



Arolygiaeth Ei Fawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

Learn Welsh The Vale

**Palmerston Community Learning Centre
Cadoc Crescent
Barry
Vale of Glamorgan
CF63 2NT**

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by

**Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**

This report is also available in Welsh

About Learn Welsh The Vale

The Welsh for Adults sector was reorganised in 2016 and the National Centre was established, along with a network of providers across Wales. Learn Welsh The Vale (LWTV) was established during this reorganisation and it is situated in the Adult Community Learning Department in the Learning and Skills Directorate of Vale of Glamorgan Council.

It received a core grant of £303,478 for the year 2022-2023 from the National Centre for Learning Welsh. It employs 5 core staff, 5 contracted tutors and twelve sessional staff (per hour). The Welsh for Adults Development Officer is responsible for leading the provider strategically and operationally.

LWTV is one of the smallest Welsh for Adults providers in terms of geography and learners. The number of learners increased to more than 500 during 2019-2020. Although the number of learners decreased significantly as a result of COVID-19, the number of learners had increased to nearly 500 by the time of the inspection in December 2022. A full range of mainstream courses is provided, from entry level to proficiency level, both in the community and in the workplace across the county and beyond, in addition to a programme of learner support activities that gives them the opportunity to practise their Welsh outside formal lessons.

Summary

Staff at Learn Welsh The Vale have succeeded in creating a close-knit community and learners' well-being is at the heart of its work. Tutors work together effectively to support learners to learn in a stimulating, supportive and inclusive environment.

A majority of tutors provide a challenge to extend learners' language skills appropriately. They question and probe skilfully, which supports learners to recall what they have learned. In the best cases, tutors present the aims of activities effectively and use the target language skilfully when presenting and revising vocabulary and sentence patterns. They vary learning methods regularly to engage and hold learners' interest successfully.

In a minority of lessons, tutors do not have high enough expectations and turn to English when presenting activities and giving instructions. In these lessons, tutors do not support learners appropriately to pronounce correctly. As a result, a minority of learners do not make progress to the best of their ability over time. On the whole, the professional learning offer does not support tutors purposefully enough to improve specific teaching and learning techniques, such as appropriate language immersion methods.

The provider organises a number of activities that support learners to practise their Welsh in informal situations. Learners who attend these opportunities enjoy them greatly and benefit from them linguistically. A minority of learners do not take advantage of these valuable opportunities to extend and use their language skills to develop as active speakers.

Overall, the provider's monitoring and evaluation arrangements are not incisive enough to address important areas for improvements in terms of teaching and learning. In addition, the provider does not have effective processes to analyse data to forward plan provision and prioritise areas for improvement strategically.

| Inspection area | Judgement |
|---|--|
| Standards | Adequate and needs improvement |
| Well-being and attitudes to learning | Good |
| Teaching and learning experiences | Adequate and needs improvement |
| Care, support and guidance | Good |
| Leadership and management | Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement |

Recommendations

- R1 Strengthen leadership and internal scrutiny processes to ensure a culture of meaningful self-evaluation to prioritise and drive improvements at a strategic level
- R2 Work with the National Centre for Learning Welsh to use data as a basis for forward planning and planning for strategic improvement
- R3 Develop a continuous professional development programme that addresses areas for improvement in teaching
- R4 Develop the offer for learners to practise their Welsh outside formal lessons to ensure that more of them take advantage of opportunities to develop as active speakers

What happens next

The provider will produce an action plan to address the recommendations from the inspection. Progress against the recommendations will be monitored in the next inspection of the National Centre for Learning Welsh.

Main findings

Standards: Adequate and needs improvement

Most learners at Learn Welsh The Vale (LWTV) participate enthusiastically in their learning sessions. They interact well with visitors and state their reasons for learning Welsh positively. Many listen attentively and respond suitably to oral prompts. They are willing to speak Welsh spontaneously with each other and the tutor and express their opinions suitably in line with their linguistic level.

Many intermediate and higher level learners use a variety of syntax and verb tenses increasingly appropriately. However, a few learners, particularly at the lower levels, do not attempt to use their Welsh spontaneously. They have a tendency to be too willing to turn to English rather than persevering to use the language that they have. A minority of learners at entry and foundation level have a tendency to be satisfied with only meeting the requirements of the task in online chat rooms rather than showing the ambition to extend their responses.

Most learners at higher levels are willing to try, correct themselves usefully and acquire and use natural elements of spoken language, such as idioms and dialectal vocabulary. By proficiency level, they speak eloquently and use varied and rich syntax and vocabulary. However, across the provision and across the levels, a minority of learners do not use their Welsh outside formal lessons. This has a negative effect on their progress and efforts to become active Welsh speakers.

Overall, a majority of learners pronounce appropriately. However, the pronunciation of a minority of learners is overly influenced by English language pronunciation.

Many learners at entry and foundation level begin to read and show an appropriate understanding of short pieces that ask them to fill in the blanks by using personal details. A majority of learners read aloud appropriately when they are given an opportunity to do so and are able to read advertisements and increasingly complex dialogues. However, a few learners at these levels read aloud hesitantly and their pronunciation and intonation are not appropriate. Foundation level learners build on their understanding of simple elements of the language by reading pieces that include the periphrastic and short forms of different verbs.

By intermediate level, many learners show a sound understanding of more ambitious texts including pieces in various registers, for example humorous letters between imaginary characters who want to find a Welsh-speaking partner. A majority of higher-level learners strive to read texts on current affairs. For example, on the whole, they understand the content of articles on the BBC Cymru Fyw website and discuss them appropriately.

Many learners across the different levels develop their writing skills in line with their level. Entry level learners begin to write in Welsh by completing gap filling tasks by using personal details appropriately. They show an increasing awareness of language patterns and simple vocabulary and use them appropriately, on the whole. A majority begin to use mutations suitably when writing sentences and answers. Overall, learners at this level translate short sentences correctly, when necessary. A

majority of foundation level learners extend their writing to include the short form of the conditional and future tenses correctly. They are also able to use the noun clause and mutate appropriately, overall. A minority have a tendency to mix up soft and nasal mutations at times. In the best examples, learners succeed in writing effective pieces in the third person to describe people they know.

Many intermediate level learners combine their reading and writing skills to express opinions efficiently in writing about more abstract themes, such as discussing whether children today have too much freedom.

Most learners at the higher levels succeed in composing extended pieces that demonstrate a sound understanding of register and grammar when writing about various themes, such as personal memories and the history of Wales.

Learner numbers have varied over the last three years. The numbers increased to more than 500 learners during 2019-2020. Almost a third of learners were lost during 2020-2021 following a provision offer that relied significantly on face-to-face courses, contrary to the sector's tendency to offer distance learning, in the main. During 2021-2022, the numbers increased to more than 400. The provider's unverified statistics note that the numbers had returned to 2019-2020 levels by the time of the inspection in December 2022.

Over a four-year period, a majority of learners, on average, have completed their courses, although this decreased to a minority during 2019-20. Many learners attended their classes during the week of the inspection.

Over recent years, the proportion of eligible learners that have chosen to sit the WJEC Welsh for Adults examinations has fallen significantly. Very few now sit an examination and, of these, nearly all pass.

Well-being and attitudes to learning: Good

Learn Welsh The Vale (LWTV) is a close-knit and caring community in which learners' well-being is at the heart of its work. This benefits learners and reinforces their emotional well-being positively.

Most learners praise the care that is available from the provider and the personal needs of individual learners are met effectively. One typical example of this care is the way in which all tutors and staff stay in regular contact with learners to support them regularly. As a result, nearly all learners feel safe and free from harassment. They are clear about the procedures that are in place to safeguard them and the protocols for compliments and complaints in the learner handbook.

When they start their courses, most learners settle well with support from their tutors. There is a sense that they are part of a close-knit community in all classes. Most feel that they have a voice that is heard, and that the provider listens to their views or concerns. Many learners appreciate that the provider acts on their comments where possible, for example by consulting to adjust Covid procedures in the classroom.

A few learners who receive additional support through '*Dal ati*' lessons benefit personally from this provision. They appreciate the flexible actions of staff when responding to any individual needs. This ensures that they can attend and continue

with their courses which, in turn, has a positive effect on their attitude towards learning the language.

In lessons, nearly all learners are respectful and appropriate and show positive attitudes towards learning Welsh. They are friendly learners who interact well with their tutors and listen respectfully to the contributions of others. Most attend lessons punctually, concentrate well and are enthusiastic to start learning immediately. They enjoy learning Welsh and this is a strong feature of the close relationship between the provider and learners. In a majority of cases, learners work constructively with their tutors to complete tasks and take advantage of oral feedback to correct mistakes and make progress in their skills.

In many cases, learners have clear goals for learning the language and this motivates them to persevere with tasks successfully. A majority of learners are confident in their use of spoken Welsh considering their starting points and the level of their linguistic ability. These learners use the Welsh language appropriately in informal situations outside lessons, for example with family members or when attending voluntary groups, such as *'paned a sgwrs'* ('cuppa and chat') sessions. However, a minority of learners do not make the most of provision to use the Welsh language in informal situations.

In a minority of cases where there is strong progress, learners are ambitious and have strong self-motivation. They take advantage of additional opportunities to hone their skills, such as completing homework regularly or by attending valuable supplementary sessions. In the few cases where the most significant progress can be seen, learners identify their personal areas for improvement clearly. These learners go the extra mile not only to improve their own experiences but also to support the progress of their fellow learners. A very few of the most successful learners volunteer to organise informal sessions to encourage others to use the Welsh language and, in a very few cases, support tutors in sessions with entry level learners.

In the few cases in which learners make slower progress, they are reticent and do not use spoken Welsh often enough within or outside lessons. These learners do not take advantage of opportunities to complete homework to reinforce their learning and receive beneficial feedback. In the online sessions for young people, they have a tendency to switch off their cameras and do not always make the most of the opportunity to talk at length in virtual discussion rooms. Their responses are short and they do not make an effort to elaborate sufficiently.

Overall, a minority of learners feel that the service from LWTV enriches their lives and improves their personal skills.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

Tutors work together effectively to support learners to learn in a stimulating, supportive and inclusive environment. Many have relevant knowledge of language and use sound methods to help learners to acquire the Welsh language and create active speakers. They provide relevant opportunities for learners to listen and speak in lessons which, in turn, helps them to gain the confidence to communicate increasingly spontaneously.

In the best practice, tutors identify learners' needs well and plan activities that meet their needs successfully. They present the objectives of activities effectively and use the target language skilfully when presenting and reviewing vocabulary and sentence patterns. They vary learning methods regularly to engage and hold learners' interest, for example by using apps and playing language games. Overall, the lively pace of lessons motivates learners beneficially as they make systematic progress in their skills. For example, in proficiency lessons, creative and contemporary activities are presented on themes that have been recommended by learners. Teaching enriches their language, for example, by learning about local dialects during a cooking activity and reading relevant poems by notable poets. However, these robust practices have not been embraced consistently across the provision. In a minority of lessons, tutors do not have high enough expectations and they turn to English when presenting activities and explaining instructions. In addition, they do not support learners to practise pronouncing vocabulary with increasing accuracy by using effective immersion methods. As a result, a minority of learners do not make progress to the best of their ability over time.

Many tutors provide oral and written feedback that supports learners to know what and how to improve, particularly in their speaking skills. They support learners sensitively and present information about language skilfully and concisely, for example by conjugating prepositions and discussing the meaning of idioms to improve and enrich their conversation. A majority of tutors challenge and stretch learners appropriately and help them to recall previous learning through skilful questioning and probing. In the best practice, particularly during the lockdown periods, tutors provide oral feedback through digital methods and support learning to develop their skills constructively. However, written feedback does not always support learners to develop their skills to the best of their ability, particularly more able learners. On the whole, the professional learning offer does not support tutors purposefully enough to improve specific teaching and learning practices.

The provider offers a full range of mainstream courses from entry to proficiency level, both in the community and in the workplace across the county and beyond. It also provides a programme of learner support activities that gives learners an opportunity to practise their Welsh outside formal lessons. A variety of face-to-face, online, intensive, very intensive, blended and non-intensive classes are organised, which includes the new developments of learning programmes for young people and Welsh at Home provision. A few tutors are confident enough in their digital skills to deliver face-to-face and virtual sessions at the same time successfully. By doing so, the provider supports learners to attend sessions face-to-face and virtually, in line with their professional and personal requirements.

The provider organises a number of suitable activities that support learners to practise their Welsh in informal situations. For example, staff organise fun activities, such as playing board games as part of 'Gwener Gweithgareddau' ('Activity Friday') provision. A few learners are also starting to use the Welsh language with increasing independence in the local community to practise talking to new and fluent Welsh speakers. On the whole, tutors encourage learners to practise speaking Welsh regularly, but a minority do not take advantage and participate fully in activities that are planned for them.

Nearly all learners appreciate that their tutors motivate and support them to learn Welsh. This, in turn, nurtures their understanding of the benefits and value of communicating in Welsh with family members and colleagues, for example. A majority of tutors enrich learners' experiences of learning Welsh further by sharing information about Welsh history and culture, for example by playing and learning songs by Welsh artists, such as Dafydd Iwan.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The provider succeeds in creating a close-knit, inclusive community that provides care and support for learners in all aspects of their learning experience. This has a positive effect on learners' attitudes to learning and their outcomes.

On the whole, tutors know their learners well and forge a successful, caring relationship and ensure a good pastoral environment in nearly all classes. As a result, learners are highly motivated. Tutors have a good knowledge of the personal needs of learning in the groups that they teach. This enables them to provide purposeful support aimed at the individual's needs, where necessary. Maintaining high levels of well-being among learners and staff underpins the work of the provider. Nearly all tutors have received training on student and staff well-being.

There is good support for learners with additional learning needs (ALN) and the provider takes advantage of being part of Vale of Glamorgan Council so that staff can receive specialist support and advice to support dyslexic and autistic learners. One example is the support given to learners with autism which supports them to improve their life skills in addition to their linguistic skills.

The provider has good communication arrangements and provides a wide range of information, including an online and paper prospectus, information leaflets and effective and impartial advice over the phone for learners to choose the most relevant course. Before starting the course, learners receive correspondence drawing their attention to the additional support available to them. The handbook has been amended recently to ensure that learners have specific knowledge about the provider's policies.

Following a significant decrease in numbers between 2019-20 and 2020-21, retaining learners is a priority for the provider. Tutors get to know their learners well and offer support to help them with their learning, including considering changing courses, if necessary, to continue with their learning. Tutors work appropriately with the administrative staff to identify learners who are finding things difficult. For example, they support them to return to the course, change courses or attend catch-up sessions with a tutor so that they can resume their learning. The provider has worked with the National Centre for Learning Welsh to provide coursebooks for learners with visual impairments. However, there is no formal system in place to track learners' attendance and monitor it regularly to facilitate forward planning.

The provider encourages learners to use the Welsh language outside the classroom. As a result, a majority of learners take advantage of opportunities to use their Welsh with family, friends, in the workplace, and so forth. An extensive programme of weekly activities is organised to enable learners to practise their Welsh, for example coffee mornings and reading clubs, and visits to local societies such as Cymrodorion

y Barri. An annual programme of visits and events is also organised, such as Gŵyl Fach y Fro and Tafwyl. These events are advertised through tutors and direct communication with learners. Higher level learners are encouraged to join the *Siarad* scheme to broaden their contact with the Welsh language. However, a minority of learners do not take advantage of these opportunities to practise their Welsh outside the classroom.

There are suitable arrangements in place to gather learners' views. There is continuous dialogue between tutors and learners. There is a suitable compliments and complaints process in place and it is implemented effectively to support communication between staff and learners. A Learner's Voice Week is held for learners to be able to express their views about the provision. The annual national *Dweud Eich Dweud* questionnaire is promoted appropriately, with around a third of learners completing it. The provider acts on comments and informs learners about any steps that are taken. One example was purchasing a small microphone for the tutor following complaints about noise in the classroom during the pandemic when the windows had to be kept open.

The provider's arrangements for safeguarding learners meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement

LWTV is part of the Vale of Glamorgan Adult Community Learning Department. The provider has developed a strong sense of team among the enthusiastic tutors who work with each other suitably. The provider is an integral part of the Vale of Glamorgan Council's aspiration to promote and increase the use of the Welsh language. It influences the wider organisation usefully by ensuring that the council's mandatory training units are provided through the medium of Welsh, in addition to offering Welsh courses to the council's own workforce. These courses are advertised on the front page of the council's intranet. This adds status to the provider's work within the home organisation.

LWTV's leaders have established a vision that is consistent with the objectives of the National Centre for Learning Welsh and Welsh Government's policy of creating a million Welsh speakers by 2050.

However, this vision is not realised in full at an operational level and, on the whole, the provider does not address important areas for improvement purposefully enough as part of its monitoring and evaluation arrangements.

All members of the team have suitable job descriptions. However, leaders are not clear about what is required of them to fulfil their strategic duties in full. Leaders are not held to account effectively enough by the home organisation's line management and scrutiny processes. In addition, the small team's capacity to operate across all of a Welsh for Adults provider's areas of responsibility is limited.

The provider does not possess processes to analyse statistics to forward plan provision and prioritise areas for improvement strategically. Leaders are not knowledgeable about the type of information that is available through national data systems and do not show an understanding of how to use data to plan for

improvement. Their use of statistics is limited and is mainly for the purpose of reporting for the National Centre for Learning Welsh's monitoring processes. This is a significant shortcoming that needs to be improved urgently.

Generally, leaders are not confident enough to reflect on and challenge historical delivery patterns through honest self-evaluation and meaningful use of statistical information.

Leaders promote professional values and behaviour among staff through the council's corporate courses. They succeed in creating a caring and supporting work environment. With the support of the National Centre, they ensure that tutors have the skills and confidence to deliver remote and hybrid lessons effectively. They also support a number of former learners to gain a national Welsh for Adults qualification, *Dechrau Dysgu*, in order to become tutors.

Tutors are observed regularly, which contributes to discussions regarding performance which include appropriate actions. Despite this, the process of assuring the quality of teaching and assessment is not evaluative and robust enough to identify strengths and areas for improvement across the provision.

Although various training courses and sessions for sharing good practice are available to tutors, training is not, overall, tailored directly to respond to the specific needs of tutors regarding effective teaching methods. For example, too many tutors continue to transfer errors, such as incorrect pronunciation, to their learners. These shortcomings hinder learners' progress and make assimilating to Welsh speaking society and networks more challenging for them.

Leaders have an appropriate knowledge of the cost of programmes and other activities. The provider benefits from its relationship with the local authority, for example in terms of using the authority's venues and internal services, which is beneficial to staff and learners. Expenditure on activities other than teaching does not exceed 15% of the total amount allocated, in accordance with the guidelines of the National Centre for Learning Welsh.

Evidence base of the report

Before the inspection, inspectors:

- analysed the outcomes from the learner questionnaire and considered the views of tutors and staff through their questionnaire responses

During the inspection, inspectors:

- met the head of the provider, a representative of the managing body/governing body, senior and middle managers (where appropriate) and tutors to evaluate the impact of the provider's work
- engaged with learners to discuss their work and hear their views about various aspects of their provider
- met with groups of learners, such as representatives of learner voice groups
- visited a broad sample of classes and conducted learning walks to observe learners in lessons and informal learning activities
- looked closely at the provider's self-evaluation processes
- considered the provider's improvement plans and looked at evidence to show how well the provider had moved forward with planned improvements
- scrutinised a range of the provider's documents, including information on learner progress, records of meetings of staff and the managing/governing body, information on learners' well-being, including the safeguarding of learners, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- reviewed the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the provider and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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