

# Appendix A: Validation Guide

## Contents

1. Introduction
2. Validation - what do we mean by 'validation' and when do we need validation?
3. Summary of the awards
4. Who validates and what is everyone's role?
5. Timetable
6. Questions to ask schools
7. Questions to ask the Criw Cymraeg
8. Validation report template

# 1. Introduction

The Welsh Government recognises the importance of the Siarter Iaith programme as a key resource for increasing children and young people's use of Welsh. Since the Siarter Iaith programme was expanded from being active in Gwynedd only, to becoming a national programme in 2016, the world around us has changed; the growth of technology and the digital field continues to affect the linguistic habits of our children and young people and how they socialise. In addition, the data from the [2021 Census on the Welsh language](#) is now known, and significant developments in language planning are underway with the development of the Welsh Language Education Bill. We believe that all this, including the introduction of the Curriculum for Wales, requires the updating of the Siarter Iaith.

In order to effectively follow the Siarter Iaith programme, we ask schools to follow the following values:

- We want everyone to **enjoy speaking Welsh**,
- We want everyone to **be proud** of the Welsh language and the Siarter Iaith, and **own** all the elements of the programme and their school plans,
- We want everyone to **work together** to promote the Welsh language while implementing the Siarter Iaith,
- We want everyone to **celebrate** success, no matter how small; at individual, class, school or community level.

One of the main steps of the Siarter Iaith programme is the validation phase. It is the validation that confirms the journey of Siarter Iaith schools in relation to the awards – either bronze, silver or gold. But winning an award is not the main focus of validation. Validation is a way of celebrating all the great work that goes on throughout the year at the school, a way of inviting coordinators to the school to enjoy and experience the fruits of the hard work that has been done in the name of the Siarter, while also offering guidance and advice to the school on how to develop. Winning an award, whether bronze, silver or gold, will of course be a credit to a school, but it is important to note that celebrating the achievements is equally important. It should also be noted that the validation step is not obligatory – it is a voluntary step, but must be followed if an award is to be given to a school.

## 2. Validation - what do we mean by 'validation' and when do we need validation?

Validation is the third step in the implementation of the Siarter Iaith.

A school embarks on their Siarter Iaith path by completing online questionnaires in order to discover information about their learners' language use and patterns. The findings of the questionnaires will be used to progress to a second step in the implementation of the Siarter Iaith, i.e. the creation of action plans. These plans are intended to put achievable steps in place for increasing the social use of Welsh within the school. When a school is ready to apply for one of the Siarter Iaith awards – the bronze, silver or gold (depending on where they have reached on the journey), - the third step will be followed, i.e. the validation process.

The principles of the validation process are as follows:

- Ensuring national consistency – and that all schools throughout Wales follow suit.
- Celebrating and recognising the achievements of each school – winning an award isn't the only form of commendation; it is vital to celebrate all the work that goes on in schools throughout the year, and the validation element is a means of doing that.
- Encouraging an increase in the use of Welsh.
- Ensuring the level of award is appropriate and suitable for all schools.

The validation process is expected to reach a consensus as to whether or not a school has fulfilled the requirements for the Siarter awards. When a school needs further support, the validator will provide guidance, share good practice and make recommendations to the school.

As a result of the validation process, the validator is expected to produce a report detailing the implementation of the Siarter Iaith in accordance with the school's self-appraisal, the impact of implementing the Siarter on learners' social use of Welsh, oracy, good practice, as well as recommendations for areas for development.

Schools and coordinators in all schools across the country are expected to adhere to this regime to ensure consistency in the process and that everyone acts in the same way on a national level.

**Validation Process:**

- **Step 1:** School to self-appraise – by completing the online questionnaires, action plan, and self-appraisal within the Siarter Iaith guide.
- **Step 2:** Local coordinator to assess the school's self-appraisal by visiting the school to conduct the validation.
- **Step 3:** If the validator approves and gives an award to the school, the local coordinator will contact Welsh Government officials to process the award and to send a certificate on behalf of the Minister to the school.

There is no set time for arranging a validation visit – when a school and Siarter Iaith coordinator feel the steps have been taken in order to apply for the next award, the validation can be arranged.

### 3. Summary of the awards

- Almost everyone in the school community understands the objectives and is aware of the vision of the Siarter Iaith.
- The school has built a strong foundation and mechanism for implementing the Siarter that involves stakeholders across the school community.
- The school has formulated a suitable action plan and is beginning to see the impact of the implementation of the objectives.
- The school has completed the Siarter Iaith questionnaires to ascertain learners' linguistic use.
- Learners are beginning to consider what activities the school can undertake to increase the use of Welsh.
- Learners show a sense of pride in their Welsh identity and have gained a passion for the language.
- The school is beginning to recognise how the programme will have a positive impact on learners' linguistic use.



- Almost everyone within the school community understands why the Siarter is being implemented.
- The school has built a strong foundation and mechanism for implementing the Siarter that involves stakeholders across the school community.
- The whole staff is involved in the planning, implementation and monitoring and see the impact of the implementation in the objectives.
- The school community is able to plan suitable actions in response to the results of the questionnaires and is able to measure the success and progress of these actions.
- Learners, with support, successfully lead actions.
- Almost everyone in the school community has developed a sense of pride in their Welsh identity and gained a passion for the language.
- Actions are starting to have an impact on learners' leisure time, e.g. choice of apps, TV, sport and social activities etc.
- There is a Welsh and Welsh language ethos within the school.



- The whole school community are ambassadors for the Welsh language and its use, and successfully promote the aims of the Siarter Iaith to make the school's vision a reality.
- All staff are involved in the planning, implementation and monitoring and sees the impact of the implementation in the objectives. All school stakeholders are instrumental in planning, implementing and monitoring the Siarter Iaith and see the impact of the implementation in the objectives.
- Almost all staff are able to successfully measure success and progress and take the necessary steps to make the vision a reality.
- Learners successfully support their peers by leading a wide range of initiatives.
- Everyone in the school community has developed a sense of pride in their Welsh identity and gained a passion for the language.
- There is a strong Welsh and Welsh ethos within the school.



## 4. Who validates and what is everyone's role?

Schools should ensure that they involve the whole school community when implementing the Siarter Iaith, including pupils, the whole workforce, parents, governors and the wider community. Schools should also make every effort to collaborate with other schools within their cluster or county, as well as specific efforts to work with relevant coordinators to ensure continuity and a seamless path of support for pupils.

When a school is ready for a validation visit, they will contact their local coordinator to make further arrangements. See section 5 for details of the timetable for the work.

The following sets out who the key individuals are in the process and what everyone's role is:

### **The School**

- In collaboration with the Siarter Iaith coordinator, the school headteacher / teacher with responsibility for the Siarter Iaith will arrange a visit with the local coordinator for the validation.
- It is up to the schools to ensure that the evidence is submitted to the validator in good time – this means sending action plans and self-appraisal to the co-ordinator.

### **Local Siarter Iaith coordinator - the validator**

- For the most part, the coordinator will be primarily responsible for the validation work (there are exceptions in some areas). A self-appraisal document must be completed, and interviews arranged with the school headteacher and Siarter Iaith Coordinator within the school, a member of the governing board as well as a group of pupils who have taken the lead on the work.
- The validator can call on one other person to assist – this person can be a colleague from the Education Authority/Consortia, a Coordinator in another area of Wales or a headteacher/teacher at a nearby school. A teacher/headteacher is not paid to undertake these duties. However, undertaking the work can be a useful opportunity in terms of personal and professional development.
- Please note that training will be available for coordinators new to the role.

**Learners' Voice**

- The voice of learners is vital to the success of the Siarter Iaith. As such, during a validation visit the validator will arrange to meet with a group of the school's learners to ask questions about what they have done in the name of the Siarter Iaith at their school.

**Governors**

- Where possible, the governor(s) responsible for the Siarter Iaith will attend the validation visit and will be available to answer any question the validator may have regarding the operation of the Siarter Iaith within the school and how the programme has involved the entire school workforce and the local community.



## 5. Timetable

**Below is a timetable to follow in terms of steps to take before starting validation.**

- Schools to complete questionnaires online.
- Schools to create action plans for the school, based on questionnaire findings.
- Schools to complete Siarter Iaith self evaluation.
- When a school has completed the above, a visit will be arranged with their local coordinator to validate.
- Following the validation visit, the coordinator must produce a short report confirming the decision as to whether the school merits the award. The Welsh Government should also be contacted to inform them of the outcome so that officers are able to send a certificate out to the school. Please note that any school that has won an award before 2024 (the date of publication of this document), and that wishes to receive a certificate, will be able to do so – the certificate will be post-dated.

**A validation visit will take approximately 2 and a half hours. Here is a possible procedure that can be followed for a validation visit.**

- The school assembly led by the group of learners who have led on the Siarter Iaith
- Meeting between the validators and the headteacher and coordinator of the school's Siarter Iaith
- Meeting between the validators and the school's Criw Cymraeg to discuss their work (this will be an informal meeting)
- Meeting between the validators and a member of the governors to discuss the work, and possibly a meeting with a member/members of the wider workforce, or perhaps a member of the local community who has been involved in the school's Siarter Iaith work
- Tour of the school to look at signs etc
- Watch the Criw Cymraeg lead playground games / activities during playtime

**After the validation visit, the coordinator will:**

- Arrange for the validation panel to have an opportunity to evaluate and reach a decision.
- Complete a validation report (see section 8 below) celebrating the school's achievements and including constructive suggestions about the way forward.
- Contact Welsh Government officials stating what award the school has received and to arrange to send a certificate to the school.

## 6. Questions to ask schools

**Please note that the questions below are suggestions only. These can be tailored as you see fit.**

### **General questions:**

- How does the strategic planning of the school's Senior Leadership Team promote the Siarter Iaith at the school?
- What is the impact of the support offered by leaders to school staff in the context of the Siarter Iaith requirements?
- How effectively do school staff support the implementation of the Siarter Iaith at the school?
- What is the contribution of the learners to the school's Siarter Iaith programme of work?
- What is the role of the other stakeholders at the school in the work of the school's Siarter Iaith?
- How successful is the school in supporting parents of learners with their Welsh?
- What are the main challenges the school has faced in working towards the Gold Award and how have you overcome them?
- What are the school's main intentions or targets in maintaining and expanding its Siarter Iaith work after today?

### **Leadership-related Questions:**

- To what extent is the Siarter Iaith a priority for the school?
- How do school leaders work together to promote the work of the Siarter Iaith?
- How does the school ensure that all school staff take ownership of the school's Siarter Iaith work?
- What do you think are the school's main accomplishments in implementing the Siarter Iaith? And what are the challenges?
- What do you think are the school's next steps in implementing the Siarter Iaith?

### **Questions for Stakeholders: workforce, governing board, parents:**

- What do you know about the Siarter Iaith of the school?
- How do you learn about the work of the Siarter Iaith?
- Do you have the opportunity to contribute to the work of the Siarter Iaith of the school?

### **Questions for the supplementary workforce (who are not Welsh speakers)**

- Do you feel encouraged / supported by the school to try to use relevant language in the school e.g. Welsh language / vocabulary patterns? How?
- Would the school be able to help you develop your Welsh skills further? How?

## 7. Questions to ask learners

**Please note that the questions below are suggestions only. These can be tailored as you see fit.**

- What can you tell me about the Siarter Iaith at your school?
- Do you think the Siarter Iaith is important? Why?
- Do you think it's important to speak Welsh? Why?
- Are you preparing for an award? Which award?
- How do you go about preparing for the award?
- What are the school's Siarter Iaith targets?
- How did you decide on the targets?
- What kinds of things happen at school to help you meet the targets?
- Do you have the opportunity to contribute to the work of the Siarter Iaith of the school? How?
- Are other children offered ideas for Siarter Iaith activities? How do you gather ideas?
- What do you enjoy about the Siarter Iaith's work at the school?
- Do you think the work of the Siarter Iaith increases the Welsh nature of a school / helps children speak more Welsh in school?
- What [else] would help the children speak more Welsh around the school?
- Who is responsible for the Siarter Iaith at the school? One person / group of people?
- How have you made Welsh enjoyable at your school?
- Criw Cymraeg plays a very important role. What do you think was your main role?
- How did you encourage other members of the school community to speak Welsh both inside and outside the classroom?
- Why do you deserve this award?
- How have you made sure everyone knows about the Siarter Iaith?

# 8. Validation report template

**\*Note that the last column of the School Action Plan allows the validator to make notes opposite the targets – this may be beneficial when going around the school on a validation visit, for example.**

**It is expected that the report below be completed by each Validator in determining the award to the school.**

School:	
Award:	
Validators:	
Visit Date:	
<p><b>Comments on Outcome 1:</b>                  Strategic leadership shown at a whole school level.</p> <p><b>Target 1:</b> Guidance given to learners about opportunities to use the language beyond school.</p> <p><b>Target 2:</b> Senior leadership team demonstrates a clear commitment to the development of the Welsh language and identity at a whole school level.</p> <p><b>Target 3:</b> Governors ensure that the Siarter Iaith is a central part of the school’s plans and supports implementation.</p>	
<p><b>Comments on Outcome 2:</b>                  Learners take ownership of the Welsh language and understand its relevance to everyday life.</p> <p><b>Target 1:</b> All learners at the school understand the purpose and importance of the Siarter Iaith and their role in supporting implementation.</p>	

**Target 2:** Learners encourage and support each other to take responsibility for the language.

**Target 3:** Instruction is given to the school council or group leading the Siarter Iaith programme on how to discuss the language and provide guidance to their classmates.

**Target 4:** School learners and forums such as Criw Cymraeg/Welsh language ambassadors support their classmates to use more Welsh outside the classroom in a positive way.

**Target 5:** Encouragement and support for learners to use Welsh through technology and social media.

**Target 6:** Learners have the opportunity to discuss the language and its relevance to everyday life.

**Target 7:** Celebrate Welsh identity and nurture pride among the learners.

---

**Comments on Outcome 3:**

Schools encourage learners' use of the language outside the classroom and offer Welsh language experiences and relating to Welsh identity across the curriculum.

**Target 1:** Learners use Welsh in various situations in school.

**Target 2:** The workforce ensures the use of Welsh across the curriculum (bilingual and English-medium schools).

**Target 3:** Enrichment activities and experiences offered in order to develop learners' use and enjoyment of Welsh.

**Target 4:** The school development plan includes a clear commitment to developing the Welsh language skills of the workforce.

**Comments on Outcome 4:**

The school workforce develop their Welsh language skills and use Welsh with each other and with the learners.

**Target 1:** Whole school workforce understands the aim and objectives of the Siarter Iaith and their role in supporting implementation.

**Target 2:** The school workforce is able to discuss the language with learners.

**Target 3:** The school workforce takes advantage of opportunities to develop their Welsh language skills, in line with professional standards.

**Target 4:** Learners support the wider school workforce in developing and using their Welsh language skills.

**Target 5:** The school workforce encourages the use of Welsh outside the classroom.

**Comments on Outcome 5:**

Work in partnership with the wider school community to support learners' use of Welsh outside school.

**Target 1:** Parents/carers and the wider community of the school understand the purpose and importance of the Siarter Iaith and their role in supporting implementation.

**Target 2:** Guidance for parents/carers to encourage them to support their children's language use outside school.

**Target 3:** The whole school community and community partners plan and work together to offer activities and opportunities for children and young people to use the Welsh language outside school.

How effectively does the school self-evaluate the impact of its planning in order to achieve the aim and objectives of the Siarter Iaith?

How effectively does the school identify its next steps in achieving the goal and objectives of the Siarter Iaith?

**Further comments:**

Have the award requirements been achieved?

The validator's initial comments and feedback to the school on how the school can continue on its Siarter Iaith path (while moving to the next award / continuing towards post-gold)