

Survey of School Preference 2007

Final Report for Wrexham Borough County Council

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Opinion Research Services

Spin-out Company of the
University of Wales Swansea

Survey of School Choice 2007

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Executive Summary

The Survey

1. Opinion Research Services (ORS) was commissioned by Wrexham Borough County Council to undertake a Survey of School Choice. The survey focused upon the future demand for Welsh language primary education among parents/guardians of the cohort of children born between September 2005 and August 2006.
2. A key aim of this survey was to assess if there is a need for Welsh language primary education in Wrexham and what factors would influence parents' decisions on sending their child to a Welsh language primary school.
3. A postal questionnaire was distributed to the parents/guardians of all children within the cohort across the Wrexham Borough County Council area. The survey was distributed to 1,616 parents/guardians in total, and the Royal Mail returned 47 of these as failed addresses reducing the effective sample to 1,569.
4. Respondents were given the option of returning the questionnaire in a freepost envelope or completing the questionnaire online. In addition, telephone interviews were conducted with a sample of non-respondents for whom telephone contact details were available. In total 661 completed questionnaires were returned (of which 154 were completed over the telephone). The response rate for postal questionnaires was 32%.

Summary Results

Key Results

5. 221 respondents (36%) stated that it would be *very* or *fairly likely* that they would send their child to an existing Welsh language primary school, with 147 (24%) respondents reporting it would be very likely.
6. 269 (44%) respondents felt that it would be *very* or *fairly likely* that they would send their children to a Welsh language primary school if it were within 2 miles of their own home.
7. It is unlikely that those who responded to the survey represented a genuine random sample of all parents and guardians in Wrexham. It would be expected that those with a greater interest in Welsh language education would have been more likely to respond to the survey.
8. An analysis of respondents shows that those who responded to the initial questionnaire were the most inclined to be very likely to want to send their children to a Welsh language primary school. This would indicate that those with the greatest interest in sending their children to a Welsh language primary school were the most likely to respond to the survey. Therefore, the results of this survey cannot simply be extrapolated to the whole population.
9. However, the telephone survey of non-respondents to the postal questionnaire (who were called at random) did still find some parents or guardians who were likely to send their children to a Welsh language primary school. Therefore, it is probable that some of those

who did not respond to the survey would also want to send their child to a Welsh language primary school. Therefore, the results presented in this survey represent the minimum demand for places in Welsh language primary schools and the true demand is likely to be higher.

Other Results

10. Only 17% (115) of respondents to the survey could speak Welsh, although 25% (163) said they could understand spoken Welsh. 101 respondents (15%) said they could read Welsh and a further 71 respondents (11%) said they could write Welsh.
11. Of the respondents who had children who attended a day group, a high proportion (38%) attended an English language day-care nursery or playgroup. Only 24 respondents (4%) send their children to a Welsh language day-care nursery or playgroup. A further 55 attend a bilingual group.
12. For those respondents who do send another child to a primary school in Wrexham, the vast majority (79%) send them to an English language primary school. 45 (18%) respondents reported that they send their child to a Welsh language primary school, and 11 (4%) of respondents stated that they send their child (or children) to both a Welsh and English language (bilingual) primary school in Wrexham.
13. A large proportion of respondents (89%) reported that they would like their children to be able to speak the Welsh language and 69% of respondents felt that their child would benefit from a Welsh language education.
14. Those respondents who would be likely to send their children to a Welsh language primary school were more likely to feel that the main language used in the school is an important factor in deciding which school their children will attend. This is further evidence that there is a demand for a greater provision of Welsh language primary education in Wrexham.
15. Those respondents who would be likely to send their children to the existing Welsh language primary school were more likely to find a longer journey to school acceptable. This represents further evidence that Welsh language education is important to many respondents.
16. 393 respondents (65%) reported that if their children did attend a Welsh language primary school, they would then be very or fairly likely to send them to a Welsh language secondary school. This figure includes almost all respondents who would be likely to send their children to a Welsh language primary school. Therefore, if the capacity for Welsh language primary education in Wrexham is to be expanded, there is also likely to be a rise in the demand for Welsh language secondary education in the future.

1. Project Overview

The Survey

- 1.1 Opinion Research Services (ORS) was commissioned by Wrexham Borough County Council to undertake a Survey of School Choice. The survey focused on profiling the existing education interest of parents in the Wrexham area.
- 1.2 In particular, the survey focused upon the future demand for Welsh language primary education among parents/guardians of the cohort of children born between September 2005 and August 2006. A key aim of this survey was to assess if there was evidence that another Welsh language primary school is necessary in Wrexham.
- 1.3 This survey is particularly important given the recent growth in interest in Welsh language education, and it should be seen as a vital step to help to plan future education strategies in Wrexham.

Research Methods and Data Sources

- 1.4 The central plank of the research strategy to assess the demand for Welsh language primary education in Wrexham was a postal questionnaire.
- 1.5 ORS was provided with addresses for parents/guardians of all children born between 1st September 2005 and 31st August 2006 in the Wrexham Borough County Council area. These addresses were derived from birth records held by Wrexham Local Health Board, and represented the contact details at the time of the birth. Records relating to a total of 1,616 children were provided.
- 1.6 Preliminary analysis of the LHB data alongside the current edited electoral role suggested that 47 of the contacts were returned as failed addresses. However, despite these concerns, it was recognised that this source provided the most accurate data about the survey population.
- 1.7 The survey was initially distributed to 1,616 parents/guardians in Wrexham Borough County. The Royal Mail returned 47 of these (3%) as failed addresses, which reduced the effective sample to 1,569. 507 completed questionnaires were returned, yielding a response rate of 32%. Furthermore, 154 telephone interviews with non-respondents to the postal questionnaire were also carried out, meaning a total of 661 questionnaires were completed.
- 1.8 Questionnaires were distributed during the week commencing 2nd July 2007. Respondents were given the option of returning the questionnaire in a freepost envelope. Reminder questionnaires were sent out to all non-responders in the week commencing 16th July 2007.
- 1.9 In addition, 154 telephone interviews were conducted. The cut-off date for returned questionnaires was 13th August 2007.

Survey Respondents

- 1.10 Figure 1 to **Error! Reference source not found.** on the following pages show the profiles of the respondents to the survey.
- 1.11 We must remember that the results represent only the views of those who responded to the survey. It is unlikely that those who did respond to the survey represented a genuine random sample of all parents and guardians in Wrexham.
- 1.12 An analysis of respondents shows that those who responded to the initial questionnaire were less likely to be very likely to want to send their children to a Welsh language primary school than those who were contacted by telephone. Only 23% of those who responded to the initial questionnaire reported that they were very likely to send their children to an existing Welsh language primary school compared to 27% who were contacted by phone. 27% of postal respondents would be very likely to send their children to a Welsh language school within 2 miles of their home compared to 33% of those contacted by phone.
- 1.13 This would indicate that it is not necessarily those who responded to the questionnaire initially who have the greatest interest in sending their children to a Welsh language primary school. Therefore, the results of this survey cannot simply be extrapolated to the whole population.
- 1.14 However, the random telephone survey did still find parents or guardians who were likely to send their children to a Welsh language primary school. Therefore, it is probable that some of those who did not respond to the survey would also be likely to want to send their children to a Welsh language primary school. Therefore, the results presented in this survey represent the minimum demand for places in Welsh language primary schools and the true demand is likely to be higher.
- 1.15 The most important result to note is that the majority of respondents, to this survey were not able to speak, read or write in Welsh, with a relatively small proportion of 17% (115 cases) stating that they were able to speak, read or write in Welsh (Figure 1). Therefore, much of the survey is focused upon identifying demand for Welsh language primary education among parents/guardians who are not Welsh speakers.

Respondent Profile

Welsh language ability – all respondents	Number of cases	Valid %
Able to speak, read or write Welsh	115	17%
None of the above	546	83%

Figure 1: Welsh language ability, by all respondents

Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding

Main Language of Household- All Respondents	Number of cases	Valid %
English	640	97%
Welsh	8	1%
Other	9	1%
Not known	4	-

Figure 2: Main Language of Household, by all respondents

Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding

National Identity- All Respondents	Number of cases	Valid %
A- Welsh	391	60%
B- English	90	14%
C- Scottish	4	1%
D- Irish	6	1%
E- British	249	38%
F- Other	18	3%
Not Known	4	

Figure 3: National Identity, by all respondents

Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding

Ethnicity- All Respondents	Number of cases	Valid %
White	633	97%
Non-white	17	3%
Not Known	11	

Figure 4: Ethnicity, by all respondents

Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding

Reporting Findings

- 1.16 Graphics are used extensively in this report to make it as user-friendly as possible. The pie charts and other graphics show the proportions (percentages) of respondents making relevant answers.
- 1.17 From Section 2 onwards in this report the numbers which appear on the charts represent the percentage of all respondents who appear in that category. Please note that the figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
- 1.18 The numbers which appear in brackets on pie-charts are the actual number of respondents in that category.
- 1.19 Those respondents who answered don't know, or did not answer the question, are omitted unless otherwise stated. The titles on the graphs refer, where appropriate, to the exact question which was asked of the respondent.
- 1.20 Some of the discussion involves aggregating categories such as those who are very likely and fairly likely to give a composite group who are likely to make a particular choice.
- 1.21 For the majority of the questions there is little difference in the responses between the different groups within the sample. Therefore, the data reported in the charts is for the whole sample, with any large discrepancies between different groups noted in the text.

2. Overall Results

Age of Children

- 2.1 Respondents were firstly questioned about the number of children they had currently living with them under the age of 2 years. The majority (94%) of respondents had only one child under the age of 2 years.

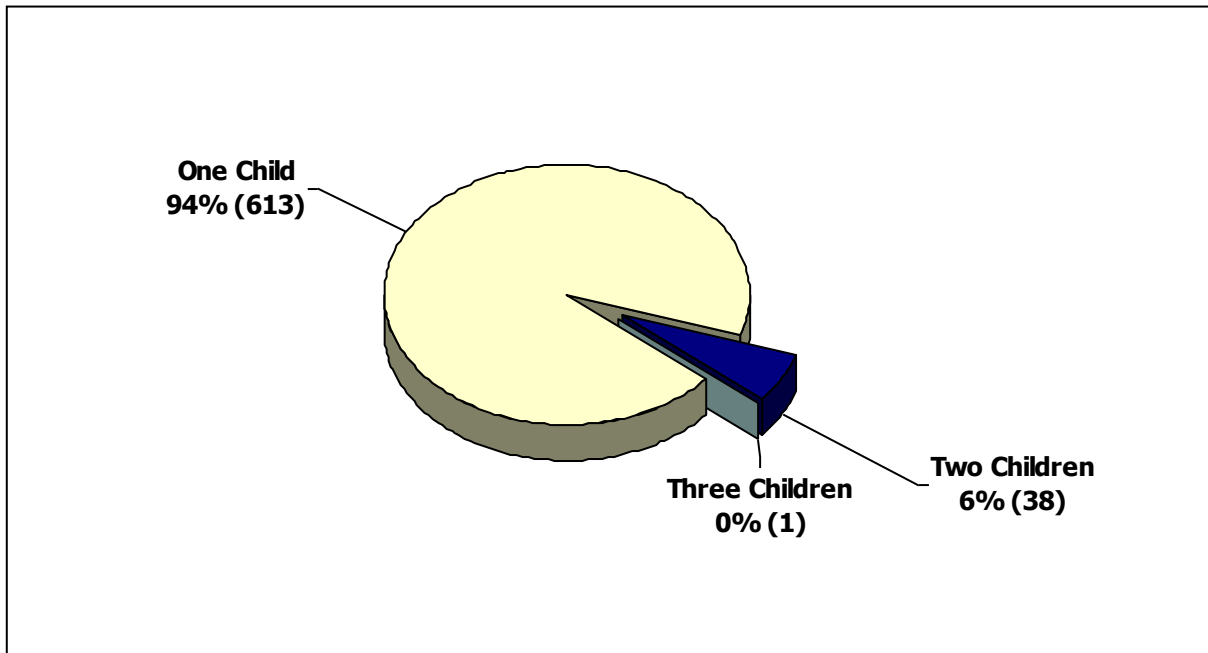


Figure 5: How many children under 2 years of age currently live at this address? By all respondents

2.2 Just over half (54%) of the respondents reported that their children did not attend a day-care nursery or playgroup. Thirty-eight percent stated that their children attended an English language day-care nursery or playgroup. Twenty-four respondents (4%) send their children to a Welsh language day-care nursery or playgroup.

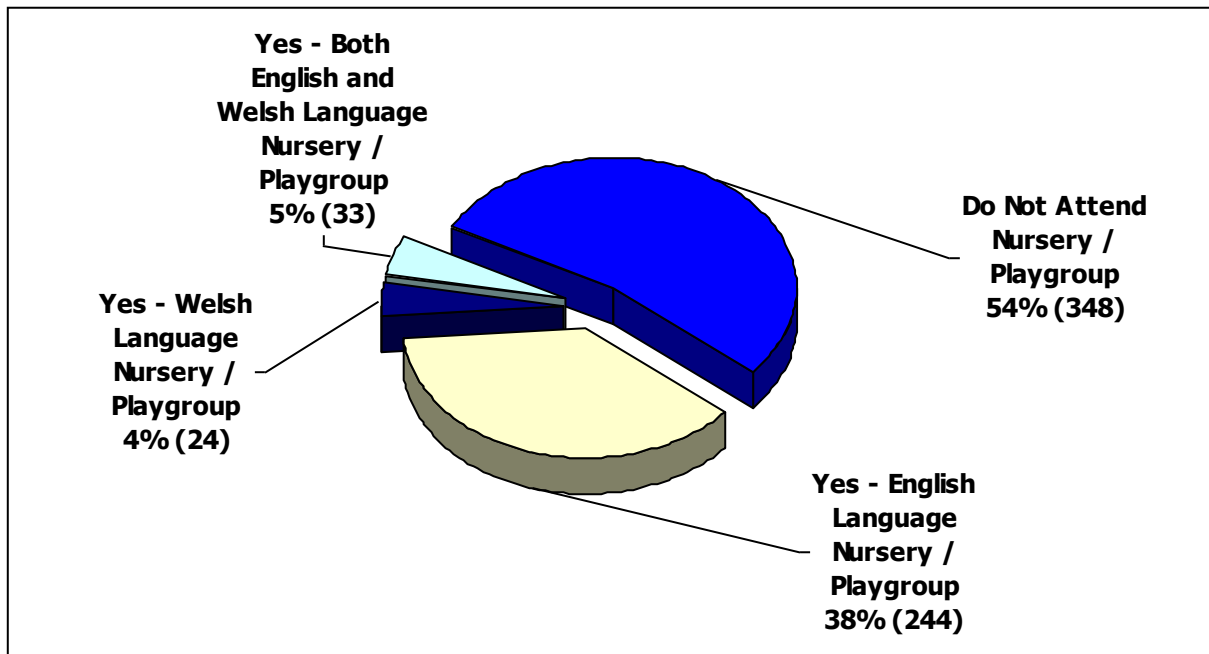


Figure 6: Does this child, or do any of these children, attend any day-care nurseries or playgroups? By all respondents

Other Children

- 2.3 Respondents were questioned about any other children currently living with them who already attend a primary school in Wrexham. 62% of respondents do not have any children attending a primary school in Wrexham.
- 2.4 Respondents were asked if they have other children who attend a primary school in Wrexham. Among the 38% of respondents that do send children to a primary school, 79% (195 cases) send them to an English language school. Forty-five respondents (18%) reported that they send their child to a Welsh language primary school and only 4% (11 respondents) reported that they send their child to a bilingual language school in Wrexham.

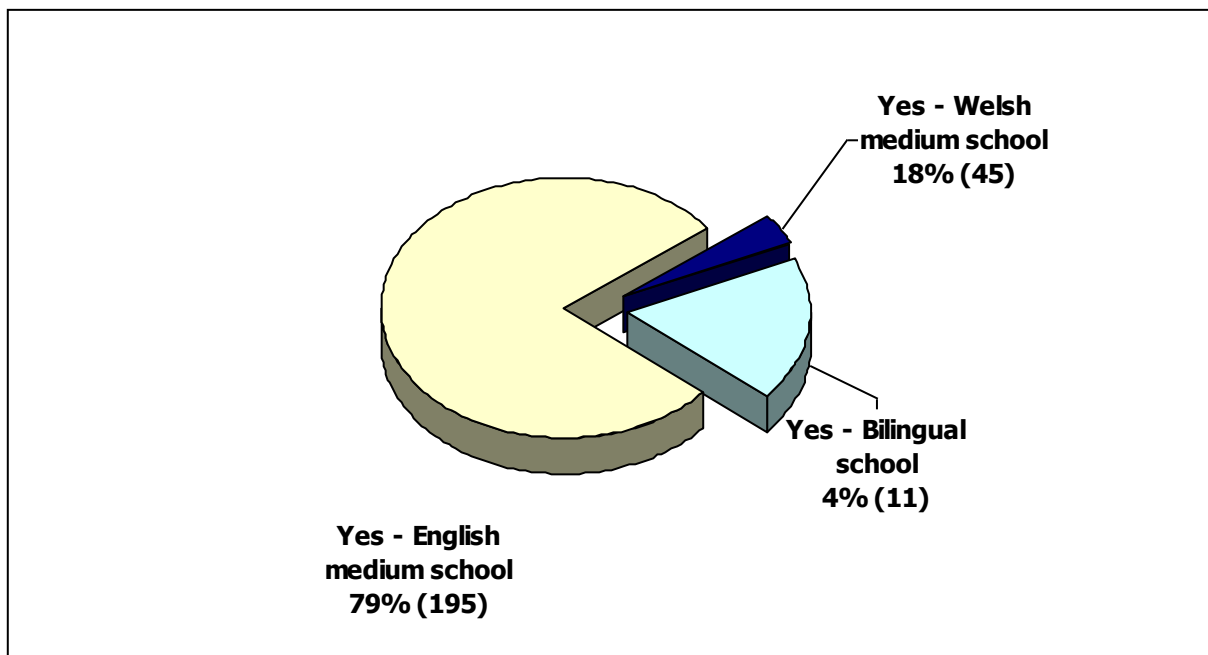


Figure 7: What is the language of the school they attend? By all respondents with children in other schools

Influences on the Choice of Primary School

2.5 Respondents were next requested to rank from most important to least important seven factors which may affect the primary school they choose to send their child(ren) to. The issues were;

- Another child already at the school
- Distance from your home
- Quality of education
- Ease of access/transport to school
- Main language used in the school
- Class sizes
- Quality of school buildings/facilities

2.6 Unsurprisingly, a majority (71%) of respondents ranked the quality of education as being the most important influence on their school choice for their child. The main language used in school was ranked fourth of the seven factors, making it a fairly important consideration. Overall, the ease of access and transport to the school was regarded as being least important.

Rank		Issue
Most important	1	Quality of education
	2	Class size
	3	Distance from your home
	4	Main language used in the school
	5	Another child already at the school
	6	Quality of school buildings
Least important	7	Ease of access/transport to school

Figure 8: Using the numbers 1 to 7, please rank the following from most important to least important in terms of their influence on your choice of primary school. Please rank them from 1 to 7, where 1 is the most important and 7 is the least important. By all respondents

Speaking Welsh as a Preference for their Child

- 2.7 Figure 9 shows that the majority (89%) of respondents reported that they would like their children to be able to speak the Welsh language. Meanwhile, 69% (321) of respondents felt that their child would benefit from a Welsh language education.

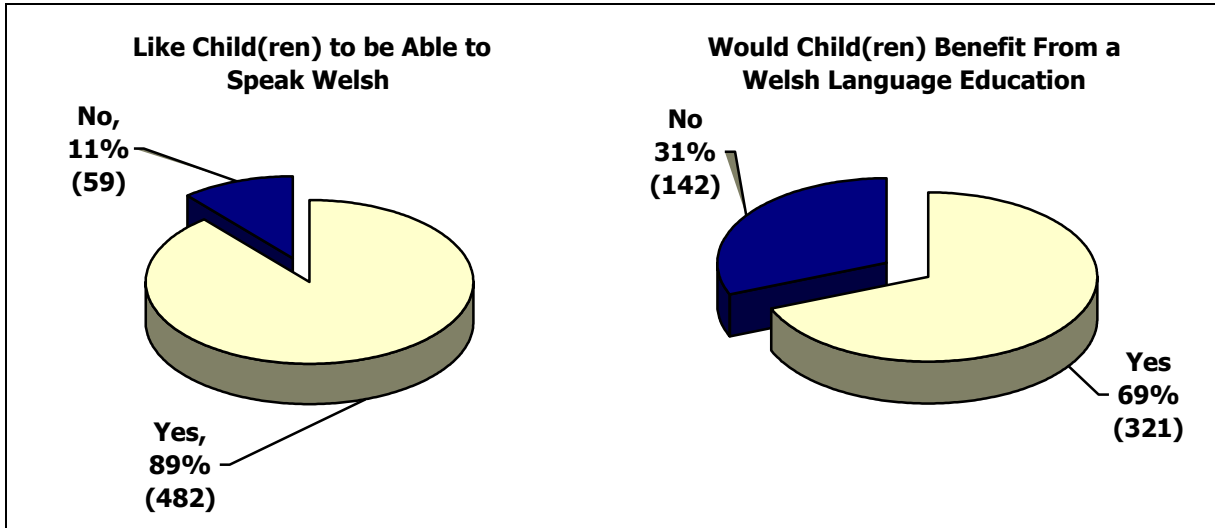


Figure 9: Would you like your child(ren) to be able to speak Welsh and do you feel that your child(ren) would benefit from a Welsh language education? By all respondents

2.8 It is interesting to note that the majority of those who are unable to speak, read or write Welsh, (88% - 432 respondents), would like their children to be able to speak Welsh. Therefore, a desire to have their children speak Welsh is not just confined to those households which contain parents/guardians who can speak, read or write Welsh.

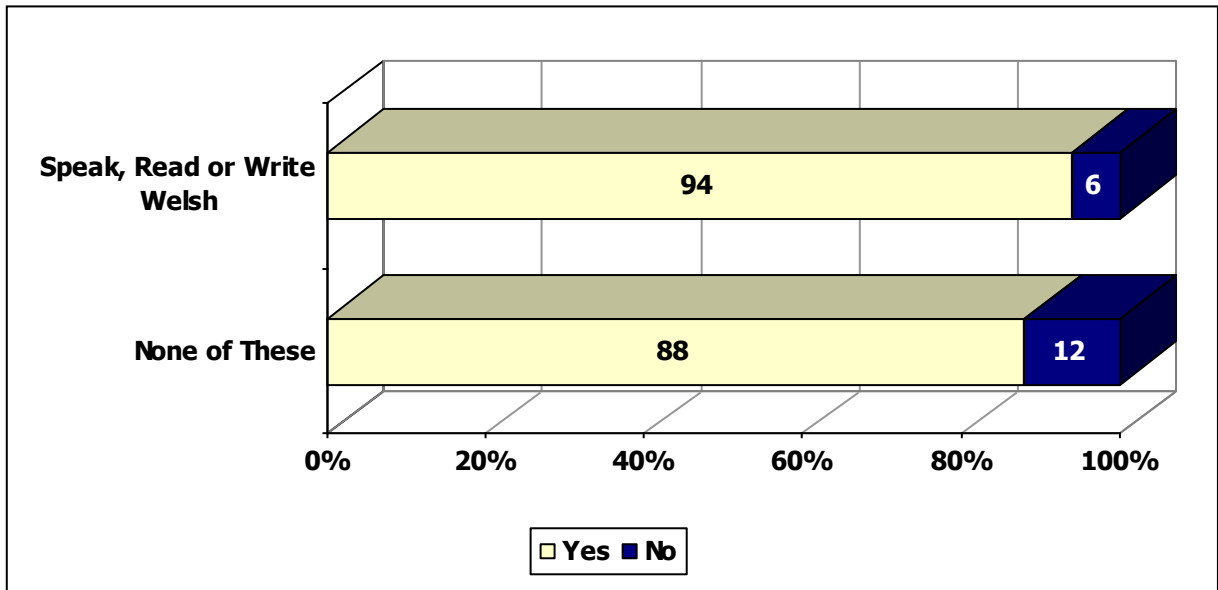


Figure 10: Would you like your child(ren) to be able to speak Welsh? By all respondents, by Welsh language ability

2.9 Similarly, 67% (361) of respondents who could not speak, read or write Welsh stated that their children would benefit from a Welsh language education. Therefore, the vast majority of respondents who felt their children would benefit from a Welsh language education cannot speak, read or write Welsh themselves.

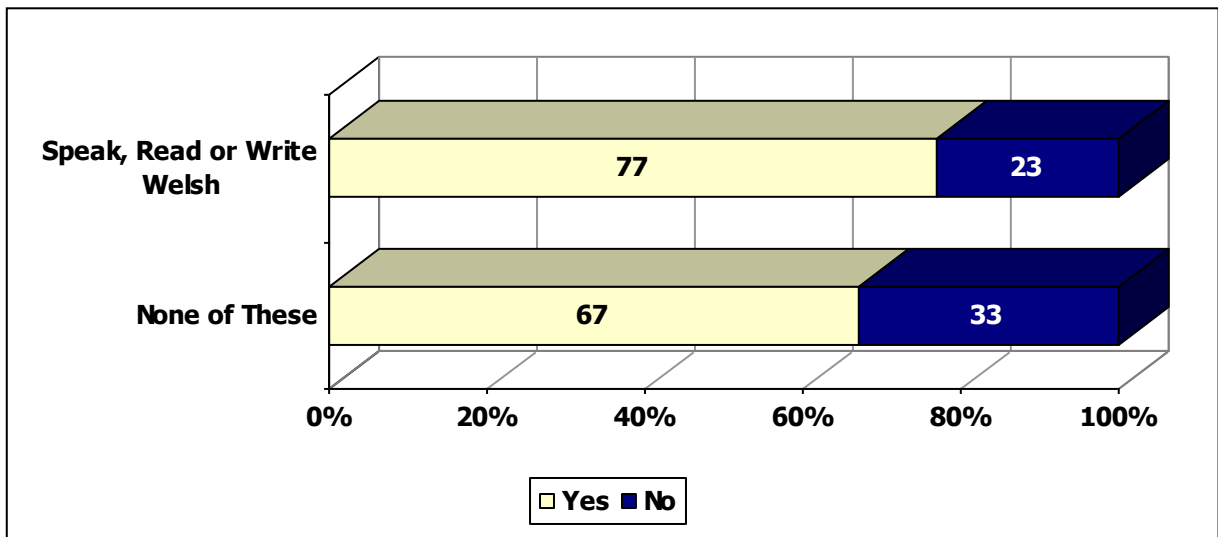


Figure 11: Do you feel that your child(ren) would benefit from a Welsh language education? By all respondents, by Welsh language ability

Existing Welsh Language Primary School

- 2.10 147 (24%) respondents reported that it was very likely that they would send their children to one of the existing Welsh language primary schools or bilingual schools in Wrexham. A further 74 (12%) reported that it would be fairly likely that they would send their children to an existing school.

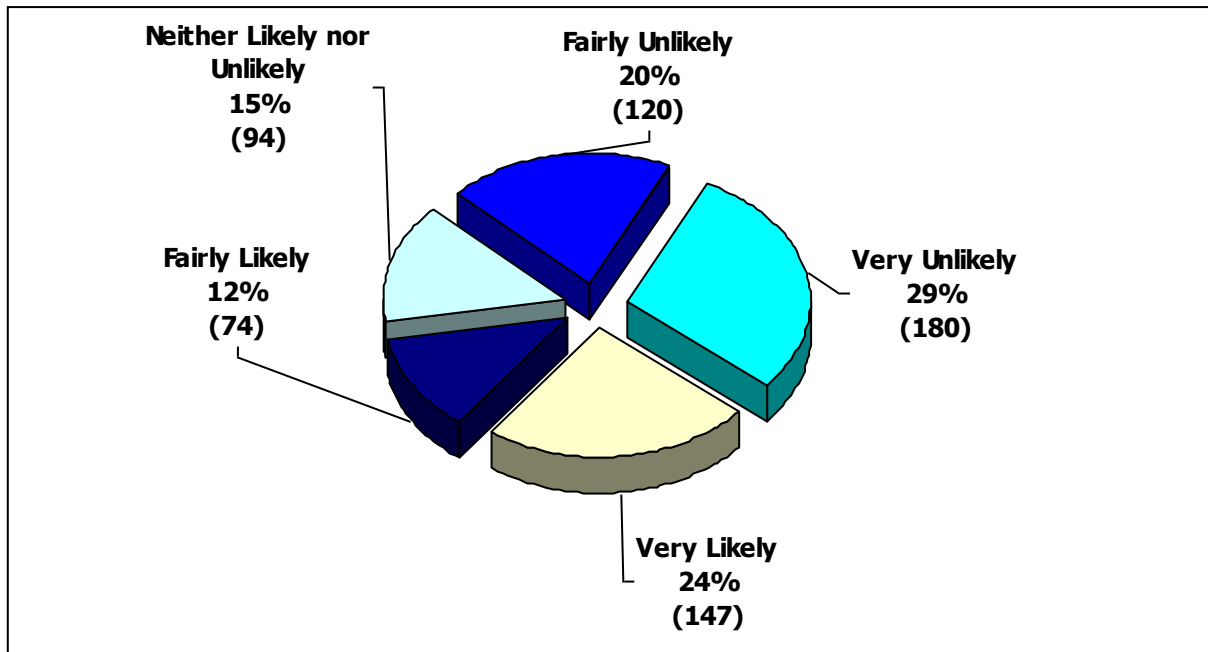


Figure 12: How likely or unlikely is it that you would choose to send your child(ren) to an existing Welsh language primary school? By all respondents

Provision of a Welsh Language Primary School in Your Area

2.11 269 (44%) respondents felt that they would be very or fairly likely to send their children to a Welsh language primary school if it was within 2 miles of their own home, with 173 respondents (28%) stating that it would be very likely.

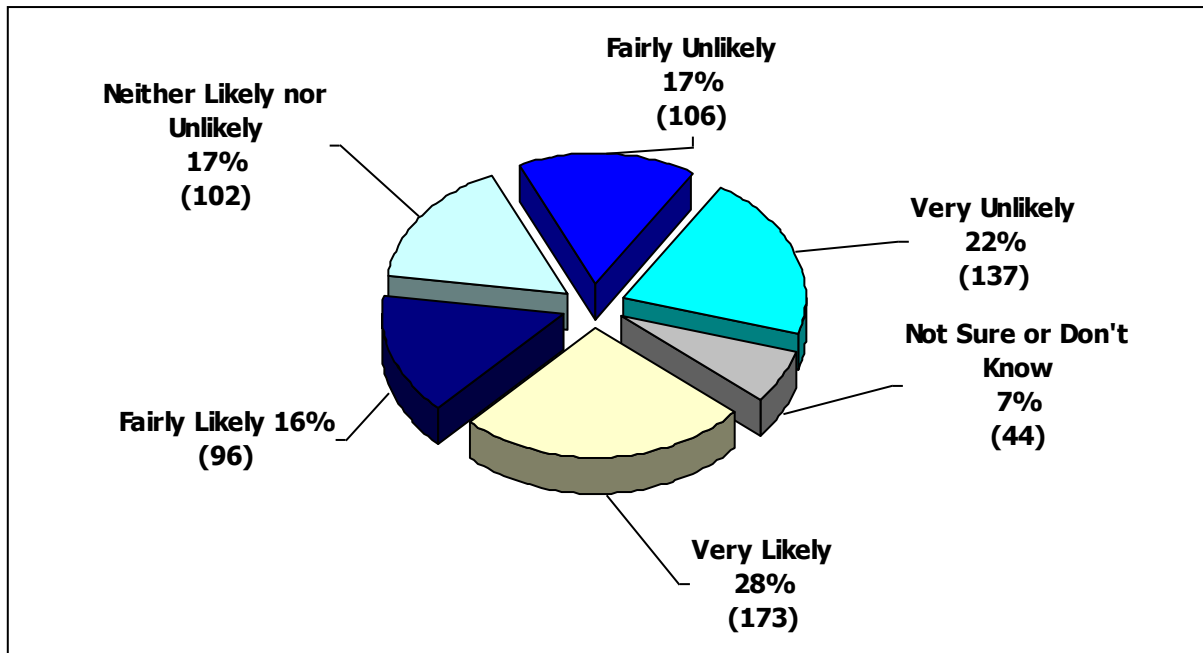


Figure 13: If there was a Welsh language primary school within 2 miles of your home, how likely or unlikely is it that you would choose to send your child(ren) to this school? By all respondents

Information for choosing a Primary School

- 2.12 Respondents were asked if they felt they had received enough information to make a decision about primary education for their children. The majority (64%) did not feel they had enough information to make this decision (Figure 14).
- 2.13 89% of respondents did not feel they had received enough information about the schools in their area. Only 74 respondents (11%) felt they had enough information regarding schools in their area (Figure 15).
- 2.14 An even higher percentage of respondents (94%) felt they had not received enough information regarding the application process for primary education. Only 40 respondents (6%) felt they had enough information on the application process (Figure 16).
- 2.15 Furthermore, 93% (579) respondents had not received information on Welsh medium schools (figure 17).

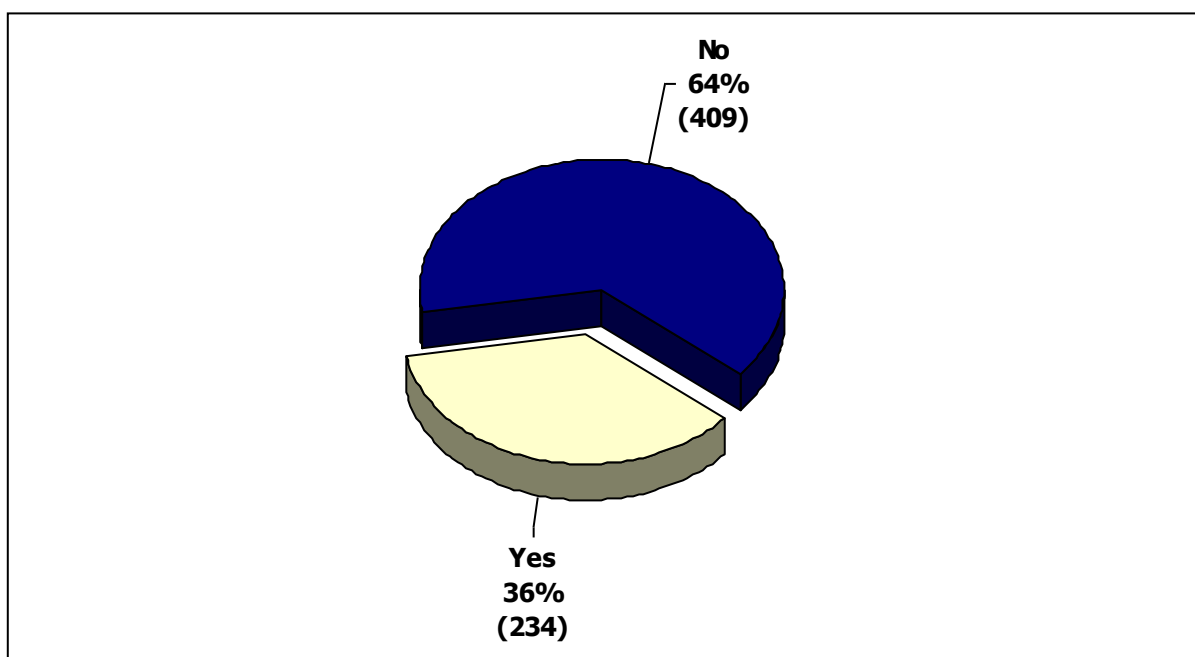


Figure 14: Do you feel that you have enough information with which to make a decision about primary education for these children? By all respondents

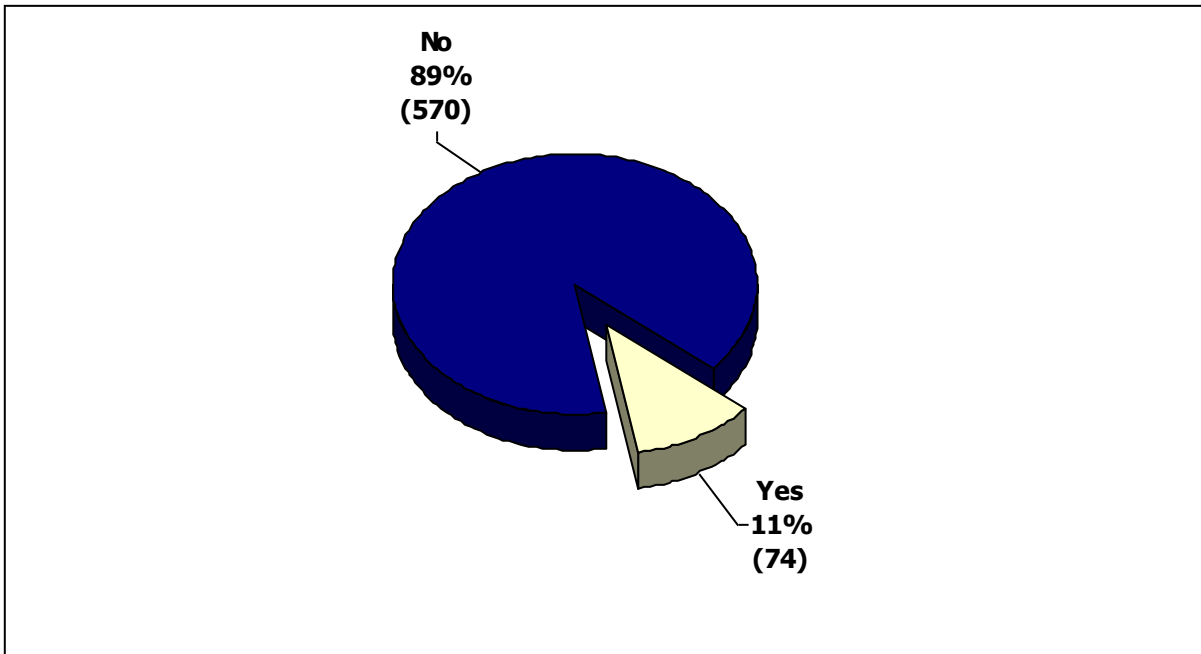


Figure 15: Have you received any of the following to help you choose a primary school for these children? Information about schools in your area. By all respondents

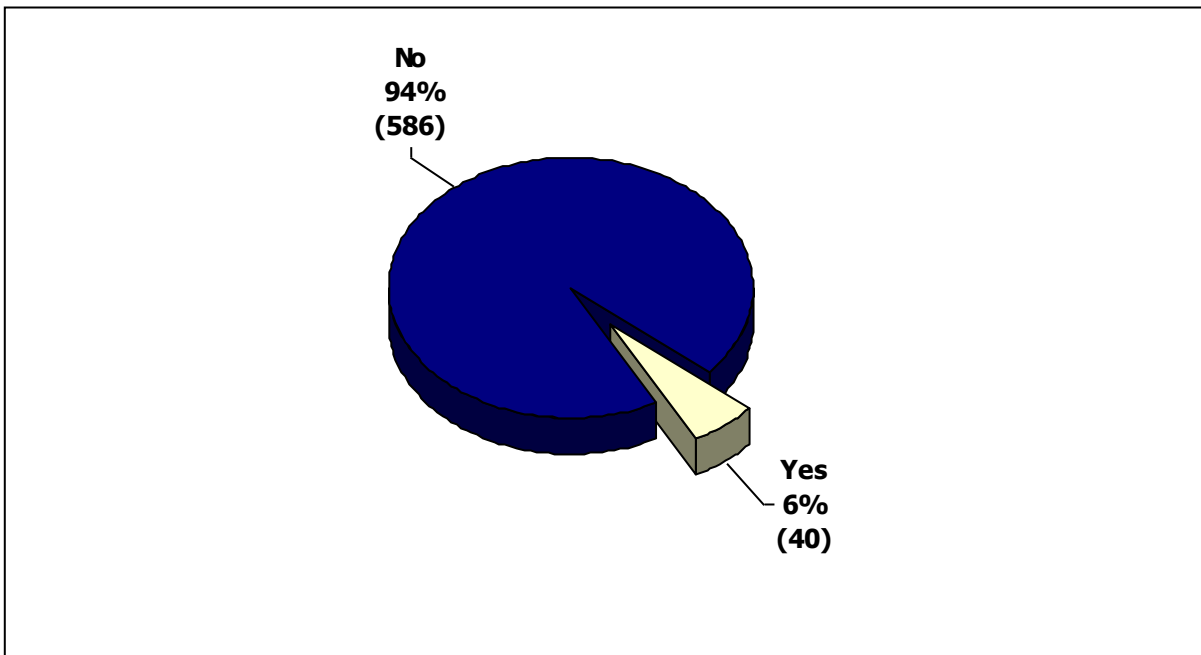


Figure 16: Have you received any of the following to help you choose a primary school for these children? Information about the application process. By all respondents

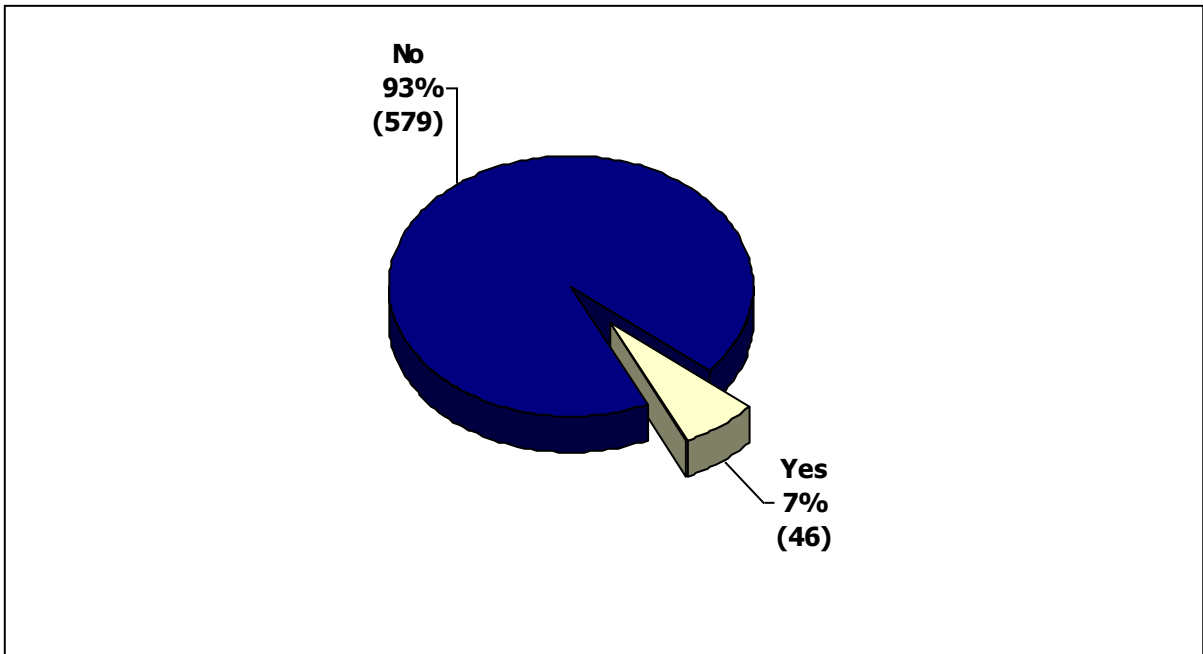


Figure 17: Have you received any of the following to help you choose a primary school for these children? Information about Welsh medium schools. By all respondents

Provision of Transport and Journey Time

- 2.16 When considering journey time to and from school, almost three quarters of all respondents (74% - 347 respondents) felt that less than 20 minutes is the longest school journey acceptable. Only 4% (28) respondents considered a journey of over 30 minutes as an acceptable longest journey time each way (18).

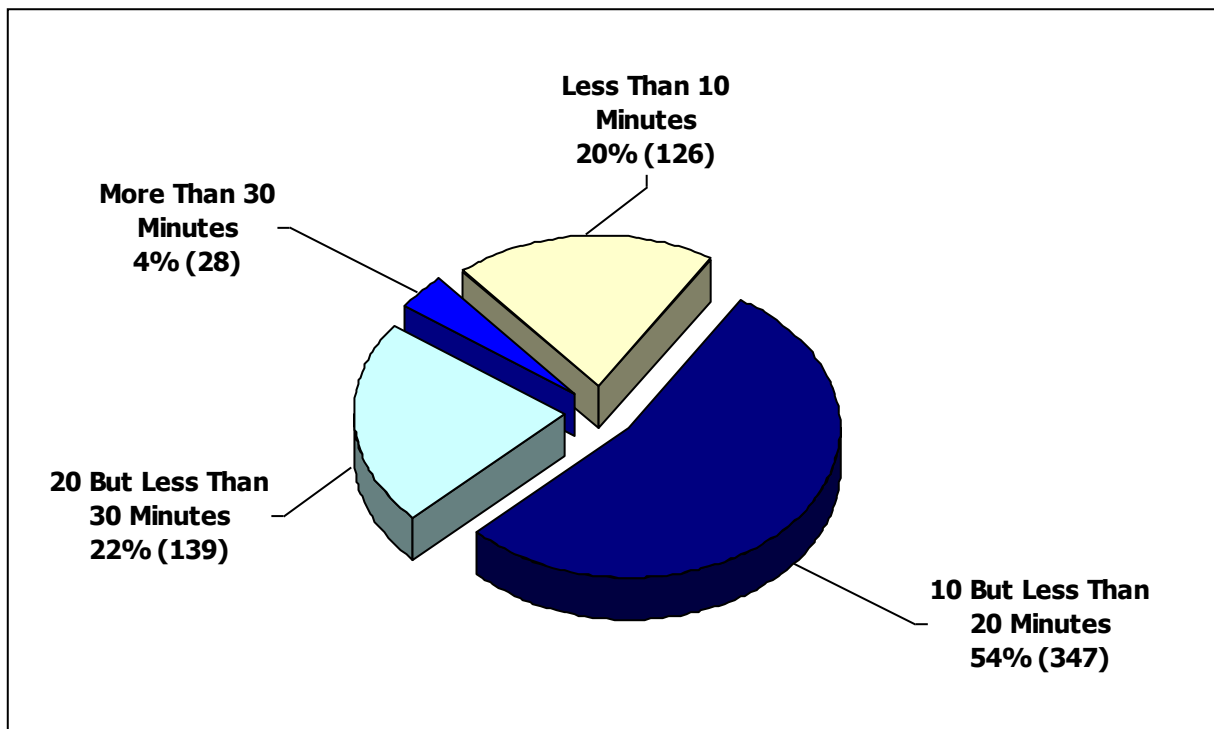


Figure 18: If your child(ren) were to use the free bus service, what is the longest journey time that you would consider acceptable each way – either to or from school? By all respondents

Important of Main Teaching Language and Distance to Travel

- 2.17 Figure 19 shows the most important and least important issues which affect the primary school choice of those respondents who would be likely to send their children to an existing Welsh language primary school in Wrexham or a local Welsh medium primary school and who currently have children in primary school. Figure 20 shows the same results for all those with children already in a primary school in Wrexham.
- 2.18 In both Figure 19 and Figure 20 the results show that the quality of education provided by the school is the most important consideration for parents, which is the same as for the overall results as shown in figure 9. However, Figure 19 shows that the main language used in the school is the second most important consideration for those respondents who would be likely to send their children to an existing Welsh language primary school. The ease of access and transport was the least important consideration. This is the same for both sets.
- 2.19 Figure 20 shows very different results with the main language used in the school being the fifth most important consideration for those respondents who would be likely to send their children to a local Welsh language primary school. The distance from their home to the school was more important than the main language used at the school.
- 2.20 These results indicate that respondents who would be likely to send their children to a Welsh language primary school felt that the distance from their home to the school was less important than those parents who would be unlikely to send their children to a Welsh language primary school.

Rank		Issue
Most important	1	Quality of education
	2	Main language used in the school
	3	Another child already at the school
	4	Class size
	5	Distance from your home
	6	Quality of building
Least important	7	Ease of access/transport

Figure 19: Using the number 1 to 7, please rank the following from most important to least important in terms of their influence on your choice of primary school. Please rank them from 1 to 7, where 1 is the most important and 7 is the least important. By respondents who stated that they would be fairly or very likely to send their child(ren) to an existing Welsh language primary school or naturally bilingual school and who have children already in a primary school.

Rank		Issue
Most important	1	Quality of education
	2	Another child at the school
	3	Class size
	4	Distance from your home
	5	Main language used
	6	Quality of building
Least important	7	Ease of access/transport

Figure 20: Using the number 1 to 7, please rank the following from most important to least important in terms of their influence on your choice of primary school. Please rank them from 1 to 7, where 1 is the most important and 7 is the least important. By respondents with children in primary school in Wrexham

Welsh Language Secondary School

- 2.21 393 respondents (65%) reported that if their children did attend a Welsh language primary school, they would then be likely (very/fairly) to send them to a Welsh language secondary school. However, this result includes many respondents who are unlikely to send their children to a Welsh language primary school.
- 2.22 A more detailed analysis of this result does show that almost all respondents who would be likely to send their children to a Welsh language primary school would also be likely to choose to send them to a Welsh language secondary school. Therefore, the result does still indicate that the interest in Welsh language education is likely to continue beyond primary school level through to secondary school.

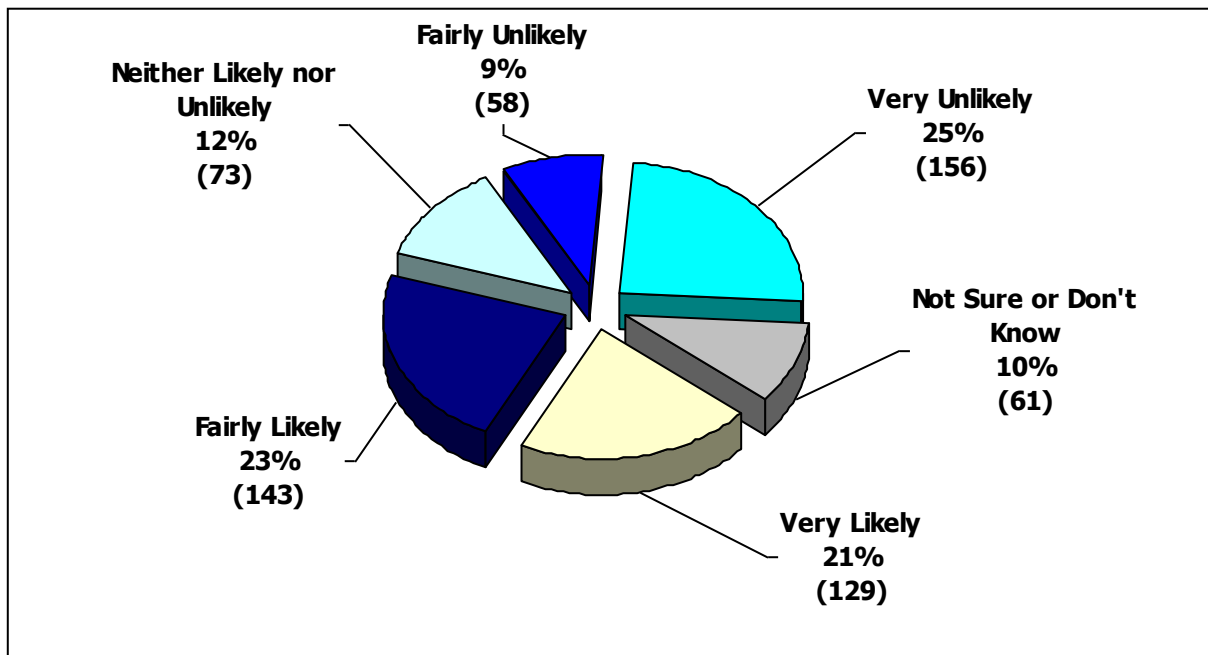


Figure 21: If your child(ren) did attend a Welsh language primary school, how likely or unlikely is it that you would choose to send them to a Welsh language secondary school? By all respondents

3. Conclusions

Evidence for a New Welsh Language Primary School

- 3.1 The central aim of this survey was to investigate the need for additional provision of Welsh language primary school education in Wrexham. The project also aimed to look at whether or not parents would send their children to Welsh language primary schools and what factors would influence their decisions. The evidence gathered clearly indicates that Welsh language primary education is required in Wrexham and many parents feel that their children would benefit from a Welsh language education.
- 3.2 The overall evidence from this survey is that 67% respondents felt that their children would benefit from a Welsh language education and 89% of respondents would like their children to speak Welsh.
- 3.3 We must remember that the results represent only the views of those who responded to the survey. An analysis of respondents shows that those who responded to the initial questionnaire were the most inclined to be very likely to want to send their children to a Welsh language primary school. This would indicate that those with the greatest interest in sending their children to a Welsh language primary school were the most likely to respond to the survey. Therefore, the results of this survey cannot simply be extrapolated to the whole population because they do not represent a genuinely random sample.
- 3.4 However, the random telephone survey did still find some parents or guardians who were likely to send their children to a Welsh language primary school. Therefore, it is probable that some of those who did not respond to the survey would also want to send their children to a Welsh language primary school. Therefore, the results presented in this survey represent the minimum demand for places in Welsh language primary schools and the true demand is likely to be higher.
- 3.5 The majority of respondents (64%) did not feel that they have enough information to make a decision on primary education for their child.
- 3.6 Quality of education is the most important factor for respondents when deciding which school to send their children to. The main language of school is more important to those who are likely to send their child to a Welsh language school.
- 3.7 Those respondents who would be likely to send their children to a Welsh language primary school were more likely to feel that the main language used in the school is an important factor in deciding which school their children will attend.
- 3.8 It should also be emphasised that almost all respondents who would be likely to send their children to a Welsh language primary school would also be likely to want to send them to a Welsh language secondary school. Therefore, if there is to be a greater provision of Welsh language primary education there is also likely to be a demand for a greater provision of Welsh language secondary education in the future.
- 3.9 The location of the school has an impact on the number of respondents who would be likely to send their children to a Welsh language primary school. Overall, 36% are likely to send their child to an existing Welsh language primary school in Wrexham. However an increase of

8 percentage points (to 44%) is found when talking about a primary school within two miles of the respondents home. Therefore the locations of the primary schools have an impact on the level of uptake at these schools (see appendices 1 and 2)

- 3.10 In a more interpretative view, there are a number of issues that have arisen from the current research. Firstly, it is interesting to note that the level of respondents who would wish their children to attend a Welsh language secondary school is lower than those wanting their children to attend a Welsh language primary school. Possible explanations include a limited provision of Welsh language secondary education available in Wrexham and therefore respondents may feel it would be better or easier for their children to attend an English language secondary school. It may be that respondents feel that Welsh language primary schools have a better standard of education and therefore are more inclined to send their children there, but do not feel the same or have less information about secondary education. Another possibility is that respondents feel it is a good idea for children to learn basic Welsh while in primary education, but do not feel that this is the best option when learning becomes more serious and academic. Other possibilities include locations of secondary schools in terms of travel time and convenience.
- 3.11 The second issue relates to the level of information respondents feel they had had in relation to choosing a primary school for their children. As shown in the report, very few respondents felt they had received sufficient information (or more accurately, no information) to help them make a decision. If it is not common practice to provide information on the various aspects of choosing primary education (such as the application process, schools within the area) then the questions are redundant, as there was very little chance of the respondents being able to answer that question. Or, is it the case that parents have to request information relating to the various aspects of choosing a primary school? If this were the case, the current research would suggest that the level of awareness relating to this is very low, in which case more should be done to make parents aware of the information available. Other possibilities include the information received was not very clear/useful/helpful. It is obvious that more probing is needed here to fully understand the level of information available against the level of information required for parents to make an informed decision.
- 3.12 An interesting finding appeared between the attendance of children in Welsh language pre-school placements (e.g. playgroups, day nurseries) and the level of children who are likely to go to a Welsh language primary school. The majority of children attend an English language pre-school placement, yet the majority of respondents want their children to attend a Welsh language school. Is this simply due to a lack of Welsh language pre-school provisions? Or maybe the location of the pre-school placements are impacting on parents decisions (with lack of transport facilities compared to those available for primary education). It is possible that the quality of care is affecting choices- if so it is possible that if consideration was given to pre-school care, with better quality provisions available, then more children will be placed in Welsh language pre-school placements. Attendance at pre-school placements could impact on the choice of primary school, based on friends made, schools in the area of the pre-school placement and so forth.
- 3.13 Attendance of older siblings at primary schools already also brought some interesting considerations. The majority of siblings already in primary school attend an English language school, yet most parents wish to send their younger children to a Welsh language primary school. It would be interesting to find out why parents are changing their school choice- essentially, what has changed since the older children started school? It could be that awareness of Welsh language schools is higher now, or possibly that a Welsh language education is more prominent now than when their older children started (depending on the age of the child in primary school already). Another explanation is the number of places now available in Welsh language primary school (has this increased recently?).

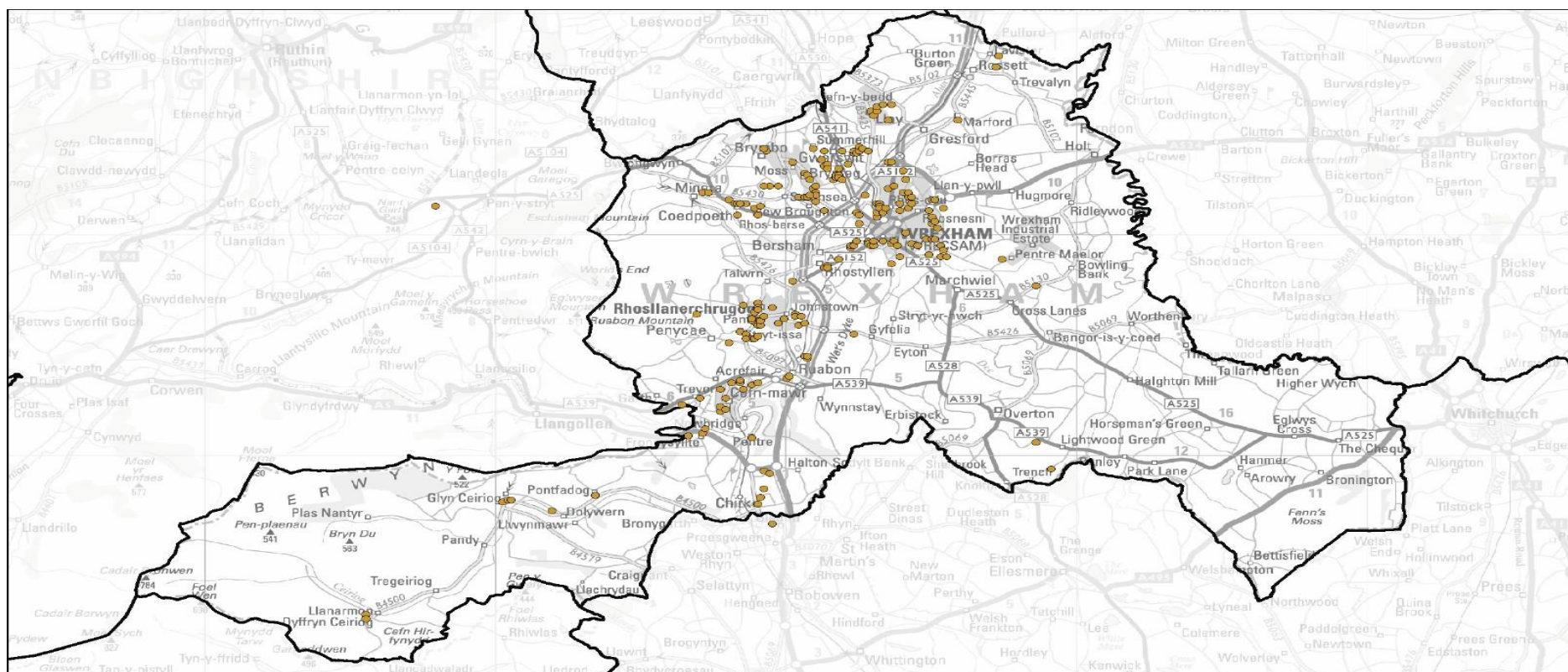
3.14 Finally, very few respondents have Welsh language abilities themselves (reading/writing/speaking), yet most want their children to speak Welsh and think their children will benefit from a Welsh language education. It would be beneficial to find out why this difference is occurring- why has Welsh language education become important? Possible explanations include there being better opportunities, better quality of education or Welsh being more widely used.

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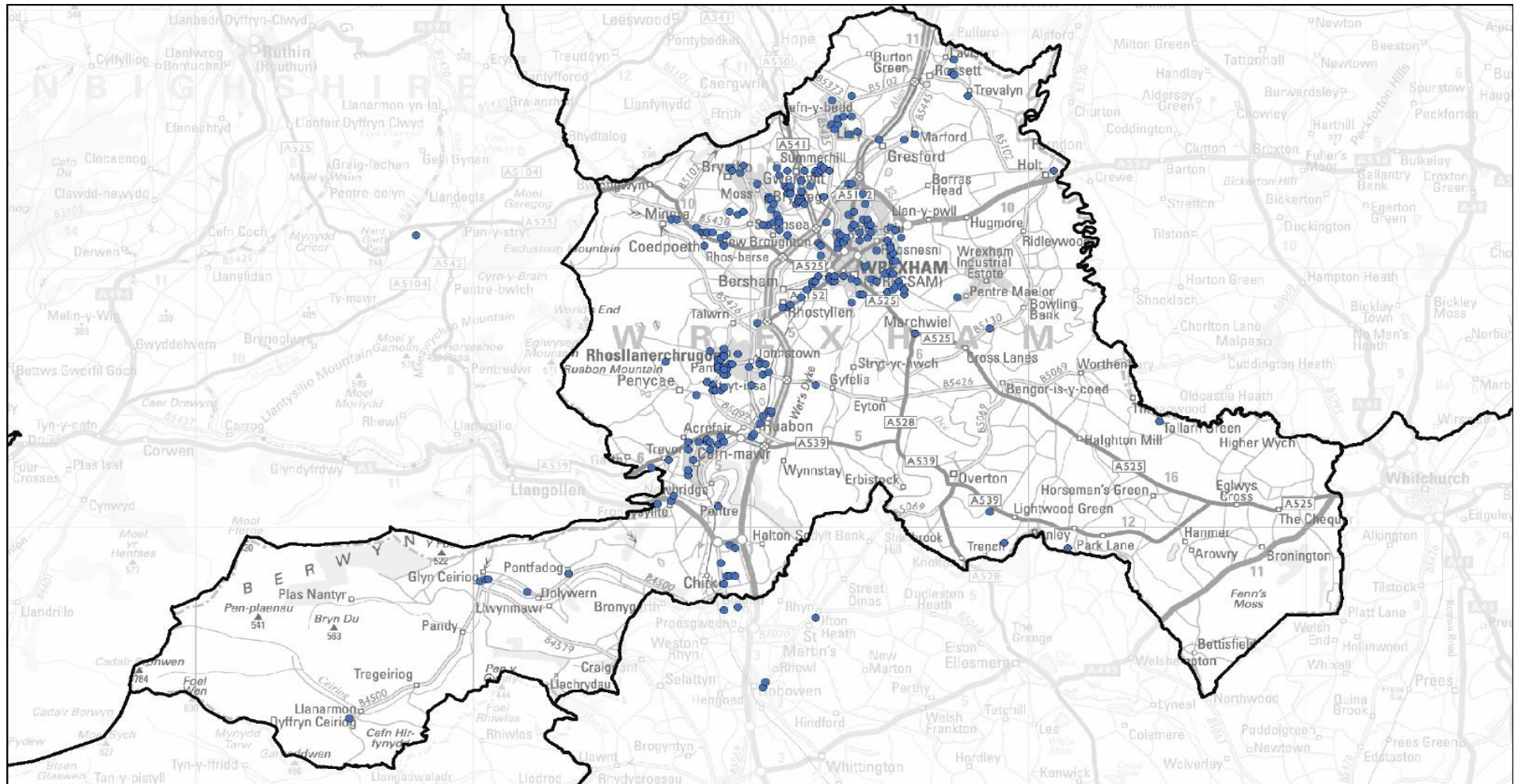
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Appendix 1



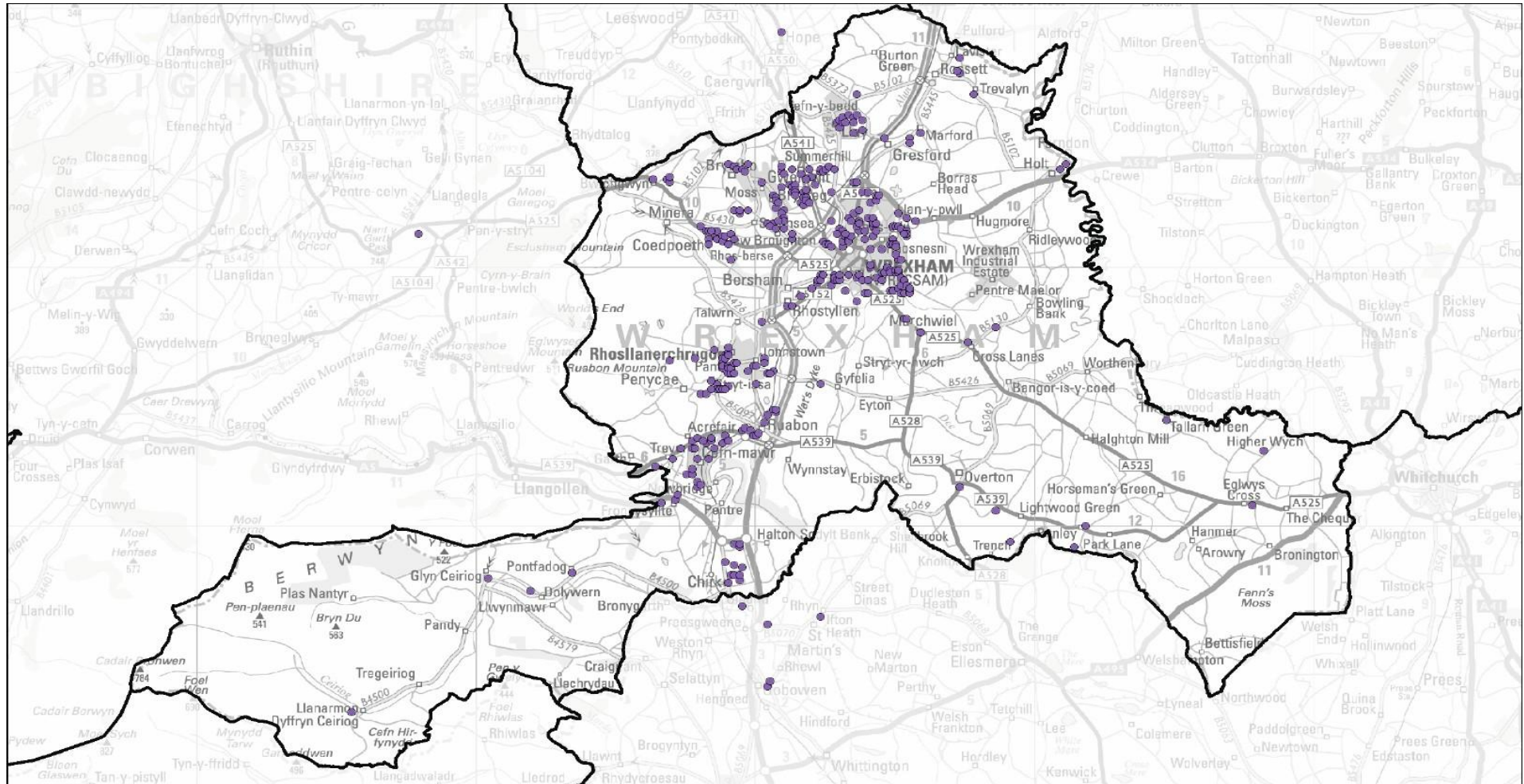
Map depicting the distribution of respondents to question 8a, 'How likely or unlikely is it that you would choose to send your child(ren) to one of the existing Welsh medium or naturally bilingual primary schools?'

Appendix 2



Map depicting the distribution of respondents to question 9, 'If there was a Welsh medium primary school within two miles of your home, how likely or likely is it that you would choose to send your child(ren) to this school?'

Appendix 3



Map depicting the distribution of respondents to question 10, 'If your child(ren) did attend a Welsh medium primary school, how likely or unlikely is it that you would choose to send them to a Welsh medium secondary school?'

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Survey of School Choice 2007
Report of Findings for Wrexham Borough County Council

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