

SDF paper – 11 October 2022

## School categories according to Welsh medium provision

### Background

The Welsh Government (WG) has set a target of increasing the number of Welsh speakers from 562,000 in 2011 to 1 million by 2050 through Cymraeg 2050: A million speakers which sets out the WG vision and strategy.

As a strand of this, Local Authorities (LAs) are now required by legislation to produce Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs) to increase Welsh-medium provision within schools. This duty is set out in the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, and regulations made under it. The plans will set out targets over a ten-year period, including increased Welsh medium provision in schools.

All Local Authority WESPs have now been approved by the Welsh Government and are operational.

Existing Welsh medium categories defined for schools to categorise their language medium do not allow an accurate way for schools and LAs to capture and publicise their position within the continuum framework nor for LAs and the Welsh Government to monitor progress towards WESP and national policy targets.

Ambiguity around existing school categories does not support commitments made in LAs' WESPs to increase Welsh-medium provision within schools and to undertake the statutory process of changing a school's category when this has been agreed between a school and LA.

New categories have been devised through a consultative process with a wide range of stakeholders and education practitioners including representation across all current school categories, Local Authorities, regional consortia, and Estyn. A formal public consultation was also held between 14 December 2020 and 26 March 2021. Subsequently, new categories and guidance were published in December 2021:

[School categories according to Welsh-medium provision | GOV.WALES](#)

In the revised guidance (published December 2021), we outlined that Local Authorities and schools would be able to implement the new policy from September 2022, and that reporting/data collection arrangements would be amended in due course to reflect the changes. Many Local Authorities have already been working with schools to map current provision and establish as which new category they identify (as well as initial plans to transition to another category to increase Welsh medium provision).

WG would like school and LA systems and data collection and reporting systems to now be brought into line with these new categories to facilitate the use of the new categories and support schools and LAs in meeting their statutory obligations.

Included in those statutory requirements are: schools reporting their closest language category in governors annual reports and local authorities reporting in their composite prospectus for schools the language category used by each school governing body in the most recent PLASC return which most closely described the school.

## Change

### Item

The existing item is a single school-level field. The new arrangements allow schools to identify with multiple categories (up to three, although a third category would be very rare).

The key areas of change in the new arrangements include reducing the number of categories that define the Welsh language provision in a school to 3 in the primary sector and 3 in the secondary sector, with each following the same pattern - English-medium (Category 1); Dual language (Category 2) and Welsh-medium (Category 3 and 3P). The percentage of Welsh language provision will also now be calculated based on the school time allocated to learning and using Welsh which includes curricular as well as extra-curricular time, with the highest being 3P, where 100% of pupils undertake 90% or more of their school activities, both curricular and extra-curricular in Welsh.

We have also introduced transitional sub categories in between each category in order to ensure a seamless transition from one category to another as well as encourage more schools to increase their Welsh medium provision.

### Old codes & categories:

WM	Welsh Medium
AB	A Bilingual
BB	B Bilingual
CB	C Bilingual
CH	Ch Bilingual
DS	Dual Stream
EM	English Medium
EW	English (with significant Welsh)
TR	Transitional

### **New codes & categories:**

C1	Category 1
T2	Transitional 2
C2	Category 2
T3	Transitional 3
C3	Category 3
C3P	Category 3P

NB C3P is only valid for secondary schools (schools with secondary age pupils?)

The new requirements are for Primary/Middle/Secondary schools and would be collected via PLASC from these school types, but we would like the facility to record categories according to these new definitions to be available to all provision types.

As set out in the new guidance, middle schools are subject to the arrangements of categorising their language provision. Therefore if there is a variation in the category between the primary and secondary, this will need to be recorded in management information systems and reported in PLASC data.

### **Guidance**

The revised guidance<sup>1</sup> for school categories according to Welsh medium provision was published on 16 December 2021 and provides clear instruction on how to identify the appropriate category(ies) for a school. Stakeholders have been fully engaged in the design of these new categories and how to use them. Local authorities are working with schools to help identify which category(ies) they are.

Prior to the formal consultation on the guidance, extensive research and engagement work was undertaken in order to develop the revised categories. This included a panel of independent advisors who reviewed the existing arrangements and proposed a series of recommendations for the Welsh Government to consider. Extensive engagement work was also undertaken prior to consultation with representatives from all existing categories of schools, Local Authorities most affected by the proposals as well as other education stakeholders including the regional consortia and Estyn. Further engagement was undertaken post consultation and prior to final publication. This engagement work allowed Welsh Government to gain a more in-depth understanding from school representatives and other

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<sup>1</sup> [School categories according to Welsh-medium provision | GOV.WALES](#)

stakeholders of how the revised categories would impact them, and how they would approach and incorporate the new arrangements, and adapt guidance accordingly.

PLASC completion notes will need to be updated in line with these changes to Welsh medium categories.

Validation rules and reports will need to be adapted to align with the new categories.

### **Associated changes**

It is likely that schools will want to record which pupils are in which 'stream' where there are multiple categories identified in a single establishment.

### **Collection**

Via PLASC annual collection.

### **Reporting**

Xml structures will need updating accordingly, as will any xslt summary reports, validation and any DEWi level summary reporting.

### **Mapping**

It is not possible to automatically map an old code to a new code as multiple options are possible. Annex A sets out how there are multiple options for old codes to map to.

### **Timeline**

WG would like the revised categories ready for use in school MIS software from Sept 2023 and to be introduced for first PLASC collection Jan 2024

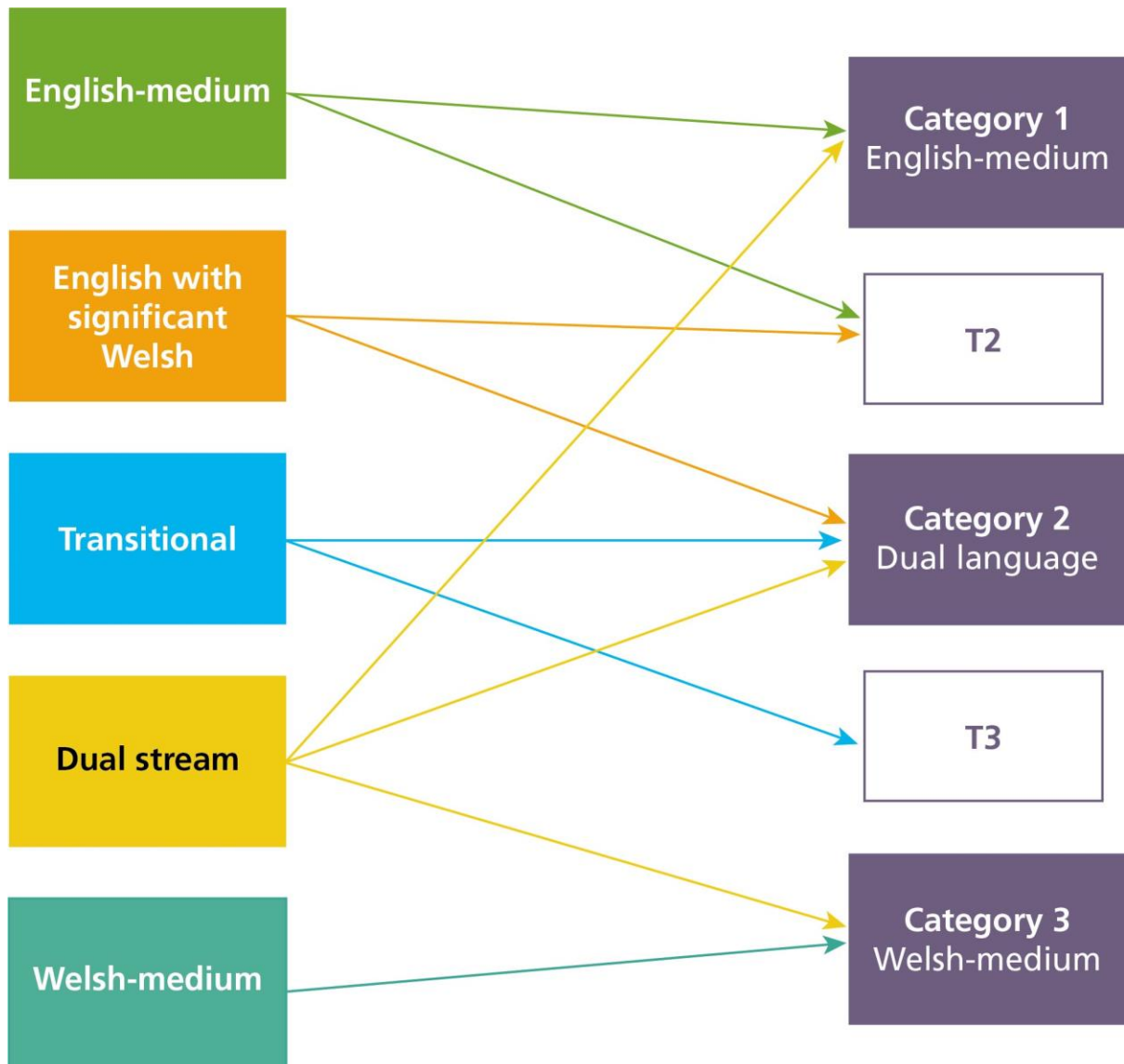
### **Future**

It is likely that at some point in the future that Welsh Government will look to review data related to Welsh language acquisition/use/medium of study data in the round. It is not anticipated that these school medium categories will change, but it may be required to link them to pupil level and class level data in different ways, especially where these data items themselves are refreshed.

In the shorter term, WG may consider other gaps, such as EOTAS PLASC and possible collection from other school types.

## Annex A

### PRIMARY SECTOR



## SECONDARY SECTOR

