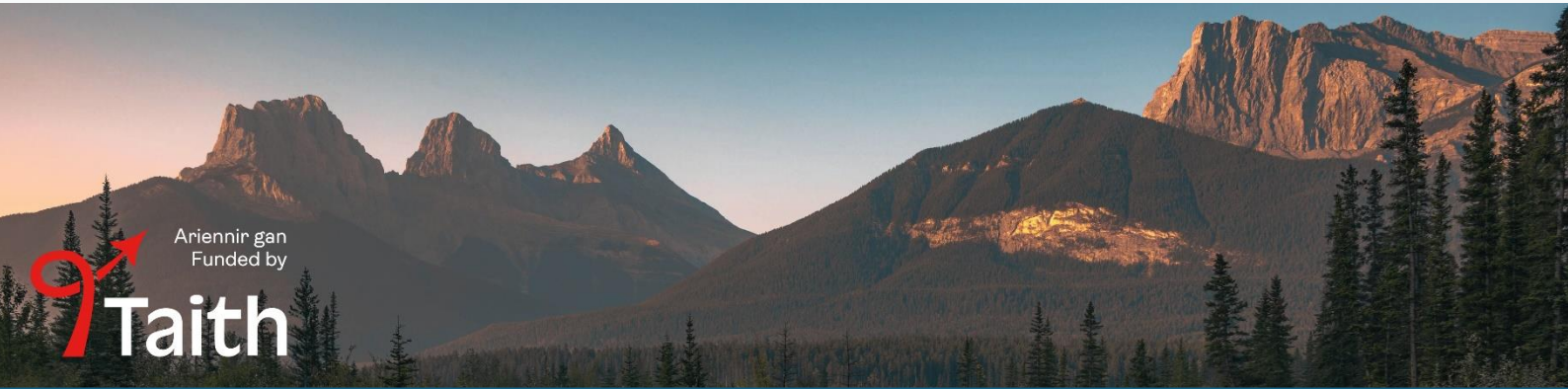




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Taith Pathway 2 Project: Developing and Promoting Minority Language Education

Final Evaluation and Project Report

“Learning from New Brunswick and Québec, Canada to Strengthen Welsh-medium Education in Wrexham”

September 2026

Wrexham County Borough Council
Education & Early Intervention



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Executive Summary

KEY INFORMATION	
Title	“Learning from New Brunswick and Québec, Canada, to Strengthen Welsh-medium Education in Wrexham”
Project Duration	24 Months
Project Partners	Wrexham County Borough Council, Wrexham Welsh-medium School Cluster, Wrexham Welsh Immersion Service, educational partners in New Brunswick and Québec, Canada.

Overview

This Taith-funded international collaborative project was established to explore how one of the world's most successful minority language education systems has developed, sustained and expanded bilingual education. Through visits to educational institutions, government departments, research organisations, immersion centres and community agencies across New Brunswick and Québec, project participants investigated approaches that have successfully increased participation in minority language education, strengthened language acquisition and promoted bilingualism across communities.

The project was undertaken during a significant period of development for Welsh-medium education in Wrexham. The implementation of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP), the ambitions of Cymraeg 2050 and emerging national discussions around language progression frameworks created an opportunity to examine successful international models and identify lessons that could be adapted locally and shared nationally.

The project involved school leaders, local authority officers and immersion practitioners working within three research workstreams focused on language acquisition, strategic leadership and community engagement. Together, these workstreams provided a comprehensive understanding of the systems, structures and partnerships that underpin successful minority language education.

The evaluation concludes that the project exceeded its original aims and objectives. It has directly influenced teaching and learning, informed strategic planning, strengthened professional expertise, improved collaboration between educational partners and increased understanding of how minority language education can thrive through collective community ownership.

Most importantly, the project has reinforced the principle that the growth of minority languages is not solely dependent on schools. Successful language development requires a coordinated system in which schools, families, communities, employers, local authorities and national government work together to create environments where language is visible, valued and used.

Background and Project Context

Wrexham's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) identifies three key priorities:

1. Promoting Welsh-medium education.
2. Developing robust Welsh-medium Additional Learning Needs (ALN) provision.
3. Developing Welsh language skills amongst the workforce.

As Wrexham entered the implementation phase of its ten-year strategic plan, there was a clear need to learn from jurisdictions that have achieved significant success in growing a minority language education system.

New Brunswick was identified as an ideal research location. As Canada's only officially bilingual province, it has successfully developed a thriving Francophone education sector despite operating within a predominantly English-speaking context. The province has established effective systems for:

- Language acquisition
- Immersion education
- Family engagement
- Policy implementation
- Workforce development
- Community participation
- Inclusion and accessibility.

Research already undertaken by the Welsh Government had highlighted the success of late immersion programmes in New Brunswick. However, the Wrexham project sought to go significantly further by examining the entire ecosystem that supports minority language growth.

The fundamental question underpinning the project was:

“How can Wrexham learn from New Brunswick’s experience to strengthen Welsh-medium education and contribute meaningfully to the ambitions of Cymraeg 2050?”

Project Objectives

The project sought to meet the following objectives:

- Objective 1:** Investigate successful models of minority language growth and bilingual education
- Objective 2:** Examine language acquisition and immersion methodologies that improve learner outcomes.
- Objective 3:** Explore implementation of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)
- Objective 4:** Investigate how government, local authorities and education organisations work together to support bilingual education.
- Objective 5:** Examine approaches to supporting learners with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) within bilingual settings.
- Objective 6:** Understand how non-French speaking families are encouraged to engage with bilingual education.
- Objective 7:** Strengthen implementation of Wrexham’s Welsh in Education Plan (WESP).
- Objective 8:** Generate findings that can be shared locally, regionally and nationally to support Welsh-medium education across Wales.

Project Methodology

To ensure comprehensive coverage of each research theme, participants were organised into three workstreams.

Workstream 1: Language Acquisition and Immersion

This group focussed on:

- Language acquisition frameworks
- Immersion methodologies
- Literacy and oracy development
- Transition arrangements
- Language progression pathways
- CEFR implementation.

All of the above were considered within bilingual contexts, with participants visiting schools, immersion centres, researchers and universities.

Workstream 2: Strategic Leadership and Governance

This group focussed on:

- Educational leadership
- Language policy
- Government support structures
- Funding arrangements
- Strategic planning
- Accountability systems.

Participants met representatives from education ministries, regional authorities, and organisations responsible for language development.

Workstream 3: Community Engagement and Inclusion

This group focussed on:

- Family engagement models
- Community partnerships
- Promotion of bilingual education
- Support for newcomers
- Additional Learning Needs (ALN) provision
- Inclusion within minority language education.

Participants explored how schools engage families, promote bilingualism, support latecomers and ensure equitable access for learners with additional needs.

Following the international visits, each group compiled detailed reports and case studies which were scrutinised collectively. The findings were synthesised to identify themes, evaluate their relevance to Wrexham and develop recommendations for future practice.

Key Findings

The key findings from the Taith-funded trip are outlined below.

Finding 1: Successful Minority Language Education Requires a Whole-System Approach

Perhaps the strongest and most consistent finding from every aspect of the project was that successful minority language development is never achieved through schools alone. Across both New Brunswick and Québec, language was viewed as a shared societal responsibility. Schools worked in close partnership with community organisations, government departments, cultural agencies, employers and families to create environments in which bilingualism was both valued and visible.

Participants consistently encountered the belief that language belongs to everyone. Bilingual education was not seen as a specialist pathway for a minority of learners but as an asset that enriched communities and supported social, cultural and economic development.

This finding reinforced the importance of partnership working within Wrexham and highlighted the role that schools, community organisations, local authorities and families must play in promoting Welsh language use beyond the classroom.

Across New Brunswick and Québec, participants observed strong collaboration between:

- Schools
- Universities
- Community organisations
- Families
- Government departments
- Employers
- Cultural organisation.

The message encountered repeatedly was simple: **Language belongs to everyone.**

Language development was viewed as a collective societal responsibility rather than solely an educational responsibility.

This represents a significant lesson for Wales. While schools play a central role in language acquisition, sustainable growth requires wider community use, visibility and support.

The project reinforced the importance of strengthening partnerships between schools, local government, Welsh language organisations and communities to create opportunities for children and families to use Welsh beyond the classroom.

Finding 2: Language, Identity and Culture are Closely Connected

A second key finding was the close relationship between language, identity and belonging. Throughout the visit, participants observed how language learning was closely connected to cultural identity and community pride.

Learners in Canada were encouraged to view bilingualism as an important part of who they are rather than simply a skill to be acquired. Educational programmes regularly incorporated local culture, heritage, literature and community experiences, helping learners develop a strong sense of belonging.

This finding reinforced the importance of ensuring that Welsh-medium education supports the development of cultural understanding alongside language acquisition. It also highlighted the need to create authentic opportunities for learners to experience Welsh language and culture beyond formal curriculum activities

Participants observed that bilingual education in Canada is strongly linked to identity, belonging and culture.

Language learning was not viewed simply as acquiring communication skills.

Instead, bilingualism was presented as:

- A source of pride
- A cultural asset
- An expression of identity
- A route to future opportunities
- An important element of citizenship.

Schools actively promoted cultural experiences, local history, community engagement and language use outside the classroom.

This finding reinforced the importance of ensuring that Welsh language education remains firmly connected to Welsh culture, heritage, and community life.

Consequently, participating schools have increasingly reflected on how Welsh-medium education can strengthen learners' understanding of identity and belong alongside language acquisition.

Finding 3: High-Quality Immersion Education Produces Strong Outcomes

The project found considerable consistency across high-performing immersion settings. Successful programmes placed a strong emphasis on explicit vocabulary instruction, oracy development, language modelling and structured progression.

Teachers consistently provided learners with repeated opportunities to hear, practise and use language in meaningful contexts. Vocabulary acquisition was carefully planned and monitored, while speaking and listening were prioritised from the earliest stages of learning.

These findings closely reflected evidence gathered through Welsh immersion research and aligned strongly with effective practice already evident within the Gwynedd Immersion Education System. The consistency between Canadian experience, international research and effective Welsh practice provided confidence that these approaches can be successfully developed further within Wrexham.

Across schools, immersion centres and universities, researchers identified consistent features of successful immersion practice.

These included:

- High expectations
- Full immersion environments
- Explicit vocabulary instruction
- Repetition and retrieval practice
- Structured sentence patterns
- Rich opportunities for meaningful conversations
- Deliberate teacher modelling

- Strong oracy development.

Particular emphasis was placed on ensuring that learners developed strong oral language skills before progressing to more complex and academic language.

Researchers observed significant alignment between Canadian practice, international immersion research and successful Welsh models, such as the Gwynedd immersion education system.

Finding 4: Vocabulary Development is Fundamental

One of the most important findings concerned the role of vocabulary development. Schools throughout the visit demonstrated highly structured approaches to vocabulary acquisition that enabled learners to access increasingly complex language and curriculum content.

Vocabulary was not treated as an isolated activity but instead formed part of a coherent progression framework supported by teaching strategies such as repetition, retrieval practice, modelling and contextual application.

Following the project, participating schools identified vocabulary development as a shared improvement priority. This has already influenced professional learning, curriculum planning and classroom practice across the Welsh-medium sector in Wrexham.

Vocabulary teaching was not left to chance.

Schools employed:

- Explicit vocabulary instruction
- Vocabulary progression frameworks
- Subject-specific language planning
- Visual language supports
- Retrieval activities
- Regular opportunities for oral rehearsal.

Teachers report greater consistency in approaches to vocabulary teaching and increased understanding of how vocabulary development underpins literacy, oracy and curriculum access.

Finding 4: Oracy Should Be Prioritised

Participants observed that successful immersion settings invested heavily in spoken language development. Learners were provided with frequent opportunities to engage in structured discussion, collaborative learning and purposeful communication.

Teachers carefully modelled language structures and provided learners with scaffolding that enabled them to communicate confidently in increasingly sophisticated ways. These approaches supported learners to develop fluency, confidence and independence.

As a result of the project, schools within Wrexham have placed a greater emphasis on developing learners' confidence in spoken Welsh and creating richer opportunities for language use throughout the curriculum.

Research findings consistently highlighted the importance of developing learners' confidence to communicate.

Successful language acquisition involved:

- Frequent structured discussion
- Partner work
- Dialogue
- Collaborative learning
- Oral rehearsal
- Language modelling.

This finding has strengthened local focus on spoken language and confidence-building opportunities across Welsh-medium education.

Finding 5: Inclusion Must Remain a Core Principle

The project challenged a number of common misconceptions regarding bilingual education and inclusion.

Throughout the visit, participants encountered examples of learners with Additional Learning Needs thriving within bilingual and immersion settings. Support systems focused on removing barriers to participation while maintaining high expectations for all learners.

Similarly, schools successfully supported learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds, newly arrived families and learners entering bilingual education at later stages.

Participants found robust examples of support for:

- Learners with Additional Learning Needs (ALN)
- Learners entering education late
- Migrant learners
- New arrivals
- Learners from non-French speaking households.

The overwhelming message was that bilingual education should be **accessible for all**.

Support was achieved through targeted intervention and effective teaching rather than reduced expectations.

This finding has informed professional discussions across Wrexham regarding Welsh-medium ALN provision and equitable access to Welsh-medium education.

Finding 6: Families are Critical Partners

Another important finding was the role of families in supporting language development. Schools invested significant time and resources in building positive relationships with parents and carers, many of whom did not speak the minority language themselves.

Rather than viewing this as a barrier, schools actively supported families through information sessions, resources, outreach programmes and community events.

This learning has informed Wrexham's ongoing efforts to strengthen engagement with families considering Welsh-medium education and support parents whose own Welsh language skills may be limited.

Successful systems invested heavily in:

- Parent information

- Family support
- Home learning resources
- Community events
- Language awareness programmes.

Participants recognised that many of the families choosing bilingual education do not speak the target language themselves.

Canada demonstrated that this should be viewed as an opportunity rather than a barrier.

This learning has informed the development of improved communication and engagement strategies within Wrexham.

Finding 7: Workforce Development is Essential

The project highlighted the importance of high-quality professional learning in sustaining successful bilingual education systems. Participants explored models that provided ongoing language development, specialist training and coaching for educational professionals.

Strong workforce development systems helped ensure consistency across schools and enabled practitioners to develop expertise in immersion pedagogy, language acquisition and bilingual education.

These findings have informed discussions regarding workforce planning and professional learning opportunities within Wrexham.

Finding 9: CEFR Provides a Valuable Framework for Language Progression

Through engagement with researchers and educational organisations, participants gained a greater understanding of how the CEFR framework can support language learning and progression.

The Canadian experience demonstrated how clear language progression frameworks can provide consistency, support assessment processes and help learners understand their own language development journey.

This learning has contributed to local and national discussions regarding language continua and future approaches to Welsh language progression.

Project Impacts

Area 1: Learning in Wrexham

The impact of the project is already evident across schools and services within Wrexham.

Participating schools have reported a greater focus on vocabulary acquisition, oracy development and immersion methodologies. Teachers have strengthened their understanding of language acquisition and have incorporated new approaches into their classroom practice.

The project has directly influenced learning experiences for approximately 900 primary learners, 900 secondary learners and more than 80 learners accessing immersion provision.

Learners are benefiting from improved language development strategies, more explicit vocabulary teaching, stronger opportunities for spoken language development and increased engagement with Welsh language and culture.

School leaders report that the project has broadened their understanding of strategic language planning and strengthened collaboration across the Welsh-medium sector. Professional dialogue has become more focused on language development, progression and immersion pedagogy, resulting in a more consistent approach across schools.

Impact on Learners

The project has directly influenced learning experiences for approximately:

- 900 primary-age learners
- 900 secondary-age learners
- More than 80 learners accessing immersion provision.

Learners now benefit from:

- Enhanced vocabulary teaching
- Improved language progression approaches
- Increased opportunities for oral language development
- Greater emphasis on Welsh language confidence
- Increased opportunities to explore both language and culture together.

Impact on Teaching Staff

Teachers involved in dissemination activities have reported greater understanding of:

- Second language acquisition
- Immersion pedagogy
- Vocabulary instruction
- Language modelling
- Effective oracy development.

The project has strengthened professional confidence and provided practical strategies which can be implemented directly in classrooms across Wrexham.

Impact on School Leaders

School leaders report increased understanding of:

- Strategic language planning
- Whole-school bilingual development
- Community engagement
- Language progression frameworks.

The project has influenced school improvement planning and strengthened collaboration across the Welsh-medium school cluster.

Area 2: Impact on Wrexham's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP)

The project has directly supported key WESP priorities.

Promotion of Welsh-medium Education

The findings have informed improved messaging around bilingualism and increased understanding of how successful minority language systems promote educational choice.

Welsh-medium Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Provision

Evidence gathered has reinforced the importance of inclusion and high aspirations for all learners.

Workforce Development

The project highlighted effective approaches to language development for staff and has informed future workforce planning.

Community Engagement

Findings have strengthened understanding of the role communities play in supporting language growth.

Area 3: National Impact

The project's findings have been shared extensively with a wide range of stakeholders.

Dissemination activities have included presentations to school leaders, local authority officers, Welsh Government representatives, professional networks and immersion practitioners. Findings have been shared through conferences, workshops, stakeholder groups, school improvement networks and events linked to the National Eisteddfod.

The project has also contributed to wider professional discussions around immersion education, language acquisition, CEFR implementation and the future development of Welsh-medium education in Wales.

As a result, the impact of the project extends well beyond Wrexham and has the potential to inform practice across multiple local authorities.

Findings have been disseminated through:

- Headteacher forums
- School improvement networks
- National immersion conferences
- Welsh Government events
- National Eisteddfod activities
- Professional learning programmes

- WESP stakeholder meetings.

The project has contributed to wider discussions around:

- Language immersion
- Welsh-medium expansion
- CEFR implementation
- The Welsh Language and Education Bill.
- Cymraeg 2050.

Sustainability and Legacy

The project has established a long-term programme of improvement.

Future developments include:

- Vocabulary progression frameworks
- Enhanced immersion methodologies
- Continued professional learning
- Family engagement resources
- Stronger community partnerships
- Development of newcomer support programmes
- Ongoing refinement of WESP delivery.

The learning from Canada will continue to shape practice for many years beyond the lifetime of the project.

Final Evaluation

The Taith Canada project has been highly successful, achieving and, in many areas, exceeding its original objectives. It has provided Wrexham with valuable insight into one of the world's most successful minority language education systems and offered a unique opportunity to explore how effective approaches to bilingualism, immersion education and language planning can be adapted within a Welsh context.

The project has strengthened professional knowledge, influenced classroom practice, informed strategic planning and reinforced the importance of collaboration between schools, families, communities and public services. Through engagement with internationally recognised experts and successful bilingual education providers, participants have gained a deeper understanding of the conditions required for minority languages to flourish.

One of the most significant outcomes has been the project's demonstration that successful language revitalisation requires a coordinated, long-term approach that extends beyond education alone. The evidence gathered throughout the visit highlighted that sustainable growth in minority language use is achieved when strong leadership, high-quality teaching, supportive communities, clear strategic direction and positive attitudes towards bilingualism work together towards a shared goal.

The project has also enabled Wrexham to benchmark its own provision against both international exemplars and successful Welsh models, including the immersion system in Gwynedd. In doing so, it has provided confidence that many of the approaches already being developed locally are aligned with recognised best practice, while also identifying opportunities for further innovation and improvement.

The evaluation concludes that the project has had a significant and measurable impact on:

- Learner outcomes and language development
- Professional learning and workforce capacity
- Teaching and immersion practice
- School leadership and collaboration
- Strategic planning and policy development
- Community engagement and partnership working
- The promotion of Welsh-medium education.

Perhaps most importantly, the project has helped to shift perceptions about what is possible.

It has demonstrated that minority language education can thrive when communities, education systems and governments work collectively to create environments in which language is visible, valued and actively used.

The learning gained from New Brunswick and Québec continues to influence practice across Wrexham and has already informed developments within the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan. Through strengthening language acquisition, promoting bilingualism, developing workforce expertise and fostering stronger partnerships with families and communities, the project has created a sustainable legacy that will continue to benefit learners across the county for years to come.

Ultimately, the Taith Canada project stands as a powerful example of how international collaboration can drive meaningful local improvement. It has strengthened Wrexham's capacity to deliver its vision for Welsh-medium education and made a valuable contribution towards the national ambition of

creating one million Welsh speakers by 2050. Through its lasting impact on learners, practitioners, leaders and communities, the project has laid strong foundations for the continued growth and success of Welsh-medium education in Wrexham and beyond.