



CHESTNUT HILL SCHOOL

WELSH LANGUAGE POLICY

Chestnut Hill School

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1.0 Purpose, scope and school context

1.1 Purpose and scope

This policy sets out Chestnut Hill School's approach to the Welsh language. It explains how the school reflects its location in Wales, promotes positive awareness of Welsh language and culture, and uses Welsh incidentally and proportionately within everyday school life while remaining an English-medium independent specialist school.

The policy applies to all learners and all staff. It should be read alongside the Curriculum Policy, English as an Additional Language (EAL) Policy, Additional Learning Needs arrangements, Equality and Diversity Policy, Safeguarding Policy and relevant communication and accessibility plans.

1.2 School language context

English is the principal language of instruction and the normal language of day-to-day school business at Chestnut Hill School. Most teaching, learning, therapy and routine communication are delivered through English. A significant proportion of learners are placed by English local authorities, although the school may also educate learners from Wales and learners whose first, home or stronger language is Welsh.

Welsh is not ordinarily taught as a discrete subject or through a formal Welsh-language acquisition programme. The school uses incidental Welsh: natural, proportionate opportunities to hear, see and use simple Welsh within routines, greetings, the environment, cultural events and local-context learning. This approach is adapted to each learner's communication profile, developmental level, additional learning needs (ALN), interests and wellbeing.

Key position: Chestnut Hill is an English-medium school. Incidental Welsh is intended to build awareness, familiarity and a positive relationship with the language and culture of Wales; it is not used to impose a formal Welsh proficiency pathway on learners.

2.0 Legal and national context in Wales

2.1 Independent school requirements

Chestnut Hill School is an independent school in Wales and is therefore governed by the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024 and the Education Act 2002 framework for independent schools. The school must provide a broad curriculum appropriate to pupils' ages, aptitudes and needs and must give suitable experience in language, communication and literacy.

Welsh Government guidance confirms that the Independent School Standards do not require independent schools to follow Curriculum for Wales. It also confirms that independent schools are free to organise their curriculum, provided the statutory independent school standards are met. Because English is the principal language of instruction at Chestnut Hill, the specific independent-school requirement for lessons in written and spoken Welsh or English where the principal language is neither Welsh nor English does not create a requirement for the school to operate a formal Welsh-language curriculum.

2.2 Status of the Welsh language

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 gives Welsh official status in Wales and establishes an important national principle that Welsh should not be treated less favourably than English. The Welsh Language Standards regime applies to organisations that are specifically brought within the standards and issued with a compliance notice. This policy does not assume that Chestnut Hill School is subject to the same Welsh-language service standards as a public authority unless a specific legal requirement applies.

The school nevertheless recognises the cultural, social and linguistic importance of Welsh and supports respectful awareness of Welsh as a living language of Wales.

2.3 Curriculum for Wales and the 2025 Act

Welsh is a mandatory element of Curriculum for Wales for schools and settings to which that curriculum applies. Curriculum for Wales is not mandatory for independent schools such as Chestnut Hill, although its guidance may be used as a source of good practice where it is appropriate to the school's learners and ethos.

The Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Act 2025 strengthens the national framework for Welsh-language education and supports the Cymraeg 2050 ambition. The school-language category and delivery-plan provisions of that Act are framed for maintained schools. Chestnut Hill will remain alert to future legislative or regulatory changes that may affect independent schools, but the current policy reflects its status as an English-medium independent school.

3.0 Aims of the policy

- ensure learners understand that they attend a school in Wales and encounter the Welsh language and Welsh culture in a positive, respectful way;
- use simple Welsh naturally and incidentally where it adds meaning, familiarity or enjoyment to school life;
- promote awareness of Wales, its language, heritage, communities, landscape and cultural events;
- ensure that the introduction of additional language does not create unnecessary barriers for learners with ALN, communication needs or developmental differences;
- recognise and support learners who already speak or understand Welsh, including those for whom Welsh is a first, home or stronger language;
- encourage confidence and curiosity rather than pressure, correcting mistakes sensitively and avoiding expectations that are disproportionate to a learner's communication profile;
- provide staff with a clear and realistic framework for incidental Welsh that is consistent across the school.

4.0 Core principles

4.1 English-medium provision and incidental Welsh

English remains the principal language of teaching and learning. Incidental Welsh is woven into ordinary routines rather than delivered as a separate timetabled subject. The amount and complexity of Welsh used should be proportionate and should never prevent a learner from understanding instructions, accessing learning, communicating needs or feeling secure.

4.2 Learner-centred and ALN-informed practice

Many learners at Chestnut Hill have significant communication, sensory, cognitive or emotional needs. Staff must therefore consider whether Welsh vocabulary, phrases or activities are accessible and meaningful for the individual learner. Welsh should be introduced through approaches that match established communication strategies, including visuals, symbols, objects of reference, repetition, AAC or other supports where helpful.

A learner must not be disadvantaged, distressed or excluded because they cannot use Welsh. Progress in Welsh is not used as a measure of general academic ability or as a condition of participation in wider school life.

4.3 Welsh-speaking learners

Where a learner speaks, understands, reads or writes Welsh, the school will recognise this as part of the learner's identity and communication profile. The learner should not be discouraged from using Welsh. Where practicable and beneficial, the school may use bilingual resources, Welsh-speaking staff, translated materials or external support to help the learner access education, express views and maintain confidence in their stronger language.

Where Welsh is a learner's preferred or stronger language, staff should consider this when assessing understanding, behaviour, communication and safeguarding. Ability should not be judged only through English.

4.4 Culture, identity and belonging

The school will promote respectful understanding of Welsh identity and culture without presenting one way of being Welsh as the only correct experience. Learners may have a range of national, cultural and linguistic identities. Welsh language and culture should be presented inclusively alongside respect for learners' own backgrounds and home languages.

5.0 Incidental Welsh in practice

5.1 Everyday spoken Welsh

Staff may use simple Welsh naturally in familiar contexts, especially where repeated language becomes meaningful through routine. Examples include greetings, thanks, praise, simple classroom words, days or dates and familiar instructions. Staff should prioritise clarity and should use English or the learner's established communication method whenever needed to ensure understanding.

5.2 Learning environment and signage

Welsh may be visible in the school environment through selected bilingual labels, Welsh place names, classroom or group names, displays, greetings and cultural references. Signage used for safety, safeguarding, emergency action or complex instructions must always be clear and accessible; bilingual presentation must not reduce comprehension.

5.3 Welsh culture, community and place

Learners will have opportunities to encounter Welsh culture and the local Welsh context through activities that are relevant to their age, interests and developmental needs. These may include St David's Day, local history and geography, Welsh music and stories, visits and outdoor learning, community participation, local place names and awareness of national events or traditions.

The local environment and wider Welsh countryside can provide authentic contexts for learning about place, community, culture and language without requiring formal language study.

5.4 Curriculum links and resources

Where appropriate, Welsh language and culture may be reinforced through literacy, humanities, expressive arts, health and wellbeing, outdoor learning, assemblies and pastoral activities. Resources may include bilingual books, songs or rhymes, visual vocabulary, photographs, symbols and accessible digital materials. Resources must be selected for their relevance and accessibility rather than simply to increase the amount of Welsh displayed.

6.0 Teaching, communication and assessment

6.1 Staff practice

- model simple Welsh accurately where they are confident to do so and use approved resources when unsure;
- avoid correcting pronunciation or language use in ways that embarrass or discourage learners;
- use repetition and predictable routines to build familiarity;
- link Welsh to concrete experiences, visual cues and meaningful contexts rather than isolated vocabulary lists wherever possible;
- ensure that English or the learner's established communication system remains available when clarity, safety or access requires it;
- avoid presenting incidental Welsh as a test of compliance, behaviour or intelligence.

6.2 Communication and AAC

For learners who use AAC, symbols, Makaton, BSL or other communication systems, Welsh may be incorporated only where it is useful and does not interfere with the learner's established system. Staff should work consistently with speech and language therapy, clinical colleagues and communication plans where these are in place.

6.3 Monitoring learner engagement

The school does not operate a formal Welsh attainment framework under this policy. Monitoring will therefore focus on participation, familiarity, confidence and whether incidental Welsh is being used meaningfully and accessibly. Where a learner has existing Welsh proficiency and specific language goals are appropriate, these may be reflected in individual planning and reviewed with relevant professionals and families.

7.0 Parents, carers and external communication

Routine school communication with parents and carers is normally in English. Where a learner or family uses Welsh as a preferred or stronger language and this affects effective participation, the school will make reasonable efforts to support communication, for example through Welsh-speaking staff, bilingual information, translated material or interpretation where practicable and appropriate.

The school will not assume a family's preferred language based on address, nationality or name. Preferences should be checked where language access may affect understanding, consent, safeguarding, medical information, annual review participation or other significant decisions.

8.0 Roles and responsibilities

8.1 Proprietor, governors and senior leaders

- ensure the school meets the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024 and keeps this policy aligned with current Welsh legislation and guidance;
- ensure the school's approach accurately reflects its English-medium status and does not overstate statutory requirements for Welsh-language teaching;
- promote a positive and inclusive approach to Welsh language and culture;
- ensure staff have access to suitable guidance and resources for incidental Welsh;
- review provision where a Welsh-speaking learner requires additional language access or support.

8.2 Teaching and support staff

- apply incidental Welsh consistently, proportionately and sensitively;
- know the communication needs and language profile of learners they support;
- use Welsh only where it supports or enriches learning and does not create a barrier to understanding;
- respect Welsh-speaking learners and other home languages;
- raise concerns where language is creating a barrier to learning, communication, wellbeing or safeguarding;
- use agreed resources and seek support when unsure about pronunciation, meaning or appropriate usage.

9.0 Equality, inclusion and safeguarding

The school will ensure that language practice is inclusive and does not discriminate against learners because of race, nationality, ethnic origin, disability, ALN, language background or communication need. The Equality Act 2010 and the school's equality arrangements apply to the implementation of this policy.

Safeguarding information must always be communicated in a way the learner can understand. Incidental Welsh must never replace clear, accessible communication in a safeguarding or emergency situation. Where a learner is better able to disclose or express concern in Welsh, the school will take reasonable steps to enable this and will follow the Safeguarding Policy, including use of appropriate interpretation or language support where necessary.

10.0 Monitoring and policy review

Senior leaders will monitor how incidental Welsh is reflected in the learning environment, routines and curriculum opportunities and whether the approach remains appropriate for the needs of the current learner cohort. Monitoring will focus on quality, accessibility and meaningful use rather than quantity of Welsh.

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where there is a significant change in legislation, Welsh Government requirements, the school's registered status, learner profile or language provision.

Appendix 1 – Examples of incidental Welsh

Context	Examples	Application at Chestnut Hill
Greetings and courtesy	Bore da; prynhawn da; helo; diolch; os gwelwch yn dda / plis; hwyl	Used naturally in greetings and familiar routines where learners understand the context.
Praise and encouragement	Da iawn; bendigedig	May be used alongside established praise language and communication supports.
Time and routine	Selected days, months, weather or routine vocabulary	Introduced only where useful and meaningful; English remains available for clarity.
Environment	Selected bilingual labels, Welsh place names, class/group names	Used to build awareness of location and language without overloading displays.
Culture and community	St David's Day, local place names, Welsh stories/music, community and outdoor learning	Used as authentic cultural and local-context learning opportunities.
Welsh-speaking learners	Bilingual resources or Welsh communication support	Used responsively where Welsh is part of an individual learner's communication profile.

Appendix 2 – Key legal and guidance references

Reference	Relevance to this policy
Education Act 2002	Provides the statutory framework under which independent schools in Wales are registered and regulated.
Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024	Directly applicable to Chestnut Hill as an independent school in Wales. Includes curriculum, teaching, language/communication and pupil welfare standards.
Welsh Government: Independent schools registration and operational guidance	Confirms that Curriculum for Wales is not mandatory for independent schools and explains the language, communication and curriculum standards.
Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011	Provides the national legal context for the official status of Welsh. Welsh Language Standards apply where an organisation is specifically subject to them.
Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Act 2025	Important national strategic context. School-language category and delivery-plan provisions are framed for maintained schools, rather than independent schools.
Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers	Welsh Government national strategy. Used as contextual guidance rather than a direct independent-school curriculum requirement.
Equality Act 2010	Supports non-discrimination and reasonable adjustments, including where language background intersects with protected characteristics or disability.
Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 and ALN Code for Wales 2021	Relevant to individualised and accessible language/communication provision for learners with ALN.
Curriculum for Wales: Languages, Literacy and Communication guidance	Not mandatory for Chestnut Hill, but may inform good practice where appropriate, including respectful awareness of Welsh and multilingualism.