

Ifor Part 2



There was a lot of 'slippage; as they say... if we take me and my best friends in London as examples, Ifan Williams, David Williams, David Evans... there's no obvious pattern, when you examine our different experiences: Ifan like me, is completely fluent in Welsh, his mother and his family came up to London from west Wales

... my parents... mother, was from the north, and had come to London, whereas father was brought up in London... then David Evans, he was brought up by two London Welsh parents who were fluent in the language and he speaks the language quite well... like Ifan, he attended the Welsh school in London... but he prefers to speak English, I think it's fair to say that, he's more comfortable speaking English...

David Williams then, again, his mother and father were both London Welsh, and fluent in the language but they didn't pass the language on to him, he understands Welsh very well, but he won't speak more than the occasional word... so there's no obvious pattern to this, ... as you can see the fact that someone's parents came up from the country, rather than being brought up in the city doesn't necessarily mean that their children will or won't speak Welsh...

To come back to the question of the school... there was a Welsh medium school in London when I was growing up - a primary school - but rightly or wrongly, my mother and father decided that I wouldn't go there... that I would just go to the local school in Pinner, where we were living by then - an English medium school, as you can imagine. Maybe this was because I had a father who was London Welsh and my grandmother before him, also London Welsh, and there was no Welsh language schooling available for them when they were growing up... and yet they'd retained their command of the Welsh language, so maybe they felt that going to a Welsh language school wasn't vital to ensure that I had a grasp of the Welsh language, and indeed that's how it transpired.

And you know I think it's fair to say, when I consider the London Welsh people of my generation. the best Welsh speakers, the most natural, the most fluent, are not necessarily those who went through the Welsh school... the Welsh school is of course a great asset and it's a good thing that we have it, but it's not a *sine qua non*, in terms of ensuring the continuing survival of the Welsh language in the city...

There are about fifty children at the school at present... I think they have about fifty on the school register, some of them at nursery level, some in their primary years. There are some who don't attend every day, their parents have come to an arrangement with their local schools, to allow them to be released from their local school ... to go to the Welsh School to have a kind of

'boost' y'know, just for one or maybe two days in a week, to help them on with their Welsh, so there are all kinds of patterns of attendance, there are some children of course who attend daily...

...another pattern is that children quite often opt out of year five or year six, so they can get a footing in their local primary school, so they can make friends in their area of London, before they go on to secondary school. But having said that, there are some who stay in the Welsh School until they're eleven... and it's a good thing that we have this available to us.