

Linguistic Background of Welsh School Population

Wales is a country where English is the main language but close to 25% of the population also speak the indigenous language, Welsh, to some degree. Education is available through the medium of Welsh and it is keenly sought after by a growing number of parents. It is also compulsory as a second language in all English-medium schools. Immigration from non-English-speaking countries tends to be centred on the larger cities such as Cardiff, where 25% of the school population is from a non-English- or Welsh-speaking background. This percentage is much higher in some individual schools.

CILT Cymru research in 2005 found that approximately 8000 children across Wales come from homes where a language other than English or Welsh is spoken, with a total of 98 different languages being represented. A large number of these are African or Asian languages, but there are groups from European countries.

Each year a survey is conducted across Welsh schools collating information about the pupils. In 2011 for the first time, the survey included a question on first language. It was shown that 94.2% of pupils speak either English or Welsh as their first language. The statistics on the languages spoken by at least 200 pupils as their first language are as follows:

Language	Number of Pupils	Percentage of non English/Welsh speaking pupils	Percentage of overall school population
Bengali	2 505	13.6	0.6
Polish	1 911	10.4	0.5
Arabic	1 787	9.7	0.5
Panjabi	1 203	6.5	0.3
Urdu	1 057	5.7	0.3
Somali	986	5.4	0.2
Tagalog/Filipino	859	4.7	0.2
Chinese	683	3.7	0.2
Portuguese	511	2.8	0.1
Czech	449	2.4	0.1
Malayalam	356	1.9	0.1
Pashto/Pakhto	322	1.7	0.1
French	268	1.5	0.1
Turkish	227	1.2	0.1
Slovak	214	1.2	0.1

The survey also examined the distribution across Wales of children whose first language is other than English or Welsh. Cardiff was the most multilingual local authority, with 21.2% of pupils reporting a different first language, followed by Newport with 13.4%. There was wide variation across the country, however, with some areas, such as Caerphilly (0.5%), Torfaen (0.8%) and Anglesey (0.9%) reporting mostly English or Welsh first language children.

Source: <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/schools2012/120911/?lang=en> Section 7: Ethnic Background, National Identity and Language