one commented that *“some speak Welsh at break times ... but the ones that do also speak Welsh at home ... the ones that speak English [during] break time tend to speak English at home”*. It must, of course be remembered that most Year 9 pupils have considerably more experience of Welsh than pupils in Year 7 and there will, undoubtedly, be a difference in the nature/quality of the language spoken by these two groups of pupils. However, as one teacher observed, the Welsh language *“isn’t something that comes naturally to them ... it’s their second language”*, adding that some first language Welsh speakers even *“think it’s more cool to speak English”*.

Figure 7.17: The Use Made of Welsh by Year 9 Pupils in Various Settings



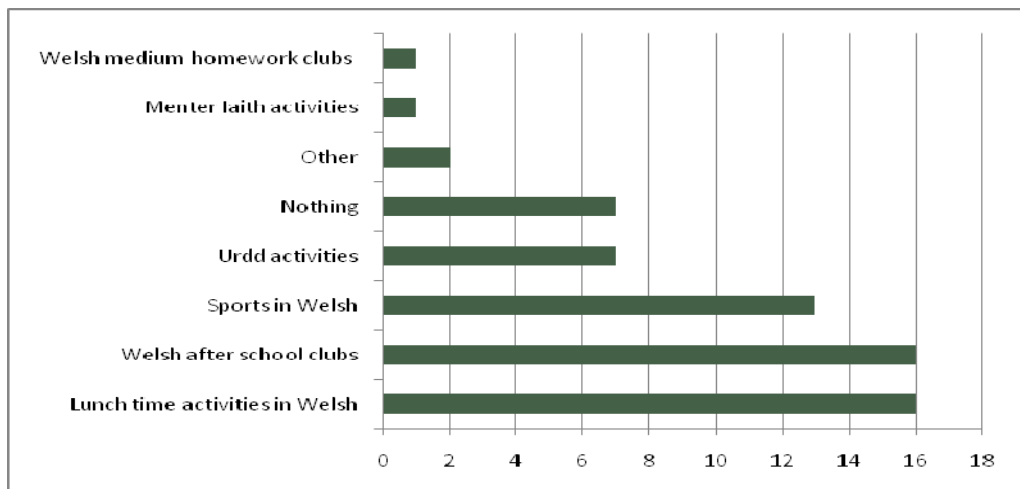
7.10.5 Year 7 survey respondents were generally fairly active in both Welsh language extra-curricular activities and activities organised outside schools. Nearly half of those surveyed were involved in Welsh language sports activities, just over a third were involved with the Urdd and just under a third were involved with Welsh language lunch time activities. However the rate of participation varied significantly across the eight schools, tending to be higher amongst pupils at naturally bilingual schools. Of course, the situation might be a reflection of the opportunities available to pupils at their schools or localities - *“because they are not available in Welsh where I live”* – and more particularly so amongst pupils who travel significant distances to school and are constrained by their ability to get to activity venues. On a rather more predictable note, several pupils noted that they were not interested in attending such activities – *“I don’t like them, they’re boring”*.

Figure 7.18: Numbers of Year 7 respondents Involved in Various Welsh Medium Extra Curricular Activities



7.10.6 Some 85% of Year 9 pupils also participated in one or more types of Welsh medium extra-curricular activities. As shown in Figure 7.19, proportionally more Year 9 pupils participated in Welsh medium lunch time and after school activities and proportionately fewer participated in Urdd activities, though this largely reflects their growing out of the Urdd target age group.

Figure 7.19: Numbers of Year 9 respondents Involved in Various Welsh Medium Extra Curricular Activities



7.10.7 The majority of parents did not feel that their children's use of Welsh had changed significantly since primary school - *"[he] still doesn't speak that much outside of school"* - with those who do speak Welsh outside school tending to be the ones who did so whilst at primary school - *"he uses his Welsh all of the time outside school ... but this was the case when he was at primary"*.

7.10.8 There was a widespread acknowledgement among both Year 7 and Year 9 pupils as well as their parents of the potential benefits of learning Welsh. Comments made included:

- *"I see it as being important. If you go to university it will be easier to learn other languages ... like Spanish or Italian ... if you have two already"*;
- *"You need to be able to speak Welsh to get some jobs now"*;
- *"It will be a help to get work in Wales"*;
- *"it's a way of showing that I'm part of Wales"*.

7.11 The Wider Effects of Pilot Projects upon Schools

7.11.1 On the whole, Year 7 immersion pupils formed a close knit group and there was a strong sense in several schools that immersion pupils were *"very supportive of each other"* within the group setting. Nevertheless, immersion pupils seemed to be socialised within the wider community at most schools, though immersion pupils at one school comment that *"usually we go around as a group of learners by ourselves ... we're a group within a big group really ... with don't really mix with the other group"*.

7.11.2 Staff at all participating schools commented upon immersion pupils' enthusiasm, both for the Welsh language and for school life more generally. Typically, this was manifested in better attendance rates, a greater pride in their Welshness and a greater preparedness to get involved in Welsh medium extra curricular activities such as the Urdd,

school assemblies, school choirs and theatrical productions. In some schools, it was thought that this enthusiasm was beginning to infect other, mainstream pupils and to normalise the use of Welsh in the school environment. Of course, most schools have only been running pilot projects for a relatively short period of time and it would be unrealistic to expect generally small groups of comparatively young pupils to have a profound influence on school cultures in the immediate term. That is not to say, of course, that they will not have an effect at all or that their impact will not be great in time.

7.11.3 At one bilingual school, it was argued that the establishment of an immersion pilot had provided the symbolic catalyst necessary to begin to shift teachers' attitudes and to increase the use they made of Welsh with pupils and with each other. Another bilingual school saw the pilot as the first step towards doing away with a bilingual stream and increasing the number of pupils studying entirely through the medium of Welsh.

7.11.4 It was acknowledged that the strongest pupils linguistically within one bilingual school's immersion group might have been able to cope in a Welsh medium class. However, it was argued that their participation in the pilot not only benefited them in terms of strengthening their Welsh language skills, but also had the advantage of enabling the mainstream Welsh medium group to remain "*puer*" during pupils' crucial normative first year in secondary education and, thus, reducing the likelihood of its members getting into the habit of turning to English unnecessarily.

7.11.5 Allied to a perception that immersion pupils tended to be more enthusiastic than the norm, several commentators also felt that their parents were more engaged in their children's education and generally showed a closer interest in the Welsh language. In some cases, this manifested itself in parents becoming involved in learning Welsh themselves - "*it's inspired me to go and learn Welsh*".

7.11.6 It seems likely that running immersion pilots has enabled some Welsh medium schools to attract pupils whom they would not otherwise have been able to accommodate. This clearly has a positive knock on effect upon the level of pupil funding which these schools are able to attract. However, it was argued that the costs of accommodating Welsh language learners are higher on average than the costs of serving mainstream pupils because of the need to provide them with additional language related support over a two to three year period. In effect, immersion pupils represent a particular type of pupil with additional learning needs and this points to the need for ongoing funding to support intensive and immersion learning approaches beyond any piloting phase. However, it was acknowledged that the level of additional funding necessary may well be slightly lower after an initial 'pilot' period, during which schools need to develop new work schemes, source and/or adapt teaching and learning materials, train staff in immersion techniques and experiment with delivery approaches.

7.11.7 One Welsh medium school had run its own, rather more limited immersion programme for a number of years before establishing its pilot project. The added features which the pilot had enabled the school to offer, to all intents and purposes, centred on the six week intensive language learning period for Year 6 pupils. According to one commentator *"since the start of the [pilot] project, the quality of children coming through has been much better"* adding that *"you still get 'characters', but generally, there is a higher level of commitment"*. This change was put down to two factors:

- Providing parents and pupils with a more thorough explanation of the purpose and implications of participation in the immersion project – *"they're told that they're embarking on a voyage and that there could be stormy seas ahead"*;
- The increased level of active decision making required of parents in that, for example, they are required to give their consent to their children effectively leaving primary school six weeks early.

7.11.8 One contributor argued that more subject practitioners should be encouraged to teach immersion pupils, in that doing so leads them to reflect upon the way they work and, thus helps to improve teaching practice more widely.

7.11.9 There was also a feeling among some practitioners that immersion pilots enabled well regarded Welsh medium schools to attract pupils who would not otherwise be in a position to opt for them, and in so doing, to become less apparently elitist and more accessible to a wider range of pupils.

7.12 Teachers' Views on Learning Resources

7.12.1 The general view among practitioners was that there are insufficient learning materials on the market to cater for immersion pupils - *"the problem with textbooks, very often, it is that the language is pitched at too high a level... even for pupils who are really good at Welsh"*. It was also claimed that some text books are *"very obviously translations"*, which seem to have been translated by non-subject specialists and, consequently contain inaccurate translations – *"the text doesn't mean what is written ... and it's difficult to say 'no that's not right' and give kids the right term"*. It was argued that WAG needs to give careful consideration to ensuring the consistency of terminology and the quality of translation where it is involved in commissioning Welsh medium resources.

7.12.2 Most teachers participating in focus groups had produced their own teaching and learning resources, some having been remitted to do so, thanks to pilot project funding. On the whole, their focus had been upon developing materials for use with Year 7 pupils on the basis that pupils higher up the school are able to cope with the same materials as mainstream pupils. Some teachers commented, however, that *"it would be useful to have a bit more time to produce teaching materials for Years 8 and 9"*.

7.12.3 There was no evidence that subject teachers from different schools running pilot projects worked together to produce teaching and learning resources, although some focus group participants thought that there might be some scope for this to happen, particularly where schools have a tradition of working together.

7.13 The Approach Taken to Practitioner Training

7.13.1 An Expert Adviser retained by WLB has been charged with the development and delivery of a series of training courses for practitioners involved in the development and implementation of pilots. The courses delivered have evolved as the Project progressed, but essentially fall into three separate courses, targeted at three distinct audiences:

- Head Teachers and Coordinators;
- Immersion Teachers within the primary sector;
- Subject Teachers (i.e. teachers other than Welsh teachers) within the secondary sector.

7.13.2 Table 7.1 shows the numbers of practitioners participating in each course since the Project's inception:

Table 7.1: Numbers of Participants in Project Related Training Courses⁶²

| Target Audience for the Course | 2003/04 | 2004/05 | 2005/06 | 2006/07 | 2007/08 | Total Number of Practitioners Trained |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------------------------------------|
| Head Teachers & Coordinators | | | 3 | 6 | 9 | 18 |
| Primary Teachers | 9 | 7 | 8 | 3 | 5 | 32 |
| Secondary Subject Teachers | 1 | 9 | 16 | 15 | 28 | 69 |
| Number of Practitioners Trained each Year | 10 | 16 | 28 | 24 | 45 | 119 |

⁶² Some Pilot Coordinators have attended more than one course

7.13.3 All the courses involve introducing practitioners to theories of immersion language teaching, but the content beyond that differs. The Head Teachers and Coordinators course focuses on:

- Leadership of pilot projects within schools;
- Models for streaming pupils along linguistic lines;
- Theories on accelerating the rate of language acquisition.

7.13.4 The course for primary school teachers focuses upon:

- “*Scaffolding*” language teaching in the sense of presenting practitioners with methods for structuring lessons, for simplifying language, for asking pupils to complete rather than construct phrases, for drilling and so forth;
- Preparing for progression in secondary school;
- Methods for presenting information visually;
- Examples of teaching/learning materials.

7.13.5 The course for secondary school subject teachers also touches upon scaffolding language teaching, before going on to deal with :

- Converting passive language into active use
- The use of language registers and certain verb tenses;
- The use of pupil “*partners*” to provide linguistic support to learners in classroom settings;
- Methods for dealing with challenging linguistic situations in the classroom in order to encourage rather than discourage learners’ use of Welsh.

7.13.6 Practitioners’ responses to courses were overwhelmingly positive with 100% of respondents to a questionnaire issued to participants in a March 2008 course claiming that both the content and teaching were either excellent or good. Comments made by participants in response to specific questions included:

- The content of the course was “*very appropriate*” not only for teaching immersion pupils, but also for teaching first language Welsh speakers;

- *“The opportunity to discuss and share ideas with teachers from other schools was extremely useful”;*
- It helped *“raise awareness of how to assist learners”*, and several respondents identified actions that they would take upon their return to work to better meet the needs of immersion pupils.

7.13.7 To the extent that the practitioners we interviewed had any criticism of the training they had received, it generally revolved around courses not being sufficiently subject specific or the tutor not going *“as far as to tell you how to do it ... he [the course tutor] wanted to leave room for everyone to develop their own style, but I would have liked to be told more definitely”*. Of course, it must be remembered that the situation at each participating school is different and it is unlikely that a ‘one size fits all’ solution would in reality meet practitioners’ needs.

7.13.8 Practitioners with experience of delivering immersion courses were used as speakers on some of the courses and stakeholders commented that courses provided a useful opportunity to exchange experiences with practitioners from other schools.

7.13.9 Allied to this, the Steering Group commented that good practice developed within the Project needed to be fed into teacher training practices, including initial teacher training⁶³. Whilst there is little evidence that wider teacher training practices have been influenced thus far, courses delivered under the auspices of the Project have evolved over the last three years.

7.13.10 Participants in the March 2008 course were asked to *“trial an element of the teaching strategies”* discussed upon their return to school and to *“retain documents/examples of pupils’ work”* as resources for future *“discussion/ information sharing”*. This innovation represented a shift in

⁶³ See Minutes of the Steering Group’s Meeting of 5 October 2005 and its meeting of 24 May 2006

emphasis towards active learning on practitioners' part, and towards engaging subject teachers in researching, understanding and sharing what works best in which situations. At this stage, it is clearly too early to comment upon the effects of this novel approach to developing practitioners' skills.

7.13.11 From the outset, teachers were released from their normal teaching duties following participation in Welsh Language Board organised courses, to produce bespoke bilingual teaching and learning materials for use with Year 7 pupils. Without exception, they found this a useful experience, not least because it enabled them to put into practice some of what they had learnt whilst it was still fresh in their minds.

7.13.12 There was also some evidence to suggest that teachers attending these courses cascaded some of their learning to colleagues upon their return to school. Equally, Pilot Project Coordinators sought to share their knowledge with colleagues, often on a very informal basis, for instance by *"reviewing a unit of work"* that a particular teacher had produced to ensure that the language used was accessible to learners. Practitioners also looked to other colleagues for help, sometimes thanks to Pilot Project Coordinators' encouragement - *"I've also worked closely with other members of staff that I probably would not normally have"*. It is envisaged that the experimental/reflective approach currently being promoted through the WLB's immersion courses will help to extend the capacity of practitioners to understand and cascade good practice within individual schools.

7.13.13 The role of Pilot Project Coordinators seemed to be particularly important in providing colleagues with the confidence to teach immersion pupils - *"it has been a challenge, certainly ... I was a bit unsure of myself to start with ... where to pitch the standard of the language"*.

7.13.14 Despite this, however, some practitioners felt that they had been thrown in at the deep end and teachers at one school did not seem to have been particularly well briefed prior to the immersion pilot's launch. One contributor claimed that *"the penny dropped"* for her as to *"what the aim of the thing was"* when she had been able to attend one of the Welsh Language Board's courses. To some extent, this chimed with the findings of Estyn's 2006 Inspection Report, which indicated that *"new schools entering the projects for the first time did not always benefit from the experience of other schools in the previous years when designing their own projects"*⁶⁴. Given conflicting demands upon school staff's time, it is unrealistic to expect that all teachers likely to come into contact with immersion pupils to have been through immersion related training within five years of the Project's start, but it is crucial that such teachers have a clear understanding of the purpose of pilot projects and what roles they, as individual practitioners, are expected to play. To this effect, the WLB might need to work with schools to guide them in providing their staff with full and proper briefings when new pilots are launched. There may also be scope to step up the numbers of practitioners attending courses as part of their continuous professional development and for schools to plan ahead rather more carefully which teachers should attend Welsh Language Board courses.

7.13.15 In the same vein, it should not be assumed that practitioners with long experience of teaching learners need no training. Indeed, one experienced teacher said that she could *"could do with a bit of training"* and *"more definite guidance on language patterns"* rather than relying on *"common sense and experience"* in trying to meet immersion pupils' needs. In the absence of such guidance, she feared that she might turn to English too readily in speaking to immersion pupils.

8. Conclusions

8.1 In this chapter we present our conclusions, drawing upon our review of Project related documentation, our discussion with stakeholders and our fieldwork with schools. We make recommendations based on these conclusions in Chapter 8.

8.2 Our conclusions are presented under six headings:

- Project Strategy, Time Horizons and Funding (section 7.3)
- Immersion Models and Concepts of Language Threshold (section 7.4)
- Measuring and Monitoring Pupils Progression (section 7.5)
- The Delivery of Pilots (section 7.6)
- The Effects of Immersion Pilots (section 7.7)
- Building Capacity to Run Immersion Approaches (section 7.8)

8.3 Project Strategy, Time Horizons and Funding

8.3.1 There is no doubt whatsoever that the Project is strongly reinforced within the national policy context set by the Welsh Assembly Government, particularly the context set within Iaith Pawb and The Learning Country: Vision into Action and One Wales. The Project's ambitions are closely aligned with the aims and objectives of the Welsh Assembly Government to increase the numbers of Welsh speakers and reinvigorate the Welsh language.

8.3.2 The Project was initially established for a three year period, its initial timescale being governed by the Welsh Assembly Government's standard project funding practice rather than any express expectation that a sufficient number of pilots could be established, implemented and their relative effectiveness assessed within three years. Since 2005/06, the Project has been funded on an annual basis, which we

believe is unsatisfactory in that it does not encourage long term forward planning by the Steering Group, the Project Team or individual schools.

8.3.3 Much in the same way, the focus in planning individual pilots has been very much on the activities which schools intended to deliver during intensive language teaching periods and during pupils' first year in secondary education. Little attention has been given (in the grant application form, for example) to pupils' ongoing need for support, although in most pilots, pupils continue to receive additional support into Years 8 and 9. Hitherto, schools have been able to provide this additional support by using a combination of grant funding received for subsequent cohorts of immersion pupils and schools' own resources. It has to be questioned, however, whether the level of support would be sustainable in the absence of 'pilot' project funding, especially within bilingual schools, which do not generally recruit additional pupils and do not, therefore, attract additional mainstream funding as a result of offering immersion opportunities. Even in the case of Welsh medium schools, which are more likely to attract pupils whom they would not otherwise be able to accommodate, the additional funding attracted may not be sufficient to meet the costs of providing the ongoing additional support needed by immersion pupils.

8.3.4 Whilst pointing to the need to consider the longer term implications of running immersion approaches, we recognise that the initial period of intensive language teaching, which forms the cornerstone of most pilots, involves a significant level of additional cost for schools. It is unrealistic to imagine that five or six week 'courses' could be offered by schools were it not for the grant funding made available.

8.3.5 In essence, immersion approaches will inevitably involve additional costs for the schools running them from one year to the next and any implicit expectation that immersion approaches can be accommodated within schools' mainstream budgets is misplaced. However, the initial costs of establishing and piloting immersion approaches are likely to be

higher than the ongoing costs of running them and some schools should also be in a position to attract some additional revenues in the longer term as a result of being able to attract pupils whom they could not accommodate in the absence of immersion approaches.

8.3.6 The grant application forms which schools have been required to complete have not encouraged schools to consider their rationale for running pilots, specific short term targets or the long term sustainability of immersion approaches developed. In part, this reflects the Welsh Language Board's reluctance to introduce any bureaucratic hurdles that might hinder schools' participation, though rather ironically, we perceive that the costs and funding element of the application form is over complicated.

8.3.7 The number of primary school projects initiated has been low in comparison to the overall number of project pilots supported by the Project and this makes it difficult to come to conclusions about the effectiveness of primary school based approaches as vehicles for providing pupils with a second entry point to Welsh medium education. Moreover the two primary school based pilots supported differed significantly in nature, making comparisons even more difficult.

8.3.8 Though not for lack of trying by WAG and project staff, there are some 'gaps' in the geographical coverage of schools selected to run pilots, particularly within south east Wales where only one English medium secondary school pilot was supported. In addition it is worth noting that all of the designated Welsh medium secondary schools delivering pilot projects are located in north Wales.

8.4 Immersion Models and Concepts of Language Threshold

8.4.1 The Project identified and trialled four different "*models*" of introducing Welsh medium education to pupils in schools. However these four models tended to reflect the nature of the schools within which they

were piloted (i.e. primary school, designated Welsh secondary school, naturally bilingual school and English medium secondary school) as opposed to any immersion theory or immersion ‘models’ per se.

8.4.2 The Steering Group decided not to pursue one of the ‘models’ adopted (i.e. English medium secondary school) on the basis that such schools were unable to make the appropriate provision for participating pupils to pursue their education through the medium of Welsh thereafter, and that these pilots focused upon the teaching of Welsh as a second language rather than as a first language. We believe that this decision was a valid one for the Steering Group to make in light of the Project’s *laith Pawb* rooted ambitions.

8.4.3 Notwithstanding the Steering Group’s decision to discontinue support for one ‘model’, schools involved in the Project were generally complimentary about the flexible approach adopted by the Welsh Language Board during the establishment of their individual pilots. Schools experimented with aspects of their pilots, most notably arrangements for assimilating pupils into mainstream classes, and developed approaches which differed slightly from one setting to another. This clearly makes it more difficult to draw conclusions about the relative merits of different ‘models’, but we believe that the Welsh Language Board was right not to hamstring pilots through the imposition of rigid preconceived ‘models’ in the interest of research.

8.4.4 Indeed, the Steering Group’s consideration of immersion ‘models’ has, by now, largely been overtaken by discussion about the concept of language “*thresholds*” i.e. the point at which pupils acquire the subject related cognitive language skills needed to assimilate effectively into mainstream Welsh medium classes. To some extent, this reflects a predictable shift in emphasis from the establishment of pilots to the assessment and demonstration of pupils’ language acquisition and curricular development as they progress through school. We would expect this change in emphasis to lead to a more settled view of what

works in which circumstances and a greater degree of interaction between similar schools.

8.4.5 Work currently being undertaken by an Expert Adviser retained by the Welsh Language Board will provide a clearer insight into language thresholds and should provide schools with a means of determining when pupils are ready to be assimilated into mainstream Welsh medium classes.

8.5 Measuring and Monitoring Pupils Progression

8.5.1 A mechanism for assessing language levels and development amongst pupils has been developed by the Project Team. The instrument has been used to assess the language levels and progress made by pupils participating in intensive language learning courses over the past three years. However, in 2007/08, the instrument was also used to assess the language skills of a sample of Year 7 pupils, thus introducing, for the first time, a longitudinal dimension to pupil assessment. Whilst the numbers of Year 7 pupils assessed in 2008 were relatively small and, therefore, provide no more than an impression of the progress made, longitudinal tracking of pupils should provide an important indication of individual pilots' success into the future and must, therefore, form a core part of the Project. We recognise, however, that pupil tracking will be a resource intensive endeavour and it will be necessary to make specific provision for doing so

8.5.2 Hitherto, the Welsh Language Board has not asked schools to provide data about participating pupils' attainment across the wider curriculum. Indeed, both the Welsh Language Board and schools have expressed concerns about using pupil attainment data to draw conclusions about pilots' effectiveness. Whilst accepting these concerns, given that equipping pupils with the wherewithal to undertake their ongoing secondary education through the medium of Welsh is a key aim of

most pilots, we believe that it is legitimate to measure the extent to which they enable this to happen.

8.6 The Delivery of Pilots

8.6.1 The feedback and responses from the schools delivering pilot projects has been overwhelmingly positive. There is a high level of commitment and buy-in to the projects at each of the schools visited and it is clear that the welfare of pupils engaged in the project is at the forefront of their agendas.

8.6.2 There is large variance in the way pupils are recruited and selected onto intensive teaching periods. In some schools minimum Welsh language standards have been introduced whilst others operate 'open door' arrangements reflecting respective LEAs' language policies. The extent to which immersion pupils have been exposed to the Welsh language before joining immersion projects varies between participating schools, with those entering Welsh medium schools being considerably less likely to have had anything beyond fairly superficial experience of the language. It is clear that, in practice, the shape of the immersion pilots which it has been possible for individual schools to run has been determined to a very large extent by their sponsoring Local Education Authorities' approach and policies to Welsh medium/bilingual education. Indeed, the fact that a number of children emerge from some primary schools with a weak grasp of the Welsh language, despite having studied it for several years, clearly raises questions about the extent and quality of Welsh language teaching at these schools and reinforces the argument for providing a second entry point to Welsh medium education, as a remedial intervention in some areas.

8.6.3 The decision to join immersion projects was generally made by pupils and their parents, with feeder primary schools doing relatively little to

encourage participation. On the whole, pupils joined immersion pilots in order to gain access to participating schools and to learn Welsh (i.e. the pilots succeeded in acting as a second entry point), although there was an undertone whereby pilot projects were also seen as a vehicle by which pupils could avoid having to progress to less desirable schools.

8.6.4 Pupils generally enjoyed intensive language learning experiences and saw them as a good way to establish a group of friends who would enter high school with them, as well as of developing their Welsh language skills. Participation in intensive language learning experiences also helped pupils to overcome some of the fears that they had in embarking upon a Welsh medium secondary education, though many - particularly pupils progressing into Welsh medium schools - still clearly had some anxieties at the outset. We believe that intensive language learning 'courses' form an important part of the immersion mix.

8.6.5 Each participating school took a slightly different approach to teaching and supporting immersion pupils, reflecting wider arrangements within individual establishments, the slightly differing philosophies towards immersion adopted by particular schools and the level of immersion pupils' Welsh language skills upon entry. As discussed earlier, the flexibility to adapt pilots to suit local circumstances was thought to be a particularly beneficial feature of the Project.

8.6.6 On the whole, however, schools had established separate, relatively small registration classes for immersion pupils which afforded them a significant level of additional support during their first year at secondary school. In a number of schools, Project Coordinators played a pivotal pastoral as well as teaching function, arguably giving immersion pupils a rather more cosseted experience of Year 7 than their peers and thus providing them with an environment conducive to learning a new language.

8.7 The Effects of Immersion Pilots

8.7.1 Data gathered by the Welsh Language Board provide clear evidence that pupils participating in intensive language learning ‘courses’ make measurable progress in developing their Welsh language skills. However, the skills levels of many pupils at this stage remain below the level which it is arguable that pupils should reach if they are to pursue mainstream Welsh medium secondary education, thus confirming the need for ongoing support to help participating pupils maintain momentum as they made the transition into Year 7 and beyond.

8.7.2 The Welsh Language Board’s assessment of a limited sample of pupils at the end of Year 7 also provided a clear indication that pupils’ Welsh language skills continue to develop during their first year at secondary school. Despite this, however, the language levels of pupils at different schools varied, largely reflecting the relative strength of the Welsh language in the communities in which they lived.

8.7.3 School staff were adamant, based on day-to-day contact, that the vast majority of pupils make remarkable progress. Whilst teachers acknowledged that immersion pupils cannot be expected to have got to grips with every aspect of the language by the time they get to Year 9, the vast majority are able to cope as well as their peers with a Welsh medium curriculum.

8.7.4 By the same token, there was a widespread consensus among teachers that pupils are able to cope with a range of subjects through the medium of Welsh by the time they are in Year 9, although it was acknowledged that some subjects are more problematic than others. School staff were convinced that studying through the medium of Welsh did not have an adverse effect on pupils’ levels of attainment and, indeed, the limited data we were able to gather about immersion pupils’ attainment in the core subjects pointed to their doing slightly

better during Key Stage 3, both in terms of attainment and progression, than their whole year groups.

8.7.5 Despite pupils' clear linguistic and curricular development, there was a strong suggestion that Welsh is, in reality, seen as the language of education by immersion pupils and is little used outside the school context. This view was reinforced by teachers who thought that there is scope for putting on more extra-curricular activities designed to encourage and reinforce pupils' use of the language, especially during long school holidays. Indeed, it is notable that a large number of 'mainstream' pupils at some schools are in the same boat in that they have little opportunity to use Welsh outside the school setting, and they could equally benefit from more Welsh medium extra-curricular activities.

8.7.6 There was a feeling among several teachers that immersion pupils tended to be more enthusiastic than their peers, both about the Welsh language and school life in general. It is likely that this owed something to the increased level of support (academic and pastoral) that immersion pupils received.

8.7.7 Although it is early in the day to comment upon the wider effects of immersion pilots upon schools, our fieldwork revealed some positive early signs. The wider benefits suggested revolved around:

- Immersion pilots helping to emphasise schools' commitment to Welsh medium education and to normalise the use of Welsh in the school environment;
- The need for teachers to think about the kind of language used in the classroom, helping them to review and improve their teaching practice more generally;
- Welsh medium schools being able to attract pupils who could not otherwise have been accommodated;

- Bilingual schools being able to maintain the linguistic integrity of mainstream Welsh medium classes during pupils' first year in secondary education.

8.8 Building Capacity to Run Immersion Approaches

8.8.1 It is worth noting from the outset that teachers at all participating schools had experience of teaching pupils for whom Welsh was a second language. On the whole, however, they were subject specialists and most had not received formal training on how to teach learners through the medium of a second language. It is not surprising, therefore that practitioners participating in courses put on by the Welsh Language Board were overwhelmingly positive about their experience. In particular they valued the opportunity to exchange experiences with practitioners from other schools.

8.8.2 The courses delivered by the Welsh Language Board under the auspices of the project have evolved over time. Far greater emphasis is now put on active learning on practitioners' part, and towards engaging subject teachers in researching, understanding and sharing what works best in which situations. Whilst it is clearly too early to comment upon the effects of this approach to developing practitioners' skills, we believe that it should provide a novel means of:

- ensuring that practitioners put into practice what they learn, thus, leading to greater utility of the training delivered;
- providing good practice/case study materials for dissemination to the wider population of practitioners.

8.8.3 The general view among practitioners was that there are insufficient learning materials on the market to cater for immersion pupils. Most teachers produced their own teaching and learning resources, some having been remitted to do so, thanks to pilot project funding. On the whole, their focus had been upon developing materials for use with Year 7 pupils, but there was a view that they also need time to develop

resources for use with Year 8 and Year 9 immersion pupils, particularly as pilot project progress.

8.8.4 There was no evidence that subject teachers from different schools running pilot projects worked together to produce teaching and learning resources, although some practitioners thought that there might be some scope for this to happen.

9. Recommendations

9.1 We conclude by setting out our recommendations.

9.2 Recommendation 1

9.2.1 The Welsh Assembly Government should review its ambitions for the Immersion and Intensive Language Teaching Pilots Project in consultation with the Steering Group and the Welsh Language Board, taking account of policy developments emanating from Iaith Pawb. Having done so, the Welsh Assembly Government should set out clear, time-bound and measurable objectives for the Project over the next three years. This recommendation echoes that made by the National Assembly's Internal Audit Services in its 2006 report.

9.3 Recommendation 2

9.3.1 The Welsh Assembly Government should commit funding for the Immersion and Intensive Language Teaching Pilots Project for a further period of three years to allow data to be gathered about sufficient numbers of participating pupils' linguistic and wider academic progression over time.

9.4 Recommendation 3

9.4.1 The Welsh Assembly Government should ask the Welsh Language Board to produce a detailed plan for the implementation of the Project over the coming three years and an outline plan for its potential extension for a further three years. This plan should address the Project's fit with other relevant Welsh Assembly Government funded interventions e.g. the Welsh Medium Education Continuation Project, the numbers and nature of schools which it hopes to engage in running pilots, how it will work with schools to embed immersion approaches, how it will assess pupils' linguistic and curricular development, how it will monitor the relative effectiveness of various approaches to

immersion and the level of resource which will be required to implement and manage an ongoing Project.

9.5 Recommendation 4

9.5.1 It would be unrealistic to expect schools to offer immersion opportunities without additional funding to do so. However, we would expect the level of grant required to diminish over time. Consideration should be given by the Welsh Assembly Government as to how immersion approaches might be funded in the longer term. Four specific categories of cost need to be considered:

- The cost of establishing and piloting immersion approaches;
- The cost of putting on periods of initial intensive language teaching from one year to the next;
- The costs of providing on-going support for immersion pupils beyond periods of initial intensive language teaching. This needs to be considered in the context of additional revenues which schools might legitimately be expected to generate as a result of attracting pupils whom they would not otherwise have been able to accommodate;
- The costs of managing immersion approaches from one year to the next.

9.6 Recommendation 5

9.6.1 Regardless of the Welsh Assembly Government's deliberations about on-going grant funding, the grant application form should be revised so that schools are asked to set out:

- Their rationale for running immersion approaches;
- Measurable objectives for pilots;
- Key features of the immersion approaches they intend to take;
- How they will assess and report pupils' linguistic and curricular development;
- The funding required to run immersion pilots over three years.

9.7 Recommendation 6

9.7.1 The Steering Group should revisit the purpose and practicality of supporting primary school centred pilots. Should it be decided to continue supporting primary school centred pilots, the number of pilots supported should be increased to ensure that comparisons can be drawn and lessons learnt.

9.8 Recommendation 7

9.8.1 The Welsh Language Board should renew its efforts to engage Welsh medium schools in south east Wales in running pilots in order to ensure a wider geographical coverage and to provide lessons about running immersion approaches in different socio-linguistic settings. If necessary, the Welsh Assembly Government may need to add its weight to engaging suitable schools in running pilots.

9.9 Recommendation 8

9.9.1 A short paper outlining the purpose of, the timetable for and the resource implications of the work on language thresholds currently being undertaken by the Expert Adviser should be presented to the Steering Group and should form part of the Immersion and Intensive Language Teaching Pilots Project three year plan.

9.10 Recommendation 9

9.10.1 The Welsh Language Board, as part of the implementation plan referred to at Recommendation 3 above, should set out how it proposes to track participating pupils' linguistic progression, using the assessment framework developed by the Project Team. We would envisage that the schools running immersion approaches would be asked to assess all participating pupils' language levels at the end of Years 7, 8 and 9 and that the Project Team would 'audit' a sample of pupils each year, focusing particularly upon schools which are new to immersion approaches, thus providing an opportunity to help those schools develop their capacity.

9.10.2 Schools should be required to provide data to the Welsh Language Board to enable it to compare pupils' linguistic development across different settings and to report on progress to the Steering Group. This will clearly have resource implications for schools, and this will need to be reflected in schools' grant allocations.

9.11 Recommendation 10

9.11.1 The Welsh Language Board should require the schools it funds to provide it with data about individual immersion pupils' attainment levels at Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3 and at GCSE in the core subjects of English, Maths and Science. Schools should also be asked to provide the average attainment levels in these subjects for whole year groups as a benchmark for immersion pupils' relative performance.

9.11.2 In order to accommodate the provision of data in a consistent fashion, the WLB should provide schools with a reporting template and clear guidance as to what is required.

9.12 Recommendation 11

9.12.1 The Welsh Language Board should explore with participating schools the feasibility of putting on extra-curricular activities designed to encourage and reinforce pupils' use of the language during school summer holidays. Such activities should focus on the needs of pupils progressing into Years 7, 8 and 9 rather than merely focusing on those who have recently completed periods of intensive language learning. Costed proposals for any such activities should be built into the implementation plan referred to at Recommendation 3 above.

9.13 Recommendation 12

9.13.1 The Welsh Language Board should continue to support the active learning approach taken to practitioner training and should disseminate

good practice/case study materials developed to all participating schools.

9.14 Recommendation 13

9.14.1 There may also be scope to step up the numbers of practitioners attending courses as part of their continuous professional development and for schools to plan ahead rather more carefully which teachers should attend Welsh Language Board courses. To this end, schools should be asked to commit to sending a minimum of 5% of their subject teachers on Welsh Language Board courses each year.

9.15 Recommendation 14

9.15.1 The Welsh Language Board should invite schools wishing to develop subject specific teaching and learning materials for Year 8 and 9 pupils to bid for resources to remit teachers to do so. In doing so, the Board should encourage teachers from different schools to work together, thus helping them to share experience and exchange ideas.