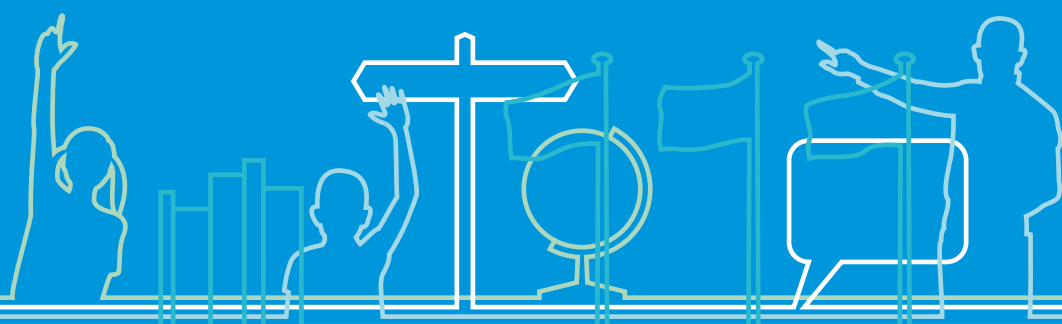


Language Trends 2015/16: The state of language learning in primary and secondary schools in England



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Welcome to Education Development Trust

Education Development Trust, established over 40 years ago as the Centre for British Teaching and later known as CfBT Education Trust, is a large educational organisation providing education services for public benefit in the UK and internationally. We aspire to be the world's leading provider of education services, with a particular interest in school effectiveness.

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About the authors

Teresa Tinsley established and developed the Language Trends series of surveys which have charted the health of languages in various sectors of education since 2002. As well as producing and analysing information on the situation of languages in English secondary schools, the surveys have also covered provision for community languages across the UK, and language learning in Further and Adult Education. Formerly Director of Communications at CILT, the National Centre for Languages, Teresa founded Alcantara Communications in 2011 and since then has undertaken policy-focused research on languages for the British Academy and the British Council, as well as CfBT Education Trust. Her work for CfBT included an international review of primary languages, Lessons from abroad, as well as the Language Trends reports from 2011 to 2015.



Teresa Tinsley

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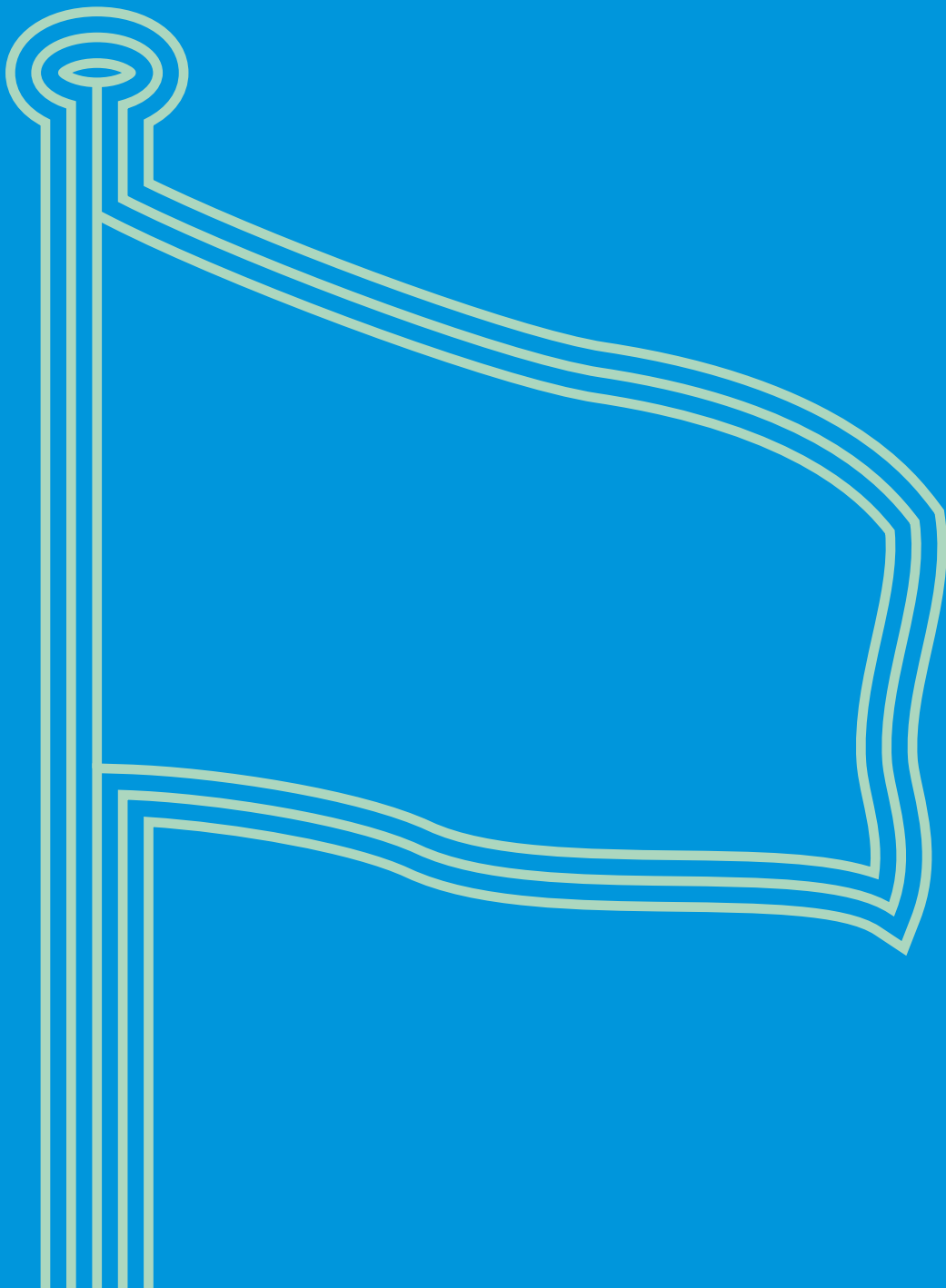


Kathryn Board, OBE

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Executive summary



Language Trends 2015/16 is the latest in a series of annual reports on language teaching based on online surveys completed by teachers in representative samples of schools from across the country.

Surveys of secondary schools began in 2002 and cover both the state and independent sectors. State primary schools have also been surveyed since 2012. This year's report looks how primary schools are responding to the challenges of including language teaching in the curriculum for all pupils in Key Stage 2 and investigates in some detail whether the English Baccalaureate (EBacc), introduced as a performance measure in 2011, is having a lasting impact on the numbers of pupils taking a language to GCSE and, more particularly, on increasing the numbers of pupils continuing to study a language in Key Stage 5. Topics such as the recent announcement by the government of its intention to establish a compulsory 'EBacc for all' (meaning, in practice, for at least 90 per cent of pupils) and the major changes being made to the GCSE and A level examinations for languages also benefit from the kind of investigation that the Language Trends surveys provide. This year's report includes, for the first time, a more detailed exploration of the situation facing lesser-taught languages. These languages are vulnerable in the wake of the announcement by exam boards of their intention to withdraw from examinations in a number of languages which generally attract small numbers of candidates. Lesser-taught languages include many of those which are 'home languages' for pupils whose first language may not be English.

This year's report includes, for the first time, a more detailed exploration of the situation facing lesser-taught languages

Data published by the Department for Education (DfE) in January 2016 show that the rise in entries for GCSE languages following the introduction of the EBacc as a performance measure has come to a halt. The proportion of pupils sitting a GCSE in a language at the end of Key Stage 4 varies between 42 per cent in the North East and 64 per cent in Inner London. Since 2002, entries for A level French have declined by about one third, and those for German by nearly half. Although more pupils are taking A levels in Spanish and other languages, these increases have not involved enough pupils to make up for the shortfalls in French and German.

The research presented in this report was carried out under the joint management of the British Council and the Education Development Trust (formerly CfBT Education Trust) between September and December 2015. A small number of case studies have been included as illustrations of schools that demonstrate a real commitment to the teaching of languages, and which have found interesting or innovative ways to overcome challenges.

Key findings

- Almost all primary schools in England now provide at least some teaching of languages to pupils throughout Key Stage 2, and just over one third of schools now have access to specialist expertise in the teaching of languages within the school. However, there is evidence that some schools are finding it challenging to provide the kind of systematic and consistent language teaching envisaged in the national curriculum.
- The principal challenges reported by primary schools are:
 - Finding enough curriculum time to accommodate languages
 - Improving the confidence of classroom teachers who teach languages
 - Accessing professional training on a regular basis
 - Recruiting suitably qualified teaching staff
- There are indications that more secondary schools are starting to make small modifications to their practice to accommodate pupils who have learned a language in primary school. However, it is clear that secondary schools do not see primary school language teaching as a platform from which to significantly improve standards.
- There is no evidence that schools are gearing up for big increases in the numbers of pupils taking languages at GCSE as a result of the proposed compulsory EBacc standards. Pupils' reluctance to study a language and the unsuitability of GCSE for all pupils are seen as the most significant barriers to implementing the EBacc for greater numbers of pupils. The majority of teachers (73 per cent in the state sector) plan to rely on improved methods and approaches to prepare pupils for the imminent arrival of the new GCSE examinations. More than half of language departments in the state sector (57 per cent) plan to introduce more independent learning and homework.
- The EBacc appears to be having very little impact on the numbers of pupils taking languages post-16. Many schools cite the current emphasis on maths and science, the widely reported inconsistency of A level exam marking and the resulting difficulty of getting a top grade in a language as the reasons for this.
- The availability of exams is vital both in terms of maintaining opportunities for pupils to learn lesser-taught languages such as Japanese and Russian, and as a way in which schools can support and recognise the multilingual skills of pupils who have access to another language in their homes or communities. Withdrawal of accreditation opportunities for lesser-taught languages will almost certainly lead to these languages no longer being taught in or supported by schools.
- The exam system is seen as one of the principal barriers to the successful development of language teaching. The comparative difficulty of exams in languages in relation to other subjects, and widely reported harsh and inconsistent marking, are deeply demotivating for both pupils and teachers.
- Teachers in both the state and independent sectors have little faith in the new A levels, and believe that they are unlikely to resolve problems of take-up in languages at A level and beyond.



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Languages in primary schools

For the first time since 2012, when the Language Trends survey first included a study of languages provision in primary schools, all responding primary schools say that they now teach a modern or ancient language as part of their Key Stage 2 curriculum.

The vast majority of respondents from primary schools believe that teaching languages in Key Stage 2 broadens pupils' cultural understanding and confidence, improves literacy and prepares them for the world of work. Many teachers also believe that language learning can help pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) to shine, and that pupils who may be doing less well in other subjects sometimes thrive in languages. However, many see the realisation of these benefits as being dependent on the quality and extent of input that primary schools can provide, and on the quality of collaboration between secondary and primary schools to ensure continuity of learning.

Some 37 per cent of primary schools report that they are already meeting the new national curriculum requirement for language teaching in full, and almost all of the remainder have taken measures in order to do so. These include employing new staff able to teach a language (13 per cent), moving from teaching several languages in Key Stage 2 to focussing on just one language, buying in commercial courses to ensure pupil progression and placing a greater focus on pupils' written skills. Some 42 per cent of schools have increased the resources available for language teaching.

However, many schools face challenges in meeting the requirements of the new national curriculum, including finding sufficient curriculum time to accommodate languages and boosting staff confidence so that non-specialist teachers are more prepared to play their part in embedding language learning throughout the school. Many respondents report difficulties in accessing continuing professional development (CPD) due to a lack of time, budget, different school priorities or the fact that CPD is no longer provided by a body such as the local authority. A number of schools also find it difficult to recruit suitably qualified teachers.

One third of schools say that they do not currently assess pupils' progress in language learning, although many are aware of the need to do so. A lack of both time and central guidance are reported to be the main impediments. Of the schools which do assess pupils' progress, the most widely used tool remains the Key Stage 2 Framework, developed for the National Languages Strategy of 2002–2010, although there is a clear move towards commercially available assessment systems and tools as well as resources that are developed or adapted in-house.

Just over half of all primary schools now have access to specialist expertise in the teaching of languages, either in the form of a specialist member of staff who is employed to teach languages alone or in conjunction with class teachers, or a part-time external teacher shared with another school. Some 45 per cent of schools have either a native speaker or a member of staff with a degree in the language they are teaching, compared to 41 per cent reported in

The vast majority of respondents from primary schools believe that teaching languages in Key Stage 2 broadens pupils' cultural understanding and confidence, improves literacy and prepares them for the world of work

Language Trends 2014/15. Other sources of expertise used by primary schools to support the teaching of languages include the Association of Language Learning (ALL, the professional organisation for language teachers), cultural institutes such as the Goethe-Institut, local Teaching School alliances, and local universities which host and resource local networks.

The languages being taught by primary schools are very similar to those we have noted in previous years. The vast majority of schools – just over three quarters – teach French, and the upward trend for Spanish, noted each year since 2012, continues: 22 per cent of responding schools now report that they offer Spanish. The small proportion (four per cent) of schools teaching German remains stable, but fewer schools in this year's sample offer Chinese or Latin. A number of schools commented that the requirements of the new national curriculum have influenced their decision about which languages to teach, for example, by deterring them from teaching Chinese.

As many as 41 per cent of primary schools offer pupils the chance to learn a language outside class time, in addition to what is provided within the curriculum. This is usually in the form of clubs, and takes place most frequently during lunchtime or after school. Extra-curricular classes are delivered by a wide range of people, including parents, governors and members of the local community. Schools that do not offer extra-curricular classes in languages do not do so because of a lack of interest from pupils and teachers' workloads.

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Languages in secondary schools

Take-up and inclusion

This year's research reveals that in a small minority of state schools (seven to eight per cent), groups of pupils do not receive any language teaching from the beginning of Key Stage 3. Yet there are some encouraging signs that this practice may be in decline, and that schools may be moving towards more inclusive policies. Where disapplication does happen, such pupils are effectively prevented from taking a language to GCSE and from obtaining the EBacc.

Some 26 per cent of schools in the state sector have reduced Key Stage 3 language provision to two years, meaning that pupils who do not choose to continue to GCSE receive only rudimentary language teaching. Opportunities to study a language are still associated with high-performing schools and those with low indices of socio-economic deprivation. Disapplication (the practice of excluding or excusing pupils from language study) is rarely seen in the independent sector.

A quarter of state schools (25 per cent) have made modifications to the provision of language teaching in Key Stage 3 in order to encourage greater uptake for languages in Key Stage 4. These modifications include the introduction of new languages (18 per cent of state schools and 21 per cent of independent schools) and, in a few cases, an increase in the lesson time available for language learning. However, as many as 25 per cent of state schools and 23 per cent of independent schools have done the opposite and reduced lesson time for languages in Key Stage 3 in order to free up time for subjects such as English and maths.

Almost 20 per cent of schools in the state sector have ceased teaching one or more languages at Key Stage 3, largely as a result of staff changes or shrinkages in the provision of language tuition.

In the state sector, some 20 per cent of schools now make a language compulsory for all pupils in Key Stage 4, which is a slight increase from 2014 but lower than 2012. By contrast, 74 per cent of independent schools make the study of a language compulsory at Key Stage 4. In the state sector, the majority of schools (59 per cent) offer a curriculum model in which taking a language as a GCSE is optional for all pupils.

The quantitative evidence from this year's Language Trends research shows that the EBacc has had a lasting impact in only 27 per cent of state schools; in the independent sector, only 3 per cent of schools reported that the EBacc has had a positive effect on the numbers of pupils studying a language to GCSE. With the government now intending to promote 'compulsory' EBacc for all (or almost all) pupils, state schools' responses fall into one of three roughly equal categories: in approximately one third there will be no change, either because all or most pupils already take a language to GCSE (22 per cent) or because schools are not likely to (further) promote the EBacc (15 per cent). Approximately another third of state schools are likely to advise pupils more strongly that they should study a language at GCSE, while the final third are more likely to make languages compulsory for some or all pupils. The vast majority of independent schools are unlikely to make any changes, since all or most pupils in this sector already take a language to GCSE.

According to teachers, the greatest barriers (in both state and independent sectors, but overwhelmingly in the state sector) to take-up at Key Stage 4 are some pupils' reluctance to study languages and the unsuitability of GCSE language exams for all pupils. Other barriers are the difficulty of GCSE languages in comparison with other subjects, pressure on the curriculum, financial concerns and the perceived lack of importance of languages compared to other subjects. In the independent sector, parental choice is also cited as a barrier.

Only 15 per cent of state schools and 11 per cent of independent schools report that the EBacc policy has led to increases in take-up for languages post-16. Schools report that the increased numbers taking the GCSE have failed to translate into AS and A level candidates due to the current emphasis on maths and science, the risk of not getting a good grade in languages and the inadequacy of GCSE as a preparation for A level study. In some state schools the very small numbers wishing to take a language at Key Stage 5 means that the subject is becoming financially unviable: there is evidence of schools opting not to offer A level language courses at all.

Quality

In preparation for the new GCSEs, schools are changing how languages are taught: nearly three quarters of state secondary schools either intend to change their approach and teaching methods or have already done so. Changes include alterations to schemes of work at Key Stage 3 to reflect the requirements of the new GCSE as well as changes to assessment methods designed to help pupils prepare more effectively for the new examinations. Other schools are planning

In some state schools the very small numbers wishing to take a language at Key Stage 5 means that the subject is becoming financially unviable

to begin the GCSE course in Year 9 to give pupils three years to prepare for the examination rather than two, or expect to have to make changes to staffing as well as to the languages taught in school. The majority of schools expect to use increased quantities of homework and a greater focus on independent learning to prepare pupils for the new GCSE examinations. Very few teachers in either the state or independent sector expect to see an increase in time allocation for languages in either Key Stage 3 or Key Stage 4. In a number of schools, shrinking time for languages is exacerbated by budget cuts which mean that they are no longer able to employ a Foreign Language Assistant (FLA), which is a valuable resource particularly for working on oral skills with small groups of pupils.

Few schools believe that capturing gains from four years of language learning in primary school will be the solution to helping pupils reach the standards required by the new examinations.

Internally organised CPD remains the most common means of professional development undertaken in state schools. Participation in language-related CPD tends to be 'occasional' rather than 'regular', due to a lack of funding and time, geographical location and the fact that some schools' language departments comprise only one teacher.

Two thirds of the state schools (67 per cent) taking part in our Language Trends research exercise and one third of independent schools (33 per cent) are involved in some form of initial training for teachers of languages (ITT). However, schools face a number of constraints on participating in ITT, including the heavy workload of serving teachers, the poor quality of trainees and a lack of trainees who can offer the languages the school needs, shrinkage of the language department, changes in management policy and cuts to partner university allocations.

Diversity

The vast majority of both independent and state schools offer French, and in the independent sector almost as many offer Spanish. In the state sector, the proportion of schools offering Spanish has been increasing, and now stands at 75 per cent in Key Stage 4, and 72 per cent in Key Stages 3 and 5. German, which has been following the opposite trajectory in recent years, appears to have maintained the proportion of schools that offer it since last year. It is taught by approximately half of all state schools and around three quarters of independent schools (actual figures depend on the key stage). Apart from Spanish, French and German, very small numbers of schools offer teaching in Arabic, Chinese, Italian, Japanese, Russian and Urdu, although the very small numbers involved mean that it is hard to identify trends in provision from year to year. Additionally, a very small number of state school respondents offer tuition as well as examination preparation in Polish, Portuguese, Dutch and Turkish, usually the result of several native speakers attending the school.

Data from this year's Language Trends survey show that Chinese is the strongest of the lesser-taught languages; it is offered in 13 per cent of state schools and 46 per cent of independent schools. However, Chinese is frequently offered in the independent sector to native speaker pupils whose parents wish their children to gain a qualification in their own language.

In a number of schools, shrinking time for languages is exacerbated by budget cuts which mean that they are no longer able to employ a Foreign Language Assistant

Our research reveals a different pattern in the provision of lesser-taught languages between the state and independent sectors. In general, state schools provide tuition in one or a very small number of lesser-taught languages, depending on the policy of the school to offer a language other than French, German and Spanish, and depending on the demand within the community from which the school draws its pupil population. In contrast, the independent sector is much more likely to offer pupils opportunities to learn a wide range of lesser-taught languages, though classes are often extremely small and would almost certainly not be viable in the state sector.

More than two thirds of the independent schools (67 per cent) and over half of the state schools (54 per cent) taking part in this year's survey which already teach a lesser-taught language believe that if public examinations in these languages were withdrawn, they would probably no longer teach them. It is clear that the opportunity to have learning acknowledged is a key factor and motivator in pupils' choices to study a particular subject. Schools also need the feedback on the effectiveness of their teaching which examination results provide. Respondents also point to the value of language diversity to British culture, the importance of equality of opportunity for all and the negative impact on perceptions of the country if the linguistic diversity England has at its disposal is undervalued.

At post-16, there is a clear pattern of decline in language provision across both the independent and state sectors. For every language, more schools have discontinued offering it post-16 than have introduced it as a new subject. However, it is very interesting to note that, although the numbers are very small, in schools which are managing to maintain provision in Arabic, Mandarin, Russian, Italian (independent sector only) and Latin (state sector only), more have increased than decreased their take-up. There is evident potential interest from students in learning lesser-taught languages, but the very small numbers show the vulnerability of provision for those languages within the education system as a whole.

As far as the ancient languages are concerned, Latin is offered by 18 per cent of state schools and 61 per cent of independent schools. It is taught by more state schools than any of the lesser-taught modern languages, and is more deeply embedded in the curriculum, though it is often aimed mainly at gifted and talented pupils. Ancient Greek is offered by 2 per cent of state schools but by as many as 33 per cent of independent schools, where it is being studied by more-able pupils or in very small groups.

Home languages: Primary phase

Nearly one in five primary school children in England (19.4 per cent) is classed as 'not having English as a first language'. The home languages spoken and understood by school pupils are an important resource not only for the children themselves and their families, but also for society as a whole. Many educators believe that there are benefits in making links between the teaching of the national language, the mother tongue (where this is different) and new languages being taught.

The results of the survey show that in schools with significant numbers of EAL pupils, there is modest encouragement for home languages. Most schools report that they provide at least some resources, encouragement and opportunities for

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pupils to reflect on their own multilingualism. The majority of primary schools in the top quartile for multilingual pupils also allow at least some use of home languages in the classroom. However, levels of more active support for the teaching of community languages are much lower; three quarters of primary schools with high levels of EAL pupils have no involvement in this at all.

Schools highlight a lack of expertise or resources as well as the number of different languages spoken by pupils as obstacles that prevent them from offering more help for children to develop their home language skills.

Home languages: Secondary phase

In the state sector, high numbers of EAL pupils tend to be concentrated in a small number of schools; the majority of schools have low proportions of EAL pupils. Once again, the survey recorded only the responses from schools in the top quartile for proportion of multilingual pupils.

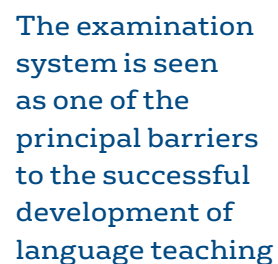
Offering pupils opportunities to take examinations in languages they speak or know from home is the most common way in which these schools offer support, and this happens in both the independent and state sectors. Almost all state schools with high proportions of EAL pupils offer them at least some opportunity to gain a qualification in their home language, where the relevant exams exist. A high proportion of these schools also say they offer individualised support, provide resources, or offer opportunities to discuss and reflect on multilingualism.

Dissatisfaction with the examination system

The examination system is seen as one of the principal barriers to the successful development of language teaching. Teachers from both the independent and state sectors express deep concerns about the inconsistency in marking of pupils' examination performance and the negative impact this has on pupils' and parents' perceptions of the subject as a whole. It also negatively affects levels of take-up by pupils when they select the subjects they are going to study at Key Stages 4 and 5, as well as senior management attitudes towards the subject. Teachers report that languages are widely perceived as harder than other subjects, and are therefore a less attractive study option for pupils.

Some respondents predict that the introduction of new, more rigorous GCSEs is likely to further reduce the number of pupils opting for languages when they make their GCSE option choices, and to create specific problems for less able pupils. However, these comments are balanced by those from others – albeit a smaller proportion – who welcome the changes.

Teachers in both the state and independent sectors report a lack of faith in the new A levels to resolve problems of take-up at A level and beyond. Teachers across both sectors are very concerned about the impact of changes to the A level syllabus and the move to a linear approach which removes the interim AS level. They believe that these changes have the potential to reduce even further the number of pupils choosing to study languages at Key Stage 5. The very real difficulty of achieving high grades in A level language examinations and the inconsistency of marking and grading exam scripts only add to this concern and is deeply demotivating for both pupils and teachers.



The examination system is seen as one of the principal barriers to the successful development of language teaching

Conclusions

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the rich quantitative and qualitative data provided by the many teachers participating in this year's survey:

1. There are signs that primary schools are taking steps to improve the quality of language teaching in the strong belief that language learning brings benefits to the Key Stage 2 curriculum.
2. Schools are not gearing up for big increases in numbers taking languages at GCSE as a result of the compulsory EBacc proposal.
3. Teachers believe the new A levels are more likely to further reduce the already declining number of pupils taking languages at Key Stage 5.
4. Teachers believe that the examination system is creating negative attitudes towards language learning.
5. There is interest in studying a wide range of lesser-taught languages, but students also place a high value on exams in these languages in order to accredit their learning.

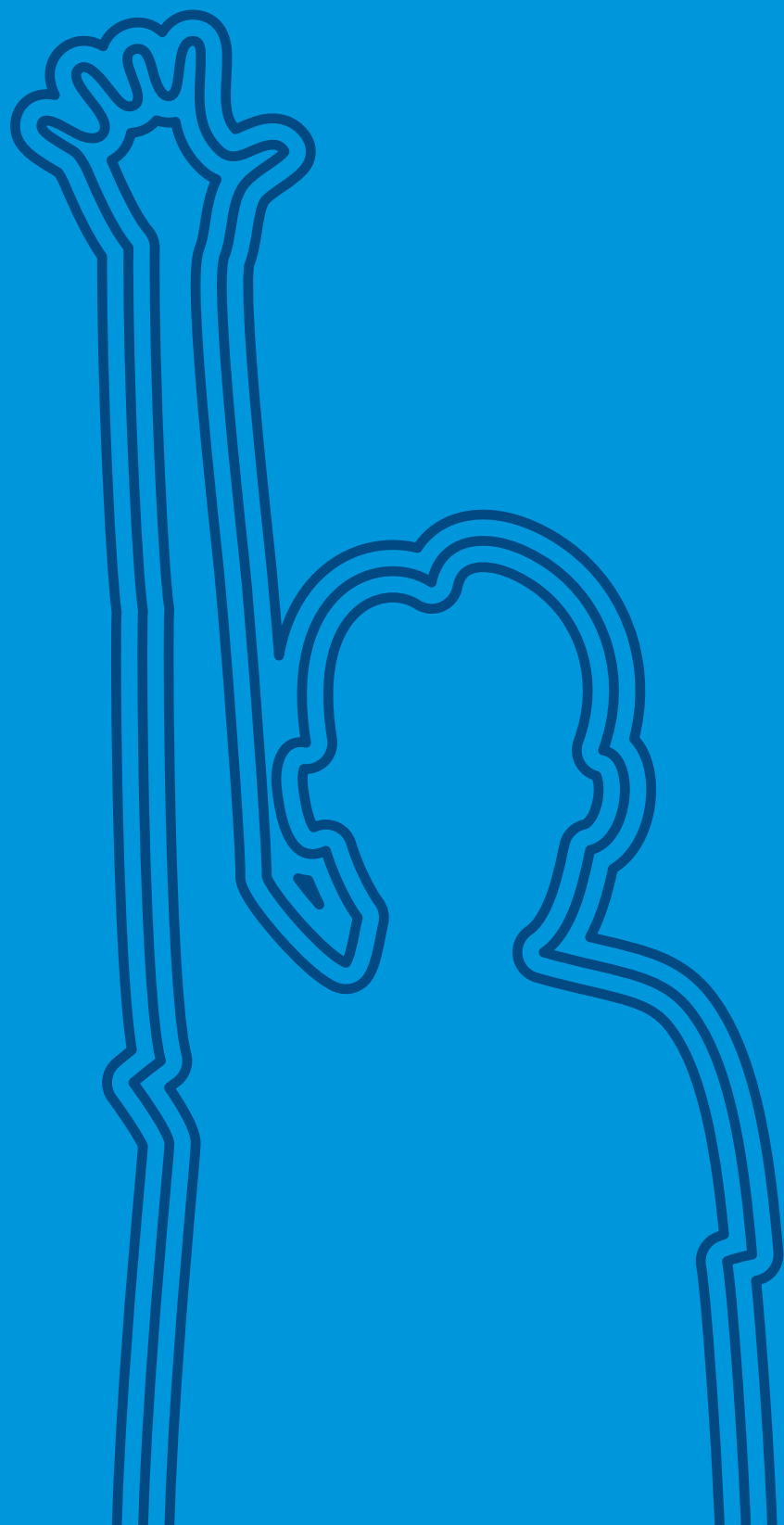
In this year's survey, the shortcomings of the exam regime are highlighted more than ever as a key factor in explaining pupils' reluctance to study languages. Teachers believe there needs to be a much closer connection between the levels of language competence which their pupils are able to achieve and the grades awarded. It is clear that the system needs to be flexible enough to accredit both weaker students who would otherwise be advised to take subjects deemed more 'accessible', as well as high flyers and native speakers who are able to attain high levels of language competence. The existence of such candidates, increasingly common as more and more pupils have experience of languages other than English outside the classroom, should be recognised and encouraged, but not at the expense of driving down grades for those who have not had the same opportunities to consolidate their language learning.

Respondents to this year's survey make a strong case for improving the assessment system and strengthening public advocacy for languages alongside STEM subjects.

Schools are not gearing up for big increases in numbers taking languages at GCSE as a result of the compulsory EBacc proposal

Chapter 1

Introduction



Languages – a vital component of the 21st century curriculum and a skill for life

*'Countries need to invest in educating their youth in cross-cultural competence skills, wherein foreign language proficiency should not only be desirable, but mandatory.'*¹

Competence in another language besides English is as vital a skill for working life as the scientific and technological skills that are regarded as so important for Britain's future

With Britain debating its future in Europe and searching for responses to the migrant crisis and the threat of terrorism, the English language is assuming an ever-greater status as a guarantor of our national identity and security.² But how does this affect attitudes towards other languages? The tabloid press regularly runs stories about how taxpayers' money is being 'wasted' on interpretation and translation services, while one newspaper recently had to publish a retraction of a scare story about how English was 'dying out' in UK schools.³ The growth in exam entries for Arabic, Turkish, Polish and other 'small-entry' languages, arguably one of the most positive language stories in recent years as a sign of increased language capacity, has been portrayed as schools 'cheating' in performance tables.⁴ All this creates a difficult climate for the teaching of languages in schools, where enthusiasm for the subject already suffers from a lingering perception that 'everyone speaks English'. Yet the evidence keeps coming that competence in another language besides English is as vital a skill for working life as the scientific and technological skills that are regarded as so important for Britain's future. And in a volatile global context, language competence provides an important means of understanding the wider world and the cultural differences among the people who inhabit it.

Research published this year has both confirmed and refined our understanding of the value of languages to the economy and to individuals. The *Born Global* research by the British Academy, probably the most in-depth study yet carried out of the interface between languages and employment, drew on the views of more than 600 employers.⁵ It found that UK nationals without language skills are losing out in the global employment market, less as a direct result of their lack of language skills, but from restricted experiences as a result of not having language skills – a lack of overseas work experience, a lack of international business sense, a failure to appreciate that other cultures have other ways of doing things and a misunderstanding of the global importance of British culture. The report highlighted the importance of language capability, a global mindset and cultural competence as essential attributes for future employability. According to Bernardette Holmes, author of *Born Global*:

'The Born Global Generation will be even more internationally mobile, tech savvy, cosmopolitan and hyper-connected. It is from this generation that we will source future leaders of local and global companies, building the social fabric of our communities and networks worldwide [...] The key to success will come from cultural and intellectual agility, arising from international experience and the ability to speak more than one language.'

¹ Dr Nitesh Singh, Associate Professor, Boeing Institute of International Business, St Louis University ² See, for example, the £20 million fund to help Muslim women learn English

³ <http://www.express.co.uk/news/clarifications-corrections/627051/IPSO-complaint-upheld-English-in-schools> ⁴ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/schools-using-community-languages-such-as-urdu-and-polish-to-boost-their-rankings-in-league-tables-10462840.html> ⁵ British Academy, *Born Global* (forthcoming). Pre-publication report kindly made available by the author

The British Council's *World of Experience* report took a broad look at international practice – including school exchange programmes, travel, volunteering, studying and working abroad – and the way in which these experiences help to build skills that generate short- and long-term benefits for individuals, employers and the UK wider society.⁶ The report showed that people who have 'deeper international experience' are more likely to be involved in innovation in their workplace, and that language skills are closely associated with this global outlook.

The *Importance of Global Talent within International Business* report, which examined both US and UK businesses, found that young peoples' perspectives were not broad enough to operate within the global economy and (once again) that British businesses are losing out to foreign competitors because of a lack of cross-cultural competence.⁷ Confederation of British Industry (CBI) Chief Executive John Cridland provided the most succinct expression of Britain's challenge regarding language skills last August as entry figures for A level were announced:

*'If we're not capable of speaking other people's languages, we're going to have difficulties.'*⁸

The CBI's most recent report on education and skills stated that:

*'The ability to communicate with other people in their own language can play a valuable part in forming relationships, building mutual understanding and trust, and developing the networks on which business opportunities depend. Language study can also indicate that an individual may have an international outlook and, for those who study to a higher level, evidence of the ability to work in diverse teams and with other cultures.'*⁹

It also found that language skills are more highly valued in sectors such as manufacturing, which are crucial in the drive to develop a more export-oriented economy.

More than three quarters of adults recognise that language skills provide greater employment opportunities, and two thirds regret not having fully appreciated the benefits of learning a language whilst they were at school, according to a recent *Populus* poll.¹¹ Yet there is continued concern about the health and direction of language learning in both schools and universities; in 2015 two more universities (Northumbria and Ulster) announced that they were no longer offering language degrees. Their decisions reflect the shrinking pool of applicants with A level languages coming through the school system and highlight the importance of the annual Language Trends survey in helping policy makers and practitioners to understand the forces which affect the provision and uptake of languages in both the independent and state sectors.

This year's report seeks to shed greater light on how school language departments are coping with the evident increased need driven by outside organisations and bodies to develop pupils' multilingual skills in a context where the focus in schools is not on languages but elsewhere in the curriculum, particularly the areas of literacy and numeracy.

More than three quarters of adults recognise that language skills provide greater employment opportunities, and two thirds regret not having fully appreciated the benefits of learning a language whilst they were at school

⁶ British Council (2015) ⁷ <http://www.conversis.com/ConversisGlobal/media/ConversisMedical-Images/Conversis-Global-Talent-Report-Download.pdf> ⁸ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/john-cridland-encourage-teenagers-to-study-arts-so-computer-games-of-the-future-are-not-designed-by-10452182.html> ⁹ CBI/Pearson Education (2015) ¹⁰ *Ibid.* ¹¹ <https://www.britishcouncil.org/organisation/press/uk-adults-regret-losing-language-skills-school-days>

The policy context

Since the publication of the last Language Trends report, a new government has come into office, with refreshed ambitions for its education policy. At the core of this policy is the promotion of the 'EBacc for all', which is designed to stem the decline in academic subjects being taken at GCSE. The motivation for this policy is rooted in the deep concern about falling numbers for languages ever since the Key Stage 4 curriculum was opened up to a wider range of options in 2004 – which has been tracked year on year in previous Language Trends surveys. Schools Minister Nick Gibb believes that encouraging more pupils to take 'traditional academic subjects' is a matter of social justice, since children from poorer backgrounds are less currently likely to opt for subjects like the humanities, sciences, and modern and ancient languages, all of which are essential components of the EBacc. This is backed up by evidence from the Sutton Trust; its *Missing Talent* report found that highly able pupil premium pupils are less likely to be taking GCSEs in history, geography, triple sciences or a language.¹²

As the EBacc 'pillar' that has experienced the most drop out, languages are seen as the subject area with the most to gain in terms of numbers. However, many head teachers – as many as 90 per cent, according to a survey by the Association of School and College Leaders – disagree with the 'EBacc for all' policy.¹³ They see it as narrowing options for pupils and likely to recreate 'the problems of disengagement, low morale and poor results' that led to the Labour Government overturning the compulsory status of languages in the national curriculum in 2004.¹⁴

There is also concern about the supply of language teachers that would be needed to cover the additional demand. Research by Education Datalab suggests that 2,000 extra language teachers would be needed – potentially quite a modest estimate.¹⁵

In autumn 2015, the Department for Education put the proposal that at least 90 per cent of pupils should take the EBacc out for public consultation, asking specifically about factors which should be taken into account in exempting pupils from the EBacc, and the likely challenges for schools in terms of teacher supply and recruitment in the EBacc subjects.¹⁶

This year's Language Trends survey responds to the pressing need for greater understanding of the issues associated with the implementation of an EBacc for all. We ask what actions schools are likely to take to increasing language take-up, and whether teacher supply or other issues, such as the suitability of exams or pupils' attitudes, are likely to be barriers to the widespread implementation of the EBacc.

At the same time, schools are preparing to start teaching new, more rigorous GCSE specifications for languages from September 2016. Previous surveys have identified widespread disenchantment among language teachers with both the content and grading of the current GCSE. This survey seeks their views on the introduction of a new exam and explores how schools intend to respond to the challenge of increasing numbers for what many perceive as a harder exam.

Since the publication of the last Language Trends report, a new government has come into office, with refreshed ambitions for its education policy

¹² Sutton Trust (2015) ¹³ http://schoolsweek.co.uk/nine-ten-10-school-leaders-oppose-english-baccalaureate-year-seven-7-2015-10072015/?utm_content=buffer804b5&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer ¹⁴ David Harbourne, Acting CEO, Edge Foundation: <http://www.sec-ed.co.uk/blog/making-90-per-cent-of-students-take-the-ebacc-will-damage-futures#.VIYW-qsd7N5.twitter> ¹⁵ <http://schoolsweek.co.uk/2000-more-mfl-teachers-needed-for-ebacc/> ¹⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/implementing-the-english-baccalaureate>. At the time of writing we are awaiting further developments as a result of this consultation

The question of fairness in the marking and grading of language GCSEs and A levels compared with other subjects has long been a concern for language teachers

The question of fairness in the marking and grading of language GCSEs and A levels compared with other subjects has long been a concern for language teachers, as reported in previous Language Trends surveys. A major finding of the 2013/14 Language Trends report centred on the alarming rate of decline in the study of languages at A level, a concern which continued to be expressed strongly by teachers responding to the 2014/15 report. Harsh and unpredictable grading as well as competition from other subjects were cited as key factors.

In 2015 Ofqual published a series of working papers on the comparability of different GCSE and A level subjects.¹⁷ The risks it identified if the exam system does not provide comparability across subjects reflect the concerns which have been expressed in previous Language Trends reports:

- Choices made by pupils, or by schools on their behalf, are skewed, affecting the curriculum followed by many pupils.
- Higher education institutions do not have reliable information about applicants' attainment and ability.
- Schools and teachers are evaluated on the basis of misleading information.
- There is a loss of public confidence in the exam system.

Ofqual's statistical analysis found that A levels in French, German and Spanish languages were harder than those in other subjects, though not generally harder than the sciences. It argued that despite this, entries for physics have been rising.¹⁸ The responses from language teachers to questions in the Language Trends survey help to shed light on this conundrum.

The impact on languages of the new performance measure for schools, Progress 8, remains to be seen as it is currently being implemented in all schools in 2016.¹⁹ Some have argued that it represents a 'watering down' of the EBacc measure, although the DfE has denied this. Rather than only taking into account final GCSE outcomes, Progress 8 contextualises them by measuring pupils' progress in 8 subjects (some of which have to be EBacc subjects, though this does not necessarily include a language) from the baseline of their Key Stage 2 SATs results. Ofqual's study found that pupils with the same prior attainment in Key Stage 2 were less likely to achieve a C grade at GCSE in French or German than in physical education or religious studies. The implication of this is that the standing of languages might be damaged even further.

This year's survey further probes schools about the current and likely future impact of assessment systems and performance measures.

Reforms to language A levels due to be introduced imminently will do away with the current modular structure, and course content will emphasise the culture and society of the country or countries where the language is spoken. AS exams will be 'decoupled' from A levels to become freestanding examinations. Respondents were asked about the likely impact of these changes on language study post-16 in their school.

There was a vociferous campaign throughout 2015 to protect the future of GCSE and A levels in 'small-entry' languages, which awarding organisations had said they

¹⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/inter-subject-comparability-research-documents> ¹⁸ Ofqual (2015) ¹⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/progress-8-school-performance-measure>



would be not be redeveloping to reflect the latest reforms. The DfE has provided assurance that exams in these languages, which include Arabic, Turkish, Urdu and Modern Greek, will continue. However, no further details are available at the time of writing. This year's survey asked schools which enter pupils for these languages for their views on the issue.

Previous Language Trends surveys have found that very few schools actually teach any of the languages under threat. Pupils taking the exams are either taught at home or outside school hours. Given the contribution that community languages make to pupils' linguistic competence as well as to exam scores nationally, schools were asked what provision they make for the home languages of pupils, looking particularly at schools with high numbers of EAL pupils.

With the issue of exams for 'small-entry' languages still not resolved, and potentially huge challenges for many schools in preparing 90 per cent of their pupils to take a GCSE in a language, the government has set its sights on a language which is new to the vast majority of schools: Chinese. A total of £10 million over four years has recently been set aside for an elite programme which will teach Chinese intensively to 5,000 pupils and bring them to post-A level standard by the end of Year 10.²⁰ We look at the national picture not only for French, German and Spanish, but also for other languages taught in our schools and seen as important for the future.²¹

Language Trends 2015/16

Drawing on quantitative and qualitative evidence from the hundreds of primary and secondary schools which responded to this year's survey, *Language Trends 2015/16* focuses on a number of topics which are important in measuring the health of languages education in English schools. These are introduced briefly below and then expanded in subsequent sections.

Implementing statutory language teaching in primary schools

Since September 2014, a modern or ancient language has been a statutory part of the Key Stage 2 curriculum in England. The National Languages Strategy – which helped to increase the proportion of primary schools teaching a language as part of the curriculum from 22 per cent to 92 per cent from 2002 to 2010 – laid the groundwork for this change.²²

Previous Language Trends reports have highlighted the extent to which languages are taught in almost all primary schools, while pointing to significant differences in how schools approach the subject and in pupils' attainment. We have also highlighted the disconnect between primary and secondary schools which hinders a smooth transition and makes it difficult for pupils to carry over learning from one phase to another. This year's survey of primary schools sought to explore in greater detail how schools are responding to the statutory status of languages and the challenges faced by different types of schools. We also asked secondary schools about the extent to which they are starting to see the impact of language teaching in primary schools and how they are responding to it.

Since September 2014, a modern or ancient language has been a statutory part of the Key Stage 2 curriculum in England

²⁰ <https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/notice/ee1a7f8a-627e-4e03-9333-38fa622469b0> ²¹ British Council (2013) ²² https://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/PLF01/PLF01_home.cfm

Ofsted has recently conducted its own survey of attitudes towards language teaching within primary schools, although the findings have not yet been made public.

Primary schools were asked about their provision for home languages and how this related, if at all, to the teaching of a new language within the national curriculum.

Access, quality and diversity in language learning in secondary schools

Previous Language Trends surveys have shown disparities in access to language learning between state-funded and independent schools, and between state schools working in relatively privileged versus relatively deprived socio-economic circumstances. The question of *access to language learning* – in terms of the choice of languages available to study, the attention given to the subject within primary and secondary schools, or the degree to which certain pupils are excluded from language learning – is one of three key topics which are explored further in this year's report.

A second question relates to the *quality of provision*. The researchers do not claim to be able to judge of the quality of teaching within the school on the basis of the responses received. However, the survey can reveal certain indicators of quality, for instance the extent to which language teachers have access to language-specific CPD and the opportunity to maintain and improve their subject knowledge. In light of the increased demands of the new language GCSEs, schools are asked what measures they will be taking to help pupils reach the required standard.

The final key strand explored in this year's report is *diversity in language learning* in terms of 1) the range of languages taught in schools, and in particular the extent to which Chinese, strongly promoted by the government, is growing as a curriculum subject and 2) the extent to which primary and secondary schools support pupils in the development of skills in home languages (not explored in previous Language Trends reports). Clearly this has important implications for the UK's future language capacity, as well as for the opportunities which will be available to individuals whose backgrounds have provided them with the potential to cross cultures and mediate between people from different cultural backgrounds.

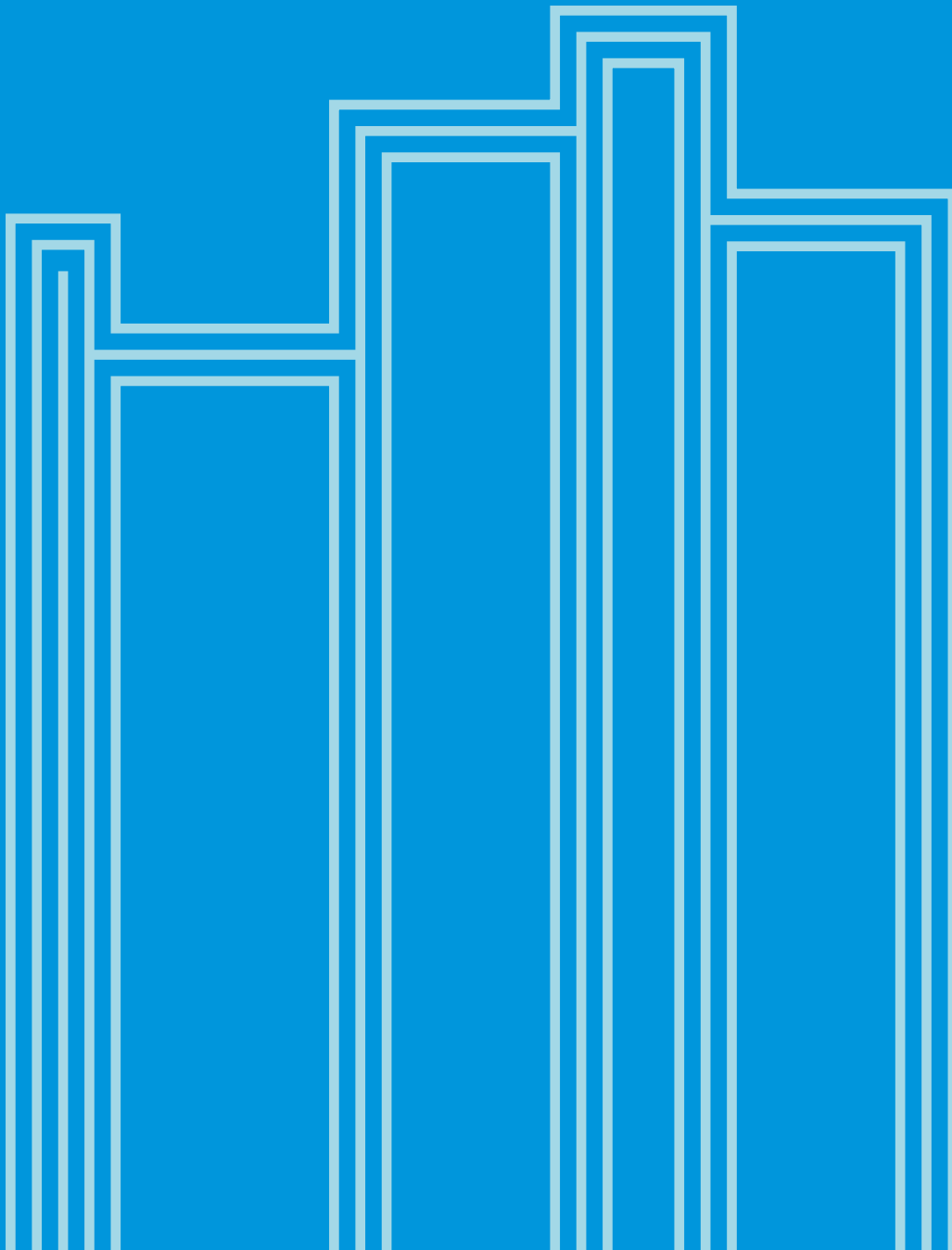
Key issues of concern

In order to do justice to the very rich qualitative data provided by this year's respondents, and the strongly expressed views being proffered, a separate chapter is dedicated to issues which emerge as key concerns for language teachers in secondary schools. These issues relate particularly to the exam regime, and the extent to which this is affecting pupils' attitudes towards the subject. The researchers have also gathered a selection of teachers' views on practical ways forward for the subject.

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Chapter 2

Research design and data collection



The Language Trends survey of secondary schools in England has been carried out annually since 2002 to track developments in language provision and take-up. Since 2012, state primary schools have also been surveyed, making this the fourth annual primary Language Trends survey.

Analysis of examination data

Entry and achievement figures for public examinations such as GCSE and A level provide one of the few comprehensive sources of national data on the situation of languages in secondary schools. UK-wide figures, comprising entries from learners of all ages from all institutions, are provided by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) in August each year. A few months later, the DfE publishes a more finely grained analysis relating to specific cohorts of pupils in English schools. These data have become increasingly rich in recent years and have enabled the analysis of GCSE and A level entries for languages broken down geographically by region/ local authority, by gender and by different types of school. The findings of the current survey have therefore been prefaced by a presentation of DfE examination data relating to languages, thus setting the schools' responses within a broader context and enabling a more insightful interpretation.

Entry and achievement figures for public examinations such as GCSE and A level provide one of the few comprehensive sources of national data on the situation of languages in secondary schools

Development of the questionnaires

Questionnaires for primary and secondary schools were developed in August 2015 by the researchers in consultation with the commissioning organisations, the British Council and Education Development Trust, and with the Association of Language Learning and the Independent Schools' Modern Languages Association (ISMLA). The questionnaires were uploaded to the online survey platform Survey Monkey and trialled in early September 2015.

Primary questionnaire

Questions were based on those used in the previous three years' surveys in order to track emerging trends. Some questions were clarified or extended in order to explore issues in greater depth – for example, more specific options were provided in the question about who teaches languages in the school, and in the question about different types of CPD, respondents were asked to say whether their staff took part in these 'frequently', 'sometimes' or 'never'. The question about whether

respondents welcomed statutory status for languages, which was relevant in 2014 in light of its recent introduction, was changed to elicit information about respondents' perceptions of the benefits of language teaching.

One new area of enquiry was included in the 2015 primary survey, related to schools' provisions to support EAL pupils' home languages.

The questions were designed to explore the extent of provision for languages, which languages are offered, how the teaching of languages is organised and what expertise schools are able to draw on in implementing the full expectations of the new national curriculum as regards language teaching. As in previous years, an important area of enquiry was the extent to which primary schools are in contact with local secondary schools on language issues. More specifically, the following areas were covered:

An important area of enquiry was the extent to which primary schools are in contact with local secondary schools on language issues

- Whether the school teaches a foreign language within the curriculum, and if so, how long they have been doing so and whether there is systematic provision for all groups from Years 3 to 6 (i.e. throughout Key Stage 2)
- Which languages are taught in each phase, including Key Stage 1, if any
- How much time is provided for the teaching of languages
- Whether schools assess pupils' progress in language learning and, if so, how they do this
- What types of contact schools have with local secondary schools
- What documentation forms the basis of the languages programme
- Who teaches the languages, and what qualifications staff have in the languages they teach
- What specialist expertise schools are able to draw on in monitoring and developing language provision (NEW)
- What types of languages specific CPD staff are accessing, and how frequently
- If schools are not providing language teaching, what is the reason for this and have they ever done so
- Whether there is extra-curricular provision for pupils to learn a language
- What level of support in their home language is offered to EAL children (NEW)
- What changes are schools making to language teaching provision in order to meet the requirements of the new national curriculum, and what are the main challenges they face in doing so
- What do respondents regard as the main benefit of teaching a new language in Key Stage 2 (NEW)

Secondary questionnaire

As in previous years, the 2015 survey included both questions which were the same or similar to those asked in the past, in order to enable longitudinal insights, and questions exploring issues of current pressing concern. Among the latter, the survey particularly explored the impact of the EBacc on take-up and participation, and schools' likely response to government proposals that at least 90 per cent of

pupils should take it (which would require 90 per cent of pupils to take a language to GCSE). The survey further probed concerns identified in previous surveys relating to the impact of the new GCSE and A level specifications, and the experience Year 7 pupils arriving in the school have had of language learning in their primary schools. As in the primary survey, a new question was included about support for home languages for EAL pupils.

The number of questions was maintained at 24. The overall number of questions had been reduced by about a third in 2014, and it was noted that the lower number of questions had been successful in increasing the response rate.

The following topics were explored:

- The range of languages offered in schools at Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and post-16, and whether lesser-taught languages are offered as full curriculum subjects or as enrichment
- Whether the withdrawal of public examinations in any of the lesser-taught languages would affect the schools' provision (NEW)
- What types of languages specific CPD staff are accessing, and how frequently
- What involvement schools have in initial training for teachers of languages (NEW)
- What level of support in their home languages is offered to EAL pupils (NEW)

In addition, the survey explored the following in relation to the different key stages:

Key Stage 3

- Whether all pupils study a language throughout Key Stage 3, and any changes that have been introduced
- What experience pupils arriving in Year 7 have had of language learning in primary school
- Whether schools have contacts with local primary schools on language issues and how they build on pupils' prior learning to ensure continuity and progression from Key Stage 2

Key Stage 4

- Whether languages are optional or compulsory for some or all pupils at Key Stage 4 in the school
- Whether any pupils are prevented from studying a language in Key Stage 4
- Whether the proportion of pupils studying a language changed as a result of the introduction of the EBacc and, if numbers increased, whether this also led to increased numbers taking a language post-16
- What changes schools will be making, if any, to respond to the demands of the new GCSE (NEW)
- How schools are likely to respond to the introduction of the 'EBacc for all', and what the main barriers would be to increasing the numbers taking languages to GCSE (e.g. teacher supply) (NEW)

The lower number of questions had been successful in increasing the response rate

Post-16

- Current school trends in the take-up of languages post-16
- What respondents think of the current A levels in languages, and what they think the likely impact will be of the new A level specifications (NEW)
- How satisfied respondents were with the grades awarded to A level languages candidates in summer 2015 (NEW)

Data collection

A random sample of 3,000 schools was selected from the population of state-funded mainstream primary schools with pupils reaching the end of Key Stage 2, thus excluding infant and first schools. The sample was selected to be representative by region and performance quintile (based on the average point score as published in the 2014 Primary School Performance Tables).

Another random sample of 2,500 secondary schools was selected from the DfE database (EduBase).²³ This sample comprised 2,000 state-funded schools and 500 independent schools. The state-funded sample was selected to be representative by region and performance quintile (based on the average total point score per pupil at Key Stage 4 as published in the 2014 Secondary School Performance Tables), and the independent school sample was chosen to be representative by region. The sample excluded middle schools and special schools.

In September 2015 an invitation to complete the online questionnaire was sent out to all schools in the sample, addressed to the head of languages in secondary schools and to head teachers in primary schools. The letters were signed by the chief executives of the Education Development Trust and the British Council.

Reminder letters were sent to heads of languages and primary head teachers to arrive in schools the week after the autumn half term. Schools which had not replied were emailed with a further reminder, and as an incentive to complete the questionnaire, two free places were offered at the ALL's annual conference, one for a primary school respondent and one for a secondary school.

A total of 556 primary schools, 492 state-funded secondary schools and 132 independent secondary schools responded to the survey, yielding response rates of 18.5 per cent, 24.6 per cent and 26.4 per cent, respectively. The response rates for state-funded primary and secondary schools were slightly lower than those for the 2014 survey, but there were slightly more responses from the independent sector than the previous year.

Comparisons of the achieved sample with the national population of schools were carried out (see Appendix, pages 162–4), and the profile of schools responding to the survey was a good match with the profile of schools nationally in terms of their educational performance and geographic location, and the socio-economic and linguistic profiles of their pupils.

In the achieved sample of state secondary schools, schools in the highest performance quintile are slightly over-represented and those in the lowest

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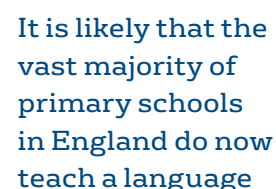
²³ <http://www.education.gov.uk/edubase>



performance quintile are slightly under-represented. In the achieved sample of independent schools there is a slight under-representation of high-performing schools and an over-representation of schools in the lowest quintile in terms of performance. This is the exact opposite of the achieved independent school sample in 2014, so comparisons between 2014 and 2015 must be made with caution.

Given that 100 per cent of responding primary schools reported that they are now teaching a language, the researchers were concerned that the achieved sample might be biased in favour of schools which teach a language, and that schools not teaching a language might have chosen not to respond. A brief telephone survey of 20 non-responding primary schools (selected at random) found that of these, 17 were teaching a language, two were not and another was not able to reply. It would be necessary to conduct a more far-reaching survey of non-responding schools in order to verify these findings. However, the results suggest that, although the figure of 100 per cent of primary schools teaching a language is an over-estimate of the situation nationally, it is likely that the vast majority of primary schools in England do now teach a language.

The tables for the sample characteristics can be found in the Appendix, pages 162–4.



It is likely that the vast majority of primary schools in England do now teach a language

Case study visits

In order to illustrate some of the quantitative and qualitative findings of the survey, and increase understanding of the issues, this year's research exercise features a small number of case studies. The aim was to provide teachers and others reading the report with a number of working examples of schools committed to providing their pupils with positive experiences of language learning.

The researchers visited two primary and two secondary schools, which are distributed around England with varied educational and socio-economic profiles and likely to constitute good models of provision.

Selection of primary schools

In the absence of comprehensive national data on language provision, researchers used findings from the 2014 Language Trends primary surveys to draw up a shortlist of schools which reported positively on their experience of developing language teaching in Key Stage 2 and were willing to be contacted for further information.

A shortlist of six schools was further narrowed down on the basis of geographic location, prioritising schools working in more challenging socio-economic circumstances. These were Irby Primary School in Wirral and Lee Chapel Primary School in Basildon, both of which agreed to host a visit.

Selection of secondary schools

In 2014, researchers used Key Stage 4 performance data to identify suitable schools for case study visits. However, schools which in theory appeared to be positive examples of provision for languages had in practice recently withdrawn from previous commitments, or were unable to host a visit from researchers. The reason cited most frequently was administrative workload.

In 2015 therefore, researchers decided to begin with schools that responded to the 2014 survey and had included positive comments about their provision, and reported that they were willing to be contacted for further information. Only a very small number of schools fulfilled this criteria, and some had to be ruled out on the basis of having low participation in languages at GCSE. One school initially agreed to host a visit, but then had to withdraw because of staffing changes. Only one school on the list was able to host a visit, Thomas Telford School in Shropshire, where languages are compulsory to GCSE for all pupils. A second school, Westminster Academy, was identified from participation in another project as fulfilling the criteria of being committed to language learning and having high take-up at GCSE, and we are grateful to them for being willing to host a visit.

Conduct of visits

Researchers conducted a half-day visit to each school selected as a case study, interviewing both teachers and pupils. In some cases, they were also able to observe language lessons or interview a member of the senior leadership team. In primary schools, they explored the history and rationale for teaching languages as well as the organisation and delivery of language teaching and the attitudes of pupils, parents and other teachers within the school. In secondary schools, the focus was on the structure of provision for languages in each key stage, the opportunities for pupils to engage with language learning beyond the exam syllabus, and the part languages and language qualifications played in pupils' aspirations for their future careers.

Information gathered during the visits was supplemented by published DfE data.

In primary schools, they explored the history and rationale for teaching languages as well as the organisation and delivery of language teaching and the attitudes of pupils, parents and other teachers within the school

Chapter 3

School examination data in England



The data summarised below are based on the latest DfE examination entry figures and cover all GCSE entries for pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 and A level entries for 16–18 year olds in English secondary schools and colleges, both state-funded and independent.

The figures provided are those for the examination results of summer 2015, which were published by the DfE in January 2016. They include time-series data either provided by the DfE or held on record by the authors.

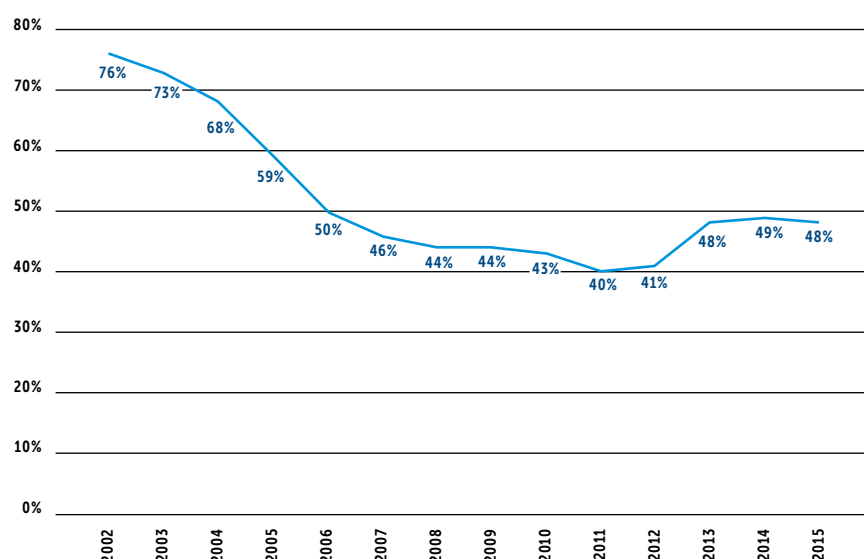
The proportion of the total cohort sitting a GCSE in a language dropped by one percentage point (to 48 per cent) between 2014 and 2015

GCSE entries for language subjects²⁴

What proportion of pupils sit a GCSE in a language at the end of Key Stage 4?

The proportion of the total cohort sitting a GCSE in a language dropped by one percentage point (to 48 per cent) between 2014 and 2015. This brings to a halt the rise in entries seen from 2012 onwards, and which had been closely associated with the EBacc policy.

FIGURE 1: PROPORTION OF END OF KEY STAGE 4 PUPILS SITTING A GCSE IN A LANGUAGE, 2002–2015



This figure for participation in language GCSEs equates to 54 per cent of female pupils at the end of Key Stage 4, and 41 per cent of boys.

²⁴ Data in this section are taken from National Statistics, 'Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England, 2014 to 2015': 'Subject tables' 'Characteristics' and 'Local Authority tables' at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/revised-gcse-and-equivalent-results-in-england-2014-to-2015>

TABLE 1: RATES OF PARTICIPATION BY LANGUAGE, 2015 (2014 FIGURES IN BRACKETS)

Language	Percentage of end of Key Stage 4 pupils taking the GCSE
French	25% (26%)
Spanish	14% (14%)
German	9% (9%)
Italian	1% (1%)
Polish	1% (1%)
Urdu	1% (1%)
Other modern languages	2% (2%)
Latin	1% (1%)

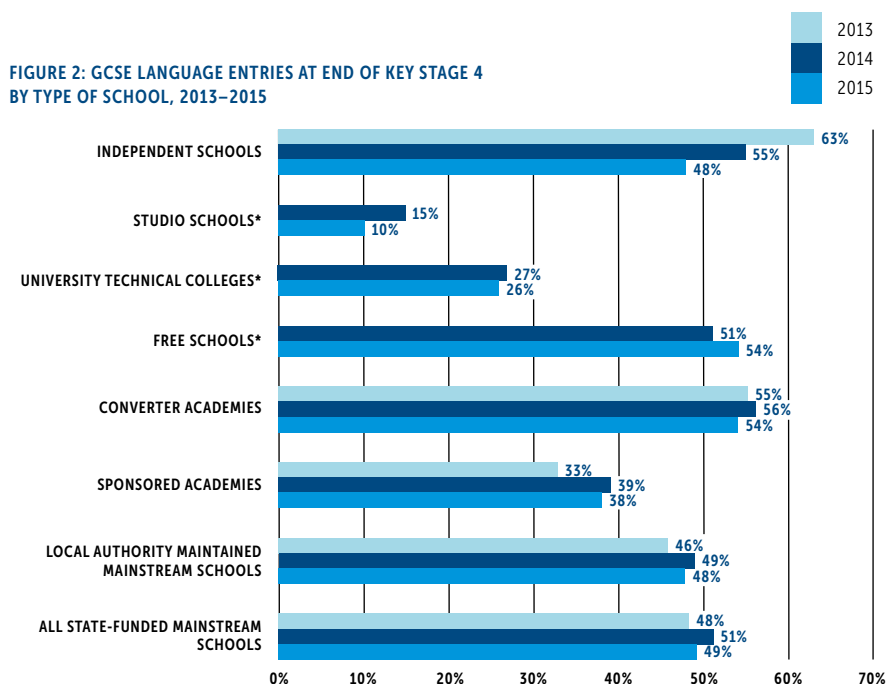
The proportion of pupils sitting a GCSE at the end of Key Stage 4 is higher than average in free schools and converter academies

GCSE entries by type of school

The proportion of pupils sitting a GCSE at the end of Key Stage 4 is higher than average in free schools and converter academies, but independent schools no longer have a higher proportion of pupils taking a GCSE in a modern language at the end of Key Stage 4. This is likely to be either because they take alternative qualifications such as the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) or because they take them earlier.²⁵ Comparatively low numbers of pupils sit a language at GCSE in studio schools, university technical colleges and sponsored academies.

Between 2014 and 2015, the proportion of pupils taking a language GCSE at the end of Key Stage 4 declined in all types of state-funded schools except free schools, where the entry level is now at 54 per cent of pupils (compared to 51 per cent in 2013).

FIGURE 2: GCSE LANGUAGE ENTRIES AT END OF KEY STAGE 4 BY TYPE OF SCHOOL, 2013–2015



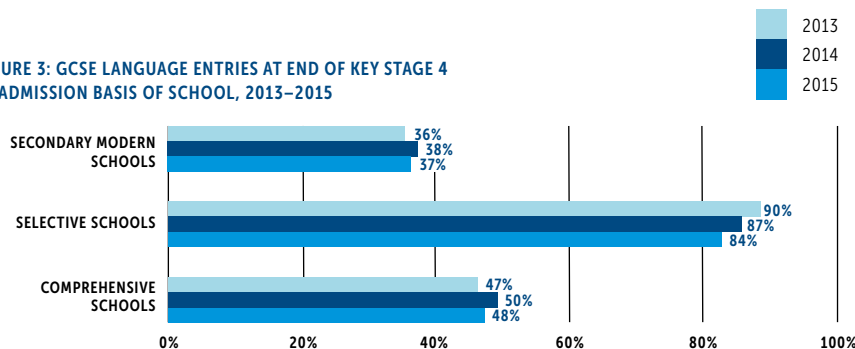
*A combined percentage for these types of schools was given as 44 per cent in 2013

²⁵ Previous Language Trends surveys have highlighted the dissatisfaction with GCSE language examinations in the independent sector, and a trend towards using the IGCSE as an alternative

Schools which select pupils (on academic and/or other criteria) have far higher entry rates for languages GCSEs than either comprehensive or secondary modern schools. This reflects the concentration of language study among pupils deemed to be of higher academic ability.

Although between 2013 and 2014, the proportion of pupils entering for a GCSE in a language declined in selective schools but increased in comprehensive and secondary modern schools, between 2014 and 2015 the proportion declined in all of these types of schools.

**FIGURE 3: GCSE LANGUAGE ENTRIES AT END OF KEY STAGE 4
BY ADMISSION BASIS OF SCHOOL, 2013–2015**

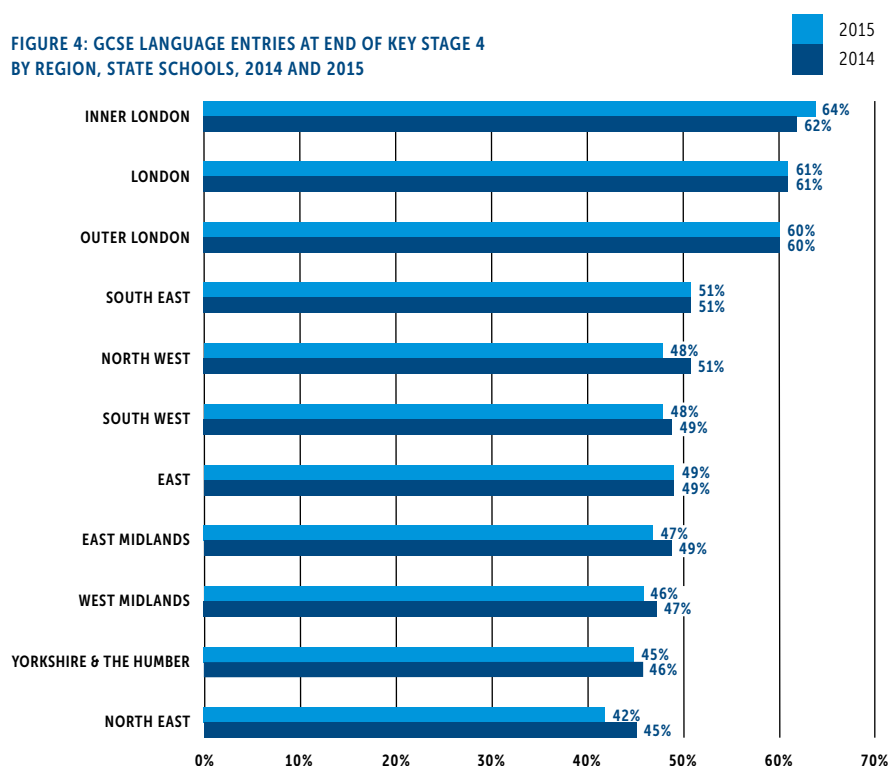


GCSE language entries by region

Figure 4 shows that state schools in London and the South East enter the highest proportions of pupils for languages GCSEs, and that schools in the North East and Yorkshire and the Humber enter the lowest proportions. The gap is increasing between London and regions, where the proportions of pupils taking a GCSE in a language are below the national average. Whereas in Inner London, a higher proportion of pupils took a language GCSE in 2015 than in the previous year, and in Outer London, East and the South East, the proportion remained the same, all other regions saw entries for languages fall as a proportion of the Key Stage 4 cohort.

State schools
in London and
the South East
enter the highest
proportions
of pupils for
languages GCSEs

**FIGURE 4: GCSE LANGUAGE ENTRIES AT END OF KEY STAGE 4
BY REGION, STATE SCHOOLS, 2014 AND 2015**



Within each region, the uptake of languages for GCSE varies by local authority. In 2015, Knowsley, in Merseyside, was the local authority which entered the lowest proportion of pupils (26 per cent) for a language GCSE, while Newham and Kensington and Chelsea entered nearly three times as many proportionately (74 per cent). However, there is no local authority in which 90 per cent of pupils take a language to GCSE, the proportion now being proposed by the government as the target to be achieved. Nine of the ten local authorities with the highest proportions of pupils taking a language at GCSE are all in London. York, in seventh place, is the exception (see Table 2).

There is no local authority in which 90 per cent of pupils take a language to GCSE

TABLE 2: LOCAL AUTHORITIES WHERE THE HIGHEST PROPORTIONS OF PUPILS TAKE A LANGUAGE GCSE, 2014 AND 2015

	2015	2014
Kensington and Chelsea	74%	67%
Newham	74%	69%
Barnet	71%	71%
Sutton	68%	64%
Westminster	68%	65%
Hammersmith and Fulham	68%	70%
York	67%	67%
Lambeth	67%	65%
Kingston upon Thames	67%	66%
Enfield	67%	65%

The ten local authorities with the smallest proportions of pupils taking a language GCSE are spread across the whole of England, with the exception of London and the East (see Table 3).

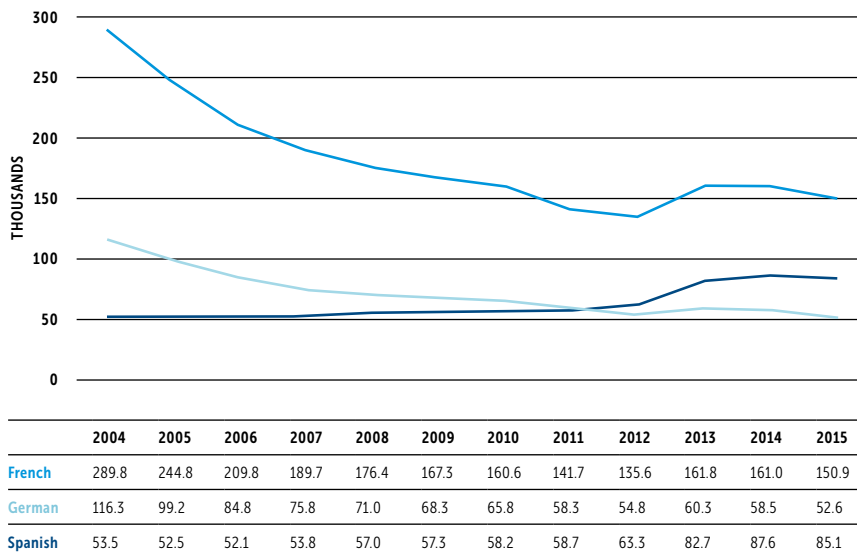
TABLE 3: LOCAL AUTHORITIES WHERE THE LOWEST PROPORTIONS OF PUPILS TAKE A LANGUAGE GCSE

	2015	2014
Knowsley	26%	37%
Middlesbrough	28%	27%
Redcar and Cleveland	29%	36%
Barnsley	31%	28%
Hartlepool	32%	41%
Blackpool	33%	37%
Doncaster	34%	34%
Oldham	34%	40%
Isle of Wight	36%	33%
Stoke-on-Trent	36%	39%

Trends in take-up by language

Entries for each of the three main languages have fallen this year. Spanish and French are still retaining some of the gains from the 'EBacc bounce' which saw substantial increases in all three languages between 2013 and 2014, but German has slipped back to its lowest-ever level. Compared to 2014, French is down 6 per cent, German is down 10 per cent and Spanish is down 3 per cent.

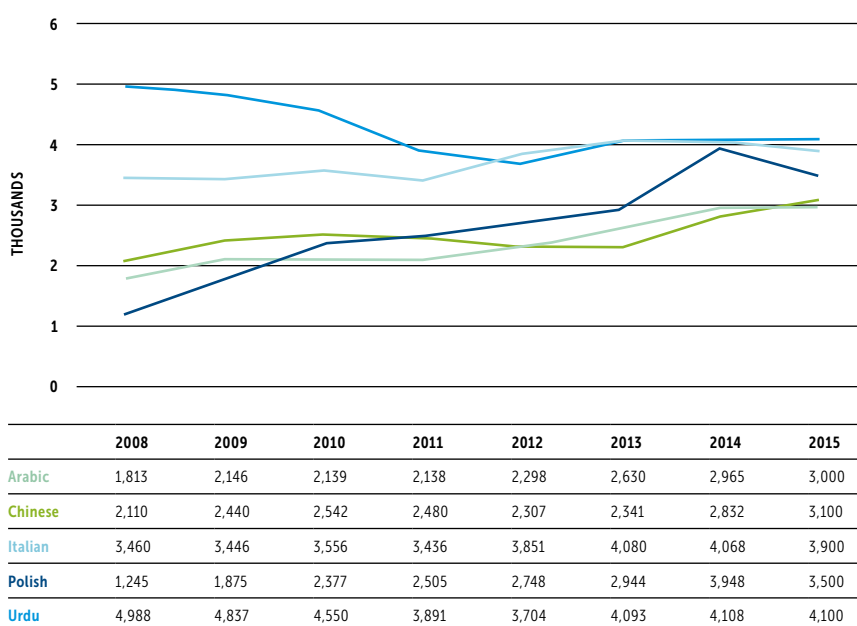
FIGURE 5: GCSE ENTRIES AT THE END OF KEY STAGE 4, ENGLAND, 2003–2015, MAIN LANGUAGES TAUGHT



Entries for each of the three main languages have fallen this year

Time-series data comparing the entry figures at the end of Key Stage 4 for languages that are not commonly taught in English schools are available from 2008. Of these, Arabic, Chinese, Italian, Polish and Urdu have the largest number of entries (around three to four thousand), but clearly only very small numbers compared to French, German and Spanish (see Figure 6).

FIGURE 6: GCSE ENTRIES AT END OF KEY STAGE 4, ENGLAND, 2008–2015, ARABIC, CHINESE, ITALIAN, POLISH, URDU



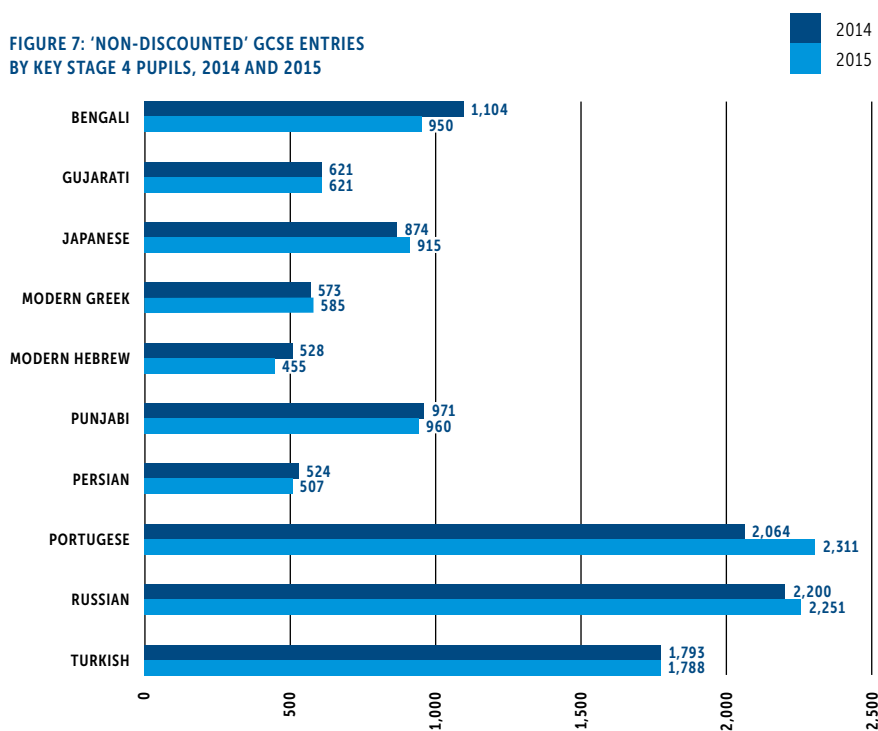
Chinese, Arabic and Polish present a clear upward trajectory from 2008 to 2015, while the number of entries for Italian has grown only marginally since 2008 and seems more prone to fluctuation. Urdu declined between 2008 and 2012, but in the last three years the number of entries has been stable.

The DfE provides the number of entries for other languages for which there is currently a GCSE exam on a different basis. Figure 7 shows the 'non-discounted' entries by Key Stage 4 pupils in 2014 and 2015. These include pupils who sat the exam twice hoping to obtain a higher grade, but provide a good sense of how these smaller-entry languages are performing in terms of numbers of entries.

Portuguese, Japanese, Russian and Modern Greek show increases, whereas Bengali, Hebrew, Punjabi and Persian show decreases. Using JCQ figures (which go back further but include all entries from all types of institutions across the UK), it is possible to confirm that since 2011, all the lesser-taught languages have grown in entries except Bengali, Punjabi and Japanese, which have declined, and Gujarati, which has remained fairly stable.²⁶

Since 2011, all the lesser-taught languages have grown in entries except Bengali, Punjabi and Japanese, which have declined, and Gujarati, which has remained fairly stable

FIGURE 7: 'NON-DISCOUNTED' GCSE ENTRIES BY KEY STAGE 4 PUPILS, 2014 AND 2015



²⁶ JCQ figures analysed at <http://www.alcantaracom.com/ebacc-effect-wearing-off-on-gcse-languages/>

A level entries for language subjects²⁷

How have numbers of entries for languages at A level changed over time?

Entries for A level French have declined by a third since 2002, and those for German by nearly half. This continues a trend seen since the 1990s: there were very steep falls in numbers for both subjects at A level between 1996 and 2000. Since 2002, entries for Spanish and other languages (grouped together) have increased rapidly in percentage terms, but not by enough in actual numbers to make up for the declines in French and German.

FIGURE 8: ENTRIES FOR A LEVEL EXAMINATIONS IN LANGUAGES, 16–18 YEAR OLDS, ENGLAND, 2002–2015



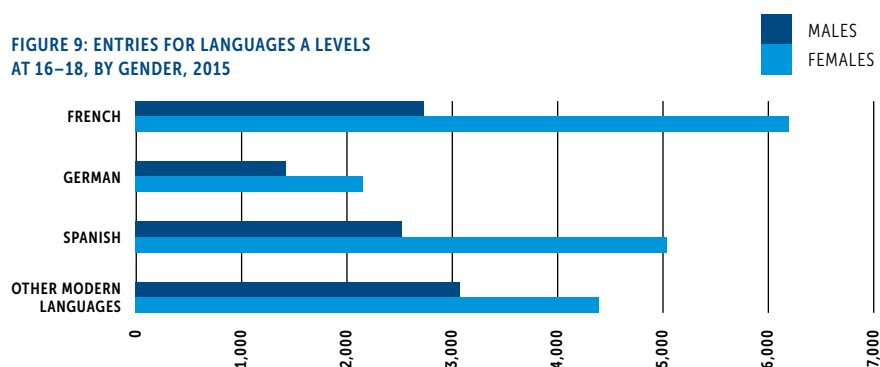
By gender

Female candidates for A level languages outnumber males by nearly two to one (64 per cent of entries are from girls and 36 per cent from boys). This pattern is most marked in French, where 69 per cent of entries come from female candidates, less marked in German (60 per cent female entries) and least marked in the category 'Other modern languages' (59 per cent female entries). This pattern barely changed over the last decade. The breakdown of other languages provided by the DfE shows that Chinese and Russian are the least gender-biased languages at A level, where females account for 56 per cent and 54 per cent of entries, respectively.

Since 2002, entries for Spanish and other languages (grouped together) have increased rapidly in percentage terms, but not by enough in actual numbers to make up for the declines in French and German

²⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/a-level-and-other-level-3-results-2014-to-2015-revised>

FIGURE 9: ENTRIES FOR LANGUAGES A LEVELS
AT 16–18, BY GENDER, 2015



By type of institution

Just half of A level language entries from 16–18 year olds come from state schools. Around one third come from the independent sector and 18 per cent from Further Education (FE) Colleges and Sixth Form Colleges. These proportions have barely changed since 2013.

However, analysis of institution type against A level entries for specific languages shows some variations on this overall pattern. A higher-than-average proportion of French and German entries comes from state schools – 54 and 59 per cent, respectively – while the independent sector supplies only 28 per cent of French A level entries and 23 per cent of German entries. Chinese and Russian entries are heavily skewed towards the independent sector: 77 per cent of entries for Chinese and 72 per cent of entries for Russian come from independent schools. For Polish, the pattern is reversed: only 7 per cent of Polish entries come from independent schools and 69 per cent from state schools. These patterns reflect the presence of pupils from China and Russia in the independent sector, and Polish-speaking pupils in the state sector.

Patterns reflect the presence of pupils from China and Russia in the independent sector, and Polish-speaking pupils in the state sector

FIGURE 10: ENTRIES FOR LANGUAGES A LEVELS
AT 16–18, BY TYPE OF INSTITUTION, 2015

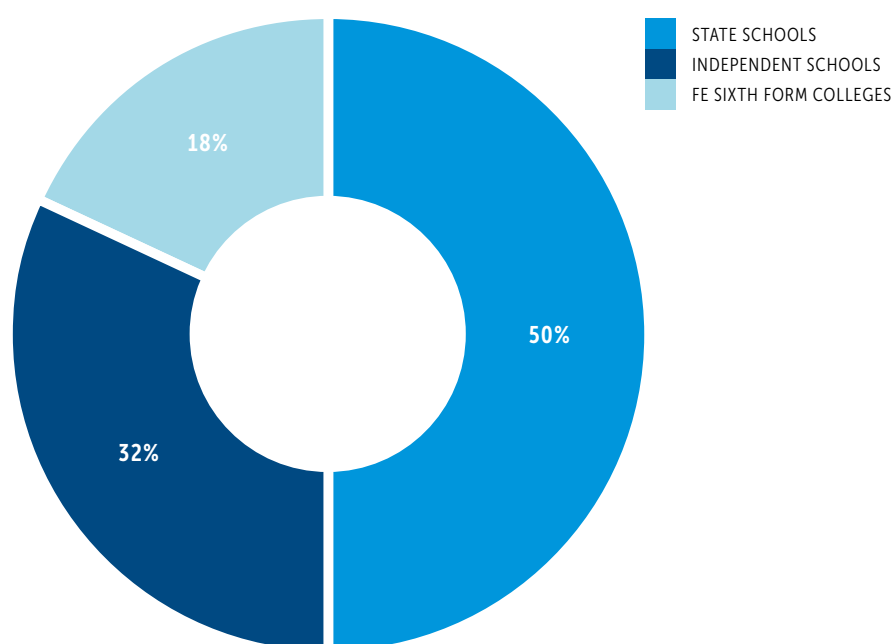
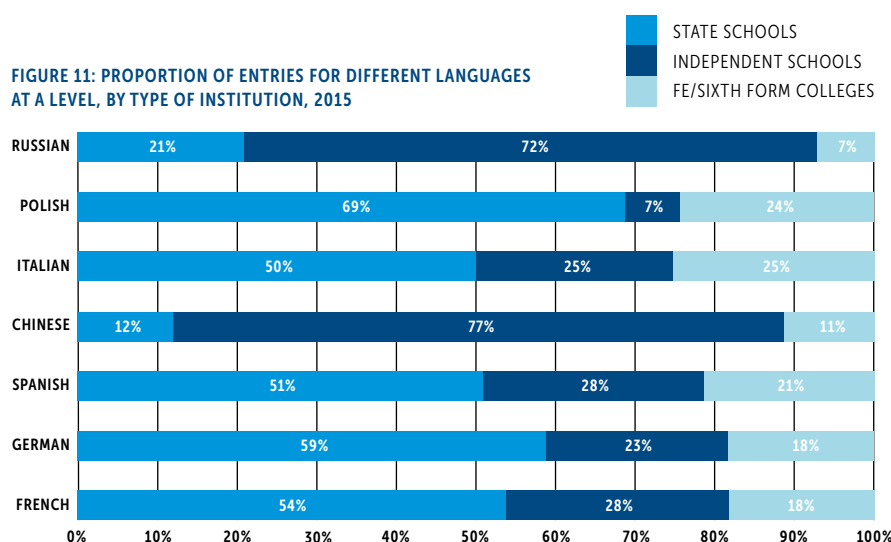


FIGURE 11: PROPORTION OF ENTRIES FOR DIFFERENT LANGUAGES AT A LEVEL, BY TYPE OF INSTITUTION, 2015



Entries by region

In the independent sector, language entries account for 8 per cent of all A level entries, while in the state sector this proportion is 3 per cent. However, there is a lot of variation between regions and local authorities, with language entries accounting for nearly 9 per cent of all A level entries in Lambeth, and less than 1 per cent in a number of northern local authorities: South Tyneside, Stockton-on-Tees, Blackburn, Rochdale, Tameside and Barnsley. There were no A level language entries in Knowsley in 2015. Coventry, Portsmouth and Luton also have very low take-up of languages at A level – just six students in Portsmouth in 2015, of which three were in French and three in other languages.

Hammersmith and Lambeth, the local authorities with the highest proportional take-up for languages, are characterised by large numbers of EAL pupils, and as would be expected, present high numbers of entries in the ‘other languages’ category. However, even excluding entries in other languages, entries for French, German and Spanish far exceed the national average at 4 and 5 per cent of all A level entries, respectively. This phenomenon was noted in 2014, when it was concluded that an appreciation of the value of other languages among London’s multilingual population is affecting take-up for all languages, not simply those most commonly thought of as ‘community languages’. However, other local authorities with high proportions of EAL pupils, such as Luton, do not follow this pattern, so it must be assumed that other factors are also at play.

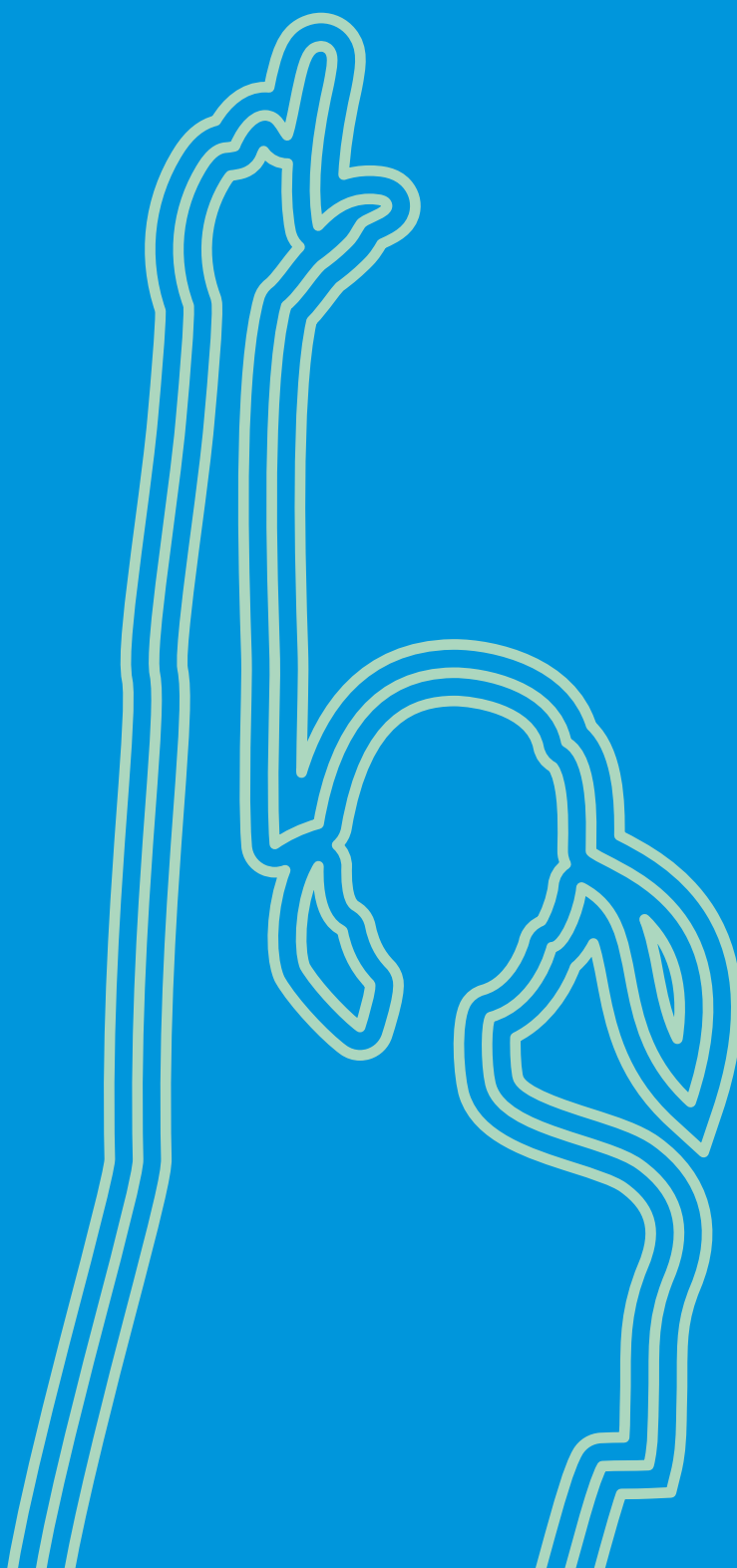
In the independent sector, language entries account for 8 per cent of all A level entries, while in the state sector this proportion is 3 per cent

Key points

- The rise in entries for languages GCSEs following the introduction of the EBacc as a performance measure has come to a halt.
- The proportion of pupils sitting a GCSE in a language at the end of Key Stage 4 varies between 42 per cent in the North East and 64 per cent in Inner London.
- Since 2002, entries for A level French have declined by about one third, and those for German by nearly half.
- Although Spanish and other languages have seen increased numbers taking A levels, the rises have not made up for the shortfalls in French and German.

Chapter 4

Language teaching in primary schools



English primary schools were first surveyed for the annual Language Trends report in 2012 when the government announced that languages were to become a statutory part of the Key Stage 2 curriculum from the beginning of the 2014 academic year.

With the findings of this year's survey, we can now track developments over four years and show how schools have been responding to the challenges they face. We include two case studies of schools working in different circumstances that illustrate how the policy is being implemented.

All responses in this chapter are from state schools: no independent schools were included in the primary school survey.

All 556 responding schools reported that they now teach a modern or ancient language as part of their Key Stage 2 curriculum

Extent of provision

What proportion of primary schools now teaches a modern or ancient language?

All 556 responding schools reported that they now teach a modern or ancient language as part of their Key Stage 2 curriculum. This compares with 99 per cent of respondents in 2014, 95 per cent in 2013 and 97 per cent in 2012. However, the possibility was considered that this finding was not representative of primary schools nationally because those not teaching a language would be less likely to respond to the survey, particularly now that languages are now a statutory requirement. We therefore followed up with a small number of schools, chosen at random to represent the full spectrum of educational achievement, to ask whether they taught a language. Of the 20 schools contacted in this way, 17 said they were teaching a language, two said they were not and one was not able to provide a response.

A very high proportion of responding schools (96 per cent) responded that they systematically provide language teaching for all groups in Years 3 to 6. However, the free comments provided by respondents to this year's survey reveal that some primary schools struggle to provide their pupils with the kind of systematic and consistent language teaching outlined in the new national curriculum. The following comments illustrate some of the difficulties faced:

'All Years 3-6 do French, but it is not very systematic – teachers use a number of schemes, and do not effectively build on previous learning: they each tend to do their own thing.'

'In theory, yes. In practice, no. Some staff have very little experience of French and rely on teachers with PPA (planning, preparation and assessment) time to deliver the lessons. Due to illness/staffing changes, this hasn't always been done.'

'Yes, in some classes but we are finding it hard to provide regular weekly sessions in some classes due to lack of teacher expertise and finding time to free up other members of staff to teach a regular slot in these classes.'

'...there are the times that [modern foreign languages] (MFL) has to get pushed to the side temporarily or as a one off.'

While many respondents comment on signs that class teacher confidence in teaching languages is growing, there is still some evidence of schools struggling with classroom teachers who do not feel confident, and schools where language teaching is not prioritised at all, for example:

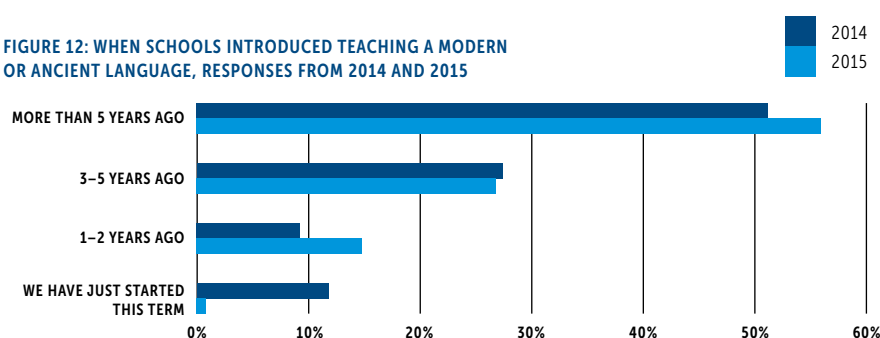
'We meet the new requirements on paper but provision is patchy across the age groups and no senior teachers deliver any language lessons on a regular basis; MFL is not highly valued and is seen as an extra lesson that can be dropped when time constraints dictate. This is why PPA time is used for this.'

How long have primary schools been teaching a language?

This year's survey confirmed the findings from last year's research that more than half of primary schools (56 per cent this year, 51 per cent in 2014) have been teaching languages to primary phase pupils for more than five years. While 27 per cent have between three and five years' experience of teaching a language, some 15 per cent started one or two years ago, and 1 per cent (eight schools) say they started in September 2015.

More than half of primary schools (56 per cent this year, 51 per cent in 2014) have been teaching languages to primary phase pupils for more than five years

FIGURE 12: WHEN SCHOOLS INTRODUCED TEACHING A MODERN OR ANCIENT LANGUAGE, RESPONSES FROM 2014 AND 2015



A sample of the free comments provided by respondents shows the breadth of experience in teaching languages in primary schools across the country:

'This year, I was employed as a specialist to teach French across the whole school, however class teachers have been teaching French to their classes for one or two years.'

'French has been taught across Key Stage 2 for over 10 years and more recently Mandarin has been introduced.'

'We have taught French for over 10 years from reception class to Year 6.'

Comments also show the bodies that have provided support in getting language teaching off the ground:

We started French teaching at the school in 2000, initially as an after school activity, then took it up in the curriculum from 2004 and we have been following the National Wakefield Scheme since 2008.'

'We have been linked to a secondary school which was a language college that has supported the teaching of MFL for at least the last eight years.'

'Although we did start a few years ago, it has been since the British Council gave us a grant that we have begun to teach languages in a more structured way, though not yet consistently throughout the school, roughly two years ago.'

Languages taught

The languages taught by primary schools responding to the survey have not changed substantially compared to those noted in previous years, with the vast majority of schools – just over three quarters – teaching French. Between 2012 and 2014, the proportion of schools teaching Spanish rose from 16 per cent to 20 per cent, and this upward trend is continued in this year's survey with 22 per cent of responding schools saying they offer Spanish (the figures in each case refer to Years 5/6 but are similar for Years 3/4).

The proportion of schools teaching German remains stable at 4 per cent, but fewer schools in this year's sample offer Chinese or Latin. However, the numbers involved are too small for this to be statistically significant.

Some schools commented on how the new national curriculum has affected their decisions about which language to teach:

'We began teaching French and moved to Mandarin three years ago, but with the new curriculum requirement to write in the language we made the decision to teach Spanish which is a language taught in most feeder secondaries and a language a significant number of our pupils hear when on holiday.'

'We always taught community languages (Bangla, Urdu and Arabic as well as French) as part of our enrichment programme but altered to teach Spanish when the new national curriculum came into effect.'

Other responses from participating schools show how some schools are reaching beyond the traditionally taught languages of French, German and Spanish – Welsh and sign language were both mentioned – and how others have chosen to teach languages in a different way than that recommended in the new national curriculum:

'We teach French in depth in all year groups in Key Stage 2. We have a language of the term – so every year six new languages are explored through our thinking skills session once a week. Last year we focused on European languages that many of our pupils speak.'

'In Key Stages 1 and 2 we try to show children how lots of different languages sound and who speaks them. We occasionally have taster sessions in the lessons and are looking to incorporate these into the curriculum more formally.'

Between 2012 and 2014, the proportion of schools teaching Spanish rose from 16 per cent to 20 per cent

Nine schools (just under 2 per cent) in the sample teach Latin. Of these, six teach it instead of a modern language throughout Key Stage 2 from Years 3 to 6. Respondent comments include:

'Latin develops the children's knowledge of the English language and opens them to learning other languages.'

'We used to teach French but have decided to teach Latin as it is more helpful in supporting English grammar.'

What proportion of schools teach a language in Key Stage 1?

Of the 503 schools in the sample which teach Key Stage 1 pupils, as many as 42 per cent (211) teach at least one language. Some 31 per cent teach French and 10 per cent teach Spanish; in terms of the number of schools teaching a language, these are very similar proportions to those found in Key Stage 2. There are very few schools teaching other languages in Key Stage 1: just six schools in the sample (1 per cent teaches German and Italian respectively, with Chinese, Russian and Latin being taught in just one or two schools).

The responses confirm a tentative finding from last year: that the proportion of schools teaching a language in Key Stage 1 is declining as schools focus on statutory provision in Key Stage 2.

FIGURE 13: PROPORTION OF SCHOOLS TEACHING A LANGUAGE IN KEY STAGE 1



However, there is evidence that in some schools the requirements of the national curriculum for languages teaching at Key Stage 2 are having a 'trickle back' effect on what happens with language teaching in the early years of school, for example:

'Spanish is taught from Years 1–6 and has been trialled in Reception.'

Extra-curricular provision

Some 41 per cent of responding schools offer pupils the chance to learn a language outside class time, in addition to the provision they offer within the curriculum.

Extra-curricular provision is usually in the form of clubs, and takes place most frequently in lunchtimes or after school, though one or two schools offer classes in the morning before school begins.

Responses to the survey show that some extra-curricular provision is free to pupils and some is charged for, for example:

'We offer French, Spanish and Mandarin lessons outside of class time. Parents pay for these sessions.'

Some 41 per cent of responding schools offer pupils the chance to learn a language outside class time, in addition to the provision they offer within the curriculum

A wide range of people provide language tuition through extra-curricular classes, as the following comments show:

'A parent offers a Spanish club.'

'Chinese and French offered by teachers and parents.'

'Pupil-led French club. Volunteer-led Spanish club.'

'Students from the local university run after school language clubs.'

However, not all schools have found such extra-curricular models to be a success, as the following response shows:

'We got a commercial group to help....good native Spanish speaker but a very bad teacher and very unprofessional. This no longer takes place as we will not allow poor teaching in school.'

Some schools report that they have offered language study through extra-curricular provision in the past but have now ceased to do so. Although some respondents give no reason for the cessation of extra-curricular provision, others report that it is due to 'no uptake from children', or because 'the curriculum is too squeezed now and teachers too busy!' Others cite the impact of policy changes, for example:

'In previous years we have offered a language club to Key Stage 1 pupils, but this has been difficult to continue after the changes to Key Stage 1 and Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) changes in free school meals – lunchtime scheduling became impractical and there are already a high percentage of after school sports clubs.'

A number of schools mention extra-curricular provision for pupils to learn home languages, with one even saying that pupils learning Arabic are prepared for GCSE in the language:

'We also let our premises each Friday evening to the Essex Tamil Society who run Tamil Language classes and cultural events each week. Many of our pupils attend.'

'School building also used for Urdu Saturday school though this is not part of our school.'

Although the survey did not ask specifically about overseas trips, a number of schools mention these as examples of extra-curricular provision. One teacher wrote:

'Children in Year 5 visit Barcelona where we have a thriving relationship with a large infant to secondary school in the centre of the city. Children from the school visit [us] the following year when the particular year group reaches Year 6. Children in Year 6 visit Seville (and Jerez/Cadiz). Both these trips serve to give context to the children's learning of the language and they get a lot of opportunity to practise their Spanish.'

Some schools report that they have offered language study through extra-curricular provision in the past but have now ceased to do so



Benefits of teaching languages

The vast majority of teachers responding to this year's Languages Trends survey are very clear that there are many benefits of teaching languages to pupils at Key Stage 2, especially widening pupils' cultural understanding and confidence, improving their literacy and preparing them for a world of work. The following selection of comments shows the importance that teachers attach to learning a new language in relation to literacy in English:

'Helping pupils with their literacy skills in their own language by seeing patterns of grammar, spelling, etc.'

'Learning a new language not only helps to prepare pupils for life in the wider world but it also impacts on their understanding of their own language as they have to consider sentence structure, grammar etc. Also useful for making links in the meaning of words, as languages share roots.'

'The cross-curricular links that can be made and the continuous reference to grammatical structures in English supports both languages.'

'Well-developed basic skills, organisation, communication, problem solving, confidence and self-esteem.'

They also highlight benefits, including:

- cultural understanding
- preparation for the future and boosting later employment opportunities
- making pupils effective global citizens
- supporting phonic awareness and development

Teachers in different types of schools describe how pupils benefit from language learning in different ways:

'Broadening pupils' horizons – particularly those in predominantly white or rural schools.'

'To open up the wealth of possibilities to them in our global society. Ours is a very small, rural school with a relatively high amount of deprivation. Children's minds need to be opened to how much they can gain through learning a language, in terms of reaching out to other cultures.'

'Most of our pupils already speak a language in addition to English. For our pupils, the main benefit of learning French is to prepare them for learning a European language at secondary school.'

Some teachers believe that pupils in Key Stage 2 are more receptive to language acquisition, and that starting early will therefore produce better language learners. Many are also of the view that languages should also be taught in Key Stage 1 and nursery. In expressing this view, one respondent adds a caveat to the benefit of early language teaching: *'teaching languages earlier assures us better linguists in the future IF secondary schools begin to cooperate with primaries and actually differentiate properly from Year 7.'*

The vast majority of teachers responding to this year's Languages Trends survey are very clear that there are many benefits of teaching languages to pupils at Key Stage 2

A number of respondents see benefits in that all pupils have the opportunity to start from the same place in beginning to learn a new language. Many teachers believe that this can help EAL pupils to shine and that pupils who may be doing less well in other subjects sometimes thrive in languages:

'SEN/EAL pupils can take part, all pupils learn a new skill.'

'The children are engaged with language learning, especially those who are not achieving in line with their peers in other areas, as there is a more level playing field again.'

'Languages boost inclusion. A new language means that everyone starts at the same point, often giving a welcome boost to those pupils generally regarded as of lower ability.'

A number of respondents see benefits in that all pupils have the opportunity to start from the same place in beginning to learn a new language

Another teacher comments:

'In my experience, it is one subject where ALL pupils are on a similar starting level – meaning that pupils who may struggle with literacy can actually achieve at the same high standard as everyone else. Pupils enjoy the interactive nature of lessons. It also develops great links to spelling and word patterns in English – a great way of teaching literacy terminology.'

Other respondents also endorse the inclusive benefit of teaching languages:

'Inclusion – most children are starting it new so from the same base. They are able to make linguistic links with own language e.g. reinforcement of word classes, grammar, etc.'

'Learning a foreign language has numerous benefits, but what we have noticed here is that language lessons create a level playing field for all children as they are all starting in the same place.our more able children are shocked when they realise they are no longer ahead of the rest of the class for everything!!'

One respondent whose school has a very high percentage of EAL pupils writes:

'87 per cent of our pupils already have English as their second or third language. They pick up other languages quickly and with interest. It is a great skill in our society to be able to use multiple languages confidently.'

This view is in stark contrast with a comment from another school, also with a high proportion of EAL pupils:

'We question whether children who are new arrivals to the UK, and at the early stages of English acquisition, should be learning a third language at this stage of their education.'

A small number of respondents argue that there are no benefits to teaching Key Stage 2 pupils a language. The reasons for this mostly centre on the quality and extent of input which can be provided in primary schools, and the lack of continuity with secondary schools:

'I think it should be scrapped. Even though I feel the learning of a language is paramount. But we are not properly equipped to teach it well.'

'It is too contrived and children don't get opportunities to develop their language acquisition outside of the classroom in a meaningful way. Comparing the UK to other European countries in terms of language teaching is not a fair comparison, as those countries are teaching English which is more widely spoken than for example French or Spanish.'

'No benefit as learning is not sustained in Key Stage 3.'

However, one respondent sets out very clearly the wider intellectual benefits which can be reaped by those pupils who have studied languages:

'Research shows students who have studied a foreign language score on average 140 points higher on standardized tests when it comes to critical reading and writing. For math, students score on average 150 points higher.'

Time allocation

On average over the school year, how many minutes per week are provided for teaching languages?

Of those schools teaching a language in Key Stage 1 (211 schools), a majority (61 per cent) do so for less than 30 minutes per week.

In Key Stage 2, just over half of schools teaching a language in Years 3 and 4 (54 per cent) do so for between 30 and 45 minutes per week. In Years 5 and 6, a higher proportion of schools (44 per cent, compared to 38 per cent) offer more than 45 minutes. These findings are very similar to those in previous years.

A minority of schools are offering a substantial amount of teaching – between one and two hours per week, in line with more usual patterns of provision for foreign languages in other countries.²⁸

A minority of schools are offering a substantial amount of teaching – between one and two hours per week, in line with more usual patterns of provision for foreign languages in other countries

TABLE 4: TIME ALLOCATION FOR TEACHING LANGUAGES

	Less than 30 minutes	30–45 minutes	45 minutes–1 hour	1–2 hours
Key Stage 1	54%	34%	7%	5%
Years 3/4	5%	57%	27%	11%
Years 5/6	4%	48%	32%	15%

A small number of schools (four in the sample) are providing even more teaching: more than two hours per week.

Response to the new national curriculum

What changes, if any, have schools made to language teaching provision in order to meet the requirements of the national curriculum introduced in September 2014?

As many as 37 per cent of responding primary schools – a slightly smaller proportion to that noted in last year's survey – say they are already meeting the new national

²⁸ For example, in France a modern language is taught for an hour and a half per week throughout the five years of primary education (Tinsley and Comfort 2012, p. 44)

curriculum requirement in full and are therefore not making any further changes to language provision in their school. Only six schools in this year's sample say that they are not following the national curriculum at all.

Respondents to this year's survey describe a variety of measures their schools have taken to ensure they meet requirements of the national curriculum. The most commonly cited are:

Respondents to this year's survey describe a variety of measures their schools have taken to ensure they meet requirements of the national curriculum

- **Employing a specialist teacher**

'A native French speaker is the new the MFL coordinator since September 2015. She has already redrafted the school policy, created a new Scheme of Work, bought new resources and organised internal CPD. French is going to be taught in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6, with progression.'

'We have employed a specialist language teacher to make sure that outstanding lessons and a love of languages is consistently taught through Key Stage 2.'

'We are able to meet the full national curriculum requirements through employment of a specialist teacher with knowledge of the UK curriculum at secondary level and beyond as well as considerable international experience and time spent teaching in international primary schools.'

- **Moving from teaching several languages in Key Stage 2 to focussing on just one language/changing language provision**

'We have amended our curriculum to cover one language in more depth rather than the selection of languages previously taught.'

'Previously there was a mixture of languages being taught. Now there is just one language – French – which is taught, so that children can build on their skills and knowledge each year.'

'We were disappointed to lose the provision we had because Bangla and Urdu were not listed on the languages to be taught, as we knew that this was having a real impact on our pupils' learning and their acquisition of English. However, we are pleased with our delivery of Spanish and the pupils are enjoying learning another new language (some of them are now up to three, four or even five languages!).'

- **Buying in commercial courses to ensure pupil progression**

'We have bought a scheme that is specifically designed for non-French speakers and ensures we meet the requirements of the national curriculum. We have invested in bilingual dictionaries. We are looking to offer more training opportunities to staff. Regular teaching of French is now compulsory in Key Stage 2. All children in Key Stage 2 are now required to keep a record of their French learning.'

'We have appointed an HLTA to teach French across a range of age groups as part of PPA cover (including EYFS and Key Stage 1) – some provision is still provided by class teachers. Currently looking into a commercial scheme to ensure development and progression through Key Stage 2.'

• **A greater focus on pupils' written skills as well as on monitoring/progression**

'We have introduced more opportunities to practise "written" French, and pupils' written competence is now assessed alongside progress in listening, speaking and reading.'

'We have increased the amount of language teaching to one hour per week. We have set up links with a French school in order to provide opportunities for written French and transcription skills. We are also involved with British Council languages courses in Carcassonne. We have a languages day twice a year.'

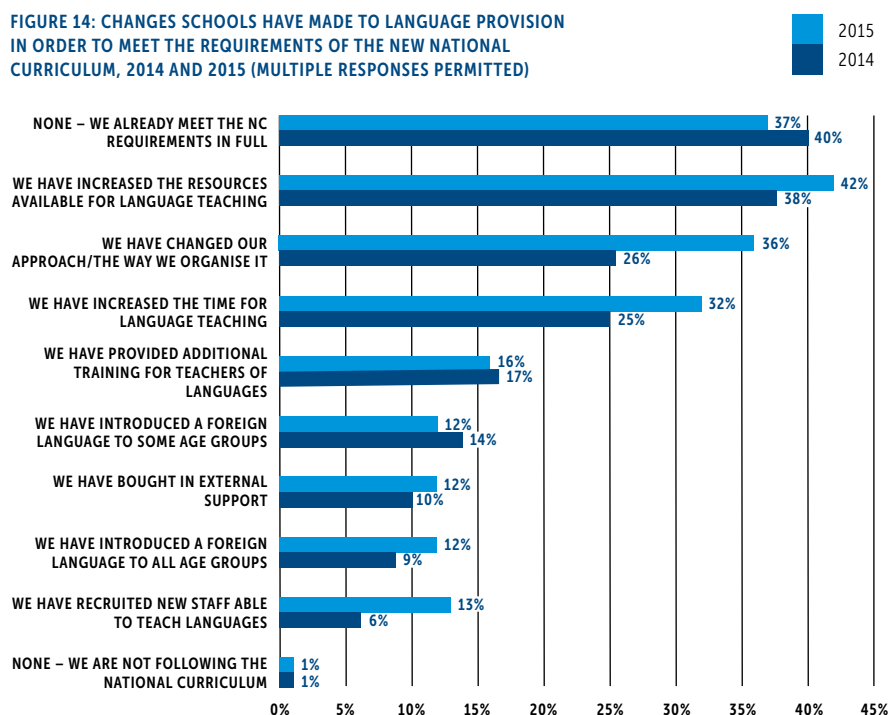
One school commented on its decision to switch from the teaching of Mandarin back to a European language because of the difficulties of achieving adequate progress in writing:

'We moved away from teaching Mandarin to teaching Spanish because of the difficulty when writing Mandarin, which was a more rigorous requirement of the new curriculum.'

Quantitative evidence from this question shows that 42 per cent of schools report that they have increased the resources available for language teaching – slightly higher than last year's figure of 38 per cent. A much higher proportion than last year – 36 per cent compared to 26 per cent – say that they have made changes to their approach or organisation of language teaching in their school, and 32 per cent (25 per cent last year) say they have increased the time available for language teaching. (However, this is not corroborated in the question about the amount of time available each week for language learning. It is possible that schools are dedicating more time to languages across the school year.) The proportion of schools providing additional training for teachers of languages has dropped one point from the already low level last year of 17 per cent, although more schools say they have recruited new staff able to teach a language (13 per cent, up from 6 per cent).

42 per cent of schools report that they have increased the resources available for language teaching

FIGURE 14: CHANGES SCHOOLS HAVE MADE TO LANGUAGE PROVISION IN ORDER TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE NEW NATIONAL CURRICULUM, 2014 AND 2015 (MULTIPLE RESPONSES PERMITTED)



What are the main challenges for schools in meeting the national curriculum requirement to teach a modern or ancient language?

Although the pattern of responses to this question is very similar to that in last year's survey, fewer schools generally are now reporting the different issues (as listed in Figure 15) as challenging – for example, whereas last year 56 per cent said that boosting staff confidence was a challenge, this year only 45 per cent say so. This downward trend is borne out by the free comments provided by respondents.

For some 50 per cent of schools, finding sufficient curriculum time for languages is a still a key challenge as the following comments illustrate:

'Time to cover the content of the new curriculum is the main issue. Even using a commercial scheme that supports less confident members of staff, time restraints mean teaching a language cannot always be consistent through the year, although we are trying to address this.'

'The challenges of ensuring that MFL is taught on a weekly basis cause clashes in timetabling frequently. There is only one member of staff who delivers and is trained to deliver MFL, therefore there is no contingency planning should this member of staff have a long-term illness or leave. The subject is fully embedded into school life but teachers have no desire to attempt to teach the subject and have become accustomed to it being taught by another member of staff.'

Although it is felt less strongly than in 2014, teacher confidence is still an issue for 45 per cent of schools, with non-specialist teachers being reluctant to 'have a go' or reinforce learning delivered by the specialist in the language class, for example:

'Getting other members of staff to drip feed French throughout the week such as using classroom instructions etc. in order to reinforce what they have learned. Keeping MFL's profile high can be tricky when hardly any of the staff speak the target language.'

'Teachers continue to feel "embarrassed" by their own attempts.'

Accessing training is an issue for 19 per cent of schools. Respondents cite inadequate training opportunities for practising teachers – both the availability of the range of courses that used to be available as well as the lack of funding to access training:

'Limited training available hence impacting on teachers' confidence.'

'French is taught by a specialist but training within the Borough would be useful, as it used to exist, and more communication of ideas, especially on assessment, between primary schools within the Borough. More online French opportunities for children to be able to access at home (free if possible).'

Another issue raised by 19 per cent of respondents is the difficulty of recruiting suitably qualified teachers, for example:

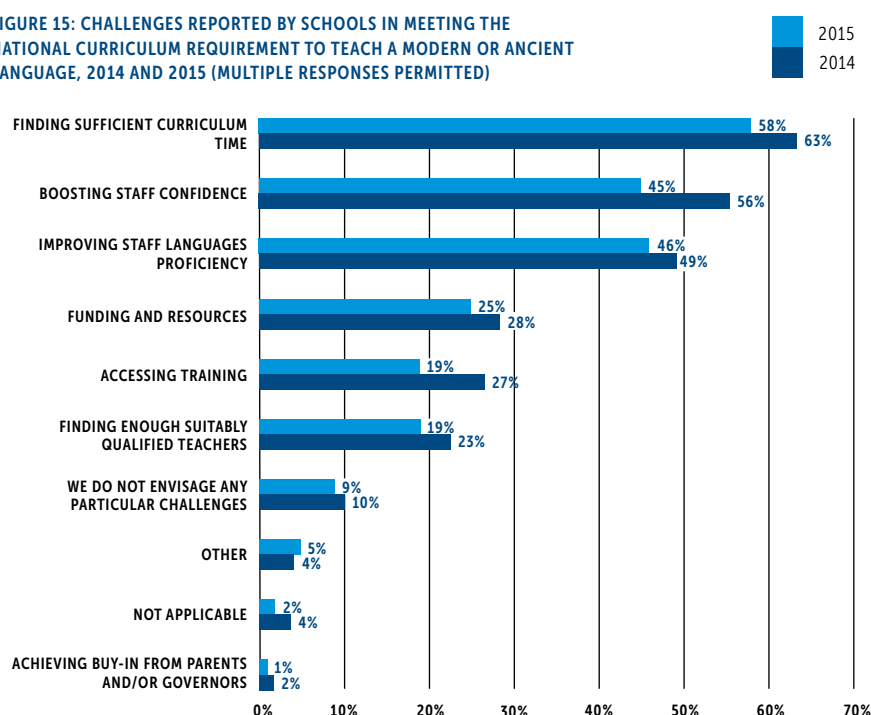
'Finding enough suitably qualified teachers in relation to covering maternity leave for languages provision.'

The lack of priority given to language learning and the emphasis on English and maths still appears in respondents' comments as an issue, for example:

'The overwhelming emphasis on English and maths, especially as these are the areas a school is judged on.'

For some 50 per cent of schools, finding sufficient curriculum time for languages is a still a key challenge

FIGURE 15: CHALLENGES REPORTED BY SCHOOLS IN MEETING THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM REQUIREMENT TO TEACH A MODERN OR ANCIENT LANGUAGE, 2014 AND 2015 (MULTIPLE RESPONSES PERMITTED)



Which challenges are experienced most by different types of schools?

The responses to this question have been analysed using different variables in order to identify particular challenges faced by schools with particular profiles. Differences in each case are fairly minor; however, those worth noting are recorded below.

• Length of time teaching a language

Schools which only started teaching a language one or two years ago are more likely, compared with the sample overall, to say that finding curriculum time is a challenge (65 per cent compared to 58 per cent) and that finding enough suitably qualified teachers is a problem (26 per cent compared to 19 per cent).

Schools which started teaching a language between three and five years ago are those which are most concerned about improving staff language proficiency (54 per cent, compared to 46 per cent across all schools) and, related to this, accessing training (23 per cent, compared to 19 per cent overall). These schools are also more likely to say that teacher supply is a problem. Schools with more than five years' experience of teaching languages are least likely to have problems finding suitably qualified teachers (15 per cent), and most likely to say they do not experience any particular challenges at all.

• Socio-economic profile

Schools which have high and mid-high numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals are less likely than other schools to report that funding and resources are a problem. This is perhaps because of pupil premium funding. However, they are the most likely to say that accessing training is challenging. Schools with low and mid to low numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals are more likely than other schools to say they do not experience any particular challenges as regards language teaching.

Schools with more than five years' experience of teaching languages are least likely to have problems finding suitably qualified teachers (15 per cent), and most likely to say they do not experience any particular challenges at all

• Schools with high numbers of EAL pupils

Interestingly, schools with high numbers of EAL pupils (17.8 per cent or more) are the least likely to say that improving staff proficiency and accessing training is a problem (41 per cent and 15 per cent, compared to 45 per cent and 19 per cent overall). This is perhaps because they are located in urban areas with better access to training. They are also least likely to say that funding and resources are a problem (19 per cent compared to 25 per cent across all schools).

Documentation, monitoring and assessment

Do schools assess pupil progress in language learning?

One third of responding schools (33 per cent) say that they do not currently assess pupils' progress in language learning. This compares with 27 per cent of primary schools in last year's survey that said they did not monitor or assess pupil learning or progression, but tallies with findings in the 33 per cent that said they did not in the 2012 and 2013 Language Trends surveys.

Whether schools have in place systems for monitoring or assessing their language provision can be used as an indicator of the quality and consistency of the teaching they provide. The responses to this question were therefore analysed according to the characteristics of the schools concerned, in order to explore whether the quality of language teaching is related to a) the socio-economic status of pupils in the school or b) attainment at Key Stage 2 as measured by performance indicators. However, the analysis showed no significant differences either by socio-economic status or by school performance overall.

Comments show that there is an awareness of the need to develop assessment systems, though a lack of time and central guidance are obstacles:

'We spent a lot of time looking into different assessment methods, including attending training days and making up our own test papers. However, now that we are assessing without levels in all other subjects, there seems little point in spending time and money using any of the above, other than informal assessment.'

'This is a frequent area of discussion at network meetings. With 30 minutes a week per class, it is challenging to assess the 4 skills for 30 children meaningfully throughout the year.'

Where teaching and assessment are working well, it is clear that pupils are making significant gains:

'Appropriate levels of assessment are made from Years 3–6, with Year 5/6 children regularly achieving levels that are close to GCSE level.'

How do schools assess pupils' progress in language learning?

The most widely used tool for assessing pupils' progress is still the Key Stage 2 Framework, developed for the National Languages Strategy of 2002–2010,²⁹ although a smaller proportion of schools (45 per cent compared to 57 per cent

One third of responding schools (33 per cent) say that they do not currently assess pupils' progress in language learning

²⁹ The Key Stage 2 Framework for Languages was published by the (then) Department for Education and Skills in 2005 as a core reference for teachers and curriculum managers in supporting the introduction of language learning in Key Stage 2 as envisaged in the National Languages Strategy of 2002. It is available at: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFES%201721%202005>

in previous years) now say they are using it. The use of tools linked to the Key Stage 2 Framework (the Languages Ladder and Asset Languages assessment materials) has also declined, and a much smaller proportion of primary schools is using their own assessment materials (see Figure 16). This is illustrated by the following comment from one respondent to this year's survey:

'We used to use the Languages Ladder, but we now have our own assessment materials created by our own language teacher.'

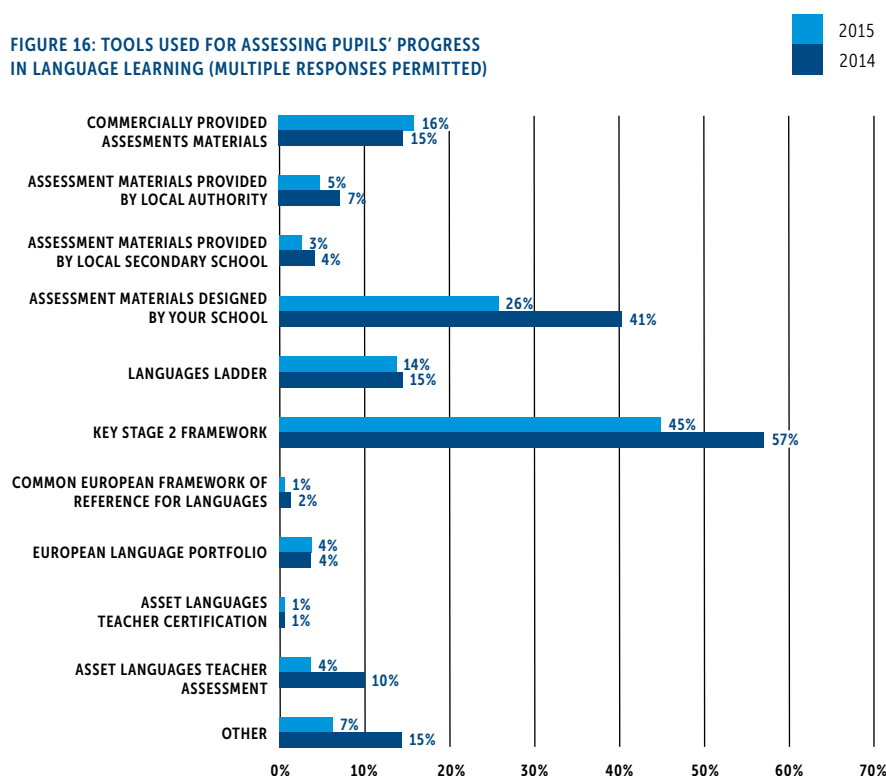
As schools look for solutions to assessing pupils' language learning, some have joined forces with others to identify appropriate systems, for example:

'The school belongs to a local language network and we are beginning to use their new assessment tool.'

'Assessment is something that I am just about to adapt after attending a French upskilling course. A group of us have decided to use an assessment document provided by the local authority but focus on three children within a cohort to use as a benchmark. It is hoped it will make it more manageable as we feel that it currently isn't. I will be trialling it after Christmas and again at the end of the academic year.'

A small proportion of primary schools are using their own assessment materials

FIGURE 16: TOOLS USED FOR ASSESSING PUPILS' PROGRESS IN LANGUAGE LEARNING (MULTIPLE RESPONSES PERMITTED)



A wide range of commercially available assessment systems/tools are mentioned by respondents to this year's survey including those provided by the following: Janet Lloyd Network, Chris Quigley Essential Curriculum and Assessment System, Challenge Curriculum, Confucius Institute (for Mandarin), Rising Stars Assessment Framework, Tout Le Monde, Target Tracker, Incerts computer software, Warwick University and partner schools' materials, Symphony Assessment System, Linguamarque, Wakefield Scheme, La Jolie Ronde, Catherine Cheater scheme, Classroom Monitor, Language Angels scheme and Step Up to Languages. Most of these were cited by more than one respondent.

What documentation underpins schools' primary languages programmes?

Responses over three years show a steady growth in the use of commercial schemes of work at the expense of those developed by local authorities. Comments show that a number of different sources of documentation are being used to underpin primary languages programmes. While some rely entirely on commercially sourced documentation, others report preparing their own in-house resources or adapting commercial or previously available schemes to suit their needs. The following comments from respondents show some of the approaches being adopted:

'Units of work based on the old QCA units of work, but heavily adapted. Some units of work made up by me to fit in with topic.'

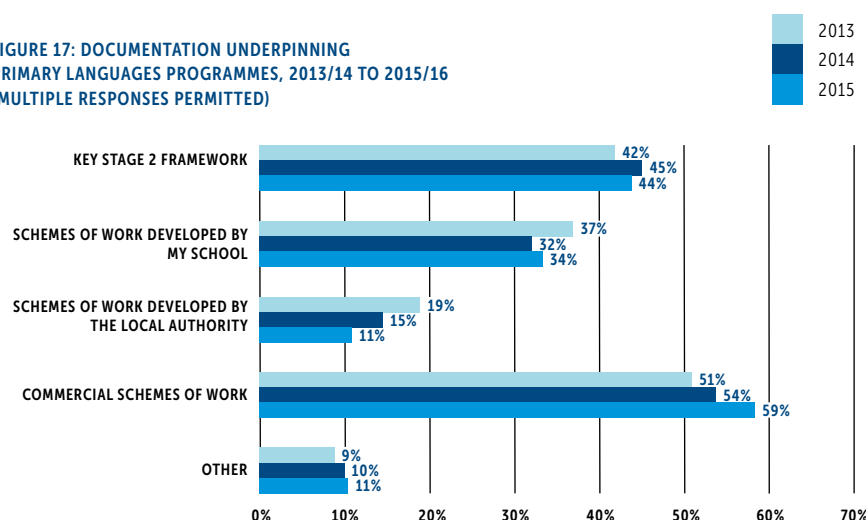
'Agency MFL supplies the work and schemes.'

'We currently use the iLanguages scheme which is taught by an MFL specialist in Years 3–6.'

'We use a combination of Early Start French and Jolie Ronde as we have mixed age classes.'

Responses over three years show a steady growth in the use of commercial schemes of work at the expense of those developed by local authorities

FIGURE 17: DOCUMENTATION UNDERPINNING PRIMARY LANGUAGES PROGRAMMES, 2013/14 TO 2015/16 (MULTIPLE RESPONSES PERMITTED)



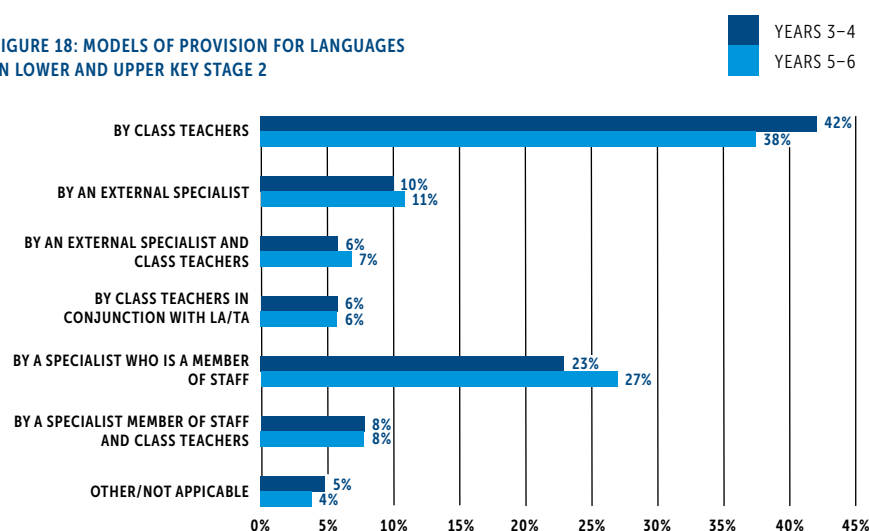


Teachers' qualifications

How is language teaching provided?

In previous years, practice in provision of language teaching has been shown to vary extensively between schools, with many schools operating a 'mixed economy' drawing on a number of different professionals and using them in different ways with different year groups. This year, respondents were invited to select from a menu of options describing different practices, as shown in Figure 18.

FIGURE 18: MODELS OF PROVISION FOR LANGUAGES IN LOWER AND UPPER KEY STAGE 2



The responses show that:

- One third of schools employ a specialist member of staff to teach languages either alone or in conjunction with class teachers.
- A further 16 to 18 per cent of schools employ an external specialist teacher, meaning that just over half of schools (53 per cent) have access to specialist expertise in the teaching of languages.
- In the remaining schools, responsibility for teaching languages falls on class teachers without the support of specialists, although 6 per cent can draw on the skills of a Language Assistant (LA) or Teaching Assistant (TA).
- Schools are somewhat more likely to use specialist language teaching staff (whether external or internal) in upper Key Stage 2 than they are in lower Key Stage 2.

Some of the ways in which schools use specialists in combination with non-specialists are illustrated in the comments below:

'Year 6 is taught by MFL subject leader (myself) due to teacher confidence teaching higher-level French.'

'Key Stage 1 and Lower Key Stage 2 are taught by the HLTA. Years 5/6 work with the HLTA, but also have half a day a fortnight with a French teacher from the local secondary school.'

One third of schools employ a specialist member of staff to teach languages either alone or in conjunction with class teachers

'I am an HLTA and I teach all of Key Stage 2 French and started to do this in 2009. We have attempted to get teachers to take it on but they are not interested. Those who have no language skills are required to stay in the lessons to try to teach them some basic language.'

'We also employ a Language Assistant through the British Council.'

'We aim to employ a specialist soon to teach in Key Stage 2, as class teachers are finding it hard to teach Spanish well.'

'We have a French Teaching Assistant who helps teachers with grammar and pronunciation when needed.'

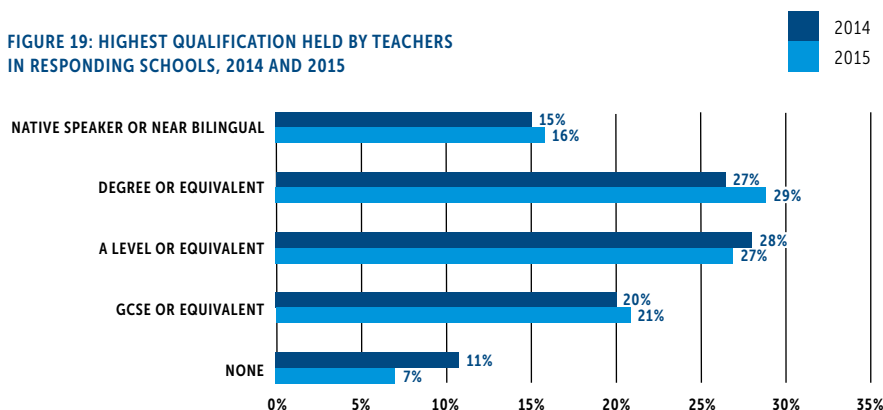
'MFL coordinator is a native French speaker and provides support and resources to less confident teachers.'

The level of language qualifications held by teachers has improved slightly on last year; only 7 per cent of schools now have no member of staff with even a GCSE in the language they are teaching

What is the highest level of qualification held by teachers in each school in the language they are teaching?

More than nine out of ten schools (93 per cent) reported that they have teaching staff with at least a GCSE in the language they are teaching, and 72 per cent have staff with at least an A level or equivalent. The level of language qualifications held by teachers has improved slightly on last year; only 7 per cent of schools now have no member of staff with even a GCSE in the language they are teaching (compared to 11 per cent in 2014), and 45 per cent of schools have either a native speaker or a member of staff with a degree in the language they are teaching, compared to 41 per cent last year. This tallies with the finding above that more schools have now recruited specialist staff to teach languages.

FIGURE 19: HIGHEST QUALIFICATION HELD BY TEACHERS IN RESPONDING SCHOOLS, 2014 AND 2015



Respondents' comments show qualifications ranging from 'PhD in French' or 'native speaker in the language being taught plus degree' to 'most have "school" French, if that. Several do not speak French'. In some cases teachers are making good use of language skills acquired from years spent living abroad. The comments demonstrated the wide range of qualifications/language skills:

'As coordinator, I hold the highest qualification although I am by no means fluent as A-Level seems a long time ago. Having teachers with no knowledge of a language means that confidence to teach is very low.'

'The teacher is learning alongside the children by doing language courses in the UK and abroad whenever possible and is always two steps ahead of the children.'

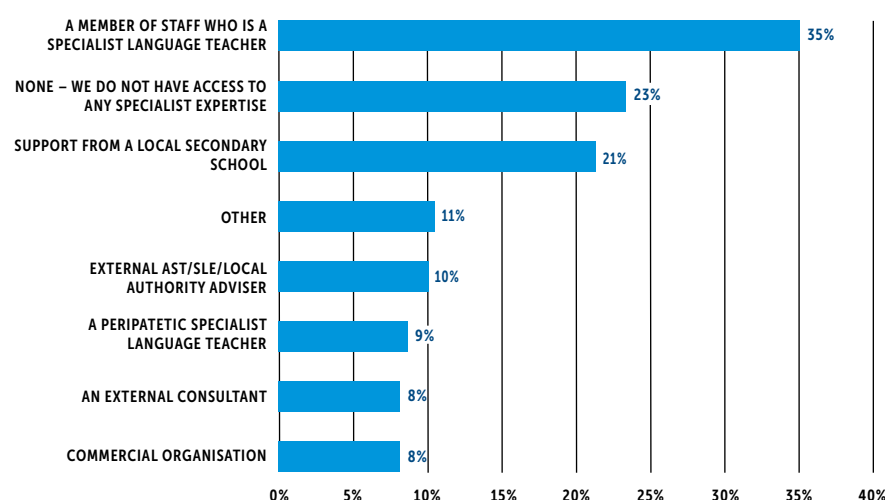
'Our specialist teacher has a BA Dual Honours degree in Russian and French, a Masters from a French university in teaching French as a foreign language (Maitrise FLE), a PGCE in MFL, a Mandarin Chinese degree-level diploma from Shanghai Huadong ShiFan DaXue, an intermediate level diploma in Greek, as well as A level German and GCSE Spanish.'

A little more than one third of schools (35 per cent) have access to specialist expertise in language teaching within the school

What specialist expertise do schools draw on in monitoring and developing language teaching?

A little more than one third of schools (35 per cent) have access to specialist expertise in language teaching within the school (this tallies with the findings above which show that one third of schools employ a specialist teacher for languages). While 42 per cent rely on outside support in monitoring and developing their language teaching, nearly one quarter (23 per cent) have no access to specialist expertise.

FIGURE 20: EXPERTISE WHICH SCHOOLS DRAW ON IN MONITORING AND DEVELOPING LANGUAGE TEACHING (MULTIPLE ANSWERS PERMITTED)



Other sources of expertise and support cited are ALL (the subject association for language teachers), local Teaching School alliances, and local universities which host and resource local networks. Others access external training such as that provided by the Network for Languages, commercially available external training or use expertise available within the school, e.g. a governor or parent who has the skills/qualifications to provide expertise in languages learning:

'Our school was part of the Network for Languages project that runs until the end of September this year. This programme has provided a mentor, seminars, workshops and conferences at Westminster University which have been an amazing source of support. We have also formed a networking group for local schools.'

'Winchester university MFL hub - regular meetings to look at key issues and share ideas and experience.'

'We are part of the Primary Languages hub for North London.'

Some respondents report receiving support from the cultural institute of the language they are teaching, e.g. the Goethe-Institut or the Japan Foundation. A number of respondents regret no longer having access to specialist local authority advisors or say that they have approached their local secondary school for support but without success:

'We have asked for support from two local secondaries that have been unable to assist at this stage.'

There is no significant correlation between not having access to specialist expertise in language learning and school performance overall. Nor does the socio-economic status of the school's pupils correlate with the likelihood of having access to specialist expertise. However, schools reporting that they do not have access to specialist expertise are more likely to have been teaching languages for less time. And schools accessing specialist support are more likely to teach languages for more than 45 minutes to Year 5/6 students and more likely to assess pupils' progress:

TABLE 5: COMPARISON OF SCHOOLS WITH AND WITHOUT ACCESS TO SPECIALIST SUPPORT FOR LANGUAGES, VARIOUS INDICATORS

	Schools with no access to specialist support	Schools with access to specialist support
Started teaching a language more than five years ago	44%	60%
Teach a language for more than 45 minutes in Years 5/6	26%	50%
Assess pupil progress in language learning	48%	72%

Continuing professional development (CPD)

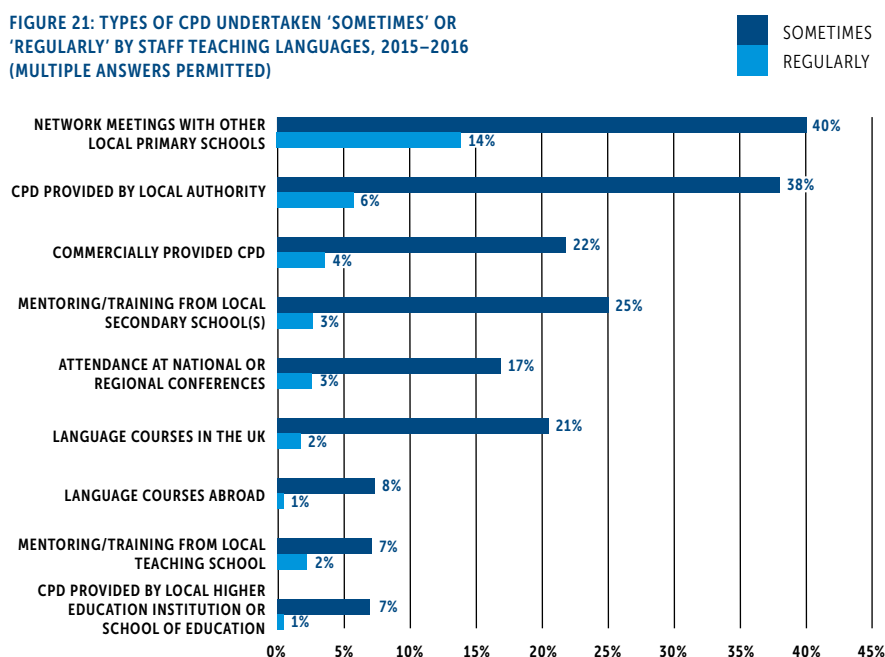
What types of CPD for languages do teachers take part in?

Fewer than a third of primary schools (30 per cent) report that any of their staff take part in any form of regular CPD for languages, and 14 per cent report that they have had no recent experience of any form of CPD for languages.

Participation in CPD for languages tends to be occasional rather than regular, with only very small proportions of schools saying they take part in any of the different types of regular training available (see Figure 21). Respondents were asked whether colleagues teaching a language in their school take part in each type of CPD 'regularly', 'sometimes' or 'never'. Although the responses shown below indicate involvement in a wide variety of types of CPD, they also highlight the very large proportions of primary schools which never take part in national or regional conferences (80 per cent), or have no involvement as regards languages with their local Teaching School (90 per cent). As many as 47 per cent never take part in network meetings with other primary schools.

Participation in CPD for languages tends to be occasional rather than regular

FIGURE 21: TYPES OF CPD UNDERTAKEN 'SOMETIMES' OR 'REGULARLY' BY STAFF TEACHING LANGUAGES, 2015–2016 (MULTIPLE ANSWERS PERMITTED)



Many respondents report difficulties in accessing CPD due to lack of time, budget, different school priorities or the fact that CPD used to be provided by a body such as the local authority but that this is no longer available and nothing has been found to replace it, for example:

'There was really good provision – courses from CILT, language cluster meetings. Now, there is NOTHING!!! I have been asking my head teacher for several years and we have both been looking, but provision is dire. I have just received details of one course, but this looks more like help for class teachers who are not specialists (good idea but no good for me). We need meetings where all primary teachers (whether specialist or not) can get together and discuss common issues and teaching ideas. In the past, this was motivating and inspirational (especially CILT course).'

'All schools are judged according to the pupils' abilities in reading, grammar, writing, maths and English. All schools therefore prioritise their budgets in these subjects more than any others. It restricts the curriculum, and art, design, science and MFL are suffering as a result.'

'Pressures on the development of the core curriculum, particularly in light of current changes to the curriculum, has left MFL very much on the back burner in terms of investing in CPD. Currently it is better value for the school to employ a part-time assistant to deliver high-quality support; this also ensures that children's first exposure to a new language is of a higher quality.'

A number of schools, however, have found imaginative ways to access CPD including that provided by cultural institutes such as the Goethe-Institut or the Japan Foundation and grants from the European Union that enable teachers to undertake a period of professional development abroad. A number of other solutions can also be seen in the following comments from respondents to this year's survey:

Many respondents report difficulties in accessing CPD due to lack of time, budget, different school priorities or the fact that CPD used to be provided by a body such as the local authority but that this is no longer available

'I have attended CPD sessions hosted by a secondary school within the county; I use the Languages in Primary Schools Facebook group for ideas/suggestions/advice.'

'I'm studying a CPD course in my own time with FutureLearn (<https://www.futurelearn.com/>).'

'Bought in consultant who led whole-school training in January 2015.'

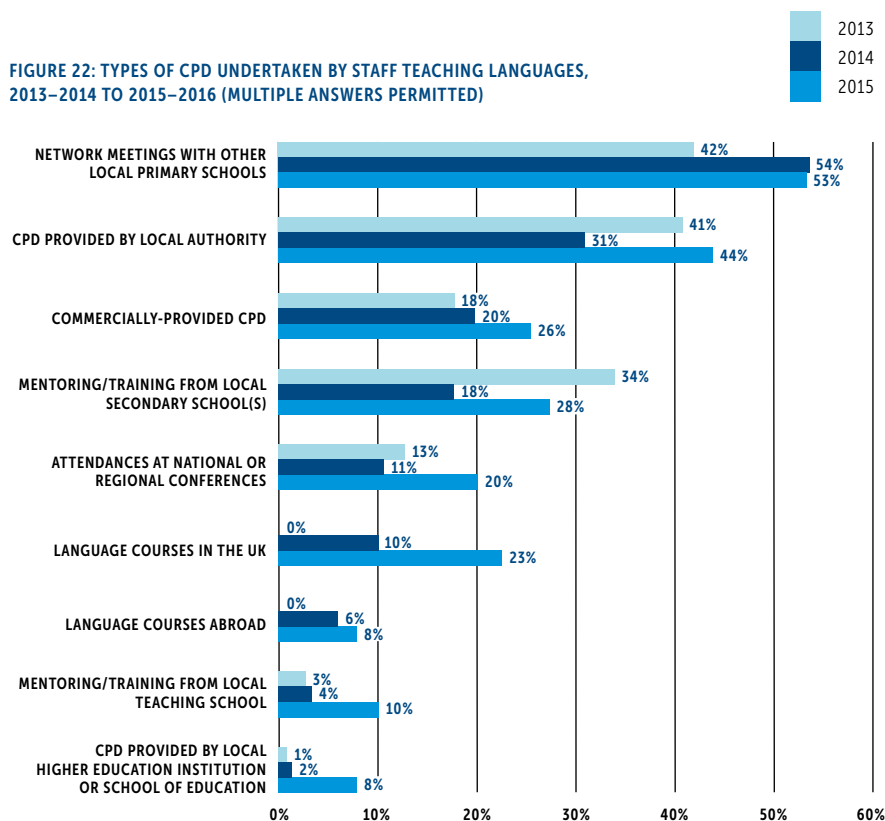
'We have a link with two schools in Le Mans and have exchange visits with the teachers from the schools which gives focus to language learning in our school and theirs.'

Commercial providers of CPD, and organisations such as ALL that help teachers to keep professionally up to date are also mentioned. Some schools have been fortunate to form part of networks and funded projects, but many of these have uncertain futures and teachers are unsure how they will be able to access CPD in the future as the following comment shows:

'We have been taking part in a CPD languages project funded by the Mayor of London's office through the London Schools Excellence Fund in collaboration with the University of Westminster since June 2014. This is due to finish in September 2015 but may be extended.'

Some schools have been fortunate to form part of networks and funded projects, but many of these have uncertain futures

Responses from this year's survey, which for the first time made a distinction between 'regular' and 'occasional' participation in different forms of CPD, were combined to compare with previous years (see Figure 22). Although last year's data were not completely reliable,³⁰ the comparison indicates a small increase in participation in most types of CPD compared to 2014. This would be expected given that languages became a statutory subject in September 2014.



NB. The options of language courses were not included in the 2013–14 survey. Any apparent inconsistency with Figure 21 is a result of percentages being rounded to the nearest whole number

³⁰ This is because the formulation of the question did not allow an option for 'none' in 2014/15

Provision for pupils with home languages other than English

What level of support in their home languages do schools offer for EAL children?

Nearly one in five primary school children in England (19.4 per cent) is classed as an EAL pupil. The home languages spoken and understood by school pupils are an important resource not only for the children themselves and their families, but also for wider society.³¹ Because all the languages an individual knows are interlinked and contribute to one's overall 'plurilingual competence', many educators believe that there are benefits in making links between the teaching of the national language, the mother tongue (where this is different) and new languages being taught. In this year's Language Trends survey, we therefore wanted to find out to what extent, in introducing the teaching of a 'foreign' language, primary schools also cater for the home languages of their pupils. Because there are great disparities between primary schools in terms of the proportions of EAL pupils, only the responses of schools in the highest quartile nationally for pupils with EAL have been taken into account in the quantitative analysis below. These are schools that have 17.8 per cent or more pupils with EAL.

Nearly one in five primary school children in England (19.4 per cent) is classed as an EAL pupil

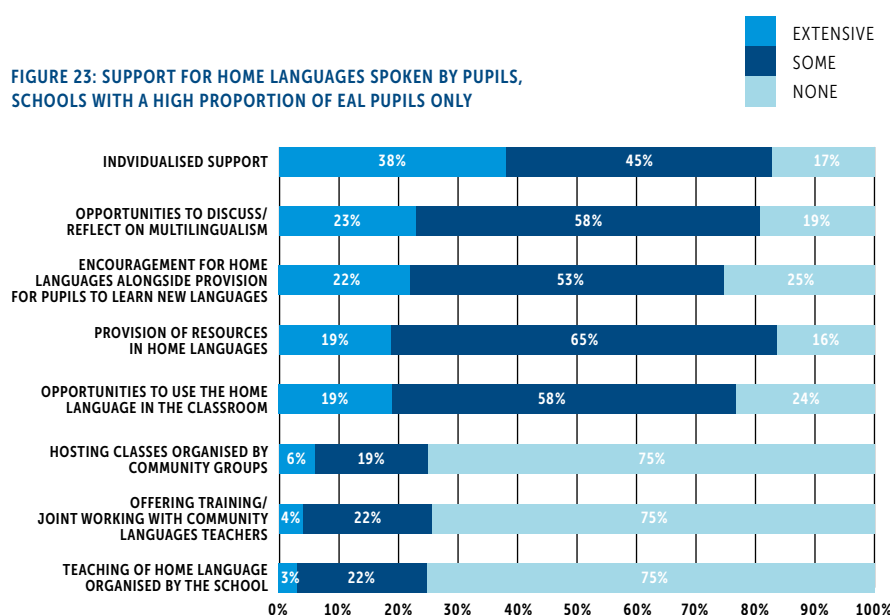


Figure 23 should be interpreted with some care, since comments made by respondents indicate that many misunderstood the question as being about support for English, and clearly there is some overlap, particularly in the area of 'individualised support', which is the most frequent type of provision schools report offering.

The overall conclusions from the data presented above are that, in schools with significant numbers of pupils with EAL there is generally mild, rather than marked, encouragement for home languages. Most schools report that they provide at least some resources (84 per cent), offer at least some encouragement (75 per cent) and some opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own multilingualism (81 per cent). The majority (77 per cent) also allow some use of home languages in the classroom.

³¹ Baker and Eversley (2000)

However, there are lower levels of more active support for the teaching of community languages, with three quarters of schools with high levels of EAL pupils having no involvement in this at all.

Comments from respondents illustrate the ways in which schools are supporting their children's community languages:

'We have two Polish-speaking staff members, one of whom was recruited in order to support children as we now have 20+ Polish children. These staff also speak some Russian, Latvian and Romanian to support our increasing numbers of Eastern European families. We also have six staff who speak Urdu, Punjabi, Hindi, Gujarati and some Pashtu. We produce packs to support children new to the country and share these with schools who request such packs on a regular basis.'

'Children have the opportunity to learn a foreign language in some depth which is sustained in secondary school. We also are able to value the home languages of many of our pupils and nurture the ethos of language learning being a life skill and a way of appreciating our multilingual community.'

'We have access to a Local Authority service to provide resources and home language materials if needed.'

'We have access to Polish- and Romanian-speaking members of staff from the local secondary school who are able to offer support to families of our EAL pupils. We have access to English lessons for parents at the local library and these have been well received.'

Other comments highlight a lack of expertise or resources which prevents them from offering more help for children to develop their home language skills:

'We have no expertise or resources to offer support. We do all we can for each individual. Polish club for Polish pupils. All parents are advised to develop home language at home. Dual language books provided for children as required.'

'Staff have very limited knowledge of "other" languages. But we may utilise older pupils with home language to assist younger children e.g. Polish.'

'The school has a lot of staff who speak our traditional community languages such as Gujarati, Hindi, Kuchi, etc. However, we are now seeing a very different cohort of languages coming into school. The school paid for a bilingual TA for six months for two recent arrivals from Hungary. But, there is no more money to pay for the same for our two recent arrivals from Romania.'

The number of different languages spoken by pupils is also cited as an obstacle:

'Our school currently has pupils who speak 41 different languages, so provision in home language is a very difficult task – all of the examples of provision you mention are very difficult to provide with no majority language represented in school.'

For some, home languages are quite simply seen as a separate matter from 'foreign' language teaching:

'This issue does not fall within the scope of our (the foreign language teachers) remit. It is handled by our SEN and EAL specialist staff.'

Comments highlight a lack of expertise or resources which prevents schools from offering more help for children to develop their home language skills

Case study: Lee Chapel Primary School, Basildon, Essex

Type of school:
Academy
converter
with Teaching
School status

**Number of
pupils:**
537

Age range:
4–11

**End of Key
Stage 2
achievement:**³²
94%

SEN:³³
3.9%

EAL:³⁴
11.2%

FSM:³⁵
23.5%

**Main language
taught:**
French

Lee Chapel Primary School is an 'Outstanding' school (OFSTED) with Teaching School status. It currently has three-form entry but the number of pupils is set to grow to approximately one thousand by 2020. The school has a mixed demographic with pupils being drawn from a local housing estate as well as from families of medical professionals based at the nearby Basildon University Hospital. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is similar to the national average.

The school teaches French to all pupils throughout Key Stage 2. At the end of Year 6, most pupils go on to one of two local secondary schools where French as well as German are taught. While Lee Chapel Primary School has links with the principal secondary feeder school, it does not provide data on individual pupils' achievements in languages. Parents are very supportive and the school's lunchtime French Club is oversubscribed.

French was introduced into Lee Chapel a number of years ago by the then-deputy head teacher because the school had a teacher with a degree in French. The current MFL coordinator is an enthusiastic and committed newly qualified teacher (NQT) who learned French to a high level through a previous career with the military. Curriculum support in the form of clear schemes of work as well as some CPD for teachers is provided commercially by the former languages adviser for Essex who now works in a freelance capacity. Classroom teachers who are responsible for teaching French to their year groups also receive support and training from the MFL coordinator. No teacher in the school has any qualification in a language and, in most cases, they are learning alongside their pupils. While they are experienced teachers, with the exception of the MFL coordinator, they lack subject knowledge. The school currently has seven teacher trainees though none has a languages background.

Pupils receive one hour of French tuition per week. This is broken down into a half hour structured lesson and a half hour dispersed throughout the week and embedded into overall lesson time. Lesson content follows the thematic-based

Scheme of Work very closely. This is closely linked to the requirements of the new national curriculum and has accompanying sound files which teachers can use to support pronunciation work: the school does not use a textbook.

The MFL coordinator has a small budget for resources, activities and trips and there is a well-established language/cross-curricular link with a school in France. There is an annual three-night trip for pupils in Year 4 to experience the life of a pupil in a French school and to practise their French.

The school faces similar challenges to many others in this survey, in that classroom teachers do not have a background in French and can show a certain reluctance based on a lack of confidence in their own grasp of grammar and pronunciation. However, given the presence now of a specialist member of staff to provide support, this should improve.

Pupil quotes (focus group comprising Year 3 and Year 6 pupils)

Comment on Year 4 visit to France:

'It was weird cos they know more English than we did French.'

'We went to a restaurant every evening/morning and had to order in French. I did it wrong and got fish instead of shepherd's pie!'

Comment on what they like about learning languages:

'Some words are similar in different languages.'

Other languages which pupils said they would most like to learn were Chinese and Latin. The majority of pupils said they found languages difficult (despite the fact that half the individuals in the group spoke other languages at home in addition to English), for example:

'I used to know a lot of French but now I've forgotten it.'

'When I was in Saudi Arabia there was this kid speaking ...I think he was speaking Saudi Arabian so I just walked away.'

³² Percentage of cohort achieving Level 4 or above in reading, writing and maths, 2015. National average 80%

³³ Percentage of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) with statements or education, health and care (EHC) plan. National average 1.4%

³⁴ Percentage of pupils with English not a first language. National average 19.4%

³⁵ Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) at any time during the past six years. National average 26.4%



Case study: Irby Primary School, Wirral, Cheshire

Type of school:
Community school

Number of pupils:
217

Age range:
4–11

Achievement:³⁶
97%

SEN:³⁷
0.5%

EAL:³⁸
2.1%

FSM:³⁹
13.8%

Main languages taught:
French and Spanish

Irby Primary School is a single form entry primary school in Wirral. It has 217 pupils on the register with low percentages of FSM (5%) and EAL (2%) and an economically mixed catchment area. The school has a long tradition of teaching languages in both Key Stages 1 and 2 using, until recently, peripatetic teachers provided by the local authority.

Language teaching was introduced to give pupils a greater awareness of the wider world. Language teaching is now delivered by a secondary qualified teacher of Spanish and French and follows a multilingual approach in which pupils in Key Stage 1 are introduced to Chinese (led by a part-time native speaker teacher previously employed by a local specialist Language College), French in Years 3 & 4 and Spanish in Years 5 & 6. The commitment to language teaching throughout the school is driven by the head teacher who has a Master's degree focussing on primary languages.

In Key Stage 1 pupils have a single block of half an hour Chinese tuition per week. Lessons focus on songs/stories/colours/numbers and cultural events such as the Chinese New Year celebrations. This approach ensures that when pupils move to Key Stage 2, they understand the need to listen and are confident in speaking in another language.

Throughout Key Stage 2, languages are taught as distinct stand-alone lessons in a one hour block per week but thematically linked across the curriculum. Two years of French tuition is followed by two years of Spanish tuition, all taught by the same teacher, ensuring that previous learning can be built on. Additional exposure to languages is provided by classroom teachers who use the taking of the register, greetings, etc. to reinforce languages. The Scheme of Work for languages changes constantly in line with the school's rolling creative curriculum. There are no textbooks as the languages teacher develops the resources herself, drawing, wherever appropriate, on sources such as the BBC and the Sunderland sites.

Irby Primary School feeds into some ten to twelve local secondary schools which teach a variety of different languages. The school's multilingual policy is therefore aimed at ensuring pupils are well prepared for transition to secondary school. The school has some links with the main secondary feeder school but this is not yet at the point of provision of information on pupil progression in languages. Local secondary schools ask at the transition meeting which languages have been studied, but are not always able to take this into account, which leads to the possibility of pupils losing interest in languages.

While the new National Curriculum has been interpreted as recommending that schools focus on one language throughout Key Stage 2, the school leadership team has the support of parents and governors for its model and believes that its pupils are achieving well. Its pupils not only have an enthusiasm for languages but also show good progress in all four skills as well as an understanding of links between different languages. While Years 3 and 4 focus on the development of speaking skills, Years 5 and 6 focus more on writing and structural skills.

Teacher quote

'Some secondary schools are not yet fully aware of the fact that some pupils are starting to come through with four years' good language teaching.'

Head teacher quote

'Languages can support grammar work in language/literacy. It shouldn't be assumed that SEN children will struggle with language lessons. The languages class could be their moment to shine especially when the focus is on oral work.'

Pupil quote

'Words in Spanish are easy to spell. I like the funny, upside down question mark in Spanish. I think pronunciation in Spanish is easier than in French.'

³⁶ Percentage of cohort achieving Level 4 or above in reading, writing and maths, 2015. National average 80%

³⁷ Percentage of pupils with SEN with statements or EHC plan. National average 1.4%

³⁸ Percentage of pupils with English not a first language. National average 19.4%

³⁹ Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals at any time during the past six years. National average 26.4%



Key points

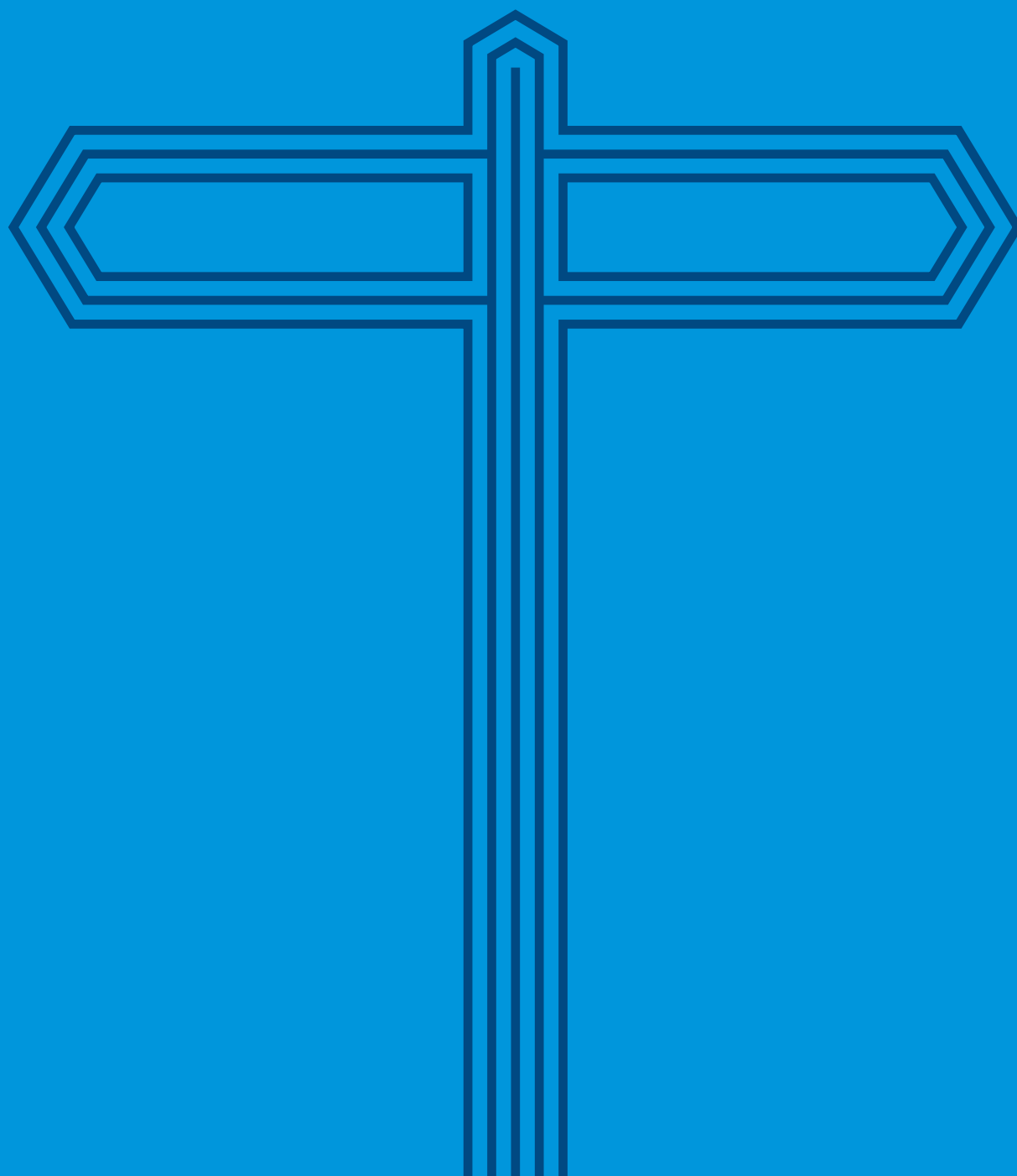
- The overwhelming majority of primary schools in England now provide at least some teaching of languages to pupils throughout Key Stage 2. However, some schools are finding it challenging to provide the kind of systematic and consistent language teaching envisaged in the national curriculum.
- Some 42 per cent of schools in this survey also teach a language from Key Stage 1. This percentage has declined from 53 per cent in 2013, as schools focus on the statutory requirements of teaching a language at Key Stage 2.
- The vast majority of schools appreciate the many benefits of teaching languages to pupils in Key Stage 2, particularly their contribution to improving pupils' cultural understanding and literacy in English. Many schools also comment favourably on the inclusivity of language learning at a young age.
- A third of schools still have no system in place to assess pupils' progress in language learning. However, there is an awareness of the need to develop such systems, though lack of time and central guidance are impediments.
- Just over half of primary schools now have access to specialist expertise in the teaching of languages.
- There is a low level of engagement with CPD for languages: as many as 80 per cent of schools never take part in national or regional conferences, and almost half of schools have no involvement with other primary schools. Reasons cited for the lack of engagement are budget, time and different school priorities.
- The main four challenges for schools remain:
 1. Finding enough curriculum time
 2. Teacher confidence (classroom teachers)
 3. Accessing training
 4. Recruiting suitably qualified staff

A third of schools still have no system in place to assess pupils' progress in language learning



Chapter 5

Transition from primary to secondary school



By making the teaching of a language compulsory for all pupils in Key Stage 2, the government made it clear that schools must focus on enabling pupils to make significant progress in one language in order to lay the foundations for further study in Key Stage 3. In turn, language teaching at Key Stage 3 must ‘build on the foundations laid at Key Stage 2’.

For the last three years, the Language Trends survey has explored the degree to which primary and secondary schools are working together to support pupils in their transition from Key Stages 2 to 3. Previous surveys have identified serious gaps in the level of collaboration between primary and secondary schools and fundamental differences of opinion between primary and secondary teachers as to the efficacy of language teaching at Key Stage 2 and the feasibility of developing sustainable cross-phase collaboration. This year’s survey once again asks specific questions about the Key Stage 2/3 transition and seeks to determine whether any progress has been made to bring the two phases closer together to support seamless pupil progression from one educational phase to the other.

About half (51 per cent) of primary schools say they have some contact with the language departments of local secondary schools

Primary schools’ contact with secondary schools

Do primary schools have contact with the language departments of local secondary schools?

About half (51 per cent) of primary schools say they have some contact with the language departments of local secondary schools. This is a lower proportion than in previous years (56 per cent in 2014, 54 per cent in 2013).

This year’s survey asked whether these contacts were with one, several or all local secondary schools. The responses show that in most cases, the contact is with a single school (see Figure 24).

The additional comments provided by respondents confirm the finding that contact is generally with one rather than several secondary schools, and shed some light on the nature of the contact which primary schools have with secondaries:

'Year 6 pupils attend occasional language events at the secondary school.'

'A local secondary school has provided a teacher to MFL in the past but no longer.'

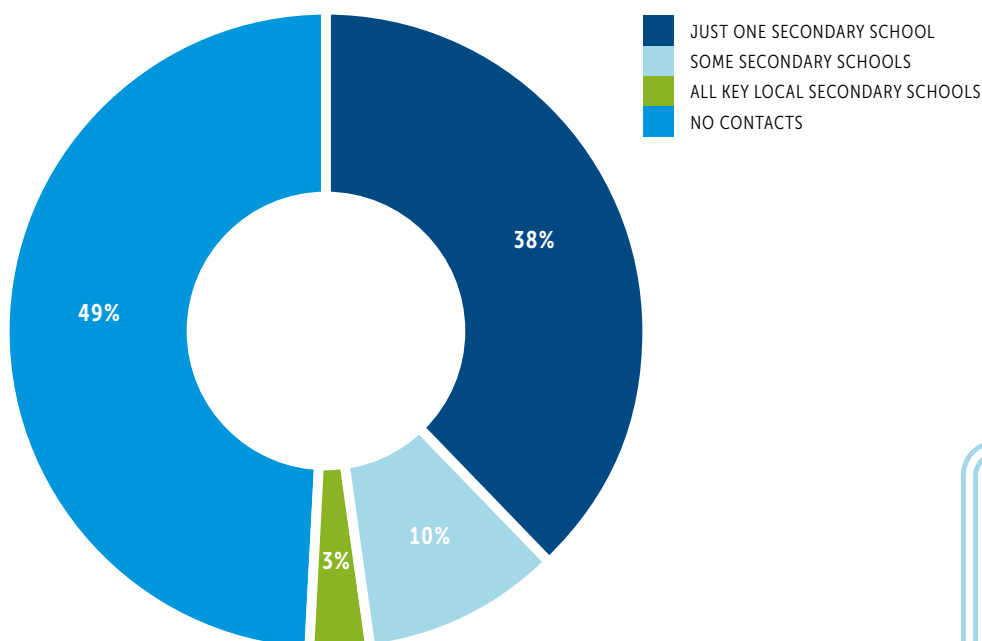
'MFL taster days for Year 5 pupils in the whole cluster.'

'One of the secondary schools runs a workshop day for our Year 5 pupils. Another school has a language workshop day, but this is only open to four pupils in Year 5.'

'We are just in the first stages of working with one of our secondary schools. The hope is to build on this with our Year 5 class working with Year 7.'

'The local secondary school has offered one-off activity sessions for our Year 5 and 6 pupils from time to time, e.g. an Easter in France half-day activity session at the secondary school.'

FIGURE 24: CONTACTS PRIMARY SCHOOLS HAVE WITH THE LANGUAGE DEPARTMENTS OF LOCAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS



What type of contacts do primary schools have?

The responses show that the most common type of contact primary schools have with language departments of local secondary schools is informal exchanges of information and visits or joint participation in cluster or network meetings:

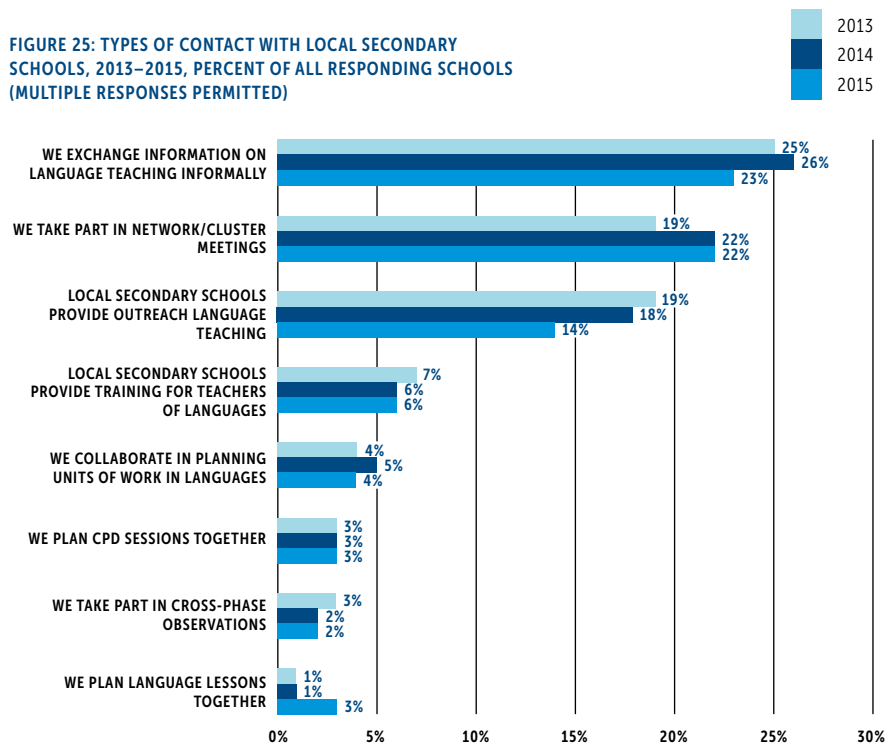
'Very informal. They (the secondary school) aren't really that interested.'

'Connected through the network group of schools. Contact with the language department is not as robust as we would like at this moment in time.'

'Our Year 5 class go to an MFL day one day a year during the summer term. It is very informal.'

The most common type of contact primary schools have with language departments of local secondary schools is informal exchanges of information and visits or joint participation in cluster or network meetings

FIGURE 25: TYPES OF CONTACT WITH LOCAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS, 2013–2015, PERCENT OF ALL RESPONDING SCHOOLS (MULTIPLE RESPONSES PERMITTED)



'Our French teacher has visited a couple of local high schools to observe lessons and share materials.'

'We visit the local secondary school for a French-themed day.'

Just under a quarter of all primary schools take part in such activities.

There has been a decline in the last three years in the provision of outreach language teaching to primary schools by secondary schools, and a very low level of engagement in other types of joint planning and training. In 2013, 19 per cent of responding primary schools benefited from this type of arrangement. In 2015 the proportion is 14 per cent.

'Until this year, a teacher from our local secondary school was coming in to support teaching in lower Key Stage 2, but due to funding cuts at their school this is no longer possible. I feel very well supported by our local secondary school – sharing of resources, offering advice, etc.'

'Until recently our local secondary school, which is a specialist language school, provided specialist outreach. However, this year they have had to stop that due to funding issues.'

'Our local secondary has provided training for teachers and curriculum planning support for the last eight years but sadly this year, due to budget cuts, could not maintain the member of staff employed for this. She started her own consultancy and we continue to buy into her support but as our budget is also becoming stretched it is not clear how long we can sustain this.'

'The outreach teaching was for two lessons per week to Year 6 for one term, although this ended in December 2014.'

There has been a decline in the last three years in the provision of outreach language teaching to primary schools by secondary schools

'Historically we had very good outreach support and CPD sessions. When the funding stopped the support stopped.'

'Although in the past we have had direct outreach language support from local state secondary schools, currently we receive support from secondary-age pupils (16–17) from a local independent school.'

However, a small number of primary schools are working well with their local secondaries and provide evidence of the good collaborative arrangements they enjoy:

'I have had advice about assessment and what the secondary school is looking for our children to have achieved in languages before they reach Year 7. Cluster meetings have been attempted but other schools have not taken up the offer.'

'The local secondary school has employed a French teacher to work with local primary schools. We have half a day a week.'

'Professional dialogue, personal support only. Although there are plans to improve this partnership.'

'MFL was introduced to our school through outreach from our local high school. We now employ a part-time specialist teacher but still receive guidance and support, as required.'

'We have worked collaboratively with the local secondary school for Year 4 to access some teaching in German. In the summer term, we work with the teachers and they come and visit and teach German. Then we take the children to the secondary school to use their learning in the languages lab.'

A small number of primary schools are working well with their local secondaries and provide evidence of the good collaborative arrangements they enjoy

Arrangements in secondary schools for receiving pupils who have learned a language in Key Stage 2

What experience do pupils arriving in Year 7 have of language learning in primary school?

Previous years' surveys asked whether secondary schools were already receiving significant numbers of pupils who had studied a language in primary school. Responses showed that a large majority of both state and independent schools were receiving pupils who had already studied a language, although in the state sector the proportion fell from 84 per cent in 2012 to 73 per cent in 2015. However, the associated comments in past surveys showed that in many cases secondary schools thought that Year 7 pupils had received only a rudimentary experience of language learning, which was insufficient for them to take into account in their planning. This year's research therefore sought to delve deeper into the level of language that secondary schools found that their Year 7 pupils were achieving in primary school. Secondary school respondents were therefore asked whether a few, some or most pupils had a measurable level of language competence on arrival, whether they had some knowledge of vocabulary and concepts, or no significant experience.

• State schools

These findings confirm the mixed and uneven picture of language learning in state primary schools from previous years' surveys. Although only 12 per cent of state secondary schools find that most pupils arrive with a measurable level of language competence, another 44 per cent say that most pupils arrive with at least some knowledge of vocabulary and linguistic concepts – a total of more than half (56 per cent) of all state secondary schools – while only 23 per cent reported that most pupils arrive with no significant experience of language learning. Comments confirm that this mixed picture is difficult for secondary schools to cater for:

'Provision in primary schools varies enormously. Some schools teach French from Reception and some teach barely any.'

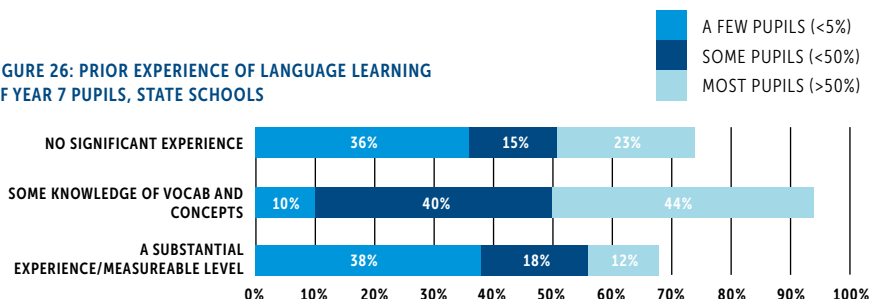
'Very patchy provision at Key Stage 2 – we don't feel we can even plan for this. Different languages are taught at different feeders and the quality of provision does not appear to be good.'

'With such a wide number of feeder schools, and sometimes different languages being taught at Key Stage 2 to the language they start with us at Key Stage 3, the range in terms of language and quality of language knowledge makes it very near impossible to use this experience effectively within MFL lessons. Our lessons are not set according to their MFL linguistic ability (rather to their Key Stage 2 and CAT scores).'

'This is a nightmare to handle.'

'No impact yet seen of primary languages being compulsory!'

FIGURE 26: PRIOR EXPERIENCE OF LANGUAGE LEARNING OF YEAR 7 PUPILS, STATE SCHOOLS



More than half of responding independent secondary schools (52 per cent) report that most Year 7 pupils arrive with at least some knowledge of vocabulary and concepts

• Independent schools

In the independent sector, many more secondary schools find that children arrive with prior experience of language learning. More than half of responding independent secondary schools (52 per cent) report that most Year 7 pupils arrive with at least some knowledge of vocabulary and concepts, and another 41 per cent say that most pupils arrive with a measurable level of language competence. Thus in 93 per cent of independent schools, most pupils are arriving with language skills they have acquired in primary schools. Only seven per cent of independent schools say that most pupils have had no significant experience of language learning at all when they arrive in Year 7.

Comments from some independent schools are similar to those from the state sector, namely, that it is difficult to cater for pupils with different levels of experience:

'A variety of languages makes transition to Year 7 difficult but then again, they don't seem to retain much from earlier years, especially with regard to accurate writing.'

'Many students come from feeder preparatory schools where they have done French to a fair level. Some students, mainly from state schools, do not have much experience of a language.'

'We have about 40 feeder schools. We have seven French groups in Year 7. Two are complete beginners, and the others have varying levels of experience in French.'

It is difficult to cater for pupils with different levels of experience

Some independent schools have linked feeder schools or preparatory departments, which means that most students arrive at the same level:

'Our junior section of the school do French from Year 1 at a very basic level (songs, etc.) and have done quite a bit but mainly on the vocabulary recognition level rather than structures and grammar.'

'Many of our Year 7 students transfer from our Prep department. French is taught in the nursery, reception, and Key Stage 1 and 2. At Key Stage 2 there are two 30–40 minute lessons per week.'

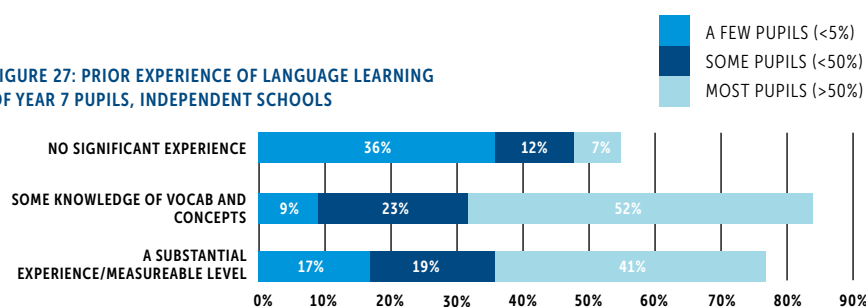
'We have a feeder primary school with a full-time French teacher. These pupils are well prepared for Year 7 in some skills, but not really in writing.'

Whilst state schools tend to talk about 're-teaching the basics', independent schools are more likely to describe arrangements which allow pupils with less prior experience to 'catch up':

'As we are an independent school (Pre-Prep, Prep and Senior School) our pupils are usually well experienced in language learning. The pupils joining us get additional tuition to ensure they catch up. The joining pupils usually have some experience in French, but very little to none in German.'

'We allow pupils joining our school to choose their language, and we have a programme which helps them to integrate quickly and catch up. It is usually at the end of Year 8 that we can really say that there is no discernible difference between them.'

FIGURE 27: PRIOR EXPERIENCE OF LANGUAGE LEARNING OF YEAR 7 PUPILS, INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

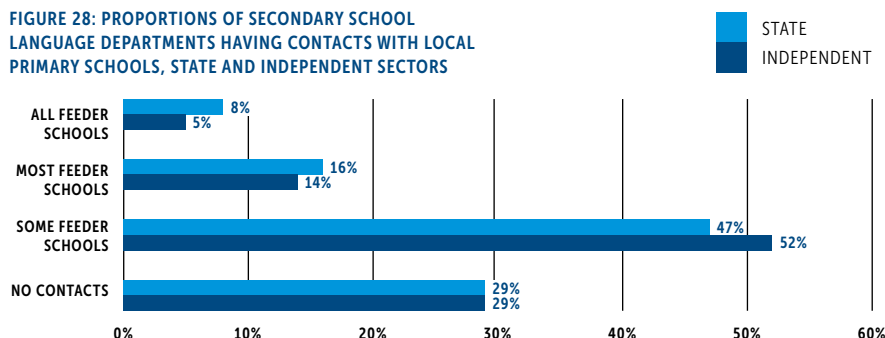




Do secondary schools have contacts with their feeder primary schools?

Secondary schools were asked whether they have contact with their feeder primary schools in relation to language learning. Nearly one third (29 per cent) of both state and independent secondary schools report that they have no contact at all with their feeder schools on languages.

FIGURE 28: PROPORTIONS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL LANGUAGE DEPARTMENTS HAVING CONTACTS WITH LOCAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS, STATE AND INDEPENDENT SECTORS



Clearly, in both the independent and state sectors, there are good reasons why schools may not have contact with all their feeder primary schools, but in both cases a much higher proportion have contacts with 'some' rather than 'most'.

As the following comments by state secondary school respondents show, there are a number of reasons why levels of cooperation with primary feeder schools are so low, but those cited most frequently are the logistics of having very high numbers of feeder schools, and a lack of time and/or funding:

'Far too many feeder schools to work with.'

'Time and staffing. Also we have about 50 feeder schools.'

'We have too few staff to provide dedicated time, and in addition they (the primary feeders) teach a different language.'

'A vast array of feeder schools from a wide geographical area. Impractical.'

'We are fed by 58–72 primary schools in any one year, across four education authorities, so it is impossible to maintain contact with more than a very few.'

'No curriculum time left for us to do this – we are at the limit of staffing so there is no free time.'

A number of schools have tried to make contact but cite a lack of interest on the part of the primaries themselves:

'When the new Key Stage 3 programme of study was published, I contacted all our Catholic feeder primary schools by letter, email, through our head teacher's meeting with primary school head teachers and by phone. I offered support with resources, materials and teaching and learning but I had no reply.'

'I am new in the role. My predecessor tried to make contact but was unsuccessful due to lack of response from feeder schools.'

There are a number of reasons why levels of cooperation with primary feeder schools are so low, but those cited most frequently are the logistics of having very high numbers of feeder schools, and a lack of time and/or funding

'A lot of our feeder schools do not communicate with us when we have tried to talk about languages provision and don't want to be told what to do unless we can go and teach it, but the secondary heads are reluctant to pay secondary teachers to provide provision in primary schools.'

'Emails have been sent several times but most schools have not replied.'

'I have contacted them to offer a Scheme of Work and help, and not one single feeder primary has replied.'

'Our feeder primaries are very reluctant to accept input and help from us.'

There are indications from both quantitative and qualitative data that the level of cooperation between primary and secondary schools in the state sector has declined with respect to previous years

There are indications from both quantitative and qualitative data that the level of cooperation between primary and secondary schools in the state sector has declined in comparison with levels noted in previous years. This has been as a result of funding cuts, increased pressures on secondary schools and other changes:

'When the school was a specialist language college our teachers provided Key Stage 2 French teaching in all of our feeder primary schools. This is no longer possible for funding reasons, although the schools still have the Schemes of Learning for Key Stage 2 French.'

'We had strong links in the past thanks to a funded MFL coordinator employed by the county. When funding got removed the local specialist language college maintained links and set up meetings. Now there is no formal provision and no funding, and since becoming an academy we have faced considerable changes. As a head of department I have little time to maintain links myself as we have too many other priorities.'

'Very few feeder primaries were able to pay for the lessons to continue due to a significant increase imposed by management.'

Some schools commented that languages were not seen as an important area for transition, with the focus being on English and maths.

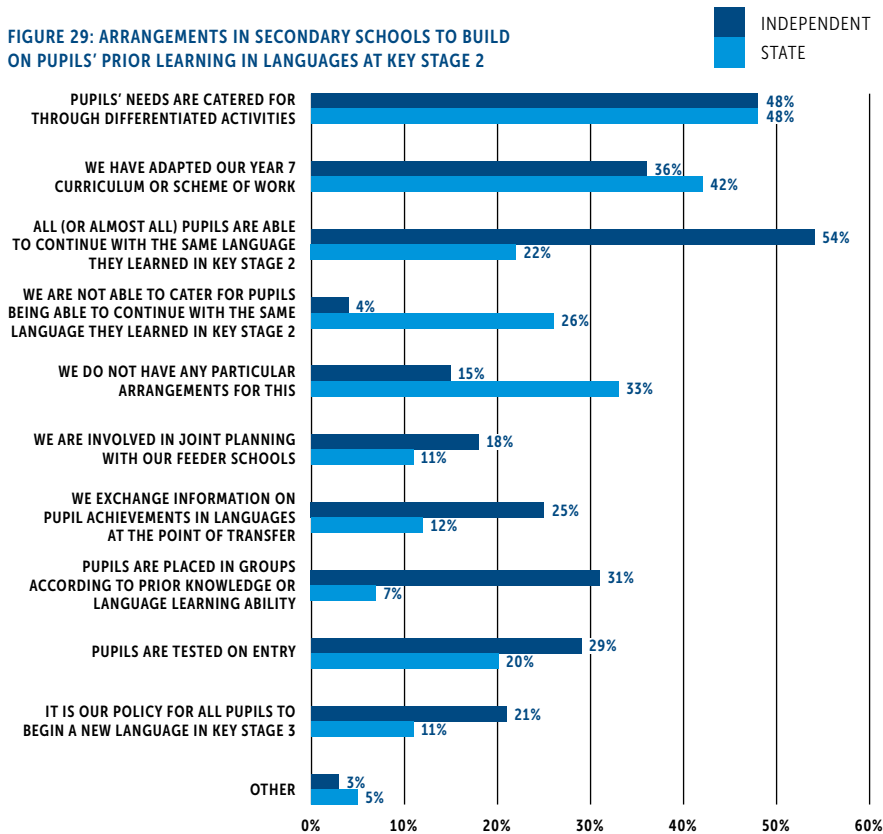
What arrangements do secondary schools have to build on pupils' prior learning in languages in Key Stage 2?

Following on from the finding that independent schools are more likely than state schools to say that the majority of pupils arriving in Year 7 have prior experience of language learning, there are substantial differences in practice between the state and independent sectors in the way in which they handle transition in language learning from the primary phase.

More than half of independent schools (54 per cent) offer all pupils the opportunity to continue learning the same language they have been studying in primary school, while only 22 per cent of state schools do so. And while only 4 per cent of independent schools say they are not able to cater for pupils wishing to continue with a language they have already been learning, 26 per cent of state schools say this is not something they can deliver.

Independent schools are more likely to test pupils' language competence on entry, to receive information on pupils' language experience at the point of entry and

FIGURE 29: ARRANGEMENTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS TO BUILD ON PUPILS' PRIOR LEARNING IN LANGUAGES AT KEY STAGE 2



to place pupils in groups according to their prior knowledge. In contrast, state schools are more likely to say they have no particular arrangements to cater for pupils' prior language learning, although comments show that many are starting to take this into account (see below). As many as 42 per cent of state secondary schools have adapted their Year 7 curriculum or Scheme of Work in order to recognise language learning in Key Stage 2.

It is interesting that, in the independent sector, 21 per cent of schools have a policy requiring all pupils to begin a new language in Key Stage 3 (sometimes in addition to the one they have been studying in Key Stage 2), whereas only 11 per cent of state schools adopt this approach.

Qualitative findings from the state sector illustrate the ways in which secondary schools are starting to adapt to statutory language learning at Key Stage 2, for instance by introducing diagnostic testing:

'We start with a diagnostic module of French and then assess. Afterwards, we set according to ability and language preference.'

'The Swedish Test is used as a Benchmark Assessment. Our Key Stage 3 Scheme of Work embeds the reviewed Key Stage 3 programme of study, pathways and all the required skills.'

'We keep them in form groups until a baseline test in November. We then set.'

In the independent sector, 21 per cent of schools have a policy requiring all pupils to begin a new language in Key Stage 3 compared to 11 per cent of state schools

Other schools are adapting their teaching and finding ways to integrate or fast track pupils who arrive with significant levels of competence:

'We now teach Spanish and most students studied French in primary school. Any students who have studied Spanish become lead learners and are given extension work but we find the written skills are poor at this stage.'

'At the moment we haven't changed our Scheme of Work, but if they find certain themes easy (colour, numbers etc) we just move on more quickly.'

'All pupils learn French on entry here, regardless of what they have learnt at primary. We set the pupils part way through the year and start preparing some pupils for fast-track French. This seems to work well.'

'The Year 7 course is designed so that the students may well come across vocabulary with which they are already familiar, but the focus is on the grammar and deeper understanding which they do not get at primary.'

However, as in previous years, there are still a number of schools which feel they have no choice but to treat all pupils as beginners:

'At present we are finding that most pupils are still arriving from primary school with little significant language knowledge, however we expect this to change over the coming years and are adapting our Scheme of Work accordingly to offer more challenge in Year 7.'

'The level of language knowledge on entry is low. We have to re-teach key concepts that have sometimes been poorly understood (or misunderstood), e.g. gender. While it is a laudable aim to build on prior progress, in practice the experiences of students are so disparate that this is not feasible. Furthermore, the idea that pupils have acquired any significant language skills from one hour a week of language learning at primary school is unrealistic. If primary language provision is to result in real language acquisition, pupils will need more than 60 minutes a week of learning.'

'Year 7s tend to start with a very basic grasp of numbers and a few songs they have learnt. Very very few understand any grammar or a real range of vocabulary. We get the students to do a baseline assessment when they get here to verify this fact.'

As in previous years, some teachers comment negatively on the quality of language teaching in their feeder primary schools:

'But all knowledge taught irrespective of feeder school (50+) is superseded after at most five/six weeks. Primary MFL is completely pointless and quite possibly counterproductive as it is taught in such a mediocre fashion.'

'What we have noticed is that students join us already with a dislike of French in particular due to their experience at primary.'

'We wish the primary schools would just leave it up to us. We are finding that pupils do all the 'fun' stuff in primary school such as songs and games and then when they get to us and learn the more complicated grammar, they get fed up. This is a main reason, we believe, why Spanish is more popular than French at GCSE and A level, as pupils have had enough of French by the time they reach Year 9.'

There are still a number of schools which feel they have no choice but to treat all pupils as beginners

From the responses in Chapter 7 to the question about how schools are preparing for the new GCSEs in languages, it appears that very few secondary schools see Key Stage 2 languages as a platform from which to achieve higher standards in Key Stage 4.

Very few secondary schools see Key Stage 2 languages as a platform from which to achieve higher standards in Key Stage 4

Schools working together: comparative views of primary and secondary teachers

In spite of the many challenges which schools face in developing collaboration which eases pupils' transition from Key Stages 2 to 3, a number of respondents (state sector) to this year's Trends survey do report interesting examples of effective collaboration which others could also adopt. Examples of different types of collaboration are provided below.

• Teaching and professional support

'Primary school leads the teaching of Mandarin and provides a CLA [Chinese Language Assistant] and training for the secondary school.'

'We have worked collaboratively with the local secondary school for Year 4 to access some teaching in German. In the summer term, we work with the teachers and they come and visit and teach German. Then we take the children to the secondary school to use their learning in the language laboratory.'

'We provide the Spanish teacher to the feeder primary schools, so all students have the same content, even if the amount of time differs.'

'I have worked with our main two primary feeders and have planned the lessons so that I know what they have done. I have also had a primary teacher watching so that she can take over with the younger ones.'

'The secondary teacher takes the Year 6 classes for French. This also helps with the transition into Year 7.'

'Language teachers work closely with feeder schools to support and deliver lessons so that languages can be further developed after Key Stage 2 to the same standard.'

• Visits and exchanges

'Secondary school provides access for Key Stage 2 pupils to attend a French theatre company production at the high school.'

'One of our local secondaries places foreign exchange students in our school for primary experience. This usually lasts for three days maximum.'

• Continuing professional development

'We are just revisiting the level of collaboration and guidance we get from our secondary partner with the aim to increase CPD, etc.'

'We run training/enrichment sessions for both Key Stage 2 teachers and pupils.'

• Joint planning

'Their MFL teacher is a governor at our school for MFL and offers support.'

'We are delivering language leaders in our primary school which is on site from February and will be discussing schemes of learning with the primary school then in view of changes. We will also provide bridging work for our new entry for over the holidays. We are hoping for a summer school too to work with those who have not done languages before.'

'We worked really closely together last year; this year each school has language coordinators.'

'Joint planning with feeder schools has been started and is an ongoing project – it currently includes about half of our feeder schools and I hope to extend this and try to get all the feeder schools involved.'

'Some of our primary feeder schools provide us with pupil information to show what standard they have achieved and which areas they have covered. However, we do not get this from all of our primary feeder schools, just two or three of them at the moment.'

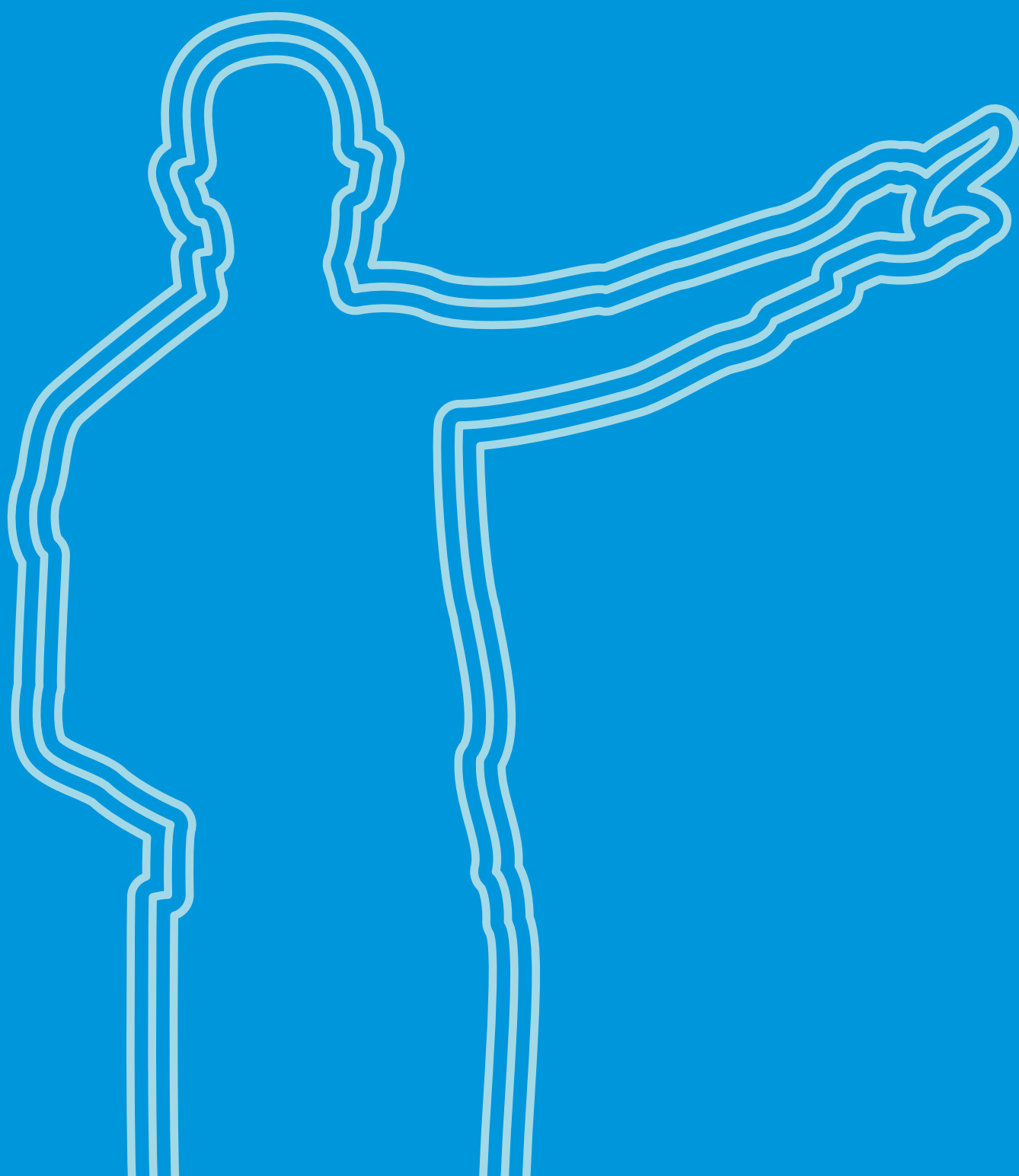
Key points

- Approximately half of all primary schools in England say they have no contact with the secondary schools to which their pupils move at the end of Year 6, and this proportion seems to be declining.
- Secondary schools are under increasing pressure and this is reducing the amount of time they are able to dedicate to working with primary schools on languages. However, in spite of the challenges, there are some interesting examples of collaboration.
- There are significant differences in practice between state and independent secondary schools in the way they cater for pupils arriving with prior experience of language learning. Independent schools are more likely to ensure that pupils can continue with the same language, to require them to start a new language, to test them on entry and to expect pupils who have had less experience than the rest of the class to catch up.
- There are indications that more secondary schools are starting to make small modifications to their practice in order to accommodate pupils who have learned a language in primary school. However, it is clear that secondary schools do not see primary languages as a platform from which to significantly improve standards.

There are significant differences in practice between state and independent secondary schools in the way they cater for pupils arriving with prior experience of language learning

Chapter 6

Take-up and inclusion in secondary schools



This chapter is the first of four dealing with the complex picture for language teaching in secondary schools. This chapter focusses on school practices in relation to provision for languages for all in Key Stage 3, and access to language learning higher up the school in Key Stage 4 and post-16.

We explore how these are evolving in response to external pressures such as school performance measures and financial constraints. We also explore schools' likely responses to the introduction of a 'compulsory EBacc', which would require the study of a modern or ancient language for up to 90 per cent of pupils.

Previous Language Trends surveys have identified a growing trend in the state sector to exclude or excuse groups of pupils from language study as early as Key Stage 3

Key Stage 3

Do all, or almost all, pupils study a language throughout Key Stage 3?

Previous Language Trends surveys have identified a growing trend in the state sector to exclude or excuse groups of pupils from language study as early as Key Stage 3. In 2007, when this question was first asked, this was only happening in 2 per cent of secondary schools but by 2014 it had risen to 8 per cent. In addition, a growing proportion of schools was reducing Key Stage 3 to two years. This complicated the analysis of the survey responses. This year the survey asked specifically whether whole sets of pupils (as opposed to individual pupils) were being 'disapplied' from language study in each of Years 7, 8 and 9:

TABLE 6: PERCENT OF STATE AND INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS WHICH WITHDRAW GROUPS OF PUPILS FROM LANGUAGE LEARNING IN KEY STAGE 3, 2015

	State	Independent
Year 7	7%	3%
Year 8	8%	1%
Year 9	26%	3%

The findings show that, albeit in a small minority of schools, there are groups of pupils not receiving any language teaching from the beginning of Key Stage 3. This means that these pupils are effectively debarred from taking a language to GCSE and from obtaining the EBacc. The qualitative evidence from respondents suggests that schools which decide to exclude some groups of pupils from studying languages in Key Stage 3 do so in order to give them additional support with literacy:

'Current Year 7 – very bottom set is disappplied from languages in order to do more general literacy.'

'We have six sets. Five follow a language in Key Stage 3. Set 6 is the literacy plus group comprising learners with a range of SEN who require further intervention in maths and English.'

'Two very small groups are disappplied in order to concentrate on improving their literacy skills.'

'Set 4 classes in Year 7 have additional literacy lessons during MFL time, approximately 60 pupils.'

Rather than being taken out of languages completely, one school provided evidence of lower ability pupils having reduced time for languages:

'Lower-level students now only have 50 per cent of teaching time in MFL; the rest is given to literacy.'

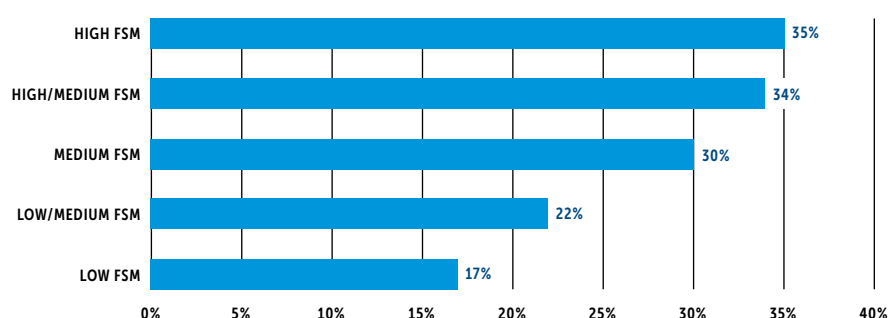
Table 6 shows that 26 per cent of schools in the state sector have now reduced Key Stage 3 to two years, meaning that pupils who do not choose to continue to GCSE receive only a rudimentary experience of learning a language. In the independent sector the phenomenon of disapplication is rarely seen.

Is the practice of disapplying pupils from languages in Key Stage 3 associated with socio-economic disadvantage?

For the small number of schools which disapply whole groups of pupils from languages in Years 7 and 8, there is no association with socio-economic disadvantage. However, in Year 9, where a quarter of schools follow this practice, there is a clear tendency for schools with higher proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals to exclude or excuse certain groups of pupils from studying a language. This means that pupils in schools which are most economically disadvantaged are the most likely to have only a very perfunctory experience of language learning, and to be excluded from the educational advantages and life chances that learning a language brings.

Pupils in schools which are most economically disadvantaged are the most likely to have only a very perfunctory experience of language learning

FIGURE 30: SCHOOLS IN WHICH GROUPS OF PUPILS DO NOT STUDY A LANGUAGE IN YEAR 9, BY PROPORTION OF PUPILS ELIGIBLE FOR FREE SCHOOL MEALS (FSM)

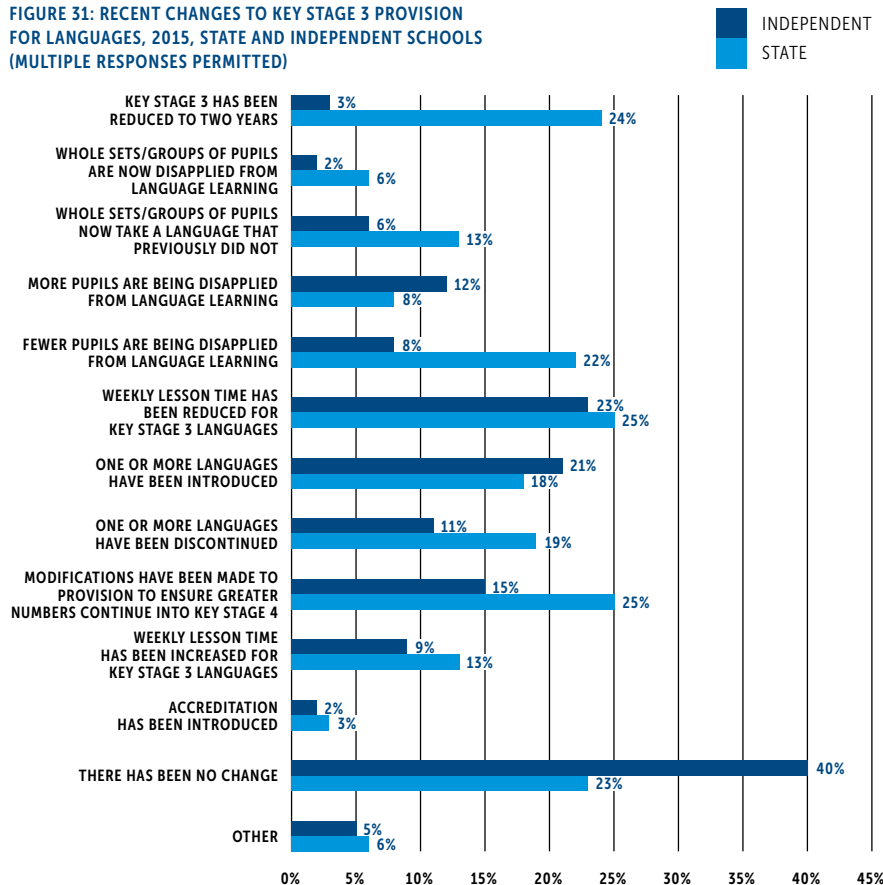


What changes have schools made recently to language provision in Key Stage 3?

As in previous years, there is evidence that state schools are much more likely than independent schools to have made changes to their provision for languages in Key Stage 3, where the situation is much more stable. The responses to the menu of prompts offered in this multiple choice question provide a rich and complex set of data relating to different issues, which are analysed in more detail below:

State schools are much more likely than independent schools to have made changes to their provision for languages in Key Stage 3

FIGURE 31: RECENT CHANGES TO KEY STAGE 3 PROVISION FOR LANGUAGES, 2015, STATE AND INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS (MULTIPLE RESPONSES PERMITTED)



Disapplication of groups of pupils from language learning

Following on from the earlier question about disapplication from languages in Key Stage 3, 6 per cent of schools reported that they have recently made changes whereby some groups of pupils no longer study a language. However, as many as 13 per cent of schools, having previously made this change, say that they have recently reversed this policy. Although 8 per cent say that more pupils are being affected by disapplication than in the past, 22 per cent say fewer pupils are now being disappplied from language learning. The reasons respondents give for disapplying pupils are the same as those given in response to the earlier question about disapplication:

'More students are disappplied based on Key Stage 2 data as they have no chance of ever succeeding at GCSE and more support in English/maths is required.'

However, the quantitative evidence shows that this may be in decline and that schools may be moving towards more inclusive policies. In 2014, 24 per cent of schools said they disappplied some pupils from language learning in Key Stage 3. The figure of 22 per cent of schools that say fewer pupils are now being disappplied from language learning is encouraging.

Reductions in lesson time

One of the changes which is most frequently reported, by 25 per cent of state schools and 23 per cent of independent schools, is the reduction in lesson time for languages. This tendency has also been identified in previous surveys, although it was most prevalent in the state sector in the 2014/15 report (29 per cent of schools). Once again, however, there is a mixed picture, with some schools – 13 per cent in the state sector, 9 per cent of independent schools – increasing the time available for languages.

'Year 7 and 8 lesson time has been reduced from two lessons per week to three lessons per fortnight. We do not have a Year 9 at Key Stage 3 as students take their options at the end of Year 8 and begin GCSE courses in Year 9.'

'Lesson time in Year 7 reduced to 2 x 50 minutes per week.'

'Language provision at Key Stage 3 has been increased to three hours per week.'

'Increasing time at Key Stage 3 from September 2016 by one hour. Increasing Key Stage 4 curriculum time by one hour.'

One of the changes which is most frequently reported, by 25 per cent of state schools and 23 per cent of independent schools, is the reduction in lesson time for languages

Changes designed to improve take-up for languages in Key Stage 4

A quarter of state schools (25 per cent) say they have made modifications to provision in Key Stage 3 in order to encourage greater uptake for languages in Key Stage 4. This is similar to last year's figure of 24 per cent. Some of the changes which have been made are illustrated in the comments below:

'The head has employed an extra half a teacher and sets in Year 7 have been paired up with Design Technology, so are only 20 in size. This is to help make their language learning experience a positive one, and in the hope that we can make languages (one at least) compulsory in Key Stage 4 – this is at the express request of the governors.'

'From September 2015 pupils will study one language only at Key Stage 3 to enable more progress and to increase the numbers opting for a language at Key Stage 4.'

'Complete new Scheme of Work to introduce challenge. German is no longer taught in Years 7 and 8. A couple of years ago, students did a carousel of language learning. They now stick with one language. In Year 9, just under half of the year group now opt to carry on with just one language whilst the remainder carry on with two, in order to boost numbers opting at Key Stage 4.'

'Spanish was introduced last year in Year 7 for students who studied Spanish in primary school.'

'Reviewed and rewritten the scheme of learning at Key Stage 3 to improve engagement in lessons, enjoyment of subject and eventual take-up in Key Stage 4.'

Introduction of new languages

Often linked to the need to encourage greater take-up, 18 per cent of state schools and 21 per cent of independent schools have introduced a new language in Key Stage 3 over the last few years as the following comments from respondents show:

• State sector

'Russian has been introduced as a full curriculum subject in Year 9 alongside Chinese, French and German as an additional MFL – all students take the level 2 IGCSE equivalent exam in Year 9 in their first MFL.'

'German has been introduced and the number of lessons per fortnight increased in some cases.'

'We now offer GCSE Spanish in Key Stage 3 at foundation level for the middle sets (around 45 students in Year 9). French is only offered in Years 8 and 9, only to the top set students.'

'Spanish introduced as third MFL. Request from governors.'

'Spanish has taken the place of German and the whole cohort introduced to it.'

• Independent sector

'Mandarin introduced into curriculum in Year 7.'

'Spanish now taught in Year 7 (previously started in Year 8).'

Discontinuation of languages

In the state sector, 19 per cent of schools have discontinued teaching one or more languages at Key Stage 3. The reasons given mainly highlight staff changes or a general shrinkage in the provision of language tuition:

'We had introduced Mandarin three years ago and discontinued it this year as the teacher who taught it left.'

'German has been dropped. Key Stage 3 MFL hours have been reduced to two hours a week.'

'Spanish introduced in 2014–2015 but discontinued due to staff changes and curriculum pressure.'

'German has been phased out, Spanish introduced. A class that was disapplied in Year 7 was split and put into mainstream groups for Year 8 French. They are now being taught as a class again and so Spanish is being introduced.'

The percentage of independent schools ceasing to offer a language in Key Stage 3 is smaller, at 11 per cent. Comments confirm that German is often the language which is discontinued, although no particular reasons are provided:

'German being phased out. More time now given to English and Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education (PSHCE).'

'German has been discontinued. Pupils take one language – French or Spanish – from Year 7. Potential to take up Latin from the beginning from Year 9. Allocation of time per language increased from 105 minutes per week to 140 minutes per week.'

'Our school has changed from teaching French to Spanish; students were finding French difficult to learn.'

In the state sector,
19 per cent of
schools have
discontinued
teaching one or
more languages
at Key Stage 3

'Italian teaching from Year 9 has been discontinued this academic year in preparation for the introduction of Mandarin from Year 9 onwards, in September 2016.'

'Exposure to French in Key Stage 3 has been reduced. Spanish has been introduced in Year 7 at a loss to French.'

This issue is discussed further in Chapter 8.

Reduction in opportunities to learn a second foreign language

Although this year's survey had no specific question about opportunities to learn a second foreign language, several state schools provided evidence of a reduction in such opportunities:

'Spanish used to be taught to top sets in addition to French. Dual linguists at Key Stage 3 have disappeared as not enough teaching time to fit two languages.'

'Students have gone from two to one language at Key Stage 3, so no more dual linguists.'

This phenomenon is also in evidence in comments from independent schools:

'Previously all of our entrants into the school did French and either German or Spanish. Now they all have to do one language of their choice. If they do two, one of them must be French.'

'Until this year, two languages were compulsory until the end of Key Stage 3. Now, two languages are taught in Years 7 and 8, but pupils reduce to one language only for Year 9.'

However, some independent schools say they are increasing their offer of languages or making some changes to their provision to encourage greater numbers of pupils to study languages, for example:

'We have brought the option language into Year 8 whereas previously it was in Year 9 as some weren't opting for a second language because they didn't feel they knew enough after only one year. We have extra French classes at lunch for those who drop French to start German or Mandarin so that they can keep up three languages and to encourage them to try German and Mandarin.'

'We are thinking of accrediting Year 9 languages with the British Airways (BA) FLAGS Award.'

'Every student now learns two languages in Year 7 (previously one). Apart from Spanish, German and French they can now also choose Italian. We no longer teach Mandarin in Year 7.'

'All pupils have to do a language. All do French plus one up to the end of Key Stage 3. This is about to change to allow some pupils to take up to three languages.'

Some independent schools say they are increasing their offer of languages or making some changes to their provision to encourage greater numbers of pupils to study languages

The status of languages in Key Stage 4

What proportion of schools make language learning compulsory in Key Stage 4?

In the state school sector, 20 per cent of schools make a language compulsory for all pupils in Key Stage 4, up from 18 per cent in 2014. In independent schools the proportion is 74 per cent, slightly down from 76 per cent in 2014.⁴⁰ A further 23 per cent of state schools (down from 26 per cent in 2014), and 7 per cent of independent schools, make the study of a language compulsory for some pupils. This suggests that a small number of state schools have introduced compulsion for all pupils, rather than just for some. However, the practice of making language learning compulsory up to GCSE in the state sector still lags a long way behind that in the independent sector. Figure 33 complements Figure 32, showing that languages are much more likely to be optional for all in state secondary schools.

In the state sector, the practice of making language learning compulsory up to GCSE in the state sector still lags a long way behind that in the independent sector

FIGURE 32: COMPULSORY STATUS: WHETHER LANGUAGES ARE COMPULSORY FOR SOME OR ALL PUPILS AT KEY STAGE 4, STATE AND INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS, 2015

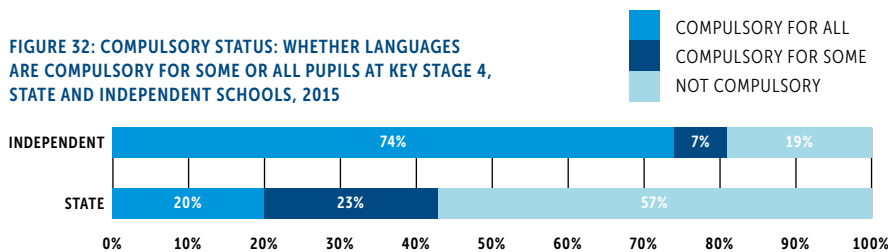
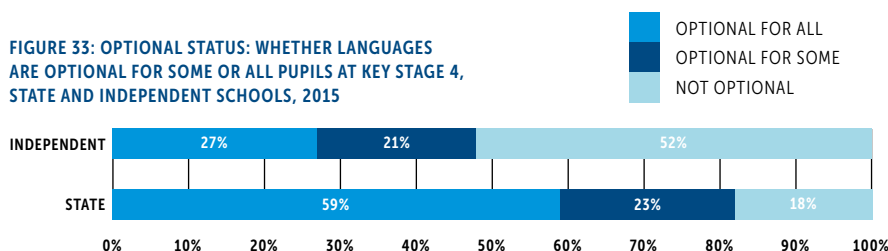


FIGURE 33: OPTIONAL STATUS: WHETHER LANGUAGES ARE OPTIONAL FOR SOME OR ALL PUPILS AT KEY STAGE 4, STATE AND INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS, 2015



How has the status of languages in the Key Stage 4 curriculum changed over time?

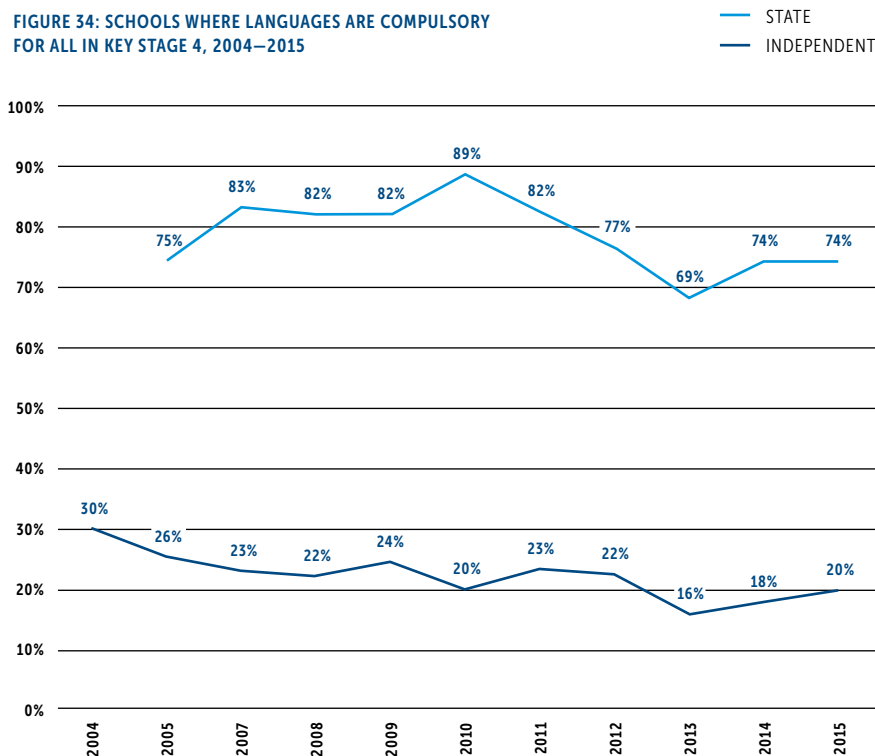
The time-series data from previous Language Trends surveys (see Figure 34) show how compulsory language learning in Key Stage 4 is increasing in state schools after having reached its lowest point in 2013. However, the proportion of state schools in which languages are compulsory in Key Stage 4 is still below the level it was in 2012.

The qualitative evidence from respondents to this year's survey shows a wide diversity of practice in whether languages are compulsory for pupils at Key Stage 4 or whether pupils are able to choose whether to study a language to GCSE. Some schools have made the study of a language at Key Stage 4 compulsory for some pupils only, mainly those of higher academic ability:

⁴⁰ This is not a significant difference and may indeed be related to the sample of independent schools which responded to the survey this year – see Chapter 2.



FIGURE 34: SCHOOLS WHERE LANGUAGES ARE COMPULSORY FOR ALL IN KEY STAGE 4, 2004–2015



'For 80 per cent of pupils it is compulsory, for 15 per cent optional and for 5 per cent not a possibility. Pupils who study two languages at Key Stage 3 (60 per cent of cohort) can opt for the language they take at Key Stage 4 and the option to do two is available.'

'Compulsory for EBacc (high-ability) students. Mid-ability students can choose MFL as an option but the option rarely runs owing to low numbers. Decisions regarding viable groups are made by the leadership team. Until this year, low-ability students (level 2/3 on entry) have not studied a language at Key Stage 3.'

'Due to the weighting of Progress 8 as a measure, all students must pick two subjects from French/Urdu, geography, history or computing. This due to their value in "Basket 2" of Progress 8. We have had an average of around 55 per cent of students picking to do an MFL GCSE.'

'MFL learning is compulsory for higher achievers and optional for the others.'

Others are responding to the government's intentions to create an EBacc for all by making or planning changes to their provision so that all pupils will have to study a language to GCSE:

'This is likely to change over the next two years. We currently give students the opportunity to opt out but the majority of students are now choosing to study a language at GCSE level.'

'For the current Years 10 and 11, it was an option. For the current Year 9, it will be compulsory to study an MFL at Key Stage 4.'

Only some schools are responding to the government's intentions to create an EBacc for all by making or planning changes to their provision so that all pupils will have to study a language to GCSE

However, a number of respondents also describe a situation in their schools in which the study of a language used to be compulsory for all but this policy has recently been relaxed, giving pupils the option of studying a language if they wish. Such a move runs counter to the government's intentions with their 'EBacc for all' initiative:

'The majority do study German to GCSE. Until two years ago all studied a language to GCSE.'

'MFL was previously "almost" compulsory for most. Numbers have dropped by around 35 per cent.'

'Key Stage 4 language has been compulsory for higher-attaining pupils for the past four years. However, this has changed, due to the number of options being reduced from five to four as a result of increased teaching time for maths, English and science with their new GCSEs. Higher-ability pupils now have to do history or geography or a language (Progress 8...).'

'This has changed gradually over the past 10 years. We used to insist that most students did a language and organise the options grid accordingly. The emphasis on MFL has gradually declined, although the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) are supportive and about 65 per cent do choose to do a MFL GCSE in any case.'

Are any students prevented from studying a language at Key Stage 4?

In 25 per cent of state schools, not all students are able to study a language at Key Stage 4. This includes 9 per cent of schools where students not deemed capable of obtaining a GCSE cannot study a language:

'Selection reliant on basic skills e.g. needy in literacy and maths = no MFLs.'

'Students who will find it difficult to achieve a GCSE in core subjects will not study a language (around 15–20 per cent).'

'Very low-ability pupils are withdrawn from MFL in Year 7, so cannot then take MFL at Key Stage 4.'

'Very weakest students – very low Key Stage 2 results are dissuaded.'

'One specific year group: the lower set was disapplied.'

'95 per cent of students study a language and it is compulsory. A very small number are disapplied due to ongoing behaviour concerns in combination with very low motivation/attainment.'

Pupils who were excluded from studying a language at Key Stage 3 are not able to study a language because they would not be able to make up lost ground:

'A very small group of students with severe learning difficulties are not able to choose it as a GCSE option as from Year 7 they are removed from MFL to focus on maths and English.'

'If they have not studied languages in Key Stage 3 due to being disapplied, they are no longer able to take up the option at Key Stage 4.'

In 25 per cent of state schools, not all students are able to study a language at Key Stage 4

'If students were placed in a bottom set and did not continue with languages in Key Stage 3 due to extra numeracy and literacy classes, they will be unable to take a language GCSE, as it will be too late to catch up.'

In some 16 per cent of schools, students following certain pathways cannot study a language or find themselves unable to study a language because of timetabling restrictions:

'Timetabling issues and an emphasis on the most-able studying three separate sciences (which takes up one of the option blocks) means both a reduction in numbers and a very atypical skewing of the MFL cohort. Only 49 per cent of our German cohort in 2014 was of "above level 4" prior attainment.'

'Very few students who prefer to go on a vocational path cannot study a language.'

'All students who wish to will have the option of studying a language. The only inhibiting factor is timetabling.'

The proportion of state schools in which all pupils who wish to can study a language has not changed significantly over the last three years.

In the independent sector, the proportion of schools in which not all students study a language at Key Stage 4 is much smaller at 9 per cent:

'Some students are encouraged not to take a language if it is deemed that it would require a lot of work which would have a detrimental effect on other subjects.'

'We find that the pupils who do not want to study a language at GCSE are generally the pupils we would not encourage as they would be unlikely to gain a C grade or above.'

The vast majority of independent schools (77 per cent) allow all students to study a language if they wish to as the following comments show:

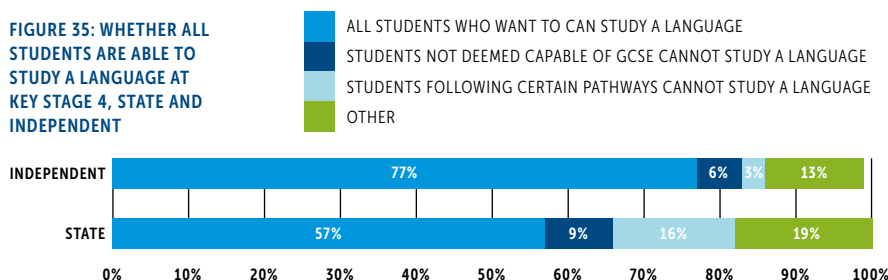
'Nobody is prevented from studying a language if they want to. However, they may opt for more learning support time.'

'ALL pupils must study two languages, no one is disapplied.'

Responses to this question were analysed by socio-economic indicator, school type and region, but no consistent patterns emerged.

In some 16 per cent of schools, students following certain pathways cannot study a language or find themselves unable to study a language because of timetabling restrictions

FIGURE 35: WHETHER ALL STUDENTS ARE ABLE TO STUDY A LANGUAGE AT KEY STAGE 4, STATE AND INDEPENDENT



Case study: Thomas Telford School

Type of school:

Mixed
comprehensive
City Technology
College

Number of pupils:

1,322

Age range:

11 – 18

End of Key Stage 4 achievement:⁴¹

89%

SEN:⁴²

0.2%

EAL:⁴³

2.1%

FSM:⁴⁴

10.2%

Main languages

taught:

French,
German,
Spanish

% of cohort entered for language GCSE in 2015

95%

% of those entered achieving A*-C 71%

Researchers conducted an interview with the Director of Languages, who is a member of the school's Senior Leadership Team, a focus group with all seven staff in the languages department and held two focus groups with pupils. They also observed a Year 7 French lesson and an AS German class.

Provision for languages

The school was chosen as an example of a comprehensive school where languages are compulsory for all in Key Stage 4 and contradicts the widely held belief that languages for all cannot be successful in a state comprehensive. In 2015 there were 176 entries for a GCSE in a language. The rigorous approach to learning adopted by the school, including for languages, produces remarkable exam results at GCSE level. The school believes that such an approach will stand the pupils in good stead when the new GCSEs are introduced. Pupils are well-disciplined and work hard but have little appetite to continue with languages after GCSE.

Pupils are allocated in mixed ability groups to French, German or Spanish when they arrive in Year 7. The school previously had a carousel system in Year 7 which allowed pupils a taste of each language before choosing which to study in depth, but this was felt to hinder progress towards GCSE and was changed. Pupils who, with good reason, wish to study a language other than the one to which they have been allocated, may be moved on request. Three hours per week are set aside for language classes in Key Stages 3 and 4, split into two one and a half hour sessions.

As in many schools, take up for languages post 16 is lower than in other core subjects in the school and class sizes are small. Despite the fact that the school takes in pupils from other local schools which do not offer languages at A level, in recent years across the three languages there have been approximately 15 – 20 students studying the subject to A level. The curriculum provision for 2016 – 2017 indicates that 41 students have opted to take a language A level in September 2016. Despite the small numbers, A level languages

are not under threat as the Head believes it is important to maintain provision in an area where not many other schools do so.

The school has a few pupils with English as an Additional Language and arrangements are made for them to sit exams in Chinese, Urdu or Punjabi. However, there is no capacity to teach these languages.

The school is over-subscribed and about 50 per cent of pupils are bussed in from Wolverhampton. Parents are aspirational and in general they support the idea that all pupils must take a language to GCSE.

The school is a teaching school and some languages staff have been recruited through the school's Schools Direct programme, although in line with the national trend the teacher shortage has been noticeable with fewer applicants applying for posts in recent years.

Discovery learning with I-Languages

The Director of Languages was recently appointed to boost language results which were lagging behind those in other subjects in this high achieving school. She has introduced an approach called i-Languages which promotes 'discovery learning' and had been very successful in her previous school. Rather than requiring rote-learning of nouns and set phrases, i-Languages allows pupils to create language and access more complex structures and use high frequency phrases independently; for example, Year 7s already work with extended texts. It provides some interesting contexts for language learning and this is extremely valuable where pupils have already learnt a language in primary school as it avoids repetition but enables them to build on what they have learnt. In her words, *'it avoids spending a whole lesson learning the months of the year'*.

In the Year 7 class observed, pupils were using dictionaries to write captions for paintings. The Director of Languages is convinced that this approach speeds up learning and this methodology will support current Key Stage 3 students who will have to sit the new linear GCSE examinations

⁴¹ Percentage of cohort achieving 5 x A*-C at GCSE including English and maths. National average 59.2%

⁴² Percentage of pupils with SEN with statements or EHC plan. National average 1.8%

⁴³ Percentage of pupils with English not a first language. National average 15%

⁴⁴ Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals at any time during the last six years. National average 29.4%

in 2018, which will be more demanding of pupils' language skills.

Languages for all

The school recognises that, with all pupils taking a language to GCSE, some may not achieve a C grade. One teacher commented: *'the assessment system is ludicrous for weaker students, even though they love languages'*. Teachers would like the option of alternative accreditation including more vocational language courses, but any such alternative would have to carry performance points or it would not be acceptable to parents. Very few pupils are withdrawn from languages. The policy is that everyone must learn a language in the school, just as everyone must learn to swim. This takes pressure off the department at options time.

The languages department is concerned about the lack of consistency in the marking by exam boards of externally assessed writing at GCSE as well as the inconsistency of A level marking and is looking forward to the new GCSE which they believe will be a more genuine measure of language competence. The school is already mapping progress according to the new 1-9 grading system and has written grade descriptors for the four skills, working backwards from the draft GCSE revised specifications.

The decoupling of AS from AL should not make much difference as there is an expectation in the school that *'if you start an A level, you should stick with it'*. Everyone does four A levels at Thomas Telford School or BTEC equivalent courses. Pupils have to achieve an A grade at GCSE to be eligible for the A level course but often the more able students are drawn towards A levels in Science and Maths.

Pupils

Pupils are conscientious and well-disposed towards languages, though they regard it as a test of their own application and discipline for learning rather than a truly joyful experience as a result of the rigours of rote learning for coursework. Teachers hope that with the removal of the coursework element at Key Stage 4 and the introduction of

more transactional language pupils will benefit from languages being taught for genuine purposes.

Teachers encourage sixth formers especially to read newspapers and to watch films in the foreign language and the opportunity for cultural learning is something which the department also hopes to develop lower down the school. There is a crammed timetable for teaching and assessment, which means that languages related extra-curricular activities are centred on language support and speaking practice for A level students. It is also logistically demanding to provide equity between languages for trips abroad.

One AS student the researchers spoke to said that she wants to join the army as a musician and thinks German will be useful. Pupils also commented that their parents regret not having had the opportunities that languages can bring.

'Our parents can't speak languages'

'I like the way words are said in German'

'Every teacher expects you to put a lot of effort into it. There is a lot of pressure and lots to do in your own time.'

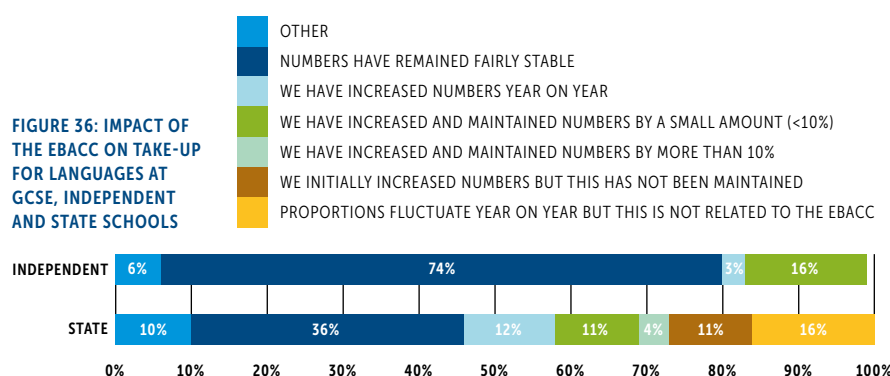


Past and future impact of the EBacc at Key Stage 4

Has the proportion of pupils taking a language to GCSE changed as a result of the introduction of the EBacc from 2011?

Survey findings in previous years showed that a proportion of state schools (38 per cent in 2014) had seen overall rises in the number of pupils taking languages in Key Stage 4, and that one of the principal reasons was the introduction of the EBacc. However, the impact of the EBacc was less marked in 2014 than it had been in 2013, and this was linked to the changed status or ineffectiveness of the EBacc. This year, respondents were asked to choose from a menu of options describing how the EBacc policy might have affected the numbers taking GCSE languages in their school.

The impact of the EBacc was less marked in 2014 than it had been in 2013, and this was linked to the changed status or ineffectiveness of the EBacc



The responses presented in Figure 36 show that the EBacc has had a lasting impact in 27 per cent of state schools. This comprises 12 per cent where numbers for languages GCSEs have increased year on year, 11 per cent where they have increased by a small amount, and 4 per cent where they have been increased and maintained by more than 10 per cent. Respondents from schools where the EBacc has had an impact on numbers comment as follows:

'(The EBacc) has been a very positive introduction for us, and it has helped to maintain high numbers.'

'When I arrived at my school in 2010 there were four classes doing languages in a year group of 180 students. Since the EBacc we have had six or seven classes every new Year 10.'

Others comment that they did not need the EBacc to keep numbers for languages high:

'MFL has always been quite popular so the compulsory EBacc pathway hasn't had a huge impact on numbers.'

For some, the EBacc has at least helped to stop numbers falling:

'Languages have never been fully optional at this school. Therefore, our numbers have been broadly stable at a high level (approximately 60–70 per cent of learners) for many years. The introduction of the EBacc has helped us make the case for continuing with languages, when languages became non-compulsory (again).'

There is evidence of fluctuation in school policies, reflecting changes in the status of the EBacc over the past few years:

'We did have large numbers taking languages following the introduction of the EBacc. We then moved to a more open options system. Now we are returning to the EBacc and will have greater numbers taking languages.'

Only 3 per cent of independent schools say that the EBacc has had an impact, although clearly it was not a policy necessarily aimed at the independent sector which already had high take-up for languages at GCSE, but rather intended to bridge the gap between independent and state schools in terms of take-up for 'traditional subjects'. One respondent from an independent school comments:

'The EBacc has helped to raise the numbers of students taking GCSEs as well as teachers' efforts, explaining why is important to learn a language and trying to make it easy for the pupils.'

What is the likely impact of the government's stated intention that all pupils should take a language to GCSE?

The responses above, and those of previous years, show that the impact of the EBacc on language take-up, although positive, has been limited. Now that the government wishes to promote 'compulsory' EBacc for all, or almost all pupils, implying that taking a language to GCSE would become the norm for the vast majority, respondents were asked what the likely impact would be in their school.

The responses presented in Figure 37 show that responses fall into three roughly equal categories: in approximately one third of state schools, there will be no change, either because all or most pupils already take a language to GCSE (22 per cent), or because schools are not likely to (further) promote the EBacc (15 per cent), for example:

'We offer other more exciting GCSE options (childcare/psychology/ICT/drama) which have previously made MFL a "difficult" option choice. Our school has held off from directing even top set pupils, preferring to give way to them and their parents and putting huge pressure on the department to increase uptake by magic!'

Another third of state schools (34 per cent) are likely to advise pupils more strongly that they should study a language at GCSE:

'The school moved towards languages being non-compulsory at GCSE but the EBacc route has been strongly advised for the majority of students. Students opt in during Year 8 and do a three-year GCSE course from Year 9 onwards. There has been a decrease from 78 per cent uptake at Key Stage 4 to 63 per cent recently, and the school has targeted the department to aim for a 90 per cent uptake for languages at GCSE. Therefore, promotion of languages at Key Stage 3 is now paramount.'

The final third say that they are more likely to make languages compulsory, either for some pupils (29 per cent) or all pupils (9 per cent).

'We are due to change to compulsory MFL study for all students at Key Stage 4 from September 2016.'

In response to the government's stated intention that all pupils should take a language to GCSE, one third of state schools say that they will advise their pupils more strongly to study a language to GCSE

'This is very likely to change from next September with it being compulsory for about 60 per cent and for our present Year 7 to be compulsory for all but SEN students if the DfE plans for all to study EBacc are introduced.'

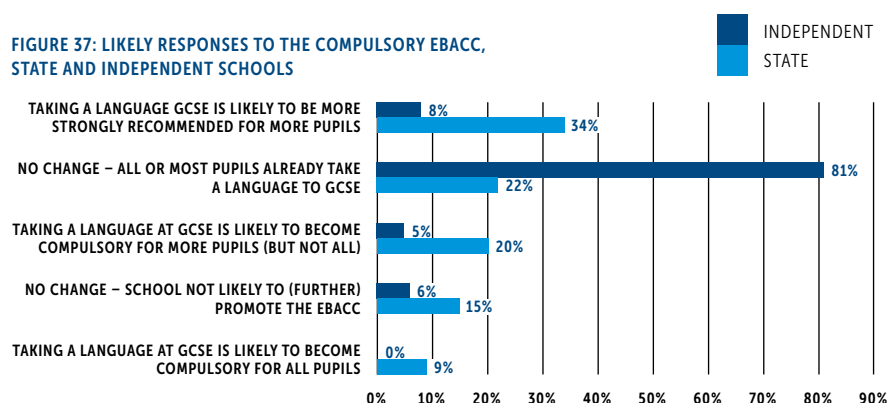
Some schools comment on the specific changes they will need to make to cater for this:

'We will have to employ more staff. We will have to switch our main foreign language from French to Spanish, as pupils find this an easier language to make progress in.'

'We are hoping to push for an increase of time allocation at Key Stage 4 due to the new EBacc requirements.'

As is to be expected, the vast majority of independent schools are unlikely to make any changes since all or most pupils in this sector already take a language to GCSE.

FIGURE 37: LIKELY RESPONSES TO THE COMPULSORY EBACC, STATE AND INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS



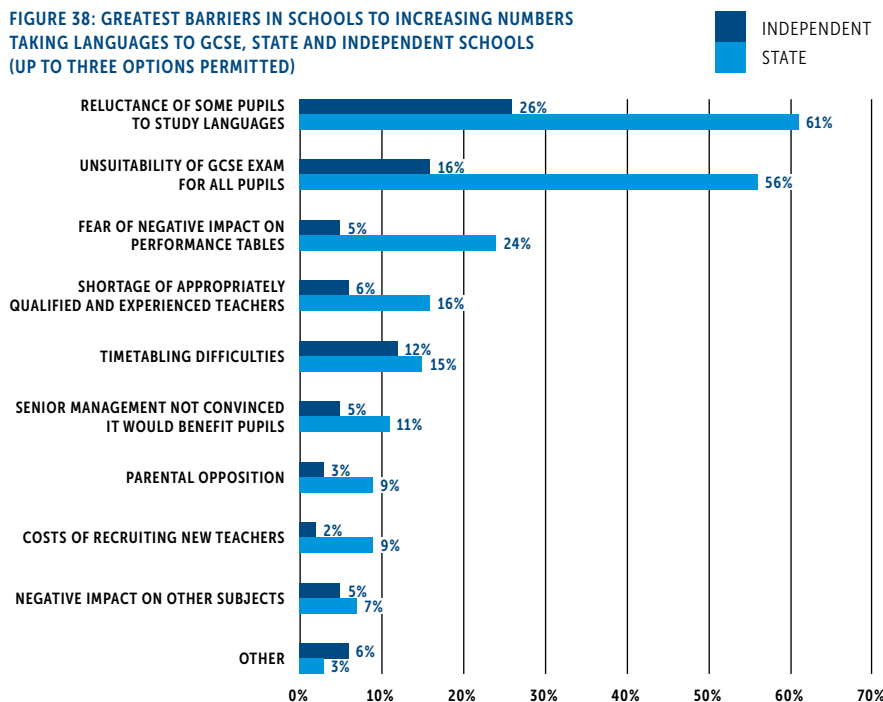
What would be the main barriers to schools increasing the numbers taking languages at GCSE?

Respondents were prompted to tick up to three possible reasons from a menu of options, or to say whether the question was not applicable to them (because all or almost all pupils already take a language to GCSE). Of the independent school respondents, 55 per cent ticked 'not applicable' and of the state school respondents, 16 per cent did so. The responses of the rest are shown in Figure 38.

According to respondents, the greatest barriers – in both the state and independent sectors, but overwhelmingly in the state sector – are the reluctance of some pupils to study languages and the unsuitability of the GCSE exam for all pupils. Only 16 per cent of state school respondents feel that the shortage of suitably qualified and experienced teachers is a significant barrier and although costs and parental opposition are each seen as an obstacle in 9 per cent of state schools, these are not regarded as critical by the majority. The fear of a negative impact on performance tables, or the attitudes of senior management, are issues for a minority of schools.

The greatest barriers – in both the state and independent sectors, but overwhelmingly in the state sector – are the reluctance of some pupils to study languages and the unsuitability of the GCSE exam for all pupils

FIGURE 38: GREATEST BARRIERS IN SCHOOLS TO INCREASING NUMBERS TAKING LANGUAGES TO GCSE, STATE AND INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS (UP TO THREE OPTIONS PERMITTED)



Further comments focus on the perceived difficulty of languages for weaker students or in comparison with other subjects:

'It is simply too hard in its new format for many students who are weak. It would have an impact on behaviour.' (state sector)

'Languages are perceived as a challenging subject. Some students think that they will be more successful by getting higher results in less demanding subjects.' (independent sector)

Other barriers mentioned by state sector respondents in their free comments include pressure on the curriculum, financial concerns and the perceived lack of importance of languages compared to other subjects:

'Limited number of option choices [four for most pupils] means that many who don't take a language simply because they have other priorities – a language often comes in as choice five or six!'

'Financial concerns as government funding decreasing to grammar schools.'

'Not seen to be important – culture stresses maths and English as the important subjects.'

'The school would only make it compulsory to study a language to GCSE if the government made it compulsory.'

In the independent sector, respondents also comment on the squeezed curriculum, and make additional points about parental choice and the impact of dyslexia on pupils learning languages:

'We would like to increase the number of students studying two languages at GCSE. This is difficult with the number of options allowed and the promotion of three individual sciences.'

Comments focus on the perceived difficulty of languages for weaker students or in comparison with other subjects

'As we are a small independent, fee-paying school, parents feel that they should have the right to choose whether or not their child learns a language. A minority of parents is not convinced of the importance of languages. The awareness of the EBacc and the government's plans for languages is low despite information evenings, etc.'

'The main problem for me is dyslexia. Our school is independent and we take a large number of dyslexic students who find it really difficult to memorise spellings.'

Teacher supply

Among the relatively few comments in the survey relating to teacher supply, a number of state school respondents note the difficulty in finding high-quality applicants:

'When we have recruited recently it has been very difficult and we've been forced to accept people we wouldn't normally employ.'

'We are sending fewer and fewer people to university to study a language and have to rely on EU teachers (I am one) to supply the needs in MFL teachers.'

'We are struggling to bring in quality people to the profession and we are also struggling to hold onto experienced colleagues due to the pressures mentioned above. It is creating a situation whereby the only way to continue teaching in a positive, creative, valued and professional environment is to move abroad or to the independent sector. It is becoming a sad place to be.'

The answers to this question were analysed by socio-economic and performance indicators. These analyses showed that:

• By free school meals quintile:

- Schools in the least economically deprived circumstances (low and mid-low proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals) were less likely to report teacher supply problems as a potential barrier to increasing numbers taking languages at GCSE, though those in the middle quintile were the most likely to highlight this.
- Schools in the most economically deprived circumstances were the most likely to report timetabling difficulties as a barrier.
- Schools across the socio-economic spectrum were likely to report that pupils' reluctance to study a language was the main barrier, although for the least economically deprived group of schools this was less significant and did not equate to a majority of schools.
- Schools in the least-deprived quintile were also less likely to say that the unsuitability of the GCSE exam was a barrier, although this still emerged as their second-highest concern.
- Schools in the middle and mid-low quintiles in terms of socio-economic deprivation were most likely to report that senior management views were a barrier to increasing the numbers taking languages at GCSE.

Schools in the most economically deprived circumstances were the most likely to report timetabling difficulties as a barrier



• By performance quintile:

- Schools in the top performance quintile were least likely to report that the unsuitability of the GCSE exam was a barrier to increasing the numbers taking languages, and least likely to report that teacher supply or the cost of appointing new teachers would be a barrier.
- A very high proportion (83 per cent) of schools in the mid-low quintile for educational performance said that the reluctance of some pupils to study languages would be a barrier. This compared to 45 per cent of schools in the highest quintile, and between 58 and 64 per cent of schools in the other performance quintiles.
- Schools in the lowest performance quintile were most likely to say that parental opposition would be a factor, though the proportion doing so was still low.

Schools in the top performance quintile were least likely to report that the unsuitability of the GCSE exam was a barrier to increasing the numbers taking languages

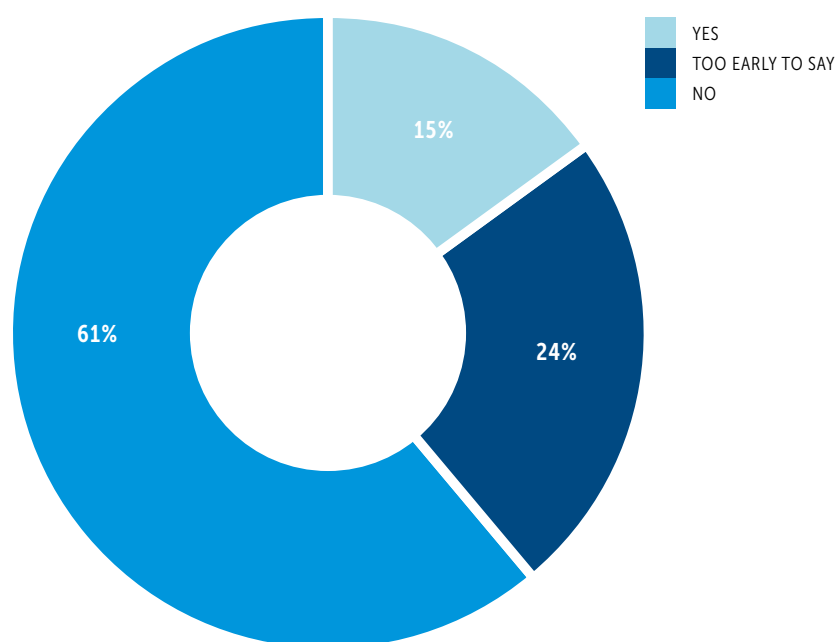
Take-up post-16

Two thirds (67 per cent) of the responding state schools have post-16 pupils, but not all teach a language at this level – around 10 per cent do not.

Have increases at Key Stage 4 also led to increases in numbers taking languages post-16?

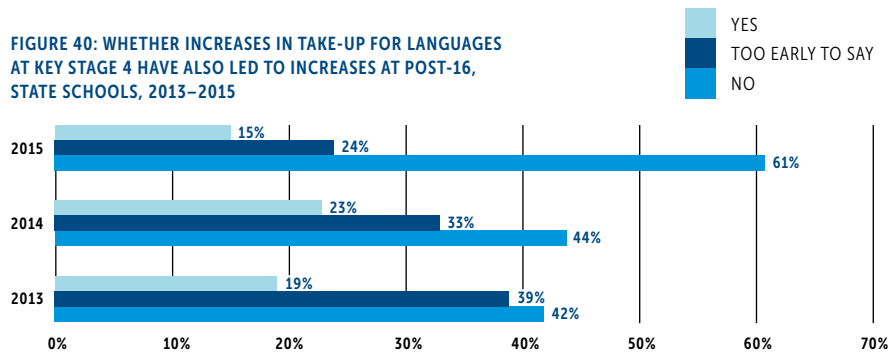
This question was answered by 250 state school and 48 independent school respondents. Of the state school respondents, only 15 per cent say that the EBacc policy has led to increases in take-up for languages post-16, compared to 61 per cent which say it has not, and 24 per cent who report that it is too early to say. Of the 48 independent school respondents (too small a number to present as percentages), half (24) agree that there has been no impact, 13 say it is too early to judge and 11 say that increases at Key Stage 4 have indeed led to increases post-16.

FIGURE 39: WHETHER INCREASED NUMBERS FOR LANGUAGES AT GCSE HAVE LED TO INCREASED TAKE-UP POST-16, STATE SCHOOLS, 2015



Compared to survey responses in previous years, the impact of the EBacc on take-up for languages post-16 is judged by this year's survey respondents to be much lower. Whereas in previous years, around one third of respondents said that it was too early to judge the impact of the EBacc on take up for languages post-16, only 24 per cent now do so. This may be because the cohort initially impacted by the EBacc policy as regards GCSE take up has now progressed to post-16 study. However, the proportion of schools now saying that the EBacc has had a beneficial impact on the number of students studying languages post-16 has now decreased from 23 per cent in 2014 to 15 per cent in this survey.

FIGURE 40: WHETHER INCREASES IN TAKE-UP FOR LANGUAGES AT KEY STAGE 4 HAVE ALSO LED TO INCREASES AT POST-16, STATE SCHOOLS, 2013–2015



The proportion of schools now saying that the EBacc has had a beneficial impact on the number of students studying languages post-16 has now decreased

Qualitative evidence drawn from respondents' comments shows some of the reasons why increased numbers taking the GCSE have failed to translate into AS and A level candidates. These include a preference for maths and science, the risk of not getting a good grade in languages and the inadequacy of GCSE as a preparation for A level study:

'It is very hard to recruit for Key Stage 5. Our students are very much science and maths oriented and languages are seen to be difficult.'

'Pressure to take maths and further maths has meant that some students wanting to take an A level language but study engineering type university courses cannot fit the maths and science requirements as well as the demands of a language, and it is the language which gets sacrificed!'

'Numbers in Key Stage 5 have actually dropped. Our most talented linguists were in mixed-ability classes and this has adversely affected take-up (as well as the move to only three AS levels in Year 12).'

'There is no correlation between increased take-up at GCSE and A level as the GCSE exams have become so difficult and the controlled assessments have taken out all the fun that fewer students choose to stay on.'

In some schools, a tipping point has already been reached when only small numbers opt for a language and the subject becomes unviable. Others report that they are heading in this direction:

'Very few want to continue. We have had three or four students who were interested but the school would not finance such a small class. We have a partnership with another school but students are put off travelling and having different teachers.'

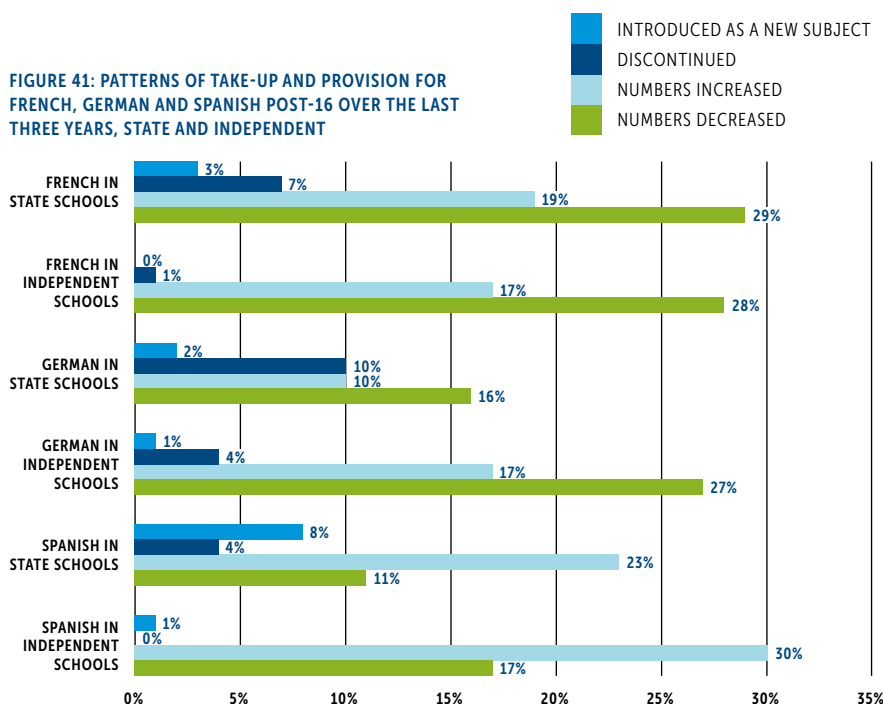
'The numbers at A level continue to drop and are disappointing – to the point that courses are under threat. We put over 120 through French GCSE each year and are lucky to get five in Year 12.'

'SLT have decided to scrap A level language for the current Year 11 who are our biggest intake of MFL students in several years...and we know we have several who wish to take languages but that option will not be available to them.'

More schools have seen declines in the number of students taking French and German at A level than have seen increases

What are the patterns of take-up and provision for French, German and Spanish at post-16/sixth form over the last three years?

As shown in Figure 41, more schools have seen declines in the number of students taking French and German at A level than have seen increases. Also, in both the independent and state sectors, more schools have discontinued French or German at A level than have introduced them as new subjects. In contrast, more schools have seen numbers increase for Spanish post-16 than have seen decreases, and it has been introduced as a new subject in more schools than those where it has been discontinued. This pattern holds for both the state and independent sectors.



Survey respondents' comments provide rich qualitative evidence on patterns of take-up and provision for French, German and Spanish post 16 in both the state and independent sectors as the following selection of comments shows:

'German is losing popularity – increasing interest in Spanish plus the perception that German is much harder. Lack of A grades in MFL generally leads to lower intake than in other subjects.'* (state sector)

'Strong results at A level in languages, particularly in Spanish.' (state sector)

'German has been discontinued until we can find an A level teacher.'

(state sector)

'German has had greater success in GCSE results over the past few years and attracts more boys at Key Stage 4.' (state sector)

'The playing field for German is uneven – there is only Spanish and French provision in the school's junior school; four times as many Year 7s opt for Spanish when coming to the senior school than for German. Pupils are able to do advanced French and seldom opt for a second language at GCSE. A level pupils do only three full A levels and no fourth AS anymore which means that both German and Spanish (but also other subjects such as Music, DT, etc.) have seen a decrease. In a survey, pupils have indicated that they think a GCSE qualification is enough. In our school, there is a great uptake and a lot of advocacy for the STEM subjects to the detriment of the human sciences.'
(independent sector)

Key points

- There are some modest signs that the situation for languages may be improving in some state schools, with indications that smaller numbers of pupils are being disappplied at Key Stage 3 and that lesson time for languages is being increased.
- However, opportunities to study a language are still associated with high-performing schools and those with low indices of socio-economic deprivation.
- Pupils' reluctance to study a language and the unsuitability of GCSE for all pupils are seen as the most significant barriers to implementing EBacc languages for greater numbers of pupils.
- There is no evidence that schools are gearing up for big increases in the numbers taking languages at GCSE as a result of the compulsory EBacc proposal.
- The evidence from this year's Language Trends survey is that the EBacc is having very little impact on the numbers taking languages post-16. Many schools cite pupils' preference for maths and science as well as the difficulty of getting a top grade in a language as the reasons for this.

Opportunities to study a language are still associated with high-performing schools and those with low indices of socio-economic deprivation

Chapter 7

Quality indicators and issues in secondary schools



How will schools rise to the challenge of increased expectations for pupils' attainment within the new GCSE?

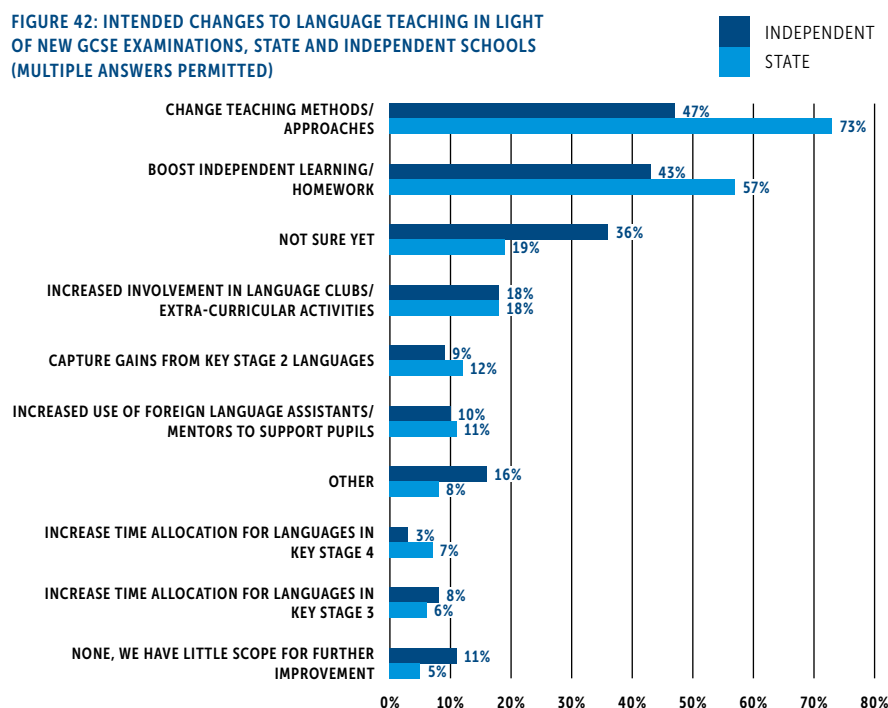
This chapter looks at what schools are doing to improve language teaching and also examines the opportunities for language teachers' CPD, an important factor in ensuring all children have access to high-quality language teaching which prepares them for success in public examinations and entuses them for further study.

Some significant changes are taking place in the way in which languages are taught in state secondary schools

Responses to the new GCSE syllabuses

What changes will schools be making to language teaching in response to the demands of the new GCSE examinations?

In light of impending new GCSE examinations, intended to be more rigorous and a better measure of consolidated language skills, respondents were asked what changes they intend to make in their schools. The results in Figure 42 indicate that some significant changes are taking place in the way in which languages are taught in state secondary schools, with nearly three quarters of schools (73 per cent) saying that they are either intending to change their approach and teaching methods or have already done so:



In their comments, many respondents describe changes to Schemes of Work in Key Stage 3 to reflect the requirements of the new GCSE as well as changes to assessments designed to help pupils prepare more effectively for the new examinations:

'We are introducing a new assessment process which mirrors the exam in order to better prepare students and give us a clear idea of where they are in terms of progress.'

'Delivery of grammar is now essential and we have started with current Key Stage 3 learners.'

'We are adjusting our teaching in Key Stage 3 to incorporate the skills needed at Key Stage 4 such as translation, transcription and reading authentic texts.'

Some respondents say that they are planning to begin the GCSE course in Year 9 to give pupils three years to prepare for the examination rather than two (see Chapter 6, which indicates that 26 per cent of schools have already gone down this route:

'We are thinking about starting the GCSE course in Year 9 so that we have three years to complete it.'

Others expect to have to make changes to staffing as well as the languages taught in school:

'We will have to employ more staff. We will have to switch our main foreign language from French to Spanish as pupils find this an easier language to make progress in.'

However, there are also those who feel that the new examinations will not require them to make any changes at all, for example:

'We have not been to the exam training – we feel confident that we already offer a good language learning experience and that we will not have to adapt too much – the whole school focus has been learning habits and the creation of independent learners.'

Very few teachers in either the state or independent sector (see Figure 42) expect to see an increase in time allocation for languages in either Key Stage 3 or Key Stage 4. In a number of schools, shrinking time for languages is exacerbated by budget cuts which mean that they are no longer able to employ an FLA, which is a valuable resource particularly for working on oral skills with small groups of pupils:

'We have no FLAs this year for the first time. This will have a huge impact on GCSE students who would normally benefit from small group sessions with the assistants.'

'We have always organised clubs and extra support and valued independent work. Unfortunately, we lost our FLAs two years ago due to finances. We are also going to lose one hour of teaching in Year 11 (only four hours left per fortnight). There has been no increase of allocation for languages at Key Stage 3.'

This respondent summed up the situation for many as follows:

'New challenges, harder exams, but less or no additional time.'

Some respondents say that they are planning to begin the GCSE course in Year 9 to give pupils three years to prepare for the examination rather than two

Following on from comments set out in the earlier chapter on Transition, it is significant that few respondents (see Figure 42) think that capturing gains from four years of language learning in primary school will enable pupils to reach the standards required:

'We have yet to see gains from Key Stage 2 languages. If this happens, we will use the gains to draw down the current curriculum by 1–2 years, where possible.'

'Primary language provisions are not as rigorous as promised. They do not have the capacity to teach languages well in many primary schools and so pupils are often already 'turned off' languages before they arrive at secondary school. To say that they are entering with national curriculum level 3 or 4 is ridiculous – they only know nouns! It is assumed that because of primary languages, secondary teachers can get pupils to almost the previous AS level by Year 11, but this is not the case. I worry that the new GCSE will be too difficult and will result in even fewer pupils continuing to take languages further than GCSE. If there was funding for excellent MFL teachers to work in primary schools, the new model could actually work, but I fear this will not be the case and languages will suffer yet again.'

The disjointed way in which the new, tougher GCSEs are being introduced means that the new examinations will be taken in the first instance by cohorts of pupils who have not studied a language as a compulsory subject in Key Stage 2. In order to bring them up to the required level, these students can expect to be given an increased amount of homework and to learn independently – as many as 57 per cent of state school respondents say they plan to use this approach.

Although the pattern of responses from both independent and state school respondents is similar, a far higher proportion of independent schools (more than a third, compared to 19 per cent of state schools) are not yet sure how they will approach the challenge of the new GCSEs, and a higher (although still) small proportion (11 per cent) think they have little scope for further improvement, compared to just 5 per cent in the state sector.

Continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers

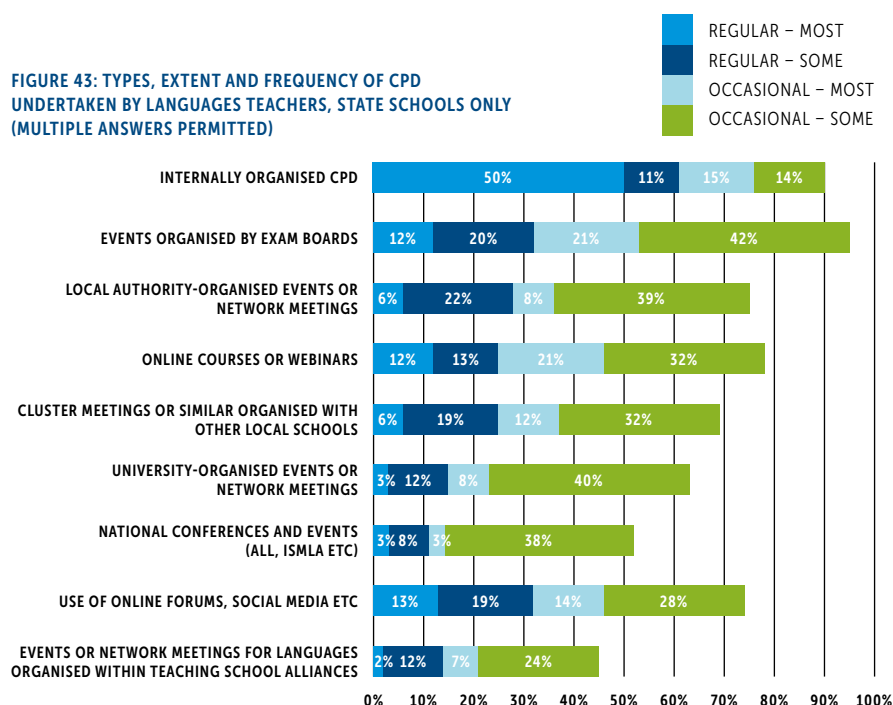
What level of involvement do language teachers have in different types of CPD for languages?

In previous years, Language Trends surveys have shown that the most common types of CPD undertaken by languages teachers in the state sector are internally organised training and events organised by exam boards. Language teachers in independent schools tend to be more frequent participants at national events and conferences, but correspondingly less involved, as would be expected, with local authority meetings, although about a third (2014 figures) do take part in cluster meetings with other schools. Independent school respondents also appear to be more frequent users of online courses, webinars and social media for professional development.

Language teachers in independent schools tend to be more frequent participants at national events and conferences than their state school peers

While this year's survey confirms these findings from previous years, it also probes more deeply into patterns of participation in different types of CPD, by asking whether schools' involvement is regular or occasional and by most or just some members of the languages department:

FIGURE 43: TYPES, EXTENT AND FREQUENCY OF CPD UNDERTAKEN BY LANGUAGES TEACHERS, STATE SCHOOLS ONLY (MULTIPLE ANSWERS PERMITTED)



The findings presented in Figure 43 show that internally organised CPD remains the principal means of professional development undertaken most regularly and involves most members of the languages departments in state schools, for example:

'We have a lead teacher (new) in our department who delivers excellent CPD. We all share resources/ideas as meetings (as of this year).'

It is interesting to note that, in 11 per cent of responding state schools, there is no involvement at all in internal CPD for languages.

Although there is widespread use of other different types of CPD, these tend to attract only occasional involvement from some, rather than all, members of the languages department. As many as 45 per cent of schools now have at least some occasional involvement with a Teaching School Alliance in relation to languages.

The qualitative data reveal that issues such as funding, lack of time, geographical location and the fact that some schools' languages departments comprise only one teacher are cited as reasons why teachers are unable to take part in languages-related CPD. The following comments are from state school teachers:

'There is no funding to go on external courses. The CPD offered in school is not specific to needs and is generic. The most useful CPD is completed in departmental meetings driven by the MFL staff.'

As many as 45 per cent of schools now have at least some occasional involvement with a Teaching School Alliance in relation to languages

'Costs and timings (being out of school) are issues. Very few, if any, event details are passed on. We are developing better links with our feeder schools.'

'We are located in a very isolated part of the country.'

'CPD which needs to be paid for is less likely. Network meetings are fewer and fewer.'

'This has been a real issue – due to financial constraints (like many schools we are in deficit). The Best Practice Forum, run originally by the local education authority, was a vital link with other schools in our area, and enabled excellent sharing of good practice, but from September 2014 we have not been allowed to attend even this.'

'Attendance at cluster meetings is compulsory for heads of department three times yearly and once yearly for the rest of the staff. I requested attendance at exam board training for the new GCSE from the vice president in charge of CPD but I did not receive a reply. County network meetings now defunct, no funding. Voluntary network meetings exist – I am not able to attend due to compulsory scheduled school meetings.'

Some schools have found ways to participate in CPD training and/or events. These include the use of commercial providers, collaboration through clusters or networks, and a number of cost-neutral solutions

Respondents from the independent sector experience similar constraints:

'There is only one MFL teacher employed by the school and little funding available for anything other than compulsory events. Any dialogue with other professionals happens through contact with former colleagues from other schools or with the exams officer/former MFL teacher at the school.'

'With an increasing workload and having to learn the new developments in technology, CPD in actual language pedagogy has been neglected.'

However, some schools have found ways to participate in CPD training and/or events. These include the use of commercial providers, collaboration through clusters or networks, and a number of cost-neutral solutions:

• State school respondents

'I host the Borough Network meetings and I am a member of ALL; I also attend the regional network meetings. Other members of the department have attended external courses and the whole department attends the MFL Network conference at the end of the year at the school.'

'I am the only French teacher at the school and I am part of the Communications faculty (with English teachers)! I have done a webinar with the AQA exam board about changes to the GCSE MFL from 2016 onwards (so I can teach Year 9 to the syllabus/exam spec) and I get regular post about courses and resources, but not information on local courses, clusters schools, etc. We do have CPD within our school and also coaching for teachers by outstanding teachers to enable us to improve.'

'Specific training days organised by CPD companies such as OSIRIS, Dragonfly, etc.'

'We are in a group called NEEEP and regularly share ideas through BOX and have regular meetings. As a result of these some schools have collaborated in teaching languages/revision skills at the University of Essex.'

• Independent school respondents

'Courses/ lectures/ exhibitions at the language institutes in London.'

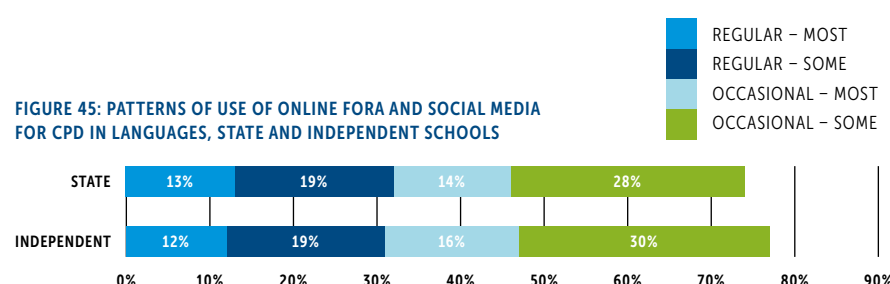
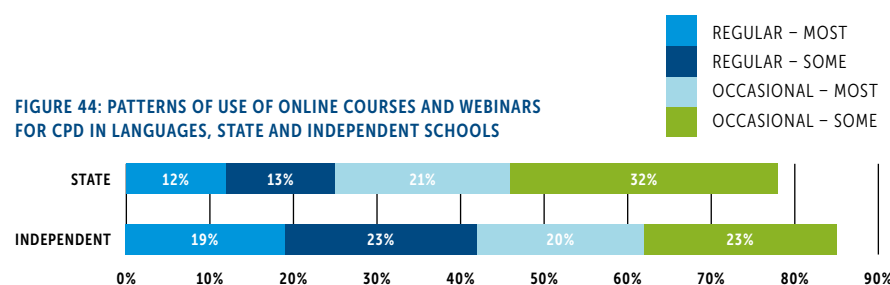
'There is no money available for training for which a fee is charged. However, we regularly attend day courses at our local languages college and find these very useful. AQA webinars on changes to GCSE and ALL courses have been excellent.'

Just one school responded 'None' to all, and they reference 'In department CPD only' in the comments.

While all, or almost all, language departments take part occasionally in at least one form of CPD, around 20 per cent of both state and independent schools never take part in any form of CPD on a regular basis.

To what extent are teachers of languages using the internet for CPD in languages?

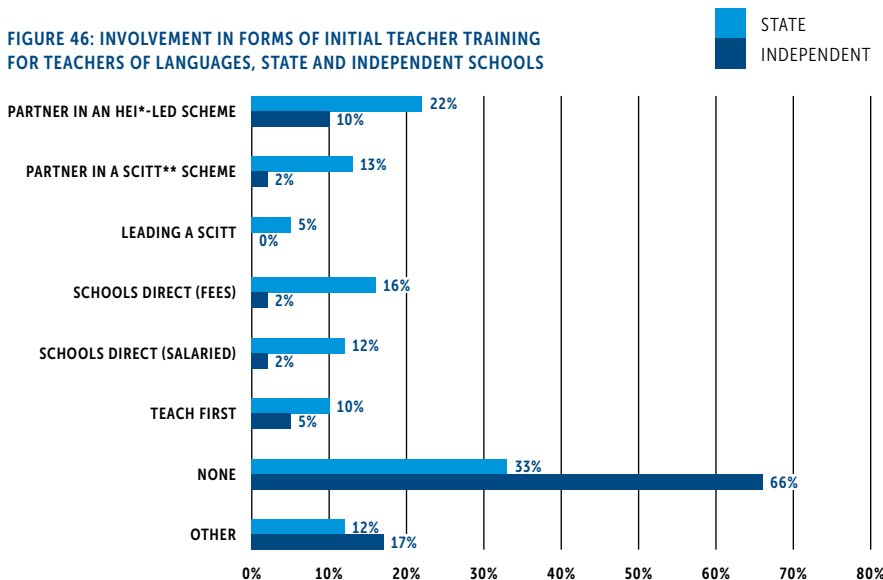
The responses to this year's survey allow a comparison between independent and state schools in the extent to which they exploit the internet for CPD in languages. Figures 44 and 45 show that independent schools tend to be more regular and extensive users of online courses and webinars for CPD in languages than their counterparts in the state sector. However, patterns of use of online fora and social media are very similar in both sectors.



Independent schools tend to be more regular and extensive users of online courses and webinars for CPD in languages than their counterparts in the state sector

What involvement do schools have in initial training for teachers of languages?

Two thirds of responding state schools (67 per cent) and one third of independent schools (33 per cent) are involved in some form of initial training for teachers of languages (ITT):



*Higher Education Institution ** School-Centred Initial Teacher Training

Two thirds of responding state schools (67 per cent) and one third of independent schools (33 per cent) are involved in some form of initial training for teachers of languages

The qualitative data provide a clear illustration of the different patterns of involvement in ITT in the state and independent sectors.

A variety of comments from state school teachers illustrate the range of ITT programmes they are involved in, as well as the importance of university links:

'PGCE is the most secure and supportive route into teaching and we support this.'

'Link with School for Education Futures at local university. PGCE students regularly undertake placements here.'

'Open University PGCE student this year. Last year we hosted a Schools Direct trainee.'

'We train PGCE students mainly in Mandarin and occasionally in French and Spanish.'

'We are the lead school in a Teaching School Alliance and have various partnerships with universities, Schools Direct, etc.'

Schools also comment on a number of constraints they face in taking part in ITT:

- **The heavy workload of serving teachers:**

'The time burden that it places on staff when pressures are already considerable – from dealing with behaviour, data entry and marking.'

'Due to our current workload and heavy teaching timetables we are unable to offer ITT for languages, as no member of staff has space on their timetable for mentoring and the necessary support.'

'Having been involved with Birmingham University for years, we now feel under too much pressure of work in school to continue to offer training.'

- **The poor quality of trainees and a lack of trainees who can offer the languages the school needs:**

'Lack of appropriately qualified trainees (we need dual linguists). Lack of trainees in general.'

'Very few Germanists!'

'We would love an Urdu ITT student but can't seem to find any!'

'We lead the academy SCITT program for MFL and had a healthy recruitment of four SCITT trainees for MFL this year. Last year we had no suitable applicants and therefore the shortage of appropriate applicants is a barrier to our future involvement.'

'Graduates of PGCE seem to be getting worse and worse in terms of resilience, organisation and punctuality.'

'We have not had a PGCE student for some time. Too many issues with providers and the poor quality of students.'

- **Shrinkage of the language department and changes in management policy:**

'We continue to support teacher training programmes but no longer have the capacity in the department to host two trainees at a time as our department is half the size it was five years ago.'

'The Academy Trust has decided to no longer participate.'

- **Cuts to partner university allocations:**

'A lower number of places for languages was offered to our training provider so we have no trainees this year.'

Although a far smaller proportion of respondents from the independent sector report active involvement in ITT for languages, the qualitative evidence from those that do shows they have similar partnerships with training providers:

'We have PGCE placements but also work with Queen Mary's University London who offer a Modern Language Experience to their undergraduates.'

Independent sector respondents also give rather different reasons for their school's lack of ITT involvement, of which the following comments are typical examples:

'Our teaching environment is so challenging with demanding parents that we would not have the time to support a teacher new to teaching on the job.'

'In the private sector, using a PGCE type of workforce is not deemed appropriate by parents.'

'This is not appropriate at present as both staff are highly experienced. When they retire new teachers will need to be recruited but these are not likely to be NQTs.'

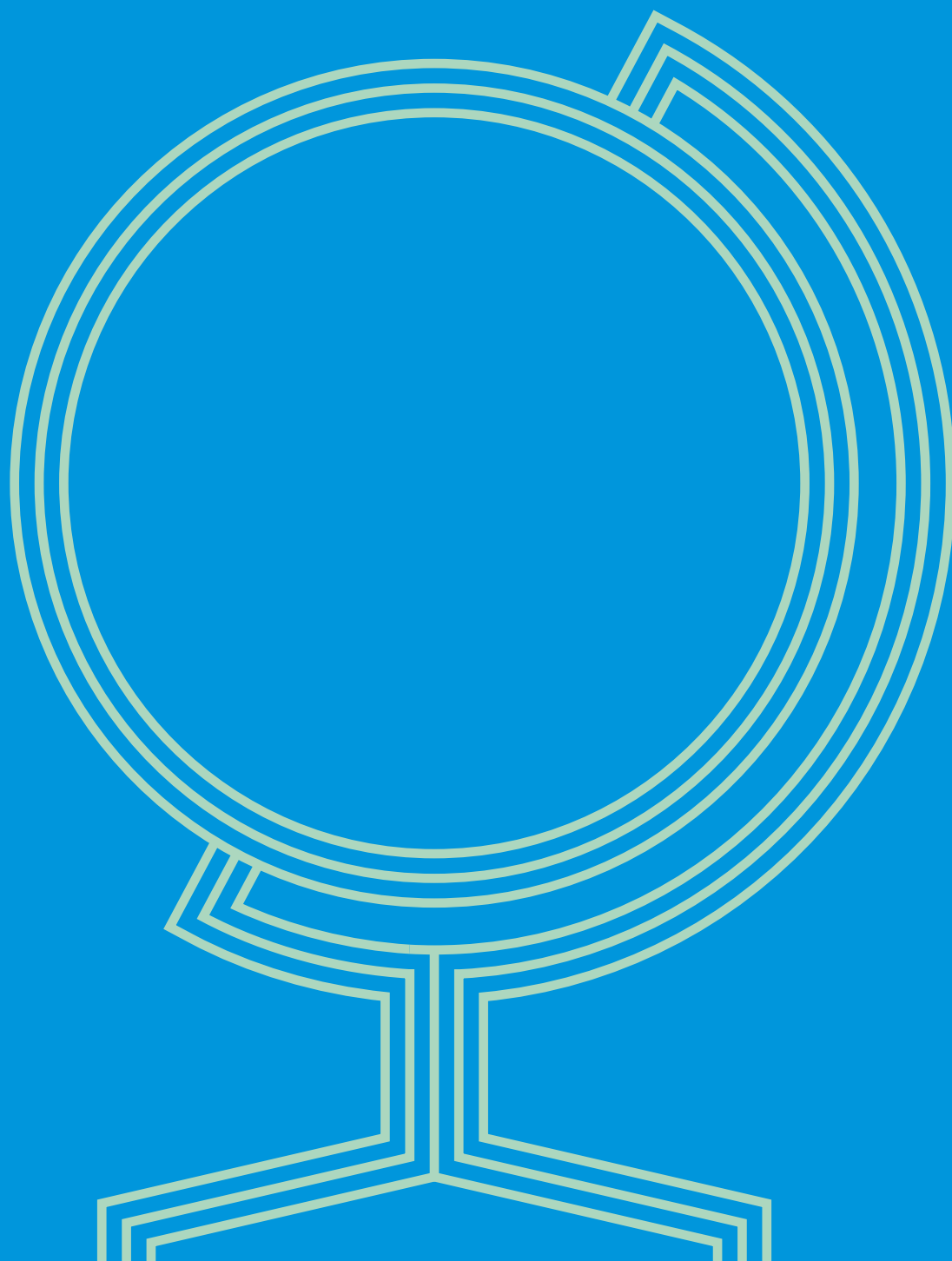
Reasons why schools do not engage in ITT for languages include shrinkage of the languages department and changes in management policy

Key points

- The majority of teachers will rely on improved methods and approaches to prepare students for the new GCSEs. They will also introduce more independent learning and homework. Very few see increases in the time allocation for languages or a concerted attempt to build on language learning in primary schools as likely solutions.
- There is no evidence of an active CPD scene for practising teachers or of any drive to develop/update professional skills through CPD.
- There are a number of barriers to participation in ITT including the heavy workload of practising teachers, the poor quality of trainees, the lack of trainees with languages and the shrinking size of language departments.

Chapter 8

Diversity in language learning in secondary schools



This chapter looks at provision for lesser-taught languages and the potential impact on the preparation of students in these languages if qualifications were to be withdrawn by Awarding Bodies. The situation for home languages spoken by pupils and the provision for ancient languages are also probed.

Provision for lesser-taught languages

What provision do schools make for lesser-taught languages?

Although trends show that since the beginning of the decade there has been an increase in GCSE entries for many of the lesser-taught languages, very small numbers of schools offer teaching in Arabic, Chinese, Italian, Japanese, Russian and Urdu. Because of the small numbers, it is hard to identify trends in provision from year to year: any variance may be due to the particular sample of schools responding to the survey.

In this year's survey efforts were made to explore provision for these lesser-taught languages by asking whether they are taught in each key stage as a full curriculum subject leading to examination (in the case of Key Stages 4 and 5) and/or whether they are enrichment options – i.e. voluntary or taster sessions not leading to public examinations. The quantitative findings are more easily explained in words for each language rather than through the presentation of data.

The qualitative data reveal a different pattern in the provision of lesser-taught languages between the state and independent sectors. State school respondents describe the provision of one or a very small number of lesser-taught languages depending on the school's policy to offer a language other than French, German or Spanish and depending on the demand within the community from which the school draws its pupil population. In contrast, comments from the independent sector show that they are much more likely to offer their pupils opportunities to learn all/any of the lesser-taught languages listed below, though classes are often extremely small and would almost certainly not be viable in the state sector.

Care needs to be taken in interpreting the quantitative findings presented below. Although in some cases large proportions of schools are shown as offering the language, the number of pupils involved is frequently very small.

Very small numbers of schools offer teaching in Arabic, Chinese, Italian, Japanese, Russian and Urdu

- **Arabic** is offered by 4 per cent of state schools and 13 per cent of independent schools. In the state sector only one responding school offers it at Key Stage 3; it is most commonly offered as a GCSE option at Key Stage 4 (12 schools = 3 per cent). Both at Key Stage 4 and post-16, it is more commonly offered as a full subject than as an enrichment option. In contrast, in the independent sector, Arabic more often appears as an enrichment option than as a full curriculum subject. Seven independent schools in the sample offer it as an enrichment subject in Key Stages 3 and 4, and eight in Key Stage 5. Just two independent schools offer Arabic as a full subject in Key Stage 3, six in Key Stage 4 and four offer it as an AS/AL subject. Previous research on Arabic has shown that the subject is widely taught in Muslim faith schools in both the state and independent sectors, and in state schools in areas with large Muslim populations.⁴⁵

Arabic is offered by 4 per cent of state schools and 13 per cent of independent schools

- **State sector (Arabic)**

'Arabic is offered as an option every 2–3 years for students who can speak and understand but can't read or write, or need input with these skills.'

'We have had an increase in pupils wanting to take Arabic GCSE, which we offer off timetable.'

'After school Arabic 10–20 students approx. in group.'

- **Independent sector (Arabic)**

'The Arabic language is taught from Years 7–11 and the average group has 12 girls.'

- **Chinese** is offered by 13 per cent of state schools and 46 per cent of independent schools. Although it appears as the strongest of the lesser-taught languages, being taught in more schools, in the state sector, it is most commonly offered as an enrichment subject in Key Stage 3 (40 schools = 8 per cent). Some 11 state schools in the sample (2 per cent) offer it as a full subject in Key Stage 3, and 23 (5 per cent) as a GCSE subject in Key Stage 4. Seven (3 per cent) teach AS or AL Chinese and 13 offer it as an enrichment subject in the sixth form. The pattern in independent schools is slightly different. Although Chinese is more commonly offered as an enrichment option than as a full curriculum subject in Key Stage 3 and post-16 (31 schools and 21 schools, respectively), at Key Stage 4, 25 schools offer Chinese as a GCSE course, and only 17 as an enrichment option.

- **State sector (Chinese)**

Quotes from state schools reveal their attempts to introduce Chinese to small groups of pupils at the margins of the curriculum:

'We have an after school extra-curricular club in Mandarin. There are approximately 20 pupils in Year 7. The course is open to pupils and parents from Years 7 to 10 and is once a week for one hour.'

'We have a small group of students at Key Stage 3. We would like to look to extend to possibly a formal group in Key Stage 3 since one of our primary schools has taught Chinese with a Chinese teacher coming in, and a lot of these students wish to continue with the language.'

⁴⁵ British Council (2015), 'The Teaching of Arabic Language and Culture in UK Schools', Alcantara Communications [Online: https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/arabic_report_2015.pdf]

'Groups of up to 15 Year 8 students taking one lesson of Mandarin a week for one term, on a rotational basis with DT and Food Technology.'

'Two groups also study Mandarin once or twice a week. This is taken from Spanish and French curriculum time. This has been newly introduced this year in an effort to increase the numbers choosing our school in the transition from primary to secondary.'

• Independent sector (Chinese)

'Mandarin Chinese has been introduced as a club at Key Stage 3.'

Chinese is frequently offered in the independent sector to native speaker pupils whose parents wish their children to gain a qualification in their own language:

'The Chinese GCSE / AS / A are taken by native speakers.'

'Chinese – small group of around six – for native speakers only.'

'Mostly Chinese nationals wanting more qualifications.'

- **Italian** is offered by 12 per cent of state schools and 36 per cent of independent schools. In the state sector, as with Chinese, it is most commonly offered as an enrichment subject in Key Stage 3 (23 schools = 5 per cent). The same number of schools offer it as a full GCSE subject in Key Stage 4. Nine schools (3 per cent) offer Italian as an AS/AL option and as an enrichment subject in the sixth form. Italian is relatively strong in the independent sector, with 22 schools (17 per cent) offering it as a GCSE course and 23 as an AS/AL subject. As an enrichment option, it is most commonly offered to sixth formers (17 schools), but 11 schools offer it as an enrichment in Key Stage 3, and nine in Key Stage 4.

'The class size for Italian is small – ten or fewer students. Students are individually offered the opportunity to study Italian through our enrichment programme and will receive a full GCSE at the end of Year 11. Students offered this opportunity are extremely able and study at least one language as an option subject.' (state sector)

'Italian – there are currently ten students in Year 11 who opted to take Italian as a 2nd foreign language to GCSE. Only two students opted for this in the current Year 10 so the course did not run.' (state sector)

'Italian is offered as an ab initio to GCSE course over two years.' (state sector)

'Italian had been taught to half of the year group from Year 7. There are two GCSE classes with a total of 30 pupils.' (state sector)

- **Japanese** is offered by 7 per cent of state schools and 17 per cent of independent schools. Japanese follows a similar pattern to Italian, with the largest number of schools (20) offering it as an enrichment option in Key Stage 3, and 14 offering it as a GCSE subject in Key Stage 4. Just seven state schools in the sample (2 per cent) offer Japanese as a full Key Stage 3 subject and eight teach it at AS/AL. Six offer it as an enrichment subject in the sixth form. In independent schools, the largest number of schools (13 = 10 per cent) offer it as an enrichment in Key Stage 3, nine as an enrichment in Key Stage 4 and 13 as an enrichment in the sixth form. Two schools offer Japanese as a full curriculum subject in Key Stage 3, eight offer it as a GCSE course and eight as an AS/AL course.

Italian is relatively strong in the independent sector, with 22 schools (17 per cent) offering it as a GCSE course and 23 as an AS/AL subject

'Japanese is offered as part of the curriculum as a second language to our most-able linguists.' (state sector)

'Japanese is offered as a timetabled enrichment subject in the sixth form. A few students manage to take a GCSE after two years of study (only one or two lessons a week). Japanese is offered as an after school club for the lower school and is popular with 20–25 students attending regularly.' (state sector)

'For Japanese ab initio in the International Baccalaureate (IB) we have ten students.' (state sector)

'Japanese – run as an extra-curricular language and culture club just for fun. It is well attended by students across the age range in Key Stages 3 and 4 (also open to Key Stage 5).' (state sector)

In the state sector Russian is taught as an enrichment subject in Key Stage 3 by 12 schools (3 per cent) and by 11 schools in Key Stage 4

- **Russian** is offered by 7 per cent of state schools and 24 per cent of independent schools. In the state sector Russian is taught as an enrichment subject in Key Stage 3 by 12 schools (3 per cent) and by 11 schools in Key Stage 4. Eleven schools also offer it as a GCSE subject, but only five start teaching it as a full subject at Key Stage 3. Seven state schools in the sample (3 per cent of those teaching pupils at this stage) offer opportunities to study Russian to AS/AL, and in five schools sixth formers can take Russian as an enrichment subject. In the independent sector, more schools offer Russian as a curriculum subject than as an enrichment option. Seventeen offer AS/AL courses in Russian, 16 offer GCSE courses and eight offer full teaching of Russian as a Key Stage 3 subject. Russian is relatively strong as an enrichment subject in the sixth form (15 schools), and is offered as an enrichment subject by 12 independent schools at Key Stage 3 and by eight independent schools at Key Stage 4.

'Russian is taught to approximately 60 students in Years 8 and 9 and is chosen as an option by 10–30 students at GCSE. Approximately 5–10 students then continue at A level each year.' (state sector)

'Russian is offered as a timetabled enrichment subject in the sixth form. A few students manage to take a GCSE after two years of study (only one or two lessons a week). Russian is offered as an after school club for the lower school and is popular.' (state sector)

- **Urdu** is offered by 4 per cent of state schools and 2 per cent of independent schools. The pattern of provision for Urdu in the state sector is similar to that of Arabic: it is more commonly offered as a GCSE option than as an enrichment subject. Fourteen schools offer GCSE Urdu, six offer it as an enrichment subject in Key Stage 4 and five as an enrichment subject in Key Stage 3. Only two schools offer AS/AL Urdu, and none offer it as an enrichment subject in the sixth form. There is very little teaching of Urdu in the independent sector. Two schools offer it as an exam subject at GCSE and AS/AL, and just one school offers it at Key Stage 3. As an enrichment subject, it appears only in one school at Key Stages 3 and 4, and not at all in independent school sixth forms.

- **State sector (Urdu)**

'40 per cent of our intake is EAL, with approximately 25 per cent being Punjabi/Pushtu speakers. As a result, we teach them the more formal language of Urdu in Years 8–11.'

'Punjabi currently running in Year 9 and 11 but being phased out in all likelihood. Healthy numbers in Key Stage 3 and four for Urdu.'

'Urdu classes are small. There is a Key Stage 3 class, with a mix of abilities, but all with prior knowledge of Urdu from home. Key Stage 4 – five girls.'

'Last group of Urdu pupils this year due to falling numbers (15) and retirement of teacher.'

• Independent sector (Urdu)

'Urdu is only offered to those girls who have Urdu as a home language, although most girls only understand basic Urdu and cannot read, write or speak the language.'

A number of state school respondents also report on schools offering tuition as well as examination preparation in Polish, Portuguese, Dutch and Turkish, for example:

'We offer Polish to students who are Polish nationals and they are taught reading and writing skills as well as grammar. Groups of around four per year.' (state sector)

'We also offer Dutch GCSE off timetable, with the speaking element administered by an external examiner.' (state sector)

The provision of courses in these languages is usually the result of numbers of native speakers attending the school. A number of state sector respondents also comment on the provision of tuition in community languages in their schools:

'Bengali about 15 pupils. We have just launched a Saturday Bengali School that welcomes pupils from the community.' (state sector)

'Punjabi and Gujarati – two classes in Years 8–9 for both languages with student numbers of about 10–20; one GCSE class in Years 10–11 for both languages with numbers of around 10–15. Many have this language as a mother tongue or a second language.' (state sector)

What impact would the withdrawal of GCSE or A level examinations have on provision for lesser-taught languages?

Only respondents from schools already teaching these languages were invited to answer this question (244 state schools and 110 independent schools). More than two thirds of responding independent schools (67 per cent) and over half of state schools (54 per cent) say that the withdrawal of public examinations in these languages would impact on the provision they make.

In the qualitative data, respondents make it clear that the opportunity to have learning acknowledged is a key factor in pupils choosing to study a subject as well as a major motivator. Schools also need the feedback on the effectiveness of their teaching which examination results provide. From the qualitative evidence it is clear that the withdrawal of public examinations in the lesser-taught languages would lead to those languages no longer being taught or studied:

• State sector

'The subject is optional and open to all, but generally attracts more-able students. The withdrawal of qualifications in these subjects would have a very serious impact on their provision; I doubt they would continue to be taught.'

The opportunity to have learning acknowledged is a key factor in pupils choosing to study a subject as well as a major motivator

'We will not be able to offer Japanese post-16 when A level is withdrawn. All languages are only offered on curriculum.'

'We would not offer Urdu if there was no GCSE.'

'We would be unable to offer Russian at GCSE or A level. This would be disastrous.'

'We are very worried about the plans to withdraw Japanese GCSE and A level in the future as we have big groups.'

'We would not be able to justify an hour a week of Japanese if the Japanese GCSE were removed.'

• Independent sector

'Japanese is a well-established language in our school, although the uncertain future of the subject at A level has affected the number of students opting it for Key Stage 3 and GCSE.'

'If Japanese A level is eventually withdrawn, chances are that it will impact in the GCSE provision for this language.'

'We would not continue a language if there were no academic qualification available at the end of the course.'

'In some languages we would just provide teaching for the IB.'

'We would not do a subject at Key Stage 3 that had no GCSE option at Key Stage 4.'

While some state schools comment that the withdrawal of public examinations in lesser-taught languages would not affect their curriculum since these languages are more usually taught as extra-curricular subjects, many nevertheless see other negative impacts from such a move:

'It would not impact on our school curriculum but would be perceived as a negative by the parents of bilingual students.'

'Losing the option for extended languages courses even if just for gifted and talented pupils would be very negative for the status of languages as a whole, in my opinion. But it would have little impact on us as a centre.'

'Pupils who want to have an additional language credit in their mother tongue will be compromised by this. More and more students who speak other languages also wish to study in their parents' country of origin so being unable to do the language to a high degree is an issue.'

'Parents probably wouldn't be interested if the extra-curricular provision didn't lead to a GCSE.'

A number of respondents also point to the value of language diversity to British culture, the importance of equality of opportunity for all and the negative impact on people's perception of our country if we undervalue linguistic diversity:

'It would disadvantage students who speak minority languages and are able to receive recognition for this skill via an official qualification.'

'It would not enable students who are learned in a language to receive credit for such knowledge.'

A number of respondents also point to the value of language diversity to British culture

'These exams place great value on home languages and British values of respect for other cultures and languages, so it would be detrimental not to offer them the opportunity.'

'The inability to value and identify pupils who may have connections with Urdu, Arabic or Japanese disturbs me. We are not tapping into the skills some pupils can offer the country.'

In the state sector, the proportion of schools offering Spanish at different key stages has been increasing

What are the trends in provision for French, German and Spanish?

The vast majority of both independent and state schools (between 94 and 98 per cent, respectively, depending on the key stage) offer French, and in the independent sector, almost as many offer Spanish. In the state sector, the proportion of schools offering Spanish at different key stages has been increasing and now stands at three quarters (75 per cent) in Key Stage 4, and 72 per cent in Key Stages 3 and 5. German, which has been following the opposite trajectory in recent years, does not appear to have lost any further ground in terms of the proportion of schools which offer it. It is taught by approximately half of all state schools and around three quarters of independent schools (actual figures depend on the key stage). However, the qualitative evidence underlines the perception that German is the language which has been most adversely affected by harsh or inconsistent marking, and consequent small and unviable classes:

'When is something going to be done to rescue German, where results here (and in many other schools) are consistently lower than in French or Spanish and this is clearly not due to the teaching?'

'It is already difficult to get high numbers choosing A level although Spanish has been slightly more successful in getting more than 10 students than French (eight this year) but German will almost certainly die out.'

'Languages, and in particular German, have become so difficult and unpredictable that they are not an attractive option for students anymore.'

'Grade boundaries for German [GCSE] have gone up every year without any explanation.'

'German is dying on its feet.'

Spanish continues to be a popular option. One respondent describes how her school has adjusted provision in order to ensure that its popularity does not damage take-up for French:

'Initially, all students studied French and Spanish in Year 7. Spanish has now been removed from Year 7 to maximise progress in French and stem the flow of students towards Spanish in Year 8, when they get to choose which language to study.'

Is provision and take-up increasing or decreasing for lesser-taught languages post-16?

The numbers of responding schools offering languages other than French, German and Spanish post-16 are too small for statistical conclusions about increases or decreases to provision to be drawn. However, raw numbers of schools reporting changes in provision or take-up are shown below. There is a clear pattern of decline across both languages and sectors. In every case, more schools have discontinued offering the language post-16 than have introduced it as a new subject. However,

in schools which are maintaining provision in Arabic (both sectors), Mandarin (both sectors), Russian (both sectors), Italian (independent sector only) and Latin (state sector only), more have increased numbers than have seen the number of students decrease. It must be stressed that the numbers of schools involved are very small, so the picture may not be representative of the situation nationally. Increases in Mandarin and Russian in the independent sector are likely to be as a result of increased numbers of native speaker pupils in sixth forms in these schools. Nonetheless, the figures show both the potential interest from students in learning lesser-taught languages as well as the vulnerability of provision for those languages within the education system as a whole.

Increases in Mandarin and Russian in the independent sector are likely to be as a result of increased numbers of native speaker pupils in sixth forms in these schools

TABLE 7: PATTERNS OF PROVISION AND TAKE-UP FOR LESSER-TAUGHT LANGUAGES POST-16

	Introduced as new subject	Discontinued	Numbers increased	Numbers decreased
Arabic – state	4	7	5	2
Arabic – independent	1	4	1	0
Italian – state	2	10	4	6
Italian – independent	0	3	9	6
Japanese – state	1	10	3	2
Japanese – independent	0	3	2	2
Mandarin – state	1	9	7	1
Mandarin – independent	0	0	12	0
Russian – state	2	8	6	1
Russian – independent	0	2	11	3
Urdu – state	1	9	2	4
Urdu – independent	1	2	0	0
Latin – state	1	9	6	5
Latin – independent	1	0	6	7
Ancient Greek – state	1	10	1	0
Ancient Greek – independent	0	2	3	5

Very few respondents provide qualitative evidence with regard to lesser-taught languages at A levels, but the following are examples of the few teachers from the state sector who have:

‘No languages offered post-16 apart from those taking home languages.’

‘We are encouraging students who speak an additional language to gain a recognised qualification in that language (mainly Portuguese, Polish, Russian and one Chinese) to support progress and statistics.’

‘We are working a lot more on the promotion of languages for sixth form. We have recently opened a new sixth form and each year we have a higher intake and for languages also. There is also a high intake of pupils with other languages as their first language as we have been able to offer them A levels in their mother tongue.’

One state school comments on the unintended consequences of offering a range of languages at GCSE in reducing the potential number of pupils taking A levels:

'As we now offer four languages at GCSE, the numbers for the two languages offered at A level have inevitably dropped. Previously we only taught French and German to GCSE so we had higher numbers of students to choose a language at A level.'

What provision do schools make for ancient languages?

- **Latin** is offered by 18 per cent of state schools and 61 per cent of independent schools. It is taught by more state schools than any of the lesser-taught modern languages and is more deeply embedded in the curriculum, though comments indicate it is often aimed mainly at gifted and talented pupils. Thirty-three state schools (7 per cent) offer Latin as a full Key Stage 3 subject, 41 (9 per cent) offer it as a GCSE subject and 21 (7 per cent of schools with post-16 provision) offer it as an AS/AL subject. In Key Stage 3, it is more often offered as an enrichment subject (39 schools = 8 per cent), but in Key Stages 4 and 5, fewer schools offer it as an enrichment than offer it as an exam option (24 = 5 per cent in Key Stage 4, 11 = 4 per cent in Key Stage 5). Evidence of the range of approaches to the teaching of Latin in state and independent schools can be seen from a sample of the qualitative data provided by survey respondents below:

Thirty-three
state schools
(7 per cent)
offer Latin as a
full Key Stage 3
subject

• State sector (Latin)

'Top set English students at Key Stage 3 study one lesson of Latin a week – approximately 30 students per class. In Year 10 there are 39 students and in Year 11 there are 29 students (three lessons per week) at AS/A2 the classes are approximately five students.'

'All Year 7 are doing Classics and Years 8 and 9 do Latin. Next year they will have Latin as an option for GCSE. In terms of numbers there are around 100 in Years 7, 8 and 9, respectively.'

'Latin is taught aiming at gifted and talented students but numbers are growing as students' interest grows.'

'Latin is offered as a gifted and talented provision to all students in Year 7 identified as such (70+) and take-up is based on parental choice. By Year 8, take-up dwindles to a couple of groups of about 20, GCSE is taken during Year 9. Any continued study during Key Stage 4 takes place after school. In Key Stage 5, Latin can be taken as an enrichment subject.'

'All students take Latin in Year 7; after that it is optional after school. Around 25 take it in Years 8 and 9, and around 18 do GCSE at end of Year 10.'

'The Latin provision is set up as an extra-curricular club, which is provided by outside agencies from a local university.'

'Latin is taught to the whole of Years 7 and 8, but only once a fortnight. All of the sixth form cohort take a module of Russian and Latin. This comprises some language teaching and also cultural/historical elements.'

'Last year, we introduced Latin as a full curriculum subject, four hours fortnightly, for top sets. We now have 60 learners in Year 8 and 60 in Year 7 doing Latin. We use the Cambridge Latin Course (CLC) 1 covering the 12 stages over the two years. The course is completed with classical civilisation and an independent reading programme. At the end of Year 8, learners sit the CLC certificate.'

• **Independent sector (Latin)**

'Latin is compulsory in Year 8 (wide ability range) and optional in Year 9 (currently 50 per cent of pupils – wide ability range). We have small numbers at Key Stage 4.'

'Latin sets are very small at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form students tend to choose classical studies rather than Latin. Latin in the sixth form does not run every year.'

'Latin is on the Key Stage 3 curriculum up to Year 8. It is an option thereafter, and there is generally one GCSE class and one AS/A level group.'

'Latin is taken at Key Stage 3 by more-able pupils whilst the others do classical studies. At GCSE, it is often offered off timetable as an extra option, although when numbers are healthier, it is included within the main option blocks.'

'Latin is compulsory up to GCSE.'

'Latin is fully taught from Years 7–13.'

'In Key Stage 3 the upper-ability group take Latin, the lower ability classic civilisation. As a GCSE option it is the more-able pupils only who opt for Latin.'

'Latin has a good take-up and we currently have around 40 pupils in Year 10 taking this GCSE, and the same in Year 11. Take-up beyond that is very low.'

- **Ancient Greek** is offered by 2 per cent of state schools but by as many as 33 per cent of independent schools. In the state sector, Ancient Greek most frequently appears in the curriculum in Key Stage 4, either as a GCSE subject (17 schools = 4 per cent) or as an enrichment option (16 schools). Ten schools offer it as an enrichment offer in Key Stage 3, and just three schools as a full curriculum subject at Key Stage 3. There are opportunities to study to AS/AL in Ancient Greek in eight of the responding schools (3 per cent), and to take it as a post-16 enrichment option in five schools (2 per cent). Only two respondents from the state sector provide qualitative evidence of the teaching of Ancient Greek:

'Ancient Greek Lunchtime club (eight students Years 9–12).'

'All Year 8 and Year 9 take Latin and Ancient Greek.'

In the independent sector, Ancient Greek may be offered as full subject at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form, or – less frequently, according to the quantitative evidence – as an enrichment subject. The qualitative evidence provided by respondents to this year's survey suggests that in the independent sector, Ancient Greek is being studied by more-able pupils and/or very small numbers:

'The most able are offered Ancient Greek as enrichment – four pupils.'

'Ancient Greek is offered after school at GCSE level, and a small number of students do it (fewer than 10).'

In the 2 per cent of state schools which teach Ancient Greek, it appears most frequently in the curriculum in Key Stage 4 rather than Key Stage 3

'Ancient Greek offered to able students as a fast-track GCSE option.'

'Ancient Greek is only offered to the most able, and again is taught in pupils' free time.'

Support for home languages

What level of support in their home languages do schools offer for children with EAL?

In state schools, only the responses from schools with high numbers of EAL pupils (18 per cent or more) are shown in Figure 47. This represents the highest quartile: across England as a whole, pupils known or thought not to have English as a first language currently make up 15 per cent of the population of secondary pupils. However, they tend to be concentrated in a small number of schools: the majority of schools have low proportions of EAL pupils. For independent schools (Figure 48) we have based the analysis on all schools in the sample, since data are not available on proportions of EAL pupils by school in this sector.

The data shows that offering pupils opportunities to take examinations in languages they speak or know from home is the most common way in which schools offer support in both the independent and state sectors. Almost all state schools with high proportions of EAL pupils offer them the opportunity to gain a qualification in their home language, where the relevant exams exist. More than two thirds of these schools say they do so 'extensively'. We take this to mean that they do so systematically as a matter of policy, rather than simply responding to individual circumstances.

A high proportion of schools also say they offer individualised support, provide resources, or offer opportunities to discuss and reflect on multilingualism. However, comments show that in some cases, schools had misunderstood the survey question about 'individualised support', which they took to mean support for English (although, depending on the way English is supported, there may well be some overlap).

Far fewer schools provide teaching of home languages, either organised by the school or by hosting community groups that provide this. It is interesting to note that in the independent sector, 40 per cent of all schools organise the teaching of the home language, while the proportion of state schools with high numbers of EAL pupils which do so is slightly lower (38 per cent). There is a relatively low level of engagement with community groups in both sectors. The proportion of high EAL state schools which host classes organised by community groups, just 26 per cent, is lower than one might expect.

The qualitative evidence supporting the data in Figures 47 and 48 confirms that although even schools with relatively low numbers of EAL pupils enter them for exams in their home languages, the majority do not provide teaching to prepare them for the examination:

Data shows that offering pupils opportunities to take examinations in languages they speak or know from home is the most common way in which schools offer support in both the independent and state sectors

FIGURE 47: TYPES OF SUPPORT FOR HOME LANGUAGES OFFERED BY STATE SCHOOLS WITH HIGH NUMBERS OF EAL PUPILS

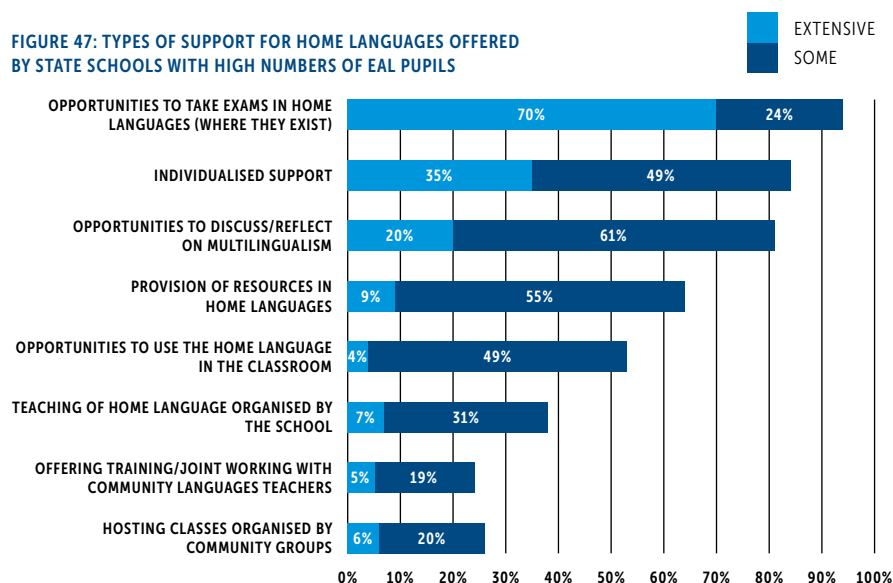
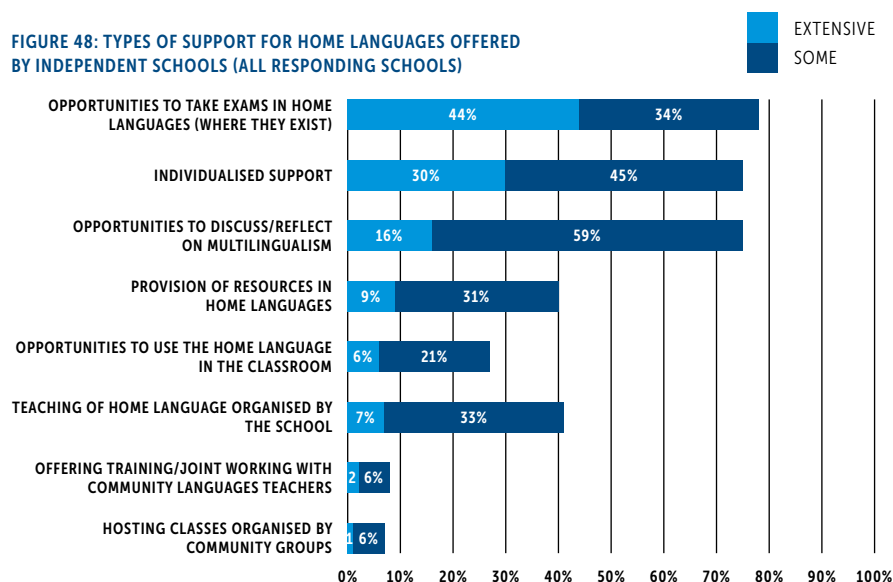


FIGURE 48: TYPES OF SUPPORT FOR HOME LANGUAGES OFFERED BY INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS (ALL RESPONDING SCHOOLS)



• State sector

'We offer examinations in home languages at all levels but do not teach to prepare them for this.'

'Due to the rural location of the school, we have very few EAL students, perhaps as few as 20 out of 1,400 students. GCSE and A level exams have been offered in Bengali, Cantonese and Portuguese.'

'We offer all students the opportunity to do a GCSE in their mother tongue if this is different from English. We have entered students for Greek, Russian, Persian, Urdu, Chinese and Dutch in the past. We tend to have fewer than 20 students in the whole school on our EAL list annually.'

'Students have exam expectations explained to them.'

One respondent is explicit about the reasons why their school enters pupils for examinations in their home languages:

'Because it will boost the overall exam grades of the school.'

- **Independent sector**

'Where pupils take GCSE exams in their mother tongue, we coach them regarding techniques.'

'We support pupils who speak one of the languages that we already teach in preparing for their examinations. If they speak a language we do not teach we merely help them in the administration of the exam entry, as they have to have a tutor outside school, who will also conduct the oral.'

Some respondents provide evidence of how schools go about supporting their pupils, and how support can vary depending on the languages pupils speak:

- **State sector**

'We have a Polish/Russian teacher, who also teaches these languages after school to allow native speaker pupils to sit an exam in them. The Polish/Russian teacher supports various pupils in their day-to-day timetabled lessons.'

- **Independent sector**

'As a boarding school with a partly international clientele, we now find ourselves providing support in French, German, Spanish and Chinese especially so that pupils' study of their own languages (particularly writing and reading texts) doesn't suffer while they are in England.'

'Native speakers of German, French and Spanish receive extensive support for exam preparation as well as weekly sessions with a language assistant. Speakers of other native languages receive support to sit qualifications.'

'It depends what languages they are. If we have teachers available who speak this language, extensive support is offered. If not, pupils tend to have their own tutors or go to Saturday school.'

The availability of exams is vital both in terms of maintaining opportunities for pupils to learn lesser-taught languages such as Japanese and Russian, and as a way in which schools can support and recognise the multilingual skills of pupils for whom English is not their first language

Key points

- There is evidence of interest in studying a wide range of lesser-taught languages. However, there is also evidence of considerable vulnerability of provision.
- The availability of exams is vital both in terms of maintaining opportunities for pupils to learn lesser-taught languages such as Japanese and Russian, and as a way in which schools can support and recognise the multilingual skills of pupils for whom English is not their first language. Withdrawal of accreditation opportunities for lesser-taught languages will almost certainly lead to these languages no longer being taught or supported by schools.
- The level of engagement with community groups is low. There is scope for greater levels of collaboration with language communities that are supporting children's education through the organisation of after-hours language classes.

Case study: Westminster Academy, London

Type of school:
Co-educational
Academy

**Number of
pupils:**
1,102

Age range:
11 – 18

**End of Key
Stage 4
achievement:**⁴⁶
62%

SEN:⁴⁷
1.5%

EAL:⁴⁸
86%

FSM:⁴⁹
65%

**Main
languages
taught:**
French,
German,
Spanish,
Arabic and
Bengali

**% of cohort
entered for
language
GCSE in 2015**
78%

**% of those
entered
achieving
A*-C**
80%

Researchers conducted separate interviews with the vice principal and lead staff from the Languages Department. A focus group was held with five pupils from Years 7, 9 and 12 and researchers were able to observe IB classes for Spanish (*ab initio*), German and Arabic.

Westminster Academy was selected for inclusion as a case study because it is a large state school situated in an area of high socio-economic deprivation but with an excellent record for languages (80 per cent take-up at Key Stage 4, mostly in Spanish, German and French).

Languages are also a very important part of Key Stage 5 study as the school offers the IB rather than A levels and the study of a language is an integral part of the IB curriculum. The school has been awarded 'Outstanding' status by OFSTED and the Languages Department is doing very well against national performance measures (currently in the top 6 per cent).

Provision for languages

The school offers tuition in Arabic, Bengali, Spanish, French and German. In Year 7 pupils start learning French, German or Spanish and continue with this language in Year 9, at which point they also have the opportunity to study Arabic or Bengali. The school runs three-year GCSE courses with pupils making their GCSE option selection at the end of Year 8. The school strongly advocates achievement of the EBacc. Although pupils are not obliged to study a language at GCSE, they are strongly encouraged to do so both in order to achieve the EBacc and to prepare for the IB in Key Stage 5, which requires all students to take a language. Staff believe that this helps pupils see where taking a language to GCSE is leading them and how it will be relevant for everyone for study and work in the future, not just specialist linguists.

A range of other languages are offered through extra-curricular clubs including Chinese and Italian. Pupils receive two language lessons of 80 minutes each per week.

At Key Stage 5 the school provides tuition (*ab initio* as well as continuation from GCSE) in Arabic, German, Spanish and French as IB diploma programme courses.

The school does not employ FLAs, but makes effective use of volunteers from within the local community to support pupils with the development of their oral skills and confidence. Given that the school is located in a deprived socio-economic area, it is not financially feasible to organise school trips overseas, pupil exchange visits, etc.

Diversity

The school has a strong international ethos and specialises in international business and enterprise. There are some 39 languages other than English spoken in the school, and the school runs a mother tongue programme to encourage pupils to take an examination in their home language to support the school's international ethos and to help pupils develop their skills in general as well as their exam techniques. The school conducts a survey each year to ascertain which languages pupils coming into Year 7 have and what their level of proficiency is. Although the school does not have the resources to offer tuition in the entire range of home languages, they are able to offer tuition in some, for example Spanish and Arabic, and to support in the form of practice papers and encouragement in others. One pupil who participates in mother tongue Spanish lessons commented:

'Mother tongue lessons are useful because if we only speak English the whole time, we're more likely to forget our Spanish. Also, we are learning to speak like adults in Spanish.'

This inclusive approach to pupils' languages is greatly valued by the community.

Despite very high levels of socio-economic deprivation in the area in which the school is located, pupils achieve high standards in languages both at GCSE and within the IB. Many pupils have another language besides English which they can build on and this helps the acquisition of new languages.

⁴⁶ Percentage of cohort achieving 5 x A*-C at GCSE including English and maths. National average 59.2%

⁴⁷ Percentage of pupils with SEN with statements or EHC plans. National average 1.8%

⁴⁸ Percentage of pupils with English not a first language. National average 15%

⁴⁹ Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals at any time during the last six years. National average 29.4%

Pupils

Year 7 pupils:

'I did French in primary school but I'm now doing Spanish. I wanted to change language. I did a bit of Spanish in Year 3 and decided I wanted to change back to it now. French has helped me to learn it.'

'I want to be a business woman – that's why I'm doing three languages.'

Year 9 pupil:

'I will have more opportunities if I have more than one language.'

Year 12 pupils:

'I'm looking at different university courses. I've found a course at a university specialising in marketing which means I can do parts of the course in different countries so languages will be very useful. I want to do Fashion and Marketing.'

'School in the UK has much more interaction between the teacher and the student. It's more fun because I have more chances to practise. In Italy we did a lot of grammar but we never had the chance to speak. In the UK the way of learning languages is more useful.'



Chapter 9

Key issues of concern for secondary schools



This chapter is mainly, but not exclusively, derived from qualitative data supplied by teachers in response to requests for free comments on the questions asked, especially in response to the final question, ‘is there anything else you would like to tell us about languages in your school or nationally?’

In these responses, strong feelings are expressed about current assessment arrangements, the way they are linked to pupils’ and school managers’ perceptions of languages as a subject, and a number of other topics. We have therefore allocated a separate chapter to presenting and discussing the issues, and to the solutions suggested by respondents.

Teachers report that languages are perceived as harder than other subjects, and are therefore a less attractive study option for pupils

Exams and assessment

What do teachers say about the current GCSE exam?

Teachers from both the independent and state sectors express deep concerns about the inconsistency in marking of pupils’ examination papers and the negative impact this has on pupils’ and parents’ perception of the subject as a whole. It also impacts negatively on levels of take-up by pupils when they are in a position to select the subjects they are going to study at Key Stages 4 and 5, and on attitudes of senior management towards the subject. Teachers report that languages are perceived as harder than other subjects, and are therefore a less attractive study option for pupils:

‘Students who get A in lots of subjects rarely manage the same grade in languages. This is putting off academic students from taking the option.’*
(state sector)

‘Some of our pupils say that they find languages too difficult – consequently they do not want to ‘blot’ their copy book of A or A grades with a lower grade – hence a high rate of disapplications recently.’* (state sector)

‘This does not encourage students to take up languages for further study, nor do senior management support languages as much, as they usually have a negative effect on the school results.’ (state sector)

‘Language grading is harsher in MFL than any other subject.’ (independent sector)

Teachers also express deep concerns about inconsistencies in the marking and grading of language GCSEs:

'We are concerned every year with the marking at GCSE. Every year we have our marks lowered for one of the attainment targets in one of the languages. This year our French students were at least one grade below their target as the writing was marked much lower than we expected. This in turn affected their choice of A' Levels as those who were predicted A but got an A or B decided not to take French at A' Level after all. In German, the speaking marks were adjusted even though we are all experienced teachers and have been moderating the students' work in the same way for many years.'* (state sector)

'We are deeply concerned about the marking and changing of grade boundaries in languages by the exam boards at GCSE... How can we predict or guide our students with these changes beyond our control? This does not support low-ability students at all! How can we explain to our students that just because they were born a year later their work is worth less than it would have been the year before?' (state sector)

'GCSE controlled assessments writing – the subjectivity in the marking of these over the last three years particularly has been ridiculous. Huge discrepancies between what was expected and the grades given despite a hugely experienced staff and very specific adherence to the marking guidelines and the grade.' (state sector)

As in previous years' surveys, their dissatisfaction is also expressed with the content of the current GCSE courses:

'The GCSE content is overloaded and the wide range of skills they need is so vast we cannot concentrate on the fundamentals.' (independent sector)

What do teachers say about the impact of the new GCSE exam specifications?

State school respondents are more concerned with the new specifications for GCSEs and A levels than are their colleagues in the independent sector. This may be because many schools in the independent sector have moved away from GCSEs and A levels in an effort to avoid the problems that have been identified in recent years with inconsistent marking, comparative difficulty and frequent policy changes.

Some respondents see the introduction of new, more rigorous GCSEs as likely to further reduce the numbers of pupils opting for languages when they make their GCSE option choices, and also likely to create specific problems for less able pupils, for example:

'I doubt that the new GCSE exams will be any more helpful as they will get even more difficult, thereby disadvantaging non-selective schools that feel pressured into entering more than 90 per cent of their students for the GCSE exams.' (state sector)

'The changes at GCSE are going to provide a real challenge for schools. They are going to become more inaccessible, more demanding and less enjoyable for pupils. This, combined with a serious lack of qualified (let alone quality) teachers is creating a perfect storm.' (state sector)

'The new spec for GCSE is welcome, as is the new specification for A level, but the fear is that it will be too hard to access the top grades. We have bright students who get A in maths, history etc. but then B or C in MFL, it is no wonder that they are not opting for them at GCSE and A level.' (state sector)

Some respondents see the introduction of new, more rigorous GCSEs as likely to further reduce the numbers of pupils opting for languages when they make their GCSE option choices

'Very concerned about the increased level of difficulty built into new specifications, especially at a time when most students will increasingly be expected to continue with a MFL at Key Stage 4. Totally unrealistic. The vast majority of students will simply not be able to cope!' (state sector)

However, a few respondents are of a quite different opinion and welcome the changes:

'We welcome the new GCSE changes and are happy with new writing and speaking changes. Hopefully we'll produce more spontaneous speakers and writers! I hope it will lead to higher sixth form numbers.' (state sector)

'I think the new GCSE will be a breath of fresh air and we are really looking forward to teaching it, but we are very worried about the appeal of the new linear A level.' (state sector)

'We are very glad that the controlled assessments are going! They have been very detrimental to the study of languages and the desire to understand the workings of languages.' (independent sector)

'The changes at Key Stage 4 should support Key Stage 5 learning more.' (independent sector)

Linked to concerns about the accessibility of GCSE for less academic students, some respondents feel strongly about the need for alternative accreditation:

'It is very frustrating that the NVQ has been removed and that there is no real alternative for weaker students. Although the assessments are not as rigorous as GCSE, the fact that even weak students were motivated to continue learning a foreign language to the end of Year 11 is surely more important. Our weak students who have to study GCSE become demotivated very early on and then stop working as they realise they are going to fail anyway. NVQ gave them a sense of achievement, and they learnt language which was much more practical in terms of real-life situations. The continued obsession with data and league tables is having a detrimental effect on the real education of our children.' (state sector)

'When MFL was compulsory for all in the 1990s, at least there was a range of qualifications to suit a wide range of availability. There appears to be no such differentiation of approach now with the introduction of the new course. In addition, recruitment will be an issue, alongside parental opposition, disengagement by students, etc.' (independent sector)

Some respondents
feel strongly
about the need
for alternative
accreditation

What are respondents' opinions of the current A levels in languages?

There is rich qualitative evidence on this topic from respondents to this year's survey in both state and independent sectors, although opinions are very diverse. Some teachers are more than satisfied, enjoy teaching the course and report high levels of pupil engagement as well as good results:

• State sector

'Logical progression from GCSE and there is a gradual increase in complexity of language content and topic area throughout the course. Topics and cultural topics are engaging.'

'A great mix of topics, grammar and culture. The students really enjoy it. Especially the debates, films and books in Year 13. They find it more challenging than other A levels. Harder to get A.'*

'Fine, though overly broad in scope. We appreciate having the freedom to teach topics that interest us and our students.'

'As a team we like them. We enjoy teaching the topics and we feel that they prepare them well for starting a university course in MFL.'

- **Independent sector**

'The specification and examinations are good and test a range of skills and important topics. The marking is unreliable.'

Others find the course content dull and the marking of examination papers harsh and inconsistent. An extensive sample of comments from teachers in both sectors is provided below to reflect the wide range of comments received on this topic:

- **State sector**

'Too difficult to get A and quite limited in scope. Not enough opportunity to explore the culture of the countries which speak the language studied.'*

'The exam is too hard compared to other subjects and not worth taking if you need good grades to get into university.'

'Challenging for pupils. Many pupils (capable linguists) take French AS but then drop it in Year 13 in favour of maths and sciences.'

'Perceived as too difficult compared to other subjects and not valued highly enough by employers and higher education institutions to encourage students to opt and put the work in. Funding also an issue.'

'Extremely high standards that are making this an extremely difficult A level to achieve and making us MFL teachers look bad compared to other colleagues.'

- **Independent sector**

'Generally we feel that the topics are beginning to seem rather outdated. The level of language demanded at A level is consistently fair. There are inconsistencies in marking and grading. The small number of candidates awarded A is of concern. Many able candidates who gain A* in other subjects fail to gain A* in languages.'*

'We teach to the exam, prepare immediately for the AS the moment they start the lower sixth. I personally prefer the IB, more natural use and purpose of the language and less translating back and forth.'

'AS should be recognised by universities to encourage the learning of MFL. Rare are students who are interested in taking an A level.'

'Far too difficult – the vocabulary and complexity of language in different languages vary too much – French and German are particularly difficult even for native speakers! This has a huge impact on uptake as, no surprise, no one wants to do an incredibly difficult exam with very little chance of top grades!'

Others find the course content dull and the marking of examination papers harsh and inconsistent

Were the grades awarded in summer 2015 A level languages examinations in line with teachers' expectations for the candidates in their school?

A small minority of respondents from both state and independent sectors (14 per cent) express deep concern about discrepancies in the grading of this year's A level languages examinations. Many others are also concerned about discrepancies for a few candidates. In the independent sector, more than half (56 per cent) are dissatisfied in some way with the grading of the exams. Although respondents in the state sector express a slightly higher degree of satisfaction, the proportion saying that the grades awarded were generally in line with expectations is only just over half (52 per cent). Respondents comment further as follows:

In the independent sector, more than half (56 per cent) are dissatisfied in some way with the grading of the exams

• State sector

'Speaking unit 2 was remarked and the score raised significantly from grade B to A. The boundaries are so high for MFL that there is a discrepancy between MFL and other A level subjects.'

'We were disappointed once again not to gain any A grades at A level, even with a very strong cohort. Oral exams seem to be marked very generously for native-speaker candidates, even when their content is not at the same standard as that of other (equally strong) candidates.'*

'We sent all papers back for remark (paid for by the school!!!) and got them all back with a higher grade (up to two full grades!!!) Marking is a real issue and all exam boards need to tackle this.'

'Continuing concern that non-native speakers taking Japanese A level continue to be disadvantaged by the high proportion of native-speaker candidates.'

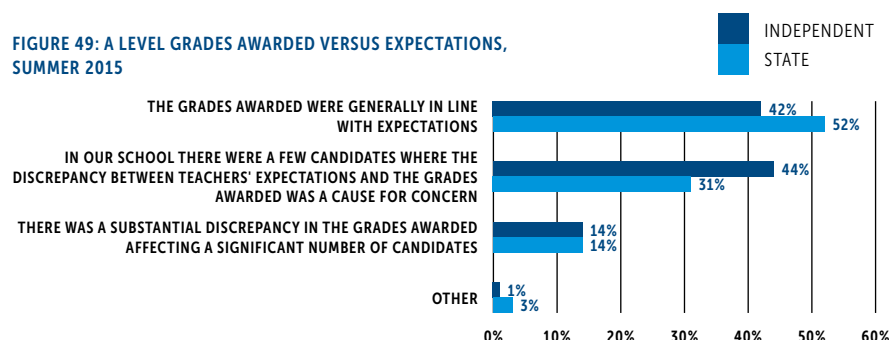
• Independent sector

'There was a big disparity in the marking of the different languages, with students of German yet again penalised in comparison to Spanish.'

'Spanish – this is a massive cause for concern – we have students who are near native being marked down, not getting A and then asking why. The exam is focussing too much on social issues and essay writing technique rather than on whether someone can communicate confidently in the language.'*

'In the past four years, our German students have received 1st class degrees from top universities for studying German/Russian. All these achieved B or A at A level. We feel very disturbed that a worthwhile academic subject can be "meddled" with in such a political way.'

FIGURE 49: A LEVEL GRADES AWARDED VERSUS EXPECTATIONS, SUMMER 2015



What do teachers think will be the likely impact of the new A level specifications on languages post-16 in their school?

The responses provided by respondents show that, although some teachers think that the new specifications will have a positive impact on students' motivation and engagement with the language and culture being studied, these are in a minority – 31 per cent of respondents from the independent sector and just 21 per cent of those from state schools. The two comments below are from respondents working in the state sector. There is no qualitative evidence in support of the new specifications from teachers in the independent sector:

'I think the renewed focus on literature and culture will have a positive impact. The way options will work – they have to choose if they are doing an AS or A level – could be detrimental. My hope is that they become more accessible and relevant. Hopefully the gap between Key Stages 4 and 5 will be less challenging and so more will consider it. My fear is that as the GCSE becomes harder (no controlled assessments etc.) fewer people will go on to opt for it at Key Stage 5.' (state sector)

'The two-year course seems to reassure pupils as they feel they have longer to gain a true knowledge of the grammar and vocabulary. The subject content seems a lot more engaging and better prepares our pupils for university.' (state sector)

A higher proportion of state school respondents believe that the impact of the new specifications on student motivation and engagement will be negative (24 per cent) rather than positive:

'The new A level specifications will not attract many learners in comprehensive schools as they seem very elitist in their content and the difficulty level may lead students to opt for other subjects.' (state sector)

'The new specifications for A level seem to me to be a step backwards. The set texts for Edexcel are identical to the ones I studied for A level in 1991.' (state sector)

'We are not happy with the focus on literature in the new specifications. Students are only expected to produce writing on a book or a film, rather than on different topics taken from current affairs.' (state sector)

Views are split on the move to 'decouple' AS and A levels:

'I like the linear idea. It gives us more teaching time.' (state sector)

'We will miss the AS/A2 split which allows AS to count towards A2.' (state sector)

For those hoping that the new A levels will revive interest in studying languages at university, the verdict will be extremely disappointing: only 6 per cent of respondents from the state sector, and 7 per cent from independent schools, think that this will happen. There is no qualitative evidence at all from respondents in either sector to support the view that the new A levels will help create a new interest in studying languages. Only very small numbers of respondents think the new specifications will increase the numbers taking languages at AS or A level, and

A higher proportion of state school respondents believe that the impact of the new specifications on student motivation and engagement will be negative (24 per cent) rather than positive

FIGURE 50: PREDICTED IMPACT OF CHANGES TO A LEVEL SPECIFICATIONS, STATE SCHOOLS

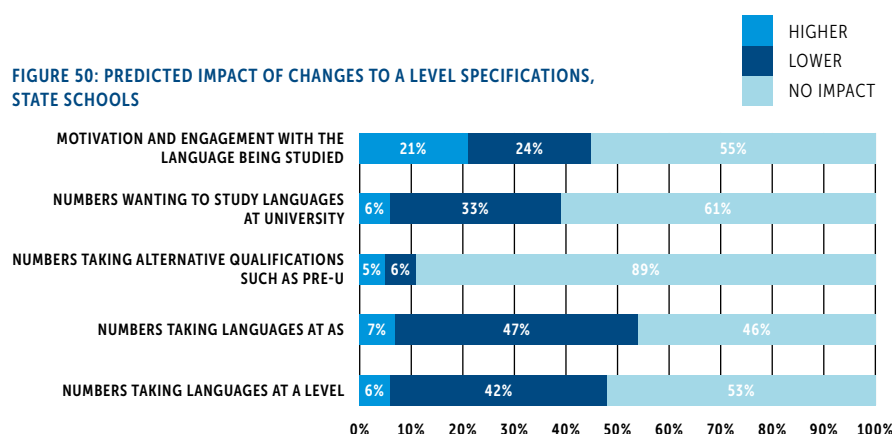
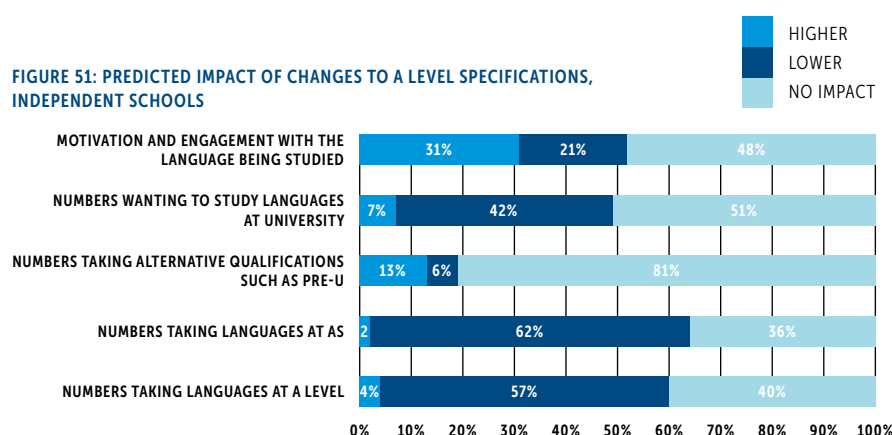


FIGURE 51: PREDICTED IMPACT OF CHANGES TO A LEVEL SPECIFICATIONS, INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS



in the independent sector, an important provider of A level linguists, the majority think that the new specifications will further lower take-up, as the following comments from teachers in this sector show:

'The universities ... are in for a big shock when they discover over the next few years that these new qualifications will result in fewer students and further closures of university departments.' (independent sector)

'Most of our sixth form language recruits choose the language as a fourth subject, then discover it's their favourite and go on to study it at university. Next year's Year 12 will only start three subjects, which we think will drive numbers seriously down. What's more, few of our students like the sound of compulsory literature.' (independent sector)

'Few of our pupils are academic enough to study languages at university, so we are looking at them studying a language to support/augment their portfolio for their university applications to UCAS. Whilst compulsory study of literature appeals to me as a graduate of languages, it does not appeal to pupils in a very competitive market for recruiting pupils to study my subject in the sixth form. The current A level is a bit off-putting for pupils, and the new A level is even more so.' (independent sector)

In the independent sector, an important provider of A level linguists, the majority think that the new specifications will further lower take-up

'We are accelerating our progress to being the Latin of 21st century education – a tiny sideshow only taken by a highly able elite.' (independent sector)

With very few exceptions, respondents do not think the new exams will have any impact on the take-up of alternative qualifications

With very few exceptions, respondents do not think the new exams will have any impact on the take-up of alternative qualifications such as Pre-U: the implication being that students will simply not take languages. This is perhaps the most significant finding of this year's survey.

A number of respondents comment on the likely adverse effect of making the A level course a two-year linear course with students having to choose at the beginning of Year 12 whether they do a one-year AS course or the full two-year A level. Respondents from both sectors highlight the impact of this particularly on maths and science students who currently take an A level as their fourth option:

'We fear that the new linear provision will put off a lot of potential AS language students who have been choosing it as an addition to their scientific subjects before concentrating on them as A2.' (state sector)

'We are concerned that the linear A levels without the one-year AS will cause scientists to take yet another STEM subject instead of branching out into languages.' (independent sector)

'Many of our A level students study a language alongside maths and sciences – they would not wish to study literature in a MFL as is proposed by the new A level, so I anticipate far fewer students opting for A level if literature remains compulsory.' (state sector)

Others comment on changes being made within schools to ensure that pupils study only for three A levels rather than the current practice of beginning Year 12 with four subjects and then dropping one once AS level has been achieved:

'We are abolishing AS levels because of funding shortages. Pupils choose three subjects now and continue with them to A2. This will have an impact on numbers in languages.' (state sector)

'With the limit of three main A levels, languages will automatically be at a loss. A lot of our students in the past chose MFL as a fourth option and then continued into A2 but with that option now gone, I fear that MFL will be hit by these new changes.' (independent sector)

'My head teacher has absolutely no intention of facilitating any form of Key Stage 5 teaching in MFLs for the foreseeable future.' (state sector)

The following comment sums up what appears to be the majority view on both the new GCSE and A level exams:

'The problems occur when elitist exams are introduced which don't encourage the "maybe students" to have a go, when exam boards fail to recognise and reward outstanding pupils and fail to reward them equally for the language they are learning. ...I am honestly stunned by the attitude of the boards – they seem to be completely unaware that if they carry on in this way, nobody will be continuing with languages in the future.' (state sector)

Perceptions about language learning

What do teachers say about perceptions of language learning by pupils, parents and others?

Another area of common concern is the poor perception of languages by pupils, which is closely linked to what teachers identify as the shortcomings of the GCSE, described above. Teachers feel they are not sufficiently supported by the government, employers and the media in communicating the value of language learning to young people, and compare the amount of effort put into promoting STEM subjects to girls with the lack of encouragement for boys to study languages:

'In an education environment (nationally and locally), where so much emphasis/competitions/awards are focussed on science, particularly women in science, the education minister is doing a huge disservice to languages by failing to promote them equally on a general level and also amongst boys. Promoting languages is permanently on the back foot in the face of media ignorance/lack of promotion of language learning.' (state sector)

'The languages department has the mission to promote the importance and relevance of language learning. Pupils/students don't seem to be getting this message from industry or the media. It is a "fight" every year to attract the more-able students to study languages – a losing battle against maths and the sciences!' (independent sector)

'The whole government policy on language learning is totally disjointed, and our job is made very difficult by perceptions that the current government is anti-Europe, the anti-otherness impressions given in the press, the difficulty of MFL public exams and the apparent ease of other subjects.' (state sector)

'Nationally, the drive for STEM or STEAM does not include specifically mastering a language. It is not seen as challenging enough, and there is the perception that the approach and textbooks need to be changed – compare English textbooks in Germany to the equivalent in England for German. The content is far more challenging and relevant, includes historical events, relevant content – not this constant discussion of holidays!' (state sector)

There were also a few remarks concerning the gender bias of languages:

'Basically you have to be really bright and usually a well-organised girl to achieve in an MFL these days.' (state sector)

'Topics seem very biased towards female interests.' (independent sector)

Teachers feel they are not sufficiently supported by the government, employers and the media in communicating the value of language learning to young people

Outlook for the future

How motivated are language teachers to drive through changes to improve the situation for their subject?

While a few teachers are positive and optimistic about the position of languages in their school, they are a small minority of the respondents to this year's survey. The following comments reflect the views of such teachers:



'Languages are very well supported by SLT here, and there is on the whole a very positive attitude towards them from the students and parents alike. The school places a big importance on EBacc results.' (state sector)

'It is a positive, however, that languages are back in the spotlight and being valued by the government. The changes made at Key Stage 5 are also – hopefully – going to be positive in terms of engaging pupils and becoming more accessible.' (state sector)

Far more common are expressions of demotivation and feeling overworked with little return:

'The MFL teachers at our school are disheartened frankly – not enough curriculum time at Key Stages 3 or 4, the inability to set pupils and inflated expectations of pupil performance value added scores make life very difficult.' (state sector)

'We are a committed department, and my sense is that we are working harder than ever with uncertain returns.' (independent sector)

'Morale is very low due to pressures from OFSTED-focussed schools, performance-related pay, increased workloads and increased expectations that are not supported by an increase in capacity (i.e. loss of free time/PPA). Staff feel undervalued and overworked, and are looking elsewhere to earn a living.' (state sector)

Teachers also express a sense of unfairness in the way changes are being introduced:

'The national expected progress continues to be a concern amongst staff and is quite demoralising. Pupils genuinely enter Year 7 on very little (if any) knowledge of a foreign language but have to achieve at least five or six levels of genuine progress in order to have achieved the equivalent of "what is expected" – i.e. three or four levels of progress based on subjects that they have learnt since the age of four. The system nationally is not fair and does not reflect the teaching that is taking place in the subject for the most part.' (state sector)

How are funding changes impacting on languages?

In their comments, state school respondents make frequent reference to funding cuts and the impact these have had on the ability of schools to offer subjects for study which only attract very small numbers:

'The severe cuts to school funding, and sixth form funding in particular, will have a severe impact on my school...Community Languages will be gone after this year.' (state sector)

'School budget is having a large impact on the MFL offer in our curriculum in the coming years – Spanish will be made optional at Key Stage 4 and may be dropped at A level, Chinese is being discontinued at GCSE due to poor uptake and we are no longer able to afford to employ FLAs.' (state sector)

Common are expressions of demotivation and feeling overworked with little return

As the comment from the last respondent above shows, funding cuts have adversely affected the recruitment of FLAs who provide support to pupils in developing their oral skills. This is not an isolated case, as the following comments show:

'I am unable to persuade SLT to hire FLAs – budget is too tight and it has proved impossible to share with partner schools. Costs of foreign language visits abroad are also too high. We have tried ICT links with schools abroad, but it rarely fits into our timetable. It feels like teaching cookery where they never get to taste the final dish.' (state sector)

'Finances of schools has also led to us losing our FLAs (we are not the only school). This has a huge impact on the efficacy of our oral provision.' (state sector)

Funding cuts have adversely affected the recruitment of FLAs who provide support to pupils in developing their oral skills

Funding restrictions, combined with other pressures, mean that trips and other extra-curricular activities have also been cut:

'Furthermore, extra-curricular opportunities are being lost (trips, etc.) as pupils are not motivated to attend them (exam pressures mean they don't want to take time out from school), schools are insisting that they take place during half terms (to save costs and impact on teaching time) with no time given in lieu. The planning for them/documentation required has become considerably onerous. The net result is that trips are becoming rarer and rarer. This is particularly sad to see as they are such an important part of MFL and such a powerful way to engage and motivate pupils.' (state sector)

What needs to happen in order to bring about positive change?

Respondents to this year's survey call on the government, media, senior academics and businesses to make a more robust case for languages and to learn from other European countries which devote a greater amount of lesson time to language learning:

'EBacc helps, as does knowledge that good universities look for languages, but this needs to be made much, much more explicit by universities.' (state sector)

'We need to get the message across to pupils and parents that languages are just as essential as maths and science in the modern world.' (state sector)

'We could seriously do with more public advocacy for modern languages to an advanced level. We hear a lot about how more girls should study STEM subjects, but we need prominent people to speak out publicly and continually about the shortage of advanced language skills in the UK.' (independent sector)

'We should oblige schools to teach languages with a minimum of three to four periods per week up to Year 11. Make a language compulsory for A level. Follow the Europeans!' (independent sector)

'Nationally, we need businesses and the government to share how much business we are missing out on because English speakers don't have the language skills necessary; the media should be pushing languages more and offering programmes for young people and children in different languages.' (independent sector)

Key points

- The exam system is seen as one of the principal barriers to the successful development of language teaching. The fact that exams in languages are seen as harder than they are for other subjects and widely reported issues of harsh and inconsistent marking are deeply demotivating for both pupils and teachers alike.
- There is a lack of faith by teachers in both the state and independent sectors in the new A levels; they believe these changes are likely to resolve problems of take-up at A level and beyond.
- As was the case in last year's research, teachers across both sectors are very concerned about the impact of changes to the A level syllabus and the move to a linear approach which removes the interim AS level. They believe that these changes have the potential to reduce even further the numbers of pupils choosing to study languages at Key Stage 5. The very real difficulty of achieving high grades in A level language examinations and the inconsistency of marking exam scripts only add to this concern.
- Respondents see the shortcomings of the exam regime as a key factor in explaining pupils' reluctance to study languages. They believe that improvements to the assessment system (in particular regarding marking and grading) should be accompanied by stronger public advocacy for languages alongside STEM subjects.

Respondents see the shortcomings of the exam regime as a key factor in explaining pupils' reluctance to study languages

Chapter 10

Conclusions



This year's Language Trends research exercise has been able to study in some depth the achievements and challenges of both primary and secondary schools across England, and to explore the impact of language teaching in Key Stages 2 and 3 on pupil interest and take-up at the later Key Stages 4 and 5.

Over the past 12 months there have been a number of significant developments related to the teaching of languages, namely the proposal by the exam boards to withdraw examinations in a number of lesser-taught languages, the government's declared intention to implement an 'EBacc for all' policy, and the ongoing reform of GCSEs and A levels. These developments have provided the Language Trends research team with the opportunity to explore teachers' views of the changes and their likely impact on languages in schools.

Language Trends 2015/16 provides rich quantitative and qualitative evidence on all of the above themes. The researchers are very grateful to respondents for the time they have taken to provide such a wealth of information and feedback. The many responses and comments have provided a detailed picture of what is happening in both primary and secondary schools across England and, at secondary level, to compare practice in the state and independent sectors.

This year's research exercise again examined the question of exclusion at Key Stage 3 and found encouraging evidence of a small reduction in the number of pupils in the state sector who are being denied the opportunity to study a language at this stage of their education. This is good news, because it means that fewer pupils are subsequently being barred from the opportunity to choose a language at Key Stage 4. The survey also asked, as it has in previous years, about arrangements in both primary and secondary schools for the transition of pupils from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. Although this remains an area for considerable improvement if language learning at Key Stage 2 is to be built on systematically in Key Stage 3, the responses revealed some interesting examples of successful collaboration between the phases that others could emulate. Levels of collaboration were generally higher in the independent sector due to the numbers of secondary schools that have a junior schools attached to them.

The many responses and comments have provided a detailed picture of what is happening in both primary and secondary schools across England and, at secondary level, to compare practice in the state and independent sectors

For the first time, the survey asked teachers about home languages and how both primary and secondary schools accommodate the language skills of pupils whose mother tongue is not English. We found modest encouragement for home languages, but a missed opportunity in terms of very low levels of engagement with local community groups, many of which organise language classes for speakers of other languages within the community.

From the rich quantitative and qualitative data provided to the survey, it has been possible to identify five major findings which merit the close attention of politicians, educators and academics. This report, and the data on which it draws, is intended to provide a useful basis for debate and discussion as well as for the development of solutions to some of the considerable challenges schools face in encouraging young people to learn languages and to appreciate the many benefits that being able to use other languages can bring.

There are signs that primary schools are taking steps to improve the quality of language teaching in the strong belief that language learning brings benefits to the Key Stage 2 curriculum

Nearly all primary schools in England are now teaching pupils a language at Key Stage 2, and primary phase teachers strongly believe that languages support literacy in English, encourage inclusivity and enhance pupils' cultural understanding. From this year's survey results it is evident that around half of all primary schools now have access to specialist expertise in planning and delivering language teaching. Although around one third of primary schools do not yet have assessment methods in place to measure pupils' progression in language learning, this year's survey also shows that schools are aware of the need to establish these. Against this encouraging background, there is, however, evidence from many schools that they are struggling to provide the quality and consistency of language teaching envisaged in the national curriculum. Those schools without specialist expertise rely on classroom teachers to deliver language teaching, many of whom lack confidence in their own linguistic ability and who also find it difficult to create sufficient time in an already crowded curriculum to develop a structured approach to language teaching. Lack of time and budget constraints make it very difficult for schools to access appropriate professional training, and many also report that they are finding it difficult to recruit suitably qualified staff.

Although around one third of primary schools do not yet have assessment methods in place to measure pupils' progression in language learning, this year's survey also shows that schools are aware of the need to establish these

While many secondary schools report that they are now adapting their Schemes of Work for Year 7, or that they are baseline testing new pupils on arrival, the majority of Key Stage 3 teachers report that very few pupils are starting Year 7 with a measurable level of language. Very few secondary teachers see the four years of language learning which pupils do throughout Key Stage 2 as something they will be able to build on in order to better prepare pupils in Key Stage 4 for the new, more rigorous GCSEs which are being taught from September 2016.



Schools are not gearing up for big increases in numbers taking languages at GCSE as a result of the compulsory EBacc proposal

Schools report a number of different approaches to provision for languages at Key Stage 4. In the state sector some schools make the study of a language compulsory for most (or at least some) pupils, while others give all pupils the option to decide which subjects they wish to study to GCSE level. In the independent sector it is more likely that all pupils will be required to take at least one language as far as GCSE. This year's Language Trends research exercise has found little evidence that schools are about to change their approach as a result of the government's recent announcement that they expect at least 90 per cent of pupils to take the EBacc. Pupils' reluctance to study a language and the unsuitability of GCSE for all pupils are seen by teachers as the most significant barriers to implementing an 'EBacc for all' policy. Indeed, the introduction of the EBacc as a performance measure in 2011, seen as a new opportunity to increase the take-up of languages at Key Stage 4, does not appear to have had a widespread and sustained effect on the way schools advise pupils at the point of choosing GCSE options or on the way the curriculum is arranged to ensure that languages feature in all pathways. Only a minority of schools in both sectors report that the EBacc has had a lasting positive impact on the numbers of pupils choosing to study a language as one of their GCSE subjects. In the independent sector there has been a trend in recent years for schools to decide to move away from GCSEs and to teach IGCSEs instead.

This year's survey results provide some evidence of state schools making small modifications to the languages curriculum or lengthening Key Stage 4 to three years in order to prepare pupils more thoroughly for the more rigorous new GCSEs. However, the majority of secondary school teachers propose instead to use additional homework and greater independent learning to fill the gaps between what can be taught in class and the requirements of the new GCSE exam. Many teachers responding to this year's survey believe that the new GCSE specifications are unsuitable for all learners, particularly those who are less academically oriented and who might previously have found an alternative qualification more suitable and more stimulating.

This year's Language Trends research exercise has found little evidence that schools are about to change their approach as a result of the government's recent announcement that they expect at least 90 per cent of pupils to take the EBacc

Teachers report little faith in the new A levels and believe that they are likely to further reduce the numbers of pupils taking languages at Key Stage 5

As well as increasing the numbers of pupils achieving a more rounded, academic education with the range of GCSE subjects, including a language, it was hoped that the EBacc measure would also produce greater numbers of pupils choosing to continue to study a language into Key Stage 5. However, qualitative evidence drawn from teachers' responses to this year's Language Trends survey reveals a number of reasons why increased numbers taking the GCSE have failed to translate into greater numbers of AS and A level candidates. These include many pupils'

preference for maths and science, which are widely regarded by both pupils and their parents as more important for a successful career, as well as the very real risk of not getting a good grade in language exams and the inadequacy of GCSE as a preparation for A level study.

The new look A levels which are due to be taught from September 2016 will be considerably different from the current qualification, with a much greater emphasis on the literature and culture of the country(ies) where the language in question is spoken. They will also be linear in nature, meaning that it will no longer be possible to study to an AS qualification in one year and then decide whether or not to continue studying for a second year in order to gain an A level. Instead, pupils will have to decide at the beginning of Year 12 whether they are going to do a one-year course and achieve an AS qualification or the full two-year A level. Evidence from teachers in both the independent and state sectors is that these plans are very likely to further reduce the already sharply declining numbers of pupils choosing to study a language at Key Stage 5. One reason is that many pupils embark on an AS level course because they are not sure how they will get on and subsequently discover they enjoy it and wish to continue to A2; others who are considering university courses in science and medicine choose to do an AS level course as their fourth A level in order to enhance their university application. The evidence also shows that a number of schools, particularly those in the state sector, have already decided to switch to a three A level system which means that they will no longer offer subjects at AS level only. This change is being made for financial as well as academic reasons. Because languages generally attract small numbers of candidates anyway, there are indications that some schools are making the decision not to offer languages at all at Key Stage 5, thus removing any possibility for pupils new to Key Stage 5 to continue learning a language at the higher level.

Although a minority of teachers in both the state and independent sectors are enthusiastic about the proposed content for the new A level courses, the majority feel that the changes will be more likely to discourage pupils from studying a language at Key Stage 5.

Teachers believe that the steep and seemingly unstoppable decline of pupils choosing a language at A level is largely due to the evidence of inconsistent and harsh marking of examination papers and the fact that it is evidently easier to achieve the high grades needed for university entrance by studying other subjects. The new A levels are perceived as being even more 'elitist', and not designed to appeal to pupils who will take a language as an 'auxiliary' rather than as a 'specialist' subject. There is no great dissatisfaction with the current content of A level, which is described as 'a good course poorly marked'. They fear that the new A levels will perpetuate the image of languages as a 'hard' subject designed only for talented specialist linguists. The lack of faith in the new A levels to resolve current problems of take-up and motivation is expressed even more strongly by teachers in the independent sector than by those in state schools.

Teachers believe that the steep and seemingly unstoppable decline of pupils choosing a language at A level is largely due to the evidence of inconsistent and harsh marking of examination papers

Teachers believe that the examination system is creating negative attitudes towards language learning

The great majority of teachers in both independent and state schools responding to this year's Language Trends survey are vehement in their criticism of both the GCSE and A level examination systems. At the level of GCSE, languages teachers are concerned about the severity and inconsistency of marking, which makes their subject a less attractive option for pupils. Whilst they welcome the end of controlled assessments, they are concerned that the new GCSEs will be even more difficult for pupils and that it will be even harder to access the top grades. Many believe that the current examination is inappropriate for pupils who are not academically oriented, and fear that the new one will only reinforce a sense of failure amongst these pupils. Even schools with high levels of take-up for GCSE would welcome some alternative accreditation that would enable the less academically able to gain practical language skills and enjoy contact with other cultures.

The perception by pupils and others of languages as a subject which is

- harder than others;
- more unreliable in terms of achieving the high grades needed for university entrance;
- peripheral to success in terms of university applications or subsequent careers; and
- not relevant to everyday lives and interests,

means that languages have an unhelpful, even negative reputation for many, including pupils, parents and school-based leaders. Teachers of languages feel that this negative reputation also rubs off on them, and that they are often seen as less successful than their peers because of the low level of take-up for languages when pupils have options and the often less-than-optimal exam results.

Teachers believe there needs to be a much closer connection between the levels of language competence which their pupils are able to achieve and the grades awarded. It is clear that the system needs to be flexible enough to accredit both weaker students who would otherwise be advised to take subjects deemed more 'accessible' as well as high flyers and native speakers who are able to attain high levels of language competence. The existence of such candidates, increasingly common as more and more pupils have experience of languages other than English outside the classroom, should be recognised and encouraged, but not at the expense of driving down grades for those who have not had the same opportunities to consolidate their language learning.

Respondents to this year's survey make a strong case for improvements to the assessment system to be accompanied by stronger public advocacy for languages alongside STEM subjects.

Many believe that the current examination is inappropriate for pupils who are not academically oriented, and fear that the new one will only reinforce a sense of failure amongst these pupils

There is interest in studying a wide range of lesser-taught languages, but the existence of exams in these languages in order to accredit learning is essential

Relatively small numbers of pupils across the country currently study and/or take examinations in a wide range of lesser-taught languages including Russian, Arabic, Mandarin, Italian, Japanese and Urdu. In some cases, pupils aspire to achieve a qualification in a language they speak at home or in their community, and in others their school has chosen to offer a language beyond the traditionally taught languages of Spanish, French and German. Because of the small numbers involved, provision of tuition in these languages is exceedingly vulnerable, particularly in a climate where many schools are ceasing to run classes for small groups because they are financially unviable.

In the course of the past year, the exam boards announced their intention to cease offering exams in these languages because of the cost and logistics of developing and servicing exams for such small numbers of candidates. This move has made teaching of the lesser-taught languages even more precarious in spite of the evidence of pupil interest in studying them. This year's survey responses show that teachers believe that the absence of an examination to accredit learning would almost certainly result in the language concerned no longer being offered to pupils and the school being unable to value and recognise its pupils' multilingual skills. Teachers also make the point that studying towards a qualification is not only motivating for the individual pupils concerned but also important for the school which needs feedback on the effectiveness of its teaching.

This year's survey responses show that teachers believe that the absence of an examination to accredit learning would almost certainly result in the language concerned no longer being offered to pupils



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Appendix 1: Response profiles, primary schools

RESPONSE RATE				
	Base	Sample	Responses	Response rate
Primary	14,086	3,000	556	18.5%

RESPONSE PROFILE						
Region	Base		Sample		Responses	
East Midlands	1,290	9.2%	285	9.5%	52	9.4%
East of England	1,564	11.1%	315	10.5%	61	11.0%
London	1,692	12.0%	361	12.0%	60	10.8%
North East	735	5.2%	152	5.1%	37	6.7%
North West	2,221	15.8%	503	16.8%	99	17.8%
South East	2,082	14.8%	446	14.9%	95	17.1%
South West	1,487	10.6%	304	10.1%	52	9.4%
West Midlands	1,491	10.6%	320	10.7%	39	7.0%
Yorkshire and the Humber	1,524	10.8%	314	10.5%	61	11.0%

Performance quintile	Base		Sample		Responses	
A - high	2,546	18.1%	525	17.5%	105	18.9%
B	2,726	19.4%	578	19.3%	111	20.0%
C	2,771	19.7%	603	20.1%	104	18.7%
D	2,760	19.6%	578	19.3%	109	19.6%
E - low	2,939	20.9%	655	21.8%	116	20.9%
NA	344	2.4%	61	2.0%	11	2.0%

School type	Base		Sample		Responses	
Academy Converter	–	–	370	12.3%	58	10.4%
Academy Sponsor Led	–	–	192	6.4%	24	4.3%
Community School	–	–	1,386	46.2%	274	49.3%
Foundation School	–	–	143	4.8%	28	5.0%
Free Schools	–	–	15	0.5%	2	0.4%
Voluntary Aided School	–	–	582	19.4%	112	20.1%
Voluntary Controlled School	–	–	312	10.4%	58	10.4%

Free School Meal eligibility quintile	Base		Sample		Responses	
High	–	20.0%	678	22.6%	118	21.2%
Middle-High	–	20.1%	643	21.4%	110	19.8%
Middle	–	20.0%	567	18.9%	97	17.4%
Middle-Low	–	20.1%	549	18.3%	114	20.5%
Low	–	19.8%	563	18.8%	117	21.0%

English as an Additional Language Quartile	Base		Sample		Responses	
High	–	25.1%	828	27.6%	137	24.6%
Middle-High	–	25.1%	751	25.0%	163	29.3%
Middle-Low	–	24.8%	731	24.4%	126	22.7%
Low	–	25.0%	690	23.0%	130	23.4%

Appendix 2: Response profiles, state secondary schools

RESPONSE RATE				
	Base	Sample	Responses	Response rate
Secondary	3,180	2,000	492	24.6%

RESPONSE PROFILE						
Region	Base		Sample		Responses	
East Midlands	265	8.3%	169	8.5%	40	8.1%
East of England	350	11.0%	211	10.6%	57	11.6%
London	467	14.7%	306	15.3%	68	13.8%
North East	150	4.7%	100	5.0%	18	3.7%
North West	455	14.3%	310	15.5%	74	15.0%
South East	492	15.5%	281	14.1%	80	16.3%
South West	315	9.9%	182	9.1%	58	11.8%
West Midlands	382	12.0%	244	12.2%	49	10.0%
Yorkshire and the Humber	304	9.6%	197	9.9%	48	9.8%

Performance quintile	Base		Sample		Responses	
A - high	603	19.0%	379	19.0%	125	25.4%
B	604	19.0%	369	18.5%	96	19.5%
C	600	18.9%	388	19.4%	91	18.5%
D	604	19.0%	375	18.8%	90	18.3%
E – low	606	19.1%	386	19.3%	69	14.0%
NA	163	5.1%	103	5.2%	21	4.3%

School type	Base		Sample		Responses	
Academy Converter	–	–	820	41.0%	222	45.1%
Academy Sponsor Led	–	–	332	16.6%	67	13.6%
City Technology College	–	–	2	0.1%	1	0.2%
Community School	–	–	368	18.4%	92	18.7%
Foundation School	–	–	173	8.7%	36	7.3%
Free Schools	–	–	60	3.0%	13	2.6%
Studio Schools	–	–	23	1.2%	2	0.4%
University Technical College	–	–	16	0.8%	4	0.8%
Voluntary Aided School	–	–	183	9.2%	50	10.2%
Voluntary Controlled School	–	–	23	1.2%	5	1.0%

Free School Meal eligibility quintile	Base		Sample		Responses	
High	–	20.2%	433	21.7%	83	16.9%
Middle-High	–	20.0%	430	21.5%	95	19.3%
Middle	–	19.8%	378	18.9%	90	18.3%
Middle-Low	–	20.4%	382	19.1%	103	20.9%
Low	–	19.5%	377	18.9%	121	24.6%

RESPONSE PROFILE (CONTINUED)						
English as an Additional Language Quartile	Base		Sample		Responses	
High	–	25.1%	535	26.8%	125	25.4%
Middle-High	–	25.0%	497	24.9%	121	24.6%
Middle-Low	–	25.3%	497	24.9%	128	26.0%
Low	–	24.7%	471	23.6%	118	24.0%

Appendix 3: Response profiles, independent secondary schools

RESPONSE RATE				
	Base	Sample	Responses	Response rate
Independent	663	500	132	26.4%

RESPONSE PROFILE						
Region	Base		Sample		Responses	
East Midlands	39	5.9%	27	5.4%	6	4.5%
East of England	79	11.9%	58	11.6%	19	14.4%
London	116	17.5%	89	17.8%	18	13.6%
North East	16	2.4%	15	3.0%	3	2.3%
North West	60	9.0%	42	8.4%	11	8.3%
South East	163	24.6%	125	25.0%	32	24.2%
South West	79	11.9%	60	12.0%	18	13.6%
West Midlands	65	9.8%	51	10.2%	13	9.8%
Yorkshire and the Humber	46	6.9%	33	6.6%	12	9.1%

Performance quintile	Base		Sample		Responses	
A – high	133	20.1%	102	20.4%	21	15.9%
B	132	19.9%	97	19.4%	28	21.2%
C	133	20.1%	100	20.0%	20	15.2%
D	132	19.9%	101	20.2%	22	16.7%
E – low	133	20.1%	100	20.0%	41	31.1%

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